



"The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1)

REASONS TO BELIEVE - SEATTLE AREA CHAPTER

NEWS AND VIEWS

MAY 2007

What's Happening?

[Hugh Ross to Japan](#)

Dr. Ross will travel to Japan May 20-27 to conduct 10 outreach events in Toyko and Osaka. Please pray for him. If would like to support this effort financially, contact Esther at RTB at eattebery@reasons.org, or the Japan RTB chapter at japan@reasons.org.

[Poulsbo Presentation](#)

Dr. John Battle, chapter member and president of Western Reformed Seminary, will speak at Christ Memorial Church, 7:00 PM, May 17th. The topic is what parents can do to help prepare their kids for college so their faith remains deep and strong. Contact Mark Rambo for more information at mrambo@wavecable.com.

[We Do Presentations](#)

The Seattle chapter does presentations on wide range of topics ranging from the scientific evidences for God, to the age of the earth debate. If your church or group is looking for speakers, contact us at seattle@reasons.org.

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Spirituality, Cosmic Origins and God Revealed

JON W. GREENE

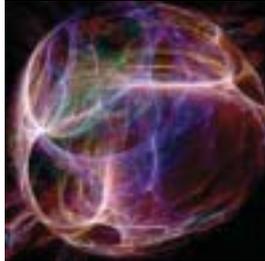
[Note: This is part two this article. Part one appeared in our April newsletter.]

WORLDVIEWS: COSMOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

So, what are the implications of recent scientific findings on various worldviews? Here are a few insights for your consideration:

Materialism/Atheism

Based on cosmological findings, many scientists are moving away from strict materialism and naturalistic causation. There seems to be good reason to believe a supernatural First Cause "turned on the switch," intentionally creating the universe. Max Planck, regarded as the father of modern quantum theory and recipient of the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1918, noted, "We might naturally assume that one of the achievements of science would have been to restrict belief in miracle. But it does not seem to do so.



The tendency to believe in the power of mysterious agencies is an outstanding characteristic of our own day."⁶⁴ Astronomer George Greenstein wrote, "As we survey all the evidence, the thought insistently arises that some supernatural agency—or, rather, Agency—must be involved"⁶⁵ Further, the extreme fine-tuning of the universal constants and various properties of the cosmos reveal design, which suggests a pre-existing Designer. There is no materialistic mechanism by which initial matter and energy could contain the information required to produce this "just-so" universe. Even Stephen Hawking, who rejects theism, once asked, "What breathed fire into the equations [the universal constants of the universe]?"

Pantheism/Mysticism/New Age

Eternality of the universe, an absolute fundamental of pantheism, has been disproved. The space-time theorems of general relativity, having been confirmed

to 0.00000000001 percent precision, prove a finite universe that was created 13.7 billion years ago.⁶⁶ Thousands of years ago, Hindu gurus imagined an eternal, reincarnating universe. Scientists tried to revive this model in the 1960s (“oscillating universe” model), but failed because the total mass of the universe is insufficient to force an eventual collapse, plus the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics degrades available energy to the point where there is insufficient energy available for further oscillations or re-incarnations.⁶⁷ As astronomer Hugh Ross states, “The cosmic entropy measure eliminated any possibility for a reincarnating or oscillating universe.”⁶⁸

Theism

Scientific evidence continues to build for a First Cause that literally and supernaturally created the universe from nothing. The finite creation of the universe was proven with finality in 1990 and 1992, when NASA's Cosmic Background Explorer (COBE) discovered ripples of background radiation from the Big Bang—a remnant from the Creation and stunning confirmation the universe had a beginning. Stephen Hawking exclaimed, “It is the discovery of the century, if not of all time.”⁶⁹

Further, the universe appears to have been “programmed,” as evidenced by the remarkable precision built into the laws of physics, the universal constants, and the many fine-tuned properties of the cosmos. Physicist Paul Davies says, “The impression of design is overwhelming.” Evidence for a Mind, existing prior to the creation event, continues to build. Robert Jastrow, self-proclaimed agnostic, provides words that challenge both skeptical astronomers and liberal theologians: “Now we see how the astronomical evidence leads to a biblical view of the origin of the world. The details differ, but the essential elements in the astronomical and biblical accounts of genesis are the same—the chain of events leading to man commence suddenly and sharply at a definite moment in time, in a flash of light and energy.”⁷⁰

Moving from the universe to the biological realm, there is absolutely compelling evidence for biochemical design. Bill Gates once commented, “DNA is like a computer program, but far, far more advanced than any software we've ever created.”⁷¹ Written documents and software programs contain information, resulting from the specific order of letters, words, and numbers. Similarly, within biological life, information is encoded within protein molecules, by the specified order of 20 amino acids, and DNA, by the sequence specificity of four nucleic acids.⁷²

All languages, codes, and information originate from a prior intelligence or mind—books and software programs don't write themselves! DNA, contained within the cells of every living organism, contains information—an entire “how-to” manual for the manufacture of thousands of different protein molecules and enzymes necessary for biological functioning—respiration, digestion, reproduction, circulation, and so forth. Antony Flew, renowned British philosopher (and atheist until 2005), commented, “It is impossible for evolution to account for the fact that one single cell can carry more data than all the volumes of the Encyclopedia Britannica.”⁷³ Increasingly, many high level scientists are inclined to agree with Flew.⁷⁴

Francis Collins, head of the Human Genome Project and Director of the National Human Genome Research Institute, wrote, “The God of the Bible is also the God of the genome. He can be worshiped in the cathedral or in the laboratory. His Creation

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In the **NEWS...**

[Something Horribly Wrong](#)

This Breakpoint commentary by Chuck Colson discusses the Virginia Tech killings and how our culture tends to look at such events as psychological defects. Colson reminds us not to forget an important part of the equation: sin and evil and the need for God's grace. Go to: <http://www.breakpoint.org/listingarticle.asp?ID=6394>.

[Earth-like Planet](#)

This article by David Rogstad addresses the recent discovery of an Earth-like planet in Libra. While it is the most Earth-like planet found to date, Rogstad points out it is premature to speculate it has all the necessary parameters for life. Go to http://www.reasons.org/resources/apologetics/earthlike_planet_discovered.shtml.

[The Legacy You Want to Give](#)

What kind of spiritual legacy are you passing on to your children? This Focus on the Family article allows you to evaluate how well you're doing by answering a series of questions about your homelife with your parents and your current homelife. Go to: <http://www.family.org/parenting/A000000401.cfm>.

[ID Scientist Denied Tenure](#)

Astronomer Dr. Guillermo Gonzalez, a Seattle Chapter member while at the UW, has been denied tenure by Iowa State University even though he meets the required standards for tenure. There are a number of articles on the Discovery website including information on how you can help. Go to: www.discovery.org/csc/ and look under “latest news.”

[Falwell Finished Well](#)

This Focus on the Family article comments on the life and achievements of Jerry Falwell. As Dobson notes, Falwell led the fundamentalist wing of Christianity away from isolation into a direct confrontation with the culture in the battle for righteousness. Go to: <http://www.citizenlink.org/CLtopstories/A000004628.cfm>.

Book Reviews

Walking from East to West

Ravi Zacharias
Zondervan, 2006

Reviewer: Mike Brown



I have always respected the clear thinking apologetics of Ravi Zacharias.

I have read many of his books, quoted him often, and recommended his works in my classes. However, reading his auto-biography gave me an even deeper respect and admiration for him.

Ravi was raised in a culture where you do not make your personal problems public. But in this book, he shares his painful youth, his alienation from his father, and even his attempted suicide as a young man. But God used these things to develop the mighty defender of the faith he is today. Ravi's story is truly a testimony of how God can bring hope from hopelessness.

For anyone who doubts that God answers prayer, this book will end their doubts. Repeatedly God answered Ravi's specific prayers in specific and powerful ways. As I read his accounts of answered prayer, I was reminded of how as a young boy I saw answered prayer as my parents set out totally on faith to do evangelistic work; and how God miraculously provided all our needs, often meeting a financial need with an unexpected check for the exact amount needed!

It was a Billy Graham event that God gave Ravi his calling:

"Before I left Amsterdam on that occasion, something very curious struck me about the event. I pondered that there were so few people who were operating in the arena of apologetics. Most of the preaching in evangelism was geared to the 'unhappy pagan.' What about the 'happy pagan', I thought, the one who has no qualms about his life? Life was about to change for me in my heartfelt desire to preach to the skeptic."

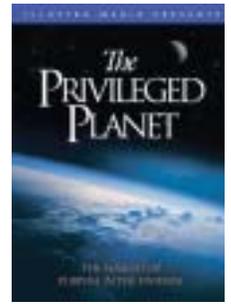
In the last chapter, he summarizes what apologetics is all about:

"Apologetics is not just giving answers to questions—it is questioning people's answers, and even questioning their questions. When you question someone's question, you compel him or her to open up about his or her own assumptions. Our assumptions must be examined."

The Privileged Planet

Guillermo Gonzales & Jay Richards
Regnery Publishing, 2004

Reviewer: Mark Rambo



The Privileged Planet presents an excellent argument for intelligent design by exploring how the Earth is designed for habitation and for discovery. For

example, it examines how the moon's size and distance from the earth fulfills some of the requirements for advanced life while, at the same time, allowing the sun's corona to be viewed/studied during a total eclipse. The authors propose such habitation-discovery correlations are designed to allow insights into the creation. For example, the light observed from the sun's corona during an eclipse, leads to discoveries and insights for development of stellar astrophysics.

The book is broken into 3 sections. The first section explores our planet and solar system, examining the unique environment of Earth that supports both advanced life and discovery. The second section explores galactic habitation, discovery requirements and fine-tuning of the universe. The third section discusses the implication of the evidences presented in the previous sections. It also examines the validity of the materialistic-Darwinian view of the universe.

The Privileged Planet makes a credible argument that the correlation between habitation and discovery meets design pattern/specificity beyond the probability of pure random events. I found it very compelling since the authors make predictions based upon their claims. It is also supported by the fact the predictions of the materialistic-Darwinian model have been proven false and/or have yet to bear fruit.

I recommend this book as a good resource for believers and for skeptics who are looking for a well-articulated and compelling science/philosophical argument for design. While the book does not broach the subject of the need for a designer/creator, the implication is rather clear. In concluding the book, the authors state: "Perhaps we have also been staring past a cosmic signal...so skillfully crafted for life and discovery that it seems to whisper of an extra-terrestrial intelligence immeasurably more vast, more ancient, and more magnificent than anything we've been willing to expect or imagine."

is majestic, awesome, intricate, and beautiful—and it cannot be at war with itself.”⁷⁵

God’s fingerprints seem to be all over—the transcendent “big bang” creation of the universe, the mathematically-defined laws of physics that order the world, the extreme fine-tuning of the universe, and even information programmed into the genome for life. Is it conceivable, then, that this Creator—this Designer possessing such power and intelligence—might reveal Himself in a more tangible way?

GOD REVEALED

Many today embrace “spirituality” but reject formalized religion. They seek after subjective experience, believing incorrectly, that traditional religious expression lacks an experiential component. This is far from true, as evidenced by the spiritual experiences of Elijah, Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Stephen, Paul, and John, all of whom had profound experiences with God, but experiences validated by objective revelation. Throughout history, many have felt the remarkable touch of God. Blaise Pascal was one such person.

Pascal, born in 1623, was a genius—a brilliant mathematician and scientist. His work on probability and various scientific endeavors placed him in the top rank of European intellectuals. In 1654, Pascal “suddenly had a personal revelation which brought about what can only be called total conversion. On 23 November 1654, he saw the light that guided him for the rest of his life.”⁷⁶ God was manifested to Pascal that night in the person of Jesus Christ. Later he wrote down his thoughts about knowing God:

“We know God only through Jesus Christ. Without this mediator, all communication with God is broken off. Through Jesus we know God. All those who have claimed to know God and prove his existence without Jesus Christ have only had futile proofs to offer. But to prove Christ we have prophecies which are solid and palpable proofs. By being fulfilled and proved true by the event, these prophecies show that these truths are certain and thus prove that Jesus is divine. In him and through him ... we know God.”⁷⁷

Jesus Christ, by any measure, is one of the most important and influential figures of all time. British author H.G. Wells once wrote, “I am an historian. I am not a believer, but I must confess as a historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history.”⁷⁸ Albert Einstein commented, “As a child I received instruction both in the Bible and in the Talmud. I am a Jew, but I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene ... No one can read the Gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled with such life.”⁷⁹

So what is the connection between the transcendent Creator of the universe and the resurrected Christ? What does Jesus, the man who

walked the dusty roads of planet earth 2,000 years ago, have to do with the Creator of the cosmos? After all, certain skeptics claim Jesus never even existed—that he’s a myth. Others suggest he was merely a wise sage, a religious figure like Buddha or Krishna. Gnostics believe the resurrected Jesus existed as a spiritual entity but minimize his fleshly physicality. New Agers surmise Jesus may have been an early New Age thinker who embraced Hinduism and pantheism. This theory fails.

Jesus was a Jew, not a Hindu. Peter Kreeft notes, “On every single issue on which Judaism and Hinduism conflict, Jesus’ teachings, from start to finish, both explicitly and implicitly, were 100 percent Jewish and 0 percent Hindu: God’s personality, God’s will, God’s creation, the goodness of matter, the reality of the material world, the reality of the individual human soul, the importance of the body, human free will, human sin . . . individual immortality, resurrection rather than reincarnation, worship rather than mystical experience, prayer rather than meditation, even the name of God. He reinforced every one of these Jewish ideas, whereas pantheists disbelieve all of them.”⁸⁰

Evangelical Christians view Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah⁸¹ foretold in ancient Hebrew prophecies written centuries before Jesus was born. Jesus is regarded as having existed eternally within the triune Godhead (Trinity) and then supernaturally revealing Himself as the incarnate Christ, thus enabling mankind to better comprehend God. Thus, the Creator “visited” His creation.

Secularists totally reject this, since they reject anything supernatural. They might agree that Jesus existed as a man, but most certainly could not have been God. And rise from the dead? No way! And yet, when one peels back the veneer of secularism and naturalism, the evidence for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is intriguing and quite compelling. The remainder of this paper will examine:

- The “mystery” repeatedly mentioned in the Bible.
- Jesus’ fulfillment of ancient Messianic prophecies.
- Eyewitness testimony regarding Christ.
- The incarnation and claims of divinity—Did Jesus actually claim to be God?
- Jesus in history—Biblical & non-Biblical, Christian & non-Christian references
- The resurrection—At what point in history did a belief in the resurrection develop? Is the resurrection just a myth that developed over time? Is there scholarly evidence supporting the truth of such an amazing claim?

Indeed, if the theistic worldview and the science that supports it are valid, no self-examination can be complete without careful evaluation of the person of Jesus Christ.

The Mystery

The Bible Code, published by Michael Drosnin in 1997, caused quite a stir. It suggested that hidden text, encoded into the Old Testament, revealed future events. Similarly, Dan Brown's *The DaVinci Code* also stirred excitement and speculation (though unfounded) about the earliest days of Christianity and the personhood of Jesus Christ.

However, the “mysteries” written by Drosnin and Brown pale in comparison to the genuine article contained within the pages of Scripture. Several books of the Bible mention “the mystery.” The biblical meaning of “mystery” (*musterion* in biblical Greek) is different from our word “mystery” in English. In the Bible, it refers to information unknown or hidden in past times, but later revealed. In Romans (circa A.D. 55-57), Paul wrote of “the revelation of the mystery (*musterion*) that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed ...”⁸² Colossians (A.D. 61) notes “the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed ...”⁸³ Ephesians comments on “the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed ...”⁸⁴

The “mystery,” veiled in Old Testament times, was now finally revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. God unveiled Himself so that mankind could better understand and relate to Him.

Jesus' Fulfillment of Prophecy

Numerous prophecies recorded in the Old Testament point toward the coming Messiah. Old Testament prophet Isaiah, writing circa 700 B.C., wrote, “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us ... and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6) The grammatical construction used by Isaiah suggests that the messianic Son-Child will be one and the same as the supernatural, all-powerful, eternal Jehovah, God of the Old Testament.

Numerous ancient Hebrew prophecies were fulfilled in Christ's incarnation:⁸⁵ genealogically, Jesus was (a) from the seed of Abraham, (b) a descendent of Jacob, (c) from the tribe of Judah and (d) the family of David; as prophesied, (e) his birth was in Bethlehem, (f) he was betrayed by a friend, (g) his hands and feet were pierced, (h) He was crucified with thieves, (i) his side was pierced, and (j) he was buried in a rich man's tomb. Over a hundred exact prophecies were specifically fulfilled in one person.

Note the following Old Testament prophetic Messianic passages regarding the crucifixion and death of the Messiah:

“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint ... my strength is dried up ... my tongue sticks to my jaws ... a company of evildoers encircle me; they have pierced my hands and feet ... they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments

among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. (Psalm 22:14-18)

He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ... But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities ... and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:3-6)

Biblical scholar John Phillips wrote, “It has been said that there were some 109 Old Testament predictions literally fulfilled at Christ's first coming, and that, of the 845 quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament, 333 refer to Christ. There are some 25 prophecies concerning the betrayal, trial, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus uttered by various prophets over a period of some five hundred years. These were literally fulfilled although the chances against such fulfillment have been shown to be one chance in 33,554,438.”⁸⁶

Eyewitnesses: Seeing is Believing

In movies like *Back to the Future* and *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*, movie characters were transported back in time to experience the past. If we could time-travel back 2,000 years, we could examine the life of Jesus Christ first-hand. This isn't possible, but we have the next best thing—a number of eyewitnesses recorded their observations of Christ. Their words are quite thought-provoking:

- Peter: “For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.” (2 Peter 1:16)
- John: “What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life—and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also ...” (1 John 1:1-3a)
- Luke (speaking of the eye-witness testimony of Peter and John): “[F]or we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:20)
- Matthew: After Jesus healed a paralytic, “But when the multitude saw this, they were filled with awe ...” (Matthew 9:8)

These were eyewitnesses. They saw, heard, touched, and walked with Christ two thousand years ago.

The Incarnation and Jesus' Claims of Divinity

Jesus' claims of divinity have stirred controversy and debate for two millennia. Because of His claims, the Romans charged him with sedition, and the Jews accused him of blasphemy. There is no doubt New Testament authors and Jesus, Himself, asserted His divinity.

- “He who has seen Me [Jesus] has seen the Father.” (John 14:9)

- “For in Him [Jesus] all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form.” (Colossians 2:19)
- “I and the Father are one.” (John 10:30)
- “He [Jesus] existed in the form of God ... and [was] found in appearance as a man” (Philippians 2:6,8)
- “But of the Son, He [God the Father] says, ‘Thy throne [Jesus’ throne], O God [Jesus], is forever and ever ...’” (Hebrews 1:8)
- Jesus praying, “And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.” (John 17:5)

Philosopher and theologian Peter Kreeft wrote, “It is, quite literally, the most astonishing idea that any mind has ever conceived in all of history. This man, this carpenter’s son who was born from a woman like any other man, who had to learn to speak and walk, who got tired and hungry, who suffered pain and weakness and death as a crucified criminal, is God, the infinitely perfect, eternal, transcendent Spirit who created the universe!”⁸⁷

In a world replete with materialistic naturalism and secular humanism, the idea that “God became flesh” seems incredulous. However, if you can conceive of God creating this entire universe from nothing, then God’s incarnation in human flesh seems more plausible. A number of verses speak directly of His incarnation:

- “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ...”⁸⁸ (John 1:1,14)
- “... Christ Jesus, who although He existed in the form of God ... taking the form of a bond-servant and bearing the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man ...” (Colossians 1:5-8)
- “He [Jesus] is the image⁸⁹ of the invisible God ... For by him [Jesus] all things were created ...” (Colossians 1:15-16)
- “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:8)
- “For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you.” (1 Peter 1:20)

Jesus in History

The New Testament gospels were written within living memory of eye-witnesses, who provided testimony regarding the remarkable life of Christ. Many fail to recognize that there are also non-Biblical evidences that extend beyond the pages of Scripture.

In addition to the nine traditional New Testament authors, another twenty early Christian authors, nine secular non-Christian sources, and four heretical writings mention Jesus. In all, at least forty-two authors write of Jesus within 150 years of his death.⁹⁰ Respected non-Christian historians, including Cornelius Tacitus (ca. A.D. 50-120, regarded as the greatest historian of ancient Rome) and Flavius Josephus (A.D. 37 or 38 to A.D. 97, noted Jewish historian) wrote of Jesus. Tacitus wrote that Christ “suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus.”⁹¹ Josephus referred to Jesus as a wise and virtuous man, condemned by Pilate to be crucified and die; Josephus further wrote that Jesus’ disciples “reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion, and that he was alive.”⁹² Other references citing Jesus included various government officials (including Pliny the Younger, Roman author and administrator), the Jewish Talmud, gentile sources, and Gnostic writers.⁹³ A late-second-century writing told of Jesus’ resurrection: “Do not think the resurrection is an illusion. It is no illusion, but it is truth. Indeed, it is more fitting to say that the world is an illusion, rather than the resurrection.”⁹⁴

Aside from the books and letters of the New Testament, written approximately 15 to 65 years after Christ,⁹⁵ the writings of the “apostolic fathers” (A.D. 90-125), barely a generation removed from Christ, provide compelling evidence for the crucifixion and resurrection. Clement of Rome, a leading elder in the church at Rome, wrote to the Corinthian church in A.D. 95 (approximately 60 years after Christ’s crucifixion), mentioning “the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁹⁶ Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, wrote seven letters to six churches circa A.D. 110 to 115, confirming the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ: “Jesus Christ ... who was truly born and ate and drank, was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died in the sight of those in heaven and on earth ... who moreover was truly raised from the dead ... For I know and believe that He was in the flesh even after the resurrection ... And after His resurrection He ate with them and drank with them.”⁹⁷ Early Christian scholar Justin Martyr wrote of Jesus’ birth in the town of Bethlehem, his lineage through the tribe of Judah and family of Jesse, Jesus’ death by crucifixion, and that “He had risen from the dead and appeared to them.”⁹⁸

Historians and scholars, both Christian and non-Christian, secular and religious, document the historicity of Jesus’ life and death by crucifixion, followed by his resurrection from the dead.

The Resurrection

The deity of Jesus Christ is fundamental to Christianity. The Scriptures record numerous incidences of Jesus healing the sick and working miracles, including raising the dead. No healing or miracle, however, approaches the significance of Jesus’ own resurrection from the dead. His resurrection is the ultimate proof of his deity—the capstone of Christianity. Within the New Testament, Jesus’ resurrection is the

focal point. The apostle Paul wrote, “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still under condemnation for your sins. In that case, all who have died believing in Christ have perished.” (1 Corinthians 15:17-18)

When such a seemingly incredible claim is made about Jesus rising from the dead, skeptics are right to ask for evidence. After all, if he did not rise from the dead, he was a false prophet and charlatan. Conversely, if he did rise from the dead, no act would better demonstrate his deity. Remarkably, Jesus predicted his own death and spoke of his resurrection:

“From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.” (Matthew 16:21)

He taught his disciples, “The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.” (Mark 9:31)

“For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have the authority to lay it down, and I have the authority to take it up again.” (John 10:17-18a)

Skeptics believe Jesus’ resurrection is merely a myth or legend that developed after he actually lived. Others suggest Jesus’ disciples never claimed that he actually rose from the dead, and that the resurrection was just an embellishment added many years later. Recent scholarly research suggests this isn’t the case, and, in fact, the resurrection story can be traced back to the original apostles. One such scholar, Dr Gary Habermas, distinguished Professor and Chairman of the Department of Philosophy and Theology at Liberty University, has surveyed almost thirty years of German, French, and English critical scholarship relating to Jesus’ resurrection. He noted that “perhaps no fact is more widely recognized than that early Christian believers had real experiences that they thought were appearances of the risen Jesus.”⁹⁹

Habermas uses the “minimal facts approach” for considering the truth claims of the resurrection. This approach “considers only those data that are so strongly attested historically that they are granted by nearly every scholar who studies the subject, even the rather skeptical ones.”¹⁰⁰ Using this approach, Habermas doesn’t argue for the inspiration of the Bible or even its general trustworthiness. Rather, he approaches the New Testament as simply an ancient volume of literature containing 27 separate books and letters that is just like any other historical work of antiquity. Habermas notes five facts that are accepted by virtually all scholars.¹⁰¹

1. Jesus’ death by crucifixion
2. Disciples’ belief that Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to

them.

3. Conversion of Paul, persecutor of the church.
4. Conversion of James, skeptic and brother of Jesus.
5. The tomb was empty.

Jesus’ death by crucifixion is well-established by both Christian and non-Christian sources. It is not only recorded in all four gospels, but also confirmed by Hebrew historian Josephus, who wrote that Pilate “condemned him to be crucified.” Roman historian Tacitus recorded that Jesus “suffered the extreme penalty.” Lucian of Samosata, a Greek satirist, wrote that Jesus was “crucified.” Even highly critical scholar John Dominic Crossan stated, “That he was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be.”¹⁰²

After Jesus was crucified, his body was placed in a tomb. Three days later the tomb was found to be empty, a fact attested to not only by Christian sources, but also by Jesus’ enemies. Jews accused the disciples of stealing the body, a tacit admission that the tomb was empty. “The empty tomb is, therefore, well evidenced for historical certainty.”¹⁰³

There is virtual consensus among resurrection scholars that subsequent to Jesus’ death, his disciples believed that he appeared to them risen from the dead. This conclusion can be reached from nine early and independent sources that fall into three categories.¹⁰⁴

1. The testimony of Paul.
2. Oral tradition passed through the early church.
3. Written works of the early church.

Saul of Tarsus, known as Paul after his dramatic conversion (actually, somewhat like that of Blaise Pascal mentioned earlier), changed from being a skeptic and aggressive persecutor of Christians to becoming one of the church’s most ardent defenders and strongest advocates. Paul’s transformation resulted from the firm belief that he had experienced an encounter with the risen Christ. Similarly, James, brother of Jesus, an unbeliever during Jesus’ earthly ministry, initially rejected claims of Jesus’ deity and only became a convert after the risen Jesus appeared to him. Subsequent to seeing Him, James became a believer and leader of the Jerusalem church.¹⁰⁵

Those living during the times of Jesus had limited means of passing along information regarding Jesus. Written words, penned by hand, reached very few, especially since few even knew how to read. Because of this, oral tradition—carefully constructed creeds, hymns, story summaries, and poetry—was the predominant method of communicating information. Habermas notes their importance: “These are significant, since the oral tradition had to exist prior to New Testament writings in order for the New Testament authors to include them. This takes us back to some of the earliest teachings of

the Christian church, teachings that predate the writing of the New Testament.”¹⁰⁶

Creeds were a popular means of communicating important information in a format friendly to memorization and retention. One of the earliest creeds was quoted in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian church (circa A.D.55):

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas [Peter], then to the twelve [disciples].” (1 Corinthians 15:3-5)

This creed, which pre-dated the New Testament, originated very early. Jesus was crucified around A.D. 30, and Paul’s conversion occurred around A.D. 31-33.¹⁰⁷ After his conversion, Paul went to Arabia for three years and then returned, visiting Peter and James in Jerusalem (see Galatians 1:18-19). During this visit, Paul received the creed. The creed therefore originated within five to ten years of the resurrection and was based on early testimony by eye-witnesses of the resurrection—Peter, the twelve disciples, “more than five hundred,” James, and “all the apostles.” (see Acts 15:5-7)¹⁰⁸

Sermons, recorded in the Book of Acts, contain oral summaries that can be traced to the earliest teachings of the church. Peter’s sermon at Pentecost, preached just fifty days after the resurrection, spoke specifically of Jesus’ death and resurrection:

“This Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. And God raised Him up again ... This Jesus, raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.” (Acts 2:23-24a, 32)

Since the original disciples made the claim that Jesus rose from the dead, his resurrection was not the result of myth-making. The disciples’ belief they had seen the risen Jesus is powerful historical evidence for the truth of the resurrection. When Paul was asked whether Jesus was raised from the dead, he said, in effect, “There are almost 500 living witnesses; go and ask them!”¹⁰⁹

Early church fathers, barely a generation removed from the death of Christ, also wrote of Christ’s resurrection from the dead. Clement, bishop of Rome (circa A.D. 30-100), wrote of the “complete certainty caused by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹¹⁰ Ireanaeus wrote regarding Polycarp (circa A.D 69-155) who was “instructed by the apostles” and “conversed with many who had seen Christ.” In his letter to the church at Philippi, Polycarp mentions the resurrection of Jesus five times.¹¹¹

Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, wrote seven letters to six churches around

A.D. 110-115, wherein he wrote, “Jesus Christ ... was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died in the sight of those in heaven and on earth ... who moreover was truly raised from the dead...” He further wrote, “For I know and believe that He was in the flesh even after the resurrection ... And after His resurrection He ate with them and drank with them.”¹¹² Justin Martyr, a distinguished philosopher writing soon after 150 A.D., noted, “For indeed the Lord remained on the tree [cross] almost until evening, and they buried him at eventide; then on the third day He rose again.”¹¹³

Habermas notes, “The bodily resurrection of Jesus was proclaimed at the earliest stages of Christianity and is multiply attested. Moreover, no first century Christian writer presents a contrary view.”¹¹⁴

WHAT SAY YOU?

Ultimately, individuals must examine their own worldview and determine what is true and not true. We live in an extraordinary world—a world with a finite beginning and one that is meticulously designed and ordered for life. It is real and not an illusion. It is bounded by time and space and bears the fingerprints of a personal Creator who possesses intelligence and volition. Christians believe the Creator is the God of the Bible, revealed 2000 years ago in the person of Jesus Christ, who demonstrated Godhood through the resurrection.

In the end, each individual must decide for himself. Was Jesus who he claimed to be? Was he God incarnate or merely a man? Jesus made specific claims about the world and himself. These claims are either true or false.

There is no way to absolutely prove the existence of God or that Jesus was divine. Numerous evidences may prove the truth of Christianity beyond reasonable doubt, but in the end, only you can accept or reject it. Norman Geisler and Frank Turkek pose the following: “If someone could provide reasonable answers to the most significant questions and objections you have about Christianity—reasonable to the point that Christianity seems true beyond a reasonable doubt—would you then become a Christian? Think about that for a moment. If your honest answer is no, then your resistance to Christianity is emotional or volitional, not merely intellectual. No amount of evidence will convince you because evidence is not what’s in your way—you are. In the end, only you know if you are truly open to the evidence of Christianity.”¹¹⁵

Aldous Huxley, New Age guru, rejected the claims of Jesus. But not long before he died, he had second thoughts about the validity of his pantheistic “new consciousness.” Two days before his death, in a taped conversation with his wife, he commented on an inner discovery he had just made, and concluded with this comment: “In a way it was absolutely terrifying, showing that when one thinks one’s got beyond one’s self, one hasn’t.”¹¹⁶ Considering one’s eternal destiny, it’s important to determine what is true or not true.

C.S. Lewis poses the ultimate challenge:

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make the choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”¹¹⁷

Jesus—Lord, liar, or lunatic? Those are the only options. What say you?

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79. *Ibid.*, 96.
80. Peter Kreeft, “Why I Believe Jesus Is The Son of God,” cited in *Why I Am A Christian*, Geisler & Hoffman, 230-231.
81. “Christ” (New Testament Greek word: christos) and “Messiah” (Old Testament Hebrew word: moshiach) have the same meaning.
82. Romans 16:25-26, ESV.
83. Colossians 1:26, ESV.
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85. (a) Genesis 12:3, 22:18, Matthew 1:1, (b) Genesis 28:10-15, Matthew 1:2, (c) Genesis 49:10, Matthew 1:2-3, (d) 2 Samuel 7:16, Matthew 1:6, (e) Micah 5:2, Matthew 2:1, (f) Psalm 41:9, Matthew 26:47-48, (g) Psalm 22:16, Luke 23:33, (h) Isaiah 53:12, Matthew 27:38, (i) Zechariah 12:10, John 19:34, (j) Isaiah 53:9, Matthew 27:57-60.
86. John Phillips, quoted in *Why I Am a Christian*, Geisler & Hoffman, 207.
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88. Word (Greek word Logos) designates the Son of God, Jesus Christ. In Greek philosophy, Logos referred to “logic” and “reason” as the underlying force that brought order and harmony to the universe. Some regard the Logos as the sum of all knowledge and intelligence.
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92. *Ibid.*, 193.
93. *Ibid.*, 197-215.
94. *Ibid.*, 214.
95. James and very possibly Galatians were written approximately 45-49 A.D., and John and Revelations were written approximately 90-95 A.D.
96. *Ibid.*, 230.
97. *Ibid.*, 231-232.
98. *Ibid.*, 234-236.
99. Habermas & Licona, 74.
100. *Ibid.*, 44.
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104. Ibid., 49-56.
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107. Some evangelicals believe that Paul's conversion occurred in A.D. 36, while Habermas claims A.D. 31-33 (see Habermas & Licona, p. 221)
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Seattle Chapter Reasons To Believe

Who Are We?

The Seattle Chapter of Reasons To Believe is a local extension of the worldwide, interdenominational Reasons To Believe ministry. We exist to support our parent organization and foster local involvement in the ministry. We serve the Puget Sound area and are composed of Christians of different ages and backgrounds.

It is our conviction that the same God who created the universe inspired the Bible. Therefore, what God says through His word must agree with the facts of nature. We reject the notion that science and the Bible are at odds and provide a scientifically-sound and Biblically-faithful alternative to Darwinism and young-Earth creationism.

What Do We Do?

Our mission is to remove the doubts of skeptics and strengthen the faith of believers. We provide scientific, historical and philosophical evidence that supports the Christian worldview and helps remove barriers to a belief in God, the Bible and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We carry out this mission by:

- Helping people access RTB and other scientifically and biblically sound resources.
- Bringing nationally-known speakers into the area to promote the scientific reliability of the Bible.
- Assembling a team of local apologists to address questions about science, the Bible and related topics.
- Working with teachers and homeschoolers to achieve a balanced approach to the teaching of origins.
- Building alliances with local churches, ministries and groups to maximize the exposure of the RTB ministry.
- Reaching out to unbelievers with gentleness and respect, encouraging them to evaluate their worldviews.

We welcome your involvement and support. For more information, contact us at seattle@reasons.org. Tax-deductible donations can be sent to: Seattle RTB, PO Box 99683, Seattle, WA 98139-0683.

Questions? Get Answers.

Whether you are looking for scientific support for your faith or answers to questions about God, the Bible, and science, contact us at seattle@reasons.org. You can also call the RTB hotline seven days a week, 5:00 to 7:00 PM at 626-335-5282.