

## Questions for Lesson 24: The New Atheists, The New Science, and God

1. What are some of the 21st century ads you have seen produced by atheists?

**Answer:** Obviously class members will have different ones they have seen. Groups making these ads are The American Humanist Association, The Freedom From Religion Foundation, American Atheist Association, The Skeptics Society, Prometheus Books, The Rational Response Squad, and any number of local associations. If you go on the web and word search under atheist you will see there are literally hundreds of groups that promote atheism and attack religion.

2. Why do atheists care? Why do they put out these ads.

**Answer:** They feel that religion has caused wars and violence throughout history, and the recent terrorist activity motivates people to believe that getting rid of religion would stop the violence. On a selfish level, atheists feel put upon by religious people in everything from moral principles to being tax exempt.

3. What is the difference between the new atheism and the old atheism?

**Answer:** The new atheism is more aggressive and militant than the old atheism. It is challenging people directly such as in the Blasphemy Challenge and portrays religion as a destructive, negative influence on humanity.

4. What do media publications mean when they say “Science has invalidated belief in God” or “Science has made belief in God obsolete?”

**Answer:** The assumption is that belief in God has only come out of ignorance, that God was invented to explain things man did not understand, and that as we gain understanding of those things, God is no longer needed. Unfortunately some people believe that description is correct, but in this series we have tried to show it is not correct.

5. Was Hitler a Christian or an atheist?

**Answer:** It is popular to try to identify a villain as being on the other side, and both atheists and Christians have done that. Historically Hitler and other demagogues have tried to use religion to promote their ideals. There is no historical indication that Hitler was a Christian, and certainly he violated everything Christ taught. The philosophies of Nietzsche certainly were opposed to Christianity and atheistic in nature, and dominated much of Hitler's beliefs and actions.

6. How do each of the following areas of the “new science” impact apologetics—quantum mechanics, cloning, the human genome, cosmologies?

**Answer:** Quantum mechanics--gives results that seem to conflict with known laws of Newtonian mechanics. Cloning--raises questions of what should be done, and whether a soul is present in people conceived by modern human technologies. The human genome--gives knowledge of the biological future of a person which may impact moral decisions. Cosmology--proposes possible origins of the universe which allow chance to explain the creation of the cosmos in which we live.

7. Why does the inability to falsify a proposal invalidate it as science?

**Answer:** If it cannot be experimentally tested in any way, then it is a conjecture that will always remain a figment of someone's imagination. To be scientifically valid there has to be some way to test the idea.

8. Give three examples of bad science.

**Answer:** (a) Proposals that involve many spacial dimensions such as brane theory and string theory. There is no way to experiment in these areas.

(b) Religious theories which incorporate the supernatural into their proposal. There is no way to control the variables in such proposals, much less do experiments.

(c) Theories that assume things from the past that cannot be proven and are scientific in nature--miracles for example, or alien intervention in historical events. In modern times showing the affect of prayer on healing without looking at the control group and whether prayers were said in those groups.

9. Give three examples of bad theology.

**Answer:** (a) Limiting the way God can do things--assuming He can only function by miracles or without miracles for example.

(b) Restricting the time frame in which God does things--prayer may be answered in a different time frame than we expect.

(c) Not taking the Bible literally (see next question).

10. What does it mean to "take the Bible literally?"

**Answer:** It means to look at who wrote it, to whom it was written, why it was written, and how the people of the day would have understood what was written.