

# Can there really be a God?

Can there REALLY be a God?

YES, this is a huge subject.

And, NO I am not going to be able to provide you with ALL of the answers this evening.

BUT, we will be considering one particular aspect of this subject that I hope will give you a new perspective on the issue as a whole.

So, 'Can there REALLY be a God?' - This question is often raised when people are considering any of the many disasters and tragedies that happen almost daily and are depicted on our television screens with increasing regularity.

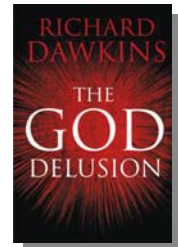
'Can there REALLY be a God' is a statement that tends to convey a degree of disbelief. And this disbelief often stems from the feeling of an apparent unfairness and unreasonableness in the events effecting peoples lives. This results in people dismissing the possibility of there being a real God that is interested in the lives of individuals.

# Today people dismiss the God of the Bible because they think he is 'unfair'

**'The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction...**

**...the moral story of Noah is appalling. God took a dim view of humans, so he (with the exception of one family) drowned the lot of them including children and also, for good measure, the rest of the (presumably blameless) animals as well.**

**A universe with a creative superintendent would be a very different kind of universe from one without.'**



People often believe that the God that is presented in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament is unfair, harsh and unloving. They also often believe that if there is a God then he would deal with things differently in the world today as they see many unfair situations that exist. And therefore because they see an apparently unfair God in the Bible and unfair situations arising on a daily basis then they decide that the Bible can be written off as fiction composed only of fables and legends.

People such as the prominent atheist Richard Dawkins have clearly stated this view. In his book 'The God Delusion' he has these words...

*'The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction...*

*...the moral story of Noah is appalling. God took a dim view of humans, so he (with the exception of one family) drowned the lot of them including children and also, for good measure, the rest of the (presumably blameless) animals as well.*

*A universe with a creative superintendent would be a very different kind of universe from one without.'*

Here Dawkins challenges the belief in a God at two levels, firstly he claims that the God being portrayed in the Bible is extremely unpleasant and his behaviour, in his words, is 'appalling', and secondly he suggests that if there is a God then the world we see around us should be distinctly different from the one we live in today.

We are going to address the issues raised by this quote this evening.

# You want to know if there is a God because it will affect your life



You may well be here this evening because you want to know whether there really can be a God.

You may realise that this is an important issue and is one that can have a significant affect on your life.

You may well be sceptical about the possible existence of a super-being that could have created the universe as presented in the Bible, as many people are today.

# If you get the wrong answer then you may make the wrong choice

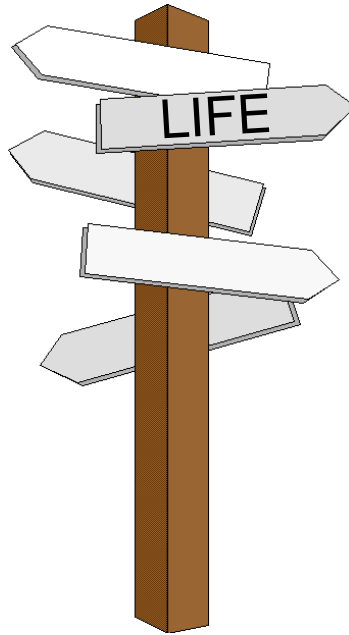


But you are aware that if you get the wrong answer to the question ‘can there really be a God?’ then this could lead to you making the wrong choice.

We make lots of decisions in our lives but very few that can truly determine the complete outcome of our lives.

Such a fundamental issue needs to be carefully considered and well researched before a personal decision is to be made.




# Get the right answer and then you can make the right choice



If you get the right answer to 'Can there really be a God?' then you can make the right choice. A choice that can lead to life rather than death.

The right choice can only be made with the correct understanding. An understanding that can only be achieved by finding out what the Bible really tells us about God and his message.

# **This evening we'll take 3 steps to help you make the correct decision**

-  **1. Correctly understand Bible teaching**
-  **2. Find out how God deals with mankind**
-  **3. Look at 'the big picture'**

We're going to do this in three steps. 3 steps that I hope will give you the information to make the right choice.

The first step will look at the conventional views of mainstream Christianity and whether these present to the public a different story to the one we see in the Bible. Over time the Christian message, I believe and hope to show you this evening, has become misaligned and no longer correctly presents the message from God shown to us in his word the Bible. And this has affected how people have viewed God in terms of whether they think he is fair or not.

And secondly, we'll look at the way the Bible shows us that God deals with mankind. And how this can give us a further understanding as to why we see the type of events that we do today in disasters and human tragedies.

And finally we'll take a look at the bigger picture and see how the way that we see life today can be understood in the full scheme of things – the scheme that God has planned. It is at this point I hope that you will realise that because you are here this evening you are in a very privileged position – not because you're listening to me, but because your listening to the word of God and have an offer extended to you that God has made to all those that hear, listen and respond to his word.

# What the Churches teach is not what the Bible teaches



So then, let's consider the first part... this is by far the biggest section so we'll take more time on this aspect than the other two sections.

We'll take a look at mainstream Christianity's beliefs and how these stand up to the words of the Bible. You see, we have to firstly ensure that the ideas being presented by the Churches about what hope we have in this life, where we go when we die, where we could end up depending on what type of person we are... these ideas need to be checked against what the Bible actually says. If we have these ideas wrong then we can draw a wrong conclusion about the God who has, it is claimed by the Bible, created this world and all life.

# The Churches teach that we go to either heaven or hell when we die

**'This just isn't adding up for me. I have believed in God, Heaven, and Hell my whole life but recently I have done some critical thinking about the concept of hell...**

**...as a more specific example, if a person leads a good life but isn't introduced to the Christian faith and doesn't accept Jesus Christ as their saviour, but is good to their fellow man, how can God punish them with eternal misery?**

**If this is really how it works, He is not a God I want to know.'**



I recently came across a letter from a Christian that was printed in a Christian Newsletter. Before we go and look at what the Bible tells us about mans destiny this letter will give us an insight into the problems that mainstream churches teachings can present.

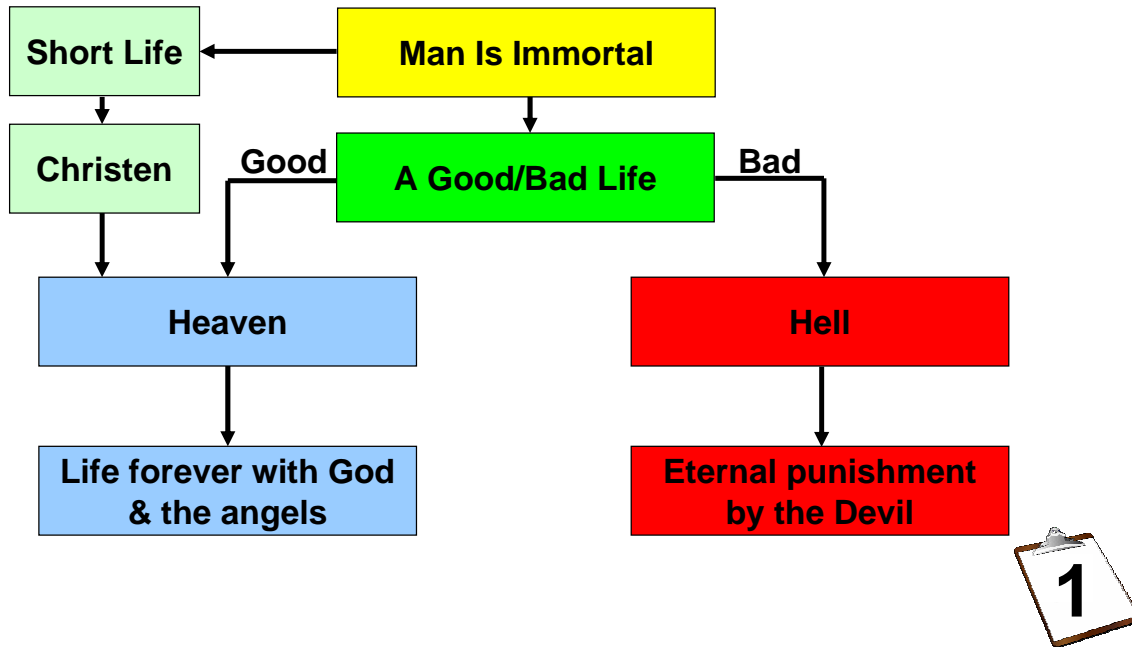
'This just isn't adding up for me. I have believed in God, Heaven, and Hell my whole life but recently I have done some critical thinking about the concept of hell...as a more specific example, if a person leads a good life but isn't introduced to the Christian faith and doesn't accept Jesus Christ as their saviour, but is good to their fellow man, how can God punish them with eternal misery?

If this is really how it works, He is not a God I want to know.'

You can see the dilemma this person faces. This is what we'll consider this evening.

So let's now consider what the mainstream churches say about the message of the Bible and see if we can make some sense of these problems.

# Church teaching starts with Man being immortal



So then, what do the mainstream churches teach is the message of the Bible?

This is what they teach...

- We have an immortal soul
- Our response to God in our lives depends on where we go when we die
- If we are 'good' then we go to heaven
- If you go to heaven then you are given eternal life with God and the angels
- If we are 'bad' then we go to hell
- If you go to hell then you are tortured for eternity by the devil

Then a problem arose with this as people realised that if a baby or child died before it had the opportunity to choose then it would go to hell, so they introduced christening, a practice that is not mentioned in the Bible. The churches believe that if a child is christened, and they die whilst young, then they will have qualified to go to heaven.

# The first error leads to a second and third error

1. An immortal soul
2. No differentiation
3. All to either heaven or hell



There are three main points to take away from this simple overview of mainstream Christianity's beliefs of the Bible message.

**1 - Firstly**, it is believed that within each person there is an immortal soul. An indestructible part of them that lives on when their body dies.

**2 - Secondly**, there is no differentiation between those that have an opportunity to hear and respond to Gods message and those that don't.

3 - And **thirdly**, that the reward from God is either eternal life in heaven or the punishment from God is believed to be eternal torture by the Devil in Hell.

The first point, of being an immortal soul, is the most significant because it determines that the other two have to be considered. If everyone has an immortal soul then we have to consider what the soul's destination is after life on earth – this has been determined by the Church as being, for everyone that ever lived, either heaven or hell. And then it needs to be determined what are the factors that send one to heaven as opposed to hell, and the Church suggests that this is ones response to the gospel message, whether or not you've heard it.

If this is what the Bible tells us then we ARE left with the problem that it would appear unfair of God to send someone to hell just because they hadn't heard the gospel message, and therefore not been given the opportunity to respond one way or the other.

This is the point at which I may be changing your perspective on human life. If you have been presented with the mainstream Churches view of the Bible message then this may come as something quite different.

You see, just as the first step we took in following the mainstream Churches view was to state the nature man, so we need to determine from the Bible what happens to a person when they die. The mainstream churches teach that the spirit, or soul of the person, lives on. So we need to see what the Bible actually tells us. As we go through this we will start to construct a different view of life and the way God works.

Now we are going to be covering quite a spectrum of subjects that each deserves an evening on their own. So, due to our time constraints I will only be giving limited evidence for the view I am presenting this evening. But, these are supported by many bible references and have been exhaustively presented by a number of people from this platform in the past.

# The Bible tells us what happens when we die

**'For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any [thing] that is done under the sun.'** Ecclesiastes 9:5,6

**'Live joyfully... Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do [it] with thy might; for [there is] no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.'** Ecclesiastes 9:9,10



So let's look at some words from the Bible to see if we can determine the nature of man, the churches assure us that mans soul is immortal, it will continue to exist when the body of the person dies.

Here is what the Bible tells us:

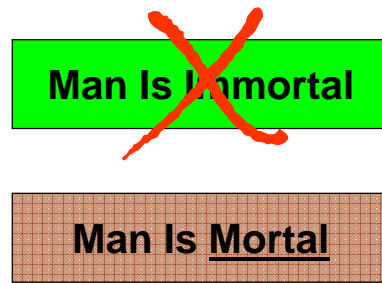
'For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any [thing] that is done under the sun.' Ecc 9:5,6

And further down the same chapter we are told:

'Live joyfully... Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do [it] with thy might; for [there is] no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.' Eccles 9:9,10

So we can see from these words that man is not immortal, when he dies his body returns to the ground. This aspect could be expanded significantly and we could spend some time looking at this aspect alone. But for this evening this has given us an idea of the nature of man – we are all mortal and have no super-natural existence beyond the grave. We will see in a short while that there is hope beyond the grave, just not in the way the mainstream churches present it.

# The Bible teaches that man is mortal



So if we go back to our diagram showing the development of the ideas of the mainstream church we will see we need a new starting point. Yes, man is mortal and when he dies he returns to the ground; the ground from which he was taken as we're told in Genesis.

So once we take the true bible teaching on mans nature we see that the eternal outcome for men and women is not necessarily determined as soon as they die. For the churches would have us believe that the soul separates from the body and either goes to heaven or to hell but this is not the case.

So, under the beliefs of the mainstream churches EVERYONE has to either go to heaven or go to hell and that happens immediately after we die. But, we have seen that the Bible does not teach that we have an immortal soul so this division does not have to occur when we die. In fact, the Bible teaches that all who have died since Adam are still buried in the ground.

# Bible teaching shows us what happens after death

**‘Men [and] brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day... For David is not ascended into the heavens’**

Acts 2:29,34



We're now going to look at some words of Peter the apostle who is speaking to the people on the day of Pentecost, in Jerusalem, after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus to heaven.

‘Men [and] brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day... For David is not ascended into the heavens’ Acts 2:29,34

The Bible tells us that David, the great king of Israel, was ‘a man after Gods own heart’. Out of all those recorded in the Bible we would have expected him to have gone to heaven, wouldn't we? But here is Peter telling the people that he had not gone to heaven but that he was still buried in the sepulchre that was still there in his day.

So then what was to happen to king David? Did he have no hope? Was he to remain dead or was God at some future time going to reward him for his faith?

# Bible teaching shows us what happens after death

**‘And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation [even] to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame [and] everlasting contempt.’**

Daniel 12:1,2



Well, the next words that we'll see are from the old testament and these were written by the prophet Daniel whilst in captivity in Babylon. At the end of his writings he reveals things that will happen in the future.

‘And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation [even] to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame [and] everlasting contempt.’ Daniel 12:1,2

Now perhaps you can start to see the picture coming together. We have king David dead in the ground – or as we see referred to here symbolically asleep, for he will one-day awake – and at the time that the events occur as described by Daniel then there will be a resurrection and a time of dividing, a time of judgement. When some will be given everlasting life, and some will not.

One other point to note from this verse is that we see that it says that ‘MANY of them that sleep in the dust’, it doesn't say ‘ALL that sleep in the dust’. This is an important distinction and we'll pick up on this in a bit.

# The Bible offers a place in God's kingdom

**'The heaven, [even] the heavens, [are] the LORD'S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men** Psalm 115:16

**'Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.** Luke 11:2

**'...this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.'** Acts 1:11



We don't have time to pursue this particular aspect any further only to say that the Bible tells us that those that will receive everlasting life will reign with Jesus in a kingdom on earth, not in heaven. For we are told that...

'The heaven, [even] the heavens, [are] the LORD'S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men' Ps 115:16

And remember that in the Lords prayer that Jesus taught his disciples we have the words:

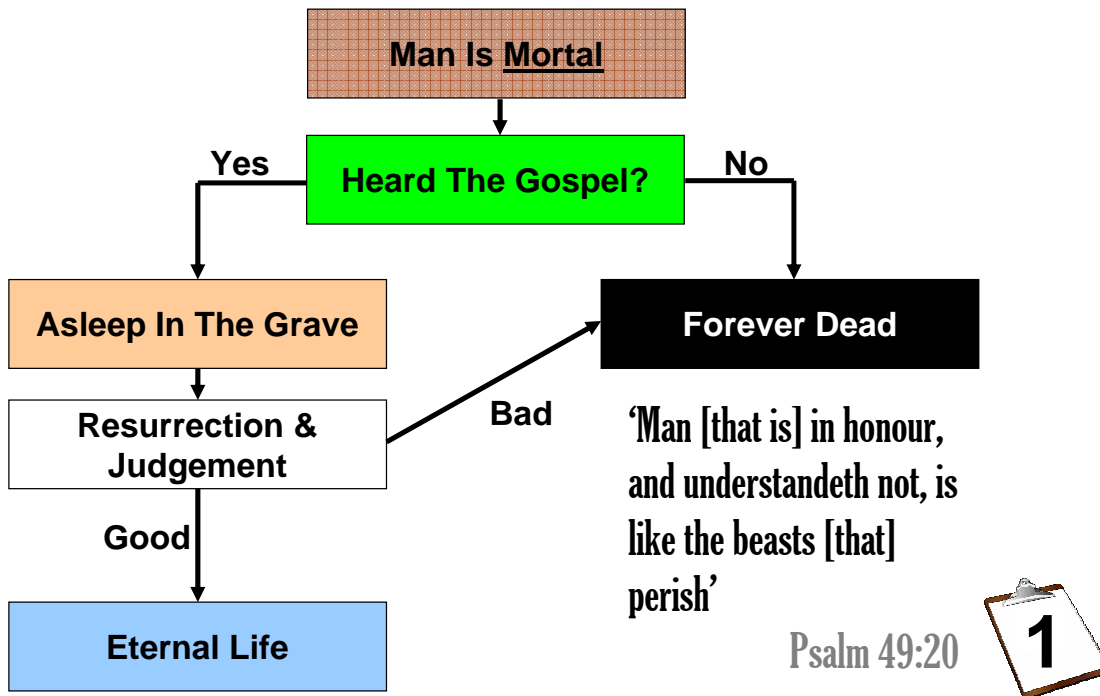
'Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.' Luke 11:2

The disciples were to pray for Gods kingdom to COME, and for his will to be done on earth. We have further words recorded that tell us Jesus will return from heaven to earth:

'...this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.' Acts 1:11

So we have established that for those who know about God and his message, when they die, they remain in their graves until the time of resurrection at Jesus' return. This will be a time when he will set up Gods kingdom on earth.

# Correctly understanding the Bible provides a new perspective



We're now going to run through and rebuild the flow diagram we constructed for the church teachings. But this time we're going to build it based on correct Bible teaching and see how this can change our outlook of the fairness of God.

So we'll now construct our flow diagram from what we have learnt about what the Bible teaches.

1 - Firstly we learnt that Man is mortal, not immortal.

2 - In our next step, whether the person has heard about the gospel message puts them into one of two groups of people. Let's firstly follow the diagram for someone who has heard about God and his message.

3 - If these people die then they remain figuratively asleep in the grave until Jesus returns and raises them to life to be judged.

4 - What they have done in their lives will determine whether or not they enter into Gods kingdom.

5 - So we have considered the possible outcome for those who have been presented with Gods message. Now we need to consider what the Bible says about those that don't have the opportunity to hear about God's message. We go back up our flow diagram up to the box where we choose 'No' for whether the person has heard about the gospel.

The answer to what happens to this group of people is given to us in the Psalms...

'Man [that is] in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts [that] perish' Ps 49:20

This is our answer to what happens to those who 'do not understand', those who have not had the opportunity to hear Gods message and to respond to it, one way or the other.

So in summary, the Bible teaches that there are essentially two types of people; and two different outcomes at death. Those that have been given the opportunity to respond – those that have a responsibility to God – and those that live, die and perish and are just like the animals that return to the ground, those have no knowledge of God and his plan and purpose.

**Those who don't know...  
die unknowing...  
will never know...  
God expects nothing from them**



**JUSTICE**

**...but sad**



For the people who don't have the opportunity have nothing to answer for – they have simply lived their lives, died at the end of it and returned once more to the ground. Or as the Psalmist writes... become like the beasts that perish. I don't know of any Church group who claims that animals have immortal souls, yet this is who they are being compared with. Their end is the grave – a dead end.

Yes, it is very sad that these people will have died and will cease to exist for ever because they have not had the opportunity to respond to God's message. But it is an extremely fair way for God to act.

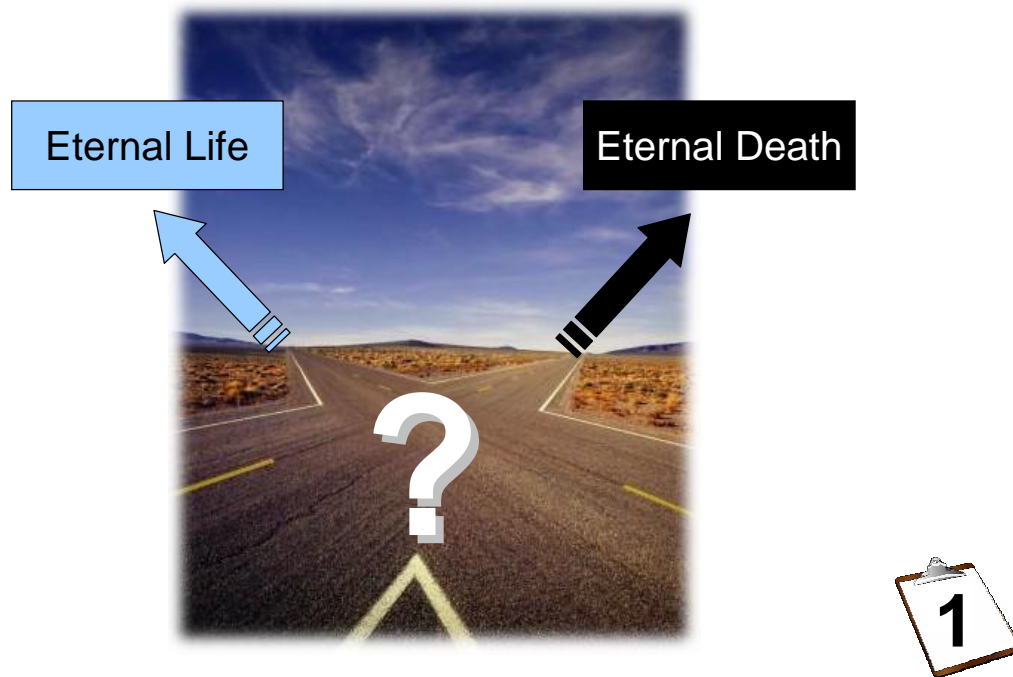
Look at it this way. These people have lived and died. Now what happens to them when they die? Well as we have learnt from the words of the Bible when a person dies they cease to exist, they no longer have thoughts, they are no more, and no longer have any reasoning, they simply return to the dust. Now this part is very relevant to our considerations. So a person who has lived a life and died without knowledge of Gods plans portrayed in the Bible can't turn around and say that they have been treated unfairly. They had and will have no knowledge whatsoever of what they have missed out on. They can't turn around and say that God has not been fair to them, they don't know now, they will cease to have the capacity to know when they die, they will never know that there was something they have missed out on.

I believe this is a significant issue and aspect of the truth of the Bible message and the fairness of God. It demonstrates that God is not unreasonable in his dealings with his creation.

For the child who dies only a few days old, or the man or woman who dies at the ripe old age of 101 without the knowledge of Gods word, the result is exactly the same. Both die, cease to exist, and will never be anymore. Neither can look back on their life and say they were treated unfairly because they weren't given the opportunity for they are gone and will never know.

This is a very sad reality.

# YOU know and have the opportunity to choose which way YOU will go



But this is where we can say that we personally are extremely privileged. Because each one of us here tonight are in the position that we have the knowledge, we are in the position that we know there is a message from God. We have the opportunity to find out more about what God says and respond to it.

So even though we have just considered how those who have not had the opportunity to hear Gods message will perish and be no more, on the flip side we know that every one of us here are not in this position, but we have knowledge and we have the offer extended to us by God.

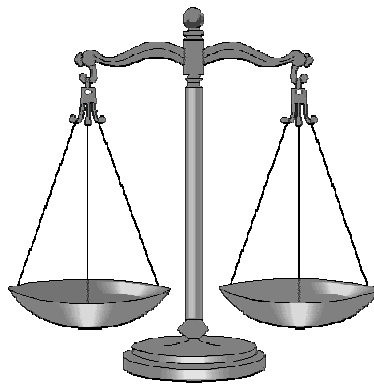
We have a choice to make. A choice that can affect the outcome of our lives.

So what God lays out before us in his word is that those that have heard his message will be held responsible for their response to its message. There will be some that lie in the grave that will be resurrected 'to everlasting life, and some to shame [and] everlasting contempt' as we saw in the writings of the prophet Daniel.

# With privilege comes responsibility

**'For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more'**

Luke 12:48



Interestingly, here we have a close representation of how we would EXPECT a reasonable person to act, even by our own standards. For if we have given someone a privileged position we expect them to live up to certain standards. If they have been given less, then we expect less from them. In fact we find Jesus giving us this same principle:

'For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more' Luke 12:48

So now perhaps we start to see a different perspective from the one presented by the mainstream churches, a different view from the one we started out with, and a different proposition to those who would have God down as an unfair God.

**Churches  
miss-sell the  
Bible message**



**When correctly  
understood...  
God IS fair**



So we've completed the first and most lengthy section of what I'm going to present to you this evening.

In summary of this section we can say that the ideas presented to the public by the mainstream churches gives them the impression that God is unfair. But, we have seen that the Bible message has been misrepresented by the churches and when we correctly understand how God operates then we can clearly see that he is fair, even by our estimation. To those he gives the opportunity, he will judge their response. For those that don't have the opportunity then he will expect nothing of them. It will be as if they never existed.

# Not everyone has the opportunity



Over 4000 children die every day  
from water-borne diseases



This now moves us into our next section. We may still be thinking that God is not fair because he doesn't give everyone the opportunity to respond. Even after what we have seen in the previous section you may still be thinking that God should give everyone the opportunity to respond.

We know there are many in this world that die without even getting old enough to understand the Bible message.

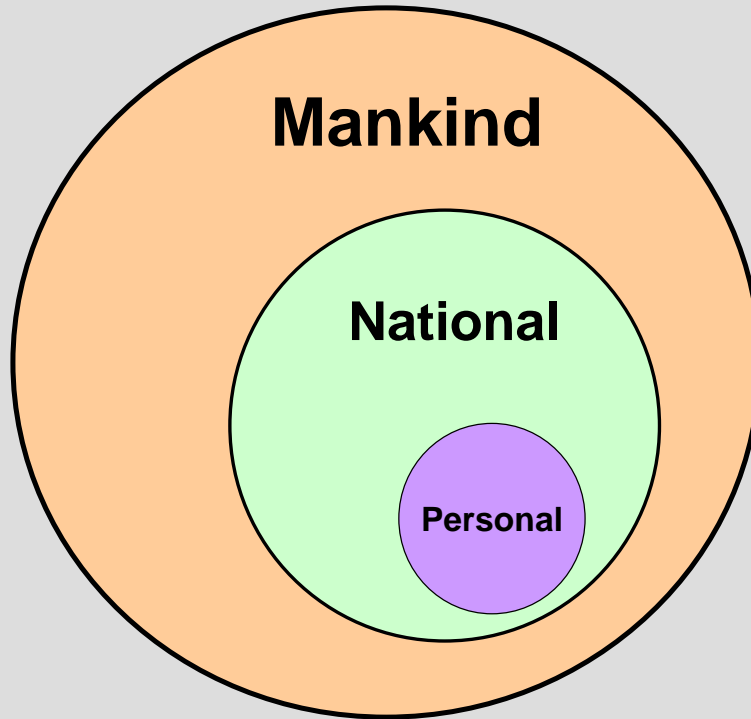
CLICK

We're told that over 4000 children die every day of water-borne diseases. This has to be understood in some way to make sense of the Bible message.

It is a challenge to our belief – we have to find some way of reconciling these events with the God of the Bible.

This section will give you some information that will give you some insight as to why this is the case – why not everyone has the opportunity.

# God judges at 3 levels



The first point we need to be aware of is that God judges on, at least, three levels.

The three levels that God judges on are, at the...

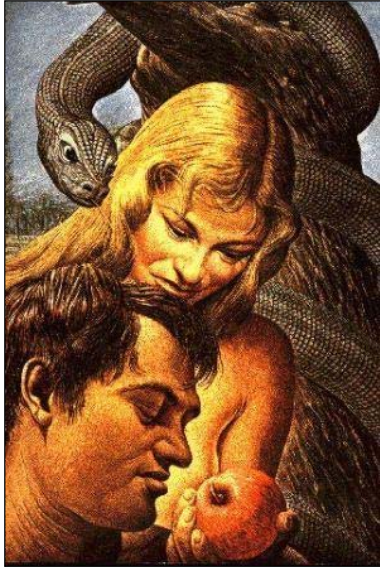
1 - personal level

2 - at the national level

3 - and at the human race level or mankind as a whole.

He judges on at least these three levels. That means he holds people responsible at these levels and metres out his judgement at these three levels.

# We are descendants of Adam and Eve



**'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou [art], and unto dust shalt thou return.'**

Genesis 3:19



Let's start at the level of all humanity.

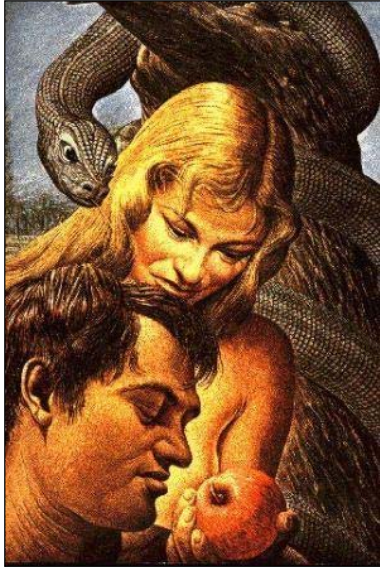
We need to go right back to the events at the beginning of the Bible to see how God judges at the level of all humanity, or mankind.

Adam and Eve were created as the first humans to live on this planet. They were placed in a beautiful garden and they were given only one command by God. There was one tree that they were not to eat of. Adam and Eve disobeyed God and they ate of the fruit of the tree. Adam and Eve sinned before God, they knowingly disobeyed his command.

God passed judgement on them. He told them...

'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou [art], and unto dust shalt thou return.' Gen 3:19

# We are descendants of Adam and Eve



**‘Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man (Adam), and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned – for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law.’**

**Romans 5:12,13 (NIV)**



So God punished Adam and Eve by saying they would start to die and eventually return to the ground from where they were taken.

We are told in the New Testament that because Adam and Eve sinned then because we are all offspring from them then we all have the same nature and tendency to sin, to disobey God.

‘Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man (*Adam*), and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned – for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law.’ Romans 5:12,13 (NIV)

This verse confirms that we will all die because we are descendants of Adam and Eve. This verse is interesting in that it also confirms what we discussed in the previous section. That being that only those that have been given the opportunity will be judged by God. Those that have not heard about the Bible will not have their sins taken into account as they have not been aware of the law that God lays out in his word.

So in the passing of the sentence of death onto the descendants of Adam, God has passed his judgement on mankind, on all humanity. This is essentially why we see so much sorrow and suffering in the world.

If we keep in mind that God judges in response to the privilege that has been given then we can now look at the way God judges at a national level.

# Israel are God's nation and have been judged as a nation



**‘And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’**

Mark 13:2



Israel are God's people. They are the nation that God chose out of all the nations to bless them and to guide them. He revealed himself to them and became their God so that when they trusted in him no-one could defeat them. He gave them a land that was very fruitful and catered for their every need.

But, Israel constantly disobeyed God. They disregarded his laws and went and did their own things ignoring the way that God had set out for them.

They finally killed God's only son, the Lord Jesus. Shortly after this God sent them great punishment by having Jerusalem destroyed by the Romans and dispersing the Jews around the world.

This is the second level of God's judgement. He greatly rewarded and blessed Israel when they obeyed him but punished them when they threw his word back into his face. Israel are greatly privileged so God expects much from them. And so when they disrespected him he greatly punished them.

In AD70 Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. Jesus spoke of this time to his disciples when he told them about the temple buildings.

‘And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’

Mark 13:2

# Our lives are affected at 3 levels

1. **Mankind**
2. **National**
3. **Personal**

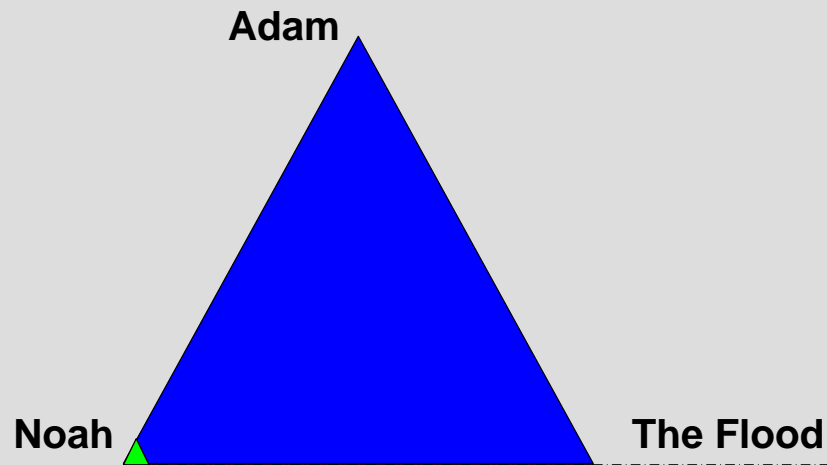


So we have looked briefly at how God judges on the level of mankind, at a national level and we already know how God judges on a personal level because we have seen that in the previous section. We have considered how God judges those that have the privilege of knowing his plan and purpose. Of those he gives much, he expects much.

So everyone suffers because we are descendants of Adam. Some suffer at a national level because of the acts of their country. But God is also interested in us as individuals. And finally our lives will be judged at the time of Jesus' return to earth to set up God's kingdom.

But the majority of problems could be fixed by mankind himself. How? Well, in the world today there are sufficient resources to let everyone have enough for their daily needs – it is mans greed and his failure to live peaceably with his neighbour that prevents this – and if everyone had enough for them to have a reasonably healthy and long enough life then everyone could be taught about God and his plans for those who will listen and obey him.

# God intervenes to preserve his message



We're just going to step back a little and see what the impact is of understanding that God judges at 3 levels.

For God has given man free-will but man has continually chosen to ignore God and his ways.

Here we're going to slowly build up a picture of the whole of human history to pick out the way that God has acted and intervened at the 3 levels we have looked at – at the level of mankind, at the national level, and at the personal level. This diagram that I'm about to construct will show you how this has happened over time.

So firstly, God created Adam as the father of all mankind.

Adam sinned and so all his descendants inherited mortality.

As time went by, Adams descendants went their own way, doing their own things and ignoring God until there was only one family left that believed in God and trusted in him.

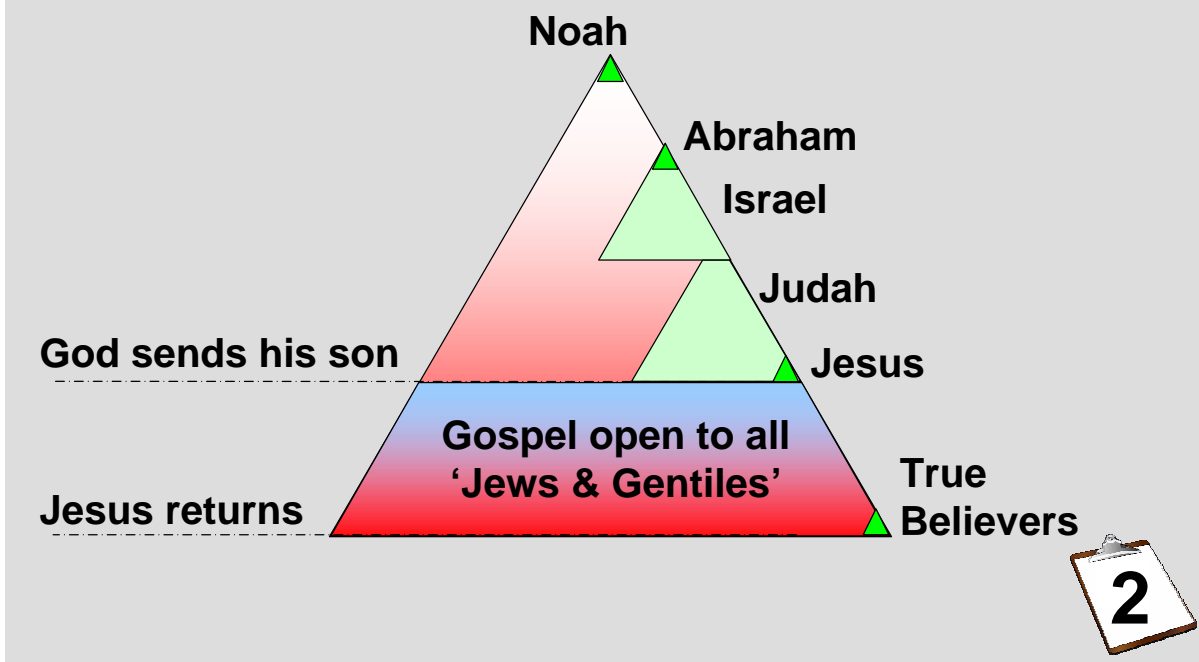
The father of this family was Noah.

If God had let life continue as it was then it was quite possible that all those living on the earth would ignore him. He would have an entire planet filled with people that knew nothing about him. God's message would die out completely.

So God decided to intervene, or judge, the world. He judged at the level of mankind because he brought the flood to destroy everyone but he judged on a personal level in that he saved righteous Noah and his family.

Let's just pause a moment and think back to those words that I quoted from the atheist Richard Dawkins. He said that 'the moral story of Noah is appalling. God took a dim view of humans, so he (with the exception of one family) drowned the lot of them including children also'. These words present a challenge to the belief of a fair God. But let's just consider the position of the people that died in the flood. They were people whose lives would have amounted to nothing in Gods eyes, sad but true. If the flood had not come then they would have lived and died, at whatever age they reached naturally and would perish and would be no more. So whether their lives were rudely interrupted by the flood or not the result would be exactly the same. If they didn't acknowledge their creator then they would perish as the beasts of the field. Unfortunately Richard Dawkins comments are made from misinformed and humanist perspective, although I doubt the things that we are considering this evening would change his outlook! So back to this overview of how God intervenes to preserve his message.

# God intervenes to preserve his message



So the flood brought about a new start. From that point on the message about God would be passed down the generations as everyone was a descendant now of Noah – they would all know how God judged the world once before when man ignored their creator.

But once again over time man went away from believing in God.

So God decides to choose a man who trusted and believed in him and make him the father of a nation that would be Gods nation – Israel. This man was Abraham.

Israel were then Gods people but the time came when they were split into two nations – Judah and Israel. Judah was the more God-fearing nation, but eventually both nations were taken into captivity. Judah did return from Babylon.

But if time had continued to go on without God intervening then his message may have got so distorted by mans views that his true message would have died out, just as it nearly did when Noah was alive. So God decided it was time to send his Son to preach his message and to see if the Jews would respond. Jesus was killed; effectively by the Jews. They killed God's only son and would be punished for it.

When Jesus died and was resurrected from the dead his sacrifice opened the way from people from all nations an opportunity to come to God and be saved. So the gospel was preached to all nations, the apostle Paul being one of the first to spread the good news to the Roman empire.

So we now move onto our time. A time when there are still a few true believers, those that correctly understand Gods message and respond to it.

And shortly, as the Bible has taught, Jesus will return from heaven to set up God's kingdom in Jerusalem.

So I hope you can see from this very brief overview of how God has intervened in the history of mankind that he has done this to preserve his message. The message that man continues to ignore at his peril. And God can be seen intervening, and judging, at the 3 levels we mentioned earlier.

# God intervenes to preserve his message

**'...the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. In the past, he let all nations go their own way... In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.'**

Acts 14:16 & 17:30,31



There is a passage in the Bible that confirms what we have seen in this diagram. That God chose a people for himself, the children of Israel, and that he spread his message throughout all humanity when Jesus died and was resurrected.

## **This child's life is affected at a personal level by the failings of mankind**



... and it could be fixed by mankind



If we go back to the slide that we started this section with, the child about to drink from the bottle full of contaminated water that will bring his life to an early end we now know that man has the opportunity to fix this child's future. The life of this child is seriously impacted upon by the failings of man. Yes, this child, like everyone else will die eventually but he could be given enough time, if only mankind would allow it, to hear Gods message and respond to it.

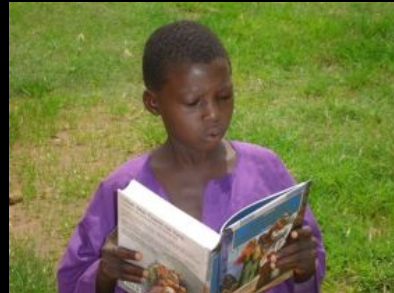
It is mankind that has robbed this child of his future.

God has judged mankind so that all will die, but he has opened a door that leads to eternal life for every person if only man would allow them the opportunity to respond - that would require firstly for mankind to love his neighbour as himself and share the worlds resources and secondly for everyone to be taught the truth of the Bible message.

**Man has failed**

**Everyone could and  
should have the  
opportunity**

**God IS fair**



So in summary of this section, where we have considered whether it is unfair of God that not all have the opportunity to respond, I hope you can see that God has from the outset given mankind his message and his plan.

It is man that has consistently gone away from God, ignored his ways and failed to pass Gods message onto their children so they grow up without any knowledge of what is on offer for them.

It is mankind that has and is denying masses of people from knowing about God and the truth of his message.

God has intervned in the past and he will intervne once again. The Bible indicates that he will send Jesus back to the earth at a time when there will be very few true believers left. We find ourselves living at that time.

# **THIS** Life is NOT the reward **it is only the test**

‘Eye has not seen,  
nor ear heard, nor  
have entered into  
the heart of man  
the things which  
God has prepared  
for those who love  
Him.’

I Corinthians 2:9



So we move onto our final section. The big picture. I hope you have seen the way that God has worked in the past and the way that he works today IS fair. God has continually tried to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to hear and respond to his offer but man has thwarted him at every turn.

We have seen that we are in an extremely privileged position because we know that God has revealed his message through the Bible.

We have seen that we have a limited time of life and we will be judged by God, at Jesus' return, to decide whether we have lived our lives in a way that pleases God and results in him giving us life in his kingdom.

CLICK – This may seem a strange statement to make after what we have heard this evening – Life is not the reward - but there's something missing from that statement. You see here in the west we have, on the whole, lives that can be lived in relative luxury. In fact for many in this world, those who struggle to have food and drink each day, we in the west live like kings and queens. So, it is easy for us to focus on what we can get out of life and forget the big picture.

The word that is missing at the beginning of this sentence is... THIS – This life is not the reward. And the phrase that needs to be added to the end is – it is only the test. Our lives today are our opportunity to show to God how we respect him, how we love him for giving us such an amazing opportunity, and how we want to please him rather than please ourselves. If we respond correctly then the reward of this life will disappear into insignificance to what God has planned for those that enter his kingdom.

Because God has not just offered us life as the reward, he has offered (CLICK) eternal life in a fantastic kingdom that we can barely imagine.

There are some words that confirm that we have an offer from him that we should be overwhelmed by.

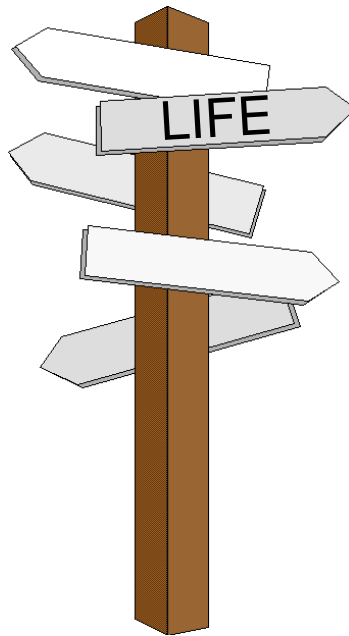
‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’



We started off by saying that you may well be here this evening to find out whether there was a case for a God. You may have wanted to find out the answer to 'Can there really be a God?' because the answer could affect your life.



I also said that you may well be aware that getting the wrong answer to the question 'Can there really be a God?' could lead you to making the wrong decision.



If you get the right answer to 'Can there really be a God?' then you can make the right choice.



1.

**Correctly understand Bible teaching**



2.

**Find out how God deals with mankind**



3.

**Look at ‘the big picture’**

**‘...even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**

**John 3:14-16**

At the outset I set out the three steps we were going to take to answer the question posed by the title, but to particularly answer the question as to whether the God of the Bible is fair.

I hope you now have some answers to your questions, and perhaps a different perspective on this subject, and it will help you to make the biggest decision of your life.

God is interested in individuals. He will care for those who put their faith and trust in him. He will reward those that show their love for him in the way they live their lives. He will reward them by giving them eternal life. Something none of us deserve but God is willing to give to us because he loved us and gave his only son to die for our sins.

Our closing words are a quote from the Bible and is one that is often quoted by Christians. Hopefully what we’ve gone through will give you a new perspective on these words: