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Proof 1: Origin of the Universe

God says He created the universe. Scientific materialists say it came into existence through natural physical means. Who is right? And what is the evidence?

By Rick Avent

When you look up into the night sky, you catch a glimpse of the same universe ancient stargazers saw. Even the few thousand stars visible to the naked eye can evoke awe and wonder (Psalm 8:3-4).

Now with the tools of modern astronomy, today's scientists see a universe undreamed of even a century ago. While the full extent of the universe remains unknown, astronomers have peered out multiple billions of light-years. Within this known universe, there may be as many as 10 sextillion stars (a 1 followed by 22 zeros).

The size of some of these stars is also mind-boggling. Our sun is huge from our perspective—about 109 times the diameter of the earth. Yet some stars may be more than 1,500 times that diameter! Such a large star, placed at the center of our solar system, would extend beyond the orbit of Jupiter.

The universe is far more amazing than the ancients could have imagined!

An explosion of knowledge

An explosion of knowledge began around a hundred years ago with the development of Albert Einstein's theory of general relativity concerning space, time and gravity. During the same period the construction of larger telescopes enabled astronomers to look deeper into space.

In 1929 Edwin Hubble used these tools to determine that the universe is not static but expanding. Further advances were spurred by new instrumentation, deep space probes and

orbiting telescopes that can detect signals across the full spectrum of wavelengths.

This knowledge has led to the development of a generally accepted theoretical model for the beginning and growth of the universe. The model is referred to as the hot inflationary big bang theory or simply the big bang theory.

This theory is consistent with current observations and measurements of the observable universe; but as we will see, it doesn't really explain how the universe could have formed by entirely natural means. It requires us to accept certain premises outside the realm of the known laws of physics.

Can the origin of the universe be explained by purely physical means?

The other alternative is to accept that our awesome universe must have had a Creator and that this Creator must have had unimaginable power.

How can you know which alternative is true?

Can you prove if God is the Creator?

Many religious people believe in God, but have never proven His existence. When people are questioned about the reasons for their belief in God, typical responses are often more emotional than rational. Such responses include:

- "It's what my parents taught me."
- "It gives meaning to life."
- "It's what my church teaches."
- "I don't want to burn in hell."

But God wants our belief in Him to be based on hard evidence, and He challenges us to do just that. "Test all things, hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21; see also Romans 1:20).

This article is the first in a series that will help you answer that challenge by examining some of the physical evidence for the existence of God. A good place to start is at the beginning—the origin of the universe. What is the evidence for God as the Creator of the universe?

What the big bang theory can't explain

The implications of the big bang theory are staggering. In order to believe it, though, we are asked to accept certain suppositions that fall outside the laws of nature and physics. These suppositions actually support the existence of an all-powerful Creator God.

First, the big bang theory and the scientific evidence behind it imply that space, time and the universe as a whole had a beginning. Anything having a beginning must have a cause. What was that first cause?

Second, the big bang theory is based on the premise that something (the entire universe) suddenly came into existence out of nothing. How could this happen?

Third, according to the big bang theory, at the beginning all the matter and energy in the entire universe was compressed into an infinitesimally small point of almost infinite temperature and density. Where did this "seed" come from, and what force held it together and then released it?

Fourth, another supposition—*inflation*—was introduced in order for the observable data to match the theory. The premise was that inflation occurred within the first trillionth of a second after the bang. This inflation caused the minuscule universe to increase in size to something perhaps approaching 50 percent of its current size! This idea defies all known laws of natural physics, but it does enable the theory to be consistent with the universe as we see it today.

The unanswered question is: What caused this sudden inflation to occur?

The big bang theory asks us to just accept these suppositions. Objections raised about these unanswered questions are typically dismissed by stating that there must be natural laws explaining it all, but they just have not been discovered yet. This response raises the question of who is exercising more faith in their beliefs. Scientists? Or those who believe in God as the Creator?

God's claim as Creator

Scientists begin with a fundamental assumption that only natural processes and sequences of events that are consistent with natural laws should be considered. As such, the idea of God creating the universe is ruled out as a possibility from the beginning.

But then they present a theory—the hot inflationary big bang theory—that is not consistent with natural laws! The description of that first instant of inflation can't be explained by the laws of the universe.

God addresses this issue by pointing out that the physical evidence of creation proves that He is God. "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, emphasis added throughout).

The missing ingredient in the big bang theory is the power source—a source beyond any natural physical law—a source beyond our imagination. The God of the Bible claims responsibility for the creation of the universe. Could anything other than the Almighty God fulfill the premises upon which the big bang theory is based?

The very first words of the Bible are, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). But this scripture does not define how far back in time this beginning was. Scientific evidence suggests it was billions of years, and the Bible does not disagree. (See the Life, Hope & Truth article "The Gap Theory" for further explanation.)

A similar declaration of God as the Creator is found in other scriptures as well. For example, "By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Psalm 33:6). This scripture perhaps poetically suggests inflation and the expanding universe as a part of the creation, as does Isaiah 40:22: "It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, *who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.*"



Notice the emphasis on God's power several verses later. "'To whom then will you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal?' says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, *by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power;* not one is missing" (Isaiah 40:25-26).

This power to create is also emphasized in Revelation 4:11. "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created."

The beginning of time

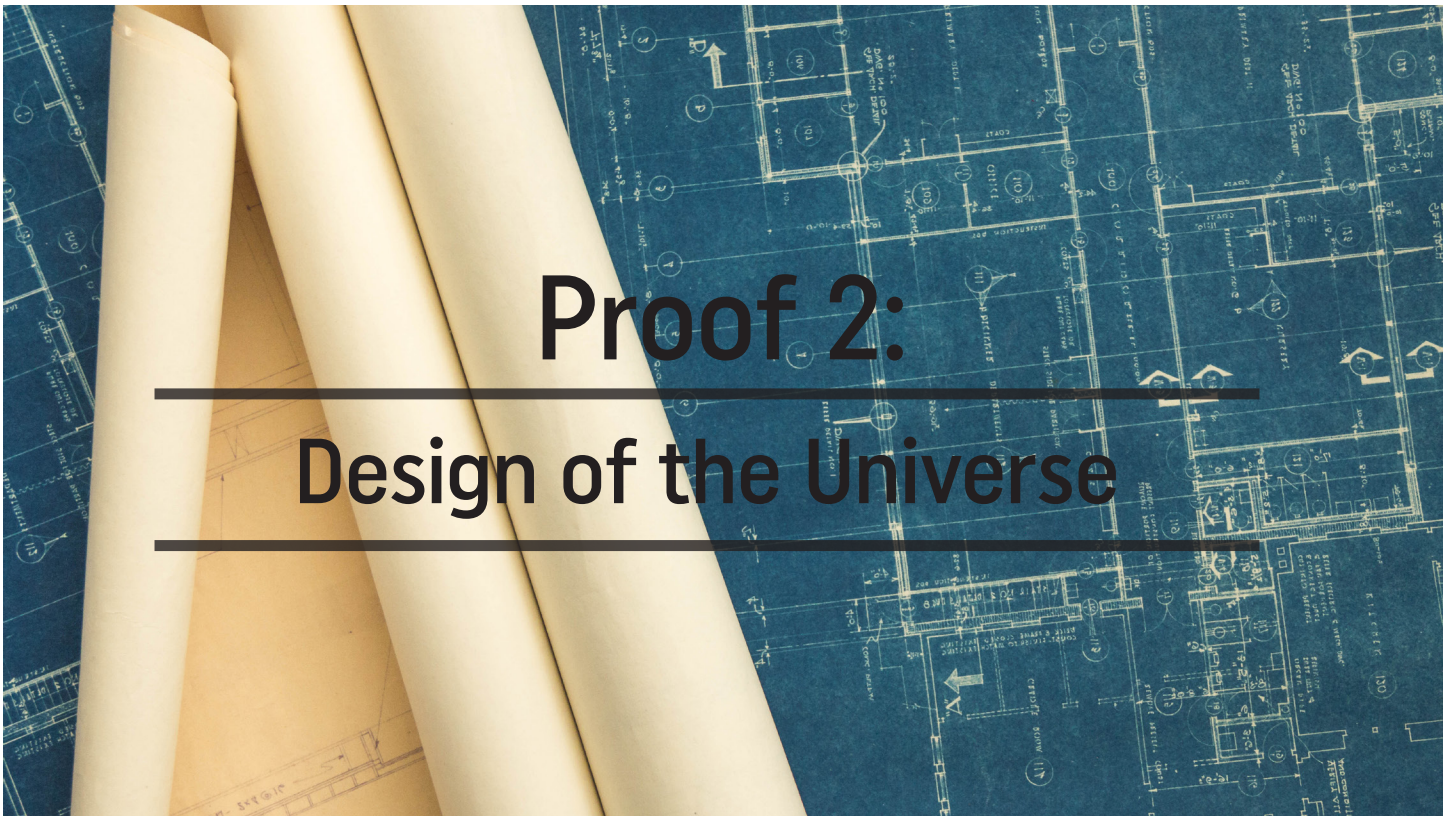
Science agrees with the Bible on the idea that time had a beginning. Paul, referring to God's promise of eternal life, wrote: "In hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised *before time began"* (Titus 1:2).

This short article has merely scratched the surface of this huge subject. There is abundant physical evidence that the creation of the universe was a supernatural event. Scientists' discoveries and theories point to a creation mechanism that cannot be explained by physical laws.

Only an all-powerful God could create something from nothing, constrain the energy of the universe in the palm of a hand, release this energy and inflate it in an instant to nearly the size of what we today call the universe.

The creation of this miraculous universe is only the first of many proofs of God's existence. Next we will explore a second proof—the design found in the universe. Could it have occurred without a Designer?

Learn more about creation as a proof of God in our Life, Hope & Truth articles "Creation Demands a Creator," "Does the Big Bang Theory Require a Miracle?" and "Is God Really the Creator?"



Proof 2:
Design of the Universe

The more we discover about our universe, the more we see the hand of design rather than randomness. And design implies a Designer.

We humans are designers by nature, and we have never been better at it. From the minuscule microprocessor to the massive, record-breaking skyscraper, it seems there is nothing we can't do.

What is the source of this proclivity? The Bible directs us to God. "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27).

When we look at the natural world around us, we see design everywhere. Did it all just happen? Or is God the master Designer? Indeed, the ability to design is not just a godly trait passed on to us but a proof of the very existence of God.

Three basic aspects of design

I am a designer. My field of design is structural engineering. I have designed buildings and bridges, but I spent most of my career teaching structural design.

As I teach my students, there are at least three basic aspects of design: functionality, safety and efficiency. Functionality refers to the need to fulfill a specific purpose. A bunch of scattered rocks suggests randomness rather than function. When those rocks are cut into blocks and assembled into a huge symmetrical pyramid as a burial ground and monument to a pharaoh, we see function.

But good design also requires an element of safety. For structures, failure is not an option; and the safety of the design is paramount. Sadly, even with our modern technology, there are occasional catastrophic failures.

In addition, designs should be efficient. More often than not, efficiency is evaluated by cost. However, it may include such things as ease of use, long-term viability or environmental considerations.

So, what about this universe? Is it just a bunch of rocks? Or does it exhibit the three basic elements of good design? Is it a complex, intricate and superbly functioning design with an obvious Designer? Or is it just an accident of nature?

God challenges us to look to the creation for proof of His existence: "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).

In the previous article on the proofs of God, we examined the scientific evidence pointing to the universe having a beginning and being created from nothing. Science provides no answer as to how this could have happened. The Bible gives the obvious answer—a miracle of God.

A second proof of God is the incredibly intricate and complex design of everything around us. Let's look at some of that evidence.

Does the cosmos show the elements of design?

The laws of nature are extremely fine-tuned to support life. Without this precise and delicate balance, life would not exist.

Scientists have identified over 100 of these fine-tuned characteristics of our universe, which are often referred to as anthropic constants. This amazing combination of anthropic constants offers evidence of design, and design requires a Designer. As the Bible says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1).

Here are just a few of these anthropic constants (for more details, see the Life, Hope & Truth article "Intelligent Design: Can Science Answer the Question, Does God Exist?"):

- The four known forces of nature (gravity, electromagnetic forces, the strong force that binds particles in the atomic nuclei, and the weak force mechanisms that are responsible for radioactive decay) must be incredibly balanced with each other, or most essential elements would be unstable and life could not be sustained.
- The size of the earth, its nearly circular orbit, its axis tilt, its 24-hour revolution, and the relative size and distance between the earth and moon must be precise for life to exist.
- The oxygen/nitrogen levels of the atmosphere and the protective ozone surrounding the earth must be within a specific range for life to exist.
- The earth's distance from the sun must be in the so-called Goldilocks zone: not too far and not too close, but just right to maintain temperatures to support life.

Taking all the anthropic constants together, the great weight of evidence strongly suggests design. The function of this design was to provide an environment for life to flourish. Safety is provided through the protective atmosphere and the effects of many of the constants. Efficiency is evident from the many interactions that are perfectly adjusted.

Does life itself indicate a Designer?

Many structural designs have critical elements that cannot fail without the entire structure collapsing. These are referred to as nonredundant designs. For example, the cause of the 2007 catastrophic collapse of the I-35W bridge in Minneapolis, Minnesota, has been traced to a failed gusset plate. Structures of this type cannot function without each critical element in place.

In the various mechanisms of life, we also find many nonredundant systems. Take away one piece, and the mechanism will not function. How is this a problem? The theory of evolution proposes that all the mechanisms of life developed gradually, piece by piece. Yet in a nonredundant system, the mechanism will not function until all pieces are in place. If the system is critical to survival, the life-form will die before the mechanism can evolve.

Such mechanisms are referred to as being irreducibly complex. Let's look at several examples, beginning with what's often called the *simple* cell—a misnomer because all cells are complex, from single-cell organisms to human cells.

The cell membrane is necessary to protect the internal workings of the cell. Yet the membrane needs conduits to bring necessary molecules in and out. Both the conduits and the protective membrane had to be present from the beginning. They are nonredundant components of the cell. The cell cannot live without both.

The membrane is a complex structure that meets all the requirements of good design: it's functional, has a great record of safety and is very efficient. Can there be such a design without a Designer?

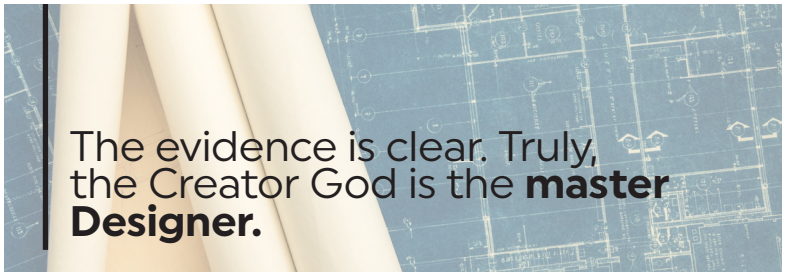
DNA shouts design

There is no aspect of the living cell that shouts design more than DNA. Only a brief description can be given here, but see "DNA: God's Information Code" on LifeHopeandTruth.com for a more detailed description.

The DNA molecule within a cell contains the information to both sustain life and pass it on to the next generation. This double helix structure contains the code to make over 100,000 tiny protein machines, and they are essential to carrying out the functions of life.

The DNA molecule contains a vast amount of information using a language that consists of three-letter words (referred to as codons) formed using a four-letter alphabet of molecules. This code in the human cell is 3 billion letters long! Every time a cell divides, the DNA reproduces itself with astounding accuracy. The process even includes a proofreading function.

If this isn't enough, in recent years a genetic code control system, the epigenome, has been discovered that exerts additional control over DNA functions. For example, it is now believed that the epigenome orchestrates cell division



and cell specialization during development in the womb.

It is unfathomably unlikely to the point of being impossible that the complex DNA molecule and epigenome could have developed in a piecemeal fashion. Also, if any of the vital parts of the genetic code weren't functioning, the cell could not survive. From a design viewpoint, DNA is incredibly functional and exists in all living cells, from single-cell organisms to humans. It is extremely safe, in that mistakes very rarely happen. DNA's efficiency is almost beyond belief. It is estimated that DNA the size of a pinhead contains as much information as 25 trillion paperback books. Yet the complete replication of the human chromosome in a cell takes about an hour.

These and many other nonredundant mechanisms, such as the ear and eye, constitute a proof of God. "The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the LORD has made both of them" (Proverbs 20:12).

The evidence is clear. Truly, the Creator God is the master Designer.

The grand design plan

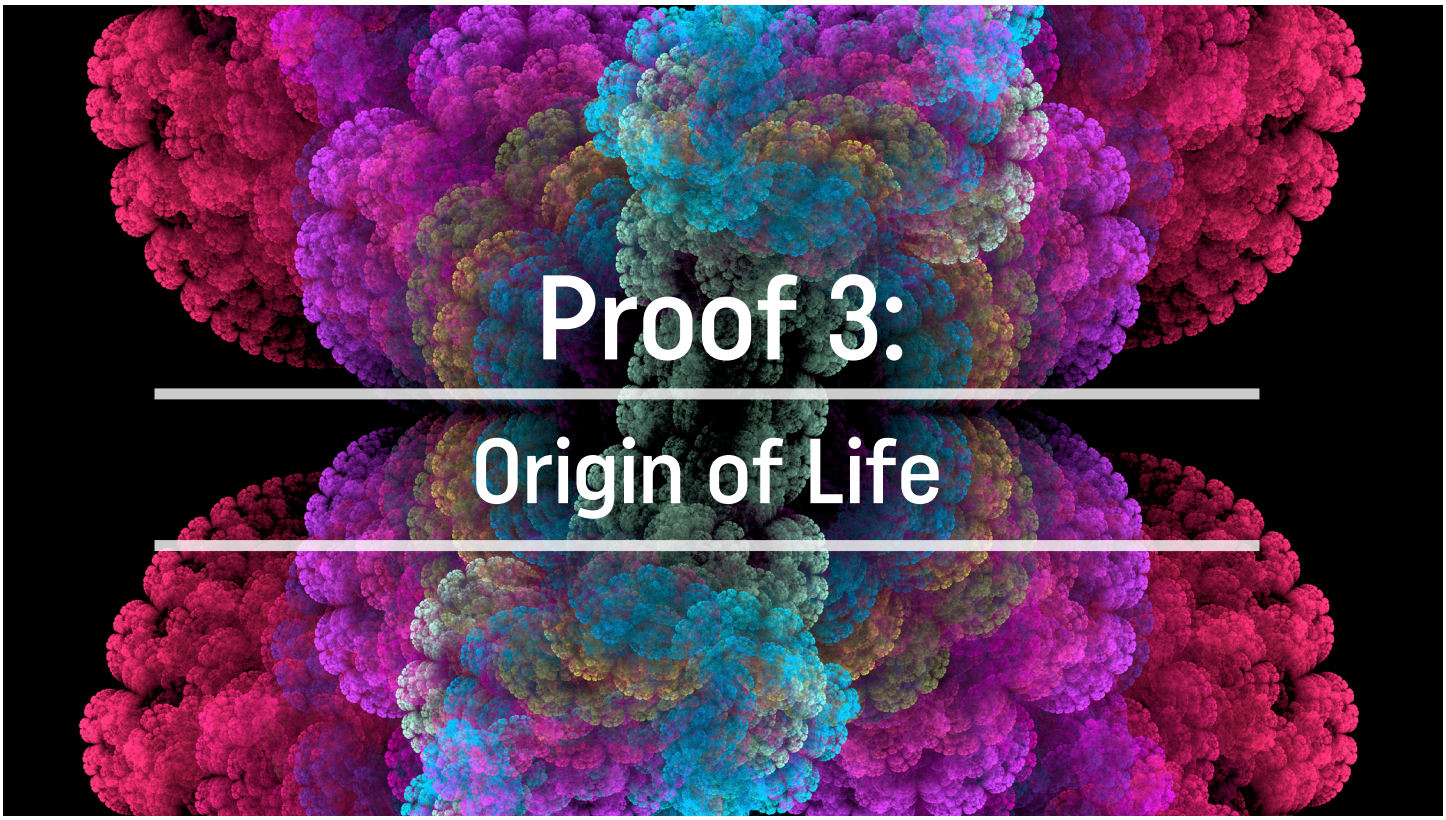
Why do very intelligent people fail to see the hand of this master Designer in both the cosmos and life? Perhaps the complexity of life still seems random because they are not aware of a larger plan for the creation or where they fit into it.

For some, it may be a case of not being able to see the forest for the trees. Perhaps because they are so focused on specifics, they miss an element of good design that we have not yet covered: Individual components should fit into a grand design plan. God's overarching design is so vast and transcendent that only those attuned to Him have been able to discern it.

Consider an example that shows the importance of this design principle. I live in a state that once built a bridge across the Mississippi River that ended in a swamp. It was first called the "bridge to nowhere," but it was eventually connected to the highway system.

Just as a newly designed bridge should fit into the overall transportation system, so also the designed elements of the cosmos and life fit into a greater plan. God reveals His master plan in the words of the Bible. He is in the process of designing a spiritual family—His family. Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, is the "firstfruits" of this family (1 Corinthians 15:23). The Bible tells us we also will have the opportunity to be redesigned—not as flesh and blood, but with an eternal, spiritual body—to be brothers and sisters of Christ with God as our Father (verses 50-53; 1 John 3:1-2). Learn more in our Life, Hope & Truth article "Children of God."

God's master plan is not finished. His greatest design is yet to unfold!



Proof 3:

Origin of Life

How did life originate? The God of the Bible says He created life. The scientific community searches for natural causes. What does the physical evidence suggest?

The existence of God has long been under attack by a large portion of the scientific community. Often referred to as scientific materialists, their basic tenet is that everything in the universe is the result of the strict mathematical laws of physics and blind chance.

As shown in previous articles, this belief creates several dilemmas. First, there is no scientific evidence to explain how the universe came into existence out of nothing. Likewise, trying to explain the design of the universe without a Designer makes little sense.

But perhaps most difficult is trying to explain the origin of life without a Creator. What does the evidence support?

Did life just emerge?

In looking at scientific thinking concerning the origin of life, the term *emergent* is often encountered. The assumption is that life somehow emerged in a step-wise transition from chemistry to biology. While the term sounds scientific, its meaning is not. It implies that through a series of chemical reactions life just happened—somehow matter became life.

In their book *Origins* (associated with a NOVA special with the same title on the Public Broadcasting System), Neil Tyson and Donald Goldsmith wrote, "The crucial question of how life actually began on Earth, either once or many times over, has no good answer, though speculation on the subject has acquired a long and intriguing history" (p. 241).

In other words, the scientific inquiry into this vital question is primarily speculation! Here is a summary of some of that speculation.

The famous Miller-Urey experiments in the early 1950s excited the scientific world by suggesting that the key to the origin of life had been found. The experiments found that an atmosphere loaded with water, methane, ammonia and hydrogen produced an amino acid when charged with electric sparks. This brew of chemicals was *presumed* to be similar to the early earth atmosphere in which lightning could have provided the spark.

However, amino acids, while one of the building blocks of life, are not remotely life. So, the *speculation* is that over millions of years larger and more complex molecules *could have* formed (by some unknown process) until life emerged.

Another theory, proposed by organic chemist Alexander Cairns-Smith at the University of Glasgow in Scotland, is that the early molecules of life *might* have formed on clay. The clay surface *might* have not only expedited the concentration of organic compounds together, but organized them into patterns. Cairns-Smith suggests mineral crystals *could have been* the driving force in this organization. And after millions of years, life emerged.

Then there is the deep-sea vent theory that life *may have* begun deep in the ocean at hydrothermal vents spewing hydrogen-rich molecules. And after millions of years, life emerged.

A huge stumbling block for developing theories of the origin of life is DNA. The DNA molecule in a living cell contains the information to sustain life and pass it on to the next generation. DNA needs proteins to form, and proteins require DNA to form. The *speculation* is that RNA, which has an integral role in the process of forming proteins, preceded DNA and somehow sustained life. The question of how RNA got here has no explanation. Perhaps it just *emerged?*

Finally, there are the metabolism-first models. The supposition being that life *might have* begun with smaller molecules interacting with each other. Over time more complex molecules succeeded in becoming more efficient and eventually evolved into life-forms.

All these theories have one thing in common. There is no conclusive evidence to support them.

Is there physical evidence for a Creator?

First, consider the law of biogenesis: Life comes only from life. Louis Pasteur's famous research showed what has been confirmed ever since. There are no instances of life being spontaneously generated from nonliving chemicals through any natural laws.

Second, there is no such thing as a simple cell. (See our Life, Hope & Truth article "Origin of Life: Are Single Cells Really Simple?") Even one-cell organisms like the amoeba are incredibly complex.

For example, Naegleria is a common amoeba, but it is not simple. It eats bacteria as an immobile amoeba when conditions are suitable. It grows two flagella that it uses to swim around looking for a better environment during periods of less favorable conditions. In more severely unfavorable environments, it turns into a hard cyst until conditions have improved for feeding. The Naegleria has 15,727 genes coding for proteins. In comparison, humans have around 23,000. That's not much difference.

DNA is so complex that scientists are still trying to unravel its mysteries. DNA is common to all organisms, so every organism is complex! DNA expresses the design platform used by the Creator of all life. Such complexity does not just develop by accident.

Related to the obvious complexity of life is the lack of randomness. If the origin of life was just a chance happening, why is there such organization? Among other things, the genome is a set of instructions for procreation. The message found in the DNA of even a simple amoeba is more than all 30 volumes of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* combined. Such complex messages embedded in all life provide strong circumstantial evidence that a superintelligent being, God, created life (see our article "The Origin of Life").

Logic, reasoning and God as the creator of life

There seems to be a great divide between the scientific community and the religious. When considering the origin of life, there are two alternatives. Either life originated naturally or life originated by the actions of an intelligent being. At present, there is little or no evidence to suggest the former.

Why the divide? Because scientists make the initial presumption that life emerged from basic raw materials through a sequence of events that was completely consistent with natural laws of chemistry and physics. Many dismiss the idea of God as the creator of life out of hand.

The same supposition is also used when considering the creation of the universe. But can science convincingly explain everything? Beauty? Ethical judgments? Free will? Reasoning?

There is one aspect of religion that scientific materialists do accept—faith. They have faith in natural explanations. Should not the religious be allowed to have faith in God as the Creator based on the evidence?

What would it take to convince a skeptic that God does exist?

In his book *Faith vs. Fact: Why Science and Religion Are Incompatible* (2015), Jerry A. Coyne, a professor specializing in evolutionary genetics at the University of Chicago, had this answer:

"Suppose that a bright light appeared in the heavens, and supported by winged angels, a being clad in a white robe and sandals descended onto my campus from the sky, accompanied by a pack of apostles bearing the names given in the Bible. Loud heavenly music, with the blaring of trumpets is heard everywhere. The robed being, who identifies himself as Jesus, repairs to the nearby university hospital and instantly heals many severely afflicted people, including amputees. After a while Jesus and his minions, supported by angels ascend back into the sky with another chorus of music. The heavens swiftly darken, there are flashes of lightning and peals of thunder, and

Belief in God as the Creator of life is not just based on blind faith. There is also ample evidence all around us.

in an instant the skies clear. If this were all witnessed by others and documented by video, and if the healings were unexplainable but supported by testimony from multiple doctors, and if all the apparitions and events conformed to Christian theology—then I'd have to start thinking seriously about the truth of Christianity" (p. 119).

Really? Is that really all it would take?

Interestingly enough, an event somewhat similar to the proof Professor Coyne requires is prophesied in the Bible. The book of Revelation describes how Jesus will descend from heaven with trumpets blaring. But even that will not be enough. It is prophesied that the world will gather armies to fight Him! (For the real story of what will happen, see our articles "What Is the Day of the Lord?" and "Second Coming.")

Not only that, but biblical history indicates that God *did* appear to the ancient Israelites at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:18-20). In spite of this, they fell into idol worship and rejected Him.

Again, God sent Jesus to the earth where He healed many and even raised some from the dead. Yet very few believed Him (see our article "Miracles of Jesus").

Is there a viable alternative to God?

The evidence is before you. How will you respond? In a series of articles published in *Discern* over the past year, five proofs that the Bible is true were presented. Our study guide ***Is the Bible True?*** presents five proofs that the Bible is true.

The Bible clearly says that God is the origin of life:

"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion.' ... So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:26-27; see also John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16).

Belief in God as the Creator of life is not just based on blind faith. There is also ample evidence all around us (Romans 1:20). As the Bible admonishes: "Test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). The articles in the Life, Hope & Truth "Is There a God?" section can help.



Proof 4: Fulfilled Prophecy

While a great many biblical prophecies point to a future time, a number have already come to pass. Fulfilled prophecy is another proof that God exists.

Upwards of a third of the Bible is prophetic. Many of these prophecies relate to Jesus Christ's second coming to establish the Kingdom of God. However, some prophecies focus on the current era and a number have already been fulfilled.

In this series of articles we have been looking at the question of God's existence from the perspective of scientific evidence. In this article we turn to prophecy and history for proof.

Our study guide *Is the Bible True?* outlines five proofs of the Bible. One proof is fulfilled prophecy. Among the fulfilled prophecies discussed were several related to Jerusalem and Babylon. These prophecies not only verify the Bible but also the existence of God. Babylon and Jerusalem have been linked in prophecies since the rise of the Babylonian Empire in the seventh century B.C.

Let's look at some additional prophecies that help present a conclusive case for the existence of God.

A tale of two cities

Isaiah prophesied during the reign of four kings of Judah (Isaiah 1:1), beginning around 740 B.C.

Here is what God inspired Isaiah to prophesy about Babylon:

"Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, who will not regard silver; and as for gold, they will not delight in it. Also their bows will dash the young men to pieces, and they will have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye will not spare children.

"And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It will never be inhabited, nor will it be settled from

generation to generation; nor will the Arabian pitch tents there, nor will shepherds make their sheepfolds there" (Isaiah 13:17-20).

Note the four aspects of this prophecy:

1. The Medes would attack.
2. There would be a bloody conflict.
3. Babylon would become desolate.
4. Babylon would not be rebuilt (see also Jeremiah 25:12).

Here is how the history of Babylon unfolded.

Babylon had previously been destroyed by the Assyrian Empire. As the Assyrian Empire declined, Babylon was rebuilt as part of the Neo-Babylonian Empire that came to dominate the Middle East. The empire reached its height under Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 B.C.).

Babylon, the capital, was located in what is now southern Iraq about 50 miles south of Baghdad. The city was a marvel of the ancient world. It was a walled city with magnificent structures and the famous hanging gardens, considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was also known as a center for learning. The ancient writers who referred to the city raved about its glory. When Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah and eventually destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C., many of the captive Jews were resettled in Babylon.

Then in 539 B.C. the Babylonian Empire, along with Babylon itself, fell to an emerging empire consisting of Medes and Persians. But due to Persian dominance, it is often referred to as the Persian Empire. Babylon was conquered—fulfilling the first part of Isaiah's prophecy—but it was not destroyed at that time.

The city continued to prosper for a while during the Persian rule. Around 482 B.C. the city rebelled against the Persians. King Xerxes recaptured the city, destroyed its temples and killed many. This bloody uprising seems to have fulfilled the second part of Isaiah's prophecy.

The city began a long decline, culminating in its capture by Alexander the Great in 331 B.C. Alexander's empire broke up into four parts at his death. His successors fought over the city, driving out many of the residents. The Seleucid Empire took control and built a new city, Seleucia, nearby; and Babylon was essentially abandoned.

By the time the Parthian Empire ruled the region in 141 B.C., Babylon was in a state of ruin, although there were still people living in and around the vicinity of the original city. By the time of the Muslim conquest in A.D. 650, evidence of Babylon was lost under the sands, fulfilling the third part of Isaiah's prophecy. It was not until the 19th century that archaeologists even located the ruins.

In the early 1980s, while archaeologists were excavating the ruins, Saddam Hussein began to rebuild Babylon. To the despair of archaeologists, Saddam razed the ruins and began to build a few walled structures. At this time he also decided to build a majestic palace at the edge of the ruins, completing it shortly before the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Saddam never moved into his palace. It was stripped and looted during and after the war and is now an empty shell.

Saddam was later hunted down and executed. Iraq remains in turmoil. The ruins of Babylon are still desolate. After 2,500 years, the fourth part of the prophecy has continued to be fulfilled.

The Bible does refer to an end-time Babylonian system that will be destroyed at Christ's return, but this will be based in Europe, not in the ancient city in the Middle East. Read more about this in our online article "What Is Babylon?"

Prophecy is being fulfilled just as God said: "So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

Babylon, Jerusalem and the Messiah

While Babylon was to become desolate forever, Jerusalem was to be rebuilt, signaling a countdown to the Messiah. There is a detailed and complex messianic prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27 (see the Life, Hope & Truth article "70 Weeks of Daniel: What Does the Prophecy Mean?").

Verse 25 reveals when to expect the Messiah. "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to *restore and build Jerusalem* until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks [for a total of 69 weeks]; the street shall be built again and the wall, even in troublesome times" (emphasis added throughout).

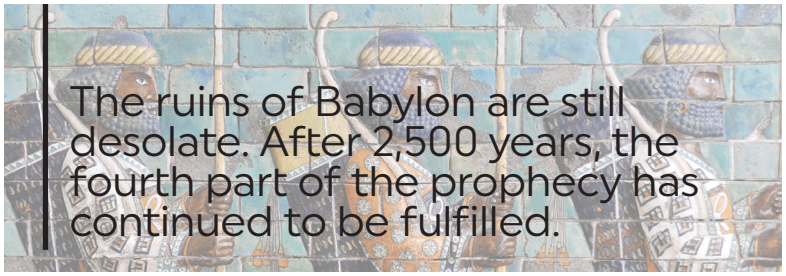
Obviously, the prophecy was not referring to actual weeks. However, God has used prophetic days to represent actual years (Ezekiel 4:4-6). Using the day-for-a-year representation, 69 weeks would equal 483 years. According to historical records, Persian King Artaxerxes I began his rule in 464 B.C. Ezra received permission to return to Jerusalem to complete the efforts to rebuild the city in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, 457 B.C. (Ezra 7:6-10; 9:9). Advancing 483 years (with the understanding that there was no year zero) would take us to A.D. 27—the year Christ was baptized and began His ministry!

These are only a few of the many fulfilled prophecies that confirm the existence of God. For more, see our articles "Fulfilled Prophecy," "Fulfilled Prophecy Is Evidence of God's Existence," "Daniel's Prophecies: Proof of God's Existence" and "Daniel 11: The Most Detailed Prophecy in the Bible."

Can you personally validate a prophecy?

The discussion so far has related to unconditional prophecies that God guarantees. However, there are also conditional prophecies. These prophecies are in the form of "if—then." The message is: If you obey God, then you will receive blessings.

For the ancient Israelites He promised: If "you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them. *Then* it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers. And He will love you and bless you and multiply you" (Deuteronomy 7:11-13).



The ruins of Babylon are still desolate. After 2,500 years, the fourth part of the prophecy has continued to be fulfilled.

The first Psalm begins by expressing the prophecy this way. If one not only obeys the law but delights in it, "he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper" (Psalm 1:3; see also 1 Chronicles 22:13).

This theme is expressed by most of the prophets. For example, Malachi emphasized one specific aspect: "'Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,' says the LORD of hosts, 'if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it'" (Malachi 3:10).

Jesus summed up the message in Matthew 6:33: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

You can personally validate this conditional prophecy. In fact, the Bible challenges you to do just that! But it must be a true commitment to understanding and obeying not just the letter of the law, but its spiritual application. Not just following what you think the Bible teaches, but reading and studying to see for yourself.

Notice how David phrases the concept. "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. ... Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler" (Psalm 91:1, 3-4).

If you commit to the truth as outlined in the Bible, your life will change and you will be blessed. Our free booklet *Change Your Life!* can help. Download it from our Learning Center today.

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About Life Hope & Truth

LifeHopeandTruth.com exists to fill a critical void in this world: the lack of understanding about the purpose of life, the lack of realistic hope for a better future and the lack of truth!

Neither religion nor science has satisfactorily addressed these issues, so people today are of divided opinions, confused or, worst of all, don't care anymore. The ancient words of the prophet Isaiah ring so true today: "Truth is fallen in the street." Why? Is it because God was right when He warned that humans are inclined to reject Him and usually choose not to know Him?

We are here for people who are searching for answers, who are ready to prove all things or who are hungry for more than what they've been taught most of their lives about God, the Bible, the meaning of life and how to live. We want to help you truly understand the good news of the gospel and fulfill Jesus Christ's admonition to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

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