

14 | PSALM 14

ANSWERING ATHEISM

The most satisfying and rational worldview is theism. Atheism is foolishness.

Outline

The Worst of All Deceptions: Self-Deception

1. GOD'S SUMMONS (14:1-4).

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What is the Charge?

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2. GOD'S SENTENCE (14:5-6).

The Fear (5a)

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The Atheist's Problem

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3. GOD'S SALVATION (14:7).

Our Hope (7a)

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Call to Worship:

PSALM 66:1–4 | Shout for joy to God, all the earth; sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise! Say to God, “How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name.

Announcements

1. Welcome visitors!
2. VBS will be July 29-August 2 (This week)
3. Spaghetti Dinner, Aug 5, as a fundraiser for Brian Nelson’s Eaglescout project, a fence for Living Hope play area by the road. Held at Bethel Baptist in Schaumburg, Aug 5 from 5-7pm. Cost and other info in your bulletin.
4. No Men’s BBall: There will be no Men’s Basketball this week or next due to the facility being unavailable. The last Basketball gathering will be on Tue, Aug 6, 7:30 PM.
5. Father-Daughter Campout: Our father/daughter campout will be Fri-Sat, Aug 16-17 at Waterfall Glen.

Introduction

Open your Bible if you will to Psalm 14. The title of our message is “The Foolishness of Atheism.”

Since I was a child, I’ve been taught in school that there is no God, and that we came from some protoplasmic pond that became a fish that became a monkey that became me. People will believe all kinds of things in order to escape accountability with the God who created them.

Dawkins

In Ben Stein’s documentary, “Expelled”, the famous atheist who is one of the most respected evolutionary experts was asked: “How did it all start?” How self-replicating life begin? Dawkins says, “We really don’t know. Nobody really knows.” Ben Stein asks, “Could it be by *Intelligent Design*?” Dawkins says, in essence, “The only kind of intelligence that could have brought this universe forth would be an ancient but advanced civilization that evolved to higher levels than us. They must have seeded the planet.” So in essence for one of the most renowned atheists, “aliens” is a better answer than God.¹

This shouldn’t surprise us. People will force themselves to believe almost anything rather than be held accountable to the true and living God. In fact, **Romans 1:18** tells us that there really are no atheists. All people know that there is a God.

ROM 1:20-22 | ¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who **by their unrighteousness suppress the truth**. ¹⁹For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰**For his invisible attributes**, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since

¹ Benjamin Stein. “Dawkins’ Answer for Intelligent Design.” Darwinian Fundamentalism, 5 Nov. 2009, darwinianfundamentalism.blogspot.com/2009/11/transcript-of-interview-of-richard.html.

the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

All mankind can see the laws of science and the laws of logic. They hear the whisper of conscience and morals. They can understand the complexity of the cosmos and of microscopic biology. All is a wonder of order and joyful design. The Bible tells us this is undeniable. What is the answer to atheism? Ultimately, all mankind have within them an alarm of conscience that tells them that there is a God, there is a judgment day, and each one of us needs a Savior. So the answer to atheism, as we will see in Psalm 14, is Jesus.

Three thousand years ago, David wrote this wonderful song (the 14th Psalm) to God. The book of Psalms is the Hebrew hymnal. David and later Israel sang this to God. This Psalm is a song about the foolishness of atheism, and the joy of being a true believer. It's ultimately a warning and invitation to those who do not yet know the love of Jesus.

Scripture Reading

Let's stand and read Psalm 14:1-7,

14:1-7 | The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none who does good. ²The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. ³They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one. ⁴Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers who eat up my people as they eat bread and do not call upon the Lord? ⁵There they are in great terror, for God is with the generation of the righteous. ⁶You would shame the plans of the poor, but the Lord is his refuge. ⁷Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion! When the Lord restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.

This is God's Word.

Outline

God's Summons, 1-4

God's Sentence, 5-6

God's Salvation, 7

Atheism is Unsatisfying

Atheists are fond of claiming that their way of thinking is logical, reasonable, and intellectual. They maintain that they are open-minded and many of them commonly refer to themselves as free thinkers. Unlike Christians, who are allegedly delusional, irrational, blind, and absurd, atheists consider themselves utterly rational, sensible people who follow the evidence wherever it leads.

Yet atheism says very irrational unprovable things. Atheism says that everything came from nothing without an intelligent cause. Atheism says that an explosion caused exquisite order. It says that random chances produced precision, and that life popped into existence in nature from non-life.

Atheism says that the design of the human eye is a delusion, while the design of a camera is apparent. Atheism says that fish and frogs are man's distant forefathers and that intelligence is the result of non-intelligence. Atheism alleges that either man is on the

same moral plane as a moose, or he actually evolved a sense of morality from amoral monkeys. Atheism spends multiplied millions of dollars and countless thousands of hours in search of extra-terrestrial life, which, for all their efforts, has never been found.

When atheism is stripped of pompous proclamations and arrogant allegations, its naked soul is seen for what it really is: weak, illogical, unscientific, and worthless baseless faith. It is faith without evidence. **I truly don't have enough faith to be an atheist.**

Atheists blindly believe that, for example, life came from non-life. Rather than accept what the scientific process has repeatedly concluded over the past 200 years (that in nature life comes only from life and that of its own kind), atheists remain committed to a disproven theory. Man has never witnessed mindlessness bring forth intelligence. He's never seen something come from nothing.

The Worst of All Deceptions: Self-Deception

Atheists are undergoing the worst of all deceptions, according to the Bible: self-deception. As **Romans 1:18** says, all human beings on earth know deep down that there is a God, but they "suppress the truth" choosing instead to follow unrighteousness.

Is there any wonder why David said, "The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God"" (Psalm 14:1)? Atheism, at the end of the day, is unsatisfying because it is unsustainable.

So how do we prove it? How do we prove that atheism is unsatisfying and unsustainable? Psalm 14 is a court case where God brings the one who forgets God to a great summons in his divine courtroom.

1. GOD'S SUMMONS (14:1-4).

Ultimately, all human beings must stand before God's tribunal, his judgment seat and give an account. God's got **a court case against all humanity**. Mankind's defense is: there is no God to offend. I just don't believe he exists! It's like taking your lawn chair and sitting in the middle of Interstate 90 and saying, "I don't believe trucks exist." Pretty soon, the truth is going to hit you.

This Psalm is really a mercy, a dress rehearsal for Judgement Day.

THE CHARGE (1)

God brings the charge: man's heart is so fallen and twisted he can't see God clearly and actually doesn't want to see God.

14:1 | The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none who does good.

If man's heart were good, he'd see God and worship him. Man is corrupt and fallen and is so corrupt he thinks he can "**decide**" and choose God out of existence.

What is a "Fool"?

And all of this is the height of foolishness. What is God saying when he calls the atheist a **fool**? To be clear, **this is not a slander**, or name calling. The word "fool" in Hebrew is *nabal*, and it has the idea of rebel. This person is a fool because they don't want God's authority over him or her.

To be even clearer, Paul defines this foolishness in Romans 3 as *practical atheism*. This charge is not only against the **actual atheist** who denies God's existence in order to create his own moral universe, but it is also for the **practical atheist** who claims to trust in the Lord, but lives at times as though God is dead. Both the actual and practical atheists are fools because they are rebels against an undefeatable God.

What is the Charge?

So what exactly is the charge? The charge is that man's heart is so fallen and twisted he can't see God clearly and actually doesn't want to see God. Mankind is in radical rebellion against God's rule. "I'll do what I want." "I'll have it my way." The Psalmist says that the root of the heart of man is that they are **corrupt** and **do abominable deeds**. In short, "there is none who does good". Theological, we would say: Man is totally depraved.

Paul establishes that there's no hope for mankind outside of Jesus in Romans 3:10-18 by quoting Psalm 14:1-3. No hope. None are good. All are turned aside, corrupt and abominable. No one seeks after God.

ROM 3:10-12 | "None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹²All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one" (Quoting Psa 14:1-3)

Total vs. Utter Depravity

What does this imply? **No one does good? Not even one?** Well, first, it does not imply that everyone is as evil as they could be. It's not utter depravity, that we are as evil as we could be but that every part of our being, our mind, our body, our spiritual life – is corrupted by sin. But it does teach what theologians call "total depravity". We are corrupted in every part of us. There is no one who is completely without sin. There is no one who doesn't have every part of their being corrupted by sin: our mind, will, and emotions are all corrupted. Our minds are bent inward. We are naturally all selfish. That's why God through David says, "There is none who does good." You might object: "I see lots of good." Yes I do too. And I'm thankful for it. So what does David mean, "No one does good"?

Don't Some People Do Good?

Of course, lost people do some good in philanthropy, in generosity, in giving. We have good things being done, but there is **no one on earth that does the ultimate good** with a motive of praise to our Creator on his own without the revelation of God preached to him or her. This is all implied by the word "fool" or rebel. There is an ultimate authority that we all have tried to rebel against. None of us would ever come to God if he didn't first reach out to us.

Consider Your Fallen Condition

So when he says "there is none good" – he is calling us to see **our own condition**. We are **morally depraved**. We have not only **missed the mark** of God's perfection, we have also **willfully transgressed** God's holiness and his moral laws. Our hearts are so depraved that the natural disposition of man's heart is to either **fight** God or **run away** from him, like Adam did in the Garden (Gen 3:8). Our hearts and our minds naturally

hostile toward God. All mankind at birth are “enemies of God” (Rom 5:10). We may live in the light of our conscience, but no one worships God or lives their life for God by nature, unless God first calls that person. Jesus says in **John 6:44**, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.”

Ephesians 2:1-3 says that we are all “dead in trespasses and sins” and are all “by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.” Pretty clear stuff.

When we were lost, we tried and tried to right our wrongs by good deeds, but we had to come to the realization that in all our “self-righteousness” there is “none good”. “Even our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isa 64:6).

God is right on with the charge: man’s heart is so fallen and twisted he can’t see God clearly and actually doesn’t want to see God. But is there any **evidence**?

THE EVIDENCE (2-3)

God is an eye witness to man’s moral depravity. God looks down and sees all the evidence. He knows the depths of our hearts. He sees our innermost motives. It’s not good.

14:2-3 | The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. ³They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.

God looks meticulously upon humanity to see if any understand and seek after God (i.e. have true saving faith). No one is faithful. No one is seeking after God. No one is living in a faith relationship with God. No one is even seeking it. All have become corrupt. Our natures are bent. The outward evidence is conclusive: “there is none who does good, not even one.” Ok, this is pretty inclusive language. “All have turned aside.”

Let’s be clear: all deserve hell because of their sin. All are powerless to help themselves because they “have become corrupt” and refuse to seek after God. It’s like **Ephesians** says: their “understanding is darkened.” The evidence shows that the world is full of practical atheists: rebellious fools.

THE URGENCY (4)

David sees things now from God’s perspective, and you can feel the urgency. Don’t they understand? Why don’t they repent and turn to God?

14:4 | Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers who eat up my people as they eat bread and do not call upon the Lord?

People are living as if God doesn’t exist. Don’t they see how urgent it is that they repent? Are they not now willing to call upon the LORD who is willing to save them?

The atheist says there is no God, but the truth is you have thrown away knowledge. You have thrown away your own conscience that God gave you. You think you can do anything, but don’t you see? You will be held account. A wise person will call upon the Lord.

A person may say there is no God, but the truth is you have a conscience. The whisper of conscience is proof that there is a God and that you are made in his image. Follow the urgency of your conscience and repent. “Call upon the Lord!”

2. GOD'S SENTENCE (14:5-6).

God's tribunal is coming.

THE FEAR (5A)

Man is very bold and brazen in his unbelief as he struts across the stage of time. But he will be gripped with stark, naked horror when he stands doomed at the great white throne.

14:5a | There they are in great terror...

Those who forget God seem calm right now. They seem like everything is fine. They go on forgetting God every day. But one day they will be in great terror. And they have every reason to be in great fear. One day we will all face God. Judgment Day is coming.

REV 20:11-15 | Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it.

From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

THE FOLLY (5B)

That word "generation" can be translated company, class, or circle. For the atheist to say, "I can't find God" is the **ultimate folly of the ungodly**. For God is to be found easily enough. The Lord Jesus has promised: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name there am I in the midst of them" (Mt 18:20). He can always be found in the circle of a company of His people.

14:5b | ...for God is with the generation of the righteous.

Christ is the head of his body. The church is the Temple of the living God. God has chosen the simple of this world and the weak to confound the mighty.

I know the generation of the righteous don't look like much. The wicked think they know so much in this life. They look on the Christians as poor, uneducated, naive souls.

Jesus called uneducated fisherman to be his disciples. Not many wise, not many who are considered strong by this world are called. If you want to follow Jesus, you have to come by the standards of another world. Abandon you pride and come to Christ. He's the only way.

Theodicy

One of the great problems the atheist has with God is the problem of evil. Philosophers call it "**theodicy**". The problem of evil is really a problem for the atheist.

The atheist says, “How can an all loving God allow evil in the world?” That’s the point, God is love. He’s given man a choice to walk with him in love, and we have chosen to rebel. God’s choice in response is to provide the **sacrifice** of his Son so that anyone who comes to him in faith will be saved.

The Atheist’s Problem

The real problem of evil lies with the atheist. If there is no God (no law giver), then there is no such thing as evil. It’s survival of the fittest. If there is no morality, then the Hitlers and Stalins and Pol Pots stand side by side with the virtuous and the righteous. If there is no God then morality is meaningless. The real problem of evil lies with the atheist. He has no answer for the order, the logic and morality of the universe. The atheist says the universe is random, but we can all see it is ordered. The atheist says the universe has no definite moral standard, but we can all see that God has put a universal conscience within all of us.

What’s the answer?

The answer is that there is righteousness. And anyone who wants righteousness must find it outside themselves. God has answered the problem of evil with his Son Jesus Christ. He has taken all the sin of the world upon himself and offered righteousness to anyone who will come to him by faith.

THE FACTS (6)

The wicked think they know so much in this life. They look on the Christians as poor, uneducated, naive souls. They shame the humble, poor Christian.

14:5-6 | You would shame the plans of the poor, but the Lord is his refuge.

The Mockery

The facts of the atheist’s peril are in their attitude toward God’s people. They mock the fact that the Christian takes refuge in the Lord.

The ungodly shame and mock the **plans** and worldview of the **poor** Christian. The **ungodly make sin a civil right** and “**shame the plans of the poor**” believers. The facts are simple: a lost person fights for his own plans, wants his own way. The unbeliever says, my way is better, so they turn to money, power and pleasure for stability. But all of those things are easily taken away. They mock the Christian who holds fast to the Lord and takes refuge in him. Isn’t the Lord an amazing refuge? When all of heaven and earth burn up and are taken away, the Christian has an eternal refuge in Jesus.

The wicked always underestimate those who are in the special care of God—the weak, the downtrodden, and the oppressed. The wicked **shame the power of the Gospel**. They say, how can a drug addict or an alcoholic or someone with abuse in their childhood really be healed? And they **shame the plans of the poor**.

The Answer

The poor sinner says, “The Lord is my refuge”. What’s the answer to atheism? Jesus is the answer. Jesus can heal and help you. There is no other name whereby people can be saved. Jesus is the answer. Jesus is the hope. The lost person stands against that and mocks it. Can Jesus really heal? Can Jesus really help? Can Jesus really transform. The

lost person says, “No.” The atheist says, “If we want help, we must help ourselves”. So the only help they have is their own psychology and their own medicine. And that’s all fine. We need good counselors and sometimes we need medical help. That’s a blessing. But real change cannot occur until the heart is changed.

The case is over. The sentence is passed, the reactions are recorded, the court is being cleared, and the accused are being marched away to execution. But what’s this? There is *another verse!* It seems out of place, *but thank God for it.* David adds a postscript.

3. GOD’S SALVATION (14:7).

A new fact has come to light and the court is hastily reconvened. A new and wonderful truth has been injected into the trial, and it is the *Witness* who brings it to the attention of the court.

OUR HOPE (7A)

When the apostle Paul exegetes Psalm 14 in Romans 3, his conclusion is the same: salvation.

14:7a | Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion!

Paul establishes that there’s no hope for mankind outside of Jesus in Romans 3:10-18 by quoting Psalm 14:1-3 (and other Psalms). No hope. None are good. All are turned aside, corrupt and abominable.

Paul’s then explains the salvation of Psalm 14 in Romans 3:23-25, these are some of the most precious and important verses in the Bible. What is the salvation that comes out of Zion? Paul tells us in Romans 3.

ROM 3:23-25 | ...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

The cure for atheism is the cross. Put aside your unbelief and forgetfulness of God. God is here. He’s always here whether you are blinded to it or not. The sun still shines on the blind. The birds still chirp though deaf cannot hear them. God still reigns though mankind refuses to acknowledge it.

There is a **salvation** that comes to anyone who comes to Jesus. Like the song says, “Earth has no sorrow that heaven can’t heal”.²

Salvation is found in Jesus alone! Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me” (Jn 14:6). Look at him there on the cross. It doesn’t look like a salvation. It looks like a defeat. But Christ’s death was for you. He died for you. He lives for you. Come to him. There’s no cleansing like the one he gives. He buries your sin in the deepest sea. “As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us” (Psa 103:12). What a **salvation!**

² *Come as you are.* David Crowder.

OUR HAPPINESS (7B)

How many of you can say that you know a happiness and rejoicing that you never had before?

14:7b | When the Lord restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.

What joy it is that God “restores the fortunes of his people”. God can bring “beauty from ashes” (Isa 61:3) and “restore the years that the locusts have eaten” (Joel 2:25). God says: “I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jer 29:11).

God makes you an heir with him and a joint-heir with Jesus. You have all things in Christ. All the promises of God are Yes and Amen in Jesus!

Conclusion

Years ago, we had purchased the parsonage in Hanover Park where Pastor Mike lives. When I asked Gavin what we should do, he said, “Gut it!”

Now gutting something is easy. But putting everything back in place is impossible without an architect and skilled laborers.

God is the architect of our lives. Unless we acknowledge that we are hopeless. “Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” Is the Lord building your house? Surrender to him today. “Earth has no sorrow that heaven can’t heal.”

His grace is amazing. His salvation is full and complete. His love will shelter and protect and grow you. What more could we ask for?