



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

REASONS TO BELIEVE - SEATTLE AREA CHAPTER

NEWS AND VIEWS

JUNE 2009

What's Happening?

New RTB Resources

Hugh Ross' latest book, *More Than a Theory*, is now available. Go to the RTB webstore. <http://store.reasons.org> and click on "NEW!". Also check out the podcasts RTB has available, including multi episode companions to several of their books. Go to <http://www.reasons.org/resources/radio-broadcasts-and-podcasts>.

Help Make a Difference

The Seattle Chapter and Campus Crusade hope to do a "Skeptics Forum" at the UW next fall. To do this, we need to raise about \$5,000. If you, your church, or your group, would like to help sponsor this event, contact the chapter immediately at seattle@reasons.org.

We Do Presentations

The Seattle chapter does presentations on wide range of topics. If your church or group is looking for speakers, contact us at seattle@reasons.org. We are also happy to help you with resources to support your personal studies and/or ministry efforts.

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The Origin of Physical Death

DR. JOHN MILLAM

Questions regarding death are some of the most painful and difficult questions to answer. The question of the origin and purpose of physical death is a difficult yet important question to answer. "Why does God allow death?" "Why do we have to die?" Some critical insights on these questions are given at the end of Genesis 3 shortly after the Fall. These are the first verses in the Bible to address the question of physical death.

Let us begin by examining the account of Adam and Eve. In Genesis 2:16-17, we see God telling Adam about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the penalty for eating its fruit. "And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die'" (Genesis 2:17 NIV). Upon eating the fruit, they immediately felt naked and ashamed, they hid from God, and a little later they felt distanced/separated from God's presence (Genesis 3:7-8). We know from Romans 5:12 that this separation from God is spiritual death. But, Adam did not die physically until about 900 years later (Genesis 5:3-6). Since physical death did not come at the same time as spiritual death, we need to understand how and why it came about.



In contrast to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve were free to eat of the tree of life (before the Fall). The word used here for "life" (Genesis 2:9, 3:22, 24) is *Chay*. *Chay* (2416) can mean living, alive, have life, remain alive, sustain life, live prosperously, live forever, be quickened, revive from sickness, discouragement, or even death (HGKSB, p. 1591). From this, we see that the tree of life was to maintain and restore physical health.

Other references also support this: "the leaves of the tree are for the healing for the nations" (Revelation 22:2, see also Ezekiel 47:12; Revelation 22:14, 19). Shortly after Adam and Eve were cursed, they were kicked out of the garden. Then God said, "He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also

from the tree of life (*chay*) and eat, and live (*chayay*) forever” (Genesis 3:22 NIV). *Chayay* (2425) is closely related *chay*. To live forever must refer to physical life, since we know clearly that they were already spiritually dead (Genesis 3:7-8). While they had access to the tree of life, they would have been able to live forever because eating the fruit would have restored their health, stopped any diseases, and reversed the effects of decay. By removing access to the tree of life, Adam, Eve, and their descendents would slowly succumb to the effects of decay and physically die. This, however, implies that Adam and Eve were created mortal and subject to decay since they needed access to the tree of life.

Not only were Adam and Eve created mortal, they were also subject to physical pain before the fall. When God is pronouncing the curse on Eve, He declared, “I will greatly *increase* your pains in childbirth” (Genesis 3:16 NIV, emphasis mine). Notice that God did not say that she would experience pain for the first time. Both Adam and Eve had to have already had known what pain was for God’s statement to make sense. Just as God’s curse on Adam increased the amount of labor man would need to feed himself (Genesis 2:5, 15, 17-19), rather than work for the first time, so God’s curse on Eve increased the amount of pain that she would undergo. Pain, like work, existed before the Fall as part of God’s plan but each became unproductive and difficult as a result of the Fall.

If then Adam and Eve were created mortal, with the capacity to suffer pain and need healing, then God must have built death and decay into universe rather than introducing it at the fall. Why would God create a universe where things can decay and die? This causes problems for many Christians, so let us examine this question in depth.

THE “VERY GOOD” CREATION

When God finished His works of creation, He surveyed it and declared it to be “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Since God is loving and compassionate, how could His “very good” creation have allowed physical death? Surely, this must have come as a result of the Fall.

When God declares creation to be “very good,” we must be very careful not to succumb to the temptation of interpreting “good” from our perspective (Isaiah 55:8-9). Throughout the scriptures, we see myriads of examples of events that seem to be bad from man’s perspective (the suffering of Job, Joseph’s imprisonment, and Daniel’s exile to Babylon) yet God is the author of these events. When we begin to see God’s plan and purpose behind the event, our views change and we see God’s wisdom and goodness manifest. A child may perceive being denied a cookie as being bad but the parent looking from a higher perspective recognizes that too many cookies are not healthy. Only when the child matures does he understand his parents perspective and that their decision was for his good.

THE RAPID CONQUEST OF EVIL

When God declared His creation to be “very good,” it means that He

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In the NEWS...

[What ‘Ida’ Give for a Missing Link](#)

This article by Casey Luskin of the Discovery Institute examines the significance of *Ida*, the recent find hailed as the missing link to human evolution. His advice? Keep a healthy skepticism of media hype over so-called evolutionary links. Go to: <http://www.discovery.org/a/11221>.

[Dead End of Secularism](#)

This *tothesource* article by Dr. Jennifer Morse comments on the inability of secularism to replace religion. She contends secularism is a dead end because it contains disincentives for having children and, thus, is dying out. Go to http://www.tothesource.org/6_11_2009/6_11_2009.htm.

[The Three Most Important Words](#)

In this Breakpoint article by Allan Dobras, reminds us that the three most important words ever spoken are “He is risen.” He contends that should be the source of the ideals and values of Christian Americans. Go to <http://www.breakpoint.org/listingarticle.asp?ID=11809>.

[Bird Evolution](#)

This article on the ARN site, discusses fossilized bird tracks found in Argentina that create serious problems for the bird-from-dinosaurs theory. Go to http://www.arn.org/blogs/index.php/literature/2009/06/16/did_birds_fly_in_the_late_triassic.

[Keep the Human in Humane](#)

This *tothesource* article by Wesley Smith examines how Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* is happening with the assault on Judeo/Christian morals and a redefinition of human beings as mere natural resources. Go to http://www.tothesource/4_29_2009/4_29_2009.htm

Book Reviews

Answering the New Atheism

Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker
Emmaus Road Publishing, 2008

Reviewer: Jon Greene

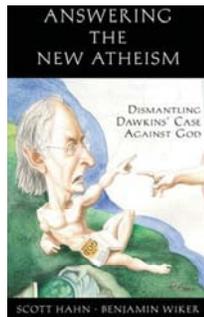
This is one of several recent books countering the claims of militant neo-atheists, such as Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, and Daniel Dennet. This book specifically challenges the claims espoused in Dawkins' *The God Delusion*.

Hahn and Wiker cover several broad topics: Dawkins' god of "chance," his fallacious philosophical notions and rejection of scientific evidences for God, and also his incoherent moral arguments against God. The authors lay aside all matters of Divine Revelation and argue solely on the basis of reason.

Dawkins has absolute faith in "chance" proving his materialistic notions that anything is possible, except the supernatural or miraculous. To accomplish his idea of a Godless world, Dawkins has to stretch science and morality beyond credulity. The extraordinary complexity of the simplest living cell, the existence of chemical elements that have not always existed, and the very fact the universe had a finite beginning are major hurdles for the atheistic materialism.

Hahn and Wiker note that "Against all odds, the simplest cell formed on our planet almost immediately upon our planet being cool enough to allow for the simplest biological life." Dawkins adamantly maintains his belief in "chance," in spite of the mathematical improbabilities of getting the right combination of 100 amino acids to make a small protein molecule (1 chance in 1.2×10^{44}) or a short strand of 100 nitrogenous bases arising randomly to form DNA (1 chance in 1.6×10^{59}).

Hahn and Wiker also uncover Dawkins' fallacious philosophical arguments. He denies an Intelligent Creator, believing that any being with the intelligence to create would Himself have to be a product of evolution. The authors counter that, noting that God, by definition, is purely spiritual, then the contingency of material evolution is inapplicable and misconstrued. The book also examines Dawkins' evolutionary explanation of morality as contributing to better survival of particular groups. Yet, as Hahn and Wiker note, Dawkins himself seems to repudiate the moral implications of evolutionary theory.



The Spiritual Brain

Mario Beauregard and Denyse O'Leary
HarperOne, 2007

Reviewer: John Battle

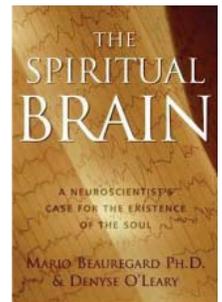
For centuries philosophers and theologians have argued about the makeup of the human being. Are we material only, or do we possess also an immaterial soul?

Christianity teaches the existence of an immortal soul, a separate essence from the material body. Since the time of the Enlightenment modernistic thinking led to widespread materialism in the West. Only the observable universe is real. All events have natural causes. Humans are simply an organized collection of material parts. What used to be considered characteristics of the soul are only the products of chemical and electrical forces in the physical brain.

Mario Beauregard is an associate researcher in neuroscience at the University of Montreal. He has done groundbreaking work in the neurobiological responses to emotions and mystical experiences. His scientific studies of many people in controlled situations, using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), has quantified and located brain activity related to emotions and mystical experiences

Beauregard subjects the modern idea of a "God spot" in the brain, the result of evolution, to scientific scrutiny. He finds people's mystical experiences, near-death experiences, the placebo effect, and low-level but measurable extrasensory perception all give evidence that the mind or soul is separate from the brain. The responses of the brain to such non-material entities are the same as those to material entities perceived by the physical senses and they are not located in one part of the brain, but rather use the same complexes and patterns as in normal interpersonal relations. The arguments of the materialists do not adequately address these findings.

Beauregard and his coauthor, Denyse O'Leary, present a well-written, convincing scientific argument supporting the non-materialist position of the human mind or soul. I hope the scientific community will respond to the arguments and not simply consign it to the oblivion of ignored theories that contradicts its worldview.



completed all His works of creation and that it exactly fulfilled His divine purpose. God's ultimate purpose in creation was to bring about the rapid conquest of evil. God created man without sin but placed him in a universe where he could freely choose to obey or disobey God. God built into the very nature of the universe (the laws of physics) the capacity to allow man to express his freewill and to face the consequences of those actions. This capacity was built into the universe from the beginning (Romans 8:19-22) rather than changing the laws of physics at the time of the Fall. Once man disobeyed, God quickly brought about physical death by eliminating access to the tree of life (rather than changing the laws of physics). Without physical death, there would be no motivation to repent since one could just keep putting off repentance and turning to Jesus.

Once sin has been dealt with, there will be a new heavens and earth that will be free from death and decay. We notice that God will not restore this creation to its original state but will completely destroy it and in its place, there will be a new heavens and earth with new laws of physics (Isaiah 65:17, 2 Peter 3:10-13, Revelation 21:1). Since there will be no more sin, there will be no more death or pain.

FROM PARADISE TO THE NEW CREATION

A common perception in Christian circles is that paradise (the Garden of Eden) is just like heaven. Since heaven is without death, pain, or sorrow, then surely so must paradise. However, unlike other world religions, God doesn't promise a return to paradise but instead will rescue us from paradise and take us to perfection in His new creation. Man was never intended to remain in the Garden of Eden forever. This world is simply the training ground God uses to prepare mankind for heaven.

This is comparable to the wanderings of the Israelites in the desert. In the wilderness, the Israelites were enduring harsh conditions while caught between two choices. They could return to Egypt ("paradise"), which was filled with cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic (Numbers 11:5) but be slaves. Alternatively, they could follow God onward through the deserts toward the land of the Promise ("perfection"). Clearly God intended the Israelites to continue toward the Promised Land.

LONG LIFESPANS BENEFIT THE WICKED

After the Fall, we see the rise of sin and lawlessness. First Cain murdered his brother Abel (Genesis 4:1-16). Next came

Lamech (Genesis 4:23-24) who was proud of being a murderer. Then comes the account of Noah (Genesis 6-9), which tells of a time of complete reprobation on the earth (Genesis 6:5-6). Murder and other forms of ungodliness were out of control. God instituted the flood to wipe out that wicked generation.

However, the problem of sin still existed even after the flood, since Noah and his family still carried the sin nature. Rather than wipe out mankind with a flood every few thousand years, God made an unconditional covenant that He would not flood the earth again (Genesis 9:11-17) but then He shortened the lifespan of man. Before the flood, some individuals lived almost 1,000 years (Genesis 5, 11). After the flood, man's lifespan began to rapidly decrease until it was less than 200 years by the time of Abraham (Genesis 11:32, 25:7). The maximum lifespan continued to drop to the current level of about 120 years, with most people not living past 70-80 years (Psalms 90:10). Only at the end of time, when sin has been dealt with will long lifespans be restored (Isaiah 65:17-25).

In the Garden of Eden before sin entered the world, God allowed Adam and Eve to have an effectively infinite lifespan (by giving them access to the tree of life). In heaven where there is no sin, God will eliminate death altogether. Without sin, long lifespans benefit the righteous. Once sin entered the picture, however, long lifespans hurt rather than helped the righteous. We see this in Noah's time where sin was rampant and widespread. Once someone goes down the path of wickedness and murder, the longer they can live the more damage they can do to society and, more specifically, to the righteous. God was merciful in shortening man's lifespan to prevent wickedness from getting out of hand as it did in the days of Noah.

CONCLUSION

Physical death was woven into the very fabric of this universe so that once sin was introduced into the world it could be conquered in the shortest possible time. Without death, it would have been more unpleasant for the righteous because the wicked would have more time to oppress the righteous and less motivation to repent. So, while physical death may seem painful from our limited human perspective, it is really an expression of God's love and mercy.

Dr. John Millam has a Ph.D. in theoretical chemistry from Rice University. He is a trained RTB apologist and has written many articles on science and the Bible.

REFERENCES

NIV = New International Version of the Holy Bible.

Vine's = W. E. Vine, M. F. Unger, W. White, Jr., Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville.

Word references in parenthesis are keyed to The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers.



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 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.