

# DOES GOD EXIST?

**Third Quarter 2025  
Volume 52 Number 3**

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



**LESSONS FROM THE  
SERMON ON THE MOUNT**

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"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.  
 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.  
 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.  
 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.  
 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.  
 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.  
 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:3-10 NIV

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## Lessons from the Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5, 6, and 7, along with Luke 6:20–49, are commonly called the Sermon on the Mount. In these passages, Jesus outlines the “New Dispensation.” The moral law of Judaism is expanded, and the moral law of Christianity applies God’s teachings to our daily lives. Like any father, God wants his children to be happy and live productive, fruitful lives. The Sermon on the Mount shows us how to achieve that.



The first 12 verses of Matthew are known as the Beatitudes. They all start with the word “blessed,” which can be translated as “happy.” Each beatitude deals with a personal way to find happiness and contentment. Being poor in spirit is an alternative to being proud and frustrated with feeling superior to others. To mourn (verse 4) refers

to a change in thinking (2 Corinthians 7:10). Being meek (verse 5) means being gentle. To hunger (verse 6) is to be at peace with your new understanding. Luke 15:17 offers an example through the parable of the prodigal son. To be merciful (verse 7) involves the joy of forgiving and being forgiven.



BLESSED ARE  
THE  
PURE IN HEART  
FOR THEY SHALL  
SEE GOD

Being pure in heart (verse 8) means living free from corruption. Though there is little joy in a casino, fellowship with fellow believers brings great joy and laughter. Being a peacemaker (verse 9), rather than causing conflict, provides a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Being persecuted for doing what is right (verses 11–12) brings satisfaction and a sense of achievement. All these principles lead to joyful living.

The rest of the sermon addresses the challenges we face in life and teaches how to handle

them. Matthew 5:21–24 discuss anger and peacemaking. Verses 27–32 focus on avoiding sexual misconduct, pornography, and divorce. Matthew 5:33–37 warns against oaths and false promises, which can cause guilt and hypocrisy. One major mental stressor is the desire to get even for perceived injustices, but choosing not to retaliate brings peace.

Matthew 6 starts by instructing us to give to others quietly, which is key to feeling good about our actions. Verses 5–18 emphasize developing a close, personal relationship with God through prayer and fasting—focusing solely on God rather than seeking human approval. Matthew 6:24–34 teaches us not to worry about food or clothing, trusting that God will provide—all of which reduces stress and promotes mental stability.

Matthew 7 begins by urging Christians not to be judgmental or hypocritical. It is not our place to judge others, because as Joe Cocker sang in “Walk a Mile in My Shoes,” we do not know what others are facing. Verses 9–11 remind us that only good things come from God, and verse 12 presents the “golden

DON'T LET  
worry  
steal  
your  
Happiness



rule”—treat others as you want to be treated. Religious con artists can cause suffering, and Matthew 7:15–22 encourages us to evaluate the fruit of religious teachers before accepting their teachings.

The extent to which we accept and apply Jesus’ teachings from the Sermon on the Mount will determine our happiness and contentment. These teachings are unique to Christianity because they come from God, not human wisdom. We

all face struggles, and Jesus understands this. In Matthew 24:6–7, Jesus says, “You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places.” To nonbelievers, these events cause worry and despair. But believers know that what we experience here is the worst we will ever endure. In the end, Christians will find perfect peace and joy with God. Revelation 21–22 describes the complete peace and comfort Christians will have with God in the new heaven and new earth. It will be joy that we can only imagine.

—John N. Clayton





# The Difference Between Meekness and Weakness

What do you understand “meek” to mean? For many in our culture, being meek is thought of as being a nerd or a pushover, someone who stands for nothing. The Bible explains the difference between meekness and weakness.

The Greek word translated as “meek” is *prajos*, meaning power under control, like a soothing medicine or a gentle breeze. *Nelson’s Bible Dictionary* defines meekness as “an attitude of humility toward God and gentleness toward man, springing from a recognition that God is in control. It is strength and courage under control, combined with kindness.”

The truth is, modern men are often too weak to truly embody meekness. Most church congregations have a surplus of women and children and too few men. Any weakling can live selfishly, but it takes real strength to feed the hungry, bring water to the thirsty, give clothing to those in need, provide medicine to the sick, or visit prisoners.

Galatians 5:22–23 shows that meekness is about love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The same chapter describes the behaviors of the weak in verses 19–21: adultery, fornication (pornography), uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envy, murder, drunkenness, and reveling. The Bible records men who had the strength to do what was right (meekness)—including Abraham, Joseph, Daniel, and Jesus. There are also weak men, like Saul, Lot, Felix, Pilate, Agrippa, and Herod.

Being a Christian means understanding the difference between meekness and weakness. Because many men are weak, women tend to dominate modern Christianity, doing the work outlined in Matthew 25:31–40. The declining numbers of active churches and the rise of “Nones” in our society are clear signs of this.

—JNC



# Life Isn't Fair!



I am sure you have noticed that life is not fair. When my daughter was young, she felt it was unfair that her friends had clothing, cars, money, and food we could not afford. She was especially bitter when I plowed up our front yard to grow enough food to survive the winter.

While her friends dined at fancy restaurants, we ate at McDonald's only on special occasions. We made applesauce from Lodi apples from a tree we had planted in our yard, sweetening it with saccharin because my wife was diabetic. My daughter would say, "My friends buy applesauce at the grocery store, and we have to make ours. It isn't fair!" When she was in high school, she saw her non-Christian friends driving expensive cars to school while she rode the bus.

The disparity has not changed, as the rich get richer, often at the expense of the poor. Jesus Christ said, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:13).

My daughter attended a Christian college in Texas, where her professors knew her by name and often invited her to their homes. Her friends went to private universities with hundreds of students in each class and no personal relationship with their professors. Many of these friends, who had money, cars, and fancy houses, have faced serious problems with drugs, alcohol, broken marriages, and mental illness. They find it hard to believe that our marriage lasted 49 years and only ended when my wife died.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told his disciples not to worry about food, water, or clothing (Matthew 6:25–34) because God would provide for them. He started this by saying, "You cannot serve God and money," because holding to one means despising the other (verse 24). Life is not fair, but God meets our basic needs. The reward for Christians is that after this life, we will have an existence so wonderful that it will surpass anything on Earth. Those who reject God have nothing when this life ends.

In Luke 16:19–31, Jesus shares the story of the rich man and Lazarus, a beggar. When the rich man dies, he suffers, and Lazarus is in Abraham's bosom. The rich man wants Lazarus to help him, but he is reminded that he had good things in life, while Lazarus suffered. Now Lazarus is comforted, and the rich man is in pain. The bottom line is that life is not fair, but Christians have the ultimate reward in eternity.

—JNC

# *A Remarkable Story of the Power of Forgiveness*



The **Does God Exist?** ministry received a letter illustrating the incredible power of forgiveness. Roy Willmon from Texas wrote that since the 1990s, John Clayton and this ministry have had “an enormous influence” on his family’s life. After reading John’s article “Life Is Hard, But There Is Hope” in our fourth quarter 2024 issue, he wanted to affirm that truth by sharing a story of how forgiveness can transform lives.

Mr. Willmon’s daughter, Carla, was a student at Harding University when she was murdered years ago. After 20 years, the Willmons wrote letters to the two prisoners serving life sentences. The letters conveyed forgiveness and included an offer to study the Bible with them through correspondence. The men, who were in separate prisons, both responded with astonishment and expressed interest in learning more. That Bible study, aided by prison chaplains, led both men to be baptized into Christ ten years ago. Since then, they have shared their faith with other prisoners, resulting in the baptism of 17 inmates so far. Both forgiven prisoners continue to write to Roy Willmon twice a month “with words of praise and thanksgiving” for their new life in Christ Jesus.

One of the prisoners, Mitchell Skinner, is an artist who has sold his artwork to raise money for a scholarship at Harding University in the name of the murdered Carla Willmon. The scholarship is now fully funded, surpassing \$50,000. Roy Willmon said, “The show of repentance and gratitude for salvation in Jesus Christ from both men is remarkable.” The extraordinary outcome of this tragedy was only possible because Carla’s parents were willing to forgive the men responsible for their daughter’s death.

Mitchell Skinner shared his testimony with fellow prisoners, and we want to share that testimony with you.



## *Mitchell Skinner's Testimony*

**I've been locked up now for twenty-four years on a life without parole sentence.** When I first came down, I was bitter, and I felt like I didn't deserve the sentence I was given because I didn't murder anyone. In fact, I'm the one who came to the police station and told them what I had witnessed, which led to the arrest of my fall partner Patric Patterson. I knew I would receive some prison time for being with Patric, but to be given a sentence equal to his bothered me, and that bitterness changed me into someone that most people didn't like. Heck, I didn't even like myself. I'm sure some of you have felt the same way at some time in your lives. Life isn't fair. It sure wasn't fair for Carla Willmon, the Harding University student who was murdered at the age of twenty-one.

**Seven years later, in 2002, my only brother was murdered.** Now I knew firsthand the pain of loss from a violent act. It tore my family apart. We couldn't even mention my brother's name for many years without breaking down in tears. I promised my brother's two sons, at their dad's funeral, that I would get this guy, Ricky Taylor, when he came to prison, and I was able to run into him. But God must have been looking out for him ... and me. He only did seven years in prison, and he did all seven at the Wrightsville unit. A prison I could never go to because of my life sentence. Oh yeah, I almost forgot to mention that Ricky Taylor is my son's father-in-law. My son's wife is this man's daughter!

**When I had first gotten the news about my brother being killed.** "Skinner! They want you at the chaplain's office." (You all know the drill. It's never good news.) I said some things that I shouldn't have when allowed to make a couple of calls. I basically told April, my son's wife, that I had nothing against her, but her father is mine when he comes to prison. She's the mother of my four grandchildren, and because of this tragedy and the comments I made, I had never met any of them. Not only did I lose a brother, but I also lost a son and my grandchildren. I was getting reports from my parents that my son and his family were visiting Ricky Taylor on a regular basis. That bothered me a great deal. I started telling people that I didn't have a son. The weight of the world was pressing down on me pretty hard.

**Then one night in 2014, I received a letter from someone in Texas.** Texas? I don't know anyone in Texas. When I opened it and started reading, I realized what I held in my hands. I couldn't believe my eyes. It was a letter of forgiveness from the family of Carla

Willmon, the murdered Harding University student. How could they forgive me when I couldn't forgive myself? As I read further, Roy Willmon gave me the answer. He quoted a scripture from Matthew 6:14–15, “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

**This man and his wife, through their willingness to surrender their own emotions to serve a loving God,** put God's love in action and wrote to me offering their forgiveness. It had a life-changing effect on me. Suddenly, I didn't feel so alone in the world. These people showed me that God's love is real. I wanted what this man was demonstrating. It was so powerful to me that I couldn't contain my excitement. That's the power of God's love. You have to tell others about it. Everyone I spoke to was just as amazed as I was.

**As I continued to write and receive letters from Roy Willmon,** he taught me what I must do to be saved. Not long after that, I was baptized. I felt the need to write a letter to Ricky Taylor, the man who murdered my only brother in 2002. I wanted him to feel the love of God as I had and let the Holy Spirit do the rest. I also wrote to my son's wife, explaining how forgiveness changed my life and how I wanted to show that same love and concern to her dad. Those letters opened up communication between us, which led to visits with my son and his family. That's the power forgiveness holds. It changes lives, it brings families back together. I'm a living witness that God can take a bad situation and make something bloom from it.

**While nailed to the cross, Jesus asked his Father to forgive us.** If we're in Christ, we should learn to surrender self and allow the love of Christ to work in and through us. May the love of Christ and his forgiveness be with you. If you are in Christ, may the Holy Spirit lead you to him and show you a more abundant way of living.

## EPILOGUE

Roy Willmon submitted this testimony to us, hoping that it would help our readers to “understand the powerful promise of Romans 8:28,” which tells us that God can “work all things together in his own way, in his own time and to his glory and to our spiritual/eternal benefit.” He also said it shows “the necessity of forgiving others, if we want to receive God's forgiveness and how forgiveness can, with God's help, change the lives of both the forgiven and the forgivers.” It is our prayer that this story will encourage you to forgive.

—JNC





## **EMBARRASSING DETAILS IN THE GOSPELS**

by Roland Earnst

Only one thing can explain the birth and growth of the Christian faith, and that is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The entire New Testament focuses on the resurrection. As the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:14 and 20, “And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith ... But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.”

Factors that verify the truth of the resurrection story include the testimony of eyewitnesses recorded soon after the events, which include embarrassing details. The primary sources were the eyewitnesses, especially Matthew, Mark, and John. Their accounts were recorded shortly after the events, while other eyewitnesses would have been alive to challenge the reports, but they did not. Paul was also an eyewitness, and he wrote within 20 years of the resurrection, recording an early Christian creed that believers may have been reciting just a few months after the event (see 1 Corinthians 15:3–7).

How about those embarrassing details? They include facts that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John incorporated into their gospels that a writer fabricating the story would likely omit, since they reflect poorly on the apostles. These include:

When Jesus was arrested, the disciples fled in fear: Matthew 26:31, 56; Mark 14:50–52.

Peter denied knowing Jesus three times: Matthew 26:69–75; Mark 14:66–72; Luke 22:54–62.

The disciples doubted the resurrection reports: Mark 16:9–14; John 20:24–29.

The disciples hid from the Jewish leaders: John 20:19.

Women were the first to testify about the resurrection, even though women’s testimonies were considered less credible at the time: Matthew 28:1–10; Mark 16:1–11; Luke 24:1–12; John 20:1–10.

Many other pieces of evidence support the truth of the resurrection, but these embarrassing details are especially worth noting. As Paul stated, “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.”



## Life Questions in Three Categories

Everyone is curious about the things we see in nature. Our posts on DoesGodExist.Today and on Facebook often concern animals, plants, and ecosystems. Most people observing living creatures believe they see design and have questions about life in three categories.



### HOW DOES IT WORK?

The first category of questions, asked mainly by scientists or the scientific-

ly minded, is, “How does it work?”

We want to understand how DNA determines the various traits of living things. We are curious about how green plants convert sunlight and carbon dioxide into energy to power their cells. How does a bat find its prey in the dark? How can an octopus control eight arms independently? The questions are many.



### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?

The second category is, “What is the purpose?” Atheist scientist Richard Dawkins stops after the “how” question to say, “Biology is the study of things that give the appearance of having been

designed for a purpose.” But then he makes it very clear that he believes they are not designed and have no purpose. On the other hand, theologians look for a purpose. Since God created the world, he must have a purpose in mind.

## HOW AND WHEN DID THIS ORIGINATE?



Both scientists and theologians ask questions in the third category. They want to know, “How and when did this originate? How did the universe come into being? How did life come from non-living chemicals? When did the first human

life begin, and how?” For believers, the Bible provides basic answers to these questions. However, since the Bible is not a science textbook, it leaves many questions unanswered. That is where science can help find answers.

Looking at questions about life in three categories, the third is very contentious because scientists and believers disagree. I mean that unbelieving scientists disagree with believers and vice versa. But also, scientists disagree with other scientists, and believers disagree with other believers. Interestingly, in recent years, some of these disagreements have been resolved. Those who once insisted that the universe was eternal have been forced to accept the evidence of a cosmic beginning about 13.8 billion years ago.

Believers, however, continue to debate young-earth and old-earth theology. All believers need to accept that the Bible does not specify when the universe began or when Adam and Eve lived. As Christians, we must let the Bible speak where it speaks and allow science to speak where it speaks.

Of the questions about life in these three categories, the most important for believers to consider falls into the second category. “What is the purpose of life?” That is a question the Bible clearly addresses. For example, read Romans 12:1–2; Romans 6:22; and Ephesians 3:10–12.

—RE





## Earth's Age Is Irrelevant.

How old is planet Earth? Why does it matter? Various branches of science agree, based on strong evidence, that our planet is about 4.5 billion years old. Many Christians argue that it is only a few thousand years old, making it a matter of faith. In other words, if you disagree



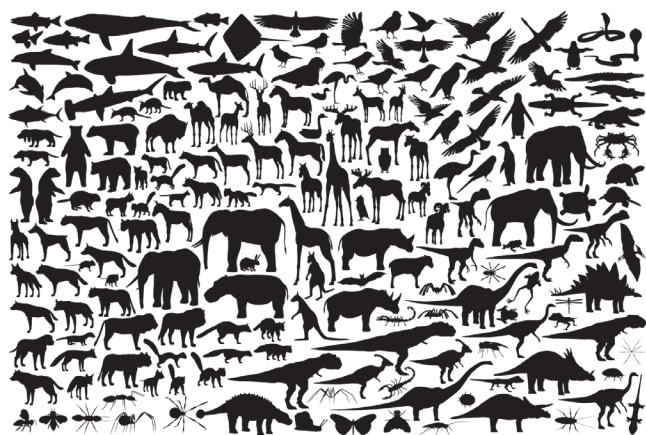
Archbishop James Ussher

with their timeline, you are considered an evolutionist and a Bible denier. Scientists have methods for calculating Earth's age that do not involve faith or denying the Bible. The truth is that Earth's age is irrelevant to Christian faith.

Why do many Christians insist on a "young" Earth? It may be because they believe the Bible says so. They base this on a document written by James Ussher, an archbishop of the Church of Ireland, published in 1654. He calculated that Earth's creation took place on October 22, 4004 B.C., basing his calculations on the assumption that the genealogies in Genesis are complete and that they are recorded for the purpose of chronology. Those assumptions are incorrect. Biblical genealogies are incomplete and meant to show lineage, not precise timelines. Ultimately, the lineage led to the Messiah. Because early English

translations of the Bible included Ussher's chronology, many came to believe it as gospel truth.

Another major reason many Christians today adopt the young-earth view is that they believe it refutes evolution. Scientists do not insist on billions of years because they want to allow time for evolution to occur. A little-known fact that scientists hesitate to admit is that 4.5 billion years is not long enough for unguided evolution to produce the diversity of life on Earth. In reality, no amount of time is sufficient for random mutations and natural selection to achieve this.



Plus, a significant portion of that time would be needed just for the planet to cool and become capable of supporting life. Then, additional time would be necessary for non-living elements to organize into the first living cells.

(They could not do it on their own, even in an unlimited amount of time, but that is another issue.)

Ultimately, Earth's age is irrelevant to Christian faith. While the age of Earth is crucial to geology, paleontology, astronomy, physics, chemistry, and other sciences, it does not impact the truth of the Bible or Christian beliefs. Archbishop Ussher was an intelligent church leader and scholar, but his chronology is flawed because it rests on false assumptions. False assumptions lead to false conclusions.

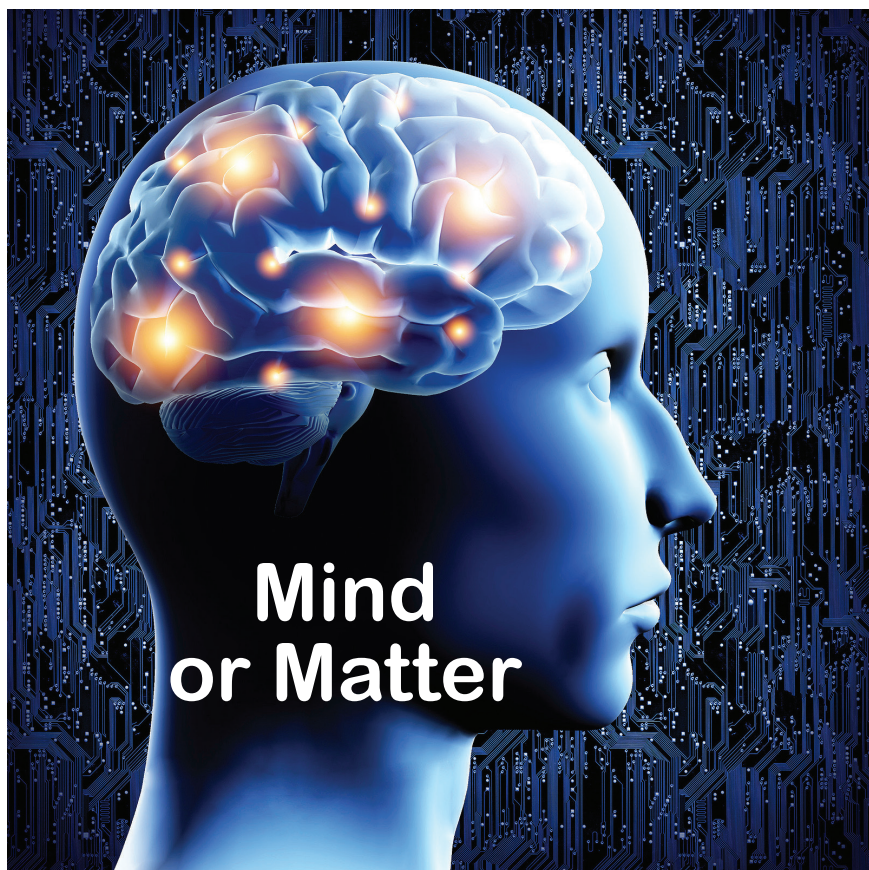
—RE

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# Mind or Matter

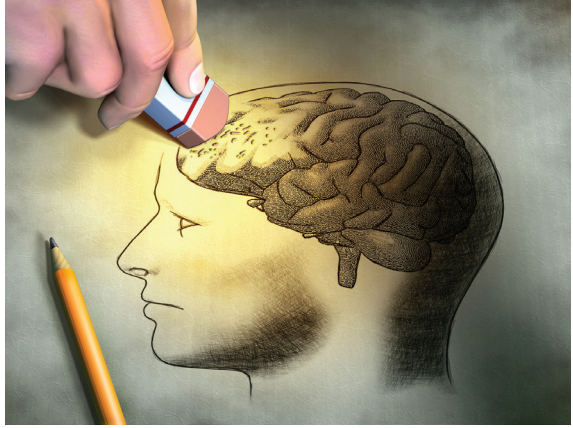
Did the universe originate with matter or with a Mind? If matter was the starting point for all things, then we are simply matter. In that case, how can we have a mind? Are our minds just collections of cells formed from molecules that consist of atoms, which are made up of subatomic particles? Could unguided matter create our minds? Do we merely imagine that we have minds?

It seems more reasonable that a Mind was the starting point for all things. In that case, the Mind initiated the matter that formed the entire cosmos, all living things, and us. That Mind gave us minds, because only a Mind can create a mind.

The human mind has two parts working together. The physical part is what we call the brain. Materialists try to tell us that the brain is all there is. The brain handles material processes, including sensory and motor functions. It also influences emotions and memory. The other part, the soul, is not made of material substance. The soul performs abstract reasoning, makes moral choices, and exhibits free will. It is what makes us different from all other animals.



The non-material part of our mind works in conjunction with the physical brain. The brain controls our physical movements but deciding what to do is primarily under the influence of the soul. Reasoning and decision-making are activities of the soul, but damage to the brain can severely affect our ability to reason and make moral choices.



The physical and spiritual aspects of our minds must work together to make us fully functioning humans. For that reason, a person who experiences brain damage from stroke, brain cancer, severe brain injury, Alzheimer's, or other causes struggles with abstract



reasoning and decision making. Dementia also results in loss of memory, sensory awareness, and motor skills, and it affects our emotions. However, physical factors such as fatigue and illness can also impact those things.

It is essential to understand that despite physical impairments,

whether temporary or permanent, we remain the same person with the same soul. For those suffering from dementia, regardless of its cause, loved ones need to realize that the soul, the spiritual part of that person, is still present. Brain malfunction makes the person seem very different, because the soul is captive to the physical brain.

We are all made in the image of God, who is a spirit (John 4:24), not physical. We are spirits functioning within a physical body. In this life, a damaged brain can limit the functioning of a person's soul. However, we can thank God that the soul is freed from the brain at the moment of death, and those who have accepted the salvation Jesus offers will spend a blissful eternity with him.

—RE

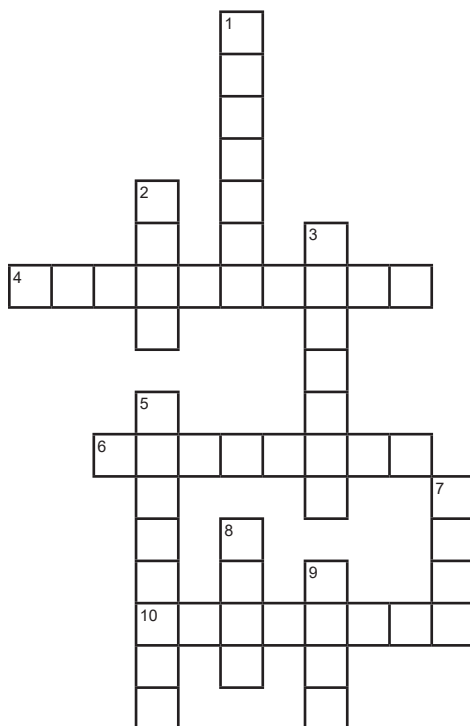
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# Does God Exist?

## 3rd Quarter 2025 Crossword

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



### Across

- [4] Earth's age is \_\_\_\_\_ to Christian faith.  
 [6] Meekness is not \_\_\_\_\_.  
 [10] Forgiveness changes the lives of the forgiven and the \_\_\_\_\_.

### Down

- [1] Atheists reject the idea that life has a \_\_\_\_\_.  
 [2] The disciples \_\_\_\_\_ when Jesus was arrested.  
 [5] The Sermon on the Mount is found in \_\_\_\_\_ chapters 5–7.  
 [7] The \_\_\_\_\_ will receive mercy.  
 [8] The \_\_\_\_\_ in heart will see God.  
 [9] Only a \_\_\_\_\_ can create a mind.

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

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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.

*Blaise Pascal  
(1623-1662)*

*French mathematician, physicist, inventor,  
and philosopher*

*He was a pioneer in the natural  
and applied sciences.*

*He made important contributions  
to the study of fluids and clarified the concepts  
of pressure and vacuum.*



Pascal's famous wager:

“Let us weigh up the gain and the loss by calling heads that God exists. Let us assess the two cases: if you win, you win everything; If you lose, you lose nothing. Wager that he exists then, without hesitating!”

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



## *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 and 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







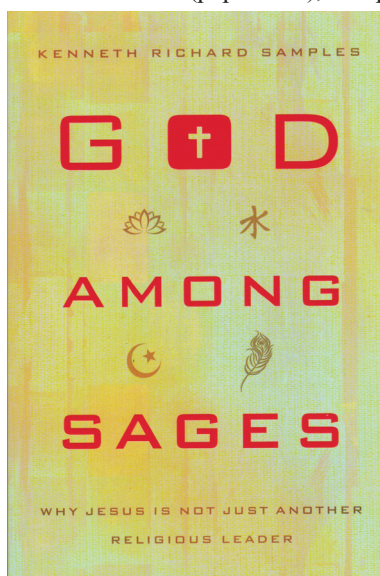
The books that are reviewed in the Book Reviews section are not available through us, but can be obtained from a local bookstore or through many online bookstores.

## **God Among Sages**

by Kenneth Richard Samples

Baker Books, © 2017,

\$16.99 (paperback), 262 pages, ISBN-13: 978-0-8010-1690-5



This book by Kenneth Samples is subtitled “Why Jesus Is Not Just Another Religious Leader.” Samples describes Jesus as the God-man with both a divine nature and a human nature, all within one person. He examines various scriptures in which Jesus claimed equality with God. He points out that Jesus claimed the power to forgive sins, accept worship, answer prayers, raise the dead, and judge humanity. No other prophet, sage, guru, or avatar could do those things.

Samples explores the challenges to Christian orthodoxy and responds to questions about the historic identity of Jesus. He compares Jesus to Confucius, Muhammad, Krishna, and

Buddha, and also compares Christianity to other world religions. Additionally, he discusses the essential role of the Trinity in salvation.

Kenneth Samples is not afraid to explore the question of whether we “all pray to the same God,” as Oprah Winfrey suggested. He considers whether all religions are valid spiritual paths. Jesus said, “No one comes to the Father except through me.” Is Christian exclusivism justified? Samples thinks so.

This book tackles these and many other difficult questions. We highly recommend it for anyone interested in a deep comparison of world religions and Christianity.

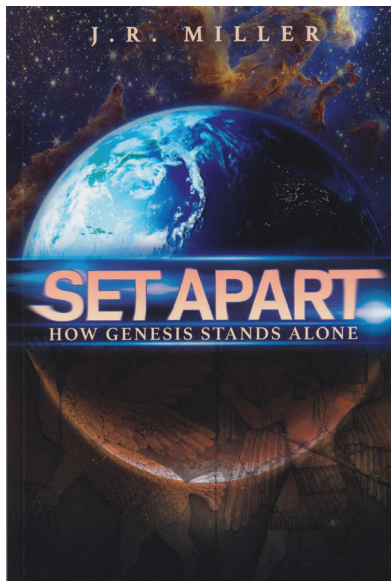
## Set Apart

by Joseph R. Miller

RTB Press, © 2024,

\$18.95 (paperback), 75 pages, ISBN-13: 978-1-956112-04-7

This book is subtitled “How Genesis Stands Alone.” The theme of the book is summarized in the first chapter’s title, “What Makes Genesis Different?” Miller aims to show that Genesis 1–11 is not just another ancient myth from Near Eastern literature. He points out that modern scholarship is leaning toward viewing Adam and Eve and the Genesis story as mythical, but Miller argues that Genesis is a historical narrative with a theological purpose.



Miller affirms the “reliability of Genesis 1–11 as a source of cosmic and human history.” In contrast to the Genesis account, Miller writes: “The gods of the ancient Near East were limited in power, lived in a constant state of battle, and the death of any one god was meaningless to the existence of the cosmos.” He

notes that Genesis describes creation *ex nihilo*, or out of nothing. In contrast, other ancient Near Eastern writings talk about creation *ex materia*, or creation from matter. While other narratives from the region portray their gods as part of nature, Genesis presents God as the creator, separate from creation.

Moses warned the Hebrews to reject the gods of other nations because *YHWH* was the one true God. The “immaterial word of God spoke the material world into existence.” Unlike that, pagan writings tell of male and female gods creating successive generations of gods. The Hebrew word for “created” in Genesis 1:1 is *bara*. It appears 48 times in the Old Testament, and Miller emphasizes that God is always the one who acts to create.

Miller states that Genesis is not a scientific guidebook but it should not be dismissed as a starting point for scientific inquiry. This aligns with the position of the **Does God Exist?** ministry. We highly recommend this short book.

See our videos at [www.doesgodexist.tv](http://www.doesgodexist.tv).

# DANDY DESIGNS

## Ocean Quahog



It is an animal that can live for 500 years. The ocean quahog (*Arctica islandica*) is a clam native to the North Atlantic that exemplifies the slogan “Take it easy and live longer.”

The ocean quahogs living in deep, cold waters farther north live the longest, and those in the southern areas tend to have much shorter lives. Since these mollusks add one growth line to their shells each year, it is possible to determine their age by counting the lines. The oldest reported specimen found in 2006 was 507 years old. That means this clam began its life shortly after Columbus discovered the Americas. Who knows how much longer it might have lived if it had escaped capture.

Ocean quahogs and a few other animals, such as tortoises, have a quality that scientists call “negligible senescence.” What that means is they do not show signs of aging. Scientists are still trying to discover the factors that allow some animals to live long lives without apparent aging. We suggest that one factor is obvious. “Take it easy and live longer” is demonstrated by the long-lived creatures with an unhurried and unstressed lifestyle. Perhaps we can learn something from that. The Creator had a reason to tell us to set aside a time for rest.

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# The Ptarmigan



One of the most remarkable birds on the planet is the ptarmigan. Along with the snowshoe hare and the Arctic fox, ptarmigans are masters of disguise.

Ptarmigans change from dark colors in the summer to completely white in the winter. What makes ptarmigans unique is that they seem aware of the importance of their coloration. The shift from winter plumage to summer is a challenging time for these birds because of the risk of predation if they lose their camouflage. However, if they shed all of their feathers at once, they would be unable to fly. Instead, ptarmigans seek out patches of mud and dirt to bathe themselves in order to keep their camouflage effective.

The question is, “How do ptarmigans know to do this?” With a brain the size of a pea, these birds could not reason or plan this behavior. The three species of ptarmigans (rock, willow, and white-tailed) are designed to be aware of their environment and themselves. Joe Jackson wrote in *Alaska* magazine, “This is a bird that’s hyperaware of what’s around it, and, we now know, hyperaware of itself.”

Trying to explain the ptarmigan's astonishing behavior by chance is creative but not logical. It appears that an intelligence has designed a system that allows these birds to survive in a complex environment. We truly can “know there is a God through the things he has made” (Romans 1:20).

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# News and Notes

**STAY UP-TO-DATE ON NEWS AND NOTES:** The stories in News and Notes are condensed from articles previously published on our website [www.DoesGodExist.today](http://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](https://www.facebook.com/evidence4god)).

**SOIL MOISTURE AND WATER SHORTAGES:** Drought events in various parts of the world have resulted in the loss of 1.614 gigatons of water between 2000 and 2002 (one gigaton equals one billion tons). In the United States, irrigation has become highly contested, as rivers in Nebraska and Colorado cannot supply enough water to grow wheat and other grain crops. Drawing from the water table has caused its level to drop over 10 feet in recent years.



Studies at the University of Texas and Seoul National University show that water shortages will lead to more hunger and human suffering if we do not take action to stop soil moisture loss.

A solution is available. We can use nuclear energy and various processes to desalinate seawater. Removing salt from seawater provides the minerals humans need while generating fresh water for irrigation and helping to restore soil moisture.

God has provided humans with the water we need. In the western United States, we can let rainfall and mountain ice melt replenish soil moisture, while desalination can supply additional water to cities by the ocean, like Los Angeles.

Water shortages have intensified greed and rivalry in many parts of our planet. The teachings of Jesus emphasize peace and concern for others.



## PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS IN NIGERIA:

The Open Doors' 2025 World Watch List states that the persecution of Christians in Nigeria is severe. Last Christmas in northern Nigeria, armed militants attacked Christian villages. They burned houses, farms, and churches, beheaded a preacher, and left his head in a field for church members to find the next morning. The militants killed around 200 people and displaced about 20,000 Nigerians from their homes. They left half of the village's buildings in ruins, with roofs gone, walls reduced to rubble, lives lost, and families torn apart.



Alliance Defending Freedom is assembling a group of lawyers to provide free legal support to targeted Christians. Their goal is to “advocate at the highest levels of law and policy internationally to inspire global action, creating generational legal precedents for freedom that bring relief and justice to the persecuted.”

Satan is having a field day with the persecution of Christians in Nigeria, but Christ is offering an answer to those under attack. We must pray for our brothers and sisters in Nigeria and other countries, including our own.



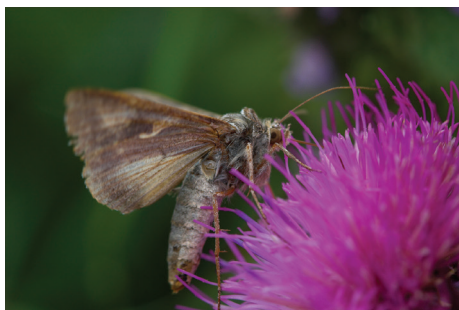
**ANIMAL PATHOGEN TRANSMISSION TO HUMANS:** The World Organization for Animal Health and the World Health Organization released data on the number of illnesses and deaths caused by pathogens transmitted to humans from animals worldwide each year. They collected data from 183 member states, revealing that around a billion illnesses and millions of deaths occur annually due to animal pathogen transmission.

The recent data was prompted by the outbreak of bird flu known as H5N1. That virus has sickened millions of birds, dozens of mammalian species, and people worldwide. This strain of avian influenza has threatened food supplies and prompted governments to seriously examine food security and public health.

When God created life on Earth, he designed it to meet the needs of humans. Long before modern science, God gave dietary instructions to the ancient Israelites. Skeptics today may consider those instructions outdated; however, they were far ahead of their time, and many still apply today. We see the consequences of ignoring wise dietary and health guidelines.



**NIGHTTIME POLLINATORS:** There is significant media discussion about the plight of bees, attributed to the use of insecticides and climate change. However, the media overlooks the fact that bees and butterflies are primarily daytime pollinators. Out of approximately 350,000 flowering plant species, some rely on nighttime pollinators.



The list of nighttime pollinators includes moths, cockroaches, beetles, slugs, snails, and bats. Many people see them as pests, especially cockroaches and beetles. Be-

cause of this, they often target pollinators by applying chemicals to control them. The result is that many desirable plants fail to reproduce and eventually die out.

The solution is to help people understand the importance of being careful about what they use on their plants and why. Christians believe that God designed all ecosystems, and good stewardship means protecting what he has given us.



**MICROPLASTICS AND DEMENTIA:** Researchers from the University of New Mexico have found a striking link between dementia and the concentration of microplastics in human brains. A study of autopsy specimens revealed that the brains of people with dementia contained as much as five times more microplastics than those of healthy brains. Comparisons of brain tissues from 2016 and 2024 show 50% higher concentrations in the 2024 samples.

The fact is that pollution appears to be a major cause of dementia. Like cancer, brain problems are connected to human greed and a failure to use what God has given us wisely. Reducing the flow of microplastics into the environment will be a tough challenge because affordable alternatives to plastics are currently unavailable. Meanwhile, more research is needed to understand the connection between microplastics and dementia.



**HOW SEA TURTLES FIND FOOD:** Research has answered an interesting question about life in the sea—how do sea turtles find food? They have an extensive diet, including small invertebrates, jellyfish, and fish eggs. The problem is that these food sources are only in small patches scattered across the ocean, so how do sea turtles locate them?

The answer relates to Earth's magnetic field. Sea turtles can create GPS-like magnetic maps of Earth's oceans. They start doing this as hatchlings and remember the locations for years or even decades.



Loggerhead sea turtles live for about 20 years, and the internal GPS map guides them to food and migration routes for their entire lives. For hatchlings to survive, it is essential that sea turtles find food quickly and grow large enough to escape predators.

Recent research has shown that sea turtles possess two senses for detecting Earth's magnetic field. One senses the direction of the magnetic field lines, and the other detects magnetic features to locate foraging areas where they find food and beaches where they can lay their eggs. Studies also show that migrating songbirds have these same magnetoreception systems.

God has endowed all animals with the special tools they need to survive. We see God's wisdom and planning everywhere in the natural world.



**ARCHAEO-MAGNETIC DATING:** Biblical archaeologists use various dating methods to uncover the history of ancient Israel. Three of these methods are relative dating, carbon-14 dating, and a newer technique called archaeomagnetic dating.

In relative dating, archaeologists compare the age of objects based on their depth in a dig — objects near the surface are younger, while those deeper under multiple debris layers are older.

Researchers also use carbon-14 dating when organic material is present, such as seeds found inside pottery. Other organic matter like fruits and textiles can also be dated with this method. While alive, all living things absorb a radioactive isotope of carbon, and once they die, this isotope decays at a steady rate. By measuring the remaining carbon-14 in an artifact, scientists can estimate its age. However, often the amount of carbon-14 is too small to detect. The half-life of carbon-14 makes it suitable for dating samples from roughly 1200 to 800 B.C., a key period in biblical history.

Recent advances have introduced a method that uses changes in Earth's magnetic field. Archaeomagnetic dating can establish exact dates for materials that were heated to high temperatures, such as during fires, lava flows, or volcanic intrusions. When materials like bricks or pottery are fired, their magnetic particles align with Earth's magnetic field. As they cool, this magnetic pattern is locked in place. Since scientists understand how Earth's magnetic field has



shifted over time, archaeologists can use these magnetic signatures to determine the age of the artifacts.

By combining archaeomagnetic data with other dating methods, researchers can verify biblical events. This technique helps date the time when Pharaoh Shoshenq (also known as Shishak in the KJV) attacked Jerusalem (1 Kings 14:25–26). As new tools like archaeomagnetic dating become more refined, it is harder for skeptics to dismiss the biblical record, because these methods allow us to verify its historical accuracy.



### **APARTIAL SOLUTION FOR INVASIVE SPECIES:**

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has proposed



a partial solution for invasive species: eat them. Erin Huggins of the CDFW wrote, “Eating invasive species can help protect native wildlife by reducing their numbers and limiting the damage they cause to ecosystems.”

The nutria is an invasive species causing problems in 18 states, especially in California.

These rodents are native to South America but were originally introduced into the United States for the fur trade. Officials thought they had eradicated them from California in the 1970s, but they started to reappear in 2017. Nutrias cause significant issues for farmers and livestock owners because they eat vegetation down to the roots. Nutrias are even more omnivorous than goats, making them more destructive.

This is not the first time an invasive species has become a problem. In the 1970s, Asian carp were introduced into ponds to control aquatic plants. Four East Asian species were introduced: silver carp, bighead carp, grass carp, and black carp. Some of these species would jump high out of the water when disturbed, creating a hazard for recreational boaters, and extensive measures have been taken to keep them out of the Great Lakes.

Fish and wildlife officials are now suggesting a partial solution for invasive species—turning them into a food source for humans. Even high-end restaurants now offer nutria and carp meat on their menus. Convincing the public to accept this will take time. A partial solution for invasive species might be to eat them, but a better solution is for people to avoid disturbing the natural balance in God’s well-designed world.



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**BOGONG MOTH MIGRATION:** Since ancient times, humans have used the stars for navigation. Similarly, many animals and migratory birds do the same. Even some insects rely on stars to guide their flights at night. For the first time, researchers have discovered that insects use stars to steer their long-distance migrations. These insects are Bogong moths, native to Australia.

Researchers spent years studying how Bogong moths migrate. They wanted to understand how a moth flying at night can travel 620 miles (1000 km) to a place it has never visited before. After spending summer in the cool, dark caves of the Australian Alps, they travel every autumn to their breeding grounds in the Australian bush.

Because Bogong moths migrate at night, they cannot navigate by the Sun. Previous research has shown that birds, as well as some insects like dung beetles, use Earth's magnetic field to steer their flight. However, dung beetles only travel a few meters, not 1000 kilometers. Researchers aimed to understand how Bogong moths navigate such long journeys.

They captured some Bogong moths and placed them in a plan-  
etarium-like flight simulator that blocked Earth's magnetic field, forcing the moths to rely solely on eyesight for navigation. The study concludes that the moths use the stars to guide their paths.



Bogong moths are the first insects known to undertake long-distance migrations at night using the stars for guidance. Is the incredible migration of the Bogong moth simply a coincidence, or is it part of an intricate, designed system of life?



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### **ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD PUZZLE ON PAGE 18**

**ACROSS:** 4-irrelevant; 6-weakness; 10-forgiver

**DOWN:** 1-purpose; 2-fled; 3-Matthew;

5-merciful; 7-fair; 8-pure; 9-mind

This journal is a part of a program of service titled **Does God Exist?** The purpose of the program is to provide thinking, seeking people with scientific evidence that God does exist and that the Bible is his Word. It is our conviction that all men can logically and rationally believe in God. In addition to this quarterly journal, the **Does God Exist?** program offers DVDs, CDs, courses, books, and other materials. These materials are offered on a loan basis or at our cost. We also are more than willing to correspond with you and answer any specific question(s) you might have. If you would like further information on borrowing or purchasing these materials, we would be glad to send it to you. Check the boxes below to describe what you would like and mail it to us. We will get it right out to you.

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