

# FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

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A BI-MONTHLY PERIODICAL OF MAMMOTH SPRING CHURCH OF CHRIST

## What Have We Learned?

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**T**he last year-and-a-half has taught us many things. Life is uncertain. Life can be unfair. We don't know how much time each of us may (or may not) have. It has taught us that we take things and people for granted. Suffering and death is real. The Bible speaks to these realities, too. After the difficulties of his life Jacob said, "*And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage*" (Gen. 47:7-9). After his loss Job said, "*Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not*" (Job 14:1-2).

The suffering and evil in life can cause people to become cynical and reclusive. People can even try to hide themselves from the difficult realities of life through isolation. That is a possibility. Or, we can face life, with all of its challenges and suffering and do everything we can to make our world a better place. It is the case that the Christian is called to do just that. We are called by the gospel (2 Thes. 2:14) to live in this world as a "light" and as "salt" (Matt. 5:13-16). We are called to "shine as lights" in a dark world of evil and suffering (Phil. 2:15). Those who have made the choice to follow God have made the choice to live in an evil world, to conduct themselves properly, and to encourage others to do the same. Jesus Himself warned His followers that they would face the same kind of treatment that He did. "*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will*

*keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me*" (Jn. 15:18-21).

Not only is there the reality of such treatment for following Jesus, there is also the reality of the difficulties of life in general that can serve as a challenge to our faith. We all age. We all get sick. Our loved ones age and get sick. We suffer from diabetes, cancer, arthritis, viruses, etc., etc. There are natural disasters and wars. People mistreat each other and abandon each other. There is physical, verbal, and sexual abuse. And then there is the ultimate cause of despair and anger - death itself. The Bible tells us that we will all die (Heb. 9:27).

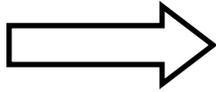
I know that this all sounds very dark and depressing, but it is not the totality of our brief existence here on earth. There is much more to life than the bad things that happen to us and because of us. The Psalms tell us that we have anywhere (generally) from 70 to 80 years of life

**"...in the midst of the difficulties that we face in this world, we can enjoy life."**

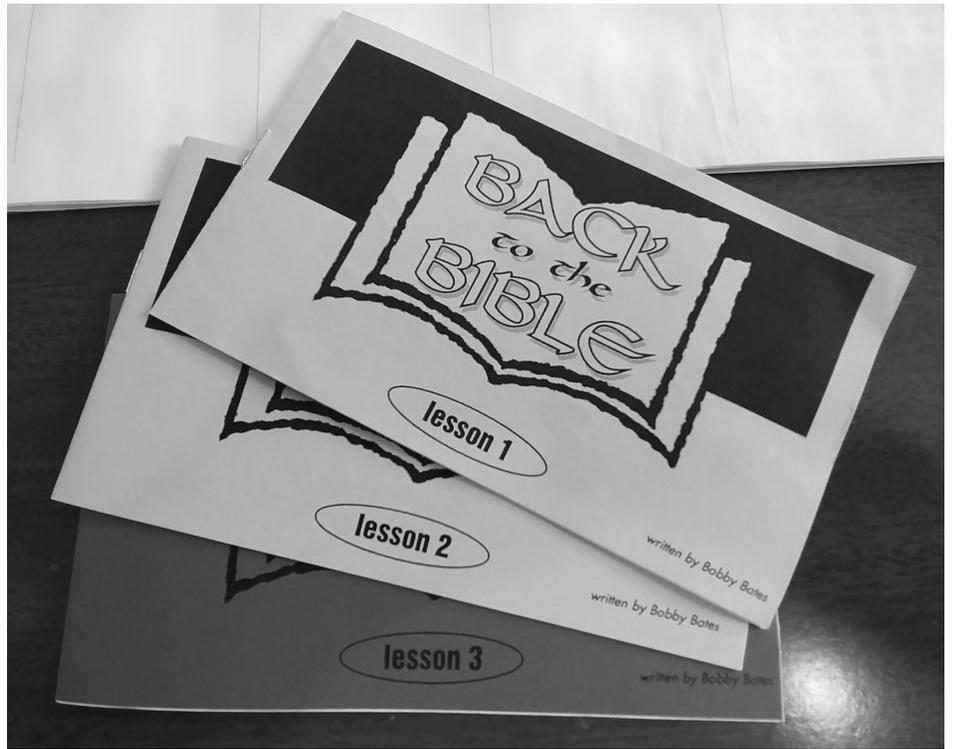
(Ps. 90:10). That is not really much time, relatively speaking - especially in relation to eternity! We are all beings who are made up of more than flesh and bone. There is a part of each of us that, once we have experienced death, will live on. The Bible also teaches us that in the midst of the difficulties that we face in this world, we can enjoy life. Peter wrote, "*For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew (turn from) evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil*" (1 Pet. 3:10-12). The purpose then of life is not just to live life and try to avoid all difficulties and suffering. The purpose of life is to glorify God and conduct ourselves in accordance with His will - in spite of all the evil, suffering, and death that is in the world. Jesus came to give life, and life more abundantly (Jn. 10:10). That does not mean that all evil and suffering will disappear from my life. It does mean that as a child of God I realize my purpose on this earth and live accordingly.

*Would You Like to Study the Bible?*

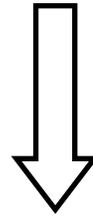
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In a September 2016 *New Scientist* article titled “Can We Ever Know If God Exists?”<sup>1</sup> Executive Editor Graham Lawton insisted that “the only coherent and rational position is agnosticism.”<sup>2</sup> Allegedly, there is not enough legitimate evidence to come to the rational conclusion that “God exists.” For example, Lawton called the design argument for God’s existence a “superficially persuasive argument” that is “very refutable.”<sup>3</sup> And how is it supposedly refuted? What evidence did Lawton offer in contradiction to the design argument? He presented only one statement: “Evolution by natural selection, working over vast lengths of time, is all you need.”<sup>4</sup>

Sadly, many people will naively take Lawton at his word and assume, “He must be right. I guess we can’t prove that God exists.” The simple fact is, however, his “refutation” of the design argument is nothing of the sort. First, the design argument for God’s existence is an actual logical argument.

“This argument for God is logically sound and observationally true.”

**Premise 1:** Anything that exhibits complex, functional design demands an intelligent designer.

**Premise 2:** The Universe exhibits complex, functional design.

**Conclusion:** Therefore, the Universe must have an intelligent Designer.

This argument for God is logically sound and observationally true. Even atheists frequently testify to the “design” in nature. For example, Australian atheistic astrophysicist Paul Davies has admitted that the Universe is “uniquely hospitable,” “remarkable,” and “ordered in an intelligible way.” He even confessed to the “fine-tuned properties” of the Universe.<sup>5</sup> The simple fact is, to deny either premise of the design argument is to deny reality, while to deny the conclusion is to deny logic.

Second, “Evolution by natural selection, working over vast lengths of time, is [not!]”<sup>6</sup> all you need.” Certainly the fit adapt and survive, and pass along their advantageous genetic traits [example: longer legs in some animals] to their offspring, but such processes (1) cannot **create** complex, functional design from nothing, (2) cannot change non-design into design, and (3) do not (and cannot) change one kind of animal into another. The simple fact is, **natural selection does not design**

**anything.** As evolutionist Hugo de Vries admitted long ago, “Natural selection may explain the survival of the fittest, but it cannot explain the **arrival** of the fittest.”<sup>7</sup> It cannot explain the arrival of the perfectly designed “bomb-producing” bombardier beetle anymore than it can rationally explain the communication skills of the “sophisticated,” “intelligent,” “tailor-made,” color-changing Cuttlefish.<sup>8</sup>

Atheistic evolution is simply inept to deal with the reasonable arguments for the existence of God, including the logically sound design argument. To say that the design argument has “turned out to be very refutable” is simply false. And to act as if natural selection over long periods of time is the answer to the design observed in nature is equally fallacious. Such talk may sound nice in theoretical circles, but the evidence on a real observational and philosophically sound level still points to design that demands a designer. In truth, regardless of what Lawton and *New Scientist* say, we **can** know that God exists.<sup>9</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Graham Lawton (2016), “Can We Ever Know If God Exists?” *New Scientist*, 231[3089]:39, September 3.

<sup>2</sup> An agnostic is “a person who holds the view that any ultimate reality (as God) is unknown **and probably unknowable**”—*Merriam-Webster On-line Dictionary* (2016), <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/agnostic>, emp. added.

<sup>3</sup> Lawton, p. 39, emp. added.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Davies (2007), “Laying Down the Laws,” *New Scientist*, 194[2610]:30,34, June 30.

<sup>6</sup> Parenthetical comment added.

<sup>7</sup> Hugo De Vries (1905), *Species and Varieties: Their Origin by Mutation*, ed. Daniel Trembly MacDougal (Chicago, IL: Open Court), pp. 825-826, emp. added.

<sup>8</sup> Eric Lyons (2008), “The Cause of the Cuttlefish,” *Apologetics Press*, <http://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=9&article=2505&topic=328>.

<sup>9</sup> See the Existence of God section of *ApologeticsPress.org* for a plethora of articles on this subject: <http://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=12>.

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### Unique features of the Church of Christ

- We use the Bible only (2 Pet. 1:3). We have no creed book, convention, or central headquarters.
- Our name is after the One who died to establish His church (Rom. 16:16).
- The church of Christ began in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2:1-4).
- Jesus promised to establish His church (Matt. 16:18).
- That church was purchased with Jesus' blood (Acts 20:28).
- The church is married to Christ (Rom. 7:4).
- It was established in the first century (Acts 2:47).
- Jesus is the one and only Head of the One Body (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23).
- You can only be added to the church by God Himself (Acts 2:41, 47).

### What about being saved?

- All people are saved by grace, though faith (Eph. 2:8-9).
- No one is saved by faith alone (Jas. 2:14-26).
- No one is saved by grace alone (Matt. 7:21).
- Jesus said that belief plus baptism will produce salvation (Mk. 16:16). That is a promise, not a command.
- The Bible teaches that repentance plus baptism produces remission of sins (Acts 2:37-38).
- Belief, confession, and baptism is seen in the account of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:37-38).
- The Corinthians heard, believed, and were baptized (Acts 18:8).
- Christ is "put on" in baptism (Gal. 3:26-27).
- The apostle Peter said that "baptism does save us" (1 Pet. 3:21).

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