

Bible Special 06-10-03a

This is Tuesday the 3rd of October 2006. We continue tonight our study in the examination of our Christian faith as it compares to the belief systems found elsewhere in the world. Let's take a moment as we begin to prepare our hearts by going to the Lord in prayer.

Father we are grateful for every opportunity to spend time together as a fellowship of believers who appreciate your word and the truth that it communicates to our souls. We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ and for his constant ministry of intercession on our behalf, his available presence in our hearts so that we can enjoy fellowship with you through him. We pray that our study this evening will enlighten us and will strengthen us for the days ahead.

We ask it in Jesus name. Amen. Well, after several weeks of looking at the vagaries of human thought, I am happy to say that we're going to find ourselves in scripture tonight to quite a great extent.

One of the reasons for this will become clear. I'm going to finish up a little bit of our examination of the tenets of evolution which is the belief system as to origins and the explanation for why our universe and specifically biological life exists on this planet. And then we're going to go back to God's word because there is an infinitude of details, arguments, pro and con, disputes about evidence, about passages of scripture.

Can they be believed? Can they be taken literally? And so forth. It's an endless, endless debate. It's been going on for a hundred and fifty years ever since before Darwin published his Origin of Species.

There were already rumblings in the scientific community that perhaps there was something other than special creation to explain life on our planet. As Richard Dawkins has said, and I gave you this quote a time or two before, his appreciation for Darwin is that it allows him to, Darwin's theories allow him to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist. He was an atheist to begin with but now he's got some philosophy and some explanation to bolster his desire to not believe in God.

And I think this is a very telling and revealing statement. Now I'm going to summarize, and actually I'm not going to summarize, I'm going to give you a great summary by Philip Johnson, once again from this book, Darwin on Trial. This is relatively early in the book, it's at the close of the chapter on natural selection, but it really sums up everything that we've talked about and it's going to put a nice fat period at the end of our formal look at evolution because there's a more fundamental question that we want to examine from God's word this evening.

But he has a section at the end of this first big chapter on the elements of Darwinism, which is the chapter on natural selection, and this section is titled Natural Selection as a Philosophical Necessity. And what he has to say about this is really true of the entire theory of evolution, the entire view of secular humanism, of materialism, toward a godless universe and godless human

life. The National Academy of Sciences argued before the Supreme Court that the most basic characteristic of science is reliance upon naturalistic explanations.

Science depends on natural explanations for things. Science does not, and indeed cannot, take into account anything that is of God. It's unscientific.

Nothing's supernatural. By definition, science deals only with the natural. So it is opposed to anything that smacks of being a supernatural means that is inaccessible to human understanding.

Now, I would argue that the accounts of God's actions and the word are completely accessible to human understanding if you're so disposed. But the National Academy of Sciences says science is reliance upon naturalistic explanations as opposed to supernatural means inaccessible to human understanding. In this latter unacceptable category, supernatural inaccessible explanations, scientists place not only God but any non-material vital force that supposedly drives evolution in the direction of greater complexity toward consciousness or whatever.

If scientists have any explanation for biological complexity at all, it has to make do with what is left when the unacceptable has been excluded. Does this make sense? If you're going to exclude God by definition, if you're going to exclude anything that you can't test and measure, then you have to make do for an explanation with what's left. The things that you can measure and scrutinize and so on.

Right? Does it make sense? Well, natural selection is the best of the alternatives that remain in terms of an explanation for how life came to be in its complexity and diversity. So, given this situation, people who don't believe in God have to believe that evolution is true. For people like this, any further investigation is going to merely explain how natural selection works and solve the mysteries created by any anomalies in the evidence that don't support natural selection.

Does this make sense? You're stuck with it for an answer because nothing else even comes close to being an explanation. It has to be survival of the fittest. It's what they call another word for natural selection and mutation.

The two driving elements of evolution is descent with modification. Offspring produce offspring produce offspring. They modify and natural selection says, well, there's a whole lot more born than there are survive and reproduce.

So, what determines the ones that survive and reproduce? They are the fittest. They're the best adapted. So, descent with modification.

This is the essence of evolution. You have to make that work because if you don't believe in God, what else is there? This was pointed out by a man named T.H. Huxley about a hundred years ago, a little over a hundred years ago. His nickname is Darwin's Bulldog.

He took the theories of Darwin and really became a proponent and chewed up anybody that disagreed with him. So, Huxley used to ask people in the late 1800s, well, okay, if you don't believe in Darwin's view of evolution, what's your alternative? Of course, there's not. The only alternative is Christianity, really.

So, Johnson says, I do not think that many scientists would be comfortable accepting Darwinism solely as a philosophical principle without seeking to find at least some empirical evidence that it is true. And, of course, they weave together empirical evidence, don't they? Fossils, genetic observations, and so forth. But there is an important difference.

Here's the point. Here's what I've been leading up to in my first five minutes. So, pay close attention now.

Here's the point. Try to remember this point. It's one of the last points I'm going to make about evolution.

There is a difference between going to the empirical evidence to test a doubtful theory to see if it's true or not. Let's look at the evidence and see if our theory holds up. That's one way of looking at it.

And going to the evidence to look for confirmation of the only theory that one is willing to tolerate. You see what I'm saying? If you're only willing to believe evolution, and you're not willing to believe anything else, is that going to color the way you approach the evidence? You've already said, the only thing I can possibly believe is evolution. So now, can you be objective when you come to the evidence? Of course not.

You're going to make that evidence fit your theory, because you don't believe anything else. Now, could the same argument be made about a creationist? Are we coming to the evidence and saying there's only one theory that I believe, and that's the Word of God, so this evidence has to fit? Yes. Shake your head like this.

Yes. We begin by drawing the conclusion through faith that God exists, that God's Word is accurate, and whatever evidence is out there needs to fit that belief. Is this a bad thing? Well, it all depends on what you believe.

It's like saying, is faith good or bad? Well, it depends. What is the object of your faith? If you're believing that Allah is going to give you great rewards if you go blow up a couple of buildings, that's a bad faith. If you believe that God rewards those who diligently seek Him, that's a good faith.

How do you know the difference? How can you argue the difference? How can you tell the difference? What's the difference between Christians who believe the Word of God and Muslims who believe the Koran? Well, to an unbeliever, there is no difference. It's two different religions that have a holy book and a bunch of gullible people who just stick to the holy book and stick their head in the sand and won't listen to science. What they conveniently overlook is that there

is a Holy Spirit, that there is a God in heaven who communicates eternity in every man's heart, who convinces the world of sin and righteousness and judgment, and this is an invisible, unprovable, untestable truth.

Everyone experiences it. Some people acknowledge it and respond to it. Some people never acknowledge it and never respond to it.

But it's something of a subjective truth. I can't prove it. You can't prove it.

Everyone is left to the witness within their own hearts as to whether they're going to believe it and accept it or not. And this comes to the point of what we're going to talk about tonight. This is by design.

People try to argue that, well, this is the big flaw in Christian faith. This is the flaw in believing the Bible. You've got no proof.

You can't objectively test it. You can't put it in the scale and weigh it. You can't put it under the microscope and examine it.

You can't see God's throne through a telescope, and therefore it's deficient in some way. Not at all. Just the reverse.

This is exactly the way God has designed it. More about that in a moment. Philip Johnson says there are two different ways you can come to the evidence.

You can either come to the evidence and say, does this evidence support this tentative or doubtful theory of evolution, and come to it with an open mind, or do you already believe the theory of evolution and all you're going to do is make the evidence fit? Well, we do the same thing. We assume that the Bible is true and what it has to say, which is not a whole lot about creation, is what it does say is accurate. And if we have misunderstood it, if we have mistranslated it, if we have misconstrued it, studying the facts that are to be found in nature will help inform our understanding of the Bible.

Our understanding of the Bible can help inform us about what we see in nature. That's our approach. That's our belief.

It is just as much a belief to come to the evidence firmly convinced of evolution as it is to come to the evidence firmly convinced of creation in the existence of God. The difference is what is the quality of the object of your faith? Is what you believe in valid or not? And this is the nature of any kind of faith. You can walk into a room and see two chairs.

Maybe one of those chairs, maybe they look identical on the outside, but one of them is made of tinfoil and has been painted to look like a solid chair. The other one is actually oak. The two look identical.

You could put your faith in one and when you sit in it, it collapses. You can put your faith in the

other and when you sit in it, it holds up. It depends entirely.

Your faith is justified depending on the quality of the chair, right? You trust your car is going to hold together when you're flying down the road at 70 or 85 miles an hour, right? You trust that your car is not going to have its steering mechanism come loose, that your engine is not going to explode, that pieces in transmission and so on are not going to fall off in the middle of the road and cause an accident. Is your faith justified or not? It depends entirely on the quality of the car. It's not the quality of your faith.

It's not the fact that you have faith. It's what you put your faith in. The short way of saying this is the merit of faith is in the object.

Everyone has faith. Everyone believes something. It's not you're wrong because you're trusting in something.

Don't ever be embarrassed because you are a person of faith. Everybody is a person of faith. The question is not do you have faith or not.

What is your faith in? Is your faith in science and scientists or is your faith on revelation and God's truth? Is your faith in your own intelligence or is your faith in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ? What do you look to to put your faith in? Everybody has faith. Nothing wrong with being a person of faith. The question is what do you believe? So, these people come to the evidence looking for confirmation of the only theory that they are willing to tolerate.

In other words, I've already made up my mind about whether or not God exists. I just want to find evidence that I can use to support my case that there is no God. Why is this important? I don't fault the atheist and the evolutionist for believing what they believe.

It's reasonable and rational to try to have an explanation. Where I fault them is when they say that their faith is legitimate and my faith is illegitimate because there's no more conflict between the evidence and my faith than there is support for the evidence and their faith. They are both faith systems and it's better to live and let live and say if you want to believe that the muck turned into the goo to you by way of the zoo, great.

Go ahead. I don't care. But don't outlaw my faith.

Don't belittle and malign my faith. Don't say that my faith is anti-intellectual when you've got the same kind of faith I do. It's just got a different object.

Each of us is responsible before God. It is a given that science accepts the power of natural selection and the power of mutation to create new complex things. They just assume that that's true.

Because of that assumption there's no real need to prove it. They say well if you need proof just look around. There's complex life forms.

Had to come from somewhere. The only reasonable explanation is descent with modification, evolution, mutation and natural selection. It's the only reasonable explanation.

So if you don't require any proof because you assume that to be true then as Johnson says there is little danger that the theory will be disproved by negative evidence. If you don't find any way to demonstrate that life can come from non-living things, if you don't find a way to demonstrate that a species can evolve upward and become an entirely new and more complex species, or that organs can evolve and get any more complex, if you've already assumed that it's true, the lack of any such evidence isn't going to give you any problem. Does that make sense? Darwinists have evolved an array of subsidiary concepts capable of furnishing plausible explanations for just about any conceivable eventuality.

For example the living fossils which have remained basically unchanged for millions of years while their cousins were supposedly evolving into more advanced creatures like human beings are no embarrassment to Darwinists. These living fossils failed to evolve because the necessary mutations didn't arrive, or there were constraints on their development of some sort, or they were already adequately adapted to their environment. In short they didn't evolve because they didn't evolve.

Some animals give warning signals at the approach of predators, apparently reducing their own safety for the benefit of others in the herd. Now if you're the little pigeon that sticks up its head and makes a big noise at the approach of a cat, how long are you likely to survive? How would that characteristic get selected for if every time you squawk you get eaten so that the others can escape? Well how does natural selection encourage the evolution of a trait for self-sacrifice? Darwinists attribute the apparent anomaly to group selection. Human nations benefit if they contain individuals willing to die in battle for their country.

Likewise animal groups containing self-sacrificing individuals may have an advantage over groups composed exclusively of selfish individuals. Other Darwinists are scornful of group selection and prefer to explain altruism on the basis of kinship selection. By sacrificing itself to preserve its offspring or its near relations, an individual promotes the survival of its genes.

Selection may thus operate at the genetic level, encouraging the perpetuation of genes of close relations to the one that stuck up his head and died. By moving the focus of selection either up to the group level or down to the genetic level, Darwinists can easily account for traits that seem to contradict the selection hypothesis. We'll just shift the ground and shift the focus.

Potentially the most powerful explanatory tool in the entire Darwinist armory. What's the best explanation they've got for their whole theory? It's called pleiotropy. Now pleia means multiple or many.

Pleios is a Greek word and it means the Pleistocene era. This has the idea of many or multiple things. And this is the idea that a single gene can have multiple effects.

You change this one gene and several things happen all at once. This means any mutation which affects one functional characteristic is likely to change other features as well. And whether or not it's advantageous depends on the net effect.

What are they doing here? Well they say, you know, sometimes you have to have some mutations that aren't really beneficial as intermediates to get the one that's really super beneficial. How could you get those intermediate bad mutations? Well one gene changes and it does several things. And so some other good thing happens that preserves these bad ones long enough until they can become something good as well.

So the example I gave you before of peacocks. I think I gave it to you before. I can never always remember what I say on the break and what I say in class.

But you know the male, there's peacocks and peahens. The male is the peacock and he's got this beautiful spread of feathers. And the peahens are greatly attracted to whichever males have the biggest, brightest, most effusive set of plumage.

Well the bigger and brighter and more effusive your plumage is as a male, the more easily you're going to be caught and eaten by a predator. So how did this evolve to where the peahens like the ones with these great big beautiful tails the best? It would seem that the ones with the big beautiful tails would get eaten all the time and it would be the dull scraggly tailed peacocks who would survive to impregnate the females and perpetuate the the whole peacock species. How can you possibly explain this? They ought to have been selecting for peacocks that have got you know sharp talons and big wings for flying away and so on.

So did this gene have a pleiotropy to where not only does it turn on big tails in the male but it makes big strong eggs for the female or something like that? Well they never found anything like that. So Douglas Futuyama, I just bought one of his books yesterday to read and he's a big proponent of evolution, he boldly proclaims the peacock as a problem not for Darwinists but for creationists. This is Douglas Futuyama.

Do creation scientists really suppose their creators saw fit to create a bird that couldn't reproduce without six feet of bulky feathers that make it easy prey for leopards? So they're saying well why would God do that? Well Johnson says I don't know what creation scientists may suppose but it seems to me that the peacock and peahen are just the kind of creatures a whimsical creator might favor but that an uncaring mechanical process like natural selection would never permit to develop. What we are seeing in Futuyama's comment about the peacock is the debating principle that the best defense is a good offense. We are also seeing the influence of philosophical preconception in blinding an intelligent Darwinist to the existence of a counterexample.

In other words he already believes evolution is true so if he can't explain it he's either going to go on the attack or he's going to find some other weird explanation. It doesn't dampen his enthusiasm for his theory at all. Julian Huxley once wrote that improbability is to be expected as

a result of natural selection.

We have the paradox that an exceedingly high apparent improbability in its products can be taken as evidence for the high degree of its efficacy, its efficiency. In other words well we would expect improbable things to happen by this uncaring process. So Johnson says on that basis the theory has nothing to fear from the evidence.

Anytime you find evidence that doesn't fit the theory you just say well you know you would expect improbability out of such a theory and then they just dismiss it with a wave of the hand. So here's the conclusion of this section and it really speaks of the whole subject and this is about my last word on the subject. Natural selection is the most famous element in Darwinism but it is not necessarily the most important element.

Selection merely preserves or destroys something that already exists. The real question is how did these better and better forms of life come to exist? Science has no viable explanation. They talk about genes swap and genes mutate and genes change.

Nothing anywhere in nature, nothing anywhere in human experience benefits from random changes. Let me ask you this. A lot of you, I've got daughters that this has happened to.

You're working on a document, you're trying to finish your homework on a computer and something happens and the file gets corrupted, gets corrupted in memory, gets corrupted on the disk. It used to happen a lot when we used floppy disks and the floppies were imperfect. You'd save a file and then you try to retrieve it and there was some random change in the bits.

Does that cause you to load up a paper that's even better than the one you wrote? If you took the dictionary and went around and randomly scrambled words and changed letters, would you get a better dictionary? Can you think of anything by way of a computer program or a piece of text? Could you take Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and rearrange the words and get a better speech? It is unique in the history of man and the history of thought to say that you can randomly scramble something and it's going to improve. It never happens. And yet this is the essential feature of evolution.

Your very complex genetic code scrambles and you suddenly get a bigger brain and better eyesight and improved hearing and a bunch of other great survivable characteristics that natural selection can then add to the complement of existing things. And this doesn't even begin to talk about how does behavior get encoded in the genes. Mating dances, these bird songs that you hear, very complex patterns of notes.

You're trying to tell me that there's a survival advantage in singing a particular song that got encoded for the robin or the the purple-breasted long-beaked finch or whatever. There are so many holes and so many flaws you can't believe it. Well, it's a matter of faith, isn't it? We believe what we choose to believe and we will fit the evidence accordingly.

Now, people can say the very same thing about us as Christians. You're looking at the physical

evidence in the universe, geology, fossils, genetic evidence and so on and you're fitting that into your biblical worldview. Is that legitimate or not? We're going to pause here and take a break.

When we come back we're going to take a welcome dive back into God's Word to examine that thought. Let's pause here and take a break.