

Contents

Introduction	pg. 2
The Bible's Claim	pg. 3
Darwin's Challenge	pg. 6
God's Alphabet	pg. 11
The Heavens' Declaration	pg. 17
Nature's Testimony	pg. 21
Leeuwenhoek's Unseen World	pg. 27
Carver's Courage	pg. 32
Rich Man's Mistake	pg. 38
Unshakeable Kingdom	pg. 42
Broken Reed	pg. 46
Flood and Fire	pg. 51
Scraped Rock	pg. 55
The Empty Tomb	pg. 60
Conclusion	pg. 65
Selected Bibliography	pg. 66

Introduction

There are profound questions which shape our lives: Why am I here? How did I get here? What should I do while I'm here? Where am I going after I leave here? Other spiritual questions follow: Is there a God of the universe? Is the Bible God's Word? Is Jesus the Son of God?

Life hinges on our answers. Does God exist, and am I accountable to Him?

The goal of the following lessons is to help students answer these questions from a biblical perspective. There has always been plenty of evidence to support Christianity, but information has flourished in recent years. We're blessed to live in this time because of the wealth of knowledge in such fields as biology, chemistry, genetics, cosmology, and archaeology.

The crowning proof of the Bible's inspiration remains the genuine, fulfilled prophecies of Scripture. As Abraham explained to the rich man in Luke 16:31, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead."

This workbook breaks sometimes complicated material into bite-sized chunks suitable for 45-minute classes. Experienced teachers have proofed and practiced the following lessons to see if they work across a broad range of students, from high school to adults.

Apologetics means a *Defense*—in this case a defense of our faith as Christians. According to God's Word, we must be ready to give "a reason for the hope" that is in us (1 Pet. 3:15). Bible evidences help us to make a defense.

While some material in this workbook will be familiar, perhaps several lessons will offer new information. This is especially true in material related to Intelligent Design. Regardless of the reader's science background, however, I've tried to explain these topics in a clear, straightforward way.

One feature of this workbook is that it presents both internal and external evidences. That is, some lessons focus on material solely within God's Word, while other lessons explore matters in fields that relate to scriptural points. For example, how does the work of archaeologists confirm prophecies related to ancient nations mentioned in Scripture? Or, how does modern biology harmonize with the biblical view of life?

May I make one final suggestion before we begin? Nothing is better for God's people than God's Word. It's vital to develop good Bible-reading habits. Toward this goal I would encourage you to maintain a daily Bible reading schedule, even while completing this workbook. Right now, my wife, Robin, and I are studying a Bible translation that's divided into 365 daily readings. By year's end, we will have reviewed God's Word from cover-to-cover. What a difference this makes in life!

Earlier I said that God has left us plenty of evidence. Come and see!

The Bible's Claim

For purposes of our study, it's important to establish three claims made in Scripture. While I understand that a person may not accept these assertions, it's necessary that we understand what the Bible says about itself.

First, Scripture states from first to last that there is one—and only one—supreme God of the universe. No other gods exist. God is endowed with all of the attributes of deity, such as omniscience (all-knowing), omnipresence (all-present), and omnipotence (all-powerful).

Even a cursory examination of Scripture affirms this point:

“. . . For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me” (Isa. 46:9).

“Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for you” (Jer. 32:17).

“Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite” (Psa. 147:5).

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last . . . who is who was and who is to come, the Almighty” (Rev. 1:8)

“For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever, Amen” (Rom. 11:36).

We could multiply such verses, but these five are sufficient to make the point. There's an all-powerful God who rules the universe. The atheist denies it, the agnostic is not sure about it, and the Christian believes it; but that's Scripture's claim.

Nor is this God we worship simply a more powerful alien being who decided to visit earth and plant life here. He's not just a higher-evolved man, with a somewhat better body and mind. He's unique and worthy of reverence: “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24).

Second, Scripture says it is the inspired Word of God. Not just a good book . . . not just a comforting collection of fairy tales and fables . . . not just Jewish mythology . . . but A GOD-BREATHED MESSAGE! Many fail to accept this claim, but there's no mistaking what the Bible asserts.

Again, we'll cite five verses:

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God. . . .” (1 Thess. 2:13).

“. . . Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

“The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever” (Psa. 119:160).

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away” (Matt. 24:35).

There’s no doubt about the meaning of such plain passages. A person may reject the Bible, choose to disregard much of it or ignore all of it, but there’s no mistaking its claim of divine inspiration. Scripture even goes so far as to say that the gospel of Christ is “. . . the power of God to salvation” (Rom. 1:16). It’s the gospel that tells us about Jesus and explains the plan of salvation, from first to last.

This brings us, then, to the final point in this first lesson. *The Bible claims that Jesus is the unique Son of God and savior of the world.* Scripture is thorough on this point, with at least 300 prophecies showing the divine nature of Christ.

Many people reject Jesus of Nazareth, or accept Him as a fine teacher and role model, while refusing to believe in His deity. But how can one read the Bible and come to such a conclusion?

“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9).

“. . . I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

“I AM the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25).

“And Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” (John 20:28).

“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11),

Anyone who’s remotely acquainted with the Bible understands the clear meaning of these passages. No doubt you could add your own verses to these five. Repeatedly, Scripture affirms the eternal existence and mission of Christ.

Are these three claims true or not? It’s one thing to make a claim; it’s quite another to prove it beyond a reasonable doubt. Is there truly a God of the universe? Can we know that the Bible is His word? Is Jesus really His Son who forgives sins and offers salvation? A person could face a million questions in his lifetime, but these three are the most important. We must get these answers right, so let’s weigh the evidence together.

Questions

1. Besides the verses listed in this lesson, can you provide at least one additional passage for each of the three claims we discussed?
2. As we proceed in our study, it's important to understand several terms as they relate to God's existence. Define each of the following words and explain how they differ among themselves: *theism*, *deism*, *monotheism*, *polytheism*. Which two of these words reflect the Bible's viewpoint?
3. Perhaps you have heard statements such as this: "All religions worship the same God; they just do it in different ways." Does such a viewpoint harmonize with the Bible? Since 1 Pet. 3:15 says that we must be ready to defend our faith, how would you respond to such a viewpoint?
4. Study 1 Cor. 2:13-14. According to this passage and 2 Pet. 1:20-21, which we have already cited, what member of the Godhead is responsible for the inspiration of Scripture? Could a person truly believe the Bible yet deny its inspiration?
5. Consider Peter's confession in Matt. 16:16-17. If one desires salvation, is it sufficient to believe that Jesus was only a good man and a gifted teacher?
6. Let's see if we can apply what we've learned. At an appropriate time and place, choose a partner and see if you can give at least one verse that explains the Bible's three claims. Do so from memory, without using notes and without referring to this lesson. Open the Bible and cite at least one verse that describes God's existence, the Bible's inspiration, and Christ's deity.

Darwin's Challenge

Genesis chapters 1 and 2 say that God created the heavens and the earth and all living creatures which inhabit the earth. Charles Darwin (1809-1882) believed the Bible was wrong. He explained that life evolved from a common, lower ancestor. Any spiritual ideas of man beyond material reality, were the result of a blind, evolutionary process. There's no God, no heaven and hell, no everlasting soul, no final judgment . . . just molecules in motion.

So, the Bible says that God created man. Darwin says that man created God. Perhaps both statements are wrong, but both cannot be right. Which view does the evidence support?

We've seen what the Bible claims, but in this lesson we want to evaluate Darwin's theory of evolution, what is often called *organic evolution* or *macro-evolution*.

Definitions are important. If someone asks you if you believe in evolution, your response should be a question: "What do you mean by evolution?" The word *evolution* denotes *change over time*, and there's no doubt that a type of evolution occurs.

For example, ancestral corn plants had few ears and small kernels. Over time, agricultural scientists have selectively bred better corn plants with larger ears, greater disease resistance, and more uniform development. Humans benefit from improved yields. Corn has evolved as a food crop.

Occasionally, new breeds of birds, dogs, and cats appear. Horticulturalists strive for a new color of rose, or a new tulip with a unique bloom. Examples of this type of *micro-evolution* are within limits. The tulip remains a tulip, the dog always gives birth to puppies, a rose by any other name . . . is still a rose. The Bible speaks of "kinds" (Gen. 1:11, 12, 21, 24, 25), and living things remain true to their general kind. This is the case throughout the fossil record and more recent history.

Also, note that God created both man and woman fully formed, not slowly evolving from lower life. People were created in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27), as a special part of God's creation.

Evolution within kinds? Yes, we can see there is compelling evidence for this type of evolution. But macro-evolution, where one animal gradually becomes an entirely new type? No. According to the Bible, primitive goo never became you.

The early giants of science generally accepted the Bible's view of creation and life. Men such as Galileo Galilei, Johannes Kepler, Robert Boyle, Gregor Mendel, Antony van Leeuwenhoek, Isaac Newton, and George Washington Carver were devout believers in God. We will discuss this point in more detail in coming lessons.

Charles Darwin, however, offered an opposing viewpoint. Darwin developed his theory of organic evolution after he sailed with a British expedition aboard the H.M.S. *Beagle* in

1831. For five years the ship traveled along the coast of South America and the Galapagos Islands, with Darwin employed as a naturalist.

Darwin observed that some members of a species had a survival advantage over other members, and these advantages were preserved in future generations—what is often termed “survival of the fittest.” For example, some finches might have slightly longer beaks than others, and this would allow them to gather food more successfully.

Darwin postulated that new species could develop through natural selection acting on random variations. This process of organic evolution would allow the new types of animals to out-compete and out-survive others, thus preserving their traits. His “tree of life” meant that more primitive organisms rested at the base, with branches of new and improved members reaching upwards. Man was simply a more highly-evolved animal, but an animal nonetheless, evolved from more primitive apes and chimpanzees.

Darwin’s two most important works are *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871). His theory of biological evolution has had a profound effect on science since then.

Many people who comment on Charles Darwin—both friends and foes—have never read his work. In fact, I would hazard a guess that most people have read what others say about Darwin without checking his firsthand accounts. The reason for this is simple: Darwin’s writing is tough! Today we favor lean, clear writing; not so in Darwin’s time. Consistent with the style of his day, his paragraphs are long and his sentences wordy and obtuse.

Yet, there’s value in allowing Darwin to speak for himself. For example, in *The Origin of Species* he explains his main thesis in this way:

Natural selection acts exclusively by the preservation and accumulation of variations, which are beneficial under the organic and inorganic conditions to which each creature is exposed at all periods of life. The ultimate result is that each creature tends to become more and more improved in relation to its conditions. This improvement inevitably leads to the gradual advancement of the organization of the greater number of living beings throughout the world (pg. 118, 150th Anniversary Edition, Signet Classics).

There’s logic supporting some of Darwin’s theory. Does natural selection work? Yes, it does—within limits. Better-equipped animals survive longer, breed more, and pass along their traits. We see this in the natural world. If one puppy in a litter is robust and another is scrawny, which one usually survives?

Darwin, however, made two huge mistakes in his thinking, which we’ll explore in coming lessons.

The first mistake is one that all of us commit. We simply don’t know enough about what we don’t know! Notice, for example, that *The Origin of Species* is an old book. The original publication date of 1859 is a little before the Civil War. Think how much science, biology,

chemistry, and medicine have changed since then. How many mistaken ideas have we tossed on the trash heap of history? How many theories have we debunked? If this old world stands for 200 more years, how many of *our* ideas will be scrapped?

Charles Darwin knew nothing of chromosomes, genes, or even the fundamental laws of inheritance. Gregor Mendel did not report the findings of his pioneering studies in genetics until 1866. Even then, it was years before scientists accepted his research.

In Darwin's day, scientists could see cells under a light microscope, they could detect the nucleus and a few other structures; but they had no idea about the true intricacies of life. Chromosomes, DNA, and genes were foreign to Darwin. *Perhaps life will turn out to be simple . . . a few chemicals to identify, maybe a few biological processes to explore . . . but we'll get that work done. We're on the verge of understanding the nature of living matter!*

Friends, this belief was spectacularly wrong, as we'll see in coming lessons. Darwin couldn't have been farther from the truth if he'd tried. Again, he didn't know enough about what he didn't know!

Even today, when we know much more about life's complexities than Darwin did, we're still uncovering deep mysteries beyond our comprehension.

Second, Darwin did not understand the limits of natural selection. Because he could see natural selection at work in, say, finches, he believed these small variations in creatures would eventually lead to huge changes. Perhaps the finch had once been a lizard and one day it would evolve into an eagle.

Again, that's a massive mistake.

Perhaps an example will illustrate this point. In my room I store several fishing rods because I love to fish. Some rods are older, and some newer. The newer rods are invariably lighter than the older ones because of improvements in materials and manufacturing. In fact, one brand-new rod weighs exactly half of a comparable vintage rod. Imagine if I then reasoned from this weight reduction over time that, eventually, fishing rods will weigh nothing! Does that make sense? Of course not. I've carried my observations too far.

That's the mistake Darwin made. He extended his conclusions beyond the facts.

Darwin realized the fossil record did not support such dramatic change in animals, but he thought that future discoveries would provide the evidence. Future paleontologists would find the missing links to prove organic evolution. To Darwin and his disciples, it was a matter of time. Again, let's read his words:

. . . Though our continents and oceans have endured for an enormous period in nearly their relative positions, we have no reason to assume that this has always been the case; consequently formations much older than any now known may lie buried beneath the great oceans (The Origin of Species, pg. 484).

He thought the necessary fossils lay covered beneath the ocean, and, eventually, the geological record would support his theory. The intervening years, have supplied no such fossil evidence. Instead, paleontologists continue to amass evidence of fully-formed creatures with no clear-cut examples of one animal gradually changing into another type.

This lack of fossil evidence has led many scientists to embrace other theories of evolution besides Darwin's. For example, Lynn Margulis (1938-2011), was a distinguished professor of biology at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, who developed the theory of endosymbiotic evolution. She did not support the Genesis view of creation, but she did challenge evolutionary scientists about the lack of fossil evidence. Where were clear-cut examples of one kind of animal slowly turning into another kind? Shouldn't those examples be everywhere?

Darwin thought that natural selection was sufficient to develop all species. You can see that in the complete title of his most important work, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. He didn't include the influence of genetic mutations in his work because that field was unknown to him. Neo-Darwinists, such as Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, later added a genetic part to Classic Darwinism, but it was not there at the beginning.

Natural selection was THE mechanism for organic evolution, said Darwin. All living creatures, all biological adaptations, were accomplished by that process.

People no longer needed God to explain life. Indeed, man was the result of the same evolutionary process from an ape-like ancestor. Occasionally, I'll hear someone say, "Darwin never claimed that humans evolved from monkeys. That's just something Christians made up to attack him." Let's allow Darwin to state his own beliefs:

The Simidae then branched off into two great stems, the New World and Old world monkeys; and from the latter, at a remote period, Man, the wonder and glory of the Universe, proceeded" (The Descent of Man, Pacific Publishing Studio, pg. 107).

Darwin couldn't be clearer about his convictions. Earlier in the same book, he went into more detail about man's evolutionary ancestors:

The early progenitors of man must have been once covered with hair, both sexes having beards; their ears were probably pointed, and capable of movement . . . and their bodies were provided with a tail . . . At a still earlier period the progenitors of man must have been aquatic in their habits; for morphology plainly tells us that our lungs consist of a modified swim bladder (Descent, pg. 104).

We don't have to wonder what Darwin believed because he plainly told us. Was he right, or is a human more than an animal? Let's evaluate the proof.

Questions

1. This lesson mentions both classic Darwinism and neo-Darwinism. Explain the difference between the two.
2. Is it possible to harmonize Darwinism with the Genesis account of creation? Why would the Bible's description of Adam and Eve preclude organic evolution?
3. Explain the difference between micro-evolution and macro-evolution. Which one is observed in nature?
4. In *The Origin of Species*, Darwin did not suggest how life began on earth. He did, however, put forward some ideas in personal correspondence. How did he think life might have started?
5. Beliefs carry consequences. Gen. 1:26-27 says that people are created in God's image. Darwinism implies that humans are simply a more highly-evolved animal. How would these opposing claims shape one's view of life? What are some of the moral fruits of Darwinian evolution?
6. We usually think of Darwinism in the scientific realm, but organic evolution also has social implications. Research the sad life of Ota Benga as it relates to American history and discuss the impact of *Social Darwinism*.

God's Alphabet

My wife and I enjoy model railroading, and we have a nice layout in our home. The layout has a miniature river running through it, some scenic mountains, beautifully-crafted trees, a sculpted tunnel, and even a train depot with people. There's a railroad track that goes around the outside of the layout.

What if I told you that this gorgeous scene happened by accident? Would I convince you that Robin and I threw some glue, some paint, some modeling clay, a few chunks of metal and plastic into a bag, shook it up, and out popped this layout that works perfectly?

What if I also claimed that the electrical transformer and speed controller, with knobs, wires, and gauges, also happened by chance? This little whirlwind swept through our garage and assembled these parts in just the right order. The writing on the transformer also happened by chance. Some ink magically formed the words one day, in the right order, with everything spelled correctly. It was wonderful; you should have been there.

After viewing our model train layout, we could journey to the Black Hills of South Dakota and see Mount Rushmore. It's a magnificent sight, with its sculpture of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln.

What's impressive is these four images happened by accident. The rains fell, the winds blew, the gullies washed, and out popped this beautiful sculpture over thousands of years. Really.

Then let me tell you about something exciting that happened to me yesterday. I was at a friend's house, and this man's wife plays the piano. I've never had a lesson, but I sat down at the keyboard and started banging away. You know what came out? — Beethoven's 5th Symphony! I didn't miss a note.

Why don't you believe me? Because I'm insulting your intelligence, that's why! You know that's not how things happened.

Common sense and experience teach us that, complex information and functional arrangements do not occur by accident. Purposeful design demands a designer. A random, undirected process does not produce order and precision.

Would you be surprised if Robin and I told you we actually commissioned an experienced model-builder to construct our train layout? Would it make sense that this modeler took the right tools and materials, used his intelligence, and made this project? Would it come as a shock if I also told you that American artist Gutzon Borglum designed the Mount Rushmore sculpture and that nearly 400 men and women labored from 1927-1941 to complete it? And you want to know what actually happened when a musical illiterate sat at the piano keyboard? A lot of loud noise that sounded like a strangling parakeet. Those explanations make sense.

Let's use these illustrations, then, to think about the human genetic code and what it reveals about God, the Designer.

In elementary science we learned that cells are the building blocks of life. Cells, in turn, are made of smaller molecules and even smaller atoms.

For right now, let's stick with cells and add one Bible verse to our thinking. Psalm 139:14 says that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Do we appreciate what that passage means?

For example, an adult human body is composed of about 37 trillion cells. We struggle with numbers that contain many zeros, so a trillion with 12 zeros may not signify much to us. How long would it take to count every cell in your body if you could count fast—say ten cells per second? Would you be surprised if I told you that it would take *tens of thousands of years*? These cells are arranged into tissues, organs, and systems. Truly, our bodies are wonderfully made.

It's important that we begin to grasp the immensity of these numbers. Remember that, when you add a zero to a number, you're not just increasing it by a little . . . You're increasing it by a power of ten. Add a single zero to a hundred, and you've got a thousand. A thousand is ten times the size of a hundred. Start adding zeros to a number and the figure becomes huge in a hurry.

You may also recall from science classes that humans have 46 chromosomes, or 23 pairs, under normal circumstances. Chromosomes are made of twisted strands of DNA (*deoxyribonucleic acid*). Chromosomes are found in the nucleus of most cells. (The nucleus is a membrane-enclosed organelle inside the cell).

So far, so good. We have many cells in our body, the cells typically have a nucleus, and the nucleus contains chromosomes made of DNA.

Now life becomes more complicated. DNA is in the form of a double-helix and is made of long sequences of nucleotide bases arranged in a four-letter alphabet. The four nucleotide bases are adenine, guanine, cytosine, and thymine arranged like a computer code. Sequences of this code are called genes, which are the basic units of heredity. Think about traits which are passed from generation to generation. Blonde hair or black? Blue eyes or brown? Left or right-handed? Tall or short? Dark skin or light? Curly or straight hair?

I'm giving you the simplified version of all this. For example, we haven't mentioned that DNA has a sugar-phosphate backbone or that adenine always pairs with thymine, and cytosine always matches with guanine. We're aiming for the main ideas. For right now just concentrate on the thought that your genetic makeup is incredibly complex, using 3.2 billion pairs of nucleotide bases, in the form of a four-letter alphabet, arranged in a precise order.

May I ask a question? If we stopped here, knowing the little that we've just reviewed from Biology 101, can anyone imagine that humans are the product of a random,

undirected process with no designer and no foresight? Does that even make sense? Does an information-rich code show intelligent design or not? What cause is sufficient to account for the 20,000-25,000 genes we have?

Bill Gates, who knows something about computer codes, studied the human genome and said, “DNA is like a computer program but far, far more advanced than any software we’ve ever created.” I don’t believe anyone is willing to suggest that a computer code happened without a coder! How about our much-more-complex genetic code?

Modern computers have massive digital memory, yet their storage capacity is primitive compared with DNA’s double helix. Consider the following quotation from Latchesar Ionkov, software architect at the Los Alamos National Laboratory, and Bradley Settlemyer, software systems expert at NVIDIA:

. . . DNA can archive a staggering amount of information in an almost inconceivably small volume. Consider this: humanity will generate an estimated 33 zettabytes of data by 2025—that’s 3.3 followed by 22 zeroes. DNA storage can squeeze all that information into a ping pong ball, with room to spare. The 74 million million bytes of information in the Library of Congress could be crammed into a DNA archive the size of a poppy seed—6,000 times over. (As reported in Scientific American, May 28th, 2021, “DNA: The Ultimate Data Storage Solution”)

The total of human data in a ping pong ball? Six thousand Libraries of Congress in a poppy seed? I know my computer’s hard drive had a designer; how about my DNA? As Heb. 3:4 says, “Every house is built by someone . . .”

We’re not done yet. Before we explore the next evidence, I want you to consider an impossibly-large number. Perhaps you remember from your science studies that atoms are made of protons, neutrons, and electrons. These subatomic particles are truly tiny. Now, imagine how many of these particles comprise the entire universe—all the observable stars, planets, comets, and asteroids that astronomers can view. Scientists estimate the total number of protons, neutrons, and electrons in the observable universe is 10 to the 80th power. That is 10^{80} , or 1 followed by 80 zeros.

I don’t know how they came up with that estimate, but I do know that a 1 followed by 80 zeros must be a staggering number. Any number close to that, or bigger than that, would be impossibly huge.

Keep that 10 to the 80th power (10^{80}) in mind as we introduce protein molecules.

Protein molecules are complex and important. Any biologist will tell you that there’s no life without protein molecules. In fact, proteins perform most of the important functions within our cells.

Amino acids are the building blocks of proteins, and there are 20 amino acids. (Nine of these are “essential amino acids,” which must be supplied from diet.)

Again, if there are no protein molecules, there’s no life; and the average protein molecule is made of a complex chain of 200-400 amino acids. What are the chances of getting even a short, functional protein molecule of, say, 150 amino acids by accident? The odds AGAINST such an occurrence are staggering.

Douglas Axe, a Molecular Biologist educated at U. C. Berkley and Caltech, has figured the math for us. Since there are 20 possible amino acids at each binding site, the chance of getting just the right amino acid is 1 in 20. So, for the first two spots in the long chain of amino acids, we have to multiply 20×20 , which gives us 400. But then we go to the third site; and, again, the chance is 1 in 20 of getting the correct amino acid. So now we have $20 \times 20 \times 20$, which is 1 in 8,000. But the fourth site gives us $8,000 \times 20$, which is 1 in 160,000 chances of getting the right amino acids. Then, the fifth site would give us 1 chance in 3.2 million, and the sixth site is *1 in 64 million*.

And on . . . and on . . . and on . . . for 150 amino acids in a short protein molecule . . . $20 \times 20 \dots$ for a long way! Is this going to happen by chance, no matter how much time you give it?

When we’re done with that math, we’re not there yet, because the amino acids have to stick together with the correct peptide bond. There’s only a 50% chance of getting the right bond at EACH amino acid link, which is a 1 in 2 chance at 149 separate links!

We’re still not there. Once that’s finished, the protein molecule must fold correctly to work, and it turns out that’s no simple task either. Amino acids come in two versions— a left- and a right-hand isomer. These optical isomers are chemically the same but mirror images of one another. For the protein molecule to fold properly, ALL of the isomers must be left-handed! Again, that means a 50% chance, or 1 in 2, for each amino acid.

Let’s see . . . We have a 1 in 20 chance of getting the right amino acid at each place, only a 1 in 2 chance of getting the right bond at each link, and only a 1 in 2 chance of getting the right *version* (isomer) of each amino acid.

What are the odds of all of that happening in just the right way to get one functional protein molecule? Douglas Axe calculated the math, and it’s been checked by his critics. It works out to 1 in 10 to the 164th power, or 10^{164} . Allow that number to sink in. That’s a one followed by 164 zeros, as close to an impossible figure as you’ll ever encounter. Remember, scientists calculate that there are only 10^{80} atomic particles in the entire universe.

What if I told you that one functioning protein molecule won’t do us much good since we have at least 100,000 unique protein molecules in our body? Each cell may hold as many as 42 million protein molecules. And, a protein molecule is just a molecule. We’re nowhere close to having life yet. The molecules have to be arranged into tissues,

organs, and systems that work together. Is this going to happen by blind, organic evolution? Will an undirected, unplanned process account for this precision?

The evidence is screaming at us. Our complex genetic code and the overwhelming odds against getting functional protein molecules by chance prove that there must be a Designer. God didn't want us to guess about such important matters.

A person may still choose to reject the God of the Bible. He or she may believe that some super race of aliens did it, or that there's some other creative life force in the universe. But there must a Creator!

We know that complex, information-rich systems, such as the human genome, demand intelligence. The relentless rules of math show that blind chance could never account for our protein molecules. It's not just that the protein molecules are *complex*. You can have complex chaos. It's that the molecules are *complex and functional*. They do specific work in our bodies! It wouldn't matter how many opportunities you gave to the process or how many millions of years you added to the equation. There are not enough resources in the material universe for life to happen on its own. Exquisite design demands a designer. Or, as Psalm 14:1 states, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'"

Questions

1. Evolutionary scientists are familiar with the exponential numbers we established in this lesson. Because the odds are against an undirected process ever creating life, some of them have begun to question Darwinian evolution in the scholarly journals. Many people are surprised to learn that there are other theories of evolution. Can you identify one or two other types? To get started, research Lynn Margulis (1938-2011) and her endosymbiotic model.
2. What is the age of the earth according to evolutionists? What about the age of the universe? Is this time sufficient to allow for the development of functional proteins and the genetic code by organic evolution?
3. What is necessary to develop complex information and purposeful design?

4. Christians are often accused of believing in a *God of the Gaps*. “When Christians can’t explain something, they claim, ‘God did it.’ They’re arguing from ignorance.” How would you respond to this criticism?

5. Studying biology and intelligent design is one way to see that there’s a Creator. But, there’s a limit to external evidence. What would you NOT know about God by studying the genetic code and protein molecules?

6. Name the two scientists who discovered the double-helix structure of DNA and identify when they made their discovery. Did their research show that the cell was more or less complex than originally thought?

7. A painting demands a _____, a book demands an _____ a poem demands a _____, and a symphony demands a _____.

8. Why didn’t Darwin include the facts and figures about chromosomes, DNA, nucleotide bases, and genes in his theory of organic evolution? (Hint: Remember when *Origin of the Species* was first published.

9. In 2003, pure mathematician and science philosopher William A. Dembski authored a book entitled *No Free Lunch: Why Specified Complexity Cannot be Purchased without Intelligence* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.). Dembski believes that intelligence is required to produce specified information and complex design. To say it another way, intelligent design cannot be explained by Darwinian evolution. Do your experiences lead you to agree or to disagree?

The Heavens' Declaration

My wife and I enjoy camping in West Texas, and we're amazed by how much we can see at night when we leave the big city. In San Antonio, with the light pollution, stargazing is frustrating. The night sky often appears pale, washed out, with stars dimmed, and the moon hidden by buildings.

But the night sky in West Texas—that's different! On a clear night the stars are sprinkled like silver glitter across an indigo blue sky. A full moon is so bright you imagine that you can reach out and touch it. The occasional shooting star adds movement and drama to a peaceful scene.

The constellations we see are the same ones that fascinated early explorers. The questions we ask about the universe are the same ones that have always challenged men and women. The smallness we feel in the presence of great galaxies is the same emotion experienced by sailors who journeyed in wood and canvas vessels centuries ago. A beautiful night sky moves us.

At times like these I remember Psalm 19:1, which says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork." Have we considered the heavens' declaration about God, the Creator?

Ponder the universe's size and scale. For the moment, think about our single galaxy, the Milky Way, which scientists now believe is bigger than originally thought. How long would it take to cross the breadth of the Milky Way if we could travel aboard a space ship at light speed? At least 100,000 years! (Some astronomers believe the figure is closer to 200,000 years.) NASA calculates that the speed of light is 186,000 miles per second.

Research suggests that there are two trillion galaxies in the observable universe. (Remember, a trillion is 1 followed by 12 zeros!) How did the universe begin? What cause is sufficient to make the universe? Heb. 3:4 reminds us that every house is built by someone. Who built our solar system? Our galaxy? ALL of the galaxies? Did the universe create itself?

The scientific law of cause-and-effect states that every material effect must have a prior and sufficient cause. Computers, cars, and cobwebs are all material effects, and they all have builders. Someone smarter than a computer built it. An engineer designed the car. A spider spun the web. Well, the universe is a material effect. What caused it?

An atheistic evolutionist might argue that the galaxies have always existed. But will that theory stand examination? Hardly. The universe exists, so it calls for explanation. No reasonable scientist, however, would suggest that matter makes itself.

Plus, observations of our own galaxy preclude an eternal time clock. For example, scientists tell us Earth is drifting away from the Sun a little over half an inch a year because the Sun is slowly losing its mass. Less mass means weaker gravitation, so Earth is not held

as tightly. In cosmic terms, the Earth's drift and the Sun's loss of mass are small, but they exist.

What do these cosmic facts tell us? The Sun couldn't lose its mass forever or else it wouldn't exist. If the Earth drifted away from the Sun for eternity, it would have left the solar system. The conclusion? Our Earth and Sun had a beginning.

Even atheistic evolutionists typically assign an age to the universe, with 13.7 billion years being their estimate. The fact that they give ANY age shows they know the universe started sometime.

Melissa Cain Travis sums up this point in her book, *Science and the Mind of the Maker*, as she talks about attempts to make the material universe eternal: "The past half-century has witnessed a string of alternative theories, some of which included an ultimate beginning, and some that did not. It is striking that the models which have posited a past-eternal universe have turned out, time and time again, to be unworkable in terms of the theoretical physics involved" (pg. 49).

On this important question, then, nearly everyone agrees. Christians, agnostics, atheists, and evolutionists all affirm that the universe had a beginning. Unbelievers may think that matter is eternal, but they understand the universe hasn't always existed.

The atheist might respond, "Well, if everything has a maker, then who made God?" The law of cause-and-effect states that *material effects have causes*, and God is not material. According to John 4:24 He's Spirit. Thus, an omnipotent God is not bound by space and time. He's the self-existent I AM (Ex. 3:14).

How does one explain the universe's precision and order without God? Did mindless matter create itself from nothing, in just the right way, to support life on Earth?

Skeptics reply, "The conditions on this planet existed first, and then life evolved to fit those conditions. What you call design is just evolution at work."

Interesting theory, but does such reasoning harmonize with the universe's mathematical precision? Why is there *something* instead of *nothing*, and why is that *something* organized in a special way? Why isn't there blind chaos and confusion, with no laws and no order? Why does math work at all? How were we able to send a spaceship to the moon 240,000 miles away in 1969? Why are astronomers able to predict that Halley's Comet will reappear in 2061? Did random molecules in motion arrange all of this? Did a finely-tuned universe tune itself?

To give an example of mathematical precision in the cosmos, astronomers predicted that a "ring of fire" (annular) solar eclipse would appear over the Texas Hill Country on October 14, 2023. They announced the path, percentage, and duration of the eclipse across the state. Vendors sold sunglasses to watch the eclipse, hotels ran "eclipse specials" for travelers, and local authorities braced for extra traffic. News reports included exact times for viewing the eclipse in different cities.

And the annular eclipse happened just as predicted! No one was surprised when it occurred, though it was stunning. The universe displayed its precision.

Doesn't such exquisite, mathematically-precise design demand a Designer? Who is that Designer? The Bible tells us: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:1-3).

Such evidence abounds and is inescapable. For example, consider a cosmic force with which we are all familiar: gravity. Specifically, think about the gravitational constant in our universe, which is an unchanging number that's used to compute the gravitational force of objects with different masses.

Yes, I understand the math is complicated. But, for purposes of this lesson, just know that the gravitational constant is $6.67 \times 10^{-11} \text{ m}^3 \text{ kg}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-2}$. No, I can't explain all of those signs and symbols, but I do recognize that this is an extremely precise, mathematically complex number. Here's the kicker: If that constant changed by even the tiniest fraction, I mean a fraction smaller than you can imagine, our universe would destabilize. It would either explode or collapse on itself. No life—or at least no life as we know it—could exist. The gravitational constant must be what it is!

How did that happen? Chance or design? Blind luck or intentional order?

Or think about our moon for a moment. We admire its beauty, but do we realize how essential it is to life? The moon's gravitational tug controls our oceans' tides, and those tides are vital. The ebb and flow of marine waters provides aeration and allows plankton to thrive. Plankton, in turn, is part of the food chain and supplies 50%-80% of the world's oxygen. We need those tides, which means we need the moon . . . the right moon at the right distance from Earth!

We can multiply examples of fine-tuning. For instance, we could explore the electromagnetic forces which bind atoms, or we could discuss the weak nuclear force constant which governs radioactive decay. On a simpler level, we could discuss how Earth has enough water to sustain life, the right atmosphere which allows us to breathe, and the correct distance from the sun to promote photosynthesis.

How does one account for this stunning collection of cosmic constants and coincidences?

Here are two important questions: If the universe exists, and matter doesn't make itself, then what cause created two trillion galaxies? And what cause is sufficient to account for the universe's fine-tuning? Shouldn't one consider the possibility of a force above and beyond nature—the God of the Bible? What other explanation fits?

The most capable scientists in the world have pondered these thoughts. More about this in coming lessons. For now, consider one quotation from a scientist who understood the deep math. Freeman Dyson (1923-2020), a theoretical physicist and mathematician best known for his work in quantum mechanics, put it this way: "It almost seems as if the universe, in some sense, must have known we were coming."

God did know we were coming! Or, as Psalm 19:1 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God.”

Questions

1. Several times in this lesson we’ve referenced Psalm 19:1: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.” Define the meaning of *heavens* and *firmament* as used in this verse.
2. Can a person study the night sky, with its stars and planets, and know that God exists?
3. Identify one or two more examples of “fine-tuning” of the universe.
4. How would you respond to someone who said, “If you claim that God made matter, then who made God?”
5. The “Big Bang” theory suggests the universe began as a concentrated bit of matter about the size of the period at the end of this sentence. Then, through a process called “inflation,” that matter expanded to form the cosmos. Georges Lemaitre, a Belgian physicist, originally proposed the idea in 1927, though Fred Hoyle, an English astronomer, did not coin the term *Big Bang* until 1949. (Ironically, Hoyle rejected the Big Bang, though he gave the theory its popular name.) Does this theory harmonize with a plain reading of Genesis 1 and 2?

Nature's Testimony

“All that information about DNA, the human genome, zettabytes, cosmic constants, and gravity is interesting, but some of it's pretty deep and hard to remember. Is there other evidence for God's existence that's easier to share?”

Yes, and one key to finding that evidence is to think about Job 12:7-10: “But now ask the beasts, and they will teach you; and the birds of the air, and they will tell you . . . Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this?”

Compelling proof for God is found in studying everyday organisms. All we need is a discerning eye and a willingness to learn. In this lesson we'll study three common creatures—the harvester ant, the monarch butterfly, and the woodpecker—and see what their lives can teach us about our Creator.

First, let's do just what Prov. 6:6 says and “Go to the ant” to learn several important lessons. Specifically, let's study the common red harvester ant, which is found throughout the southwestern United States, up into Canada, and down into Mexico and South America.

We all know this common insect, but have we considered its behavior?

Deborah Gordon is a professor in the Department of Biology at Stanford University and a world's leading expert on ant colony behavior. It's unusual for an evolutionary biologist to begin a science book with a clear affirmation of a Bible passage, yet that's exactly what Gordon does in *Ants at Work*.

Prov. 6:6-8 reads, “Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer and gathers her food in the harvest.” Now read the first three sentences in the introduction to Gordon's scholarly work: “The basic mystery about ant colonies is that there is no management. A functioning organization with no one in charge is so unlike the way humans operate as to be virtually inconceivable. There is no central control” (pg. vii). That's an excellent commentary on this Scripture!

Here's the amazing part of these two quotations: *Ants at Work* was published in 1999; *Proverbs* was written over 2,000 years before that! How was Solomon able to explain accurately the unique structure of ant colony behavior centuries before Gordon's research confirmed it? Shouldn't that single fact give the unbeliever pause? The queen ant lays eggs, but she doesn't direct traffic or assign duties to the workers. In fact, Gordon goes on to say, “No individual is aware of what must be done to complete any colony task.” Yet, the colony's work progresses, and food is gathered . . . just as the Bible says. How can each ant act on its own, yet accomplish all that needs doing in a colony?

This evidence becomes more impressive when we consider the size of some ant colonies. It's common for a single harvester ant colony to reach 10,000 workers, but that's small

compared to some ant species. So-called “super colonies” of ants can have millions of workers spread over hundreds of acres.

A harvester ant’s brain is one-fourth the size of a honey bee’s, yet the workers in a colony perform astounding feats of navigation. For example, even when ants travel long distances in many directions while searching for food, they can always return to the nest in a straight line. In some way their internal compass means they don’t have to retrace each step. How does their little speck of a brain enable them to do this?

Through ingenious experiments, investigators have found that ants use various navigation tools, including visual landmarks, vector analysis, path integration, chemical signals, and a sun compass. How is such a small insect capable of such complicated behavior? One experiment showed that some species are able to count their steps! Who taught ants to do arithmetic? Who gave them an internal pedometer to measure distance?

Stop and think for a moment because we’re nibbling around the edges of geometry and trigonometry. How does each ant, with no boss, know what to do and when to do it? How would any colony survive long enough through the blind, unguided alleys of Darwinian evolution to develop such complex, programmed behavior?

Prov. 30:25 says, “The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their food in the summer. . . .” Remember, the colony can’t wait around a few million years to develop this ability through natural selection and random genetic mutations. The ants need to survive today, right now! Science would say they shouldn’t have the cognitive capacity to do what they do—yet they do it anyway.

Surely the ant shows us that God exists.

If the harvester ant isn’t convincing enough, consider one of nature’s favorite insects, the monarch butterfly. Specifically, we’ll take a close look at the eastern population of monarchs that overwinter in Mexico.

To begin with, we need to understand *irreducible complexity*, a term coined by Dr. Michael Behe, a biochemist at Lehigh University. Irreducible complexity describes systems so interdependent and complex that all fundamental parts must be present for that system to work. A biological system is irreducibly complex if removing any of the main parts would cause it to fail. A simple mousetrap shows this principle. If you think about it, a mousetrap has a few main components, such as a trigger, a spring, and a base, which are necessary for it to work. We can’t start with only a base, catch a mouse, add a spring, catch a few more mice, until we have all the parts and can catch a bunch of mice.

Irreducibly-complex systems defy Darwinian evolution because incremental change does not allow for all parts to develop at once.

This principle of Irreducible Complexity is especially important when you consider the monarch butterfly’s life cycle.

Monarch butterflies, like all butterflies and moths, mature through four distinct stages. During March in Texas, female monarchs lay their creamy-green, football-shaped eggs on the underside of milkweed leaves. After four or five days, an egg hatches and a caterpillar emerges. The white, yellow, and black-striped caterpillar is an eating machine; and it devours milkweed leaves as it steadily grows. In a single day it doubles in size. As the caterpillar grows, it sheds its skin four times until it pupates and forms a chrysalis. (In moths the chrysalis is called a cocoon.)

Then, an amazing metamorphosis happens. The butterfly remains a chrysalis for ten days to two weeks during which time the caterpillar becomes a soup-like mixture and slowly changes into an entirely new body. Wings form, new eyes appear, antennae develop, and a new mouth grows. At the end of this time a monarch butterfly emerges from the chrysalis—perhaps the most incredible and beautiful transformation in nature.

Genetic information controls a butterfly's entire metamorphosis, from egg to caterpillar to chrysalis to adult. The DNA must be complete for a butterfly to survive. The transformation is irreducibly complex because you can't go partway through it and have a reproducing adult. A soupy caterpillar in a chrysalis can't remain alive. Darwinian evolution says that natural selection would only preserve those changes that promote survival of the creature. But a partially evolved egg or caterpillar doesn't survive. Without full instructions, a chrysalis is just a coffin. Metamorphosis is necessary for us to have monarch butterflies. Incremental evolution provides no answer because it offers no foresight.

But we're not finished. What happens, then, to the adult monarch? Most folks know the eastern population migrates to the oyamel fir forests in northern Mexico to over-winter.

Monarchs are the extreme navigators of the insect world. Adult butterflies weigh less than a dime, yet they can fly up to 60 miles a day and migrate over 2,000 miles. While researchers continue to study how they do it, we now know the butterflies use a sun compass on bright days and a magnetic compass on overcast days to find their way. Their compound eyes can detect the Sun's azimuth, and magnetic sensors in their antennae establish latitude. Who put magnetite in their bodies to act as a compass?

Most generations of monarchs live only two to four weeks, yet the fall population of monarchs is biologically programmed to survive up to eight months, which allows them to survive the migration to Mexico. Again, how do we account for such complex, programmed behavior?

During spring and summer, monarch butterflies spread over 400,000 miles of territory in the United States and Canada. Yet, the eastern population of monarchs overwinter in small sites that barely cover *40 acres of fir forests in northern Mexico!* Let that fact sink in . . . 400,000 square miles down to 40 acres! Here's the astounding part. When monarchs leave Mexico in the spring, it takes two or three generations of butterflies to return to their summer homes. That means *not a single monarch butterfly that migrates*

to Mexico in the fall has ever been there! It's a new generation. How do they all know to go to the same place? And the monarch can't wait a million years to evolve that ability; they must survive this year to survive at all.

Perhaps Job 11:7 says it best: "Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?"

For our final example, let's examine a bigger creature—one we may think of as an annoyance rather than as proof of God's existence.

Woodpeckers have interrupted all of us at one time or another with their constant banging on our homes or in nearby trees. What's with these birds, and why don't they move along instead of bothering us? Instead, they keep hammering away, pecking to mark their territory, making nests, and searching for insects.

But, have you considered the marvelous biological engineering in such a common creature?

Take that hammering, for instance. It sure is fast and loud, isn't it? Did you know that woodpeckers can hammer up to twenty times a second, thousands of times a day? That's impressive by itself. But what if I told you that woodpeckers can strike with a thousand times the force of gravity?

The woodpecker's action is so common that we don't think about it. Woodpeckers just do what they do. But, when they hit the wood so hard with their beaks, why don't they die of a concussion, or get serious brain damage? A little bird shouldn't be able to withstand the impact. How did they even think to take up pecking in the first place? What instinct, biological programming, or natural selection allowed them to do so?

The truth is, a woodpecker's body is marvelously designed to allow for the constant pounding. For example, each woodpecker is blessed with an extra-thick skull and spongy shock absorbers behind its beak. Not only that, but its super-strong beak can survive ten million strikes over ten years and never need sharpening! The purpose of most pecking is to drill for insects, and it turns out that a woodpecker's tongue is three times longer than its beak and coated with "stick 'em" to snare the insects. Woodpeckers also have extra strong tail feathers and two toes on the back of their feet so they can brace themselves.

Here's the point: Could woodpeckers wait around several million years for Darwinian evolution to equip them with these uniquely-engineered features? What good would it do for them to develop an extra-strong beak if they didn't have the extra-thick skull and shock absorbers to go with it? Could they wait a few centuries for the extra-long tongue with goo on it to get the insects once they made a hole in a dead tree? Why didn't the first woodpecker kill itself when it banged its head? Coincidence or design?

There's that persistent principle of *irreducible complexity* again. Or, as Psalm 111:2 puts it, "The works of the Lord are great, studied by all who have pleasure in them."

Friends, the truth is what Rom. 1:18-21 told us all along: A person should realize there's a God by studying nature. Even the simplest or most common creatures display design and complex, programmed behavior. Our common experience and understanding tell us that intelligence is demanded. There's no program without a programmer; there's no irreducibly-complex design without a designer. God exists.

Questions

1. Of the eastern population of monarchs that overwinter in Mexico, how many of them have been there before? How did they manage to get there?
2. In this lesson we studied harvester ants, monarch butterflies, and woodpeckers as examples of creatures that show intelligent design and complex behavior. Can you identify at least one other example from nature that shows these traits?
3. In our study we introduced the principle of *irreducible complexity* and applied it to butterflies and woodpeckers. Summarize this idea and think about the human body. Are there parts or systems of our own bodies that demonstrate irreducible complexity?
4. In the past three lessons, we've considered evidence from DNA, cosmology, and nature to prove a Creator, in keeping with Psalm 19:1 and Rom. 1:18-21. Of the examples we've studied, which evidence is most compelling to you?
5. In his book *Made in Heaven* (2023), Ray Comfort asks the following questions and then draws a conclusion:

Do you ever think about flies, or eyes, or skies, or birds, nerds, words, or trees, bees, and even knees—with their remarkable hinge joints and their smoother-than-oil synovial fluid that keeps everything moving efficiently? Have you ever looked deeply into

your own eyes in a mirror or studied the dexterity of your hands and thought about how you are “fearfully and wonderfully made”? Our problem is that we don’t consider creation in any real depth, and we give even less thought to the Creator (pg. 7).

Do you think he’s right about most people, and would you add anything?

6. Organic evolution is, by definition, an unguided, material process fueled by random genetic variations and natural selection. Does this theory have *sufficient explanatory power* to account for the examples we’ve studied?
7. What can we reasonably infer when we observe design, beauty, engineering, and complex programmed behavior?

Leeuwenhoek's Unseen World

Sadly, some high school and college science classes assume that Darwinian evolution and scientific materialism are facts. All living creatures descended from a common ancestor. The universe is only molecules in motion and electrons in orbit. A student is not allowed to question scientific materialism, or is ridiculed if he does.

Within this atheistic worldview is the unspoken idea that anyone who believes in God and Scripture is deceived by myths, fables, and fairy tales. Real scientists don't believe the Bible. A Christian may be sincere, but he's sincerely wrong.

It comes as a shock to many atheistic evolutionists to learn that the heroes of early science believed in a Heavenly Creator. I'm talking about men and women who shaped our knowledge of the universe and who first explored and explained the basic laws of nature. In fact, because they believed in God, they confidently searched for order and precision in the universe.

Johannes Kepler, the father of modern astronomy said, "We see how God, like a human architect, approached the founding of the world according to order and rule and measured everything in such a manner" (*Johannes Kepler, Giant of Faith and Science*, John Hudson Tiner, pg. 178).

It was this expectation which allowed them to make important scientific discoveries.

In this lesson, we'll focus on Antony van Leeuwenhoek (1632-1723), and then follow with a study of George Washington Carver (1864?-1943). Insightful individuals throughout history have believed in God, but this doesn't prove He exists. It does show, however, that smart men and women can study the evidence and reach this conclusion. A person shouldn't be ashamed to have faith in God.

Antony van Leeuwenhoek was born October 24, 1632, in Delft, Netherlands. At that time Delft was a thriving commercial shipping center, famous for its fine dishes and exquisite art. Leeuwenhoek's father was a basket maker, and his mother's family brewed beer.

Today, we honor Leeuwenhoek as the father of microbiology, but his early life revealed no search promise. In his time, only the rich and privileged attended a university. Most young men received only a basic education and then learned a trade.

Leeuwenhoek's father passed away in 1638, and his mother remarried two years later. A year after that, Antony was sent to a boarding school fifteen miles away for most of his schooling. By age 14, he completed his education and, for two years, lived with his lawyer uncle in a nearby town. In 1648 the uncle arranged Antony's move to Amsterdam, where he apprenticed to a draper. Here he sold cloth, buttons, ribbons, and upholstery. He proved his worth as a hard worker and loyal employee.

When I read Leeuwenhoek's life story, I'm reminded of 1 Thess. 4:11: ". . . That you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind you own business, and to work with your own hands,

as we commanded you.” Throughout his life, Leeuwenhoek worked at least two jobs, and sometimes three, even while pursuing his scientific studies.

In 1655 he returned to Delft, bought a home, and set up his own drapery shop.

Something remarkable happened along the way. Scholars are not certain what drove Antony to explore the microscopic world. Perhaps his early use of a magnifying glass to examine the cloth he sold led to further study with lenses. Or, maybe he saw a copy of Robert Hooke’s famous book *Micrographia*, with its beautiful illustrations of tiny insects. (He could not have read this book because it was written in Latin, and Antony knew only Dutch.) Perhaps a single trip to England spurred his interest in new sights.

Antony probably never took a science class. Like most young men he received instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic; but that was it. Whatever else he learned, he secured through hard work and dedication, while laboring to support his family. Perseverance and careful study became the hallmarks of his life. He became the self-taught master of microscopy.

Again, his life reminds us of a Bible principle. Eccl. 9:10 says, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.” In Col. 3:23, we read, “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.” The more you study Leeuwenhoek’s life, the more you see these principles in action.

Leeuwenhoek married twice, but both of his spouses passed away. While his wives gave birth to five children, only one, Maria, survived to adulthood. She never married, but took loving care of her aging father instead.

Somehow Leeuwenhoek learned to make his own small microscopes out of metal and glass. Writers sometimes claim that Leeuwenhoek invented the microscope, but this is mistaken. Rather, he fashioned microscopes with superior magnification and resolving power. His instruments allowed him to see microorganisms in amazing detail that NO ONE had seen before. Imagine the thrill of discovering a new, unseen world!

His microscopes did not look like the ones we use in science classes today. They were small—about the size of your thumb—and the lenses were nothing more than tiny glass beads, often 3 mm in diameter and smaller. It doesn’t make intuitive sense, but the smaller the spherical lens, the more it magnifies because the curvature of the lens is tighter. Some of Leeuwenhoek’s simple scopes magnified as much as 250X, with sharp images. His simple microscopes were better than the compound microscopes of his day.

Beginning at age 40 and continuing for the next 50 years, Antony built around 500 microscopes while exploring the world around him. He studied everything. He even approached his neighbors and asked if he could scrape their teeth to see what grew there! His appetite to learn was insatiable.

He studied thousands of specimens, from protozoa to peat moss, from bacteria to blood. He studied sperm and egg cells. He examined tiny freshwater eels and muscle tissue. He

infused rain water with black pepper to see what would grow. Year after year he sampled water from rivers and ponds, dirt from the garden, and fleas on a dog.

Because Leeuwenhoek was seeing objects that no one had ever viewed, many doubted his discoveries. He persuaded judges and lawyers to write testimonial letters to say they could see the same microorganisms under his lenses.

Leeuwenhoek documented most of his discoveries through numerous letters to the Royal Society of Scientists in London. Though he never wrote a book or showed others how to make his microscopes, he kept a steady hand and excellent eyesight until his death at age 90. Through determination and hard work, he opened a new world to others.

Leeuwenhoek was a person of great faith. His correspondence is filled with references to God and the wonders of creation. In fact, Antony's faith in God drove his investigations of the natural world.

Leeuwenhoek's work confirmed at least three Scriptural principles.

First, he was an early proponent of Intelligent Design, and he believed that God was the Designer. When Leeuwenhoek first saw hundreds of microorganisms in a drop of water, he instinctively knew that chance could not produce such organization and beauty. In describing one protozoa, he wrote, ". . . We see here the unconceivable Providence, perfection, and order, bestowed by the Lord Creator of the Universe upon such little creatures which escape our bare eye." In a lengthier statement, he penned this:

In all the observations I have made, we can clearly see the incomprehensible perfection, the exact order, and the inscrutable providential care with which the most wise Creator and Lord of the Universe, has formed the bodies of these Animalcules, which are so minute as to escape our sight. (Select Works, Vol. 2, pg. 214. This, and other Leeuwenhoek quotations, are translated from the Old Dutch into English.)

Leeuwenhoek's first instincts in viewing the microscopic world was to praise God. His eyes told him that planning and perfection were involved in these tiny creatures. He inferred design from what he saw.

Second, Leeuwenhoek was one of the first scientists to denounce spontaneous generation—the idea that life could spring from nonliving matter. For example, some people thought that frogs sprang from the mud after a rain. Some even claimed to see half-formed frogs arising from the ooze! Others thought that flies arose from decaying meat. When meat rots, flies gather, so they must be coming from the meat.

At first, Antony thought that spontaneous generation might be true, but his thorough studies convinced him otherwise. He could see that all creatures, no matter how tiny,

reproduced themselves, according to their kinds, just as Genesis 1 said. Dead matter never became life. In some way, all living things had parents.

His microscopic studies enabled Leeuwenhoek to affirm “. . . the regular reproduction of all the animals and vegetables on the earth; and to admire the infinite wisdom of the Creator, in the formation of all things at the Beginning, and in the wonderful and infinitely diversified provision made for their propagation through all the succeeding ages of the world” (*Select Works*, Vol. 2, pg. 344).

Thus, Leeuwenhoek believed in creation “at the Beginning,” an all-powerful Creator, and the procreation of all living creatures as ordained by God. This self-taught father of microbiology saw these truths 350 years ago, yet many scientists today struggle with the same ideas.

Finally, Leeuwenhoek possessed intellectual honesty. When we read his letters, we’re struck by his humility. He never let pride stand in the way of learning. He was keenly aware of his own limits and lack of formal education. These qualities became his strengths instead of weaknesses. In keeping with Phil. 4:8, he honored others before himself.

He also was willing to learn from his mistakes. When he discovered he was wrong, he admitted his fault and corrected his view. How many of us struggle with this? We become mentally invested in what we believe, and we refuse to give it up, even when the evidence shows we’re incorrect.

Leeuwenhoek went where the evidence led. For example, he abandoned the idea of spontaneous generation when he saw it wasn’t true, even in the smallest of creatures.

You can see this aspect of Leeuwenhoek’s personality in the following quotation:

I have said many times that it is not my intention to stick stubbornly to my opinions, but as soon as people urge against them any reasonable objections, whereof I can form a just idea, I’ll give mine up, and go over to the other side. That is because my efforts are ever striving towards no other end than, as far as possible for me, to set the Truth before my eyes, to embrace it, and to lay out to good account the small Talent that I’ve received, in order to draw the world away from its old heathenish superstition, to go over to the Truth, and to cleave unto it. (Antony van Leeuwenhoek and his Little Animals, 1932, pg. 74)

What remarkable words for a man of his time! Perhaps we all need to grow in this attitude. Or, as Prov. 23:23 puts it, “Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding.” Leeuwenhoek made it his life’s goal to honor those words. He knew that truth had nothing to fear from examination.

Questions

1. Antony van Leeuwenhoek's observations discredited the theory of spontaneous generation, yet many people continued to believe this idea. What French scientist finally proved that spontaneous generation was wrong? Describe the simple experiment he performed to show that life does not arise from nonliving matter.
2. Genesis 1 states every living thing reproduces "according to its kind." Organic evolution states that every living thing descended from a common ancestor—that one type of life can slowly change into another. While both of these ideas may be wrong, can both be right? Which one of these is confirmed by observation?
3. T/F Antony van Leeuwenhoek invented the microscope.
4. T/F Leeuwenhoek believed that orderly design demanded a designer.
5. Eccl. 9:10 says, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might." In what ways did Leeuwenhoek's life illustrate the principle of this passage? How many microscopes did he build, and how many letters did he write? Did he also work a regular job while continuing his scientific inquiries?
6. Why do you think so many scientists today struggle with the same beliefs about God and Creation that Leeuwenhoek confidently affirmed? You might consider 1 Cor. 1:19-29 in your evaluation.

Carver's Courage

George Washington Carver was a genuine American hero. Few people have done more with less than he did. By making the most of his abilities and resources, he became a positive example of the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30). Throughout his life, Carver glorified God and urged others to do the same.

By all rights, George should never have survived infancy. He was born on the homestead of Moses Carver, a slave owner, in Diamond Grove, Missouri. His exact birthdate is unknown, with January 1864 commonly cited. President Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, but that meant little in border states such as Missouri. Carver's father was probably a slave on a neighboring plantation, who perished in a logging accident.

While "Carver's George" was still a baby, slave raiders stole his mother, Mary, and him from the Carver farm. A tracker rescued George, but his mother was lost forever. Thus, George had no memories of either his father or mother. He did have one older brother, James, who died of smallpox.

George was a frail child who often was too sick to work in the fields of Moses Carver. Frequent bouts of croup and other respiratory illnesses left him weak and thin. Because of these illnesses, his voice remained high-pitched and bird-like throughout his life. People who hear recordings of his voice on YouTube are often startled by how feminine it sounds. Yet, in later life, he was honored as an exceptional teacher and public orator.

From his earliest years, George loved plants. He even created a plant nursery in the woods for the specimens he called his "beauties." Neighbors soon learned of his expertise and brought their ailing roses and lilies to the "plant doctor." He could almost always help them.

Young George wanted more. Most of all he wanted an education. But, where to go? Yes, after the Civil War slaves were free; but there were degrees of freedom. For example, he could attend the nearby Locust Grove church on Sunday, but a school which met in the same building Monday through Friday denied him entry. George would sit beneath the window, outside the schoolhouse, just to hear the teacher's voice. His only book besides a Bible was a Webster's Blue Back Speller. He soon memorized that little volume.

At age 12, George heard of a school for people of color in nearby Neosho, so he struck out on his own. Imagine being 12 years old, no job, no prospects, no real family, but having an overwhelming desire to learn. He walked the eight miles to Neosho and slept the night in a shed by the one-room schoolhouse because he had nowhere else to go.

The next morning, a kindly black woman, Mariah Watkins, who lived next door to the school, found George and took him in. She fed him, gave him a place to sleep, and taught

him how to do “fancy laundry” for the rich folks. He learned how to wash, iron, starch, and press the frilly dresses and stiff shirts.

George rarely had more than a nickel in his pocket, but he was happy. For once he could sit in a classroom. During lunch, he would dash home to help with the laundry and then return to school. Often, he would prop a book by the washtub so he could read while he worked. How would you ever stop someone like him from learning?

Within a year, George had learned all the school in Neosho could teach him, so he moved on to Kansas and Iowa. Remember, he was still a teenager, on his own, with no family and no means of support except what his hands could provide. He was no longer “Carver’s George” but George Carver. Eventually he added the middle name “Washington” to prevent confusion with another George Carver in town.

Many trials followed; some we can barely imagine. One night, in Fort Scott, Kansas, he witnessed the lynching and burning of a black man. The memory haunted him for the rest of his life. George was always sickly, suffering from recurrent lung and throat problems, but he worked when he had to and went to school when he could. He was in his 20’s before he finished high school.

Eventually, Highland College north of Kansas City accepted him as a student. He couldn’t believe it—he would finally be going to college! Sadly, when he showed up for classes, the staff turned him away. Highland College didn’t accept black students.

More challenges followed. Some people helped George along the way. Others mistreated him or slammed the door in his face. Would we survive in such circumstances?

Throughout these trials, Carver remained a man of great faith. Where others would see only discouragement, he saw opportunities. Like David, Carver would say, “I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread” (Psa. 37:25). Often, he would make a meal from greens he found growing wild, but he was thankful for the Lord’s provision.

After years of struggle, George eventually became the first graduate of color from Iowa State College. He proved himself in the classroom and laboratory. Eventually he was appointed assistant director of the agricultural experiment station at Iowa State. He became one of the nation’s leading mycologists—a person who studies molds, yeasts, and mushrooms. He was also a talented painter, singer, and musician.

His greatest work, however, came when Booker T. Washington hired him in 1896 to teach at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Note that the school was an “institute” and not a “university” then. Its primary mission in the beginning was to teach job skills and basic education to students of color. Later it became an institution of higher learning.

George Washington Carver and Booker T. Washington loved each other like brothers—and fought like brothers, too. George had the temperament of an intuitive artist, while Booker possessed the habits of a careful administrator. Booker wanted reports filled out quickly, turned in daily, documented with facts and figures. George wanted quiet time to

roam the countryside around Tuskegee or to conduct experiments in the laboratory. God fashions each person according to His purpose. We are the clay; God is the potter (Isa. 64:8). Together these two men made an unbeatable combination and slowly fashioned Tuskegee Institute into one of the South's premier schools.

Carver spoke openly and often about God. Early in his teaching career, he was asked to teach a Bible class Sunday evenings after supper. At first, only a double-handful of students attended his Bible study in the library. Sunday evening was one of the few times of the week when students enjoyed some freedom. Carver was such a gifted teacher, however, that the numbers swelled. Soon, more than a hundred students gathered to hear George speak about God and creation. Often, he would bring in plants from the field or use one of his drawings to explain a Bible point. Still, the number of attendees grew to where students gathered outside the windows to hear the study.

Carver was a natural instructor, and he seldom relied on long lectures to make his points. He believed that students learned by doing, by getting their hands dirty and by direct observation. He encouraged them to see God in the world around them. In a letter to one student, he put it this way:

As soon as you begin to read the great and loving God out of all forms of existence he has created, both animate and inanimate, then you will be able to converse with him, anywhere, everywhere, and at all times. Oh, what a fullness of joy will come to you. My dear friend. Get the significance. God is speaking.

Carver always believed in helping the person "farthest down the ladder," as he put it. He wanted to help those who had grown up hard, just as he had. He encouraged farmers to rotate their crops and terrace their fields to preserve the land. When the boll weevil threatened "King Cotton," he taught landowners to plant peanuts, sweet potatoes, and black-eyed peas. The peanuts and black-eyed peas would fix nitrogen from the air and give it back to the worn-out soil.

"My work is that of conservation," he said. For farmers who could not travel to Tuskegee to receive instruction at his farmers' conferences, he had the Jesup Agricultural Wagon built to carry displays throughout the countryside. If the landowners couldn't come to the school, then the school would come to them! He even developed hundreds of paints, dyes, and whitewashes from the native Alabama clays so poor people could beautify their homes for next to nothing.

He also authored a series of popular agricultural bulletins, such as *How the Farmer Can Save His Sweet Potatoes* and *Nature's Garden for Victory and Peace*. He wanted to get information into the hands of people who needed it most.

Along the way, he gave a celebrated speech to the House Ways and Means Committee, lectured at black and white colleges, helped industry experts, and even became friends with Henry Ford and Thomas Edison. Tom Huston of "Tom's Peanuts" was a steadfast supporter. Not bad for an orphaned slave from Diamond Grove, Missouri.

Carver is best known for his extensive work with peanuts and sweet potatoes. He believed these two crops produced best in the Alabama soils and that they could solve many of the nutritional deficiencies in the average person's diet. He eventually developed over 300 uses of the peanut and over 100 uses for the sweet potato. In his small laboratory, he made milk, dyes, syrup, desserts, glue, shoe polish, bread, shampoo, laundry soap, and coffee from these two natural products.

1 Tim. 6:7-8 reads, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content." Carver knew how to be content with what he had, though he always tried to learn more so he could help others. Perhaps author John Perry put it best in his book *George Washington Carver*: "He sincerely believed that frugality, patience, prayer, optimism, and hard work would carry financially strapped families—both black and white—through hard times to a better day" (2011, pg. 128).

Carver didn't just pay lip service to these godly ideas. He taught at Tuskegee for a total of 47 years. He was hired at a salary of \$125 a month or \$1,500 dollars annually. When he retired, he was making the same \$1,500 a year—not a single raise—and he gave over \$30,000 back to the university!

Can a person of science, I mean a real scientist, study the evidence and believe in God? George Washington Carver thought so. In fact, he once said, "I'm not interested in any science that leaves God out; in fact, I'm not interested in anything that leaves out God."

Today you can visit the George Washington National Monument outside of Joplin, Missouri, and walk the same fields that Carver roamed as a child. You can see some of his work and learn something of his life. Then you can drive eight miles to Neosho and see the one-room schoolhouse where he received his first formal education. Perhaps one day you can even visit Tuskegee University in Alabama and stand beside his grave. Just know that his entire journey was one of faith. His life spanned from the Civil War to WWII, yet the lessons he taught were timeless.

After studying the previous two lessons, a person might say, "Well, sure, Leeuwenhoek and Carver believed in God, but they belonged to a different time. They didn't know better." Rest assured that scientists throughout the ages, down to our present day, have expressed the same faith.

Allow me to give a few examples. Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) developed the universal theory of gravitation and explained the principles of gravity and motion in his book, *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy). This volume is still considered one of the most influential books in the history of science. Don't try to read it unless you're good at math and Latin., Newton also explored the nature of light and optics, plus he invented calculus. Here's the astounding part: Newton made these important discoveries within 18 months, when he was still in his 20's! His estimated IQ was 200.

Did you know that Newton’s scientific investigations convinced him there had to be an all-powerful Creator? See the question part of this lesson.

Gregor Mendel (1822-1884), who framed the basic laws of heredity, also had a strong faith in God, as did the father of modern physics, Joseph Clerk Maxwell (1831-1879), who developed the theory of electromagnetism.

Moving into our present age, Dr. John C. Lennox (1943--) is Emeritus Professor of Mathematics at Oxford and an articulate defender of Christianity. His debates with atheists are worth watching. Douglas Axe, Ph.D., is a molecular biologist who completed his doctoral work at Caltech and his postdoctoral research at the University of Cambridge. He, too, is open about his faith.

One example of a modern woman of science and faith is Colonel Eileen M. Collins, USAF (retired), who has logged nearly 900 hours in space. NASA entrusted her to command the first shuttle mission after the Columbia disaster. In fact, she was the first female pilot and first female commander in shuttle history and flew four shuttle missions. At a book signing, I asked her about her faith. Her response was enlightening. She said, “I can remember looking out the shuttle window back at Earth, then gazing out toward the stars, and realizing how small we are and how big God must be.”

Friends, if we believe in God, we’re in good company.

Questions

1. T/F A person of science can also be a person of faith.
2. What is the most impressive aspect of George Washington Carver’s life for you? Why?
3. Think about the powerful connection between perseverance and faith. Faith builds perseverance, and perseverance strengthens faith. Evaluate such passages as Isa. 41:10 and Rev. 2:10 in your thinking. In what ways does Carver’s life show the power of perseverance? Can you share one significant trial you’ve faced in your life? Did that challenge strengthen or weaken your faith in God?
4. Because of recurrent throat problems, Carver had a thin, bird-like speaking voice. This would be a problem for a classroom teacher and public speaker. Yet, his students loved him, and many were still writing to him years later. In one

celebrated instance, members of Congress gave him only ten minutes to speak because they were worn out from listening to other speakers. An hour-and-a-half later, Carver was still addressing them at their own encouragement. He often illustrated his talks with hands-on demonstrations and displays of his laboratory work. His enthusiasm and genuine kindness always stirred people. What lessons can we learn here?

5. Just about everyone knows of Sir Isaac Newton. People realized that apples fell from trees before Newton came along. However, by his universal theory of gravitation, he showed that the force which causes the apple to fall is the same force which holds the planets in orbit. Consider Newton's words in an appendix to his famous book, the *Principia Mathematica*:

This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful being. And if the fixed stars are the centers of other like systems, these, being form'd by the like wise counsel, must be all subject to the dominion of One.

Newton could show mathematically what force kept the heavenly bodies in orbit, but could his equations explain how they got there in the first place? Who did he think created the moon and stars?

6. Besides the examples cited in this lesson, can you name other scientists who believe in God? Try to identify at least one from the past and one from present.

Rich Man's Mistake

Did God inspire the Bible? How can we know for sure? These two questions have challenged men and women for centuries, and there are many lines of evidence we might consider.

We could discuss the Bible's unique unity, for example. How does one explain 40 men (many of whom never met), across 1,600 years, living in different places, writing in three languages, being able to produce one volume of 66 books with a coherent message? Not only does each book display unity, but the books together are unified as well. How did this consistency occur? How can we account for the beautiful unfolding of the gospel story and our hope in Christ? Paradise lost in Genesis is regained in Revelation. How is there such harmony of doctrine and purpose?

Imagine if I took 40 people from 40 neighborhoods, separated them from one another, ignored their differences, and then asked them to write their plans to overhaul health care in America. Then I gathered their documents together in a book. What would I have? A mess! Let's get those same people to design the immigration policy for our nation, or address gun control. Now imagine that some of these folks wrote their plans decades ago. Would there be unity and agreement? No! So how does the Bible succeed when ordinary people would fail?

Or, perhaps we could explore the scientific foreknowledge of the Bible. We've already discussed one example when we studied the red ant. How did Solomon deduce the structure of ant colony behavior more than 2,000 years before Deborah Gordon's research confirmed it?

Why were the Bible's hygiene and health laws so far ahead of other ancient cultures? How did Scripture know the value of washing in water, disposing of waste, and quarantining to control disease more than 2,000 years before Louis Pasteur proposed modern germ theory in the 1860's? Perhaps you've read of how difficult it was for Ignaz Semmelweis to get fellow doctors to wash their hands in the mid 1800's in a Vienna hospital. Read such verses as Lev. 13:45-46 (covering the nose and mouth and isolating the sick person to slow the spread of disease) and Deut. 23:12-13 (covering human waste) and see if the advice is sound.

In Lev. 12:3, the Mosaic Law commanded circumcision of Hebrew male babies on the 8th day. In the absence of modern surgical techniques, the 8th day is the best time to perform circumcision because two important clotting agents, Vitamin K and prothrombin, are at their peak levels then. How did Moses know this?

Perhaps the greatest evidence of scientific foreknowledge in the Bible is that it doesn't repeat the nonsense that was common in other ancient cultures. Read the detailed procedures in Lev. 13-15 and see how advanced Scripture was in its recognition and treatment of disease compared with other cultures of that day. While the Bible described the importance of cleanliness, some pagan cultures were teaching that demon possession

caused ALL diseases. While the Bible commanded those who were sick to cover their nose and mouth, Egyptian doctors prescribed medicines made from worm blood and cattle urine. Modern doctors confirm the benefit of Old Testament sanitation practices; those same doctors are horrified at the medical practices of ancient Egypt and Babylon.

Another avenue of evidence is the historical and factual accuracy of Scripture. As an ancient book, the Bible is unrivaled in its correctness. Most books of antiquity contain many errors and inconsistencies in names, places, and events. In contrast, the Bible is remarkably reliable. How do we account for such precision? Even today, publishers will release a book, and then—shortly after that—those same publishers will print a list of corrections. Why doesn't Scripture suffer from such faults?

Consider the single book of Acts. Even Bible skeptics are forced to admit that its earthly author Luke was an accurate historian. In the late 1800's, Sir William Ramsay—a Bible skeptic—traveled to Asia Minor in an archaeological expedition to show the mistakes and lies in Luke's writing. What do you think Ramsay found instead? In his narrative Luke mentions over 30 countries, 50 cities, and 90 people (62 of which are not named elsewhere in the New Testament). In every instance, where the facts are checkable, Luke is right. Or, to use Ramsay's words, "Luke's history is unsurpassed in respect of its trustworthiness." Ramsay turned from skeptic to believer.

Such accuracy demands respect.

But now we come to a key point. As compelling as these lines of evidence are, as convincing as the unity, scientific foreknowledge, and factual accuracy of the Bible are, they are NOT the strongest proof of Scripture's inspiration.

How do we know the Holy Spirit inspired the Bible? That answer is found in Luke 16:19-31.

Most Bible readers are familiar with the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man. While preachers and commentators like to debate whether this episode is a parable, for this study it doesn't matter. Even if the story is a parable, Jesus is speaking truth.

The rich man lives it up while he's here on earth. Lazarus suffers in poverty. The rich man feasts; Lazarus survives on crumbs. The rich man sees poor Lazarus every day at the gate, but it's the dogs who comfort him.

Physical death is the great equalizer, however, and both men pass away. Now the situations of the two are reversed. The rich man groans in agony, while Lazarus rests in the comfort of Abraham's bosom. The poor man is poor no longer.

The rich man longs for a drop of water, but his fate is sealed. Lazarus cannot comfort him. An impenetrable divide now separates the two. The rich man remembers his five brothers, and his concern for them motivates his call for Lazarus to return from the dead and warn them. Abraham replies, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." The rich man cries out, "No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will

repent.” Despite his plea, Abraham repeats, “If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.”

Have we weighed these words?

In my years as a gospel preacher, I’ve participated in memorial services for dozens of people, young and old, male and female, rich and poor. Funerals are important because they remind us of life’s brevity and judgment to come. Yet, I can tell you this: If a person I have preached a service for rose from the dead and knocked on my door, that person would have my attention! Can evidence be more convincing than a message from the dead?

Therefore, I used to think these final words in the episode of Lazarus and the rich man must be hyperbole—just exaggeration to make a point.

I no longer think that, however. Abraham said that Scripture’s testimony itself is the most compelling evidence we have of God’s reality and truth. If God’s Word doesn’t motivate us to spiritual action, nothing will.

Prophecy can mean any utterance of a divine message by special revelation, but let’s focus on predictive prophecy for a moment. J. Barton Payne, in his book *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecies*, details 1,239 predictions in the Old Testament and 578 in the New. More than one verse in five contains some predictive elements. This means that forecasting the future is an integral part of Bible prophecy.

It’s these predictive prophecies of Scripture which are the crowning proof that the Bible is inspired. We cannot consistently predict the future of uncertain events, but Scripture can.

Think about all the unexpected events that have happened in your life. Twenty years ago, how many people were forecasting that Donald Trump would one day be President of the United States? Who will be President twenty years from now? What nations will vanish in 100 years, if this world is still standing? What nations will arise? Do sports handicappers win their bets 100% of the time?

Did you predict the COVID pandemic and its consequences? I can remember when I first heard about the virus and saw all of those people overseas wearing masks. “Too bad, so sad,” I thought. And then it wasn’t long before I became one of them! Can you forecast the next five pandemics? I can remember my wife and I debating whether color monitors for personal computers were here to stay. Wonder if the early makers of slide rules foresaw the rise of hand-held electronic calculators? Which crypto currency, if any, will dominate the market five years from now?

Abraham says, “Let your brothers hear Moses and the prophets.” The rich man had failed to do so! “If Scripture and its predictions aren’t enough to convince them, then nothing will.” Abraham’s words fall hard, like a door slammed shut.

How about you and me? Will the Bible's testimony convince us, especially the predictive prophecies, or will we keep company with the rich man?

Questions

1. Can you identify at least one other example of scientific foreknowledge besides the ones mentioned in this lesson?
2. The word "inspired" can have different meanings depending on context. What does Scripture mean when it claims to be inspired? What does *plenary inspiration* suggest?
3. Do you think that many people deny the inspiration of Scripture because there isn't enough evidence or because they haven't examined the evidence?
4. Baseball Hall of Fame catcher Yogi Berra once quipped, "It's tough to make predictions, especially about the future." Share one or two unexpected events that have happened in your life.
5. Before death, would the rich man have traded places with Lazarus? How about after death? What mistake did the rich man make in his life? How can we guard against making the same error?
6. James 4:14 says, in part, "Whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow . . ." What does this verse tell us about our ability to predict the future of uncertain events?
7. What does Rom. 10:17 say about the foundation of faith?

Unshakeable Kingdom

If you were allowed to select a single Bible episode to prove the inspiration of Scripture, which one would you choose?

We might make different choices for good reasons, but I would pick Nebuchadnezzar's vision and Daniel interpretation in Daniel 2. I would use this chapter because of the scope of its predictions and because it points toward Christ and His kingdom. Frankly, I'm not sure how a person can read this chapter, study the events in light of world history, and not know the Bible is extraordinary.

In Daniel 2 King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon has a perplexing dream. Under penalty of death, he challenges his wise men to both describe the dream and explain its significance. His wise men are stumped: "Tell us the dream first, O King, and then we'll give its meaning." Nebuchadnezzar is too wise for this, however, and sees their request as a delaying tactic and lack of ability.

Daniel is the one person who can give both the vision and its meaning because God reveals the answers to him in a night vision. The first action Daniel takes is to glorify God: "Blessed is the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His . . . He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings . . . He reveals deep and secret things . . . I thank You and praise You, O God, of my fathers. . . ." (Dan. 2:20-23).

When confronted by a life-and-death matter, Daniel's faith is unshakeable. His eyes remain fixed on God.

Daniel goes before Nebuchadnezzar, and the king asks him, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?" (v. 26).

Daniel responds, "The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days" (vv. 27-28).

Only the Heavenly Father can reveal the future, says Daniel, and God is the One who deserves glory and honor. Prov. 1:7 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and Daniel is a shining example of this wisdom.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream centered on a great image made of different materials. The figure had a head of fine gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, with feet partly of iron and partly of clay. While viewing this image, Nebuchadnezzar witnessed a great stone, uncut by human hands, which struck the figure and broke it into pieces. The gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay were crushed and carried away. The mighty stone, however, grew into a mountain that filled the earth.

Daniel then gives the dream its divine interpretation. The great image stood for four world empires, with the head of gold signifying Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian Kingdom. Three kingdoms would arise after Babylon, each of a different character. Silver is valuable, but not as precious as gold. Bronze is strong, but inferior to both gold and silver. Iron is exceedingly strong, but the feet of iron mixed with clay suggested a divided earthly kingdom. The stone which crushed the image represented a different kind of kingdom—"cut out without hands" and eternal in nature (vv. 35-45).

There's no vague language or uncertain words here. Daniel specifies four earthly kingdoms and describes the passing of each. He tells when the final, everlasting kingdom will come and describes its nature. This last kingdom is unlike the earthly nations; it spreads throughout the world and surpasses them all.

How would we know if Daniel is a true prophet of God? Deut. 18:21-22 provides the answer: "And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?'—when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him." Are the prophecies fulfilled or not?

Daniel's predictions come true. There are many prophecies in Scripture, but it's hard to miss the power and plainness of this one. Anyone familiar with world history immediately recognizes the accuracy of Daniel's words. We're blessed to live in a time when we can see the complete fulfillment of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

As we examine the details more closely, ask yourself this: How can we reasonably explain these predictions if they're not from God? Only timeless God can tell history before it happens!

Let's outline the events which fulfill Daniel's words. The book of Daniel was written in the 6th century B.C. As mighty as the Babylonian Empire was, it fell in 536 B.C. to a combined force of Medes and Persians, about 50 years after the prophecy in Dan. 2.

The Medo-Persian Empire dominated that part of the world for the next 200 years, but it was defeated by Alexander the Great in 331 B.C. Greece was now the third world empire. Alexander was a mighty warrior king, but he perished in his early 30's, probably from typhoid fever or malaria. Eventually the fourth world empire of Rome arose. Rome crushed Greece in 146 B.C., 400 years after Daniel's prophecy.

Rome was overwhelming in its military might and geographic dominance. Who would ever defeat the Caesar's legions? This kingdom was the legs of iron in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, but—like the feet of iron mixed with clay—divisions arose. Political turmoil, overextended resources, and attacks by Germanic hordes eventually doomed the Roman Empire.

So, we have the four kingdoms of this world, just as Daniel predicted—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. But during the days of the Roman Empire, a unique kingdom

emerged with the coming of Christ. This was the spiritual kingdom not made with human hands. Mark 9:1 specifies the time of its birth: “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.” This is the kingdom Jesus spoke about in Matt. 16:16-19. This is the kingdom we read about in Acts 2 and Col. 1:13.

This spiritual kingdom endures while the four worldly empires have been swept into the dustbin of history.

Step back and see the picture. Daniel predicted these events hundreds of years before their completion. We’re incapable of such predictions ourselves, but we can read secular history and see the fulfillment of these prophecies. How do we explain the accuracy of Daniel 2 if it’s not the controlling hand of the Holy Spirit?

Because of the clarity and power of this prophecy, Bible skeptics try to dismiss Daniel 2. They assume it can’t be right because they believe God doesn’t exist and the Bible isn’t His Word. Instead of accepting the evidence, they harden their hearts.

The most common attempt is to alter the date of Daniel’s predictions. Skeptics claim Daniel 2 was written much later, after these historical events, so he really didn’t prophesy. It just looks like Daniel 2 predicts the future because a later author recounted the events after they happened.

When you hear this criticism, the first question you should ask is, “Where’s your proof?” Usually, people are just repeating what they’ve heard someone else say. They assume Daniel must be wrong because they don’t want to follow God. They latch on to any evidence that supports their assumption. This is confirmation bias, where a person only considers statements that support what he already believes. We tend to favor things that confirm our existing beliefs.

But, there’s a huge problem with trying to alter the date of Daniel 2’s writing. The Greek Septuagint version of the Old Testament was completed when Greece was still the world empire. This is a fact of history which even Bible skeptics admit. The Septuagint was completed by the 3rd century B.C., but the Greek Empire did not collapse until 146 B.C. That means the key elements in Daniel’s prophecy—the fall of Greece, the rise of Rome, and the birth of the spiritual kingdom—occurred *after* the writing of the Septuagint! So, even if a person wanted to post-date Daniel, he couldn’t do it beyond the date of the Greek Septuagint. To say it plainly, the Septuagint is undeniable proof that Daniel predicted the future.

Plus, as powerful as Daniel 2 is, it becomes more convincing in the context of other prophecies. One old-time gospel sermon is in the form of a math equation: Psalm 2 + Isaiah 2 + Daniel 2 + Joel 2 = Acts 2. This is an interesting way to tie several prophecies together as they relate to Christ’s spiritual kingdom.

Psalm 2:1-9 foretells how many nations’ leaders will reject Jesus, yet God will still carry out His plan. V. 6 mentions the “holy hill of Zion,” which reminds us the first 3,000 souls

were added to the church in Jerusalem. Isaiah 2:2-3 reinforces this point: “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains . . . And all nations shall flow to it.” Daniel 2:44-45, as we’ve seen, further describes this eternal kingdom. Joel 2:28-32 predicts the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which would accompany these events, and Acts 2 shows the fulfillment of these prophecies. Taken together, these kingdom prophecies are powerful confirmation of the Bible’s integrity. Christianity is built on solid rock, not the endlessly shifting sands of doubt. We’ve received an immovable kingdom (Heb. 12:28).

If you’re skeptical by nature, as I am, perhaps one Old Testament prophecy wouldn’t be enough. Taken together, however, these verses are impossible to ignore. What, then, if we find other Bible prophecies about nations and people all perfectly fulfilled? What would we decide then?

Questions

1. Nebuchadnezzar is an intriguing historical figure, and there’s much about him that we don’t know. Study the verses in Daniel 2 and consider evidence from other sources. How would you evaluate his character? Especially consider vv. 46-49 which show the king’s reaction after Daniel’s prophecy.
2. Name the four world empires predicted in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. What was different about the kingdom which would arise in the days of the fourth empire?
3. Think about Bible prophecies, and then compare them with modern-day predictions such as those made by astrologers and religious leaders. What differences do you see? Anyone can guess correctly on occasion, but what’s the true test of a prophet?
4. What lessons can we learn about Daniel’s character in this chapter? What does he do when confronted by life and death?
5. Is Bible faith blind faith, or is it built on solid evidence and the explanatory power of God’s Word?

Broken Reed

It bears repeating: The genuine, fulfilled prophecies of Scripture are the crowning proof of the Bible's inspiration. These prophecies show that the God of the Bible is also the God of the universe.

Step back and consider these fundamental prophecies and promises in Scripture. In Gen. 8:22, following Noah's flood, we read, "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease." Each day we live on this earth we can see the fulfillment of this prophecy. Or think about Matt. 5:45: ". . . He makes His sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and unjust." Again, each day we see the truth of this promise.

The same God who made those promises said this to Abraham: "And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). We see the fulfillment of that promise in Gal. 4:4: "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son born of a woman. . . ." We'll have more to say about the prophecies concerning Jesus in our final lesson.

Scripture is filled with such prophecies and promises. We can read them for ourselves, understand what they mean, and see their fulfillment. In this way, we learn that God has spoken to us through the Bible. Or, as Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

When I complete a class on Bible evidences, I ask the participants which prophecy of Scripture was most compelling to them. I often receive an answer I didn't expect: Egypt. When I ask why the predictions about Egypt were so convincing, the reply is, "Because we see the continuing fulfillment of those prophecies today."

Let me show you.

When we think of Egypt, most folks picture pyramids, or the Great Sphinx in Giza, or hieroglyphics, or Egyptian linen. Perhaps we get an image of the Nile River, mummies, and King Tut. We picture an ancient culture in North Africa that influences the Middle East and that's of modest power today. Most of us don't see it as a world leader, and we're not worried about waking up tomorrow and finding that Egypt has attacked the United States. Egypt remains in the back of our minds.

This was not true in the ancient world. For over 2,000 years Egypt was THE preeminent culture. It was the breadbasket of the world, with fertile fields along the Nile, a mighty army, and political stability that endured for centuries. When other countries had no food, Egypt did. (Think about the story of Joseph in Genesis.) An elaborate series of irrigation canals watered the crops. Egyptian art and clothing were prized throughout the world. Its craftsmen were renowned for their work, and its culture flourished.

Kenny Barfield, in his book *The Prophet Motive* (1995), summed up Egypt's position this way:

No land of antiquity could match Egypt. Born amid the fertile Nile Valley, it matured rapidly and dominated the western world longer than any nation in history. It assumed the role of supreme power in the Mediterranean. Where Greece and Rome counted their supremacy by the centuries, Egypt numbered hers by the millennia (pg.33).

Think about it: plenty of food, a strong government supported by a powerful army, skilled craftsmen, beautiful artwork, centers of learning . . . What could go wrong?

But Egypt was a pagan nation with a pantheon of gods and goddesses. There was Re, the sun god; Osiris, god of the underworld, Bastet, the cat goddess; Horub, the sky god; plus a host of others. "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?" said Pharaoh Sesostris of Joseph in Genesis 41:38. Sadly, "There arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph" (Ex. 1:8). Throughout most of its history Egyptians ignored the one true God in heaven and worshipped gods of their own making.

God often warned Israel not to turn to Egypt in times of trouble. Isaiah proclaimed, "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the Lord!" (Isa. 31:1). Again, in Jer. 42:19 we read, "The Lord has said concerning you, O remnant of Judah, 'Do not go to Egypt!' Know certainly that I have admonished you this day."

Why would Israel seek help from an idolatrous nation instead of turning to the Lord? Too often people do what they want to do, and trust man instead of God!

In an ironic twist, even wicked Assyria warned Judah not to trust in Egypt for deliverance: "Look! You are trusting in the staff of the broken reed, Egypt, on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him" (Isa. 36:6). Thankfully, in this instance King Hezekiah of Judah turned to God for help.

Eventually Egypt paid the price for its spiritual idolatry.

God, through His prophets, said He would take away Egypt's power and prestige. Isa. 19:2 predicts civil turmoil where peace had existed before: "I will set Egyptians against Egyptians; everyone will fight against his neighbor, city against city, and kingdom against kingdom." True to Isaiah's words, civil war arose in Egypt. Peace and stability had characterized the nation; now there was internal strife.

The Nile River, with its extensive canals and lush vegetation, would also decline. ". . . The river will be wasted and dried up. The rivers will turn foul . . . the reeds and rushes will disappear . . . The fishermen will also mourn . . . And they will languish who also spread nets on the waters" (Isa. 19:5-8). In the decades that followed, foreign invaders failed to preserve the bounty of the Nile River. Irrigation canals became stagnant swamps. The

beautiful stands of papyrus receded as the river's ecosystem decayed. Once the breadbasket of the world, Egypt now had trouble feeding itself.

Alice Hall, in her article "Egypt: Two Perspectives," (*National Geographic*, March 1977) explains, "Since Egypt cannot grow enough to feed its fast-multiplying population, much of the land is planted in export crops—cotton, oranges, rice, and potatoes. Profits pay for imported grain." Egypt once fed the world; now the world feeds it.

Isaiah also predicted the decline of artisans and culture: "Moreover those who work in fine flax, and those who weave fine fabric will be ashamed . . . Neither will there be any work for Egypt, which the head or tail, palm branch or bulrush may do" (Isa. 19:9-15). Again, history records this degrading of culture, as several forces invaded Egypt, including armies of Islam.

The prophecies about Egypt become even more specific, down to individual cities and rulers. "I will destroy the idols and make the images cease from Noph" (ancient Memphis, Ezek. 30:13). Ancient Thebes, on the other hand, would be "split open" (Ezek. 30:16). True to the Bible's prophecies, Memphis was destroyed, its idols toppled, its temples crushed. Inhabitants abandoned the city by A.D. 700, and today it exists only as an archaeological site, a place of ancient ruins. The city of Thebes was fragmented into several smaller villages, *split open*, just as the Bible said.

Ezek. 30:13 also offers this prediction: "There shall no longer be princes from the land of Egypt." What could this passage mean? No longer would the supreme rulers in Egypt descend from the Pharaohs' native sons. Ferrell Jenkins makes this point in his book *Introduction to Christian Evidences* (pg. 134):

The ancient Egyptians were descendants of Ham through his son Mizraim (Gen. 10:6). Mizraim is a Hebrew word for Egypt . . . Most of the inhabitants of Egypt today are Arabs (Semitic descendants of Shem and Abraham through Ishmael) . . . Modern presidents are not descendants of the Pharaohs.

Egypt has had its presidents—Nassar, Sadat, Mubarak, Morsi, and Fattah el-Sisi—but not a single one can legitimately claim descent through the royal bloodlines of ancient Egypt. The same is true of the leaders who came before them, back to the fulfillment of this prophecy.

While God's prophets often foretold the complete destruction of nations, such as Babylon and Edom, Egypt would suffer a different fate: "It shall be the lowliest of kingdoms; it shall never again exalt itself above other nations" (Ezek. 29:15). Instead of being completely destroyed, Egypt would lose its preeminence and become a weak nation.

Friends, after reading these prophecies and seeing their fulfillment in history, I would be afraid *not* to believe the Bible! Think about how mighty ancient Egypt was; then consider how its economy, its military, and its society declined. Think about the specificity of these predictions . . . Memphis razed, mighty Thebes broken up . . . the change in influence and

leadership. Today Egypt's status in the world is a continuing reminder of the steadfast nature of biblical prophecy and its unerring accuracy. Egyptians can be saved in the same way as Americans and Canadians—by turning to Jesus and obeying His word . . . but the nation will never reclaim its supremacy.

In some ways, the prophecies of Egypt are most convincing because it was not wiped out. A Bible skeptic might argue, "Well, sure, all nations eventually fall. That's not much of a prediction." But Egypt survived, just as Scripture said it would, in a diminished capacity. Its continuing judgment remains a sobering reminder that "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34).

These prophecies prove that the God of the Bible is also God of the universe. Examine the evidence, and see for yourself. Who but Almighty God could accurately predict the fate of entire nations, cities, and rulers? Could ordinary man—on his own--make such remarkable predictions?

"God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne," says Psalm 47:8. Only God knows the future.

Questions

1. What natural feature was the source of Egypt's early abundance and prosperity?
2. What is the spiritual significance of Exodus 1:8 to Egypt's history? "Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph."
3. Think about the pantheon of Egyptian gods and goddesses. There were gods of the underworld, goddesses of fertility, gods of the river, gods of the animals, and gods of the sun. What did the ten plagues show about the power of these gods? Could these gods protect Egypt from decline?
4. Man constructs great buildings and monuments and imagines they will never crumble. What happened to the magnificent temples and idols of ancient Memphis and Thebes? Is any earthly city or kingdom above destruction?

5. One important lesson we learn from Egypt is that God's timetable is often not ours. The predictions about Egypt were fulfilled across centuries, as the nation was plundered by Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, and Muslims. What other lessons can we learn from Egypt?

6. Ancient Egypt was known for its practice of embalming and mummification. Why did the Egyptians believe it was important to preserve the physical body after death? How did they view the soul, the body, and the afterlife? Can you harmonize their ancient views with what the Bible teaches?

7. According to Jesus in John 14:29, what is the purpose of fulfilled prophecy?

Flood and Fire

Imagine the terror that the Assyrian Empire struck in the hearts of its neighbors. Its armies ravaged Mesopotamia, parts of Egypt and the eastern coast of the Mediterranean. Assyria conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. and nearly captured Jerusalem until an angel of the Lord smote 185,000 Assyrians (2 Kings 19:35). The nation's character is revealed in its royal image of a powerful winged bull with a human head. Assyria saw itself as the mightiest of kingdoms and its capital of Nineveh the greatest of cities.

Assyrians were a striking mixture of culture and cruelty. Magnificent golden panels of art adorned the royal palaces in Asshur, Calah, and Nineveh. Even in Jonah's day, before the height of the Assyrian Empire, Nineveh was described as a huge city: "So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent" (Jonah 3:3). This would imply a circumference of 45-60 miles.

They also built huge libraries with some of the most valuable writings of the ancient world. Colossal sculptures of white alabaster lions and bulls lined their wide streets. Ivory flowers and giant cedar beams adorned the ceilings of their public buildings. They composed sensitive poetry which expressed their belief in God and an afterlife, such as these two lines inscribed on an ancient brick:

*Like a bird may the soul fly to a lofty place!
To the holy hands of God, may it ascend.*

Yet, they were merciless toward their enemies and committed unspeakable atrocities. It's hard for us to imagine their barbarity. The Assyrian soldiers were masters of intimidation. In a war, if they caught any survivors, they would impale them on stakes in front of their hometown. They would skin their enemies alive and then chop off their heads. They used the skins of their victims to line their streets. They would lead prisoners around by lip-rings and then blind their eyes. When it came to opponents, they had no pity or forgiveness in their national character.

Arrogance filled the hearts of Assyrian kings. Here's how mighty King Sennacherib described himself:

*I am the Great King, the Mighty King, King of the Universe,
King of Assyria, King of the Four World Regions!*

And here's how Esarhaddon, his son, viewed himself:

*I am Powerful, I am All-Powerful,
I am a Hero, I am Gigantic, I am Colossal,
I am Honored, I am Magnified, I am Without Equal!*

With such hubris, they thought no enemy force could defeat them. No foreign army would ever tread the streets of Nineveh.

No wonder Jonah didn't want to preach to Nineveh, the bitter enemy of his own people. Why should he bring God's message to these perverted pagans? He didn't want the merciless to experience mercy. Imagine if the Lord asked you to minister to Osama Bin Laden and the Taliban after the 9/11 attacks. That would be the last thing you wanted to do! Even though Assyria had not reached its zenith in Jonah's day, his immediate reaction to God's request was to flee in the opposite direction. We can see why. Surprisingly, Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, but not for long. Within 150 years, the city had once again fallen into idolatry.

Unlike Egypt, God determined to destroy Assyria completely because of its pagan cruelty. In strong, specific language, God's prophets predicted the end of the Assyrian Empire.

The book of Nahum begins with the prophecy that Assyria's days were numbered: "The burden against Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. God is jealous, and the Lord avenges; the Lord avenges and is furious . . . He reserves wrath for His enemies . . . With an overflowing flood He will make an utter end of its place" (Nahum 1:1-8). God, through His prophet, says that the Assyrians will have no descendants to carry on their name. They will cease to exist as a people: "Your name shall be perpetuated no longer. Out of the house of your gods, I will cut off the carved image. I will dig your grave, for you are vile" (Nahum 1:14).

Zeph. 2:13-14 adds these details: "And He will stretch out His hand against the north, destroy Assyria, and make Nineveh a desolation, as dry as the wilderness. The herds shall lie down in her midst."

Then comes the most intriguing part of the prophecy. God predicts that Nineveh would be destroyed by both a flood and fire. Nahum 1:8 has already spoken of "an overflowing flood," but Nahum 2:6 is even more specific: "The gates of the rivers are opened, and the palace is dissolved." But Nahum also says that fire will help to destroy the city: "Fire shall devour the bars of your gates . . . There the fire will devour you" (Nahum 3:13-15). It seems that it would be one or the other, flood or fire. Usually, those two forces cancel each other. How would flood and fire combine to destroy Nineveh?

One final part of the prophecy is that God would destroy Nineveh while the Assyrians were enjoying a drunken feast: "For while tangled like thorns, and while drunken like drunkards, they shall be devoured like stubble fully dried" (Nahum 1:10). "You also will be drunk; you will be hidden; you also will seek refuge from the enemy" (Nahum 3:11).

So, who was right? The Assyrian kings such as Sennacherib and Esarhaddon claimed they were too mighty, their armies too powerful, and their capital too majestic to be defeated. God said, "I'm going to demolish Nineveh, and I'm going to use flood and fire to do it. Not only that, but I'm going to do it while the Ninevites are throwing a drinking party." This prophecy is so detailed, so specific, that it either does or doesn't happen. Its fulfillment—or lack thereof—will be plain.

What happened in history? For decades Assyria looked unbeatable, until a combined army of Babylonians, Medes, and Scythians besieged Nineveh. Still, the Assyrians were comfortable in their enormous walled city. They felt safe with their huge army, and Assyria's King Sinsharushkin was so filled with pride that he failed to see the danger. Self-confidence caused him to think that his own forces were winning.

But in 612 B.C. the sun thawed an unusually heavy snow cover in the mountains. The snow melted, the water in the rivers rose, and the mud bricks of Nineveh dissolved. Erosion from the river clawed at the city walls until they were breached. The enemy forces, with the water, poured into the city.

What was the king doing? He was so sure of victory that he was throwing a drunken blow-out for a few thousand of his closest friends. His mighty army had relaxed under a false sense of security.

When Sinsharushkin finally realized that the Babylonians and Medes were within his inner walls, he panicked. Instead of allowing himself to be captured, he piled all his royal possessions and clothing in a funeral pyre and burned himself to death, while torching the inner palace.

Astonishing, isn't it? Both flood and fire destroyed Nineveh, while the king was throwing a drinking party . . . just like God said would happen. After the city was destroyed, neighboring populations assimilated the Assyrian refugees, and soon no one would admit to Assyrian citizenship. They vanished from the stage of world history, just as God's prophets predicted. Today Nineveh exists only as ruins.

Gospel preacher Ferrell Jenkins, in his book *Introduction to Christian Evidences* (2021), adds this final note from his world travels: "Perhaps the most exciting thing about my visit to Nineveh was seeing the shepherds grazing on the ruins of this ancient world capital" (pg. 138). Zephaniah said it would happen, and Jenkins witnessed the evidence.

Friends, how would one ignore God's predictions about Assyria, given that Nahum delivered his words some 50 years before the events occurred? Nineveh became a dead city in every way that a city can die . . . just as the Bible stated.

Jehovah used a flood and fire to judge Assyria, but those elements appear elsewhere in Scripture as instruments of God's judgment. In 2 Pet. 3:3-6 we read of those who ridicule the idea of God's judgment on the world: ". . . Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming?' . . . For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water." God will also use flames to destroy the earth in the final day: "But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (v. 7).

Nineveh repented at Jonah's preaching, but that remorse didn't last. The mighty Assyrians thought they were stronger than any rival, but they made themselves foes of God. When God becomes your enemy, you're bound to lose.

In the same way, we can make ourselves "enemies of the cross of Christ" by rejecting our Lord (Phil. 3:18). What a terrible thing to be an enemy of one who should be our greatest friend! We have the lesson of the Assyrians to warn us. Will we heed that lesson?

Questions

1. How did the Assyrian kings see themselves? Now think about King Saul and Samuel's words to him in 1 Sam. 15:17. When was King Saul blessed by God? When was the kingdom stripped from him? What do the Assyrian kings and King Saul teach us about the importance of humility?
2. Read Jonah 3:4-5. What was the people's reaction when Jonah proclaimed, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"? What did Jesus say about the men of Nineveh in Matt. 12:41? Is there any doubt the people of Nineveh repented when Jonah preached about God's judgment? Why didn't their repentance last?
3. It's interesting to consider the time between a prophecy and its fulfillment. Daniel, by God's power, predicted events that were hundreds of years in the future. Nahum prophesied one generation before Nineveh fell. Do you think that prophecies are more compelling when they occur shortly before the events or when those predictions are widely separated from the time of their fulfillment? Is there value to having both kinds of prophecies?
4. In some ways, the prophecies become more convincing as time passes. We see the fulfillment of the prophecies, and then we can witness their continuing fulfillment. Have people always had plenty of evidence to believe in God?
5. T/F Material wealth and military might guarantee spiritual prosperity.

Scraped Rock

The Old Testament prophecies about Tyre are among the most compelling because of the seeming impossibility of their fulfillment. Skeptics might claim that some Bible prophecies are nothing more than lucky guesses. The remarkable predictions about Tyre are beyond guessing.

The citizens of Tyre, were a powerful seagoing people with a history that stretched back over 2,000 years. This city-state was renowned for its advanced culture, successful commerce, and beautiful architecture. The Phoenicians perfected such skills as navigation, writing, and glassblowing. The Tyrians were expert craftsmen and industrious traders. Other nations prized the royal purple cloth of Tyre, dyed from shellfish. Giant cedar beams from surrounding forests were a favorite export. Gold, silver, and copper filled Tyre's coffers.

The king of Byblos once described the royal palace in this way: "Behold the house of Tyre! There is no governor's house like it. It is like the house of Ugarit! Exceedingly great is the wealth within it" (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, V. 4, pg. 932).

Tyre appears often in the Old Testament. Hiram was an able king who befriended both David and his son, Solomon. In 2 Sam. 5:11 we read of Hiram sending cedar trees, carpenters, and masons to build David's house. In fact, 1 Kings 5:1 says that Hiram "had always loved David." Later the Tyrian king also sent cedar and cypress logs as material for the temple (1 Kings 5:10). Solomon and Hiram even formed a navy together, according to 1 Kings 10:22: "For the king had merchant ships at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the merchant ships came bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and monkeys."

Tyre was especially fortunate in its location. The city was divided into two parts. There was the mainland city of "Old Tyre" and also a fortified island citadel about a half mile into the sea. If the mainland city were attacked, its citizens could retreat to the island fortress, where Tyre's powerful navy could protect them. The swift, deep water between the mainland and the island fortress prevented the construction of conventional wooden bridges.

Ezek. 27:2-7 provides a detailed description of ancient Tyre:

Now, son of man, take up a lamentation for Tyre, and say to Tyre, "You who are situated at the entrance of the sea, merchant of the people on many coastlands, thus says the Lord God: 'O Tyre, you have said, "I am perfect in beauty" . . . Your builders have perfected your beauty . . . Fine embroidered linen from Egypt was what you spread for your sail; blue and purple from the coasts of Elishah was what covered you.'"

But Tyre's material prosperity and longevity hid a dark secret. After Hiram, its leaders became increasingly heathen and materialistic. Its wealth was built on the backs of slave

labor and the working poor. The Phoenicians chased worldly riches above all else. This attitude, in turn, led to many wicked practices. 1 Tim. 6:9-10 says, “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men into destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” The Tyrians valued material wealth above spiritual health.

Ezek. 28:16-18 describes the corrupt nature of Tyrian culture:

By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within. And you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God . . . Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground . . . You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities.

Perhaps the easiest way to see the sinfulness of Tyre and the adjoining city-state of Sidon is to remember that vile Queen Jezebel was the daughter of a Phoenician king (1 King 16:31). Thus, a Sidonian ruler was father-in-law to wicked King Ahab of Israel. The people of Tyre and Sidon worshipped Melqart (Baal of the Canaanites), not the God of heaven. In reality, business was their god.

God would not allow such rampant worldliness and contempt for the poor to go unpunished. We have read Prov. 14:34 before: “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” The Tyrians learned that lesson.

King Nebuchadnezzar besieged Tyre, though he could not completely subdue it: “Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to labor strenuously against Tyre; every head was made bald, and every shoulder rubbed raw; yet neither he nor his army received wages from Tyre, for the labor which they expended on it” (Ezek. 29:18).

Indeed, according to Ezek. 26:3, many nations would oppose Tyre.

Eventually, the ancient city would be wiped out, including the throwing of its ruins into the sea:

. . . They shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. “It shall be a place for spreading nets in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken,” says the Lord God . . . “They will lay your stones, your timber, and your soil in the midst of the water. I will put an end to the sound of your songs, and the sound of your harps shall be heard no more. I will make you like the top of a rock; you shall be a place for spreading nets, and you shall never be rebuilt, for I the Lord have spoken” says the Lord God (Ezek. 26:3-14).

It’s one thing to predict the fall of a city; it’s quite another to say that its buildings will be scraped to the ground and thrown into the sea. Yet, that’s exactly what happened.

Think how detailed these prophecies are. First, God identified the sins of Tyre and then pronounced judgment against her. Many nations would oppose the city, with Babylon specifically identified. Nebuchadnezzar would batter Tyre's walls, break her towers, plunder her riches, and kill her people (Ezek. 26:9-12). He would not be able to conquer her, however. Another enemy would devastate Tyre and cast her ruins into the sea. Even the dust would be scraped from her location till it became bare rock. Fishermen would spread their nets where a majestic city once stood. Tyre would be desolate and uninhabited.

Step back and ask yourself, "What are the chances that all of these predictions will come true?" Do these prophecies sound anything like the predictions of modern-day astrologers and soothsayers?

Shortly after Ezekiel's prophecies, Babylon did attack Tyre. For 13 long years Nebuchadnezzar's forces besieged the city. True to the prophet's words, Babylon battered mainland Tyre, broke down her walls, and killed many of her soldiers. Tyre survived, however, when her people retreated to the island fortress, where ordinary siege tactics wouldn't work. Ezekiel was aware of Nebuchadnezzar's eventual failure when he wrote about the events in Ezek. 29:18.

Some 250 years after the first prophecies (A.D. 332), Alexander the Great led his forces against Tyre. Once again, the people of Tyre retreated to their island citadel, confident that this would protect them from the Greek army.

Alexander had other ideas, however. He ordered his forces to build a narrow causeway from the mainland to the island fortress by throwing the ruins of the old city into the sea. The land bridge of stone, timber, and soil could withstand the swift currents of the sea where a wooden bridge would collapse. The Tyrians repeatedly struck Alexander's forces, but the Greek army beat them back. Eventually the land bridge reached the island fortress, and Alexander's army breached the walls. Blood ran in the streets.

Today, if you look on a map, you can see that Alexander's causeway is silted into a peninsula that extends into the sea, testimony to the accuracy of the Bible's predictions.

Doubters will point at a modern map and say, "See, the Bible is wrong! Tyre still exists; people still live there!" But this is a superficial observation that ignores a clear reading of Scripture.

Ancient Tyre will never be rebuilt or occupied for the simple reason that the ruins of the mainland city are in the sea. The Greek army scraped the rock where the majestic city once stood, and time has erased its outline. You can't rebuild a town and live in it when it's covered by water. Where mainland Tyre once stood is now a place for fishermen to spread nets. It was the ruins of the mainland city that would be dumped in the water; it was the mainland city that would be left desolate and uninhabited; it was the mainland city that would become like the top of a rock (Ezekiel 26:12-14).

How accurate was Ezekiel’s prophecy? Allow the words of an early traveler, Benjamin of Tudela (A.D. 1160) to supply the evidence: “. . . Should one care to go by boat, one can see the castles, market-places, streets, and palaces in the bed of the sea.”

Modern Tyre has buried the island fortress, and the isle itself is transformed into a peninsula. Perhaps the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* summarizes the fulfillment of the Bible’s prophecies best: “The shallow depth of soil which covers the rocky islet and the successive reconstruction of buildings across the centuries have left nothing of the Phoenician city” (V. 4, pg. 933). Heaps of ruins atop the old walls frustrate attempts to excavate the island citadel. The shoreline is changed forever.

God never said the area would be completely uninhabited because fishermen would “spread their nets” there. Modern Tyre is an Arab community; ancient Tyre—prophesied against by Ezekiel—is gone for good. The Phoenicians have vanished as a nation.

How can we study the prophecies about Tyre and not see God’s judgment and power?

Questions

1. Ezekiel condemned the ancient Phoenician city of Tyre because of their wickedness. How did Jesus use the people of Tyre and Sidon in the New Testament? (Matt. 11:21-22)
2. According to Matt. 6:19-21, where should our treasures be? While worldly riches are not automatically sinful, what’s the danger of material prosperity? When ancient Tyre pursued wealth at all costs, what happened to their spirituality?
3. Ezek. 26:2-3 delivers an interesting charge against Tyre: “Son of man, because Tyre has said against Jerusalem, ‘Aha! She is broken who was the gateway of the people; now she is turned over to me; I shall be filled; she is laid waste.’ Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, I am against you O Tyre. . .’” What is the sin of Tyre here? What does Prov. 24:17-18 say about gloating over the misfortune of others?
4. We have studied Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2, the prophecies concerning ancient Egypt and Assyria, and now the predictions about Tyre. Of these four lessons, which prophecy is most compelling to you and why?

5. Previously I said a single prophecy might not be enough to convince a skeptic that Scripture is inspired. In truth, however, how many genuine, fulfilled prophecies should it take to prove that God inspired the Bible?

6. Alexander the Great destroyed ancient Tyre, but he was not a godly person. Can God use wicked people to carry out his will, and then punish their wickedness as well? (See Isaiah 10:5-12.)

7. Which one of Ezekiel's prophecies about Tyre was fulfilled in his lifetime? How long after his original prediction did the Greek army destroy Tyre?

The Empty Tomb

Every accountable person makes a decision about Jesus. Some people reject Him. Others choose to ignore Him. Some wonder about Him. Many reduce Him to a good teacher only. A few obey Him (Matt. 7:13-14).

Is Jesus the Son of God? Let's study the evidence and see.

First, it's important to settle one dispute. Some people argue that Jesus never said He was the Son of God. Perhaps his too-zealous followers raised Him to a position that Christ never claimed.

Usually, doubters will express the idea like this: "Jesus never said, 'I am the Son of God' in those exact words. Since he didn't say it, I can't accept it."

That's a strong statement, but is it true?

Here's a general point to start with: It always amazes me that people refuse to accept something because it's not worded precisely the way they want it. "If you don't use the identical words that I think you should use, I'm not listening." That's a shortsighted approach, isn't it? Would we want others to bind a particular expression on us—*the exact words we must use*, or what we say isn't worth hearing? I doubt it.

But, beyond this introductory point, it's easy to show that Jesus claimed to be deity. Just a couple of verses will do it.

In Ex. 3:13 Moses asks God an important question: "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" V. 14 continues, "And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And He said, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

I AM is how God identifies Himself to man. No one except God can legitimately claim this statement of eternal existence.

Now read Jesus' response to the doubting Jews in John 8:58: "Most assuredly I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." There can be no stronger claim of deity than this.

To reinforce this point, study the "I AM" statements in Revelation. In Rev. 1:7-8 we read the following:

Behold He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

Similar words are used in Rev. 1:11, 21:6, and 22:13. Christ uses these words to signify His eternal nature and deity. A person may choose to reject these statements, but there can be no misunderstanding the point.

We might also consider Matt. 16 when Jesus asked the apostles, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” (v. 13). Peter responds in v. 16, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” How did Jesus react to Peter’s words? Did he say, “You’re wrong, Peter; don’t make that claim because that’s NOT who I am”? No. Instead Jesus said, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is heaven.” Again, Jesus’ point is plain.

We also recall the meeting between Thomas and Jesus in John 20:25-28:

“ . . . Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe” . . . Then He said to Thomas, “Reach your finger here and look at My hands, and reach your hand here, and put it into My side” . . . And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Again, notice that Jesus didn’t correct Thomas and say, “Stop calling me God—I’m just an ordinary man!”

Finally, in John 10:30 Jesus said plainly, “I and My Father are one.”

Once for all let’s put to rest the notion that Jesus never said He was God’s Son. The examples above are clear.

But is what Jesus said about His deity true? That’s where the messianic prophecies come in. Jesus Himself pointed us toward those prophecies: “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled” (Matt. 5:17-18).

There are over 300 individual prophecies about Christ in the Old Law. Perhaps 60 of these are “major prophecies” in the sense that they stand by themselves and are easily identified as predictions. Here’s the astounding part: *Jesus fulfilled every one of these prophecies to the fullest degree . . . and ONLY Jesus fulfilled them!* Can we know that Jesus is the unique Son of God, part of the Godhead and eternal in existence? Yes! God loves us so much that He doesn’t want us to guess about Jesus’ identity. The evidence is clear.

Let’s begin with Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus. Human reasoning would say this small town was an unlikely choice. Bethlehem was known mostly as the burial site for Rachel (Gen. 48:7) and the city where Samuel first anointed David as future king (1 Sam. 16:1-13). Jerusalem, where the temple was located, seems the natural location for the Savior’s birth. Why pick Bethlehem?

Yet, there's the prophecy in Micah 5:2: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." Matt. 2:1-2 records the fulfillment of this prophecy: "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying 'Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?'" Joseph and Mary had traveled from their hometown of Nazareth to fulfill the requirements of a royal census ordered by Caesar Augustus.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Micah's prophecy about Bethlehem is that it was made some 700 years before Jesus' birth. If one were guessing the birthplace of the Messiah, Bethlehem wouldn't be the choice—and certainly not centuries before it happened!

The Jews respected genealogy, and there are a host of prophecies about Christ's earthly lineage. He would be of Abraham's seed (Gen. 12:1-3), a descendant of Jacob through the tribe of Judah (Gen. 28:14, 49:10), of David's family (2 Sam. 7:12-14), and born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14). Matthew, the meticulous author, carefully traces Jesus' ancestry in the first chapter of his gospel account and also describes the virgin Mary. His Jewish readers would be familiar with these names and relationships. They would have identified any mistakes in Matthew's record.

Then there's the entire chapter of Isa. 53, which poignantly portrays Christ's earthly ministry and eventual crucifixion. Here the humanity of Jesus is stressed: "He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (v. 3). Isaiah also emphasizes the Lord's sacrifice: "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities . . . By His stripes we are healed" (vv. 4-5). Isaiah also describes the humility of our Lord: "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth (v. 7).

While all verses of Isa. 53 are important, v. 9 is especially revealing: "And they made His grave with the wicked—but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth." Isaiah must have wondered about the meaning of the words he wrote under influence of the Holy Spirit. Because we live on this side of the cross, however, we know the significance. Our Lord was crucified between two thieves. Normally, the bodies of those who were crucified would be dumped on a trash heap and eaten by wild animals. Instead, Joseph of Arimathea, described as a rich man in Scripture, asked for the body of Jesus, which was then placed in a new tomb (Matt. 27:57-60).

Again, how could the prophet Isaiah foresee these events and coincidences *more* than 700 years before they happened? Only God's omniscience explains such detailed prophecies.

In his book *Introduction to Christian Evidences*, Ferrell Jenkins states, "There are at least 16 prophecies which were fulfilled in one 24 hour period surrounding the death of Christ" (pg. 149). For example, it was prophesied that Jesus would be betrayed for 30 pieces of

silver, his garments would be parted and have lots cast for them, he would be pierced, but his bones would not be broken (Zech. 11:12, Psa. 22:18, Zech. 12:10, Psa. 34:20). These predictions were fulfilled in the events surrounding the crucifixion (Matt. 26:14-15, John 19:24, John 19:33-37).

Then Jesus arose on the third day. If the genuine, fulfilled prophecies are the crowning proof of Scripture's inspiration, then the empty tomb becomes the greatest evidence. Death could not hold our Lord, just as Psa. 16:10 and Matt. 12:40 predicted and just as Luke 24:2-3 revealed.

Jenkins concludes his study of the messianic prophecies by writing, "Only a divine mind could have conceived such a character through the centuries, recording these things about Him; and only a Divine person could have fulfilled the predictions. This leads us to the conclusion that Jesus is the Christ of God and that the Bible is a special divine revelation" (pg. 150).

A doubter might be tempted to argue, "Those Old Testament prophecies existed for centuries. Maybe Jesus just arranged the events in his life to make it appear that he was the Messiah." There are some things a person can arrange and some he cannot. For instance, could Jesus pre-plan his birthplace in Bethlehem? Could he know ahead of time that he would descend through David's line? How about the betrayal price of 30 pieces of silver, or the Roman soldiers dividing his garments? Could he know the soldiers would not break his legs during crucifixion? No, that reasoning won't work.

Unbelievers might also argue that Christ's followers lied about the events of His life; they never happened at all. Perhaps someone invented the gospel story.

The problem with this argument is that Jesus has always had many enemies. We're talking about people in the first century who crucified Him down to those today who reject Him. If those foes could have shown that the fulfilled prophecies were pure fiction, they would have done so.

That's not what happened. When Jesus healed the blind and mute man in Matt. 12:22-30, the Pharisees didn't deny the miracle—the evidence was standing there! The best they could do was suggest that Jesus cast out the demon by the power of Beelzebub. In fact, the Jewish authorities didn't argue against the empty tomb. Instead, they bribed the Roman soldiers to say that Christ's followers had stolen the body (Matt. 28:12-15). The proof, however, was irrefutable.

The only reasonable conclusion is that Jesus is God's Son who came to save the world. He is Christ, the Anointed One, the Prince of Peace and Lord of all. Each person accepts or rejects the evidence. What we stated at the beginning of this lesson remains true: We all make a decision about Jesus.

Questions

1. In addition to the messianic prophecies mentioned in this lesson, identify one or two more with the relevant verses.
2. Do other religious books which claim inspiration have anything like the fulfilled prophecies of Scripture?
3. How would you respond to someone who says, “Jesus just arranged his life to fit the prophecies?”
4. T/F Many people in recorded history have fulfilled all the prophecies about Christ.
5. What did Jesus say about the Scriptures in John 5:39? Given what Jesus says in this verse, what should we do to confirm His identity?
6. What does Col. 2:9 say about the deity of Christ?
7. Because the empty tomb is such a powerful witness, many skeptics try to argue against it. They suggest that the disciples identified the wrong tomb, or maybe the disciples stole His body, or some even suggest that Jesus only appeared dead. He awoke in the tomb and freed himself! Are any of these arguments likely? Carefully read Matt. 27:65-28:6. Evaluate these verses as they relate to the resurrection.
8. Do we have enough evidence to know that God exists, that the Bible is His Word, and that Jesus is His Son?

Conclusion

Do Christians believe in God in spite of the evidence or because of the evidence?

Scientism is a reductionist philosophy that says science can explain everything. Humans are simply highly-evolved meat computers; the universe is just molecules in motion. There are no souls; there is no eternity; God doesn't exist. Final judgment isn't coming. Chemistry and physics explain all of reality.

Christianity says that God created the universe, the Bible is His Word, and Jesus is His Son. People are a unique part of God's creation, and salvation is available through Christ alone.

Both ideas may be wrong, but they cannot both be right. What's our responsibility? 1 Thess. 5:21 says, "Test all things; hold fast what is good."

This workbook shows through strong evidence and the explanatory power of Scripture that Christianity is correct. Scientism cannot explain how the complex human genetic code could have developed from the undirected process of organic evolution. Scientism cannot explain the origin of life or the irreducible complexities of life. Scientism cannot explain the immensity of the universe or the precision of the cosmos. Scientism cannot explain the wonderful monarch butterfly.

The Bible can! Common experience and observation teach us that complex, functional information arises from intelligence. God is the supreme intelligence. Design demands a designer, and God is the ultimate designer. Ordinary man cannot predict the future, but God is timeless. He knows the end from the beginning.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream, with Daniel's prophecies, prove that the Bible is God's Word. The predictive prophecies about Egypt, Assyria, and Tyre confirm that conclusion.

Many of the most gifted men and women of science, math, and space, such as Antony van Leeuwenhoek, George Washington Carver, John C. Lennox, and Eileen Collins, have accepted the evidence.

The Devil wants us to doubt; but, just as Rom. 1:19-21 says, God has given us plenty of proof that He exists. Sadly, most people don't study the evidence.

Is Jesus the Son of God? The life of Christ—and *only* the life of Christ—fulfills the messianic prophecies. If those prophecies were fiction, made-up tales to trick people, the enemies of Jesus could have easily shown it. But they couldn't gainsay the evidence because of the specific predictions in the Old Testament and the many eye witnesses in the New Testament.

Jesus says, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). This is the most precious promise ever made, the greatest gift ever offered. Will you obey Jesus and come?

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