

Christ in Prophecy

Q&A 8: “Tough Bible Questions with Ron Rhodes: Part 1”

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: I have found over the years that people love question and answer sessions about the Bible, particularly when they can ask those questions of a person who is really knowledgeable about the Bible. Well, we have such a person with us for this program and we are going to bombard him with some tough questions, stay tuned.

Program

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus our blessed hope and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. I am delighted to have with me this week as my special guest, Dr. Ron Rhodes, who is the founder and director of Reasoning from the Scriptures Ministries. He is an expert on the Bible. And one of the things that he specializes in is answering tough questions about the Bible. Welcome to Christ in Prophecy.

Dr. Rhodes: It's good to see you today.

Dr. Reagan: I understand your ministry is located in Frisco, is that correct?

Dr. Rhodes: Frisco, Texas. Very few people have heard of it but it's a great town.

Dr. Reagan: Well, isn't it one of the fastest growing places in the entire United States? Not only Texas but...

Dr. Rhodes: Well that's what I like to tell people, yes.

Dr. Reagan: Okay. And also with us is one of our newest staff members, Nathan Jones and he's going to help me interview Dr. Rhodes. Nathan is our Web Minister and that means much more than just being a Webmaster. Nathan is on the website every day responding to questions from people all over the world and looking for opportunities to share the gospel with unbelievers. Nathan, you get bombarded with questions all day long every day. I know that because you show me some of those questions. Why don't you lead off by asking Dr. Rhodes a question, okay?

Nathan Jones: Well it's a pleasure to meet you Dr. Rhodes.

Dr. Rhodes: It's good to meet you, and if I don't have the answer, I know that Dave does.

Nathan Jones: Well I am so impressed by the amount, 40 books that you've written all on topics on apologetics. I love apologetics. And we get zingers all the time in from atheists, skeptics who are trying to shoot us down and you wrote a book *Answering the Objections of Atheists Agnostics and Skeptics*. And I'm sure you get zingers all the time. What do you think is the number one zinger you get from atheists and how do you respond?

Dr. Rhodes: Well, one of the questions I get asked is if God is all powerful and if God is all good, how come bad things happen on planet earth. I get asked that question all the time.

Dr. Reagan: I would say that's the number one question.

Dr. Rhodes: It's gotta be. And I'd like to answer that question by giving you an illustration. Let's say that you built the perfect house, I mean it's just a beautiful wonderful house. The construction is perfect it's got excellent materials. Maybe fifteen years later you've got this termite invasion and it just eats away at the foundation and eats away at the walls. The question becomes, does the existence of termites in that house disprove the existence of an architect? Does it?

Dr. Reagan: No.

Dr. Rhodes: Obviously not. What about arson? Somebody comes in and throws a match in there and burns the whole place up, does that disprove the existence of an architect? Not at all. What if you have sloppy home owners that don't cut the lawn? Does this disprove the existence of an architect? Not at all, it just means that something good has been corrupted. The house was good but now it's got termites. It's been corrupted. And that's what evil is evil is the corruption of something good. Now by analogy, God created the earth and you remember what God said when He completed the creation? He looked out over it all and said it is good. But the earth has since become corrupted. And you know what caused it? It was a termite invasion of human sin, that's what brought evil into the universe. So we shouldn't be really blaming God on this we should be blaming ourselves.

Dr. Reagan: But if God is really a God of love, why didn't He just put an end to evil?

Dr. Rhodes: Well let's just consider that for a minute. Let's just say that at midnight tonight God's gonna say, "Evil is over." I don't like that option Dave, let me tell you why, because at midnight tonight, Dave Reagan is gone, Ron Rhodes is gone. In fact, your entire viewing audience is gone.

Dr. Reagan: That's right.

Dr. Rhodes: So I'm kind of glad God is patient with us. You know one thing God did as soon as man got himself into this trouble with this termite invasion of sin, is He engaged in a rescue mission for us. And He's been involved in that rescue mission ever since and it's all based on Jesus Christ and His work on the cross, so that's the good news.

Dr. Reagan: I guess the fundamental problem here is the free choice that God gave us.

Dr. Rhodes: Well God did give us free choice but you know some people try to blame God for that. But look at it this way Henry Ford created the Ford car. It was a good car. Now that pre-dates me, I wasn't there back then when Ford made his car.

Dr. Reagan: You didn't know?

Dr. Rhodes: Dave, what was that car like anyway? [Dave laughs]

Dr. Reagan: Ow.

Dr. Rhodes: Of course Dave knows I'm kidding, but you know it was a good car. But let's say that some man decides to drive that car after drinking some alcohol. He drives down the street and crashes into a building. You see, are we going to say that Henry Ford is a bad man for creating the Ford? No. He's not the person who did something wrong. It's the man who used his free will to drink alcohol, to do something wrong, before he drove. You see, that's the person who is at blame. So I don't think that we should blame God for giving us free will. I've never seen a person walking down the street saying, you know with one of those signs that says, "Down with Free Will." Or "Back to Bondage."

Dr. Reagan: Why didn't God create us without free will and just say you're going to obey me and do what I tell you to and every things going to be nice and fine.

Dr. Rhodes: Well that's a good question. I think that if God had created a bunch of those little robots, you know like where you pull the string on the back and it says, "I love you?" Just imagine an entire universe of those. Would that bring glory to God?

Dr. Reagan: There's really no fellowship there.

Dr. Rhodes: Not really I mean, you just pull it and it goes, "I worship thee o Lord God." I mean that doesn't bring glory to God. What would bring glory to God is if God created free human beings many of whom are going to choose to freely follow Him and worship Him for all eternity. Of course the very gift of free will also means that some people will misuse that free will. Some people will choose against God. But as C.S. Lewis put it, in the end this scenario brings much more glory to God than a universe of robots.

Dr. Reagan: Ron, we're going to be asking you a lot of tough questions in this particular program and hopefully in some other programs that you'll come back and be with us. So let's just pause for a moment and give you an opportunity to tell our viewers

what are your credentials for answering these questions? I think it's important that they know that you're just not talking off the top of your head here. So what are your credentials for answering Bible questions?

Dr. Rhodes: Well, I was very, very blessed to be able to attend Dallas Theological Seminary. And I got my Masters and my Doctorate there. And I've got to tell you that I went when men like Charles Ryrie and John F. Wolvoord, and Dwight Pentecost, I mean all those guys were my primary teachers. And you know those guys are just the most wonderful men of God that I've ever met.

Dr. Reagan: We've had Dr. Ryrie on this program.

Dr. Rhodes: Well then you know what I mean. I mean he's just a wonderful, not just a wonderful scholar but a wonderful Christian.

Dr. Reagan: What fields did you get your degrees in?

Dr. Rhodes: Well Systematic Theology, what seems to be a dying dinosaur today.

Dr. Reagan: Scary area.

Dr. Rhodes: Well you know for whatever reason a lot of people don't like Theology. Well I like it personally. I love Bible doctrine, you know why? Cause it's built upon the foundation of the Bible.

Dr. Reagan: Well you're actually considered to be an expert in the field of Apologetics, which to the average Christian and even the non Christian it seems a very strange word, are you apologizing for the faith? What does Apologetics mean?

Dr. Rhodes: Well it sounds like we're always going around saying I'm sorry but in fact what we're doing in defending Christianity against any challenge whatsoever. It might be Atheism, Agnosticism, it might be the Jehovah's Witnesses, or the Mormons. It might be Islam, there's all kinds of challenges against Christianity so what we do is to help provide solid strong answers that people can use to reach those people for Christ.

Dr. Reagan: Okay now tell us a little bit more about your ministry, the name of it and what it does.

Dr. Rhodes: Well, we're called Reasoning from the Scriptures and that kind of gives it away right there. We base everything on the Scriptures. The name is not really unique to us because you might remember that the apostle Paul in the book of Acts would reason from the Scriptures with people in different cities. So that's what we do, we happen to think that the Bible is the most important book ever. And so what we do is to help people to use the Bible to answer Agnostics and Atheists and people that are lost in different cults and stuff like that. And we actually do answer our email. I say that because a lot of ministries don't. If people have a problem and they're looking for an answer, we will help. And none of us take a salary at our ministry this is all based upon our own commitment to the Lord and our joy in the Lord.

Dr. Reagan: Well at the end of this program we're gonna tell people how to get in touch with your ministry and they may put you to the test of asking questions and expecting an answer. And I want to say too, that they can do that here anytime because Nathan is online eight hours a day.

Dr. Rhodes: Well you know what it's like then.

Dr. Reagan: Ready to respond to questions and he really does answer those questions. So what we'll do is take a break here and then we'll come back in just a moment and start bombarding you with some more questions okay?

Dr. Rhodes: Sounds fun.

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: Okay gentlemen, let's get back to some tough questions about the Bible. Nathan, how about another one?

Nathan Jones: Alright, well I've been looking at your book, *Understanding the Bible from A to Z*, and what would you then say is the key most important thing to understanding the Bible?

Dr. Rhodes: Three words: context, context, context. Every word of the Bible is part of a sentence, every sentence is part of a paragraph, every paragraph is part of a book, and every book in the Bible is part of the entire Bible. So there's both an immediate context of each verse and there's a broader context. And the best way to make sure that you're interpreting rightly is to consult both, the immediate context and the broader context. Can I give you an example? There's a verse in Matthew 5:48 that says, "Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect." Some people read that and they go, "Oh gees, I gotta be absolutely perfect to go to Heaven. Uh oh, not good." Because you know, we're not perfect. None of us are?

Dr. Reagan: Is that right?

Dr. Rhodes: Except for you. But in any event, when you look at the context, what you see is a discussion about love. You see the Jewish Pharisees said that you're supposed to love your neighbors but hate your enemies. Jesus said no you love your neighbors and you love your enemies, you are to be perfect in loving other people as the Heavenly Father is perfect.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Dr. Rhodes: You see that's the context, it's all about love. So that helps us to understand what this verse is really talking about. It's not saying that we must attain some perfection to go to Heaven, but rather it's saying that we should be complete in loving other people day to day.

Dr. Reagan: One that comes to my mind that I see used all the time and it just really upsets me, is people who are trying to prove that Revelation 20 does not mean what it says, when it says that Jesus is coming back to reign for a thousand years. And what they do is they go over and pick up that psalm that says God owns the cattle on a

thousand hills. They say now are there only a thousand hills? No, there's many more so therefore the word thousand is always symbolic and never literal.

Dr. Rhodes: Well that's right. People often approach the book of Revelation with what we call pre-understandings in the theological world. People approach the text with a pre-understanding of the theological system that governs the way they interpret those verses and you know what? What you really need to do is to have what they call a circular system of interpretation. All of us have some kind of a system of theology but what I'm saying is that that system of theology must be subject to the Bible, it should always be tested against the Bible. And if you come across a verse real clear like Revelation 20 and that contradicts your theological system, guess what, you need to rewrite your theological system.

Dr. Reagan: And you certainly don't take a verse that's over in some other area with a different context and apply it to Revelation which is a whole different context.

Dr. Rhodes: Well and really when you think about it, the entire Bible is pointing forward to the reign of Christ anyway.

Nathan Jones: Is that the overall theme would you say then for the Bible?

Dr. Rhodes: Well I think that the kingship of Christ was prophesied back in the original covenant, you look at the Davidic covenant. You look at the Davidic covenant in Second Samuel 7, prophesied about a King who would rule forever who would sit on the throne of David. And we're not talking about some sort of spiritual thing up in a twilight zone Heaven we're talking about a real throne on a real earth. And so if you interpret Scripture in a literal fashion, you're going to come out believing in a literal one thousand year period.

Dr. Reagan: You love illustrations and one that just popped into my mind about this point... let's use the same term in two sentences. Yesterday I visited the White House. Today the White House announced that the President is going to Russia. Now I've used the same term in two sentences, in one it's literal in the other it's symbolic. The White

House doesn't talk but you know I visited the White House the White House says. You have the same term but one is literal, one's symbolic, context determines whether it is.

Dr. Rhodes: Well that's right and you know just to give an English illustration. You know if you use the word trunk that can refer to the front of an elephant, the rear end of a man, the back of a car, it can refer to a suitcase. I mean just depending upon the context a word can mean a whole lot of different things. And one of the big mistakes that first year seminary students make is assuming that because a word is used one way in one context it has to mean the same thing in every other verse and that's a mistake.

Dr. Reagan: Okay now you mentioned context, context, context but another one that comes to my mind that seems to me very important is to interpret the Bible for its plain sense meaning.

Dr. Rhodes: Well that's right. When the plain sense makes good sense why seek any other sense?

Nathan Jones: That sounds familiar.

Dr. Rhodes: That's one of the things that I base my entire interpretive methodology on. And yet today we've got all kinds of people reading all kinds of things into the Bible. If people would just let the Bible speak for itself. Guess what guys? Who created human language? Who was it?

Nathan Jones: God!

Dr. Rhodes: God created linguistic symbols called words by which He communicates with man through revelation. And in most cases, God communicates in a normal, every day means. Now it is true that there are some verses that are poetic like in the Psalms and so forth, but you know most of the time when God is communicating in statements of fact. And when the plain sense makes good sense why seek any other sense?

Dr. Reagan: I think one of the reasons that people spiritualize so much is because they become God when they do so, because they can make the Scriptures mean anything they want it to mean.

Dr. Rhodes: Well you know the cults are experts at that. You know they'll take a verse and they'll make it say something entirely foreign to the original context. And frankly we've got a crisis in the church today because many Christians don't know the Bible very well.

Dr. Reagan: That's right.

Dr. Rhodes: And that's all the more reason for people to get back to the Bible and when you're reading Scripture verses remember that rule, when the plain sense makes good sense don't seek any other sense.

Dr. Reagan: Zechariah 14 says the Lords coming back, He's coming back to the Mount of Olives, when His foot touches the mountain it's going to split in half. He's going to speak a supernatural word, the enemies will be destroyed on that day He will become king over all the earth. Loraine Boettner, one of the great theologians of the 20th century, reformed theologian says that doesn't mean that. What it means is that the Mount of Olives stands for the human heart. And when you invite Jesus to come into your heart, He lands on your heart, your heart breaks in contrition, the enemies are defeated and He becomes king of your heart.

Dr. Rhodes: Well you know I went to talk to a minister at a church you know what the ministry told me? "Yes the Bible is inspired, but its inspired kind of like Shakespeare is inspiring to read, yes there is a Second Coming in the Bible but what that really means is that when person finds God again in his heart." You know that's spiritualizing the text and if you spiritualize the text you can make it say anything.

Nathan Jones: Where did they get interpretation?

Dr. Rhodes: It's almost like they go to the Scriptures and they say now what God really meant to say was...

Nathan Jones: Yeah.

Dr. Reagan: W. A. Criswell once made the comment that one of the problems with biblical interpretation is that so many people believe that the Bible is inspired only in those areas where they agree with it. Then it's inspired.

Dr. Rhodes: Well you know what inspiration really means, it means God breathed. God breathed out the Scriptures and that means that He so superintended their writings that He controlled what they wrote, even though He didn't violate their writings styles.

Dr. Reagan: Nathan I know you're biting at the bit to ask another question because it's one that's dear to your heart about evolution and creation, so jump into that.

Nathan Jones: And you did a book on that too! You've got everything.

Dr. Reagan: What's the title of that one?

Nathan Jones: This one is *Things You Should Know about the Creation Versus the Evolution Debate*. And besides Bible prophecy, I am very interested in the creation evolution debate, just because the mindset of the evolutionist is just so other worldly.

Dr. Rhodes: It's foundational to everything else, the fact that God is the creator.

Nathan Jones: Well the Bible seems to be so beaten up in the first few chapters in Genesis, and at the end of the Bible in Revelation.

Dr. Reagan: The beginning and the end.

Nathan Jones: And so you get arguments against both so what would you then say is the most frequent question you get from Evolutionists? What is their strongest argument?

Dr. Rhodes: Well you know very often it seems like today the real attack from the Evolutionist is coming against Intelligent Design. I think that's got them running scared.

Nathan Jones: From Ben Stein's movie.

Dr. Rhodes: Yeah I think the fact is – remember that old preacher who was preaching a sermon and he came to a weak part in the sermon and he had on his sermon notes pound pulpit, weak point. That kind of reminds me of what these Atheists are doing, they know that they're cornered by intelligent design,

Dr. Reagan: I think DNA forced them into this.

Dr. Rhodes: I think so. I think DNA is a great place to start. I don't think you can look anywhere and not find Intelligent Design. You can look into a microscope you can look into a telescope and find evidence for Intelligent Design. You know just in terms of the DNA factor, did you know that just a single pinpoint of DNA, you can find as much information as four complete sets of the Encyclopedia Britannica. Now you know the Encyclopedia Britannica is thirty volumes with small print. That's a lot of information in there. So the question is natural, did it write itself? Did the Encyclopedia Britannica write itself? Do software programs right themselves?

Nathan Jones: What's crazy is the thinking, we had a guy write in and say, because creation is so complex it proves there isn't a God because if He is God He would have made everything simple.

Dr. Rhodes: Well that's kind of a ridiculous argument often we as human beings think we might have had a better design for certain things. But you know look at it this way, I might look at a computer system and say you know I think I could design this computer to where it would be much smaller. But then I go and talk to the engineer and the engineer tells me, "Ah but the reason why it's got a big casing like that is to provide for the cooling system because of the internal heating of the components." Well now I've got new information that alters the way that I'm looking at things. And the fact is, is that God has many reasons, many of which we don't know about, as to why He created certain things in certain ways. And so I think that one day when its too late for a lot of people

once they've passed over, they're gonna say, wow, boy I was wrong after all there really is an Intelligent Designer and it really does make sense.

Dr. Reagan: One of the things that's so disconcerting to me is the way in which the people who believe in Evolution are absolutely determined not to have any other viewpoint presented. And yet the essence of education is to consider all viewpoints and seek for truth. It's as if they're afraid that if the other viewpoint is presented somebody might believe in it.

Dr. Rhodes: Well you know the way I look at it is that Naturalism reigns supreme in universities today. And that may be a word that your viewers may not know but Naturalism refers to the idea that nature explains everything, you don't need a God, you don't need supernatural miracles. But what if the science that has been supporting Naturalism for so many years turns on Naturalism and starts to provide scientific arguments against Naturalism. That's what we're seeing today in Intelligent Design and I think that's one of the reasons why they're so vitriolic against the Intelligent Design movement.

Dr. Reagan: Well I know one reason they're so vitriolic and that is they don't want to give an inch on this because if you ever actually admit that there might be an Intelligent Designer or Creator that means you're subject to that person and that there are some....

Dr. Rhodes: Oh! That's a good point!

Dr. Reagan: And it messes up my life because I want to do what I want to do.

Dr. Rhodes: Well you know I was talking to Lee Strobel about this very thing. Now you know that Lee used to be an Atheist and he said, "Ron, you know one of the things that kept me an Atheist was not specific belief systems, one of the things that kept me an Atheist was the fact that it made my lifestyle real comfortable. I could do anything I wanted and I didn't have to answer to an external God, I didn't have to obey commands." So you're right if you end up believing that there is an Intelligent Designer who created the universe that means that you and I are responsible to obey that Creator. And that means a change in lifestyle is in order. A lot of atheists don't want to make that change.

Dr. Reagan: Well I would say so. Did you have another point you wanted to make about Evolution?

Nathan Jones: Sure, we've heard the strongest argument for Creation is Intelligent Design it seems and the Bible says that Creation proves the Bible basically. A fool says in his heart there is no God. What is the strongest argument for Evolution and how can Christians counter that?

Dr. Rhodes: Well you know one of the arguments that very often comes up in support of Evolution is that they believe that the fossil evidence supports their viewpoint. Well I really don't think it does support their viewpoint.

Nathan Jones: No, not at all.

Dr. Rhodes: And the reason that I say that is that we've discovered virtually billions of fossils all over the world and if Evolution were true what you would expect to see is simple life forms evolving into complex life forms.

Dr. Reagan: That's right.

Dr. Rhodes: You'd expect to see fossils of simple life forms and then on the next layer of rock you would expect to see a little bit more advanced creatures. And then each new layer of rock would bring all new fossils that are supposedly growing wings and different body parts and stuff like that, but we don't see that. There are no transitional forms in the fossil record. You know what it looks like in the fossil record? It looks like all the sudden all these life forms suddenly exploded on the scene and got fossilized. All of them are fully formed. That seems to support Creationism.

Nathan Jones: It's interesting the Theory of Evolution is based on the dating like you said of the strata, so they'll date the strata based on the fossils inside the strata and then the paleontologist will date the fossils based on the strata there in. So you're like, wait a minute, each bases the dating on the other.

Dr. Rhodes: Kind of circular reasoning.

Nathan Jones: It's totally circular reasoning, there's no logic to it.

Dr. Rhodes: I think also that these people also assume what's called Uniformitarianism, the idea that things have been going along at the same pace throughout all human history. But what I believe as a Creationist is that when the flood occurred the entire world was upset in a catastrophic way, all of a sudden you had layer upon layer of mud coming upon each other with dead creatures being captured within that layer of mud and I think that explains a lot of the layers that we presently see today. It doesn't represent this incredible length of time as some of these Evolutionists like to talk about but it's a shorter time.

Dr. Reagan: Let me ask you a question that Christians often ask and we only have about a minute for you to respond to this. And I hear Christians say this all the time what difference does it make who cares whether God created it instantly or He created it over a long period of time? What difference does it make?

Dr. Rhodes: Well for one thing, can you trust your Bible? Can you trust your Bible? I mean when you look at the Genesis account it's talking about the creation days in terms of light and darkness in terms of morning and evening. And you need to consider the fact that the Hebrew word for day whenever it's used with a number always refers to a literal 24 hour a day. If you cannot trust the book of Genesis in its plain statements of fact about creation, what makes you think you can trust anything else in the Bible?

Dr. Reagan: So the very veracity of the Word of God is at stake here.

Dr. Rhodes: It is absolutely. And so you know there's much more than the creation itself at stake it's the entire Bible with the entire message of the Bible. And that spells disaster for you if you're looking for redemption in Christ. How do you know you can trust those verses about redemption in Christ if you cannot trust the Bible?

Dr. Reagan: Well I tell you what, you know how to answer questions, get right to the heart of them.

Dr. Rhodes: Well, I tell you, I love the Bible.

Dr. Reagan: What I want to do is come back in just a moment and talk about your book *Answering Tough Questions*. We will do that in a moment.

Dr. Rhodes: Excellent sounds good.

Part 3

Dr. Reagan: Ron you have authored several reference books and one of them is entitled, *What Does the Bible Say About...* really it's *Answering Tough Questions* and I'd just like to ask you, what do you think are two or three of the toughest questions you've ever been asked about the Bible.

Dr. Rhodes: Oh gee I've got some good ones I could think of, some good ones. One is, "Why did God command the Israelites to completely wipe out another nation like the Canaanites?"

Dr. Reagan: Well that's a good question.

Dr. Rhodes: That's a tough one, it really is. Another one that people ask me these days is, "Isn't Jesus just one of many ways to salvation? And isn't it a little bit arrogant and narrow minded to say that Jesus is the only way?"

Dr. Reagan: That's probably the number one question now.

Dr. Rhodes: Well that one just comes up all the time. And another one I can think of that comes up, especially among Christians, is, "If the Holy Spirit guides Christians in understanding the Bible as first Corinthians 2 indicates, why is it that spirit-filled Christians interpret Bible verses differently?"

Dr. Reagan: Wow, you know how to...these are tough questions!

Dr. Rhodes: So I'm gonna ask you those questions.

Dr. Reagan: You think you've been getting tough questions brother! Well I tell you what we don't have time to answer those right now. But I tell you what folks, if you'll tune in we'll have Dr. Rhodes back with us and he will answer those questions. And as we conclude this week would you look right into that camera and tell folks how to get in touch with your ministry?

Dr. Rhodes: Oh I'd love to; yeah you can visit us on the web at www.ronrhodes.org. And we've got lots of free materials that you can download and we've got a free newsletter you can ask for, we don't ask for any money for it so we hope you stop by.

Dr. Reagan: Thank you very much Ron, well folks that our program for this week until next week I hope you'll be back with us this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb and Lion Ministries saying look up be watchful! For our redemption is drawing near!

End of Program