

The Leap of Doubt: Examining Seven Toughest Objections to God and Christianity
Objection 6: “Science Has Disproved Christianity”
October 25, 2009 by Kevin Haah



I. Introduction

Welcome to New City Church!

We are on a middle of a series called The Leap of Doubt; it's a series on 7 toughest questions and objections people have about God and Christianity.

Today's objection is this: Science has disproved Christianity. Richard Dawkins, a famous atheist who recently wrote a book called *The God Delusion*, argues that you can't be an intelligent scientific thinker and still hold religious beliefs.

We are going to dive into the question of whether there is a conflict between science and faith in God. We are going to look at it in three areas: the beginning of the universe and the creation of life. Then, we will look at the limitations of science and theology.

Note: Q&A at the end.

I want to say right from the get-go that this is going to be dense. I can't really get around it. It's one of those talks where we're all going to roll up our sleeves and go through a lot of material together. So, every once in a while, I'm going to ask you if you're with me, and I want you to say, "Yes." Even if you're not with me, I want you to say, "Yes."

II. First, let's look at whether there is a conflict between science and faith with respect to the beginning of the universe.

From its very first sentence, the Bible presents a Creator: Genesis 1:1 says: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

The universe had a beginning and God created it. The ultimate reality created reality. The timeless One created time, and the limitless One created space. All time, space, matter, and being are created by God, who is outside of the created universe. You noticed that if God created heavens and the earth, he must be outside of the created universe. He can't be a part of what he has created. A beam in the house can't be the builder. The builder can't be a part of the creation. He must be greater than the creation. The bible teaches us that God is infinite and the world is finite. That means God does not have any limits. He does not have a beginning. He

does not have an end. However, the Bible teaches us that the universe is finite in that there was a time when the universe was created. It didn't always exist. There was a point in time when He spoke the universe into existence. Powerful Word! Let there be light, and there was light! He created the world through his word.

Scientists used to think that the universe was infinite. In fact, that was the prevailing belief among physicists and astronomers up to the beginning of the 20th Century. Scientists used to study the stars and assumed that the universe always existed.

However, in 1929, Edwin Hubble found a phenomenon called "red shift" which showed that galaxies were moving away from each other. In fact, he found that everywhere in the universe, objects were moving farther away from each other. If everything was moving further away from each other, then, at some point all of these galaxies were together in one incredible massive entity. Hubble's finding led to a massive number of studies and measurements, and now, about 70 years later, vast majority of physicists and scientists believe that the universe had a beginning; in fact, it began at a single moment. They call this moment The Big Bang. There was a complete reversal in the scientific community.

Now, to me this sounds very much like the biblical story of creation: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. If the Big Bang is how it happened, what was there before the Big Bang? What caused the Big Bang? Science can't answer this question.

Francis Collins, the scientist who led the Human Genome Project, wrote in his recent book, *The Language of God*,

"The Big Bang cries out for a divine explanation. I cannot see how nature could have created itself. Only a supernatural force that is outside of space and time could have done that."

Even agnostic scientists are coming to that conclusion. Robert Jastrow, one of the world's most renowned astrophysicist and a well known agnostic, wrote about this in his book *God and the Astronomers*, and said in his final paragraph:

"At this moment, it seems as though science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation. For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries."

[Now are you still with me?]

II. Now, let's go on to the second point. Is there a conflict between science and faith in the area of creation of life?

I know that even if you are a Christian, you have a lot of questions about this stuff. How do we reconcile all the stuff that we've learned in school about the theory of evolution with the creation account? I know some of you just don't want to deal with it because you decided to compartmentalize your faith and your mind. But I don't think that there is an irreconcilable conflict.

Let me start off by saying that Christians who are sincere followers of Jesus Christ disagree with how to read this passage. So, I think this is an area that some of us have to agree to disagree. The disagreement is not just among liberal Christians and Conservative Christians. Even conservative Bible believing evangelical Christians differ on this issue.

Some Christians believe in the story in a literal way. God created the universe in 6 literal days. The Creation Research Society, formed in 1963 as a committee of ten scientists in Michigan and whose membership is limited to those with a graduate degree in natural or applied science, now has hundreds of members. They believe that all types of living things were made by direct acts of God during the creation week.

Of course, this runs counter to the theory of evolution that we learned in biology classes at school. The idea is that all species, including you and me, evolved from a pre-biotic soup where life arose from non-life and this first life evolved over millions of years into human beings through a process called survival of the fittest. Charles Darwin proposed this theory and it is probably universally accepted by biologists right now.

If you believe that evolution just happened by itself, there are some real problems to contend with: One problem has to do with this pre-biotic soup. The theory is that there was this chemical prebiotic liquid, referred to as *abiogenesis*, which produced life from no life. How does life come from non-life? No one knows that answer. The more we find out about how life works, the more we find out how complicated it is. Yet, evolutionary theory requires belief in that happening. It's one thing to believe in evolution but it is another thing to believe in creation of life out of no-life without the intervention of an intelligent designer.

Sir Frederick Hoyle, the astronomer who coined phrase The Big Bang, assessed the odds of life coming from non-life with an analogy: "What are the changes that a tornado might blow

through a junkyard containing all the parts of a 747, accidentally assemble them into a plane, and leave it ready for take-off? The possibilities are so small ...”

Now, other Bible believing Christians interpret this passage differently. They point out that the Hebrew word for “day” has many meanings, even within Scripture. Since the sun didn’t appear until day 4, the writer probably didn’t mean 24 hour days. The word can mean a long period of time. So, they say it is possible that God may have used evolutionary processes to create species.

Many Christians read Genesis 1 as a poetic and theological narrative that is not meant to be a scientific account of creation. Poetic language can be true without being literally true. When the psalmist wrote, “The world is firmly established; it cannot be moved” (Psalm 93:1), he was using a poetic image. But, when Galileo’s opponents took it literally, they argued that the earth was stationary and that the theory that the earth was revolving around the sun was wrong. So, in the same way, these Christians feel that we shouldn’t take the creation narrative as if we are reading a scientific account of creation. That’s just not the way it was written or the genre that it was written in.

Genesis was written by a real person, in a real context, to a real audience, to address real questions that were being asked in that day. Those were not questions about the “Big Bang,” or “natural selection,” or Darwin or modern science. That discussion was not going on then, and that’s not *why* the book was written. It was written against a backdrop of *polytheism*.

In the Mesopotamian Ancient Near East culture, lots of gods were being worshipped; lots of objects were worshipped; the sun was worshipped; the moon was worshipped. People would look to the stars to give them guidance. They thought their future was controlled by the position of stars and planets.

They did not believe that there was a connection between these gods and morality, ethics, or justice. They believed that human beings were created to provide food for the gods and to be slaves to the gods. People were just an afterthought. Therefore, infant sacrifice was often part of their worship.

The writer of Genesis is concerned with these ideas and uses the linguistic raw material of that day, that age, that culture to make statements that were radically unique:

- that there is one God;
- that this God is the One who created the heavens and the earth;

- that creation is good, but it is not God;
- that human beings, in particular, are unique as they were created in the image of God;
- that something has gone wrong and we are not what we should be;
- that death and decay have messed up creation;
- that they came in because of sin;
- and that God is our only hope to set it right, because we cannot do it on our own.

That's what is at the core of those opening passages of Genesis. The writer is not trying to answer questions posed by modern science, because there was no "modern science" back then. That's a different agenda.

I'll give you one example of why I think this is true, but sometimes misunderstood:

On the first day of Creation, according to Genesis, God says, "Let there be light," and there is light. (Genesis 1:3)

Again, this is written against the backdrop of a time and culture when people worshipped the sun and the moon. The Creation account unfolds in Genesis. The writer uses poetic language in the description:

"And God spoke...And it was so...And God saw that it was good."

This is Hebrew poetry.

God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light over the earth... And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning—the fourth day. (Genesis 1:16-19)

The great light that governs the day...we call the sun. Does anybody think that it is kind of odd that the sun doesn't show up until the fourth day? Have you ever thought about that before? Don't you think a good editor would have caught that kind of problem? Again, I think very clearly what the writer of Genesis is not trying to do is to give a modern, scientific chronology of when the sun showed up. He is not saying, "There were three days where there was light and darkness, morning and evening, and then, on the fourth day, the sun came along."

By the way, this understanding is not a new thought among Christians that has developed with the advent of modern science. There was a church father named Origen, who was born in the 2nd century—about 185 AD—and this is what Origen wrote:

“For who that has understanding will suppose that the first and second and third day existed without a sun and moon and stars, and that the first day was, as it were, without a sky? I do not suppose that anyone doubts that these things are intended figuratively and not literally.”
(The Fundamental Doctrines 4:1:16)

In other words, the point of the writer of Genesis is something much bigger than a chronological account of what was going on. That’s why I don’t think that the idea that he’s talking about 24-hour day periods jives with the meaning of Genesis. His point was:

- Don’t worship the sun. Don’t worship the moon. Don’t look to the stars for guidance.
- God is God. God made the whole thing. It is only God who should be worshipped.

Could God use evolution for the development of life on earth under God’s guidance, to create human beings who are unique and made in His image? I think God could use any kind of process that He wanted to.

Now, whether you take Genesis more literally or poetically, I think it is up to you. Christians have disagreed on this question for centuries. Saint Augustine, probably one of the greatest intellects of his time and definitely the greatest theologian of the 4th century, was aware of the debate on the interpretation of Genesis, and he said this:

“In matters that are so obscure and far beyond our vision, we find in Holy Scripture passages which can be interpreted in very different ways without prejudice to the faith we have received. In such cases, we should not rush in headlong and so firmly take our stand on one side that, if further progress in the search for truth justly undermines this position, we too fall with it.”

Now, whichever view you take, you should note that there is not necessarily a conflict between science and Scripture. Albert Einstein wrote, “[A legitimate conflict between science and religion cannot exist. Science without religion is lame; religion without science is blind.](#)”

[Are you still with me?]

IV. Now, thirdly, I want to address the issue of the limitations of science as well as the limitation of theology.

I think theology will not answer the details of what the nature looks like and how it work. You have to study the universe; you have to study the human body; you have to study matter,

atom, sub-atomic particles like electrons, protons, neutrons, fermions, leptons, quarks; you have to study cells, DNA, the building blocks of life. I think the more you study it, the more you appreciate its complexity, its smallness and its vastness.

Psalm 19 says “**the Heavens declare the glory of God.**” The heavens show us just how big, how huge, how unfathomably powerful and magnificent our God is. Just think about the size of the universe that God created. We live in a galaxy called the Milky Way. And our solar system relative to the Milky Way is the size of a quarter to the size of North America. And the Milky Way galaxy is one of billions of galaxies. Our God is huge.

At the same time, the Psalm 139:14 says, “**I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.**”

In many ways, science becomes a way to seeing the glory of God.

But, science has its limitations.

Do you remember the scientific method that we all learned about in high school? We make observations and generate a hypothesis. Then we test the hypothesis, and, if it is confirmed, it might lead to a theory that can be empirically verified and so on. That's the scientific method.

But, the deepest questions of life cannot be answered by the scientific method. We must answer them in order to live. We've all got to live! Whether or not we do it intentionally, formally, we all have to take a position on the questions:

- Why are we here?
- What is our purpose?
- What should we do?
- How should we live?

Stephen Hawking, one of the most brilliant contemporary scientists, has admitted: “science may solve the problem of how the universe began, but it cannot answer the question: why does the universe bother to exist?”

Now, why did God create the universe? Why did he create us? Was He was kind of lonely and didn't have much to do? Have you ever wondered what God was doing before the creation of the world? What was this powerful infinite God doing before He decided to create the heavens and the earth? The Bible actually gives us a hint of it.

In verse Genesis 1:2, it tells us that the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. So, it looks like the Spirit of God was there before the beginning with God.

Then, Hebrews 1:1-3 says:

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

It says Jesus was there before the creation as well. He created the world through Jesus. The Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) was there before the creation, according to the Bible. What did they do? Jesus gives us a hint of what was going on before the beginning in John 17:4-5 (this is a prayer that Jesus prayed right before He was arrested and crucified):

4 I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

They lived in mutual glory. They loved one another, affirmed one another, honored one another for eternity. What we experience in drops, they experienced in ocean-full.

- There was a dance of the Triune community of God.
- There was glory in the Triune community of God.
- There was love in the Triune community of God.
- It was a perfect community—one yet three, and three yet one.

Then, why did God create us? In John 17:24, Jesus prayed this (it gives us another hint):

24 Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

God created us to see the glory of the Triune God. God created us to experience the glory of Triune God. There was a dance of the Triune God, and God created us to join Him in the dance! He is the Lord of the Dance and He has created us to join Him in the dance, to experience His presence, to see His glory, to live in His presence.

I want to conclude by showing you something.

I have here the most magnificent brownies you have ever seen. And suppose I have in front of me the world's most renowned academics and scientists and I ask them to analyze the brownies for me.

- The world famous nutritionist talks about the calories, fats, and ingredients of the brownies.
- The biochemist does an analysis of the brownies at the biochemical level and the chemist does an analysis of the basic chemicals that form the brownies.
- The physicist says that we need to get down to the electrons and protons.
- Then a mathematician says we have to understand the equation that governs the movement of electrons and protons.

Then, I ask them one last question: please tell us why the brownies were made. They can't answer that question.

Then comes Susan, who made the brownies yesterday. Only the baker can disclose why the brownies were made. No amount of scientific analysis can answer that question. She says, the brownies were made as an illustration for this talk and for communion.

In the same way, science cannot answer the questions about why the universe was created and why you are I were created. Only the creator can answer that question. And the creator God tells us that he created us to invite us to join him in the Dance of the Triune God—to fellowship with Him and see him.

So, today only, we are using a brownie to symbolize the sweet fellowship of the Triune God that for which we were created. We will eat the brownie as a symbol of entering into that fellowship

and enjoying the sweetness of his glory and fellowship, which only comes because Jesus died for us on the cross to reconcile us to him.