

“Because (God) hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world . . . by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).

March 2002

RELIGION AND RESURRECTION

by Henry M. Morris*

A common fallacy in the secular street-corner philosophy of the world is that all the different world religions are just different ways of reaching God and getting to heaven. The fact is that each religion has its own distinctive belief about God, creation, and the future life, as well as heaven and how to get there. But then, how do we know which is true?

The only world religions which include faith in one supreme God who created all things are Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Several of the eastern religions teach that one's future life will be in the form of another person or perhaps an animal. This is the idea of reincarnation and transmigration of souls—an idea which even seems to appeal to many westerners.

But the only religions which teach an actual bodily resurrection of each individual person are those three which teach one great Creator God and His special creation of all things. Even those three in many cases have capitulated to modern evolutionism so that only the traditional orthodox branches of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam continue to teach special creation. It is significant, therefore, that these three—and only these three—also teach a future special bodily resurrection of all people.

It is true that all other religions (except doctrinaire atheism) do believe in a

future life of some kind, and that fact is also very significant. Most people intuitively realize somehow that this life, so often unfair and seemingly meaningless, cannot possibly be all there is.

So we have all the different religions, each with its own version of the future life. As noted, many of the religions of Asia such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, with all their internal cults and external offshoots, believe in transmigration and reincarnation, a process terminating eventually perhaps in nirvana, a state of universal oneness (or perhaps nothingness). Individual resurrection is never considered even a possibility.

The Chinese religion (before Communism, that is) has been a sort of synthesis of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, with many hold-over elements of a still earlier animism. Confucianism is primarily an ethical system, though with occasional overtones of belief in a high God back in the beginning. Buddhism in its original form was also mainly ethical and meditational. Taoism was more mystical. Again, however, in none of these religions has there ever been any notion of resurrection.

The various forms of animism, whether ancient or modern, seem often to include the concept of a high God, but

*Dr. Morris is Founder and President Emeritus of ICR.

one who is very distant and who is involved in individual lives mainly through a host of lesser “gods,” usually understood either as benevolent or demonic spirits. This is all quite similar also to the ancient pantheistic/polytheistic religions of Babylonia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, et al.

But once again there is never in any of these the promise of individual bodily resurrection. There is commonly a belief in some sort of immortality, but never resurrection. When a loved one dies, his or her family and friends have no hope of ever seeing that one again, except possibly as a disembodied spirit somewhere.

Not so in Christianity! As the Apostle Paul urged those Christians who had suffered such losses: “Sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, . . . the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we . . . shall be caught up together with them . . . to meet the Lord” (I Thessalonians 4:13,14,16,17). “He that believeth in me,” Jesus said, “though he were dead, yet shall he live. . . . Because I live, ye shall live also” (John 11:25; 14:19).

What about the other two monotheistic religions, Islam and Judaism? These do indeed teach resurrection, at least in the orthodox form of these religions.

But they are hardly like the resurrection promised in the Bible to Christians. In the holy city where Christians will dwell, they “neither marry, nor are given in marriage” (Luke 20:35) and “there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth” (Revelation 21:27). The Muslim “Paradise,” on the other hand, will be a very sensual place: the men there will have free access to many “houris” or maidens of paradise, and they can marry as many as they please. They will recline on soft couches near flowing rivers, quaffing cups of wine served by their

own personal virgins. There are no equivalent promises to faithful Muslim women, however: in fact, the Koran seems almost to ignore their future life.

As far as Judaism is concerned, there is little in the Old Testament concerning the future life at all. There are, however, a few clear references to a future resurrection. The prophet Daniel, for example, predicts that “many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2). Also note the prophet Isaiah’s promise to the faithful in Israel: “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead” (Isaiah 26:19). There is also the promise of Hosea 13:14: “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.” And of course, there is the wonderful assurance in the very ancient record of Job: “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: . . . yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another” (Job 19:25–27). Job was answering his own earlier question: “If a man die, shall he live again?” (Job 14:14).

The Old Testament answer clearly is yes—though admittedly such promises are few and far between in that portion of Scripture, and the result was that many Jews at the time of Christ believed it only superficially if at all. They seemed more concerned with the problems of their current situation, especially their subjugation to Rome, from which they were seeking deliverance.

One of the main Jewish parties, in fact, denied any future resurrection altogether and, of course, these Sadducees did all

they could try to stop the preaching of Christ's resurrection. The Sadducees were not atheists, but downplayed any ideas of a future life, the reason being that the Torah had only the vaguest references to it, and they regarded these five books of Moses as the most authoritative of all. The Pharisees, on the other hand, did believe in a future resurrection and eventually became more powerful than the Sadducees.

As far as modern Judaism is concerned, only those known as the ultra-orthodox still believe in the inerrancy of the Old Testament. The general belief of most Jews today—at least those who have not become atheistic—is that all Jews will eventually end up in heaven, perhaps after a short time in what amounts to a purgatory.

It must also be noted that, in recent years, many Jews have become Christians and often have organized themselves into Hebrew Christian churches. Such Christian Jews, of course, have come to believe also in the Christian doctrine of resurrection.

In any case, the one truth especially significant in this very brief study of comparative religion is that the promise of resurrection is found only in those faiths that are monotheistic and also believe in special creation, and only the orthodox forms of those faiths at that. It is clear too that this commonality depends largely on the fact that all three of these accept special creation because they all accept the first book of Moses as the divinely inspired record of creation.

It also is obvious that the ideas of creation and resurrection go together. The Creator had an eternal purpose in creating men and women and cannot fail in that purpose. Therefore, He is the only one who can and must overcome death. Death is the wages of sin, and must be


paid either by those who are guilty (which means all men) or by an innocent human Substitute for sinners who is Himself sinless and is willing to take their place in death. Only the Creator Himself could meet this criterion, and therefore He must become man, then die and then restore Himself to life by resurrecting Himself from the grave.

The glorious truth is that the bodily resurrection of the Word made flesh, the Lord Jesus Christ, has been shown to be a true fact of history by “many infallible proofs” (Acts 1:3), and He is the only man in all history who has thus been victorious over death and the grave.

Mohammed is dead, and so are Buddha and Confucius and Moses and all other religious founders and leaders. But Jesus Christ was living and then was dead and now is “alive for evermore” (Revelation 1:18). We need never be in doubt as to which religion is *true*. True salvation is provided only through the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us to pay for our redemption from sin and death, and then rose again from the grave to assure us that the price has been fully settled and paid. Now, all who receive by faith this free gift of salvation can be assured that they also will be raised out of death into a glorious heavenly future which will never end.

“Because (God) hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).

“Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercessions for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

“Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him” (Psalm 2:12). 

IS LACK OF ROOM FOR WISDOM TEETH PROOF OF EVOLUTION?

by John Morris, Ph.D.

Removal of wisdom teeth has become commonplace in western countries. Based on evolutionary training, many dentists assume that wisdom teeth are “vestigial,” useless evolutionary leftovers from our simian ancestry when jaws were larger.

When my oldest daughter was 17, even though she was experiencing no adverse symptoms, she was told that her wisdom teeth should be removed before they became a problem. In preparation, the oral surgeon made her watch a video on human evolution, showing that as humans evolved from hypothetical ape-like ancestors, jaw size lessened until now we have no room for these otherwise helpful features. Her experience is replicated many times over, and now the practice has become a billion dollar industry. But is it proper? Is it necessary? And does it demonstrate evolution in action?

A troubling fact has been noted, that in America’s former years, people had plenty of room for all their teeth. Even today in non-western societies, a greater percentage still have plenty of room. Does this mean that only Americans are evolving? Are other factors involved?

ICR adjunct professor, Dr. Jack Cuzzo (an orthodontist), has evidence that humans today may be maturing faster than in yesteryear, and our facial bones lack sufficient growth time before wisdom teeth come in. This may be due to growth hormones in food or change since the time of Adam, but room is lacking in many people.

Others cite evidence that a western diet and habits are the cause. In western societies we eat cooked carrots and tenderized

beef, whereas diets in other countries demand more rigorous chewing. Actually, in all countries throughout all time diets have been more rigorous with the resulting exercise of the jaw muscles producing greater jaw size and strength. A recent article in a dental journal encouraged mothers to give their children bubble gum to chew (sugarless, of course) in hopes that jaws would grow and teeth would come in straight.

Still others cite poor nutrition and improper hygiene as a cause of gum and bone disease which can force wisdom teeth to erupt in an impacted position. Some studies point at improper sleeping position in infants with continual side or belly sleeping molding the soft facial bones into abnormal shape. The teeth themselves are evidently not the problem.

Recent dental guidelines specify that dentists use caution in recommending removal of wisdom teeth. In many patients the problem is real and must be addressed, perhaps by surgery, but in others, minor manipulation and care can often save healthy teeth.

As far as evolution goes, how can it be said that loss of a useful feature, or loss of room for that feature demonstrates evolution? This is the opposite of evolutionary development! How much better if evolution could explain the *origin* of structures, not their loss.

And how much misery has unnecessarily been caused by the indiscriminate application of wrong-headed evolutionary thinking. From a creationist viewpoint, wisdom teeth are valuable gifts from the Creator and should not be removed if healthy. ☞



© 2002 by ICR • All Rights Reserved

Single Copies 10¢ • Order From: **INSTITUTE FOR CREATION RESEARCH**

P.O. Box 2667, El Cajon, CA 92021 • Available for download on our website (www.icr.org).