

Does God Exist?

A better first question may be to ask why or if this matters.

So to get to that question, a good starting point and question might be: What happens when we die?

If nothing, then perhaps God is irrelevant? But if there are consequences after death; if there is such a thing as eternal life, whatever they may be exactly, then it might be worth trying to determine

- a) Is there a God; is there a Creator of the Universe and
- b) If there is, is this Creator interested in his Creation and especially is he interested in humanity?

Before answering this question, there is another consideration that I would suggest is very relevant to the question of the existence of a Creator of the Universe. Science has learned that there are unchanging laws of physics such as the law of gravity; Einstein's $E=mc^2$, the fixed speed of light in a vacuum, and so on.

If this is a Creator who designed these laws of physics, and if this Creator cares about his creation then we might surmise that he has also created unchanging moral laws as well as physical laws. These laws might be things like 'dishonesty is a boomerang' and 'if you steal from another there will be unpleasant consequences, either immediately or at some later time, even if not blatantly obvious'. These moral laws or laws of justice, may be discernable if we look hard enough. I would argue they exist and are really all based on the 10 Commandments.

More on this later, if time permits.

Let us look now though, at the more easily verified, the question of a Creator or Designer of the universe.

Today more than ever, science is learning that this universe has a beginning; that all the dimensions of this universe were created at some instant. That time, and space were created and that therefore before their creation, there was no time or physical space.

Science has also seen overwhelming evidence that the universe that was created is incredibly designed and that all our experience and evidence teaches us that only intelligence is capable of designing such complex interacting systems such as the cosmos as well as, at the microscopic level, such complex systems found in biological life such as protein machines and propellation motors.

The anthropic principle (first proposed in the early 1970's) states that the universe appears "designed" for the sake of human life. More than a century of astronomy and physics research, but most especially new evidence found since 1998) yields this unexpected observation:

- *the emergence of humans and human civilization requires physical constants, laws, and properties that fall within certain narrow ranges*
- and this truth applies not only to the cosmos as a whole but also to the galaxy, planetary system, and planet humans occupy.

To state the principle more dramatically, a preponderance of physical evidence points to humanity as the central theme of the cosmos.

Also Science and experience have shown us that only intelligence is capable of creating information. Science has also learned that all living beings contain a blueprint, a code that determines their design, their structure, their function, etc. We now know that code is in the DNA and RNA of the cells of living organisms.

One of the intriguing ways that recent science has further demonstrated the truth of these findings is in the use of reverse engineering.

From the very large aspects of the universe (i.e., big bang cosmology and galactic and stellar evolution) to the very small (i.e., the fitness of the chemical elements and the coding of DNA for life), the cosmos is so readily and profitably reverse engineered by its human inhabitants as to suggest that the whole shebang was engineered from the beginning.

"The linking of extraordinarily complex, but stable and functional structures with the production of value provides the strong impression of a calculating intentionality, which is apparently able to operate in a transcendent (overriding, overarching) fashion"

D.Halsmer, J.Asper, N.Roman, T.Todd, "[The Coherence of an Engineered World](#)," *International Journal of Design & Nature and Ecodynamics*, Vol. 4(1):47-65 (2009)

The most coherent view of the universe is that of a system of interdependent subsystems that efficiently interact to prepare for, develop, and support advanced life, subject to various physical constraints.

Human-engineered systems are characterized by stability, predictability, reliability, transparency, controllability, efficiency, and (ideally) optimality.

These features are also prevalent throughout the natural systems that make up the cosmos. However, the level of engineering appears to be far above and beyond, or transcendent of, current human capabilities.

Even so, there is a curious match between the comprehensibility of the universe and the ability of mankind to comprehend it. This unexplained matching is a prerequisite for any kind of reverse engineering activity to be even remotely successful.

And yet, mankind seems to be drawn onward toward a potential wisdom, almost in tutorial fashion, by the puzzles of nature that are continually available for us to unravel.

For example, Science was able to progress to Einstein's theory of relativity in part because there existed an elegant mathematical description of gravity that approximated reality, namely the one Newton formulated.

Indeed, the universe is so readily and profitably reverse engineered as to make a compelling argument that it was engineered in the first place, apparently with humanity in mind.

It appears that the evidence for a Designer and Creator of the Universe grows daily and exponentially.

So accepting that there is a Creator, a God or perhaps Gods, behind it all, the next valid question may be, is he interested in us?

Recognizing that humanity is the pinnacle of creation and that the human brain and the human mind is the pinnacle of the universe being both the most complex and most intelligent creation, we immediately start to sense that this Universe was created with mankind in mind.

There is much cosmological evidence to support this contention; from the unique placement of our Solar System and of Planet Earth, to the unique time in the evolution of the cosmos that allows us to be in the perfect epoch of time to investigate it.

The Return of a Static Universe and the End of Cosmology

by Lawrence M. Krauss and Robert J. Scherrer (Dated: June 27, 2007)

The remarkable cosmic coincidence that we happen to live at the only time in the history of the universe when the magnitude of dark energy and dark matter densities are comparable has been a source of great current speculation, leading to a resurgence of interest in possible anthropic arguments limiting the value of the vacuum energy. But this coincidence endows our current epoch with another special feature, namely that we can actually infer both the existence of the cosmological expansion, and the existence of dark energy.

Thus, we live in a very special time in the evolution of the universe: the time at which we can observationally verify that we live in a very special time in the evolution of the universe!

Observers when the universe was an order of magnitude younger would not have been able to discern any effects of dark energy on the expansion, and observers when the universe is more than an order of magnitude older will be hard pressed to know that they live in an expanding universe at all, or that the expansion is dominated by dark energy. By the time the longest lived main sequence stars are nearing the end of their lives, for all intents and purposes, the universe will appear static, and all evidence that now forms the basis of our current understanding of cosmology will have disappeared.

"The idea that the natural world was designed especially for mankind is the very bedrock of the Greek, as well as of the Judeo-Christian world view. Western philosophers of the post-Roman era went so far as to formalize a discipline called teleology —the study of the evidence for overall design and purpose in nature. Teleology attracted such luminaries as Augustine, Maimonides, Aquinas, Newton and Paley, all of whom gave it much of their life's work." - Design and the Anthropic Principle by Hugh Ross

So having accepted that the evidence grows that this Creator designed the universe with humanity as its ultimate aim or with humanity 'in mind', what is the evidence that this Creator is actually at all involved with his Creation?

One approach here is to search all recorded history of man and carefully search for evidence of this interaction. If this Creator has interacted with humanity at all on a personal level what might we expect to see as evidence?

- 1) Evidence that there is a script and plan and therefore destination or finish line for the Universe,
- 2) Evidence in the words of man that he has communed with God;
- 3) Prophecies from God foretelling accurately the future;
- 4) Real verifiable miracles;
- 5) The Resurrection of a man?

We might expect the Creator to interact with humanity and his Creation in some way that would clearly display his presence and power.

Thus we might expect to learn about this creation through such evidence.

For example, the TaNaK (the OT) as well as the NT is full of such evidence and much more:

20th Century cosmologists have confirmed the following facts that the Bible first revealed about the Universe:

1. The universe has a beginning in finite time - Genesis 1:1; 2:3-4; Psalm 148:5; Isaiah 40:26; 42:5; 45:18; John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 11:3
2. The beginning of space and time coincides with the beginning of the physical universe - Genesis 1:1; Titus 1:2;
3. The material universe was made from that which is immaterial - Hebrews 11:3
4. The universe has been continuously expanding from the beginning of space and time - Job 9:8; Psalm 104:2; Isaiah 40:22; 42:5; 44:24; 45:12; 48:13; 51:13; Jeremiah 10:12; 51:15; Zechariah 12:1
5. The expansion of the universe appears precisely guided for the benefit of life - Job 9:8; Isaiah 44:24; 45:12; 48:13
6. The expansion of the universe resembles the spreading out and setting up of a tent - Psalm 104:2; Isaiah 40:22
7. The universe functions according to fixed physical laws - Jeremiah 33:25; Psalm 104:19
8. The entire universe is subject to those physical laws - Romans 8:20-22
9. The universe has an ending in finite time - Job 14:12; Ecclesiastes 12.2; Isaiah 34:4; 51:6; 65:17; 66:22; Matthew 24:35; Hebrews 1:10-12; 12:27-28; 2 Peter 3:7,10-13; Revelation 21:1-5
10. At its end, the universe will roll up like a scroll and vanish in a burst of extreme heat - Isaiah 34:4; 2 Peter 3:7,10; Revelation 6:14

Also we would expect to see real verifiable miracles, preferably vouched for by a great number of people (at least in the hundreds if not millions).

As any Creator of time and space would by definition exist outside of this universe he created (and also be able to in some sense inhabit it), we could expect this Creator to be able to predict the future, that is to inform humanity what would happen to them before it happened and especially to predict totally unbelievable and unlikely events so that those hearing these predictions might be well convinced of the Creators power and control over his creation.

Where do we find such evidence first?

The veracity of the TaNaK has been extremely well verified through a great many archaeological discoveries; through scientific evidence and through external documentary support etc. The TaNaK describes how this Creator has interacted with humanity and in particular with one man, Abraham and his descendants. There is also much evidence to support the veracity of many of the great prophecies or predictions contained therein.

Archaeology:

The definition of archaeology is "the discovery and interpretation of the physical remains of previous civilizations and peoples." Note that within the definition of archaeology is the word "interpretation". How one archaeologist interprets the meaning of a particular find can be very different from how another archaeologist interprets the meaning of the same find.

Archaeology is not a hard science. When an archaeologist finds a piece of rock, a vessel, or a piece of a building, he tries to decide what it means. The find has no label on it, unless it's a written document, and even written documents are open to interpretation.

So when people make definitive statements about what archaeology does or doesn't say, you have to be very careful, because the bias of the archaeologist affects how he interprets the information. As the early books of the Bible are concerned, there is little direct evidence for the characters in the Bible. There is, however, a huge amount of indirect or circumstantial evidence -- names, places, business contracts, marriage contracts, migratory patterns.

An enormous amount of information in the Bible has been borne out by archaeology.

That is as far as the early books of the Bible are concerned, but once we get to later books, like the Book of Kings, for example, there is excellent direct evidence, written records of other emperors, etc. But the early events exist more or less in a historical vacuum and, unfortunately also in an archaeological vacuum.

Keep in mind that the same thing that applies in a court of law applies to archaeology: *Lack of evidence is no evidence of lack.*

The fact that I haven't found Abraham's camel saddle doesn't mean Abraham didn't have a camel or a saddle. And, indeed, there is a huge amount of circumstantial evidence supporting the basic historicity of the Bible.

Archaeology doesn't definitively prove the Bible, but it certainly doesn't discredit it. In fact the more we find, the more we see that there's a tremendous amount of historicity in the text.

One great example is the reference in Isaiah 20 to Sargon, a King of Assyria. Until fairly recent discoveries (between 1943 and 1989), Sargon's very existence was questioned by most scholars¹. Now the evidence for his reign and role in biblical times is very strong.

Also, for example, the 20th century has seen the discovery of much archaeological evidence to support the historical existence of Abraham², such as:

- 1) The City of Ur in Southern Sumeria excavated and found to have been an advanced and flourishing city around 2000 BC;
- 2) The name Abram found on tablets from 1550 BC;
- 3) Excavations in Shechem and Bethel show that they were inhabited in Abraham's time;
- 4) Over 70 sites of human habitation found in Jordan Valley from as old as 3000 BC (Gen 13:12 Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom.)
- 5) Mari and Nuzi Tablets etc confirm customs etc, of pre-Egypt sojourn. "Their accurate reflection of social conditions in the patriarchal age and in some of Mesopotamia from which the patriarchs are said to have come, many centuries before the present documents were composed, is striking" ('Old Testament Introduction' Gleason p 179).
- 6) Hittite Legal Code (discovered in 1906 and dated around 1300 BC) explains why Abraham only wanted the cave and not the whole parcel of land – he would have needed to perform some pagan ceremonies otherwise. This transaction clearly pre-dated 1300 BC;
- 7) Camels were disputed – now much evidence for use of domesticated camels as far back as 3000 BC.

In summary, the Bible is not a book of history, yet it contains history and culture, which is more or less borne out by archaeology. It's a book of teachings, and it's the ideal way to learn the patterns of history. And if we understand that the reason why we're learning history is to learn lessons, then we have to pay extra special attention to what is going on in the Bible.

The Jewish conception of God (which is derived from their Bible, the TaNaK³) is that of Creator, Sustainer and Supervisor, which means not a God who created the world and then went on vacation to Miami, but an infinite Being who is actively involved in creation. To put it more philosophically: The entire physical world is a creation of God's consciousness. The universe has no independent existence outside of God "willing" it to exist.

Everything in the universe is under God's control -- from the quantum to the cosmic. This has monumental implications for the events that take place on the tiny speck in the universe that we call Earth. If God knows and controls everything, then history is a controlled process leading to a destination.

Since God is the cosmic scriptwriter, director and producer, the events of human history are not random. This is a story with a plot -- a goal. This means we're headed for a specific destination; there is a finish line.

Even recent events within the last 65 years (from 1948 & the return of the Jewish people to their Land⁴) have seen the fulfilment of some of these prophecies in the most remarkable ways. In fact, the very existence of the Jewish people through thousands of years of persecutions, pogroms, dispersion and exile, is in itself an amazing proof of both a Creator and His relationship with the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob⁵.

1 An inscription found: "Property of Sargon, King of Assyria, conqueror of Samaria and of the entire country of Israel who despoiled Ashdod and Shihuti, who caught the Greeks who live on islands in the sea"

2 Richard Dawkins in 'The God Delusion' objects to Abraham's existence

3 T = Torah; N = Nevim (Prophets, K = Kethuvim (Writings – Wisdom literature such as Psalms, Job, etc)

⁴ See my article 'Israel: Return in belief or unbelief' for some details – at www.circumcisedheart.info

⁵ The Jewish Rabbi Yeshua (Jesus) only further supports this proof.

So the evidence that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the Creator of the Universe is very strong. This evidence in turn supports and informs us that a prophet would arise from amongst the descendents of Moses who would be remarkable and would speak exactly as directed by his Father, the God of Israel.

How strong is the evidence that Jesus was this prophet and that he was resurrected and lives to this day?

Nobody seriously disputes that a man named Jesus of Nazareth actually existed.

There is more written about Jesus than any other individual or event in the history of mankind. If Jesus did not exist then how can we say that Julius Caesar, Napoleon, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington or anybody else for that matter ever really existed.

He is mentioned by Roman Historians Suetonius in AD 49 in Claudius, 25,4, and by Tacitus AD 115-117 in Annals, XV,44, and by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus in the first century AD or CE in Josephus Antiquities, XX,200. Roman historians had absolutely nothing to gain from mentioning him in their records and in all likelihood neither did Josephus.

Many have tried for a great many reasons to establish that the resurrection did not happen. These attempts by sincere man such as Simon Greenleaf.

Simon Greenleaf⁶ was a Professor of Law at Harvard University in the early 1800's. Having set out to refute the resurrection of Jesus using the legal approach taken by a Court of Law, he instead found the evidence for the resurrection proven beyond reasonable doubt and consequently became a believer.

Greenleaf's article is available and worth reading at the link below. Greenleaf starts with four 'rules of law';

In trials of fact, by oral testimony, the proper inquiry is not whether it is possible that the testimony may be false, but whether there is sufficient probability that it is true.

A proposition of fact is proved, when its truth is established by competent and satisfactory evidence.

In the absence of circumstances which generate suspicion, every witness is to be presumed credible, until the contrary is shown; the burden of impeaching his credibility lying on the objector.

The credit due to the testimony of witnesses depends upon, firstly, their honesty; secondly, their ability; thirdly, their number and the consistency of their testimony; fourthly, the conformity of their testimony with experience; and fifthly, the coincidence of their testimony with collateral circumstances.

His conclusions are well summarised by these quotes:

"Either the men of Galilee were men of superlative wisdom, and extensive knowledge and experience, and of deeper skill in the arts of deception, than any and all others, before or after them, or they have truly stated the astonishing things which they saw and heard... "

Juan Baixeras (from a brilliant paper on proving the resurrection⁷):

"The proof of the resurrection is in the lives of the Apostles. It is in how they lived and in how they were treated. I use to ask myself, "Why didn't God help the Apostles during their journeys?" They went through such hardships. All of them were beaten, tortured, imprisoned, and all except John were brutally killed.

Paul is probably the most powerful witness to the resurrection of Christ. One must carefully analyse the steps that he took after that fateful day on the road to Damascus. You MUST ask yourself WHY?"

The scientific methodologies of the historical sciences:

There are a number of descriptions that illustrate how historical sciences attempt to prove their hypotheses. For example the famous evolutionist Stephen Jay Gould stated that historical sciences test their theories by evaluating their explanatory power⁸.

Historical scientists essentially proceed by inferring history from its results, that is they reason from clues back to causes.

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Testimony_of_the_Evangelist <http://www.bibleteacher.org/sgtestimony.htm>

⁷ <http://www.reocities.com/Athens/olympus/5257/proving.htm>

⁸ Gould, 'Evolution and the Triumph of Homology'

Further than this they investigate various hypotheses to see which hypothesis, if true, would best explain the known data. This may sound simple but where there are a number of possibly adequate competing hypotheses, this can prove very difficult.

In summary then, to establish a casual claim, an approach is used which requires the identification of three things:

- 1) Evidence that the cause proposed was present;
- 2) Evidence that on other occasions it has demonstrated the capacity to produce the effect under study, and
- 3) That there is an absence of evidence, despite a thorough search, of any other possible causes.⁹

On studying Greenleaf's and McDowell's approach to this topic it appears to me that they have generally followed a similar methodology.

To meet the requirements of point 1 above, we need to establish that Jesus did actually exist at the time in question and that 'resurrection' was an event, that within his culture and religion, was seen as at least plausible and possibly predictable.

Further on this point, recent evidence from the Qumran Scrolls especially suggests that not only was the death of a 'Messiah' anticipated before the time of Jesus, so was the possibility of the resurrection of this 'Messiah'.

Prof. Flusser writes in 'Judaism and the Origins of Christianity' (p 429):

"The Oracles of Hystaspes¹⁰ and the Book of Revelation reflect the idea that the eschatological prophet will be killed; they also speak about his resurrection. It was almost inevitable that such a belief arose: the idea of resurrection became for many part of the Jewish faith; at that time not only Jews believed that a wondermaker could raise a man from the dead; one could learn from the Bible that Enoch and Elijah were brought up to heaven, and there were some Jews who thought that this was also true of Moses' end. As it was difficult to accept that at the End of Days the great prophet will come to a tragic end, it was easier to assume that he will finally resurrect and ascend to heaven.

The evidence for the actual existence of Jesus 2000 years ago is well established, as is the evidence that 'resurrection' was an event that the Hebrew Bible and proto-rabbinic Judaism (the main Jewish sect at that time) saw as both a historical reality and a future expectation.

Clearly though, as the specific resurrection in question involves no subsequent death it is a unique event so it can not be evaluated based on point 2 above.

The nearest approach that we can possibly make is to study other 'resurrections', that is, other instances where people have been restored to life (although they have subsequently died at some later date).

Even a cursory examination of such events or alleged events should demonstrate that they have a most significant impact of those who witness them and even on those who are only indirectly witnesses to these 'miraculous' events.

Meeting the requirements of point 3 is perhaps the most difficult. Many alternative hypotheses need to be fairly evaluated to determine if the resurrection of Jesus 2000 years ago is the best explanation (i.e. has the most explanatory power), of the 'results' witnessed today.

The 'results' of this causal claim range from the creation of the New Testament, to the last 2000 years of human progress that has largely developed based on the underlying Judaeo-Christian ethic and mindset.

The 'results' are especially the amazing tales of individual lives totally 'turned' to God, from examples like the slave trader, John Newton; to the founder of the Salvation Army, William Booth; Nicky Cruz, Keith Green, and to the unknown drug addict turned tireless servant to some societal outcasts.

Almost all alternative hypotheses to the actual resurrection of Jesus fall very short in their explanatory power when reviewed against the backdrop of the last 2000 years of the spread of Christianity.

For example, the Jewish scholar, and Professor at Hebrew University, the late Joseph Klausner in 'Jesus of Nazareth His Life, Times and Teaching' (1926, p358-359), argues that Jesus did not rise from the dead but that all 500 witnesses only saw a vision.

⁹ Scriven, 'Causes, Connections and Conditions in History' p 249-250

¹⁰ Written around 40 BCE, Flusser is quite certain that this book is of Jewish not Zoroastrian origin – see page xxii)

While there are many problems with this alternative, the major issue appears to be that such an event or 'cause' has no precedent or antecedent that provides any 'results' that come even close to the incredible 'results' and impact of this particular 'vision'.

Despite the very impressive scholarship of Klausner, this 'vision hypothesis' is one of the least credible of alternatives, to the point where a number of other leading Jewish scholars have refuted it. For example, the late Yehezkel Kaufmann, (also a Professor at Hebrew University) states:

"There are scholars who opine that the belief in Jesus' resurrection derived wholly from his appearance before the disciples (that is, in a vision unconnected with bodily resurrection), which opinion is, however, in error. Jesus' appearance was considered a miracle; it brought renewal of faith after the disappointment of Golgotha — and reunited the scattered disciples. The appearance, on the other hand, of the "spirit" or ghost of a departed in a vision would not have been a miracle."
(Kaufmann., 'Christianity & Judaism – Two Covenants' p133)

Intriguingly, Kaufmann didn't seem to realise that his own explanation or attempt to provide an 'alternative hypothesis' was just as unacceptable and lacking the miraculous that is so clearly needed to explain the momentous impact of this event down through the ages.

It is not impossible that the miracle is to be explained like thousands of instances of "rebirth" of the dead which have occurred from ancient times to the present; that Jesus did not die on the cross, but lost consciousness, and then revived and rose from his grave and fell in some other place. Whatever the facts, the legend of the resurrection instilled the faithful with new hope.
(Kaufmann – p 133)

A legend or myth rarely gives the strength and courage to sane men and women to stand and accept the most heinous deaths for simply professing such 'myths'. In fact, as Juan Baixeras points out, any past miraculous event such as the parting of the Red Sea, can easily be dismissed as a myth if there is little supporting evidence.

The incredible and enduring impact of the resurrection then, is in fact evidence that it was not a myth, because, despite a most diligent search by a great many disbelieving men and women over the last 2000 years, they have failed to come up with any plausible alternative hypothesis and these 'deniers' have instead needed most often to resort to accusing those who accept the evidence for the resurrection as fools or insane or mad.

We should always treat with great caution any debater or proponent of any theory who is unable to rationally challenge his opponents but instead resorts frequently and increasingly to vitriolic condemnations of his/her opponent's personalities and intellect. The infamous Richard Dawkins is a classic case in point.

No such accusations could be levelled at the scholarship and efforts of such impressive scholars as Klausner or Kaufmann. Neither of these great men though had the same level of access to the relatively recent discoveries and deciphering of the Dead Sea Scrolls, that one of their successors at the Hebrew University, the orthodox Jewish scholar, Professor David Flusser has had.

So, one might ask where the Professor Flusser (who died only a few years ago) stood on this issue. Flusser had made it his lifetimes work to study the Jewish Rabbi Jesus. His intimate appreciation of what Jesus was like and what he said and didn't say is most impressive.

'The fact of the resurrection is often mentioned: it is both an historical experience and a cornerstone of Christ's metahistorical biography.' 'Judaism and the Origins of Christianity', David Flusser, p 621

'Is it indeed credible to suggest that when the Synoptic Gospels are studied scientifically they present a reliable portrayal of the historical Jesus' 'Jesus', Flusser p 21

'Hence, Luke and Matthew together provide the most authentic portrayal of Jesus' life and teachings'. 'Jesus', p 22.

It should not really be necessary to state that the synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark & Luke clearly state that Jesus was resurrected.

The unquestionable impact of the resurrection story on world history can be seen in the conclusions of historians like HG Wells who said: *"I am an historian, I am not a believer, but I must confess as a historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very centre of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history."*

Perhaps though, even more compelling is the conclusion of Pinchas Lapide, an orthodox Jewish scholar, (1922- 1997) that Jesus' resurrection actually occurred.

Lapide stated that , *“against all plausibility, his adherents did not finally scatter [and] were not forgotten,”* and that *“the cause of Jesus did not reach its infamous end on the cross.”* *“His disciples, who by no means excelled in intelligence, eloquence, or strength of faith, were able to begin their victorious march of conversion only after the shattering fiasco on Golgotha—a march which put all their successes before Easter completely into the shadow.”*

During that fateful feast of Unleavened Bread; that pivotal Passover, something happened. What was it? Lapide’s answer: *“The resurrection of Jesus from the dead.”*¹¹

Lapide argues that if Judaism and Christianity both derive from the same God, then Christianity could not be founded upon a lie. And since it "stands or falls" with the Easter story, Lapide concludes that the church was *"born out of an act of the will of God, which all the New Testament authors call the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead."*¹²

“When this frightened band of apostles suddenly could be changed overnight into a confident mission society... Then no vision or hallucination is sufficient to explain such a revolutionary transformation.” Pinchas Lapide, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective* (Fortress Press, 1988), p. 125

Another excellent example of the explanatory power of a real resurrection is the life of one of Jesus’ brothers, Ya’acov (transliterated to James in 1611 KJV):

‘The Lord’s brother, James, came to believe as a result of a resurrection appearance. In 62 AD James died for his faith in his brother; he was murdered by a Sadducean high priest. The other brothers were later converted to faith, and with their wives they accepted the hospitality of the congregations.’ 1 Cor. 9:5; 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 2:9; - see E. Hennecke & W. Schneemelcher, New Testament Apocrypha I, Gospels and Related Writings (Westminster, 1991), pp. 470-88

James had grown up with Jesus, he knew him better than most, but as a brother he was perhaps too familiar and consequently rejected the notion that his elder brother Jesus was the prophet that Moses had spoken of. The resurrection changed James. It dramatically altered his life to the point where he became one of the pillars of the church in Jerusalem. No explanation other than the literal, physical resurrection of his brother appears to offer a satisfactory explanation of this great change in James.

Thus we see through the story of Israel and her Son, Jesus, that the Creator of the Universe has shown His interest in humanity which He tells us he made in ‘His image’. That is we have been made with his characteristics to some degree, at least to the degree that we can recognize when we are engineers, that he is the greatest engineer; when we are painters, that he is the greatest painter, when we are fathers, that he is the greatest Father, etc.

So, we learn that there is a Creator and that he created us as the pinnacle of this Creation and then entered into a relationship with Abraham and his descendents through Isaac and Jacob; and then sent a prophet who would demonstrate perfectly how we should live and tell us of the great future that awaits us. What then should our response be?

It’s really very simple, we are to repent (that is to turn back to God) and seek forgiveness; turn to our Father in Heaven; to love Him and to love our neighbour (all those created in His image) – see Gal 5:14 (quoting Lev 19:18); the Shema, Deut 6:4; & the 10 Words.

I did not though, fully address all the questions I started with. These included; ‘What happens when we die’ and the unspoken question regarding ‘moral laws’ and their evidence for their impact.

Let me then try to briefly address these two issues.

Firstly, regarding life after death or ‘life after life’ as theologian Tom Wright likes to put it. Is there more life after this one, and what does it involve?

¹¹ Lapide however denies that Jesus was the Messiah of Israel - *“I do accept the fact that he is the Saviour of the Gentile church. I do not think that his being the Saviour of the church and not being the Messiah of Israel is necessarily a contradiction.”*

¹² Two centuries before Jesus was born, Lapide points out, Judaism began believing in a future, generalized resurrection of believers, which became a tenet of Orthodoxy. In addition, the Jewish tradition includes six accounts of God reawakening the dead, three of them in the Old Testament (I Kings 17: 22, II Kings 4: 35 and 13: 21). Lapide sees no religious reason why Jesus could not have been the seventh "dead Jew revived by the will of God," although the New Testament describes Jesus' resurrected body as having a changed nature. The Jewish resurrector tradition, he contends, provided the basis for the Christian Apostles' faith. "This certainty of the future rising of the dead and the possible reawakening by God of some dead before the end of days was the precondition for their hope against hope that their beloved teacher and master had not been abandoned by the God of Israel." However Easter is interpreted, says Lapide, "one thing is certain: since all the witnesses of the resurrected Jesus were sons and daughters of Israel, since, moreover, he appeared only in the land of Israel, his Resurrection was a Jewish affair which must therefore be judged by Jewish standards if we are to gauge its authenticity." <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,920335-1,00.html>

Having discussed and hopefully agreed that the Bible is an authoritative declaration from the Creator of the Universe, we can study it and learn that a future life; a resurrected life in a world where the God of Israel is fully in charge; a world where true peace will prevail, is a very common theme and prophecy of scripture.

So significant in fact, that the first recorded words in public ministry of both John the Baptist and Yeshua were *'Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near'*.

Their Jewish listeners understood very well that the Kingdom of God was a future time when God would truly rule the world and Israel and His peace would be over all the land. This was also the mission statement of Yeshua and can be seen in his statement in Luke 4:43 *"but he said to them, I must preach the good news of the Kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for this was why I was sent."*

The Kingdom of God is also referred to as the Coming Age and 'eternal life'. While it may well involve two distinct time periods, namely the Millennial Kingdom and the New Creation, it is a time of unimaginable joy. I have written fairly extensively on this time both in an article and series of lectures 'The Kingdom of God' on my website¹³ and spoken at some conferences as well. For example, see *'Its Life Jim, but not as we know it'*¹⁴.

As for the impact of our breaking God's Moral Laws, this is a much more subjective issue and one which there is a great diversity of opinions on, because in many ways, it is based on personal experiences.

Is there a deeper layer of cause and effect at work here though. Is there a deeper and more powerful consequence to 'breaking' (or attempting to break¹⁵) any of the 10 Words?

Many may argue no, especially at the personal or individual level, as such consequences if any, are not easily discernable, or at least are easily avoided.

I suspect that there are two ways in which we could discern these consequences of moral failure. One is to look through history at all the nations, people groups and societies that have existed and then died out, and study the evidence as to why they died out. Without being an historian, I suspect that the evidence is very strong that when immorality and decadence became the norm in societies from Sodom to the Roman Empire, to the British Empire (whose decline appears to have begun around 1922 and matched the time when the British Empire betrayed its own, and turned it's back on Israel¹⁶).

Well known Christian apologists such as C.S. Lewis, and the late Prof. Norm Geisler have written extensively and positively on the subject of the Moral Code.

Such apologists point out some compelling evidence from daily living. For example, even persons who might argue that rape is not an absolute evil would most likely feel sick at the thought of a loved one being raped.

Western society has been founded and successfully built on what is often called the Judeo-Christian ethic. In reality, this has meant that the constitutions and regulations governing Western democracies have enshrined many of the 10 Words (Ten Commandments) into their Laws.

We see this in the penalties enacted for murder, for perjury (dishonesty in court), for theft and so on. Thus, at the National, State and legal level, there are many serious consequences that may befall those who fail to abide by the laws of the land.

While the consequences for someone convicted of doing something against the laws of the land are instituted by human beings; we can find evidence that these national or community created laws are in the main part only successful where they match the moral laws and principles outlined in the Bible.

As a converse, we see that generally countries which base their laws on other 'holy books' such as the Koran, have historically been a lot less prosperous and permanent, and in fact, have often been places or lands of desolation and despair.

We also see the converse argument in the impact of Social Darwinism. This approach to the ordering of a human society has been used by a number of dictators such as Hitler with disastrous results. Some excellent books and articles have been

¹³ www.circumcisedheart.info

¹⁴ See <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/OneGod/meetings.html> - Meeting 5; Saturday 11th August 2007 at Faith Christian Church 15 Cecil B. De Mille, the famous Director of the movie 'The Ten Commandments' stated "It is impossible for us to break the law; we can only break ourselves against the law."

¹⁶ See "Palestine: The Original Sin" by Meir Abelson - available from <http://www.theolivetreeconnection.com>

written in the last few years on how Nazism followed the philosophy of Social Darwinism. See *'From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics and Racism in Germany'* by Richard Weikart for example.

So while we may find support via the clear negative consequences of societies which reject the 10 Words; what evidence is there that societies and particularly, individuals who try hard to obey the 10 Words, fare much better. We might also ask how this is measured? Is it measured by greater prosperity; greater happiness; longer life, or what?

This may illustrate that this is not a simple question, However, some statistics can still reveal a very powerful connection.

For example, the sanctity of the institution of marriage is enshrined in both the 10 Words and the whole of the Bible. For example, a great many academic studies conducted on marriage and the family have strongly affirmed that a society where marriage is honoured and protected is a society in which both the family and the individual benefits.

These studies and surveys have *shown "that the decline in marriage in the USA and Australia, since the 1960s has been accompanied by a rise in a number of serious social problems. Children born out of wedlock or whose parents divorce are much more likely to experience poverty, abuse, and behavioral and emotional problems, have lower academic achievement, and use drugs more often. Single mothers are much more likely to be victims of domestic violence.*

With the rise in these problems comes high program costs to deal with the effects of the breakdown of marriage. For children whose parents remain married, however, the benefits are real. Adolescents from these families have been found to have better health and are less likely to be depressed, are less likely to repeat a grade in school, and have fewer developmental problems"^{17, 18}.

Some of the more significant benefits, both for society and the individual are that marriage:

- Lengthens life spans of men and women;
- Civilizes men;
- Protects women;
- Protects mothers from violent crime;
- Lowers welfare costs to society;
- Encourages an adequate replacement birth rate.

The last benefit helps explain why immoral societies, which have not revered and protected the institution of marriage have often died out.

Another immoral and unbiblical activity is drug abuse.

Some scriptures that speak out against excessive use of alcohol and other drugs are:

Ephesians 5:18

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,

Deut. 21:20-21

... and they shall say to the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. So you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear.

Amos 6:4-6

Woe to those who lie on beds of ivory ... who drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!

1 Cor.6:9-10

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Gal. 5:19-21

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Proverbs 20:1

Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

¹⁷ See <http://www.summit.org/resources/truth-and-consequences/martin-luther-king-and-natural-law/> - accessed March 25th 2011

¹⁸ For statistical details, see Patrick F. Fagan et al., "The Positive Effects of Marriage: A Book of Charts," The Heritage Foundation, <http://www.heritage.org/research/features/marriage/index.cfm>. Another good site is <http://www.allaboutlove.org/natural-marriage.htm>

Isaiah 5:11

Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening as wine inflames them!

Habakkuk 2:15-16¹⁹

“Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink— you pour out your wrath and make them drunk, in order to gaze at their nakedness! You will have your fill of shame instead of glory. Drink, yourself, and show your uncircumcision! The cup in the LORD's right hand will come around to you, and utter shame will come upon your glory!

The negative consequences of drug abuse are easily discernable in today's world. Violent street gangs, family violence, the spread of AIDS, and babies born with cocaine dependency all testify to the pervasive and negative influence of drugs.

I will briefly touch on one other significant area of moral consequences. In 2008, John McTernnan published a book 'As America Has Done to Israel' about the Blessings and the Cursings that have befallen the USA as a result of her positive and negative interactions with the Jewish people and the Nation of Israel.

Two scriptures that foretell a blessing on those nations and peoples who support Israel and a similar but opposite consequence to those who fail in their duty to support Israel or who actively work to delegitimize and demonize Israel, are Genesis 12:1-3 and Obadiah 1:15.

Genesis 12:1-3

Now the LORD said to Abram, Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

Obadiah 1:15

For the day of the LORD is near upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head.

Just a few of the negative consequences are summarized below. I highly recommend reading the book for further elucidation.

Date	Speech	By	Disaster Date	What
Sept 19 '38	USA fails to act against Hitler – instead involved in appeasement	Pres Roosevelt	Sept 18-22 1938	Great Hurricane
Oct 31 '91	'territorial compromise'	Pres. Bush (Madrid)	Oct 31	Perfect Storm
24 Aug 92	Palestinian self-rule of territories	Sec. of State @ Madrid Peace Conference	24 Aug 92	Hurricane Andrew
Sept 1 st 93	Oslo Accord	Clinton	Sept 1 93	Hurricane Emily
Jan 16 th 94	'give up Golan Heights'	Clinton to Assad in Geneva	Jan 17 th	LA Earthquake
March 1 97	Arafat received warmly...	Clinton	Same day	Worst tornados in history
Jan 21 98	Clinton presses Netanyahu to give up land		Jan 22	Clinton's sex scandal surfaces
Sept 28 98	Arafat addresses UN			Hurricane Georges hits Gulf Coast
May 4 '99	Clinton to Arafat	'determine their own future in their own land'		Most powerful tornadoes ever to hit US
Aug 9 2001	Suicide bomber in Jerusalem kills 19 and injures over 100	Bush is speaking publicly to condemn the terrorist goes on to demand Israel withdraw to pre-67 war borders and negotiate with the very people who sent the suicide bomber	Sept 11, 2001	The Twin Towers plane crashes
Sept 20 2004	Bush @ UN	Israel should impose settlement freeze and end the daily humiliation of the Palestinian people		Hurricane Jeanne changes course 1° 80 degrees and hits US
Aug 22 2005	As a result of considerable US pressure – Gush Katif evac of 21 settlements		Aug 25 th 2005	Hurricane Katrina
Mon 16 th July 2007	Bush	Shocking speech against Israel and for division of land (at this time there was no talk of a recession or unimaginable debt	Friday 20 th July	Subprime mortgage debt implosion hits
Oct 14 2007	Rice	Annapolis Conference	Oct 19 th	California Bush fires
Apr 15 th 2010	Hilary Clinton	Called Israeli plans insulting – called Israel to address humanitarian needs in Gaza	Apr 20 2010	Gulf Oil Spill

19 Both the TaNaK and the New Testament condemn sorcery and witchcraft. The word translated "sorcery" comes from the Greek word from which we get the English words "pharmacy" and "pharmaceutical." In ancient time, drugs were prepared by a witch or shaman.

If the correlation seen here is causal; that is, if the USA leaders pronouncements against Israel did led to God's cursing via these natural disasters; then we need to ask if this causal relationship does not just impact America, but all the Gentile Nations.

As this point, there is been no in-depth analysis of this proposition that I am aware of. I do believe though, from some limited research into a number of countries and their political relationship with Israel, that this causal relationship is in effect with all nations.

It certainly adds an extra dimension to our observance of God's interactions with his creation of humanity, both corporately and individually.

I have now, along with a brief overview of science and history's evidence for God, touched briefly on both the coming Kingdom of God and the discernable consequences of moral actions by both individuals and nations.

To follow up in more depth on these issues, I recommended the books below, for further reading on this important topic, as well as the articles and links referenced throughout this article.

Paul Herring, March 2011

Some Recommended Books:

The Universe & the Creator:

Signature in the Cell: DNA and the evidence for Intelligent Design by Stephen Meyer

The Design Revolution by William Dembski

More Than a Theory: Revealing a Testable Model for Creation by Hugh Ross

The Design of Life: Discovering signs of intelligence in biological systems by Dembski & Jonathan Wells

The History of Israel & the World:

Crash Course in Jewish History by Rabbi Ken Spiro

Archaeology: Evidence that Demands a Verdict by Josh McDowell

Jesus:

'Jesus' by Prof David Flusser

'They Never Told Me THIS in Church' by Greg Deuble

The Moral Laws:

Torah: Mosaic Law or Divine Instructions by Frank Selch

Video:

Series by Dr. Gerald Schroeder; for example, see 'The Scientific Proof for the Existence of God' at

<http://israelmuse.blogspot.com/2010/10/video-dr-gerald-schroeder-proof-of-gods.html>