

Good News from God? Really?

By Norm R. Allen Jr.

A friend of mine gave me a pamphlet from the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society titled *Good News from God!* The supposed good news is that those that are saved will enter the Kingdom of God after their physical deaths.

I have a lot of friendly conversations with my friend, a Jehovah's Witness. I never challenge or debate him. I just politely talk with him and respectfully ask him questions. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses, like most Christians, believe that the Bible accurately predicted current events. Furthermore, Witnesses, like many Christians, believe we are living in the end times. Witnesses actually believe that the end times began in 1914, over a century ago. When they say the end is "near," who knows how many more centuries they might be talking about?

Witnesses, like most Christians, like to quote from the Bible to the extent that a day in the life of the Lord is like 1,000 years to human beings. However, that does not help *us*. If God seriously wants to reach us, he should feel morally and intellectually obligated to relate to us on our level. He certainly should not say "near" if he actually means far off in the minds of human beings.

My former freethought colleague Dan Barker of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) once wrote that "a prophecy should be a prophecy." That is to say, a genuine prophecy should contain exact dates, names, places, and so on. There should be specificity. They should *not* be vague statements ideally suited for retrofitting.

Retrofitting occurs when people after the vague prophecy has been made force facts to conform to the supposed prophecy. The best example is when Christians point out that the Bible predicted that in the end times, there will be "wars and rumors of wars." Could it get any more vague than that? That pretty much sums up the entire history of the human race.

Yet Christians maintain that there have been more wars in recent years than at any other time in history. That makes these times special. In any case, would it not have been better if the Bible had specifically stated that the wars in Vietnam,

Korea, Iraq, Afghanistan, and so on would have occurred, and predicted the exact number of casualties, injuries, refugees, widows, and orphans in each war, and so on? Now *that* is what a divinely inspired prophecy should look like.

Some Christians believe that biblical prophecy is special because all of the prophecies have been fulfilled, or are likely to be fulfilled. Not really. The granddaddy of all failed prophecies is the prediction that Jesus would return during the lifetimes of some of his original followers. He made statements such as “give no care for the morrow,” “let the dead bury the dead,” and so forth. These statements could only make sense to those that were expecting the return of Jesus very “soon” (in the human sense.) Obviously, 2000 years is not soon in the human sense.

On page four of this tract, it is pointed out that God has no beginning and no end. What is missing from this contention, however, is any strong evidence to back it up. How do theists know that this possibly existent mystery God has no beginning or end? What extra-biblical evidence can they draw upon to back up this extraordinary claim? If they have no evidence to back up this claim, yet maintain that everything else has a beginning and end, this is nothing but the common logical fallacy of special pleading.

On page eight of the tract, the reader is informed that “Death and old age were not part of God’s original purpose for mankind.” However, why should anyone believe this? Every plant and animal dies. It is the height of human arrogance to believe that humanity was ever somehow set apart from nature and able to live forever. It is the stuff of which pure fantasy is made.

This belief gets stranger. All human beings have to die because Adam sinned. How is this just? Why do all human beings have to suffer death because of one man? Human beings did not *elect* Adam as their representative. God created Adam and simply determined that he should serve as humanity’s representative. In this world, however, human beings have to be held accountable for their own actions. We do not punish people for the crimes (or “sins”) of others.

These are just a few of the problems readers encounter in this tract. In the next column, there will be more.

