Thy Word Is a Lamp Unto My Feet: The Bible for Today

The Bible and Science

Lesson #6 for May 12, 2007

Scripture: Genesis 1:1; 2:1,2; 7:11-24; Deuteronomy 4:32; Psalms 100:3; 139:14; Isaiah 42:5; 45:18; Jeremiah 33:22; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2.

1. This lesson is about the evaluation of evidence. What should be the relation between science and the Bible? How many different kinds of "evidence" are there? How do we compare "scientific evidence" with "historical evidence"?
2. Science is based on probability. How reliable is probability? If you can never be 100% confident, can your conclusions be trusted?
3. Do you personally believe that God is the author of both science and the Bible?
4. What is the nature of truth? Can you define truth? Are some types of truth more reliable than other types? Is something less true because it happened in the past? What kind of evidence would you need to believe that something which happened in the past, and cannot be repeated, is "the truth"?
5. Probably the most important single characteristic of "truth" is that it must always be consistent with itself. If science is true and the Bible is true, shouldn't they be consistent with each other?
6. Why are so many modern scientists so openly opposed to religion? For thousands of years the church dominated the history of western civilization. Through the Protestant Reformation, the Enlightenment, the Renaissance, and the scientific revolution, the human family has grown more and more independent of "the church." In France in the 1700s, a vigorous attempt was made to completely overthrow religion. They sought to destroy everything that had any trace of religion in it. In the decades that followed, a huge pendulum shift occurred and Bible societies were formed and a huge religious movement developed. The Seventh-day Adventist Church grew out of that movement. But the devil was not asleep! When the pendulum swung back in the late 1800s, higher critics attempted to discredit virtually everything related to Christianity and the Bible. With that kind of history, is it any surprise that scientists oppose religion?
7. Many of the world's great scientists in the early years believed that as they studied science, they were learning to understand God. Descartes, Kepler, Galileo, Copernicus, and Newton–to mention only a few–believed that their scientific work was merely a way to reveal God's handiwork.
8. Not all aspects of science have been in apparent conflict with biblical studies. There is much from science which supports ideas from the Bible.
9. There is no doubt about the fact that the Bible–from Genesis to Revelation–repeatedly echoes the idea that God created everything. Since the early years of the 20th century–symbolized by the Scopes "monkey trial"–scientists have been promoting the idea that evolution is the explanation for all existence, that everything is a result of pure chance, and that everything we see is a result of gradual change. By contrast, in the early years of the 21st century, scientists are honestly speaking about "anthropic coincidences." What is an

"anthropic coincidence"? Science has revealed repeatedly that:

> Many factors in the universe are so finely tuned that even the slightest variation would create an environment unfit for human existence. It's almost as though the universe was created with the existence of humanity in mind! *Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 66.

This implies that if certain factors that seem to control things on this earth had turned out only very slightly differently, the world, as we know it, could not exist.

> If the rate of expansion after the creation of the universe had been smaller by one part in a hundred million, the universe would have collapsed in on itself. On the other hand, had it been greater by one part in 100 million, the universe would have expanded too rapidly for stars or planets to form. (*Ibid*)

> Also, one of the known basic factors in nature is called the strong nuclear force. Had it been slightly weaker, there would have been only hydrogen in the universe; had it been slightly stronger, there would have been only helium. In either environment, humanity as we know it could never have been formed. (*Ibid*) See Gribbin and Rees' *Cosmic Coincidences*

There are scores more such "coincidences." The famous scientist, Stephen Hawking, who certainly is not a religionist, admitted:

> The odds against a universe like ours emerging out of something like the Big Bang are enormous...I think there are certainly religious implications.–quoted in Ian Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), p. 58. (quoted in *Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 66)

10. What are the major issues that divide Christianity and science? Certainly, one of the largest is about origins. Scientists want us to believe that we should not accept as fact anything that cannot be tested in the laboratory, "in the here and now." While they would not readily acknowledge it, by taking such an approach, they are denying the existence of anything that is purely historical. How much "evidence" is there for the existence of Richard the Lion-Hearted, Joan of Arc, Nero, Caesar Augustus, Plato, Aristotle, or Socrates? How would you go about verifying the existence of such individuals as those? How would you prove that their stories or writings are reliable? What kind of evidence would you consider acceptable in your search? What about Mohammed, Buddha, or Confucius? **If we are not going to accept as true anything that cannot be tested in the laboratory, then we must throw out our belief in, and understanding of, all these people!**

11. Read Jeremiah 33:22. What do you think Jeremiah had in mind when he wrote this verse?

> Ptolemy many centuries ago counted about 1056 stars; Tyco Brahe counted up to 777; Kepler, 1005. Before the invention of the telescope in the 17th century, people believed that the number of stars was 5119. Today we know there are an estimated 10,000 billion billion stars. (*Ibid*)

So does Jeremiah's statement give you greater trust in the Bible?

12. Read Job 22:12. What is the relationship between the place which God considers the

center of his universe and the stars? Does God live somewhere in the Orion nebula in our galaxy? Do such comparisons between biblical statements and scientific discoveries confirm your faith?

> Scientists view religionists–and Christians in particular–as unthinking sheep and their leaders as slick talkers with something to hide. Religionists view the scientifically minded as cold-hearted, arrogant know-it-alls who are subtly or not-so-subtly trying to destroy or steal their faith. Here is the worst part: both sides are right at least some of the time. *ibid* p. 69

13. Read Proverbs 17:22. That is a verse which could have a simple experiential meaning, and it probably did have such a meaning to Solomon. But that verse can also have a deeper psychological and medical meaning in terms of modern science. There is plenty of evidence that laughter and cheerfulness improve health. There is even more evidence that depression and discouragement are a detriment to health.

14. Read Psalms 139:14. God's actions do indeed at times seem strange and wonderful. There are estimated to be one trillion neurons in the brain and each neuron may have up to 12,000 synapses (connections with other neurons in the brain). The synapses in the brain are dependent on prior experiences of the individual, making the brain extremely complex and different from one person to the next. Francis Crick of DNA-model fame, a vehement atheist, speculated that life must have started somewhere else and was then brought here, perhaps by space aliens who wanted to see the earth! Life is too complicated to have just happened!

15. In recent times there has been considerable debate and real conflict between those people who want to stick with a strictly mechanistic chance method of evolution and those evolutionists who want to believe in some kind of "intelligent design." Michael Behe wrote a book entitled *Darwin's Black Box* which raises many questions about the premises of evolution. What should evolutionists do and how should creationists react when it appears that pure chance–even given millions, even billions, of years–can not possibly explain the origin of life or even of our universe?

16. But the greatest question of all is really the question of meaning! If one takes the evolutionary approach, life ultimately has no specific meaning! There can be no overall purpose to it! On the other hand, if one believes that we are born as children of a heavenly Father who has designed our world and our universe for very specific reasons, then meaning is an obvious consequence. When it comes to meaning, evolutionists have no answers!

17. In the arguments that take place between creationists and evolutionists, there is perhaps one very important factor that has been overlooked. **Evolutionists want us to believe that their arguments are based on science. By contrast, they picture creationist's beliefs as being based on myths from the past. Scientific Christians recognize that there can be no conflict between different aspects of the truth–whether it is from science or from the Bible. In light of this fact, we would state that the hard data that comes from evolutionary research are true and reliable. But when the evolutionist takes that data and begins to interpret it according to his own presuppositions, he has created an "evolutionary religion." That is interpretation and no longer hard data. We must never allow the evolutionist to try to contrast their science with our "myth" or our**

religion. Their hard data can be compared to our hard data; their "religion" can be compared with our religion. But let us make it very clear that they have a religion just like we do! Just as they claim that our interpretations of biblical realities are unscientific, we can turn to their interpretations of data and demonstrate that they are theories and may not be fact.

18. There are ways to interpret the hard data that seem to be consistent with an evolutionary model. There are also ways to interpret the same data that are quite consistent with the biblical model of creation and a world-wide flood. The data are not in conflict; it is the interpretations which are in conflict. As those who have attended one or more geologic tour have seen demonstrated, there is much evidence for rapid changes and catastrophic events in nature. We do not have to depend upon a slow-time-period model to explain all of the things that we observe in nature.

19. Ellen White suggested that if we had always kept the Sabbath as we should have, there would never have been an evolutionist or an atheist.

> I was shown that if the true Sabbath had always been kept, there would never have been an infidel or an atheist. The observance of the Sabbath would have preserved the world from idolatry. {1T 76.1}
>
> Had the Sabbath always been kept, man's thoughts and affections would have been led to his Maker as the object of reverence and worship, [383] and there would never have been an idolater, an atheist, or an infidel. {SR 382.2}

Do you agree with those statements? Why do you think they are true or not true?

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