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Faith Bible Church
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<http://fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

JEWISH APOLOGETICS (30)
ANSWERING JEWISH OBJECTION #21
(DDR #649)

Objection #21: Why have wars, famines, and human suffering only *increased* since Jesus came?

Michael Brown's short response:

As we explained in the previous answer, we are in the transition age, the age when God's kingdom is being established throughout the earth, one life at a time. During this era, because the population of the world has increased and technology has advanced, there are now more evil people capable of doing more evil things, cause an increase in human suffering. Also, Jesus told his disciples that before the end of this age, there would be great turmoil and upheaval, the final birth pangs before God's kingdom was fully established on the earth. But this is only part of the picture. Throughout the world, the knowledge of the one true god has also increased dramatically since Jesus came. This was one of the key roles of the Messiah—to spread the knowledge of god to the nations of the world—and it is certainly no small matter that hundreds of millions of people who once would have lived and died in spiritual darkness have now come into the light of the Messiah.¹

Although Brown is mistaken in his eschatology in that he views this present age as a transitional kingdom age (the truth is that we live in an intercalation age, an age of a parenthesis known as the Church Age), he is correct in that God's purposes continue (but through the church) as the light of the gospel and the knowledge of God continue to expand across the globe. In the last few centuries there has been incredible progress in translating the Bible into the languages of the world.

¹Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: General and Historical Objections*, 1ST ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000), see 88-98 for this objection. In this work, Brown lists the objection and then gives a short response, which is followed by a more developed response. This DDR series, for the most part, tracks the objection and his *short* response, after which you will find my comments. I highly recommend his book if you are interested in his longer responses (there is far too much material to include in the DDRs).

In this section Brown provides very interesting statistics on the spread of the Bible and Christianity through the centuries. On the Bible being translated into other languages, he writes:

By the year 100 C.E., the Bible had been translated into only a handful of languages (less than a half dozen, to be exact). By 200 C.E.—one hundred years later—the number had grown only to seven. By the year 500, it had increased only to thirteen, and by 1000, to just seventeen. Nine hundred years passed with less than twelve new translations! And all this time people were dying without knowledge of God as contained in the pages of Holy Scripture.² Thousands of life were touched, but the going was slow.

By 1500 C.E., the number of languages with the Word of God had grown to 34 (that's still a pretty slow pace), then, picking up a little speed, by the year 1800, there were 67 translations, and then, by the year 1900, the number had swelled to 537. By the year 2000, the number will exceed the 2000 mark. Isn't that incredible? It sounds like the knowledge of the kingdom of God is spreading. . . .

Writing in November 1990 issue of *Missions Frontiers*, Dr. Ralph D. Winter stated in the year 100 there was approximately one genuine follower of Jesus for every 360 people on the earth; by 1900, there was one for every seven; and by the year 2000, he projected that there will be one in three. The end is drawing near! The time of Messiah's return is approaching. . . .³

What this means in practical, down-to-earth terms—and it is staggering—is that there are approximately 100,000 to 150,000 people coming to the Messiah *each day* and more than 16,000 *new congregations* being established *each week*. Spiritually speaking, there can be no doubt: It's harvest time, and this transition age is almost over.⁴

While I do not agree with his eschatological views, I do appreciate his approach in answering the question. Instead of focusing in on the famines and hardships, he turned the focus on how more and more people are becoming believers and thus God is still working through history.

²I would like to note that just because the Bible had not been translated into a people's language does not mean that knowledge of God was not communicated to them through Christian missionaries and translators.

³While the end may near, the correct view, that we are in the Church Age, leads to the understanding that we cannot determine the future by trends—and trends are all we have for the Church Age. The Church Age is an age of parenthesis in the Plan of God and as such there is no prophecy for the Church Age—all we have are trends as per 2 Timothy 3.

⁴Again, while we can appreciate the growth of Christianity around the world (especially in China) this does not mean we are in a 'transition age that is almost over.' We are in the Church Age. I will touch on the Church Age at FBC next month.