

JANUARY BIBLE STUDY – 2024
Lesson 3: Modern Apologetics (Truth Is Discovered)

What Does the Bible Say?

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

If this is indeed true, then the evidence should clearly point in that direction:

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork” (Psalm 19:1)

“For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, *in the things that have been made*. So, they are without excuse” (Romans 1:19–21, emphasis mine).

How should general revelation (creation) relate to special revelation (Bible) and vice versa?

Definitions

Science – “observing the world by watching, listening, observing, and recording. Science is curiosity in thoughtful action about the world and how it behaves” (NASA Space Place).¹

Empiricism – the belief that all knowledge originates through sensory experience (sight, smell, touch, etc.).

Naturalism – the idea or belief that only natural (as opposed to supernatural or spiritual) laws and forces operate in the world; the idea or belief that nothing exists beyond the natural world.

Scientism – the view that the hard sciences—like chemistry, biology, physics, astronomy—provide the only genuine knowledge of reality.

Evolution – the theory that diversity at every level of biological organization, including species, individual organisms, and molecules, occurs through change in the inherited characteristics of biological populations over successive generations.

Intelligent Design – the theory that certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, not as an undirected process such as natural selection.

¹ <https://spaceplace.nasa.gov/science/en/>

Main Tenets of Intelligent Design

Irreducible Complexity – a single system which is composed of several well-matched interacting parts that contribute to the basic function, wherein the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to effectively cease functioning.

Examples: the eye, bacterial flagellum, coagulation cascade (blood clotting)

In response, specifically concerning the eye, atheist Richard Dawkins provides this explanation:

An ancient animal with 5 percent of an eye might indeed have used it for something other than sight, but it seems to me as likely that it used it for 5 percent vision.... Vision that is 5 percent as good as yours or mine is very much worth having in comparison with no vision at all. So is 1 percent vision better than total blindness. And 6 percent is better than 5, 7 percent better than 6, and so on up the gradual, continuous series.

How do you feel about Dawkins' explanation?

Specified Complexity – the concept espoused by William Dembski that states when the details of living things are both complex and specified simultaneously, one can infer that it was produced by an intelligent cause rather than being the result of natural processes.

Example: DNA sequences

Dembski provides the following illustration: "A single letter of the alphabet is specified without being complex. A long sentence of random letters is complex without being specified. A Shakespearean sonnet is both complex and specified."

How strong do you believe Dembski's argument is?

Fine-Tuned Universe – the structure of the universe is finely tuned to support life as we know it. In order for this to be so, the universe would have to have known in advance what kind of life it was going to support prior to developing it as it did.

Book Recommendation: Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box* (New York: Free Press, 2004).

Cosmological Evidence

While scientists agree that the universe appears remarkably tuned to produce life (the anthropic principle), the explanations they provide for this phenomenon vary drastically.

Strong Anthropic Principle – the belief that the universe is compelled to bring about the conditions to support life as we know it.

Weak Anthropic Principle – the belief that only a universe capable of producing life would contain beings able to observe it.

Consider the following items related to Earth being fit for habitation:

Axial Tilt – If it were greater, then surface temperature differences would be too great; if it were smaller, then surface temperature differences would be too great.

Rotational Period of the Earth – If it were longer, the difference in temperature between night and day would be too drastic; if it were shorter, atmospheric wind would be too fast.

Gravitational Interaction with the Moon – If it were greater, then the tidal effects on the atmosphere and rotation period would be too severe; if it were smaller, then there would be gross climatic instabilities.

Magnetic Field around the Earth – If it were stronger, then the electromagnetic storms would be too severe; if it were weaker, then there would be inadequate protection from stellar radiation.

Thickness of Planetary Crust – If it were thicker, then there would be too much oxygen transferred from the atmosphere to the crust; if it were thinner, then there would be catastrophic volcanic and tectonic activity.

Earth's Distance from the Sun – Earth is situated at just the right distance from the sun to ensure that water can exist as ice, liquid, and vapor. If the Earth was any closer, all water would boil, possibly creating a greenhouse effect that would heat the temperature on the surface like that of Venus. If it was any farther away, all water would freeze, making plant life all but impossible.

Since facts are not self-interpreting, what would cause a person to examine the above data and conclude that the Earth was not designed by a Creator?

Zoological Evidence

“And God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.’ And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:24–25).

If the above passage is true (and it is), then zoological evidence should point to creation. Consider the following animals as to whether they present evidence for creation or against it.

Camel – The camel has two sets of eyelashes that protect its eyes from the blowing sands of the deserts. It can allow its body temperature to reach up to 106°F, which allows it to travel in hot, dry areas without losing great amounts of water. Its feet are also specially padded to endure the hot sand of the desert without blistering.

Giraffe – The giraffe possesses many unique features that all play vital roles in its survival. The giraffe’s heart must pump enough blood into its brain while the capillaries must prevent the high blood pressure from affecting the animal when it bends over to get a drink. The lungs, which are eight times the size of a human’s, provide enough oxygen to the brain. The giraffe gives birth while standing up. Such a fall would mean certain death to the newborn except for the fact that the mother lowers its young to the ground slowly through use of the afterbirth.

Nurse Shark – Unlike most sharks, the nurse shark does not have to constantly move water across its gills to breathe. The nurse shark can remain motionless on the seafloor because of its ability to pump water across its gills. It does this by opening and closing its mouth.

Clownfish – The clownfish exhibits a symbiotic relationship with the sea anemone. While sea anemones have stinging tentacles, the clownfish is able to develop a mucous that covers its body to protect it from the stings of the sea anemone. With this ability, the sea anemone can provide protection for the clownfish, and the clownfish helps feed, oxygenate, and remove waste materials from the sea anemone.

Carrion Beetles – Carrion beetles exist in many varieties, some with wings and some without. Whereas being without wings might be a disadvantage in some areas, making it more difficult for the beetle to evade predators, it can actually serve as an advantage on windy islands, where beetles that fly tend to be blown into the sea.

Book Recommendation: John Van Sloten, *God Speaks Science: What Neurons, Giant Squid, and Supernovae Reveal about Our Creator* (Chicago: Moody, 2023).

I. ARGUMENT FROM CAUSE (Cosmological)

- ... Something exists (I doubt, I think, I am).
- ... That which is finite, changing, and dependent is caused to exist (every effect has a cause).
- ... There can be no infinite regress (create more effects which need explanation).
- ... Must be first cause which is self-existing (uncaused cause).
- ... The uncaused cause must be of sufficient power to begin the process which results in present reality.
- ... The uncaused cause we call God.

Genesis 1:1

John 1:1-3

Colossians 1:15-17

We can know he is cause (creator) sustainer, powerful, immanent.

III. ARGUMENT FROM JUSTICE (Moral Argument)

- ... Men argue about the commission of moral right and wrong (look not to how they act but how they expect to be treated).
- ... Neither person has authority to impose moral standards on the other (subjective). Both of equal authority.
- ... Both appeal to higher standard to which they are subject.
- ... Appealing to higher standard requires appealing to authority of source for higher standard (who has authority to impose higher standard of conduct).
- ... If higher law, there must be a law giver with right to establish standards of conduct.
- ... This law giver we call God.

Exodus 20:1-3ff

Romans 2:14-15

We can know God is concerned with justice and right conduct. Also, consequences for transgression of moral standard.

RESURRECTION

I. Claims

- ... Who? I and father are one, John 10:30 (I am, John 8:58)
- ... Do What? Seek and save, Luke 19:9-10
- ... Validation, resurrection--John 3:17, Romans 4:25, John 2:19, Matthew 12:39-40

II. Resurrection Questioned, I Corinthians 15:1-19

- ... Church impacted by society (Platonists, Stoics, Epicurians, v. 32).

- ... If not risen

Preaching vain, v. 14

Liars, v. 15

Faith is vain, v. 17

Still in sin

False witness about God, v. 15

Dead parish--no hope, I Thessalonians 4:15

Most miserable, v. 19, 30--II Corinthians 11:24

III. Christ Has Risen (v. 20)

- ... Personal experience--I received, you believed (v. 1)
Romans 8:16
- ... Scripture, (v. 3) II Peter 1:16-21
- ... Acceptance by Corinthian Christians (v. 1-3)
- ... Seen by Peter (v. 5), Luke 24:34
- ... Seen by the 12, John 20:24-29
- ... 500 "brethren", no mass hallucination
- ... The apostles (40 days), Acts 1:2-3

... Skeptics

James (Matthew 13:55)

Brothers don't believe John 7:15

Find brothers believing, Acts 11:4

James as head of church, Acts 12:17

How? He saw the risen Christ

Paul, Acts 9

IV. Other Witnesses

... Two on road to Emmaus, Luke 24:13

... Thomas, John 20:29

V. Other Evidences

... Death--spear, John 19:34

... Empty tomb--Luke 23:50

... Response of Jewish leaders--Matthew 27:62, Matthew 26:56, Matthew 28:13

... Change in disciples, (Peter) Luke 22:62, Acts 4:5

... Center of early faith, Acts 2:42, Acts 5:28

... Sunday worship, most early christians were Jewish who were taught to worship on the sabbath.

... Jesus own prophecy, John 2:19, John 20:31

... Faith rests on facts, What response? If give mental ascent but not commitment, faith is vain (v. 2)