

## There Is No God      Psalm 14

### There Is No God    Introduction

- Question: What do Richard Dawkins, Gwyneth Paltrow and the Dalai Lama all have in common?
- Answer: We'll let them answer for themselves.
  - *We are all atheists about most of the gods that humanity has ever believed in. Some of us just go one god further.*
  - — Richard Dawkins, in *The God Delusion*
  - *I don't believe in religion ... Religion is the cause of all the problems in the world ... More people have died because of religious conflict than any other reason.*
    - Gwyneth Paltrow in *Women's Day*, April 20, 2010
  - *Buddhism does not accept a theory of God, or a creator. According to Buddhism, one's own actions are the creator, ultimately.*
    - Dalai Lama, in *Policy of Kindness*
- Needless to say, the Bible differs with them all at this point.

**Once you know God, it's really hard to say, "No, God."  
It's even harder to imagine that there is no God.**

## There Is No God    Psalm 14

- This Psalm is repeated almost word-for word in Psalm 53.
- The Holy Spirit and the human compiler of the book must have both thought we needed a second reminder.

### There Is No God    Psalm 14:1

- The word David uses for "fool" is Nabal.
- We may remember Nabal as the first husband of Abigail, who treated David and his men very badly.
- He died shortly thereafter. David married his widow.
  - *The thrust of this line is more moral than theological. The concern is not a philosophical question of God's existence but the scoundrel's lack of conscience, his feeling that he can act with impunity, because he thinks he need not fear divine retribution.*
    - Robert Alter, *Professor of Hebrew and Comparative Literature, UC Berkeley*

- *'Fools' ... are not mentally deficient in any way, ... are not even necessarily confessed atheists, but [those] whose lives indicate that for all practical purposes they live as atheists.*
  - *Nupanga Weanzana, Bangui Evangelical School of Theology, Central African Republic*
- *The fool David is talking about here denies God's rule in his life and in the life of the society. He refuses to admit that he is accountable to the Sovereign of the world for what he does.*
  - *Nupanga Weanzana, Bangui Evangelical School of Theology, Central African Republic*
- God desires to engage each of us on the most personal level possible.
- This is undermined when we call his authority – or even his existence – into question.
- The difference between foolishness and wisdom is the difference between those who resist God's involvement in their lives and those who welcome it.

#### **There Is No God Psalm 14:2-3**

- Paul uses these verses as part of his case to explain that the whole world is guilty before God.
- See Romans 3:9-12.
- The Bible's starting point is not trying to prove God's existence.
- God's existence in the Bible is assumed.
- We are separated from him due to our own:
  - Lack of faithfulness (at best)
  - Rebellion (at worst)
- Once you know God, it's really hard to say, "No, God."
- It's even harder to imagine that there is no God.

#### **There Is No God Psalm 14:4-6**

- *Sigmund Freud was quite correct to describe the religious impulse ... as essentially ineradicable until or unless the human species can conquer its fear of death and its tendency to wish-thinking.*
  - *Christopher Hitchens (1949-2011, in God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*
- *When the growing individual finds that he is destined to remain a child for ever, that he can never do without protection against strange powers, he lends those powers the features belonging to the figure of his father ...*

- ... he creates for himself the gods whom he dreads, whom he seeks to propitiate, and whom he nevertheless entrusts with his own protection. Thus his longing for a father is a motive identical with his need for protection against the consequences of his human weakness.

- Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), *The Future of an Illusion*, 1929

- According to this Psalm, the greater exercise in *wish-thinking* looks like atheism or related outlooks.
- Some people *really wish* that God was only for those who are less intelligent or more naïve than they are.
- Some people *wish* there would be no God to ever hold them accountable for their actions.
- It's never a question of certain people (We) being better than others (They).
- David sees those who act as if God is irrelevant as those who will ultimately be put to shame.
- The righteous are those who take refuge in God.

#### **There Is No God Psalm 14:7**

- Salvation = safety, rescue, deliverance
- In Hebrew it is *yeshuah*, directly connected to the Hebrew name of Jesus.
- Also see the repeating refrain in Psalms 42-43.
- The final verse of this psalm is an encouragement for us to turn to the Lord and remain faithful.
- The world may well be wicked – or in denial about God.
- We may feel that God has nothing at all to offer.
- We may be tempted to reject God to be like the world.
- But to do so would make us all fools.
- Psalm 14 warns us not to give in to this temptation.

## There Is No God    Conclusions

- Once you know God, it's really hard to say, "No, God."
- It's even harder to imagine that there is no God.
  
- Christians face challenges on a couple of different fronts.
- First of all, we live in a time and culture much like that of the early church, in which the message of the gospel is despised.
  - *For Buddhists, the universe has no first cause and hence no creator, nor can there be such a thing as a permanent, primordial pure being.*
    - *The Dalai Lama, "Buddhism and Other Religions", in Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*
  
  - *I'm probably 20 percent atheist and 80 percent agnostic. I don't think anyone really knows. You'll either find out or not when you get there, until then there's no point thinking about it.*
    - *Brad Pitt, NY Daily News, July 23, 2009*
  
  - *I cannot know for certain but I think God is very improbable, and I live my life on the assumption that he is not there.*
    - — *Richard Dawkins, in The God Delusion*
  
- So there we have one view that challenges the gospel.
- Simultaneously, we see that Paul was right, the whole world is guilty before God – and that includes us.
- We need a Savior every bit as much as the rest of the world.
  
- The solution God provides is good for all.
- See Paul's later words in Romans 3:21-26.
  
- God is more than a judge, more than a creator and more than a father figure.
- And you are made in His image, made to enjoy him deeply and forever.
  
- Jesus, though fully God, loved you enough to die for you, even when you were in complete rebellion against him.
- Don't be a fool. Trust Jesus.