

January 8, 2012

Genesis 1:1 / Exodus 3:11-15 / Psalm 90:1-2 / Romans 1:18-20
Most Pressing Questions Series (#1) - Where Did God Come From and
How Do We Know He Exists?

Today I'm going to begin trying (to the best of my ability) to answer some of the questions handed in to me on the forms we handed out before Christmas.

In all I had about 15 requests (mostly from people under 15 years old!) asking for sermons addressing everything from what is faith and what does it do / to where did God come from / and how do we know the Bible isn't just a story someone made up / and does God answer the prayers of unbelievers / and can one lose their salvation / and why does the God of the OT seem different from the God of the NT / and more.

And interestingly, they were ALL questions people have asked me before, ever since the first day I started in the ministry! Many of them were questions I once asked, or wrestled with myself, both before and after my conversion.

Which simply goes to show: Times change and people change and fads and trends come and go, but the ultimate questions of life seem to remain pretty much the same from generation to generation.

In fact, in relation to today's message, I need to tell you that I myself went through a brief time of actually doubting God's existence -- in seminary of all places! It was 3 to 4 years AFTER I had come to Christ, and I wrestled with intense doubts concerning the existence of God. And, it was that questioning (or those doubts) that drove me to seek the answers I will share with you today.

And let me preface it by saying this: It all started, interestingly, when I prayed for more faith. And not long after I did, I was overwhelmed with severe doubts in regard to just about everything!

Why did I pray for one thing and receive just the opposite? Because that's how God often gives us what we pray for -- by INITIALLY giving us the opposite of

what we pray for! In answering our prayers God will often give us that which we need to produce what we desire or ask for.

For instance, if you pray for patience, what do you get? You get hardship, struggles, trials, hardships or suffering -- something that blocks you from immediately getting what you want. Why? Because as Paul points out in Rom. 5:3, "**trials produce patience.**"

And the same was true when I prayed for greater faith. God knew that the faith I desired would only come as I was buffeted with doubts and sought to resolve those doubts and confronted each one head on and considered all the arguments involved. And in doing that actually made my faith more secure.

It was no longer a, "*believe it simply because this is what Christians are supposed to believe,*" type faith. It was now a faith that had come to see that what the Bible teaches about God, **NOT ONLY MAKES SENSE**, but given all the options, and what we know and see all around us in life and the creation, **ACTUALLY MAKES MORE SENSE** than any theory that denies His existence!

What I discovered when I actually looked into it, is that there is **FAR MORE** evidence pointing to the existence of a Creator, than against a Creator. Yet I didn't know that until those doubts drove me to dig deeper.

So what I'd like to do in the time we have remaining, is share with you the things that are to me, the FIVE MOST CONVINCING PROOFS for the existence of God (remembering that each one could be a sermon in itself)!

And the **FIRST** or most convincing proof -- *for me* -- the one that helped eradicate the doubts I had in regard to the existence of God is really very simple. It goes like this: ***Being cannot come from non-being. And, therefore, if we exist -- if life exists -- God must exist, for no living thing could ever come from nothing.***

Whether you are a secular scientist / or a Christian theologian (or a Christian scientist) doesn't matter. For all three schools of thought agree that there was a time when the material universe did not exist / and a time later on when it came

into existence. (Thus the ongoing debate as to the age of the universe. Is it thousands, millions or billions of years old?)

Yet for today's purposes, let me say that the issue is NOT the age of the universe. That's entirely irrelevant to the point we need to make. Because the issue that matters in regard to proving the existence of God, is that at one point in time nothing existed, and at a later point in time the material universe had come into existence. And it's the mere existence of the creation itself (let alone its order and complexity) that gives us the greatest evidence for a Creator.

For as one popular song correctly asserts: *"Nothing comes from nothing. Nothing ever could."* Because it's not possible for *SOMETHING* to come from *NOTHING*! Being cannot come from non-being and life (especially complex organisms) cannot come from nothing!

I know it's nearly impossible for us to picture "nothing" in our minds. An unending, black, empty, void where nothing exists -- as Gen. 1:1 puts it. No oxygen / no atoms / no elements / no particles / no microscopic organisms or anything! But that is the way the universe was at one point.

And as the most reasonable argument for the existence of God goes: ***"Life must come from life, and being must come from being, because something can never come into existence out of nothing!"***

For life to come forth, there had to be a Source of life from which it came -- some eternal Being that existed prior to the material universe -- and was the well-spring from which all other life derived its life.

So, it's not just *FAITH*, my friends, its *REASON* that points to the reality of a Creator. In fact, it is reason even *MORE* than faith that assures us that God must exist!

Heb. 11:3 does say: ***"By faith we understand that the universe was formed by God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible."*** That is, God didn't use existing matter. But rather, matter came forth

by the command of the invisible God Himself. Theologians have always called this, "creation ex nihilo" or "creation out of nothing."

Yet this is where scientists (or former engineers like myself) struggle. Because to say that matter was created "out of nothing" violates one of the first and most fundamental law of physics. A law which states that, **"Matter cannot be created or destroyed."**

It can change form. It can be converted from solid / to liquid / to gas / to plasma / and back again / And atoms can be combined into molecules and split again into their component parts. But matter cannot be created from nothing nor can it be completely destroyed and return to nothing.

That's why the declaration that God created everything from nothing causes people to struggle. It's not natural for us to believe it. In fact, that's why faith becomes necessary. / Because it so violates what is *NATURAL*, that it drives us to concede the existence of the *SUPERNATURAL*.

You see, the Bible DOES NOT BEGIN by building up an extensive airtight argument for the existence of God. It simply states: **"In the beginning God created..."** But don't misconstrue that! Because as we've seen, that's all it needs to say to prove God's existence!

The simple fact that the creation came into existence / combined with the fact that something cannot come from nothing / is all the reasonable proof anyone needs to justify the assertion that God not only DOES exist, but MUST exist!

And that same argument answers the SECOND part of our initial question as well: "Where did God come from?" And the answer comes to us in Ps. 90:2: **"Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth, and the world; from everlasting to everlasting you are God."**

Where, then, did God come from? The Bible simply tells us what it must: He didn't come from anywhere. He simply was, and always will be -- from the everlasting past to the everlasting future! And when you think about it, it has to be that way! For again, since being cannot come from non-being (and that includes God Himself), that means that if God is (and we know He is because

we are) God must always have existed, for He could not have come into being out of nothing. / Or put more simply, our existence proves His existence, and His existence proves there was never a time when He did not exist!

That even helps us understand why God, in Ex. 3:14, gave Himself the name, "**I AM.**" In Scripture God's Name says something about Him / and the interestingly, the Name He gave Moses is simply the Hebrew verb, "To Be."

His Name essentially means He is, and was and ever will be. He is the Ever-living or eternally self-existent One. He is the uncreated Creator who had no beginning and will have no end. He is from everlasting to everlasting.

And I KNOW this stretches the human mind beyond its capabilities, because as finite beings we know of nothing else in all creation that didn't have a beginning somewhere in time. Yet God does not. He couldn't have! For since He could not come from nothing, He must always have existed -- hard as that is for the finite mind to grasp!

That's why I've often said, "**Faith is not contrary to reason; faith is above reason.**" Reason can only take us so far, before it runs into the ceiling of its own limitations. And at that point (after reason has taken us as far as it can) faith must take over. Because faith picks up, where reason leaves off.

Then **SECONDLY**, in Romans chapter 1, Paul essentially tells us that when it comes to the creation, the intricacy of its *DESIGN* and order (and he's appealing to nothing but human observation and reason) is such irrefutable proof of the existence of a *DESIGNER* that it leaves all people without excuse in regard to proving His existence.

You may be able to look at the creation, and argue about what the creator is like, but no one, says Paul, can look at the creation, and **not understand** there has to be a Creator.

In v. 20, after telling us that, "**what may be known about God is plain to us, for God has made it plain to us,**" Paul goes on to say: "**For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities -- His eternal power and**

divine nature -- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

It's been called the "Watchmaker Argument." And the common illustration goes like this: ***"If you were walking through the woods (or in a field, or on a beach) and were to find a gold pocket watch, beautifully embossed with diamonds and intricate etchings of people on it / and you open it up and see all the intricate springs and gears -- all so precise and all functioning so perfectly -- you would know by nothing more than pure reason and common sense -- that someone had to have made it."***

It didn't just happen. All those precise parts didn't simply join themselves together. Someone made them and put them together. Someone who was wise, and gifted, and had knowledge, and talents, and tools! Because such intricate design always points to a designer.

James Keener, professor of Mathematics at the University of Utah, says this: ***"I find it impossible to believe there is no Creator. In all my experience, in all of science, I have never heard of an effect that did not have a cause. I have never seen a design that did not have a designer, a law that had no lawgiver, an order that had not been ordered, information that had no informer. Chance produces nothing. Saying something happened by chance...is simply not an acceptable answer. It is an open admission of ignorance."***

Dr. Harold Morowitz, former professor of biophysics at Yale University, estimated that the probability of the chance formation of the smallest, simplest form of living organism known is about one out of ten to the 340 millionth power. / Dr. Carl Sagan of Cornell University (one of the most prominent evolutionists of our time) figured even steeper odds against the simplest life beginning naturally on a planet such as earth. According to Sagan, the probability would be about 1 out of ten to the 2 billionth power.

(Dr. Bert Thompson's, The Scientific Case for Creation, Apologetics Press Inc., 1999)

Those odds would be similar to saying that: One could drop a trillion pennies / on a perfectly flat surface / from a height of about 20 feet / and have every single penny land on its side, standing up!

Or more in keeping with Sagan's odds: That one could drop all the parts of a Boeing 747 aircraft -- one by one -- on the tarmac of the Philly airport and have them all come together by themselves to form a complete, airworthy, flyable plane.

And it's phenomenal odds like that which have led even unbelieving skeptics to concede there must be a God.

You see, not just from the standpoint of faith, but also from the standpoint of reason, the atheist really is in a position of intellectual disadvantage. Because the abundance of facts that can be gleaned from the creation -- both its complexity and its uncanny order -- overwhelmingly point to the existence of a Creator.

Rather than the Christian being the one who must hide their head in the sand to keep from looking at the evidence, it is the atheist who must do so. For as Rom. 1:20 suggests, design and order and organization and uniformity and consistency and methodology and balance and stability and structure and the precise, interdependent, harmonious interaction between all the elements of creation -- *all resoundingly shout in the face of anyone that is willing to be objective* -- that there has to be a Designer, Organizer, Sustainer or Creator behind the creation.

The Psalmist, by simply standing back, and looking at the beauty and majesty of creation, could say in Ps. 19:1: ***"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech..."***

That is, day after day they relentlessly declare to any objective observer (in a voice that cannot be silenced): *"God made this! God made this! God made this! It displays His knowledge. It displays His power. It displays His wisdom! And it exhibits His care!"*

My own doubts about the existence of God were not resolved by refusing to consider the facts of science; they were resolved by looking at as many as I could and seeing where they all undeniably pointed (or I should say, whom they all undeniably pointed to).

And that's not all. The **THIRD** proof for God's existence comes from Paul in Romans 2:12-16, where he tells us that God's existence can be discerned and clearly shown from the fact that humans have a conscience, which indicates a moral law written upon their hearts, and thus a law-giver.

And he means that even people who have never read the Bible or the 10 Commandments, seem to have an uncanny sense that certain things are just plain right, and others are just plain wrong. And yes, the minutia of the details vary from culture to culture, but almost universally, across the globe, murdering innocent people is considered wrong. As is lying or deceiving, adultery, dishonoring ones parents, and stealing.

This is actually the thing God used to turn C. S. Lewis, from atheism to Christianity. If I may summarize his argument, Lewis essentially says:

"There are two odd things about the human race. The First is that we have an idea that there is a way we ought to behave / and the second is that we do not in fact behave that way. Stones and trees, light rays and molecules, simply are what they are, and it makes no sense to say they ought to be different.

But the human race, on the other hand, knows that it ought to be different. And this discovery that we are not what we feel we ought to be leads us to certain deductions. Where does this feeling that we ought to behave a certain way come from? / Some say it's from our own realization that society would function better if people behaved differently. But why should we care whether society as a whole is better? The idea that we ought to care about human society is, itself, one of those "ought to's" -- which come from a unknown source -- a source outside the self, yet is fixed deep within the self."

And after going over many possible objections and explanations, Lewis says: Something is inside human beings, trying to influence them to be-have in certain ways / and making them aware that humanity's behaviour does not measure up to the standard which it prompts us to pursue.

He admits that his argument doesn't prove that this power is God as Christians understand him. It only proves that **"Something"** (with a capital "S") **"exists"**

outside the material universe and directs or influences it, morally." That which Paul unapologetically calls, "***the law of God written on the human heart,***" and causing their conscience to accuse them when they violate it, and defend them when they conform to it.

It's proof, Paul would say with Lewis, that the Creator is a moral Being, and that we as creatures made in His image, are also moral beings, and therefore responsible to obey that law He has written on our hearts / and culpable to punishment if we do not (Rom. 2:16).

But even that is not all. For the **FOURTH** proof of God's existence is the existence of evil. I have known so many people (my wife being one of them and myself being another) who came to be convinced of the reality of God by being confronted with the harsh reality of evil, and then reasoning backwards, that if evil exists, then good, or God, as its opposite, must also exist.

For as humans, we often learn things by way of contrasting opposites. We have a better idea of what love is after we have seen or experienced hatred. We know what ugliness is because we've seen beauty. / We know what sin is when we see true goodness. / And we really only discover the true nature of grace, after we've lived under the unbearable yoke of the law or legalistic bondage.

And the same is often true in relation to God. Many people are skeptical of the existence of God until something horribly and undeniably EVIL happens, and then, through seeing or experiencing evil, GOD becomes more credible! They become convinced of GOOD by seeing EVIL, and the reality of GOD, by seeing or experiencing things that point to the reality of SATAN.

I've mentioned this before, but one of the most amazing statistics in recent American history points to this as well. On the two Sundays following 9/11, some 7,000,000 people who rarely (or up until that time, never) darkened the doors of a church, flooded to churches in droves.

WHY? Because they had all witnessed acts of raw, horrifying, undeniable EVIL, and that unavoidable confrontation with evil, convinced them (if only for a short time) that there must be a God. / For if evil exists (and you can't look around without seeing it) reason alone would tell us that God must exist as well.

And then **LAST** (and I give you so many to show you how much proof or irrefutable evidence there is) we have the testimony of providence, experience and the miracles of answered prayer. My cousin, who was a zealous Buddhist at the time (and whose dad boasted to me that the reason he was a Buddhist, was because he could be a Buddhist and atheist at the same time, since you can be a Buddhist and not believe in God) said to me at a holiday party many years ago, ***"There has to be a God. Too many things have happened in my life that can only be explained if there is a God."***

I agree. Some people would say it's fate / and others, chance / and others, coincidence. And if it were only one or two things in an entire lifetime, they may be able to rationalize them away.

But in my own life, I experienced too many things which when I looked back at them, could only be explained by the existence of a personal God, whose hand of providence was sovereignly ordering and overseeing the affairs of my life.

In them I saw in a plan unfolding, and a plan speaks of a Planner! / Oversight suggests and Overseer. / The hand of providence suggests one who moves that hand.

So with so much undeniable evidence pointing to the existence of an eternal creator, why do some still deny Him? Rom. 1:18 gives us the answer. Paul says it's because their sin has made them blind to it, or made them want to deny what is obvious to them.

"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness..."

And what Paul means by "**wrath**" is God "**giving people over**" (verses 24, 26, and 28). That is, God lets them continue to believe and do the foolish things they want to believe and do.

It's their sin (or their desire to cling to some sin) that causes them to "suppress" (or deny) the truth that God so plainly reveals to them in the creation.