

## 8: What about miracles? What [about] all the people who claim to have a connection with Jesus? What about those who claim to have seen saints or angels?

I don't believe them.

I was going to leave it there, because that really is enough. But I thought might also point out I wrote a blog about miracles [\\*here](#).

As for the claims of a connection with Jesus or that they've seen saints or angels...well there's many, many people who'll claim they've been abducted by aliens, experimented on, and returned to earth. We don't believe any of these people on testimony alone. Why would we drop our standards of evidence when the claim is religiously based?

## 9: What's your view of Dawkins, Hitchens and Harris?

I've not met any of these gentlemen so it's not possible for me to give a personal critique. Having said that I have enjoyed reading their work and particularly in the case of Christopher Hitchens, listening to them speak. I don't 'follow' them as a theist would a preacher, I don't think they're always right, none of them is my pope.

They are three people who wrote books and give/gave talks on a subject that interests me. That is all.

## 10: If there is no God, then why does every society have a religion?

Like with question 6, remove the first six words and it's still the same question. Something to remember - religions are old. Really old. Sure you might bring up Mormonism (which is pretty much based on Christianity) or Scientology but ask yourself what has been the global impact of these more recent religions? Not much. The problem these two religions suffer is that they were invented in a time when big religions were already established and people already had a way of finding out answers. These religions didn't 'take' because there was no gap to fill.

I think the creation of religions demonstrates not that a god exists but that humans desire answers and because most religions were invented prior to the development of the scientific method supernatural answers were the best they could come up with. Why is

there something rather than nothing? God did it. Why are we moral? God made us so. Why are there humans? God made Adam and Eve. Of course the 'god did it' answer is an absolute cop out. There's no explanatory power there whatsoever. If someone was to say to me 'God did it' then the next question is, How? They either won't have a how or the how will be natural and no god required.

I think also that religions are used as a tool by the ruling classes to keep the lower classes in check. Put the fear of god, literally, into people and you might think you will have an easier time in your attempts to control them. Don't just tell them the state will punish them for wrong-doing, but that Gee Oh Dee GOD will punish them too! (and forever!) Unthinking, superstitious, intellectually lazy people will believe you without question and (try to) follow those instructions to the best of their ability.

Of course once a population gets educated and develops a sense of equality and social justice, this is pointless, but hey...it's worth a shot, right?

And lastly there's the fear of death. People don't want their existence to be over when they die. They want to carry on in some kind of spiritual realm, meeting again with loved ones who passed away before them.

They want heaven and will believe pretty much anything that helps foster the idea of it.

*\*On Miracles:*

<http://mrozatheist.blogspot.com.au/2014/03/on-miracles.html>

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# 10 Questions for Atheists

## 1: How did you become an atheist?

Simply - I thought about it. I was raised in a Catholic household, going to a Catholic school but doubts started to creep in when I was about 12 or 13. I couldn't understand why we followed some parts of the bible but ignored others. I once cooked and ate red meat on Good Friday thinking there was a chance I would be instantaneously transported to hell. Nothing happened. I was dissatisfied with 'God works in mysterious ways' as an answer. I began to learn more about the universe and how what we knew about it didn't equate with what the bible was telling me and the more I looked into it the more I realised the idea of 'God' was made up.

## 2: What happens when we die?

No one knows. Death is final and no one has ever returned from it. Even people 'clinically dead' aren't actually dead. Dead is forever. However - I can confidently say that nothing happens. To make an obvious point, dead is the state of being 'not alive'. We've all been not alive. We were all not alive for billions of years before we were born. I have no good reason to think it'll be different when we're not alive again.

When I say 'nothing' happens, that's not quite right. Plenty happens. The world will go on, lives will be lived. As Christopher Hitchens said:

*“It will happen to all of us, that at some point you get tapped on the shoulder and told, not just that the party's over, but slightly worse: the party's going on — but you have to leave. And it's going on without you.”*

And he's right. What happens when we die? Pretty much everything that would have happened anyway - only you won't be involved.

But what I love is the idea that my atoms will carry on. The billions of little pieces that make me me will carry on doing what they do. Whether they be iron, carbon, oxygen, whatever it is, those atoms will continue on, only they'll no longer be arranged as me.

### **3: What if you're wrong and there is a heaven. And there is a HELL!**

A quick search of Google for 'Pascal's wager debunked' puts this question to bed pretty easily but let's take it on face value and say there IS a God who will send me (my soul?) to 'HELL!' when I die. Let's assume also that it's the 'lake of fire' type hell, not just the 'separation from God' type hell.

If I'm wrong....I burn in hell for eternity, right? I mean, I get no choice in the matter, do I? As a non-believer, I burn in hell...so why even bother asking?

But the idea that a God who loves me will allow me to burn in hell for eternity simply because I couldn't believe he was real? Absolutely 100% without question ridiculous. As Australian comedian Josh Thomas said:

*"As an Atheist, having a Christian threaten me with hell is like having a hippy threaten to punch me in my aura"*

### **4: Without God, where do you get your morality from?**

Let's understand - morality, as a thing, doesn't exist. It's the name we give to describe how we think we should act. And everyone's is different and everyone's is flexible. One might scream anti-homosexuality messages from the pulpit, for example, yet jerk off to all kinds of gay porn when the curtains are closed, the lights are off and the tissues are handy.

What we call our morals are evolved. There are evolutionary benefits for our species to look after each other, to care for each other, share with each other, work together, and so on.

Morals grow and evolve as society does. We no longer keep slaves, we don't force rape victims to marry rapists, couples of different skin colour can marry and in some parts couples of the same gender can marry too (in other parts we're still working on having that happen), and women are allowed to vote in all decent countries. This wasn't the case just a few generations ago. Who wants a stagnant morality?

Morals come from discussion, debate, reason, experience, understanding and empathy. It's not hard

to work out that I wouldn't like my stuff stolen, so I'm not going to steal from someone else. It's also not hard to work out that if someone is on the street starving, and they steal a loaf of bread, 19 years as a slave and parole forever after is not fair.

### **5: If there is no God, can we do what we want? Are we free to murder and rape? While good deeds are unrewarded?**

This question is ridiculously naive. I'm an atheist and I've raped and murdered exactly as many times as I've wanted to - zero. It's not the fear of God and eternal punishment that stops me from doing these things, and if that's the only thing stopping you from doing them, then I question if you are moral at all. We live in a society, we are responsible to each other and we make rules and regulations that reflect this (we call them laws).

The other point is - believing there is a god doesn't stop people from raping and murdering. Believers do these things. It's not as though crime is the exclusive domain of non-believers. Belief in a god does not make us moral and does not keep us moral.

As for good deeds being unrewarded. Simply not true. Acts of heroism, volunteers, people who sacrifice themselves for others. Things like this are acknowledged and rewarded regularly. But again, it's from us to us. There's no need for a god to be involved.

### **6: If there is no god, how does your life have any meaning?**

Why should it? Why do we think that because we exist...no, because we're self-aware that our lives deserve meaning? We are life forms. We exist because a series of natural process resulted, through our own unique pathway, in us.

If you want your life to have meaning, give it to yourself. Find a pursuit that drives you to a goal, if that's what you desire.

The thing with this question is that you could leave off the first five words, and it's still the same question.

### **7: Where did the universe come from?**

This question is strangely worded for me. As though the universe is travelling and this is its final destination.

Or maybe not even final, just one in a series of many stops. It's like something you'd ask someone in the coffee shop at an airport, maybe Singapore. 'Where did you come from?' 'Oh, I'm here from Melbourne, on my way to Chennai for work'.

But what is this question actually trying to ask? I don't think it's 'what caused the universe to exist'...not exactly, I think someone might phrase it as 'If the Big Bang happened, who\* caused the Big Bang?'

\*Of course the first thing I would do here is ask them why they're limiting themselves to 'who'.

I think the question that's at the heart of this line of thinking is this: 'Why is there something rather than nothing?' If you ask Professor Lawrence Krauss he'll tell you 'Because there had to be'. It's got to do with a zero energy universe, which means the matter and energy of the universe is countered by what they call dark-matter and dark-energy...but as far as I know no one has actually found that yet. It's still a hypothesis. And a little bit over my head.

Where did the universe come from or Why is there something rather than nothing? My friend Andrew Skegg from twitter (@askegg) has the best answer for this question and it's the one I've used ever since I saw him use it...

"I don't know. How do you suggest we find out?"

I think it's a great way to put it because I'll tell you now, the answer isn't in a centuries old holy book. Whether the hypothesis of Professor Krauss becomes accepted or rejected, or a new hypothesis is formed and that becomes accepted, it is through science and the scientific method that we will gain the answer, not through reading bronze age scripture. It is through scientists that we'll get the data required. Perhaps the scientists who will do this aren't even scientists yet. Maybe the scientist who'll make the breakthrough is still a little girl spending her days finger painting or digging holes and filling them in with a scoop truck in a sand pit at the local park. Whomever it is, it's not going to be a person interpreting the words of someone who lived in extremely superstitious times thousands of years ago, and who wrote not what they knew, but what they guessed.

And when the answer is found...it'll be natural. I guarantee it.