

The comments by Jeff Siker on why he is still a Christian even though he, like me, has a thoroughly historical-critical understanding of the Bible (comments posted from four years ago) sparked some interesting responses. One reader wrote him directly the following pressing questions, and Jeff wrote a reply that I thought was even more germane, interesting, and helpful than the original posts.

Here are the questions and his response (as he forwarded them to me). Jeff, by the way, has said he is happy to answer other questions. So if you have any, let me know, possibly by making a comment on this post.

QUESTIONS FOR JEFF SIKER:

I was extremely interested in the republication of your guest post from Jan. 2013 on Bart Ehrman's blog this week. You were addressing an issue paramount in my own life: How can I be a Christian knowing what I have learned in the past 70 years? Can you confirm for me what being a Christian means to you? I realize you are busy, so if you need to point me to something specific you have already written, please do so.

But, I really am asking about specifics. Belief in Jesus death vicariously propitiating for universal sin? Jesus being bodily resurrected? Jesus and God being identical (traditional Trinity belief)? Regarding human suffering, you wrote "In light of his ministry I believe that we are called to embrace human suffering with the hope and faith that God will transform such an embrace into new life." Can you expand on this? It seems to simply express a personal conviction that suffering is a fact of life and we should simply try to alleviate it.

JEFF SIKER'S RESPONSE:

As to your question about how one can be a Christian knowing what we do about the world and the terrible suffering that persists. To me being a Christian means that I find my fundamental orientation to the world and to God in the person of Jesus as reflected in the NT writings. I say this while at the same time being fully aware that the portrait of Jesus in the NT is highly ideological and...

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