

Pastor-teacher Don Hargrove
Faith Bible Church
Friday, March 11, 2011
<http://fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

JEWISH APOLOGETICS (38)
ANSWERING JEWISH OBJECTION #29
(DDR #657)

Objection #29: Why did God allow six million Jews to die in the Holocaust? Before I could even think about believing in Jesus, I need an answer to this question.

Michael Brown's short response:

This is an agonizing question that has been asked countless times by both Jews and Christians, but in many ways, it is more a question about man's sin against man than about God's silence during that sin. In other words, the Holocaust is something people did to other people. Why didn't God intervene? Some Orthodox rabbis would say it was because we, the Jewish people, had sinned against the Almighty and were therefore under his disfavor. The Holocaust, then, was a massive, overwhelming example of divine discipline, devastating for the moment but leading to health and healing in the end. To the extent that there is truth to this view, we must then ask what sins we had committed to merit such a fate (or to rob us of divine protection). Other Jewish leaders strongly disagree with this view, claiming that even godless Jews who died in the Holocaust were martyrs in some sense of the word, innocent victims of murderous injustice solely because they were Jews. Which view is correct from a biblical perspective? That is something we will consider, but let me suggest something you may never have entertained: The ultimate image of an innocent Jew suffering atrocities at the hands of godless murderers is not so much the image of a Jew dying in the Holocaust as it is the image of our Messiah, the best-known Jew of all time, beaten, flogged, humiliated, and nailed to a cross. He is a Messiah with whom we can identify—and who can identify with us.¹

Following this short response, Brown cites many examples of prominent rabbis who have written that God allowed the Holocaust because of the sins of the Jews. He follows this up with an extended discussion of the atrocious voluntary death of the Messiah as a substitute for

¹Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: General and Historical Objections*, 1ST ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000). See 177-196 for his full response to this objection. In this work, Brown lists the objection and then gives a short response that 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).

mankind. As I mentioned in my last DDR, the Holocaust is a sensitive area. This is no place for flippancy. However, just because it is a sensitive area does not mean that the root cause should not be brought up. Brown does an excellent job in bringing up the issue of the Holocaust and its relationship to the sinfulness of the people through the mouths of Jewish authorities. He follows this with a discussion of Jesus Christ as an innocent sufferer for the sins of the world.

One of the things that has always baffled me is how people can be so blind to divine discipline. I am speaking of believers here. Take the Exodus generation: The whole generation of adults, from the age of twenty upward—about 1,200,000—was under divine discipline. The wilderness, which was intended to be a place of testing and passing through to a new land, had become a huge cemetery. “What does it mean to have 1,200,000 people die in a period of thirty-eight years?” It means that 31,580 people died per year. More specifically, it means that eighty-seven people died every single day, eighty-seven funerals per day. With all of these funerals one would think they would “get it.” However, there is no indication that they ever did.

Consider the New Testament Corinthians. At a time when they should be together in fellowship worshipping the Lord in the Lord’s Supper, MANY were suffering from divine discipline—weak, sick, and dead.

1 Corinthians 11:28-30, But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. ³⁰ For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep [sin unto death]. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged.

Or consider the Laodecian believers, who thought they were doing just fine when they were making the Lord sick to His stomach.

Revelation 3:15-17, ¹⁵ 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷ 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

All of this is to remind us all of the importance of being diligent about the spiritual life. We need to make sure we continue to stay in fellowship with God and continue growing in His Word lest we be counted among the MANY who are suffering in divine discipline and not even aware of it. In each age only a very few continued to be faithful to the Lord by living in obedience to Bible doctrine. Most believers live out of fellowship, do not grow in doctrine, and have no interest in assembling with other believers. Most believers do what they want and are very clever in fooling themselves that they are OK. This is the way it has always been.

Every believer has the opportunity to be part of the faithful remnant who are found in the Old Testament and New Testament. Do you consider yourself part of the remnant or part of the rabble? Why?

On the Glory Road,

Pastor Don