

# “Why I Believe in God”

Message 1 of 5 in the Sermon Series “Key Questions: God, Creation, Scripture, Jesus, the Resurrection”

Acts 17:22-25 | Pastor Christian Newsome

Hebrews 11:1; 6—“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen...<sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

*“There cannot be irrefutable proof for the existence of God, (though) many people have found strong clues for his reality—divine fingerprints—in many places.”*

Tim Keller, *The Reason for God* [Riverhead: NYC, 2008]. p. 132

1 Peter 3:15—“but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect...”

*“Neither religion nor secularity can be demonstrably proven—they are systems of thinking and believing that need to be compared and contrasted to one another in order to determine which makes the most sense...of our social experience and addresses the problems we face in living together. And which of these is the most logically consistent...in offering meaning, satisfaction, freedom, identity, hope, and justice.”*

Tim Keller, *Making Sense of God* [Viking: NYC, 2016] p. 215-216

Acts 17:22-25—“So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: ‘Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.<sup>23</sup> For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: “To the unknown god.” What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.<sup>24</sup> The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man,<sup>25</sup> nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.’”

## Clue #1: Cosmic Wonder – What exists around us. v. 24

*“If there is no God, then either original matter came from nothing, or original matter has always existed without a cause...each of these answers takes us out of the realm of science and the universe that we know. They (the above two options) are nothing short of miracles, for science knows nothing of beings or physical processes that spring out of nothing or that have no beginning. Whatever brought it (the Universe) about must have been something extranatural or supernatural.”*

Keller, *Making Sense of God*, 218

- a. A Universe with a beginning.

The Kalam Cosmological Argument [Dr. William Lane Craig]

**Book:** *The Kalam Cosmological Argument: Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology*

- Step 1: Whatever begins to exist has a cause.
- Step 2: The Universe had a beginning.
- Step 3: Therefore the Universe has a cause.

*“Whatever begins to exist has a cause. The idea that things can come into being uncaused out of nothing is worse than magic. This is a principle (cause and effect) that is constantly confirmed and never falsified in science. We never see things coming into being uncaused out of nothing.”*

*“The assumption ever since the ancient Greeks has been that the material world is eternal. Secular science always assumed the universe’s eternity. So the discovery in the twentieth century that the universe is not an unchanging, eternal entity was a complete shock to secular minds.”*

- Albert Einstein: General Theory of Relativity – 1915
- Alexander Friedman/George Lemaitre – 1920s
  - Fred Hoyle – ‘Big Bang’
- Edwin Hubble – Galaxies are moving away from us – 1929
- George Gamow – Background temperature of early universe – 1940s
  - 1965 – Background radiation temperature of 3.7 degrees above absolute zero

*“Predictions about the big bang have been consistently verified by scientific data. Unquestionably, the big bang model has impressive scientific credentials. It is the standard paradigm of contemporary cosmology. I would say its broad framework is very securely established as a scientific fact. Stephen Hawking (noted atheist) has said ‘almost everyone now believes that the universe, and time itself, had a beginning at the Big Bang.’”*

Dr. William Lane Craig, Interview with Lee Stroble in *Is God Real: Exploring the Ultimate Question of Life* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2023], p. 19-30 ed. for length.

- b. A Universe with a place to live. **Acts 17:26**
- c. A Universe with a plan. **Acts 17:27**

### **Clue #2: Moral Obligation: What exists within us.**

*“Moral obligation is the belief that some things ought not to be done regardless of how a person feels about them within themselves, regardless of what the rest of the community and culture says, and regardless of whether it is in their self-interest or not.”*

Tim Keller, *The Reason for God*, p. 152

### Moral Explanations in a world with no God:

- a. **Relativism** – There is no standard of ‘absolute’ truth; everything is relative.

*“Truth decay (relativism) is a cultural condition in which the very idea of absolute, objective and universal truth is considered implausible, held in open contempt or not even seriously considered. The reasons for truth decay (relativism) are both philosophical and sociological, rooted in the intellectual world of ideas as well the cultural world of everyday experience. These two worlds reinforce one another. Post-modern culture—with its increasing pluralism, relativism, information overload, heightened mobility, identify confusions, consumerism and so forth—make postmodern philosophy seem more plausible. (Yet) the truth itself does not decay. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, ‘the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever’ (Is. 40:8). Likewise, Jesus affirmed that ‘heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.’ (Mt. 24:35).” / [cf. 2 Tim. 4:3-4]*

Douglas Groothus, *Truth Decay* [Intervarsity: Downers Grover, IL, 2000], p. 22-23

- b. **Moral relativism** – There is no standard of ‘moral law’; everything is relative.
- c. **Cultural relativism** – Morality is subject to your ‘culture’, but not a ‘divine standard.’

*“In the absence of God...each...ethical and legal system...will be differentiated by the answer it chooses to give to one key question: ‘Sez who?’ Either God exists or He does not, but if He does not, nothing and no one else can take His place. If there is no God, then there is no way to say any one action is ‘moral’ and another ‘immoral’ but only ‘I like this.’ If that is the case, who gets the right to put their subjective, arbitrary moral feelings into law? If there is no God, then all moral statements are arbitrary, all moral valuations are subjective and internal, and there can be no external moral standard by which a person’s feelings and values are judged...As things are now, everything is up for grabs. Nevertheless: napalming babies is bad. Starving the poor is wicked. Buying and selling each other is depraved...There is such thing as evil. All together now: Sez Who? God help us.”*

Yale Law Professor Arthur Leff: edited for length by Tim Keller in *Reason for God* [p. 158-160]

*“It is after you have realized that there is a real Moral Law, and a Power behind that law, and that you have broken that law and put yourself wrong with that Power—it is after all this, and not a moment sooner, that Christianity begins to talk.”*

C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* [HarperCollins: NYC, 1980 \*from 1952 copywrite], p. 31

**Clue #3: Consciousness: What exists (above) us. v. 25**

*“Human consciousness points to something beyond the natural world...Consciousness and idea-making make far more sense in a universe created by an idea-making, conscious God.”*

Keller, *Making Sense of God*, 223-224

Oh My Soul...		
Self-Consciousness	Free Choice	Love
Ability to Reflect	Ability to Reason	Awareness & Longing for Beauty

*“Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing.”*

C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1943; repr. New York: Macmillan, 1960), p. 120

*“These arguments and signs that we have been reviewing are not so strong as to force belief, but they do make it completely rational to believe.”*

Keller, *Reason for God*, 227

Psalm 14:1—“The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”

Job 28:28—“Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.”