

## Core Issues

*Does God exist? What about evolution and billions of years? Why is the Bible “God’s Word”? What happens after we die? Why does evil exist? Why is believing in Christ so important? How should we live this life?*

These questions confront almost everyone in the Western world today. Sadly, most people don’t really want to know the answers. They’re content to muddle thru life according to their own lights, as if there are no true (or at least reliable) answers. Some people make up answers and are content supposing that they’re true. Very few people actually want to know the answers to these questions, and fewer yet will act on them when they know them. Let’s go thru these and see if we can posit good answers and what those answers should mean to us. So what follows isn’t just religionspeak (the world is already saturated with that), but truthful answers to the issues that are essential and fundamental to every person’s life. As we’ll see, they’re all interconnected in one way or another, because all biblical truth is coherent.

**1. Does God exist?** Of course God exists. How else do we explain that there is something instead of nothing? We live in a real, physical world, one that can be experienced by our senses. It’s a complexly functioning and beautiful world. So it can only have come into existence by a transcendent, super-intelligent Creator who knows what’s good and beautiful. In this world, everything that happens does so because of some identifiable cause. For every “effect,” there had to have been a sufficient “cause.” The entire cosmos and all it contains, including life forms, by its very existence, proclaims the existence of God, the ultimate initial Cause. The pre-Socratic philosophers in ancient Greece had no access to any Scriptures, yet by simply reasoning from the fact of existence they understood there had to be a Creator God who was sovereign, good and wise, Someone who was superior to all their Greek gods.

Every human is religious. Everyone worships. It’s inescapable because God has placed the awareness of Himself in our hearts. We can stifle or ignore that awareness. We can pretend that that awareness doesn’t exist. We can substitute some other entity for God. But the knowledge of God’s existence is certainly there in every one of us. Every self-proclaimed atheist is really just an unwilling believer (as a few honest atheists have acknowledged).

Those who deny God’s existence aren’t thinking clearly, because it’s impossible to prove a negative. Such people don’t *want* God to exist. He’s invisible and therefore cannot be sensed by mortals, but He’s there. We know it by His effects, just as we know there’s such a thing as gravity, though no one has ever actually seen (or heard or touched) gravity.

But more important is this: We know that God exists because He has revealed Himself to us, not merely analogously in the created world, but in the Scriptures. The Bible is God’s self-revelation, given to us in love, so that we can not merely know of Him, but know Him experientially. He invites us to do exactly that.

Before moving on, let’s also ask, What is God like? He reveals Himself in Scripture, first of all, as good. He is morally perfect, so perfect that no mortal can approach Him and live. In His holiness, He not only eschews evil, He judges it and condemns it; and with wrath He punishes it, in part by eternally separating it from Himself. God is infinitely glorious, beautiful beyond comprehension in His perfections. He also is the sovereign ruler of His creation, and He has the abilities to do that, for example, He is all-powerful and all-knowing. Too, God is wise, which means He has perfect understanding of all things, and He knows what is right and what is wrong. He always does what is right – and *only* what is right. And He loves. God exists as three Persons, and the Persons of the Godhead love each other with an infinitely great love, a unique love that can be shared with us creatures. He is a God who loves. There’s more, for another time and place.

**2. What about evolution and billions of years?** The great problem with humanity is sin. We’re sinners, and our sinfulness profoundly affects our ability to think about God. That’s why when it comes to origins, our rebellious spirit finds ways to exclude God’s existence from our thinking. So we devise imaginary alternatives to explain our origins, which is what Darwinism and supposed billions of years of geologic history are. Earth is not billions of years old, and humans are not hundreds of thousands of years in the process of evolving.

Consider just these three facts: (1) If the sun was maturing over billions of years, earlier in its history it would have been much less luminous, so earth would have been totally iced over – even to this day. It’s not. So the sun isn’t as old as claimed, nor the earth. (2) Mutations accumulate in the human genome at the rate of 100 to 300 per generation. So if evolution were true, the human race would have become extinct long ago. Yet here we are, 7 or 8 billion of us! Human history extends back in time only six thousand or so years. (3) The magnetic field of the earth is rapidly decaying. If we

extrapolate back into deep time, the field would have been so strong no life on earth would be possible. So there was no deep time. There are many other such examples of physical evidence that disprove billions of years and Darwinism.

We've already established that God exists. That necessarily means that all existence is here for a purpose. It's preposterous to suppose a wise, good, sovereign God isn't purposeful. So billions of years of purposeless, randomly occurring events in the physical world never happened. The naturalist hypothesis, claiming that there is nothing supernatural, only matter acted on by the natural laws that reside in matter, is bogus. Matter cannot come into existence on its own; nothing cannot give rise to something, no matter how much time is presumed. Only a transcendent, wise and powerful Being can bring matter (and time and space) into existence. Moreover, the exceedingly complex functions of integrated systems in all life forms defies any supposed development by random processes, but instead proclaims compellingly the fact of a Designer, and an exceedingly skilled and intelligent One at that. We need to jettison science's imagined narratives of origins and humbly acknowledge that God created us.

What instigated belief in evolution and deep time was a denial of the Bible's report of the great, global Flood, recorded in the Book of Genesis. The layered rock strata and their contained fossils were (deliberately) misinterpreted so as to refute the validity of Scripture's narrative. Radioisotopic and other physical evidence that supposedly point to deep time and evolution have likewise been misinterpreted. But trust in the Bible's historical record voids all the speculations regarding our origins that scientists and science popularizers so arrogantly claim to be true.

**3. Why is the Bible God's word?** Our Creator God is a supernatural Being, so He is invisible to us. He is too holy for any mortal to see Him and live. Yet He speaks! He is not silent. He speaks to us because He loves His human creatures and has purposes for them. God holds us in such high integrity that He has revealed Himself to us. And He speaks to us because He has rules by which humanity is to live. He holds us accountable for how we live, which means – in perfect justice – that we must know what the standards are that we're to meet. So He has revealed not only Himself but His will to us, in written form, the holy Scriptures, that is, the Bible.

The anti-theists of the Enlightenment period gave us a phony dichotomy between reason and "revelation." They alleged that revelation is inferior knowledge, if it is even that, compared to reason, which supposedly always gives true knowledge. That's total nonsense. Revelation is a legitimate source of knowledge, depending on the trustworthiness of the Revealer. There's more to this cosmos than what is seen with our senses. A spiritual dimension exists. (The belief that the physical world is all that there is, what's called naturalism, is a massive lie.) We could not know spiritual truths unless they are revealed to us; the knowledge revealed in Scripture is otherwise unknowable to humanity. These truths are offered by grace for us to respond to them. God does not and cannot lie. So everything in the Bible, *everything*, is true truth. But (except for the fact of sin) they are empirically un-provable, so we must trust God that they are true.

The best evidence of the supernatural origin of Scripture is its astonishing coherence. It comes from an eternal God, the One who created language, so even though it was penned over the course of two millennia by many authors, all supervised in their writing by God Himself, it forms a coherent whole. It has a meta-narrative, a plot, and it's self-attesting: the many secular and Messianic prophecies fulfilled in the course of history are absolute proof of its supernatural origin.

Because God is transcendent, we necessarily relate to Him indirectly, and that is possible (only) by means of the Word of God. God identifies with His Word, so that we encounter Him thru His Word, the Scriptures. To believe or trust what the Scriptures say is to believe or trust God Himself. To obey the Scriptures is to obey God. To ignore the Scriptures is to ignore God. And to be critical of what's in Scripture is hubris; it's exalting oneself above God.

Scripture, the revelation of the eternal God, was given to us so that we may know God. To know Him is to love Him and fear Him and obey Him and trust Him. In Scripture, to "know" is not mere cognitive awareness, but to be intimately in personal relationship. God places on offer this kind of relationship with Him – thru the Word of God.

The Church has disseminated the Scriptures throughout the Western world, and in most other places of the world as well. Preaching and teaching of the Bible is available in almost every town and city anywhere in the world, either in person or by radio, TV or internet. Bibles or Scripture portions can be found even in "closed" countries, in the languages of those countries. God has spoken, and almost everyone who wants can hear Him.

**4. What happens after we die?** In His Word, God has revealed matters of immense importance to us that we otherwise could not know. And one of those is what happens on the other side of death. It seems strange to say this, but we were

created not for this life, but for the one that's to come on the other side of death. When we initially came into existence, we were given an eternal existence. Death is a judgment from God because of sin. It separates and it's an interrupter. It separates us from our present life and it separates our soul from our body. It interrupts our bodily existence, but only temporarily because everyone will experience resurrection from the dead. We exist forever, all of us, every human being. The very great issue is, Where and with whom do we spend eternity?

This present life is a probation. We're here being tested: Do we love our Creator, or not? If we love Him, we will obey His commands, and we will accept as true the statements He's made – and act accordingly, that is, on the basis of His words. To say it another way, we will live out our lives trusting in His Word. Our lives thus will reflect His beautiful Person, and we will in that way glorify Him. To love God is to love good, it's to take the side of good in this wicked world. And so, if we love Him, at death He will take us to be with Himself to enjoy His good and infinite Person for an eternity. The blessings promised at Creation will be experienced in that next existence. But if we won't love our Creator, either out of indifference or deliberate and willful rejection of His Person, or we refuse to obey Him or trust His Word, we forfeit those creational blessings and will pass eternity totally apart from His presence, in a place called hell. To not love God is to not love good, but rather –by default – it is to love evil. The proud, evil being, Satan, will be there in hell, and all those who live this present life under his control will be raised to exist forever with him in that dreadful place apart from God. Who decides our destiny? At the end of time, God who knows us better than we do ourselves, will judge.

There are only these two choices. No other options exist! There's no such thing as purgatory, or reincarnation, or annihilation of the soul, or universal salvation; these are all human inventions. And any other notion about what happens after death is equally false. The Bible is quite plain about this: We either spend an eternity in heaven in God's blessed presence, partaking of the joy and love and peace of the Godhead, or in a dreadful place with the devil and his demons. Is this fair? Of course it is. In many places throughout Scripture, we've been warned. Moreover, Scripture reveals God as the most lovely Being in existence. So it is just for us to love Him. No one has an excuse.

**5. Why does evil exist?** Intellectuals in the Western world thoughtlessly argue that, because there's evil in the world, the Judeo-Christian God, who is supposed to be "good," must not exist. A good God, they claim, would never have allowed evil in the world. The argument is phony. Yet, the question is a good one, and it deserves a reasonable answer.

God created humanity with a free will – not totally free, but a will with sufficient freedom to make moral choices. We aren't programmed robots, and the choices we make are not pre-determined. But the freedom to make moral choices means (at least) two things: (1) there must be real choices to make, between good and evil, and (2) God holds us accountable for the choices we make. So, in addition to the need for a time of reckoning, which justice requires, evil *has* to exist in this cosmos.

Furthermore, the evil that's in this world is actually a compelling proof *for* the existence of God. After all, things don't have moral agency. Flowers can't be evil, nor can they be good. They're just flowers. The wind may blow a tree over onto somebody's house, but the wind isn't evil. Things don't have moral awareness, not even consciousness. Only persons do. Evil is embodied in a supernatural person called Satan. He's a terribly wicked created being, filled with pride, hate, lies and violence. Whether anyone believes it or not, he exists, as Scripture unhesitatingly reveals. The existence of sin in humanity – instigated by Satan – is empirically demonstrable. There's no explanation of evil apart from understanding the embodiment of evil in the very real person of Satan. And as surely as Satan exists, so God must exist. God is the source of all good in the world.

Perhaps we don't really understand "evil." The Holocaust was an example of it, sure. And tornados and wars and etc. Bad things happen in this world. Some are caused directly by Satan or his wicked supernatural minions, called demons. The lies that Satan tells to those under his control to keep us from knowing and loving God are also evil. But there's much more. Our sin nature is an innate proclivity to offend God not only by doing evil but by failing to meet the standard of goodness (termed righteousness) that's revealed in Scripture, and which God expects us to carry out. Thus, for example, much of the poverty in the world is due to the sinful misallocation of resources. Selfishness and its many and varied expressions is another category of sin, or evil. And this: Some "bad things" that happen are either caused or allowed by God to move us to repent (of our sins, for example) and turn to God in faith; so they actually can be blessings! The subject of evil is a complex issue, necessitating very careful thought.

We must honestly acknowledge sin and evil in our lives because God judges it. Sin deeply offends God, and in perfect justice, He must punish it. That is, He must punish *us*. Because of indwelling sin, we are all in a desperate state.

**6. Why is believing in Christ so important?** Because of indwelling sin. Because He (and *only* He) can save us from the terrible future judgment on sin. Because He (and only He) releases us from the control of Satan and from the power of sin. Because He (and only He) is able to share His eternal life with us and take us to God. Nothing, *nothing*, is more important than believing in Christ – in His Person and His atoning work.

Who is Christ? He is the eternal, Creator God. In supreme condescension, God entered His own created world and, more specifically, the human race by taking on a human nature. Christ Jesus is a unique Person, He is the God-man. And He came on a unique mission: to deal with sin and evil and to save and bless God's beloved humans. He revealed the Person of God by His life and teaching to show how lovely God is in a way no written words possibly could do. But He did more.

Christ Jesus suffered rejection by His own people, suffered an agonizingly painful and humiliating death on a cross, then rose from the dead and ascended to heaven. Because Christ Jesus is deity, His death had infinite value. That death was necessary in God's justice to atone for sin and the guilt of sin. By humbly and selflessly submitting to death in order to save others – even the death on a cross – He defeated proud, self-serving Satan and all evil, a victory that will be realized in the future. Because all sin was dealt with by that self-sacrificial death, the alienation of humanity from God was ended and God is free to forgive everyone their sins, however massive that burden of sin may be.

At the climactic end of the Book of Deuteronomy, God extends a choice: "I put before you life and good, or death and evil. Choose life." Those are the only two options. We already are biologically alive, yet God says "life" is in the future. That means what we have now is the default, "death," because of sin and the world-wide dominion of Satan. This life we're experiencing now is not the "life" that God offers. The "life" we should choose (and hopefully we truly want it) is that which is to come, that is, resurrection life, eternal life, life in the very presence of God. The great revelation in the New Testament is that this "life" that God offers is a Person! It's Christ Jesus. Everyone everywhere throughout all time is under condemnation. Only by choosing the "good," which is obeying God's Word and trusting in Christ and His atoning work, do we gain the promise and expectation of a future glorious life. That life is Christ's own resurrection life imparted to us by faith in Christ. Christianity isn't something we *add* to our lives. It's the very essence of life itself.

What "choose life" means is this: We've all been given the opportunity and the moral ability to decide whether to love God and all that He's done for us and will do for us in the future, or to foolishly reject Him and His great love. God invites us—*appeals to us*—to enter into a loving, intimate personal relationship with Him that begins now but lasts beyond the grave into eternity. It's why we're here.

**7. How should we live this life?** Most of us hold to the notion that life is to be enjoyed however we choose to pursue it. We want our lives to be happy, secure, comfortable, healthy and at peace. And interesting and fulfilling. And maybe lots more. To live a godly life is an ideal probably totally alien to most of us. We need to think very carefully about this.

Because we're created beings, we're obliged to live according to the revealed will of our Creator. We are not free and autonomous, although our sin nature makes us think we are. We are not independent, as if we were God. We are dependent on Him for our very lives as well as how to live. This world is His house, and we are guests in it, subject to His rules. He can cut short the life of any of us at any moment according to His holy will. And as He has revealed in Scripture how we are to live, He has the right to judge us according to how well we met His standards – and that judgment occurs after death, when it's too late for us to change. This necessarily means – if we're wise! – that we'll carefully read Scripture to know and put into practice His righteous rules and principles for living.

God created us "in His image." That means a lot theologically, but it especially means that God intends for our lives to reflect His perfections as a mirror reflects an image. So we're to be good, loving, humble, selfless and righteous people. In many places in the Bible these godly qualities are unpacked so that they can be applied to our lives. So we need to be constantly reading and meditating on God's revelation to understand His values, priorities and requirements to be able to live them. Our lives should be an expression of His Word. Having been made in the image of God means also that others are in God's image as well as ourselves. So we're to treat others as we would treat God Himself. These are the ideals we're to pursue. If we trust Christ as Savior, the Spirit of Christ comes into us to enable us to live that godly life.

\* \* \*

Dear reader, because all the above comes from the Bible, which is God's Word and God cannot lie, it is all true. Absorb these truths. Embrace them. Then live them. It's God's will for you.