

Defenders of The Faith

Introduction to Apologetics

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Does God Exist?

CHAPTER 1



Helen Keller

In the year 1880, Helen Keller was born in Tuscumbia, Alabama. When Helen was only nineteen months old, a serious illness left her blind and deaf. Because no one could communicate with her, Helen Keller did not have the opportunity to learn about God. Later, with the help of her teacher, Anne Sullivan, Helen learned how to communicate by having someone write words on her hand with their finger and to “listen” by feeling a speaker’s face. When she was nine years old, a minister told her about God. When he did, she smiled and communicated back to him these words:

“I always knew he was there, I just didn’t know his name.”

This little girl knew _____ even though she was blind, deaf and could not talk. Something inside her told her that God exists.

In the next four chapters, we are going to look at reasons to believe that God exists.

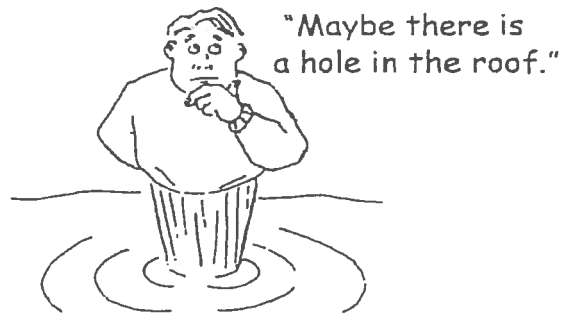
There have traditionally been _____ used for reasons to believe in the existence of God:

- 1) Whatever begins to exist has a cause. _____ to exist. Therefore, the universe must have a cause.
- 2) Every _____ that serves a purpose has a designer. The universe, earth and its inhabitants display mind-boggling complexity in design. Thus, there must be an _____.
- 3) A _____ can exist only if God exists. A universal moral law does exist. Therefore, God must exist.

In this chapter we will look at Reason #1.

REASON # 1 – EVERYTHING THAT HAS A BEGINNING HAS A CAUSE

When we find water on the floor, we look for a cause.ⁱ



When a window is broken, we look for a cause.



When we get sick, we look for a cause.



Can you think of anything in this world that does not have a _____?

Imagine that you are a world traveler and an explorer. You are traveling in a boat and you sail up to an island that you believe no other person has ever been to before.

As you are walking around the island you discover this ...



Would you say ...

A. Wow, what luck! This is a perfect place to live. This place is perfectly suited for my needs. I guess over billions of years wind, dirt and water created this. I am going to make myself at home!

OR...

B. I am not the first person on this island.

Obviously, you would assume that someone built the house.

What about our _____?

It is a _____ to live. It is _____ for our basic needs.

Did the universe have a cause?

Where did our universe come from?

There are only three options:

1. The universe is eternal.
2. The universe created itself.
3. The universe was created.

Let's look at these options:

1. The universe is _____

It is now clear, because of a growing mountain of scientific data that the universe did have a beginning. This view has not always been held by scientists.

*"By far the most important piece of evidence supporting the existence of a Divine Creator is the relatively recent scientific discovery of a _____ to the universe."*ⁱⁱ

Evidence that the universe is not eternal.

- A) The Expanding Universe - Our expanding universe suggests a beginning and a central point of origin. A beginning suggests a Beginner or _____
- B) The Second Law of Thermodynamics - The universe is running out of usable energy. In other words, the universe is winding down like a clock which implies that it must have been "wound up" at some point in the distant past. This would not be true if the universe were eternal. To illustrate, *"every car has a limited amount of energy (gas). If we had an unlimited (i.e., infinitely) large gas tank, we would never have to stop for gas again. The fact that we have to refill shows that it was filled up to begin with."*ⁱⁱⁱ
- C) Radiation Echo - In 1965, two Bell laboratory employees were testing an ultra-sensitive microwave radiation detector and accidentally discovered that low level radiation static readings were coming from everywhere. No matter where they pointed the detector they picked up a low-grade "hum." It was discovered that there was a faint amount of radiation coming from every rock. This "Radiation Echo" was first thought to be a malfunction or static on instruments. Many scientists soon deduced that the universe has low-level radiation from some past catastrophe or explosion.

Imagine the following scenario:

You hear a small explosion in your house. Concerned, you shout to your child, "What was that?" Your child yells, "Nothing! It just happened!"

Would you...

A. ...say to yourself, "*Hmm? That's strange. Oh well, if my child says 'it just happened' then I guess I'll accept that and assume that the small explosion did not have a cause.*"

B. ... run upstairs, look for (and punish) the cause?

There is abundant scientific evidence that the universe came into being in a sudden, explosive and cataclysmic way. Yet, when you ask some very intelligent people, "What was that?" they will claim, "Nothing! It just happened."

"If there is obviously a cause for a little bang, doesn't it also make sense that there would be a Cause for a Big Bang?"^{iv}

2. The universe _____

This would mean that in the beginning of time _____ came from _____. Since something can't just come out of nothing this option does not logically make sense. Nor, is there any scientific evidence that this has ever happened or could possibly happen.

Ravi Zacharias writes, "*Some years ago, I was having dinner with a few scholars, most of whom were scientists. They were a fine group of people, and I was honored to be in their company. At one point, our discussion veered into the conflict between naturalism's starting point (nature and nature alone) - and supernaturalism's starting point (which is that God is the only sufficient explanation for our origin). I asked them a couple of questions. 'If the Big Bang were indeed where it all began, may I ask what preceded the Big Bang?' Their answer, which I had anticipated, was that the universe was shrunk down to a singularity.*

I pursued, 'But isn't it correct that a singularity as defined by science is a point at which all the laws of physics break down?'

'That is correct,' was the answer.

'Then, technically, your starting point is not scientific either.'

There was silence, and their expressions betrayed the scurrying mental searches for an escape hatch."^v

Robert Jastrow, the founder-director of NASA's Goddard Institute of Space Studies, put it this way:

"A sound explanation may exist for the explosive birth of our universe; but if it does, a scientist's pursuit of the past ends in the moment of creation...The scientist's quest for answers for the origin of the universe ends like a bad dream. In it he has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries."^{vi}

3. The universe has a _____

The first sentence in the Bible says:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."^{vii}
(Genesis 1:1)

"In arguing for the _____ thirteenth-century Christian philosopher Thomas Aquinas always presupposed Aristotle's view that the universe is eternal. On the basis of that difficult assumption, he then sought to prove that God exists. Why did he take this approach? Because, Aquinas said, if he were to start with the premise that the universe had a beginning, then his task would be too easy! Obviously, if there was a beginning, something had to bring the universe into existence. But now, modern astrophysics and astronomy have dropped into the lap of Christians precisely the premise that, according to Aquinas, makes God's existence virtually undeniable. Given that whatever begins to exist has a cause and that the universe began to exist, there must be some sort of transcendent cause for the origin of the universe."^{viii}

If _____ in our world came from _____, why should we believe that the universe came from _____?

The Bible says:

"...Every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything!"
(Hebrews 3:4)

"By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible." (Hebrews 11:3)

"If everything has a cause then what caused God?"



This is a good question because the answers can tell us a lot about God!

Consider the following descriptions of God in the Bible:

"God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and truth."
(John 4:24)

" 'Am I only a God nearby,' declares the Lord, 'and not a God far away? Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?' declares the Lord. 'Do not I fill heaven and earth?' declares the Lord." (Jeremiah 23:23-24)

"...who is able to build a temple for him (God), since the heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain him." (2 Chronicles 2:6)

"But you remain the same, and your years will never end."
(Psalm 102:27)

"But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day."
(2 Peter 3:8)

" 'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.'" (Revelation 1:8)

These verses tell us that God is _____, unchanging and powerful.
God is everywhere at the same time. He is _____ He is _____
He is always _____ He has _____ and _____ He is

"Only things that had a beginning – like our universe – need a beginner. God had no beginning, so God did not need to be made."^{ix}

NOTES

CHAPTER 1:

Does God Exist? Everything that has a beginning has a cause.

- ⁱ Much of the artwork in this book was done by Alex Vasilyev.
- ⁱⁱ Michael A. Corey, *The God Hypothesis* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 25.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler, *Who Made God?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 2003), 25.
- ^{iv} Lee Strobel, (quoting William Lane Craig), *The Case for Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 76.
- ^v Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 64.
- ^{vi} Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomer* (New York: Warner, 1978).
- ^{vii} All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated are taken from the Holy Bible: New International Version. NIV. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society.
- ^{viii} Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 108.
- ^{ix} Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler, *Who Made God?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 2003), 23.



Does God Exist?

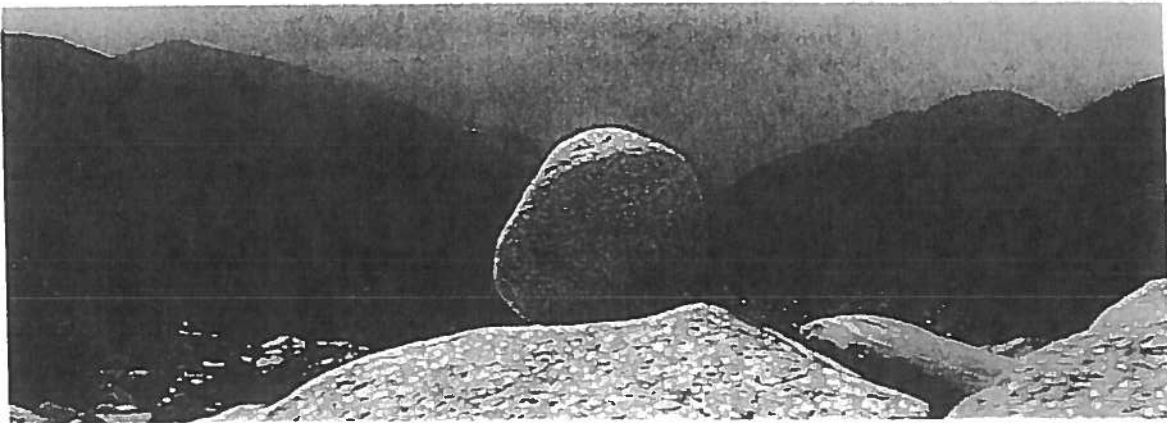
CHAPTER 2

REASON #2 - EVERY COMPLEX DESIGN HAS A DESIGNER

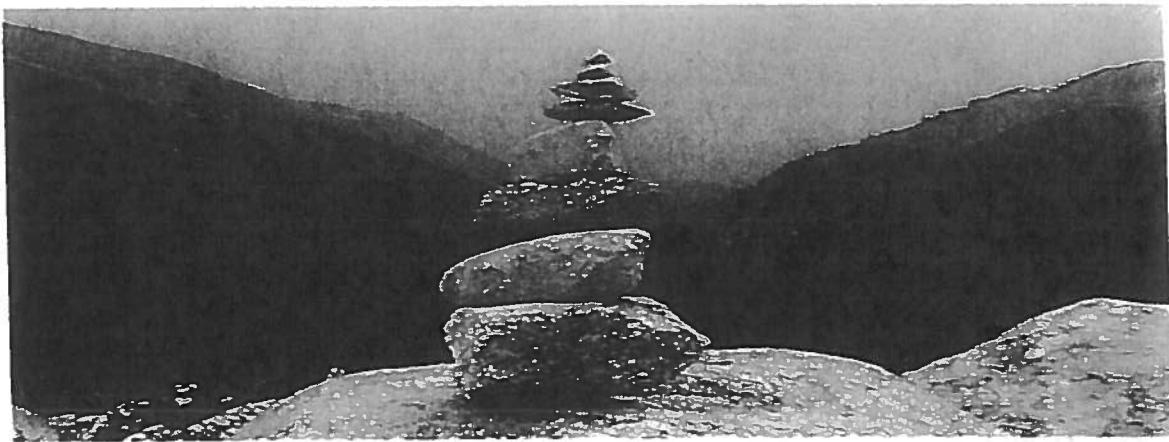
"The most miraculous thing is happening. The physicists are getting down to the nitty gritty ... and the last thing they ever expected to be happening is happening. God is showing through."

--John Updike

1. Imagine that you are hiking in an area of the world that you believe no other person has ever been to before. As you are hiking, you see one rock on another. Would you now suspect that someone had been there before you? Why or why not?



2. If you were hiking in the same area and saw several rocks on top of each other would you suspect that someone had been there before you? Why or why not?



3. If you saw this rock formation...



...would you suspect that someone had been there before you? Why or why not?

Nature is somewhat predictable. We know that wind, rain and snow did not create the faces of the four U.S. presidents on Mount Rushmore. The design is too complex. It is obvious that an intelligent, talented designer/artist created this.

Consider our universe.

From the outer regions of space to the microscopic world of atoms and molecules our universe displays

HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF THE COMPLEXITY OF OUR UNIVERSE:

- a) If our universe had not expanded at just the right speed at the moment of origin -- life on earth would not have been possible. Stephen Hawking has calculated that if the rate of the universe's expansion one second after the Big Bang had been smaller by even one part in a hundred thousand million million, the universe would have collapsed into a fireball.¹
- b) If the precise amount of matter were not produced at the moment of origin -- the universe would have never formed.
- c) If our universe expanded at any other speed -- life on earth would not be possible.
- d) If electrical, gravitational, electromagnetic or nuclear forces in our world were any stronger or weaker -- life on earth would not be possible.
- e) If our planet were not tilted exactly the way it is (at an angle of 23.5 degrees on its axis of rotation) -- life on earth would not be possible.

- f) If planet earth were any closer to the sun it would be too hot for life to exist on earth. If it were any farther away it would be too cold for life to exist on earth. The distance happens to be just right!
- g) If the size, composition, location and orbit of the sun, earth or moon were not just what they are – life on earth would not be possible. (In fact, the size of the moon “just happens” to be 400 times smaller than the sun and the moon “just happens” to be precisely 400 times closer to the earth than the sun is. This “just happens” to make a total solar eclipse possible from an earthbound point of view whenever their orbital travels bring them in line with one another. *“One can’t help but feel a nagging sense of suspicion that there is probably more going on here than just a mindless series of happy accidents”*).ⁱⁱ
- h) If the surface temperature of the sun was slightly higher or lower – life on earth would not be possible.
- i) If the earth rotated around the sun at any other speed or diameter-- life on earth would not be possible.
- j) If the cosmological constant (the energy density of empty space) were any different -- life on earth would not be possible. In fact, *“all the seemingly arbitrary and unrelated constants in physics have one strange thing in common – these are precisely the values you need if you want to have a universe capable of producing life.”*ⁱⁱⁱ
- k) If the delicate ozone layer did not exist to filter out the sun’s harmful ultraviolet rays – life on earth would not be possible.
- l) If the moon were any closer to earth, ocean tides would cover the highest mountains. If it were any bigger and in the same place, the tides would be too strong -- life on earth would not be possible.
- m) If the thickness of the earth’s crust were slightly different – life on earth would not be possible.
- n) If our planet did not have an abundant supply of carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen, phosphorus, and calcium -- life would not be possible. No other planet has been found to have all these crucial elements to sustain life.
- o) If our planet were not covered with 4/5th water which evaporates, gives us rain and regulates temperature-- life would not be possible.
- p) If water did not have such a high boiling point and if its solid form (ice) were not less dense than its liquid form – life on earth would not be possible.

Robin Collins uses this analogy:

“Suppose astronauts landed on Mars and found an enclosed biosphere, sort of like the domed structure that was built in Arizona a few years ago. At the control panel they find that all the dials for its environment are set just right for life. The oxygen ratio is perfect; the temperature is seventy degrees; the humidity is fifty percent; there’s a system for replenishing the air; there are systems for producing food, generating energy, and disposing of wastes. Each dial has a huge range of possible settings, and you can see if you were to adjust one or more of them just a little bit, the environment would go out of whack and life would be impossible. Do you know what the headline would be in the newspaper the next day? It would say: EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE EXISTS. We would conclude that this biosphere was not there by accident. Volcanoes didn’t erupt and spew out the right compounds that just happened to assemble themselves into the biosphere. Some intelligent being had intentionally and carefully designed and prepared it to support living creatures. And that’s an analogy for our universe.”^{ix}

Stephen Hawking writes, “*It would be very difficult to explain why the universe should have begun just this way, except as an act of God who intended to create beings like us.*”^x

Roger Penrose calculated that the mathematical probability of our universe “just popping out of nowhere” with the mind-boggling degree of fine-tuning that enables us to exist in our universe to be 10 to the 10¹²³. This number is so vast that it can’t be written on a piece of paper the size of the entire visible universe.

“The _____ does indeed _____ after all, insofar as it is permeated with the very same structural specifications that are necessary for human existence...These cosmic ‘coincidences’ between distant branches of physics are so compelling, in fact, that many scientists are actually coming forward and admitting that ‘something must be going on behind the scenes.’ ... Physicist Freeman Dyson said this... ‘As we look out into the universe and identify the many accidents of physics and astronomy that have worked together to our benefit, it almost seems as if the universe must in some sense have known that _____.”

The Bible says:

“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”
(Psalms 19:1)

“Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.”
(Isaiah 40:26)

“When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?”
(Psalms 8:3-4)

Thus far we have only discussed the _____ and the _____ of our universe.

Consider the complexity, design and the beauty of nature!

Rubel Shelly writes, *"One of my favorite examples of a case in nature of _____ involves an insect. The bombardier beetle, squirts a lethal mixture of two chemicals into the face of its enemy. When the two chemicals mix, they explode. In order to store those two chemicals in its own body until needed for self-defense, a chemical inhibitor is there to make them harmless. At the instant the beetle squirts the stored liquid from its tail, an anti-inhibitor is added to make the mixture explosive again. The slightest alteration in the chemical balance involved here would result in a race of exploded beetles in only one generation. How reasonable is it to put this complex process down to a lucky roll of the dice as opposed to _____? Since nature is not an intelligent being, and consequently has no sense of purpose, there must be Somebody behind nature who designed and built these flamethrowers in beetles."* ^{xii}

Consider the complexity of our own bodies!

Carl Sagan wrote this about the brain...

"The information content of the human brain expressed in bits is probably comparable to the total number of connections among neurons - about a hundred trillion. If written out in English, that information would fill some twenty million volumes. The equivalent of twenty million books is inside the heads of every one of us. The brain is a very big place in a very small space...The neurochemistry of the brain is astonishingly busy, the circuitry of a machine more wonderful than any devised by humans."

Richard Dawkins wrote this about the cell...

"Each nucleus of every cell in the human body contains a digitally coded database larger, in information content, than all 30 volumes of the Encyclopedia Britannica put together." ^{xiii}

Consider the "eye!"

Humans have been trying to build a better camera for about 250 years. However, even the most complex and advanced camera can't even closely compare to our eyes. Our eyes have a lens cover that keeps the dust off the lens in our eyelids. Our eyes can focus at various distances. Our eyes have automatic focus and a light meter which always adjusts to its setting. If you scratch your eye lid it heals itself. Doctors can't even explain why there is no scar tissue left.

Consider "DNA!"

Scientists tell us that a single strain of DNA holds enough information to fill a 6,000 volume encyclopedia. Who wrote the DNA code?

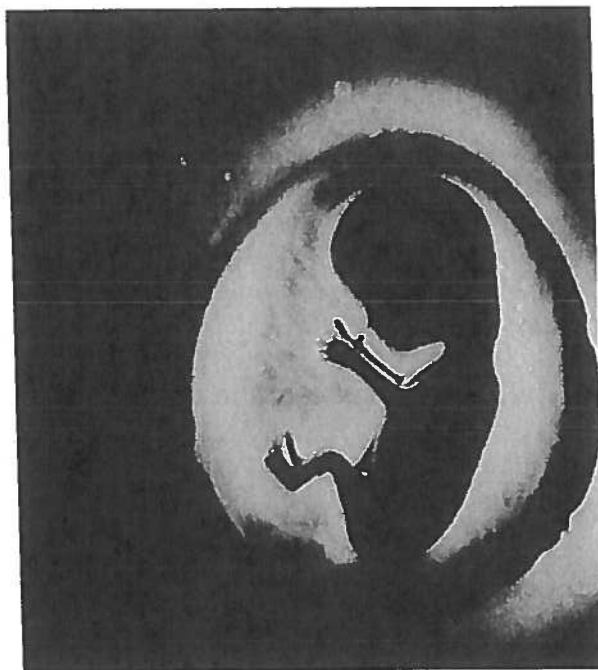
"How does a universe, which itself developed from nothing, impart into every human strand of DNA enough specific information to cover 600,000 pages of information from nothing?" ^{xiv}

The Stoic philosopher Chrysippus said this...

"If there is something in the world which human reason, strength and power are incapable of producing, that which produces it must be better than man. But the heavens and everything which displays unceasing regularity cannot be produced by man. Therefore that by which those things are produced is better than man. And what name rather than God would you give to this."^{xv}

The Bible says...

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." (Psalms 139:13-14)



NOTES

CHAPTER 2:

Does God Exist? Every complex design has an intelligent designer.

- ⁱ Stephen W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), 123.
- ⁱⁱ Michael A. Corey, *The God Hypothesis* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 142.
- ⁱⁱⁱ See: Patrick Glynn, "The Making and Unmaking of an Atheist." In: *God: The Evidence* (Rocklin, Calif.: Forum, 1997), 1-20. As cited in Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 126.
- ^{iv} Michael A. Corey, *The God Hypothesis* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 11, 39.
- ^v Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 157.
- ^{vi} If you would like to read more about these "cosmic coincidences" may I suggest the following books:
Michael A. Corey, *The God Hypothesis* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000).
John Gribbin and Martin Rees, *Cosmic Coincidences* (New York: Bantam, 1989).
Paul Davies, *The Accidental Universe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomer* (New York: Warmer, 1978).
Hugh Ross, *The Fingerprint of God* (Orange, California: Promise Publishing, 1991).
Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).
- ^{vii} Sir Fred Hoyle, "The Universe: Past and Present Reflections," *Annual Review of Astronomy and Astrophysics* 20 (1982). As cited in Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 78.
- ^{viii} As cited in Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 78.
- ^{ix} Cited in Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 78.
- ^x Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York: Bantam, 1988), 123.
- ^{xi} Michael A. Corey, *The God Hypothesis* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 46.
- ^{xii} Rubel Shelly, *Prepare to Answer - A Defense of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: 21st Century Christian, 1990), 72.
- ^{xiii} Richard Dawkins, quoted in Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds* (Dover's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 77.

^{xiv} Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 66.

^{xv} A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 149.

"What about evolution?"

CHAPTER 3



DEFINITION OF TERMS:

Micro-evolution = Small-scale variation or change within a species of animals and plants. Micro-evolution refers to the observable fact that living things can or must adapt to survive.

Micro-evolution is strongly supported by observation, research and science and is perfectly consistent with the Bible. The Bible tells us that all the different races of humans descend from a common human ancestor. Darwin's theory goes much farther than micro-evolution.

Macro-evolution/Darwinian Evolution = The theory that life began with simple single-cell creatures and then developed through random genetic mutation, natural selection and "*survival of the fittest*" into the vast array of plant and animal life that populate our planet.

Macro-evolution refers to changes from one species to produce a new species. This theory holds that evolution is an unguided, mindless, purposeless and God-less process.

For example: The 1995 official position statement of the American National Association of Biology Teachers states...

*"The diversity of life on earth is the outcome of evolution: an unsupervised, impersonal, unpredictable and natural process of temporal descent with genetic modification that is affected by natural selection, chance, historical contingencies and changing environments."*¹

This is not a Biblical teaching.

PROBLEMS WITH DARWIN'S THEORY OF EVOLUTION

I. Darwin's theory of evolution can't explain the universe came from.

"Life prohibiting universes are vastly more probable than life permitting universes. How much more probable?

The number of seconds in the history of the universe is about 10^{18} . That is, 10 followed by 18 zeros or 10,000,000,000,000,000,000.

The number of sub-atomic particles in the entire known universe is said to be about 10^{80} .

With those numbers in mind consider the following...

Donald Page one of America's imminent cosmologists has calculated the odds of our universe existing as being ...1 chance out of 10 to the power of 10^{124} . A number that is so inconceivable that to call it astronomical would be a wild understatement."ⁱⁱ (Quote from Dr. William Lane Craig)

II. Darwin's theory can't explain non-living things turn into living cells.

Darwin's theory of evolution presupposes that nonliving chemicals, if given the right amount of time and circumstances could develop by themselves into living matter. But there is no scientific data to back up that belief. There is no scientific evidence that our universe has the power of self organization.

Mathematicians (even atheistic mathematicians) have calculated that the probability of life emerging from chance chemical interaction is impossible.

Sir Fred Hoyleⁱⁱⁱ, who is a respected astrophysicist from Cambridge University, calculated that the probability of one living cell developing by chance from non-living material would be $1 \times 10^{40,000}$.^{iv}

This figure was endorsed by Chandra Wickramasinghe, (a Buddhist) professor of applied mathematics at the University of Cardiff, Wales.

Mathematicians commonly say that anything with a possibility less than 1×10^{50} is impossible.

So statistically speaking, it isn't even possible for life to appear by chance alone.

With these odds it is difficult to see how anyone could possibly believe that the origin of life was merely a random chance event. In fact, given the odds it is totally irrational to believe this. *"Yet, for some reason, we have been conditioned to accept this type of irrational belief structure as 'scientific.'"*^v

Walter Bradley, former professor at Texas A&M University, author of the book *The Mystery of Life's Origin*^{vi} said the following: "I think people who believe that life emerged naturalistically need to have a great deal more faith than people who reasonably infer that there's an Intelligent Designer."^{vii}

Sir Fredrick Hoyle once said, "The current scenario of the origin of life is about as likely as the assemblage of a Boeing 747 by a tornado whirling through a junkyard."^{viii}

Nobel Laureate Sir Francis Crick (one of the co- discoverers of the DNA molecule) has stated publicly that it is mathematically impossible for life to have randomly evolved on earth by chance processes alone.^{ix}

He writes: "An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have been satisfied to get it going."^x

III. Fossil Evidence and Darwinian macro-evolution.

Charles Darwin said that the lack of fossil evidence is "the most obvious and serious objection" to his theory.^{xi} However, he predicted that future fossil discoveries would vindicate him. He believed that fossil hunters would eventually find a great many transitional intermediates between the major groups

David M. Raup, the curator of the Field and Science Museum of Natural History in Chicago said this:

"We now have a quarter of a million fossil species, but the situation hasn't changed much ... We have even _____ of evolutionary transition than we had in Darwin's time."^{xii}

Michael Denton said the following in his book entitled *Evolution: A Theory in Crises*:

"...the universal experience of paleontology ...[is that] while the rocks have continually yielded new and exciting and even bizarre forms of life ...what they have never yielded is any of Darwin's myriads of transitional forms. Despite the tremendous increase in geological activity in every corner of the globe and despite the discovery of many strange and hitherto unknown forms, the infinitude of connecting links has still not been discovered and the fossil record is about as discontinuous as it was when Darwin was writing the *Origin*. The intermediates have remained as elusive as ever and their absence remains, a century later, one of the most striking characteristics of the fossil record."^{xiii}

What does the '_____.' show?

Major gaps remain in the fossil record. Most of the "missing links" that Darwin predicted would turn up are _____. "Despite the illustrations in scientific textbooks showing a gradual transition from ape to man, there is no hard evidence for it. In the case from ape to man, virtually every 'missing link' has turned out to be either man or ape, but not a transitional kind of 'ape/man.' Some finds were deliberate hoaxes."^{xiv}

Phillip E. Johnson, the author of *Darwin on Trial* reminds us: "There is no fossil history of single-celled organisms changing step by step into complex plants and animals. On the contrary, the major groups of animals all appear suddenly in the rocks of the Cambrian era - and no new groups appear thereafter."^{xv}

What is the '_____?' The Cambrian Explosion is a term to describe the layers of sediment from the Cambrian geological period, estimated to be about 550 million years ago, that show a sudden appearance of about 100 phyla of plants and animals. Biochemist Michael Behe uses the phrase _____ to describe this geological period.

Commenting on this period, the atheistic biologist Richard Dawkins says this: "...the Cambrian strata of rocks, vintage about 500 million years, are the oldest ones in an advanced state of evolution, the very first time they appear. It is as though they were just planted there, without any evolutionary history. Needless to say, this appearance of sudden planting has delighted creationists...The only alternative explanation of the sudden appearance of so many complex animal types in the Cambrian era is _____"^{vi}

Dr. Jonathan Wells (who earned a doctorate in religious studies at Yale Graduate School and a doctorate in molecular and cell biology from the University of California at Berkely) said: "This is absolutely contrary to Darwin's 'Tree of Life.' These animals, which are so fundamentally different in their body plans, appear fully developed, all of a sudden, in what paleontologists have called the single most spectacular phenomenon of the fossil record."^{xvii}

Stephen Meyer, Director and Senior Fellow at the Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture, explains: *"To put [the Cambrian period] into perspective, if you were to compress all of the Earth's history into twenty-four hours, the Cambrian explosion would consume only about one minute ... The Cambrian explosion represents an incredible quantum leap in biological complexity. Before then, life on Earth was pretty simple – one celled bacteria, blue-green algae, and later some sponges and primitive worms or mollusks. Then without any ancestors in the fossil record, we have a stunning variety of complex creatures appear in the blink of an eye, geologically speaking...All this totally contradicts Darwinism, which predicted the slow, gradual development in organisms over time. Darwin admitted the Cambrian explosion was 'inexplicable' and 'a valid argument' against his theory. He insisted ... 'nature takes no leaps.' He thought he would be vindicated, however, as more fossils were discovered, but the picture has only gotten worse."*^{xviii}

Paleontologist, Stephen Gould writes the following:
"All paleontologists know that the fossil record contains precious little in the way of intermediate forms; transitions between major groups are characteristically abrupt."^{xix}

"The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record persists as the trade secret of paleontology ... The evolutionary trees that adorn our textbooks have data only at the tips and nodes of their branches; the rest is inference, however reasonable, not the evidence of fossils."^{xx}

IV. Darwin's theory of evolution can't explain the irreducible complexity in

On page 154, of *"The Origin of Species"* 6th ed., Darwin says this:
"If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, then my theory would absolutely break down."^{xxi}

Darwin imagined the cell to be something rather simple. Recent discoveries have shown that a one-cell organism is more complicated than anything we've been able to recreate through supercomputers.

Bruce Alberts, the President of the National Academy of Sciences said this,
"We have always underestimated the cell ... The entire cell can be viewed as a factory that contains an elaborate network of interlocking assembly lines, each of which is composed of a set of large protein machines ... Why do we call them machines? Precisely because, like machines invented by humans to deal efficiently with the macroscopic world, these protein assemblies contain highly coordinated moving parts."^{xxii}

Michael Behe, the author of *Darwin's Black Box*,^{xxiii} (a book the *National Review* called one of the most important non-fiction books of the twentieth century)^{xxiv} explains that recent bio-chemical discoveries show numerous examples of this very kind of "irreducible complexity" and that molecules are made up of many parts that interact in complex ways, and all the parts need to work together. Any single part does not have useful function unless all the other parts are also present -- much like a mouse trap would not function if one part were removed.

"To Darwin, the cell was a 'black box.' Its inner workings were utterly mysterious to him. Now, the black box has been opened up and we know how it works. Applying Darwin's test to the ultra-complex world of molecular machinery and cellular systems that have been discovered over the past 40 years, we can say that Darwin's theory has 'absolutely broken down.'" (Michael Behe, biochemist, *Darwin's Black Box*, 1996).

Molecular biologist James Shapiro of the University of Chicago wrote this in *National Review*:

"There are no detailed Darwinian accounts for the evolution of any fundamental biochemical or cellular system, only a variety of wishful speculations."^{xxv}

Michael Behe says this: *"Maybe these 'molecular machines' and these biological systems look designed because they really were designed."*^{xxvi} *The only force known to be able to make irreducibly complex machines is intelligent design ... Why ignore intelligent design when it's a good match to the data? Yes, we have to keep an open mind in science, but we shouldn't be ignoring the most obvious explanation for all the evidence we have today."*^{xxvii}

V. Darwin's theory can't explain the highly complex information in _____.

"Life does not just consist of matter (chemicals) but also information. A theory of life not only has to explain the origin of matter but also the origin of the information."^{xxviii}

Information is different than matter. For example, if all the copies of Shakespeare's plays were destroyed, nothing would be permanently lost because actors who had memorized the roles could easily re-create the text."^{xxix}

In living systems, the guidance that is needed to assemble everything comes from DNA. Every cell of every plant and animal has to have a DNA molecule.

Scientists say that a single strain of DNA holds enough information to fill a _____ volume encyclopedia."^{xxx} *"There is, in fact, no entity in the known universe that stores and processes more information, more efficiently than the DNA molecule."*^{xxxi}

Suppose you were in a cave and you believed that you were the first person ever in this part of the cave. As you were trudging through this cave, you discovered ancient pictographs painted all over the wall. Would you still believe that you were the first human in this cave?

"When archaeologists discovered the Rosetta stone, they didn't think its inscriptions were the product of random chance or self-organizational processes. Obviously, the sequential arrangements of symbols was conveying information, and it was a reasonable assumption that intelligence created it."^{xxvii}

Whenever we see written information we assume that there is intelligence behind it. *"Every experience we have about information – whether it's computer code, hieroglyphic inscription, a book, or a cave painting – points toward intelligence. The same is true about the information inside every cell in every living creature."*^{xxviii}

That which is encoded on DNA is purely and simply written information.
Who wrote the information rich DNA code?

"Consider the difficulty of generating just two lines of Shakespeare's play Hamlet by [randomly] dropping Scrabble letters onto a table top. Then consider that the specific genetic instructions required to build a protein in even the simplest one celled organism would fill hundreds of pages of printed text."^{xxix}

"If nature is so 'clever' it can exploit mechanisms that amaze us with their ingenuity, is that not persuasive evidence for the existence of intelligent design behind the physical universe? If the world's finest minds can unravel only with difficulty the deeper workings of nature, how could it be supposed that those workings are merely a mindless accident, a product of blind chance? ... If physics is the product of design, the universe must have a purpose, and the evidence of modern physics suggests strongly to me that the purpose includes us."^{xxx}

Stephen Meyer explains the importance of this issue:

"This issue has caused all naturalistic accounts of the origin of life to break down, because it's the critical and foundational question. If you can't explain where the information comes from, you haven't explained life, because it's the information that makes the molecules into something that actually functions."^{xxxi}

Lee Strobel sums it up this way ... *"What do we make of the fact that DNA stores far more information in a smaller space than the most advanced supercomputer on the planet? What else can generate information but intelligence? What else can account for the rapid appearance of a staggering variety of fully formed, complex creatures that have absolutely no transitional intermediates in the fossil record? The conclusion was compelling: an intelligent entity has quite literally spelled out evidence of his existence through the four chemical letters in the genetic code. It's almost as if the Creator autographed every cell."*^{xxxii}

VI. Darwin's theory can't explain why we do not routinely observe beneficial mutation in living creatures.

Genetic mutation *"does not introduce new levels of complexity, and it cannot be shown that it is a step in the right direction. Most observed mutations are harmful, and there is no experimental evidence to show that a new animal organism or even a novel structural feature has ever been produced from the raw material produced by mutation."*^{xxxviii}

Pierre-Paul Grasse of the French Academy of Sciences writes: *"No matter how numerous they may be, mutations do not produce any kind of evolution."*^{xxxix}

"Geneticist John F. McDonald has called this 'a great Darwinian paradox.' The kind of mutations that macroevolution needs – namely, large-scale, beneficial ones – don't occur, while the kind it doesn't need – large-scale mutations with harmful effects or small-scale mutations with limited impact – do occur, though infrequently."^{xl}

CONCLUSION

More and more biologists, biochemists, astronomers, geologists, paleontologists, geneticists, mathematicians and other researchers - not just Christian - have raised serious objections to the Darwinian evolutionary theory in recent years.

"If Darwinists are to keep the Creator out of the picture, they have to provide a naturalistic explanation for the origin of life. They haven't been able to do it."^{xli}

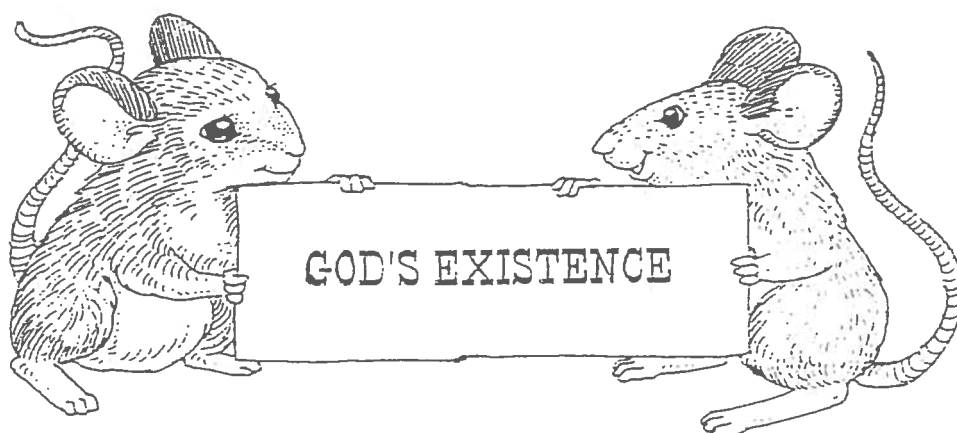
(Phillip E. Johnson, author of *Defeating Darwinism*)

Dr. James Tour is one of the world's leading nanoscientists. He is a professor at Rice University's Department of Chemistry and Center for Nanoscale Science and Technology and has earned a doctorate in organic chemistry from Purdue University and has done post-doctoral work at Stanford University and the University of Wisconsin. He has written over 140 technical research articles and holds more than 17 U.S. patents. Dr. Tour said this ...

"Only a rookie who knows nothing about science would say science takes away from faith. If you really study science, it will bring you closer to God. I stand in awe of God because of what he has done through his creation."^{xlii}

The world-renowned paleontologist Colin Patterson (Senior paleontologist of the British Museum of Natural History and author of the book *Evolution*) in 1981, in front of an entire audience of his evolutionary colleagues said this...

"Last year I had a sudden realization. For over twenty years I had thought I was working on evolution in some way. One morning I woke up and something had happened in the night; and it struck me that I had been working on this stuff for twenty years and there was not one thing I knew about it. That's quite a shock, to learn that one can be so misled so long ... So for the last few weeks I've tried putting a simple question to various people ... 'Can you tell me anything you know about evolution, any one thing ... that is true?' All I got was silence ... the absence of answers seems to suggest that ... evolution does not convey knowledge, or, if so, I haven't yet heard of it ... I think many people in this room would acknowledge that during the last few years, if you had thought about it at all, you have experienced a shift from evolution as knowledge to evolution as faith. I know that it's true of me and I think it is true of a good many of you here ... Evolution not only conveys no knowledge but seems somehow to convey anti-knowledge." ^{xliii}



A PARABLE ^{xliv}

Once upon a time there was a family of mice who had lived all their lives in a large piano. Every day in their piano world they heard the beautiful music of the instrument, filling all the dark spaces with pleasant sound and harmony. At first the mice were impressed by it. They drew comfort and wonder from the thought that there was Someone who made the music – invisible to them – yet close to them. They loved to think of the Great Player whom they could not see.

Then one day a daring young mouse named Charlie climbed up part of the piano and returned very thoughtful. He had discovered how the music was made. In fact, Charlie was a little disturbed by what he had discovered. Wires were the secret! Tightly stretched wires of graduated lengths which trembled and vibrated. He carefully and thoughtfully wrote a book about his discovery and called it "*The Origin of Music.*" At first, Charlie's theory was met with resistance. But eventually, it became the predominate view of where the music was coming from. The mice had to revise all their old, outdated beliefs. None but the most conservative mice could any longer believe in the "Mysterious Unseen Player."

The really cool mice designed "Charlie" stickers and wore them with pride to show the rest of the mice that they were not narrow-minded.

Later, other explorers carried the explanation further. Hammers were now the secret -- numbers of hammers dancing and leaping on the wires. This was a more complicated theory, but it all went to show that they lived in a purely mechanical and mathematical world.

The Unseen Player came to be thought of as a myth.

All the while, the Pianist continued to play.

Silly mice.

QUESTIONS FOR DARWIN

by Russ Whitten

So you think you know the answer
about how we came to be?

Do you think our ancestors
were really chimpanzees?

Did something really come from nothing
complete with complexity?

Is it human opinion
that defines morality?

If everything in this world has a cause
what caused the universe?

If all art has an artist
do you believe nature's art came first?

Did mind create matter or did matter create mind?
Is random chance the father of life, complex order and design?

Who is responsible for the information in my DNA?
Charles Darwin tell me where's the hope at the end of your day?

NOTES

CHAPTER 3: What About Evolution?

ⁱ Published in *The American Biology Teacher*, 58, no. 1 (January 1996): 61-62. Cited in Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds* (Dover's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 15.

ⁱⁱ Quote from Dr. William Lane Craig Audio Tape entitled "*Does God Exist? The Evidence For and Against*" (InterVarsity Christian Fellowship of the U.S.A), 1997.

ⁱⁱⁱ Fred Holye, *The Intelligent Universe* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1983).

^{iv} Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler, *Who Made God?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 2003), 64.

^v Michael A. Corey, *The God Hypothesis* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 222.

^{vi} Charles B. Thaxton, Walter L. Bradley, and Roger L. Olsen, *The Mystery of Life's Origin* (Dallas: Lewis and Stanley, 1984).

^{vii} Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 42.

^{viii} Fred Holye, *The Intelligent Universe* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1983).

^{ix} Michael A. Corey, *The God Hypothesis* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 220.

^x Francis Crick, *Life Itself: Its Origin and Nature* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981), 88.

^{xi} Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, 6th ed. (New York: New York University Press, 1988).

^{xii} David Raup, "Conflicts Between Darwin and Paleontology", *Field Museum of Natural History Bulletin*, January 1979 – quoted in Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 91.

^{xiii} Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crises* (Chevy Chase, Md.: Adler and Adler, 1986), 162. As cited in Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 56.

^{xiv} *Creation and Evolution*, Wall chart/poster, (Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing, 1999).

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- ^{xv} Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds* (Dover's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 95.
- ^{xvi} Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1996).
- ^{xvii} Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 44.
- ^{xviii} Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 240.
- ^{xix} Stephen Gould, "The Return of Hopeful Monsters," *Natural History*, vol. LXXVI (6), June - July (1977), 24.
- ^{xx} Stephen Gould, "Evolution's Erratic Pace," *Natural History*, vol. LXXXVI(5), May (1977), 14.
- ^{xxi} Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, 6th ed. (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 154.
- ^{xxii} Bruce Alberts, "The Cell as a Collection of Protein Machines," *Cell* 92 (February 8, 1998). As cited in Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 193.
- ^{xxiii} Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box* (New York: The Fress Press, 1996).
- ^{xxiv} Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 195.
- ^{xxv} Molecular biologist James Shapiro of the University of Chicago wrote this in *National Review* - quoted in Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 79.
- ^{xxvi} Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 79.
- ^{xxvii} Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 214.
- ^{xxviii} Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 75.
- ^{xxix} Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 72.
- ^{xxx} "Each nucleus of every cell in the human body contains a digitally coded database larger, in information content, than all 30 volumes of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* put together." (Richard Dawkins, *Climbing Mount Improbable*, 1996) quoted in Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 77.

^{xxx} A quote from *Unlocking the Mystery of Life*, a video produced by Illustra Media.

^{xxxii} Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 238.

^{xxxiii} Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 78.

^{xxxiv} A quote from *Unlocking the Mystery of Life*, a video produced by Illustra Media.

^{xxxv} Paul Davies, *Superforce* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 243.

^{xxxvi} Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 225.

^{xxxvii} Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 244.

^{xxxviii} Paul Davies and Kenyon, D., *Of Pandas and People* (Dallas, TX: Houghton Publishing Company, 1993).

^{xxxix} Pierre-Paul Grasse, *Evolution of Living Organisms* (New York: Academic Press, 1977), 88.

^{xl} Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 241.

^{xli} Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds* (Dover's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997).

^{xlii} Lee Stroble, *The Case for Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House), 111.

^{xliii} Michael A. Corey, *The God Hypothesis* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 5.

^{xliv} Author unknown. Adapted from an article in *Bulletin Digest*.

"I think it's indisputable that there has never been a time in history when the hard evidence of science was more confirmatory of belief in God than today."^{xliv} -- Dr. William Lane Craig

"The best data we have are exactly what I would have predicted had I nothing to go on but the first five books of Moses, the Psalms and the Bible as a whole."^{xliv} -- Arno Penzias -- (Nobel Prize winner).

"I find more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history whatsoever." -- Sir Isaac Newton (developed the laws of motion, calculus)

"With regard to the origin of life, science...positively affirms creative power." --
Lord Kelvin - (established thermodynamics as a science)

*"It is difficult to understand a scientist who does not acknowledge the presence of
God...as it is difficult to comprehend a theologian who would deny the advances
of science." --* Wernher von Braun - (past director of NASA)

Does God Exist?

CHAPTER 4

REASON #3

Universal and timeless moral values can exist only if God exists.
We know universal, timeless moral values do exist.
Therefore; God must exist.

Imagine the following scenario:

Two men, one named Bob, the other named Dan, are asked to create an animal in their minds that does not exist.

After doing this, Bob claims, "*My animal is bigger than yours.*" But Dan replies, "*No, my animal is bigger.*"

How would you decide who was right?

It would be impossible to decide who was right in this case because the animals that were created in their minds do not exist.

Now, what if Bob and Dan were asked to think of an animal that does exist and then write the name of the animal down on a piece of paper?

After doing this, Bob claims, "*My animal is bigger than yours.*" But Dan replies, "*No, my animal is bigger.*"

How would you decide who was right?

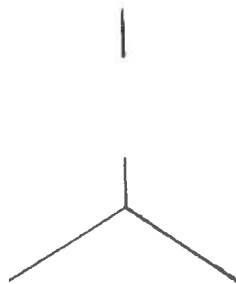
This time it would be easy to decide who was right. If Bob wrote the word "elephant" and Dan wrote the word "mouse" – obviously, Bob would be right! Elephants and mice really do exist. Elephants are always bigger than mice.

How do we decide who is right and who is wrong when it comes to morality?

When World War II was over, some of the war criminals were brought to trial. Some of these people were asked, *"How could you kill so many innocent people?"* Some answered, *"I was just obeying the commands of my leaders and following the laws of my country."* The judges asked, *"But, is there not a law that is bigger and above national laws? Isn't there a universally recognized law of morality that we all must live by?"*

If a law exists that is bigger and above national laws, human feelings and personal opinions, then who created this universal moral law?

This law must come from someone who is bigger and above nations and humans -- This must come from God!



If there is no God, there is no universal moral law. Many atheistic philosophers affirm this.

Jean Paul Sartre admits that this is the atheist's dilemma. This French atheistic philosopher, wrote *"everything is indeed permitted if God does not exist, and man is in consequence forlorn, for he cannot find anything to depend upon either within or outside himself...Nor on the other hand if God does not exist, are we provided with any values or commands that could legitimize our behavior."*ⁱ

In other words, if we take God out of the picture -- right and wrong, good and evil go with Him. In the process, we lose the right to say anything is wrong or evil.

Trying to decide who is right or wrong without the standard of a moral law is like trying to decide whose imaginary animal is bigger.

When God is no longer in the picture terms like "Morality," "Good," "Evil," and "Truth" can only be defined by conflicting human opinions, personal feelings or personal tastes.

If _____ based solely on _____ or personal feelings, whose opinion or feelings should we choose to follow? If _____ is the author of the _____ whose nature do we choose to follow?

C.S. Lewis wrote: *"The moment you say one set of moral ideas can be better than another, you are, in fact, measuring them both by a standard, saying that one of them conforms to that standard more nearly than the other ... You are, in fact, comparing them both with some Real Morality, admitting that there is such a thing as a real Right, independent of what people think, and that some people's ideas get nearer to that real Right than others."*ⁱⁱ

Of course, there are some objections to this argument.

Some people say...

"This universal moral law came from thousands and thousands of years of social human evolution."



Why does this not make sense?

Here are reasons why the idea of an universal moral law does not make sense:

1. *"Not one proponent of evolutionary ethics has explained how an impersonal, amoral first cause through a non-moral process can produce a moral basis of life."*ⁱⁱⁱ (Ravi Zacharias).
2. If morality is evolving then society's morals should be getting better, but we see that we are not getting better. *We have just ended the bloodiest century in human history, it would be hard to prove that we are progressing in areas of morality.*^{iv}
3. The theory of evolution uses the words "*the survival of the fittest*" to explain how animals evolve. This theory claims that it is natural that a bigger, stronger living thing lives and the smaller, weaker living thing dies. If this is true, then a strong person killing a weak person is a natural result of evolution. But, we know that this is evil. Thus, the Universal Moral Law must be bigger and above any theory of evolution.
4. Evolutionary ethics can't explain why sometimes strong, healthy people will die to save a weaker, unhealthy individual.

What is the relevance of this argument?

1. If there really is a moral law, (going back to the law of causality) there has to be a moral law giver. "A law implies a law giver."
2. If God is the author of the law, then we can learn a lot about Him from this Law.
3. It may occur to us..."Hey wait, a minute... I consistently break the moral law! And because I do and will again break this law, I just may be an enemy of the Creator of the Universe. I may be in serious trouble!!"

C. S. Lewis, in his classic book *Mere Christianity* which deals with this issue says this...

"It is after you have realized that there is a real Moral Law, and a Power behind the law, and that you have broken that law and put yourself wrong with that Power – it is after all this, and not a moment sooner, that Christianity begins to talk. When you know you are sick, you will listen to the doctor. When you have realized that our position is nearly desperate you will begin to understand what the Christians are talking about...They tell you how the demands of this law, which you and I cannot meet, have been met on our behalf, how God Himself becomes a man to save man from the disapproval of God...The Christian religion is, in the long run, a thing of unspeakable comfort. But it does not begin in comfort; it begins in the dismay I have been describing, and it is no use at all trying to go on to that comfort without first going through that dismay."

In this lesson we have been reminded that a Moral Law exists and a Moral Law Giver exists (God). We have also been reminded that because of our sin – we have made ourselves enemies of God. But there is and there is.

His name is Jesus Christ.

The Bible says...

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." (Romans 5:6-11)

NOTES

ⁱ *French Philosophers from Descartes to Sartre*, (New York: Meridian Books, 1961), 485.

ⁱⁱ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001).

ⁱⁱⁱ Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 113.

^{iv} Ravi Zacharias, *Is There Meaning in Evil and Suffering?* (Video: Faith and Science Lecture Forum, Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, 1999).

^v C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 32.

Is the Bible Really the Word of God?

CHAPTER 5

Christians believe that God has _____ with us through the Bible. How do we judge whether this is true or not? What evidence is there that the Bible is trustworthy, reliable and any different than other sacred religious books?

In the next two chapters, we will look at the following two questions:

1. If God wrote a book what sort of qualities would you expect from it?
 2. Does the Bible display the qualities and characteristics we would expect if it was from God?
- I. If God wrote a book we would expect that he would tell us that he _____

In the Old Testament alone there are over 3,800 claims that the Scriptures are ultimately from God.

In fact, the Bible claims that it comes from the _____

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

The Bible claims that God _____ to write exactly what he wanted them to write.

"Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:20-21)

Jesus described the Scriptures as the very "word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)

II. If God wrote a book we would expect that it would be a '_____ book.

- A. No book in the world even begins to approach the Bible in terms of circulation and popularity.
- B. No other book has been translated more than the Bible.
- C. Complete books of the Bible have been translated into 2,303 languages.ⁱ
- D. The entire Bible has been published in 405 languages.
- E. The entire New Testament has been published in over 1,034 languages.
- F. The Bible can now be read by 90% of the world population in their own language.
"We are less than a generation away from the Bible becoming the world's first universally translated book."ⁱⁱ
- G. The Bible is the best selling book internationally.
- H. No book has ever had more influence on history, civilization, ethics, art, music, literature, architecture, philosophy, politics and even our calendar than the Bible.
- I. There have been more books written about the Bible than any other book.

III. If God wrote a book we would expect it to be _____

Think about history books, maps, scientific literature and encyclopedias. These types of books are reprinted every few years and sometimes are outdated even before they come from the press. *"Most men cannot even agree with their own writings after 10 years! Try getting just 10 science textbooks spread over 20 or 30 years together, and compare them."*ⁱⁱⁱ In contrast, the content and message of the Bible has always remained the same, yet it has never been considered outdated. The Bible speaks to every generation. Its universal message has given hope, peace and comfort to people from every nation and every generation for more than 2,000 years.

IV. If God wrote a book we would expect that it would be _____

There are Christians all over the world. This proves that every culture can understand and accept the basic message of the Bible. The Bible also appeals to every age. It is both simple and profound. Young children can understand the simple stories of God's love and protection. The most educated scholars are amazed at the Bible's profound depth and complexity.

"[The Bible] is a pool in which a child may wade and an elephant can swim. It is both simple and profound. It is immediate and neverfailing."^{iv}

V. If God wrote a book it would be perfectly

The Bible is a collection of 66 books.

It was written by about 40 different people.

These people were from different cultural, economic, geographical and educational backgrounds. Some of the Biblical writers include: Kings, political and military leaders, shepherds, fishermen, rich people, poor people, a tax collector, a doctor.

It was written over a course of 1,600 years of human history.

It was written in three languages -- (Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic).

It was written on three continents -- (Europe, Asia, and Africa).

It contains many different styles and genres of literature.

The writers worked independently from one another at different periods of history. Many of the writers never met another biblical writer.

The books for the most part were 66 independent compositions.

Yet, when these books were collected and put into one volume there was perfect harmony of unity, focus, message and teaching. There were no contradictions.

"This incredible unity amidst such great diversity can best be accounted for by a God who stands outside of time and history and has weaved each of the pieces into one overall mosaic of truth and hope."^v

VI. If God wrote a book we would expect that it would

The power of the Bible to change individual lives and society for the better is indisputable. Millions of people have been changed for the better because they have read and followed the teachings in the Bible.

Not too long ago there was a highly publicized debate among a Christian preacher and an atheistic philosopher. The atheist was trying to convince the audience that the Bible is just another book with no inherent "power" to change lives. The Christian speaker presented the following scenario to the philosopher. He asked, "What if you were driving and found yourself lost in a part of the city that was well known for being extremely dangerous and violent? As you make a wrong turn down a dark ally, all of a sudden, your car sputters and then comes to a stop. You try desperately to get the car started again, but it just won't start. You quickly notice a gang of men slowly approaching the car. Would it matter or not to you if you knew that these men were coming from a Bible study?"

After the laughter subsided, the philosopher conceded, "Yes, I have to admit that it would ease my fears if I knew that the gang of men was coming from a Bible study!"^{vi}

The American Bible Society once conducted an interesting experiment in Chicago. They chose a 5-block area in a district with one of the highest crime rates in the city and flooded it with copies of the Gospel of John. They included an invitation for anyone who wanted more reading material to send for a copy of the complete New Testament. They received many requests. The district police captain later reported that the crime rate in the area dropped dramatically in one month's time. The same experiment produced similar results in another area with a high crime rate.^{vii}

“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”
(Hebrews 4:12)

John Bunyan, the author of the book *Pilgrims Progress* once wrote this about the Bible:

“This book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book.”^{viii}

VII. If God wrote a book we would expect that it would be

The Bible makes the claim that it will never be destroyed.

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." (Mark 13:31)

"...All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever." (1 Peter 1:24-25)

These words are proven true when we consider that many people and governments throughout the ages have tried to destroy the Bible, yet it survives.

- 1) In 100 B. C., Antiochus IV burned all the scriptures he could find and decreed death to all owners - Yet, the scriptures survived.
- 2) In 301-304, the Roman Emperor, Diocletian burned thousands of copies of the Bible, commanded that all Bibles be destroyed and decreed that any home with a Bible in it should be burned. In fact, he even built a monument over what he thought was the last surviving Bible. He then claimed, *"The Christian name has been extinguished!"* The very next emperor, Constantine, made Christianity the state religion of Rome. 500 years after Diocletian's death, his grave (a huge mausoleum) became a Christian church.
- 3) The Roman general and nephew of Constantine named Julian proclaimed that his book entitled *"Refutation of the Christian Religion"* would destroy the Bible forever. Have you ever heard of this book?
- 4) Voltaire, the great French Philosopher (1694-1778) said, *"In 100 years, the Bible would be a forgotten and unknown book"* ...a hundred years later, the Geneva Bible Society occupied his home.
- 5) Lew Wallace (1827-1905) who served as a writer, a Civil War general, a Governor of the territory of New Mexico and U.S. ambassador to Turkey was a known atheist. For two years, he studied at the leading libraries in Europe seeking information for his book that he believed would disprove the Bible and "forever destroy Christianity." While writing the second chapter of this book, he found himself on his knees crying to Jesus, *"My Lord and my God!"* Because of the indisputable evidence, he could no longer deny that the Bible was the Word of God. Later, he wrote *"Ben Hur"* one of the greatest English novels ever written concerning the time of Christ.
- 6) During the 1950's, the Soviet Government (who outlawed owning or studying the Bible) built a grand building in Kiev, Ukraine to house the Communist headquarters for that region. In 1994, I had the privilege of teaching the Bible to the entire freshman class in this very building which then housed one of the first Christian universities in the former Soviet Union.

VIII. If God wrote a book we would expect that it would be . . .

If a book is really from God we would expect it to be historically, scientifically, archeologically, philosophically and morally accurate.

A. IS THE BIBLE

About 100 years ago, it became popular to criticize the Bible because some people felt that it had historical mistakes in it and some believed that eventually archaeology would prove that the Bible is not historically accurate. However, just the opposite happened. Modern archaeology has helped us realize that the Bible is historically accurate even in the small details. There have been thousands of archaeological discoveries in the past century which support every book of the Bible. Here are some examples...

Critics used to believe...

...that Moses could not have written any of the books of the Bible because they believed that writing did not exist that early in history...

but then...

...in 1902, archaeologists discovered the Code of Hammurabi which was written long before Moses was born.^{ix}

Critics used to believe...

... the Bible was wrong because they felt that King David was a myth. They pointed to the fact that there was no archeological evidence that King David was an actual historical figure...

but then ...

...in 1994 archaeologists discovered an ancient stone that was inscribed with the references to King David and the "House of David."

Critics used to believe...

...that the Bible was wrong because there was no evidence (outside of the Bible) that a group of people called the Hittites ever existed. Thus, they felt this proved that the Bible is a mythical creation of ancient Hebrew writers...

but then...

...in 1906, a German archaeologist named Winckler was excavating in Turkey and discovered the capital city of the Hittite empire, the entire Hittite library and 10,000 clay tablets documenting the Hittite history. Scholars translated these writings and discovered that everything the Bible said about the Hittite empire was true.

Critics used to believe...

...the book of Acts was not historically accurate. A man named Sir William Ramsay, one of the greatest historical/archaeological scholars in history, decided to try to disprove the Bible as the inspired Word of God by showing that the book of Acts was not historically accurate...

but then...

...after 30 years of archaeological research in the Middle East, Ramsay came to the conclusion that "*Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy ... this author should be placed along with the very greatest historians.*" He wrote a book on the trustworthiness of the Bible based on his discoveries^x and _____ to Christianity based on his research.

Sir Ramsay found no historical or geographical mistakes in the book of Acts. This is amazing when we realize that in the book of Acts, Luke mentions 32 countries, 54 cities, 9 Mediterranean islands and 95 people and he did not get one wrong. Compare that with the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. The first year the *Encyclopedia Britannica* was published it contained so many mistakes regarding places in the United States that it had to be recalled.^{xi}

Critics used to believe...

...that the Old Testament could not be reliable because they felt that over a long period of time the Old Testament writings would have been changed, altered, edited or corrupted...

but then...

in 1947, the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. These scrolls contained, among other writings, every book in the Old Testament (except Esther). Until the Dead Sea Scrolls were found the earliest copy of the complete Old Testament was from 900 A.D. Scholars compared this copy with the Dead Sea Scrolls (produced around 1,000 years earlier) and found that the Old Testament had been handed down _____ through the centuries.

The great Jewish archaeologist, Nelson Glueck (who is known to be one of the top three archaeologists in history) said this...

"No archaeological discovery has ever _____ a single, properly understood Biblical statement."^{xii}

B. IS THE BIBLE _____

The Bible was written centuries ago and it has many verses in it that relate to science. One would expect that the lack of modern scientific knowledge of the writers would show through on this ancient document. But instead, there is an amazing treatment of science in the Bible that transcends human invention and the knowledge of the period in which it was produced.

Consider what the Bible does not say...

In 1862, an American adventurer and antiquities dealer named Edwin Smith purchased an ancient Egyptian medical book in Luxor. Ten years later, Egyptologist George Ebers purchased and helped translated it. It is now known as _____. It was written in Egypt about 1552 B.C. (around the time Moses was born). *"Since Egypt occupied the dominant position in the ancient medical world, the Papyrus is of great importance as a record of the medical knowledge of that day."*^{xiii} When it was translated, it was really humorous as to what they believed. For example, this book said the following things...

"To prevent hair from turning gray, anoint it with the blood of a black calf which has been boiled in the fat of a rattlesnake."

"To prevent balding mix together the fat of a horse, a hippopotamus, a crocodile, a cat, a snake and an ibex. Then mix in the tooth of a donkey crushed in honey."

"Victims of poisonous snake bites are to be treated with 'magic water.' Water is considered 'magic' when it has been poured over an idol."

"Splinters are to be treated with a mixture of worm's blood and donkey dung."

"To stop bleeding, rub donkey dung on a cut."

"To remove wrinkles, split a toad in half and apply to wrinkled area."

The ancient Egyptians believed that our planet was supported by five great pillars, that the earth was flat, that blood contained evil spirits and that there was spontaneous generation of life.

Again, scholars have dated *Papyrus Ebers* back to the time of Moses.

Where did Moses grow up? Acts 7:22 tells us that ...*"Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians..."*

Don't you think we could expect to see some of this scientific ignorance or medicinal errors shining through in the writings of Moses? Yet, we see no scientific mistakes. Not only is this true, but we also find that some of our _____ were recorded in the Bible the whole time.

Consider the following examples...

What the Bible said all along	Scientific Discoveries
God told the Israelites to separate people who had infection and disease from the rest of the community. (Leviticus 13 written about 1,500B.C.)	In the 1500's, the Black Plague was killing many people in Europe. Then the people began following the Bible's teachings to separate those who had diseases. This practice helped to end the Black Plague.
God gave the Israelites many teachings about the washing of hands and clothing. (Numbers 19:11-16 written about 1,500B.C.)	The importance of washing to prevent the spread of germs was not recognized until 1865 by Joseph Lister.
God told the Israelites to let the land rest every seventh year. (Leviticus 25:4 written in about 1,500B.C.)	Today, the practice of "letting the land rest" is known to be very important for the soil. This was not practiced, however, (except for the Israelites) until about 200B.C. by the Romans.
God told the Israelites in Genesis 17:12 (written about 1,500B.C.) "every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised."	In 1935, doctors discovered that the best day for a surgical procedure on a new born baby is on the 8th day because the blood is at the height of clotting on this day.
Isaiah 40:22 (written about 700B.C.) tells us the earth is round.	Most cultures before the 16th century believed that the earth was flat.
Job 26:7 (written about 2,000 B.C.) tells us that "God hung the earth on nothing."	Most ancient cultures believed that the world was held up by something.
Isaiah 43:16 (written about 700B.C.) and Psalms 8:6-8 (written about 1,000B.C.) talk about "paths of the seas."	In 1855, Matthew Fountaine Maury, the "father of oceanography" discovered that there were natural currents and paths in the ocean.
God told Noah exactly how to design the ark in Genesis 6:15 (written about 1,500B.C.)	Navel engineers now know that this design is perfect for the rough seas.
Job 38:20(written about 2,000B.C.) speaks about light moving from one place to another.	The fact that light moves was not known until Newton discovered the motion of light in the 1600's.
The prophet Jeremiah said that "no person can count all the stars"(Jeremiah 33:22 written about 600 B.C.)	At one time in history some people believed that we could count and even name all the stars. Astronomers now understand that the stars are uncountable.
Ecclesiastes 1:6 (written about 950B.C.) describes global wind patterns.	Global wind patterns were not understood until the 1960's with the help of satellites.
Job 36:27-28; (written about 2,000B.C.) and Ecclesiastes 1:7 (written about 950B.C.) describes the water cycle.	This process was not understood by scientists until Perrault and Mariotte in the 1700's.

C. CONCLUSION:

“Several years ago, *Time* magazine featured the following question on its front cover: ‘How True Is the Bible?’ On the final page of an eight page article, the piece concluded:

‘After more than two centuries of facing the heaviest scientific guns that could be brought to bear, the Bible has survived – and is perhaps the better for the siege. Even on the critics’ own terms – historical fact -- the Scriptures seem more acceptable now than they did when the rationalists began the attack. Noting one example among many, New Testament Scholar Bruce Metzger observes that the Book of Acts was once accused of historical errors for details that have since been proved by archaeologists and historians to be correct.’”^{xiv}

IX. If God wrote a book we would expect it to display _____

Deuteronomy 18:21-22 says this... “You may say to yourselves, ‘How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?’ If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken...”

According to this test, a person was to be considered a false prophet if his prophecies were not 100% accurate at all times. In other words, it would only take one false prophecy to reveal a false prophet. The same is true about a book. If a book claims that it is speaking for God and it predicts that something will happen in the future, but the prediction is wrong, then you can know that the book is not from God.

The Bible contains numerous examples of predictive prophecy showing that God is the only possible author. The Bible has more than _____ in it. These prophecies are about people, places and events _____. None have ever been proven false! Only the Bible is _____ in its prophecies.

Here are some examples:

PROPHECY

The prophet Isaiah writing in ~740-681 B.C. predicted that a leader named Cyrus would lead an army against the Babylonians and allow God's faithful people to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. At the time of Isaiah's prophecy, the Assyrians, not the Babylonians, controlled Jerusalem and the temple was standing untouched. This prediction is found in Isaiah 44:24-45.

FULFILLMENT

Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in 586 B.C. by the nation of Babylon. In 537 B.C., Persia defeated Babylon. 150 years after the prophecy, the Persian King Cyrus, a man who was not even born when Isaiah predicted this, victoriously led the Medo-Persian armies against the Babylonians and declared that the captives were free to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

PROPEHCY

In 586 B.C., the city of Tyre was considered one of the most powerful seaports in the world. At this time, the prophet Ezekiel predicted that Tyre would be destroyed by Babylon and other nations. He also predicted that the city would be flattened, reduced to a simple place to fish and that the city would never be rebuilt. These predictions can be found in Ezekiel 26.

FULFILLMENT

That very year, Babylon destroyed part of the city of Tyre. Then, in 332 B.C., Alexander the Great destroyed the rest of the city and it was never rebuilt. Today, the place is just a flat rock where people fish.

In chapter 10, we will discuss the hundreds of prophecies in the Old Testament about the Messiah which were fulfilled during the life of Jesus Christ.

There are many prophecies in the Bible about the end of the world, Jesus' return, judgment, heaven and hell that have not yet been fulfilled. Since the Bible has proven itself to be correct 100% of the time in the prophecies that have been fulfilled, don't you think it would be wise to take the prophecies that have not yet been fulfilled very seriously?

The offer of the gift of _____ of sins, an _____ and _____ through Jesus Christ is the core message of the Bible and it sets the Bible apart from all other books in all of history!

NOTES

- ⁱ These statistics were from 2004 and found on www.biblesociety.org.
- ⁱⁱ Quote from Ted Bergman in Josh McDowell's, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 9.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Floyd McElveen, *God's Word, Final, Infallible and Forever* (Grand Rapids: Gospel Truths Ministries, 1985), 23.
- ^{iv} Adapted from Leon Morris's assessment of the Gospel of John in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament - The Gospel According to John*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1971), 7.
- ^v Norman Geisler, *How Can We Know the Bible is the Word of God?* (International Students, Inc., 1995).
- ^{vi} Ravi Zacharias, *Is There Meaning in Evil and Suffering?* (Video: Faith and Science Lecture Forum, Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, 1999).
- ^{vii} Rubel Shelly, *Prepare to Answer* (Nashville: 21st Century Christian, 1990), 128.
- ^{viii} Dr. David Jeremiah, *A Nation in Crises – God's Plan for Leadership - Vol. I* (Atlanta: Walk Thru the Bible Ministries, 1996), 13.
- ^{ix} Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 444.
- ^x Sir William Mitchell Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915; reprinted Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), 222.
- ^{xi} Bert Thompson and Wayne Jackson, *A Study Course in Christian Evidences* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, Inc., 1992), 114 – 115.
- ^{xii} Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 90.
- ^{xiii} S. I. McMillen, M.D., *None of These Diseases* (New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1973), 9.
- ^{xiv} "The Bible: The Believers Gain," *Time*, 30 Dec. 1974, 34. Cited in Rubel Shelly, *Prepare to Answer: A Defense of the Christian Faith* (21st Century Christian, 1990), 103.

MORE REASONS WE CAN TRUST THE BIBLE

CHAPTER 6

First, let's consider the trustworthiness of the New Testament.ⁱ

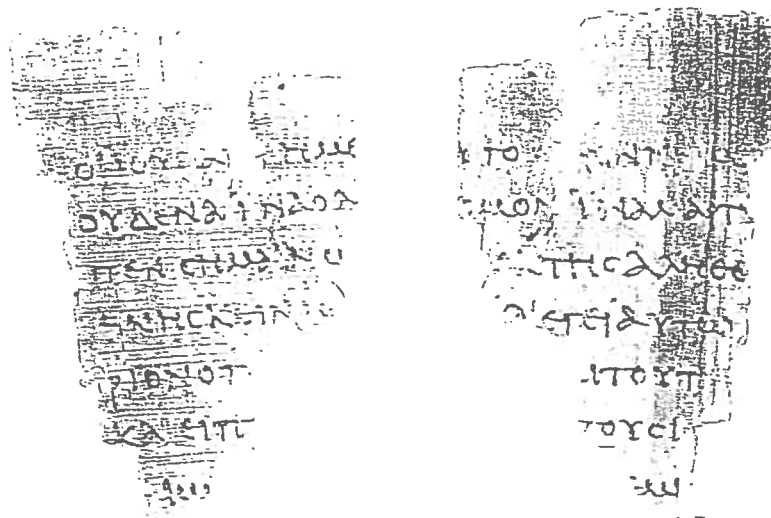
1) **We have a great quantity of highly _____ copies of books of the New Testament.**

There are more than 5,660 ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament from close to the time when the originals were written. Furthermore, these copies are from many different geographical areas.

*"In addition to the Greek manuscripts, we also have translations of the gospels in other languages at a relatively early time. For example, there are more than 8,000 ancient Latin copies of the New Testament. Even if we had no Greek manuscripts today, by piecing together the information from these translations we could actually reproduce the contents of the New Testament. In addition to that, even if we lost all the Greek manuscripts and the early translations we could still reproduce the contents of the New Testament from the multiplicity of quotations in commentaries, sermons, letters, and so forth of the early church fathers."*ⁱⁱⁱ

*"The abundance of manuscript copies, about 24,970 manuscripts in all, makes it possible to reconstruct the original with virtually complete accuracy."*ⁱⁱⁱ

The oldest portion of the New Testament we have today is from the Gospel of John. It is called John Rylands Fragment (P⁵²). Scholars have dated this portion of John's gospel to about 125AD. The interesting thing about this scrap is that it was found in a community along the Nile River in Egypt, far from Ephesus where the gospel of John was written.



Two papyrus fragments of the Gospel of John dating from A.D. 100-150. They are in the John Rylands Library and are the earliest extant manuscripts of any part of the New Testament.^{iv}

- 2) There is a remarkably small gap of time between the original New Testament writings and the oldest existing manuscript copies.

RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT DOCUMENTS

Author & Book	Time Gap between the Original and Earliest Copy	Number of Existing Copies
Herodotus, <i>History</i>	ca. 1,350 yrs.	8
Thucydides, <i>History</i>	ca. 1,300 yrs.	8
Plato	ca. 1,300 yrs.	7
Demosthenes	ca. 1,400 yrs.	200
Caesar, <i>Gallic Wars</i>	ca. 1,000 yrs.	10
Livy, <i>History of Rome</i>	ca. 400 yrs. ca. 1,000 yrs.	1 partial 19 copies
Tacitus, <i>Annals</i>	ca. 1,000 yrs.	20
Pliny Secundus, <i>Natural History</i>	ca. 750 yrs.	7
New Testament	fragment of a book: 50 yrs. books of the NT: 100 yrs. most of the NT: 150 yrs. complete NT: 225 yrs.	5,366

(Dr. Norman Geisler)^v

"Even if someone deliberately or by accident emended or corrupted a manuscript, it would be corrected by the many other manuscripts available. To sum up; unless we want to throw a blanket over all of history and say that there is nothing knowable about the past, no history that can be trusted, no Grecian or Roman history, no Aristotle or Plato or Socrates, we had better not make any claims against the historicity and accuracy of the New Testament. The _____ documents are far more numerous, older, demonstrably more accurate historically, and have been examined by a far greater battery of scholars, both friend and foe, than all the other ancient manuscripts put together. They have _____"

"I'm disturbed by the fact that we do not have the originals and the copies are known to have mistakes in them!"



There are some _____ in the biblical manuscripts. However...

- Such variants are relatively rare in the copied manuscripts.
- In most cases, we know which variant is wrong from the context or the parallel passages.
- In no case do the variants affect any doctrine of Scripture.
- The variants actually vouch for the accuracy of the copying process, since the scribes who copied them knew that mistakes existed in the manuscripts, still they were duty-bound to copy what the text said.
- The variants _____ the message of the Bible. (For example, one manuscript copy reads "*Holy, Holy is our God*" when most other texts read "*Holy, Holy, Holy is our God*").

Dr. Norman Geisler reminds us that a distinction can be made between the text and its message, for one can receive a text with mistakes and still receive 100% of the message. He gives the following example: Suppose you receive a message from Western Union as follows:

#ou have won seven million dollars!

No doubt, you would be excited about the message even though there is obviously a mistake. Now, suppose on the same day you receive an e-mail that reads:

Y#u have won seven million dollars!

And then later you receive a message in the mail that reads.

You #ave won seven million dollars!

Would you say... "*I'm disturbed by the variants and mistakes in these messages?*"
Probably not. No doubt you would gladly pick up your money.

Two things are important to note about this example...

- 1) Even with one sentence - mistake and all - 100 % of the message comes through.
- 2) Because in each message the mistake is in a different place we can have confirmation of every other letter in the original intended message.^{vii}

3) **The _____ of the New Testament were in a position to report _____ historical information.**

Matthew, John and Peter were apostles. Paul and James were later recognized as apostles. Luke was Paul's companion and "beloved physician." Mark was Peter's companion. Papias, who wrote in about A.D. 125, affirmed that Mark had carefully and accurately recorded Peter's _____. In fact, Papias said Mark "made no mistake" and did not include "any false statement."^{viii}

Irenaeus writing in about A.D. 180 confirmed the traditional authorship of the gospels. He wrote...

"Matthew published his own Gospel among the Hebrews in their own tongue, when Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel in Rome and founding the church there. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself handed down to us in writing the substance of Peter's preaching. Luke, the follower of Paul, set down in a book the Gospel preached by his teacher. Then John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned on his breast, himself produced his Gospel while he was living at Ephesus in Asia."^{ix}

- 4) **The New Testament was written during the first century of Christianity which was during the lifetimes of eyewitnesses.**

"The standard scholarly dating, even in very liberal circles, is still within the lifetimes of various _____ including hostile eyewitnesses who would have served as a corrective if false teachings about Jesus were going around."^x

If the gospels were not true, all someone would have to do was to say, "Hey, wait a minute! I was there and it didn't happen that way!"

- 5) **The New Testament writers would have wanted to _____ accurate history.**

The apostles were dying out, so it would have been very important to the New Testament writers to preserve their teachings. (See Luke 1:1-4; John 20:31) These writers had nothing to gain except criticism, prison, beatings and death.

- 6) **Ancient cultures meticulously cultivated the art of _____**

Thus, we don't have to worry about the time Jesus actually taught from the time these teachings and events were written down.

Books and scrolls were rare and expensive in that culture. They didn't have computers, printing presses, television, video, recorders, etc. In ancient days, school children would memorize Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Rabbis would memorize all the Old Testament. Many Muslims have been known to memorize the entire Koran. Bhandanta Vicitsara recited 16,000 pages of Buddhist canonical text in Yangon, Myanmar (formerly Rangoon, Burma) in May, 1974.

- 7) **The differences among the gospels _____ fit the patterns of ancient storytelling.**

Remember—no electricity in those days. At night the community would gather and tell sacred stories. It was customary to tell sacred stories with some very minor changes. It was entertaining, creative, and enjoyable to tell a story in a different way.

In storytelling, the ancient people did not feel it that important, as we do today, to “*tell the story in strictly chronological order or even to quote people verbatim, as long as the essence of what they said was preserved. Ancient Greek and Hebrew didn’t even have a symbol for quotation marks.*”^{xi}

One study suggested that in the ancient Middle East, anywhere from 10 to 40% of any given retelling of sacred tradition could vary from one occasion to the next. However, there were always fixed points that were unalterable, and the community had the right to intervene and correct the storyteller if he or she erred on those important aspects of the story. In the ancient world the importance was not seen in quotation, but rather in getting the gist of the teaching right.

8) The literary genre of the gospels most resembles that of other trustworthy histories and biographies from the ancient world.

9) The presence of details which would embarrass the apostles supports the Gospel’s historicity.

If the apostles were just making it all up, why would they include that they disbelieved, misunderstood and even denied Jesus? Why would they record that they argued at times and acted like cowards?

10) The testimony of non-Christian writers confirms the general contours of Christ’s life.

Ancient writers/historians did not write much about religious matters. They wrote about political rulers, emperors, kings, military leaders and battles. With this in mind, it is remarkable how much is recorded about Jesus by ancient non-Christian writers. “*We have better historical documentation for Jesus than for the founder of any other ancient religion...One expert documented thirty-nine ancient sources (outside of the Bible) that corroborate more than one hundred facts concerning Jesus’ life, teachings, crucifixion and resurrection.*”^{xii}

11) Archaeology has confirmed the _____ details in the New Testament.

12) The testimony of other early Christian writers _____ most of the rest of the details.

These early Christian writers were people who had left their former lives. The early Christians had not always been Christians. They all had non-Christian backgrounds and traditions and then became followers of Christ. To say that their testimony is too biased because they believed what they were saying is like saying you are disqualified from writing about history if you believe the things you’re writing about actually happened.

Now, let's consider the trustworthiness of the Old Testament.

When it comes to the Old Testament, it is the careful _____ of the ancient scribes that can give us confidence that the original message has been accurately and faithfully preserved.

"Hasn't the Bible changed over time?"



Many of us have enjoyed playing "the telephone game." You whisper a sentence or a story into someone's ear and they in turn whisper the message into someone else's ear. On and on it goes until the last person has to report the message he or she has received. Most of the time, the story is very different than the original.

What evidence do we have that the same sort of thing did not happen with the message of the Bible over the years? What confidence do we have that the original content of the Bible has not been edited, altered or changed?

An important point to remember is that when the Bible is translated into English or another language, scholars do not use more recent versions or translations as their source. Rather, they use _____ manuscripts of the Old and New Testament.

Also, consider what has been learned about the careful copying techniques used in transmitting the Bible.

Careful Copying Techniques:

The scribes who copied the Bible were _____; with very strict standards and rules.

For example, the rules for the Talmudists (A.D. 100–500) included:

- The copyist must sit in full Jewish dress and be recently bathed.
- He should not begin to write the name of God with a pen newly dropped in ink.
- If a king addresses the scribe while writing the divine name, the scribe should ignore him.
- If there was one mistake on a scroll it was destroyed, if it was intended to be a master.
- No word or letter must be written from memory without the scribe looking at the codex before him.
- Only a master could be used – no duplicates of duplicates allowed.
- Between every consonant the width of a hair or thread must intervene.
- Between every section, the breadth of nine consonants must intervene.
- Between every book, three lines must intervene.
- The fifth book of Moses must terminate exactly with a line, but the rest need not do so.

The Massoretes who followed (A.D. 500-900) likewise exercised great care in copying. As Frederick Kenyon noted in *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, “They numbered the verses, words, and letters of every book. They calculated the middle verse, the middle word and the middle letter of each. They enumerated verses which contained all the letters of the alphabet, or a certain number of them; and so on. These trivialities, as we may rightly consider them, had yet the effect of securing minute attention to the precise transmission of the text; and they are but an excessive manifestation of _____ which in itself deserves nothing but praise. The Massoretes were indeed anxious that not one jot nor tittle, not one smallest letter nor one tiny part of a letter, of the Law should pass away or be lost.”^{xiii}

Further regulations these ancient scribes adhered to were as follows:^{xiv}

- They could only use clean animal skins to write on.
- They could have no less than forty eight and no more than sixty lines on a page.
- The ink must be black of a special recipe.
- They must verbalize aloud each word while they were writing it.
- They must wipe the pen and wash their entire bodies before writing the word God.
- If three pages required correction, the entire document must be replaced.
- The letter, words and paragraphs must be counted.
- The document becomes invalid if two letters even touch each other
- All documents could only be stored in sacred places.
- All old and worn documents were buried with ceremonial pomp.

"What about all the contradictions in the Bible?"



Dr. Gleason Archer, (a Harvard graduate who has taught graduate level seminary in the field of Biblical criticism and learned over 30 languages, most of them languages of Old Testament times in the Middle Eastern world) in his book entitled *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* said this...

"As I have _____ one apparent discrepancy after another and _____ the alleged contradictions between the biblical record and the evidence of linguistics, archaeology, or science, my confidence in the ^{trustworthiness} of Scripture has been repeatedly _____ by the discovery that almost every problem in Scripture that has ever been discovered by man, from ancient times until now, has been dealt with in a completely satisfactory manner by the biblical text itself - or else by objective archaeological information."

Dr. Norman Geisler, said he has made it a hobby of collecting "alleged conflicts or mistakes" in the Bible. In fact, he has written a book called "*When Critics Ask*" in which he devoted more than 570 pages to the "alleged contradictions or mistakes." Dr. Geisler said this...

"I have a list of about 800 of them. Of the 800 allegations I've studied, I haven't found one single error in the Bible, but I've found a lot of errors by the critics... When it has been proven to be accurate over and over again in hundreds of details, the burden of proof is on the critic, not the Bible."^{xv}

"Is the Bible the only book from God? Why can't the holy books from other religions also be from God? Isn't it arrogant and narrow-minded to claim that only one religion has the truth?"



Christianity does not claim that there is no truth in other religious books. It only claims that the Bible is true and whatever is contradictory to the Bible is false.^{xvi}

Imagine the following: Three people are asked the question, "*What is the capital of the United States?*" One person answers, "*New York.*" Another person answers, "*Washington D.C.*" The other answers, "*Toledo.*" It wouldn't matter how sincere they were about their answers; only one answer is correct. They can't all be true and contradict each other at the same time. Further, it should not be considered arrogant and narrow-minded to say that only one of their answers is correct.

"Likewise, if the Bible declares that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead (1 Corinthians 15), and the Qur'an teaches that he did not (Sura 4:157), both books cannot be true on such a crucial teaching. One of them has to be wrong. Further, if the writings of Joseph Smith teach that there are many gods, which they do,^{xvii} and the Bible declares that there is only one God, as it does, then both of these writings cannot be true. If the Bible is true, Smith is wrong; if Smith is right, the Bible is wrong."^{xviii}

Belief in reincarnation is common to some religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism. The Bible says, "*man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.*" (Hebrews 9:27) Both beliefs can't be true. One must be false. Buddhism denies the existence of a personal God. Christianity affirms the existence of a personal God. Again, one religion is wrong about this.

NOTES

ⁱ Much of the discussion about the trustworthiness of the New Testament was taken from a lecture by Dr. Craig Blomberg I attended in 2000 at Colorado State University. Dr. Blomberg is a professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary and the author of *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*.

ⁱⁱ Lee Stroble, (quoting Bruce Metzger) *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 59.

ⁱⁱⁱ Norman Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 123, 124, 386.

^{iv} This picture comes from David S. Dockery (General Editor), *Holman Bible Handbook* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1992), 609.

^v This chart comes from Norman Geisler, *How Can We Know the Bible is the Word of God?* (International Students, Inc., 1995).

^{vi} Floyd McElveen, *God's Word, Final, Infallible and Forever* (Grand Rapids: Gospel Truths Ministries, 1985), 19.

^{vii} This example comes from Norman Geisler, *How Can We Know the Bible is the Word of God?* (International Students, Inc., 1995).

^{viii} Lee Stroble, (quoting Craig L. Blomberg) *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 24.

^{ix} Ibid., quoting from Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 3.3.4.

^x Ibid., 33.

^{xi} Ibid., 25.

^{xii} Lee Stroble, *The Case for Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 264.

^{xiii} Judson Poling, *How Reliable Is the Bible?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998, 2003), 54-55.

^{xiv} This list came from the video entitled, *The Indestructible Book: The Story of the Bible*, Volume One, (Chandler, AZ: Bridgestone Multimedia Group, 2001).

^{xv} Lee Stroble, *The Case for Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 137-8.

^{xvi} Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler, *Who Made God?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 2003), 38.

^{xvii} “By 1844 Smith came to believe that ‘God himself, who sits in yonder heavens, is a man like unto one of yourselves, that is the great secret ... I am going to tell you how God came to be God ... God himself; the Father of us all dwelt on an earth the same as Jesus Christ himself did ... You have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves. No man can learn you more than what I have told you.’ (cited in John Taylor, ed. *Times and Seasons* [periodical of the Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints], 5:613-14).” Footnote cited in Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler, *Who Made God?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 2003), 220.

^{xviii} Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler, *Who Made God?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 2003), 38.

Why is there so much suffering and evil in the world? (Part I)

CHAPTER 7

"How can an all-powerful, all-loving God allow so much suffering and evil in the world?"



Three hundred years before Jesus was born, the Greek philosopher, Epicurus (342-270BC) gave this problem its classical form. He said...

If God wants to prevent evil, but can't -- God is not all-powerful.
If God is powerful enough to prevent evil, but won't -- God is not all-loving.
If God neither can nor desires to prevent evil -- He is not divinity.
If God can and desires to prevent evil -- Why then is there evil in this world?

Even the prophets in the Bible raise the question in various forms:

Habakkuk asked God, "*Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong?*" (Habakkuk 1:3)

David cried out, "*How long will the enemy mock you, O God?*" (Psalm 74:10)

Jonah wondered why God would put up with the evil Ninevites and wanted God to wipe them out.

Jeremiah challenged God by saying, "*I would speak with you about your justice: why does the way of the wicked prosper?*" (Jeremiah 12:1)

The book of Job is consumed with the question: "*Why was Job suffering?*"

TWO IMPORTANT POINTS TO BEGIN WITH:

- 1) Every world religion and every world view - not just Christianity - must give an answer for an answer for this is not just a Christian question!
- 2) An answer to the question of suffering and evil must meet both the logical and the emotional of the question. In other words, if someone puts forth an explanation for the problem of suffering and evil this explanation must make sense logically, intellectually, philosophically and emotionally.¹

One way that people choose to resolve this problem is to say that evil and suffering really do not exist. Many Eastern religions go this route.

For example, pantheistic religions teach, "*If God is all, and God is good, then evil can not exist.*"

Hinduism, Taoism, some forms of Buddhism, the Christian Science Church, Unitarians, and others believe that the way to resolve the problem of evil is to realize that it really does not exist at all. It is an illusion. Thus, in order to overcome pain, suffering and evil, (they say) we must learn to believe that everything in the physical world is non-real or illusion -- then the illusion will have no grip on us.

This explanation does not make sense emotionally. I can't imagine having to tell a rape victim, "the evil you've encountered is just an illusion."

Also, the pantheistic explanation of evil and suffering does not make sense intellectually.

*"There is a humorous story told of India's leading philosopher, Shankara. He had just finished lecturing the king on the deception of the mind and its delusion of material reality. The next day, the king let loose an elephant that went on a rampage, and Shankara ran up a tree to find safety. When the king asked him why he ran if the elephant was non-real, Shankara, not to be outdone, said, 'What the king actually saw was a non-real me climbing up a non-real tree!' ONE MIGHT ADD, 'THIS IS A NON-REAL ANSWER.'"*ⁱⁱⁱ (Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods*, 118)

"If it is true that 'all is one' and 'all is God,' as the New Age worldview holds, the distinction between good and evil ultimately disappears. When a New Ager tells me there are no absolutes, I always ask him if he is *absolutely* sure about that."ⁱⁱⁱ

Another example of an explanation that does not make sense logically and emotionally is atheism. Many atheists and skeptics begin their challenge to God's existence by saying "*God can't exist because evil exists.*"

But there are logical problems with this statement.

Questioning the question: Consider the following dialogue by Dr. Ravi Zacharias and a university student from a question and answer session (adapted from Ravi Zacharias' book "*Can Man Live Without God?*").^{iv}

- Student: There is too much evil in this world; therefore, there cannot be a God!
- Speaker: Would you mind if I asked you something? You said, "God cannot exist because there is too much evil." If there is such a thing as evil, aren't you assuming that there is such a thing as good?
- Student: I guess so.
- Speaker: If there is such a thing as good, you must affirm a moral law on the basis of which to differentiate between good and evil.
- Speaker: In a debate between the philosopher Frederick Copleston and the atheist Bertrand Russell, Copleston said, "Mr. Russell, you do believe in good and bad, don't you?" Russell answered, "Yes, I do." "How do you differentiate between good and bad?" challenged Copleston. Russell shrugged his shoulders and said, "On the basis of feeling – what else?" I must confess, Mr. Copleston was a kindlier gentleman than many others. The appropriate "logical kill" for the moment would have been, "Mr. Russell, in some cultures they love their neighbors; in other cultures they eat them, both on the basis of feeling. Do you have any preference?"
- Speaker: When you say there is evil, aren't you admitting there is good? When you accept the existence of goodness, you must affirm a moral law on the basis of which to differentiate between good and evil. But when you admit to a moral law, you must posit a moral lawgiver. That, however, is who you are trying to disprove and not prove. For if there is no moral lawgiver, there is no moral law. If there is no moral law, there is no good. If there is no good, there is no evil. What, then, is your question?
- Student: What, then, am I asking you?

This student just realized that the question of evil and suffering is only valid if God, in fact, exists. As soon as you take God out of the picture, terms like "Good" and "Evil" can only be defined by conflicting human opinions and personal feelings. If morality is defined by human opinion we are reduced to asking ourselves, "*which human's opinion do we choose to follow?*"

"Seen in this light, _____, 'ot evil actually requires the _____ rather than disproves it."^v

So atheism's explanation for the problem of evil and suffering does not make sense logically. Also, it does not make sense emotionally.

Listen to what Richard Dawkins, an atheistic professor at Oxford University, says about "why people suffer:"

"In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at the bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no other good. Nothing but blind, pitiless indifference. DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is. And we dance to its music."^{vi}

Would Dawkins honestly tell a rape victim that the rapist was merely dancing to his DNA?^{vii}

"Why did God create a world where evil and suffering exists?"



There are two types of suffering:

- 1) Suffering caused by _____
- 2) Suffering caused by _____ such as natural death, drought, famine, tornadoes, cancer, etc.)

In this chapter, we will examine both types of suffering.

Think about four possible worlds God could have created:

1. God could have created _____ at all.
2. God could have created a world where _____ could be chosen.

In this type of world suffering caused by moral evil or sin would not exist, but along with that, there would be _____.

One of the greatest gifts God has given us is the freedom to choose. If God did not create us with the freedom to choose we would be like robots. God could have created humans that had no choice to love him or not. But, this would have made real love impossible.

For example...

Imagine a man who programmed his computer to say "*I love you!*" every few minutes.



Would this be real love?

God does not force us to love him. He gives us a choice. Free choice, however, leaves the possibility of a wrong choice.^{viii} If we choose to love God, we will obey him. If everyone obeyed God, evil would not result. If people choose not to obey God, evil will result. This is where suffering caused by evil comes from. **It comes from disobedient people, not God.**

C. S. Lewis writes, "God created things which had free will. That means creatures which can go either wrong or right. Some people think they can imagine a creature which was free but had no possibility of going wrong; I cannot. If a thing is free to be good it is also free to be bad. And free will is what has made evil possible. Why then, did God give them free will? Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automata - of creatures that worked like machines—would hardly be worth creating."^{ix}

3. God could have created a world where there was no such thing as suffering due to natural causes.

According to the Bible, the original creation was "very good" (Genesis 1:31). This implies that there was no suffering due to natural causes in the beginning. Genesis 3 describes how Adam and Eve used their _____ to disobey God and introduced sin in the world. Now we live in a fallen world where, because of sin, even the ground is cursed (Genesis 3:17-19). Because of sin, we are subject to suffering due to natural causes that would not have occurred had humans not _____, against God.

The Bible says, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time." (Romans 8:18-22)

Why doesn't God _____ every time there is possible suffering due to natural causes?

Would this be a desirable environment to live in? Probably not. This would be Road Runner/Wylie Coyote Land. This type of world would only confuse us and frustrate us. Rationality and intelligence involve a high degree of dependability between observable causes and their effects. Consistent scientific laws enable us to understand, manage and use our environment constructively. God has created our world with consistent natural laws (such as the law of gravity). These natural laws help us to survive. In a world where there were no consistent laws of nature, we would never grow in our understanding of it. We would never be able to use these laws for our good or pleasure. However, sometimes these natural laws can bring about suffering and pain.

4. The world as we know it - where good and evil exist along with the possibility of choosing either.

If God's intention was to produce an environment where humans could exercise their _____ love for each other...This world is equipped for that.

If God's intention was to produce an environment where humans could develop character and exercise their rational, ethical, intellectual, spiritual and moral sensibilities...this world suits that purpose. In the final analysis, of the four worlds described -- **ours is the only one where love is possible.**

"This world is the _____ of the _____. If God is to both preserve freedom and defeat evil, then this world is the best way to do it. Freedom is preserved in that each person makes his or her own _____ to determine their destiny. Evil is overcome in that once those who reject God are separated from the others, the decisions of all are honored and made permanent." ^x

NOTES

ⁱ Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 108-139.

ⁱⁱ Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 118.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler, *Who Made God?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 2003), 42.

^{iv} Ravi Zacharias, *Can Man Live Without God?* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 1994), 182.

^v Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler, *Who Made God?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 2003), 35.

^{vi} Richard Dawkins, *Out of Eden* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 133.

^{vii} Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 114.

^{viii} Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler, *Who Made God?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 2003), 37.

^{ix} C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, HarperCollins Edition 2001), 47-48.

^x Norman Geisler and Ron Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1990), 73.

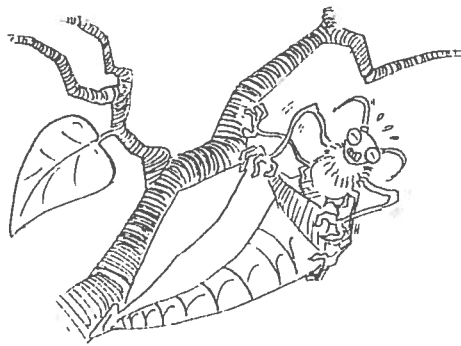
Why is there so much suffering and evil in the world? (Part II)

CHAPTER 8

16 SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO BETTER UNDERSTAND SUFFERING AND EVIL FROM A CHRISTIAN POINT OF VIEW

1. Suffering is not always evil.

Often, it is a good thing in the human experience and essential for our survival. Have you ever watched a butterfly struggling to get free from a cocoon?



It doesn't look like it is having a good time. In fact, it looks like it is suffering. But, if you feel sorry for it, intervene and tear the cocoon open to set the butterfly free, it will die. The struggle strengthens the butterfly so it can survive.

2. Suffering can develop our character and lead us to maturity.

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” (James 1:2-4)

Someone once asked Michelangelo, “How can you take a huge hunk of granite and turn it into David?” He answered, “That hunk of granite *is* David. I just have to remove everything that does not belong.” How can God take a sinful, imperfect, flawed human being and make them into a mature, complete, Christ-like person who is the very image of God on earth? God has to remove everything that does not belong and that process is often painful, but necessary.

3. Death is not intrinsically evil. – The death of bacteria is required to have fertile soil. The death of plants and animals are required for other animals to survive. It would not be desirable, given the earth's limited resources, for there to have been no physical death among humans.

4. But... "What about the death of a child?"

"If God is good and can do anything...
How do you explain the death of a child?"



First of all, it is important to be reminded that...

If there is no God, then there is no explanation.

If there is no God, there is no answer to this question.

If there is no God, when a child dies there is no hope for the family to ever see that child again.

However, from a Christian point of view, when a child dies the family can still have hope, peace, strength and comfort. Here are 4 reasons why...

A. God ... the child's life; he has the power to give the child life again.

The Bible tells about a man named Lazarus who died. His sister, Martha, went to talk to Jesus and said ... *"'Lord,' Martha said to Jesus, 'if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha answered, 'I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?'"* (John 11:21-26)

B. When a child dies he or she goes to Heaven which is ... than our world.

The apostle Paul stated ... *"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far..."* (Philippians 1:21-24)

The following verses indicate that when a child dies, he or she goes to be with God in Heaven. (2 Samuel 12:21-23; Matthew 18:2-4, 19:13-15; Romans 9:11; 1 Corinthians 14:20; Deuteronomy 1:39)

C. God can ... the family who lost the child.

To the family and loved ones, God can be the comforter and healer. David (who himself lost a child) wrote... *"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me."* (Psalm 23)

D. The Bible teaches that the separation caused by death is only temporary for those who are Christians.

"Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

5. Although God is not the cause of evil, he has the power to use evil to bring about

How would the nation of Israel have survived the famine if Joseph had not been sold into slavery by his brothers and if he had not been imprisoned unjustly?
Joseph said in the end ...

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." (Genesis 50:20)

The ultimate example of how God used evil and suffering for greater good is the cross! In this case, God used evil and suffering to defeat Evil, death and Satan.

6. Suffering helps us realize that we need God.

"We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead." (2 Corinthians 1:8-9)

Suffering can cause us to _____ and bring us _____, and that is the best thing that can happen in life.

C. S. Lewis writes ... "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains. It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

7. Your suffering can help you . . . the suffering of others.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows." (2 Corinthians 1:3-5)

8. Suffering can allow the . . . of God's Word where it would not otherwise be possible.

"If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation..." (2 Corinthians 1:6)

9. Sometimes it takes suffering to bring about the . . . of someone else.

Again, the ultimate example of this is Jesus. *"For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit..."* (1 Peter 3:18)

10. Sometimes we suffer because of . . .

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction..." (Galatians 6:7-8; See also Hebrews 12:5-11)

11. God never intended for this world to be our ultimate home.

"All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth... Instead, they were longing for a better country - a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them." (Hebrews 11:13-16)

12. Life and good health are gifts from God.

Skeptics who doubt God because of the problem of suffering rarely stop to ask, *"Where does life and good health come from in the first place?"*

Scottish theologian James S. Stewart writes *"It is the spectators, the people who are outside, looking at the tragedy, from whose ranks the skeptics come; it is not those who are actually in the arena and who know suffering from the inside. Indeed, the fact is that it is the world's greatest sufferers who have produced the most shining examples of unconquerable faith."*ⁱⁱⁱ

13. When skeptics or atheists ask, “Where is God when people suffer?” – Believers can rightly respond, “Where is atheism when people suffer?”

Christianity offers hope, peace and comfort in the midst of suffering. What does atheism offer that comforts us or gives us hope in the midst of suffering? The question is sometimes raised, “Where was God during the Holocaust?” An appropriate response can be, “Where was atheism during the Holocaust? Was it not the natural outworking of atheism that fueled the Holocaust?” In fact, “if we are indeed the random product of evolution then aggression and domination are in themselves good things, because at least they assure survival of the fittest. Certainly, mindless evolution is ‘red in tooth and claw’ to quote Tennyson.” ⁱⁱⁱ

14. All suffering is ... if you are a Christian.

When sin, death, pain, natural disasters, evil and all the powers of darkness do all they can do ... God has the last word! _____

The Bible mentions that “*our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*” (Romans 8:18)

“*Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*” (Revelation 7:13-17)

“*And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’”* (Revelation 21:3-5)

15. God is not finished yet!

“*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*” (Romans 8:28)

Justice delayed is not justice denied. “*Criticizing God for not punishing evil people right now is like reading half a novel and criticizing the author for not resolving the plot.*”^{iv}

"How can a finite human be sure that God would not tolerate certain short range evils in order for more long range goods that we couldn't foresee?

Would you agree that the difference between us and God is greater than the difference between us and a bear? Imagine a bear in a trap and a hunter who, out of sympathy wants to liberate him. He tries to win the bear's confidence, but he can't do it, so he has to shoot the bear full of drugs. The bear, however, thinks this is an attack and the hunter is trying to kill him. He doesn't realize that this is being done out of compassion. Then, in order to get the bear out of the trap, the hunter has to push him further into the trap to release the tension on the spring. If the bear were semiconscious at that point, he would be even more convinced that the hunter was his enemy who was out to cause him suffering and pain. But the bear would be wrong. He reaches this incorrect conclusion because he's not a human being. Now, how can anyone be certain that's not an analogy between us and God? It is at least possible that a loving God could deliberately tolerate horrible things because He foresees that in the long run more people will be better and happier than if He miraculously intervened. God has shown us how this can work. The Cross of Christ. Here is a situation of how the very worst thing ended up resulting in the very best thing that has ever happened in the history of the world." ^v

16. We can know that _____ our suffering and our heartaches because he experienced human suffering.

The Lord told Moses, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am _____ about their suffering." (Exodus 3:7)

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin." (Hebrews 4:15)

God, who created all things, _____ to natural laws and human vulnerability. He took the pain of his creation onto himself. He became hungry, thirsty and tired (See John 4:6, 19:28). He wept over the death of a friend (John 11:35). He knew temptation of every kind. He knew the agony of being lied about, betrayed, misunderstood, abandoned, abused and beaten. He even experienced the cruelest form of death.

Suffering and pain did not spare the very Son of God. God _____ not in spite of the dark mystery of evil, but _____

God's answer to the problem of evil is that he came right down into it, experienced it, then conquered it.

"The Long Silence"

(from John Stott's book *"The Cross of Christ"*)

At the end of time, billions of people were scattered on a great plain before God's throne. Most shrank back from the brilliant light before them. But some groups near the front talked heatedly - not with cringing shame, but with belligerence. *"Can God judge us? How can he know about suffering?"* The words came from a thin, starving young girl. She ripped open a sleeve to reveal a tattooed number from a Nazi concentration camp. *"We endured terror ...beatings ... torture ...death!"* In another group, a man lowered the collar on his shirt revealing an ugly rope burn on his neck, *"What about this...I was lynched for no crime, for no reason other than the color of my skin."* All across the plain there were hundreds of such groups, each had a complaint against God for the evil and suffering he permitted in the world. *"How lucky God was to live in heaven, where all was sweetness and light...no weeping, no fear, no hunger, no hatred...What did God know of all that humans had been forced to endure in this world?..."* they were saying. So each of these groups sent forth their leader, chosen because he or she had suffered the most -- a Jewish person, a black person, a person from Hiroshima, a horribly deformed arthritic, several with various forms of disabilities -- at last they were ready to present their case...it was rather clever. They pronounced that before God could be qualified to be their judge, he would have to endure what they had endured. Their decision was ... God would have to be sentenced today. Sentenced to live on earth and to live as a man who would suffer. *"Let em' be born a Jew!" "Let the legitimacy of his birth be doubted!" "Let him know what it is like to be hungry!" "Let his work be so difficult that even his family will think he is out of his mind when he tries to do it!" "Let him be betrayed by his closest friends!" "Let him face false charges!" "Let him be tried by a prejudice jury!" "Let him be convicted by a cowardly judge!" "Let him be tortured!" "Let him see what it means to be so terribly alone and then let him die! Let him die so that there can be no doubt that he died!" "Let there be a great host of witnesses to verify it."* As each leader pronounced the portion that he or she would add to the sentence, loud murmurs of approval went up from the throng of people... *"Yes, yes, it's only fair! It's only right!" "If he would judge us, he must face what we faced"* ... And when the last had finished pronouncing their sentence...**there was a long silence...**
No one dared utter another word. No one could even move. For suddenly, it dawned upon them all. That God had already served his sentence and that God would judge no one in whose shoes he had not already walked in.^{vii}

If you want to know what God is like...Look at the cross! Jesus, God in the flesh, suffered and died so that you could have forgiveness for your sins, and that you could spend eternity in a place without suffering and evil.

NOTES

ⁱ C.S Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 138.

ⁱⁱ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Classic Sermons on Suffering* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 1984), 92.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ravi Zacharias, *Cries of the Heart* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998), 214.

^{iv} Peter Kreeft , as quoted in Lee Stroble, *The Case for Faith* (Grand Rapids: ZondervanPublishingHouse, 2000), 43.

^v Peter Kreeft , as quoted in Lee Stroble, *The Case for Faith* (Grand Rapids: ZondervanPublishingHouse, 2000), 32.

^{vi} Ravi Zacharias, *Is There Meaning in Evil and Suffering?* (Video: Faith and Science Lecture Forum, Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, 1999).

^{vii} Adapted from John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove. IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 336.

IS JESUS REALLY THE SON OF GOD?

(Part 1)

CHAPTER 9

If God came down to earth in the form of a human what would we expect this person to be like? In the next two chapters, we will look at the following question:

Did Jesus have the qualities and characteristics we would expect if he were really the Son of God?

I. If God became a human we would expect that person to be good (without sin).

Was Jesus without sin?

A. Jesus' followers claimed that he was without sin.

The apostles lived and traveled with Jesus for three years. They were with him every day. If Jesus had any sin in his life, they would have known it.

Peter claimed:

"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

(1 Peter 2:22)

"For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God..."

(1 Peter 3:18)

John claimed:

"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One."

(1 John 2:1)

"...You know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin."

(1 John 3:5)

Paul claimed:

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

(2 Corinthians 5:21)

The writer of Hebrews claimed:

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin."

(Hebrews 4:15)

"Such a high priest meets our need - one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens."

(Hebrews 7:26)

Of course, we would expect his friends to say he was good.

What did Jesus' say about him?

B. Jesus' enemies he was without sin.

Judas Iscariot

Judas was a friend, an apostle and a travel companion of Jesus for three years. Then Judas became an enemy. If Jesus was a sinner, Judas would have known about it and would have told everyone. However, in the end, Judas said this...

"I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed _____"
(Matthew 27:4)

Jewish Leaders

"The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward..." (Matthew 26:59-60)

Pilate and King Herod

"Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, and said to them, 'You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death.'"
(Luke 23:13-15)

Roman soldier

"The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, 'Surely this was a _____"
(Luke 23:47)

Pilate's wife

"While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: 'Don't have anything to do with that innocent man...'"
(Matthew 27:19)

The thief on the cross

"...But this man has done nothing wrong." (Luke 23:41)

Jesus even stood before his enemies and asked them...

"Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?" (John 8:46)

No one could!

Jesus' life has always been regarded as the purest in human history. Even in the religion of Islam, the *Koran* claims that Jesus was _____

II. If God became a human we would expect that person to have ..

Did Jesus have supernatural power? Here is a list of some of the miracles of Jesus recorded in the Bible:

MIRACLES OF JESUS IN THE BIBLE

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. His mother was a virgin when he was born | Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1: 26-38, 2:1-7 |
| 2. He changed water into wine | John 2:1-11 |
| 3. He healed a Roman official's son | John 4:46-54 |
| 4. He healed a man that had an evil spirit | Mark 1:23-28; Luke 4:33-37 |
| 5. He healed Peter's mother-in-law | Matt. 8:15; Mark 1:31; Luke 4:39 |
| 6. He caused many fish to be caught | Luke 5:5-6 |
| 7. He healed a man with leprosy | Matt. 8:2-3; Mark 1:41-42 |
| 8. He healed a man who was paralyzed | Matt. 9:1-8; Mark 2:5; Luke 5:17-26 |
| 9. He healed a man with a disabled hand | Matt. 12:13; Mark 3:5; Luke 6:10 |
| 10. He healed a Roman officer's servant | Matt. 8:13; Luke 7:10 |
| 11. He brought a dead man back to life | Luke 7:11-17 |
| 12. He calmed a stormy sea | Matt. 8:26; Mark 4:39; Luke 8:24 |
| 13. He healed a man with many demons | Matt. 8:32; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:33 |
| 14. He healed a woman with internal bleeding | Matt. 9:22; Mark 5:29; Luke 8:44 |
| 15. He gave life to a girl who was dead | Matt. 9:25; Mark 5:42; Luke 8:55 |
| 16. He healed two blind men | Matt. 9:27-31 |
| 17. He healed a man who could not talk | Matt. 9:32-33 |
| 18. He healed a man who was disabled | John 5:1-9 |
| 19. He fed 5,000 people | Mt. 14:19; Mk. 6:41; Lk. 9:16; Jn. 6:11 |
| 20. He walked on the sea | Matt. 14:25; Mark 6:48; John 6:19 |
| 21. He healed a girl with an evil spirit | Matt. 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30 |
| 22. He healed a deaf man | Mark 7:31-35 |
| 23. He fed 4,000 people | Matt. 15:29-39; Mark 8:1-10 |
| 24. He healed a blind man at Bethsaida | Mark 8:22-25 |
| 25. He healed a man who had been born blind | John 9:1-7 |
| 26. He healed a boy with an evil spirit | Matt. 17:18; Mark 9:25; Luke 9:42 |
| 27. Catching a fish with a coin in its mouth | Matt. 17:24-27 |
| 28. He healed a blind man with an evil spirit | Matt. 12:22; Luke 11:14 |
| 29. He healed a woman with an 18-year illness | Luke 13:10-13 |
| 30. He healed a man with a bad disease | Luke 14:1-4 |
| 31. He healed 10 men with leprosy | Luke 17:11-19 |
| 32. He raised Lazarus from the dead | John 11:1-44 |
| 33. He healed a blind man near Jericho | Luke 18:35-43 |
| 34. He healed another blind man | Mark 10:46-52 |
| 35. He caused a fig tree to dry up | Matt. 21:19; Mark 11:12-21 |
| 36. He healed a cut ear | Luke 22:49-51 |
| 37. He was resurrected from the dead | Mt. 28; Mk. 16; Lk. 24; Jn. 20-21 |
| 38. He caused many fish to be caught again | John 21:4-6 |

The apostle John wrote, "*Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*" (John 20:30-31)

Jesus' _____ demonstrate power over nature, power over evil, power over demons, power over sickness, power over disease and power over death!

What did the enemies of Jesus say about his miracles?

"... 'What are we accomplishing?' they asked. 'Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him...' "
(John 11:47-48)

Even early Jewish, Roman and Islamic writers wrote about Jesus' ability to do miracles.

(A.D.95) Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrnanus wrote about Jesus' "*magic arts.*"ⁱⁱ

(A.D.95 - 110) The Jewish Sanhedrin (the Jewish religious leaders) wrote that "*Jesus practiced magic...*"ⁱⁱⁱ

(A.D.361-363) The Roman Emperor, Julian (in his writing against Christianity) wrote about Jesus' ability to "*heal disabled and blind people and cause demons to leave people...*"^{iv}

The *Koran* speaks of Jesus' ability to perform miracles.^v Also, the *Koran*, written six hundred years after Jesus, speaks about his virgin birth.^{vi}

Again, it is important to point out that the New Testament books were being circulated while _____, were _____. If these miracles did not really happen, someone could have easily said, "*I was there and I'm telling you that Jesus did not perform a miracle!*" However, no eyewitness ever said this and no one ever denied Jesus' power to do miracles!

III. If God became a human we would expect this person to have a
on history!

- Jesus has been the most influential, famous and important person in history for almost twenty centuries.
- Two thousand years after his life on earth he is the center of the largest religion in the world.
- The Church that he founded has become the largest institution in the history of the world.
- Today, two billion people call themselves his followers.
- He is looked upon as a prophet or “enlightened one” by nearly every major world religion.

Consider the life of Jesus (as one writer put it)...

“Born in an obscure village, he was the child of a peasant woman. Growing up in another out of the way and disdained village, he worked in a carpenter shop until he was about thirty. Then for three years, he was a preacher who both talked and listened. He helped people whenever he could. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never went to college. He never had a family of his own or owned a home. He never traveled over 200 miles from the place where he was born. He never did any of the things that usually accompany greatness and had no credentials but himself.

While he was still a young man, the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. He was turned over to his enemies. He went through a mockery of a trial, after which he was executed along with two thieves. While he was dying, his executioners gambled for the only piece of property he owned. Only because a generous friend offered his own cemetery plot was there a place for him to be buried.

2,000 years have now come and gone, and today he is the central figure of the human race. The leader of the column of spiritual progress. The ultimate example of love.

It is no exaggeration to say that all the armies that have ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the kings who have ever reigned, all the congresses that have ever convened, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this Earth as that One Solitary Life.”^{vii}

Napoleon once said these words about Jesus...

"I know men and I can tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between him and every other person in the world there is no possible term of comparison. Alexander, Caesar and Charlemagne, and I have founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ founded his empire upon love: and at this hour millions of men and women would die for him."^{viii}

L.H. Marshall once wrote...

"The historical facts are beyond dispute. He appeared on this earth of ours nearly 2,000 years ago. Anything in the way of earthly privilege or advantage was denied to him. He was born in a stable, brought up by a peasant couple in a cottage, worked as a youth and young man at a carpenter's bench. He had no contact with any of the world's great cosmopolitan centers, or with any famous university, or with any renowned teacher. On the contrary, he lived his brief earthly life in an out-of-the-way corner of the world, amongst a subject people, in a small country commonly regarded as of no consequence. The only school he ever attended was the synagogue school at Nazareth. Quite possibly, the only text-book he ever studied was the Old Testament. He was without wealth or status. Yet, in spite of all these disadvantages and limitations, by virtue of the Spirit that was in him, he uttered a wisdom which transcends in worth that of any world-renowned philosopher, and indeed of all philosophers combined. His message has proved itself fitted to the deepest needs of all humans, irrespective of all considerations of time or place or nationality. His witness was so sublime that it has been the light of the world ever since. In view of the impact of his life upon the life of the world and of the profound and far-reaching and lasting effects which he has produced, there are few who would deny for a moment that he is the greatest Being who has ever trod on our earth."^{ix}

NOTES

ⁱ Koran, (Mary, V. 19)

ⁱⁱ Ethelbert Stauffer, *Jesus and His Story* (Translated by Richard and Clara Winston -- New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), 9. Quoted in: Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 314.

ⁱⁱⁱ (Sanhedrin, 43a) Ethelbert Stauffer, *Jesus and His Story* (Translated by Richard and Clara Winston -- New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), 9. Quoted in: Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 314.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Koran, (the Table V. 110).

^{vi} Koran, (Surah 19:19-21).

^{vii} Rubel Shelly, *Prepare to Answer* (Nashville: 21st Century Christian, 1990), 184-185.

^{viii} Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other God's* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 149. Quoted in Henry Parry Liddon, *Liddon's Bampton Lectures 1866*, (London: Rivingtons, 1869), 148.

^{ix} L. H. Marshall, *The Challenge of New Testament Ethics*, (1947), 350-51.

IS JESUS REALLY THE SON OF GOD?

(PART 2)

CHAPTER 10

I. If God became a human we would expect that this person's words would be the

What does the Bible say about Jesus' words?

*"Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people. They were **at his teaching**, because his message had authority."*
(Luke 4:31-32)

*"Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? **You have the words of eternal life.**'"*
(John 6:68)

*"Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, 'Why didn't you bring him in?' **'No one ever spoke the way this man does,'** the guards declared."*
(John 7:45-46)

One writer said this about the words of Jesus...

*"... the Gospels are the greatest literature ever written. They are read by more people, quoted by more authors, translated into more languages, represented in more art, set to more music, than any other book or books written by any man in any century, in any land. **Why is this?** Because they are the greatest words ever spoken. The words of Jesus deal clearly and authoritatively with the greatest questions and biggest problems in the human heart. Jesus answers questions like:*

Who is God? Does He love me?

Does He care for me? What should I do to please Him?

How does He look at my sin? How can I be forgiven?

Where will I go when I die? How must I treat others?

*No other man can answer these fundamental human questions as Jesus answered them. **They are the kind of words and the kind of answers we would to give...**"*ⁱ

The historian Phillip Schaff described the words of Christ in this way... *"This Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohamied, and Napoleon; without science and learning, He shed more light on things human and divine than all philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of schools, He spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since, and produced the effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, He set more pens in motion, and furnished the themes for more sermons, discussions, learned volumes, works of art and songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times."*ⁱⁱ

II. If God became a human we would expect this person to _____
(...if he were to present himself as Israel's Messiah).

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, people recognized that the Hebrew writings (Genesis through Malachi) were the very words of God. Serious students of these Hebrew books understood that God was preparing to send a special person to earth who would save people. This person was called "*Messiah*" in the Hebrew language which translates to "*Christ*" in the Greek language. These words literally mean "*The Anointed One*." In the ancient world, when a man was chosen to be a King, he was anointed or oil was put on his head.

The people of Israel anticipated and expected a _____

Question: How would they know when the Messiah arrived?

Answer: God told the people of Israel what the Messiah would be like before he was sent.

The Old Testament contains more than 300 prophecies about the Messiah.

Here are just a few examples of prophecies about the Messiah in the Old Testament:

1. The Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham, Jacob, Judah, Jesse and King David. (Genesis 22:15-18, 49:10; Numbers 24:17; Isaiah 11:1-10; 2 Samuel 7:16; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Isaiah 9:6-7)
2. The Messiah would be the child of a virgin. (Isaiah 7:14)
3. The Messiah would be born in the small city of Bethlehem. (Micah 5:2)
4. The Messiah would be betrayed by a friend and would be sold for 30 pieces of silver. (Zechariah 11:12-13)
5. The Messiah would suffer and die for all people. (Isaiah 53)
6. God even told the people of Israel exactly how the Messiah would die. (Psalm 22:16; Zechariah 12:10; Isaiah 53)

The people of Israel knew that the Messiah had to fulfill all the prophecies. -Otherwise, he could not really be the Messiah that God promised. These prophecies in effect formed a figurative fingerprint that only the true Messiah could match.ⁱⁱⁱ This gave Israel and us a way to rule out imposters and validate the credentials of the true Messiah.

Against astronomical odds, Jesus, and only Jesus, matched this prophetic fingerprint.^{iv}

Of all the prophecies and statements about the Messiah in the Old Testament – Jesus _____ of them.

We learn from reading the New Testament that Jesus was a descendant of Abraham, Jacob, Judah, Jesse and King David. His mother was a virgin when he was born and he was born in Bethlehem. He was betrayed by his friend for 30 pieces of silver. Jesus suffered and died exactly the way the Old Testament described. In fact, when the prophecies were given about the Messiah being “pierced,” (Zechariah 12:10; Psalm 22:16) stoning was the common method of execution. Crucifixion was not used as a form of execution until much later in history. Isaiah 53:12 says that the Messiah would be “numbered with the transgressors.” Jesus was crucified with two thieves. Psalm 22:18 indicates that the Messiah’s garments would be divided and lots would be cast for his clothing.

“The hardened, burly soldiers of Rome at the cross centuries later, did not get their Bibles out and say ‘Hey, fellows, this is our cue. Here is where we are supposed to fulfill prophecy and gamble for the clothes of Jesus Christ!’ Nevertheless, they did! They gambled for his garments (Matthew 27:35). It is doubtful they knew or cared about the prophecy at all, but how significant that men even in unbelief perfectly fulfill the Word of God. It impresses me too, that Psalm 69:21 dares to say centuries in advance that he would be offered gall and vinegar to drink. He was! (Matthew 27:34) Only God could know that, centuries in advance. There are thousands of things he could have been offered. He could have been offered nothing! The prediction that he would be buried in a rich man’s tomb, is spectacular. (Isaiah 53:9) That simply did not happen to one who died as a criminal. Yet look at Matthew 27:57-60 and see this ‘impossible’ fulfillment as Joseph of Arimathaea risked his riches, his reputation, and his life, to claim the body of Jesus to bury in his own unused tomb!”

A mathematician who wrote a book called *Science Speaks* decided to determine the mathematical probability that any one man could fulfill just 8 of the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. The number came to 1 chance in 10 billion.^{vi}

This is amazing when you realize that Jesus fulfilled _____ prophecies about the Messiah (which were written from 500 to 1,000 years before his birth) during the final 24 hours of his life.

Max Lucado writes, “Did you know that in his life _____ distinct prophecies in the Old Testament? What are the mathematical possibilities of all these prophecies being fulfilled in the life of one man? One chance out of ...

840,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,
000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,
000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,
000,000,000,000,000,000

(That’s ninety-seven zeroes!) Amazing!”^{vii}

"The odds alone say it would be _____ for anyone to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies. Yet Jesus – and only Jesus throughout all of history – managed to do it."
(Louis Lapides, who grew up in a conservative Jewish home but became a Christian and later a minister after studying the prophecies).^{viii}

Jesus Christ is the only figure in history whose birth, life and death were predicted and described hundreds of years before he was born.

III. If God became a human we would expect this person to satisfy the spiritual hunger in people.

Jesus claimed that he (and he alone) could satisfy our spiritual hunger and thirst.

Here are some examples of these claims:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."
(Matthew 11:28)

"...whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."
(John 4:14)

"Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.'" (John 6:35)

"...If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."
(John 7:37)

"...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

Millions and millions of people all over the world agree that only Jesus Christ can satisfy a person's spiritual hunger and that when you follow Jesus and his teachings, life becomes peaceful, joyful, hopeful and meaningful.

When I lived in Florida several years ago, I had the opportunity to study the Bible with a man from Egypt named Salah. Salah was a Muslim. One day we got into a discussion about Jesus. I asked him, *"What does the Koran say about Jesus?"*

He told me that the Koran tells us that Jesus was a prophet who was born of a virgin named Mary and that Jesus could perform miracles and was without sin.

I asked my friend, *"Do you really believe that an ordinary man can be without sin?"*

He immediately changed the subject. He said, *"I don't want to talk about Jesus anymore."*

The next time we met together, Salah said to me, *"Do you know why I can't believe that Jesus was the Son of God?"* He then said, *"Because of this ..."* (He spread his arms apart like Jesus on the cross). *"This is weakness! God is God and can't be weak."*

I asked him, *"Do you love your children?"*

He said, *"Of course, I love my children!"*

I asked him, *"At what lengths would you go to show your love for them?"*

It seemed that he momentarily forgot the context of our conversation and passionately told me, *"Russ, I would die for my children!"*

I said, *"You see, that is not weakness. In fact, that is ultimate strength in an act of ultimate love."*

Salah angrily changed the subject, said good bye, walked out of the room and I never saw him again.

"For the _____ cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the _____. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength."

(1 Corinthians 1:18, 25)

NOTES

ⁱ Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957), 170-171.

ⁱⁱ Philip Schaff, *The Person of Christ* (American Tract Society, 1913).

ⁱⁱⁱ Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 172.

^{iv} Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 267.

^v Floyd McElveen, *God's Word, Final, Infallible and Forever* (Grand Rapids: Gospel Truths Ministries, 1985), 40.

^{vi} Peter W. Stoner, *Science Speaks* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1969), 109.

^{vii} Max Lucado, *He Chose the Nails* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 96. Citing William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John, of New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), 431.

^{viii} Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 183.

WAS JESUS REALLY RAISED FROM THE DEAD? (Part I)

CHAPTER 11

Jesus said to Martha, *"I am the resurrection... Do you believe this?"* (John 11:25-26)

In the New Testament book of 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul said this ...

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born." (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

In these verses, Paul tells us the three most important things about Christianity:

- Christ died for our sins.
- He was buried.
- He was raised.

The Bible claims many times that Jesus was raised from the dead. For example, we find this in Matthew 28:1-7 ...

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." (Matthew 28:1-7)

How do we know this is true?

In the next two chapters we will examine these questions:

WAS JESUS , _____ , FROM THE DEAD?

OR

DID , _____ HAPPEN TO HIS BODY?

All of Christianity stands or falls with the resurrection! (See 1 Corinthians 15:14-19)

If Jesus Christ was not raised from the dead ...

- A Christian's faith is useless and futile.
- A Christian is a false witness and thus, an enemy of God.
- Every Christian, either alive or dead, is lost and still in their sins.
- Jesus' power was limited and his testimony was a lie.
- We should not believe that any of the miracles in the Bible actually occurred.
- Everything in the New Testament and everything Jesus said should be held suspect.
- Christianity is a false religion.

If Jesus Christ was raised from the dead ...

- Jesus' power is unlimited.
- Everything Jesus said should be believed and followed.
- Christians can be sure that their sins are forgiven and that they will be raised from the dead to be with God in heaven.
- All other religions are false religions.

"We, as Christians, are betting our _____ on the fact that the tomb was empty."

During his life, Jesus said many times to many people that he would be crucified and then resurrected from the dead. Look at all the times Jesus claimed that he would be raised up on the third day:

Matthew 12:38-40, 16:21, 17:22-23, 20:18-19, 26:32, 27:63

Mark 8:31-9:1, 9:10, 9:31, 10:32-34, 14:28, 14:58

Luke 9:22-27 and John 2:19-22, Chapters 14-16

Wilber Smith writes, "...when Jesus said that he would rise again from the dead, the third day after he was crucified, he said something that only a fool would dare say, if he expected longer the devotion of any disciples, unless – he was sure he was going to rise. No founder of any world religion known to men ever dared say a thing like that!"ⁱ

C.S. Lewis writes in his book *Miracles* that "Jesus is the first fruits, the pioneer of life. He has forced open a door that has been locked since the death of the first man. He has met, fought, and beaten the King of Death. Everything is different because he has done so. This is the beginning of the new creation and a new chapter in cosmic history has opened."ⁱⁱ

How can we know with _____ that this is true?

A. A simple starting point/ Historical cause and effect:

Let's pretend that you live in the year 5,000. You are a historian and an archeologist. You are trying to find out what happened historically during the 20th century. During one of your archeological digs, you find the map below.



Ah-ha! Now you know that in the early 1940's someone named Hitler was either a King or some other sort of ruler and he ruled most of Europe. In fact, based on this map you deduce that by 1943, Hitler had conquered more of Europe than any ruler previous to him. Not even the French Empire of Napoleon or the Roman Empire of the Caesars was equal to this man's empire.

Then, later as you continue your digs you find a map which dates 1948. This map has no mention of Hitler and shows that Germany had been split into two parts. From this map you learn that in 1948 West Germany was aided by Britain, the United States and France and East Germany was under Soviet control. From the information on these two maps, you have the following facts:

-----]	[-----
Germany dominates Europe 1943	1948 - Germany is a defeated, split nation

Just using this information, as a logical historian, what would you assume happened in this gap?

Now, let us carry this same logic over and look at the beginnings of Christianity. Consider the historical information we have about the year AD33.

-----]	[-----
Friday, Passover Time AD 33 -	Pentecost AD 33 - (50 days later)
No Christian Church exists	The Christian Church has 3,000 members
Jesus hangs dead on a cross	Peter boldly preaches that Jesus is alive
Peter denies even knowing Jesus	[-- Saul, enemy of Christianity, converts
Jesus' followers have deserted him	[-- Jesus' brother becomes leader of Jerusalem church
Judas betrayed him and hangs himself	[-- All apostles (but John) and others martyred
Women followers are crying and mourning	because they preached that Jesus is alive
Jesus' brothers do not even believe in him	[--AD 150 Christianity spreads over
	Roman world
	[---AD330 Roman Empire supports
	Christianity
	[--AD450 Rome Falls/Europe
	Christianized

I think it is safe to say that something radical, monumental and profound happened in history between Jesus' crucifixion and the day of Pentecost.

What happened? What caused a _____ religion to pop up out of nowhere?

"If the coming into existence of the [church], a phenomenon undeniably attested by the New Testament, rips a great hole in history, a hole the size and shape of Resurrection, what does the secular historian propose to stop it up with?"^{iv} – C.F.D. Moule, New Testament scholar from Cambridge University.

The Resurrection: Fact or fiction?

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BODY OF JESUS?

Some believe that the Resurrection is fiction. They explain the missing body of Jesus with one of the following theories.

"Maybe Jesus never really died
and he escaped from the tomb."



This theory supposes that the Roman guards and the Jewish leaders were mistaken about Jesus being dead. After a sleepless, emotionally exhausting night, Jesus was beaten and scourged, then nailed to a cross, then after a spear was thrust into his side, he was declared dead (but he really just fainted). Then his body was placed in a rock tomb and a great stone was rolled across the entrance. After he came to himself and revived in the cool of the tomb, he forced back the huge stone and walked unnoticed passed the guards out of the tomb.^v

Problems with this theory

1) Jesus was _____ beat with whips). (Matthew 27:26; Mark 15:15; John 19:1)

"When a man was scourged under the Roman law, he was bound in a kneeling position so that his naked back was exposed. The lash was a long leather thong studded at intervals with pieces of sharp bone, lead and rocks which literally tore a man's back into strips. Many a man had died under the lash; still more had lost their reason and emerged raving mad; few retained consciousness to the end of that bitter ordeal; and all who survived were broken men."^{vi}

Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, (3rd century church historian) said this concerning the Roman scourging inflicted on those to be executed:

"the sufferer's veins were laid bare, and the very muscles, sinews, and bowels of the victim were open to exposure."^{vii}

2) Jesus was _____ on the head by a staff again and again. (Matthew 27:30; Luke 23:63)

3) Jesus was _____ (Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 19)

- 4) The Roman soldiers believed that Jesus was dead. (John 19:31-33)
- 5) One of the Roman soldiers "*pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.*" (John 19:34) Modern pathologists say that blood and water would not have come out unless the body was, in fact, dead.
- 6) Pilate (the Roman governor) was convinced by the Roman centurion that Jesus was dead, so he gave Joseph permission to remove the body from the cross. (Mark 15:44-45)
- 7) The Roman law did not allow anyone to remove someone's body from a cross until the death of that individual was obvious and certain. Roman soldiers removed the body from the cross.
- 8) The body was wrapped in linen with gummy spices between the wraps.

Merrill Tenney explains the customary Jewish grave clothes as follows:

"In preparing a body for burial according to Jewish custom, it was usually washed and straightened, and then bandaged tightly from the armpits to the ankles in strips of linen about a foot wide. Aromatic spices often of a gummy consistency, were placed between the wrappings or folds. They served partially as a preservative and partially as a cement to glue the cloth wrappings into a solid covering. John's Gospel tells us that some seventy pounds of spices were used in this process (John 19:38-42)—thus, the grave clothes would not easily be removed. On the morning of the first day of the week the body of Jesus had vanished, but the grave clothes were still there (John 20:5-9)."^{viii}

- 9) The body of Jesus was placed in a rock tomb and a very heavy stone was rolled across the entrance. (Matthew 27:59-60)
- 10) Guards were placed outside the tomb (Matthew 27:62-66). Under Roman law, a guard was to be killed if he fell asleep while on duty.
- 11) The Jewish leaders wanted guards at the tomb because they were afraid that the disciples would try to steal the body. This is evidence that the Jewish leaders believed that Jesus was dead. (Matthew 27:62-66)

*"Clearly, the weight of the historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted. Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge." -- William D. Edwards et al., "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ," *Journal of the American Medical Association* (21 March 1986): 1463.^{ix}*

"Maybe the body was removed by Jesus' enemies."



Problems with this theory

- 1) Jesus' enemies had no reason or motive to remove the body. They had absolutely _____ removing the body.
- 2) The enemies of Jesus wanted the body to stay in the tomb. That is why they ask Pilate to put Roman guards around the entrance. (Matthew 27:62- 28:14)
- 3) Pilate took _____, make sure the body stayed in the tomb.
- 4) The story could not have been kept quiet.
- 5) The enemies of Jesus _____, that they removed the body from the tomb. They claimed instead that the disciples stole the body.
- 6) The enemies would have admitted stealing the body when the apostles preached about the resurrection. The apostles went everywhere telling people that Jesus was raised from the dead. The enemies of Jesus never once denied it.
- 7) If the enemies stole the body of Jesus they could have produced the decaying body with dramatic effect. This would have humiliated the apostles, proved that they were lying and silenced their resurrection claims.

"Maybe the disciples stole the body."



The enemies of Jesus gave the Roman soldiers money and told them to say that the disciples stole the body (Matthew 28:11-15), but there are many problems with this theory.

- 1) The soldiers said that Jesus' followers stole the body. They also said that they were asleep (Matthew 28:12-13). **Does this sound fishy? How would they know who stole the body if they were asleep?**
- 2) Historians tell us that if a Roman soldier fell asleep while on guard, he would be killed^x and that there were usually at least four men in a Roman guard unit.^{xi} Is it possible that all four guards fell asleep at the same time? Is it possible that a huge stone was rolled away from the entrance of the tomb and this sound did not wake someone up?
- 3) If the disciples stole the body of Jesus from the tomb, sooner or later someone who knew the facts would have talked. People do not knowingly die for lies. All of the apostles (except John) were killed because they taught that Jesus was raised from the dead.
- 4) Jesus' followers were scared of the Romans. Matthew 26:56 tells us that when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus "...all the disciples deserted him and fled."
- 5) Matthew 27:65-66 tells us that the Roman soldiers sealed the tomb. The sealing was always done in the presence of the Roman guards who were left in charge to protect this stamp of Roman authority and power. The followers of Jesus would have been punished for breaking the Roman seal.

**Note about the Roman Guards... "Their sole purpose and obligation that evening was to rigidly perform their duty as soldiers of the empire of Rome to which they had dedicated their allegiance. The Roman seal affixed to the stone before Joseph's tomb was far more sacred to them than all the philosophy of Israel or the sanctity of her ancient creed. Soldiers cold blooded enough to gamble over a dying victim's cloak are not the kind of men to be hoodwinked by timid Galileans or to jeopardize their Roman necks by sleeping on their post."*^{xii}

- 6) The authorities did not insist that the disciples produce the body. They knew better than anyone that the disciples did not have it.
- 7) The apostles did not believe that Jesus was alive until they saw him. (Luke 24:9-12)
- 8) If the disciples (or anyone else for that matter) decided to sneak past the Roman guards, roll away the large stone and steal the body...why would they take the time to remove the grave clothes?
- 9) Jesus was killed during the Passover. Thousands of people came to Jerusalem for this holiday. It is not likely that the disciples could have carried a dead body in Jerusalem without someone seeing them.
- 10) If the disciples stole the body this means that the writers of the New Testament would have had to invent a story about Jesus being raised from the dead. According to the Bible the first people to find that the tomb was empty were women. If the writers made up this story they would not likely have chosen women as the first people to find the tomb empty. Women were not even allowed to give evidence in Jewish courts of law in the first century. A woman's testimony meant nothing in the first century Jewish culture.
- 11) If the disciples said, "Hey, Jesus said he would be raised from the dead...we better do something to save face..." The easiest way to go about this would be to claim that Jesus was "spiritually resurrected." Instead, they taught about the resurrection of the actual _____.

"Maybe the women looked in the wrong tomb."



Problems with this theory:

- 1) These women had _____ where the body of Jesus was buried less than 72 hours before.

"The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it." (Luke 23:55)

- 2) How did the grave clothes get in the wrong tomb?
- 3) If the women went to the wrong tomb, the Roman and Jewish authorities could have gone to the right tomb and produced the body.

NOTES

ⁱ Wilber Smith, as quoted in Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 209.

ⁱⁱ C.S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: Macmillan and Co, 1947).

ⁱⁱⁱ Map from Albert Marrin, *Hitler* (New York: Puffin Books, 1987), 144.

^{iv} C.F.D. Moule, *The Phenomenon of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1967), 3.
Cited in Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler, *Who Made God?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 2003), 25.

^v The Koran claims that Jesus only pretended to be dead (Surah IV: 156-57). Ahmadiya Muslims say that Jesus actually fled to India and is buried in Srinagar, Kashmir.

^{vi} Taken from Frank Morison's, *Who Moved the Stone?* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967).

^{vii} Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, *Epistle of the Church in Smyrna* – as quoted in Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 221.

^{viii} Merrill C. Tenney, as quoted in Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 261.

^{ix} Cited in Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler, *Who Made God?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 2003), 98.

^x "The punishment for falling asleep while on guard duty was death, according to the Roman laws." (Dion. Hal, *Antiquities Rom.* VIII. 79). As quoted in Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 237.

^{xi} Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 239.

^{xii} Albert Roper, as quoted in Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 248.

WAS JESUS REALLY RAISED FROM THE DEAD? (Part II)

CHAPTER 12

"I say unequivocally that the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming that it compels acceptance by proof which leaves absolutely no room for doubt." -- Sir Lionel Luckhoo (the world's most successful attorney according to the Guinness Book of World Records)ⁱ

"Maybe the 'resurrected Jesus'
was really just a vision or a hallucination."



Problems with this theory

- 1) It doesn't explain the empty tomb.
- 2) Over 500 people saw the risen Christ at one time.
(READ 1 Corinthians 15:1-8)
- 3) The Bible tells us that people ate with Jesus and touched him after he was resurrected.
- 4) It doesn't explain what happened to a man named Saul.

"Who was Saul?"



Saul was an _____ of the Christian church. He was there, giving his approval, when a young Christian named Stephen was stoned to death and then he set out with extreme passion to exterminate the Christian religion.

"While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he fell on his knees and cried out, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he fell asleep. And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison." (Acts 7:59 - 8:3)

One day, Saul decided to go to a city called Damascus so that he could _____

"Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem." (Acts 9:1-2)

Saul wrote this about himself ...

"For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers... If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless."
(Galatians 1:13-14; Philippians 3:4-6)

Saul (which was his name in the Hebrew language) later changed his name to Paul (which was his Greek name). He _____ of Jesus Christ and writer of 13 books in the New Testament.

Tertullian (A.D. 160 -220) of Carthage, North Africa reports that Paul was beheaded in Rome because of his Christian faith.

Origen of Alexandria (A.D. 185-253) writes that Paul suffered martyrdom in Rome under Nero. He was a Roman citizen so he was beheaded rather than being burned to death with the thousands of other Christian martyrs killed by Nero.

Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea (3rd century church historian) tells us that *"after defending himself the apostle was sent again on his ministry of preaching, and coming a second time to the same city, suffered martyrdom under Nero."*ⁱⁱⁱ

"What happened to cause an enemy
of Christianity to become a leader and a martyr
in the Christian church?"



Paul tells us what happened ...

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins ... was buried ... was raised on the third day ...and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve ... and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born." (1 Corinthians 15:3-7)

If you would like to read more about how this happened you can find this story in the book of Acts 9:3-22.

Paul not only had to _____ that he saw the risen Lord – but he also had to convince the _____ and the _____--and he did! (See Acts 9:21; 9:26-27)

Saul was not the only one who changed after seeing the _____ .

Consider the _____ of the apostles!

When Jesus was arrested his apostles deserted him (Mark 14:50) and Peter even denied _____ (Mark 14:66-72).

Just 50 days later, Peter and these same men boldly and courageously went everywhere _____ with their message that Jesus was alive! (See Acts 2:32, 3:15, 10:41) They became powerful leaders of the early Christian church. They suffered and were killed for the cause of Christ.

"What happened to cause this group of timid cowards to become so courageous?"



Answer: They saw _____ (See 1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

At times, these men were arrested, beaten and sternly warned not to speak about Jesus and his resurrection. However, they would boldly and courageously go right back out to the people and preach about the resurrection. (READ Acts 5:17-42)

Josh McDowell writes this about the apostles:

"You could imprison them, flog them, kill them, but you could not make them deny their conviction that on the third day he rose again."

What ever happened to the apostles?

James, son of Zebedee, was killed with a sword. (Acts 12:1-2)

Matthew was killed by a sword.

Andrew was crucified.

James, son of Alphaeus, was crucified.

Philip was crucified.

Simon was crucified.

Thaddaeus was killed by a spear.

Bartholomew was crucified.

John was exiled to the island of Patmos (Revelation 1:9).ⁱⁱⁱ

What about Peter?

Origen (A.D. 185-253) reports that Peter was “*crucified head downward, for he had asked that he might suffer that way...*” He felt unworthy to die in the same manner as Jesus Christ.

Do you really think these men would _____?

“The response that is usually chorused back is this: ‘Why, a lot of people have died for a lie; so what does that prove?’ Yes, a lot of people have died for a lie, but they thought it was the truth. Now if the resurrection didn’t take place (i.e., was false), the disciples knew it. I find no way to demonstrate that they could have been deceived. Therefore these eleven men not only died for a lie – here is the catch – but they knew it was a lie. It would be hard to find eleven people in history who died for a lie, knowing it was a lie.”^{iv}

Consider the changed life of James, the brother of Jesus.

We find out that Jesus had brothers in Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3.

“Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. ‘Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?’ they asked. ‘Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?’”
(Matthew 13:54-55)

As we see, one of his brothers was named James. We also learn from the Bible that Jesus’ brothers did not believe that he was the Christ during his lifetime.

“...even his own brothers did not believe in him.” (John 7:5)

Later, after Jesus had been killed, James became a leader of the Christian church in Jerusalem (See Acts 15:13-21 and Galatians 2:9).

He later wrote the letter of James in the New Testament and begins this letter by calling himself, “*a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.*” (James 1:1)

He was later recognized as an apostle of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:19). In fact, Paul ranked James right up there with Peter and John as “pillars” of the Christian church in Galatians 2:9.

Josephus, the ancient Jewish historian/philosopher wrote (around A.D. 93) that James was stoned to death by Ananias, the high priest because of his Christian teachings.

What happened to cause this kind of _____?

*“...Christ died for our sins ... was buried ... was raised on the third day ...**Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles...**”* (1 Corinthians 15:3-7)

OTHER EVIDENCES THAT THE RESURRECTION REALLY HAPPENED:

1. The large number of

1 Corinthians 15 says that "...Christ died for our sins ... was buried ... he was raised on the third day ... After that, he appeared to **more than five hundred** of the brothers at the same time, **most of whom are still living**, though some have fallen asleep."

This letter was written and was being circulated during the lifetimes of the men and women who saw Jesus alive after he had been killed. If anyone wanted to make sure that this letter was true, all they had to do was to find one of these 500 people and ask them.

After Jesus was killed and buried, he appeared ...

To Mary Magdalene – John 20:10-18; Mark 16:9

To the women returning from the tomb – Matthew 28:1-10

To Peter later in the day – Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5

To the disciples on the road to Emmaus - Luke 24:36-43

To the apostles, with Thomas absent – John 20:19-23

To the apostles, with Thomas present – John 20:24-29

To the seven by the Lake of Tiberias – John 21:1-23

To more than 500 people at one time -- 1 Corinthians 15:6

To James – 1 Corinthians 15:7

To the eleven apostles -- Matthew 28:16-20

As he was taken up to Heaven - Acts 1:3-12

To Paul – Acts 9:3-6; 1 Corinthians 15:8

To Stephen – 7:54-60

To Paul in the temple – Acts 22:17-21, 23:11

To John on the island of Patmos – Revelation 1:10-19

J.N.D Anderson writes of the testimony of the appearances:

"Think of the number of witnesses – _____ Think of the character of the witnesses - men and women who gave the world the highest ethical teaching it has ever known, and who even on the testimony of their enemies lived it out in their lives. Think of the psychological absurdity of picturing a little band of defeated cowards cowering in an upper room one day and a few days later transformed into a company that no persecution could silence – and then attempting to attribute this dramatic change to nothing more than a lie. That simply wouldn't make sense."

2. The _____ the Roman and Jewish leaders

These men were powerful and hostile to the Christian faith. If they proved that the resurrection was not true, they could have destroyed Christianity forever.

In Acts chapter 2, Peter stood up in front of a large crowd of Jewish people and told them...

"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him...God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact." (Acts 2:22-32)

Why didn't the Jewish leaders say that he was lying?

Because Jesus' body was not in the tomb. The empty tomb was there for anyone to examine it.

3. The rapid and massive _____ of Christianity

Christianity began in the very place it could be most easily stopped. In less than sixty days after Jesus was killed, the Christian church had 3,000 members and then it rapidly spread all throughout the Roman world. Today, Christianity is the largest religion in the world.

4. The _____ of mourners at the tomb

The tomb that Jesus was buried in never became a monument or an important place for people to come. **Why?** His body was not there.

5. _____ on the first day of the week

One of the Ten Commandments is to keep the Sabbath day holy (see Exodus 20:8, 31:12-17, 35:1-3). The Jewish Sabbath day is Saturday. At the time of Christ's death the Sabbath was a 1,500 year old tradition and a very important and sacred part of a Jewish person's life. A great number of the early Christians were Jewish people. Yet, they began to worship on Sunday, the first day of the week. **Why would they break a 1,500 year old tradition that God Himself ordained?** To honor the resurrection of Jesus.

6. The phenomenon of the !

The Lord's Supper is a memorial of Jesus' death (see Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). However, we read in Acts 2:46 that this was a time of joy and happiness. The memory of the meal which led directly to the betrayal and crucifixion of Jesus, their Lord and friend, would have been unbearably painful. **What changed the sorrow and anguish of the Last Supper into a communion of joy the world over?** Because He is risen!

7. The symbolism and meaning of

From the very birth of the Christian faith, baptism was recognized as symbolically reenacting the death, burial (going under the water; dying to the old sinful nature) and resurrection of Jesus Christ (raising out of the water to share a new resurrected life with Christ). The New Testament explains that when a person believes and confesses that Jesus is Lord and Savior, repents of their sins and is baptized, they are united with Christ in his death and resurrection.

"...don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection." (Romans 6:3-5)

How are we to account for the symbolism and meaning of Christian baptism if the resurrection didn't really happen?

NOTES

ⁱ Ross Clifford, ed., *The Case for the Empty Tomb: Leading Lawyers Look at the Resurrection* (Claremont, CA: Albatross, 1991), 112. Cited in Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler, *Who Made God?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 2003), 97.

ⁱⁱ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, ii. 22.

ⁱⁱⁱ Josh McDowell, *More than a Carpenter* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1977), 61.

^{iv} Josh McDowell, *More than a Carpenter* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1977), 62.

^v J.N.D. Anderson, "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ," *Christianity Today*. March 29, 1968. Cited in Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict Vol. 1* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, Inc.), 224.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?

(Part 1)

CHAPTER 13

“What is the meaning of life and can the answer be found in the Christian religion?”

I would like to address this question by looking at one of the books in the Old Testament, the book of Ecclesiastes.

Ravi Zacharias was once speaking to a large crowd of college students and one student interrupted his presentation, stood up and yelled out, *“Everything is meaningless!”*

The speaker responded very quickly, *“You don’t believe that.”*

The student yelled, *“Yes, I do!”*

The speaker said, *“No, you don’t.”*

The student yelled, *“I most certainly do. Who are you to tell me I don’t?”*

“Then repeat your statement for me,” the speaker requested.

“Everything is meaningless!”

Dr. Zacharias then said to him, *“I assume that you assume that your statement is meaningful.”*

The student said, *“Pardon?”*

The speaker said, *“If your statement is meaningful, then everything is not meaningless. On the other hand, if everything is meaningless, then what you have just said is meaningless too. So, in effect, you have said nothing.”¹*

The interesting thing is that this student’s statement is identical with the first verse of the book of Ecclesiastes.

“The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem:

‘Meaningless, meaningless!’ says the Teacher. ‘Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.’” (Ecclesiastes 1:1-2)

That’s a real “pick me up” verse, isn’t it?

At times, this book sounds incredibly pessimistic and depressing. However, if you read this book carefully you will see that the author has the answer to the question, **“What is the meaning of life?”** He has the answer, but first he will discuss all the things that *we think* will bring meaning and joy to our lives.

Ecclesiastes is a book about experimentation. It is about a man who is reflecting on his lifelong quest for meaning. The teacher, the author of Ecclesiastes, an old man now, looks back over the years of his life and basically says... *"been there, done that."* He has experimented and tasted everything life has to offer.

Money: The writer says, *"I've had more than you can dream."*

Wisdom and education: *"My wisdom was world renowned."*

Fame and Power: *"More than anyone before me."*

Fun: *"I've done it all."*

Accomplishments: *"Ditto."*

Relationships: *"I've had more relationships than you can possibly imagine."*

He has _____ all these things that we think are supposed to bring meaning and happiness. Here is his report in a nutshell...It's empty. It's all meaningless.

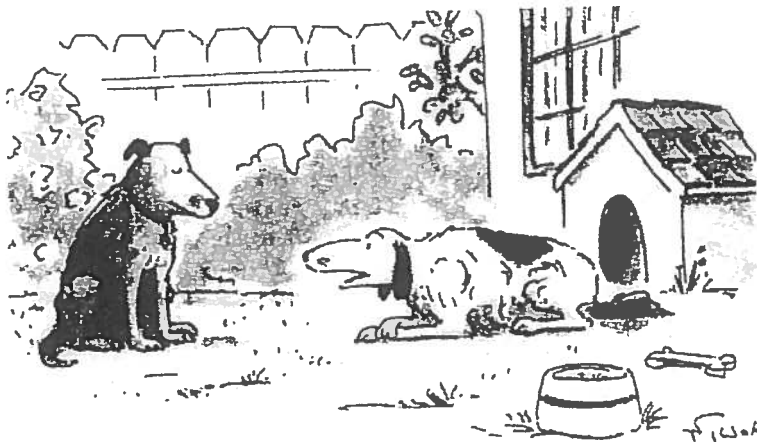
He's not saying that these things are unimportant, but that all these things, especially in abundance, will ultimately _____.

The Irish writer, Oscar Wilde once said, *"In this world there are two great tragedies: One is not getting what you want, and the other is getting it."*ⁱⁱⁱ

Most people are desperately searching for meaning, peace and joy, but are trying to find these things in the wrong places.

Before we look at what the author of Ecclesiastes says about the meaning of life, let's look at the question,

"What does not bring meaning, peace and joy to life?"



"I've got the bowl, the bone, the big yard. I know I should be happy."

"I would be happy if I were more educated!"



Many people throughout history have felt that knowledge is the key to a meaningful, peaceful and joyful life.

What about education, wisdom and knowledge?

Most believe that the book of Ecclesiastes was written by or at least about King Solomon of Israel.

Let's look for a moment at how wise, educated and smart King Solomon was according to the Bible:

"God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than any other man..." (1 Kings 4:29-31)

"Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard his wisdom." (1 Kings 4:34) (See also 1 Kings 10:4-8)

What does he say about education and wisdom?

Look at Ecclesiastes 1:12-13:

"I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven."

Yeah, Teacher what did you find out? Surely knowledge, the wisdom of the ages and the wonders of science hold the key to meaning and true happiness!

"I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are _____, a chasing after the wind." (Ecclesiastes 1:14)

"For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief."
(Ecclesiastes 1:18)

Albert Einstein, two days before his death, said something very similar –

"Those of us who know the most are gloomiest about the future."ⁱⁱⁱ

So, the writer here is the smartest of the smart. He has reached the _____
His report on the matter is this – Meaning, Peace and Joy can't be found there.

The message here is not that education and knowledge are unimportant. He affirms this in chapter 2:13... *"I saw that wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness."*

Education is vital. He would affirm this. The message here is that wisdom, education and knowledge do not bring life.

"What about pleasure and fun? Will these things bring me joy and meaning?"



What about Pleasure and Fun?

Surely, _____ bring happiness!

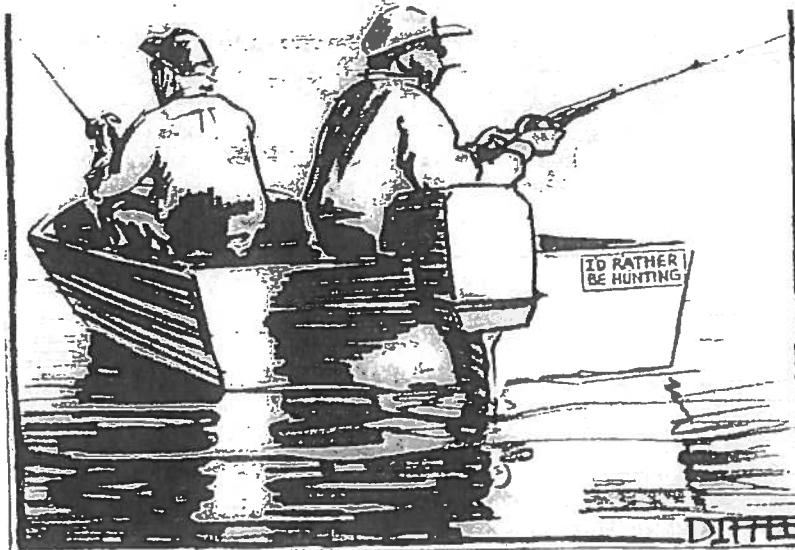
There are two types of fun – sinful fun and fun that isn't sinful.

The author of Ecclesiastes would say that both are ultimately _____. Sinful fun leaves you empty, lost and feeling guilty. Just plain old fun...well, it still leaves you empty eventually.

Proverbs 25:16 is an interesting verse ... *"If you find honey, eat just enough - too much of it, and you will vomit."*

In other words, even _____ in abundance, will eventually make you sick.

Ravi Zacharias put it this way... "Any pleasure, however good, if not kept in balance, will distort reality and destroy appetite."^{iv}



What does the author of Ecclesiastes say about fun?

Look at Ecclesiastes 2:10: "I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure."

Can you imagine? Anything he saw that he wanted, he took. Anything he wanted to do, he did.

"I thought in my heart, 'Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good.' But that also proved to be meaningless." (Ecclesiastes 2:1)

The truth is that _____ and short lived. The writer of Hebrews commends Moses for his faith by saying:

"By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward." (Hebrews 11:24-26)

Moses could have had _____ Egypt had to offer, but he _____ God rather than _____ because he knew it was short lived and it could not ultimately provide life, meaning, peace or joy.

Ravi Zacharias says something that we here in this wealthy nation should take special note of:

"I am absolutely convinced that meaninglessness does not come from being weary of pain; meaninglessness comes from being weary of pleasure."^v

This is exactly the conclusion in Ecclesiastes.

"I would be happy, if I were _____"



What about money, wealth, riches, and power?

Let's look briefly at just how rich Solomon was.

"The weight of the gold that Solomon received yearly was 666 talents (25 tons) not including the revenues from merchants and traders and from all the Arabian kings and the governors of the land." (1 Kings 10:14-15)

"King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth." (1 Kings 10:23)

Again, the writer of Ecclesiastes has gone farther down the road of wealth than anyone before him. Here is his report...

"Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is _____ with his income. This too is meaningless." (Ecclesiastes 5:10)

Someone once asked John D. Rockefeller, the richest man of his time, "How much money is enough?" He replied with a perfect definition of greed: "Just a little more." A real estate tycoon said something similar: "I don't want all the land in the world, just whatever touches mine."^{vi}

Consider the following story about Howard Hughes:

"At age 45, Hughes was one of the most glamorous men in America. He courted actresses, piloted exotic test aircraft, and worked on top-secret CIA contracts. He owned a string of hotels around the world, even an airline – TWA – to carry him on global jaunts.

Twenty years later, at age 65, Howard Hughes still _____, - \$2.3 billion to be exact. But the world's richest man had become one of its most pathetic. He lived in small dark rooms atop his hotels. Without sun and without joy. He was unkempt: a scraggly beard had grown waist-length, his hair fell down his back, his fingernails were two inches long. His once-powerful 6'4" frame had shrunk to about 100 pounds. This famous and powerful man spent most of his time watching movies over and over, with the same movie showing as many as 150 times. He lay naked in bed, deathly afraid of germs. Life held _____ for him. Finally, emaciated and hooked on drugs, he died at age 67, for a lack of a medical device his own company had helped to develop."^{vii}

A Chinese billionaire who converted to Christianity was asked "Why did you convert?" This was his answer --- "All my life I have spent my time climbing the mountain of wealth and success and when I finally got to the top...I looked around and nothing was there."

Jesus once said, "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?" (Matthew 16:26)

Money and riches cannot bring life, meaning, peace or even security.

Laurence Shames was right when he made this observation about the United State's myth that more is better...

_____ kept the workers working, which kept the paychecks coming, which kept the people spending, which kept inventors inventing and investors investing, which meant there was more to consume...It was a perfect circle, complete in itself –but empty in the middle."^{viii}

What about fame, success or reaching the top of your game?

Boris Becker stunned the world after winning his second Wimbledon when a reporter asked, "How does it feel?" He answered, "I still battle daily with the decision of whether or not to commit suicide."^{ix}

During his interview with Diane Sawyer on ABC's "Primetime Live," Mel Gibson discussed the reasons he turned back to God and initially began meditating on the Passion of the Christ. "Let's face it," said Gibson, "I have been to the pinnacle of what secular utopia has to offer. I got money, fame, this, that and the other... It wasn't enough. It's not good enough. It leaves you empty. The more you eat, the emptier you get."^x

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"What people fail to realize is that all achievements are eventually surpassed, records are broken, reputations fade, and tributes are forgotten. In college, James Dobson's goal was to become the school's tennis champion. He felt proud when his trophy was prominently placed in the school's trophy cabinet. Years later, someone mailed him that trophy. They had found it in a trash can when the school was remodeled. Jim said, 'Given enough time, all trophies will be trashed by someone else!'"^{xi}

What about your career? Work? Accomplishments?

The writer of Ecclesiastes became a _____.

"I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit in them. I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees." (Ecclesiastes 2:4-6)

...but then he became bitterly

"So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. I hated all the things I toiled for under the sun..." (Ecclesiastes 2:17-18)

"...I saw that all labor and all achievement spring from man's envy of his neighbor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind." (Ecclesiastes 4:4)

What about relationships?

Look at 1 Kings 11:1-3...

"King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women ... Solomon held fast to them in love. He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray."

Many young people say things like this... *"I would happy, if I could only find someone to date or marry." "If I could only be in a _____..then I would be complete."*

Of course, there is some truth to this. Even God said *"It is not good for the man to be alone."* (Genesis 2:18)

Relationships are so important and great but they will not and they _____

NOTES

ⁱ Ravi Zacharias, *Can Man Live Without God* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 1994), 184.

ⁱⁱ Philip Yancey (General Editor), *The Student Bible – The New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 722.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ravi Zacharias, *Can Man Live Without God* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 1994), 54.

^{iv} Ravi Zacharias, *Cries of the Heart* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998), 140.

^v Ravi Zacharias, *Is There Meaning in Evil and Suffering?* (Video: Faith and Science Lecture Forum, Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, 1999).

^{vi} Philip Yancey (General Editor), *The Student Bible – The New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 728.

^{vii} Philip Yancey (General Editor), *The Student Bible – The New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 723.

^{viii} Laurence Shames, *The Hunger for More* (New York: Times Books, 1989).

^{ix} Ravi Zacharias, *Can Man Live Without God* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 1994), 56. Taken from Alister McGrath, *Intellectuals Don't Need God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 15.

^x Taken from Diane Sawyer's interview with Mel Gibson on ABC's "*Primetime Live*" which aired on February 16th, 2004.

^{xi} Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 33.

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WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?

CHAPTER 14 (Part 2)

"What does bring joy, peace and meaning to our lives?"



In the book of Ecclesiastes, the writer deals with all the things that we think ought to bring joy and renders them meaningless. This leaves us asking, "O.K., Mr. Pessimistic, what does bring happiness, joy and meaning?"

The writer of Ecclesiastes answers this question two ways. First, in the midst of telling us what does not bring meaning, he sprinkles verses throughout the book with part of the answer. Look at the following verses that create a common thread throughout Ecclesiastes:

2:24-25: "A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the _____, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment."

3:12-13: "I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil – this is the _____"

3:22: "So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work, because this is his lot. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?"

5:18: "Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toil: some labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him – for this is his lot."

8:15: "So I commend the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun."

9:7-9: "Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for it is now that God favors what you do. Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil. Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love..."

Where can we find meaning and joy? I believe we have some answers here.
It almost sounds too simple.

Ecclesiastes basically says, "*Look around you! Look at the blessings God has given you today.* _____ *Be glad and thankful about them.*"

Mike Copeⁱ once pointed out that God didn't have to make eating fun. We could have been created to just suck up nutrients like plants. But eating is fun.
How many of you ate a meal in your car last week? We are a fast food culture. We pride ourselves with working through lunch.
Ecclesiastes is saying: "Stop! Put the cell phone down. Let the answering machine pick up. Enjoy your meal with your family! This is a gift from God!"

How many of you went to work last week? This book is saying: " _____
you should try to enjoy it or try to find a job that you do enjoy."

How many of you spent time with your wife or husband or your kids or with good friends? Those moments were gifts from God.

Joy, meaning, peace and life can't be found in wealth, fame, power, money, wisdom or education. It can't be found in dwelling in the past or living for the future. However, it can be found in this day.

The author of Ecclesiastes reminds us that we can't control a lot of things in life. So, what does he suggest... enjoy life. *Don't let the things you can't control destroy what you can enjoy.*ⁱⁱ

Too often, we miss that and we want what we want (or what we think we want) *right now.*

John Lennon once said, "*Life is what's happening while we're busy making other plans.*"

One of my favorite books on the shelf is *The Book of Virtues*. It is a collection of great moral stories from around the world. One of my favorites is the following French story about the danger of impatience and discontentment.

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The Magic Threadⁱⁱⁱ

Once there was a boy named Peter. Peter did not enjoy going to school and he was forever daydreaming.

"Peter, what are you dreaming about this time," his teacher would say to him.

"I'm thinking about what I'll be when I grow up," Peter replied.

"Be patient. There's plenty of time for that. Being grown up isn't all fun, you know," the teacher said.

But Peter found it hard to enjoy whatever he was doing at the moment, and was always hankering for the next thing. In the winter, he longed for summer. In the summer, he looked forward to skating, sledding and the warm fires of winter. He was never content. One day, he was walking through the woods. He sat down by a tree and was dreaming about the future, when he fell asleep. When he woke up, there was an old woman and in her hand she held a silver ball, with a golden thread dangling from it.

"See what I have got here, Peter," she said, offering the ball to him. "What is it?" he asked curiously. "This is your life thread. Do not touch the golden thread and time will pass normally. But if you wish time to pass more quickly, give the thread a pull and an hour will pass like a second. But I warn you, once the thread has been pulled out, it cannot be pushed back in again. The ball is for you; if you want it," the old lady replied.

Peter said joyfully, "Give it to me!" He put the ball in his pocket and ran home.

The following day at school, he started to get bored with the lesson. He thought, if only it was time to go home...He decided to pull the string. And just like that...he was home. Peter was overjoyed. "This is great! How easy life would be now!" From that day forth he began to pull the thread, just a little, every day.

One day, it occurred to him that if he gave it a harder tug, school would be over altogether. So that night he did. The next morning he awoke to find himself a trained carpenter in town. He loved his new life. But sometimes payday seemed so far away. So he would pull just a little each week.

During that time, Peter met a girl. He couldn't wait to marry her. So, one night, he gave the string a big tug and when he woke up, it was his wedding day.

On the day of his wedding, everyone, including Peter, was happy. At the wedding feast he glanced over at his mother. He noticed for the first time how gray her hair was. Peter felt a pang of guilt that he had pulled the thread so often. Several months later, his new wife announced that she was going to have a child. Peter was overjoyed and could hardly wait... You know what happened. He pulled the string and there was a beautiful child.

When the child was born, he felt that he could never want for anything again. But sometimes the child was ill or cried through the sleepless night. So Peter would give the thread a little tug, just so the baby would be well and happy again.

Then hard times came. Business was bad. Peter's family grew. Peter found himself again dissatisfied and discontent. It seemed as soon as one trouble was solved another seemed to grow in its place. One day, he thought how much easier life would be if all his children were grown up and had careers of their own. So Peter gave the thread a mighty tug.

The following day, Peter woke up. He looked in the mirror. His hair was almost white. He looked at his wife and she was old and very ill. His parents were now gone. He felt so sad and guilty that he decided to go for a walk in the forest to think things over. He noticed on his walk that all the trees had grown up. It was hard to even find the path. He was old and his bones were weak so he sat down by a tree and fell asleep. He awoke to someone calling his name, "Wake up, Peter. You will be late for school. You were sleeping like the dead!" When he awoke, his youthful mother was bending over him, shaking him gently. As Peter walked to school that morning, he noticed what a bright spring morning it was. It was the kind of morning when it felt good to be alive.

Someone once said:

"I used to be dying to get out of college.

Then I was dying to get married.

Then I was dying to get a good job.

Then I was dying to get a promotion.

Then I was dying to get the kids off to college.

Then I was dying to retire.

Now, I'm dying and I realize that I forgot to live."

With these things in mind, I believe one of the most important Biblical teachings is found in Psalm 118:24:

"This is the day the Lord has made; let us _____ (Psalms 118:24)

_____ even the hard ones, has its blessings. A few years ago there was a popular Kodak commercial. The scene was a mother and a dad desperately trying to get themselves and the kids ready to go somewhere. The kids were holding up progress every step of the way...pillow fights, jumping on the bed, dancing, and so on. Finally, a smile came on the mother's tired face and she took a picture of the laughing kids. Then the narrator's voice said ... "Stop, look around. This is the good stuff. Don't miss it."

THIS MOMENT

I may never see tomorrow; there's no written guarantee,
And the things that happened yesterday belong to history,
I cannot predict the future, I cannot change the past,
I have just the present moment, I must treat it as my last,
I must use this moment wisely for it soon will pass away,
And be lost to me forever as part of yesterday,
I must exercise compassion, help the fallen to their feet,
Be a friend unto the friendless, make an empty life complete,
The unkind things I do today may never be undone,
And friendships that I fail to win may nevermore be won,
I may not have another chance on bended knee to pray,
And thank God with humble heart for giving me this day.

--Author Unknown

Ecclesiastes ends with this conclusion. Here, says the teacher, is the meaning of life:

***“Now all has been heard;
here is the conclusion of the matter:
Fear God and keep his commandments,
for this is the whole duty of man.” (Eccl. 12:13)***

When we have a good relationship with God, life becomes peaceful, hopeful, joyful and meaningful. In other words, we will not _____ until we learn to _____

Psalms 37:4 reminds us of this promise:

“Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.”

Ecclesiastes reminds us that we will never find ultimate meaning in life “under the sun.” This book drives us to the conclusion that to find meaning, joy, peace and life we must look outside of our self and search for answers “beyond the sun.” Perhaps, we are not content and happy here because we’re not supposed to be. Have you ever considered that _____ us to be empty, frustrated and discontent without Him? We were meant for more than life “under the sun.” We were created to live forever in heaven, not in this fallen world.

Alister McGrath summed it up this way:

“Many have found that the awesome sight of the star-studded heavens evoke a sense of wonder, an awareness of transcendence, that is charged with spiritual significance. Yet the distant shimmering of stars does not itself create this sense of longing; it merely exposes what is already there. They are catalysts for our spiritual insights, revealing our emptiness and compelling us to ask whether and how this void might be filled.

Might our true origins and destiny somehow lie beyond those stars? Might there not be a homeland, from which we are presently exiled and to which we secretly long to return? Might not our accumulation of discontentment and disillusionment with our present existence be a pointer to another land where our true destiny lies and which is able to make its presence felt now in this haunting way?

Suppose that this is not where we are meant to be but that a better land is at hand? We don’t belong here. We have somehow lost our way. Would not this make our present existence both strange and splendid? Strange, because it is not where our true destiny lies; splendid, because it points ahead to where that real hope might be found. The beauty of the night skies or a glorious sunset are important pointers to the origins and the ultimate fulfillment of our heart’s deepest desires. But if we mistake the signpost for what is signposted, we will attach our hopes and longings to lesser goals, which cannot finally quench our thirst for meaning.”^{iv}

"On the surface we seem quite different; but deep down we are fundamentally the same - We are all desperately unhappy about something—and we don't know what it is. In every person there is this nameless, unsatisfied longing; this vague discontent; this something lacking; this frustration; this something that only Jesus Christ can satisfy."

Ultimately, _____ can satisfy a person's spiritual hunger and thirst. In Christ the hunger and thirst disappear. The human heart at last finds what it has been searching for – _____

"Thou has made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee." – Augustine

"Happiness is neither within nor without us – it is in God and only when God is in us is happiness within and without us...All of us have been created with a God shaped vacuum that only God can fill."

-- Blaise Pascal, seventeenth century mathematician, father of the modern computer

"A car is made to run on gasoline, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other." -- C. S. Lewis

"Anything that endures for a shorter time than the soul does is incapable of satisfying the soul."^{vi} -- Dr. Ravi Zacharias

A personal note to young people from the author:

I'm sure many of you remember the terrifying tragedy that played out at the bottom of the Barents Sea in the late summer of 2000. On August 12th, after a series of explosions, the giant Russian nuclear powered submarine called the K-141 *KURSK* drifted to the bottom of the sea. Most of the one hundred and eighteen sailors were instantly killed. However, tapping noises detected in the icy waters and, later, a note in the pocket of Lieutenant DR Kolesnikov revealed that at least 23 men remained alive after the initial explosions. These sailors were trapped aboard with little hope and no means of communication to the outside world. It is almost unbearable to think about what these men were going through. Yet, think about this for a moment. Imagine the overwhelming joy those men would have felt if they heard a voice from the outside through radio transmission saying, *"It's going to be all right. I know you're down there and I know what you're going through. Don't worry! I'm going to try to save you. I've sent someone down to help you and to get you. Listen to what he says, follow his instructions and you will live."* **Imagine the cheering that would have followed that message.**

Young people, some of your professors, friends and peers will try to convince you that our universe is just like that submarine. They will try to convince you that we live in a closed system called the universe and we are drifting aimlessly through space without meaning, purpose or ultimate destination. They will tell you that there is no voice out there to speak to us, comfort us, help us or guide us. They will try to convince you that there is no hope for life outside this system. They will claim that we are own our own and our few days in this world is all we've got.

Young people don't be deceived. God is and He has spoken. There is a voice from outside this system and that voice has said, *"It's going to be all right. I know you're down there and I know what you are going through. Don't worry! I'm going to try to save you. I've sent someone down to help you and to get you. Listen to what He says, follow His instructions and you will live."*

That someone is Jesus Christ and there should be great rejoicing because of that message.

That very voice may be calling you today to become a Christian or to recommit your life to Him. If that is the case please don't ignore this voice. Listen to what He says, follow His instructions and you will find forgiveness for the past, an abundant life in the present, and hope for the future.

May God's richest blessings be upon your life!

This book is a work in progress and I would love to hear your comments about it. If you noticed any mistakes, have any further questions or something was unclear or left out please let me know. Also, if your faith in God, His Word and/or His Son has grown as a result of reading this book, please write and encourage me by telling me about it!

My e-mail address is russ@meadowlarkchurch.org or russ@ramsforchrist.net

NOTES

ⁱ Much of this lesson was inspired by and adapted from a wonderful sermon by Mike Cope entitled “*Carpe Diem Joy*” (Preached February 9, 1997 at a college student retreat called Gateway Get-a-Way).

ⁱⁱ Tommy Nelson, *Navigating the Icebergs of Life* (Audio lesson series on the book of Ecclesiastes) (Denton, TX: Media Ministry of Denton Bible Church, 2003).

ⁱⁱⁱ William J. Bennett (Editor), “The Magic Thread,” *The Book of Virtues* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 57-63.

^{iv} Alister McGrath, *Glimpsing the Face of God*, 51, 53. As cited in Lee Stroble, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 292.

^v William Barclay, *The Gospel of John, Vol. 1-The Daily Study Bible Series*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 155.

^{vi} Ravi Zacharias, *Sense and Sensuality – Jesus Talks with Oscar Wilde on the Pursuit of Pleasure* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, 2002), 70.

