

“God, Are You Real?”

September 24, 2017

Brian Watson

Today, we’re starting something new. I’m going to give a series of messages answering people’s questions. I titled the sermon series, “If You Could Ask God One Question, What Would It Be?” The idea is to see what people would ask God if they could speak to him directly. But I’m also taking questions about God, or even handling people’s questions about the Bible or the Christian faith.

When I ask, “If you could ask God one question, what would it be?” I’m presupposing that there is a God. I’m assuming that God exists. Most of us here are Christians, and we may never doubt the existence of God. But some of us may have doubts, and we all know people who are skeptics. They may wonder if indeed God exists. Their question may be, “God, are you real?” Or, “God, are you there?” We all know people who outright reject the existence of God. Simply quoting the Bible to these people likely won’t work, since they don’t yet trust that the Bible is the written word of God. Before they can believe the word of God, they need to know that there is a God.

So, how do we know that God exists? I’m going to answer that question as well as I can in about forty-five minutes. Of course, I can’t give a full answer in one message. But I want to give us some good reasons to believe that God—and specifically the God of the Bible—indeed exists. I’m going to work through this very carefully and logically, so please follow closely.

To begin to answer this question, we need to have some idea of who God is. Monotheistic religions—religions that believe in one God—believe that God is a perfect being.¹ The standard monotheistic vision of God is that he is personal, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, benevolent, and immaterial. That last part is very important. God isn’t matter. The Bible says that God “dwells in unapproachable light” and that “no one has ever seen or can see” him (1 Tim. 6:16).² And Jesus said that God is spirit (John 4:24). That means that we can’t see God.

¹ Anselm (1033–1109), a medieval Christian theologian, said to God: “You are something than which nothing greater can be thought.” In other words, God is the greatest conceivable being. Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion*, trans. M. J. Charlesworth, in *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans, Oxford World’s Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 87.

² All Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

The Bible also says that there is a separation between us God and us due to our sin, which is our rebellion against God, our disobedience of his commands, and our general way of living life without reference to him. Isaiah 59:1–2 says this:

- ¹ Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save,
or his ear dull, that it cannot hear;
- ² but your iniquities have made a separation
between you and your God,
and your sins have hidden his face from you
so that he does not hear.

This explains why we don't always sense God, why we don't see him or hear his voice directly. We are estranged from God.

How would you get to know a stranger? There are two ways. The first way is you could get to know *about* the stranger. You could learn facts about him or her. You could dig up information online, see if any news stories are written about this person, see if they have a website or blog, or discover their social media profiles. You could even stalk this person or hire a private investigator to do that for you.

Yet we can't see God. We can't learn about him, at least directly, through observation or experimentation. Though we can't see God, the Bible tells us that there are clues to his existence which are available to all people. In Christian theology, we call these clues general revelation.

One passage that tells us this is found in the New Testament book of Romans. Romans is a letter written by the apostle Paul, who was commissioned by Jesus to spread the message of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. This is what he writes in Romans 1:18–20:

- ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

Paul's point toward the beginning of this letter is that all human beings are in quite a predicament. We all know God exists, but we ignore him. We suppress the truth about him and don't live for him. Instead, we worship false gods. And, therefore, we stand condemned by God. Now, if true, that's bad news. Paul does get to good news later. I will, too. But I want to focus on what he says about our knowledge of God. He says that that "what can be known about God is

plain,” because “God has shown it.” More specifically, two of God’s attributes, “his eternal power and divine nature,” are evident from “the things that have been made.”³

Is this true? Can we know something of God from the created order?

Well, yes, I believe we can. This doesn’t mean we can know everything about God from studying the universe, but we can know that he exists, and that he is eternal and powerful and intelligent.

Some people don’t realize that there are many arguments for the existence of God. When I say, “argument,” I don’t mean a fight or a quarrel. I mean a philosophical argument, a case presented to show that God exists. Each argument is not definitive “proof” that God exists. Someone can always doubt any of the premises of these arguments, or simply refuse to believe. But they show that the idea that God exists is rational. And when multiple arguments for God are presented, they accumulate a certain weight. In short, together, these arguments make the case that the God hypothesis, that God exists, makes far better sense of life than the atheistic hypothesis, that there is no God. You can’t simply write these arguments off.

When it comes to arguing for the existence of God from the existence of the universe and the complexity of life, there are at two major arguments. The first argument for the existence of God that we’ll consider today is called the cosmological argument. I know, “cosmological” is a big word. It simply refers to the “cosmos,” or the universe. The idea is that the very existence of the universe needs explaining. Why, after all, is there something rather than nothing? This argument states that the best argument for the existence of the universe is that God created it.

Put more formally, this is the argument:

1. Everything that begins to exist has a cause
2. The universe began to exist
3. Therefore, the universe has a cause

Let me explain each point. The first premise is that everything that *begins to exist* has a cause. That’s an important qualification. Because there is one thing that didn’t begin to exist. And that thing is the ultimate bedrock, the thing that needs no other explanation. We believe that thing, or being, is God. Christianity has always believed that God is eternal, uncreated. He doesn’t require an explanation. The Bible presupposes his existence and begins with these words: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). God sometimes calls

³ See also Psalm 19:1–6.

himself “I am” (Exod. 3:14; Isa. 41:4; 43:10, 11, 13; 44:6; 48:12; John 8:24). The idea is that God exists, period. He doesn’t need any other explanation. He is the one necessary being. Everything else is contingent. That means that everything else might not have come into existence. The universe doesn’t need to exist. But God does.

Now, if you reject God, you have to state that universe exists, period. It’s just a brute fact. And many scientists used to believe that the universe itself was eternal, that it had no beginning. But in the twentieth century, significant scientific discoveries called that belief into question. And that leads us to the second premise of this argument, which is that the universe began to exist.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, many scientists believed that the universe was eternal and static. However, some American astronomers, including Edwin Hubble, observed that distant heavenly bodies were moving away from the Earth, leading them to conclude that the universe was expanding. Judging from the current rate of expansion and extrapolating this data backwards would suggest that at one point the universe was very small and very dense. Scientists believe that all matter, energy, and space were in this dense ball, which expanded into the universe as we know it. Though scientists can’t get “behind” a certain point using models, this suggests that the universe had a definite beginning. This is the so-called “Big Bang.”

Some Christians are afraid of the “Big Bang,” because they think accepting it is the same thing as accepting some form of Darwinian evolution. But the two really don’t go together. In fact, the term “Big Bang” was created by an atheist, Fred Hoyle, in 1949, and it was intended as a pejorative term. He rejected the Big Bang theory because it suggested that God created the universe.

In the 1940s, scientists predicted that if this hypothesis were true, then cosmic background radiation would be found on the edges of the universe. In other words, residual energy of the initial and incredibly hot explosion would be found at the edge of the universe in a cool, harmless form, and the temperature of this radiation would be uniform all around the edges of the universe. This prediction was confirmed in 1965, when two physicists, Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson, working at the Bell Telephone Labs, found this cosmic background radiation. They were working on a satellite designed to detect microwave radiation and they found that such radiation was coming to earth from all directions of space. Penzias and Wilson won the Nobel Prize in 1978. When he won that prize, Arno Penzias said, “The best data we have

concerning the big bang are exactly what I would have predicted, had I nothing to go on but the five books of Moses, the Psalms, the Bible as a whole.”⁴

Penzias said that because if everything that begins to exist has a cause, and the universe began to exist, then it has a cause. What else could cause the universe to exist except God? Not only would an incredibly powerful force need to create the universe, but, as we’ll see, an intelligent agent would have to plan and carry out this creation.

More of the details of this argument are available online at our website, wbcommunity.org. If you search for the “Articles” section under the “Media” tab, you can find an article about this cosmological argument with far more details than I have time to present this morning.⁵

Before we move on to the second argument we’ll look at this morning, I want us to consider this: If God can create a universe out of nothing, can he not perform miracles? Some people have a hard time believing miracles are possible. Yet miracles are reported throughout the world on a somewhat regular basis, even if they are relatively rare. And miracles are certainly part of the Christian faith. If God could make a universe out of nothing, could he not cause a virgin to become pregnant? Could he not raise Jesus from the dead? Can he not, some day in the future, restore the universe to be a perfect place? If God has the power to cause a universe to come of nothing, he has the power to change us and fix this broken world.

Since time is short this morning, I’ll move on to the second argument. The big fancy name for this argument is the teleological argument, but I’ll simply call it the design argument. In fact, there are many different design arguments that can be made. All of these arguments state that life is designed, and therefore there must have been a Designer who created life. And, of course, that designer is God.

Put more formally, here is the design argument:

1. Every design has a designer.
2. The universe has highly complex design.
3. Therefore, the universe has a Designer.

The first premise of the argument is obvious. Of course, every design has a designer. If I found a machine of some kind, even if I didn’t know what it did and even if it were broken, I

⁴ This was reported in *The New York Times*, March 12, 1978, quoted in Edgar Andrews, *Who Made God?* (Carlisle, PA: EP Books, 2009), 94.

⁵ See <https://wbcommunity.org/cosmological-argument>.

would still recognize that someone designed and made that machine. We recognize design when we see it.

That leads to the second, and more controversial premise, which is that we find evidence of highly complex design in the universe. As expected, atheists challenge this premise. Francis Crick, who co-discovered the structure of the DNA, says that “biologists must constantly keep in mind that what they see was not designed, but rather evolved.”⁶ He said that because biologists continually see what evidently looks like design. But, according to Crick, this intuition that life is designed must be beat back by our firm belief in unguided evolution, which is the atheistic explanation of how life emerged. Richard Dawkins, a famous atheist and evolutionary biologist, says, “One of the greatest challenges to the human intellect, over the centuries, has been to explain how the complex, improbably appearance of design in the universe arises.”⁷ So, both Crick and Dawkins acknowledge that there certainly appears to be design in the universe. But their atheism won’t allow a Designer in the door. Yet since they can’t ignore the idea that complex forms of life somehow emerged out of non-living things, they have both posited that aliens somehow “seeded” life on Earth.⁸

As I stated before, we recognize design when we see it. Design requires information, not law-like patterns or random chaos. Here’s an illustration of what I mean. This week we had some powerful winds. On Thursday, a number of branches and even one larger limb fell from the big tree outside these windows to my right. The branches happened to fall in a random pattern that didn’t mean anything. But suppose I went outside on Thursday and found that the branches were arranged in such a way as to form letters, which spelled out the words, “I love you.” Would I suppose that somehow the winds had just happened to cause the branches to fall into that pattern? Or would I suppose that somehow had taken the fallen branches and then arranged them into that meaningful pattern? Of course, that would be the best hypothesis.

The point is that we recognize design, because design results in complex patterns that appear in specific arrangements. (This concept is called specified complexity.) Intelligence is required to generate information, to arrange branches or letters or, as we’ll see, nucleotides (the

⁶ Francis Crick, *What Mad Pursuit: A Personal View of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 138, quoted in Douglas Axe, *Undeniable: How Biology Confirms Our Intuition That Life Is Designed* (New York: HarperOne, 2016), 3–4.

⁷ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 157.

⁸ Francis Crick, *Life Itself: Its Origin and Nature* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981). Dawkins makes that claim in the film, *Expelled*

chemical bases that make up our DNA) into particular, meaningful arrangements. Random, unguided events degrade information, they don't create it. Imagine if I took all the letters of all the words of this sermon I have written, and I put each letter on a little slip of paper. Imagine I had all of those slips of paper stacked on top of each other, so that all the letters appeared in their proper order. Then imagine I took those slips of paper and threw them into the air, confetti style, so that they landed on the floor. Then imagine I randomly grabbed the slips of paper and put them into a new, reordered stack. What are the chances of that new ordering of letters producing meaningful words and sentences? Sure, I might have some new words, and perhaps even a few words strung together. But most of it would be gibberish.

Here's why this matters. We find evidence of design in cellular biology. In other words, we find design at the microscopic level in even the simplest life forms. Charles Darwin knew nothing of the complexity of life since it was only in the twentieth century that we could even begin to observe such complexity. DNA is our genetic material. It is quite literally encoded information that is found in each of our cells. It is very much like a language. The information contained in DNA is so complex that Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft, said, "DNA is like a computer program, but far, far more advanced than any software we've ever created."⁹ The information in our DNA determines our physical traits. The information in our DNA is like a set of instructions that are used to build proteins, the building blocks of our bodies.

It turns out that the code of DNA must be rather precise to build new proteins in our bodies. It appears almost impossible that random, or unguided, changes to our DNA would produce new proteins. This is significant because those who believe that large-scale evolution is responsible for the emergence of all of life believe that new traits and, ultimately, new species emerged through random mutations in DNA. The idea is that small changes in DNA led to new traits in species. The members of species that had beneficial new traits were able to out-survive and out-procreate other members of their species. Thus, the new trait was passed on to more members of that species so that, in time, all members of that species would have that trait. And with each successful trait added through random mutations, a species would eventually evolve into a new species. A nearly countless series of small changes to species accounts for all the diversity of life.

⁹ Bill Gates, *The Road Ahead*, rev. ed. (New York: Viking, 1996), 228; quoted in Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 316.

The problem is that the chances of producing new, functional proteins through random mutations is unimaginably small. Proteins consist of amino acids, linked together in chains. Recent studies have shown that the probability of a mutation producing a sequence of 150 amino acids that could fold to produce a stable protein is 1 in 10^{74} . That's one followed by seventy-four zeros. But a stable protein isn't necessarily a functional one. The probability of producing a stable protein of that size is 1 in 10^{77} . That's "one chance in one hundred thousand, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion."¹⁰ Keep in mind that there are about 10^{80} atoms in the universe, and that longer proteins can consist of 400 amino acids. The chances of producing a functional medium-size protein by way of random mutations is about the same chances that a blind astronaut has of finding one particular atom in the whole universe. Now, someone can always say, "Well, it's incredibly improbable, but that's just how things have worked out." But I find that it would take much more faith to believe that idea than to believe in God.

Another way that we can see design in biological is in the complexity of molecular machines. Michael Behe, a science professor at Lehigh University, wrote a book about complex biological systems called *Darwin's Black Box*.¹¹ He noted that some biological systems are irreducibly complex. That means that if you take one part away, the system doesn't work anymore. In other words, it would seem impossible for small evolutionary changes to produce these complex systems, because any advantage that an organism would have comes only by having the whole system. His famous example is the bacterial flagellum. The flagellum helps a bacterial cell swim by acting like a rotary propeller, similar to the way an outboard motor propels a boat. The propeller of the flagellum is a hair-like structure called the filament, which fits into a universal joint called the hook. The hook attaches the filament to the cell's outer membrane. On the inside of that outer membrane, connecting to the opposite end of the hook, is the rod, which acts as a drive shaft. The rod is connected to the stator, which is embedded in the inner membrane of the cell. Within the stator is the rotor, which rotates the rod, spinning the hook and filament so that the bacteria can "swim." Several O-rings and other parts hold the structure together, and the motor of the flagellum is powered by a flow of acid through the membrane of the cell. The flagellum can move at up to 100,000 RPM. This system is amazing complex and

¹⁰ Stephen C. Meyer, *Darwin's Doubt: The Explosive Origin of Animal Life and the Case for Intelligent Design* (New York: HarperOne, 2013), 200.

¹¹ Michael J. Behe (New York: Free Press, 1996).

incredibly small (a flagellum is about 10 micrometers, or 10 millionths of a meter), and this is found in simple, single-cell organisms. Are we supposed to believe that these molecular machines are the result of blind, purposeless, undirected processes? From everything that we know, such complexity is the result of an intelligent agent. Who else but God could come up with DNA and the complex, fully-integrated systems that we find in cellular biology?

If you want to know more about this story, I would encourage you to watch a documentary about Michael Behe called “Revolutionary.” You can watch it on YouTube or at www.revolutionarybehe.com.¹² You can also read about this design argument in far greater detail on our website.¹³

Before moving on to the final argument, let us consider what it means for God to be the designer of life. If God designed life, isn't there a purpose? If he has designed the laws of physics and the complexity of biology, hasn't he designed all of life? Doesn't he dictate our purpose and how we should live? Shouldn't we want to know what God's design for our lives is?

There's one more clue to God's existence, something that is available to all of us. The apostle Paul, in the book of Romans, says that all people have information to know that there is a God. The Israelites had special revelation from God. God performed miracles in their midst and spoke to them and gave them his law. So, they certainly have no excuse for ignoring God and violating his commands. But Gentiles (non-Jews) are also without excuse because, as we've seen, they have the witness of God's creation to tell them there's a God. But Paul also says they have a conscience which indicates to them that there is a moral law.

To see this, let's read Romans 2:12–16:

¹² For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³ For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. ¹⁴ For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them ¹⁶ on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ToSEAj2V0s>; <http://revolutionarybehe.com>.

¹³ <https://wbcommunity.org/the-design-argument>.

The meaning of some of this is debated, but I think that when Paul says that Gentiles, though they don't have the law, sometimes do what the law requires, he means that all human beings have a general sense of morality.¹⁴ A moral law is part of the fabric of God's design, and we all sense this law. Everyone knows murder, rape, and theft are always wrong. We may not agree on the particulars, but civilizations have largely agreed on basic morality. When we do follow the dictates of that moral law, our conscience is clear. Yet we so often do what we know to be wrong, so that our conscience accuses us.

This leads us to the moral argument for the existence of God. Put formally, it goes like this:

1. If God does not exist, objective moral values and duties don't exist.
2. But objective moral values and duties do exist.
3. Therefore, God exists.

The basic idea is that if there is an objective moral law, something real that we can appeal to when injustice occurs, it has to be rooted in something real. It can't be manmade law, because then we can always change it. Moral values or facts, such as murder is wrong, must be grounded in something (or someone) that is unchanging, and even transcendent and eternal. Moral obligations or duties, such as "you shall not murder," are personal. They are laws, and laws are written by moral agents. Any unchanging, universal, transcendent moral law must be rooted in the existence of God.

Many atheists have been aware of this. Jean-Paul Sartre said, "It [is] very distressing that God does not exist, because all possibility of finding values in a heaven of ideas disappears along with Him."¹⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche said, "There are altogether no moral facts," and that morality "has truth only if God is the truth."¹⁶ And then there's Richard Dawkins, who writes, "In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we

¹⁴ My understanding of this passage is informed by Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 116–125.

¹⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), 22, quoted in Paul Copan, "Ethics Needs God," in *Debating Christian Theism*, ed. J. P. Moreland, Chad Meister, and Khalidoun A. Sweis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 86.

¹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ* (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), 55, 70, quoted in Copan, "Ethics Needs God," 86.

should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but pitiless indifference.”¹⁷ In other words, according to these atheists, if there is no God, there’s no transcendent moral law.

But we all know better. Every time we make a universal moral claim, such as racism is always wrong, or that rape is always wrong, we’re not just stating an opinion. We’re appealing to something greater than a personal preference, or even a temporary, manmade code. We’re appealing to a transcendent moral law.

Almost forty years ago a professor at Yale Law School named Arthur Leff wrote an article about ethics in a law journal. He begins his article with these words:

I want to believe—and so do you—in a complete, transcendent, and immanent set of propositions about right and wrong, *findable* rules that authoritatively and unambiguously direct us how to live righteously. I also want to believe—and so do you—in no such thing, but rather that we are wholly free, not only to choose for ourselves what we ought to do, but to decide for ourselves, individually and as a species what we ought to be. What we want, Heaven help us, is simultaneously to be perfectly ruled and perfectly free, that is, at the same time to discover the right and the good and to create it.¹⁸

In other words, he says we need a transcendent moral law that come from a final, perfect authority. But he also doesn’t want to be ruled by that authority. What he’s saying is that all moral controversies can be boiled down to what he calls “the grand sez who.”¹⁹ When one person says, “Such-and-such is wrong,” the other person can say, “Says who?” Moral evaluations require an evaluator. According to Leff, “the evaluator must be the unjudged judge, the unrulled legislator, the premise maker who rests on no premises, the uncreated creator of values. Now, what would you call such a thing if it existed? You could call it Him.”²⁰ Leff says, “Either God exists or He does not, but if He does not, nothing and no one else can take His place.”²¹

Then, he adds:

We are never going to get anywhere (assuming for the moment that there is somewhere to get) in ethical or legal theory unless we finally face the fact that, in

¹⁷ Richard Dawkins, “God’s Utility Function,” *Scientific American* 273 (Nov. 1995): 85.

¹⁸ Arthur Allen Leff, “Unspeakable Ethics, Unnatural Law,” *Duke Law Journal* 1979, no. 6 (1979): 1229. The whole article can be found at http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3810&context=fss_papers.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*: 1230.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*: 1231.

the Psalmist's words, there is no one like unto the Lord. If He does not exist, there is no metaphoric equivalent. No person, no combination of people, no document however hallowed by time, no process, no premise, nothing is equivalent to an actual God in this central function as the unexaminable examiner of good and evil. The so-called death of God turns out not to have been just *His* funeral; it also seems to have effected the total elimination of any coherent, or even more-than-momentarily convincing, ethical or legal system dependent upon finally authoritative extrasystemic premises.²²

To put it more simply, he's saying that if God doesn't exist, then who makes the ethical rules?

Who makes the final moral judgments? What is the answer to "says who"?

Leff isn't a believer. He gives no reason for rejecting the God hypothesis other than the fact that he doesn't want to have an ultimate authority rule over him. But he ends with these words:

All I can say is this: it looks as if we are all we have. Given what we know about ourselves and each other, this is an extraordinarily unappetizing prospect; looking around the world, it appears that if all men are brothers, the ruling model is Cain and Abel. Neither reason, nor love, nor even terror, seems to have worked to make us "good," and worse than that, there is no reason why anything should. Only if ethics were something unspeakable by us, could law be unnatural, and therefore unchallengeable. As things now stand, everything is up for grabs.

Nevertheless:

Napalming babies is bad.

Starving the poor is wicked.

Buying and selling each other is depraved.

Those who stood up to and died resisting Hitler, Stalin, Amin, and Pol Pot—and General Custer too—have earned salvation.

Those who acquiesced deserve to be damned.

There is in the world such a thing as evil.

[All together now:] Sez who?

God help us.²³

The death of God is the death of an objective moral law and an ultimate moral evaluator. And that is, ultimately, a very bad thing, because it would mean there is no justice, no final court of appeals, no one to say definitively that this is right and this is wrong. Everything would be up for grabs.

We can learn a bit about God through these arguments. They establish that believing in God's existence is rational. I think they establish that theism (that God exists) is far more

²² Ibid.: 1232.

²³ Ibid.: 1249.

probable than atheism. I think the God hypothesis is far better than an atheistic one. But these arguments only take us so far. They are limited.

Earlier I said we can learn about a stranger by observing them and by digging up facts about them. But if we want to know a stranger, we need to listen to that person. We need to let him or her speak. We have no other way of truly knowing that person's personality, desires, thoughts, hopes, dreams, regrets, secrets, and so forth. And so it is with God.

One of my favorite authors is a pastor named Tim Keller. He has written two great books that give us reasons for believing in the existence of God. The more recent one is *Making Sense of God*, which shows that without God we wouldn't have reasons to believe that our lives have meaning, that there are rights and wrongs, or that we could ever have justice and hope.²⁴ His earlier book, which I view as something of a modern classic, is called *The Reason for God*. I highly recommend both of them to anyone who doubts that God exists. In *The Reason for God*, Keller writes:

When a Russian cosmonaut returned from space and reported that he had not found God, C. S. Lewis responded that this was like Hamlet going into the attic of his castle looking for Shakespeare. If there is a God, he wouldn't be another object in the universe that could be put in a lab and analyzed with empirical methods. He would relate to us the way a playwright relates to the characters in his play. We (characters) might be able to know quite a lot about the playwright, but only to the degree the author chooses to put information about himself in the play.²⁵

And here's the thing: the author of life has put information about himself in this play. In fact, the author of life has entered into the play.

We Christians believe that Jesus is God. As the Son of God, he has existed forever. We believe God the Father created the universe through the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. And yet, over two thousand years ago, the Son of God also became a man. This is what it says at the beginning of another book in the New Testament, the book of Hebrews:

¹ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins,

²⁴ Timothy Keller, *Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical* (New York: Viking, 2016).

²⁵ Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2008), 126–127.

he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs (Heb. 1:1–4).

Notice that it says that God has spoken. He has revealed himself. Prior to Jesus' birth, God had primarily revealed himself through the prophets. We call Scripture "special revelation," because it gives more specific information about who God is and what he expects of us. The most special and specific revelation of God is his Son, who came in the flesh. Jesus taught us most clearly about the ways of God. He, the one who created the world and now sustains it by his powerful word, also died in place of sinners. It's as if Shakespeare wrote himself into *Hamlet* to die in place of the melancholy Dane. Or, to put a contemporary twist on it, it's as if J. K. Rowling wrote herself into the Harry Potter books—and actually, physically entered into the world of those books—to die in place of Harry and his friends.

The best way to know God is to know Jesus. And there is evidence that Jesus lived, died, and then rose from the grave.²⁶ The best evidence we have about Jesus is the Bible, but there are sources outside the Bible that also confirm his life, death, and resurrection.

We have all broken God's moral law. We have failed to live according to God's design. We fail to love and live for the Creator of the universe. But Jesus came and lived the perfect life, fulfilling God's design for humanity. And though we have broken God's moral law and deserve punishment, Jesus took that punishment for his people when he died on the cross. And he rose from the grave as the first installment of a new creation, one that won't be contaminated by sin and death. Everyone who trusts in Jesus has their sins paid for and will live with him forever in that new creation.

So, the question is, "God, are you real?" And the answer is a resounding, "Yes!" What is the greatest proof? God sent his Son. To know Jesus is to know God. If you're here today and you want to know more about Jesus, I would love to help you. But for now, let's pray.

²⁶ For more information, see <https://wbcommunity.org/jesus>, particularly the first sermon, "How Can We Know Jesus?" (December 14, 2014). See also <https://wbcommunity.org/evidence-resurrection-jesus-christ> and the resources linked to that page.