

Ministry of Grace

Easter 2022

Speaker Notes

We're going to look at the resurrection of Jesus from an entirely different perspective today. At times during this talk, you may think that I've lost it, but hang in there with me. I will get to the point and I think you will agree that it was worth the round-about journey.

What do non-religious people believe in today? What is it that holds the answers to the deep questions of life for them? Questions like, "Where did I come from?" "How did all of this start?" "What happens when you die?" "What's the purpose of life?"

Where does the non-religious world get the answers? Science! And why do they believe in science instead of religion? Because science has the answers - and they're provable. Science can prove that you are the result of a sperm cell and an ovum joining together under the right environmental conditions forming a single new cell, wherein almost immediately it begins to reproduce. But, why does it begin to reproduce? Science can tell us what it does, but it can't tell us why. And - how does the sperm find the ovum in the first place? According to a textbook on Molecular Biology of the Cell,

There is evidence that chemical signals released by the follicle cells that surround the ovulated egg attract the sperm to the egg, but the nature of the chemoattractant molecules is unknown.

So, science doesn't completely know how human life starts. They know a lot about it, but they aren't sure of all of it. They will tell you that both the sperm cell and the ovum are alive. But even though that thing growing inside a woman was formed from two living cells, has a beating heart, and moves around, the scientist will tell you that it's not really a living person until it has been born. Really?!

OK, so how did life start in the first place? Here's the latest theory (which, incidentally is totally different than what I was taught as "truth" when I was a young boy in school.)

A new scenario suggests that some 4.47 billion years ago—a mere 60 million years after Earth took shape and 40 million years after the moon formed—a moon-size object sideswiped Earth and exploded into an orbiting cloud of molten iron and other debris. And even though the temperature in space is close to absolute zero, this orbiting cloud remained in a liquid state.

The metallic hailstorm that ensued likely lasted years, if not centuries, ripping oxygen atoms from water molecules and leaving hydrogen behind. The oxygens were then free to link with iron, creating vast rust-colored deposits of iron oxide across our planet's surface. The hydrogen

formed a dense atmosphere that may have lasted 200 million years as it ever so slowly dissipated into space.

After things cooled down, simple organic molecules began to form under the blanket of hydrogen. Those molecules, *some* scientists think, eventually linked up to form RNA, a molecular player long credited as essential for life's dawn. In short, the stage for life's emergence was set almost as soon as our planet was born.

No rocks or other direct evidence remain from this supposed cataclysm. Its starring role is inferred (that is, guessed at) because it would solve a bevy of mysteries. The metal-laden rain accounts for the distribution of metals across our planet's surface today. The hydrogen atmosphere would have favored the emergence of the simple organic molecules that later formed more complex molecules such as RNA. And the planetary crash pushes back the likely birthdate for RNA, and possibly life's emergence, by hundreds of millions of years, which better aligns with recent geological evidence suggesting an early emergence of life.

According to science, the first life forms were simple single-celled plants and animals. As time went on, however, they evolved into more complex beings. And across the billions of years, these complex life forms evolved into ever more complex life forms until we have the plants and animals that we see today. This is called the Theory of Evolution, although most people refer to it simply as Evolution. But there are two big problems with the theory of evolution. The first is that no one has ever observed a life form evolve into a different life form. Yes, science has observed mutations, but the resultant life-form either dies off or is unable to reproduce. The other problem with evolution is that it breaks one of the most fiercely held laws of science. It is called the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics or "Entropy." According to the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics, any system left undisturbed always, let me repeat, *always*, moves from order to disorder and from complexity to simplicity. Mutations have never been observed that go the other direction.

Science has lots of theories, but theories aren't facts, just educated guesses by people with brilliant minds. And they remain theories until they are proven, if they even can be. However, even the proof is often later shown to not be accurate. And, some things firmly held by the scientific community can't be proven, so they remain simply - theories. For instance, the current theory about how everything came into being is referred to as "the big bang theory." This is usually referred to simply as "the big bang." Here's roughly how this theory goes: approximately 13.8 billion years ago all matter was condensed into what they call a "singularity" about the size of a pencil point. Nobody can explain how this singularity happened in the first place. But - this singularity suddenly exploded and the universe has been expanding ever since. But - what caused this explosion in the first place is still a mystery. Science doesn't know what caused the explosion. In spite of the fact that it can't be proven and can't even be completely explained, it's what most of the secular world believes. It's still a theory, but one that is held as a sacred fact by the scientific community and much of the secular world. Oh, and one more thing: The outer reaches of the universe appear to be moving away from the center of the universe at a speed faster than the rest of the universe is expanding. In fact, the outer regions of the universe appear to be moving away from the center at a speed greater than the speed of light, but science can't explain how or why!

Now – how about the next question, “What happens when you die?” The answer from science is that as soon as your heart stops pumping oxygen-rich blood, your body begins to decay and, given enough time, will eventually disappear completely. But what about me? What about the real me that is inside this body? What about my spirit? What about my soul? Scientific research says that there is no “real me inside this body.” We are simply a collection of cells with intelligence. But where did we get the intelligence? It’s just the way that we evolved. Science doesn’t really know.

Well, then – what about the last question. “What is the purpose of life?” Some would say that the person who dies with the most toys, wins. Others will say that we are here to educate ourselves and learn as much as we can so we can make life better for future generations. Still others will say that the purpose of life is to gain as much wealth and pleasure as you can for yourself. Some will say that we are here to help each other. Finally, the realists in the group will say, “there is no purpose to life. We were born, we live, and we will die. That’s all there is to it. We were nothing before we were born and we will be nothing after we die!” So - the bottom line is, science has no answers for the most important issues of life and death.

Okay, let’s talk about the nearest star, the sun. If you do some research on the Web, you will discover that the temperature at the center of the sun is about 27 million degrees Fahrenheit. How do they know this? Did they send a thermometer to the center of the sun to measure it? Actually, it’s a theory; one that can’t be proven. One measurable scientific “fact” is that as you get farther away from a heat source, the heat drops by the square of the distance. In other words, if you’re twice as far from the heat as someone else, you only feel a quarter as much of the heat as they do. So, with that scientific “fact” in our possession, let’s talk about the sun again. The temperature at the surface of the sun is around 11,000 degrees F. That’s quite a bit less than the 27 million degrees F at the core. And - the temperature a couple of hundred miles above the surface is about 7,000 degrees F. However, as you move farther away from the sun, into the area known as the corona, the temperature climbs to about 2 million degrees F. So much for the measurable “fact” about heat and distance. There are actually a number of “theories” as to why the corona is hotter than the surface, but nothing that is provable. So much for the “provable” facts of science.

As long as we’re talking about provable “facts.” Most of the “facts” regarding the mysteries of life are not based on direct measurements, but on what is known as empirical evidence. For instance, if you’re sitting inside a building, how do you know if the wind is blowing outside? You can observe the effect of the wind on the trees outside. That’s empirical evidence. The trouble with empirical evidence is the fact that our senses can be fooled.

Everything we are taught about science eventually boils down to unprovable “facts” that are little more than theories which have to be accepted by faith.

Faith

Wait a minute, Pastor! This is Easter! What are you doing talking about science on Easter Sunday? Easter is about the resurrection! Good point! So, here’s why I started out this message by talking about science. We are surrounded every day by people who believe in science. But, if you ask an eminent scientist if they believe in the resurrection of Jesus, they will probably say, “No, because

it's impossible for a person to come back to life after they have died. Besides, it can't be proven. You have to accept it on faith and I don't live by faith, I live by provable facts." Really?

Here are the facts about the resurrection of Jesus. Outside the Bible and the writings of early church fathers, there is no evidence that there ever was a person named Jesus of Nazareth. There is no secular evidence that he was killed by Roman crucifixion, and there is no direct evidence that he came back to life after he was killed. Outside of Scripture and early church writers, there is no more evidence of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth than there is of the Big Bang. And yet, there are millions of people who believe in the scientific explanation of the beginning of the universe, of how life began, and of nothingness after death. It has to be accepted by faith! And, if you ask me, it takes more faith to believe in the Big Bang Theory than to believe in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

The scientists of the world will be quick to tell us that the Bible can't be believed. It claims that the earth is less than 7,000 years old, but there is scientific evidence that it is much older. Radio carbon dating proves it! But - God can create things with age, can't he? When He created Adam and Eve, did He create them as embryos, or did He create them as fully developed man and woman, with age? So, if He could create Adam and Eve with age, He certainly could have created the heavens and the earth with age.

A few weeks ago we talked about the odds of a person fulfilling 48 of the prophecies about Jesus. We learned that the odds are literally astronomical. One in 10 to the 157th power. You may recall that we said that one million billion electrons laid side by side would be about 1 inch long. We also learned that the number of electrons that it would take to fill the space of a sphere one light-year in diameter is one times ten to the 60th power. That's miniscule compared to 10 to the 157th power. And, keep in mind that one in one times 10 to the 157th power are the odds of anyone fulfilling 48 of the prophecies about Jesus, and yet, there are more than 450 Old Testament prophecies that Jesus perfectly fulfilled. It's absolutely impossible! But, with God, all things are possible ([Matthew 19:26](#)).

But those who don't want to admit that there is a God will be quick to point out the many discrepancies in the Bible. For instance, I read of a noted atheist who claims that there are numerous contradictions and mis-truths in the Bible. Among other things, he cited a number of verses regarding the "end of the world." Incidentally, these are all from the King James Version.

Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom. ([Matthew 16:28](#)) [KJV] (Did they not see the resurrected Jesus just as He will appear in His kingdom?)

Verily I say unto you, This generation (race) shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. ([Luke 21:32-33](#)) [KJV]

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. (truth) The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. ([Romans 13:11-12](#)) [KJV]

Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. (approaches)
(James 5:8) [KJV]

Little children, it is the last time: (before what?) and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come,
even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. (1 John 2:18)
[KJV]

But the end of all things is at hand: (approaching) be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.
(1 Peter 4:7) [KJV]

Obviously, this atheist believes he has the right to define what is meant by these quotes even though he has no understanding of the language they were written in, nor does he understand the true definition of the words. He erroneously assumes that all these verses are talking about the end of the world, whereas some are talking about the end of time and others are talking about the coming of the Millennial Kingdom. These are two entirely different things which are separated by 1,000 years.

He closes his arguments with:

What is incredible about the Bible is not its divine authorship; it's that such a concoction of contradictory nonsense could be believed by anyone to have been written by an omniscient god. ... To be an atheist, one need only be able to laugh when such obvious nonsense is offered as being "divine" truth.

I wonder how much he will laugh when he stands before the Great White Throne?

The Resurrection

Now, let's talk about the resurrection! After all, the resurrection is what Easter is all about, isn't it? As I said before, there is no direct evidence outside the Bible proving the resurrection of Jesus. However, there is empirical evidence. Before the crucifixion, the disciples believed that Jesus was about to usher in the Kingdom. Peter even confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And – even though Jesus told them on several occasions that He would have to die and be raised up, they all missed His message.

For instance, when Jesus chased the moneychangers out of the temple the first time, the devout Jews asked him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" Jesus's response was, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." We've talked before that there are two different words translated "temple." The first is *hieros*, meaning the entire temple complex. The other is *naos*, meaning the innermost building within the complex. It was the *naos* where God was believed to dwell. In fact, even the Romans and Greeks built a *naos* within their temple complexes where their god or gods were said to live. Jesus used the word *naos* when He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." He was referring to the temple of His body, where God was dwelling.

Again, as Jesus was teaching throughout the cities, when some Pharisees challenged His authority to teach, here's how he responded to them.

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no

sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Matthew 12:38-40)

Jesus was even more clear in his teaching to His disciples. Shortly after Peter proclaimed, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,” Jesus taught His disciples this:

From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. (Matthew 16:21)

Jesus couldn’t have been any clearer that He was going to die and be raised from the dead after three days. But, Peter rebuked Him for saying this because, although he believed Jesus to be the Christ, he didn’t believe that he would die, much less be raised from the dead.

Now, how did the disciples feel after Jesus died on the cross?

Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. She went and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept. But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it. (Mark 16:9-11)

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. (John 20:19-20)

Do you see that? Jesus, himself told the disciples that he would be raised from the dead. And yet – when Mary came and told them that she had seen Jesus alive, risen from the dead, they did not believe her. They had been mourning and crying because they truly believed that Jesus was dead, and they didn’t yet believe that he would come back from the dead.

Then, later that evening, they were inside the upper room with the doors locked for fear of the Jews. They knew that the religious leaders of the Jews believed the disciples had stolen the body from the closed, sealed tomb, that was guarded by Roman soldiers. The Jews believed that these timid, frightened disciples had somehow gotten past the guards carrying a dead body. Remember, these were Roman soldiers who would lose their lives if someone were to steal the body out of the sealed tomb. You know, the tomb with the huge rock rolled in front of it? But – once the disciples saw Jesus and saw the holes in his hands and feet and the hole in his side, they believed. They believed! They believed that Jesus had risen from the dead! That’s what the Bible tells us. But, there’s no evidence outside the Bible that corroborates these facts, or is there. Remember empirical evidence? These same timid, frightened disciples suddenly became bold, confident disciples who were all willing to die because of what they now knew was truth. Jesus had been raised from the dead. These disciples gave their lives for their faith. The disciple James had his head removed by Herod Agrippa I. Peter and Paul were killed by order of the Roman Emperor Nero. Paul was beheaded and Peter was crucified, upside down. Andrew was crucified in Greece. Thomas was pierced through with the spears of 4 soldiers. Philip was put to death by a Roman proconsul because his wife had become a Christian as a result of Philip’s testimony. Matthew is believed to

have been stabbed to death in Ethiopia. Bartholomew is believed to have been martyred because of his witness, although there is scant evidence of that. According to Josephus, James the less was stoned and then beaten with clubs. Simon the Zealot was killed in Persia after refusing to sacrifice to the sun god. Matthias, who was chosen to replace Judas, was burned at the stake. Any one of these would have had their life spared if they had confessed that the resurrection was fake, but none of them did. They all faced death head-on proclaiming Jesus to be their Lord and Savior. All of them! Not a single one of them recanted their testimony. That's pretty convincing empirical evidence.

Crucifixion or Resurrection

Which would you rather have, the crucifixion without the resurrection, or the resurrection without the crucifixion? Well, the crucifixion without the resurrection, of course; at least then our sins would be paid for.

Would they? You see, if Christ was not raised from the dead, then Jesus is a liar because He promised His disciples that He would rise after three days. If Jesus was a liar, then He was not sinless and His death on the cross would only pay for His own sins. You and I would still be responsible for our own sins and we would be d-e-a-d dead! We would have no hope for the future and certainly no hope for our own resurrection. Here's what Paul said about the resurrection:

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. (1 Corinthians 15:12-17)

OK, so what if Jesus did not die from the crucifixion. What if He hadn't voluntarily given up His life on the cross. What if he died from having a Roman soldier's spear thrust into His side and His disciples made-up the story about Him being crucified. Well, if Jesus was killed from a Roman spear, then He was not the sinless lamb of God. Remember, "The wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23) Without sin, there can be no death. If He were sinless, a Roman spear would not kill him. The bottom line is that Jesus both died on the cross and was resurrected on the third day.

OK, so Jesus gave up His life on the cross and His blood paid for the sins of the whole world. Why isn't the whole world saved? Since Jesus did give up His life on the cross and since Jesus was raised from the dead, God offers the gift of salvation to anyone who believes. Anyone who believes that Jesus died on the cross to pay for their sins and that he was raised from the dead three days later is a born-again Christian and has a free ticket into heaven.

And - for many Christians, that's as far as it goes. But - it doesn't have to stop there. You see, God didn't just give the gift of salvation. He actually adopted us as sons and He is our father. And, more than that, He is our Daddy, according to Paul:

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” (Romans 8:15)

The word translated “Abba” is a very personal, intimate name for a father. Today, we would probably say, “Daddy.” You see, God wants a personal, father-child relationship with us. Remember, salvation is not about feelings, it’s about facts! Sometimes we don’t feel like we are the sons of God. Sometimes we feel like God doesn’t really care about us. Sometimes it seems like He is ignoring us. If we really are His beloved children, why do we still suffer in this life? Well, if we continue on from what Paul said above:

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (Romans 8:16-18)

Remember what Jesus told His disciples?

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

The word translated “will have” is expressed in the present tense, active voice. In other words, Jesus said, “In the world you have tribulation, right now!” It’s not a future thing, it’s a present thing. So, when we experience troubles and hardships in this life, it’s not because God is angry with us, He’s trying to help us grow.

“But I prayed to God and believed that He would take the troubles away, and He didn’t. So, either He doesn’t really love me, or He is ignoring my prayers, or I’m not really saved.

First of all, remember that salvation is a fact, not a feeling. Like all those things that scientists believe in, our salvation can’t be proven. And God is not a magic Genie who gives us everything we ask for. He allows difficulties to come into our lives to help us grow in our faith. And, in order to grow in our faith, we have to get to know Him better. The more time we spend reading the Bible and praying, the better we will get to know Him and the happier our lives will be. Notice that I didn’t say that our troubles would go away. We still have tribulation in this life, but with the resurrected Jesus by our side, life is good!

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