

## **QUESTIONS ATHEISTS ASK: DID MAN INVENT GOD?**

David Halbrook

Most atheists view God, and thus all moral teachings, to be the product of society (culture), like Santa. The issue is this: Did God make man or did man imagine God?

The issue is answered by first admitting that the universe could not create itself and secondly by learning that “the prophetic word” could not have been written without supernatural help (Heb. 3:4; 2 Pet. 1:19, 21).

Contradictory teachings concerning God and gods exist because of the corruption of original truth. Ephesians 4:17-19 describes the process of corruption. It begins with a hardened heart, which ignores and suppresses some knowable truth. The natural result of this is ignorance. Those who are ignorant are easily confused (“their understanding darkened”). Those who are morally confused take the next step into perversion (“past feeling”), since they have no “moral compass.”

Romans 1:18-32 shows this process with the subject of “God.” In ancient times, men ignored and eventually perverted the original revelation of God. This explains ancient idolatry and modern Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Wicca, etc.

God made man before any culture existed. Ignoring the facts proving that truth begins an ancient process which no man can stop. (Read more at [WWW.QVCOC.COM](http://WWW.QVCOC.COM))

-- *Editor's Note:* We all have so much to learn and so many people to teach. Starla and I leave tomorrow, going to teach the lost and strengthen the church thousands of miles away. We could not go unless we were sent—thank you for sharing in this work with us. While you cannot go on this trip, we cannot teach the people you live among. Let's each do our part this week. Find someone to give the above article to. Even if they believe in God, this will lay the groundwork for other things you can teach them later. There is a similar article on our website, with further discussion of this subject.

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# The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

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## **“GRACE: DON'T TELL ME WHAT IT ISN'T”**

David Halbrook

I received an ad from Lubbock Christian University, a church-funded college, publicizing an occasion "to hear about K.C Moser who 'experienced the ire and praise of many by emphasizing God's grace in his preaching and teaching, consistently saying the gospel consists in a man (Jesus Christ), not a plan.'" Speakers included Rubel Shelly, speaking on topics such as "Grace: Don't Tell Me What It Isn't" and John Mark Hicks on "The Man or the Plan? KC Moser and the Renewal of Grace in Churches of Christ, 1932-1984." Obviously, these lectures targeted “churches of Christ,” and there clearly is an audience to whom these lessons would appeal.

While the spiritual barrenness of this is apparent even without hearing the lectures, notice the title of the lesson taught by Rubel Shelly- “Grace: Don't Tell Me What It Isn't.” Herein is heralded the weak-kneed motto “accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative.” If avoiding the words “not,” “no,” “wrong,” “error,” etc., aided the spread of the gospel then we would find that approach in Scripture. But we don't find that idea in the mouths of Spirit-guided Christians.

We don't even find that idea in the normal process of teaching. What parent hasn't corrected their ever-learning toddler who points to a cow and says “doggy!”? Who would take the approach “Doggy: Don't Tell Me What It Isn't”? We constantly learn by comparing *and contrasting*.

Jesus not only taught the people what they ought to do, but He often clarified His point by showing them what not to do. How often were the religious leaders the figure chosen to illustrate Jesus' lesson “Faith, Proper Prayer, or Righteousness: What It Isn't” (Jn. 12:42-43; Matt. 6:5, 20)?

The Bible lays out a fairly simple picture of the concept of God's grace as He has revealed it to us (which is the only way that we can form a proper understanding of grace, 1 Cor. 2:11-13). Grace *is* undeserved favor. It was shown to Adam and Eve

when they were placed in the Garden of Eden, to the Israelites as they obtained Canaan, to Naaman as he was cleansed of his leprosy, and to mankind as Jesus came to this earth. By these examples, we see God's gracious generosity, and man's ability to choose or reject God's revealed grace.

Paul has much to say about what grace is: accessed by faith (Rom. 5:2), spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 1:4-5); physical gifts (2 Cor. 8:1); His kindness shown in Christ (Eph. 2:7); in truth (Col. 1:6); His plan from eternity to send Christ (2 Tim. 1:9); teaching us to live soberly, righteously, and godly (Ti. 2:11). Despite these teachings concerning what grace *is*, there were still misconceptions and false teachings concerning grace.

Because of these misconceptions, Paul also taught that grace isn't: given as wages (Rom. 4:4), like Adam's sin (Rom. 5:15), found in keeping Moses' law (Rom. 6:14), the result of fleshly wisdom (2 Cor. 1:12), once received-always received (2 Cor. 6:1), received of ourselves (Eph. 2:7), given according to our works (2 Tim. 1:9), or obtained by being occupied with dietary restrictions (Heb. 13:9). Notice that concerning the subject of grace in Ephesians 2:7 and 2 Timothy 1:9 Paul told *both* "what it is" and "what it isn't." Which part of Paul's teaching did Rubel Shelly specifically request *not to* be told? Will he only read half of these verses?

God chose to reveal his plan of salvation through the Man Jesus Christ. When we begin wondering who will receive the grace of God in a way that is not revealed in Scripture, we are treading on God's ground. Our teaching and attention must be given to those who have not appealed to God's revealed means of grace. That involves teaching them an appreciation for what God's grace is *and* "what it isn't."

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### ***IT'S TERRIBLE TO GROW OLD***

*Gene Taylor*

Did the title of this page get your attention? I hope so. That is why I put it there. I want everyone, especially the young, to read this article because the sentiment expressed above is what our society in general thinks. You don't think that is the case? Ask Don Shula.

The winningest coach is NFL history "retired" the day after his 66th birthday. Yes, he was given the option to retire rather than being fired so he could at least maintain some sense of dignity. After devoting most of his life to football, because he was aging, it was said of him "the game had passed him by" and "we need an infusion of youth into this organization." He is not the first one to be adversely affected by aging. I doubt he will be the last.

One of the greatest horrors in our society is to grow old. In our youth-oriented culture it is embarrassing, if not downright shameful, to be old. Such an emphasis on youth causes people to spend millions of dollars to retain their youthful appearance and to buy into such philosophies as "You're only as old as you feel," hoping that others will think they are young. Corporations, with no compassion for the individual, no sense of loyalty for years of dedicated service, and no appreciation for experience, permanently lay off older workers and replace them with younger ones who will cost them a lot less.

I am saddened when I see this attitude in the world. I am horrified when I see it in the church in some places. Sometimes, instead of being utilized for their knowledge and experience, those who are older are looked upon as being out of date and not useful to the Lord's work. Sometimes preachers, as they age, find it difficult to locate with a congregation because the people want someone who "can relate to the young people."

How different this attitude is from what God would have it to be. **Psalm 92:12-15** states, "*The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of Jehovah; They shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; They shall be full of sap and green: To show that Jehovah is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.*"

God, in His wisdom, knew that age was necessary to be that full, mature individual who could properly serve as an overseer in the local church. **1 Timothy 3:6** states that one who would serve in that capacity must be "not a novice." **Titus 1:6** says he must be old enough to have "*believing children.*" Also, one designation of his office is "elder" (**Phil. 1:1**), implying age. God has also seen the usefulness of "*older women*" -- they are to instruct the younger women (**Titus 2:3-5**).

The Lord realized that age was needed for one to be wise enough to effectively lead His people. Wisdom, based on knowledge and experience, is a vital asset for good leadership. While those who are young may possess great knowledge, they do not have sufficient experience to make them wise. One of the greatest resources our country and the church have is older people. They are useful and necessary and ought to be appreciated. May we always show them.