

AUGUST 2021 – DAVID RENWICK

Renewing Your Life in Christ

- August 11 How Can I Find God?
- August 18 How Can I be Sure that I am Loved and Forgiven?
- August 25 How Can I Grow in Faith?
- September 1 How Can I Serve God Faithfully?

VARIOUS QUESTIONS ABOUT GOD

1. Is There A God At All? – *In A World of Science*
2. What Is God Like? – *In A World with Evil?*
3. How Can I Find God? – *When I Feel God's Absence?*

1. Is there a God at all?

Especially in the light of science –

- The areas in which we can say “It must be God” are shrinking
- Science seems to squeeze God out (“the God of the Gaps”)
- Some Christians seems opposed to science (vaccines, etc. – *just trust God* + yard signs in the light of Covid: “*I believe in science*”)

Is there a wall between science and faith in God?

What are the arguments against Science as “the be-all and end-all”?

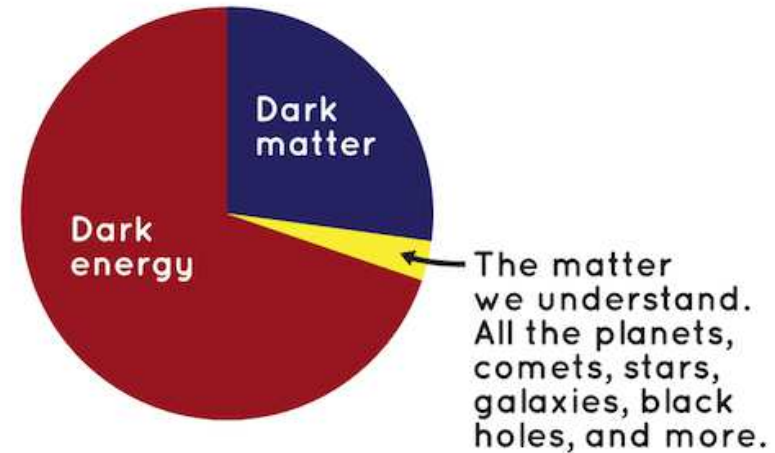
1. Some = ANTI-SCIENCE IN ITSELF–

It's really hard to deny the general arc of progress

- The web . . . the computer . . .
- The prolonging of life expectancy
- Remarkable Changes

2. Some = ANTI-PRIDE IN SCIENTISTS – Scientists can be Proudful/Arrogant/filled with Hubris

- I agree! – “Scientists get it wrong a lot!!”
 - are eggs and butter good/bad for you? Etc.
 - Newton vs. Einstein
- What we know scientifically is VERY limited
see . . . <https://spaceplace.nasa.gov/dark-matter/en/>



3. Some ANTI-the -CLAIM/ASSUMPTION that SCIENCE IS THE ONLY FORM OF REAL KNOWLEDGE

- I agree! -- Scientific Explanations don't explain it all

EXAMPLE: . . . think “SOS”

-- Suppose you get a Morse Code message by sound or flashed of light
→ “dot.dot.dot.dash.dash.dash.dot.dot.dot”



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9A3tBINRdiE>

You can analyze the signal in terms of physics – sound or light

Wavelength? Brightness? Volume? Exact length of the dots and dashes?

→ But this scientific investigation, no matter how detailed, will not provide you the real meaning of what's going on or what's needed!
i.e., that it is Morse Code;
or that "SOS" is a cry for help

If you know Morse Code, you can analyze it in terms of language:

.. you can ask ..

- Is SOS a word in English? (No!)
- Is it an acronym/abbreviation ("Save our Ship/Souls"?). No!

So How do we know what it means? ..

outside the realms of science and language ..

You can analyze it in terms of (arbitrary) human convention!!

In 1905 in Germany someone said "*Let's connect the cry for help with Morse Code, and let's choose something easy and memorable*"

– And on July 1, 1908 it became an official international distress signal.

- It is **not** an acronym; in language it means **nothing**;
- **Nor** does wavelength or brightness or volume mean anything – except for seeing or hearing.
- It is just "easy to recognize and remember"! .. one of many possibilities chosen and agreed on arbitrarily.

IN OTHER WORDS .. Do not be deluded by "over-reaching claims"

i. **There are different "realms of knowing"** – of which science is just one!
Depending on the kinds of information you are looking for (especially "why?") **science provides only one branch of knowledge.**

ii. **Beware of the God of the Gaps, (it must be God if I don't understand it) but believe in the God of the Whole Thing**

Think Movies ..

It is not a proof that there is no director or producer

- If there are no written credits including their names
- If the director or producer does not appear in the movie itself (like Alfred Hitchcock or Clint Eastwood)

[Nor is it an absolute proof that the existence of the movie proves that there is a "creator" – but it's a strong hint/rumor in that direction]

The Bible assumes the existence of God ..

2. But that begs the question: WHAT kind of God?

= The most poignant question .. **in the face of evil – weakness, death**

→ **Is this God Powerful? Loving?**

→ **The Problem of Evil**

- i. Note: **There is no problem at all** if all there is an inanimate universe ..
with no "sensing/sentient" creatures
-- The devastation involved in the creation of the universe and the functioning of the earth (with volcanoes, tsunamis, earthquakes, hurricanes, etc.) is merely "awesome" and morally neutral

BUT

ii. Some terrible things can happen

IF God

- Puts relatively small and powerless people/animals into the universe
- Allows people to make
 - bikes that are exposed
 - and cars that drive fast,
 - and trucks that carry heavy materials
 - and buildings that can collapse, . . . etc., etc.
- Makes people capable not just of being puppets on a string, but of choosing not only good but evil?

iii. If God is Powerful & Loving the only justification for this would be

- the production of an immediate "good" better than the harm or pain
 - *but what if we cannot see ANY good coming out of evil?*
- the production of an ultimate good in the long term: will it end ok? – will the end justify the means?

= Love and Justice (fairness) win out .. in the end

This is the Biblical Understanding

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 + Revelation ..

For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

But what about NOW?

OK .. so there is a God .. And God will fix things in the end ..

BUT what about now??

3 Where is This God to be Found – when I need God?

- Not just a theological question -- but personal --
- What if I don't feel God's presence? . . . when I need God?
- What if my experience is . . . loneliness, meaninglessness, even abandonment?

Not Uncommon →MOTHER TERESA:

In 2003, a book called "Come Be My Light" was published that contained the private letters of

Mother Teresa. The book created quite a stir because the constant theme of many of the letters in the book was her sense of distance from God not her sense of closeness to God.

For decades, that is how she felt. In one place she says:

Lord, my God, who am I that you should forsake me, the child of your love and now become the one most hated, the one you have thrown away as unwanted, unloved? I call, I cling, I want and there is no one to answer, no one on whom I can cling. No. No one. Alone. The darkness is so dark and I am alone, unwanted, forsaken. The loneliness of the heart that wants love is unbearable. Where is my faith? Even deep down right in there is nothing but emptiness and darkness. (p.187)

How do we deal with and understand this experience when it happens to me?

-- Next Week!

-- Today . . . focus on more general answers . . .

Because it's possible that we're simply

- looking in the wrong places
- OR trusting in/expecting the wrong experience

Where Can I expect to find and experience God?

—from a Biblical perspective?

LISTENING -- God IS speaking to US . .

I. Psalm 19

In CREATION

1The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

2Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.

3There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard;

4yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.



Andromeda Galaxy, Hubble



Speckled padloper tortoise- smallest tortoise

In the BIBLE



7The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;

the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple;

8the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;

the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes;

9the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever;

the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

10More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;

sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.

• 11Moreover by them is your servant warned;

• in keeping them there is great reward.

• 12But who can detect their errors? Clear me from hidden faults.

God IS speaking . . all around us and in the Bible

– Question 1 -- Are we tuned in?

Expectation? Excitement? Awareness?

Discipline . . to pick up and read . .

God WANTS His People to Know He is Close

Old Testament – God promises to be in Specific Places:

Mt. Sinai, Tabernacle, Temple . . . and with his people

Exodus 19:17-19

Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was completely enveloped in smoke, *because the LORD had descended on it in fire*. And the smoke rose like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently. And as the sound of the ram's horn grew louder and louder, Moses spoke *and God answered him in the thunder*....

Tabernacle

Exodus 25:8

- "*Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them.*"

Exodus 25:21-22

- Place the cover on top of the ark and put in the ark the Testimony, which I will give you. *22 There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you* and give you all my commands for the Israelites.

Exodus 40:33-34

Moses finished the work. Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and *the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle*.

Temple & Jerusalem

1 Kings 8:10-11

¹⁰And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, ¹¹so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for *the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord*. . . .

(Note: Prayers directed to the temple)

Psalms 87:2

The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob.

Psalms 132:13

For the Lord has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his dwelling place:

With His People -- Cloud and Fire

Exodus 13:20-22

²⁰The Hebrew people set out from Succoth (in Egypt near the Red Sea), and camped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness. ²¹The Lord went in

front of them *in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night*, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night. ²²Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

Numbers 14:14

The inhabitants of this land have heard that you, O Lord, are in the midst of this people; for you, O Lord, are seen face to face, and *your cloud stands over them and you go in front of them, in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night*.

Deuteronomy 1

³⁰*The Lord your God, who goes before you*, is the one who will fight for you, just as he did for you in Egypt before your very eyes, ³¹and in the wilderness, where you saw how *the Lord your God carried you*, just as one carries a child, all the way that you traveled until you reached this place.

Footprints – a little sentimental . . . but Biblical

One night I had a dream...

I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord, and across the sky flashed scenes from my life.

For each scene I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand;

One belonged to me, and the other to the Lord.

When the last scene of my life flashed before us, I looked back at the footprints in the sand.

-- I noticed that many times along the path of my life, there was only one set of footprints.

-- I also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in my life.

This really bothered me, and I questioned the Lord about it.

"Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, You would walk with me all the way; But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why in times when I needed you the most, you should leave me.

The Lord replied,

"My precious, precious child. I love you, and I would never, never leave you during your times of trial and suffering. When you saw only one set of footprints, It was then that I carried you.

NEW TESTAMENT

Jesus . . . God in Jesus

Matthew 1²³ -- God is Present in Jesus

“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” -- which means, “God is with us.”

Matthew 18:20 -- Jesus is where his people are

“Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

Matthew 28:19-20 -- Jesus is with us when we serve

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Luke 17.11-21 – Jesus is the New Temple (The Grateful Samaritan)

¹¹On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee.

¹²As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, ¹³they called out, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

¹⁴When he saw them, he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were made clean.

¹⁵Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. ¹⁶He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan.

¹⁷Then Jesus asked, “*Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they?*” ¹⁸*Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?*”

¹⁹Then he said to him, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”

1 Corinthians 3.16, 17 – The Church as the New Temple

Do you not know that you all (the church) are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.

1 Corinthians 6.19 – Our Lives as the New Temple

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?

Q. WHY IS THIS “3rd” QUESTION – “How Can I find God?” SO IMPORTANT?

A. It’s really the fundamental question (“problematic”) of Scripture

Genesis 3 -- After eating the fruit . . . Adam and Eve

⁸ heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ *But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?”*

Not: where is God?

But: Where are we?

Answer: Locked Outside Eden!!

²³ therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.

WHERE ARE WE?

Isaiah 59:1-2

The Lord’s hand is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. Rather, *your iniquities have been barriers/made a separation between you and your God*, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

Romans 3:23

For all have sinned and **fallen short of the glory of God**

Romans 5:1-2

Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in **our hope of sharing the glory of God**

AND IN THE END

Revelation 21:3, 22

³ and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, *the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them*, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them.

²²But I saw no temple in the city, because *the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.*

