

STANDING ON THE PROMISES

Preparing to Make a Defense
for Our Faith



Participant's Book Three
Making the Case for Christianity

Sessions Thirteen to Eighteen of Eighteen

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Go Make Baptize Teach

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Table of Contents

Session Thirteen: Addressing Secularism	4
<i>Psalm 53</i>	
Session Fourteen: Classical Proofs for God	6
<i>Psalm 89 & 90</i>	
Session Fifteen: The Law of Human Nature	8
<i>Psalm 1</i>	
Session Sixteen: The Big Bang	10
<i>Psalm 98 & Genesis 1</i>	
Session Seventeen: The Anthropic Principle	12
<i>Psalm 8</i>	
Session Eighteen: The Origin of Life	14
<i>Psalm 104</i>	
Appendix 1: The Three Great Creeds	16
<i>Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian</i>	
Appendix 2: Selected Bibliography	18

Session Thirteen:

Addressing Secularism

Psalm 53

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious Father, We struggle each day with the unbelief in ourselves and in our neighbors. Help us to balance a loving response to those secular tendencies that are common to us all. Call our spirits to believe in you. Strengthen our minds to see your truth. Encourage our hearts to love you, love our neighbors and love ourselves. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.



God looks down from heaven on the children of man to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God (Psalm 53:2)

ADDRESSING SECULARISM

In this series, *Standing on the Promises*, we are inquiring into the Bible's directive, "Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you." (1 Peter 3:15) This means that we must address the current secularism of our age. It is clear that there is an urgent need to address the external pressure coming from our society's faithlessness. But we also want to address the tendencies for unbelief that can occur within ourselves.

Even if we never publicly witness about why we believe in Jesus Christ, we must be ready to make a defense against our own inner attacks. And oddly, the triumph of faith inside us may be the clearest witness to faith for those around us. Certainly we will never convince anyone else about Jesus until we ourselves are both convicted and convinced. This is why Jesus began his ministry in Galilee by preaching, "... repent and

believe the Gospel." (Mark 1: 15)

To better prepare to make a defense we are going to look at the root causes for today's secularism. There are two causes which commonly result in rejecting belief in God. The first is our natural resistance to the moral law. The Bible calls this "temptation to sin." The second root cause for secularism is the attempt to take revenge against God. Blaming God for the bad things can lead us to try and get back at him by abandoning faith. In order to make a defense for faith and address secularism, we need to address these root causes for both ourselves and our neighbors.

RESISTANCE TO THE MORAL LAW

Jesus teaches us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." This is important because God has woven the moral law into the very fabric of our being. It comes naturally to us and grows stronger and stronger as we age. It is meant to be a guide for us as we seek after God.

But temptation comes when the moral law gets in the way of what we want to do. When we think we can find a more effective way to pleasure, security, and power than what God has designed. We choose to make ourselves enemies of God. And we think we can be free of him by doubting his existence so we can shape our own custom morality. Jealous of God's authority, we choose to make moral decisions for ourselves.

Temptation's worst result is not that it leads to sin. The forgiveness of sin is sure and swift. No, temptation's worst effect is that it leads us into rebellion against God; rebellion that seeks to eliminate God, faith, and Scripture. Modern secularism is a kind of mutiny so that we can

sail our morality anywhere where we want.

Read Psalm 53:1-3

13.1 What is David saying about the relationship between atheism and the moral law?

13.2 What is God expecting the moral law to accomplish in the hearts of people? How is morality a guide to finding God?

13.3 How should we talk with people who deny God in order to permit changing moral standards to what they want?

TAKING REVENGE ON GOD

A small child stomps her foot in rage and shouts, “I hate you, mommy!” An atheist claims confidently that there is no God. How are these two actions similar? They can both be understood as acts of revenge by a child against a parent. But there is always more to the story. In the child’s case, the parent has done something that she doesn’t like. In the atheist’s case, the pain is likely from some catastrophic event blamed on God that triggers the desire for revenge. The only revenge possible against God is to deny his existence.

Most secular people are not conscious of the revenge they are seeking. To them their belief in the nonexistence of God is quite rational. But the vehemence of their reaction to the Bible and Christianity shows that there is some significant emotional motivation under the surface. Revenge is a very powerful motivation. It must be carefully factored into the process of addressing modern secularism.

Read Psalm 53:4-6

13.4 How is taking revenge on God through atheism what David calls “evil?”

13.5 What does David reveal about the inner feelings of the secular? How should that shape how we address them?

MAKING THE CASE - LEE STROBEL

(AN INTERVIEW WITH LYNN ANDERSON)

Anderson leaned back in his chair. “I talked with a girl who had been sexually abused,” he continued. “Every way God had been represented to her, as filtered through her parents’ religion, was horrible. I don’t blame her for having trouble believing. But her arguments were always in the intellectual realm. When you tried to dig deeper into her real obstacles, she didn’t want to go through the pain of facing them. She used intellectual doubts to deflect people.”

“Then there was the time I had a conversation about God with a guy in the Pacific Northwest. He was raising all kinds of intellectual issues. But when we got beneath that, it turned out he didn’t want to believe in God because he didn’t want to sell his topless bar. The money was too good and he was having too much fun making it.”

Strobel, Lee (2009-05-18). *The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity* (p. 236). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

13.6 How might one best address the sexually abused girl’s secularity?

13.7 What is at the root of the topless bar owner’s secularity, how would you respond?

SUPPORTING TEXTS FROM SCRIPTURE

- ◇ *Isaiah 1:2-4*
- ◇ *Matthew 5:17-30*
- ◇ *Ephesians 2:1-9*
- ◇ *Revelation 2:12-16*

Session Fourteen:

Classical Proofs for God

Psalm 89 & 90

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious Father, We want to know you as our God, the maker of our universe and the final answer to all seeking after truth. Reveal yourself to us by your Holy Spirit that our faith in you may grow. Help us to confidently worship you in all that we do that you may be revealed to the nations. In Jesus' dear name. Amen.



Let the heavens praise your wonders, O Lord, your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones! (Psalm 89:5)

THE GREAT DIVIDE

There is a great divide when it comes to proofs for God. In short, a proof for God is only convincing when one is reasonably open to the idea that God exists. For those who have closed out the possibility for God's existence, the classical proofs are not convincing in anyway. The basic attitude toward God's existence actually precedes conscious thought about the subject. It is simply a "gut" reaction.

Please note that this "gut" reaction can be changed, but it is not likely to be changed by a rational or logical "proof." This does not in anyway discredit the proofs themselves. They are still careful arguments that have developed over time to give an explanation to why we believe in God. And they still have an important purpose. They demonstrate clear and rational thinking about important questions.

However, we need to understand that they have

limited usefulness in convincing non-believers to believe. Their primary purpose is to demonstrate that there are rational ways of thinking about the existence of God alongside the leap of faith that shapes belief in God.

THE THOUGHT OF GOD

Sometimes this proof is called the "Ontological Argument." It was first advanced by a Benedictine monk named Anselm during the 11th century. Basically it argues that God exists because we can think of him as greater than anything we can imagine. Classically stated, "There is always a thought of God greater than the thought that he does not exist." Therefore he exists by definition. At first this seems like merely a play of words, but it is logically accurate and has a role to play in discrediting the bald assertions of atheism.

Read Psalm 89:1-8

14.1 How do our thoughts about the incomparable power and glory of God advance our confidence in His existence?

THE FIRST CAUSE

The "First Cause" proof stretches so far back into antiquity that it is impossible to identify its origin. This proof is often called the "Cosmological Argument." Essentially it claims as self evident that everything that exists comes from a cause. Therefore that cause which is not itself caused by anything else is God. He is the first cause. God is the logical beginning of all causality. Since we perceive the existence of the things he has caused, we can therefore show

that he exists.

Read Psalm 89:9-18

14.2 How does the Psalm speak of God as founder and foundation of reality? In what ways does that demonstrate his existence?

THE DESIGNER GOD

The official philosophical label for this proof is the “Teleological Argument,” but it is more commonly called the argument from design. Even though Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) laid the foundations for this approach it is best known from the work of William Paley (1743-1805). Paley compared the universe to a watch. He argued that similar to examining a watch, science revealed the cosmos to be too intricately inter-related to be a random occurrence. Just as a watch points to a designer who made it, so the universe points to a creator God.

Read Psalm 90:1-8

14.3 How does this psalm suggest we adjust our perspective to better understand how the design of creation itself points to a creator?

PASCAL’S WAGER

The perspective advanced by Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) called Pascal’s Wager is less of a proof and more of a way ahead without proof. Pascal begins with the obvious by saying that God either exists or does not exist. If one chooses to believe, “bets on God,” he does well whether God exists or does not exist. But if one chooses to disbelieve in God, “bets against God,” then he only wins if God does not exist. In the case that God does exist, those who bet against him face serious negative consequences. Therefore Pascal demonstrates that belief in God is by far the safest wager whether or not God exists.

Read Psalm 90:9-17

14.4 In what ways does Pascal’s Wager connect

with what the Psalmist calls “a heart of wisdom” (vs 12)? What advantages does the psalmist suggest this perspective give the faithful?

PREPARING A DEFENSE - DINESH D’SOUZA

Remarkably, there are many people today who wish to conduct their lives on the presumption that there is no God, no afterlife, and no reality beyond the world of experience. These are not only the self-proclaimed atheists but also the agnostics, whose professed ignorance translates into a practical atheism. Often with a self-satisfied smile, they say, “I cannot believe because I simply don’t know.” This attitude is peculiar for two reasons. First, it is entirely incurious about the most important questions of life: Why are we here? Is this life all there is? What happens when we die? These great mysteries press themselves on all humans who ponder their situation, and yet there are people who refuse even to consider those mysteries. They continue to demand evidence of a kind that is simply not available here. Their attitude is also bizarre because it shows no hint of an awareness of the limits of reason. Empirical evidence is unavailable because the senses cannot penetrate a realm beyond experience.

D’Souza, Dinesh (2008-11-04). *What’s So Great About Christianity* (p. 194). Regnery Publishing. Kindle Edition.

14.5 What role can the classical proofs for God play in shaping discussion about life’s big questions?

8.7 What are the issues to consider in this kind of discussion with secular folk?

SUPPORTING TEXTS FROM SCRIPTURE

- ◇ *Isaiah 40:12-14*
- ◇ *John 1:1-4*
- ◇ *Acts 17:22-34*
- ◇ *Colossians 1:15-17*

Session Fifteen:

The Law of Human Nature

Psalm 1

OPENING PRAYER

Dear God, Help us to seek you in the moral nature you have given us. Let the sense for right and wrong that you have built into all of us illuminate our way not only in this life but also in our search for your truth. Help us to find you in the righteousness you grant to us through your son, Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.



Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.. (Psalm 1:1-2)

MORALITY AS EVIDENCE FOR GOD

Can human morality be evidence for God? This is a fundamental question that bears careful thought. All humans have some kind of inborn sense of morality. By this we mean that humans not only think in terms of what they will do, but they also think about what they *ought* to do. Often when people have conflicting choices between what they want to do and what they ought to do, they will choose the morally superior option to the one they prefer.

Scientists have difficulty accounting for the universal human moral instinct. “Survival of the fittest,” which is the foundation of Darwinian theory, seems to directly oppose many of the moral imperatives that are common to our human morality. Often the morally superior choice weakens a person’s chances for survival. Take

for instance the instinct we have to save other peoples lives even at the risk of our own. It cannot not be a product of environmental conditioning, because it is surprisingly uniform in spite of great variation in culture and social practice around the world.

The best theories continue to lead thinkers back to a divine source of human morality that exists outside of humanity itself. In this way, human morality makes the most sense as the intended course for human action desired by God. Without God, human morality makes little sense. With faith in God, it becomes a guiding light for relationship between humans and faith in God.

LIVING WITH THE “OUGHT”

Every day we face hundreds of moral choices that affect the nature and quality of our lives. Often we make morally superior choices, doing what we “ought” to do, rather than what we are inclined to do. However with disturbing frequency we also make selfish, lazy, or evil choices that compromise our moral integrity.

We feel the results of our choices in ways that are very consistent with fellow human beings. When we succeed in making morally superior choices, we experience a sense of righteousness. When we fail, we feel guilty. These are strongly motivating emotions. They also bring us face to face with our understanding about God. Belief in God gives us access to repentance and forgiveness. Rejection of God is often an attempt to alleviate guilt by eliminating accountability for moral action.

For many, the experience of repentance and forgiveness itself serves as a confirmation of God’s existence. God’s reality enters human experience in the midst of our struggle with the inborn

moral standards we hold in common. Faith in God helps us to make sense of morality and to channel it in productive ways that enhance life. It also helps to establish actions and rituals that enhance our comfort with this inborn reality. In this way our beliefs are also strengthened.

Read Psalm 1:1-3

15.1 How does this psalm portray the nature and purpose of inborn human morality?

15.2 How might we talk about this inborn morality with secular folk as an avenue to exploring the possibility of God?

ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD

It is common for humans throughout history, from many different cultures and religious perspectives, to draw a connection between inborn human morality and a final accountability which transcends life itself. The Judeo-Christian tradition refers to this as the Day of Judgement. People draw the conclusion with remarkable consistency that our actions in this life have significance for things beyond this life.

This natural sense of final accountability for our inborn morality is not only universal, but it is one of the most common articles of faith in world religions. Although the sense of transcendent accountability itself is not proof of God's existence, it is a compelling argument for looking beyond our experiences in this life to find meaning. The need for a final arbiter of truth begs for a recognition of God's existence and his attention focused on events in the world.

Read Psalm 1:4-6

15.3 How is the psalmist's understanding of the wicked and the righteous both transcendent and universal?

15.4 What are the pitfalls for talking about God's judgment with secular people? How can

we work around them to discuss transcendent accountability?

PREPARING A DEFENSE - C. S. LEWIS

If there was a controlling power outside the universe, it could not show itself to us as one of the facts inside the universe—no more than the architect of a house could actually be a wall or staircase or fireplace in that house. The only way in which we could expect it to show itself would be inside ourselves as an influence or a command trying to get us to behave in a certain way. And that is just what we do find inside ourselves. Surely this ought to arouse our suspicions? In the only case where you can expect to get an answer, the answer turns out to be Yes; and in the other cases, where you do not get an answer, you see why you do not. ... Do not think I am going faster than I really am. I am not yet within a hundred miles of the God of Christian theology. All I have got to is a Something which is directing the universe, and which appears in me as a law urging me to do right and making me feel responsible and uncomfortable when I do wrong. I think we have to assume it is more like a mind than it is like anything else we know—because after all the only other thing we know is matter and you can hardly imagine a bit of matter giving instructions.

Lewis, C. S. (2009-05-28). Mere Christianity (C.S. Lewis Signature Classics) (p. 24-25). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

9.5 What does the law of human nature suggest to us about the existence of God? What is the best way to discuss this with secular folk?

SUPPORTING TEXTS FROM SCRIPTURE

- ◇ *Exodus 20:1-6*
- ◇ *Deuteronomy 6:1-8*
- ◇ *Matthew 5:17-20*
- ◇ *Revelation 20:11-15*

Session Sixteen:

The Big Bang

Psalm 98 & Genesis 1

OPENING PRAYER

Creator God, We see your fingerprints everywhere in the universe you have made. We thank you for the wonder of scientific study in the natural world. Bless its investigation of the truth and help it to teach us about your power and glory. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen



*And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.
(Genesis 1:3)*

DARWIN AND THE ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES

It is difficult to overestimate the impact of Charles Darwin on our modern secular world. Even though his focus was on scientific discovery, those findings, and the way they are commonly presented to the world, have transformed our western culture in some critical ways.

Prior to Darwin, most of western civilization assumed that life was created by a process described in scripture. But after Darwin, Biblical interpretation was fractured between literal and symbolic approaches. In spite of the fact that the Bible itself assumes an evolutionary pattern similar to Darwin's findings, many people were trapped into thinking that the Bible opposed the concept of "natural selection."

This situation is further confused because some Darwinists claimed that evolution eliminated the need for God in the creation of life. This naturalistic metaphysical understanding of Darwin's theory lies at the very foundation of modern secularism. All secular thinking today

assumes that the development of life can be understood as purely natural without any need for the supernatural at all.

However, to make this claim, Darwinists require nearly infinite amounts of time to enable random chance to produce life as we know it. The "steady state universe," was the predominant theory in Darwin's time. This was a perpetually existing universe, giving nearly unlimited time for an "accidental" origin of life.

However, a new theory about the beginning of the universe has generally discredited the steady state model and knocked the pins out from under the purely natural, Darwinistic, origin of life. It postulates that the universe, time, and physical laws were all created in a single explosive event occurring a mere 13.8 billion years ago. Far too recently to permit random chance to have created life. Further, it raises the question of what caused the origination event itself. This new theory is called, "The Big Bang."

THE BIG BANG

The Big Bang theory is perhaps the best thing to happen for Christian apologetics in the last three centuries. Ever since Charles Darwin published his seminal work "On the Origin of the Species" in 1859, Christians have been on their heels trying to prepare a defense for our Christian hope. However, the Big Bang theory substantially counters most of the assumptions that give rise to modern secularism. This needs to be carefully understood. For instance The Big Bang does not discredit evolution, it only discredits the notion that evolution could have happened as a random event.

Christians that insist on arguing for a literalistic interpretation of what they assume to be

the Bible's view of creation will not be helped in anyway by the Big Bang theory. The problems with the so called "creationist" understanding are legion. Primarily creationism simultaneously cuts the Christian off from a deeper understanding of scripture and prevents fruitful conversation with our allies in the scientific world.

In every evangelistic effort with secular people a gentle, thoughtful conversation about the Big Bang should be primary goal. To do this Christians need to understand both the chief points of the theory itself and how the Bible itself supports it.

Read Psalm 98:1-8

16.1 Does this Psalm benefit from a literal understanding? How does one draw the line between interpretive license and Scriptural truth?

16.2 How can we use the confidence of the "New Song" to speak to our secular culture?

THE BIBLE PROPOSES THE BIG BANG

A careful reading of the first chapter of Genesis leaves one with the uncomfortable predicament that God created light before he created the source for light in the Sun and the Moon. Generations of believers has struggled with this using imaginative poetic interpretations to provide an explanation.

Oddly, the Big Bang theory agrees precisely with the way Genesis sets out the events of creation. Light was indeed created long before the sun and the moon. What seemed an insurmountable self-contradiction is really the factual truth as born out by the emerging scientific theory. This is both delightfully ironic and a wonderful subject for discussion with our secular friends. It simultaneously enables us to shed the literalists' stigma and to reveal the amazing relevance of Scripture.

Read Genesis 1:1-19

16.4 How is the account of creation in Genesis 1 the earliest formulation of the Big Bang Theory?

16.5 How can the startling accuracy of Genesis 1 in setting out a currently emerging scientific theory be used to engage our secular friends in evangelistic conversation?

PREPARING A DEFENSE - DINESH D'SOUZA

In a stunning confirmation of the book of Genesis, modern scientists have discovered that the universe was created in a primordial explosion of energy and light. Not only did the universe have a beginning in space and time, but the origin of the universe was also a beginning for space and time. Space and time did not exist prior to the universe. If you accept that everything that has a beginning has a cause, then the material universe had a nonmaterial or spiritual cause. This spiritual cause brought the universe into existence using none of the laws of physics. The creation of the universe was, in the quite literal meaning of the term, a miracle. Its creator is known to be a spiritual, eternal being of creativity and power beyond all conceivable limits. Mind, not matter, came at the beginning. With the help of science and logic, all this can be rationally demonstrated.

D'Souza, Dinesh (2008-11-04). What's So Great About Christianity (p. 116). Regnery Publishing, Kindle Edition.

16.6 How is the Big Bang a "gold mine" for Christian apologetics today?

SUPPORTING TEXTS FROM SCRIPTURE

- ◇ *Job 38:1-7*
- ◇ *John 1:1-14*
- ◇ *Hebrews 11:1-3*
- ◇ *Revelation 20:1-8*

Session Seventeen:

The Anthropic Principle

Psalm 8

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious Father, We are truly amazed when we look at the grandeur of your creation. The universe in its vastness speaks to us of your loving purpose. We exist as your children because you have designed human beings to be the crown of your creation. We have your image so that we can see the wonder of what you have done and love you for it. We thank you and bless you for this in Jesus name, Amen.



What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?. (Psalm 8:4)

THE MARKS OF DESIGN

We live in a vast Universe filled with wonders that people who first wrote down the Bible's words could only imagine. Those first human instruments of God's word could not have known about the amazing nature of creation the way it is now revealed to us through science. This makes it all the more amazing when God's Word in the Bible reveals an understanding of our universe which anticipates developing scientific understanding of the natural order.

A chief example of this is something that is called the "Anthropic Principle." To understand this we have to look at the history of science and religion together. Up through the middle ages it was assumed that the earth was the center of the known universe and that the sun, stars, and planets all moved around it. At that time Biblical scholars supported this view because it helped to portray humans as the crown of God's

creation, which is a fundamental Scriptural principle.

In 1543 a book written by Nicolaus Copernicus, "On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres" proposed a different view of the heavens with the sun at the center of the Solar system. The Copernican revolution certainly toppled what was seen as the prevailing Biblical view of the universe. Many people also believed that it convincingly disapproved the Bible's assertion that humanity was the crown of creation. Oddly, new scientific developments have reopened this issue in some very interesting ways.

A group of scientists who were looking closely at the physical laws of the universe noticed something quite unexpected. When it comes to things like the overall size and age of the universe, along with specific constants like the speed of light and the number of physical dimensions, it becomes apparent that our universe has been "finely tuned" for the purpose of making human life possible. This discovery puts the issue of God's unique design for humanity back on the table. At the same time it refutes several generations of popular attempts to erode the witness of Scripture that human beings are the crown of Creation. Science has once again discovered the marks of God's true design for humanity in the midst of His creation.

WHAT IS HUMANITY?

Although the Anthropic Principle does not directly assert that humanity is the crown of God's creation, it opens the way for intelligent, scientifically sensitive folk to again ask the question the psalmist poses so poignantly from Psalm 8. "what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?"

At the heart of current debate is the emerging thought that humans are no more than clever animals. Scripture emphatically asserts that we are much more than that. We are created to fill a special place in God's creation that he has designed for us.

Read Psalm 8: 1-4

17.1 What kind of relationship does Psalm 8 propose between God and the universe? What does this mean for science?

17.2 In what ways does contemplation of the natural order suggest questions about human purpose within that order?

DOMINION

The Bible clearly asserts human dominion over the created order. This is the nature of God's design as the Scriptures describe it. However modern science, and especially some approaches to ecological study, seem to suggest that humans are actually harmful and dangerous to the natural order.

Psalm 8 affirms the general biblical view that humans are created to have dominion over creation. But that dominion is not simply a power over the natural world. Dominion includes responsibility to care for the natural order and to see to its wise use. Humans are given the right to rule in creation, but not the right to mistreat it or turn it to selfish purposes. God remains the central focus of the glory creation brings to God. The primary purpose for human dominion is to assist nature in bringing glory to God.

Read Psalm 8:5-9

17.4 What is the nature and purpose of human dominion over the created order?

17.5 How is science a reflection of God making humans "a little lower than heavenly beings?" How does Biblical dominion work for science?

PREPARING A DEFENSE - DINESH D'SOUSA

It turns out that the vast size and great age of our universe are not coincidental. They are the indispensable conditions for the existence of life on earth. In other words, the universe has to be just as big as it is and just as old as it is in order to contain living inhabitants like you and me. The entire universe with all its laws appears to be a conspiracy to produce, well, us. Physicists call this incredible finding the anthropic principle, which states that the universe we perceive must be of precisely such a nature as will make possible living beings who can perceive it. The Copernican narrative has been reversed and man has been restored to his ancient pedestal as the favored son, and perhaps even the *raison d'être*, of creation.

D'Souza, Dinesh (2008-11-04). What's So Great About Christianity (p. 129). Regnery Publishing. Kindle Edition.

17.6 How can the Anthropic Principle be used as a part of Christian witness?

17.7 How is the fundamentalist reading of scripture, with its seven day creation and six thousand year limitation on the age of the universe, problematic for real conversation with our world about Jesus?

SUPPORTING TEXTS FROM SCRIPTURE

- ◇ *Genesis 1:26-31*
- ◇ *Mark 16:14-20*
- ◇ *Romans 8:12-30*
- ◇ *Colossians 1:15-23*

Session Eighteen:

The Origin of Life

Psalm 104

OPENING PRAYER

Lord God, You created life as a great gift. It is the foundation of our connection to you and all other living things. By faith we know that life comes from your hand and by your design. Help us to see you and your purpose in the lives of everything around us. But most of all help us to receive our own life as a wondrous gift to be lived in gratitude. We ask this in your Son's dear name, Amen.



When you send forth your Spirit, they are created and you renew the face of the ground. (Psalm 104:30)

HOW LIFE STARTED

For over 150 years many people in our culture have thought they had a clear scientific reason for suggesting that God was not necessary for life to begin. This is a frightfully upsetting assertion for Christians. It has led many people away from faith in God. The assertion itself is based on Darwin's remarkable scientific work in what has come to be called evolution. Evolution in and of itself presents no problem for Biblical Christianity outside of "fundamentalist literalism" which is a particular kind of Scriptural interpretation.

The philosophical position that uses evolution as the reason for Godless creation is called Darwinism. Darwinism has always had a significant flaw. Although it does an admirable job of showing how life can evolve from lower forms of life to higher, it is not able to show how life began in the first place. With the Bang Bang

theory limiting the time available for evolution and advances in biology showing the incredible chemical complexity of even the most simple life forms, the chances of an accidental start to life of any kind recedes rapidly into impossibility. Even under scientific scrutiny, the sequence of events that lead to human beings literally screams for a creator.

Even the famous experiments commonly cited for demonstrating how life emerged spontaneously from Darwin's "warm little pool" are extremely misleading. These experiments were performed by Stanley Miller and Harold Urey in the 1950's. They produced only amino acids which are vital components of living creatures, but are not in anyway living themselves. Scientific research since then has shown that the problems attending the accidental emergence of life under any possible circumstances is not just unlikely but virtually impossible. And if science continues to demonstrate that life could not have possibly started by accident then only the Bible's explanation remains. God himself created life.

A DWELLING PLACE

The Bible's view of creation is quite simple and straight forward. First God created a dwelling place for life. In what modern science calls the "Big Bang," God created the natural universe out of nothing by his word. Life could not happen without a physical universe, laws of nature, time, and space. Science is just beginning to learn how finely tuned this universe is to the specific needs of life and human life in particular. Believers have long known of the wonder in God's design of a place for the life he intends.

Read Psalm 104:1-18

18.1 How does the psalmist portray the relationship between God and His creation?

18.2 What evidence does Psalm 104 give that God’s primary purpose in creation was to provide for living things?

LIFE IN ABUNDANCE

When we peer into the mysteries of life’s origin we find our selves looking into the face of God. There is no where to logically turn that does not place God at the very center of life as its creator and sustainer.

Many who refuse to believe look for an explanation that attributes random chance as the cause for life. But those attempts always fail to grasp the wider issues of the design that makes such chance possible. They also fail to deal with the high degree of likelihood that God himself loaded the dice.

Research into the chemical underpinnings of the origin of life continues to build the case for complexity beyond our wildest dreams; complexity that witnesses to a divine designer who generates life by his will in amazing abundance and variety. And for those of us who believe, we see this abundance and variety as a profound expression of the God who loves us.

Read Psalm 104:19-35

18.4 Why is it impossible for science to demonstrate a method for the creation of life that does support God sending forth his Spirit to create life? (Vs 30)

18.5 How can science address the questions of what and how in creation while the Bible faithfully answers the question of who and why?

PREPARING A DEFENSE - LEE STROBEL (IN CONVERSATION WITH WALTER L. BRADLEY, PHD)

From 1980 on, NASA scientists have shown that the primitive earth never had any methane, ammonia, or hydrogen to amount to anything,” he said. “Instead, it was composed of water, carbon dioxide, and nitrogen—and you absolutely cannot get the same experimental results with that mixture. It just won’t work. More recent experiments have confirmed this to be the case.”

I slumped back in my chair, amazed at the implications of what Bradley had disclosed. My mind flashed back to my biology teacher, who seemed so utterly confident that Miller’s experiment validated the chemical evolution of life. Certainly that was the thinking of his day. Now new discoveries have changed everything—and yet there are generations of former students still living under the impression that the origin of life issue has been resolved.

“So the scientific significance of Miller’s experiment today . . .,” I began, prompting Bradley to finish my sentence. “. . . is zilch,” he said. “When textbooks present the Miller experiment, they should be honest enough to say it was interesting historically but not terribly relevant to how life actually developed.”

Strobel, Lee (2009-05-18). The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity (p. 97). Zondervan. Kindle Edition. ”

18.6 How is the issue of truth vital for both Scriptural study and scientific research?

18.7 How do these issues affect how the origin of life should be taught in public schools?

SUPPORTING TEXTS FROM SCRIPTURE

- ◇ *Genesis 1:11-25*
- ◇ *Psalm 148*
- ◇ *Ephesians 3:7-13*
- ◇ *Hebrews 11:1-3*

Appendix 1:

The Three Great Creeds

Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian

The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord, He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, The Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in ac-

cordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to Judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. We Believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge on Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen

The Athanasian Creed

Whoever wants to be saved should above all cling to the Christian faith. Whoever does not guard it whole and inviolable will doubtless perish eternally. Now this is the Christian faith:

We worship one God in trinity and the Trinity in unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the divine being. For the Father is one person, the Son is another, and the Spirit is still another. But the deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, equal in glory, coeternal in majesty. What the Father is the Son is, and so is the Holy Spirit. Uncreated is the Father; uncreated is the Son; uncreated is the Spirit. The Father is infinite; the Son is infinite; the Holy Spirit is infinite. Eternal is the Father; eternal is the Son; eternal is the Spirit: And yet there are not three eternal beings, but one who is eternal; as there are not three uncreated and unlimited beings, but on who is uncreated and unlimited. Almighty is the Father; almighty is

the Son; almighty is the Spirit: And yet there are not three almighty beings, but one who is almighty. Thus the Father is God; the Son is God; The Holy Spirit is God; And yet there are not three gods, but One God. Thus the Father is Lord; the Son is Lord; the Holy Spirit is Lord: And yet there are not three lords, but one Lord. As Christian truth compels us to acknowledge each distinct person as God and Lord, so Christian religion forbids us to say that they are three gods or lords. The Father was neither made nor created nor begotten; the Son was neither made nor created, but was alone begotten of the Father; the Spirit was neither made nor created, but is proceeding from the Father and the Son. Thus there is one Father, not three fathers; One Son, not three sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Spirits. And in this Trinity, no one is before or after, greater or less than the other; but all three persons are in themselves, coeternal and coequal; and so we must worship the Trinity in unity and the one God in three persons. Whoever wants to be saved should think thus about the Trinity.

It is necessary for eternal salvation that one also faithfully believe that our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, is both God and man. He is God, begotten before all worlds from the being of the Father, and he is man, born in the world from the being of his mother-- existing fully as God, and fully as man with a rational soul and a human body; equal to the Father in divinity, subordinate to the Father in humanity. Although he is God and man he is not divided, but is one Christ. He is united because God has taken humanity into himself; he does not transform deity into humanity. He is completely one in the unity of his person, without confusing his natures. For as the rational soul and body are one person, so the one Christ is God and man. He suffered death for our salvation. He descended into hell and rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. At his coming all people shall rise bodily to give an account of their own deeds. Those who have done good will enter eternal life, those who have done evil will enter

eternal fire. This is the catholic faith. One cannot be saved without believing this firmly and faithfully. Amen.

Appendix 2:

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