

Can We Believe in God's Existence?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 28 April 2013

Preacher: Rob Martin

[0 : 00] for God. Now if they're right, if there is no evidence for God, then believing in a God may indeed be a delusion, lacking credibility, incredible. So can we believe in God's existence?

Is there any credible evidence for God? Well I think that there is evidence for God and I'm going to provide a couple of different pieces of evidence tonight which provide glimpses of God and then I'm going to point and paint a picture which I think is the clearest picture that we have of God. Now for our first glimpse of God, look up. The first Bible reading we had today encapsulates this, the heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Have you ever been in the country on a clear night and looked up? I was once on holiday in Broken Hill and we'd been out all day and we were driving back to Broken Hill and it was dark and we couldn't see another light anywhere. We stopped the car, got out and looked up and it was magnificent.

I don't think I've ever seen so many stars in my life. But with a telescope, the universe is even more vast and magnificent. There are an estimated 100 billion galaxies in the universe containing up to 300,000 million million million stars. I put that number into Google and I had a heart attack.

300 sextillion stars, three with 23 zeros after it. It's a number so massive to comprehend. It's hard to comprehend. There are more stars in our universe than there are grains of sand on every beach and desert on our planet. Some atheists consider the enormity of the universe evidence against God.

[2 : 03] We're but a smear on an insignificant rock orbiting an ordinary star in an unremarkable galaxy, a galaxy amongst billions, a grain of sand on the beach. Wouldn't the huge size of the universe suggest that we're just a cosmic accident? Possibly, but how small would you want the universe to be before you believed God created it? The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the work of his hands. Our universe gives us three glimpses of God. First, the universe had a beginning.

Second, the universe is rational. And third, the universe appears fine-tuned for life, revealing an intelligent, ordered mind. Modern science teaches us that the universe had a beginning. The great physicist Stephen Hawking said, the universe had not existed forever. Rather, the universe and time itself had a beginning in the Big Bang. Now, this becomes a problem for atheists. Why is there something rather than nothing? Some atheists attempt to answer this question by suggesting that the universe can come from nothing by redefining nothing to be something. So, Stephen Hawking himself says that because of the law of gravity, the universe can and will create itself. But Hawking's solution raises a further question. Well, where did the laws of gravity come from? Isn't the law of gravity something?

Physicist Lawrence Krauss, who recently appeared on the Q&A; show, wrote a book called *A Universe from Nothing*. And he suggests that the laws of quantum mechanics are the reason that there's a universe.

But his solution, along with Hawking's, fails. You can't assume the existence of something to prove the universe came into existence by nothing. Also, a big problem with this is that laws describe things, they don't create anything. It's a bit like saying that I can create real money by doing sums. My eldest son, Aidan, loves his five times tables, but the law of multiplying five by 150 doesn't automatically put \$750 into my bank account. Now, if Krauss and Hawking were right, then we'd all be a lot richer. So, to explain the origin of the universe, I think that you're left with two options.

[4 : 38] You either have to propose an eternal universe or multiverse, a universe without beginning or end, or you have to propose an eternal God who made the universe, a God without creation or end.

I can't see any other option. Now, modern science tells us that the universe really did have a beginning. Hence, it seems reasonable that an eternal, unmoved mover like God created the universe.

Now, it's interesting that scientists like Hawking and Krauss have provided evidence for the existence of God because they propose the existence of something eternal, immovable, the laws of gravity.

Which also leads me to my second point, which is why the universe gives us a glimpse of God. God. The very principle of rationality that we expect order or laws in the universe gives us a glimpse of God. This evidence that points to God is the evidence that lay behind the rise of science.

So, rather than being opposed to science, being opposed to the existence of God, it's the fact that it's exactly the opposite that's the case. Because all science depends on the view that the universe is rationally intelligible. Albert Einstein was astonished at this and he said, the most incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible. Now, what do I mean by this? Well, why do I expect laws in nature? Are there any science students out there? Anyone done science at all? Why are you able to write equations about the universe and make predictions about them? It's because the universe is ordered and intelligible. Now, why is that? The classical Greeks like Aristotle thought that the universe was changeless, eternal, and perfect. They said that the universe could be understood by rationality. We define, define, define, define. We define things. That's the way we understand the world.

[6 : 44] Yet the Christian view is very different. The Christian view is that the world is not permanent, that it was created. It changed. Hence, we could and we should test God's creation.

A classic example is Aristotle's claim that reason tells us that heavier objects fall faster than lighter ones. A feather will fall to the ground faster than a brick because it is lighter.

Now, there is nothing in his worldview which would require him to test it. Why should he? Reason and logic tells me that the heavier object will fall to the ground faster than a light object.

The Christian view says, let's test it. Let's test God's creation and see if our conception of reality is right. How does God work? What will happen? Well, if you do test it, you discover the law of gravity. You do science. A very Christian invention. C.S. Lewis wrote that men became scientific because they expected law in nature and they expected law in nature because they believed in a law giver.

[8 : 00] And renowned non-believing physicist Paul Davies says, every scientist must assume that nature acts in certain predictable, measurable ways. That is what makes scientific discovery possible.

Science can proceed only if the scientist adopts an essentially theological worldview. Christianity depicts God as rational, responsive, dependable and omnipotent and the universe was his personal creation. The natural world had rational, lawful, stable structure awaiting and inviting human comprehension. The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the work of his hands. What we know as science arose only once in the world and that was in Europe. Science came from the rationality of the Christian God which was dominant in Europe. No other image of God can support science.

Other images of God found in other religions, especially Asia, are too irrational and too impersonal to have sustained science. And even atheism cuts the ground from science and rationality itself. For it gives us no basis on which to under, to which to base the rationality of the universe. Why is there order in the universe? Why is it comprehensible? The atheist must answer, because it is. The Christian, the theist says, because it's evidence for a rational, intelligent, law-giving God.

[9 : 46] And these laws appear to have been fine-tuned to allow life to form. And again, through this we gain our third glimpse of God. Now the sheer size of the universe is necessary to allow life.

For the universe could not have been much smaller than it is in order for nuclear fusion to have occurred during the first three minutes after the Big Bang. Without this brief period, the early universe would have been entirely hydrogen and no rocky planets like our Earth could have existed. Likewise, the universe could not have been more massive than it is, otherwise the universe would have collapsed before universe, before life was possible. So it actually seems quite staggering, but the universe is the size it must be for life to exist at all.

And this fine-tuning has led some, like Paul Davies, the non-believing physical, the physicist that I mentioned before, to say this. I've got a slightly extended quote. He says this, Scientists are slowly waking up to an inconvenient truth.

The universe looks suspiciously like a fix. The issue concerns the very laws of nature themselves. For 40 years, physicists and cosmologists have been quietly collecting examples of all too convenient coincidences and special features in the underlying laws of the universe that seem to be necessary in order for life and hence conscious beings to exist.

[11 : 09] Change any one of them and the consequences would be lethal. Fred Hoyle, the distinguished cosmologist, once said that it was if a super-intellect has monkeyed with physics. A super-intellect has monkeyed with physics.

Even non-believers seem to suggest that the universe looks like it's been ordered by an intelligent mind. I say, if it looks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then perhaps it might really be a duck.

Our universe gives us three glimpses of God. The universe had a beginning. It is rational, and it appears fine-tuned for a life revealing an intelligent, ordered mind.

The heavens declare the glory of God. Now, the second glimpse of God that I want to talk about tonight comes from morality. There are objective moral values.

Now, this seems funny, but I used to think that this was actually quite a weak argument for the existence of God, until I was actually convinced by an atheist that I debated last year. Now, this atheist was fiercely critical of what he saw as the moral failings of religion.

[12 : 28] He spoke with such conviction about absolute right and wrong, and so powerful, in fact, that his argument presented powerful evidence for the existence of God.

Why is this evidence for God? Well, because in the atheist universe, there can be no such thing as right or wrong, good and bad. Richard Dawkins himself acknowledged this once when he wrote, Now, this argument can be confusing.

I'm not suggesting that atheists are incapable of being good or doing good things. Atheists can certainly be good or be moral, but atheists cannot absolutely and always declare that something is right or wrong.

They have no basis for an absolute morality or that someone ought to behave in a certain way.

Now, I'll explain. Have you ever seen the TV show Can of Worms?

Has anyone ever watched it? No? There's maybe one hand at the back there, perhaps? Yeah.

Someone once described to me as a bogan Q&A;, but I'm not sure. You can make your own opinion as to what you think of Can of Worms.

[13 : 48] On this show, they ask a number of moral questions, and they get their guests to say if an action is right or wrong. Usually, the guests are footballers and comedians, not often the ones best to make a moral judgment.

But this coming week, some of the great moral dilemmas of Can of Worms are wrestling with our questions like, Should men open doors for women? Is it okay to use your phone at a family dinner? Or is it okay to lie about your religion to get your kids into a good school?

As I said, these are the big moral issues of our time. Now, the guests vote by a red sign saying no and a green sign which says yes. So this is how they identify whether or not something is right or wrong.

Now, in many ways, this is how morality operates without God. If enough of us vote yes, it becomes right. So, for example, is homosexuality wrong?

I'd say, a hundred years, the vast majority would have voted yes. Today, a large majority, I'd say, a large number would vote no. So without God, morality becomes subjective, and the result of attitudes in society.

[14 : 51] In fact, I think this means that you can never say anyone is ever right or wrong, because opinion might change. When there was a lot of green votes at one time, well, we might change our minds, and there might be a lot of red votes at another time.

What was wrong a hundred years ago might be right today. So how can I condemn the pedophile? Because society's opinions might change in the future.

Jean-Paul Sartre, the atheist philosopher, wrote about the atheist world. He said, There can no longer be any good a priori before the fact, since there is no infinite and perfect consciousness to think it.

It is nowhere written that the good exists, that one must be honest or must not lie, since we are now upon the plain where there are only men. Sartre was right.

The only way that you can say something is absolutely and always right or wrong is with an external, eternal reference point. And we do have these external, eternal reference points.
[15:59] These giant red no's and green yes's are stitched into the very fabric of our universe. Our conscious tells us this, and our experience of life, it's our experience of life, isn't it?

There are things that we ought to do, things which are always right. I mean, it's also true to our shame that it's true of human nature to disobey this moral code, isn't it?

When we're offered to help someone and we didn't, when we were selfish, we feel guilty about disobeying what we ought to do. We feel guilty because we fail to obey this moral code, a code which says that there are things which are always right and wrong.

And interestingly, and this is what convinced me, that a number of modern atheists claim that there is this moral code, this absolute moral code. My atheist debating opponent did.

And so did the late, great Christopher Hitchens. He once said, there has never been a society found where rape and murder and perjury are not condemned. These moral discoveries, or absolutes if you want to call them that, long predate the arrival of anything recognisable as monotheism.

[17:11] This is a stunning admission. There are things which are always and absolutely right or wrong. Murder, rape, perjury. Hitchens has unwittingly demonstrated evidence for God.

The fact that there are objective moral values points towards an eternal law giver. You can't have it either way. Either murder is always wrong or sometimes it's okay to put Jews in gas chambers.

Saying something is always wrong, objective moral values, provides another glimpse of God. So what have we got so far? A few glimpses at an eternal divine intelligence.

The origin, nature and rationality of the universe and the existence of objective morality point us to something. But we're only halfway there. Even if we have demonstrated that it appears that there is an eternal law giving intelligence behind the universe.

It's another step completely to assume that this is the God of the Bible. So how do we get to know this eternal intelligence? How can we know if this eternal intelligence is the God of the Bible?

[18:25] How can we know this eternal life?

Stimulating. You surmise there must be an intelligence behind this. But who? Who wrote it? Can you tell me? How would you know?

You can only know who wrote the book if they tell you. If they reveal themselves. Otherwise you'd just be guessing. And it's the same with God.

We can only know God if he reveals himself. God hasn't been silent he has spoken he has revealed himself in a number of ways and the main way he has revealed himself is in the person and works of Jesus Christ. Look at the second passage that we were looking at this reading before from the book of John John chapter one and we're looking at particularly at sentence 18 where the version says something to the effect of no one has ever seen God but God the one and only who is at the father's side has made him known this is crucial when we want to understand God most fully we look to Jesus Jesus is the one at the father's side and he is the one who makes God known it's as though Jesus comes and explains who wrote the beautiful book he does this because he knows God he does this because he is God this is explained further in the very first sentence of the book of John there it says the very in the first verse that verse one or sentence one in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God he was with God in the beginning here Jesus is referred to as the word the word is the one who reveals the one who speaks the mouth the mouthpiece of God and here we discover the origin of the word the word or Jesus was there in the beginning and he was with God now this means that Jesus was distinct from God or the father because it says that he was with uh it says the word was with God yet Jesus also contained the qualities of being God the God ingredient whatever it was that made God God the word had it the word was God John 1 is saying the most profound thing it's saying that Jesus was God but it's also saying that Jesus that God is not a monad God has different personalities it's important to remember that Jesus and his Jewish friends were strict monotheists they believed in one God and one God alone monotheistic Jews were not in the habit of inventing new gods so what we learned through revelation is that there is one God one God ingredient or essence but there's different personalities and one of these is the word and further down in sentence 14 we see that this word became flesh and made his dwelling among us Jesus came and lived amongst us so that we could know him some people ask well why is God so hidden well if you'd lived 2 000 years ago went to Palestine and could speak Aramaic you could have shaken his hand and had a conversation with him you could have met God himself he revealed himself through Jesus he became flesh and he lived amongst us

prince charles can reveal the royal family because he's royalty jesus can reveal god because he is god but how do we know that jesus was god well i've got a couple of reasons the the first is that jesus demonstrated powers that we would expect from god he walked on water healed the sick restored shriveled arms and he even raised the dead these miracles of jesus are all in character they're the kinds of works we'd expect from someone who claimed to be god jesus had power that was so exceptional so controlled and so intentional that it reveals god and the kind of kingdom that he promised but secondly jesus did the things that god alone does most significantly claiming to forgive sins now jesus claimed to forgive the wrongdoings of his people now we might not think that claiming to forgive sins is that significant but in the ancient jewish world only a madman would claim this this is because god only and god alone can forgive sins only the one offended can forgive i can't forgive you if you go on tomorrow you punch your boss or your teacher in the face now i'm not suggesting i'm not suggesting that you should try this at home try this anywhere and go and punch someone but only the one offended can give can forgive only god can forgive sins c.s lewis wrote once about jesus claim to forgive he says one part of the claim tends to slip past us unnoticed because we've heard it so often that we no longer see what it amounts to i mean the claim to forgive sins any sins now unless the speaker is god this is really so preposterous as to be comic in the mouth of any speaker who is not god these words would imply what i can regard as a silliness and conceit unrivaled by any other character in history jesus was either a madman or he really was god in the flesh finally jesus reveals god because he was raised from the dead i haven't properly got time to unpack this today but at the heart of the christian faith rests that that jesus really did rise from the dead that we have good evidence to suggest that the tomb really was empty and that multiple people on multiple occasions were convinced that they had seen jesus alive seems as though jesus really did rise from the dead and i can't see how a physical resurrection could be possible without a god to explain it the best and clearest evidence we have for the existence of god is through the life works death and resurrection of jesus the word who comes to reveal god to us now at this point i must acknowledge much of what i've said about you know in terms of believing in god through jesus christ require that the gospels be trustworthy and that the resurrection really did happen now i'd love to talk about these things more but those two topics will be dealt with in more detail in the next couple of weeks so i commend the next two weeks presentations to you so please come back and ask the presenters all your really hard questions you just have the easy questions today and the really hard questions in the next two weeks thank you that'd be much appreciated so god's existence incredible there is evidence for god there is now and there always has been the heavens declare the glory of god the universe began it's understandable and it's fine-tuned for life things that give glimpses of an eternal unmoved mover then there's an objective moral code which we all follow and accept another glimpse of an eternal intelligent lawgiver but most crucially we can notice god through jesus who came lived died and was raised to dead to offer hope and life jesus offers far more than a glimpse of life he is a a blasting megaphone screaming here i am and through jesus we also have a solution to the problem that this moral law creates we're guilty of not obeying this law and without god there is no way that this can be resolved or solved yet jesus offers forgiveness for our wrongdoings and our failures

[27 : 21] jesus claim to forgive is not simply proof he's god it's a genuine offer to wipe away all our guilt and our wrongdoing and to begin a relationship with the creator and sustainer of this magnificent universe c.s lewis was for many years an atheist he was converted kicking and struggling resentful and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance to escape but he recognized there was indeed more he found evidence for god and this evidence was found in the person of jesus christ c.s lewis recognized jesus as the lord he fell at jesus feet and his life was never the same again if there is no god then our lives are meaningless pointless hopeless nothing but blind pitiless indifference but if there is a god there is hope meaning a future forgiveness we can believe in god's existence it's reasonable and there is evidence but most importantly we can know the author of the book personally through jesus christ thank you amen so please stand but right after this is the time for q and a so be thinking about those questions um