

DOES GOD EXIST?

**Second Quarter 2025
Volume 52 Number 2**

*A nonprofit effort to
convince mankind that
God is real and the
Bible is His Word.*



WHY DO WE NEED THE OLD TESTAMENT?

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God's Final Word: His Son

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.

Hebrews 1:1–2 NIV

The Supremacy of the Son of God

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

Colossians 1:15–16 NIV

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DOES GOD EXIST? (USPS 011-010) is published quarterly (January/February/March, April/May/June, July/August/September, and October/November/December) by **Does God Exist?**, 814 S. Main St., South Bend, IN 46601-3008. Subscription is free upon request. Periodicals postage paid at South Bend, IN. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: **DOES GOD EXIST?**, PO Box 2704, South Bend, IN 46680-2704.

Why Do We Need the Old Testament?



Many people consider reading the Old Testament on the same level as playing a child's video game. The stories about Noah and the flood have even been made into movies that paint a negative image of the leading biblical characters in the story. The list of Old Testament biblical characters written off by the media, the filmmakers, and even some preachers is very long. Are Old Testament characters like Sampson, Noah,



Jonah, Abraham, Sarah, David, and Goliath real, or are they fictional like Spider-Man,



Batman, or Wonder Woman? We suggest they are real, and here are six reasons why we need the Old Testament.

1. You cannot understand the claims by and about Jesus Christ without the Old Testament.

The references to the coming of Christ begin in Genesis 1:1 with the use of the plural Hebrew word *elohim* for God. Hebrews 1:1–2 and Colossians 1:15–16 in the New Testament tell us that Jesus was part of the *elohim* in Genesis 1:1. We also see that Christ's mission was predicted in Genesis 3:15 when God said to the serpent, “I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel.”



In the Old Testament book of Isaiah, chapter 53, we see a prophecy of Christ's nature and his sacrifice for all humanity. This passage was written some 700 years before the birth of Christ and strongly supports the New Testament picture of his life. The very nature of Christ as a priest "after the order of Melchizedek" in Hebrews 5:5 – 10 and Hebrews 7:1 – 28 clarifies the Old Testament references to Melchizedek and the priesthood.

2. You cannot understand current conflicts in the Middle East without the Old Testament.

The last 200 years have seen conflict which goes back to the times and events of the Old Testament. Even the claims of Islam have Old Testament roots.

3. We see the Bible's credibility through evidence in the Old Testament.

Through the years, skeptics have attempted to denigrate the biblical record of history, but archaeological support for the Old Testament narrative is massive. This ministry offers a 13-lesson correspondence course and a video series that shows that while the Bible does not detail all of history, much of it has archaeological support (see page 19).

4. The Old Testament allows us to see various literary styles and messaging methods.

Those who study languages and cultures tell us that the Old Testament displays various literary styles and messaging types. The main ones are narrative, poetry, and prose discourse. Also present are apocalyptic literature, wisdom literature, law, letter, parable, and gospel literature.

5. In the Old Testament, we can see human struggles with pain and suffering and how to deal with them.

Many people cite the book of Job as the most complete discussion of pain and suffering that has ever been written. It is a part of the Old Testament that people have adapted into books, plays, and counseling techniques. Job is uniquely dedicated to comprehending life, pain, suffering, and death. The Old Testament vividly displays the struggle between good and evil and gives us the only rational explanation for why we should continue to live and endure life's problems. Atheism offers no reason for our existence and even de-

nies the existence of evil. Survival of the fittest is not a solution for human suffering. The growth of suicide in the world today reflects the human inability to make sense of pain and suffering.

6. In the Old Testament, we see the importance of following God’s plan for human morality.

The Old Testament gives a vivid picture of the consequences of immorality. From Cain, David, Ahab, Jezebel, and God’s people, to the pagan kings of Babylon, Syria, Persia, and Moab, we see how immoral conduct brought eventual catastrophe. We need to understand the Ten Commandments to see how Christianity is superior to the Old Law when we read Christ’s “Sermon on the Mount” in Matthew chapters 5–7.

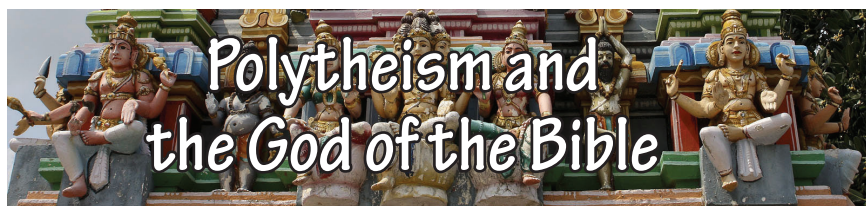


A lack of knowledge of the Old Testament causes many misunderstandings of Christianity. In 2 Timothy 2:15 (*The New Testament from 26 Translations*), we read, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman with no reason to be ashamed, accurate in delivering the Message of Truth.” As we understand the difference between the Old and New Testaments, we can comprehend the New Testament as it reflects the Old Testament message.

—John N. Clayton



See our videos at www.doesgodexist.tv



Evidence of Christianity's validity is the fact that every religious belief system outside of the Bible is a polytheistic human invention. People worldwide, especially in Asia and Africa, believe in multiple "gods." Historically, the same was true of the Greeks and Romans. Wikipedia lists 33 gods and goddesses, including Pelee (the goddess of volcanoes), Minerva (the goddess of weather), Zeus and Thor (the gods of lightning), Poseidon (the god of horses and seafarers), Titan (the god of the oceans). How can we compare polytheism and the God of the Bible?

The God of the Bible is incorporated in the Hebrew word "YHWH," translated as LORD (all caps), or more correctly, Yahweh. The events surrounding the death of Christ show that Yahweh controls all the things attributed to human-invented polytheistic gods. Matthew 27:45–56 describes each area of control. Three hours of darkness showed God's control of astronomical events. The earthquake that split rocks showed God's control of geological events. Temporarily bringing back people who had died long before showed God's control of life. This description of God's control over the creation is unique to the biblical account, giving evidence of the difference between polytheism and the God of the Bible.

The tearing of the veil was especially significant. The temple veil was commanded in Exodus 26:31–33 and Leviticus 16:2 to separate God from humanity. God was in the Holy Place, and humans could not even enter it. Tearing that veil, removed it as a barrier no longer separating us from God. This incredible change is a cornerstone of Christianity. John 1:1–14 and Colossians 1:15–20 describe God taking on human form to draw people to himself.

In Acts 17:23–30 Paul describes to the polytheistic culture in Athens the biblical concept of God: "... in him we live and move and have our being. ... for we are his offspring." Throughout the New Testament, we find calls to "repent." That does not mean to remember and beg forgiveness for every mistake you ever made. It means to "think differently." In Acts 2:38, Peter calls his audience, and us today, to "repent and be baptized for the remission of sins." We need to think differently about the nature of God.

We cannot achieve the unity that Jesus prayed for and called us to (John 17:20–23) until we understand the uniqueness of Yahweh.

—JNC

Who Created God?

One of our most frequently asked questions from believers and non-believers is, “If God created the cosmos, who created God?” Atheists claim that God is something humans invented to explain what they did not understand. It is true that ancient civilizations invented gods or goddesses to explain phenomena such as volcanoes, ocean storms, weather, lightning, and animal behaviors. The biblical concept is that God created everything we see in the cosmos and around us on Earth. Asking “Who created God?” reflects a failure to understand WHAT God is.

If your concept of God is that he is an old man in the sky or some variation of that idea, you will be unable to answer the question of who created God. God is a spiritual being, not a physical one. John 4:24 tells us, “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.” The Bible tells us that God does not experience time as we do. Acts 1:7 says, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in his own power.”

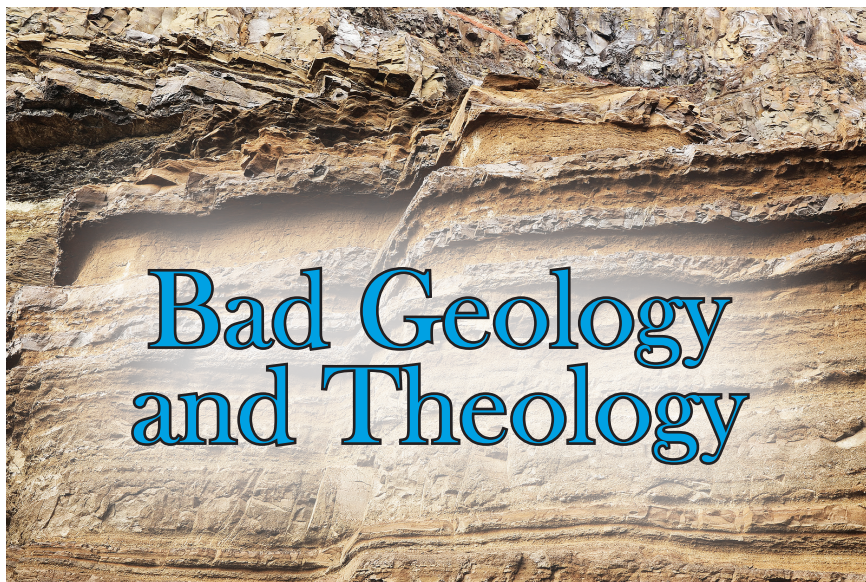
Genesis 1:1 begins with the Hebrew word *reshith*, translated as “in the beginning.” According to the Hebrew dictionary, the meaning of that word is “absolute beginning point.” The message is that time began when God created it at that point. The verse continues by saying God created “the heavens and the earth.” God is outside of time, space, and matter/energy. Science can propose theories about the beginning of time down to 10^{-43} seconds, but it cannot go any further. Quantum mechanics supports the concept of the beginning of time.

The bottom line is that nothing created God. God is outside of time and space and is the creator of all things. Colossians 1:16–17 says: “For by him were all things created whether spiritual or material, seen or unseen — the spirit world with its kings and kingdoms, its rulers and authorities. The whole universe has been created through and for him, so he existed before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

Second Peter 3:8 tells us, “One day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.” Verse 9 says that God is allowing humans time to respond to his invitation before the cosmos is dissolved (verse 12). Our doesgodexist.org website has some pamphlets, including “A Help In Understanding What God Is” and “Who Created God?” We all must deepen our understanding of these issues and strive to study and learn together.

—JNC

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Bad Geology and Theology

Young professionals with a church background often reject the Bible teaching they received when they realize it cannot be correct. Denominational dispensationalism teaches that the books of Daniel and Revelation predict Christ returning with his followers, defeating Russia and China in a war, and establishing a worldwide political system in Jerusalem for 1000 years. This dispensational teaching has several variations and is not only bad theology but also bad geology.

Christ's return and establishment of a kingdom on Earth are not the whole story. This doctrine also teaches that creation occurred only 6,000 to 10,000 years ago. That means all geological events have happened in a few thousand, not billions, of years. Various video presentations by dispensationalists attempt to explain folded rock layers by saying they were laid down during the biblical flood when the rocks were soft and pliable. When the waters receded, those soft layers were folded and hardened as they dried.

Any young person with an earth science course or any college student with an introductory geology course can see the problems with this bad geology. There are different types of rocks, and they fall into three categories.

IGNEOUS ROCKS

The first category is igneous rocks, molten material that can either be on Earth's surface as lava or deep underground as an intrusive rock like granite. Erosion has exposed many layers of intrusive rocks, but they cool very slowly, allowing the formation of mineral crystals. You never see crystals in lava. The folded rock layers dispensationalists use in their presentations are granite or other intrusive rocks such as



Granite

diorite or gabbro. They are not flood deposits and were never soft.

SEDIMENTARY ROCKS

Sedimentary rocks are usually produced by water acting over time. Chemical precipitates, like limestone, are produced by quiet water or sediment carried by moving water or wind. The size of the particles can vary depending on the violence of

the water or wind. Sedimentary rocks can also be conglomerates made of cobble-sized particles or shale made of very fine grains, too small to be seen by the naked eye. Flood deposits are easy to identify and are not made up of a chemical precipitate or igneous rock.



Limestone



Marble

METAMORPHIC ROCKS

The third rock type is metamorphic, in which the material has been changed. Marble is limestone morphed under heavy pressure.

This brief summary of petrology shows that it is bad geology to suggest that folded rock layers, especially intrusive igneous rocks, were produced by a flood. The Bible does not tell us Earth's age. Jesus said that his kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36), and Christ does not endorse war of any kind. The biblical message is spiritual, and the kingdom Christ came to establish is his church.

The false teaching of dispensationalism drives many young people away from faith. Ignorance of what the Bible says makes a person vulnerable to false religious teachings. We offer free postage-paid Bible studies. Send your name and address to jncdgc@aol.com, and we will mail you a course listing so you can choose a course to expand your Bible knowledge.

—JNC

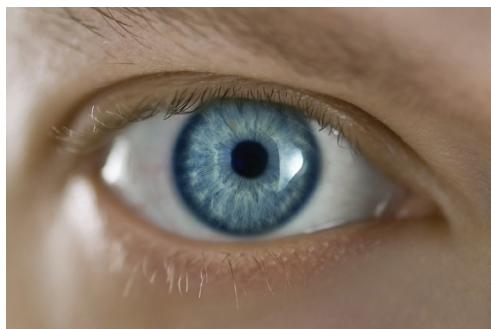


We read many quotes from various sources about humans traveling to the Moon, Mars, or some distant moon of Jupiter or Saturn. Most media stories seem to imply that a space suit is all an astronaut would need to survive the journey. They overlook the fact that the human body is carefully engineered to survive on Earth, not in space. Studies from the International Space Station show a new challenge for astronauts' eyes in space.

We can address the damage weightlessness causes to the heart and some other organs by providing enough cardiovascular activity on treadmills. However, new data on astronaut eyes show that long periods of weightlessness affect ocular biomechanics. More than 70% of astronauts on the International Space Station have Spaceflight-Associated Neuro-Ocular Syndrome (SANS).



NASA collected data on 13 astronauts who spent between 157 and 186 days in a weightless environment. The studies detailed a 33% decrease in ocular rigidity, an 11% decrease in intraocular pressure, and a 25% reduction in ocular pulse amplitude. These changes caused decreased eye size, an



altered focal field, optic nerve edema, and retinal folds. The researchers point out that some of these effects can produce long-lasting changes in the eye's mechanical properties.

Science shows that the human body is engineered and designed for the gravitational effects of our planet.

Every organ has to adjust when the body is subjected to weightlessness, but most organs cannot change. When NASA put Scott Kelly in space and his identical twin Mark stayed on Earth, it provided a comparison. Scott was in space for 340 days during 2015–16, and there were numerous changes in his DNA and body.

Additional data shows the effect of extended weightlessness on the eyes. Some things, such as ocular pressure, have poten-

tial complications like glaucoma. Our bodies are engineered with many individual characteristics essential for life. The more variables that must be “just right,” the less likely it is that the final product could exist by chance.



For an airplane to fly, thousands of features must be carefully engineered. That requires engineers, not chance. That is even more true for the human body. God carefully designed us to live on planet Earth, and the media often oversimplifies what we need for space travel. Look in the mirror and behold the handiwork of God (see Psalm 139:14).

—JNC

**Visit the Clayton Museum
of Ancient History at
York University, York, Neb.**



Why Would God Do That?

by Roland Earnst

A Christian friend was looking for help to answer his sons' questions. One son is in high school, and the other is in college, and they questioned why God would tell the Israelites to "attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys" (1 Samuel 15: 2–3). Why would God do that — requiring total destruction of the Amalekite society?

I shared my thoughts on this question, but first, I suggested he go to our website, doesgodexist.tv, and scroll down to video number 7, "Anticipating Some Objections."



Saul prepares to attack the Amalekites.

Between 11:50 and 15:40 in that video, you will find a very brief answer to the objection of why God would command the killing of all of the Amalekites, including women, children, and livestock.

It seems that in addition to other sins, such as attacking the Israelites in Exodus 17, the Amalekites were sexually corrupt, even including bestiality. That resulted in diseases, even affecting the animals, for which there was no cure at that primitive time. If the Amalekites and their animals were allowed to live in the land God had promised to his people, they would morally corrupt the Israelites and even spread diseases.

God was preparing a people through which he would bring salvation to all people. Why would God do that? Because of his love. Allowing the Israelites to be corrupted by their neighbors could destroy God's plan to redeem all humanity through Jesus Christ. The gospel came into the world because God had prepared a people who believed in the one true God who created all things. Any other religious system would not work to prepare people to accept Christ's message.

The Israelites failed to follow God's instructions to the letter, and that failure returned to haunt them (see 1 Samuel 30). Paganism corrupted even Israel's kings. However, God allowed his chosen people to suffer captivity and punishment. Why would God do that?



Samuel scolds Saul for disobeying.

Allowing his people to suffer eventually led to the Jewish people at the time of Jesus being completely cured of paganism. They had other faults, but they refused to worship any pagan gods. They had the prophecies of the Old Testament, the miracles, and Jesus' message to cause many of them to believe and be baptized

into Christ's body, the church. Although many rejected Christ, those who accepted the gospel became powerful witnesses to the pagans of their day to the point where they "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). Actually, they turned it right side up.

The church today would not exist if God had not taken harsh steps that may seem immoral to our modern Christian sensitivities. I believe that without the influence of Christianity in the past two millennia, people would have destroyed civilization and the planet before now. As people reject God today, we are on the verge of doing that. Today, God does not command us to save the world by destroying our enemies but by bringing them into God's family through his church. Why would God do that? Because he loves all people. When you consider the entire history from God's perspective and realize his ultimate purpose, you realize it was because of his love that he commanded the destruction of the Amalekites.

For documents and archives of this journal plus booklets and more: www.doesgodexist.org

Pursuing Harmony of Faith and Science

by Al Cornell

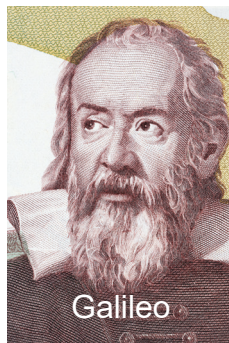
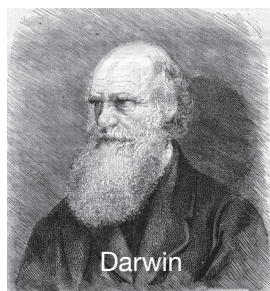
Three of us were discussing science and religion. A fourth person entered, and someone mentioned what we were talking about. The newcomer responded, “I believe in one of them.” We all understood that he was discarding religion as worthless, or perhaps evil, as Richard Dawkins and others have striven to do.

At the 1959 Darwinian Centennial, agnostic Loren Eiseley presented the case that modern science is a child of religion. The Judeo-Christian religion had established the case for a logical and rational creation that could be investigated. That differed from the voodoo and mystical concepts of most cultures.

However, from its inception, that “child” challenged ingrained doctrines established by religious leaders. Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo studied the world and found themselves at odds with some keepers of the established beliefs. Many people claimed to find biblical proof that the Earth was at the center of the universe. The conflict was resolved with the gradual realization that it arose from the arrogant defense of unwarranted human interpretations of Scripture. However, science continued to challenge religious doctrines.

A significant segment of the religious community, especially in North America, has set its peg on the young-earth interpretation and rejected a huge part of modern science. At the same time, an arrogant segment of the scientific community has declared all religions to be a bunch of ancient myths that need to be discarded. This polarization has resulted in many people choosing a side and acting disparagingly toward the other side.

The late scientist Stephen Jay Gould wrote of what he called separate “magisteria” for science and religion. At first, that approach may sound good. However, Gould claimed nearly everything for science and left a god who could not interfere with natural causes. His

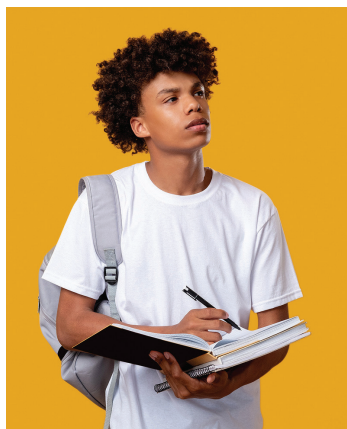


analysis of the world only left room for a god who was nearly dead or relaxing on some very distant beach.

Christianity teaches us values of humility, compassion, generosity, love, altruism, faith, honor, worship, holiness, purpose, family, integrity, character, and beauty. Science merely reaches the fringes of some of these. A world without pure religion is not an ideal home for humanity. Eiseley wrote of man, "... without a sense of the holy, without compassion, his brain can become a gray stalking horror — the deviser of Belsen" (a World War II concentration camp). Though many scientists are stellar citizens, that characteristic is not a product of the influence of science's domain. Science is morally indifferent.

Difficult times are frequently part of the future for those trained in a culture that views the science fields of geology, geography, biology, and astronomy as atheistic assaults on the Bible. Also, the extensive study of the radioactive decay of dozens of elements has broad applications in science. A few examples of contaminated samples do not discredit it.

After being raised in a church culture that presents young earth as a Christian doctrine, young people who enter a science field are thrown into an unnecessary dilemma. They are left believing they



must choose between faith and science. Some face the conflict and work through it to an acceptable solution, but most perceive a fundamental flaw in the faith system and drift away from it.

On the other hand, I was exposed to instructors who used their science professor platform to denounce the Christian faith. Evangelistic atheists regularly prey on the youth they instruct and add fuel to the conflict.

However, harmony is attainable for the one who concludes that there is a God who gave us the Word and the world.

Scientists study details concerning the world, but topics relating to value and purpose are not subject to research done by physical tools. They are topics of Christianity.

When Genesis 1:2 says, "the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters" that indicates a process. Teaching Genesis 1 as purely prose and demanding literal days from that text is an interpretation that is not without serious question. Being dogmatic about that view is not the same as being faithful to God and the Bible.

There is tremendous satisfaction in being drawn into the harmony of the Word and the world. Turn to Ecclesiastes 3:11 and note the beauty, the God-spot within us, and the unfathomable creation. Listen

Consider the following parallelism in Genesis 1:

Day 1: “light” -----

Day 4: “sun, moon, and stars”

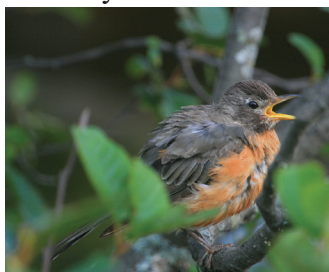
Day 2: “sky and water” -----

Day 5: “birds and fish”

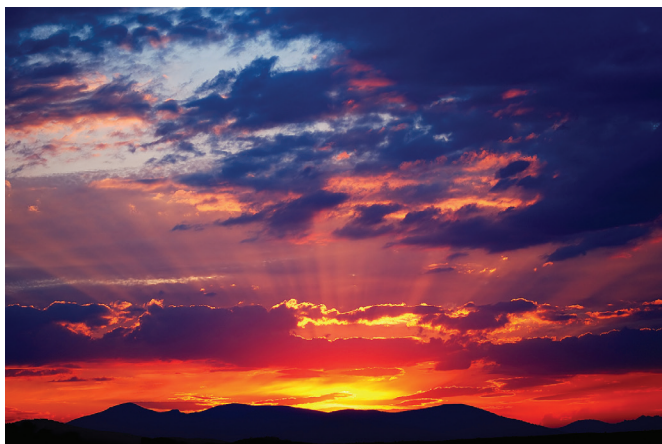
Day 3: “land and plants” -----

Day 6: “land animals and man — plants as food”

for the voice of the cosmos as described in Psalm 19:1–4. Combine Romans 1:20 with a view of sunsets and backyard birds and sense the Author of the Word and the world. Open to Hebrews 3:3–4 and land on a reasonable explanation for your existence and for the world around you.



Is reality a random consequence arising from an unpredictable past or a God-caused event? Let the privileged planet, the fine-tuned universe, and the unimaginable transition of the meaning of the Roman cross underpin an unshakable faith. It all comes together as the great reality in which we survive and believe.



Follow us daily on “Does God Exist? Today.”

There Is No Time Machine!



There is probably no person alive who does not wish they could change something from their past. Perhaps we made a bad investment or missed a good investment of either time or money. We may have spoken words to someone that we wish we could take back. Perhaps we failed to do something to encourage a person facing difficult times. We may have missed a golden opportunity to share Jesus Christ with someone. Whatever past regrets we have, we cannot do it over. There is no time machine.

Even if we could go back in time, we still might not get it right. Also, changing things in the past could have dramatic and potentially disastrous effects on the future. Seriously, we should be glad that there is no time machine. That also means we cannot see the future. What will tomorrow bring—or next year? Whether good or bad, we are probably better off not knowing. God is the only one outside of time who can see the future because it is all present to him. Being unlimited by time, God knows our past and sees our future.

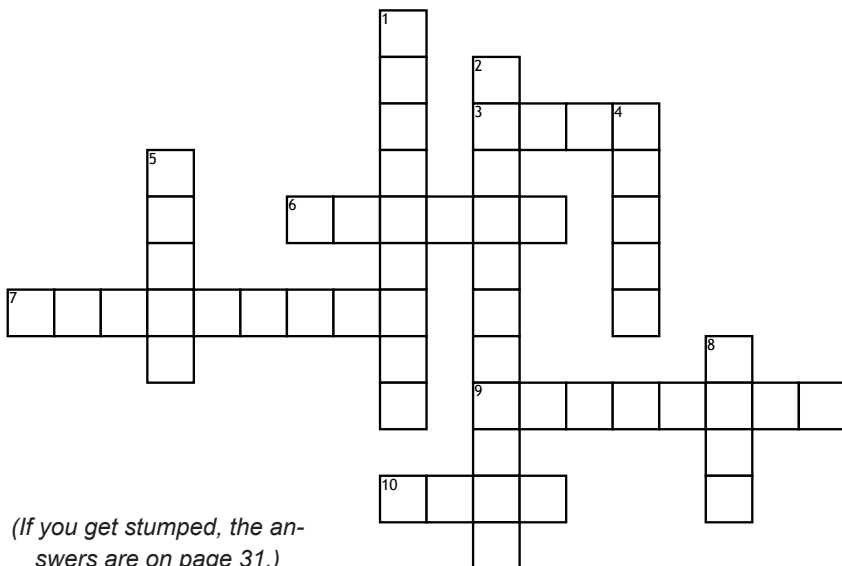
Since there is no time machine and time for us moves in only one direction, we can choose to change the future. We can determine how to do things differently in the future. Sure, we will continue to make mistakes, but that is part of being human. The great thing is that the One who knows our past can forgive our mistakes because he entered time and did what we could not do. He took our sins on himself so that we can look to the future with a clean slate.

Do not beat yourself up over your past. In Christ, starting today, you have a new beginning. “As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12). There is no time machine, and we do not need one.

Does God Exist?

2nd Quarter 2025 Crossword

Solve this puzzle based on the articles on pages 3–17



(If you get stumped, the answers are on page 31.)

Across

- [3] Weightlessness can damage an astronaut's _____.
- [6] Chapter 53 of _____ predicts details of Christ's crucifixion.
- [7] God commanded the complete destruction of the _____ society.
- [9] God's punishment cured the Jews of _____.
- [10] When Christ died, the temple _____ was torn.

Down

- [1] The Old _____ helps us understand the New.
- [2] _____ rocks have been changed by pressure.
- [4] God is outside of time and _____.
- [5] God gave us the Word and the _____.
- [8] There is no _____ machine.

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We invite you to read our daily posts on:

DOESGODEXIST.TODAY

Much of the material in this publication
appeared earlier on that website.



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SCIENTISTS AND GOD

Editor's note: Atheists attempt to suggest that scientists are intelligent people who have rejected faith and do not believe in God. The fact is that some of the most productive scientists who have ever lived were believers in God. We share some of their thoughts with you in this column.

*Augustin – Louis Cauchy
(1789–1857)*

*French mathematician, engineer, and physicist.
He was one of the first to rigorously state and
prove the key theorems of calculus,
thereby creating real analysis.*

*He pioneered the field of complex analysis,
and the study of permutation groups
in abstract algebra.*

*Cauchy also contributed to a number of topics in
mathematical physics, notably continuum mechanics.*



“I am a Christian, that is, I believe in the divinity of Christ, as did Tycho Brahe, Copernicus, Descartes, Newton, Fermat, Leibniz, Pascal, Grimaldi, Euler, Guldin; Boscovich, Gerdil, as did all the great astronomers, physicist and geometers of past ages.”

Reference: <https://sciencemeetsfaith.wordpress.com/2019/05/23/augustin-louis-cauchy-i-believe-in-the-deity-of-christ/>

For documents and archives of this journal plus
booklets and more: www.doesgodexist.org

Cynthia's Corner

The Purpose of the Old Testament



The Old and New Testaments serve different purposes. The Old Testament is about God's chosen people, the Israelites, and how God deals with them and the pagan nations around them. He gives them laws to follow, famously the Ten Commandments, plus many others, to keep them in the right relationship with him and others. But, because all humans sin, and sin separates us from a holy God (Isaiah 59:2), there had to be atonement for their sins. God commanded animal sacrifices because blood was necessary to atone for sin (Hebrews 9:22). However, God tells us, "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin." Their sins were never fully atoned for, just "carried forward" year after year (Hebrews 10:1–4). The only blood that can fully forgive our sins is the blood of God's only Son, Jesus Christ. He is our perfect "lamb sacrifice" because only he lived a sinless life (Hebrews 4:15); therefore, only he could pay the price for our sins (Romans 6:23).

God's relationship with the Israelites in the Old Testament shows us how seriously he takes sin. Some people say the Old Testament God was more vengeful than the loving and forgiving God of the New Testament. God's tolerance of sin has not softened (Matthew 18:8–9). What has changed is how we are forgiven—only by the blood of Jesus through repentance and baptism (Romans 6:2–8), and how we are punished. The Israelites sometimes saw immediate punishment from God (Exodus 32:19–28, 34, 35; Numbers 21:4–9). God even used pagan nations to punish them. However, in this Christian era of the "New Covenant," the punishment for our sins (if we are not forgiven by the blood of Jesus), comes when our bodies die, and our eternal soul is judged and punished. However, that does not mean we do not suffer consequences in this life for our bad decisions and behavior. God gives us free will to make choices that have consequences in this life and eternally.

God tells us that "... everything that was written in the past was written to teach us" (Romans 15:4). After Jesus' resurrection, in Luke 24:25–27, he rebuked his disciples for being "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them all that the scriptures said concerning himself." The Old Testament is full of prophecies that are fulfilled in the New Testament, especially about Jesus. One of the most famous Old Testament passages about Jesus is Isaiah 53, depicting his crucifixion. The Old Testament is necessary for us to understand why only Jesus can save us from our sins.

—Cynthia Clayton



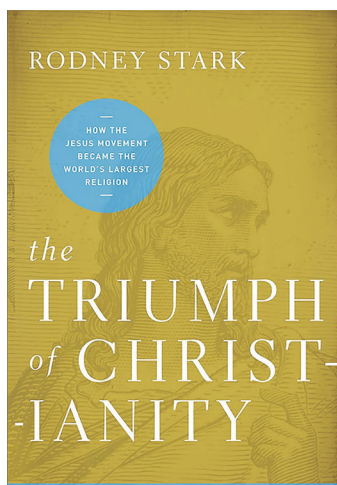
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The Triumph of Christianity

by Rodney Stark

HarperOne, © 2012

\$15.99 (paperback), 512 pages, ISBN-13: 978-0062007698



This book, written by Rodney Stark, a Distinguished Professor of the Social Sciences at Baylor University, is one of the best books we have read. Since it was published in 2012, I am surprised that it has not been more widely read and shared. *The Triumph of Christianity* will challenge your thinking.

The book contains some important but lesser-known facts from the time of Christ. There was no soap, sewage systems ranged from poor to non-existent, and crowded populations spread disease. Stark documents his facts, showing a vast knowledge of the teachings of scholars and media sources.

The volume of material in this book is enormous, so thoroughly reviewing it would take more space than we have available. Instead, here is Stark's summary of his book:

1. The first generation of the Jesus movement consisted of a tiny and fearful minority existing amid a Palestinian environment abundant in zealots willing to assassinate even high priests for not being sufficiently orthodox and pious—let alone willing to tolerate Jews who claimed the Messiah had come.

2. The mission to the Jews was probably quite successful, and large numbers of Jews in the diasporan communities outside Palestine probably converted to Christianity.

3. Christianity was not a religion based solely on slaves and the lowest classes of Romans but was particularly attractive to the privileged.

4. Christian mercy had such profound worldly consequences that Christians even out-lived their pagan neighbors.

5. In a Roman world relatively short of women, women significantly outnumbered men among early Christians. This occurred in part because Christians did not “discard” female infants, and Christian women did not have a substantial mortality rate from abortions done in a world without antibiotics or even knowledge of germs. It also occurred because women were more likely than men to convert.

6. Paganism was not quickly stamped out by a triumphant and intolerant Christianity, but disappeared very slowly and lingers in various New Age and esoteric circles.

7. For centuries, there probably were more Christians in the Middle East and North Africa than in Europe. Christianity was eventually destroyed in these areas by Islamic persecution and repression.

8. The crusaders were not greedy colonialists but marched east for religious motives and at great risk and personal expense. Many knowingly went bankrupt, and few of them lived to return.

9. The so-called Dark Ages were not dim but one of the most inventive times in Western history.

10. Despite medieval Europe’s great cathedrals, most Europeans of that era were, at best, barely Christian, and few ever attended church.

11. Science arose only in the West because efforts to formulate and discover laws of nature only made sense if one believed in a rational creator.

12. The Spanish Inquisition was relatively temperate, and it was responsible for very few deaths. It saved a great many lives by opposing witch hunts that swept through the rest of Europe.

13. Religious competition increases the level of religiousness prevailing in a society. In the long run, it also results in norms of religious civility.

14. The claim that religion must soon disappear as the world becomes more modern is nothing but wishful thinking on the part of academic atheists.

15. Despite the low levels of religious participation in Europe, religion is thriving, perhaps as never before, all around the globe, excluding China but including Europe. Seventy-six percent of Earth’s inhabitants say religion is important in their daily lives.

16. More than 40 percent of the people on Earth today are Christians, and their number is growing more rapidly than any other major faith.

If you read all 500 pages of *The Triumph of Christianity*, you will learn much and gain new insights.

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DANDY DESIGNS

Wet Dog Shake



The design of the world around us shows intelligence. The creation is not just a massive series of accidents but a carefully engineered system that works very well. If you have a dog, you are familiar with the wet dog shake. When a dog gets wet, it does an elaborate series of shakes that spin off 70% of the water in its coat. That water can be an issue for us if the dog is close by, but it is an excellent example of intelligence and engineering.

The skin of mammals has 20 different types of sensory receptors to detect temperature, itching, and touch. Touch alone has 12 different kinds of receptors that react to pain, vibration, steady pressure, or soft caress. One of the most sensitive receptors wraps around the base of hair follicles. The slightest movement of the hair triggers a shaking response from the animal. The dog's brain feeds the shaking response sequentially from one end of the animal to the other.

Bears have the same response, and the benefit to the animal in a cold climate is obvious. But it is not just dogs and bears. Thirty different hairy mammal species use the wet dog shake. This response is so complex that scientists are still studying it. The next time your dog does the wet dog shake, watch what happens and how efficient it is. Every kind of life on our planet shows purpose, intelligence, and design, and this is one more example.

It is easy to see why God used a variety of animal life to challenge Job to explain how they got the equipment and behavioral instructions to do what they do (see Job 39). We are still trying to answer these ancient questions. Even with special equipment and the aid of computers, we are unable to give a chance explanation that excludes an intelligent agent.

Mountain Goat Design



Every niche in the natural world has a designed relationship with plants and animals that live where they do. Goats thrive in a variety of environments that are unsuitable for other animals. The design of mountain goats allows them to run up vertical mountain slopes and even climb trees in areas where no ground forage is available. Their ability to run vertically up steep slopes protects them from predators like bears or mountain lions. The only predator goats have to worry about are those that can fly. However, eagles and hawks can carry away small young goats.

The secret that allows mountain goats to do these seemingly impossible things is their hoof design. The outer edge of a goat's hoof consists of very hard material. The hoof has adjustable toes that can compress to a sharp point for digging or to gain traction on a narrow ridge. Mountain goats can also expand their toes for a wider surface. The hoof edges have pointed toenails to catch on small crevices in rocks. The center of the hoof has a soft, rubbery material that gives traction for walking.

People who raise goats have found them difficult to hold in a pen. They can scale any material the walls of an enclosure might be made of and even move about on a steel roof with ease. No other animal has all of the features that allow goats to thrive in places where other animals cannot survive.

The design of mountain goats is challenging to explain based on chance. They are uniquely designed to be the leading players in the ecology of mountainous areas. Their design speaks loudly of the statement of Romans 1:20 that we can know there is a God through the things he has made.

News and Notes

STAYUP-TO-DATE ON NEWSANDNOTES: The stories in News and Notes are condensed from articles previously published on our website www.DoesGodExist.today. You can use the QR codes with each article to see the original posts for more details and references. There are many other interesting and informative articles on that website each day. On that website, you can subscribe to follow us daily. Each week we publish “The Best of the Week from DOES GOD EXIST?” with links to our most popular posts on DoesGodExist.Today and our Facebook page (Facebook.com/evidence4god).

BAIKAL SEALS ARE UNIQUE: The world’s only exclusively freshwater seal is the Baikal seal (*Pusa sibirica*), which is found only in Lake Baikal in Siberia, the deepest lake on Earth. Lake



Baikal is covered with ice most of the year, and the ice thickness can be several feet.

Adult Baikal seals can hold their breaths for up to 30 minutes, but their pups can only go a maximum of 15 minutes, so researchers are amazed by how the pups survive. Some

freshwater springs in Lake Baikal maintain holes in the ice where adult seals can breathe. A Baikal seal mother will dig a den for her pups under the ice. After breathing in air, she will blow bubbles in the den to create an airspace under the ice for the pups to breathe.

Lake Baikal is on a geological structure with no connection to any ocean. The primary food source for Baikal seals is golomyanka fish that live only in Lake Baikal. The evidence shows that every nook and cranny of God’s creation has life specifically designed to survive and prosper in that environment.



SNAKEBITE ANTIVENOM AND AI: Venomous snakes have a blizzard of toxins in their bite, proteins that can stop a person's heart and ability to breathe. Snakebite antivenom is produced today by milking snakes to extract their venom, injecting it into a horse or other large animal, and harvesting the antibodies. This process is expensive and time-consuming, so researchers want to find a better way. The 2024 Nobel Prize in chemistry went to three chemists who used artificial intelligence (AI) to design proteins that dampen and neutralize snake venom.

It is essential to understand that snakes control the populations of rats, mice, and other disease-carrying animals. What would happen if there were no predators to eat rodents when they go underground? Rodents above ground are preyed on by foxes, bears, hawks, and eagles, and killed by humans. When they retreat underground, they are safe from all of those, but snakes can go after and kill rodents even there. Snakes and their venom serve a purpose in God's beautifully designed world, but snakebite antivenom is essential to protect human lives. AI may soon make it easier to prepare antivenom proteins.



SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIPS: A stable ecosystem needs all forms of life to benefit other life forms. When two living things mutually benefit each other, we call it symbiosis. Many symbiotic relationships exist in the insect world, and some insects have multiple such relationships. The red wood ant is an example. The ants have a symbiotic relationship with aphids, which excrete energy-rich honeydew, supplying food for the ants. In return, the ants protect the aphids from their enemies.

Another symbiotic relationship is with Eurasian jays. The birds land on an ant mound and allow the ants to crawl on them, spraying their feathers with formic acid. The acid concentration is low enough not to harm the birds but strong enough to kill parasites that hide in their feathers, including mites. In this way, the jays find protection from mites.



A third symbiotic relationship of red wood ants protects spruce forests by controlling the wood-boring beetles that destroy them. The ants bite the beetles and spray formic acid into their wounds. Killing the beetles protects the spruce trees and provides a home for the aphids that live in them. That takes us back to the ant-aphid symbiosis. Symbiotic relationships show God's design in nature.



DESIGNED TO SOAR: An international group of researchers found that soaring birds are designed differently from non-soaring birds. Using computer (CT) scans, the researchers found that soaring birds have an air-filled sac attached to their lungs. This subpectoral



diverticulum air sac exists in diverse soaring birds, including bald eagles, turkey vultures, brown pelicans, and western gulls. The researchers did not find it in any non-soaring birds.

The subpectoral diverticulum appears to boost the power of the flight muscles, allowing the birds to stay aloft for long periods without flapping their wings. Lead author Dr. Emma Schachner of the University

of Florida said, “This evolutionary pattern strongly suggests that this unique structure is functionally significant for soaring flight.” But how can evolution explain that lines of soaring birds “evolved” this trait independently? Evolutionary biologists call it “convergent evolution,” but we suggest it shows intelligent design.



An essential point to remember is that evolution does not create anything. It simply modifies what has already been made. Finding a way to create an air sac from an existing structure to supplement flight is a challenge for evolutionists. This structure shows that some birds were designed to soar from the start.

BAT MIGRATION: The disappearance of bats from various areas of the world when winter approaches has puzzled scientists for years. Dr. Edward Hume of the Max Planck Institute for Animal Behavior led a study of



bat migrations to determine where the bats go and how they get there. Monitoring bat migration is difficult because bats are fast and travel at night. They have a very low

mass, roughly an ounce, so tags used for birds are too heavy for bats. Hume and his associates designed new tags weighing roughly a gram that they could apply to bats.

Research has shown that bats use the warm fronts that precede storms to ride the winds to travel as much as 1000 miles. There are many variables in this system, meaning that the timing and direction of the winds must be very precise to carry the bats where they need to go.

There is a very practical reason for understanding bat migrations. Wind turbines can kill large numbers of bats, so knowing the timing of the migrations can reduce this problem by shutting down the wind turbines. Bats are essential to control insect populations, and humans often make or do things that interfere with God's design.



ANIMAL MEDICINE: Animals have a fascinating ability to use natural materials to combat or treat injuries or illnesses. Researchers watched an injured Sumatran orangutan extract juice from a plant known for antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties in humans. The orangutan applied it to a wound under his eye, and it did not become infected. In five days, the wound closed, and in a month, it completely healed.



Chimpanzees fold and swallow rough leaves to purge parasites. Great apes, elephants, bears, and porcupines are among the animals with an innate ability to find and use certain plants for medicine. Emory University biologist Jaap De Roode said, "You have to have inherited the gene that gives you the general ability to detect the right taste or smell in a plant for your needs."

The study of animal medicine shows that they are programmed to deal with the health problems they encounter. When God addressed Job with questions in chapters 38 to 40, Job realized how much he did not know. As we read those chapters, we recognize how much we do not know and are still learning from the lives of God's creatures.

BUMBLEBEES CAN FLY HIGH: Some people have questioned how bumblebees can fly. Two researchers have discovered that bumblebees can fly high at elevations of 29,527 feet. That is higher than Mount Everest! Michael Dillon and Robert Dudley worked with bumblebees native to Sichuan, China, that live at elevations over 10,000 feet. The question is how these bumblebees do that with the thin air and reduced oxygen levels at such altitudes.

The researchers used a pressure chamber to simulate high-altitude conditions. Using high-speed cameras, they saw that the bumblebees did not change their wings' flapping but rather used deeper arcs to scoop more air with each beat. This technique also enables more efficient escapes from predators and the ability to carry heavy nectar loads.



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Bumblebees can fly high, but how they can sustain their metabolism with so little oxygen remains unanswered. We have much to learn from bumblebees, but their design challenges all observers. All of God's creatures have something to teach us, including bumblebees.



LEARNING FROM BENNU: One of NASA's outstanding engineering accomplishments was the OsirisREx spacecraft landing on the Bennu asteroid in October 2020. Not only did it land, but it also took surface samples of the asteroid and returned the samples to Earth. The samples arrived in September 2023, and examinations of the asteroid material showed that 14 of the 20 known amino acids, the building blocks of life, were present in the asteroid material. The media jumped on that fact and proclaimed that it was now certain that life originated in outer space. The tabloids declared that it was clear that aliens had seeded space with life forms, explaining the origin of life on Earth.

Scientists have known for a very long time that astronomical processes can produce amino acids. They have shown up in certain types of meteorites found on Earth. The mainstream media has not reported that amino acids have a shape orientation to them. The molecule arrangement in amino acids causes them to be either right-handed or left-handed. Life, as we know, requires 100% left-handed amino acids. Science is still looking for the reason, but the amino acids on Bennu are 50% right-handed and 50% left-handed. In other words, they could not explain the origin of life on Earth.



Every discovery made by science raises more questions. The wisdom of having only left-handed amino acids doubles life's food supply, and that may be the answer to why. But one thing is sure: there is a reason for what Bennu teaches us and for the design of life.

A PREGNANT WOMAN'S BRAIN: In our day of surrogate mothers, in vitro fertilization, and abortion, we need to understand how a pregnant woman's brain functions. Many husbands will describe very different thinking in the minds of their wives during pregnancy.

Dr. Liz Chrastil, a cognitive neuroscientist at the University of California, Irving, realized she could be her own study subject when she became pregnant. Chrastil exposed herself to four MRI scans before pregnancy, 15 during pregnancy, and 7 scans in the two years after the baby was born.

The data on Chrastil was astounding. Pregnancy caused a 4% reduction of gray matter in 80% of Chrastil's brain. At the



same time, some of her white matter tracts that carry information around the brain grew stronger, reaching a peak in the second trimester. By the end of Chrastil's pregnancy, the white matter returned to the pre-pregnancy level. Her gray mat-

ter changes seem to be permanent.

This research on a pregnant woman's brain has enormous implications. As we have said before, if a woman has an abortion, the vestiges of her pregnancy continue with her for life. Pregnancy permanently alters the brain of a surrogate mother. Those who ridicule the biblical design for motherhood and families are encouraging significant risk to women who choose to alter God's plan. Humans cannot improve on God's system for families. When they try, the result harms everyone.



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CORRECTION: There are two mistakes in our first quarter 2025 *Does God Exist?* journal printed copy in the answers for the crossword puzzle on page 31: 10 across: spices to species; and 6 down should be 8 down for Mars.

ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD PUZZLE ON PAGE 18

ACROSS: 3-eyes; 6-Isaiah; 7-Amalekite; 9-paganism;
10-veil

DOWN: 1-testament; 2-metamorphic; 4-space;
5-world; 8-time

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