

The Gospel for a Pagan World – Part 2

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth

Before we delve into the negative of science saying it can make life from non-life, let us get a positive divine viewpoint.

Job is speaking:

Job 12:7 “But now ask the beasts, and let them teach you; And the birds of the heavens, and let them tell you.

Job 12:8 “Or speak to the earth, and let it teach you; And let the fish of the sea declare to you.

Job 12:9 “Who among all these does not know That the hand of the Lord has done this,

Job 12:10 In whose hand is the life of every living thing, And the breath of all mankind?

David speaking:

Psalm 19:1 The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

Psalm 19:2 Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge.

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Psalm 19:3 There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard.

Psalm 19:4 Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the world. In them He has placed a tent for the sun,

Paul speaking:

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

The five topics that Eric Metaxas' book covers and that we are exploring are topics in which atheists use to attack the Bible and the existence of God.

This lesson is a continuation of last week's journey into Eric Metaxas' book, "Is Atheism Dead?" His title is a response to the 1966 Time Magazine cover story entitled, "Is God Dead?" Last week, we covered the first two points. For continuity sake, let's look at the overview of the first two points as we developed them last week. The quotes are from Metaxas' book. We will continue at point 3, Abiogenesis.

1. The Big Bang Theory

"The first is the discovery of what we call the Big Bang—and the proof of the Big Bang, which settled the question once and for all whether the universe always existed or didn't."

Last week I made the following points on this topic:

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- A. Science, in the Big Bang Theory, agrees with the Bible (Genesis 1:1) in that there was a beginning to the universe. This took science from an anti-Genesis 1:1 theory that the universe always existed and hence there was no creation event to a theory which is much closer to the Bible.
- B. Time is finite. Scientists calculate, based on observations, that the universe is about 13.8 Billion years old. It is not infinitely old.
- C. The implication is that “evolution” only had that amount of time to develop from nothing to the complexity of earth and the human being today.
- D. Science changes based upon updated observations. Newton’s laws of physics are correct only up to a point. There are some situations in which they do not work. There are “facts” which we now know which were unknown 200 years ago, like the photoelectric effect. Science has a lot to learn.

2. Fine Tuning

“The second thing—which we have already mentioned—is our discovery in the last decades of the increasingly overwhelming evidence of so-called “fine-tuning” in the universe.”

“Scientists are slowly waking up to an inconvenient truth—the universe looks suspiciously like a fix. The issue concerns the very laws of nature themselves. For 40 years, physicists and cosmologists have been quietly collecting examples of all too convenient “coincidences” and special features in the underlying laws of the universe that seem to be necessary in order for life, and hence conscious beings, to exist. Change any one of them and the consequences would be lethal.”

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Science tried to postulate that the universe always existed. That was the so-called “Steady-State” Theory. Except now, science has discredited that. Based upon scientific observations and calculations based upon those observations, the “Big Bang” Theory replaced it. This theory has come relatively close to the Biblical creation narrative. In an instant, space, time and things in it came into being “ex nihilo,” or out of nothing. The only thing they left out was God.

But look at the complexity of the universe. The more science observes things in the universe and the “laws” that govern it, the more improbable random events could have put this coherent universe together in an instant.

This week we start with something called “abiogenesis.” Essentially this means says, from an atheist scientist point of view, that life originally came from or was derived from something that was not life. In the biblical account, God created life. In the atheist point of view, it just happened as the result of enough random interactions of various elements.

3. Abiogenesis

“The third major shift in the last decades has to do with our views on how life emerged from non-life on the early earth, often called “Abiogenesis.”

This is closely associated with the fine tuned earth. Not only does “nature” have to put together an organism, but it has to work. But “nature” has also at the same time have to provide a suitable environment.

Read the article from “All About Science” at website:
<https://www.allaboutscience.org/abiogenesis.htm>

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Suppose, for a moment, you are going to build a building. It is difficult enough to build a building with steel beams and cement and bricks or whatever buildings are made of. But, it must also have pipes for water, pipes for sewer, electrical wiring for electricity, wiring for telephones ducts for air conditioning, infrastructure for security systems, wiring for internet access and on and on. But here is the kicker. You build all of that. What if you built this building in the Middle Ages? There is no environment, no infrastructure to support all the various subsystems inside the building. The point is, for life to have spontaneously been generated from primordial chemicals, that life needed an environment to support it that would also have spontaneously been generated.

The same type of infrastructure issues would face a newly made cell. Temperature and water would have to be just right. There would need to be something for the cell to eat. And on and on.

Look at the complexity of a cell membrane:

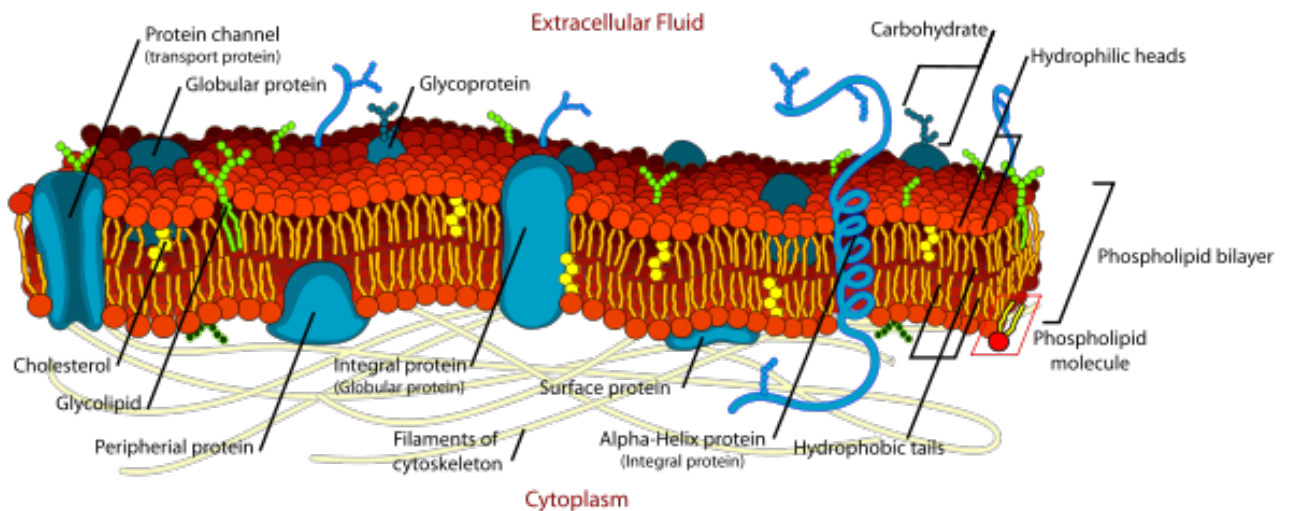


Illustration of a cell membrane

From Wikipedia

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I get the feeling that atheists today look forward to being like the atheists I encountered in college. It seemed that they lived to destroy the faith of a young Christian.

One of the first questions an atheist must answer, “is he or she interested in a search for the truth?” Or are they going to just defend his or her atheist position?

Before we get to attempts to make life in a test tube, we need to at least try to define what life is. I don’t always like Wikipedia as a source, it sometimes gets to the heart of the matter.

“The definition of life has long been a challenge for scientists and philosophers. This is partially because life is a process, not a substance.”
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life>

Why is it important to understand life? There are questions mankind has been asking for millennium: Where did we come from? What is our purpose? What happens when we die? That last question causes a lot of fear. It is obvious that people die. Death and taxes, the two sure things.

The definition of life is also important if science is going to declare they found life in space. And if they find life, or traces of life, they might say, “that is not in the Bible, so your Bible is incomplete or wrong.” What is often overlooked is the existence of non-human sentient beings called angels and demons. But that is a topic for another time.

“The search for life on Mars clearly benefits from a rigorous, yet broad, definition of life that compels us to consider all possible lines of evidence for a Martian biosphere. Recent studies in microbial ecology illustrate that the classic definition of life should be expanded beyond the traditional definition of a living cell. The traditional defining characteristics of life are threefold. First, life is capable of metabolism, that is, it performs chemical reactions which utilize energy and also

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synthesize its cellular constituents. Second, life is capable of self replication. Third, life can evolve in order to adapt to environmental changes. <https://ntrs.nasa.gov/citations/19980032170> [Work of the US Gov. Public Use Permitted]

From the Wikipedia article on life: “Another way of putting this is to define life as "a self-sustained chemical system capable of undergoing Darwinian evolution", a definition adopted by a NASA committee attempting to define life for the purposes of exobiology, based on a suggestion by Carl Sagan.”

You notice that this definition assumes Darwinian evolution is a fact.

There have been attempts to create life out of non-live chemicals. Perhaps the first was attempted in 1952. It is called the Miller-Urey Experiment:

“The Miller–Urey experiment (or Miller experiment) was a chemical experiment that simulated the conditions thought at the time (1952) to be present on the early Earth and tested the chemical origin of life under those conditions. The experiment at the time supported Alexander Oparin's and J. B. S. Haldane's hypothesis that putative conditions on the primitive Earth favored chemical reactions that synthesized more complex organic compounds from simpler inorganic precursors. Considered to be the classic experiment investigating abiogenesis, it was performed in 1952 by Stanley Miller, supervised by Harold Urey at the University of Chicago, and published the following year.”

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miller%E2%80%93Urey_experiment

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We have already encountered a Christian-oriented science focused website in allaboutscience.org. Now I am going to introduce you to a fascinating individual, James Tour. From Wikipedia:

“James Mitchell Tour (born 1959) is an American chemist and nanotechnologist. He is a Professor of Chemistry, Professor of Materials Science and NanoEngineering, and Professor of Computer Science at Rice University in Houston, Texas. He supports the idea that life could not have arisen spontaneously, and his work has been used by various religious groups to challenge Darwinism and the theory of abiogenesis.” He has his own website: www.jmtour.com. He also shows up in other websites like discovery.org.

Listen to a small portion of a lecture he gave on “Origin of Life.”

<https://youtu.be/zU7Lww-sBPg?t=3231>

Here are some key points to take away from the discussion.

1. Attempts to produce life in a test tube have not produced life. The amino acids produced were hailed as the “building blocks of life.” But it is a far cry from producing chemicals to producing an organism that meets the criteria of life.
2. Our discussions are not an attempt to “prove” the existence of God. Convincing an unbeliever of the gospel is the Holy Spirit’s job. Our job is to provide information the Holy Spirit can use.
3. Some atheists, perhaps many, seemingly don’t want truth. They want to be proved right and shatter Christian faith.
4. An atheist who truly seeks the truth, when challenged to investigate biblical claims, may end up embracing the Bible.

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5. The Bible is the inerrant Word of God. God has given us information to help us see and understand the world around us. It is not a science textbook.