

5-21-23, Church on the Rock

Title: There is a God: The Religion of Naturalism

There is a God: The Religion of Naturalism

- I. Introduction
- II. Today, I want to bring you an unconventional message.
 - a. Because I believe that we are living in unconventional times.
 - b. While I know that there is nothing new under the sun (**Eccl 1:9**).
 - c. The chaos in our culture, the celebration of sin, and the blatant hatred of Jesus that we're seeing does seem pretty new to America, or at least new to us in learning how to deal with it all.
 - d. I want to start by painting a broad picture of the state of world and what we're dealing with.
 - e. Here are some statistics that will get your attention.

Barna Research and Other Non-Profit Statistics

- Our culture today has the highest reported rates of mental health issues to have ever existed. ^[2]
- Gen Z, our kids are statistically twice as likely to struggle with depression and hopelessness.
- They are 3 times more likely to contemplate suicide and want to end their lives than generations before them.
- Gen Z is also known as the lonely generation, even though they are constantly interacting with others through their screens, it seems that online interactions cannot replace in-person relationships and real intimacy.
- To make matters worse, studies show that the majority of Gen Z report turning to platforms like TikTok for guidance and wisdom on how to process and handle their mental health and other issues.
- Which is a case of the blind leading the blind. That we have lost, broken, depressed, and sexually confused people trying to guide young people down their paths of brokenness.
- Parents, be mindful of the things we're allowing our kids to access, we need to be involved.
- Nearly every report you can find will show that Gen Z is the most sexually confused generation to have ever lived.
- And if you give in to the confusion and identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, statistics reveal that all of the previously mentioned struggles depression, mental health, suicide, and loneliness skyrocket.

- Our culture today reveals the highest rates of porn addiction, not only occurring in teens but in every age and gender category.^[3]
- Which undoubtedly cripples marriages, families, and the church.
- A study by Barna Research revealed that 64% of children and teens active within the church, will walk away as an adult.^[4]

III. These are the results of secularism and what it produces.

- a. This happens when we are told that human life has no value, meaning, or purpose.
- b. When there are no moral absolutes. That there really isn't right or wrong.
- c. When our kids are taught to pursue happiness and pleasure above all things.
- d. It's angering to see the things that are happenings around us.
- e. But... This is also what happens when the church ceases to be the church.
- f. It our job to be the salt and light of the earth, to preserve culture and speak truth into the darkness.

IV. It is abundantly clear that the culture can't provide the answers to these huge problems.

- a. We are in desperate need for Jesus Christ.
- b. This amazing thing is that this is not just a personal opinion, but there are many other studies that I could quote, to supports that claim, which I will only briefly mention.
- c. These studies show that Christianity is one of the best ways to combat the issues of our day.
- d. Within Christianity, the most effective practices to help overcome these struggles includes church attendance, Christian community, and the most effective being a daily habit of Bible reading.
- e. The evidence for these things is so apparent that author and psychoanalyst, Erica Komisar wrote a piece encouraging atheistic parents, parents that don't believe in God, suggesting that they lie to their kids because it is far better for their development.^[5]

V. That's not where I'd like us to focus in today.

- a. I, as a youth pastor, am concerned that 64% of our young people will more than likely walk away from the church and from God.
- b. We are fighting to make sure that doesn't happen here. It doesn't happen to our kids.
- c. There are number of factors we could discuss that could possibly contribute to this.
- d. But I would like to hone in on one.

- e. I believe a huge contributing factor to young people walking away from the church is that we have not helped them answered the difficult questions and effectively wrestle with the ideologies of the day.
 - f. When asked a difficult question, the typical Christian often responds with the notorious phrase, “Just have faith!”
 - g. While that is a noble task, that falls well short of our responsibility to impart wisdom and understanding of even the most complex topics to younger believers.
 - h. There are difficult questions, but there are also brilliant answers.
 - i. It takes effort and energy to mine for them, but that doesn’t mean that we don’t do it.
 - j. We have nearly unlimited resources at our disposal to find answers and help explain them to people in our lives.
- VI. Throughout Paul’s missionary journeys, in Acts 17 and 19 for example, Paul would use logic, reason, and philosophy to target the ideas of the day, and once he had their attention, he would pull it back to Scriptural truth and the gospel message.
- a. That is what I would like to attempt to do today.
 - b. I want to engage the topics of naturalism, science, and evolution, because these are the fastest growing religions in our country.
 - c. We aren’t losing the 64% to other major religions, we’re losing them to what I would call the religions of the modern age.
 - d. I would like to reveal several illogical issues that occur when you build your worldview on these foundations and showcase that the big questions of life and science do not somehow disprove the existence of God, but they point to the fact that There is a God!
- VII. VII.I have to give a quick disclaimer.
- a. I do not consider myself an expert or authority on the topics we are going to explore.
 - b. Although, I do have a little background in science, my bachelors degree is in Biology, and I have a masters degree in Christian apologetics.

Book Recommendations - 10 Questions Every Teen Should Ask about Christianity, by Rebecca McLaughlin.

Bibliography and Resources Notes Online

- VIII. VIII.Before we jump into our main content, there are a few points that need to be made to preface our discussion.
1. **We need Jesus.**

- a. He is the only answer. He is the solution.
 - b. We must make room for Him to come and have His way in our families, in church, in our city, and in our nation.
- 2. It's ok to have questions, and it's normal to have doubts.**
- a. Neither of those things mean that you're a bad Christian or a terrible person.
 - b. Although you may be a terrible person, but good news... that's based on other qualities.
 - c. It's normal to have questions and doubts.
 - d. God has asked us to trust in and believe in Him although we haven't seen.
 - e. But God hasn't asked us to blindly trust in Him.
 - f. He has given us ample evidence that points to His existence and His goodness.
 - g. Don't feel bad for asking questions. Diving into those questions and exploring God's truths can bring a new depth and foundation to our faith.
 - h. Our faith isn't blind or foolish, but it is both rational and reasonable for us to believe in God, and for that God to be the God of the Bible and His Son, Jesus Christ.
- 3. I'm sorry, if you have been scolded or dismissed because you have questions!**
- a. If someone has done that to you, I'm sorry!
 - b. That's not an appropriate response if you were sincerely and respectfully asking a question.
 - c. The church should be a safe place to ask questions, to learn, to grow, to solidify your faith.
 - d. So know that it's ok to ask questions, because your questions take you deeper into the faith.
- 4. God desires faith to play a role in our relationship with Him.**
- a. While we can understand and explain many things, there will always be things that we simply cannot explain or understand.
 - b. That statement is true in the realm of science as well.
 - c. I'm not sure if you have thought of it quite like this, but our short life on this earth is the only time in all of eternity that we will be able to worship, pray, and trust God acting in faith without absolute certainty of Him.
 - d. That idea, the trust and devotion to Him in faith is something very meaningful to God.

John 20:29 (ESV)

²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

- IX. While I believe it's logical for us to believe in God, there comes a point where we must choose to place our faith in Him.
- a. Because we won't fully understand everything until we come face to face with Him.
 - b. Choosing to place our faith in God without us having 1000% percent certainty is not a thing to be mocked, but it's a beautiful thing deeply admired by God.
5. **Christians have been given the duty to defend the faith.**

1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a **defense** to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

Defense - ἀπολογία (*apologia*): this is the word from which we derive the term apologetics.

Means: defense, defend oneself, make a formal justification, the content of the answer or reply^[6]

- X. **1 Peter 3:15** is the infamous reference to support this idea, but this precise word **apologia** is used at least 7 different times within the New Testament, including Acts and several epistles.
- a. Really all of these references could be used to support this idea that we are responsible to explain, defend, and make sense of our faith and what we believe.
 - b. I hope that this interests you to some degree, but even if it doesn't, I want us to recognize that this is our responsibility and it's something God has called me to do.
 - c. I want to wrestle with these things, not only for myself, but for others.
 - d. I want to be able to aid in solidifying other people's faith before the enemy comes to steal the seed that has been sown.
 - l. So, with that foundation laid, we're going to take a look at a little more technical ideas of science, naturalism, and evolution.
 - a. I have a lot of content, so we are going to try to jump through a lot of these ideas quickly.
 - b. Let's start with science.
 - c. The reason we are going to start here and why this is an important topic to address, because this is the fastest growing religion in the United States.
 - d. More people convert to atheism or agnosticism in America, than any other religion.^[7]
 - e. Which means they are trusting in naturalism and science to explain everything.
 - f. I think it's important to show some of the holes within their worldview.

- II. With the popularization of science, there has been this false narrative developed in our culture that claims science and Christianity don't mix.
 - a. That we must make a choice between the two to uphold one or the other.
 - b. That is simply not true.
 - c. The majority of scientists throughout history that have led to huge ground breaking discoveries have been theists, with the majority being Christians.
 - d. These individuals approached science believing this.
- 1. **Science simply uncovers the complexities of God's creation.**
 - I. Truly unbiased and unmanipulated science declares the glory and majesty of our God, rather than somehow disproving Him.

Psalm 19:1 (ESV)

1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

- II. We aren't fearful of what science may uncover, because it will only reveals the handiwork of our God.
 - a. Just how awesome and complex He really is.
 - b. The discoveries and the knowledge that we have gained about the human body or even the universe.
 - c. It should cause us to be in awe of our God.
 - d. That He has put all of things in motion. How mighty is He!?
- 2. **Science can neither prove nor disprove the existence of God.**
 - I. Science and the scientific method is all about observation and experimentation in both physical and natural processes.
 - a. The problem therein lies in the fact that God is supernatural.
 - b. He is not contained or confined to nature.
 - c. He is immaterial.
 - d. Therefore science can neither prove nor disprove that He exists.
 - e. In short, scientists that interpret data in a manner that supposedly claims there is no God, proves nothing but their extreme bias.
 - f. Science can make no claim on the matter.
 - g. The only way science could possibly come into this discussion is if God intervenes in our world in an observable way.
 - h. And even then, the only response would be is that there is a God.
 - i. New Testament scholar, Dr. Craig Keener provides overwhelming evidence of God's supernatural intervention in our world, in his book of documented and verified miracles.

- j. His book isn't filled coincidence or unexplainable phenomena, many of the miraculous feats were accomplished through the name, power, and authority of Jesus Christ.
- k. All of it bringing reasonable evidence to proclaim that there is God.
- l. The reason I made these first two points, is because I think its important that we see that we aren't forced to choose between science or God.
- m. True science simply helps us understand God's creation.
- l. From here, I think it's necessary to progress to the central dogma of naturalism, which is evolution.
- a. All of us probably have some experience with the theory of evolution, that originated from Charles Darwin.
- b. In my undergraduate degree, I took evolutionary biology.
- c. We discussed this a great deal.
- d. It was a challenging season in my faith, because I had to wrestle with many of the things that I was being taught in the classroom.
- e. It was really the first time I had to dive deeper and study and make sense of it all, and uncover some of the holes within this worldview.
- f. Once I did, it made my faith stronger.
- g. I'll give you a few issues that more specifically apply to evolution.
- II. First, I'll briefly define evolution.
- a. **Defining Evolution:** is the process by which species adapt over time in response to their changing environment.
- b. This is really a simplistic and reasonable version of what the theory of evolution has evolved to contain.
- c. None of us would really disagree with this simple definition, things can somewhat adapt to their environment in a limited way.
- d. We see small changes and adaptations within species that become the norm over time.
- e. We see that. We can observe that in our world today.
- f. The most popularized example of this would be to reference Darwin and the Galapagos Finches.
- g. Essentially, some finches were more suited to survive in this particular environment.
- h. Therefore, those finches thrived, the other finches died, and the dominant traits became the new norm among the island.
- i. This is really kind of common sense.
- j. This would be called **natural selection** or **survival of the fittest**.
- k. This would also fall under the umbrella of what's called **microevolution**.
- l. None of that is crazy.

- III. The issue comes into play, when scientists try to apply this same adaptation model in a macro scale.
 - a. **Macroevolution** is essentially the theory that these small adaptations and changes over long periods of time can lead to entirely new organisms.
 - b. That some inorganic molecules slowly evolved over time into organic compounds resulting in life forms that slowly evolve into more complex life forms over time.^[8]
 - c. This is where we find fault for many reasons.
 - d. I want to stop here for just a moment.
 - e. My goal is not to get into the headiness of evolution and the science behind it, because anyone can get lost there, including scientists.
 - f. I don't think we need to even go there to show huge issues within this theory.
- IV. Just to start, scientific theories are proven through observation and reproducible experimentation.
 - a. Macro-evolution cannot, or at least has not been observed, and it cannot be reproduced.^[9]
 - b. So macro-evolution can't be proven through the scientific method, so it falls outside of the realm of empirical science.
 - c. Which leads to point #3.
- 3. **Macroevolution is not proven by science, it is a religion.**
- V. We have observed small adaptations within species.
 - a. We have no substantial evidence that those small adaptations can lead to entirely new organisms, even when we multiply that theory by billions of years.
 - I. Another quite significant issue with this theory is this.
 - a. For evolution to even be a possibility, that simplistic organism could evolve into more complex beings, there must be a mechanism to introduce additional genetic material.
 - b. For a simple organism to become a more complex organism, there is the requirement of more genetic information.
 - c. The claim is that natural selection and mutation are the mechanisms that produce this.
 - d. **Natural selection and genetic mutation are only proven to deplete variation or delete genetic material, not add to it.**^[10]
 - II. In a more simplistic way, essentially what I am saying, is that the mechanism needed for macroevolution to be possible doesn't exist.
 - a. In fact, if natural selection and mutation are losing genetic information, it would be more proper to say that organisms are shown to be devolving rather than evolving.
 - b. The process of macroevolution is not observable today, the solution for that is not throwing billions of years at it.

- c. It's still just as unlikely to occur then as it is now.
- d. So, as far as evolution is concerned, we can uphold variation within a species, but there is hardly any evidence, if at all, that confirms speciation, evolving into a separate and more complex organism is even possible.
- e. **Naturalism and evolution undermine human logic and cognitive faculties.**
 - I. C.S. Lewis popularized this thought in his book "The Case for Christianity."^[11]
 - a. Philosopher, Alvin Plantinga uses a similar argument that reveals that evolution and naturalism are actually incompatible.
 - b. This argument is known as the evolutionary argument against naturalism.^[12]
 - II. If we are the byproduct of a random and chaotic process over billions of years, and my brain is just of a byproduct of that random chance.
 - a. If that is the case, then there is no reason for us to trust that our thoughts are true.
 - b. **Charles Darwin** himself, battled with this, "With me the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man's mind which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy."^[13]
 - c. If we are the byproduct of accidental chance, that evolution produced all of this, then our thoughts are nothing more than a flurry of random chemicals bouncing around in our brains.
 - d. There is nothing to give credibility to our thoughts at all.
 - III. But, if my brain was designed by an intelligent designer with faculties specifically made for thinking, using logic, finding truth, and housing information and memories.
 - a. Then and only then would I be able to place trust and value in my thoughts at all.
- I. And here is my last official point, which really addressed a number of sub-points.
- 6. **Naturalism fails to provide satisfactory answers for the major questions of life.**
 - II. It cannot provide an understanding of the meaning, purpose, or even value of life, because within naturalism, those things do not exist.
 - a. It cannot provide proper explanation for the origin of life or the universe.
 - b. It's interesting in the attempts the origin of life, scientists begin to attribute seemingly supernatural characteristics to the universe: such as eternal nature, self existence, the ability to create something from nothing.
 - c. Doesn't that sound awfully similar to the characteristics we attribute to God?
 - d. But Christians are ignorant to do that, got it!
 - III. Naturalism fails to provide a foundation for morality and truth, which means everything becomes relative to the individual, which means that any action becomes permissible.
 - a. Naturalism cannot uphold the existence of good and evil.

- b. If there is no arbiter of truth or morality, then everything simply is, no act can be deemed good or evil, no matter how noble or horrendous.
 - c. Example: Upholding this type of worldview that has no objective values, means that you cannot pass judgment on Hitler for the horrendous act of the holocaust.
 - d. It's all a matter of opinion and Hitler thought he was right.
 - e. Everything instantly becomes permissible and no one agrees to that kind of world.
 - f. Almost everyone would declare that Hitler was evil, and to do so is assuming an objective moral value.
 - g. For there to be an objective moral value, it points again to fact that there is a God.
 - h. Naturalism cannot explain the immaterial world.
 - i. So if you believe in things like human free will, love, and even mathematics, that these things are real and impact our world.
 - j. Then, your beliefs and experiences in life directly contradict this worldview and others like it that are sweeping across our nation.
 - k. They provide no basis for a number of things that the majority of us generally hold as facts.
- IV. There are many other things that could be addressed, and we simply do not have the time to go through all of it.
- a. But what I want us to see is that clearly, when we wrestle with some of the deeper truths of life, it does not somehow disprove the existence of God, but all of this points to His majesty.
 - b. I hope that through this lecture, it has become increasingly obvious that many of the things that uphold our world only have proper grounding and support within a theistic worldview.
 - c. That we would walk away with greater assurance and faith that there is in fact a creator, an intelligent designer, a law giver, an immovable mover, an uncaused causer.
 - d. There is a God!
 - e. And within that context, we have ample evidence to show that it's not just a god but that there is One God.
 - f. It's the God that Dr. Craig Keener provides documentation of verified miracles that have been done through the power and authority of His name.
 - g. It's the God-Man that Dr. Gary Habermas and Dr. Michael Licona give endless evidence that He really lived an extraordinary life, was brutally crucified, and He raised Himself back to life.
 - h. It's not Muhammad, Brahma, or Buddha. Our God is not science, evolution, naturalism, or any other ism.

Acts 4:12 (ESV)

¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

- And it is through the name, the power, and the authority of Jesus Christ.

John 14:6 (ESV)

⁶ “[He is] the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through [Him].

John 1:3 (ESV)

³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Colossians 1:15-17 (ESV)

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

- I. In our modern culture, we are losing people, especially young people, to science, naturalism, atheism, and agnosticism.
 - a. Not because these new world religions are more rational, reasonable, or hold more explanation power.
 - b. It's deception.
 - c. This is nothing other than a retelling of the fall of man in Genesis 3, that we live in a world today filled with people striving to be like God.
 - d. It's not that they are fully convinced that God doesn't exist, it's that they don't want Him to exist.
 - e. So there will be no high-power to which we are held accountable.
 - f. Their goal is to make themselves God, and there is nothing more Satanic than that.
 - g. When these worldviews are examined, and when we dive deeper into difficult questions, these things don't disprove God, but they reveal His majesty.
 - h. Jesus Christ is the answer. He is the explanation.

Robert Jastrow: NASA Scientist, Astronomer, and Planetary Physicist

Says this in his book, “God and the Astronomers.”

For the scientist who has been living by the dream of his, that he will come to all of the answers by science alone, his journey will end as they climb higher and higher up the mountain and when they finally reach the top to find the final answer, they may well be greeted by a band of theologians that have been seated there for centuries.^[14]

- I. As we get ready to close, there are a few things I want you to walk away with.
 - a. **First**, I don't expect you to remember all of the ins-and-outs of what I talked about, but I do hope that it wet your appetite for deeper things.
 - b. I hope that you will push yourself to study and learn, because it is our responsibility to explore and defend the faith.
- II. **Secondly**, if what I argued today is true.
- III. That theism and Christ provide the best and most reasonable explanation for human existence and all we covered today.
- IV. Then, I want to recognize this, that what we do in response to that truth is the most important decision we will ever make.
- V. Do we obey Him?
- VI. Do we worship Him?
- VII. VII. Do we live for Him?
- VIII. VIII. Or are have we been influenced by the secular system and choose only to live for ourselves?
- IX. Because if Christ is real and He truly rose from the grave, then it changes everything, it changes your life.
- X. Perhaps, today takes your relationship with Christ to a deeper place.
- III. **Thirdly**, maybe you're here and you're someone that has been a skeptic or plagued with doubts and questions.
 - a. I pray that this would be the beginning of your journey to finally put your faith in Christ.
- IV. **Lastly and most importantly, salvation.**

Lennox on DNA

Big Bang, universal beginning that everything came from nothing to which there is no explanation except that there was a creator.

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Naturalism Defined: in philosophy, a theory that relates scientific method to philosophy by affirming that all beings and events in the universe (whatever their inherent character may be) are natural. Consequently, all knowledge of the universe falls within the pale of scientific investigation.