

## Psalm 19

*If God is there, why doesn't he prove it?*

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### INTRODUCTION

I remember when I stopped believing in Santa Claus. Well, I say I “believed” in Santa Claus, it was more a kind of hope that he exists because if someone like that actually existed, it would be truly magical for me as a young boy.

Anyway, I remember the night – Christmas Eve. Obviously, I was trying hard to get to sleep. But, late into the night, I noticed, through a crack in my eyelids, the figure of my father sneak into my room and deposit a stocking of presents at the end of my bed. It was then, I knew, for certain.

I had my absolute proof that *Santa isn't real!*

You know, there is a popular idea that believing in God is like believing in Santa Claus. But although it is popular, it isn't very sophisticated.

The famous atheist, Richard Dawkins once said,

*“Father Christmas and the tooth fairy are part of the charm of childhood, so is the belief in God. Some of us grow out of all three.”<sup>1</sup>*

For Dawkins, belief in God is something you're supposed to grow out of! Which implies that, if you believe in God beyond a certain point of reason, as an adult, then you are in fact, well, *stupid!*

But is this fair? Can you compare belief in Santa and belief in God?

Or let me put it another way, is it *reasonable* to believe in God? Is there evidence that he exists? I assume most of us here don't believe in Santa because it isn't reasonable to believe he does.

A lot of people, and maybe you are one of them, would deny the existence of God ***because there is no evidence.***

Another atheist, Bertrand Russell, was once asked what he would say to God, if he did meet him, why he didn't believe, and he famously replied, *‘I would look him in the eye and say, “Not enough evidence.”’*

Is that why you don't believe, because there isn't any evidence for God?

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Third Way* magazine, Vol. 26, No. 5, June 2003, p. 5.

Well, this morning, I want to challenge that assumption by showing you some reasonable proofs for God's existence.

But before I do, I also need to make sure you have the right expectations.

If you're here today hoping for some absolute proof, some undeniable, unquestionable proof, then you're probably not going to get it. Why? Well, apart from a few things, like mathematical stuff –  $2+2=4$  – there isn't 100% certain for anything.

Instead, we have to ask whether it is reasonable to believe something based on the evidence we have, in the same way police gather evidence to convict a criminal.

So, if you're looking for at least one, absolutely air-tight proof of God's existence before you will ever believe, then you're not going to get it. And even if you did have the most brilliant proof, a lot of people will always manage to find **some rational way around it**.

But, neither can you emphatically prove that there *isn't* a God. Even an atheist like Richard Dawkins admits that. ***You can't prove the non-existence of something.***

The other thing I want to be clear about this morning is that we are tackling this from a particularly Christian perspective. So that means I also want to show you some reasons why the Bible says God exists **and** also why people don't believe he does exist.

Now, in doing so, I appreciate that the reliability and authority of the Bible is another huge question. However, much of what we're going to see today doesn't necessarily depend upon whether you think the Bible is true or not.

Nevertheless, I want to give you a **biblical angle** simply because I think the Bible gives us the best explanation of our world and the way people behave.

Fianlly, rather than talking about proofs for God's existence, I want to talk about them as clues.

There may not be a single piece of evidence that clinches it for you, but when taken all together, I think there is a very compelling argument for God's existence.

So, I want to tackle this by examining three major clues for God's existence. That's not because there are only three but actually each of these could be expanded way more than we have time for today. Rather these are three large categories of clues that I think taken together present a compelling argument for the existence of God.

So, my three clues are this: (1) the clue of **creation**, (2) the clue of **conscience**, and (3) the clue of **Christ**. So, creation, conscience, Christ.

And once we've looked at these clues I want to talk about how you could respond to them.

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## 1. THE CLUE OF CREATION

Now right off the bat I want to say that rather than concealing himself, hiding himself, or making it hard for us to know he exists, the Bible says that God has made it plain to us that he exists.

In the passage we read a moment ago we read that all of heaven, sky and space, are speaking loud and clear, telling us that there is a God and also something of what he is like.

*Psalm 19<sup>1</sup>The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

*<sup>2</sup>Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.*

**In other words, the world and universe in which we live point to a God who created them.**

Tonight and tomorrow, you will have the opportunity to witness the biggest and brightest super-moon of the century. You won't get another opportunity to see one as good. But from the mysteries beyond the gaze of our telescopes to the wonders beneath our microscopes, our universe is crying out – "There is a God!"

Now, it is popular to assume that science has removed the need for us to prove God exists because *it* can explain the world to us.

But, this simply isn't true. For example, science has **not** been able to give us any reasonable understanding **as to why the universe is here at all.**

What science has begun to show us, very convincingly, is that the universe had a **beginning**. That it hasn't always been around *but had a cause!* Many attribute this beginning to what is called 'The Big Bang.'

But, the most this idea is able to tell us is that something, *everything*, came from **nothing!** Which doesn't really make sense!

Have you ever asked the question: **why does something exists rather than nothing?**

Science alone is unable to explain why there is something rather than nothing. All that science has been able to do is point to the fact that there was a beginning.

The thing is, something **or someone** had to cause the universe to begin, and it necessarily needs to be something that was outside of nature, uncaused, changeless, timeless, immaterial, and a personal being.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Read more: <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/does-god-exist-1#ixzz4PnY76kSA>. "From the very nature of the case, this cause must be an **uncaused, changeless, timeless, and immaterial being** which created the universe. It must be uncaused because we've seen that there cannot be an infinite regress of causes. It must be timeless and therefore changeless—at least without the universe—because it created time. Because it also

**Now, that sounds a lot like God to me!**

The very fact that this universe exists as it does points to a *creator*.

But more than this, the very make-up of this universe, that it is able to support life, is also a big clue.

This is the argument of **fine-tuning**, that the universe has been constructed just so to make life possible. Really, our existence is balanced on a knife edge!

Take just one aspect like gravity, for example. The physicist P. C. W. Davies has calculated that a change in the strength of gravity by only one part in  $10^{100}$  (that's 10 with one hundred zeroes after it), would have **prevented** a life-permitting universe.<sup>3</sup>

In fact, when you pull all of the various constants and quantities that need to be in place, in minute correlation to each other, you end up with a probability of existence that is, well, unbelievable!

Sir Fred Hoyle, the famous astronomer illustrated it like this:

*Now imagine  $10^{50}$  blind persons (that's 100,000 billion, billion, billion, billion people; standing shoulder to shoulder, they would more than fill our entire planetary system) each with a scrambled Rubik's cube, and try to conceive of the chance of them all simultaneously arriving at the solved form. You then have the chance of arriving by random shuffling (random variation) at just one of the many biopolymers on which life depends. The notion that not only the biopolymers but the operation programme of a living cell could be arrived at by chance from a primordial soup here on earth is evidently nonsense of a high order.<sup>4</sup>*

The odds of the universe existing by chance are so high as to be effectively zero!

Tim Keller illustrates it like this: Imagine you're playing poker with some friends and you manage to deal yourself 20 straight hands of Aces. Now, you might explain to your friend that, well, it's possible, probable, even to an incredible degree, that you would deal yourself 20 straight sets of Aces. But, would that be **reasonable**? What would your friends reasonably conclude? That you're cheating!

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*created space, it must transcend space as well and therefore be immaterial, not physical. Moreover, I would argue, it must also be **personal**. For how else could a timeless cause give rise to a temporal effect like the universe?"*

<sup>3</sup> Read more: <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/does-god-exist-1#ixzz4PoA7E7oh>

<sup>4</sup> Sir Fred Hoyle and Chandra Wickramasinghe in 'Evolution from Space' (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), p.176. Quoted in Roger Carswell, *Grill a Christian* (10Publishing, 2011) p.10.

So, what are we to reasonably conclude about the fine-tuning of the universe? To believe it happened by chance is, as Sir Fred Hoyle says, a “nonsense of a high order”. Some would say, it takes greater faith to believe that, than in a god who made everything.

**So, again, the fine-tuning of the universe seems best explained as the work of intelligent design and has been intentionally set up this way.**

Now, at this point, I've not absolutely concluded that there is a god, nor have I shown you how this God is the God of the Bible.

But, can you see how these two big clues of creation – the *cause of our existence and the fine-tuning of the universe* are big, big *clues* to the existence of a god? The clues reasonably point to a creator, to God.

Now, my second clue is the clue of conscience.

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## **2. THE CLUE OF CONSCIENCE**

What I'm talking about here is the fact that we find objective moral values in the world and that you, as moral agents, have a deep sense of right and wrong.

The Bible says God has given us all a conscience, a deep seated knowledge of right and wrong. Romans 2 says that God's law is written on people's hearts. That because we are made in God's image, we have a sense of absolute moral values.

**But, without the existence of God, there is absolutely no grounds for objective moral values.**

So, an objective moral value is to say something is wrong regardless of whether someone, anyone, or everyone believes it is right. It's independent of whether you think something is right or wrong.

So, today is Remembrance Sunday, when we as a society pause and reflect on various conflicts we have been involved with and remember those who gave their lives. One of the horrors of the Second World War was the Nazi anti-Semitism that led to the extermination of millions of people. Now, objective morality would say that what the Nazis did was wrong even though the Nazis thought it was right!

But, if there is no God – *someone outside ourselves who determines right from wrong* – on what would that assertion – the Nazis were wrong – have to stand on? What gives anyone else the authority or right to say that they were wrong? Because they thought they were right and heaven forbid that we should ever impose our moral beliefs on others?!

If we **decide for ourselves** what is right or wrong, then we remove the basis for saying anything is right or wrong for anyone else. Similarly, if right and wrong is **decided by our society**, then you still have no absolute right or wrong. A few generations ago, slavery was seen as right but we would have no right to condemn slavery then because society believed it is right.

And neither can we say right and wrong is **determined by whether it benefits us** from an evolutionary point of view, for example, as if it was more beneficial to our survival and advancement to be good, kind and loving, rather than hateful, murderous and cruel. But this doesn't explain why people do good things without any benefit at all. Those who protected Jewish people from the Nazis did so at great risk to their own lives, there was no evolutionary benefit for their moral actions.

**So, morality without God becomes subjective and unfixed. Effectively, there is no such thing as right and wrong.**

Can you see?

But the problem is objective moral values *do* exist and we all know it deep down. Some things are just wrong, and are always wrong.

J. L. Mackie of Oxford University, one of the most influential atheists of our time, admitted:

*If . . . there are . . . objective values, they make the existence of a God more probable than it would have been without them. Thus, we have a defensible argument from morality to the existence of a God.<sup>5</sup>*

So, your conscience, the fact that there is right or wrong, acts as a clue to the existence of God. You know there is such a thing as object moral values but that would be meaningless if God didn't exist, a morality without God is a terrifying thing.

The clue of creation and the clue of conscience.

But there is one more hugely compelling clue to God's existence, in fact, I think it is more significant than anything we've seen already: the clue of Christ.

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### **3. THE CLUE OF CHRIST**

Early on I talked about how some people demand absolute proof for God's existence. Along these lines, they might say something like, "If God appeared to me right here and now, *then* I would believe!"

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<sup>5</sup> J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 115-16. Quoted by William Lane Craig here: <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/does-god-exist-1#ixzz4PoJVh7lY>

Well, the Bible tells us that, in fact, that very thing has already happened. OK, you may not have been a personal witness to it, but, still, God has revealed himself personally in history.

One such witness of this appearance of God was a man called John and he wrote about his experience. Here's what he said:

*John 1:1, 14<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>14</sup>The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.*

This, 'Word' John talks about, is later revealed to be none other than Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is God revealed to the world!

God in flesh!

Now, this is a huge claim to make and one that we simply can't ignore.

But rather than God seeming vague, distant, hidden or obscured, the Bible says he definitively revealed himself in the most astounding way – in the form of a human being.

As a person, who lived and moved around in history, we have the opportunity to really investigate him and examine who he was and what he was like.

It is largely accepted, even by many atheists, that Jesus existed as an historical person. The New Testament's historical account of Jesus life, one of the most substantiated ancient texts in the world, give us some amazing insights into who he was and what he did.

Personally, for me, this is the most convincing argument for God – yes, when I look at creation I am persuaded that it was created by God. When I think about morality, of right and wrong, I am persuaded that only God makes true morality possible.

But I'm persuaded most of all by this person, Jesus Christ – the most incredible man to have ever walked the earth and who made the most astonishing claims about who he was, and *I cannot simply explain him away!*

For one, we could talk about the impeccable life Jesus lived. Some have talked about the extraordinary combination of qualities and virtues which come together in Jesus. One author writes:

*Jesus combines high majesty with the greatest humility, he joins the strongest commitment to justice with astonishing mercy and grace, and he reveals a transcendent self-sufficiency and yet entire trust in and reliance upon his heavenly Father. We are surprised to see tenderness without any weakness, boldness without harshness, humility without any uncertainty, indeed, accompanied by a towering confidence. Readers can discover for themselves his unbending convictions but*

*completely approachability, his insistence on truth but always bathed in love, his power without insensitivity, integrity without rigidity, passion without prejudice.<sup>6</sup>*

In short, Jesus was the most wonderful person to have ever lived and is the most influential figure in world history.

But, most significantly about Jesus, he claimed to be the revelation of God himself. He claimed to be divine. God in the flesh. He would say things like, "If you have seen me, you have seen [God] the Father (i.e. God)."<sup>7</sup> There isn't anyone else in history to have had so great an influence and yet who claimed to be divine!

All of this converges in the most amazing thing to have ever happened in history: **the fact that Jesus died but three days later rose again.**

There are lots of lines of evidence for the resurrection of Jesus and we haven't got time to go into all of it today (you can go online actually to our website where I spoke on this back in April 2014 and hear more on the evidence for the resurrection).

Here are three widely recognised facts about the resurrection:

**Firstly, the empty tomb.** It is hard to explain why no body for Jesus was exposed when his disciples proclaimed him to be risen from the dead. The most reasonable explanation for the empty tomb is a resurrection.

**Secondly, the quality and the range of witnesses** to the resurrection, which included sceptics and unbelievers, make it hard to argue or deny.

**Thirdly, consider the origins of the disciple's belief.** Not only was there no precedent for them to invent the death and resurrection of the Messiah, but all of them would suffer and most of them die holding to this belief. Something astonishing must have happened for them to hold to such a belief.

Luke Johnson, a New Testament scholar at Emory University, states,

*"Some sort of powerful, transformative experience is required to generate the sort of movement earliest Christianity was."<sup>8</sup>*

N. T. Wright, an eminent British scholar, concludes,

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<sup>6</sup> Tim Keller, *Making Sense of God: An invitation to the sceptical* (Hodder & Stoughton, London 2016) p. 233.

<sup>7</sup> John 14:9

<sup>8</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1996), p. 136. Read more: <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/does-god-exist-1#ixzz4PqcNdpuS>



*"That is why, as an historian, I cannot explain the rise of early Christianity unless Jesus rose again, leaving an empty tomb behind him."<sup>9</sup>*

All this and much more makes it very hard to ignore Jesus and his claims to be God and to be raised by God.

A God who loves his creation, even though people say he doesn't even exist. A God who loved them so much he was willing to sacrifice himself for them. A God who now patiently and graciously offers himself to you today, inviting you to believe what you have heard about him.

That is why I believe God exists and many others here today as well.

God isn't hidden, he has been revealed to us – in creation, in our conscience and ultimately in Jesus Christ.

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## CONCLUSION

So, now as I conclude, let me summarise for us.

We've looked at three major clues that, taken together, present a compelling argument for the existence of God.

Creation, in all its complexity and beauty, strongly suggests that it needed God to create it and God to design it perfectly for life.

We've seen that our consciences, our sense of right and wrong, point to a moral law giver, God himself, without whom there would be no right or wrong.

And lastly, we've looked at Christ, who claimed to be the revelation of God and who uniquely rose again from the dead just as he said he would do.

I hope these things will make you think, although I'm not expecting them to convince you.

From a Christian point of view, the reason people do not believe isn't because of a lack of proof or evidence, it is because of a problem with the human heart. The simple fact that, deep down, you don't *want* to believe in God.

Another leading atheist philosopher, Thomas Nagel, said:

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<sup>9</sup> N. T. Wright, "The New Unimproved Jesus," *Christianity Today* (September 13, 1993), p. 26. Read more: <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/does-god-exist-1#ixzz4PqcNdpuS>

*It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that.*"<sup>10</sup>

In the Bible, the apostle Paul, in the book of Romans and chapter one, says this:

*<sup>18</sup> The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, **who suppress the truth by their wickedness**, <sup>19</sup> since what may be known about God is plain to them, because **God has made it plain to them**. <sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—**have been clearly seen**, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.*

Can you see what Paul says here? He says that the problem is not lack of 'proof' or 'clues' as we have been calling them. The reason people don't believe God exists is because **they suppress the truth**.

They sort of push it down, out of site. They want to kill it off and get rid of it or explain it away! Paul says the existence of God is plain and clear having been revealed in creation, the universe, and in our consciences. But people will do anything to believe there isn't a god.

Life without God means that I can create my own meaning and purpose – I am the god of my life. A universe without God means there is not right or wrong and so I can do as I like and not feel ultimately accountable for the way I've lived.

A universe without God gives me freedom to live as I please without any ultimate consequences.

So, denying the existence of God seems liberating. But, it isn't wise at all and the evidence I've shown you today I hope will challenge you to think again. That is why the Bible says that only a fool would say in his heart, "There is no God."<sup>11</sup> Now, that isn't meant to be an insult. A fool is someone who acts contrary to what he knows or refuses to acknowledge the truth about something.

My friend, I am so glad you are here today, and I want to encourage you to look more into these things. But don't ignore it because the Bible says that would be a foolish thing to do.

Finally, let me appeal to your hearts instead of your minds – if God exists, the Bible says he wants you to truly know him, to experience him. God is able to open your eyes and truly reveal himself to you in a deeply personal and experiential way.

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<sup>10</sup> Nagel, Thomas, *The Last Word*, pp. 130–131, Oxford University Press, 1997. Dr Nagel (1937– )

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 14:1

One brilliant Christian apologist, William Lane Craig said this:

*Now if this is right, then there's a danger that arguments for the existence of God could actually distract one's attention from God Himself. If you're sincerely seeking God, God will make His existence evident to you. The Bible says, "draw near to God and he will draw near to you" (James 4.8). We mustn't so concentrate on the proofs that we fail to hear the inner voice of God speaking to our heart. For those who listen, God becomes an immediate reality in their lives.<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>12</sup> Read more: <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/does-god-exist-1#ixzz4PqfS5Xr9>