

WHY I AM NOT A CHRISTIAN

#5 Christianity is Immoral – Suffering

In this series we're looking at the problems or criticisms people have towards the Christian faith. This particular criticism is called 'Christianity is Immoral', and it's do with the sort of God (loving or powerful) he *must* be in the face of suffering.. It's said - "If God's all-powerful, then he must be immoral because the loving thing would be to not allow people to suffer. But if he's all-loving, he then can't be all-powerful because he obviously does not have the strength to stop the terrible suffering that people experience". According to this formula, suffering proves that God must be one or the other. He cannot be both.

What do you think about this formula?

Suffering in a very difficult topic. Over the centuries religious people have wrestled with the issue of why people undergo terrible things. Read Job 8:1-7 & Job 42:1-6; Luke 13:1-5; 2 Timothy 3:12, then discuss how should these verses, should guide our thinking on suffering?

Have you heard people speak about God and suffering that runs counter to these verses?



Suffering & God's Elect, Strangers in the World

On Sunday, we looked at several passages to help provide a biblical framework for grappling with suffering. Key passages were: Genesis 3, Luke 22-23; Hebrews 11-12; and Revelation 21:1-4. But the main focus for today will be on a different part of the bible—a passage that is directed to 'God's elect, strangers in the world'. Read 1 Peter 1:1-12.

1. What is the past thing that has taken place? v3
2. What is the present reality we find ourselves in? v3
3. What is the future reality that God's people look forward to? v4

Verse 4 speaks on an *inheritance*. This is a beautiful theologically loaded word that comes straight from the Old Testament. Israel were able to enter (for a while at least) the promised land and enjoy God's promised inheritance—Canaan. But now God's chosen people (post-Christ) will be shielded by God's power as they await a glorious eternal inheritance in heaven.

Does this 'shielding' mean that a Christian is protected from life's troubles? Are Christians surrounded by a divine cocoon? Do we just sit back and enjoy the ride? Let's keep reading.

4. What is the vehicle or mechanism through which God guards or shields us?

5. Will Christians be protected from all difficulty?

6. Look carefully at how the trials or difficulties are described:

a) What is their duration (compared with the eternal inheritance)?

b) What sort of trials will come?

c) What is their immediate purpose?

d) What is their end result?

7. What should the Christian reaction be in the midst of trials?

How can this be possible?

8. What sort of trials are you facing at present? How might these refine your trust in God?

Pray for each other.