



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

## REASONS TO BELIEVE - SEATTLE AREA CHAPTER

NEWS AND VIEWS

FEBRUARY 2010

### What's Happening?

#### Social Networking

RTB is now using several social networking sites. Check them out at: Twitter at [http://twitter.com/RTB\\_official](http://twitter.com/RTB_official), Facebook (you can login through [www.reasons.org/rtb-social-networking](http://www.reasons.org/rtb-social-networking)), and You Tube at <http://www.youtube.com/user/ReasonsToBelieve1>.

#### Radio Interviews

Listen to Hugh Ross on Moody Radio, Jan. 29 at 4:00 PM PST, and The Frank Pastore Show, Feb. 2 at 5:00 PM PST. Fuz Rana will be on KKMS Live, Feb. 3 at 3:00 PM PST, and The Frank Pastore Show, Feb. 4 at 4:00 PM PST. To listen live to the interviews, go to: <http://www.reasons.org/whats-new/media-interviews>.

#### We Do Presentations

The Seattle chapter does presentations on wide range of topics. If your church or group is looking for speakers or discussion leaders, contact us at [seattle@reasons.org](mailto:seattle@reasons.org). We are also happy to help you with questions and resources for your personal studies and/or efforts.

### Inside This Issue

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### Ardi: Missing Link Between Monkey & Man?

CATHY BAKKEN

In December, the prestigious scientific publication, *Science*, announced the scientific breakthrough of 2009: a 4.4 million year old fossilized hominid named "Ardi," allegedly displacing Lucy as the oldest known ancestor of modern humans. The species *Ardipithecus ramidus* was first discovered in 1992, and "Ardi's" unusually complete (45%) skeleton was discovered two years later. She was discovered 46 miles from where Lucy was unearthed, in an area of Ethiopia where paleoanthropologists have been digging for human ancestors for decades.



It took a team of 47 scientists in nine nations fifteen years to excavate and analyze the bones of Ardi and remnants of 36 other individuals. Ardi was unveiled to the world in October, 2009 in *Science*. According to the BBC, "careful examination of its skull, teeth, pelvis, hands and feet revealed that Ardi shared a mixture of "primitive" traits shared with its predecessors, and "derived" features, which it shared with later hominids, or human-like creatures. It shared some of these derived features with humans." Tim White from U.C. Berkeley, one of the lead scientists on the study, said, "This is not an ordinary fossil. It's not a chimp. It's not a human. It shows us what we used to be."

Scientists do not know whether Ardi is a direct ancestor of modern man according to the evolutionary paradigm. She is a hominid, but that term actually includes all the great apes and chimpanzees. But that hasn't stopped the media from claiming her as man's oldest fossilized ancestor.

Let's look at some of the facts about *Ardipithecus ramidus*.

Ardi fossils date to between 4.32 and 4.51 million years ago. Ardi is a more primitive hominid than the well-known Australopithecine Lucy. Ardi is 1.3 million years older, six inches taller, and weighed twice as much (around 110 lbs) as Lucy. Her brain is much smaller than Lucy, about the same size as a chimpanzee, only about 20% of the modern humans' brains. However, Ardi's teeth are not chimp-

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# Thinking as Christians Part 2

DAVID PETERSON

Last month I introduced this series of articles by looking at some situations in which scriptural truth intersects with knowledge we gain elsewhere, and the kinds of questions these intersections can raise. This time I want to survey the kinds of things I have learned by bringing various school subjects into contact with the Bible. On one hand, scripture can guide and correct our understanding of almost anything; on the other hand, these studies can help us better understand scripture as well.

**History** – When I began to study the Bible, I found I was thankful for my high school history teacher! What I learned there helped me see the Bible as real stories of real people (not just cartoon characters in a simplistic world), because I knew something of the geographical and cultural background for God’s story. I could also fit prophecies into their place in history and see how they were fulfilled, validating their message. At the same time, in scripture we can see some of what God is doing behind the scenes of history, both past and future. When students make these connections, it both enriches what they are learning in school, and fleshes out what we teach in church.

When we study history or archaeology, we sometimes find support for the reliability of scripture, but sometimes the data seems to conflict with what we thought we knew about a Bible story. This can motivate us to look more deeply, and correct misinterpretations of either scripture or the archaeological evidence.

**Science** – Similar issues arise in areas of science (astronomy, geology, biology) that reconstruct the past, such as how the universe began and life developed. These can present challenges, but we can honestly face them, knowing that a true understanding of the world God made will never conflict with a true understanding of the Word God gave. On the other hand, science can also support our faith, by giving evidence for the existence of a creator, or even backing up the truth of specific scriptural statements. We need to be cautious in interpreting these, but should seek out the best evidence that will help scientifically-minded unbelievers begin to trust the Bible.

Other kinds of science give us information about our world that we can use in obeying God, or that help us see God’s glory. Physics enables us to improve travel and communication, and to see how God’s universe operates. Medicine has helped us care for the sick, and revealed the intricate design of our bodies. Biology helps us manage the creation over which God has set us. But we need to use science wisely. Topics like global warming, extinction of species, and “alternative medicine”, for example, raise hard questions both of fact and of values.

**Psychology and social sciences** – These are the “soft” sciences; that is, we don’t have a lot of solid data to go by, so there are many false theories. We need to steer away from godless interpretations of the data. But some psychology is really just carefully-obtained experience of human nature, which we might use to help others follow God’s precepts. We want to identify what is good, and protect people from what is

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## In the NEWS...

### [Be Tolerant or Else](#)

This tothesource article discusses a bill in Britain, and surely something that will happen here, that attempts to force tolerance of what Christians morally reject. According to the author, tolerance is not a virtue when it is imposed by force. Go to: [http://www.tothesource.org/2\\_24\\_2010/2\\_24\\_2010.htm](http://www.tothesource.org/2_24_2010/2_24_2010.htm).

### [The Faith of the Founders](#)

This Breakpoint article examines the debate over how Christian our nation’s founding fathers were. According to the author, despite their theological differences, religion (Christianity) played an important role in their thinking. Go to: [www.breakpoint.org/features-columns/articles/14571-the-faith-of-the-founders](http://www.breakpoint.org/features-columns/articles/14571-the-faith-of-the-founders).

### [Catfish Convergence](#)

This article by RTB’s Fuz Rana discusses an example of convergence (repeated evolution) where, according to the evolutionary perspective, the venom glands in catfish must have emerged (evolved) at least two separate times. Go to <http://www.reasons.org/convergence-catfish-venomous-evolution>.

### [The Trouble with Twilight](#)

This Christianity Today article critiques the Twilight books and movies concluding they could be more of a concern than the Harry Potter books which provoked far more criticism. Go to <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/februaryweb-only/17.51.o.html>.

### [Unless We All Matter](#)

This tothesource article discusses the push by some to abandon the principles of human exceptionalism and intrinsic human dignity as the basis for medical ethics, and instead judge each individual’s value based on their individual characteristics and capacities. Go to: [http://www.tothesource.org/2\\_10\\_2010/2\\_10\\_2010.htm](http://www.tothesource.org/2_10_2010/2_10_2010.htm).

like, and her feet are made more for walking on two feet than chimp's feet are.

Ardi's teeth are smaller than chimps, and the same size as males of her species. Scientists have extrapolated this into evidence of a social structure where males did not compete with females, as is the case in chimp communities today, but lived together cooperatively to raise their young. Finally, the researchers say that Ardi's feet and pelvis are shaped in such a way that she was able to walk on two feet as well as use all four limbs when in trees.

In choosing Ardi as the scientific breakthrough of 2009, the Science editors declared her to be the "central character in the story of human evolution." But this was just the culmination of a firestorm of hype proclaiming a radical new character in the story on human evolution, and attempting to reinforce the image of evolution as the truth in the minds of ordinary people.

Beside a whole string of eleven articles in *Science* on October 2, and the print, web and TV media's repetition of the story, the Discovery Channel aired a documentary on October 9. The show was called, "Discovering Ardi: Darwin Could Only Dream of Finding This."

However, there are a number of questions about the fossil, and the conclusions drawn from it. First of all, why did it take fifteen years for "Ardi" to be released to the world? While some have claimed that the researchers wanted to maintain complete control over the remains and the data they gained from it until they could be the first to publish it, this is actually standard practice.

More importantly, it took this long because the remains are in such bad condition. Not only have they been gnawed by predators and—yes, really—stomped by hippos (the skull is crushed to four centimeters in height), they are so fragile and chalky that they turn to dust at the touch, according to the National Geographic. The fossils had to be removed by soaking the earth around them in chemicals, then painstakingly reversing the chemical process to reach the specimens. Then each of hundreds of bone fragments had to be molded and digitally reconstructed.

Another area of criticism comes from within the evolutionary camp. Donald Johanson, who discovered Lucy, was quoted in the Chronicle of Higher Education. He said he expected the team's initial interpretations "will undoubtedly generate widespread debate," perhaps even including the question of whether Ardi is actually a human ancestor. "There must have been very rapid evolutionary change" for the human form to transform so quickly from Ardi to Lucy.

In order to tell whether Ardi was bipedal, researchers had to obtain precise measurements of the angles of key bones such as the pelvis,

femur, and knee-bones. The pelvis was so crushed that one scientist who saw it questioned whether the researchers could be sure at all that they had reconstructed it correctly. In fact, in the very articles in *Science* from October, skeptics within the field voice concerns both about the poor condition of the find and any conclusions drawn from it, and argue that Ardi would have walked extremely clumsily, if at all.

Ardi casts doubt on classical explanations for the evolution of bipedalism. It has been posited that in order to see over the tall grasses of the African Savannah, the ability to stand and walk on two legs would have made that a sought-after advantage. However, Ardi's remains were found in situ in a woodlands environment, so it seems that bipedalism must be explained by some other mechanism. And Ardi's "un-chimp-likeness" challenges the "ape-man" evolutionary hypothesis as well.

Finally, the emphasis on bipedalism as a link to humans is strong only in the eyes of the uninformed. A number of upright-walking, forest-dwelling ape-like species lived before Ardi, and are not believed to be related to humans. So bipedalism doesn't necessarily qualify as a prerequisite for being an ancestor of man.

While paleontologists recognize this research as "science at its best," it is important to note that this one fossil knocks askance the classic textbook evolutionary story. Things aren't as robust as they seem in the evolutionary camp.

According to Reasons to Believe's creation model, hominids such as Ardi are creations of God with physical, intellectual and emotional characteristics, but are not spiritual in nature – they are animals. Mankind is a special, unique creation, with no real link to these hominids.

Unfortunately, in the popular press, Ardi is depicted as another buttress supporting the cathedral of evolution. But, looking deeper, the story is much more exciting.

For more information, visit <http://www.reasons.org/ArdiHardlyEvidenceforHumanEvolution>, or see *Who Was Adam* by Fuz Rana and Hugh Ross, as well as <http://www.ideacenter.org/contentmgr/showdetails.php/id/1484>.

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harmful. On the other hand, simply understanding how people think and feel and interact can help us better understand what is going on in the Bible.

**Philosophy** – Many Christians assume that philosophy is just worthless human wisdom. But the reality is that all of us have some sort of philosophy, often called a “worldview”, by which we interpret the world around us, and this is often affected in subtle (or not-so-subtle) ways by what we read, see, or experience. Just being able to identify the philosophies found in the books we read or the ads that surround us can help us resist lies and replace them with a scriptural philosophy. Moreover, by understanding how our friends think, we can be better prepared to speak in ways that will make sense to them. Knowing how to reason logically can help us think and communicate more clearly.

**Linguistics** – Studying other languages, even if they are not the languages of the Bible, can give us insight into the problems of communication and translation, so that we can better avoid some of the traps people fall into when they take the Bible too “literally” in English, not realizing that it may not be what was meant in the original languages. Many supposed contradictions in the Bible come from this sort of wrong expectation of language.

I think one reason we tend to avoid some of these “secular” topics in the church is that we are uncomfortable with the uncertainty that comes with uninspired information. Life would be easier if we could pay attention only to scripture’s absolutes and ignore the mess of human knowledge, on which there is plenty of room for differences of opinion. Yet we must each apply the minds God gave us to all the information available to us, and do the best we can. If you disagree with me on the dating of the Exodus, or the reality of global warming, or the usefulness of psychology, we can still respect one another.

Each month I will discuss a question like those I’ve raised here, emphasizing how we can bring truths from scripture into the thinking and culture of the modern world, or use ideas we find there to strengthen our faith or our understanding. Next month, we will begin with a general look at apologetics: how we can use reasoning to lead others to faith, and deepen our own.

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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 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](mailto: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](mailto:seattle@reasons.org). You can also call the RTB hotline seven days a week, 5:00 to 7:00 PM at 626-335-5282.