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APOLOGETICS & THE SCOFFER

The
Godhood
of Jesus

Creation
Cards

Who was
at the **Tomb**
of Jesus?



Apologetics and the Scoffer

Dave Miller, Ph.D.



THE Bible writers used precious space in Holy Writ to warn the Christian apologist about scoffers and their destructive influence on others, including Christians (2 Peter 3:3; Jude 18). In order to “be ready to give a defense” (1 Peter 3:15), a biblical study of the “scoffer” is warranted. The term occurs most prominently in the Proverbs, one of six books in the Old Testament classified as “wisdom literature,” along with Job, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations. In Hebrew usage, a “proverb” (root meaning = “comparison”) is a moralistic pronouncement about everyday life. Proverbs are pithy bits of advice that give insight into existence and reality. Proverbs very practically point people down the pathway to successful living. They cut through the facade and complexities—that we humans so typically conjure up in our lives—by pinpointing how to live a godly life in preparation for eternity.

Rather than being a disconnected hodgepodge of unrelated maxims, Proverbs constitutes a distillation of wisdom gleaned from the Law of God. Wisdom is the general subject matter of the book, but the central theme is stated in 1:7—“the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (cf. 9:10; 15:33). In other words, the starting point for

life and the real essence of wisdom is **fear of God**. True living cannot commence without **first** a genuine respect for God. A healthy fear of the Lord entails a reverence for God that includes obedience and submission to His will (Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10; Ecclesiastes 12:13). A person’s life cannot even “get off the ground” until a humble respect for God and His will is in place. Once the prerequisite of genuine regard for God is intact, the individual is in a position to hear God and to begin the process of assimilating God’s wisdom as it relates to a variety of life’s characteristics, including pride/humility, wealth/poverty, folly, goodness, use of the tongue, vengeance, strife, gluttony, justice, love, lust, laziness, death, friends, and the family.

A SCOFFING SOCIETY

THE last half-century in America has brought sweeping cultural changes. Many of the values and beliefs of our civilization have been jettisoned or significantly altered. As one example, consider the fact that society in general is less respectful, less serious, and less self-controlled. More people tend to be flippant and irreverent. Paul spoke of the importance of being sober-minded, serious, and reverent (Titus 1:2-8). It’s as if the further our nation moves away from God and

His moral precepts, the more reckless, undisciplined, uncontrolled, and irreverent people become. Eventually, nothing is sacred or worthy of respectful, cautious, careful handling.

Such is the case with the “scoffer” of Proverbs. Various forms of the term (verb, participle, noun) occur some 18 times in the book. Depending on the translation, the noun form is generally translated “scorner” (KJV), “scoffer” (NKJV, ASV, NASB, RSV), or “mock” (NIV). In identifying the meaning of the underlying Hebrew terms, the language authorities speak of “chatterers,” “overbearing tittle-tattle,” “arrogant men,” “rebels,” “to brag, speak boastfully,” “to put on airs,” “to scoff, deride,” “to encourage scorn.”¹ They also speak of ridicule, scorn, and mockery, make fun of, in association with arrogance, wickedness, licentiousness, and folly.² Our English dictionaries define “scorn” as “contempt or disdain felt toward a person or object considered despicable or unworthy; to reject or refuse with derision.” “Scoff” is defined as “to mock at or treat with derision or scorn.” “Mock” means “to treat with ridicule or contempt; deride, jeer.” A good summary description of the “scoffer” is seen in the comment by the classic Hebrew lexicographer William Gesenius: “a frivolous and impudent person, who despises scoffingly the most sacred precepts of religion, piety, and morals.”³

Characteristics of the Scoffer

Solomon had much to say about this prideful, stubborn approach to life. Proverbs 1:20-22 (NASB) reads:

Wisdom shouts in the street, she lifts her voice in the square;
At the head of the noisy streets she cries out;

At the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her sayings:

“How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded?”

And **scoffers delight themselves in scoffing** and fools hate knowledge?"

The scoffer is in the same class with fools and the naïve—those disinterested in acquiring the wisdom and knowledge that can only come from God. A “fool” in Proverbs is not someone who is mentally handicapped; it is the person who is morally deficient because he or she rejects the approach to life advocated by God. Proverbs 9:7-8 reads:

He who corrects a **scoffer** gets dishonor for himself,

And he who reproves a wicked man gets insults for himself.

Do not reprove a **scoffer**, or he will hate you,

Reprove a wise man and he will love you.

Observe that Solomon meant that if you impart correction and reproof to someone with a prideful attitude, you are wasting your time, “casting your pearls before swine” (Matthew 7:6), and will receive only abuse, hate, and resentment in return. We so often feel like it is our duty and mission in life to correct everyone around us. This passage teaches that we need to be more judicious and discriminating regarding when to “weigh in” on a matter that arises in another person’s life. We literally must make an assessment of such a person before we offer advice (Proverbs 26:4-5).⁴ That assessment would have to be based on “fruit” (Matthew 7:20).

Proverbs 9:12 states: “If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, and if you scoff, you alone will bear it.” In other words, by embracing and inculcating wisdom into your life, you will receive its benefits and be rewarded. On the other hand, if you scoff at wisdom and refuse to apply God’s insight to your circumstances, you will hurt yourself by being your own worst enemy. Past generations captured this concept well in the

reference to those who would “cut off their nose to spite their face.”

“Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, reprove a wise man and he will love you.”

Proverbs 14:6 says: “A scoffer seeks wisdom and does not find it, but knowledge is easy to him who understands.” By “seeking wisdom,” Solomon means that a scoffer’s pursuit of proper thinking and insight is a useless enterprise, since he is not actually interested in finding it. For him, the pursuit of wisdom is a vain exercise. But if our heart and attitude is right, and we are sincerely and sensibly seeking God’s perspective, we will find it. When Festus accused Paul of being driven insane by learning, Paul responded: “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the **words of truth and reason**” (Acts 26:25). Spiritual insight and the wherewithal to function effectively in this life is

available to those who sincerely, genuinely desire it. As Jesus explained: “If anyone **wants** to do His will, **he shall know** concerning the doctrine” (John 7:17).

Proverbs 15:12 informs us: “A scoffer does not love one who corrects him, nor will he go to the wise.” Again, the scoffer resents constructive criticism and helpful input that would make life go better for him and spiritually prepare him for eternity. His complete lack of interest in spiritual things, and his prideful, self-absorbed attitude means that he refuses to enlist the aid of those who could help him, those who have already “been around the block.”

Rearing a Scoffer

From whence come scoffers? How do they arise? How does a person become a scoffer? Proverbs addresses these questions as well. Proverbs 13:1 reads: “A wise son heeds his father’s instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.” The very nature and attitude of a scoffer means that he will not listen to sage counsel from parents and others who would help him. It also

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means that he will not receive the benefits to be gained from being disciplined—either orally or physically. That is one reason why parents must start young in the administration of corporal punishment: “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15). One of the ways to head off having a scoffer for a son or daughter is to address the scoffing attitude early on. Spanking must have as its end to alter **attitude**. If the application of physical pain to the posterior does not alter the **attitude**, perhaps you did not get the job done and more diligence is needed.

Proverbs 17:21 says: “He who begets a scoffer does so to his sorrow, and the father of a fool has no joy.” Observe that “scoffer” is put in parallel construction with “fool,” showing the close connection between the two. Proverbs has much to say about parenting. Sometimes the unwillingness of the scoffer to listen to advice and to heed wise counsel is an indication that his parents did not get the job done early on. Parents must **make** a child listen to them. That’s not something that comes naturally for a child. A child must be **made** to show respect and to be attentive to parental guidance. Children are self-absorbed and consumed in their little world, so they must be brought to reality by parents who insist/demand that the child stop his preoccupation with trivialities, look the parent in the face, and pay attention to the parent’s instructions. Such respect and honor must be **taught** and **demanded**. Proverbs also has much to say about the fact that bringing a child under control in order to instill respect for authority and receptivity to wisdom takes corporal punishment (13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15,17). When such is done early in the child’s life, depending on the child, it will be needed rarely as time goes by.

On the other hand, when that aspect of childrearing is neglected or omitted, the adult that results is in need of firmer measures than mere verbal rebuke: “Strike a scoffer, and the simple will become wary; Rebuke one who has understanding, and he will discern knowledge” (Proverbs 19:25). Notice that there are people in society who will not be corrected by mere oral admonition. God Himself declares that physical punishment is necessary and appropriate. Yet, our society has degenerated so far from God that they would declare such punishment

*"Judgments are prepared
for scoffers, and beatings
for the backs of fools."*

as “cruel and inhumane.” Remember that Eli’s own two sons—who were not mere boys—were in need of more than the verbal reprimands their father gave them (1 Samuel 2:23-25). They were in need of physical intervention and restraint (1 Samuel 3:13). Corporal and capital punishment were authored by God (Genesis 9:6; Proverbs 13:24; Romans 13:4).

Adult Criminal Behavior

Observe also the effect that the punishment of lawless people has on others in society: “Strike a scoffer, and **the simple will become wary**” (Proverbs 19:25). It is a fact that punishment of the lawbreaker is a deterrent to the spread of criminal behavior. God stated that principle repeatedly in the Old Testament, and even repeated it in the New (Deuteronomy 13:11; 17:13; 21:21; Acts 5:11; 1 Timothy 5:20). The Bible teaches the corollary of this principle as well. Where there is inadequate, insufficient, or delayed

punishment, crime and violence increase. As Solomon stated in Ecclesiastes 8:11—“Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” This very phenomenon is occurring even now in our country—and even in the Church. The concept is repeated in Proverbs 21:11—“When the scoffer is punished, the simple is made wise; but when the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge.” Proverbs 19:29 reads: “Judgments are prepared for scoffers, and beatings for the backs of fools.” Question: Based on such declarations, does God want scoffers punished? To ask is to answer.

Yet, our criminal justice system, beginning in the 1960s, has been turned away from the original intent of the Founders. The architects of American jurisprudence sought to emulate Bible principles and inculcate into our laws the thinking of God. But in recent years, the entire system has shifted from concern for the rights of the victim to the rights of the criminal. Our prisons are full to overflowing, and lawlessness continues to increase. The godly concept of justice has fallen on hard times. As if describing our own society, Proverb 19:28 declares, “A disreputable witness scorns justice.” “Scorns” is the verb form of the word for scoffer. Those who are either lawbreakers themselves or who “approve of those” (Romans 1:32) who are, scoff at justice. Proverbs 14:9 adds: “Fools mock at sin.” That is precisely why John Adams, Signer of the *Declaration of Independence*, Vice-President under George Washington, and Second President of the United States, declared on October 11, 1798—“We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion.... Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious

people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”⁵ The greater the numbers of Americans who scoff at justice and Christian morality, the more inevitable will be our national doom.

The Heart of the Scoffer & How to Handle It

Proverbs 21:24 pinpoints the central malady of the scoffer: “A proud and haughty man—‘Scoffer’ is his name; he acts with arrogant pride.” Here is the perennial problem of us all: pride. It reared its ugly head in the Garden, and it threatens us now. The scoffer is inherently prideful. The bottom line, taproot cause of all departure from God’s will is human pride. Pride is the attribute of thinking highly of self (Romans 12:3). Pride is self-centeredness. It is approaching life from the perspective of personal desire—what do **I** want? What will make **me** happy? What will bolster **my** status? What will enhance **my** circumstances? No wonder John summarized the nature of worldliness in terms of the three avenues through which Satan seeks to subvert people: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and **the pride of life** (1 John 2:16). Even the lust of the flesh and eyes are actually further manifestations of pride. When our flesh and our eyes desire something which we should not have, the motivation behind the fleshly lust is the desire to enhance self. Selfishness is the essence of pride. The scoffer is eaten up by it.

Proverbs 22:10 gives additional advice on how to deal with the scoffer: “**Cast out the scoffer**, and contention will leave; yes, strife and reproach will cease.” Let’s get direct and practical on this one. What are the elders to do with a member of the church who stirs up trouble by mocking authority, righteousness, or serious matters? What should be done when a member badmouths the elders behind their backs, and

undermines their authority because of a decision they’ve made? Solomon said: “Cast him out.” Paul agreed with Solomon. He told the church at Corinth regarding an impenitent fornicator: “[W]hen you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, **deliver such a one to Satan.... [P]urge out** the old leaven.... Therefore **put away from yourselves** the evil person” (1 Corinthians 5:4-5,7,13).

So very much heartache, division, and confusion has been generated in the Church over the years simply because those causing division were not handled promptly and biblically. We have not taken God’s words seriously. We’ve lacked the faith and zeal to step up to the plate and act. We do not share God’s sentiments when He says: “The devising of foolishness is sin, and the scoffer is an abomination to men” (Proverbs 24:9). We have allowed the body of Christ to be torn asunder, because we did not listen to our God when He warned us that “Scoffers set a city aflame, but wise men turn away wrath” (Proverbs 29:8).

Who Are the Scoffers Today?

Who in our day fits the description of the scoffer from the book of Proverbs? First on the list would surely be many atheists, agnostics, skeptics, and evolutionists. The world population stats show that over one billion people on the planet claim no affiliation with religion in any form. They scoff at the idea of God and those who follow Him. They believe that the Universe and life on Earth came about solely through naturalistic processes without any divine intelligence. They scoff at anyone who thinks otherwise. They believe that only the physical Universe exists with nothing metaphysical—beyond the physical. In this category would be many of the radical animal rights people and environmentalists who think that animals are people and that it’s up to humans to save the planet. The Bible assessment of such individuals is simple: “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Psalm 14:1; 53:1).

Observe that the Christian apologist who defends the existence of God and the inspiration of the Bible must be prepared to recognize and

(cont. on p. 104)

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cope with what it feels like to be scoffed at. For example, legion are those today who scoff at the historicity of the Noahic Flood—though the geological evidence for such a catastrophic deluge is worldwide.⁶ The strategy of the scoffer is to make the recipient of his scoffing to feel pressure to give up his view and accept the thinking of the scoffer. The victim is made to feel that the scoffer possesses knowledge that the victim is not privy to; the scoffer's condescending jab creates an air of authority designed to intimidate and bully the believer into submission and gather other followers from among his audience. The approach is effective and explains why Scripture warns about scoffers so often and how to handle them. No wonder Peter explained:

...knowing this first: that **scoffers** will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (2 Peter 3:3-7).

Modern uniformitarian "geology" was developed by scoffers as a direct counter to biblical catastrophism and the Flood. The Christian must not capitulate to such deceitful tactics. The truth outweighs the counterfeit confidence of the scoffer.

Who else qualifies as a scoffer? Those people and organizations that seek to undermine the American way of life often merit the label when they mock and belittle those

individuals who seek to uphold it. By "American way of life," I mean the Christian moral principles on which the nation was founded. Organizations such as the ACLU, AUSCS, FFR, BLM, Antifa, and LGBTQ groups are feverishly attempting to silence God in our society by systematically expunging all references to God, Christ, and the Bible from our schools, our government, and public life. In close proximity to these groups are those liberal politicians who also have made it clear that they share the same anti-Christian views.⁷

"When the scoffer is punished, the simple is made wise; but when the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge."

Two premiere, politicized moral issues, that have become prominently championed by liberal politicians, liberal media, the educational system, Hollywood, and beyond, are abortion (which includes embryonic stem-cell research) and homosexuality (which has expanded to include transgenderism). Since the 1960s, the Feminist Movement and other subversive forces, have scoffed at the traditional American values that made our nation great. They have demeaned and ridiculed the home and family as God intended. They have celebrated sexual promiscuity and demanded the right to destroy unborn babies—to the tune of more than 63 million since 1973.⁸ Their lust for sexual license has led to the widespread acceptance of homosexuality—a catastrophic issue in the culture war that is raging across the country.⁹ The decline of sexual sensibility has sparked cries for the acceptance of polygamy and other forms of sexual deviancy. All such people are scoffers who scoff at God

and His plan for the home—the basic building block of humanity. The faithful must not flinch in the face of such forceful coercion.

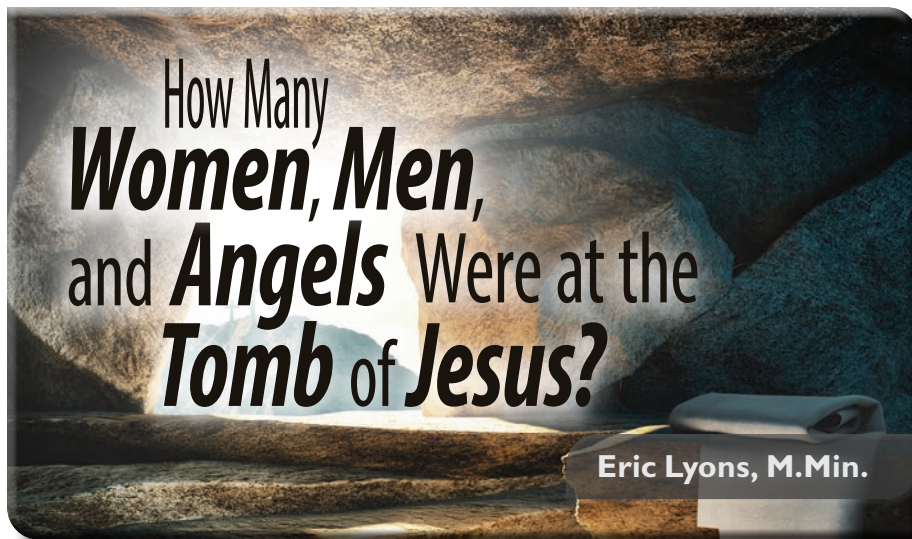
CONCLUSION

A FITTING conclusion to this brief consideration of the scoffer is found in Proverbs 3:33-35. Ironically, the Lord Himself will heap back upon the scoffer his own scoffing, even as He will bring judgment on the scoffer in the end:

The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked,
But He blesses the home of the just.
Surely He scorns the scornful,
But gives grace to the humble.
The wise shall inherit glory,
But **shame shall be the legacy of fools** (Proverbs 19:29).

ENDNOTES

- ¹ L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, M.E.J. Richardson, & J.J. Stamm (1994-2000), *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, electronic ed.), pp. 529,533-534.
- ² William Gesenius (1847), *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979 reprint), pp. 435,440; William Holladay (1988), *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 176.
- ³ Ibid., p. 435.
- ⁴ Jeff Miller (2017), "Jesus Gave Him No Answer," *Reason & Revelation*, 37[10]:112-113, 116; Eric Lyons (2004), "He Opened Not His Mouth," Apologetics Press, <https://apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=6&article=1437>.
- ⁵ John Adams (1854), *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States*, ed. Charles Adams (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company), 9:229.
- ⁶ Jeff Miller (2019), "Was the Flood Global? Testimony from Scripture and Science," *Reason & Revelation*, 39[4]:38-41,44-47.
- ⁷ History demonstrates that socialism, communism, and Marxism have shown themselves to be antithetical to Christianity.
- ⁸ <http://www.numberofabortions.com/>.
- ⁹ See Jeff Miller and Dave Miller (2021), *Homosexuality: Scripture, Society, Science, and Psychology* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press).



IN his debate with Michael Horner on “Did Jesus Really Rise From the Dead?” atheist Dan Barker asked:

Who were the women who came to the tomb? Matthew said it was Mary Magdalen and the other Mary. Mark said it was Mary Magdalen, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. Luke said it was Mary Magdalen, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and other women. John said Mary Magdalen....

Who was at the tomb when they arrived? Mark said there was one “young man.”... Luke said there was [sic] two men. Matthew said there was one angel, and John, the last writer, said, there’s two angels. See what’s happening here? See how the myth is growing and getting more exaggerated?¹

Indeed, two of the most frequently cited reasons for questioning (and perhaps rejecting, as in the case of Barker) the four resurrection accounts have to do with the identity and number of women who went to the empty tomb of Jesus, as well as who (and how many) they actually found there.

THE WOMEN

MANY fail to recognize in their critique of the Bible that **additional** information is not necessarily **contradictory** information. Was it essential for the apostle John to mention every woman who came to the tomb of Jesus on the morning of His resurrection, or was he at liberty to mention as few as he wanted (John 20:1)? If Mary Magdalene was at the tomb on that Sunday morning, and John recorded that she was there, without ever denying the presence of others (some of whom were mentioned by Matthew, Mark, and Luke), could his record of the events be truthful? Of course. Differences exist among the Gospel writers’ accounts, but no one has proven that they are discrepant. Just as a person might say, “I went to the ball game with Bill, Bob, and Bubba,” he might also truthfully say, “I went to the game with Bill and Betty.” These statements are not necessarily contradictory. One can easily (and honestly) supplement the other. A person may only mention Bill and Betty in one setting when talking to one group (e.g., at worship where the church knows the married couple), while at another setting when talking to a different group (e.g., at the office where only

the men are known), he may truthfully just mention the men. We must keep in mind that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote at different times, to different people, for different reasons.

Consider the scenario where four different newspaper reporters are covering the 2021 NBA finals (between the Phoenix Suns and the Milwaukee Bucks). All four writers are from different cities, including Phoenix, Milwaukee, Charleston, South Carolina, and Athens, Greece. Here are the four different headlines from the Bucks’ third win in the series:

- From Phoenix: “Timely Team Effort Lifts Bucks Over Suns”
- From Milwaukee: “Jrue Holiday’s Big Night on Offense and Defense Leads to W”
- From Charleston: “Hometown Hero Kris Middleton Shoots Lights Out in Win”
- From Athens: “Greece’s Giannis Leads the Way for Another Bucks Win”

All four reporters focused on different people in their headlines (and stories) for different reasons for their different audiences. Yet, all four reports were truthful. No reasonable person would accuse the writers of contradicting one another. Similarly, no rational, fair-minded individual should assume the Bible writers were errant in their accounts of the events on the morning of Jesus’ resurrection.

Furthermore, if the Bible writers always told every detail of every account the same way (mentioning the same people, places, things, and events exactly alike), the criticism would then be, “They all copied each other’s accounts. They conspired with one another!” When an experienced detective interviews various suspects regarding a crime, and all four suspects have **the exact same** alibi (down to the smallest details), the detective will be highly

suspicious of such “perfect” repetitiveness—wondering if collusion has taken place to cover up a crime.

One of the many marvels of the Gospel accounts is how similar they are so as not to be contradictory, yet how different they are so as not to be guilty of collusion. This perfect balance of various truthful differences is what should be expected by independent truth-tellers, especially those who were inspired by God.

THE NUMBER AND NATURE OF THOSE ALREADY AT THE TOMB

THE Gospel writers also differ in their accounts of who was at the tomb of Jesus when the women arrived. Regarding the **number** of individuals present, if there were “two” (as Luke and John specify), then there was at least one (on whom Matthew and Mark focus). Matthew and Mark do not say “there was **only** one,” but they do mention one individual. As with the number of women who came to the tomb, the number of individuals who were already at the tomb is not contradictory but supplementary. If I tell someone, “I have **an** old car with a lot of miles on it,” and I tell someone else, “I own **two old cars** you should check out,” I have not contradicted myself. Both statements are factual. Simply because I did not mention both cars in the first conversation is not a denial of owning more than one older car. It’s quite telling how easily skeptics can understand the legitimacy of supplementation not being equivalent to a contradiction in their own everyday-life scenarios, yet not give the Bible writers the same fair treatment.

Still, what about the **nature** of the individuals at the tomb of Jesus? Were they men or angels? The answer is simply, “They were both.” Lest someone scoff at such an answer, pause for a moment to consider how versatile certain things are (as well as the description of those items).

In one setting, a person may refer to his handheld device as a “phone,” and in another setting, his “flashlight.” He may take out this device at a meeting to check his “calendar,” while later on that night he uses it as an “alarm clock.” (Imagine telling someone in 1950 that his “phone” would one day also be his flashlight, calendar, alarm clock, camera, directory, etc. He would have thought you had gone mad. Yet, to those in the 21st century, it all makes perfect sense.) Many things are not either/or; they are both/and.

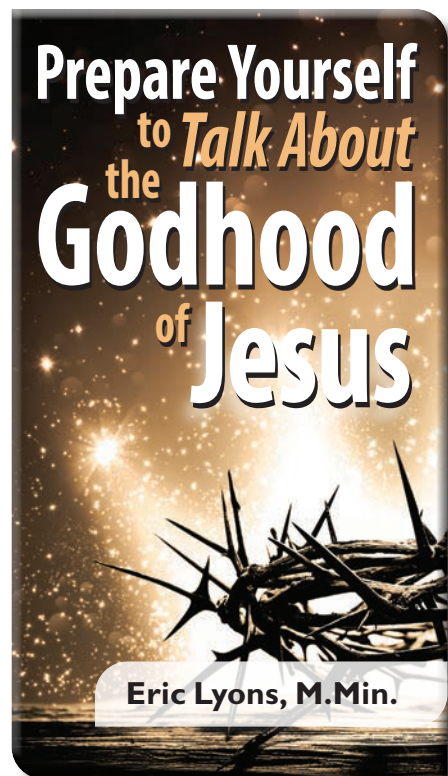
Similar to how Jesus was both God **and** man (John 1:15,14; Philipians 2:5-11), the individuals at the tomb of Jesus on the day of His resurrection were both angels and men. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were all correct in their accounts.

The angels were in human form. Mark and Luke referred to their humanity (in their appearance), while Matthew and John referred to their angelic nature. Consistent with what Scripture teaches elsewhere (e.g., Genesis 18:1-33; 19:1,5,15), in the past, both God and angels have come to Earth in the form of human beings.

The four Gospel accounts independently testify that various women arrived at the tomb of Jesus on the morning of His resurrection and were greeted by angels who were in the form of men. Such differently worded statements are without contradiction. In truth, they stand as perfectly harmonious accounts with different, supplemental material from four different independent writers.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Dan Barker (1996), “Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?” Debate with Michael Horner at the University of Northern Iowa, April 2, http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/dan_barker/barker_horner.html.



SOME Christians do not prepare themselves to answer questions people have about Christianity.¹ Other followers of Christ study a sundry of Bible truths and are able to help others see God’s will about various important matters: from the sanctity of life (Genesis 9:6) to the sinfulness of all forms of sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 5-6); from the essentiality of water baptism (Acts 2:38) to the importance of worshiping God Almighty “in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24).² For those faithful Christians who care enough about teaching heavenly revealed truths to others (cf. Mark 16:15-16; Acts 8:1-4), let me plead with you not to overlook preparing yourself to teach the most fundamental truths of the Christian Faith, including, and especially, the Deity of Christ.

In the latter part of 2020, *Newsweek* magazine³ reported a survey conducted by a Florida-based, non-profit organization called Ligonier Ministries.⁴ Though the sample size was not the largest in the

world (3,002), it was still at least three times greater than the average political poll (500-1,000).⁵ Furthermore, 630 of those surveyed were self-described evangelicals. What did the survey show? No doubt, the most surprising part of the poll for many Christians was that 52% of those surveyed indicated that “Jesus was a great teacher, **but he was not God.**” What’s more, another 12% were unsure. Only 37% of the Americans surveyed “strongly” or “somewhat” agreed that Jesus was God.

If this poll even remotely reflects the beliefs of the approximate 330 million Americans, Christians must seriously reflect more on **God’s** saving Gospel—on the death, burial, and resurrection of **Christ** (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). To be saved, we must come to **learn** Who Jesus is (Matthew 11:29), and we must come to **believe** Who He is (John 8:24; cf. 8:48-59—the Great “I Am”). While on Earth, did Jesus not ask pointed questions to various ones about His nature?

- “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” (Matthew 16:13).
- “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?” (Matthew 22:41).
- “Do you believe in the Son of God?” (John 9:35).
- “Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins...” (Mark 2:9-10; cf. 2:7).

If we care about lost souls and pleasing God (1 Thessalonians 1:6-8), we must **prepare** ourselves to tell our friends, neighbors, and co-workers **Who Jesus is**. He was not a created angelic being, and He was not merely a “great teacher”—and certainly not an **imperfect** “great teacher.” He was not merely a man! As the Scriptures revealed in the

Old Testament (Isaiah 9:6; 7:14; cf. Matthew 1:23), so the Scriptures revealed in the New Testament (in many ways⁶): Jesus is Divine. He was and is God⁷—one Personality of the Godhead.⁸

“Christ Jesus, Who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:5-7). Yes, our holy **God** lovingly stepped out of the splendors of heaven and humbled Himself so that He might make sinful man holy and acceptable before God (1 Peter 1:15-19).

Friends, in addition to offering evidence for the existence of God and the inspiration of the Bible, nothing is more important nor more fundamental than learning the biblical Truth regarding the nature of Jesus. Let’s take the opportunities that God gives us to immerse ourselves in these truths, and let’s teach the many non-believing, precious souls around us (and abroad!) the soul-saving truths of **Who Jesus is** and **what** He has done for us.

[We hope that the Apologetics Press website, study Bible, books, journals, tracts, and videos will be helpful in your studies and evangelistic efforts.]

ENDNOTES

¹ For a discussion on why every Christian should be involved in apologetics, see Eric Lyons (2021), “Preparing

to Give an Answer: God’s Defense Recipe in 1 Peter 3:15,” *Reason & Revelation*, 41[5]:49-58, May, <https://apologeticspress.org/apPubPage.aspx?pub=1&issue=1344>.

² For a plethora of material on these subject matters and many more, visit apologeticspress.org. You may especially want to visit the “Doctrinal Matters” section of our site and check out the various topics under which a number of articles are listed.

³ Benjamin Fearnow (2020), “52 Percent of Americans Say Jesus Isn’t God but Was a Great Teacher, Survey Says,” *Newsweek*, <https://www.newsweek.com/52-percent-americans-say-jesus-isnt-not-god-was-great-teacher-survey-says-1528617>.

⁴ See “A Majority Of Americans Think Jesus Is A Great Teacher Yet Reject His Claims To Be God,” *Cision PR Newswire*, <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/a-majority-of-americans-think-jesus-is-a-great-teacher-yet-reject-his-claims-to-be-god-301119281.html>. See also “The State of Theology” at thestateoftheology.com.

⁵ See National Council on Public Polls, <http://www.ncpp.org/?q=node/6>.

⁶ John 1:1-15, 14; 10:30-38; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Colossians 1:16; Philippians 2:5-11; etc.

⁷ See the “Deity of Christ” section of the Apologetics Press website (apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=10). Cf. Kyle Butt & Eric Lyons (2006), *Behold! The Lamb of God* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press).

⁸ See Kyle Butt (2015), “The Trinity,” *Reason & Revelation*, 35[10]:109-119, October, apologeticspress.org/apPubPage.aspx?pub=1&issue=1203.



**NOTE FROM***The Editor***Newly Refurbished Creation Cards: "God's Animal Kingdom"**

One of the tasks that we at Apologetics Press take very seriously is helping people of all ages know more about the God Who created them. Through the years, we have learned that if we can begin at a very early age, we enjoy more success in our efforts. Parents understand the logic behind this reasoning because they know that bouncing babies have inquisitive minds that are anxious to "soak up" almost everything they experience. Their busy little hands and feet help them explore the world around them during practically every waking moment. And so do their little eyes and ears.

These Creation Cards were specially designed to help parents who are passionate about training their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" to be able to begin that task at the earliest stages of their child's development. Each of the 32 cards presents a unique facet of God's creation. With these cards,

a child can learn about God's animal kingdom, including fish, foxes, and frogs, from the comfort of their own environment. The "target age" for these cards is babies and toddlers 9 months and up.

We are pleased to announce that these cards have just been refurbished. They consist of brilliant, full-color pictures on the front, combined with fascinating facts on the back. They are produced with a sturdy, resilient structure designed to endure some serious "exploration." Each card contains special emphasis on God's design and creative power. Don't forget our previously updated set of Creation Cards: "Exploring God's Creation."

Dave Miller

Creation Cards**God's Animal Kingdom**

**Animal
photographs
and fun facts to
help your baby learn**

**See Center Spread
for More Details**