

Grace Evangel Fellowship Pulpit

DOES GOD EXIST?

Has He Spoken to Us?

Is the Bible His Revelation to Mankind?

Was Jesus Really Resurrected from the Dead?

And as a Result - Is God Now In the Process of Reconciling ALL?

Excerpted from a Message

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What is the evidence we've considered when formulating our own conclusion of God's existence? Let me share with you my own thought process as I've expressed in my book "Does God Exist, And Has He Spoken to Us?"

First – what causes us to believe that God does exist!

1. Consider our world and the universe!
2. The well-ordered, harmonious design of the universe functions with mathematical precision.
3. The earth is just the right size and distance from the sun to support life.
4. The tilt of the earth's axis provides a moderation of temperature to support life.
5. The moon is just the right distance from the earth and the right size to provide cleansing tides.
6. The mix of nitrogen and oxygen in the air is perfect to support life.
7. Consider the ingenious exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide between plants and animals.
8. Water – which provides many essential functions within the earth and within our bodies.
9. The intricacies that are built into the natural laws that science discovered and put to good use.
10. Natural laws that are mathematically precise, universal, and tied together.
11. What was it that imposed such regularity upon the universe?
12. Consider the existence, not just of inert matter, but life.
13. How did life first emerge from non-living matter?
14. How did life develop the ability to reproduce?
15. Consider the intricacies of these human bodies.
16. The body's genes which control hereditary characteristics.
17. The DNA material with its unbelievable complexity of arrangements needed to produce life.
18. The complexity of the number of elements working together with precision.
19. The incredible circulatory system within our bodies.
20. The intricate structure of the human eye.
21. The marvel of the human brain – intelligence and our ability to create, to think, to reason.

Could all of this have suddenly **happened** by accident?
Spontaneously without the work of a Creator?

If you find a smart phone lying on the ground,
Could you pick it up and explore all of its capabilities,
And could you claim this device just appeared – without a creator that thought about it,
And proceeded to create it?

I think about my house.
Could it have suddenly appeared spontaneously,
Without there being a builder that existed,
A builder that was skilled in designing and building a house?

The creation all around us speaks,
Saying there is a wise, mighty, intelligent, Creator that lies behind all that we see all around us!

Romans 1:18-22 tells us what is known of God is *apparent*, for His invisible attributes, and His imperceptible power, and His divinity – can be seen in His achievements throughout history.

Besides the historical account of God's achievements found in the Scriptures themselves, the observations I've just itemized are some of God's visible achievements that lead us to see that He does, in fact, exist.

So, it seems quite clear that a Creator – God, if you will – exists and was responsible for the creation we see all around us.

But has He communicated with mankind, beyond just creating all of this?

What causes us to believe that God has spoken to mankind?

There are various written works that some contend have come from God. The Koran is an example of this – or what are referred to as “the lost books of the Bible.”

But, from my studies I see the unique case for the Bible, and the Bible alone, as having come from God.

1. Consider the survival and preservation of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament).
2. There is more manuscript evidence than for any other piece of classical literature.
3. It is the oldest, written historical record still in existence.
4. The table of nations is remarkable in its accuracy.
5. God's people implemented the most stringent of safeguards against errors in the manuscripts.
6. Its survival is amazing what with the severe persecution throughout time.
7. Many tried to burn or ban the ancient texts.
8. Later writings validated the Hebrew Scriptures.
9. The Septuagint, Origen's Hexapla, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Aramaic Targums, The Mishnah, the Gemara, the Midrash.
10. Consider the survival and preservation of the Greek Scriptures (New Testament).
11. There remains over 5,600 known Greek manuscripts today.
12. No other document of antiquity comes close to this.
13. There are surviving copies that originated within a couple of generations from the originals.
14. Consider the testimony of extra-biblical writers – especially Philo and Josephus.
15. Josephus, an important Jewish historian of the 1st century, provides important references to Jesus.
16. Tacitus also provides references, and he was not sympathetic or biased toward Christianity.

17. Tacitus provides reference to a historical figure, Jesus, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate.
18. Archeology has never made a discovery that contradicts any statement from the Bible.
19. Archeology has helped to establish the Bible as a reliable document.
20. Languages? There is considerable evidence that the world once had a single language.
21. Prophecy? There are thousands of biblical prophecies that were fulfilled throughout history.

From "God's Eonian Purpose" by Mr. Adlai Loudy: "Twenty-five specific predictions were made by the Hebrew prophets, bearing on the betrayal, trial, death, and burial of Christ. These were uttered by different prophets during a period of 500 years – yet they were all fulfilled in 24 hours in one person, the Christ of Whom they spoke."

22. Consider the unity of the Bible.
23. Written over 1400 years in different lands by people from diverse walks of life.
24. It employs a wide variety of literary styles.
25. But it is clearly one book telling one story – the story of mankind.
26. A mankind that God created and that He is now telling us about.
27. Men wouldn't have written the Bible in this way – a scathing look at his many severe flaws.

Now, let me share a short overview of the story of mankind found in the Scriptures.

God creates all things, including mankind. Man has a close fellowship with God, until man sins and death is the result. Humanity inherits this death condition – mortality – which is accompanied by inherent weakness and a propensity toward sin.

To communicate, God speaks not to the mass of humanity with an audible voice, but to select individuals that He chooses to be His agents. Signs and wonders validate their message to enable mankind to differentiate between the true prophets and those that are false.

God communicates His just requirements to mankind, but time and again mankind fails to be obedient. Experience proves that none have the ability to be righteous according to God's standards. All appears to be lost.

God never chooses a select person or group exclusively because they are better than the rest. His purpose is always to bless all of mankind. (This is stated repeatedly in Genesis.) But His means for doing so is to work thru certain select individuals who are called to be His agents. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were chosen, and God communicated directly with them. But always, the Bible tells us, God's intent is to bless all mankind.

Jacob is renamed Israel, and his descendants become the nation of Israel. Thru Moses the Law is given to the Israelites. Always God desires to bless all mankind, but His chosen instrument; the nation of Israel; fails to be faithful. So Israel is removed from her land, and the line of kings ends as the nation is in exile. But even then God speaks thru His prophets of a time when Israel would be restored to her land, and when the Anointed One would come and reign upon the throne.

After years of silence John the Baptist comes bearing the message that the kingdom is near and it is time to repent and get ready. Jesus follows with the same message; the kingdom is near. Here was the Anointed One, ready to fulfill the words of the prophets by sitting upon the throne to reign, and thru Israel all peoples upon the earth would at last be blessed.

But Israel does not recognize the time of the king's "visitation." The kingdom is rejected, and the king is crucified.

The apostles continue to proclaim the coming kingdom message to the nation of Israel. Peter calls upon Israel to repent so that the "times of restoration" that were spoken of by the prophets could come, and so that the Anointed One would return. But again Israel rejects the message and persecutes those who proclaim it.

Since the day God told Abraham, "All peoples of the earth will be blessed through you," God has been working thru His chosen agents to accomplish this very purpose. But His chosen agents have not always cooperated.

So, it appears that God's plan is at an impasse. How can the kingdom come upon the earth, and how can God bless all peoples thru Israel, when Israel herself continues to reject the message from God?

But we learn that this too is a part of God's plan. This rejection may not have been prophesied before, but it fits right into God's plan for the ages. Israel rejects the kingdom, so God now turns directly to the Gentiles.

Paul is not one of the select twelve apostles; but he is an apostle chosen by God nonetheless. He is an apostle of a different kind, and he did not simply proclaim the same message that had been borne by the others who preceded him. When Paul became a believer he did not study under the other believers. This might have seemed like a good idea in the ways of man, but God had different plans; and He revealed new things directly to Paul; things that had not been revealed to mankind ever before.

Today God is no longer working thru Israel. He now goes directly to Gentiles – the nations other than Israel. Believers from among the nations are now joint heirs (equals) with Jewish believers. The focus is no longer on Israel being born again, but on an entirely new creation. No longer is the focus on the nearness of the kingdom to come upon the earth; but upon God's broader kingdom overarching the entire universe. No longer do we wait for the Lord to come to reign upon the earth; we wait for Him to call us to serve Him in the celestial realm.

But God has not rejected Israel forever. Israel will still serve a purpose when Christ prepares to return to establish the kingdom upon the earth. But for now Israel has been temporarily set aside as God works thru a new instrument – an instrument that had not been mentioned by the prophets of old; the Body of Christ. This plan had been God's secret that He kept concealed until the time was right – when it was revealed to the apostle Paul. And this new instrument, the Body of Christ, would be the example of God's grace to the entire universe. This was the next step in God's unfolding plan, not previously revealed – until Paul came along.

The day will come when Christ calls the Body of Christ to be with Him to play a part in the heavens. And the day will come when Christ returns to reign upon the earth, when again Israel will play a part. And the day will come when all of God's creation will be subjected to Him, under the reign of Christ, when all are reconciled to God; when not one sheep remains lost; when even death and evil are defeated; when all are saved; and when God becomes All in all.

It all began with God alone, in perfection. Then He created. And now mankind is on a journey, guided by the sovereign God, toward a perfect conclusion.

When we step back and consider this amazing revelation, can any dispute the wisdom and love and power that is displayed?

Just as God's fingerprint is upon His visible creation, letting us know that He does exist and He did create all that we see around us, so also **God's fingerprint** is upon the Bible – His message to mankind – when we consider the wisdom, the genius and the perfection of the message.

And when we consider the other writings that some claim are from God, we know enough of the message being conveyed to see that there is not the same wisdom and perfection that permeates the Bible. God's fingerprint is missing! In no other case do we see the perfection of God, the flaws of mankind, and the perfect plan where not just some; but all of creation is reconciled to God, ending in perfection.

And so – consider the perfection of the message being conveyed, a perfection we would expect if the communication has truly come from God.

And to top things off, the inspired writers themselves confirmed that the Bible was not a work of man but was inspired by God. In Peter's words, "Men moved by the holy spirit spoke from God." (2 Peter 1:21). [See also 2 Timothy 3:16, 1 Corinthians 2:13, Galatians 1:12, Ephesians 3:3).

But how do we know the Bible contains the correct writings?

Let me recommend "The Original Bible Restored," an excellent book by Ernest Martin, which includes a very detailed and insightful description of the Bible's canonization process – deciding which writings were God-inspired and that needed to be incorporated into the written Word of God – and which writings were not. In the book, Martin points out:

1. The OT was canonized early on by King Hezekiah to preserve the inspired writings.
2. Hezekiah's selection of writings was confirmed and finalized by Ezra.
3. There were 22 books canonized – containing the same writings as our own 39 books,
4. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet.
5. Hebrew acrostics (poetry) contained 22 sentences.
6. So, 22 is a number signifying completion.
7. The NT was canonized by the apostles in their lifetime, as they saw believers were falling away from the truth.
8. The NT consisted of the same 27 books as our current NT.
9. This brings the total in the Bible to 49 books – 7 times 7 – signifying completion!

Let me add to what Martin shares.

Colossians 1:25 tells us Paul *completed* the Word of God – a safeguard against other writings.

And it's very important that canonization wasn't left to the 1st century church, as they had already fallen away even in the apostles' lifetime. This is what led them to identify the canon before they departed.

Lastly, E. W. Bullinger and A.E. Knoch – both steeped in a study of the Scriptures for much of their lives – both discerned and notated detailed outlines of each book in the Bible – their outlines showing amazing symmetry and perfection.

What causes us to believe that Jesus was resurrected and is the Son of God?

1. The historicity of Jesus is substantiated in the writings of many historians and other early writers.
2. Eusebius, Irenaeus, Josephus, Cornelius Tacitus, Suetonius, Thallus, Pliny the Younger, Lucian of Samosata, Mara Bar-Serapion.
3. There were many eyewitnesses of Jesus post-resurrection (over 500 per 1 Corinthians 15).
4. The change in Jesus's followers: discouraged and depressed → elated and energized.
5. They were committed to proclaiming the resurrection and that He was the Christ.
6. They faced extreme hardship and persecution and sometimes death but did not recant.
7. They were not just convinced over time of a belief system – they were witnesses of a miracle.
8. No one would die for their beliefs if they KNEW they were false and based on a hoax.
9. Their testimony faced rebuttals from a very learned opposition.
10. All took place in Jerusalem, where any could examine the tomb.
11. None ever paid homage to the tomb of Jesus.
12. Jesus's body was never produced, which would have immediately quashed their testimony.
13. The believers would have no motive for removing and hiding Jesus's body.

14. If the opposition had removed the body they would have later produced it to stop the testimony.
15. How could the stone have been moved while heavily guarded, without awakening the guard?
16. The guards would not have abandoned their post, facing consequences, aside from a real fright!
17. Consider Thomas, who refused to believe without seeing. And he saw!
18. Consider James, brother of Jesus, who saw Him as nothing but a brother ... until!
19. Consider Paul, extremely intelligent and a passionate persecutor ... until!

Beyond these points, I've included additional detail and references in my book, "Does God Exist, And Has He Spoken To Us?"

Having addressed the evidence in support of God's existence, and in support of the Bible (the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures) as being His Word to mankind, I wanted to touch on one last topic that is key to our Ambassadorship – our sharing the correct message with the world, as commissioned by our Lord.

What causes us to believe that God is in the process of saving ALL mankind?

At the heart of our message is the risen Lord, and the *implications* of the resurrection event. The message being proclaimed by most organized churches of our day distorts the good news, keeps people away from any thoughts concerning God, and diminishes the real work of our Lord and the revelation God has provided to mankind.

When Paul made the statement, "For Christ, then, are we ambassadors" – in the same context he states the heart of the message we bear.

"God was, in Christ, conciliating THE WORLD to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them, and placing in us the word of the conciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:18-21)

What is the evidence that leads me to believe that God is in the process of saving ALL mankind, in light of the apparent conflicts in our common Bible translations?

1. "Eon" (*aionion*) does not mean eternal

Consider the different variations found in the Scriptures.

- Eon (singular)
- Eons (plural)
- Before the eon
- Before the eons
- End of the eon
- End of the eons
- Eon of the eon
- Eon of the eons
- The present eon (Galatians 1:4)
- The coming eon (Mark 10:30)
- The oncoming eons (Ephesians 2:7)

The fact is that *aionion* is translated very inconsistently by most translators.

It is sometimes translated "eternal" or "endless."

Other times it is translated as a finite period of time, with a beginning and an end.

A careful study will show that *aionion* consistently refers to a time period ...

Never eternity or endless.

2. "Hell" as it is taught does not come from the Scriptures.

Three different words in the Greek are carelessly mixed together and translated "hell."

Hades (Greek) and the Hebrew equivalent *Sheol* – literally means “unseen”.
When the context will not permit “hell” a different word is used by the translator (“grave”).
Gehenna is a literal place outside Jerusalem – the Valley of Hinnom.
Gehenna has been taught figuratively to accommodate “hell” – but is clearly a physical place.
Tartarus is used only once. It is a holding place for angels awaiting judgment.

3. Lake of fire.

The lake of fire is only found 5 times in the Scriptures.

Only 2 refer to conscious torment, but only the beast, false prophet, and Adversary are there.
In the 3 instances where humans are involved, no conscious torment and no time period.

The lake of fire is described as the second death in Revelation 21:7-8.

And death will one day be abolished (1 Corinthians 15).

Thus, will be the end of the lake of fire.

It will fulfill some purpose of God, whether literal or figurative.

But it is not eternal!

4. Consider God’s nature and the nature of judgement.

God **is** love. All other attributes are subservient to His essence of love.

Matthew 25:46 is a favorite passage for those teaching eternal torment.

Here we read of “everlasting punishment” in most translations.

But *Kolasin* in the Greek is “correction” (as with the pruning of a tree).

Kolasin aionion is, then, “*Eonian correction*” – not everlasting punishment.

5. Lastly, consider the ALL passages.

These passages are “artificially” restricted by the translators to fit the concept of eternal torment.

God is the Savior of all, especially believers. (1 Timothy 4:10)

“Especially” is not “exclusive,” as we see in Galatians 6:10.

God wills that all mankind be saved. (1 Timothy 2:4)

God is operating all in accord with counsel of His will. (Ephesians 1:11)

Christ is a *correspondent ransom for all* – the testimony in its own eras. (1 Timothy 2:6)

In Adam all are dying; in Christ shall all be vivified. (1 Corinthians 15:21-23)

One offense for all mankind for condemnation – one just award for all mankind (Rom 5:18-19)

The Lamb of God taking away sin of *the world*. (John 1:29)

We see every knee bowing in Philippians 2:9-11; Isaiah 45:23).

God locks all in stubbornness; to be merciful to all. (Romans 11:30-32)

He [Christ] should be tasting death for the sake of everyone. (Hebrews 2:9)

God was in Christ conciliating the world to Himself. (2 Corinthians 5:19)

Christ is the propitiatory shelter “For our sins, not ours only but the whole world.” (1 John 2:2)

Jesus said, “If I should be exalted – I shall be drawing *all* to Myself. (John 12:32)

In Him [Christ] *all* is created ... through Him *all* will be reconciled, (Colossians 1:16-20)

Consider this final reference very carefully (Colossians 1:16-20).

*for in Him is **all created, that in the heavens and that on the earth**, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or sovereignties, or authorities, all is created through Him and for Him, and He is before all, and all has its cohesion in Him. And He is the Head of the body, the ecclesia, Who is Sovereign, Firstborn from among the dead, that in all He may be becoming first, for in Him the entire complement delights to dwell,*

*and through Him **to reconcile all** to Him (making peace through the blood of His cross), through Him, whether **those on the earth or those in the heavens**.*

ALL is created through Him, and ALL is reconciled. Consider the global nature of this passage. ALL CREATION is included ... visible and invisible.

And as we consider the ALL passages, let us not forget 1 Corinthians 15:28 – when Christ’s work has been completed, and when all is subjected to Christ, whereupon He turns everything over to the Father – Who becomes All in all.

All in all! An amazing statement.

In this is the grand conclusion of the eons, when God has become All in all – God will have taken what mankind (and Satan) have intended for evil, and He will have used all of it to achieve good. Throughout the course of history, He has operated all in accord with the counsel of His will – to achieve His will ... that ALL mankind be saved.

In the end, some will have recognized the greatness of God, and the work of the Saviour, in this lifetime, by faith. Others will have taken longer but now find salvation also. Every knee is now bowing in subjection before Him. Every person has found salvation. Every lost sheep has been found. The purpose of the eons has been achieved, and God is now All in all.

In proclaiming the truth concerning mankind’s destiny when this life has ended – universal reconciliation – we are not mitigating Christ’s work upon the cross. Christ’s death and subsequent resurrection were necessary for *any* to be saved. Without Christ none could be saved, for none are righteous. Because of Christ none will be lost in the end.

Proclaiming that eternal torment is the destiny for some is to limit the true power and wisdom and love of God. It is to limit the true scope of Christ’s work upon the cross. It is to blaspheme God by saying He is love, yet is unwilling or unable to save those bound for “eternal torment”

Could God really be love, and all wise and powerful, and yet be unable or unwilling to find a way to save every last one of His creation?

Links

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This overview contains the thoughts and opinions of the author and is a work in progress as his study of the Scriptures continues. Some things that God has revealed are very clear. That Christ died for our sins; that He was entombed; and that He was roused (1 Corinthians 15:3) is clear. That all are to be ultimately reconciled to God thru the work of Christ is also very clear (1 Corinthians 15:20-28). But on many specifics in the Scriptures there are a variety of interpretations and opinions, and none should conclude they have the complete and final understanding on these matters that are less clear. The reader is encouraged to consider various opinions, but to study and to think for himself. Within the Body of Christ we should study and discuss our understandings so as to mutually reach a more complete understanding of that which God has revealed.

Unless otherwise noted, Scriptures are taken from the Concordant Literal New Testament and the Concordant Version of the Old Testament. Concordant Publishing Concern, P O Box 449, Almont, MI 48003 (Concordant.org)

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