

DOES GOD EXIST?

If God exists and the Bible's description of him is accurate, then the implications cannot be underestimated. This begs two vital and obvious questions. Does God exist and is the Bible reliable? What follows are a series of reasons why we might take God and the Bible's description of him seriously, starting with general indications of the existence of God and moving on to specific evidence for the authenticity of Jesus of Nazareth's claim to be God in human flesh. This is not intended to make a watertight case, but to suggest some areas to consider.

MEANING IN THE WORLD:

Our lives, our relationships and world history are all brimming with meaning. However, if there's no creator and designer of the universe, then it has no ultimate meaning. Our lives are the meaningless shrapnel of a curious explosion and all apparent meaning; love, hate, integrity, good, bad and so on is a transitory illusion with no anchor in ultimate reality.

The fact that the implications of the world being meaningless are so horrific to those who seriously consider them is further evidence that the world is in fact profoundly meaningful. The world requires a creator to give it real, absolute meaning.

CREATION:

There's a story told of Isaac Newton showing a model of the Solar System to a friend. "Who made the model?" asked the friend. "No-one!" replied Newton. "Ridiculous" his friend exclaimed. Newton then enquired how his friend could believe that the real thing had no creator. The intricacy, creativity, beauty and meaning in the universe and our lives demands a cause. Explosions, even big ones, don't create poetry and penguins!

MORALITY:

As humans we have a deep inner sense of right and wrong. It's always wrong to feed children to alligators, it's always wrong to steal what rightfully belongs to someone else. However, if morality is to be any more than a democratic agreement or an autocratic rule, it must find its definition in something higher than humanity. The only candidate is that ultimate morality reflects the character of God. If there's no God then I can only say that in my opinion murder and theft are wrong. Who's the judge? It has been suggested that people are much more likely to believe in absolute truth after their car has just been stolen!

SPIRITUAL HUNGER:

Throughout history people have experienced a spiritual hunger, a desire to know what life and death is all about. If there was no God and the world was just a natural coincidence, why would man ever think to ask about God in the first place? C.S. Lewis drew an analogy with our other desires. If we're hungry

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it reflects our need for food. If we're cold it reflects our need for warmth. There's a correspondence between our desires and reality. Our spiritual hunger reflects our intrinsic need for God and meaning

THE BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW AND THE TEACHING OF JESUS:

The Biblical worldview offers a coherent, attractive, powerful and highly persuasive explanation of all the issues outlined above. Furthermore the teachings of Jesus, a working-class carpenter from an obscure country who never taught abroad or had academic training and was assassinated after three years of public ministry, has underpinned much of Western culture for two millennia.

FULFILLED PROPHECIES:

The Old Testament contains many varied and detailed prophecies about the Christ, or Messiah. Jesus fulfilled the 60 major prophecies of the Old Testament and over 270 ramifications including his family line, the time and location of his birth and the nature of his betrayal and death. The detailed accuracy and nature of these predictions are way beyond the possibilities of even the most intricate conspiracy.

THE EMPTY TOMB:

During his brief public life, Jesus publicly claimed he would rise from the dead. His political and religious opponents, the Roman rulers and Jewish leaders, were careful to guard the tomb after his death. However, after three days the body had gone and his opponents, who would have given anything to produce the body, could not do so. The case for the resurrection has withstood two thousand years of the most severe scrutiny.

EYEWITNESSES OF THE RESURRECTION:

The disciples of Jesus were in despair after the death of their leader. After their claimed encounter with the risen Jesus they were transformed into a band who fearlessly proclaimed a gospel based on his resurrection. Of the core of eleven disciples, ten were martyred and one was exiled for their testimony. The New Testament claims that over 500 witnessed the risen Christ. Most of them were still alive at the time that letter was circulated, meaning any false claim could easily have been exposed, but it wasn't.

THE EARLY CHURCH:

The early church was a powerful and irrepressible agent of love and sacrifice in the Roman World. The faith of the first Christians in the person and resurrection of Christ was such that many willingly endured horrific martyrdom at the hands of the Roman authorities. Despite their refusal to use force to defend themselves, the church overcame the hatred and might of the Roman empire and many other equally ferocious empires since.

CONTEMPORARY FOLLOWERS OF JESUS:

Around 1 billion people today claim allegiance to Jesus Christ. More people were martyred in the last century than the preceding nineteen put together. The power and life of Jesus continues to transform the lives of everyone from drug addicts to world leaders across the globe. The impact of Jesus cannot be explained by mass hysteria.

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