

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

**Does The God
Of The Bible Exist?**

By

Don Stewart

Does The God Of The Bible Exist?

© 2020 Don Stewart

Published by EOW (Educating Our World)
www.educatingourworld.com
All rights reserved

English Versions Cited

The various English versions which we cite in this course, apart from the King James Version, all have copyrights. They are listed as follows.

Verses marked NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version, copyright 1989 by Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved

Verses marked NIV are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, New International Version, Copyright 1973 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved

Verses marked ESV are from The Holy Bible English Standard Version™ Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked “NKJV” are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked CEV are taken from the Contemporary English Version (CEV) copyright American Bible Society 1991, 1995
Scripture taken from THE MESSAGE: Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

Scripture quoted by permission. Quotations designated NET are from the NET Bible Copyright © 2003 By Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. www.netbible.com All rights reserved.

Verses marked HCSB are taken from the Holman Christian Standard Bible® Copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission.

GOD'S WORD is a copyrighted work of God's Word to the Nations. Quotations are used by permission. Copyright 1995 by God's Word to the Nations. All rights reserved.

Does The God Of The Bible Exist?

Table Of Contents

Question 1	Who Exactly Is The God Of The Bible?
Question 2	Does The Bible Attempt To Prove That The God Of Scripture Actually Exists?
Question 3	Why Should We Give Arguments For The Existence Of God If The Bible Does Not Give Any? Why Should We Do Something The Bible Does Not Do?
Question 4	What Is The Cosmological Argument For God's Existence? (The Argument From Contingency Or First Cause)
Question 5	What Is The Teleological Argument For God's Existence? (The Argument From Design)
Question 6	What Is The Anthropological Argument For God's Existence? (The Argument From The Need To Worship Something)
Question 7	What Is The Moral Argument For God's Existence? (Moral Standards Are Found Everywhere)
Question 8	What Is The Biological Argument For God's Existence? (The Argument From Life Itself)
Question 9	What Is The Ontological Argument For God's Existence? (The Argument From Being)
Question 10	What Should We Conclude About The Traditional Arguments For God's Existence? Are They Convincing?
Question 11	Why Do Some Believers Think The Traditional Arguments For God's Existence Should Not Be Given?
Question 12	What Does Nature Tell Us About The Existence Of The God Of Scripture? (Natural Theology)
Question 13	How Do We Know That The God Of The Bible Is The God Who Exists?
Question 14	How Does The Unique Makeup Of The Bible Give Evidence For The Existence Of The God Of Scripture?
Question 15	In What Sense Does Predictive Prophecy Show That The God Of The Bible Exists?

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

- Question 16 How Does The Resurrection Of Jesus Christ Give Evidence For God's Existence?
- Question 17 How Does The Testimony Of Changed Lives Give Evidence For The Existence Of The God Of Scripture?
- Question 18 What Should Our Conclusion Be Regarding All Of The Arguments Which Are Given For God's Existence?
- Question 19 Haven't The Discoveries Made By Modern Science Disproved The Existence Of The God Of The Bible?
- Question 20 Can An Intelligent Person In The 21st Century Really Believe In The God Of The Bible?
- Question 21 Is The God Of The Bible A Real Living Being Or Merely A Concept Or Idea?
- Question 22 Who Created The God Of Scripture, Where Did He Come From?
- Question 23 If God Of The Bible Exists, Then Why Is He Silent?
- Question 24 Would Everyone Believe In The God Of Scripture If He Only Showed Himself To The World?
- Question 25 Why Should We Expect The God Of The Bible To Reveal Himself To Humanity?
- Question 26 How Has The God Of Scripture Revealed Himself To Humanity?
- Question 27 Why Doesn't Everyone See That The God Of The Bible Really Exists?

Part 2 **When The God Of The Bible Is Rejected** **What Non-Christians Believe About God**

- Question 28 Does Any One Religion Have The Answer About God? (Religious Pluralism)
- Question 29 Don't All Religions Ultimately Teach The Same Thing?
- Question 30 In What Sense Is Christianity Unique Among The World's Religions?
- Question 31 Can A Person Experience The True God Through Religions Other Than Christianity? (Christian Exclusivism)
- Question 32 What Is Monotheistic Religion? (The Belief In One God)
- Question 33 Can A Person Reach The True God Through Judaism?

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

- Question 34 What Is Dualism?
- Question 35 What Is Animism?
- Question 36 What Is Polytheism? (The Worship Of Many gods)
- Question 37 What Is Henotheism? (The Belief In Many gods But The Worship Of Only One Of Them)
- Question 38 If The God Of The Bible The Only One Who Exists, Then Why Does Scripture Speak Of Other gods?
- Question 39 Is Everything That Exists Part Of God? (Pantheism)
- Question 40 Is God Subject To Change (Panentheism, Process Theology)
- Question 41 Could God Have Created The World And Then Backed Off? (Deism)
- Question 42 How Is God Viewed In The New Age Movement?
- Question 43 What Is Atheism?
- Question 44 If Atheists Actually Cannot Claim That God Does Not Exist Then How Can They Argue Their Position?
- Question 45 What Is Agnosticism?

About The Author

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

You are my witnesses, says the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior.

Isaiah 43:10,11 NRSV

Within the pages of the Bible are the claims that God has spoken to humanity. Over three thousand times in the Old Testament alone there are phrases such as “God spoke” . . . “And the Lord said” . . . “The word of the Lord came unto” . . .

The men who wrote the books of the Old and New Testament believed that God exists and that He has clearly revealed Himself to the world. The Bible is a record of that revelation.

But the claim that God exists does not, in-and-of-itself, make it true. How do we know that God exists? Couldn't the idea of God be some wish-fulfillment on our part? Maybe God is only a mental projection—something which merely exists in our minds.

If there is a God, as the Bible affirms, then how does a person know that this God is the same one that the Bible reveals? How does the Christian know that their God exists? What reasons are there to believe in the God of the Bible? This book will answer questions concerning the evidence for God's existence.

Question 1

Who Exactly Is The God Of The Bible?

The most frequently asked questions about the God of the Bible concern His identity. Who is this God? What is He like? What can we know about Him?

The only specific information we have about the God of the Bible is that which He has revealed to us in His written Word—the Holy Scriptures. We only know who He is, and what He is like, because He has told us these things. Therefore, it is to the Scripture alone that we go to discover truths about God.

From Scripture we can have a basic, though not complete, picture of the nature of God. While it is difficult to give a simple definition of God, we can give a basic description of His being or character. They include the following things.

1. The God Of The Bible Does Indeed Exist

To begin with, we must note that the Bible speaks of a God who truly exists. He is not merely something that exists only in the minds of humans or is some fulfillment of a deep desire or hope which we all have. God has genuine existence! He is not simply something we have imagined. This is the consistent testimony of Scripture from the first page until the last.

2. God's Nature Is That Of A Spirit: He Has No Physical Form

The Bible also tells us something about the form or nature of the God who exists. God's form is that of a spirit. Scripture says that He is an invisible, eternal spirit. That means that God does not have a body, or any type of physical form.

Because He is an invisible spirit, it impossible to make any likenesses, or representation, of Him that is accurate.

3. He Has Existed Forever

Another thing we learn about God is that He is eternal. He has always existed, and He will always exist. There has never been a time when God did not exist, nor will there ever come a time when He will not exist. He had no beginning, and He will have no end. The God of the Bible is the eternal God.

4. He Is The Only God That Exists

Furthermore, the God of the Bible is the only God who exists. There is no other God, either more or less powerful, who exists anywhere in the universe. He alone is God.

5. He Is Absolutely Perfect

The God revealed in the Bible is absolute perfection. There is nothing lacking in His character, or nature. He does not need anything or anyone to exist. He is complete within Himself. He is, therefore, the perfect, eternal spirit.

6. God Is Distinct From His Creation

This is important to understand. The universe is not part of God. God is distinct from His creation. The universe has not always existed. When the universe was created, God brought something into existence that had not existed previously.

Furthermore, He did not create the universe out of Himself—His own being. Therefore, God has a separate or distinct existence apart from the universe. He is not dependent upon it for existence.

7. He Is Infinite: He Is Not Subject To Human Limitations

The God of the Bible is an infinite God. He is not subject to the same limitations as humans. He is all-knowing, all-powerful, and everywhere present. He knows everything there is to know, or which could be known. He has power to do anything which is consistent with His holy character. His presence can be found everywhere in the universe.

8. The God Of The Bible Is A Personal God

Along with all these other qualities, we find that God is also personal. This means that He has intelligence, will, emotions, and self-cognizance—He is aware of His own existence. Personal names are used when referring to Him. Personal characteristics are also attributed to Him. In other words, He is not some vague creative force that has no mind or feelings.

9. He Is Intimately Involved In The Universe

God is also personally involved in the running of the universe. He did not merely create the universe and then leave it on its own. He is intimately involved in everything that is occurring. He is concerned with what occurs in the universe which He created.

10. He Is Different Than All Other Descriptions Of God

This is an important point. The God of the Bible is unique in the sense that no other religion, or belief system, describes God in the same manner, as does the Bible. According to Scripture, God is a Person. Indeed, He interacts with His creation.

However, He is also infinite—He is not limited in any way by space or time. Only in the Scriptures do we find such an understanding of the nature of God. The God of the Bible is the infinite/personal God. Though He is all-powerful, yet He is still personal.

While God is a personal loving God, One who is concerned with the needs of human beings, He is also a righteous God. The Bible says that He is One who will judge sin. The God of the Bible will not let evil run rampant in His universe.

11. He Is Knowable

The good news of Scripture is that human beings can personally know God. It is possible to have a special relationship with the Creator of the universe. What a wonderful thought this is! The God who created all that there is can be personally known by humans. This relationship can only come about for those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ—God the Son.

12. He Is Not The Type Of God We Would Create

There is one final point that should be mentioned. To many people, God is nothing more than our own creation. He is a divine being that *we* want to exist. In other words, we create the sort of God that we need. This God that we have created is primarily interested in us and our personal needs. In other words, He does what is necessary to meet those needs.

While it is true that humanity may wish for this type of God to exist, would anyone create the God who is revealed in Scripture? Would anyone create a God who has condemned the human race because of sin and will send them away from His presence forever unless they believe in Him? Would anyone create this type of God who punishes sin? The answer is, “No.” The God of Scripture is not the type of God humans would create. However, He is the God that does exist.

This gives a basic summation of the God of the Bible. As we can see, from Scripture we can know many things about Him.

Summary To Question 1

Who Exactly Is The God Of The Bible?

It is important that we have an accurate understanding of the God who is revealed in the pages of the Bible. While a complete definition of God is something that is impossible to do, there are still certain things that we can know about Him. We can make the following observations.

First, it must be emphasized that the Bible teaches that God actually exists. He is not merely a being which humans have created to meet some deep need. Indeed, God has genuine existence. This is the consistent testimony of Scripture.

Once we understand this, we can then go to the Bible to discover certain truths about Him. From a study of Scripture, a basic definition of God includes these facts.

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

To begin with, there is only one God who exists. There are no lesser gods or greater gods. In fact, there are no other gods of any type. He alone is God. He is the only God that has existed, or that ever will exist.

God does not have any physical form. He is an invisible spirit. Furthermore, He is an eternal spirit. He has always existed and always will exist.

He is also all-powerful. There is nothing impossible for Him to do. Anything that is possible to do, consistent with His holy character, He can do it.

Though all-powerful, God is also personal. He has characteristics of a person. He thinks feels and loves. He is an infinite/personal God.

God is absolute perfection. There is nothing lacking in Him. He has no needs. He is an infinite God who is not subject to human limitations.

He is not the same as His creation, but is Lord over it. He existed before He created the world, and He is not dependent upon the world for His existence.

As a personal God, He is intimately involved in the affairs of the universe. He is a God who gets involved. Indeed, though all-powerful, He is personally interested in each human being.

The infinite/personal God of the Bible is different from all other descriptions of God in the various religions of the world. Nowhere do we find God described in this manner.

The God of the Bible is a God of love. While God is a God of love, who is personally interested in each of us, He is also a righteous God who will judge sin. Therefore, a person has to make a decision as to whether or not to believe in the God of Scripture.

Those who believe in Him will spend eternity in His presence while those who do not believe will spend eternity apart from His presence. There are only two destinies for human beings—heaven and hell.

Finally, He is knowable. It is possible for humans to have a personal relationship with the God of the universe. This is the wonderful promise of Scripture.

These are some of the truths about the God of the Bible which He has revealed about Himself. We only know who He is, as well as what He is like, because He has told us these things. Fortunately, He has not left us in the dark about His character.

Question 2

Does The Bible Attempt To Prove That The God Of Scripture Actually Exists?

No it does not. In the Bible, there is no attempt at all to prove that the God revealed in Scripture actually exists. From the first page of the Bible until the last, the existence of the God of Scripture is assumed—everyone is aware that He exists.

From an examination of the Scripture, we can discover a number of things about the existence of the God of the Bible. They include the following.

The Bible Offers No Proofs For The Existence Of The God It Reveals

We again emphasize that nowhere in the Bible are there arguments seeking to prove God's existence. The fact of His existence is assumed from the very first page—where we read the following:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1 KJV).

The existence of the God of Scripture is implicit throughout the rest of Scripture. The Bible assumes the fact of God's existence, and calls upon people to make a step of faith toward Him.

We read the following in the Book of Hebrews about the necessity of faith when it comes to believing in God's existence:

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him (Hebrews 11:6 NIV).

Since the God of the Bible is invisible to humanity, we can only know that He exists by means of faith. In fact, this passage in Hebrews emphasizes that it is impossible to know God, or to please Him, except by means of faith. While we cannot see Him, we can know through faith that He does indeed exist.

As we have said, there is no attempt to prove that He exists. The closest thing in Scripture to attempting to prove God's existence is a statement of the Lord recorded in Malachi. It says the following:

“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do,” says the LORD Almighty, “I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Let me prove it to you!” (Malachi 3:10 NLT).

However, even this statement does not attempt to prove God's existence. What is proven, in this context, is that the Lord is faithful to His promises.

The Existence Of The God Of The Bible Is Evident To All

There is no attempt to prove that God exists because Scripture says that God's existence is evident to everyone. Paul wrote to the Romans and stated it in this way:

For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. From the creation of the world His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what He has made (Romans 1:18-20 HCSB).

God has made His existence evident to all of us. In some sense, every created thing gives evidence to God's existence.

If a person denies the existence of God, then there is no reference point for correctly understanding themselves, or the world around them. They are without any hope.

Only A Fool Denies That The God Of Scripture Exists

Not only does the Bible assume that God exists, it says that only fools deny His existence. The psalmist wrote the following:

Fools say in their hearts, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they commit abominable acts; there is no one who does good. God looks down from heaven on humankind to see if there are any who are wise, who seek after God. They have all fallen away, they are all alike perverse; there is no one who does good, no, not one (Psalm 53:1-3 NRSV).

Only a foolish person would deny that God exists. The fact of His existence should be obvious to all.

Those who do reject the truth of God's existence usually end up in some sort of idolatry. They worship aspects of the creation rather than the Creator Himself.

The Apostle Paul described these people in his letter to the Romans. He said:

For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. . . For though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became nonsense, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles (Romans 1:18,21-23 HCSB).

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

If a person rejects the idea of the worship of the God of the Bible, then they will turn to worshipping things that have no real worth.

There Is No Excuse For Denying God's Existence

Ultimately, those who deny God's existence have no real excuse for what they are doing. When Paul wrote to the Romans, he said unbelievers have no excuse for denying the existence of God. He put it this way.

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse (Romans 1:20 NIV).

The existence of God should be clear to everyone. God will accept no excuse from unbelievers about their ignorance. Indeed, there is no excuse!

The psalmist wrote that the “wicked” live as though God is dead. He put it this way:

For they brag about their evil desires; they praise the greedy and curse the LORD. These wicked people are too proud to seek God. They seem to think that God is dead (Psalm 10:3,4 NLT).

While they know that He exists, they live as though He did not exist. Again, they are without any excuse, as well as without any hope.

Only The Bible Reveals The True God Who Exists

The main interest in Scripture is to show that the God of Scripture is the only God who exists. In the ancient world it seems that everyone believed in some type of god. Atheism was not really an issue at that particular time in history.

The question, therefore, was, “Which God, or gods, truly exist?” This is the issue in which the Bible addresses itself. The God of the Bible is contrasted to the false idols and powers which people were worshipping. He is the only God who exists.

Summary To Question 2 Does The Bible Attempt To Prove That The God Of Scripture Actually Exists?

From the first page of the Bible until the last, God's existence is assumed. Nowhere in Scripture is there a case set out to prove that God exists. The writers of Scripture take it for granted. They state that His existence is obvious to all.

In fact, only those who are fools deny that He exists. Those who reject His existence have no real excuse whatsoever.

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

However, the primary interest of Scripture is to show that it is the God of the Bible who exists, rather than the many false gods that were worshipped in the ancient world.

Therefore, the purpose of Scripture is to make the distinction between the only God who exists and the false gods who have no real power or authority.

Consequently, in the Bible, we find the God of Israel often compared to the non-existent gods of the ancient world. He exists and He has acted in history. This is the message of Scripture.

Question 3

Why Should We Give Arguments For The Existence Of God If The Bible Itself Does Not Give Any? Why Should We Do Something The Bible Does Not Do?

Although the Bible does not give a series of arguments for God's existence, this does not mean that we cannot provide certain lines of evidence to prove that He does exist.

Indeed, there are many reasons as to why we believe that the God of Scripture exists. While we believe that He exists by faith, it is certainly not "blind faith."

Yet, it may be fairly asked, "Why should we attempt to provide arguments for God's existence when the Scripture does not? Why should we attempt to do something that the Bible itself cannot do?" Three reasons come to mind.

1. Providing Evidence Can Help Convince Honest Seekers

First, we do so to show there is sufficient evidence to believe for those who are sincerely seeking the truth. People, who may have some difficulty believing in God, can be shown that faith in the God of the Bible is not irrational, or unreasonable.

To the contrary, placing our faith in the God of Scripture is the only sensible thing to do when one examines all of the evidence. Of course, there is no amount of evidence that will convince a person against their own will, or if that person wishes to live in sin. However, the evidence is there, and the unbeliever should be confronted with these undeniable facts concerning God's existence.

2. Looking At The Evidence Will Strengthen The Faith Of Believers

Second, we provide reasons for God's existence to strengthen those who already believe in Him. Faith increases when the Christian considers the overwhelming evidence for God's existence. We know that we are not believing in Jesus Christ merely because we wish to believe it. There are solid reasons to embrace the Christian faith.

3. We Can Know God Better By Looking At The Evidence He Has Provided For His Existence

Finally, we look at the evidence for God's existence in an effort to increase our knowledge about Him and His nature. The more we know about Him, the more we will trust Him. Furthermore, knowing God better should cause us to be more like Him.

This, therefore, is extremely practical. What we believe and know about God will affect how we live.

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

Accordingly, a correct knowledge of God is essential. Sound belief should produce sound living.

In fact, the Bible commands believers to hold to sound doctrine. Paul wrote the following warning to Timothy about those who refuse to accept the truth of God:

For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. They will reject the truth and chase after myths (2 Timothy 4:3 NLT).

As our knowledge of God increases, we are not only further convinced that He exists, we should attempt to become more like Him in our character and in our behavior.

Consequently, there are a number of benefits for believer and unbeliever alike in considering the evidence for God's existence.

Therefore, it is a subject we should indeed investigate.

Summary To Question 3

Why Should We Give Arguments For The Existence Of God If The Bible Itself Does Not Give Any? Why Should We Do Something The Bible Does Not Do?

Although the Bible does not attempt to give proof of God's existence, reasons can be brought forward to show that He does exist. There are a number of benefits of doing this.

For one thing, an examination of these evidences can help convince honest seekers that the God of Scripture does truly exist—He is not a figment of our imagination. It demonstrates that Christian faith is not a blind faith but rather it is an intelligent faith. In fact, once the evidence is examined, it will be clear that it takes more faith not to believe than to believe.

In addition, those who already believe in His existence can have their faith strengthened when they discover the tremendous amount of evidence that is available. It is encouraging to realize the facts behind the claims of the Bible. This will give us further confidence in telling others about Him and His message of forgiveness of sin which He offers to the human race.

Finally, the more one knows about God and His nature, the greater the possibility of knowing Him better on a personal level. Indeed, the more we know about Him and how He works, the more we can trust Him with our own life. We can then become more like Him in our attitudes and our actions.

Therefore, the examination of the existence of the God of the Bible has benefits for everyone. Consequently, it is a subject which we should pursue.

Question 4

What Is The Cosmological Argument For God's Existence? (The Argument From Contingency, Or First Cause)

How can someone know that God exists? Can anyone be certain that the idea of God is not just something that humanity has invented? We cannot see God, touch Him, or hear Him? We cannot prove God's existence by any mathematical formula. If this is the case, then how do we know that He truly exists?

The Traditional Arguments For The Existence Of God

Although the Bible itself does not give specific arguments for God's existence, we do find that God has left His fingerprints everywhere. Consequently, there have been a number of arguments that have been brought forward to show that the existence of God is consistent with the facts as we know them. These are known as the traditional or classical arguments for God's existence. These arguments have come from both Christians and non-Christians. We will examine them one by one. The first one we will consider is the cosmological argument.

The Cosmological Argument

The Cosmological Argument is also known as the argument from contingency. Basically, it says that the existence of the world requires a Supreme Being to account for it. This argument can be summed up as follows.

1. Every Effect Has A Cause

The word "cosmology" comes from the Greek word *kosmos* that means, "an orderly arrangement." The cosmological argument argues that there must be a sufficient cause, or a reason, for the universe (cosmos) as it now stands. Our minds are made in such a way that we must believe in causes. We see that every effect has a cause.

2. The Universe Is An Effect, A Supreme Being, Or God, Must Be The First Cause

The universe is not self-existent—it is an effect. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that there must be some "first cause" that originally brought the universe into existence. This first, or uncaused cause, must be God. Since the world does exist, and something caused it to exist, the cause is God. Something that is as great and majestic as the universe must have been caused by something equally as great. This is the cosmological argument.

The Argument Must Be Correctly Understood

This cosmological argument must be correctly presented and understood. Indeed, at times it is presented and discussed in an imprecise manner.

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

It is not saying that *everything* in the universe must have a cause. If stated that way, then God must have something which caused Him to exist. However, this is not what the cosmological argument is saying.

Instead, what this argument is saying is that everything in the universe that is finite, or limited, or that came into existence at a certain point in time, has a cause. All of these things are effects which were caused by something or someone.

However, with this proper definition of the argument, it rules out God as being an effect. Indeed, He is infinite, and He is eternal. He has always existed, and He has no limits. Therefore, He is not included in the definition that everything in the universe must have a cause. This part of the cosmological argument must be properly understood.

Strengths Of The Cosmological Argument

The strengths of the cosmological argument can be listed as follows.

1. It Fits What We Know About The Universe

The cosmological argument fits what we know about the nature of things in the universe. The law of cause and effect operates everywhere.

2. It Would Take A Cause As Great As God To Bring About The Universe

In addition, the cosmological argument proves whatever caused the universe must be something, or someone, very great. The cause must be as powerful as the effect.

The Weaknesses Of The Cosmological Argument

While the cosmological argument shows the need for some cause to bring about the effect of the universe, there are a number of weaknesses in the argument. The weaknesses in the cosmological argument are as follows.

1. This First Cause May Have Been Something Impersonal

We do not know whether this cause, that brought the universe about, was some type of impersonal matter, or a personal being. It can be argued that something impersonal could have brought the universe into existence. We are not forced to assume it must be some personal being.

Even if it were a supreme being who created the universe, it is not necessarily the God of the Bible. Indeed, it may be some other God or the work of many gods.

We have no way of knowing this from merely looking at the universe.

2. The Cause May Have Been Something In The Universe, Not Apart From It

The cosmological argument cannot prove whether this cause was something that exists apart from the universe, or something that is part of the universe.

It is possible that something inside, not outside, of the universe caused it to come about.

3. The Cause Of The Universe May Be Finite, Not Infinite

We do not know if the cause for the universe is infinite or finite. From the universe itself, there is no way to determine the nature of the cause.

4. There Could Have Been Many Causes To Bring About The Universe

We do not know whether there was only one cause or many causes that brought about the universe. Either is possible. We just do not know.

Therefore, the cosmological argument has its weaknesses as well as its strengths.

Summary To Question 4

**What Is The Cosmological Argument For God's Existence?
(The Argument From Contingency Or First Cause)**

The cosmological argument has been a popular way to argue for God's existence. Basically it recognizes that every effect has a cause. Since the universe is an effect, something or someone must have caused it. That cause is said to be God. This is a short summary of the cosmological argument.

Unhappily, the cosmological argument has often been imprecisely stated. It does not say that *everything* in the universe must have a cause. If one argues in this manner, then God Himself must have been caused by something.

However, this is not what the cosmological argument is saying. Instead, it claims that everything in the universe, which is limited or finite or came into being at a certain point in time, had something or someone to cause it. This definition of the argument rules out God as being something which was caused. God is not an effect. He is eternal and infinite. He has always existed, and He is without limits.

Thus, we cannot put Him in the same category as the various effects we see in the universe. By definition, God did not need anything to cause Him to exist.

While the cosmological argument does fit the evidence as we know it also has its weaknesses.

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

For one thing, we do not know that it was a personal being which caused the universe to come into existence. From the universe itself there is no way of knowing who or what caused it to come into being.

Furthermore, the universe may have been caused from something in it, not from something apart from it. Again, from observing the universe as it now stands, we are not able to determine whether the cause was from within or without.

In addition, whatever the cause might be, it does not have to be something infinite. There could possibly be some other cause rather than appealing to an infinite God.

Finally, we should not necessarily assume that only one cause brought about the universe. It is possible that there could have been many causes to bring about the universe as we know it.

Therefore, while the observable universe is consistent with the idea of a supreme Being who created it, the cosmological argument does not make this being necessary. There are other possible explanations.

Question 5

What Is The Teleological Argument For God's Existence? (The Argument From Design)

If there is a God who was the first cause of the universe, as the cosmological argument states, then what kind of God is He? What sort of God exists? The teleological argument answers this question. He is an intelligent cause.

1. The Universe Appears To Be Designed

The teleological argument comes from the Greek word *telos*, meaning “purpose, end, or goal.” It is an argument from design and purpose. Everything in the universe has a purpose, and everything appears to have been specially designed to fit that purpose.

2. Everything Designed Indicates A Designer

If everything observable in the universe has a design and purpose, then why not the universe itself? There cannot be poetry without a poet, there cannot be music without a musician, and there cannot be design without a designer. The original or ultimate designer, or purposer, is God.

Although not directly arguing for God's existence in this manner, the Bible assumes this to be the case. The psalmist wrote the following about the God of the Bible:

You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food from the earth, and wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart (Psalm 104:14,15 NRSV).

The biblical writers saw God behind the intricate design and balance of the universe. We read the following in Proverbs:

Ears that hear and eyes that see—the LORD has made them both (Proverbs 20:12 NIV).

The design of the human body is credited to God.

The psalmist also noted how wonderfully the human body was constructed. He gave praise to God for such a marvelous creation:

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well (Psalm 139:14 NIV).

There is a majestic harmony in the universe. The order and design we see everywhere tells us that the Creator is not disorganized, or that He does things in some sort of haphazard way. The Creator has a purpose in everything that He does. From the most distant objects in space, to the

minutest material detected by a microscope, we find order and design. This is the sign of an intelligent designer.

The Illustration From The Watch

One of the oldest illustrations that is used to point to design is that of a ticking, working, watch. When a person examines a watch, it bears the all the marks of something that has been specifically designed. There are a number of parts of the watch that are put together for a purpose. They are arranged in such a way as to regulate the motion of the watch in order to tell time.

Two things can be inferred from looking at the design of a watch.

First, the watch had to have had a maker. Second, the maker had a purpose in mind when designing the watch. We make these conclusions even though we never saw the watch being made, never saw the watchmaker, or have no idea how the work could be done. We determine this because the end result, the watch, forces us to this conclusion.

In the same manner, when we look at the universe, and its intricate design, we assume that it had a designer who wisely made it for a purpose. The belief in a designer is not affected by the fact that we did not see Him, did not observe His construction, and cannot understand how He did it. Indeed, we believe in this designer because the evidence forces us to that conclusion.

There is something else which we must appreciate. Although a watch demonstrates intricate design, how much more does the hand upon which the watch is worn show the obvious work of the Creator?

The value of the teleological argument is that it demonstrates that some intelligence made the universe in its present form. The universe is too intricate to have randomly come together. Chance does not explain the intelligent design that we find everywhere. It is too hard for us to imagine that the marvelous design of everything in the universe is a product of mere chance. Consequently, the argument from design gives evidence of the existence of a Creator as well as telling us something about His nature.

The Limitations Of The Teleological Argument

While the teleological argument is consistent with the universe as we know it, there are, however, weaknesses or limitations in this argument. They are as follows.

1. There May Be No Source Or Ultimate Designer

Perhaps the universe just seems designed. It is possible that everything occurred by blind chance. The fact that it looks designed does not necessarily mean that it is designed. Given enough time, it is argued that the universe could arrange itself.

2. The Intelligence May Be Impersonal

If the universe was designed by some intelligence, we do not if this intelligence is personal or impersonal. While it is possible that a personal intelligence created the universe, it is also possible that what we see was not designed at all, but rather came about by a series of chance formations by some impersonal force.

3. The Designer May Be Finite, Not Infinite

If there is a designer who made the universe, then it is possible that this designer is finite, or limited, in power rather than being infinite and all-powerful. From the design itself, we cannot know the nature of the designer.

4. There May Be Other Designers Who Exist

If the universe is designed by a designer, we do not know whether it is the only fashioner or designer that exists, or whether the one who fashioned our universe is one of many designers. The designer may be the only one who exists, or the designer may be one of many. Either is possible. From the design itself, we do not have an answer to this question. Thus, we cannot assume that the design and purpose of the universe can be traced back to a single origin.

5. The Designer May Owe His Power To Some Other Being Who Created Him

We do not know whether this designer is all-powerful or whether the designer owes its power to some other being with greater power. Again, it is possible that the designer of our universe is not necessarily the being with the greatest power.

6. There Are Destructive Forces In The Universe And Processes That Seem To Lack A Purpose

There is one more thing. Although the universe seems to testify to one grand design, there are processes in the universe which seem to be destructive. Other processes seem to be without any real purpose. These processes must be accounted—if one is to argue for a universe that is designed. In other words, if the universe has been designed, then why do we find disharmony? This seems inconsistent with the idea of a perfect designer.

Furthermore, if one assumes that some God is the designer of the universe, then what do we do with the fact that there is evil in the world? If He designed everything, then is He not the cause of evil?

Again, while the teleological argument is helpful, it does not prove the existence of God.

Summary To Question 5
What Is The Teleological Argument
For God's Existence? (The Argument From Design)

The teleological argument is the argument from design. As we examine the universe it appears to be designed. Indeed, everywhere we look we seem to find evidence of design. We also know that every design has a designer. Since the universe is one big grand design, there must be a designer behind it. That designer is God.

While the argument from design is consistent with the idea of a God who exists, there are weaknesses in it.

For one thing, the universe may only appear to be designed. It is possible that the design we think we see is not really a design at all.

Furthermore, the so-called designer of the universe does not have to be God—it may be some impersonal force. We cannot tell the identity of the designer from merely looking at the universe as it now stands.

In addition, if there is a designer, it may be a finite or limited being—not an infinite being. Again, from the universe itself there is no way of telling which it is. Either is possible.

There is also the possibility that other designers exist. Indeed, the designer of our universe may have someone or something that designed him. We just do not know.

Finally, if the universe is designed, then how do we explain the destructive forces in nature? Since there is death, destruction, and all sorts of evil in the world, the designer must be evil. At the very least, it seems that he is not perfect.

To sum up, the argument from design is consistent with some sort of God who exists, but by itself it does not provide convincing evidence.

Question 6

What Is The Anthropological Argument For God's Existence? (The Argument From The Need To Worship Something)

The anthropological argument is the argument from humanity. We learn something about God and His existence from the way in which we are made. Human beings are rational, intelligent beings. We reflect our Creator in a number of ways.

However, humans also have certain needs. These needs must be explained.

We Are Created With The Need To Worship Something

One of the needs found in every human society, both past and present, is the need to worship. No matter the background, culture, or the particular time in history, we find human beings worshipping some type of God. There is something within all of us which has the need to worship someone—something greater than ourselves. This fact points to the existence of God.

Indeed, the cry of the psalmist is the cry of all humanity:

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? (Psalm 42:2 NKJV).

Humanity is looking for something to satisfy that thirst. Saint Augustine, the great scholar of the ancient church said it well:

You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until we find our rest in you.

This religious sense is not found in any creatures except human beings. Indeed, it would be useless to attempt to teach any religious sense to the highest type of ape. Yet we find that every human may be taught about God. This need for worship has been used as an argument for the necessity of a Supreme Being to be the object of our worship.

There Is Widespread Belief In A Supreme Being

There is not only the universal need to worship something or someone, we also find that belief in the existence of some type of Supreme Being is widespread throughout the world. It seems that all societies have some sort of higher power that they acknowledge. No matter how crude, or how sophisticated, the society may be, human beings have the need to believe in some greater power.

Even if some particular society was discovered that had no religious beliefs this would not disprove the rule. That would be like arguing the presence of blind people in the world proves that human beings are creatures who cannot see. The universal testimony is that human beings are incurable religious.

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

Since we find the universal need to acknowledge something greater than ourselves, it is fair to ask the question as to how this need originated. Certainly, it is now through human reason. Indeed, there are many reasoning humans who deny the existence of God. The anthropological argument says that this need for worship was placed into us by God Himself.

The Weaknesses Of The Anthropological Argument

As is true with the other arguments for God's existence, there are a number of limitations in this argument. The weaknesses are as follows.

The Need For God Does Not Mean He Exists

The universal need for God does not mean that such a being exists. The need may have been created by the desire for humanity to have some type of purpose, or meaning in life. The need for God does not prove His reality.

The Creator May Have Not Created All Things, Only Human Beings

If there is a Creator, we do not know whether this being is the Creator of all things or merely the Creator of humankind alone. It is possible that the Creator was limited in his ability to create. From observing the universe, we cannot determine this.

The Creator May Have Been Created

We do not know whether this Creator was Himself created. It is possible that there is someone greater than the Creator who made him. Looking at the universe does not give us an answer to this question.

The Creator May Be Finite Or Limited, Not Infinite

We do not know whether this Creator is infinite or finite. He may be limited in what he is able to do. Our knowledge from his creation is not sufficient to make a final determination.

Therefore, it is necessary to understand the limitations of the anthropological argument. The value of this argument is that it gives evidence of a personal being who exists, and who is the proper object of the love of humankind. It shows the universal acceptance and need for the idea of God. Again, we have a helpful argument for God's existence, but certainly it is not decisive by itself.

Summary To Question 6

What Is The Anthropological Argument For God's Existence? (The Argument From Humanity)

The anthropological argument says that we can know something about God from the way we human beings are made. Indeed, humans are

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

creatures which have the need to worship something. In fact, there seems to be a universal need on the part of humans to worship someone or something.

Furthermore, there is widespread belief in a supreme being that deserves our worship. This gives further evidence of a God who exists. Why is there such a need if a supreme being does not exist?

The anthropological argument, while recognizing our need for worship, does have its weaknesses. For one thing, the mere need to worship something does not mean that the object which we worship actually exists. It may be just wishful thinking that some sort of God or gods, in reality, exists.

Furthermore, we do not know the extent of the creative ability of this being or these beings. His creative ability may be limited. He may have only created limited things, not everything.

In addition, for all we know the creator himself may have been created by some other greater being. If this is the case, then do we worship his creator? It is impossible to know the answer to this question by merely observing the universe as it now stands.

Finally, we cannot know whether this creator is an all-powerful being or a being who is limited in his power. Indeed, we have no way of knowing.

Therefore, while the need for worship is something that seems universal in all human beings, it does not, by itself, prove that some sort of God exists.

Question 7

What Is The Moral Argument For God's Existence? (Moral Standards Are Found Everywhere)

One of the most popular arguments given for the existence of a supreme being is the fact that moral standards are found in every society. This is known as the "moral argument." It can be simply stated as follows.

There Are Universal Moral Standards Found In Every Society

The moral argument states that there must be a God to account for the sense of right and wrong that is universal within humankind. Every human culture has some type of moral standards.

Human lives are regulated by conceptions of right and wrong and the need for justice to be done. This has to be explained in some way.

Our Inner Awareness, Or Conscience, Tells Us There Is Right And Wrong

The reason humanity has moral standards is because the Creator put that within us. This human moral sense points to the existence of God. The Bible says:

For example, whenever non-Jews who don't have laws from God do by nature the things that Moses' Teachings contain, they are a law to themselves even though they don't have any laws from God. They show that some requirements found in Moses' Teachings are written in their hearts. Their consciences speak to them. Their thoughts accuse them on one occasion and defend them on another (Romans 2:14,15 God's Word).

The conscience of every human being tells them when they do right, and when they do wrong. Whether the human conscience is obeyed, or not obeyed, it is still speaking.

Conscience does not create the standard—it merely testifies to it.

Therefore, Some Lawgiver Must Exist Who Gave Us These Standards

The conclusion drawn from this is that there is a lawgiver who has placed a standard of right and wrong within each of us.

The value of the moral argument is that demonstrates that a perfect standard exists apart from humanity and there has to be something that accounts for this standard.

Again, the simple explanation is that there is a lawgiver who has given us this standard.

The Weaknesses Of The Moral Argument

As with all of the other arguments for God's existence, there are weaknesses and limitations. They are as follows.

1. We Do Not Know Whether The Lawgiver Created All Things Or Merely Created Humans

We do not know whether this being, who gave the standard, is the Creator of all things or merely the Creator of humankind alone. Again, his creative abilities may be limited. From observing the universe, as it now stands, we are not able to tell.

2. We Do Not Know Whether This Lawgiver Was Himself Created

If there is a Creator who gave us these laws, we do not know whether this lawgiver was Himself created or whether he is the sole Creator. It is possible that there were others who came before him who created him. From the creation itself, we have no way of knowing whether the lawgiver is created, or uncreated. It is impossible for us to tell.

3. We Do Not Know Whether This Lawgiver Is Infinite Or Finite

We do not know whether this Lawgiver is infinite or finite. While he may be the Creator, his ability may be limited, or finite. We cannot be certain. In fact, there is no way for us to know this unless the Creator reveals it to us.

4. We Do Not Know Whether There Is A Lawgiver

The fact that people everywhere have laws by which they live does not mean there is an ultimate "lawgiver." Societies have different ideas as to what "good" means, and what "evil" means.

Since there are a variety of moral codes in the world, this could give evidence that there is no such person as a lawgiver. It could be argued that moral codes are adopted in various societies merely because they work—not because there is some lawgiver behind them.

Therefore, like all of the other arguments we have listed for the existence of God, there are strengths and weaknesses with the moral argument.

Summary To Question 7

What Is The Moral Argument For God's Existence? (Moral Standards Are Found Everywhere)

The moral argument recognizes that there are moral standards which universally exist. Each and every society recognizes that it must be governed by certain laws. These universal moral standards point to a

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

lawgiver who has placed these standards in our conscience. Therefore, some God must exist.

While this is stated as evidence for the existence of God, the moral argument has its weaknesses. They are as follows.

For one thing, from moral standards alone we do not know the extent of the creative ability of God. We do not know if he was created by some other God. Indeed, we have no way of knowing.

Furthermore, we do not know if this creator has unlimited ability or merely limited ability to create. Again, from looking at the universe we cannot come to any conclusion on this issue.

Finally, we cannot be certain whether or not there truly is a lawgiver. The codes adopted in society may be there simply because they work—not because some lawgiver put them there.

The fact that different societies have different codes may point away from the idea of a universal lawgiver.

Consequently, like the rest of the arguments for God's existence, the moral argument has its weaknesses.

Question 8

What Is The Biological Argument For God's Existence? (The Argument From Life Itself)

One popular argument for the existence of God is known as the 'biological argument.' The biological argument is an argument from the nature of life itself. It can be summed up in the following way.

1. Life Does Not Come From Non-Life

One of the universal truths that science has discovered is that life only comes from life. Put another way, life does not come from non-life. If life does not spontaneously appear from non-life, then there must have been a source of life from which it originally came. This source of life is God.

2. It Takes Intelligence To Create Life

In addition, if life is ever created artificially, it will only prove the point that it takes intelligence to create life. Life does not just spontaneously appear.

Therefore, there must have been some intelligence behind the creation of life and the universe.

The Weakness Of The Biological Argument

There are weaknesses with the biological argument. They are as follows.

1. We Do Not Know The Identity Of The Giver Of Life

While it is true that we have discovered that life can only come from life, it does mean that someday a principle won't be discovered that contradicts this. As far as our present knowledge is concerned, life only comes from life. In the future, we may discover that this is not always the case.

Furthermore, if life originally did come from a creator, we still do not know whom this God is that first brought about life as we know it. All we can say is that there may be a creator. Nothing more. Therefore, this argument doesn't really solve anything.

2. It May Be Many Gods, Not Just One God, Who Created Life

There may indeed be an intelligence that created the universe. However, this intelligence may be one God, or one of many gods. We do not know which it is. The identity of this intelligence is not explained by the creation itself.

Therefore, the biological argument does not solve the question as to the existence of God, or tell us who this God is, or how many gods exist.

Summary To Question 8
What Is The Biological Argument For God's Existence?
(The Argument From Life Itself)

The biological argument is an argument from life itself. There are a couple of points which are usually raised by the biological argument.

Life does not just spontaneously develop. As far as we can tell, life only comes from life. This is true everywhere we look in the universe. The conclusion that can be drawn is that there must have been some Creator who is the source of this life. This Creator is God.

Furthermore, to create life, it takes intelligence. Life does not happen by chance. Therefore, some intelligence must have created life in the beginning. This intelligence must be God.

While the biological argument is consistent with the facts as we know them, there are some problems with it. For one thing, we do not know the identity of this giver of life, or if he truly exists.

Perhaps there will be a discovery made someday which shows that such a being does not need to exist. Perhaps life does not have to come from life. Therefore, until all the evidence is in, we cannot conclude that a creator must exist. Our present knowledge says life only comes from life but this may change in the future as our knowledge increases.

Even if there is a creator who is the source of life we do not know if he is one God, or one of many gods. We do not know if he himself was created. The universe does not provide answers to these questions.

Consequently, creation itself does not necessarily mean that only one creator God exists. The biological argument does not solve the question of the existence of God.

Question 9

What Is The Ontological Argument For God's Existence? (The Argument From Being)

The ontological argument is the argument from "being." Historically this is last argument that has been given to account for God's existence. It is based upon the idea of a perfect being. It can be summarized as follows.

God Is The Highest Being Humans Can Conceive Of

The ontological argument is usually given in two steps. First, we recognize that the idea of God is the highest thing that a human being can conceive or think of. It has been argued that humanity's conception of a perfect being must be based upon some reality. Why do humans think about an all-powerful being?

Therefore, God Must Exist In Reality, As Well As In The Mind

Step two consists of facing the question, "Why would humankind conceive of such a perfect being if such a being did not exist?" The answer given is that "We would not." Therefore, God must exist. Otherwise, we would not have thoughts of such a perfect being.

Weaknesses With The Ontological Argument

Although this argument has been given in various forms throughout history, it is not very convincing for a number of reasons.

1. Something Does Not Exist Because We Can Imagine It

Merely because humanity can conceive of a perfect being does not guarantee the existence of such a being.

Although it may seem logical to some, there has to some evidence to back it up. There has to be more than merely the idea of a perfect being for that being to exist.

2. This Shows Our Need For God's Existence, Not The Fact Of His Existence

There is something else. The fact that we have a need for a perfect being to exist does not mean that He exists in reality. While humanity may have this need, this does not mean that the need has been met.

Thus, the ontological argument only proves that humans have a need for God and have thought up the idea of a supreme being. His existence, however, cannot be assumed or proven merely because we can conceive that such a being exists.

There has to be some evidence to back up what we are thinking about.

Summary To Question 9
What Is The Ontological Argument For
God's Existence? (The Argument From Being)

The ontological argument is a difficult argument to follow. We will try to simplify it. Basically it says that God is the highest being which humans can imagine or conceive of. Since we can imagine this perfect being which does exist in our minds, he must exist in reality. If not, we would not imagine this type of being actually exists. Indeed, why would we conceive of such a perfect being if there was no such personage?

The obvious problem with this argument is that things do not merely exist because we can imagine them. We can imagine an unlimited number of things which do not really exist. There has to be something more than our mere imagination for such a being to exist.

The ontological argument shows us the need for God to exist but not the reality of his existence. More evidence is needed to demonstrate that this desire is not merely wishful thinking on our behalf.

Therefore, the ontological argument, by itself, proves nothing.

Question 10

What Should We Conclude About The Traditional Arguments For God's Existence? Are They Convincing?

There are a number of conclusions that we can make to the traditional or classical arguments for God's existence. These arguments do give us some insight into different aspects of God as He is revealed in Scripture. For example, we can make the following observations.

The Evidence From These Various Arguments Relate To Different Aspects Of God's Person

The various arguments that have been given for God's existence relate to different aspects of His being. The ontological speaks of His complete perfection, the cosmological and biological to His creative abilities, the teleological to His designing intelligence, and the moral and anthropological to His personal nature. The evidence from these arguments is consistent with what the Bible reveals about God's existence and His nature.

Belief In The God Of Scripture Is Consistent With Everything We Know And Observe

We can also conclude that what we know and observe of the universe around us is consistent with how the Bible describes God. These traditional arguments do reflect truth about God.

The universe had a cause, and that cause is God. He is the One who started everything in the beginning as the Bible so clearly says.

Furthermore, the universe has a Designer, and that Designer is God. God created everything perfect so that it would function together in an orderly manner.

In addition, the universe has a purpose in God's plan. Just as everything we find in the universe has a purpose, so we discover that the universe itself is here for a specific purpose.

The Bible says God has given the moral sense of right and wrong to us. Our conscience is there to testify to the standard which He has provided.

In addition, since we know that life only comes from life, we can conclude with the Bible that God is the Giver of life.

The universal moral standard has been placed in our hearts by God, the Lawgiver. He has left the entire human race without any excuse. Everyone knows that He exists.

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

The fact that we can conceive of such a perfect being as God, as the ontological argument points out, only shows that the Lord has put those thoughts in our hearts. We long for such a being to exist and He does exist!

Therefore, while not proving the God of the Bible exists, the traditional arguments are consistent with His existence, as well as what the Scripture has to say about Him.

Summary To Question 10

What Should We Conclude About The Traditional Arguments For God's Existence? Are They Convincing?

There are a number of conclusions we can make from the traditional arguments for God's existence. These arguments, while not conclusively proving that God exists, when considered together, do relate to various aspects of God's nature or being. In other words, they are consistent with what we know about the God of the Bible.

The cosmological arguments show there is a first cause. In fact, the first verse of Scripture says that God is that cause.

The teleological argument points out the intricate design in the universe. Scripture also testifies to God's great designing power.

The moral argument shows that the Lord has put a sense of right and wrong in each of us. We know that there are certain universal standards of good and evil, right and wrong.

The biological argument says there must be a Creator since life only comes from life.

The ontological argument shows that the Lord has put thoughts of Himself in our hearts and minds.

Therefore, every single thing we observe in the world around us gives testimony to God's existence. Thus, there is no need to be ashamed of our belief in the God of Scripture.

Question 11

Why Do Some Believers Think The Traditional Arguments For God's Existence Should Not Be Given?

It must also be noted that there are a number of believers who do not believe that any of the traditional arguments should be given to prove God's existence. A number of points have been made.

At Best, The Traditional Arguments Only Show That Some God May Exist

The traditional arguments are limited in what they can do. They can only demonstrate that some type of God exists, but it can do nothing more. It is true that attempts to prove the existence of God through these traditional proofs seldom, if ever, causes someone to believe in Him. Indeed, all they would do is convince a person that some type of God exists. However, it would not show them *which* God exists.

Special Revelation Is Necessary To Know The Identity Of This God

The traditional arguments do nothing to explain who God is, who we are, and what the meaning of our existence consists of. At best, they can only tell us that some God possibly exists. However, His identity is not revealed. We need so much more than the traditional arguments.

The Bible Says The Unbeliever Has A Sinful Nature That Does Not Want To Know God

There is something else that we need to remember. The Bible clearly says that unbelieving humanity is not seeking after the truth about God. To the contrary, he is running from the truth. The desire is not to know the God who created all things but rather to deny what is evident to all of us. This attitude is a result of the spiritual blindness caused by sin.

The problem is that sinful humanity, completely on its own, cannot have correct knowledge about God, or know God personally. Special revelation is needed for that.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the preaching of the message of Christ which is necessary to have true knowledge of God:

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe (1 Corinthians 1:21 NIV).

Therefore, it is only through the preaching of the message of Scripture that humans can know any specifics about the God who exists. Elsewhere, we are told that unbelievers have a spiritual blindfold that keeps them from seeing the truth. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

If there is anything hidden about our message, it is hidden only to someone who is lost. The god who rules this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers. They cannot see the light, which is the good news about our glorious Christ, who shows what God is like (2 Corinthians 4:3-4 CEV).

Because humanity is in a darkened state due to sin, some believers think it is improper to argue for God's existence to those who have no capacity to understand. God's existence should be merely assumed and proclaimed to these people. In other words, it should not attempt to be proven.

However, there are many other Christians who believe that arguments for God's existence should be presented to unbelievers. As we find in the Book of Acts, the early Christians reasoned with unbelievers through the Scriptures and presented evidence that Jesus was the promised Messiah. We should follow their example.

Scripture Says Unbelievers Are Already Aware Of God Apart From Any Rational Arguments

Finally, the Bible says that unbelievers are already aware of God's existence. They are not ignorant that He exists. Through the internal testimony of the conscience, as well as the external evidence from the nature of the created universe, humans already know that there is a God.

Therefore, it is the job of believers not to prove God to the unbeliever but rather to tell them which God it is that does exist. This is the God of the Bible.

Summary To Question 11 Why Do Some Believers Think The Traditional Arguments For God's Existence Should Not Be Given?

There have been a number of arguments that have been brought forward to show that the existence of God is not something irrational, or contrary to the facts. They include the following.

The cosmological argument says everything must have a cause. The teleological argument argues that the intricate design of the universe shows intelligence and purpose. The anthropological argument points out the fact that human beings are unique. There is also the fact of the universal belief in a supreme being.

The moral argument observes the fact that morality is found in every culture. The biological argument states that life does not come from non-life. Finally, the ontological argument, the idea of a perfect being such as God must mean that He exists.

Each of these arguments has their strengths and weaknesses. While none of them are decisive, in and of themselves, together they show that God's existence is certainly not irrational. However, these arguments do not tell us who that God is, or how we can get to know Him. This can only be

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

understood through special revelation—the truths which God has revealed in Scripture.

From the Bible we find that unbelievers are not seeking after God. Indeed, they are running from Him. Furthermore, there is a spiritual blindfold which keeps them from understanding the truths of God. Only the work of the Holy Spirit, through message of the Word of God, can remove this blindfold.

These facts have caused a number of people to question the value of any arguments put forward for God's existence. If the unbeliever has on a spiritual blindfold and is running from the Lord, then all the intellectual arguments in the world won't make a difference.

However, others believe that it our responsibility to provide whatever arguments we can for the Jesus as Messiah. This is in keeping with what the New Testament believers did.

There is one last thing which should be noted. According to Scripture, everyone knows that God exists. Nature makes this clear. However, we need the Bible to tell us which God it is that does exist. This God, of course, is the One who is revealed in the Bible.

Question 12

What Does Nature Tell Us About The Existence Of The God Of Scripture (Natural Theology)

The Bible says that nature, or the world around us, is one of the ways in which God has revealed Himself to humanity. What exactly does nature tell us about God? Can we find evidence of God's existence from looking at the world in which we live?

The examination of what evidence nature can provide is known as "Natural Theology." The following points need to be made.

God's Existence And Precision Are Evident In Nature

The Bible asserts that the entire universe is a testimony to God's existence and precision. The psalmist had this to say:

The heavens declare God's glory; the sky displays his handiwork. Day after day it speaks out; night after night it reveals his greatness (Psalm 19:1-2 NET).

Gods' existence can be seen from an examination of the universe around us.

The Apostle Paul told the people in Lystra that God has left a witness of Himself to everyone in the world. He said:

Men, why are you doing these things? We too are men, with human natures just like you! We are proclaiming the good news to you, so that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to go their own ways, yet he did not leave himself without a witness by doing good, by giving you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying you with food and your hearts with joy (Acts 14:15-17 NET).

Again, we find that the world in which we live testifies to the existence and goodness of God. Indeed, everyone has this witness.

To the church at Rome, the Apostle Paul wrote:

From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse whatsoever for not knowing God (Romans 1:20 NLT).

These passages are reminders that God's creative work can be observed in nature. He created things to function in an orderly fashion and He continues to keep things in order. His handiwork is present everywhere for all to view.

How Much Information About God Can Be Known From Nature?

There has been a debate concerning how much information about God can be derived from nature. Christians hold a number of different positions on this subject.

Basically there are five points of view: nature can teach us nothing about God; only believers can understand truth about God from nature; nature can actually prove that God exists; nature provides enough truth as to be able to save people; nature provides everyone a knowledge of God's existence but not enough to save. We can make the following observations about each of these arguments.

Option 1: There Are No Truths About God That Can Be Seen Through Nature

Some Bible students argue that natural theology, as such, does not exist. Fallen humanity cannot derive any truth from nature. Because humankind has fallen from our original perfect state, we are now totally corrupted by sin. This fact holds true for believer and unbeliever alike. While there may be truths about God that are found in nature, none of us can see it

Option 2: Only Believers Can Understand Truths About God From Nature

Some Christians have argued that only believers can understand the testimony of nature concerning the things of God. Those who have the benefit of God's Word can clearly understand the physical world because of the testimony of Scripture. Without the Bible, nature tells unbelievers nothing.

Option 3: Nature Can Prove God's Existence To Everyone

It has also been argued that nature can actually prove that God exists. Those who hold this view do not believe that nature is sufficient to save individuals from their sin, but they can know, for a fact, that God does exist.

Option 4: Nature Is Able To Save Lost Sinners

There have been some theologians who have argued that truths from nature can actually save those who have not had any acquaintance with special revelation. They believe there is enough in this revelation of God to save an individual.

Option 5: Nature Provides A Basic Knowledge Of God, Nothing More

The final position is that nature can provide a basic knowledge of God. All people, at all times, know that God exists through what He has revealed. Yet nature only tells us the basic facts about God. We do not know any specific information about Him.

In addition, human beings have either consciously, or subconsciously, suppressed these things that can be known. Therefore, nature is of very little help.

Evaluation: Option 5 Seems To Best Fit The Evidence

Option five seems to be the best way to understand what Scripture has to say on this subject. While nature testifies that God does exist, in the final analysis, it is only God Himself who can give us knowledge of His own being. The Bible makes it clear that God's revelation of Himself in nature is not sufficient for sinful humanity to know Him.

Paul Explained The Unknown God To The Athenians

When the Apostle Paul went to the city of Athens, he spoke to the people about the God of the Bible. While the Athenians recognized that some unknown God may exist, his nature, or character, had to be explained to them by Paul. The Bible records what happened as follows:

So Paul stood before the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I see that you are very religious in all respects. For as I went around and observed closely your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: 'To an unknown god.' Therefore what you worship without knowing it, this I proclaim to you (Act 17:22,23 NET).

The unknown God had to be explained. Nature, by itself, is an inadequate source to know the God of the Bible. While the evidence from nature may give us some secondary attesting to God's existence, it certainly is not enough for anyone to know which God exists, or what God expects from humanity.

At best, the arguments from nature are consistent with other arguments that can be brought forward for the existence of the God of Scripture. Therefore, any help that nature can give is only minimal—for people misinterpret God's revelation in nature. It is the Bible alone that tells us how to understand nature.

The Various World Religions Give Testimony To The Need Of Written Scripture

In addition, nature cannot tell us anything about where sin came from, how it can be pardoned, or how to live a holy life. The various religions of the world give testimony to this fact.

They all have the witness of nature before them, yet they reach different conclusions about which God exists and what is demanded from human beings.

For these things, we must go to God's special revelation, the Bible. Divine revelation gives us *explicit* knowledge about God.

Therefore, any conclusions about God's character and purpose, which one might derive from nature, must be evaluated in light of what God has said about Himself, and what Jesus Christ revealed about God. Nature is indeed a witness to God's might and power, but it does not supply all the knowledge a sinner needs to develop a personal relationship with God. That is the purpose of God's written Word, the Bible.

Summary To Question 12
What Does Nature Tell Us About God's Existence?
(Natural Theology)

Nature gives evidence to the precision and creative hand of God. This is called "Natural Theology." It is debated as to how much information that it can provide to humanity.

Some feel nature can teach humanity nothing about God. They believe that nature is a dead end. In other words, it offers no help whatsoever.

Others think that only believers can benefit from the truths about God found in nature. Since we have the benefit of God's Word, we can draw some conclusions from nature.

There is also the position that nature can actually prove God's existence. This view holds that those who have only nature to testify to them have enough to know that there is a God but they do not have enough evidence to save them.

There is also the argument that nature gives enough evidence about God to actually save those who do not have access to Scripture. Nature replaces Scripture for these people.

The best view seems to be that nature can provide basic truths to humanity, but falls short of giving any absolute truth. It tells us that there is a God who is majestic and powerful, but nothing more. It is the Bible alone that tells human beings how to understand the testimony of God from nature. We find that Scripture supports this idea. When Paul went to Athens, he preached to the Athenians about the unknown God which they worshipped. He had to explain the exact identity of this unknown God.

While they had the testimony of nature, it could not tell them what this God is like, or what He requires from them. The Apostle then preached the One who can answer these questions—Jesus Christ. Without his preaching they would not know any specifics about the only God who exists.

This is why the Bible is so necessary. It alone tells us which God exists, what He is like, as well as what He requires from us.

Question 13

How Do We Know That The God Of The Bible Is The God Who Exists?

There are reasonable arguments that give testimony to the existence of God. It seems fair to conclude that perhaps God does exist. But which God is it who exists? Is there only one God or many gods? If there is only one God, is it the God of the Bible or some other God? How can a person be certain that the God of the Bible really exists?

The Claim Of Scripture: Only One God Exists

The claim of Scripture is clear with respect to the existence of God. First, it informs us that the God of the Bible exists. Second, we discover that He is the only God who exists.

The Bible assumes, but does not try to prove, that there is a God who exists. His name in Hebrew is “Yahweh” or “Jehovah” which is translated “LORD” in English Bibles. He is real. He does exist, has always existed and always will exist. This is the clear position of Scripture.

The Bible makes another point about the existence of God—He is the *only* one that exists. There are no other gods in the universe—either lesser, or greater, than the God who is revealed in the Bible.

These are the unambiguous claims of Scripture. But are these claims true? Why should anyone believe the claims found in the Bible?

The Bible Gives Substantial Evidence To Support The Claims

Scripture not only makes these claims, there is also compelling evidence that backs up the claims.

The evidence for the existence of the God of the Bible includes the following: the unique composition of the Bible, predictive prophecy, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and changed lives of believers. We develop these arguments in detail in a number of our other books (*10 Reasons To Trust The Bible* and *The Case For Christianity*). In the following questions, we will merely summarize some of the evidence for each of these points.

When all is said and done, we will find that the evidence for the existence of the God of the Bible is overwhelming.

Summary To Question 13

How Do We Know That It Is The God Of The Bible Who Exists?

There is sufficient evidence to believe in the existence of God. His fingerprints are everywhere. However, this does not mean that it is the God of the Bible which exists. Indeed, other religions claim it is their God or gods which actually exist—not the God of Scripture. How then does the Christian know that the God of Scripture is the God who truly exists?

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

Two points must be emphasized. First, Scripture itself makes the claim that the God it reveals is the only God which exists. Therefore, this is not some claim we are making independent of Scripture. We are merely citing what it says.

Second, Scripture does more than merely make these claims. It backs them up with convincing evidence. Indeed, there are a number of lines of evidence that demonstrate that the God of Scripture is the only God which does exist.

This includes the uniqueness and the reliability of the Bible, predictive prophecy, the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the changed lives of the believers.

While these are not the only lines of evidence that can be brought forward to show that it is the God of Scripture which exists, we will discover that there is more than enough evidence from these sources to make the case for Christianity. The evidence is certainly there for all to behold. In other words, people can know the truth—if they are truly interested in knowing. In point of fact, they have no excuse whatsoever.

Question 14

How Does The Unique Makeup Of The Bible Give Evidence For The Existence Of The God Of Scripture?

One of the reasons that we can have confidence that God does exist is the Bible. Indeed, the Bible is like no other book that has ever been written. It claims to be the divinely inspired Word of God. Paul made the following claim:

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16 ESV).

But the mere claim of divine inspiration does not make it true. There has to be evidence to back up the claim. An examination of the evidence for the divine inspiration of the Bible will be more than sufficient to the reasonable questioner. This can be seen by looking at the unique makeup of the Scriptures.

The Bible Has An Amazing Continuity

The Bible, though made up of sixty-six separate books, is in reality one book. One of the strongest arguments for the divine inspiration of the Bible is its unity, or continuity. We can briefly illustrate this truth in the following manner.

1. It Was Fifteen Hundred Years In The Making

The first book of the Bible written was either Genesis or the Book of Job (about 1400 B.C.). The last book composed was probably either the third letter of John, or the Book of Revelation. They each were written toward the end of the first century A.D. This makes a total of about fifteen hundred years from the composition of the first book of the Bible until the last.

2. There Are Many Authors With Many Occupations

In addition, there were over forty different human authors who composed the books of the Bible. They came from a variety of backgrounds and held different occupations. For example, Amos was a herdsman, Peter and John were fishermen, Luke was a doctor, Joshua, a military leader, and Daniel a prime minister.

3. It Was Written In Three Languages On Three Different Continents

The Bible was written in three different languages—Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, as well upon three different continents—Africa, Asia, and Europe. In other words, there was not one special place, or one special language, in which the Scriptures were composed.

4. It Covers Many Different Subjects

The subject matter contained in the Bible includes many controversial matters. A controversial subject can be defined as one which would cause people to have a number of different opinions. These subjects include the existence and nature of God, the formation of the universe, and the creation and purpose of humankind. These are subjects which people constantly debate.

5. Amazingly The Bible Is A Unity

To sum up, the Bible is sixty-six books, composed by forty different human authors, over a fifteen-hundred-year span, written on three different continents, covering many controversial subjects.

One would expect the result to be a confused and disjointed text, anything but harmonious. Yet the Bible is a unity. It is one unfolding story from beginning to end—written with complete harmony and continuity. The message is consistent, the authors in unity with one another. In other words, it is one Book rather than many books.

Conclusion: There Is One Author Behind The Various Biblical Books

This feature is remarkable when one considers the different factors involved. The only reasonable way that this Book came together so precisely is that the ultimate author behind it was God Himself. This is the claim which the Scripture makes for itself and the evidence reveals that this claim is true. No other book has these types of credentials. The Bible stands alone.

This is one line of evidence for the existence of the God of the Bible—the Holy Book which He divinely inspired.

Summary To Question 14 How Does The Unique Makeup Of The Bible Give Evidence For The Existence Of The God Of Scripture?

One of the reasons to believe that the God of the Bible actually exists is the makeup of the Bible itself. The design of the Bible is unique—it is one of a kind.

The Bible was written by over forty different human authors, from various backgrounds, in three different languages, on three different continents, over a thousand five-hundred-year span. It also covers many controversial subjects.

Instead of the contradictory result one would expect, when putting these books together, we find that the Bible tells the same story with complete unity and harmony.

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

This fact separates the Bible from all other books both ancient and modern. No other book, sacred or secular, has the credentials of the Bible.

There has to be some explanation for this. The best explanation is the one in which the Bible gives for itself—it is the Word of the living God.

Thus, we find that the Bible itself gives us a strong reason to believe that there is an all-powerful God which exists. Otherwise, there is no other way to explain its one-of-a-kind composition.

Question 15

In What Sense Does Predictive Prophecy Show That The God Of The Bible Exists?

The Bible itself is a starting point for us to believe in the existence of God. But there is much more. One of the strongest lines of evidence that can be marshaled for God's existence is the subject of predictive prophecy. The Scripture records many events that were predicted in advance by God.

These fulfilled prophecies are evidence of God's knowledge of all things. Only God, who is outside of our time-space existence and our finite knowledge, could accurately and consistently reveal the future. The Bible says the following about the evidence from predictive prophecy:

So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2 Peter 1:19-21 NRSV).

Prophecy is God foretelling events before they occur. Furthermore, biblical predictions are not vague prophecies, but are specific in nature. In addition, they cannot be accounted for by chance, common sense, or collusion.

The Biblical Tests Of A Prophet: 100% Accuracy 100% Of The Time

The biblical prophet must be 100% right 100% of the time.

We read the Lord saying the following words to Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy:

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account. But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death. You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him (Deuteronomy 18:18-22 NIV).

A genuine prophet of God does not make any mistakes. Indeed, he or she cannot make any mistakes!

What Constitutes Fulfilled Prophecy?

For predictive prophecy to be considered valid, it must pass a number of tests. They include the following.

1. The Prophecy Must Be Given Before The Fulfillment Takes Place

The prophecy must be given before the fulfillment takes place. This is primary. For any prophecy to be considered valid it must be delivered before the events take place—not after the fact. Otherwise we are not dealing with prophecy.

2. The Prophecy Must Be Explicit

There is something else which is crucial. The prophecy must be of an explicit nature. In other words, it cannot be so general and vague that it can mean anything and everything. It must say something specific.

3. The Prophecy Must Be Able To Be Falsified

This brings us to our next point. The prophecy must be of such a nature that it can be proven to be false. It has to contain elements that can be either proven to be true or false. Unless a prophecy can possibly be falsified it is meaningless.

4. The Prophet Cannot Have Any Part In The Fulfillment

Another essential ingredient is that those who gave the prophecies, the biblical prophets, cannot have any part in the fulfillment. The prediction must be completely fulfilled apart from the one giving it. The prophet can have absolutely nothing to do with its coming to pass.

5. The Fulfillment Must Correspond Exactly To The Prediction

In addition, for a prophecy to be considered valid, the fulfillment must correspond exactly, and in all points, to the predictions that were given. Partial fulfillment is not enough. Fulfillment must be exact.

Some Examples Of Fulfilled Bible Prophecy

Scripture contains many examples of fulfilled prophecy. For example, the Old Testament predicts the coming of a Savior, known as the Messiah. The predictions surrounding Him are very specific. They include the following points.

1. The Birthplace Of The Messiah: He Must Be Born In Bethlehem

He was to be born in the city of Bethlehem. We read the following in the Book of Micah:

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

But you (Bethlehem) Ephrathah, the least of the clans of Judah, from you will come for me a future ruler of Israel whose origins go back to the distant past, to the days of old (Micah 5:2 NLT).

This eliminates every other city in the world for the potential birthplace of the Messiah. Only Bethlehem could be the city in which He is to be born.

2. The Family Line: He Must Be A Descendant Of David

The Old Testament predicted the exact family line that the Messiah would come through. This includes the line of Abraham (Genesis 22:18), the line of Isaac (Genesis 21:12), the line of Jacob (Numbers 24:17), the family line of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1), and the line of David (Jeremiah 23:5). This makes His ancestry clear.

3. He Must Come Before Jerusalem And The Temple Are Destroyed

The Messiah was to come on the historical scene before the temple in Jerusalem, along with the city itself, was destroyed. We read the following in the Book of Daniel:

After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed (Daniel 9:26 NIV).

The temple, and the city of Jerusalem, were both destroyed in A.D. 70. Thus, the predicted Messiah was prophesied to come upon the scene of history before A.D. 70.

The Prophecies Were Literally Fulfilled In Jesus Christ

We find that the prophecies given concerning the coming Messiah were literally fulfilled in the Person of Jesus Christ. The evidence is as follows.

Jesus Was Born In Bethlehem

The New Testament records that Jesus was born in the city of Bethlehem.

Matthew recorded His birth in this manner:

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea when Herod was king. After Jesus' birth wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem. They asked, "Where is the one who was born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star rising and have come to worship him" (Matthew 2:1-2 God's Word).

Jesus was born in exactly the right place.

Jesus Was A Descendant Of David

Jesus was also a descendant of King David—just like the prophecy read. We also read about this in Matthew. It makes it clear in the very first verse:

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1 NKJV).

Jesus was also born into the right family.

Jesus Came Before The City And Temple Were Destroyed

There is something else. True to the prophecy, Jesus came on the scene of history before the city of Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. They were both destroyed in A.D. 70. This is about forty years after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus.

The odds that one person could fulfill these prophecies by chance are astronomical. But Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled these and many others—demonstrating He was the promised Messiah.

The Bible also gives many prophecies concerning nations and individuals, which have been literally fulfilled. These also demonstrate that God exists, and that He is controlling history.

Why Has God Told Us The Future?

Since the Bible gives us examples of God predicting the future, we may rightly ask the question, “Why has He done this? Why has God at times predicted future events? Through the prophet Isaiah God gives us the answer to this question:

And do not forget the things I have done throughout history. For I am God—I alone! I am God, and there is no one else like me. Only I can tell you what is going to happen even before it happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish (Isaiah 46:9,10 NLT).

Isaiah also recorded God saying:

Time and again I warned you about what was going to happen in the future. Then suddenly I took action, and all my predictions came true. “I know how stubborn and obstinate you are. Your necks are as unbending as iron. You are as hardheaded as bronze. That is why I told you ahead of time what I was going to do. That way, you could never say, ‘My idols did it. My wooden image and metal god commanded it to happen!’” (Isaiah 48:3-5 NLT).

From these verses we can deduce the following.

1. We Can Know That The God Of The Bible Exists

Because He tells us what is going to happen in the future, we can know that the God of the Bible actually exists. Indeed, only an all-knowing God could state with certainty what will happen in the unknown future.

2. We Can Be Assured That He Is The Only God Who Exists

We can also know that He is the only God who exists—for no other God or idol has been able to foretell the future with complete accuracy. He alone is God.

3. We Can Be Confident About His Other Predictions

Humanity can also be confident that other predictions God has made, which have not come to pass, will indeed be fulfilled. Since He has always been correct in His predictions up to this time, there is no reason to assume that He will be anything but correct in the future.

4. We Can Trust Everything God Says

We can also trust anything else that God says because He has given us a basis for trusting Him. He has demonstrated that His words are always truthful. The God of the Bible does not lie.

5. We Can Be Confident God Is Controlling History

We can, therefore, have confidence that God is controlling history, as well as our own lives. By realizing that God has predicted the future accurately, we can live in the security of what He has told us will happen.

Therefore, along with the unique character and makeup of the Bible, we find that predictive prophecy gives irrefutable evidence that the God of the Bible exists, and is in control of all events.

Summary To Question 15

In What Sense Does Predictive Prophecy Show That The God Of The Bible Exists?

One of the strongest arguments for the existence of the God of Scripture is predictive prophecy. Before certain events took place, the God of the Bible specifically foretold what would happen. Indeed, the Bible gives a number of examples of predictions being made and then later fulfilled long after the predictions.

These events could not have happened by chance. The predictions were made long before the events took place. The persons making the predictions had no hand in their fulfillment. Furthermore, they were of such a specific nature that they could be shown to be false if they did not come to pass as predicted. However, all of them have come to pass.

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

As to why God gave predictive prophecy, there are a number of reasons as to why this is so. They include the following.

First, Bible prophecy was given so that we can know that there is a God who exists, the God of Scripture. Scripture makes it clear that He is the only God which exists. There are no other gods, either lesser or greater than He. The fact that He accurately predicts the future confirms this.

Not only does predictive prophecy tell us that God exists, it also tells us that He is in control of all things. The future is not unknown to Him. Indeed, He controls the future.

Furthermore, because God has accurately told us what will occur in the future, we can also be confident in predictions which have not yet come to pass. Indeed, we know that they will come to pass—as have all of the previous predictions.

In addition, we can trust every other thing which He says because He has accurately foretold the future.

In sum, predictive prophecy is another powerful line of evidence which gives testimony to the existence of God—the God of the Bible.

Question 16

How Does The Resurrection Of Jesus Christ Give Evidence For God's Existence?

There is a third reason why one should believe in the existence of the God of the Bible—the Person of Jesus Christ and His resurrection from the dead. We can make some simple observations about why this is such a powerful reason to believe the God of Scripture exists.

1. Jesus Claimed To Be The One True God

The New Testament declares that Jesus Christ is one true God who became a human being. The Gospel of John begins by stating the eternal nature of Jesus:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (John 1:1,14 KJV).

Here is the clear testimony that Jesus, the eternal God, became a human.

On one occasion, we find that the Jewish leaders were offended at Jesus' claim to be God. We read the following in John's gospel:

For this reason the Jewish authorities were trying even harder to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was also calling God his own Father, thus making himself equal with God (John 5:18 NET).

It is obvious Jesus made some amazing claims about Himself.

2. Jesus Claimed The Ability To Forgive Sin

In addition, Jesus claimed to do something that only God could do—He forgave sin. Jesus said the following words to a paralyzed man, who was brought to Him:

“My friend, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5 CEV).

This claim brought a heated response from the religious leaders. They said:

Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, “Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone” (Mark 2:6,7 NIV).

They were absolutely right. Only God has the ability to forgive sins. The prophet Isaiah records God as saying:

I—yes, I alone—am the one who blots out your sins for my own sake and will never think of them again (Isaiah 43:25 NLT).

Jesus, by claiming the ability to forgive sin, put Himself on an equal level with God.

3. To Back Up His Claims He Predicted He Would Rise From The Dead

The fact that Jesus claimed to be God is clear. However, the question is, “Were His claims true?” Jesus gave evidence that He was indeed God by doing the things only God could do. This included healing incurable diseases and raising the dead. As we have already noted in our previous question, His coming to earth fulfilled a number of prophecies that could not have been fulfilled by mere chance.

However, according to Jesus, there is one thing that would separate Him from any other person—He would rise from the dead three days after His death. In fact, He made a number of predictions of His resurrection. We read the following in Matthew:

But Jesus replied, “Only an evil, faithless generation would ask for a miraculous sign; but the only sign I will give them is the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so I, the Son of Man, will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights” (Matthew 12:39-40 NLT).

Jesus made the tremendous claim that He would be raised from the death three days after His death. In another place, He claimed that He had the ability to do this:

The Father loves me because I give my life in order to take it back again. No one takes my life from me. I give my life of my own free will. I have the authority to give my life, and I have the authority to take my life back again. This is what my Father ordered me to do (John 10:17-18 God’s Word).

Jesus said that He could bring Himself back from the dead. This is an absolutely incredible claim which He made!

4. Jesus’ Resurrection Proves He Is God The Son

We have seen that Jesus predicted His resurrection. Not only did He make this prediction, He fulfilled it by coming back from the dead:

Jesus’ greatest feat was conquering the greatest enemy we all face—death. The Bible says that the resurrection demonstrated that Jesus was God the Son. The Apostle Paul wrote the following to the Romans:

From Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God that he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son who was a descendant of David with respect to the flesh, who was appointed the Son-of-God-in-power according to the Holy Spirit by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 1:1-4 NET).

The death of Christ on the cross and His resurrection from the dead is the gospel, or Good News, in which we place our faith. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:1-4 NIV).

The resurrection of Jesus demonstrated the fact that He indeed is God. It showed that He has authority in all matters including life and death.

The Evidence Evaluated

Therefore, we can sum up the matter as follows.

1. The New Testament testifies that Jesus is the eternal God.
2. Jesus demonstrated that He could do the things only God could do—including conquering death.
3. Jesus' resurrection is evidence that He indeed was God the Son.

This line of evidence, the claims of Jesus Christ as well as His resurrection from the dead, gives further evidence that the God of the Bible exists.

Summary To Question 16

How Does The Resurrection Of Jesus Christ Give Evidence For God's Existence?

The Person of Jesus Christ, as well as His resurrection from the dead, provides us another reason to believe in the God of the Bible. Three things are noteworthy.

First, Jesus made it clear that only one God exists—the God of Scripture. Yet, He Himself claimed to be this one true God. He made Himself equal with God.

In order to back up His claims, Jesus predicted that He would come back from the dead three days after His death on the cross.

The fact that He did come back from the dead shows that Jesus is the One whom He claimed to be. Jesus has demonstrated that He has control over life and death. This is something only God can do.

Therefore, the resurrection of Jesus Christ provides further evidence for the existence of the God of Scripture.

Question 17

How Does The Testimony Of Changed Lives Give Evidence For The Existence Of The God Of Scripture?

Even though we have given only the briefest of evidence here, there is, as we have seen, many reasons to believe that the God of the Bible exists. There is a final line of evidence which also must be mentioned in our simple overview. This is the evidence of the changed lives.

The message of the Bible of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ meets the deepest needs of humanity. Only the good news about Jesus Christ can satisfy the longings of the human heart. All other religions fail at this point.

The Bible encourages people to personally experience the God of Scripture. The psalmist wrote:

Taste and see that the Lord is good! How blessed is the one who takes shelter in him (Psalm 34:8 NET).

The Message translates this verse as follows:

Open your mouth and taste, open your eyes and see—how good God is. Blessed are you who run to him (Psalm 34:8 MsgB).

Christian experience does not in-and-of-itself prove the reality of the Christian faith. Yet if the one true God has revealed Himself in the Bible, and Jesus Christ is the One whom He claims to be, then we should expect Christian experience to provide a testimony consistent with that revelation. We find that it does. We can make the following observations.

1. The Example Of The Changed Lives Of Jesus' Disciples

The disciples of Jesus are an example of personal experience validating God's Word. Each of them abandoned Jesus when Judas Iscariot betrayed Him. Simon Peter even denied knowing Him. When Jesus was tried and crucified His disciples were nowhere to be found.

Yet, less than two months later, these same cowards were boldly proclaiming the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ to the world. Each one of these men suffered persecution for the rest of his life and, with the exception of John, went on to die a martyr's death for his belief in Christ.

2. They Did Not Believe Myths

Something changed their lives. Cowards do not become martyrs without a reason. What was it? The disciples testified that it was seeing the risen Christ that made the difference. This was an historical event, not just a fairy tale. The Apostle Peter declared:

And we are witnesses of all that he [Jesus] did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on

a tree, but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead (Acts 10:39-41 ESV).

The risen Christ appeared to a number of people. These individuals could go to their deaths for the cause of Christ because they knew He had been raised from the dead.

3. The Conversion Of Saul Of Tarsus

The changed life of Jesus' disciples serves as a testimony to the truth of the Christian message. Saul of Tarsus is another example. He was a persecutor of Christians, but his life changed when he experienced the risen Christ while on the road to Damascus. He explained it in this manner:

On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me' (Acts 26:12-16 NIV).

As was the case with Jesus' disciples, there is no disputing that Saul's life was radically changed. Like the disciples, he testified that seeing the risen Christ is what caused him to believe. His changed life adds another testimony to the truth of the Christian faith.

4. Millions More Can Testify To Changed Lives

Since the time of Jesus Christ, there have been millions of others who have had their lives changed by experiencing the risen Christ. They have believed without seeing Him. The experience of those who have believed in Him is further confirmation of the truth of the Christian message.

We can, therefore, conclude that Christian experience is based upon the facts of the gospel. The disciples of Jesus, and Saul of Tarsus, are two biblical examples of the confirmation of Christian experience.

Millions of others, since their time, have had their life changed by believing in the risen Jesus. Thus, Christian experience gives a further confirmation of the truth of the Christian message.

Indeed, there is a God who exists, and He has revealed Himself to the world through the Person of Jesus Christ.

Summary To Question 17
How Does The Testimony Of Changed Lives Give Evidence For
The Existence Of The God Of Scripture?

The final testimony of the truthfulness of the Christian faith concerns how it relates with human experience. If the Christian faith is true, then it must work in the real world. It is not enough to claim there is sufficient evidence for Christianity. Indeed, there must be something that backs up these claims. The Bible gives testimony to individuals whose lives were radically changed through meeting the risen Jesus.

For example, in the matter of fifty days, the disciples of Jesus went from cowards, who abandoned Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, to being bold proclaimers of His resurrection. Something changed their lives. They said it was seeing the risen Christ.

In fact, Peter would later emphasize that they were eyewitnesses of the majesty of Christ—they did not believe myths. Seeing Him after His death is what gave them the boldness to proclaim the message of forgiveness of sin through Jesus.

Saul of Tarsus is another example. He went from the greatest enemy of the Christian faith to its greatest spokesmen. Something changed his life. He testified that it was meeting the risen Christ on the road to Damascus.

Since the time of Jesus Christ, millions of people can give testimony to a changed life after believing in Him. Therefore, Christianity is not only true, it works!

Question 18

What Should Our Conclusion Be Regarding All Of The Arguments Which Are Given For God's Existence?

To sum up, the following lines of argumentation give evidence for the existence of the God of the Bible.

1. The Traditional Arguments For God's Existence Fits The Evidence We Observe

The traditional arguments for God's existence, the cosmological, teleological, anthropological, moral, and biological show that belief in God is not contrary to observable evidence. While these arguments point to a first cause, a designer and a lawgiver, more needs to be revealed so that one can know which God exists.

2. The Evidence From The Makeup Of The Bible Shows Its Divine Authorship

The evidence from the nature of the Bible shows that it is the God of Scripture who exists. It is only He who could arrange such a unique book as the Bible. It bears evidence of divine authorship. Indeed, only God could cause such a diverse group of authors, separated by fifteen hundred years in time, to compose a number of books which would read harmoniously.

3. Fulfilled Prophecy Shows That The God Of Scripture Knows The Future

The evidence of fulfilled prophecy gives unparalleled testimony to the existence of the biblical God. Only God knows the future, and, in the Bible, God has told us what will occur.

From predictive prophecy we can be assured that the God of Scripture exists and that He is in control of all events.

4. The Resurrection Of Jesus Christ Proves His Identity As God The Son

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Without it, there is no Christianity. The evidence is that three days after His death Jesus was alive again. No other explanation makes any sense when all the facts are in.

5. The Changed Lives Of Believers Shows It Works In Real Life

The testimony of changed lives shows that Christianity works in real life. The Christian faith is not something that is merely theoretical. The message of Jesus is life changing. In fact, Jesus Christ has been in the business of changing lives for the last two thousand years!

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

Therefore, the evidence for God's existence is both objective and subjective. It is objective in the sense that the testimony of the uniqueness of Scripture, fulfilled prophecy and the resurrection of Christ give genuine evidence for His existence. God is only known by faith. Yet, the faith is intelligent, not blind.

The evidence is also subjective. We find that the testimony of the changed lives of those who have believed in Jesus also shows its truthfulness. It makes it clear that Christianity works in the real world.

There is something else that also must be stated. It is only the Christian who can live consistently with his or her view of God and reality. The non-Christian may deny that God exists, but cannot really live consistently with that belief.

This combined evidence gives sufficient testimony to the existence of the God who has revealed Himself in Scripture. However, these facts cannot compel someone to believe in God if they do not wish to know the truth. People still need to make their own personal choice. They can follow the evidence, or they can choose to ignore it. Whatever the case may be, the evidence is clearly there.

Summary To Question 18

What Should Our Conclusion Be Regarding All Of The Arguments Which Are Given For God's Existence?

While evidence from the traditional arguments provides evidence for the existence of some God, it does not tell us which particular God exists. Therefore, if God exists, why should we believe that it is the God of the Bible rather than some other God?

There are separate lines of proof for the existence of the God of the Bible. This includes evidence from the makeup of the Bible. In fact, the Scripture shows its composition is something only an all-powerful, all-knowing God could put together. Another strong line of evidence for believing in the existence of the God of Scripture is predictive prophecy. The Bible gives numerous examples of God predicting specific future events before they come to pass. Only an all-knowing God could do this.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ gives a resounding testimony for the existence of the God of Scripture. Jesus, who claimed to be God Himself, validated His claim by coming back from the dead. God exists and Jesus is God.

Finally, there is the personal evidence—the changed lives of the followers of Jesus. From Jesus' original disciples to millions of others through the last two thousand years, lives have been changed through trusting the risen Christ.

Each of these lines of evidence provides a strong reason for the belief that the God who exists is indeed the God of the Bible.

Question 19

Haven't The Discoveries Made By Modern Science Disproved The Existence Of The God Of The Bible?

Many people assume that the discoveries of modern science have proved that God of the Bible does not exist. They think that ever since Galileo showed that the earth revolved around the sun, science has continually been demonstrating that the Bible is in error.

Indeed, scientists no longer accept the idea that the universe was created in only six days a few thousand years ago. The scientific community also rejects the idea that a great flood covered the earth in Noah's day. Furthermore, modern humanity no longer has a mythical view of the world with heaven above and hell below.

It is argued that since the time of Charles Darwin, and his theory of evolution, we now understand that all life, including human life, evolved. In other words, it was not created. Science, not the Bible, has given us the explanation as to how all life came to be in its present form. Consequently, the Bible and its God are to be rejected.

The Accusation: Belief In God Was Necessary In The Past But Not Today

It is argued that in the ancient world, the idea of God was necessary because superstition abounded. However, with our great accumulation of scientific knowledge, we now understand that achievements once attributed to God are merely the products of natural forces.

Since we now have a scientific understanding of how the universe functions, we do not need to resort to believing in God to explain unexplainable events. Science and reason have prevailed—superstition has not. Therefore, there is no need for any thinking person to believe in the God of the Bible.

Response

There are a number of observations that need to be made about this issue of science and the Bible. They are as follows.

1. There Are Misconceptions About The Bible And Science

The idea that science has shown the Bible to be wrong, and the God of Scripture non-existent, is incorrect. The problem lies with misconceptions about what the Bible really says, and what science has proven. Science has not removed the existence of the biblical God. There are indeed scientific theories that attempt to explain all reality apart from God.

Yet we must remember that these are merely theories—not incontrovertible scientific fact. To the contrary, the most recent scientific evidence only bolsters the case for the existence for a Creator.

Furthermore, a correct understanding of what the Bible actually says will remove some of these misconceptions about what Scripture teaches (We have dealt with many of these issues in our five book series on *The Bible and Science: Are They In Conflict?*).

2. There Is No Ultimate Conflict Between The Bible And Science

There is no ultimate conflict between the God revealed in Scripture, and the findings of modern science. God's existence is not refuted by any discovery that science has ever made. To the contrary, the more we know about how our universe works, the more evidence we have of a Creator.

Indeed, it could not be otherwise. If the same God who created the universe also divinely inspired the Bible, He would not place one message in nature while placing a different message in Scripture. The message of Scripture and the message of nature would be in complete harmony. This is what we would expect from the God of truth.

3. The Bible Was Not Written To Give Technical Scientific Explanations

It is important to understand that the Bible was not written to give a technical scientific explanation of nature and creation. The purpose of the creation account is to explain, in simple terms, how the earth and the human race were created, and why creation is no longer perfect.

Since the Bible does not claim to give a detailed scientific account of the origin of the universe, it is wrong to criticize it for something it is not attempting to do. Instead of a technical scientific account, God put the story of creation in a timeless form that every generation could understand.

The Bible tells us God Himself created the universe as well as the first human beings—Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were placed in a perfect environment in the perfect world which God had created. They were told they could eat of the fruit of every tree—except one. When they disobeyed God, and ate from that tree, the perfect environment which God had created became corrupted. Everything, including the human race, has fallen from the position of original perfection.

This is why we find humanity in the state we are in today. The story of the creation and the fall is brief and to the point. It was written to explain why the world is no longer perfect and why the human race needs a Savior. This is the message the Bible is attempting to communicate in the creation story.

Therefore, we find the Genesis account of creation, as well as the rest of the Scripture, is written in non-technical scientific language from the viewpoint of an observer here upon the earth. Consequently, we will find common expressions such as “the sun rising,” and “the sun going down.” These statements, rather than attempting to teach technical scientific truths about the nature of our solar system, are relating events as to how they look to an observer here upon the earth. Again, it is important that the purpose of the biblical writers be understood.

Furthermore, if the Book of Genesis had been written in technical scientific terminology to explain the intricate details of creation, nobody would have been able to understand it until now. And, judging by how scientific knowledge is increasing, the technical scientific explanation would be out of date about twenty years from now! Therefore, it is wrong to try to make the Bible be something that it did not intend to be.

4. There Is Nothing Scientifically Absurd In Scripture

While the Bible was not specifically written in scientific language, or to teach scientific truth, one of the fascinating things we discover when we study the Bible is that there is nothing in Scripture that is scientifically absurd. This is not true of other sacred books written at the same time as the Bible. Only the Bible, and the God who divinely inspired it, have an accurate scientific view of nature and the universe. Indeed, there is an unfathomable difference between the Scripture, and all the other so-called sacred books. Some explanation needs to be given for this. If the Bible was a mere product of human thought or human genius, then why is it so different from these other books?

5. The Bible Has Anticipated Modern Science

There is one final thing we should note. While the Bible is not attempting to teach technical scientific truths, an examination of the Bible and science will yield some interesting results. When the Scripture is studied carefully we find that some of the discoveries of modern science are actually anticipated in Scripture. This includes laws of sanitation and regulations regarding the non-eating of certain foods. Before these truths were discovered by modern science, the Bible commanded its followers to put them into practice.

Therefore, no one, in this age of unparalleled scientific advancement, needs to be ashamed for placing his or her faith in the God of the Bible. To the contrary, the biblical view of the world of nature is consistent with the evidence.

Summary To Question 19

Haven't The Discoveries Made By Modern Science Disproved The Existence Of The God Of The Bible?

Although much of modern humanity rejects the God of the Bible, because of so-called scientific evidence that has been discovered in the past one hundred and fifty years, the scientific case against God's existence is getting weaker by the day. Contrary to popular opinion, modern science has not ruled out the existence of the God of Scripture. To the contrary, the evidence makes it clearer that we are here upon the earth as a result of God's special creation—rather than by some random chance of evolution.

While the Bible is scientifically accurate in what it teaches, it should be remembered that the purpose of Scripture is not to give technical scientific explanations. In fact, it is to explain in non-scientific terms how the earth

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

and the human race were created, and why we are in the imperfect state which we presently find ourselves.

For one thing, we learn from the Bible that God did not initially create the world in this manner that we now find it. The world is in this state because of the entrance of sin brought about by the disobedience of the first two humans, Adam and Eve. This is the message that the Bible presents. Consequently, the scientific references are always given in a wider context. Indeed, they are presented to explain why we find ourselves today in a sinful world that is full of imperfections.

Thus, the Scripture, while not emphasizing areas of science and nature, is always accurate in its non-scientific explanations of things. In fact, the God of the Bible never has us believe anything scientifically absurd. The references to science and nature, given by the God of Scripture or through His prophets, when properly understood, do not conflict with what we know about the world around us.

Yet it must be recognized that the scientific and nature references are given from the viewpoint of an observer here upon the earth. They are related in the same way which we speak about these things in our everyday speech. Therefore, the language is non-technical and non-scientific, but it certainly is not unscientific.

The Bible itself not only contains nothing scientifically absurd, it actually anticipates some of the discoveries of modern science. Certain laws and prohibitions which the Lord gave to ancient Israel are just as valid today as when first given.

Therefore, the truths about God and His creation that are revealed in Scripture can still stand up to the most rigorous scientific questioning. Consequently, the believer has nothing to be ashamed of.

Question 20

Can An Intelligent Person In The 21st Century Really Believe In The God Of The Bible?

Can an intelligent person in our modern age actually believe in the God who is revealed in Scripture? Can we really put our faith in this unseen God and hold our intellectual integrity? The answer is a resounding, “Yes.” The Bible encourages people to put their faith in the God of Scripture. In fact, the Bible says that without faith it is impossible to please Him. The writer to the Hebrews said:

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him (Hebrews 11:6 ESV).

Unfortunately, many people equate faith with some sort of blind leap in the dark, or wishful thinking. But the faith that the Bible requires is intelligent faith. Indeed, it is sensible Christianity which is in view here. It is neither blind faith nor irrational belief.

Biblical faith consists of trusting in an actual personal being, God, who is worthy of our faith. No person is asked to sacrifice their intellect when they put their faith in the God of the Bible. Yes, the Christian exercises faith, but this faith is not blind. There are a number of points that need to be made.

1. The Christian Faith Is Based Upon Fact

The Christian faith is factual. It matches up with the known evidence. Jesus emphasized that we are to do the following:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37 CEV).

We are to use our minds in loving God. Nowhere are we encouraged to stop thinking or accept things on “blind faith.”

On the Day of Pentecost, some fifty days after Jesus’ death and resurrection, Simon Peter stood up and declared the following to a crowd that had gathered:

Men of Israel, listen to what I say: Jesus from Nazareth was a man whom God brought to your attention. You know that through this man God worked miracles, did amazing things, and gave signs. By using men who don’t acknowledge Moses’ Teachings, you crucified Jesus, who was given over {to death} by a plan that God had determined in advance. But God raised him from death to life and destroyed the pains of death, because death had no power to hold him (Acts 2;22-24 God’s Word).

Notice that Peter listed a number of facts about Jesus. He stated that Jesus of Nazareth was a miracle worker, He was crucified, and that God raised Him from the dead. In doing so, he appealed to the knowledge of those to whom he spoke.

Indeed, *they* knew certain things about Jesus were true. Peter declared that they knew Jesus had performed miracles. In other words, the fact of Jesus' miracles was beyond dispute. They all knew this. Now he is telling them of the greatest miracle of all of which they were witnesses. Jesus, the Man from Nazareth, has risen from the dead!

Here, as in many places in Scripture, we find the appeal to actual events to verify the truth of the message. We are dealing with fact, not fiction.

2. The Claims Should Be Intelligently Investigated

Since the Christian faith claims to be based upon actual fact, any claims that it makes should be carefully investigated. Again, we find the New Testament writers encouraging the people to look into the facts about Jesus.

The Apostle Paul told people to inspect the claims of Christianity to see if they were true. He wrote to the Thessalonians:

But examine all things; hold fast to what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21 NET).

The Message translates this verse as follows:

On the other hand, don't be gullible. Check out everything, and keep only what's good (1 Thessalonians. 5:21 MsgB).

The biblical writers encouraged people to investigate the Christian faith because they knew the events they wrote about actually occurred.

3. The Spirits Should Be Tested

The Apostle John would later write to the believers and tell them to test the different spirits which were out in the world. He said:

Dear friends, don't believe all people who say that they have the Spirit. Instead, test them. See whether the spirit they have is from God, because there are many false prophets in the world (1 John 4:1 God's Word).

They were to "test" all of the spirits. They were not to believe whatever they were taught by mere blind faith.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians with this same charge. He told the people to examine or test themselves to see if they were living true to the faith. He put it this way:

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

Test yourselves and find out if you really are true to your faith. If you pass the test, you will discover that Christ is living in you. But if Christ isn't living in you, you have failed (2 Corinthians 13:5 CEV).

Testing involved thinking and reflecting upon the truth of God. They were to use their minds to determine if they were faithful to the message of Christ.

4. They Knew The Difference Between Myth And Reality

In another example, Simon Peter showed that the New Testament writers were aware of the difference between mythology and fact. He testified that the message they were proclaiming about the Lord Jesus was based upon facts which they were personally acquainted with. He put it this way:

For we did not follow cleverly contrived myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; instead, we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, a voice came to Him from the Majestic Glory: This is My beloved Son. I take delight in Him (2 Peter 1:16-17 HCSB).

Peter had the utmost confidence in the message he was proclaiming because he had seen the risen Christ with his own eyes. He was also there on the Mount of Transfiguration when God the Father spoke approvingly of Jesus.

Since the New Testament writers were eyewitnesses to the events they recorded, they welcomed an honest investigation of the facts. They knew what they wrote and taught about Jesus was true. Therefore, they challenged others to investigate the evidence. Blind faith never was encouraged.

5. Intelligence Is Equated With Knowing The Biblical God

When Jesus had a conversation with one of the teachers of the religious law, He equated intelligence with knowing God. Mark wrote:

Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." But after that no one dared question Him (Mark 12:34 NKJV).

An intelligent or wise response from this teacher of the law caused Jesus to say that the man was close to the kingdom of God. This is another indication that the Bible encourages people to use their minds when examining the evidence.

6. Only A Foolish Person Rejects The God Of The Bible

Since the evidence is everywhere for all to see, it is only the fool that rejects the existence of the God of Scripture. The psalmist wrote.

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

Only fools say in their hearts, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, and their actions are evil; no one does good!” (Psalm 14:1 NLT).

Consequently, we do not find any anti-intellectual attitudes in Scripture. On the contrary, the writers welcomed an open and honest investigation of all the facts. The same holds true today. Intelligent men and women can still consider the claims of the God of the Bible, and can believe these claims without committing intellectual suicide. The Christian faith is indeed an intelligent faith.

Summary To Question 20 **Can An Intelligent Person In The 21st Century** **Really Believe In The God Of The Bible?**

The God of the Bible does not expect people to act in faith toward Him unless that faith is an intelligent or reasonable faith. It must be built upon the solid foundation of what He has done in history, and what He has recorded in His Word. Indeed, God urges us to think as well as to investigate His claims. In fact, Scripture welcomes an honest investigation of the facts.

In addition, in the Bible, we find intelligence equated with knowing the biblical God. There are a number of examples of this.

On the Day of Pentecost, some fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Simon Peter stood up in the very same city of Jerusalem and told the crowd that Jesus had risen from the dead. Part of his argument was appealing to the knowledge of his listeners. They knew that Jesus was a miracle worker.

Most likely, there were some in that crowd who had been healed by Jesus. Peter then went on to argue that Jesus performed the greatest miracle of all—He had risen from the dead. Furthermore, Peter and the others testified that they had seen the risen Christ. They were witnesses! Consequently, these people could make an intelligent step of faith by believing in Jesus.

The Apostle Paul told the church at Thessalonica to use their minds and to test all things. They were only to accept the things which passed the test. In other words, they were not to accept anything and everything which they heard. Again, there is the appeal to think—to consider the facts.

The Apostle John told the Christians something similar. They were to test all the spirits. They were not to believe everything which was told to them. In evaluating the evidence, they were to use their minds.

Indeed, Jesus Himself said we are to love the Lord our God with our entire being. This includes our mind. This means we are to think. We are to look at the evidence, to weigh it and evaluate it. In one instance, He said a certain religious leader was close to the kingdom of God because he had answered Jesus’ question wisely or intelligently.

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

This illustrates the fact that biblical faith does not consist of believing something which is contrary to the evidence. In fact, we find that foolishness is attributed to those who reject the idea of the existence of the God of the Bible.

Scripture can make this statement because the evidence is everywhere. Indeed, it is overwhelming. The problem is not with the evidence. The problem is that many people will not take the time to look at the evidence. They do not want to know the truth.

Therefore, an intelligent person can, and should, believe in the God of the Bible. Their honest questions will receive honest answers. There does not have to be any blind faith when one trusts the God of Scripture. He is the God of truth, and His claims always prove to be true.

Question 21

Is The God Of The Bible A Real Living Being Or Merely A Concept Or Idea?

If the God of the Bible does exist, then it is important to know what type of God He is. Does the Bible teach that God is real living being who truly exists, or does it indicate that God is a mere concept or idea that only exists in the minds of people? In other words, what type of God does the Bible portray?

1. God Is An Actual Being Who Exists

As we look at the Scripture, we find consistent teaching about the God who is revealed—the God of the Bible does actually exist. He is not merely something humans have dreamed up to meet our deepest needs.

This can be seen in two ways. First, we find that God has interacted with humans in history. Second, there are passages in Scripture which assert the fact that He is a living being.

2. God Has Been Involved In Many Events In History

We know that the God of the Bible is not merely something that exists in the minds of the biblical writers because of the various works or actions attributed to Him. The God of the Bible is a God of action. Indeed, from the first page of the Bible until the last, we find God working His plan in our world.

For example, the Bible begins by telling us that God created the heavens and the earth in the beginning (Genesis 1:1). God then created humans according to His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-28). When humanity sinned (Genesis 3) God pronounced judgment upon humanity and the earth. The remainder of the Old Testament records God dealing with His people Israel. He made them a special people who would represent Him to the world. These are the acts of a personal living being. They are not merely ideas in the minds of the biblical writers.

In the New Testament, we find the same truths being taught. God became a human being in the Person of Jesus Christ. The Bible says that Jesus came to show us what God is like:

No one has ever seen God. The only one, himself God, who is in closest fellowship with the Father, has made God known (John 1:18 NET).

If we want to know something of the character of God, we need to examine the Person and ministry of Jesus Christ. From the life and ministry of Jesus, we discover that the God of the Bible is a God who truly exists as a personal living being. He is not merely some idea or concept that was in the mind of the biblical writers.

3. The Bible Says That God Is A Personal Being

Not only has God acted in history, the Bible specifically states that God has a form or essence. He truly does exist as a personal being!

In the Old Testament, God told Moses to tell the children of Israel that He, God, had sent him to the people of Israel. Moses then asked what he should tell the people if they asked who this God is.

The Bible records God's answers as follows:

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Exodus 3:14 NIV).

The response of God to Moses testifies to the fact that God is a personal being. He is One who actually exists.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul wrote that Jesus existed in the "form" of God. He put it this way:

Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage (Philippians 2:5,6 HCSB).

The idea behind the word translated "form" is that Jesus was the same essence as God. Since Jesus had a genuine identity, it logical follows that God Himself has a genuine identity. He is a being which in fact exists.

When Paul wrote to the Galatians, he compared the God of the Bible to gods who are not God "by nature." He wrote:

But in the past, when you didn't know God, you were enslaved to things that by nature are not gods (Galatians 4:8 HCSB).

The translation God's Word puts it this way:

When you didn't know God, you were slaves to things which are really not gods at all (Galatians 4:8 God's Word).

Paul compares the God of the Bible to gods whom the Galatians had formerly served. He said that these gods did not possess any genuine essence. In other words, they were non-existent.

This is in contrast to the God of the Bible who does exist as a being which has genuine substance of essence. Again, the fact of God's authentic existence is made clear in Scripture.

In addition, Paul wrote to the Colossians:

For in Him the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily (Colossians 2:9 HCSB).

Unless God is a real being, this statement would make no sense. In Jesus Christ, the entire fullness of God existed. This assumes God has genuine existence.

Paul wrote that nature testifies to the existence of God. He said the following to the Romans:

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse (Romans 1:19,20 NRSV).

According to this statement of Paul, God's existence is known to everyone. Indeed, His divine nature can be seen from the things which He has created. This is further evidence that God is a being who truly exists.

Consequently, the Scripture is clear as to the nature or character of the God of the Bible. He is indeed a living being who exists. He is not merely some idea or concept that was in the mind of the ancient Hebrews.

Summary To Question 21
Is The God Of The Bible A Real Living
Being Or Merely A Concept Or Idea?

If God does exist, it is important to know as much as we can about Him. Is He a personal living being or is He merely an idea or concept? Are we to understand Him as One who has genuine existence or is He One who simply exists in the minds of people?

The Scripture is clear on this matter. The God of the Bible is an actual being who exists and who acts in history. From the first page of the Scripture until the last, we find God working His purpose and plan for humanity. In all of this there is the assumption that God is a real being who exists apart from the minds of the biblical characters. He is truly there and He has interacted with humanity from the beginning.

In fact, when the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Galatia, he contrasted the non-existent gods whom the Galatians formerly served with the God of Scripture. These gods do not exist, but the God of the Bible does. This is the message of God's Word! Thus, when we speak of the God of Scripture, we are speaking of a being who not only exists, He has personally interacted with the human race from the time He created the first human being. Furthermore, the good news is that He still interacts with people today.

Question 22

Who Created The God Of Scripture? Where Did He Come From?

People continue to ask age-old questions about the origin of God. If God made everything, then who made God? Indeed, who created God? That is, assuming that He does exist. Where did He come from? How did He get to be God? Did He have a beginning? Did He have parents?

The Bible has the following to say about this important question.

1. The Bible Says Nobody Created God

The Biblical answer is that nobody created God. He is by nature the eternal God. He was not created at all. He has always existed and always will exist. In the Book of Revelation, John describes Him this way:

From John to the seven churches in Asia. I pray that you will be blessed with kindness and peace from God, who is and was and is coming (Revelation 1:4 CEV).

God is the One who is, who was, and is coming. He is the eternal God, the everlasting God. Consequently, He did not work Himself up into a position to be God neither did He inherit the position from His parents—for He had no parents. God had no mother, no father. He had no beginning and will have no end. The fact that God is eternal is stressed in the Bible.

The psalmist wrote:

Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God (Psalm 90:2 NIV).

He has been God from the beginning.

Moses records the Lord saying that He is the eternal God, the One who has lived forever:

I raise My hand to heaven and declare: As surely as I live forever (Deuteronomy 32:40 HCSB).

God has existed forever and will exist forever. This is the testimony of Scripture.

2. God Is Uncaused: He Has Always Existed

Therefore, God is uncaused. This means that nothing brought Him into existence. He has always existed. This, of course, is a problem because we think that every effect has a cause. Therefore, we assume God must also have a cause.

Yet this is not the case. As a starting point, one must assume a first cause, or else no cause whatsoever. If it is denied that the God of the Bible has always existed, then one must assume that something material has existed from all eternity. This material would have come about without a cause. Therefore, our choice is between an intelligent being who is self-existent, and lifeless matter that just popped into existence.

Thus, if a person makes the statement, “God had to have been made by somebody” then this question must arise: “Who made this somebody who made God? Then we need to know who it is that made *that* somebody who made the particular somebody that made God. It becomes obvious that this question will have to be continually repeated. There is no logical stopping point.

However, if the universe had a beginning, as the evidence of science clearly tell us that it did, then something had to be there at the beginning. The Bible says that it was God.

3. This Is Not Assuming What You Should Be Proving

Some might argue that these statements “beg the question.” This means someone is already assuming as true what they should be proving. They conveniently start with God, but do not explain the how, or why, of His existence.

But ultimately, we must admit that there had to have been *something* in the beginning—whether it is God or something else. The starting point, according to the Bible is God. God was in the beginning, and everything stems from Him. This is not inconsistent with what He has revealed about Himself in Scripture—nor is it inconsistent with our understanding about the origin of the universe.

Yet, of course, it is something that our limited minds cannot comprehend. This is where faith comes in. In faith, we believe what God says about Himself and His eternal existence—we do not have to have everything about God figured out

4. Conclusion: Something Had To Exist In The Beginning

Therefore, we conclude that something, or someone, had to exist in the beginning. The Bible tells us that someone did exist, and has always existed. This Person is the God of the Bible.

Summary To Question 22

Who Created The God Of Scripture, Where Did He Come From?

Once children hear about the idea of God their first question usually is “who made God?” This is natural. We assume that if God exists then somebody or something had to make Him. This is how our minds think. However, the Bible says that God has been God from all of eternity. Nothing caused Him to exist. He had no beginning, and He will have no

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

end. He had no mother, no father, and no creator. He has always existed and always will exist.

Although we are used to thinking that everything must have a beginning, there had to be something that has existed eternally. The Bible states that it is an infinite, personal God.

The only other choice is to argue that some sort of material has existed eternally. But then the question becomes where did this lifeless matter come from? How did it get here?

Consequently, one must choose between an infinite personal God who has always existed, or lifeless, impersonal matter. The God of Scripture tells us that He has always existed as well as providing irrefutable evidence of His existence.

Question 23

If The God Of The Bible Exists, Then Why Is He Silent?

During the mid-1960's, there was much interest in a philosophical movement that believed that God was dead. Is God dead? The question certainly is a valid one.

The answer is a resounding, "No." God is alive and working His will in the universe. If this is true, then why don't we hear from Him? Why is God silent? Why doesn't He reveal Himself so everyone can see Him? Why does He remain invisible to all of us? Four points need to be made in answer to this question.

1. God Has Spoken In The Past

To begin with, God has spoken. The Bible records the fact that from the beginning of creation God has revealed Himself to humanity. The Bible says God is not silent. He has spoken. He has revealed Himself in history. Each page of the Old and New Testament gives evidence of this God revealing Himself. The climax to God's revelation was when God the Son became a human being in the person of Jesus Christ. The Bible says:

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds (Hebrews 1:1,2 NRSV).

Until the time that God the Son came to the earth, He had been continually speaking to humanity through the prophets. Jesus Christ was God's final word to the human race.

2. God Is Not Completely Silent: He Speaks Through His Word

Since the time of Christ, and the writing of the New Testament documents, there has been no additional revelation from God. The writing of divinely inspired Scripture ended with the writings of Christ's apostles, and those in their inner circle. God has been silent in that sense from the time of Jesus Christ until the present. Yet, He left behind a clear witness of Himself in Scripture.

3. God Will Speak Publicly Again: Jesus Christ Will Return

God is not presently speaking to humanity in an outward manner. The next time God will publicly intervene in the affairs of humanity is when He comes again in the Person of Jesus Christ. At that time every eye shall see Him. We read about this in the Book of Revelation:

Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen (Revelation 1:7 NRSV).

This is a wonderful truth! Jesus Christ will come again to this world and set up His eternal kingdom. It will involve everyone and everything on our planet.

4. The Present Silence Of God Reveals His Patience

The Bible says that the present silence of God is a continual testimony to His patience with humanity. God is still waiting for people to repent of their sinful ways and come to Him in faith. Peter wrote:

The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9 NRSV).

The Message reads as follows in this verse:

God isn't late with his promise as some measure lateness. He is restraining himself on account of you, holding back the End because he doesn't want anyone lost. He's giving everyone space and time to change (2 Peter 3:9 MsgB).

Presently, God is calling out to people to believe in Jesus Christ. When that number is finally complete, then Jesus Christ will come again.

Consequently, the so-called silence of God, as has been the case since the time of Christ, will end someday.

5. We Don't Believe Only What We Can See

There is one final point to be made. We humans do not only believe in the things which we can see. For example, we cannot see gravity, but we believe that it exists. Therefore, we do not jump out of a tenth-story window because we know what will happen.

Likewise, we have never seen electricity but nevertheless we believe that it exists. Consequently, we do not put our fingers into a light socket. Although we do not see things such as gravity and electricity, we do see the effect they have on our lives. Therefore, we believe in their existence though they are invisible to our human eyes.

In a similar sense, we do not see God because He is invisible. Yet He has provided sufficient reasons to believe in Him. We have the objective evidence that He has given us—miracles, fulfilled prophecy, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. These truths are sufficient for us to place our faith in Him.

When we do this, He inwardly confirms our decision by the Holy Spirit who lives inside each believer. The Spirit testifies that we are God's children. Paul wrote to the Romans about this important truth:

The Spirit Himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children (Romans 8:16 HCSB).

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

The Holy Spirit confirms that we are indeed the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ.

This is why Paul wrote the following to Timothy:

For this reason I suffer as I do. However, I'm not ashamed. I know whom I trust. I'm convinced that he is able to protect what he had entrusted to me until that day (2 Timothy 1:12 God's Word).

Paul knew the One in whom he had trusted. He was convinced of God's existence as well as His loving concern for those who trust Him.

Consequently, although the believer does not visibly see Christ, nevertheless we love Him. Peter wrote the following:

Although you have never seen Christ, you love him. You don't see him now, but you believe in him. You are extremely happy with joy and praise that can hardly be expressed in words as you obtain the salvation that is the goal of your faith (1 Peter 1:8 God's Word).

We love Jesus Christ although we cannot see Him.

Therefore, the fact that God is invisible, and that He is not presently revealing Himself to the world in a public manner, does not mean He is not there, or that He does not care about humanity.

He certainly is there, and He does care. This is the message of Scripture, and this is also the personal experience of millions of Christians.

Summary To Question 23 If God Of The Bible Exists, Then Why Is He Silent?

Many people wonder why God is not presently speaking to humanity if He does indeed exist. Why don't we hear from Him? Some people assume this means that God does not really exist or that He is dead.

However, the God of the Bible is not dead. He not only exists—He has spoken to humanity from the very beginning. The Bible is the record of God revealing Himself to the human race.

Yet we now find that the Scriptures are complete, and God is no longer speaking in this manner. He has said everything that He needs to say.

But this does not mean that God is not working. Indeed, God is still actively working His plan for the universe. The present silence of God, as far as divine revelation is concerned, is a sign of God's patience, mercy and grace. We are now in an interim period.

God, through Jesus Christ, has promised to come to the earth again, and set up His everlasting kingdom. In the interim, He is calling out for people to believe in Him. There will come a time when His present silence will be

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

broken and that He will return to this earth. In the meantime, God is very much alive, and He is working out His will in the entire universe.

We must also realize that we humans do not merely believe in the things which we can see. In the same manner, there are sufficient reasons to believe in God through the Person of Jesus Christ—although we have never seen Him. Though we do not see Him, we know that He exists and that He is concerned for our well-being.

Those of us who believe in Jesus Christ can personally testify to this. God is indeed still alive and working in our individual lives. Time and time again the Lord proves this to us.

Question 24

Would Everyone Believe In The God Of Scripture If He Only Showed Himself To The World?

No they would not. While people would not be able to deny God's existence, His visible presence would not cause everyone to trust Him. It is one thing to believe that God exists, but it is quite another thing to make a trusting commitment to Him. The following observations need to be made.

1. Unbelief Is Never Satisfied: The Example Of Jesus And John The Baptist

From Scripture, we learn that unbelief is never satisfied. Jesus made this clear when He compared the response of the religious leaders to Him and to John the Baptist. He said:

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon!' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him, a glutton and a drunk, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is vindicated by her deeds (Matthew 11:18,19 NET).

Note that John lived the life of self-denial. The people rejected his message and said he had a demon.

On the other hand, Jesus ate and drank with people, and He was called a glutton, a drunk, and a friend of sinners. Nothing could satisfy the unbelief of the people.

2. The Example Of Lazarus: Some Refused To Believe No Matter The Evidence

The case of Lazarus further illustrates this point. Lazarus had been dead for four days when Jesus brought him back to life. This caused a great number of people to believe in Jesus.

We are told that the religious leaders reacted in the following manner:

Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus (John 12:9-11 NKJV).

They not only wanted to kill Jesus—they also wanted to kill Lazarus! They wanted to destroy the evidence of Jesus' power.

They certainly were not looking for the truth.

3. People Still Refuse To Believe Because Of The Wicked Human Heart

Although people today might say that they would become believers if God personally appeared to them, this is not necessarily the case. The problem is not so much a matter of evidence as it is a matter of the human heart. The prophet Jeremiah said:

The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse—who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9 NRSV).

Even if God were to appear publicly it would not cause an outpouring of faith toward Him. The human heart is still wicked. Many would choose not to believe in Him even though they could not deny His existence.

4. Jesus Said Certain People Are Not Willing To Believe

Jesus said the people rejected Him because they were not willing to believe. When Christ wept over the city of Jerusalem, He made the following statements:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God's messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn't let me (Matthew 23:37 NLT).

It is not that they could not believe in Him, they simply *chose* not to. The same holds true for many people today. They are not unable to believe—rather they are unwilling to believe.

To sum up: even if God did indeed reveal Himself to everyone, so that nobody had an excuse, it would still not cause each individual to become a Christian. Multitudes would still choose to reject Christ. Like the unbelieving people in Jesus' day, they would find some reason not to trust Him.

Summary To Question 24 Would Everyone Believe In The God Of Scripture If He Only Showed Himself To The World?

While there are people who say they would believe in God if He only appeared in some public manner, this is not really the case. Though they could not deny his existence, they would still not become His followers. Why? The human heart will always find ways to reject God.

Jesus illustrated this in the way He and John the Baptist were received by the religious leaders of His day. John lived a life of self-denial. He supposedly had a demon. On the other hand, Jesus lived the opposite way. He was supposedly a glutton and a drunk. To sum up, unbelief is never satisfied—no matter what evidence is presented.

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

We also find an example of refusing to believe the evidence in the case of the raising of the dead man Lazarus. The religious leaders wanted to kill Lazarus who had been brought back to life. They wanted to destroy the evidence.

God, through the prophet Jeremiah pointed out the real problem. The human heart does not want to believe. It is sinful, wicked. Indeed, it will always find an excuse.

Jesus illustrated this in His prayer over the city of Jerusalem. The people rejected Him willingly and knowingly. It was not that they *could* not believe—they *would* not believe. They freely chose to reject him.

We conclude that people reject the message of God because they choose to do this. It is not because of any lack of evidence. Basically, this is due to the wickedness of the human heart. Consequently, even if the Lord showed Himself publicly to the entire world it would not cause belief on the part of everyone. People will always find reasons not to believe.

Question 25

Why Should We Expect God Of The Bible To Reveal Himself To Humanity?

If God has a purpose for His creation, then how can it be known? Experience has shown that the problem cannot be solved by human reason alone. History has demonstrated that human beings, left to their own devices, come up with a variety of conclusions with respect to God's existence and purpose. Those who do come up with answers find differing conclusions. Who then should we believe?

A number of important observations need to be made.

1. **There Is No Consensus Of Belief About God**

There is certainly no consensus about the question of God's existence. The Bible makes it clear that the world, by its own wisdom, cannot know the God of the Bible—who is the one true God. Paul wrote the following to the church at Corinth:

For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe (1 Corinthians 1:19-21 ESV).

The wisdom, that belongs to this world system, does not lead people to believe in the biblical God.

Indeed, Paul wrote to the Ephesians about the fact that unbelieving humanity has a mind that is closed to the truth of God. He said:

With the Lord's authority let me say this: Live no longer as the ungodly do, for they are hopelessly confused. Their closed minds are full of darkness; they are far away from the life of God because they have shut their minds and hardened their hearts against him (Ephesians 4:17,18 NLT).

Because there is no consensus of belief about God's existence from humanity, we should expect God to reveal Himself, if He does indeed exist.

2. **The Idea Of God Revealing Himself Is Not Unreasonable**

The idea, therefore, that God should reveal Himself to humankind, is not an unreasonable position. Because God does exist, it is not irrational to assume that He would make Himself known. Thus, when one examines the situation, it makes sense that God would reveal Himself to the human race.

3. If God Is The Creator, Then It Is Possible That He Would Reveal Himself

This brings us to our next point. It is certainly possible that an all-powerful God could reveal Himself. If God exists as the Creator of the universe, then we should not consider it impossible that the Creator would attempt to communicate with His creation. This being the case, there is nothing that rules out the possibility of God revealing Himself.

4. It Is Probable That God Would Reveal Himself

Furthermore, it is probable that God would reveal Himself. He has made humans as personal beings with the ability to communicate with others. Since God has made humanity this way, why shouldn't He communicate with His creation?

5. A Revelation From God Should Be Expected

We should expect, therefore, that a divine revelation be given to the human race by the Creator God. Since there is nothing stopping God from revealing Himself, and since He has made humankind with the ability to give and receive communication, a divine revelation is consistent with what we know about God.

6. A Revelation From God Is Necessary

From humankind's position, it is absolutely necessary that God reveal Himself. We can know many things about God from nature. The fact that He is the Creator, and the fact that His creation is wonderfully made is obvious to all.

Yet nature does not tell us what God wants us to do. We need a divine revelation to know and understand who God is, and what He wants from us. Thus, a supernatural revelation from God to us is not only possible, from humanity's point of view, it is absolutely essential.

The Character Of A Loving God Must Be Considered

There is also the character of God to be considered. Because God is an intelligent Being, and He has made us intelligent creatures, we should expect that He would reveal Himself to His creation. Also, because He is a good God, humanity should look to Him for some help with respect to our identity, purpose, and destiny. Therefore, the character of God leads one to expect some type of revelation from Him.

Indeed, it is hard to conceive of a human father concealing himself from his children and never communicating with them. In the same manner, it is impossible to conceive of a good God concealing Himself to those whom He created in His own image.

All of these things should cause us to expect that the living God would make Himself known to His creation. The good news is that He has revealed Himself and we can read about this in His Book, the Bible.

Summary To Question 25
Why Should We Expect The God Of The Bible To Reveal Himself To Humanity?

On our own, the human race has not come to any consensus about God's existence or His character. Not everyone believes that He does exist and those who do believe have different conceptions of God. Since God is invisible, we cannot see Him or perceive Him with our senses.

Therefore, He must reveal Himself to us if we are to know anything about Him. Consequently, if God truly exists, then a supernatural communication from Him to humankind is not something unreasonable.

Furthermore, if an all-powerful God exists, it is certainly possible that He could reveal Himself if He so chose to do so. In fact, nothing can stop Him from doing so.

Because God has made humans as personal beings who communicate with one another, it is probable that He would communicate with His creation.

From humankind's point of view, it is absolutely necessary for God to reveal Himself to us. Indeed, we are hopelessly lost without His communication.

Finally, the character of God leads us to believe that He would reveal Himself. An intelligent loving God would not leave His creation in darkness. A loving Father would tell His children all things which are necessary.

Therefore, we have the expectation of some sort of communication from God to us. The human race should be looking for this communication.

The good news is that the Bible says that God has indeed communicated to us. Furthermore, we have a record of that communication in His written Word. Therefore, the expectation of the human race has been met.

Question 26

How Has The God Of Scripture Revealed Himself To Humanity?

The Bible says that the living God has revealed Himself to humanity in four different ways. They include nature, our conscience, Jesus Christ, and the Bible. We will briefly explain each of them as follows.

1. Nature Has Revealed God

The universe with its vastness and complexity gives testimony to God and His glory. The Bible says the following:

When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—the moon and the stars you have set in place—what are mortals that you should think of us, mere humans that you should care for us? (Psalm 8:3,4 NLT).

The earth testifies of the glory of God.

In the writings of the prophet Isaiah we are told that the seraphim, winged creatures in God's service, praised the Lord as follows:

They called out to one another, "The LORD who leads armies has absolute sovereign authority! His majestic splendor fills the entire earth!" (Isaiah 6:3 NET).

They also recognize that the entire earth gives evidence to the glory of God.

The Bible also says that the testimony from nature to God's existence leaves humanity without any excuses. We read the following in the Book of Romans:

For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, because they are understood through what has been made. So people are without excuse (Romans 1:20 NET).

The witness of nature is to everyone in every place. His power is there for all to see.

Therefore, the Bible says that God has revealed Himself through nature. The witness of creation serves as a continuous testimony to God's existence. Indeed, everything that exists in our physical world testifies to the existence of God.

2. Our Conscience Tells Us That God Exists

God has also revealed Himself through the human conscience. Each of us has an inner sense, or awareness that tells us that there is a God who exists. Indeed, all societies have a certain moral code built into them in which

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

stealing, lying, murder, and other such things, are universally condemned. Humanity's sense of right and wrong testifies to God's existence. The Apostle Paul wrote of this in his letter to the Romans. He said:

So, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, instinctively do what the law demands, they are a law to themselves even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. Their consciences confirm this. Their competing thoughts will either accuse or excuse them (Romans 2:14,15 HCSB).

The conscience, our inner sense, tells us there are such things as right and wrong, good and evil. It also tells us that someone put this sense in our hearts—God. Everyone is aware of God's existence through nature and the human conscience.

3. Jesus Christ Has Revealed God

God has also revealed Himself to the world through the Person of Jesus Christ. The Book of Hebrews begins by stating the following:

Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. But now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he made the universe and everything in it (Hebrews 1:1,2 NLT).

While God had revealed Himself in various ways and to various people during the Old Testament period, His ultimate revelation of Himself to the human race was through Jesus Christ.

Jesus Himself testified that He had come to earth to reveal the will of God the Father. We read about this in Matthew's gospel. He said:

All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone the Son decides to reveal him to (Matthew 11:27 NET).

Jesus came to let us know what God is like.

In the Gospel of John, we are told that Jesus came to our earth to make God the Father known to us. John wrote:

No one has ever seen God. The only one, himself God, who is in closest fellowship with the Father, has made God known (John 1:18 NET)

Because of Jesus Christ, we can know what God is like.

The Bible also says that one cannot know God the Father except through God the Son. This truth is stated elsewhere in Scripture:

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also (1 John 2:23 NIV)

Scripture is clear. God the Father can only be known through God the Son. There is no other way in which He can be known.

4. The Scriptures Testify Of God's Existence

God also has revealed Himself through the written Word—the Scriptures. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself to humankind.

The Apostle Paul wrote the following about the Scripture:

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16 NRSV).

The Bible is humanity's only source for our knowledge of God and His plan for us. It records sufficient information so that we can know who God is, and what He expects from us. In the Bible we have everything which we need in our quest for knowledge about God.

Thus, God has given the human race ample opportunity to know about Him by means of nature, the human conscience, Jesus Christ, and through the Bible. In sum, we have no excuse whatsoever for rejecting God.

Summary To Question 26:

How Has The God Of Scripture Revealed Himself To Humanity?

The God of the Bible has revealed Himself to the human race in four major ways. They are nature, the human conscience, the Person of Jesus Christ, and finally in the Bible.

Each of these methods testifies to His existence. Humanity has no excuse whatsoever for rejecting Him.

Nature shows us that a majestic Creator has intelligently formed the universe and put it together in an intricate way. Everywhere we find nature testifying to God's existence and greatness.

Our human conscience lets us know that there are such things as right and wrong, good and evil. This inner sense testifies to a God who has put this in the human heart. He has left His mark on our conscience.

While these first two lines of evidence testify that some God does exist, it is only through the revelation of God Himself that we know who this God is—Jesus Christ.

Jesus came to earth to let us know what God is like. Indeed, if one wants to know about the God who exists, then one only needs to look at Jesus Christ. The Bible says that He has explained God.

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

Finally, there is God's written Word, the Bible. It contains the record of God's dealings with humanity. Scripture provides sufficient information about God so that we know who He is, how we relate to Him, as well as what He expects from us.

Consequently, God has provided sufficient evidence for the human race to believe in Him, as well as to be able to know how we should act toward Him. We, therefore, do not have any excuse.

Question 28

Why Doesn't Everyone See That The God Of The Bible Really Exists?

If God does exist, then why doesn't everyone in the world acknowledge it? Why are there certain people who deny the existence of God? Why do they say there isn't sufficient proof to know that God exists?

The Bible gives us several answers to this important question. They are as follows.

1. The Human Race Is Running From God

We must first have a proper view of the human race from God's perspective. The biblical picture of humanity is one of an entire race of people running away from God. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans:

As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God" (Romans 3:10,11 NKJV).

Rather than seeking God, humans are seeking to live without God. We are not looking for God—He is looking for us! We don't find God, He finds us! This is the position unbelieving humanity finds itself in—it is not looking for the truth.

2. Unbelievers Do Not Wish To See The Truth

There is more. Not only sinful humanity does not want to know that God actually, exists, the Apostle Paul says that they are actually suppressing, or holding down, the truth of God. In other words, they are actively and willingly ignorant of God and His ways. He wrote the following to the Romans:

God's anger is revealed from heaven against every ungodly and immoral thing people do as they try to suppress the truth by their immoral living (Romans 1:18 God's Word).

This verse describes sinning humanity as deliberately suppressing the truth of God. This shows an active willingness on the part of people to keep the truth of God from coming to them. They do not want to know the truth.

3. They Deny The Truth Of God

While unbelieving humanity knows that God exists, they do not acknowledge what they know to be true. Paul wrote about the fate of such people:

And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what should not be done (Romans 1:28 NET).

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

Since they did not wish to acknowledge God, He allowed their own immoral minds to control their thoughts and behavior. The translation God's Word puts it this way:

And because they thought it was worthless to acknowledge God, God allowed their own immoral minds to control them. So they do these indecent things (Romans 1:28 God's Word).

Instead of thinking God's thoughts, their thoughts and actions are guided by their sinful human nature. This, of course, will cause them to deny God in their words and their deeds. Such is the predicament of sinful humanity which refuses to acknowledge God.

The psalmist emphasizes the same thing about sinful humanity. He put it this way:

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one (Psalm 14:1-3 NIV).

The wicked go their own particular way with no thought of God. They are not attempting to seek after God or to do His will. They only want to do their own will.

In another place, the psalmist wrote that the wicked only seek their own pleasure. Indeed, he made it very clear about their priorities:

The wicked brag about their deepest desires. Those greedy people hate and curse you, LORD. The wicked are too proud to turn to you or even think about you (Psalm 10:3,4 CEV).

The wicked are proud and arrogant. They only think of themselves. Such behavior deserves judgment.

Paul wrote about the punishment that awaits the wicked. He said:

Although they fully know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but also approve of those who practice them (Romans 1:32 NET).

They recognized the truth of God, but they still refused to obey His truth. They did this with the full knowledge of the righteous judgment they should receive.

Furthermore, they also approved of, and encouraged, others to practice similar evils. Such wicked behavior deserves punishment fitting the offence.

These factors illustrate that sinful humanity does not really want to know the truth of God. The picture is not of lost humanity vainly searching for the truth of God while God is somehow hiding it from them. To the contrary, they are doing everything they can to reject His truth.

4. People Substitute False gods For The Real God

This brings us to our next point. When people reject the existence of the true God, they have to substitute something in His place.

Paul wrote about what people worship in place of the God of the Bible:

And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people, or birds and animals and snakes (Romans 1:23 NLT).

While the evidence for God's existence is clear for all to see, and humans are without an excuse, sinful humanity still chooses to worship something else. This includes such things as the spirits of their ancestors, trees, rivers, mountains, and false gods and goddesses. They turn to worshipping anything but the only God who exists.

In fact, Paul said that they actually exchanged God's truth for a lie. He wrote:

They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creation rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen (Romans 1:25 NET).

Instead of serving the Creator, they worshiped and serve the things the Creator created. In doing so, they exchanged or traded the truth of God for a lie.

Thus, we find that the desire to worship something exists for all humanity. We all have this need. If the God of the Bible is rejected, then false gods will be substituted.

5. The Problem Of Sin Blinds Unbelievers To The Truth

The Bible explains where the problem originates. Rejecting the truth about God comes down to the problem of sin. Sin is blinding humanity from the truth of God. Paul wrote:

But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing, among whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of those who do not believe so they would not see the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:3,4 NET).

Consequently, the spiritual blinders need to be removed so that a person can see clearly in a spiritual way. Only the Holy Spirit of God can remove these blinders.

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

From the above, we conclude that human wisdom is not adequate to know the God of Scripture.

The Apostle Paul made this clear when he wrote:

I didn't speak my message with persuasive intellectual arguments. I spoke my message with a show of spiritual power so that your faith would not be based on human wisdom but on God's power (1 Corinthians 2:4,5 God's Word).

Human wisdom is not enough to know God. It will never be enough. Sinful human beings need the power of God to have their spiritual eyes opened.

6. The Good News: They Still Can Know The Truth If They Wish

Jesus made it clear that anyone who wishes to know the truth about God's existence can certainly know it:

Anyone who wants to do the will of God will know whether my teaching is from God or is merely my own (John 7:17 NLT).

It is a matter of people being willing to know whether or not God exists, as well as what He wants from us. Jesus said that the truth is able to set them free:

And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:32 NKJV).

This is the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The truth is knowable for anyone who wants to know it.

It is what sets us free from the power of sin.

Summary To Question 27: Why Doesn't Everyone See That The God Of The Bible Really Exists?

The Bible says that everyone knows that the God of the Bible exists. No one has any excuse. However, many people do not acknowledge His existence. In fact, they are running from Him. The biblical picture is not of people desperately seeking after God but rather God seeking after them as they are attempting to run from Him and His truth.

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, he described unbelievers as those who are willingly and actively rejecting His truth. Although God is speaking to them, they are purposefully not listening. They do not want to know the truth.

Instead of worshipping Him, they are substituting false gods in His place. Furthermore, these people engage in all sorts of evil behavior. To make matters worse, they encourage others to participate in their sinful deeds.

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

Sin has blinded unbelievers to the truths of God. Until the spiritual blinders are taken off, a person will remain in spiritual darkness. They will remain ignorant about the things of God.

However, the Bible has good news! It says that everyone still can know the God of Scripture—if they are willing to listen. Jesus made this clear. If anyone wants to know the truth of God, then they will be able to know it.

Therefore, everyone can know that the God of the Bible does exist. He has made this possible. The issue is whether or not they want to know.

Part 2

When The God Of The Bible Is Rejected

What Non-Christians Believe About God

Christians are not the only people who believe in God. Indeed, there are many people who believe in some sort of god but do not equate this God with the One revealed in the Bible. These include those who belong to non-Christian religions and non-Christian cults. Their god is not the God of Scripture.

Others, such as agnostics, and atheists, do not believe in any type of god—whether it be the God of Scripture or some other god.

This section looks at some of the various alternatives that have been offered in place of the God of Scripture as well as our response to these alternatives.

Question 28

Does Any One Religion Have “The” Answer About God? (Religious Pluralism, Religious Tolerance)

In modern times, it is quite popular to believe that no one particular religion can have “the” answer when it comes of the question of the existence of God or gods. This viewpoint, that it is not possible for any one group to have exclusive claim to truth in the area of religion, is known as “religious pluralism” or “religious tolerance.”

The Beliefs Of Religious Pluralism

We can simply state the beliefs of religious pluralism as follows.

1. It Is Not Possible For Humans To Have Infallible Knowledge About God

Religious pluralists believe that the existence of God is a mystery. They do not think that it is possible for any human being to know infallible truths about God—even if He does exist. This belief is foundational for all religious pluralists.

2. Therefore No One Religion Has The Truth About God

Since exact truth about God cannot be known by humans, no particular religious system can claim to be superior to another system. Consequently, no religion or religious teacher can maintain to have “the” truth in this area. It is simply not possible for humans to have such knowledge.

3. All Religions Have Some Truth In Them

Religious pluralists argue that every religion has some truth in them. While some religions may have a better understanding of truth than others, all of them, with a few exceptions, have something to contribute to our knowledge about God, or ultimate reality. Religious pluralists think that religions are more often right than wrong in the things that they teach. Each of them has something truthful to say to humanity—but none of them has the complete truth.

4. All Religions, Therefore, Are Valid To Some Degree

Because no one system of religion has absolute truth about God, and since all religions have some truth in their teachings, then all religions should be seen as more or less equally valid. Ultimately, there is no real difference between them—no matter what they may claim for themselves.

5. Consequently, There Is The Need To Accept All Faiths

This leads to the next point. People need to be tolerant, or accepting, of all faiths—all points of view when it comes to understanding God. Since no

one has the truth, we can learn from all faiths because each of them has discovered some partial truth about God. We should not be so arrogant to think that our way is the only way.

6. Historic Christianity With Its Claims Of One Way To Reach God Must Be Restated

Therefore, religious pluralism believes that the historic Christian faith is wrong in asserting that only one God exists, and there is only one way to reach the one God. It is contended that Christians must restate their beliefs in such a way as to accept other faiths as being truthful. Since there is some truth in all religions, it is arrogant and intolerant for Christians to claim that their religion is somehow better.

Consequently, any type of missionary activity or attempting to make converts to Christianity is wrong. There is no need to do this because all religions are more or less equal.

Result: The God Of Religious Pluralism Ends Up Being Some Vague Concept

The natural result of saying that all religions contain some truth about God, and all are equally valid, is that God ends up being whatever someone wants him, or it, to be. God becomes some vague concept where people project their own hopes and ideals. Rather than God creating humanity in His image, God is now created in our image. God becomes either totally unknowable by humanity, or if he is knowable, he is a God who is our friend—one who is vitally interested in our well-being. He is never our judge—never one who will punish sin.

These points briefly sum up the main ideas of religious pluralists. As mentioned, it is a very popular viewpoint today. Multitudes of people accept this idea of religious pluralism either knowingly or unknowingly. Often, the belief in religious pluralism is accepted as a fact in the same sense that the earth revolves around the sun. Indeed, it is something which everyone knows to be true, and therefore, it cannot be questioned.

Response To Religious Pluralism

While religious pluralism is certainly a popular idea with many people in our modern age, there are a number of fatal problems with it. They are as follows.

1. They Assume, Not Prove, That God Cannot Be Known By Humans

To begin with, religious pluralism assumes, not proves, that God cannot be known. The assumption is that God, if He exists, cannot be personally known by human beings. They start with the idea that true knowledge about God is beyond the reach of human beings. In other words, they are assuming as fact what they should be proving. This is not the way to prove your point.

2. If God Exists, Why Can't He Make Himself Known To Humans Through One Religion And One Holy Book?

While religious pluralists contend that God cannot be known through any one religion, they have no way of proving or demonstrating this claim. In fact, they cannot offer any proof—since no proof is possible. They merely assume that God, if He exists, is unknown and unknowable. They do not allow for the possibility of God taking the initiative and revealing Himself to humanity in a sacred book.

However, this idea is neither rational nor logical. If an all-powerful God does exist, then what would stop Him from communicating with the human race should He decide to do so? The answer, of course, is “nothing.”

3. Religious Pluralists Are Inconsistent: They Are Intolerant Of The Systems They Attack

The irony is that religious pluralists are just as intolerant as those they accuse of intolerance. In other words, they cannot live consistently with their own system. They claim, without proof, that accurate knowledge about God is impossible.

However, when they assume this, they put themselves in the same position as people of various faiths who believe that their faith is “the” only way to the truth. No human being is in a position to rule out the possibility that God could make Himself known through a religious system of His choice. Yet religious pluralists do this.

4. Christianity Claims To Have The Answer And Backs Up Its Claims With Convincing Evidence

The final point concerns the claims of the Christian faith. Christianity believes and teaches that there is such a thing as objective truth. Furthermore, it makes certain claims about God which, by definition, exclude other beliefs systems to be true.

In addition, the Christian faith backs up these claims with convincing evidence. There are a number of points we should make about this.

5. The Bible Says That There Is Objective Spiritual Truth

Contrary to religious pluralism, or those who believe we should be tolerant of all other religions and their beliefs, the Christian faith says that there is such a thing as objective religious truth. Indeed, there is truth which exists outside of ourselves and our own beliefs. Truth is not relative—rather it is absolute. There are things which are true and there are things which are not true.

According to Scripture, there is no such idea as “something may be true for you but not for me.” Truth is absolute. It does not depend upon how

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

what we believe or how we feel about it. This truth is determined by the God of the Bible and by Him alone.

Therefore, certain beliefs are incompatible with the truth. John wrote about the possibility of humans knowing the truth:

I have not written to you because you don't know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie comes from the truth (1 John 2:21 HCSB).

According to this statement of John, it is possible to know the truth and it is possible not to know the truth. In other words, there is such a thing as truth.

Jesus made the claim for Himself that He was "the truth." We read this in the Gospel of John:

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6 HCSB).

Jesus said that He is "the truth."

Again, Scripture emphasizes that there are things true, and things that are false. Consequently, we are not to be tolerant of all of the beliefs of others in the sense that we accept them as being true. While people have a right to hold these beliefs, we have the right to say that these beliefs are incorrect because God's Word says so!

6. The Bible Makes Exclusive Claims About God: He Is The Only God Who Exists

It is still the claim of historic Christianity that it does have "the" answer with respect to God's existence. From beginning to end, the Bible makes it clear that the God of Scripture is the only God who exists.

For example, we read the following words of the Lord in the Book of Isaiah:

I am the LORD All-Powerful, the first and the last, the one and only God (Isaiah 44:6 CEV).

The God revealed in the Bible is the one-and-only God.

This truth is emphasized in another statement found in Isaiah. It says:

You are My witnesses—the LORD's declaration—and My servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He. No god was formed before Me, and there will be none after Me (Isaiah 43:10 HCSB).

The Lord, the God of the Bible is the only God who exists. Indeed, He declared that no god was formed before Him and there will never be any

god formed after Him. Indeed, there is no other God. This is His claim. It is either true or it is false.

The God Of The Bible Is Knowable

There is something else which must be appreciated. According to Scripture, the God of the Bible, the only God who exists, is knowable. Humans can indeed know certain truths about Him, as well as know Him personally through God the Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus acknowledged this when He prayed to God the Father on the night of His betrayal. He said:

And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth (John 17:3 NLT).

There is only one true God, and this God is knowable.

The disciples of Jesus came to know God the Father through God the Son, Jesus Christ. They gave this testimony:

Simon Peter answered, “Lord, who will we go to? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that You are the Holy One of God” (John 6:69 HCSB).

This is one of the main points of the Christian message—the God of the Bible exists, and He can be known.

Christianity Offers Sufficient Evidence To Back Up Its Claims

Therefore, it is the claim of the Christian faith that the God of the Bible, the only God who exists, is knowable. Christianity not only makes these claims—it also offers sufficient evidence to back up the claims. It challenges those who doubt these claims to investigate them to see if they are true. The apostle Peter wrote:

But set apart the Messiah as Lord in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. However, do this with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15, 16, HCSB).

The reason Peter could tell the believers to give a defense for their faith is because they were eyewitnesses to the miracles of Jesus Christ. They knew these things to be true. In other words, they were not following after myths or fables. He also wrote:

For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the power of our Lord Jesus Christ and his coming again. We have seen his majestic splendor with our own eyes. And he received honor and glory from God the Father when God’s glorious, majestic voice called down from heaven, “This is my beloved Son; I am fully pleased with him.” We ourselves heard the voice when we were there with him on the holy mountain (2 Peter 1:16-18 NLT).

Christians are not afraid of the truth because Jesus claimed to be “the truth.”

Furthermore, the knowledge of this truth will set us free. We read in John’s gospel these words of Jesus:

You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free (John 8:32 God’s Word).

It is the truth about Jesus Christ which sets sinful human beings free. There is truth and can indeed be known!

Religious Pluralism And Religious Tolerance Is To Be Rejected By Bible-believing Christians

Consequently, religious pluralism, the idea that God, if He does exist, cannot be personally known by human beings, and that no one religion has the answer, is to be rejected by Bible-believing Christians. God does exist and He can be known through the Person of Jesus Christ. This remains the claim of the Christian faith.

In addition, Scripture knows no such idea as being tolerant of other beliefs about God. God has revealed His truth to the world and people are held responsible to believe it.

Therefore, Christians must take a stand for the truth which has been once-and-for-all revealed to humanity through God’s written Word and through the Person of Jesus Christ. Religious pluralism, in all its forms, needs to be soundly rejected.

Summary To Question 28 Does Any One Religion Have The Answer About God? (Religious Pluralism, Religious Tolerance)

Religious pluralism is the idea that no one system of religious belief has the answers when it comes to God, or ultimate reality. They assume that it is not even possible for this to occur since humans cannot know anything for certain about God. Therefore, no one religion can claim to have “the” truth. It cannot be contained in any one faith or any one Holy Book.

Consequently, all religions ought to be respected for their attempt to understand ultimate truth. Religions, such as Christianity, that claim there is only one way to reach God, should be rejected. Any view of God must, by definition, be some vague concept. This assumption of religious pluralism is held by many people today.

Christians need to respond to such claims. When we examine the evidence, we find that religious pluralism is inadequate for a number of reasons.

First, it assumes that God, if He exists, cannot reveal Himself exclusively through one religion. Of course, this is a claim that has no way of being proved or disproved. It is merely assumed by faith. Why should the

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

religious pluralist assume that if there is a God that He cannot choose to reveal Himself in any manner in which He pleases. What is stopping Him from revealing Himself through one particular faith or Holy Book? The answer, of course, is nothing.

In addition, religious pluralists cannot live consistent with their beliefs. They are as intolerant as the people they accuse. While they chide people who claim there is a right way and a wrong way to believe, they assume that these people must be wrong. Yet they provide no evidence whatsoever for their belief.

Finally, the Christian faith has a clear response to the idea of religious pluralism and religious tolerance for all beliefs.

To begin with, the Bible claims that there is such thing as objective truth. These truths are universal. Humanity is to be held responsible as to how they respond to these truths. Scripture knows nothing of the idea that truth is relative—something that is true for one person may not be true for someone else. According to Scripture, there is absolute truth.

Furthermore, Christianity does claim to have “the” answer to the spiritual needs of humanity. It claims that there is only one true God who exists. This God has revealed Himself to the human race. Among other things, He has told us who He is, who we are, and what our responsibilities are toward Him. The Bible says that there is only one way to approach the one God. It is through Jesus Christ.

These claims are exclusive. In other words, they rule out other religions as being true at this point. There is no middle ground. Either the claims are true, or they are not true.

In addition, Christianity teaches that this God is also knowable. It is possible that we can know certain things about Him, as well as know Him personally. He is not some unknown God.

Moreover, He has confirmed the truth of Scripture with overwhelming evidence. Indeed, we do not have to believe in Him by blind faith. To the contrary, He has provided us with sufficient facts to believe in Him.

Therefore, the idea of religious pluralism, or religious tolerance, is contrary to the teachings of Scripture. God does exist and He had made Himself known to humanity through His written Word, and through the Person of Jesus Christ. Certain religious, or “spiritual” things are true while other religious things are not true. These are the exclusive claims of the Christian faith.

While people have the right to believe whatever they wish to believe about God and His existence, ultimately the way each of us responds to the claims of the God of Scripture will determine where we will spend eternity. This indeed is the truth!

Question 29

Don't All Religions Ultimately Teach The Same Thing?

People often ask the question about certain common features which are found in all religions. It has been claimed that they all seem to be saying the same thing—but are saying it in different ways. Doesn't this mean they all eventually lead to the same place? Several points should be made about this common question.

1. Religions Have Things In Common

Yes, most religions do have things in common. They all attempt to meet a deeply felt need that all human beings have—to worship something and to experience ultimate reality. Many have similar codes of ethics. Furthermore, it is generally believed by all religions that such things as murder and stealing are wrong, and loving our fellow humans and doing good to others is right. Therefore, we find that there is indeed some common ground between all faiths.

When this truth is established, then people often assume that all religions are basically the same.

2. Many People Claim All Religions Are Ultimately Saying The Same Thing

This leads us to our next point. Since religions have many things in common, is it possible that all major religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc.) are ultimately saying the same thing? Are they telling us the same truths but in slightly different ways? If this is the case, then it does not really matter which one of these religions a person embraces.

Often, we hear the question asked in this manner, “Why make such a big issue about Jesus Christ and Christianity? All religions ultimately teach the same thing. Was not Jesus basically saying the same thing as the founders of the other great religions of the world? They all teach that God is love, we are to love our fellow human beings, and that we should give of ourselves for others, do they not? If this is the case, then why single out Christianity for special attention?” There is no reason for doing this if they are all saying the same thing.

3. The Major Religions Are Contradictory To Each Other In Their Main Beliefs

While it is popular to view all religions as saying basically the same thing, such a claim is simply not true. The Muslims, Buddhists, Christians and all other religious groups cannot all be experiencing the same God. Why? It is because the way they define God contradicts each other.

For example, Buddhism believes in an impersonal God—they do not separate God from the creation. Indeed, they are one-in-the same. God has

no separate existence apart from the creation. In fact, some forms of Buddhism are actually atheistic in their view of God—they reject the idea that such a being as God exists.

Christianity, on the other hand, believes and teaches that God is personal. He is not the same essence as His creation but has a separate existence from it. In fact, the very first verse of the Bible makes this clear:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1 NKJV).

The personal infinite God of the Bible existed before the universe came into being. Then, at a certain point in time, He brought something into existence which didn't exist previously—the universe.

Therefore, at its core, Christianity, and a religion such as Buddhism cannot be reconciled.

There are countless such examples of major differences between the religions of the world. In many instances, it is at the very core of their teachings.

4. All Religions Cannot All Be True At The Same Time

Since the various religions teach different and contradictory things about the nature of God, and how a person can get to know Him, they cannot all be true at the same time. They can all be wrong, but they cannot all be true. Indeed, it is impossible for God to be personal and impersonal at the same time. Hence, to say that all religions are ultimately the same shows a lack of understanding of these religions and what they are teaching.

The main question that needs to be addressed concerning the various religions is not, “Do they contain some truth?” The real issue is, “Can they save?” It is the Christian faith alone that is able to save humanity from their sinful state. The Bible makes this clear. Simon Peter said salvation is found in Jesus Christ and in Him alone. He said:

Only Jesus has the power to save! His name is the only one in all the world that can save anyone (Acts 4:12 CEV).

This is the claim of Christianity. It is the only way that the one God has made for humanity to reach Him. As stated, the claim must be either true or false. If it is false, then it is possible that some other religion has the ultimate truth about God as well as how He can be approached.

However, if the claims of Christianity are true, then, by definition, all other ways to reach God are false and should be rejected. This is where the issue stands. Consequently, the claims made by Jesus Christ must be evaluated to see if they are indeed true. An examination of the evidence will discover that this is the case.

Summary To Question 29
Don't All Religions Ultimately Teach The Same Thing?

Religions have many things in common. No one disputes this. This had led many people to assume that they all ultimately teach the same thing. If this is true, then nobody should attempt to lift up any one religion above another. They are all basically equal. So goes the argument.

Although it is true that religions have a number of things in common, all religions do not ultimately teach the same thing. Indeed, they teach different things about such crucial matters as the nature of God—if He can be known, and what He expects from humanity.

Therefore, they cannot all be true at the same time. They can all be wrong, but it is impossible for all of them to be true. The key question is not, “Do religions teach some truth?” Almost all of them teach things that are true. The real question is, “Can they save lost humanity?”

Only the Christian faith can do this. It not only claims to be the one truth, it provides evidence to back up its claims. Therefore, when someone embraces the Christian faith, they can do so on the basis of reasonable or intelligent faith—not blind faith. When the facts are investigated one will find that Christianity lives up to its claim.

Thus, we should never fall into the trap of believing that all religions teach the same thing. They do not. However, one faith, the Christian faith, provides humanity with ultimate truth about God.

Question 30

In What Sense Is Christianity Unique Among The World's Religions?

Throughout history many religious leaders have come on the scene and attracted large followings of people. The Buddha, with his teachings on how to cope with life's suffering, gained millions of adherents, Confucius, with his precepts, on how members of society should get along with each other, likewise numbers his followers in the millions. The same can be said for Muhammad and the religion of Islam.

Yet, Jesus is different. He has demonstrated that He is in a different class from these, as well as all the other founders of world religions. This can be seen in a number of ways.

1. Jesus Made Himself The Issue

There are several things which make Jesus Christ different from all other religious leaders—both past and present. First, He made Himself the issue while other leaders made their teachings the prime concern. Indeed, central to religions such as Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism, Confucianism, etc. are the teachings. What is stressed in these religions are the things these founders taught—it is not so much who they were. The teachers, therefore, are secondary to the teachings. The teachings of these leaders are what is all-important.

However, in Christianity, the opposite is true. The all-important issue is not so much what Jesus taught, as it was whom He claimed to be. The religious leaders of His day became infuriated when He claimed authority over everything. When Jesus healed on the Sabbath, contrary to their tradition, they became incensed. The Bible says:

Then some of the Pharisees began to say, "This man is not from God, because he does not observe the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such miraculous signs?" Thus there was a division among them (John 9:16 NET).

They were upset because He was breaking their cherished traditions.

Jesus answered this charge by declaring the following to the people of His day:

For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8 HCSB).

He claimed that He Himself had the ultimate authority over the Sabbath issue—as well as every other issue. This is one of the major differences between Jesus and the founders of other religions. Indeed, Jesus made Himself the issue. We find Jesus asking His disciples the following question:

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15 NKJV).

He wanted a clear answer from them. Who did they think that He truly is?

Peter, speaking for the rest of Jesus’ disciples, answered the question:

Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!” Jesus replied, “Simon, son of Jonah, you are blessed! No human revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven revealed it to you (Matthew 16:16-17 God’s Word).

Jesus acknowledged that He was God the Son. In fact, He said the revelation of this truth came from God the Father in heaven.

Christ asked this particular question to secure a commitment—either for Him or against Him. We do not find the founders of the other world religions doing such a thing.

When the Jewish religious leaders brought Jesus to Pontius Pilate, they accused Him of claiming equality with God. We read in John’s gospel:

The Jewish religious leaders replied, “We have a law, and according to our law he ought to die, because he claimed to be the Son of God!” (John 19:7 NET).

It was the claims of Jesus which infuriated the religious leaders. He made Himself equal to the only God who exists.

Therefore, in contrast to the founders of all the other major religions, it is the identity of Jesus Christ, not His teachings, that is the major issue.

2. Jesus Demonstrated His Authority

Another aspect that separates Jesus from all other religious leaders is that He demonstrated that He had authority to make such monumental claims. While other religious leaders have made great claims, they have given no legitimate evidence to substantiate them. One can only take their word for it. They have nothing else to back it up.

Jesus, on the other hand, backed up His claims with objective proof. He not only made the claims He backed up the claims with objective evidence. We can cite why this is so.

The Difference That Jesus Makes: He Performed Miracles

The account of Jesus healing a paralyzed man illustrates this point. When this man was brought before Him, we read the following:

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5 NRSV).

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

This claim to forgive sins upset the religious rulers. Mark records their response to these claims of Jesus:

Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, “Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Mark 2:6,7 NRSV).

They accused Jesus of blasphemy because He claimed the authority to forgive sins. They said that only God could do this! Indeed, they were absolutely right in their assertion that only God could forgive sins.

The prophet Isaiah records the Lord making the following claim:

“I—yes, I alone—will blot out your sins for my own sake and will never think of them again (Isaiah 43:25 NLT).

Jesus certainly knew this particular Old Testament passage where the Lord, the God of Israel, made this claim to be the only One who could forgive sins. Therefore, by claiming to forgive sins, He knowingly made Himself equal with God.

But making the claim to forgive sins is something that cannot be publicly verified. There is no observable sign that comes with the forgiveness of sin. How could anyone have known that Jesus had this authority? Why should they believe His claim?

Knowing this to be the case, Jesus demonstrated what makes Him unique from all other religious leaders. Mark records what occurred:

At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, “Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and take your mat and walk’? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” —he said to the paralytic— “I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.” And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!” (Mark 2:8-12 NRSV).

We note how Jesus dealt with the situation. He asked the following question, “Which is easier to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven or to say rise up and walk?’”

The answer is that it is much easier to say to someone that their sins are forgiven. Since forgiveness of sins comes with no observable sign, nobody is able to tell, at that moment, whether or not they have been forgiven. The forgiveness of sin is not something that can be objectively verified.

But, if someone says to a paralyzed person, “Rise up and walk,” immediately it will become apparent to everyone whether or not the person

has the ability to supernaturally heal. Therefore, it is much easier to say “your sins are forgiven.”

When Jesus instantly healed the paralytic, as recorded by Mark, He showed the religious rulers that He had God’s authority. Indeed, this miracle occurred where everyone could see it with their own eyes—after Jesus had made such claims about Himself.

Jesus, therefore, demonstrated His authority in the realm we can see, the visible realm. It also illustrated the fact that He had supernatural authority to forgive sins in the realm we cannot see, the invisible realm.

Therefore, Jesus did not merely make claims about Himself—He backed up those claims with observable miracles which testified to His power and authority. This is the difference which Jesus makes.

3. He Personally Fulfilled Prophecy

Another thing that separates Jesus from the other founders of the world’s religions is that He fulfilled ancient predictions about the coming Messiah. These were written hundreds of years before Christ came into the world. These predictions could not have been fulfilled by mere chance.

In fact, on the day of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, He held the people responsible for not paying attention to these truths. Luke records what happened in this manner:

When Jesus came closer and could see Jerusalem, he cried and said: It is too bad that today your people don’t know what will bring them peace! Now it is hidden from them. Jerusalem, the time will come when your enemies will build walls around you to attack you. Armies will surround you and close in on you from every side. They will level you to the ground and kill your people. Not one stone in your buildings will be left on top of another. This will happen because you did not see that God had come to save you (Luke 19:41-44 CEV).

Judgment was pronounced upon the people of Jerusalem for rejecting Jesus. The reason for this is that He was the One whom the Old Testament prophecies spoke of.

On the day in which Jesus came back from the dead, He scolded two of His disciples who were walking with Him on the road to Emmaus. He told them they did not listen to all that the prophets had said:

Then Jesus said to them, “How foolish you are! You’re so slow to believe everything the prophets said! Didn’t the Messiah have to suffer these things and enter into his glory?” Then he began with Moses’ Teachings and the Prophets to explain to them what was said about him throughout the Scriptures (Luke 24:25-27 God’s Word).

Jesus did indeed fulfill long-awaited prophecies at the time of His First Coming to the earth.

Furthermore, Jesus not only fulfilled prophecy by certain events in His life, He Himself made predictions that were literally fulfilled. In other words, Jesus fulfilled prophecy as well as being a prophet Himself.

No one else who has ever lived, either a religious leader or a non-religious leader, can claim anything like this (we have covered this in detail in our book *The Case For Christianity*).

4. Jesus Conquered Death

A final fact that separates Jesus Christ from all other religious leaders is that He conquered the ultimate enemy that everyone faces—death. By coming back from the dead, Jesus provided a solid answer to the question, “What will happen to us when we die?” No other religious figure has returned from the dead to verify his claims except Jesus of Nazareth.

The evidence that Jesus came back from the dead is sufficient to convince even the most skeptical.

In fact, the New Testament writer Luke put it this way:

After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3 NRSV).

Christ demonstrated that He came back from the dead through many convincing proofs. In addition, the bodily resurrection of Jesus can be tested by the most rigorous historical methods. While many other religious traditions have an idea of spirit resurrections (an untestable hypothesis), only the New Testament proclaims a bodily resurrection that passes all tests of historical reliability.

This provides the believer with a genuine hope of life beyond the grave and it is one of the many things which separate Jesus from all other religious leaders.

Indeed, it is the resurrection of Jesus Christ which separates Him from all other religious figures, whether past or present—for He alone conquered the greatest enemy we all face, death.

To sum up, in every important area, Jesus showed the difference between Himself and the other religious leaders. Other religious leaders have made claims, but Jesus backed up His claims. Indeed, He demonstrated that He is unique. Jesus has no equal.

Summary To Question 30 In What Sense Is Christianity Unique Among The World’s Religions?

It is not possible to place Jesus Christ in the same category as other religious leaders. While many of them have made astounding claims, none of them have backed up these claims with objective evidence. The New

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

Testament records that Jesus also made some unique claims. Yet there is a difference, Jesus claimed to provide evidence which would back up these claims.

If these claims are true, then Jesus is in a different class than all the other religious leaders, and Christianity is different than all other religions. We find that the evidence shows that Jesus is different from the founders of other religions in at least four ways.

First, contrary to the other religious leaders, Jesus made Himself the issue instead of His teachings. Everything rode upon His identity. It was the Person of Jesus Christ which was the main issue. Who exactly was He? This was the overriding issue.

Next, He backed up His claims with observable miracles. He did things that nobody else has ever done. These miracles testified to the validity of His claims.

He also fulfilled predictions from the Old Testament about His life and ministry. These predictions were made hundreds of years before He was born. Humanly speaking, there is no way in which He could have done this. Again, this demonstrates that He is distinct from all other religious leaders.

Finally, He conquered the greatest enemy we all face, death. In doing so He verified that He was indeed the unique Son of God. Jesus Christ by showing that He had the authority over life and death.

In addition, these claims of Jesus Christ can be put to the test. No one has to accept them by blind faith. Scripture invites us to weigh and evaluate these claims. When weighed, we find that these claims prove to be true.

There is much more which we could add to this. However, it is fair to conclude that Jesus is indeed in class by Himself.

Question 31

Can A Person Experience The True God Through Religions Other Than Christianity? (Christian Exclusivism)

Humanity has the need to worship. Indeed, wherever we find human beings on our planet we find them worshipping something. Temples, shrines, and holy places abound. People have this basic need to worship some type of power and in doing so, experience ultimate reality.

What does the Bible have to say about how to worship God? Can He be worshipped through religions other than Christianity? Is the Christian faith the only way in which a person can know God? Does the Christian faith exclude all other religions? A number of important points need to be made.

1. The Bible Is Exclusively God's Word To The Human Race

To begin with, we find that the Bible claims to be God's exclusive Word to the human race. In fact, there are no other sources of divine revelation. Paul wrote to Timothy:

All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16,17 HCSB).

Only the Scriptures are profitable for teaching God's truth. There is no other document which does this.

Peter also wrote about the uniqueness of Scripture. He said that the prophetic Scriptures did not originate with any human will or desire but rather by the work of the Holy Spirit:

First of all, you should know this: no prophecy of Scripture comes from one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, moved by the Holy Spirit, men spoke from God (2 Peter 1:20-21 HCSB).

Therefore, God has given us His Word to humanity exclusively in the Bible. There are no other sources of divine revelation.

2. The Bible Says There Is Only One God To Be Worshipped

Scripture reveals that the God of the Bible is the one true God. He alone deserves our worship. In fact, the Bible also warns us about other religions and other gods:

Do not have other gods besides Me (Exodus 20:3 HCSB).

There is no other legitimate God for people to worship. In the Old Testament, Moses wrote the following to the children of Israel:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength (Deuteronomy 6:4,5 NIV).

There is only one God that exists, and only this one God should be worshipped. There are no exceptions to this commandment. Again, Scripture is very specific on this matter.

3. Pagan Deities Counterfeited The Truth Of The One True God

Not only does the Bible say that there is only one God which exists, the Old Testament prophets ridiculed belief in the gods of other nations. The false gods were leading people astray from the one, true God. They were counterfeits to the Lord who is the true and living God. Isaiah the prophet recorded the Lord making the following challenge:

“Present your case,” says the LORD. “Bring forth your strong reasons,” says the King of Jacob. “Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; Let them show the former things, what they were, That we may consider them, And know the latter end of them; Or declare to us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods; yes, do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed and see it together. Indeed you are nothing, and your work is nothing; He who chooses you is an abomination” (Isaiah 41:21-24 NKJV).

The New Living Translation as follows:

“Can your idols make such claims as these? Let them come and show what they can do!” says the LORD, the King of Israel. “Let them try to tell us what happened long ago or what the future holds. Yes, that’s it! If you are gods, tell what will occur in the days ahead. Or perform a mighty miracle that will fill us with amazement and fear. Do something, whether good or bad! But no! You are less than nothing and can do nothing at all. Anyone who chooses you becomes filthy, just like you! (Isaiah 41:21-24 NLT).

Here we find the denouncing of idols in the strongest of terms. They are not to be worshipped because they do not exist as gods!

On one occasion, the Bible records that the prophet Elijah had a contest with the prophets of the false god Baal. When Baal did not answer their prayer, Elijah ridiculed belief in this non-existent god. Scripture puts it this way:

So they took the bull that was given them, prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, crying, “O Baal, answer us!” But there was no voice, and no answer. They limped about the

altar that they had made. At noon Elijah mocked them, saying, “Cry aloud! Surely he is a god; either he is meditating, or he has wandered away, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened” (1 Kings 18:26,27 NRSV).

This god Baal could not answer them because he did not exist. The gods that the ancients worshipped were non-existent entities—there was no substance to them. Again, the God of the Bible, and He alone, is the only God to be worshipped.

4. God Has Made A Unique Way To Know Him: There Is No Other Way

The Bible says that God has provided a way that individuals may know Him. This is through the Person of Jesus Christ. The Bible says:

So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture” (John 10:7-9 NRSV).

To get into the presence of God, one must come through the Person of Jesus Christ. He is the gate, the way.

This is stated by Jesus elsewhere. Indeed, Jesus said that He alone is the way, the truth, and the life. The Gospel of John records the following:

Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6 HCSB).

Nobody can come to God the Father except through God the Son.

The Apostle Peter emphasized that a person could know the true God but it is only through Jesus Christ. He said the following to the religious rulers who had arrested him and the Apostle John:

There is salvation in no one else! There is no other name in all of heaven for people to call on to save them (Acts 4:12 NLT).

There is no other way to be saved except through Jesus. This is the message of Scripture.

According to the New Testament, religions that offer the individual a way to know God, other than through the Person of Jesus Christ, are false religions. They offer erroneous ways of knowing ultimate truth. The claim of Scripture is clear: Jesus Christ is the only way through which an individual can know the living God.

In fact, Jesus said to the religious leaders of His day that they would die in their sins if they did not believe in Him:

Thus I told you that you will die in your sins. For unless you believe that I am the Christ, you will die in your sins (John 8:24 NET).

This being the case, it is not possible for people to experience the true God in any religion apart from Christianity. It is through Jesus Christ, and through Him alone, that a person can experience the only God who exists. This is the exclusive claim of Scripture.

5. The Opportunity To Believe In The One God Is Limited To This Life Only

There is something else that the Scripture teaches. Humans have only this life to make the decision for Jesus Christ. In other words, there is no second chance after death. The writer to the Hebrews said:

And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgment (Hebrews 9:27 NRSV).

The translation God's Word puts it this way:

People die once, and after that they are judged (Hebrews 9:27 God's Word).

The Bible could not be clearer. After death comes judgment.

Again, the claims of Scripture are exclusive. There is one way to reach the one God and the opportunity to believe is limited to this life and to it alone.

6. People Will Spend Eternity With Christ Or Without Him: There Will Be A Judgment

Because only one God exists, and has made only one way to know Him, all of humanity will be judged based upon how they have responded to Him. We read in the Book of Daniel of this judgment:

At that time Michael, the archangel who stands guard over your nation, will arise. Then there will be a time of anguish greater than any since nations first came into existence. But at that time every one of your people whose name is written in the book will be rescued. Many of those whose bodies lie dead and buried will rise up, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2 NLT).

Some will arise to everlasting life while others will be raised to everlasting contempt.

In the Book of Revelation, we read of the awful fate of those who are not part of God's family. Scripture gives a sobering description of what will happen to them:

If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15 NIV).

The stakes could not be higher! The place where each of us will spend eternity depends upon how we respond to God's truth. This is the claim which the Bible itself makes.

The Bible Makes Exclusive Claims Which Must Be Dealt With

Therefore, as we look at what the Bible has to say about itself, the existence of God, the identity, purpose and destiny of humanity, and the way that we humans can reach God, we find that it is exclusive in its claims. In other words, it does not allow for any other way.

The issue is thus clear: either the Bible is true in its claims, or it is not. If not, then it should be ignored.

However, if true, then every human being needs to respond to the claims in which it makes. Those who believe will have everlasting life but those who do not believe will experience the wrath of God for all eternity. This is the message that all of humanity needs to hear.

Summary To Question 31

Can A Person Experience The True God Through Religions Other Than Christianity? (Christian Exclusivism)

People attempt to worship God in a variety of ways. Indeed, Christianity is not the only religion which believes that God exists. Yet Christianity makes a number of exclusive claims about itself.

First, the Bible, the sacred Book of the Christian faith, claims to be the only divine revelation which God has given the human race. According to Scripture, it is the final authority on all matters of belief and practice. There is no other source of authority.

In this sacred Book, we find that there is only one God who actually exists. We are told that the gods who were worshipped in the ancient world are not real. They have no substance. It is only the God who is revealed in Scripture that has real substance or existence.

Furthermore, this one God has provided a way by which people may know Him. This one way is through the Person of Jesus Christ. Jesus said that nobody is able come to the one true God except through Him. Indeed, one cannot know God except through Jesus.

If His claims are true, then, by definition, all claims to ultimate truth by other religious leaders are false. Thus, there is no other way in which the one true God can be experienced. None. Therefore, we cannot conclude that people are actually experiencing the God of Scripture through other religions. Any spiritual experience which they have is not with the only God who exists.

In addition, it is only in this lifetime where people have the opportunity to respond to the claims in Scripture. There is no second chance to believe after death. This life provides us with our only opportunity.

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

In fact, the Bible also speaks of a final judgment which all people will have to face. They will be judged based upon how they responded to God's requirements for them. Those who believe will spend all eternity with the Lord while those who reject the Lord will spend eternity apart from Him. Everyone will end up in one of these two destinations.

These are some of the exclusive claims made by the Christian faith. Scripture not only makes these claims—it also provides evidence to back them up. This is what separates Christianity from all other belief systems.

Question 32

What Is A Monotheistic Religion? (The Belief In One God)

When a person believes in some type of God they are called a “theist.” Monotheism is the belief that only one God exists. The term is derived from the word *mono* meaning “one” and *theism* meaning “God.” Three of the major world religions are monotheistic—Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Each of these faith worships only one God. A number of points need to be made about monotheistic beliefs.

1. Monotheism Teaches That Only One God That Exists

The Bible is monotheistic. From beginning to end, it testifies that there is only one God who exists. Indeed, the Lord has made it clear that He is the only God. The Bible says:

“But you are my witnesses, O Israel!” says the LORD. “And you are my servant. You have been chosen to know me, believe in me, and understand that I alone am God. There is no other God; there never has been and never will be” (Isaiah 43:10 NLT).

No other God exists.

In addition, Scripture is clear that other gods should not be worshipped. In the Ten Commandments, we read the Lord saying:

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me” (Exodus 20:2-5 NIV).

According to the Bible, only one God exists, and He is the only God that is to be worshipped. No other gods have any real substance, and consequently should not be given any type of worship.

2. It Is Not Enough To Believe In Only One God

However, the fact that a religion is monotheistic is not nearly enough. Belief must not only be in one God—belief must be in the right God!

James wrote:

You believe that God is one; well and good. Even the demons believe that—and tremble with fear (James 2:19 NET).

There are religions that believe in the existence of one God but that God is different than the God of the Bible. Belief must be in the God of the

Bible who has revealed Himself to humanity in these last days through the Person of Jesus Christ.

3. Judaism And Islam, While Believing In One God, Fall Short

Although Judaism and Islam worship only one God, neither of these faiths can lay claim to being true. Islam worships a different God while Judaism continues to reject the coming of their promised Messiah, Jesus Christ.

However, the Bible says that it is essential to believe in Jesus. John wrote:

No one who denies the Son has the Father; everyone who confesses the Son has the Father also (1 John 2:23 NRSV).

Without belief in God the Son, there is no genuine belief in God the Father. Consequently, belief in one God is not enough.

Indeed, true belief consists of believing in the one God that Christianity reveals.

Summary To Question 32 What Is Monotheistic Religion? (The Belief In One God)

The Bible presents the idea of monotheism. This is the belief in the existence of only one God. While there are a number of religions which believe in one God, not every religion that holds this belief is true. Indeed, belief in only one God is not enough. It is important to believe in the right God.

Islam, for example, insists upon the existence of one God. However, the one God of Islam is not the same God as the One God who is revealed in the Bible. Islam presents a different god and thus has a false god.

Judaism is in a different category. Although Judaism believes in the right God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the system in which they worship has now been done away with. When the Promised One, the Messiah, came into the world, the old system was replaced. The only access to God now is through the Messiah, Jesus. There is no other way.

Hence only Christianity proclaims the genuine truth of the one God who exists.

Question 33

Can A Person Reach The True God Through Judaism?

Is it possible for a person today to reach the true God through Judaism? Since the God of the Jews is the same God of the Christians, shouldn't a person be able to reach Him through either Judaism or Christianity? Aren't there really two ways in which people can reach the same God? Does the Bible have anything to say on this subject?

There are a number of crucial points which we need to make about this all-important topic.

1. God Established The True Religion That Is Revealed In The Old Testament

In the Old Testament, God divinely revealed Himself to the nation Israel. The New Testament says that they were given the oracles, or truths, of God. Paul wrote to the Romans stating this truth:

So what advantage does the Jew have? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Considerable in every way. First, they were entrusted with the spoken words of God (Romans 3:1-2 HCSB).

The Old Testament system was divinely given. The Scripture makes this clear.

2. He Sent His Prophets To Speak Of The Coming Of The Messiah

God put in place a system of worship that looked forward to a time when it would be fulfilled in a Person known as the Messiah, or the Christ. The Scripture spoke of His coming in the following way:

A voice cries out, "In the desert clear a way for the Lord; construct in the wilderness a road for our God" (Isaiah 40:3 NET).

The major theme of the Old Testament is that the kingdom of God is coming to the earth in the Person of the Messiah.

3. The Prophecies About The Messiah Were Fulfilled By Jesus

From the New Testament, we learn the following about the prophecies of the coming Messiah and its relationship to the old system.

To begin with, the coming of Jesus Christ to the earth fulfilled the predictions of the Old Testament. We read in John's gospel:

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth” (John 1:45 NRSV).

Jesus of Nazareth was the long-awaited Messiah.

When Jesus died upon the cross, He declared His work finished. The Gospel of John records His last words on the cross:

When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” Then bowing His head, He gave up His spirit” (John 19:30 HCSB).

What was finished was the work God the Father gave God the Son to do. Jesus completed the work that He was sent to do.

4. Jesus Brought In A New Age

With Jesus’ death, resurrection, ascension, and the sending of the Holy Spirit to live inside each believer, God instituted a new age. The former was the age of Law. This age has been superseded. Today we are living in the age of grace. The Bible says:

For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came about through Jesus Christ (John 1:17 NET).

The age of grace was established by Jesus Christ.

5. The Old System That God Established Was Abolished

Today God is not working through this old system. In fact, the coming of Jesus Christ has abolished it. The sacrifices that God instituted have been fulfilled in the death of Christ. The writer to the Hebrews stated the following:

The Son is the radiance of his glory and the representation of his essence, and he sustains all things by his powerful word, and so when he had accomplished cleansing for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:3 NET).

Jesus sat down because His work was finished. Indeed, He accomplished what He set out to do. The writer to the Hebrews also stated:

For the law possesses a shadow of the good things to come but not the reality itself, and is therefore completely unable, by the same sacrifices offered continually, year after year, to perfect those who come to worship. . . By his will we have been made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Hebrews 10:1,10 NET).

The Law was only a shadow while Jesus Christ is the reality. Consequently, the Old Testament Law, with all its ceremonies and commandments, has

been abolished with the coming of Christ. Believers are now under the law of Christ in this age of grace.

Conclusion: A Person Cannot Have The Father Without The Son

The Bible is clear that a person cannot have a relationship with God the Father without a relationship with God the Son. Those who are presently rejecting Jesus have also rejected God the Father. John wrote:

Anyone who denies the Son doesn't have the Father either. But anyone who confesses the Son has the Father also (1 John 2:23 NLT).

Therefore, while in the previous age God could be approached by those exercising faith through the Old Testament system, that system is no longer in effect.

Today a person must believe in Jesus Christ in order to be saved. There is no other way in which a person can reach God.

Summary To Question 33

Can A Person Reach The True God Through Judaism?

The Old Testament represents God's revelation to humanity concerning His person and plan. In that divine plan He predicted that a Messiah, or Christ, would come and deliver His people from sin and from their enemies. God set up an elaborate system of law, sacrifice, and behavior that looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. In point of fact, the entire Old Testament system looked forward to the coming of the Christ.

The promises of the Old Testament have been fulfilled. The Bible says that the Christ has now come in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth. With the coming of Jesus those laws, ceremonies and rules have had their fulfillment. They were only a shadow of what was to come. The old system has been abolished and a new one put in its place. Judaism attempts to live under the old system. Consequently, it does not represent what God is doing on earth today.

Therefore, Judaism rejects the complete revelation of God in the Person of Jesus Christ. In this present age, only Christianity provides the truth concerning how a person can know the one, true God.

Although the God of the Old Testament is the same God as portrayed in the New Testament, today God has made only one way to reach Him. This is through Jesus Christ alone. According to the New Testament, Jesus is the only way in which the living God can be known. This is the unified claim of the New Testament writers. There is one way to reach the one God and this is through the Person of Jesus Christ. Judaism has been superseded by Christianity.

Question 34

What Is Dualism?

Often, we hear people speak about “dualism” when referring to the problem of good versus evil, right and wrong. Just what exactly is dualism? What does it teach?

Dualism Defined: There Are Two Eternal Powers, Good And Evil, Who Are Opposed To Each Other

Dualism argues that there are two equal and opposing realities, good and evil. These forces are in an eternal battle with one another. There are a number of religions, such as Taoism, that hold to an eternal dualism. These see all of reality consisting of these two opposing forces. Simply put, there is the good side of the force and the dark side of the force—as in the “Star Wars” movies. These two forces remain in an eternal struggle.

Response To Dualism

While dualism is popular with a number of people it is not taught in Scripture. A number of important points need to be made.

1. God Alone Has Existed Eternally

The dualistic idea is not biblical. Scripture does not teach that there are two equal opposing forces that have eternally existed. God alone has existed eternally. The psalmist wrote:

Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God (Psalm 90:2 NIV).

Only God has eternally existed. Everything else has been created by Him. Only He is eternal.

2. Evil Is Not Eternal

Evil does not have eternal existence. When God created the heavens and the earth everything was created perfect. The Book of Genesis says:

And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day (Genesis 1:31 KJV).

There was no evil anywhere when God finished creating the heavens and the earth—the universe. Evil only entered the universe at a certain point of time in the past.

Therefore, there has been no eternal struggle between good and evil.

3. God And Satan Are Not Equals

There are those who say that the biblical teaching regarding God and Satan shows an eternal dualism—an eternal struggle of good versus evil. However, this is not correct. Satan is a created being, who was originally created perfect, but chose to rebel against God. It was only at that time that evil came into existence. Therefore, there has been no eternal struggle between God and the devil, between good and evil.

In addition, as a created being the devil has none of the divine attributes which God possesses. The devil is not all-powerful, all-knowing, or everywhere present. He is not God's opposite.

4. There Will Be An End Of Satan

There is good news! The Bible also predicts that the devil will have an end. He will not be the eternal foe of God.

The Book of Revelation tells us about his end. It says:

And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Revelation 20:10 NRSV).

Therefore, there will be no eternal struggle between God and Satan because Satan will be banished from God's presence.

Conclusion: God Alone Is The Only Eternal Being In The Universe

Contrary to the teaching of dualism, God alone is the only eternal being in the universe. There is no eternal evil character, such as the devil, neither has there been some eternal evil force. Thus, there is no necessity of assuming that some cosmic struggle of good and evil has always been occurring, or always will be occurring.

Summary To Question 34 What Is Dualism?

Dualism is the idea that there are two opposite eternal forces in the universe, one for good and one for evil. Good and evil become two equal gods that are in conflict. Although taught in some religious systems, dualism finds no support in Scripture.

Only God has existed eternally. Everything else in the universe came along at some point in time. All other beings are created while God is the Creator.

We also find that evil has not existed eternally alongside God. Evil only came into being after God had created the universe. There has not been this eternal struggle.

This brings us to the foe of God, the devil. He is not the opposite of God. For one thing, he has not eternally existed. There was a time when he did

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

not exist. Furthermore, as a created being, he does not possess God's divine attributes. Satan is not all-knowing, all-powerful, or everywhere present.

To make it crystal clear, that there will not be an eternal struggle of good versus evil, the Bible says that Satan will one day be banished into the lake of fire. Thus, he will not be the eternal enemy of God. He will meet his demise.

Consequently, although there is a cosmic fight between good and evil, it is not an equal fight. God is the Creator while Satan is merely a creature. Dualism fails to discover the good God who will judge evil.

Question 35

What Is Animism?

Animism is a term which goes back to the 19th century. It is derived from a Latin word *anima* which means “breath” or “soul.” The term was coined by a man named E.B. Tylor who was one of the founders of modern anthropology. Tylor, applying Darwin’s theory of evolution to the religious realm, reckoned that religion started off as something primitive. He alleged that the first religion was animism.

Animists believe there are innumerable spirits or ghosts which are behind events in the natural world. Indeed, animists see a spirit or soul living in every object—including plants, rocks, and animals. Consequently, everything in the world is, in some sense, alive.

According to Tylor, as humans progressed so did their understanding of the spiritual world around them. From animism, the worship of many gods, or polytheism developed. Eventually polytheism led to the worship of one God, or monotheism. Thus, animism was the belief of early man in his primitive stage. As humans evolved so did their religious beliefs.

There Is No Evidence That This Has Taken Place

While this theory became popular, and still remains popular in some circles, there was no evidence to support that this is what actually happened. Nowhere do we find any historical confirmation that humans moved from a simple animistic belief to a more developed belief in one God.

Indeed, various forms of animism are still practiced today all over the world. In fact, it has been estimated that up to 40% of the population of the earth have some sort of animistic belief. Even in developed countries, such as Japan, animism exists in the form of ancestor worship.

This is a belief that deceased relatives can actually exercise influence on those who are living. It is assumed that these dead ancestors are interested in the affairs of the living. Consequently, there is the attempt of the living to placate those who have died.

To sum up, there is no evidence that animism was a primitive religious belief that gave way to more developed or sophisticated religious beliefs. Animism, in a number of forms, is alive and well today.

Bible Evaluation Of Animism

Animists do not believe in one personal God but rather in innumerable impersonal spirits. Consequently, they are at odds with what the Bible has to say about unseen world.

1. Spirit Beings Are Under God's Authority

While the Bible teaches that spiritual beings do exist, all of them are under the ultimate authority of the one true God. These spirits have limited ability to do harm to individuals.

In fact, in an episode recorded in the Book of Job, we are told that Satan, a spirit-being and the chief adversary of the Lord, had to seek His permission to cause trouble to Job. The Bible explains what happened in this manner:

One day the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. The LORD asked Satan, "Where have you come from?" "From roaming through the earth," Satan answered Him, "and walking around on it." Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? No one else on earth is like him, a man of perfect integrity, who fears God and turns away from evil." Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Haven't You placed a hedge around him, his household, and everything he owns? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions are spread out in the land. But stretch out Your hand and strike everything he owns, and he will surely curse You to Your face." "Very well," the LORD told Satan, "everything he owns is in your power. However, you must not lay a hand on Job [himself]." So Satan went out from the LORD's presence (Job 1:6-12 HCSB)

We see that Satan was only able to do to Job that which the Lord allowed. Thus, the believer is under the protection of the Lord. Spirits have no ability to harm or harass people unless the Lord allows it to happen. The Apostle John wrote:

Children, you belong to God, and you have defeated these enemies. God's Spirit is in you and is more powerful than the one that is in the world (1 John 4:4 CEV).

The believer should take comfort in this all-important truth. We do not have to fear spirits—as do those who accept the beliefs of animism.

2. Spirits Do Not Reside In Inanimate Objects

There is something else. The Bible does not teach that inanimate objects such as rocks or trees, or the sun and the moon, have spirits of the dead residing in them. Neither do we find that the spirits of the dead reside in animals. Indeed, there is nothing in Scripture that says the spirits of the dead have the ability to wander around and reside in inanimate objects.

There is one episode in Scripture where it speaks of evil spirits entering animals. This is the account recorded in the gospels of Jesus casting out demons and sending them into a herd of pigs. However, in this instance the pigs immediately drowned themselves rather than being inhabited by these spirits! The behavior of the pigs certainly does not support the idea that evil spirits could reside in animals.

3. Spirits Can Live In Humans

Evil spirits do exist, and they are able to reside in humans. The Bible refers to this as “demon-possession” or a person being “demonized.” Scripture does provide examples of people being demon-possessed. It also records examples of Jesus driving out demons that controlled the behavior of certain people.

However, demon-possession is something that cannot happen to the believer because each Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. We deal with this issue of demons in great detail in our book on “Evil Angels, Demons, And The Occult.”

4. Christians Are Not To Attempt To Contact Spirits

As we examine the Scripture, we find that it is clear on this subject. God’s people are to have nothing to do with any type of animistic belief or practice. Any attempt to contact spirits of the dead, worship them, or appease them in any way, is strongly condemned in Scripture. We find the following warning given to the children of Israel as they were about to enter the Promised Land:

When you arrive in the land the LORD your God is giving you, be very careful not to imitate the detestable customs of the nations living there. For example, never sacrifice your son or daughter as a burnt offering. And do not let your people practice fortune-telling or sorcery, or allow them to interpret omens, or engage in witchcraft, or cast spells, or function as mediums or psychics, or call forth the spirits of the dead. Anyone who does these things is an object of horror and disgust to the LORD. It is because the other nations have done these things that the LORD your God will drive them out ahead of you. You must be blameless before the LORD your God. The people you are about to displace consult with sorcerers and fortune-tellers, but the LORD your God forbids you to do such things (Deuteronomy 18:9-14 NLT).

The Bible consistently condemns all forms of worshipping the spirits of the dead or attempting to contact them. While spiritual beings exist, they do not exist or function in the same way as animists believe. The beliefs of animists are not biblical. Hence, they are wrong.

Summary To Question 35

What Is Animism?

Animism is a general term given to certain religious beliefs which imagine that spirits are living in all objects. Animists believe that these spirits have the power to do good or to do harm. It was once popular to think that animism was the earliest form of religion practiced by primitive humans. From animism came the belief in many gods, or polytheism. Eventually this led to monotheism—the belief in one God.

This evolutionary theory of religious beliefs has no evidence to support it. Indeed, the idea that spirits of the dead dwell in animals, as well as in

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

inanimate objects, is not limited to ancient times. Today we can find millions of people worldwide who hold to some form of animism. People still worship the sun, moon, and stars because they believe these inanimate objects have spirits residing in them.

The Bible does not teach that inanimate objects are inhabited by spirits, or ghosts. While acknowledging the existence of spirits, both good and evil, these spirits do not control events as animists believe.

The biblical example of Job shows that evil spirits are limited in what they can do. Satan, who is a spirit-being, had to ask the Lord for permission to test Job. In other words, God limited what the devil was allowed to do. Thus, we find that the ultimate control of all things belongs to the God of the Bible. Therefore, while the Christian should respect the power these spirit-beings may have, we are not to fear them. The Lord is our Protector.

Moreover, believers are warned not to have anything to do with animistic beliefs or practices. We are to stay away from such things. Dabbling in this sort of practice can cause us real harm.

Instead of seeking after the spirits of the dead, our worship should be directed toward the only God who exists—the God of the Bible.

Question 36

What Is Polytheism? (The Worship In Many gods)

In the ancient world most people were polytheists. The nation of Israel, God's chosen people, was living in the midst of nations who were polytheistic in their beliefs. This being the case, it is important to know what polytheism is and how it differs from the biblical view of God.

Polytheism Defined: The Worship Of Many Gods

Polytheism is the worship of many gods. It comes from the word *poly* meaning, "many" and *theism* where we get the word "God." People who are polytheists accept the idea that many gods exist. Furthermore, they worship more than one particular god. These gods can be either immaterial spirits, or some type of god that supposedly has material or physical existence. A number of important points need to be made about polytheists.

1. Polytheists Spread Around The Worship

Polytheism is based upon the idea that the universe is governed by more than one force. Therefore, there may be such personages as a water god, a mountain god, a desert god, etc. Each of these gods must be appeased. Consequently, these different forces receive some type of worship.

2. The Biblical World Was Polytheistic

In the world in which the Bible was written, polytheism was the rule. Ancient religions are characterized by the worship of a number of gods. The founder of the Hebrew race, Abraham, was called out from a polytheistic culture by the Lord to be a witness to the one, true God.

Joshua recounted this when Abraham's descendants entered into the Promised Land:

And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: "Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods. "Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac" (Joshua 24:2,3 NKJV).

The worship of many gods was the norm in the ancient world.

3. The Bible Is Monotheistic: There Is Only One God Who Exists

In the background of a world that believed in, and worshipped, many gods, the nation of Israel was unique. In fact, Scripture, from beginning to end, is monotheistic—no other so-called gods have any real substance.

Isaiah the prophet recorded God saying the following:

Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other (Isaiah 45:22 NIV).

The God of the Bible is the only God who exists.

4. The God Of Scripture Is Unique Among The So-called gods

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, he emphasized that the God of Scripture is different. Indeed, He is unique among the other so-called gods. Paul explained the difference between the God of the Bible, which does exist, and these other gods, which do not exist:

According to some people, there are many so-called gods and many lords, both in heaven and on earth. But we know that there is only one God, the Father, who created everything, and we exist for him. And there is only one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom God made everything and through whom we have been given life (1 Corinthians 8:5,6 NLT).

These other gods who people worship are not real. Indeed, they have no substance. There is only one God which truly exists. This is the God revealed in the Bible.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians and compared the false gods to the true God. He made the following comment:

For they themselves report about us what kind of reception we had from you: how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God (1 Thessalonians 1:9 HCSB).

In contrast to idols, there is the living and true God.

Paul wrote to Timothy that only one God exists, and there is only one way that humanity can approach Him. This is exclusively through Jesus Christ:

For there is one God and one intermediary between God and humanity, Christ Jesus, himself human (1 Timothy 2:5 NET).

This is the united message of Scripture; only one God exists. The New Testament makes it clear that this one God can only be approached in one way.

In addition, the Bible says that no one can be compared to the Lord, the living God of the Bible.

We read the following in the Book of Exodus:

Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you— majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? (Exodus 15:11 NIV).

There is no God like the God of Scripture. None.

Consequently, there is no doubt that Scripture presents the truth that there is only one God who exists. This one God cannot be compared to the non-existent gods of the other nations. He alone is God.

5. The Mission Of Israel: Testify To The One, True, God

The mission of the nation Israel was to witness to the world about the only God who existed—the One who can save people from their sins. The prophet Isaiah records the Lord saying the following to the nation:

“But you are my witnesses, O Israel!” says the LORD. “And you are my servant. You have been chosen to know me, believe in me, and understand that I alone am God. There is no other God; there never has been and never will be. I am the LORD, and there is no other Savior” (Isaiah 43:10,11 NLT).

Israel was to testify to the existence of the God of Scripture. Their message was simple: there is no other God who exists and there never will be any other one. Thus, worship belongs to Him alone.

When the true God was rejected, people invented their own objects of worship. Rather than worshipping the one true God who is Lord over all things, they divided up the power and worshipped a number of forces. In other words, they became polytheists.

Paul wrote to the Romans about this rejection of God and the replacement of Him with worthless objects of worship:

Because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen (Romans 1:25 NRSV).

Worship of the Creator was substituted with worship of the creation.

Polytheism was indeed prevalent during biblical times. However, we should not assume that polytheism was only practiced then.

Indeed, today we find polytheism in many cultures such as those who worship the spirits of their dead ancestors.

The Problems With Believing In Many gods (Polytheism)

We now come to our evaluation of polytheism. As we will discover, there are a number of problems with believing in many gods.

They include the following.

1. Polytheism Undermines God's Character And His Claims

To begin with, the idea that many gods exist undermines the character of the God of the Bible. Instead of being the only God who exists as the Bible says, He is now one of many. His uniqueness is lost.

Isaiah the prophet records the following words of the Lord which refute this idea of many gods existing:

This is what the Lord, Israel's king, says, their protector, the Lord who commands armies: "I am the first and I am the last, there is no God but me" (Isaiah 44:6 NET).

As the only God who exists, the God of the Bible shares His glory with no one. No other object in the universe is worthy of worship.

2. There Is A Lack Of Power Among The gods

There is also the problem of power. The gods in any polytheistic system lack the power to do everything. By definition, in a world that believes that many gods exist, the power among them is shared. Not one of these many gods is able to do everything. Therefore, each one of them is subject to limitations of their power. In the system of polytheism, there is no god who can ultimately save, no god who people can ultimately trust.

3. Worship Has To Be Spread Out

Because more than one god supposedly exists, worship must be spread around to all the different deities. This does not allow any one god to receive the worship of everyone. Furthermore, one would never be certain as to which of these gods truly deserved their worship. None of them can be of help all of the time because none of them is all-powerful.

Therefore, polytheism, with its belief in many gods falls short in couple of ways.

First, it is in contradiction to the God of the Bible. These so-called gods just do not exist. They only exist in the minds of people.

In addition, those who are polytheists cannot have any confidence in the gods they are worshipping. Ultimately, nobody can know whether they are giving their worship to the right god, or if that god can truly do anything for them.

Therefore, polytheism, as a system of belief, should be soundly rejected.

Summary To Question 36

What Is Polytheism? (The Worship Of Many gods)

In the ancient world there were no atheists. Ancient religions worshipped many gods instead of the one, true God. The worship of many gods is called polytheism while the worship of one God is called monotheism.

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

Polytheism distorts the true picture of God. Indeed, it undermines His character. Polytheism creates many gods, but misses the one true God. It contradicts what the Scripture says about the God of the Bible—He is the only One who exists.

In addition, the gods in the polytheistic system lack absolute power. There is no single god who has the ability to save. Power is shared among them. In a polytheistic system, nobody can be certain if the god they worship is powerful enough to grant their desires.

Furthermore, worship must be spread among these various gods. This being the case, humans would never have assurance that the god they are worshipping deserves their worship or that this god can truly do anything for them.

Consequently, those who are polytheists can have no real security in their beliefs. What a contrast to the God of the Bible! Those who trust in Him can have security in the fact that He is the only God who exists and that He is in complete control of all things.

Question 37

What Is Henotheism? (The Belief In Many gods But The Worship Of Only One Of Them)

There is one particular belief system that is similar to polytheism—the belief and worship of many gods. This system is known as “henotheism.” There are a number of important points to consider about henotheism.

Henotheism Defined: Belief In Many Gods But The Worship Of Only One

Henotheism is the belief that many gods exist. Yet the henotheist worships only one of these gods. A henotheist would admit that many gods have real existence and are able to be worshipped. However, the henotheist chooses to worship only one of these many gods. This sets the henotheist apart from the polytheist who worships many gods.

Some Problems With Henotheism

There are problems with the henotheist position from a biblical standpoint. They include the following.

1. They Believe The Same As The Polytheists: Many gods Exist

The first problem with henotheism is that they believe in the existence of many gods. Although henotheists worship only one of these many gods, they admit to the existence of other gods. In this sense they are the same as the polytheists. In other words, they deny that only one God exists.

The Bible rejects the idea of the existence of other gods. These so-called gods have no real substance. There is only one God by nature. This is the God of Scripture.

Paul wrote to the Galatians about this important truth:

Before you Gentiles knew God, you were slaves to so-called gods that do not even exist (Galatians 4:8 NLT).

Scripture says that only one God has genuine existence—the God of the Bible. He is only one God who is God by nature. Consequently, there are not many gods that exist like the henotheist believes. None of the other so-called gods are real.

The prophet Isaiah records the Lord saying that He alone is God:

This is what the LORD, the King of Israel and its Redeemer, the LORD of Hosts, say I am the first and I am the last. There is no God but Me (Isaiah 44:6 HCSB).

Consequently, people do not have the choice to worship one god among many gods because only one God exists.

2. They Cannot Be Certain About The Power Of The gods They Are Worshipping

If a person believes in many gods but chooses to worship only one of them, they have a number of problems.

For one thing, they cannot be certain that the god they are worshipping will be powerful enough to grant their desires. If a god is not all-powerful, there is always the chance of another god conquering him. He may be the chief god but certainly he is not all-powerful. This is not a very comforting thought.

Therefore, there will never be any sense of certainty that the request to a particular god will be granted. Consequently, a henotheist can never have any real security that their prayers will be answered.

At best, they can only hope that their god is powerful enough to help them to some degree.

3. The God Of Scripture Presents No Problem

No problem like this exists when one worships the God of the Bible. First, He is the only God which exists. Consequently, one does not have to choose among the gods as to which one to worship.

Thus, no choice has to be made. He is the only one who is there.

Next, He is all-powerful. Hence, there is no need to worry that He can be conquered by another god—because there is no other God! He alone has all-power.

Thus, the God of the Bible can do whatever needs to be done. We can be confident that He will answer our prayers. There is no need to be concerned that our prayers will be ignored.

Therefore, the henotheist has no security whatsoever while the believer in the God of the Bible can be secure in all things.

**Summary To Question 37
What Is Henotheism? (The Belief In Many Gods
But The Worship Of Only One Of Them)**

The henotheist, like the polytheist, admits that many gods exist in the world. For whatever reason, they choose to worship only one of these gods. This is what distinguishes a henotheist from a polytheist. They not only believe in more than one God—polytheists worship these many gods.

However, the Bible says that only one God exists—it is only the God who is revealed in Scripture that has genuine substance. All the other so-called

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

gods are false gods. Consequently, He is the only God who is to be worshipped.

In addition, there is a practical problem for the henotheist. They can never be certain that their particular god can perform for them. If many gods exist, there is always the possibility of one god conquering another. Therefore, henotheism gives no real security for the person who chooses to worship one god out of many. The god whom they choose might not be able to grant their requests. He may lack the power.

This is in contrast to the God of the Bible. First, no choice among the gods has to be made because He is the only God which exists. There are no others. In addition, since no other God exists, there is no fear that He will be conquered by another.

Knowing these things gives real security to the believer. We can be assured that our prayers will be answered and that our lives will always be under His control. What a contrast this is to the henotheist who cannot have assurance about anything!

Question 38

If The God Of The Bible Is The Only One Who Exists, Then Why Does Scripture Speak Of Other gods?

Apart from the God of the Bible, could other gods possibly exist? Does the Bible have anything to say about the existence of other gods? From Scripture we learn the following.

1. There Are No Other gods That Do Exist

The Bible is clear that there is only one eternal God who exists. Isaiah records the Lord saying the following:

“You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me” (Isaiah 43:10 NIV).

There was no god before Him, neither shall there be any god formed after Him.

Isaiah also records the Lord saying this:

I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me (Isaiah 45:5 NIV).

Again, we have the emphasis. There is no other god.

We find the same truth in the New Testament. Paul wrote to the Romans emphasizing the existence of only one God. He said:

Since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith (Romans 3:30 NIV).

There is no doubt that the Bible teaches that only one God exists. Indeed, this is the unified belief from beginning to end.

2. These So-Called gods Have No Substance

If only one God exists, then why do we find Scripture making reference to false gods? This is one of these issues where we must clearly understand what the Bible is saying. While the Bible makes reference to false gods, it does not state that these are actual beings who exist. We must appreciate this distinction. The Apostle Paul wrote:

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods (Galatians 4:8 NRSV).

Only one God exists. By nature, these so-called gods are not gods. In other words, they are called gods but they do not exist.

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

We read the following powerful statement in the Book of Jeremiah where the comparison is made between the true God and the gods that the various heathen nations worshipped:

But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath. “Tell them this: “These gods, who did not make the heavens and the earth, will perish from the earth and from under the heavens”” (Jeremiah 10:10,11 NIV).

It is the God of the Bible who is the Creator of the universe. It was not these false gods which were inventions in the minds of people.

3. They Cannot Compare To The Biblical God

Scripture shows that these false gods are not to be compared with the one, true God. The Lord said the following of Himself:

To whom will you compare me or count me equal? To whom will you liken me that we may be compared? Some pour out gold from their bags and weigh out silver on the scales; they hire a goldsmith to make it into a god, and they bow down and worship it. They lift it to their shoulders and carry it; they set it up in its place, and there it stands. From that spot it cannot move. Though one cries out to it, it does not answer; it cannot save him from his troubles (Isaiah 46:5-7 NIV).

The Lord, the God of Scripture, is incomparable. Nobody can, or should, compare Him to these worthless idols that people have to carry around.

4. They Are Inventions In The Minds Of Humans

This brings us to the origin of these gods. These so-called gods were inventions in the minds of people who rejected the truth of the one true God. The psalmist wrote:

For our God is in the heavens, and he does as he wishes. Their idols are merely things of silver and gold, shaped by human hands. They cannot talk, though they have mouths, or see, though they have eyes! They cannot hear with their ears, or smell with their noses, or feel with their hands, or walk with their feet, or utter sounds with their throats! And those who make them are just like them, as are all who trust in them (Psalm 115:3-8 NLT).

Human hands create these idols. They cannot move, speak, or think for themselves. They have no ability to help those in trouble. In short, they are not real.

5. There Is No Room For Another God To Exist

Also there is no room in the universe for another God to exist. Scripture says that God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere present. He is

without limits. It would be absurd to believe that two unlimited beings could occupy the same space.

If another god did exist, then God would be limited. However, the Bible says God has no limitations.

Therefore, when Scripture speaks about other gods it is not acknowledging that they truly exist. It is using this term to compare these worthless idols to the one true God who does exist. Indeed, the Bible is clear as to which God exists and which gods do not.

Summary To Question 38
If The God Of The Bible The Only One Who Exists, Then
Why Does Scripture Speak Of Other gods?

The Bible says that only one God exists, but it also speaks about false gods? Why does it do this?

While the Bible speaks of false gods, Scripture makes it clear that these gods have no real substance. They are the imagination of those people who worship them. These various gods of the heathen nations are only mentioned to contrast them to the God of Scripture who is indeed real. He exists, they do not.

Since the God of the Bible has given us reason to believe in His existence, whatever He might say on the matter of other gods is final. Because God says He is the only God who exists, this solves the question. There are no other true gods.

In addition, if another God did exist, then God would not be the self-existent, all-powerful God. Two all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere-present beings could not occupy the same space. There is only one all-powerful God in the universe. This is the God of the Bible.

Question 39

Is Everything That Exists Part Of God? (Pantheism)

One popular way of looking at ultimate reality is known as “pantheism.” Pantheism sees God and the universe as basically being the same thing. In other words, there is no distinction between them. A number of important points about pantheism need to be made.

Pantheism Defined: God Is Everything And Everything Is God

The term pantheism is derived from two Greek words *pan* and *theos*. Pan means “all or everything” and theos means “God.” Pantheism, therefore, means god is everything and everything is god.

There Is No Distinction Between The Creator And The Created In Pantheism

Pantheism teaches that everything that exists is part of one single reality and that reality is called god. God is all, and all is god. There is no distinction between the creature and the creator in pantheism. God is equal to anything and everything.

Trees and rocks, birds and land animals, the wind and the rain, everything that exists, including human beings, is declared to be parts of God. God expresses himself through these substances and forces.

The concept of a personal God, who created the universe as a separate substance, is foreign to pantheism. Pantheism depersonalizes any idea of God.

The Problems With Pantheism

There are a number of problems with believing the pantheistic point of view from a biblical perspective.

They include the following.

1. The God Of The Bible Is Distinct From Creation: He Exists Apart From The Universe

The first verse of the Bible refutes the idea of pantheism. In no uncertain terms, it makes it clear that God is not the same as the created universe. It reads as follows:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1 KJV).

According to this opening verse in Scripture, the universe and God are not the same thing. Indeed, God created the universe. He did not make it out of Himself. The Apostle Paul wrote:

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse (Romans 1:20 NKJV).

God's eternal power is seen by His creation. It is not His Person because He is not part of the created universe. He has existence separate from it.

2. The Universe Was Something Newly Created: It Has Not Existed Eternally

There is something else. The universe has not existed eternally, but God has. When God created the universe, He brought into being something different from Himself. The Bible says:

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen has been made from things that are not visible (Hebrews 11:3 HCSB).

Pantheism blurs this distinction.

3. God Made Everything In The Universe Except Himself

Scripture teaches that God made everything except Himself. The Apostle Paul said the following to a crowd in Athens:

The God who made the world and everything in it—He is Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in shrines made by hands (Acts 17:24 HCSB).

Everything in the universe is the result of God's creative activity. Everything. The only thing He did not create was Himself. He has not been created.

4. God Is The Sustainer Of All Things

The living God is also the Sustainer of the universe which He created.

Paul wrote the following to the church at Colosse:

For all things in heaven and on earth were created by him—all things, whether visible or invisible, whether thrones or dominions, whether principalities or powers—all things were created through him and for him. He himself is before all things and all things are held together in him (Colossians 1:16,17 NET).

The universe is not God rather it depends upon God for its existence. He created it and He sustains it.

5. The Origination Of Pantheism: The Rejection Of God's Truth

Scripture gives us a clue as to the origination of pantheism. Speaking of the eternal God, Paul wrote the following to the Church at Rome:

For although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks, but they became futile in their thoughts and their senseless hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for an image resembling mortal human beings or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles (Romans 1:21-23 NET).

When people on the earth began to reject the idea that the God of the Bible existed, they substituted the creation for the Creator. Realizing that humanity needed something big and powerful to worship, humans turned their affections to the creation, rather than the Creator. This is the origin of pantheism.

6. Pantheism Brings Confusion Between Creator And The Created

Pantheism confuses God with His creation. The art is not the artist, the poem is not the poet, the music is not the musician, and the creation is not the Creator. We are the clay and the Lord is the potter. We should never confuse the two. We read in Isaiah:

Your thinking is perverse! Should the potter be regarded as clay? Should the thing made say about its maker, "He didn't make me"? Or should the pottery say about the potter, "He doesn't understand"? (Isaiah 29:16 NET).

The potter is not the clay. This is something we should never forget.

7. The Present World Will Someday Pass Away

While God has revealed Himself through nature, He is separate and above it. Nature is not divine. Scripture says that the present heavens and earth will pass away, but that God will exist forever. Peter wrote the following:

But by the same word the present heavens and earth are held in store for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men (2 Peter 3:7 HCSB).

The pantheist position is: without the universe, there is no God. The Christian position is as follows: if the universe were taken away, God still exists. The Bible says the present heaven will one day disappear.

Peter also wrote:

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief; when it comes, the heavens will disappear with a horrific noise, and the celestial bodies

will melt away in a blaze, and the earth and every deed done on it will be laid bare (2 Peter 3:10 NET).

Though the present heavens will one day disappear the Lord will continue to exist. He is eternal but the universe is not.

8. Good And Evil Is Blurred In Pantheism

Pantheism must also deny the existence of evil. Since everything that exists is God, this must, of necessity, include evil. Consequently, those who hold to a pantheistic belief system do not really have an answer for the problem of evil because they do not see it as a problem.

This is in contrast to Christianity which teaches that evil does exist but it was not the creation of a good God. Evil came about through the choice given to creatures who had a free-will.

We can compare pantheism, atheism, and Christianity in their views of God and evil. Pantheism denies that evil exists, yet accepts the idea of God. Atheism denies that God exists yet recognizes the problem of evil. Christianity recognizes the problem of evil and accepts the idea that God exists. These are some of the distinctions between these belief systems.

As far as pantheism is concerned, it contradicts all the main beliefs of the Christian faith. Consequently, it should be soundly rejected.

Summary To Question 39 Is Everything That Exists Part Of God? (Pantheism)

One of the alternatives to the God of the Bible is known as pantheism. Pantheism states that God is equal to anything and everything. All things that exist are part of one reality. This reality is called God. There is no distinction between God and the creation in pantheism.

This is not the biblical idea of God. There are a number of reasons as to why this is so.

The god of pantheism is impersonal while the God of Scripture is the personal Creator. Thus, we have the contrast between the personal and impersonal.

God is distinct from His creation according to the Bible but not according to pantheism. When we read the Scripture, we find that God created the universe. It had no existence before He created it. Therefore, the universe is not part of His nature. He existed before there was such a thing as a universe.

Thus, pantheism confuses the creature with the Creator. It makes everything god and misses the God of everything. This belief originated when people exchanged the truth of God and substituted the worship of created things. People worshiped the creation instead of the Creator.

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

The Bible also says that the physical universe will one day pass away but the God which created the universe will remain. Obviously He is not the same entity as the universe.

There is also the fact that pantheism denies the existence of evil. If everything which exists is termed as "God," then this must include evil. Thus, good and evil do not exist. Pantheists can give no answers for all the evil we find in this world. Indeed, they do not see it as a problem.

Therefore, pantheism is contradictory to the biblical view of God in every conceivable area. Either the Bible is true or pantheism is true. There is sufficient objective evidence to believe that the message of Scripture is true but there is none whatsoever which supports pantheism.

Question 40

Is God Subject To Change (Pantheism, Process Theology)

There is a relatively recent view of the nature of God known as “pantheism.” This has the idea that God is “in everything.” This is also known as process theology.

Process Theology: A Changing God

Process theology can be simply defined as follows. Since everything in the universe evolves or changes, it is argued that God too is constantly evolving or changing. In other words, He is not a stagnant being. He is like the universe in which He created.

This view goes further. It says that God must change. If not, then nothing humans do will have any effect on Him. Life would not have any real meaning if human beings cannot do anything to make God act. Consequently, humanity is basically irrelevant if God never changes. Therefore, it is argued that God must be a changing God for human beings to have any relevance.

It Is A Mixture Of Pantheism And Classical Theism: God Is Not The Same As The World But He Needs The World

One way to look at the beliefs of process theology is to see it as sort of a mixture of classical Christian belief about God, and pantheism. Pantheism makes no distinction between God and the universe. In pantheism the creator and the creation are identical.

The biblical position is that God and the world are not identical. God did not create the world as an extension of Himself, nor did He create it from part of His own being. Neither does God need the world for His existence, or to give Him any meaning.

Though He intimately works with the creatures in this world, He is above the world in the sense that He is independent from it. Simply stated, God does not need the world. God does not need anything.

Process theology agrees that God is not identical to the world, but it claims that God does indeed need the universe. He is not independent of the world but rather interdependent with it. The world is what gives meaning to God’s existence. He needs the world as much as the world needs him.

In process theology, God has been compared to the head while the universe has been compared to a body. As the head cannot function without the body, so God cannot function without the universe.

God Grows In His Knowledge: He Is Not All-Knowing

The idea of God being omniscient, or having all knowledge, is re-defined in panentheism. While it is taught that God has all knowledge, it is also taught that he can learn new things. His perfect knowledge can be improved upon.

For example, the God of process theology knows the past and present exhaustively, but he does not know the future. He does not know how things are going to turn out. He is growing in knowledge with the rest of his creation. Therefore, he is spoken of as being “in process” or becoming something that he presently is not.

There is more. Because he is relational God, and not a controlling God, he cannot guarantee that good will eventually triumph over evil. By taking risks the God of process theology risks evil winning in the end. Obviously, there is no certainty to the future in this view of God.

Humanity, Not God, Is At The Center Of Process Theology

We should also note that process theology does not see God’s chief aim as declaring who he is, and receiving the deserved honor and glory from his creatures. Rather the God of process theology desires that humans, and their enjoyment, be his highest priority. The God of process theology has human beings chiefly in mind rather than himself.

Biblical Response To Process Theology

Process theology uses and quotes the Bible selectively to come to its view of God. This is why it arrives at a distorted picture of God’s character. The biblical response to this perspective is as follows.

1. God’s Basic Nature Never Changes

The God of the Bible is changeless in His character. His attributes do not change. Indeed, they always remain the same. The Bible says:

For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, have not perished (Malachi 3:6 NRSV).

This is one of the central truths of Scripture. The God of the Bible is unchangeable in His attributes.

The writer to the Hebrews declared the same to be true of God the Son, Jesus Christ. He wrote:

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8 KJV).

Jesus will never change in His character. Indeed, He will always remain the same.

Thus, the God of the Bible will always be all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere present. This can never change. He cannot learn anything new because He knows everything.

Perfection in the knowledge of God extends to events that will occur in the future, as well as those that have occurred in the past, and those which are presently occurring. The Lord has said the following about His control over events which will take place in the future:

Remember what happened long ago, for I am God, and there is no other; [I am] God, and no one is like Me. I declare the end from the beginning, and from long ago what is not yet done, saying: My plan will take place, and I will do all My will (Isaiah 46:9-10 HCSB).

God can tell us what will happen in the future because He knows with certainty what will occur. He knows everything.

2. God Is Personally Involved With Humanity

There is something else which must be emphasized. While God does not change in His basic nature, this does not mean that He is uninvolved with humanity. To the contrary, He is personally concerned with everything that is occurring in the lives of human beings. When we get into trouble, He tells us to call upon His name, and He promises to answer us. The Bible says:

God is our secure shelter; he is truly our helper in times of trouble (Psalm 46:1 NET).

The Bible is full of promises like these. The God of Scripture is a God of action. He is actively involved with human beings and their concerns. He is not some God “afar off” in this sense.

3. The Unchanging God Acts Differently In Different Situations

While God’s character does not change, He does act differently in different situations. He is able to respond, as necessary, to various situations that occur. The unchangeable God has the ability to act differently, as the need arises, without any change in His basic nature.

Process theology mistakenly assumes that God must change in His nature in order for Him to respond to differing situations. But this is not the case. While His responses may be different, His nature is always the same.

Therefore, the idea that God is somehow continuing to evolve in His nature, or character, is at odds with the teaching of Scripture.

Process theology, or panentheism, does not accurately reflect the nature of the God of the Bible.

**Summary To Question 40
Is God Subject To Change (Panentheism, Process Theology)**

Process theology, or panentheism, does not believe in the God who is revealed in Scripture. Instead, the god of panentheism is constantly evolving. He does not remain the same in his attributes.

Panentheism is a mixture of pantheism and classical Christian belief. It rejects the idea that God is the same as the universe, as pantheism teaches, but it makes God dependent upon the universe—contrary to classical Christian theism. Instead of seeking his own glory, the God of process theology is more interested in humans and their happiness.

Process theology is different than historic Christianity for a number of reasons. They can be simply stated as follows.

Scripture says God is not dependent upon anything or anyone. He did not need to create the universe. In fact, the God of the Bible needs nothing. He is not interdependent with His created universe. He can certainly exist without it.

In addition, the God of the Bible never changes in His basic nature. He will always be all-knowing, everywhere present, and all-powerful. These attributes will never change.

This, however, does not mean that God is not intimately concerned with the problems of humanity. Rather it merely means that He is unchangeable in His basic attributes. Indeed, if anything is clear from the Bible, it is that God is intimately involved in the lives of His people.

Furthermore, the God of the Bible is not limited in His knowledge of future events. He not only knows what will happen, He also knows every potential thing that may happen. He knows everything.

Therefore, the God of Scripture is not the god of process theology.

Question 41

Could God Have Created The World And Then Backed Off? (Deism)

There are those that hold a view of God's nature called "deism." This view believes in the existence of a personal God, but the God of deism does not become personally involved with His creation. He is a God who is uninvolved.

The Beliefs Of Deism

The beliefs of deism can be summarized as follows.

1. God Created The World

Deism believes that a personal God created the world, set it in motion, but then backed off from his creation. The god of deism does not play an active role in his world, but allows the universe to run by natural and self-sustaining laws that he established.

2. God Does Not Get Personally Involved In The World

Although the deists believe in a supernatural creation of the world, they do not believe in any supernatural intervention in the world. Because there is no supernatural intervention by God, the deists believe that miracles do not occur.

Hence, they deny the truthfulness of the miraculous accounts given in Scripture.

Problems With Deism

When it is compared with the teaching of Scripture, there are a number of insurmountable problems with the deistic position concerning the nature of God.

They include the following.

1. Deism Contradicts Scripture: God Performs Miracles

Deism is in contradiction to the God revealed in Scripture. If God can create the universe, as the deists agree that He did, then He certainly is capable of performing other miracles of less magnitude. This is what the Bible says occurred.

For example, the Bible says that God spoke to Moses in a bush that was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. Scripture also says that God supernaturally guided the children of Israel on their way to the Promised Land by means of a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. This list goes on and on.

Indeed, the Bible, from the first page until the last, is an account of God intervening miraculously in human history. To admit the miracle of creation, and then to deny other miracles is an inconsistent position.

The most important miracle deism denies is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, this is the particular miracle upon which Christianity is based. Basically, deism contradicts the main truths of Scripture. Contrary to deism, God has been involved with humanity from the beginning.

2. The God Of Scripture Is Not The Master Clockmaker

The deist position would have God as a master “clockmaker.” He made the clock, wound it up, and then left it alone. But the Bible portrays God as much more than a great “clockmaker.” He is a loving Father who is personally interested in His children.

God desires that humanity call out to Him when they have a need. The psalmist records God saying:

And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me (Psalm 50:15 NIV).

The deist position, that God created the universe but does not participate in the running of it, is contrary to what the Bible says. God is intimately involved in the affairs of the universe.

3. Deism Has A One-Sided View Of God

The deist position of God is only one-sided. The Bible teaches two important truths with respect to God’s relationship to the world.

First, He is separated from, and exalted above the world and humanity. This is also known as His “transcendence.” We read the following in the Book of Isaiah:

In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple (Isaiah 6:1 NLT).

God is high above the human race in His nature.

Scripture also teaches that God makes His presence known in the world and is near to humanity. The technical term for this is “immanence.” The psalmist wrote:

God is our refuge and strength, a helper who is always found in times of trouble (Psalm 46:1 HCSB).

The Contemporary English Version puts it this way:

God is our mighty fortress, always ready to help in times of trouble (Psalm 46:1 CEV).

Deism overemphasizes the first truth and rejects the second. God is indeed separate from the world that He made, but He is also working in the world.

The main message of the New Testament is that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to come to earth and to die for the sins of the world. He also sent the Holy Spirit to indwell those who trust Him. Consequently, He is intimately involved in His creation.

Therefore, the God of the Bible is above His creation in one sense while personally involved in it in another sense. The deistic view of God is not the biblical view.

Summary To Question 41
Could God Have Created The World And Then Backed Off?
(Deism)

One of the many inadequate views of God is deism. Deism believes that a personal God does exist, and that this personal God created the world. So far, so good.

However, the god of deism left the world to be governed by natural laws. He does not intervene in his creation. This god is a non-miracle worker. Furthermore, he does not supernaturally provide for humanity. In deism, humans are left to themselves to figure out all things. There is no help from the god of deism.

The god of deism is certainly not the same God who has revealed Himself to humanity through the Scriptures. The God of the Bible is separated from the world, but He is also intimately involved in it. We discover this in a number of ways.

For one thing, He is a miracle-working God. From the first page to the last, the Bible reports that God has intervened in our world with His miraculous works. He did not merely create the world and then back off from His creation.

We also discover that the God of Scripture is intimately involved in His creation. He cares for His own. Indeed, He is intimately involved in every aspect of our lives.

In addition, He has also provided for the sin problem of humankind by sending His Son to die for the sins of the world. We are not helplessly wallowing in sin because God has done something about it.

Furthermore, God has also sent the Holy Spirit to reside inside those who trust Jesus. In all things, He looks after the believer. God is involved with us!

The God of the Bible is a God of action and a God of involvement. The god of deism is not. Consequently, the god of deism is not the God of Scripture.

Question 42

How Is God Viewed In The New Age Movement?

The New Age Movement is not one single religion but rather a collection of various beliefs. Since it is the result of a combination of different beliefs, it can be hard to define or pin down. However, there seem to be a number of beliefs which are held by all New agers. This includes specific beliefs about the existence of God and the nature of human beings. These beliefs can be summed up as follows.

1. Everything In The Universe Is Labeled God

In the New Age Movement everything is part of one entity. This one entity is often labeled as “god.” However, god, in New Age thought, is an impersonal force. This force is in every human being as well is in all parts of creation. Consequently, there is no distinction among the New-Agers as to God and his creation.

2. Humans Are Progressing Toward Godhood

In the New Age Movement, it is humans who are the central figure, not god. Indeed, the idea of a personal God who exists independently of humans is rejected. Instead, each of us is on our way to a type of godhood. New Agers accept the theory of evolution in the natural realm as well as in the spiritual realm. What this means is that we are all evolving spiritually as we are evolving biologically. We are evolving into some sort of godhood.

3. There Is No Such Thing As Right Or Wrong

The logical conclusion of accepting the idea that each of us is some sort of a god is that there is no such thing as an objective standard of right and wrong. We make our own rules. Therefore, sin does not really exist. Truth is what we make it. Everything is relative. What is true for you may not be true for me.

4. There Is No Personal Accountability To Anyone

The next step which logical follows is that there no personal accountability for those in the New Age Movement. Why should there be? If each of us is a god who makes up the rules, then we are accountable to nobody but ourselves. We do not have to answer to anyone.

5. There Is No Need For Jesus Christ To Save Us

The last point logically follows the others. Since there is no personal God who has given us a standard of right and wrong, and that we ourselves are divine beings answerable to no one, then there is certainly no need for salvation in the Christian sense of the term.

Therefore, Jesus Christ is looked upon as an example of the potential which is in all of us. He is not seen as a Savior which each human being desperately needs. Indeed, there is no judgment for humans, there is no heaven, no hell to be saved from.

This briefly sums up some of the main beliefs held by those in the New Age Movement.

Response To The New Age View Of God And Humanity

We can make the following response to the New Age view of God and humanity.

1. God Is Distinct From His Creation

Contrary to the New Age Movement, the Bible says that there is a personal God who exists. Furthermore, Scripture makes a distinction between the Creator and His creation. Indeed, they are not part of one entity. Scripture thus separates God the Creator from the things He has created.

In addition, the creation is never personalized. In other words, the sun, the moon, and the stars are never seen as objects that have some type of personality or will. They do not think and feel on their own. They are created impersonal things.

2. Humans Can Never Become God

The New Age Movement assumes that humans can be equated with God. Again, the New Age Movements blurs the distinction between God and His creation. It is true that humans are distinct from non-living things—as well as from other living creatures. However, we are not God. We do not have the power to create. Neither do we have the power over life and death. This belongs to God and to Him alone.

As far as the theory of evolution is concerned, the Bible says that humans are not getting better, or becoming more highly evolved. To the contrary, Scripture says that humans were originally created perfect and that the human race has fallen from this original perfection.

Therefore, the progression of the human race is not toward perfection but rather toward imperfection. The biblical picture of humanity is just the opposite of the theory of evolution.

3. God Has Provided A Standard Of Right And Wrong

According to Scripture, truth is not relative. Indeed, it is absolute. The God of the Bible has provided a standard of right and wrong for humanity. This standard has been set down for us in His Word.

From the Bible, we know how to behave properly. Therefore, we find that there are such things which are right and there are other things which are wrong.

4. We Are Personally Accountable For Our Actions

Since there is a God who exists, who is distinct from His creation and who has provided a standard of right and wrong, we humans are accountable for our actions. We have to answer to Him for our sinful deeds. We do not merely answer to ourselves.

5. We Desperately Need A Savior

Finally, because we are fallen creatures who are held accountable for our actions against a personal loving Creator/God, we are in desperate need of a Savior to be saved from the punishment of hell. The only way in which a person can get to heaven is through the Person of Jesus Christ. He has died as a substitute for us. Indeed, Jesus took upon Himself the penalty for our sins so that we do not have to suffer for them.

One must believe in Him to have eternal life in His presence. Jesus offers this gift of salvation to all who will place their trust in Him.

This sums up the New Age Movement and its views with respect to God and humanity. Obviously, the different perspectives are in complete conflict in all of their main points. They both cannot be true at the same time. Somebody has to be wrong.

Summary To Question 42

How Is God Viewed In The New Age Movement?

The New Age Movement consists of a combination of beliefs which are at variance with the Bible. Indeed, it contradicts every major doctrine of the Christian faith.

For example, New Agers do not believe in a personal God who created the universe. Instead they see the entire universe as some sort of godlike entity. Furthermore, rather than believing in some type of God who is distinct from us, New Agers hold that each of us can attain some type of godhood. In fact, we are constantly evolving into that state.

Since humanity is evolving into a godlike state, we are answerable to no one. We decide our own fate. We determine our own destiny.

Therefore, there is no ultimate standard of right and wrong because we set the standard. There is no accountability for our actions because we are the final judge of what is right and wrong for ourselves. And there is no need for a Savior because there is nothing that we need to be saved from. So, there will be no judgment of the human race. This means there is no heaven or hell after this life is over. This is the New Age position.

In response, the New Age view of God and humanity is at odds with Scripture. The God who exists is a personal loving God who created the universe. The universe is not part of one divine essence.

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

Furthermore, humans, as created beings, cannot attain some type of divine status. We will never become the Creator. Rather we will always be the creature.

Moreover, we do not create our own standard of right and wrong. Rather we must obey the standard God has set down.

However, all of us have fallen short of God's perfect standard. Therefore, as lost sinners we need a Savior. Jesus Christ has provided the only salvation available for the human race. He has died for the sins of the world so that we do not have to come under condemnation.

Those in the New Age Movement need to come to Christ and trust Him as their Savior. If they do believe in Him, then they will escape the judgment of hell because the Bible does indeed teach that there is a hell for those who reject Christ.

When all the evidence is in, the Christian faith and the New Age Movement are at odds with each other in every conceivable way.

Question 43

What Is Atheism?

Atheism is a belief which is held by many people. It is important, therefore, that we have a proper understanding of the beliefs, or non-beliefs, of atheism.

Atheism Defined: God Does Not Exist

The word atheism comes from the Greek prefix *alpha* (*a*) meaning “no or non” and the word *theos* meaning “god or God.” An atheist is one who believes that God does not exist. Simply put, the atheist has no “God beliefs.” The atheist explains all of existence in a natural rather than a supernatural manner. When he or she looks at the world around them, they see it as a product of natural forces. The atheist considers religious belief in a God, or gods, as without ultimate meaning.

There Are Practical And Theoretical Atheists

We need to make the distinction between practical and theoretical atheists. Practical atheists live and speak as though no God exists. They may hold to some belief in God but for all intents and purposes they live their lives without acknowledging God. God does not interfere with their lives, and they do not acknowledge Him with the way they live.

Theoretical atheists claim to hold an intellectual belief that no God exists. They not only live as though no God exists; they also state their belief. Practical atheists far outnumber theoretical atheists.

Problems With Atheism

There are a number of problems with atheism.

1. A Person Must Have Infinite Knowledge To Know God Does Not Exist

Some atheists believe that proof of the non-existence of God is available. They contend that there is convincing evidence that God does not exist. Yet, this type of atheist cannot personally know with certainty that God or gods do not exist. This is because there are only two possible ways that anyone could know that God did not exist.

Since it is possible that a God exists somewhere in the universe who has not communicated to us, a person would have to have complete knowledge of everything that is going on in every part of the universe to categorically make the claim that God does not exist.

Of course, if that person had sufficient knowledge to be able to make the statement that God does not exist, they would be all-knowing and then, by definition, they would be God. Otherwise they could not know with certainty whether or not one God, or many gods, do exist.

2. Special Revelation Could Tell Us That God Does Not Exist

There is a second way that someone could know that God does not exist—if they received a special revelation informing them that there exists no God or gods in the universe. But only God Himself could give that special revelation, so this way of denying God’s existence is also ruled out.

Therefore, a little proof may show that God does exist, while no amount of proof that humanity can gather can ever disprove His existence. Therefore, to state that God does not exist is to commit the fallacy of “categorical denial.”

One should more properly say, “I do not believe that there is evidence of the existence of God” rather than saying there is no God. Many atheists do argue like this. On that basis, the atheist can then present their case as to why they think God does not exist, and the theist, the one who believes in God, can counter the atheist’s arguments as to why they believe that God does indeed exist.

The Bible makes it clear what it thinks of atheism:

Fools say to themselves, “There is no God.” They sin and commit evil deeds; none of them does what is right. (Psalm 14:1 NET).

According to Scripture, the position of the atheist cannot be reasonably held.

There Is No Ultimate Right Or Wrong In Atheism

There is something else that must be recognized. The logical result of being an atheist is that there are no moral absolutes. Indeed, there is no such thing as right and wrong. In denying the existence of God, atheists find nothing greater in the universe than themselves and their own beliefs. There is no Lawgiver or Judge before whom the atheist will someday stand to give an account of their behavior.

Therefore, atheism permits the individual to do whatever he or she wishes to do. Although some atheists have a moral code, they certainly do not have to follow any moral standard. This atheistic belief system gives the entire world a reason to act in an irresponsible and sinful manner.

The Unsolvable Problem For The Atheist

However, this brings up an unsolvable problem for the atheist—the problem of evil. While atheists recognize that evil exists in the world, they cannot appeal to any outside standard to say what is right and what is wrong. This leaves them in the uncomfortable position of denying God but recognizing evil.

In fact, if there is no absolute standard of right and wrong, then why call anything evil? By definition, there is no absolute authority to tell us what is

right and what is wrong. Yet the atheist cannot live consistently with this belief system. When an atheist is wronged, they will complain just as loud as those who believe in an absolute standard of right and wrong. However, according to their own system, there is nobody who can actually say what is right and what is wrong.

The believer in the God of the Bible has no such problem. He or she can examine the Scripture for an absolute standard of right and wrong. Contrary to the atheists, the believer in Jesus Christ knows who we are, why we are alive, and what is going to happen to us when we die. Indeed, the God of the Bible has told us our identity, purpose, and destiny. Atheism can provide no such answers.

Summary To Question 43

What Is Atheism?

Atheism denies the existence of a personal God. They believe there is no convincing evidence that any sort of Deity exists. Some atheists make the claim that no God exists while others say they do not believe that there is any convincing evidence for the existence of God.

Yet there is no way that an atheist can really know this for certain. The atheist would have to have all knowledge of everything in the universe to make such an authoritative claim as to God's non-existence. Strange as it may sound, only God, whose existence is denied by the atheist, could have the ability to prove that no God exists!

Atheists can also be simply divided into two groups. We have the practical atheists and the theoretical atheists. There are more practical atheists than theoretical atheists. Practical atheists merely live as though God does not exist—though they may have some belief in a God. Theoretical atheists state their denial. They openly say that God does not exist. Whatever the case may be, God's existence is denied.

The logical result of atheism is to deny any sense of right and wrong. This opens the door to all types of behavior that threaten the very foundation of human societies. The atheist, by denying the existence of God, replaces God with himself. However, the atheist cannot really live consistently with this position. When they are wronged, they complain. But if each of us sets our own standard or morality, there is nobody to really complain to.

Furthermore, the atheist does not have any answer to the problem of evil. If there is no ultimate standard, then nobody has the right to call anything good or evil. This is one of the many problems for the atheist.

The Bible-believer has no such problem. God has provided an ultimate standard of right and wrong by which we know how to live. The atheist has no such standard.

Question 44

If Atheists Cannot Actually Claim That God Does Not Exist Then How Can They Argue Their Position?

Atheism is a belief which is held by many people. It is usually stated that atheists believe, as well as claim, that God simply does not exist. Indeed, we often hear the statement from atheists that there is no such thing as a God. To them, the idea of God is merely wishful thinking.

Most atheists, at least those who have thought about the issue, do not make the claim “God does not exist.” They realize they are not in a position to make such a claim. Indeed, only a being with all knowledge of all things could know whether there was or wasn’t some God somewhere in the universe.

Perhaps God does exist but is not able to be detected by any means available to us. The atheist does not know whether or not there is an undetectable God out there. Consequently, they cannot know for certain that God does not exist. So, how do they argue?

Atheists Claim Lack Of Belief In God

Instead of saying they believe that God does not exist, many atheists try to turn the argument around. They do not tell us what they believe, but rather what they do *not* believe. In other words, they say that they do not have any “God beliefs.” They are neutral on the subject of God.

Consequently, there is nothing to defend since they haven’t claimed that God does not exist. Indeed, they merely say that they do not have any belief about the subject of God. Consequently, they do not see themselves as denying God’s existence.

This line of reasoning supposedly places them in a position that does not have to be argued or defended. The burden of proof, they say, is on others who claim that there is a God which exists. Doing this puts them in an offensive position rather than a defensive position. What should we say to this type of argument?

The Response To The Atheistic Non-Argument

In response to the claim of the atheist, that they are not really asserting that God does not exist but rather saying they do not have any beliefs about God, we can make the following observations.

1. Atheism Is Logically Impossible

First, while many atheists claim this is what they believe or do not believe, they certainly do not act this way. Indeed, atheistic literature is full of claims that say such things as, “God does not exist” or “The idea of God is logically impossible.” Statements like these do not merely reflect some lack

of belief in anything. Indeed, atheists do have beliefs—an entire belief system or worldview.

This view of the world states that there is no God to answer to. Thus, they make their own rules, follow their own desires, and make their own choices. Consequently, they have constructed a belief system that needs to be defended. They cannot escape the logic of their claims.

2. The Evidence Is Sufficient To Believe In The God Of The Bible

As we have noted, there is sufficient evidence to determine that God does indeed exist. This is the God who has revealed Himself in the pages of the Bible. Furthermore, there is not merely the claim that He exists—there is overwhelming evidence to support this claim.

Indeed, Christianity makes claims that can be investigated and verified. We appeal to the evidence, not to blind faith.

The one God which does exist came into our world in the Person of Jesus Christ. While He was here upon the earth, Jesus made a number of claims about Himself. These claims can be proven to be true or false. In other words, they can be verified when one looks at the evidence.

The problem in many cases is that people do not want to look at the evidence that Jesus has provided, or they incorrectly state the arguments Christians are presenting. However, this does not relieve them of their personal responsibility toward Jesus Christ.

In sum, we conclude that the atheist cannot escape defending his position by claiming lack of beliefs about God. Indeed, they certainly do have beliefs—beliefs which they proclaim loud and long.

Consequently, they must have some evidence to support their claims. As we have pointed out, they have none.

Summary To Question 44 If Atheists Actually Cannot Claim That God Does Not Exist Then How Can They Argue Their Position?

The thinking atheist often argues that they are not claiming God does not exist but rather that they do not have any personal “God beliefs.” They assume that this will relieve them of the responsibility of denying that some God exists out there—somewhere in the universe.

Instead of proclaiming what they do believe, they are claiming some sort of neutrality on the subject. This puts the burden of proof on those who claim that there is a God. They must defend their system while the atheist claims there is no system for them to defend.

This line of reasoning does not work. First, when we listen to atheists, as well as read their literature, we continually find statements which deny

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

God's existence or claim that the idea of God is logically impossible. These are "fact claims." Consequently, there has to be some sort of support for these claims.

Furthermore, atheists construct a view of the world which denies any personal responsibility to a supreme being. They insist there will be no "judgment day" no "heaven or hell." Again these are claims which support a certain view of reality. Thus, there must be some defense made to this position. They cannot escape it by claiming they have no beliefs about God.

The Christian responds by saying that there is one God who does exist. He is the God who has revealed Himself in the Scripture. In the New Testament, this God became a human being in the Person of Jesus Christ. When He came into this world, He made certain claims about Himself. Indeed, Jesus said that He Himself was the one way by which a person could reach the one true God.

Furthermore, Jesus has provided sufficient evidence for humanity to believe the astounding claims which He made. Thus, the claims of Christ are open to an honest investigation of the facts.

To summarize, the atheist cannot escape having his position being evaluated because he merely claims, "lack of beliefs." Atheists do have beliefs which must be weighed and evaluated.

Question 45

What Is Agnosticism?

While there are many people who believe that God does not exist, known as atheists, there are many others who are not certain if God or gods exists. These people are known as agnostics.

Agnostic: One Who Does Not Know Whether God Exists

Agnosticism comes from the Greek prefix *alpha* (*a*) “no, or non,” and the noun *gnosis* “knowledge.” An agnostic is a person who believes that there is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the existence of God or gods. The agnostic criticizes both the theist and atheist for holding their position with such certainty. The agnostic tries to maintain a neutralist position.

The Latin form of the word agnostic is *ignoramus*. However, it would be insulting to call an agnostic an “ignoramus” because of the present-day meaning of the term.

A number of points need to be made about agnosticism.

1. An Agnostic Is Similar To A Skeptic

A term that is similar to agnostic is “skeptic. A skeptic does not believe there is sufficient evidence that God exists. Some people attempt to make a difference between the terms, “agnostic” and “skeptic.” A skeptic does not believe the evidence for God exists, while an agnostic denies that God can be known. While this is true of certain types of agnostics, it is not true of everyone who would claim to be an agnostic. Therefore, it can be proper to use the terms agnostic and skeptic interchangeably.

2. One Type Of Agnostic: It Is Possible To Know If God Exists

There are basically two types of agnostics. One type says that there is insufficient evidence that God exists but leaves open the possibility of attaining that evidence at some future time. This type of agnostic considers it possible to have enough evidence to know with certainty that God exists.

3. Another Type Of Agnostic: It Is Impossible To Know If God Exists

There is another type of agnostic who believes it is impossible for anyone to ever know with certainty whether or not God, or gods, exist. This group feels that the facts are not now available, and never will be available to make such a decision. They argue that the finite cannot grasp the infinite. By definition, God is unknowable.

We can, therefore, break down the categories of agnostics into two groups: those that say we *do not know* whether or not God exists, and those that say *we cannot know* whether or not God exists.

The Biblical Answer To Agnosticism: We Can Know

The Apostle Paul encountered agnostics in his day. The Bible records how Paul dealt with this group in a sermon he gave in Athens:

So Paul, standing before the Council, addressed them as follows: “Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious, for as I was walking along I saw your many altars. And one of them had this inscription on it – ‘To an Unknown God’ You have been worshiping him without knowing who he is, and now I wish to tell you about him. “He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man-made temples, and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need there is. From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand which should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries. His purpose in all of this was that the nations should seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us (Acts 17:22-27 NLT).

From the Scripture we discover what we can and cannot know about God. A number of observations need to be made.

1. We Can Know Some Things About God

The message of Scripture is loud and clear. God exists, and it is possible to have knowledge of that fact. The psalmist wrote:

Realize that the Lord is God! He made us and we belong to him; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture (Psalm 100:3 NET).

There is a difference between knowing God absolutely and knowing some things about God. Although human beings cannot perfectly comprehend God, we can know some things about Him. From the first page until the last, the Bible testifies that God is knowable.

2. We Can Also Personally Know God

There is something else. Not only can we know some things about God, we can also have personal knowledge of Him. The Bible teaches that it is possible to have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. In fact, eternal life consists of knowing a Person—the Person of Jesus Christ. Jesus said:

And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent (John 17:3 NRSV).

Eternal life begins the moment an individual trusts Jesus Christ as their Savior. It is a personal relationship which is created.

3. Some People Are Willfully Ignorant Of God's Existence

Those who are ignorant about God are willfully ignorant. The Apostle Paul wrote the following to the church at Rome:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth (Romans 1:18 NRSV).

According to this verse, unbelievers are actively suppressing the truth about God. They do not know the truth of God's existence because they are consciously rejecting all testimony about Him. The point is this: they do not want to know the truth.

4. Though We Can Know God We Can Only Know Him Partially

Although humanity can personally know the living God, our present knowledge will always be partial. In fact, Scripture makes it clear that there are many things about God, and the ways in which He works, that we humans cannot know. We read about this in the Book of Ecclesiastes:

Just as you cannot understand the path of the wind or the mystery of a tiny baby growing in its mother's womb, so you cannot understand the activity of God, who does all things (Ecclesiastes 11:5 NLT).

We are not able to understand "His ways."

In the Book of Job, we have the following question asked:

Can you discover the essence of God? Can you find out the perfection of the Almighty? (Job 11:7 NET).

The answer is, of course, "No." It is not possible for any human to discover God's essence.

The Apostle Paul wrote to Romans expressing our limitations in understanding of who God is, and what He does:

Oh, what a wonderful God we have! How great are his riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his methods! For who can know what the Lord is thinking? Who knows enough to be his counselor? (Romans 11:33,34 NLT).

Paul emphasized to the church in Corinth about the partial knowledge that all human beings have. He said:

Now we know only a little, and even the gift of prophecy reveals little! But when the end comes, these special gifts will all disappear. It's like this: When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child does. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. Now we see

Does The God Of The Bible Exist

things imperfectly as in a poor mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God knows me now (1 Corinthians 13:9-12 NLT).

While we cannot know everything about God, the good news is that we can know some things about Him. Thus, for those agnostics who believe it is possible to know whether or not God exists, the evidence is certainly available for them.

Summary To Question 45

What Is Agnosticism?

The atheist says that God does not exist or at least there is no evidence for the existence of a God. An agnostic says they do not know whether or not God exists. This is similar to the term “skeptic.”

Some agnostics believe that it is possible to know there is a God, while others do not even accept, as theoretically possible, the idea that anyone can really know that God exists. Whatever the case may be, agnostics say that they “do not know.”

Against this is the Bible that says that God not only exists, but that the people can personally know the God who has created them. Those who are ignorant of God are willfully ignorant. They do not wish to know the truth, but they *can* know it. So the problem is with them. They are willfully suppressing the knowledge of God.

Although our knowledge about God is not exhaustive or perfect, it is sufficient to understand some basic things about who He is. Indeed, the Bible tells us a number of things about who God is, as well as what He expects from us.

Furthermore, the Bible says that we can have personal knowledge of Him. When an individual believes in Jesus Christ, they enter into a personal relationship with Him. This relationship will last forever.

Knowledge of God, according to Scripture, is thus possible for humans. We can know things about God, and we can have personally knowledge of Him.

Therefore, the Bible is thoroughly opposed to agnosticism.

About The Author

Don Stewart is a graduate of Biola University and Talbot Theological Seminary (with the highest honors).

Don is a best-selling and award-winning author having authored, or co-authored, over seventy books. This includes the best-selling *Answers to Tough Questions*, with Josh McDowell, as well as the award-winning book *Family Handbook of Christian Knowledge: The Bible*. His various writings have been translated into over thirty different languages and have sold over a million copies. His available books can be found on his website www.educatingourworld.com.

Don is now a full-time missionary with GoinChrist Ministries. His website educatingourworld.com provides free resources for those wanting to know what Christians believe, as well as why we believe. Currently there are 61 books on the site in PDF form, totaling about 13,000 pages of material while answering over 1,900 questions. Eventually we hope to record all the books, as well as translating the material in other languages.