

Getting to Know God

Lesson 1

In the Beginning God

The Bible does not seek to prove the existence of God. Instead, the existence of God is accepted as fact with the statement, *"In the beginning God..."* (Genesis 1:1). Proof of God's existence can be found simply by looking at nature. As Romans 1:20 points out, God's eternal power and divine nature can be clearly seen and understood from what has been made.

How are God's power and divinity seen in the creation? In the world of science, the second law of thermodynamics states that natural processes go in a direction that increases the total amount of disorder and randomness in the universe. In simple terms, this means that sophisticated and complicated things don't just happen. For example, you can't shuffle a deck of cards to get them into order, and you can't put watch parts into a box and shake it to make a watch. In every observable system, large and small, when things are left to themselves, they tend to go from order to disorder and from arrangement to randomness.¹

The order, sophistication and majesty of the universe imply a divine, intelligent creator. The universe can't have just happened. Let's consider some of the evidence in the solar system, the animal kingdom and the human body for an intelligent and powerful designer.

The Solar System

The Earth is 93 million miles from the sun. If it were closer we would burn up, and if it were farther away we would freeze. *"If during its next orbit around the Sun, the Earth deviated only a fraction of an inch every twenty miles or so, it would either fry or freeze within a year!"*² The Earth is also tilted on its axis in such a way as to allow most of the planet to support life. Without this tilt the poles would be cooler, the equator would be hotter and less of the planet would experience a variety of seasons.

The moon helps us keep track of time by faithfully changing from a new moon to a full moon

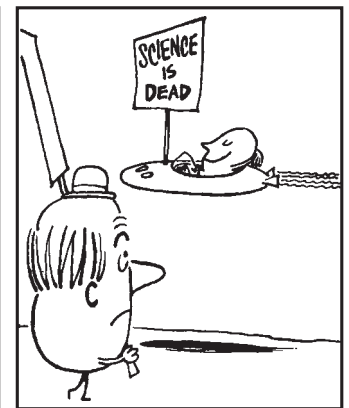
every 29½ days. The moon's size and position enable it to pull on the Earth in just the right way to cause the oceans to circulate, cleaning themselves and absorbing the oxygen needed to support life. If it were bigger it would cause dangerous tidal waves and earthquakes, and if it were smaller it wouldn't pull on the oceans with enough force to create the tides necessary for life.³

The Animal Kingdom

We can also see God's handiwork in the animal kingdom. For example, an 18-foot tall giraffe requires a heart about two and one-half feet long to pump his blood up into his brain. Whenever a giraffe starts to bend down to drink some water, that last pump of blood is on the way to his brain with enough force to blow his brains out if his head is down at the time the blood arrives. However, God designed the giraffe such that as he begins to bend down, some valves in the arteries of his neck begin to close. The blood that is already beyond the last valve, instead of going into the brain, soaks into a small sponge-like set of blood

THEOPHILUS

The Heavens Declare It!



vessels under the brain, causing them to gradually swell. As the giraffe begins to move his head back up, those valves in his neck arteries open and the sponge underneath the brain squeezes its blood up into his brain, allowing the giraffe to function well in any position.⁴

The archer fish is another interesting example. Even though the archer fish swims and eats like other fish most of the time, he is also able to hunt for food on the shore by firing an “arrow” of water at a bug on a plant along the water’s edge and then quickly swallowing it as it falls stunned into the water. To accomplish this, the archer fish has a special groove in the roof of his mouth through which he can push water with enough force to stun his prey. His eyes are also able to compensate for the way light is bent in water. To keep from merely scaring his prey away, he must aim accurately the first time, and he nearly always does.⁵ To attribute this ability to evolution is senseless. The adaptations in his eyes and in the roof of his mouth would have to either take place suddenly and simultaneously (a ridiculous assumption) or continue to slowly take place together in spite of the changes being useless until completed.

The Human Body

The more complicated something is, the more intelligent its maker must be. Therefore, the intricate workings of the human body may be the most amazing evidence of divine design. Within the body are about 100,000 miles of complex blood vessels, 206 hollow marrow manufacturing bones which, weight for weight, are stronger than steel, a heart which pumps 5-6 quarts of blood through the body each minute continuously without stopping to rest and a pair of kidneys able to purify over a ton of blood a day.⁶

These and other parts of the human body contain trillions of cells, and the nucleus of each cell is composed of hundreds of thousands of genes. Each gene is made up of a complex chemical referred to as DNA which has a complicated code for determining the entire development of that person. If the coded instructions of a single human cell were written in English, “they would fill a 1,000-volume encyclopedia.”⁷

As Darrel Kautz explained in *The Origin of Living Things*, “The information in DNA is sufficient for directing and controlling all of the processes which

*transpire within a cell including diagnosing, repairing and replicating the cell. Think of an architectural blueprint having the capacity of actually building the structure depicted on the blueprint, of maintaining that structure in good repair, and even replicating it.”*⁸

One of the more fascinating organs of the human body is the eye which functions much like a video camcorder yet with a great deal more complexity and efficiency. Reflected light enters the eye through the pupil, and its lens focuses the image onto the retina in the back of the eye. As the light is focused onto about 100 million rod cells (that are extra-sensitive and ‘see’ in black and white) and 300 million cone cells (which ‘see’ in color) which cover the retina, the light is absorbed and converted to electrical signals which are processed by a computer-like network of interneurons which enhance the information before sending it to the brain -- all within a fraction of a second.⁹ Charles Darwin recognized the complexity of the eye according to his book, *The Origin of Species*, where he said, “*To suppose that the eye...could have been formed by natural selection seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest degree.*”¹⁰

Every aspect of creation, from the intricacies of the human body to the vastness of the universe, shows God’s power. As King David expressed in Psalm 139:14, “*I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well,*” and in Psalm 19:1, “*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*”

Written Revelation

Even though the Creator’s eternal power and divine nature are obvious when we examine what he has made, God’s written revelation, the Bible, is where he reveals himself even more fully. Romans 10:17 tells us that faith comes by hearing the word of God. But can we rely on the Bible to accurately reveal God to us? Absolutely! Evidence that the Bible is the inspired word of God can be found in several areas:

1. The Bible’s claim of inspiration and its influence on the world. 2 Timothy 3:16 states that “*All Scripture is God-breathed...*” and 2 Peter 1:21 says that “*men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*” In addition, the Bible is saturated with phrases such as “*The Lord said...*” and Paul claimed that his preaching was the word of God (I

Thess. 2:13). Most of the writers of the Scriptures were uneducated men (fishermen, farmers, tax collectors) yet they wrote with confidence that they were revealing God's message, and they gave the world the finest statements of morals and ethics it has ever known, expressed in a manner superior to that of many men from much better educational backgrounds. The influence of the Bible has lifted civilization to a higher plane, and it has been the strongest influence for good in the history of the world.¹¹

2. The unity of the Scriptures. The Bible was written by about 40 different men over a period of nearly 1,600 years. These men were from a variety of cultural and educational backgrounds and wrote in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek), yet, as we shall discuss in more detail in the lessons which follow, the result was 66 books with a

consistent theme of God's plan for man's redemption from sin.

3. The accuracy of the Bible. The Bible is not intended to be a science, history or geography textbook, yet it is absolutely accurate in matters relating to these subjects. For instance, we do not find any of the superstitions and misunderstandings which were prevalent in ancient times incorporated into Scriptures. To the contrary, we see evidence of scientific understanding centuries ahead of its time. For example, Isaiah 40:22, which was written about 680 B.C., mentions God sitting above the "circle of the earth" and Leviticus 13, written by Moses about 700 years earlier, shows an understanding of the need to isolate those with certain diseases, a concept not understood until many centuries later.¹² Moses also wrote that "the life of the flesh is in the blood" 3,500

God said it long before

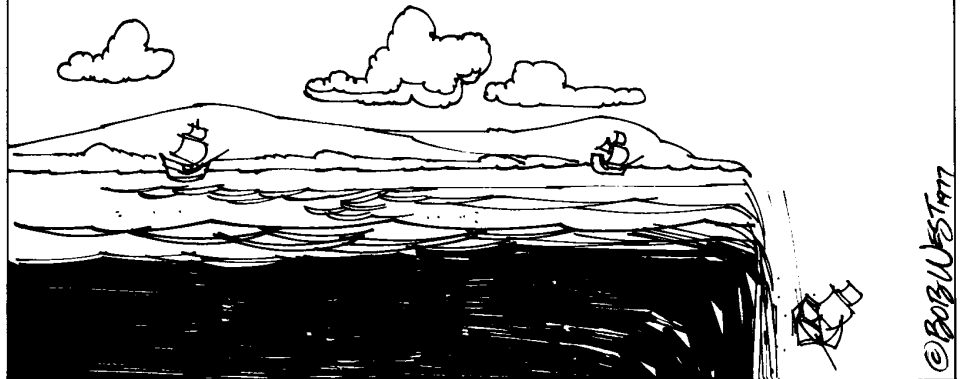
C. 700 BC: "IT IS HE THAT SITTETH ABOVE THE CIRCLE* OF THE EARTH." (ISAIAH 40:22 NASB)

*CIRCLE (from Hebrew *Khug*).
DEFINITION—SPHERICITY, OR ROUND-
NESS, AS THE ROUNDED SURFACE
OF A BOWL.

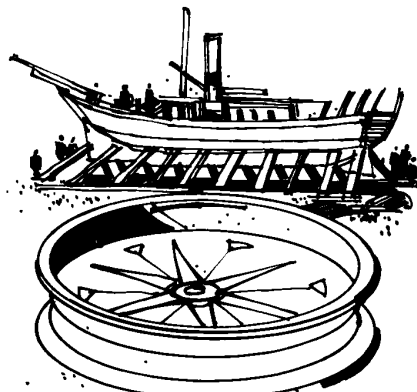


by A.O. SCHNABEL and BOB WEST
ILLUSTRATIONS BY R. TOM GILLEON

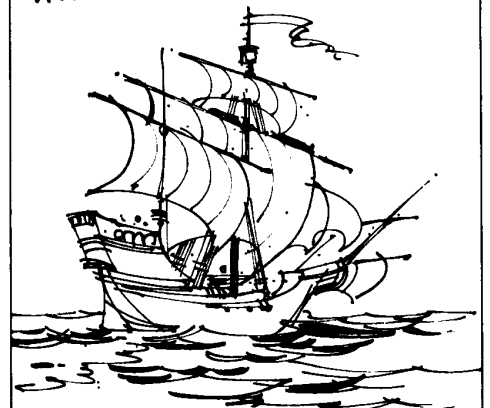
UNTIL RECENTLY, ALL CIVILIZATIONS BUT ISRAEL BELIEVED THE EARTH WAS FLAT AND DANGEROUS AT ITS EDGES.



TWO INVENTIONS—A SHIP WITH FOOD STORAGE CAPACITY FOR LONG VOYAGES AND THE COMPASS—MADE DISTANT SEA EXPLORATION POSSIBLE.



1520 AD: COLUMBUS AND MAGELLAN PROVED THAT THE EARTH WAS A CIRCLE.



JUST LIKE GOD SAID OVER 2,200 YEARS BEFORE!

years before science came to this understanding and stopped bloodletting, a procedure based on the incorrect belief that blood contained evil vapors and too much of it caused illness. It is commonly believed that George Washington's death in 1799 was a result of this so-called therapy.¹³

The Bible is also amazingly accurate in the area of geography. For instance, in the New Testament book of Acts, Luke mentions 32 countries, 54 cities and nine Mediterranean islands, and his references, where verifiable, are always correct.¹⁴ In addition, the Scriptures are consistently accurate regarding altitude (going up or down to a particular city) in a time when there were no scientific instruments for measuring altitude.¹⁵

4. Fulfilled Prophecies. The Old Testament is filled with specific prophecies concerning the rise, decline and fall of various nations including Israel and her neighbors, and all came to pass exactly as foretold in the Bible. The writers of the Bible foretold events that they could not have possibly known without divine revelation. The same can be said of the 300+ specific Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus Christ. In his book, *Science Speaks*, mathematician Peter Stoner chose eight Old Testament prophecies regarding Christ (Psalm 22:16; Isaiah 63:7; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 9:9; 11:12; 11:13; 13:6; and Malachi 3:1) and calculated the odds of these being fulfilled in one man as approximately 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. He said these were the same odds that a blindfolded man would have of picking up one uniquely marked silver dollar as he walked across the state of Texas, the entire surface of which had been covered with a pile of silver dollars two feet deep.¹⁶

5. Abundance of Manuscript Evidence. Can we be confident that the New Testament in our Bibles accurately relates the earthly life and teachings of Jesus and contains the same message that the New Testament writers penned? Most definitely! Compared to other ancient documents, there is an unprecedented number of New Testament manuscripts (approximately 24,000) still in existence. Homer's *Iliad* takes second place as the work of antiquity with the largest amount of manuscript evidence, and there are fewer than 650 Greek manuscripts (or portions thereof) in existence today. Unlike the New Testament manuscripts that can be dated extremely close to the original writings (the oldest being 100-150 A.D.), the *Iliad* manuscripts date from the second and third

centuries A.D. and following, about 1,000 years after Homer composed it in 800 B.C.¹⁷

F.F. Bruce, a former professor at the University of Manchester, England, and author of *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* confirmed that "*There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament.*" Furthermore, Sir Frederic Kenyon, former director of the British Museum and author of *The Paleography of Greek Papyri*, said that "*in no other case is the interval of time between the composition of the book and the date of the earliest manuscripts so short as that of the New Testament.*"¹⁸

Without a doubt, we can rely on the Bible to accurately communicate our creator's message to us, and it therefore deserves our careful attention. In Lesson 2 we will begin with the book of Genesis and continue through the Old Testament, summarizing the message of these books particularly as they relate to man's need of a savior and God's promise to fulfill that need.

References

¹Serway, Raymond A. and Faughn, Jerry S. *Physics* (Austin, TX: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1999), 425-426.

²Bromling, Brad T. *Be Sure!* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetic Press, Inc., 1995), 16.

³*Ibid.*, 17.

⁴West, Bob. *Evolution vs. Science and the Bible*, Teacher Guide and Supplement (Brevard, NC: Bob West Graphics, 1994), 14

⁵Bromling, 19.

⁶West, 12.

⁷Thompson, Bert and Jackson, Wayne. *A Study Course in Christian Evidences* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, Inc., 1992), 25.

⁸Kautz, Darrel. *The Origin of Living Things* (Milwaukee, WI: privately published by author, 1988).

⁹Bromling, 18.

¹⁰Darwin, Charles. *The Origin of Species* (New York, NY: Random House, 1993), 227.

¹¹Baxter, Batsell Barrett. *I Believe Because...* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1971), 174.

¹²*Ibid.*, 196.

¹³Bromling, 37.

¹⁴Thompson and Jackson, 115.

¹⁵Baxter, 197.

¹⁶Thompson and Jackson, 119-120.

¹⁷Strobel, Lee. *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 78 (pb), 60 (hb).

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 82 (pb), 63 (hb).

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Questions for Lesson 1

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Name _____

Address _____

Give an example of evidence for an intelligent and powerful designer of each of the following:

- a) the solar system
- b) the animal kingdom
- c) the human body

Read Romans 1:18-20. By looking at nature, what can we know about God?

If we can learn certain things about God by looking at nature, why do we need the Bible?
What information about God do we need that nature cannot provide?

Name three evidences that the Bible is the inspired word of God and that we can rely on it to accurately communicate God's message to us.

- a)
- b)
- c)

If you would like more in-depth information regarding any of the evidences provided in this lesson, please indicate below.

Please complete and return this page in the enclosed envelope.

Feel free to write on the back of this page any Bible questions which you may have, and we will do our best to provide Bible answers.