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EVIDENCE FOR THE OTHER SIDE

In chapters three and four we have considered 10 separate lines of evidence, all of which point to the truth of these facts: that God does exist; that the spirit world is real; and that supernatural events do occur. All of this evidence is separate and apart from the Bible. It is evidence we can see in the universe around us, evidence we can see within ourselves, and evidence we can observe from human experience. Chapters eight through thirteen will present evidence for the truth of Christianity – evidence for the inspiration of the Bible and for the deity of Christ. Of course, that evidence will also be further proof of the existence of God, of the spirit world, and of supernatural events. But the 10 lines of evidence we have considered this far are:

1. Evidence from cause and effect.
2. Evidence from design.
3. Evidence from beauty.
4. Evidence from human self-consciousness.
5. Evidence from the human ability to reason.
6. Evidence from the human moral nature.
7. Evidence from the human ability to choose.
8. Evidence from reports of miracles, providential happenings, and answered prayers.
9. Evidence from other spiritual experiences.
10. Evidence from the universal desire for God.

These 10 converging lines of evidence are proof beyond a reasonable doubt of God's existence and of the reality of spiritual things and supernatural events, and would easily satisfy the standards of proof set by a court of law, unless other evidence was offered that disproves or explains away the affirmative evidence. Since Christianity claims to be the religion of truth and knowledge, it is certainly fair and appropriate that we consider the evidence for the other side. That is the purpose of chapters five, six, and seven.

GOD AND THE SPIRIT WORLD CANNOT BE SEEN

The first Russian astronaut into space said he looked all around and did not see God, implying that this confirmed his atheism. Of course, the fact that God and spirits are not visible to us, is not proof that they do not exist, and probably few atheists would claim it is. We cannot see gravity either, but we believe that it exists because we can see its results. In like manner, we can see the results of God – evidence of what He

has done and is doing — and thus believe He exists. That God is invisible actually strengthens our faith and confidence in Him, because we can see that all visible things are wasting away.

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (II Cor. 4:18).

*MAN IS TOO INSIGNIFICANT
FOR GOD TO CARE ABOUT*

The late Harlow Shapley, world famous astronomer at Harvard University, in a speech delivered some years ago at Carthage, Missouri, explained how insignificant the earth is in the enormous universe, and then suggested that, if there is a God out there, human beings are very egotistical to believe that a God with so much to look after could have time for them.

This argument, however, is based on the same anthropomorphism (attributing human characteristics to God) that is exhibited by the most primitive pagan religions, and of which unbelievers often accuse the Bible. One of the favorite attacks on the Bible is that the writers have fabricated a god in the image of man. It is true that man was created in the image of God, and thus, man has some attributes in common with God. But the Bible never teaches that man is equal to God and never attributes to God the imperfections and limitations of men — in fact, just the opposite:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. As the

heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isa. 55:8-9).

So it is surprising that modern scientists and scholars should fall into the primitive error of anthropomorphism by making this argument. Certainly the all knowing, all powerful, ever present, supernatural God who created the universe is not limited by the size of His own creation. He can mark the fall of every sparrow and number the hairs of every head. The inability of modern scientists to understand how God can do all this is more evidence of His supernatural greatness.

THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING

If God exists, and He is good, and He is all powerful, then why is there so much suffering in the world? Unbelievers argue that either God is not good, or He is not all powerful, or He does not exist. Not only is this a favorite argument of unbelievers, the problem of suffering also is troubling to many Christians. We cannot expect to know all of the answers from our limited human knowledge, but the following suggestions do throw some light on the problem and are enough to show that the presence of suffering in the world is not convincing evidence that God does not exist, or that He is not good and all powerful.

1. Can we know joy without sorrow, pleasure without pain? Perhaps we need the suffering of this life before we can appreciate the full joy of heaven.

2. We are not robots. God gave us free will – the power to choose. This freedom carries with it the possibility of our doing evil and causing suffering. Much

suffering results from man's sin.

3. Our sense of values is often wrong because we lack the perspective of eternity. The things we value most, money, long life, good health, physical beauty, athletic ability, may be of comparatively small value, or may even be harmful to us.

4. Suffering may be beneficial to the sufferer. The Apostle Paul suffered from a thorn in the flesh that, by teaching him humility and making him more dependent upon God, actually made him into a better preacher. Great musicians and writers are sometimes those who have suffered. Suffering can teach discipline and cause the sufferer to focus his life upon those things that really count. Most important of all, suffering can lead one to God and thus bestow eternal blessings.

5. Suffering may produce good for others. A child with leukemia, a family left destitute by fire, a city devastated by an earthquake, all these bring an outpouring of love and generosity that demonstrates the very best in people, and we can only guess at the eternal good that results. The courage of those who suffer sometimes inspires others to greater heights. And, as Tiny Tim pointed out, suffering can make others more grateful to God for the blessings they have.

6. Some suffering may be a warning of judgment to come. As such, it is really a great kindness from God.

7. Some suffering is deserved as just punishment for sin. An arrogant creature that defies, ridicules, and disobeys its own Creator actually deserves more punishment than ever received in this life.

8. The Christian faith is not a religion of comfort and ease that would produce moral and cultural decay for mankind. We are not promised freedom from

suffering, but the spiritual power to overcome suffering.

9. Finally, and most importantly, if the evidence proves that God exists and is our Creator, then we have no right to question anything He does. The clay does not say to the Potter, "Why have you made me thus?" If He is the Creator of the universe, then His wisdom so far surpasses ours that it is the height of arrogance for us to tell Him what is right and wrong, or how He should run the universe.

We need to trust God enough to know that, whether we understand it or not, He can always bring good out of evil. Remember, the greatest evil the world has seen was the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Yet from that tragedy, God brought forth the greatest good the world has seen.

A world without sorrow, without pain, without failure, would also be a world without joy, without pleasure, without success. It would be dull and monotonous, a robot-like existence that would rob us of our humanity. Even with our limited knowledge we can see that suffering in the world is not proof that God does not exist, nor is it proof that He lacks goodness and power.

THE SUPPOSED GREAT AGE OF THE EARTH

That the earth is billions of years old is an essential doctrine of atheism, and is probably considered by atheists to be their strongest argument against Christianity. In their debates with creationists, evolutionists always dwell on this age question. Actually, the age of the earth is a separate question from evolution versus

creation, but it is related, because, while creation could have occurred whether the earth is young or old, evolution must have a very old earth. So the age of the earth question is vital to evolution. An old earth does not prove that evolution did happen, but a young earth does prove it did not happen.

The age of the earth, also, is a separate question from the existence or non-existence of God and the spirit world. God can exist regardless of the age of the earth. But the age question is the favorite point of attack against the Bible and has been used to undermine the faith of many in God and in the reality of things spiritual and supernatural.

Christians have resorted to various means of reconciling the Bible to the supposed great age of the earth. One such means is to treat the Genesis days as geologic ages during which God created by means of evolution. This is sometimes called theistic evolution. Of course, this is not impossible. God could have created by any method He chose. But this theory does place a strained construction upon the language of the Bible. Also, evolution would seem to be a clumsy and inefficient way for God to go about the work of creation. And finally, if God did create by evolution, the evidence should appear in the fossil record. As will be seen later, the evidence is not there.

Others have suggested that the Genesis days were short periods of creative activity, separated by long ages without any creation going on. The sedimentary rocks, fossils, and other appearances of great age, are assigned to the intervening ages. This theory rejects evolution and thus avoids the problems connected with it. However, while it is not impossible, this theory also puts a strained construction upon the

language of the Bible.

Probably the most popular means of reconciling the Bible to the supposed great age of the earth, is the gap theory. This theory accepts the 6 days of creation described in Genesis, Chapter One, as being 6 consecutive 24 hour days and agrees they occurred about 6000 years ago. However, the first day began with Genesis 1:3. The creation of the heavens and the earth, as described in Genesis 1:1, occurred some time before that. All we are told is that it was "In the beginning," which could have been a few years or even billions of years before the 6 days of creative activity. Since the word "was" in Genesis 1:2 can also be translated "became", this theory holds that the 2nd verse tells us of the destruction of all that was on the earth previous to the 6 day creation period, so that "the earth became formless and empty," and that sometime thereafter, God created in 6 days the things we see now.

According to this gap theory, we are not told what was on the earth prior to its becoming formless and empty, because those things have nothing to do with the story of redemption, which is the main theme of the Bible. For all we know, the earth could have been teeming with plant and animal life back at that time, and this could explain fossils, coal beds, oil deposits, etc. Again it must be said that this theory is possible, and it is accepted by some sincere, Bible-believing Christians. But many others believe that the gap theory requires a strained construction of the Bible and thus reject it.

Treating the Genesis days as actual 24 hour days following immediately one after another, best fits the language of the Bible, and probably is accepted by

most conservative Christians, although not all accept the 6000 year age suggested by Ussher's chronology. The genealogies listed in Genesis, Chapters 5 and 11 may not include all of the links, as Moses may have eliminated some of the less important men for the sake of brevity. But even if this is true, it still leaves a young age for the earth, so the question remains — can an intelligent person look at the available evidence and still reasonably believe in an earth age measured in thousands of years instead of billions of years? For the following reasons, the answer to that question is yes:

1. Creation necessarily involves the appearance of age. Adam was created a grown man. When he was only 10 seconds old, an anthropologist may have estimated his age at 21 years. If plants were to be created, it may have been necessary to create soil to sustain the plants and, also, to create a process to continually replenish the soil. But a geologist looking at this soil and the replenishing process only seconds after the creation, would have calculated a great age for the earth based on the amount of soil he found. No matter what is created, that is, brought into existence from non-existence, it will immediately appear to be older than it actually is. To deny this is to deny the possibility of creation, which, as we have seen before, is unreasonable to do.

Therefore, everything we see on the earth, regardless of how old it may appear, could have been created by God in a moments time and put here for our use or for some other purpose of His own. Does this make God a deceiver? Certainly not, because He tells us in His Word what was done, and we are deceived only if we choose to disregard what He has said.

2. The various dating methods used by scientists to compute a great age for the earth require at least two assumptions, neither of which can be shown to be true. First, they must assume what the condition of the material was when the process began, and second, they must assume that the process itself has always proceeded at the same rate throughout elapsed time. Not only are scientists unable to show the validity of these assumptions, there is growing evidence from geology that mountains were raised, canyons were cut, rock strata were deposited, and fossils were buried, not by gradual, uniform processes, but by sudden catastrophes.

The old idea of uniformitarianism, which geologists have believed so long, and upon which Darwin relied so heavily, is giving way to catastrophism. Since it is now clear that conditions have not continued in a uniform manner, it is no longer reasonable to believe that the timing processes are accurate.

3. There are many dating methods which show a very young age for the earth. An excellent book by Dr. Henry M. Morris and Dr. Gary E. Parker, entitled *What is Creation Science*, Master Books, El Cajon, Calif., 1987, contains a list of 68 dating methods which vary in indicated age for the earth from 500 million years down to 100 years. Of course none of these processes is really accurate because of the assumptions that must be made and because of the influence of outside factors. Nevertheless, the fact that many scientists rely on those processes that indicate the earth is very old while ignoring those processes that point to a young age, is revealing evidence of unscientific bias.

4. Actually most of the dating is based on the assumption that evolution is true. Rock strata are

dated by the fossils they contain, and since, according to evolution, the fossils are very old, it follows that the rocks are also very old. But, as will be seen in chapters six and seven, the overwhelming weight of scientific evidence is against evolution. Of course, if evolution is not true, neither are the dates given for the rocks.

In books, in museums, in schools, in the news media, we are constantly confronted by the assumption of a great age for the earth. Christians should remember that this is just an assumption. In addition to the evidence against a great age that is presented in this chapter, chapters eight and nine will present evidence for the truth and inspiration of the Bible, and that will be the best evidence of all that God created the heavens and the earth, and that He did it when the Bible says He did.

CHRISTIANITY ONLY ONE OF MANY RELIGIONS

It is claimed that the Bible is only one of many great religious books, and that Christianity is only one of several great religions. Since these other religions also have large followings, it is argued that they should be treated as equal to Christianity. Furthermore, it is argued that the proliferation of hundreds of cults, many of them offshoots from Christianity, shows that all religion is man-made and unreliable.

None of the foregoing should surprise a Christian. Jesus made it very clear that most people would not follow Him:

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and

narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it (Matt. 7:13-14).

The apostles repeatedly warned that false teachers would arise, and that many would follow them, even many Christians:

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping (II Pet. 2:1-3).

Note what an amazing prophecy this is. Peter stated that false teachers would arise among the Christians, that many would follow them, that they would bring the way of truth into disrepute, that they would be greedy, and that they would exploit their followers with stories they have made up. How often we have seen this prophecy fulfilled in our own time, and how we have marveled to see seemingly intelligent people exploited by obvious frauds. Instead of being an argument against Christianity, the exact fulfillment of such prophecy is convincing evidence in its favor.

Furthermore, a study of the causes of the growth of the other great world religions shows that their growth can be explained by natural causes — by military force; by political and social pressure; by appealing to the lower nature of mankind; by demanding little or no moral regeneration; by the use of ritualism; and by compromise with other religions. On the other hand, the early growth of Christianity cannot be explained by

natural causes, although in later years some corrupted forms of Christianity did grow in this way.

The early Christian Church grew rapidly in spite of the following adverse factors:

1. It was not spread by force or political power. In fact, Christians were cruelly persecuted and oppressed.

2. It was not spread by social pressure or influence. In fact, Christians were looked down upon and often became outcasts, even from their own families.

3. It was not spread by economic advantage. In fact, Christians often lost their jobs, had their property confiscated, and became poor and destitute.

4. It was not spread by promising salvation through ritualism. In fact, Christians were told that physical rites would not save them.

5. It was not spread by appealing to man's lower nature. In fact, it demanded a drastic change in the way people lived.

6. It was not spread by compromise with other religions. In fact, it claimed to be the only true religion and refused to submit to Greek paganism or even to obey the Roman demand to worship the emperor.

The amazing growth of the early Christian Church, despite all these powerful forces working against it, cannot be explained on natural grounds. Such growth is strong evidence that the Church was from God, was guided by the Holy Spirit, and was blessed with supernatural gifts. The wise Jewish teacher, Gamaliel, correctly assessed the prospects for the new Christian Church, as follows:

Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from

God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God (Acts 5:38-39).

Actually none of these 5 arguments offers any real evidence that God does not exist or that Christianity is not true. Instead they are merely assertions by man that God should have done things differently. In his arrogance, man offers advice to God. You should not be invisible. You should not have made the universe so large. You should not permit bad things to happen to people. You should not allow people to choose other religions. You cannot just create a canyon or a valley, or scour one out with a great flood, but instead you must start with a plateau and let the water and wind gradually cut out the canyons and the valleys.

God answered this kind of foolish arrogance many centuries ago:

Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said: "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone— (Job 38:1-6).

Study Questions

1. Why should Christians never fear the truth?
2. What is anthropomorphism? Explain how unbelieving scientists are sometimes guilty of this.
3. How is the problem of suffering used as an argu-

ment against God?

4. Give at least 4 reasons why God may permit suffering.

5. Why is a great age for the earth a vital doctrine of atheism?

6. What are some of the ways that some Christians have attempted to reconcile the Bible to the supposed great age of the earth?

7. Explain why it is reasonable for an intelligent Christian to believe the earth is comparatively young.

8. Why is the fact that so many people follow false teachers and bizarre cults, actually proof of the existence of God and the truth of the Bible?

9. Why is the rapid growth of the early Christian Church evidence that it was from God?

10. What caused the growth of the other great religions of the world?

