

Evidence For Christianity Newsletter



Apologetics Research Society is excited to announce the apologetics conference to be held in the Chicago area. This event will bring together scientists, scholars, teachers and Christians from around the world to share ideas and to hear inspiring messages. It is for anyone who is interested in using Christian evidences as a way to build up their own faith, the faith of those in their churches and to reach out to unbelievers. There will be classes by experts in different fields of apologetics, discussion groups, forums, an evangel-istic event on Friday evening and a debate on Saturday night. Sunday morning we will have a worship service with an apologetic theme.

Vol. 4 Issue 2, April 2008

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Presenters include: Dr John Beggs, Professor of Physics, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN; Dr. Willis E. Hames, Associate Professor of Geology, Auburn University, AL; Dr. Robert Kurka, Professor of Bible & Theology, Lincoln Christian College and Seminary, Lincoln, IL; Dr. Doug Jacoby, Director, Athens Institute of Ministry, Atlanta, GA; John Lang, Real-estate Appraiser and writer Zionsville, IN; Phillip Lester Ed.S.; Dr. John Oakes, Professor of Chemistry, Grossmont College, San Diego, CA; Foster Stanback, Chairman, ARS, Irvine, CA; Dr. John Wilson, Professor of New Testament, Director of Institute for the Study of Archaeology and Religion, Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA.

Classes will include; Philosophical and Religious Implications of Neuroscience Research, Judaism and Christian Apologetics, Radiometric Techniques and the Age of the Earth, Apologetics and Eastern Religion. Christianity and Islam, A Different Name or a Different God? How Worldview Apologetics Helps Us Answer, The Question." Adam, Eve and Christianity and more.

Field trips are planned to the Oriental Institute Museum, the Field Museum and a tour of both a Synagogue and a Mosque.

Debate: "What is the True Legacy of Abraham?" Christian apologist Douglas Jacoby, Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, and Muslim scholar Shabir Ally will discuss and debate the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim prospective on the place of Abraham in religious history.

The registration fee is \$90 for students, and \$120 for all others. The fee includes the round table luncheon on Friday, Saturday's field trip, a sack lunch and the debate.

Housing is available at Holiday Inn 624 N. York Rd Elmhurst, IL 60126, a room for \$89 per night, . 1 (877) 426-4386 toll free 1(630) 279-1100 Call to reserved a rooms at this price until May 23rd. You may also arrange a shuttle pickup from O'Hare Airport, The shuttle will also transport us to Elmhurst College.

For information and to register go to www.evidenceforchristianity.org or email joakes01@san.rr.com or call 858-505-8841

Review of the Dead Sea Scroll Exhibit at San Diego's Museum of Natural History by Dr. John Beggs

In my mental list of evidences for Christianity, there are few things more powerful than the book of Isaiah. I vividly remember discovering its messianic prophecies as a sophomore while flipping through a Bible in my dorm room: "...by his wounds we are healed...it was the Lord's will to crush him...he bore the sin of many..." I had wanted to believe, but faith alone was too much for me to swallow. Now with this, the scientist in me had found some hard evidence for God. It seemed incontrovertible – Isaiah was written 700 years before Christ – that God had planned all along for us to be saved by Jesus.



I soon found out that my hall mates did not feel the same way! Late night conversations turned up objections: "They just wrote the prophecies after Jesus died and made them fit his life...the Bible has been copied so many times, the text probably looks nothing like the original version...modern day Judaism doesn't view Isaiah as a messianic prophecy." Unable to respond, I felt confused and discouraged.

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My son Ben and I left for Hong Kong on Jan 2. Hong Kong is a very modern and VERY crowded city of about seven million. It is a prosperous and modern city which has weathered the change of government from the UK to China in 1997 fairly well. The downtown section is on Hong Kong Island which has as a backdrop a beautiful mountain. The church we visited has about 1800 members. There is an endless variety of interesting and delicious food here which bears little resemblance to the Chinese food eaten in restaurants in the US. We spent the greatest amount of time with Aaron Chow who is an evangelist and teacher for the church and his wife Theresa. The church here has an organized teaching ministry called Oasis. Members of this group include the fairly young David and Kalun as well as Mike and Lorinda and a more mature couple Turner and Elizabeth. I taught classes for Oasis on God and Science and Archaeology and the Bible.

From there, we took a fast train to the bustling city of ***** where Red Dragon #1 church meets. The churches in mainland China are underground. It was a truly striking experience to teach for a church which does not meet legally. The church here almost never meets together for "security reasons," and when they do, they do not sing songs so as to not attract attention. When they eat in public areas, they do not pray out loud. Those who work for the church here must not admit this, even to their own families. Instead, they work as "consultants." Despite all this, the churches here are strong and growing. The Christians have great faith that God will do amazing things in China. I was blessed to speak on Sunday to about two hundred on From Shadow to Reality. The food here is, if anything, more interesting than in Hong Kong. The next day I spoke to 130 on Science and God. The city seems rather prosperous; though signs of lingering extreme poverty can be seen in the countryside. Church members work very long hours. I would love to share the names of my wonderful hosts here, but will not for "security reasons." Ben and I enjoyed shopping here. It seems everything we buy in the US is made in China. Here we can buy it at the source, for much lower prices.

We returned to Hong Kong for one more day and one more class before traveling on to Bangkok. We met with two regions for a midweek service as I spoke to about 700 on From Shadow to Reality. On Wednesday Jan 9 we flew to Thailand. Bangkok is a sprawling city of 12 million. There are many very modern buildings as the country is rapidly moving from "third world" to a prosperous country. Still, most get by with wages which would appear shockingly low to a Westerner. The traffic here is very bad, but the government is now building infrastructure which is beginning to make a difference. The Thais revere their octogenarian king in a way which borders on worship. He is a figurehead who still wields tremendous power through the incredible respect he is given by the people. We spent time with Oat, the main teacher for the Bangkok Christian Church, as well as Bunsong and his wife and Ken and Lena Chow, who have moved to the city from the US to help build up the church. I gave lessons on the Book of Daniel, The Problem of Pain and Suffering and on Freedom in Christ to the church, as well as one on Leadership and Membership to the Bible group leaders. The church of about 120 members is faithful, but still trying to find its way in this very Buddhist country where Christians make up under one percent. We took a wonderful tour on the river and through the canals with Sophan and his wife Dong. The food here is very spicy, but absolutely fantastic. We also dined with Ken who shared the story about his family's escape from Cambodia before the Pol Pot regime. They carried with them a ruby which turned out to be the largest ever found in Cambodia. Its sale for 1.2 million dollars led to family wealth which sons Ken and Sokhoun have used to build businesses, all of which have a benevolent aspect. They have done much to help the Thai and Cambodian people, which makes me proud.



Hong Kong



John and Aaron Chow



Phnom Penh Church



Buddhist Temple in Bangkok



Ben and Sophan in Bangkok



Street scene in Phnom Penh

From Bangkok we traveled to Phnom Penh. This is the somewhat sleepy capital of Cambodia. We were struck immediately by the poverty here, but also by the smiles and friendliness. The church we met with here is led by Sovann and his wife, with the help from the visiting missionaries Cesar and Jennifer Lopez. The church of a bit over two hundred, after going through some hard times is very healthy and growing. They have great vision, both to help the Khmers with benevolent projects and to bring Christianity to this Buddhist country. Ben and I visited Toul Sleng, the genocide museum with the young ministry couple Raksmeay and Srie Oun. This is a very disturbing monument to the outrageous genocide perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge and the Pol Pot regime. Everyone we met lost more than one member of their immediate family in this genocide. Ben and I were very impacted by the pain and suffering of this people—yet they are happy. It is ironic that I taught on The Problem of Pain and Suffering here. I also taught a class on the Book of Daniel and one for the staff on using our gifts in the church. Ben was able to tour the Sihanouk Hospital while I taught. This hospital is run and staffed, in part, by members of the church here as well as ex pats from our family of churches. The faith, courage and vision of our brothers and sisters here in Cambodia is inspiring.

From Phnom Penh, we spent a day and a half in Siem Reap. This city is the gateway to the marvelous, spectacular, stupendous ruins of the Khmer people. We toured Angkor Wat, Angkor Tom and Ta Prom, which is where part of Tomb Raider was filmed. We were so blessed to visit these world treasures. Also a blessing was to meet with and teach for the new church which was planted here quite recently. We met with about fifteen members and several guests as I taught on Science and God. Most of the church here are very young Christians. They have great hearts and vision.

We then returned to Phnom Penh and continued to Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam. This city of over 10 million is the economic center of Viet Nam. It is a bustling city of ten motorcycles to every car. It is not unusual to see four on a motorcycle, with the driver using his cell phone! There is a flavor here of the French influence from colonial times. Viet Nam is officially a communist/atheist country, yet the people do not seem as oppressed as one might guess. It remains a very poor country, yet economic growth has been very strong. The church we met with here, like that in China, is illegal. However, the church recently applied for legal status. For this reason, they are able to meet legally, at least for now. The leaders have been threatened and forced to move several times. The group we met with has nearly eighty members. There is an excitement, zeal and vision here which are like nothing I have seen. The church is exploding with growth. The group is now so large that they do not allow guests to come to their meetings as they do not have room. Please pray that they will find the resources and location to meet. The lead couple, Hong and Hung are very encouraged. There is vision to plant a church in Hanoi in 2009. Ben and I visited the War Museum. This was a very shocking account of the tremendous suffering of the Vietnamese people. It gives a rather one-sided view of the war, but this is a view that we in the United States have not seen. We were sobered and I found myself apologizing to the Christians for what was done to them. Hung was born in a hospital which was destroyed by American bombing soon afterwards. I taught classes on successive nights for the church on The Book of Hebrews and Science and God. When this group meets, everyone is there. The commitment is a wonderful example. The singing is great and it is immediately obvious that this group loves meeting together. Ben and I were very privileged to meet with this wonderful group of Christians. A conference for Vietnamese expatriates is scheduled here for 2009. This will be a great opportunity for anyone who can make it.

After two day is Ho Chi Minh City, we returned to Bangkok for one more class, followed by the long return trip to San Diego. We returned exhausted but encouraged much in our faith.



Church in Phnom Penh



Street scene in Phnom Penh



Temple at Ta Promh



Temple in Angkor Tom



Street scene in Ho Chi Minh City



Church in Ho Chi Minh City

I soon found out that my hall mates did not feel the same way! Late night conversations turned up objections: “They just wrote the prophecies after Jesus died and made them fit his life...the Bible has been copied so many times, the text probably looks nothing like the original version...modern day Judaism doesn’t view Isaiah as a messianic prophecy.” Unable to respond, I felt confused and discouraged.

Later, I learned about the Dead Sea Scrolls. These scrolls were discovered in a series of caves near Jerusalem and contained copies of many religious writings, including the book of Isaiah. Amazingly, many of the scrolls were dated to around the year zero, and their text of Isaiah matched nearly word for word with the scriptures used to produce modern Bibles. So Isaiah was not written after Jesus died, and the text of the Bible had not drifted over the centuries. Moreover, much evidence suggested that the community that produced these scrolls was expectantly waiting for a messiah, and it is likely that they, like other first century Jewish communities, considered Isaiah as a central messianic prophecy. After learning this, I reread the Bible with renewed interest.



Given the deep influence the Dead Sea Scrolls have had on my life, I leapt at the chance to view them while on a recent business visit to San Diego. A selection of about 10 scrolls (out of hundreds) is on display at the Natural History Museum in Balboa Park from June 29 to December 31, 2007. Admission for non-members is \$28, but I felt that this was well worth the price. In what follows, I will review the features of this excellent exhibit that I experienced.

One of the most thoughtful aspects of the exhibit is that it provides ample historical, archeological and social context for the audience before showing them the scrolls. The opening sections of the exhibit are composed of large pictures of the landscape from around the area of Qumran where the scrolls were discovered. There we learn that the climate and terrain near Jerusalem is actually quite similar to that found near San Diego. A video of a map centered on Jerusalem uses waves of different colors to show the different empires, from Egyptian to Roman, which swept through the area over the span of 1500 years. We realize that strong religious convictions could have provided these people with a sense of stability in uncertain times.

The next sections describe how the scrolls were first uncovered by shepherds and sold piecemeal to antiquities dealers. Large black and white photographs from the late 1940’s and early 1950’s give us a feeling for the time of their discovery. A tent is set up with archeological tools and a soundtrack of desert winds plays in the background to simulate the experience of excavating the community at Qumran. Hundreds of tiny scroll fragments spread out on a table give us a sense of the monumental work required to piece them together. Another display shows how letters in the Hebrew alphabet were gradually written differently over time. We can move a template of letters from a scroll backward and forward until they match a set of letters from a known period. This allows us to clearly see how lexicographers were able to accurately date the scrolls.

As the exhibit winds around to new sections, we are told about the group of people who were thought to have transcribed the scrolls. Pictures of large cisterns for ritual cleansing are displayed with sounds of pouring water in the background. A reconstruction shows the long scriptorium room and benches where it is thought that the scribes copied the scrolls. A room full of pottery marks what was probably their communal dining area. Overall, we get the impression that these ascetic people were deeply committed to pursuing holiness, and that they brought this conviction to their work on the scrolls.

Experiencing this entire context builds suspense for viewing the scrolls, displayed in the final section. They are surprisingly small and fragmented. Kept in climate controlled cases and shown under soft light, we have to lean forward and squint to make out the tiny letters used by the scribes. Despite the strain, the result is breathtaking. Here are jots of ink made on sheepskin over two thousand years ago by a people earnestly seeking God. In one of the scrolls, we see that four dots, rather than the Hebrew letters for YHWH, are used out of reverence for God. Even the personalities of the scribes seem to speak to us from across the ages: in one scroll the letters are rigid and straight, while in another they are fluid and expressive. Fragments of the Psalms, Leviticus, and a commentary on the Ten Commandments are shown alongside their English translations. Although there is a crowd to view them all, we only hear hushed voices, and the atmosphere is like that in a church during prayer. Most unusual of the set is the “copper scroll,” a short cylinder that contains faulty instructions on where to find treasure. Scholars are puzzled as to why this would be included with the others. Was it intended to distract possible looters away from the real treasures, the scriptures?



Isaiah Scroll Fragment

Before I left, I leaned forward and closely examined a fragment of Isaiah, with commentary. I wondered how the scribe must have felt about it when he was writing it down. Could he have ever imagined that I would come, thousands of years later, to be deeply moved by his work?

The Dead Sea Scrolls are a profound expression of our desire to be close to God. Should they still exist another two thousand years from now, they will probably still draw a crowd. I highly recommend this informative and beautiful exhibit.

Contact Information jmbeggs@indiana.edu
<http://www.sdnhm.org/scrolls/index.html>

**Can a thermodynamic law be used to describe the natural state of a soul without Christ?
Can we appeal to this law as proof of objective moral laws?
If all our morale laws were subjective wouldn't they be subject to the same entropic losses?**

This is a quite insightful question. I agree with your general thesis that "everything we put in our hands tends to break down over time, except the Spirit that is renewed by God." There is an obvious analogy between the scientific/physical law of entropy and behavior in the economic, business, psychological, historical and other aspects of human behavior.

Having said that, the answer to your question is no. It is not legitimate to apply strictly the second law of thermodynamics to other areas such as history, economics morality and so forth. Conceptually, this might work as a useful analogy, but as a set of mathematical equations or a strictly scientific concept, it is not legitimate to apply the second law to these things. Bottom line, the second law is a mathematical statement which simply cannot be used in non-material things such as sociology or politics. Moral laws are not governed by the second law of thermodynamics. People have tried to apply the mathematics and failed. How would one define mathematically the entropy level of a social system or of human relationships? This is not possible.

So, I like where your thinking is going. I think it is legitimate to apply the analogy to help understand what happens in non-material things, but if you want to make definite statements or statements about theology by applying literally the second law, you are on very thin ice. Scientists will be unanimous or nearly unanimous in this. They tend to cringe at people abusing the second law to apply it elsewhere. In summary, conceptually, yes or perhaps better to say maybe. Mathematically and literally, a definite no.

Let me give an example:

It seems that in the hands of human beings, our lives and our societies tend toward evil and corruption. Only with the outside influence of God through his Holy Spirit can we hope to keep it together. This is not unlike the scientific concept of entropy. The second law of thermodynamics describes how nature naturally tends toward disorder (ie more entropy). Only the intervention of energy from outside a system can this natural tendency toward disorder be reversed. As a teaching point the analogy may be useful.

An example of what not to do.

Scientists tell us about the second law of thermodynamics which describes the natural tendency of everything in the universe to go toward disorder (greater entropy). There is a moral law of entropy as well which states that it is impossible for human beings to control their lives and that without God.....

I think the second example is going too far in that it implies some actual, real law which works with a mathematical precision and in a form exactly like the second law. This may seem like a subtle distinction, but it is the best I have to offer. I hope it is helpful.

How long did the descendants of Noah live? Does "son of" literally mean his son or is it one of the descendants of that guy?

The answer is that for Jewish genealogies, "the father of" meant the male ancestor of. It could mean literally father of in the sense we use it, or it could mean grandfather or even great grandfather of. This was normal Jewish usage. We know this for a fact. For example, the genealogies in Matthew and Luke are not complete. They skip numbers of generations. Matthew and Luke create accurate genealogies, but not complete ones. The number of generations is created for symmetry and elegance. There are three groups of twelve descendents in Matthew. This was a matter of style for the Jews. What I am saying is that these are actual, correct genealogies, but they are nowhere near complete. There are gaps, and possibly for the early figures there are very large gaps.

Bottom line, we do not know when the flood happened. For biblical dates, we can get back to the time of David with very good precision. For the time of the Judges, we can apply only approximate dates. This is the case for the time of Abraham (2000 BC plus or minus a couple of hundred years) and Moses (1400 BC plus or minus 100 years or so) [as well](#). For Noah and Adam, we simply do not know the dates. Period.

It is my opinion that the flood did indeed happen. I am not certain of the date, but it was probably well before 3000 BC, perhaps many thousands more BC.

That is my quick little answer. Doug Jacoby has some good material on this in his book Genesis, Science and History.

Calvinist use Ezekiel 36:27 which says, "And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do them." as proof that their view is true. What do you say?

I would say that if this were the only passage on this subject, the conclusion of Calvinists (ie. that this implies that God causes us to become Christians or to go to Hell--that we are predestined and that it has nothing to do with our own choice) would be a possible interpretation of this one passage in isolation. I do not agree with this interpretation at all, but this is not an outrageous interpretation of this one passage if one is to ignore all other passages on the subject of predestination. In fact, this is how the false doctrine of predestination is supported in general. Calvin and others reached a pre-conceived idea--that a sovereign God chooses us for salvation or damnation and that our salvation has nothing to do with our own will--and then interpreted the relevant passages in such a way as to make them fit the conclusion. Continued

If you want more on predestination and "once saved, always saved." you will find quite a bit at my web site. For example, the outline on Hebrews and the power point on "Salvation, Predestination and Falling Away." Also, if you do a search on "predestination" in the question and answer portion of the web site, you will find more.

The question then, in this case, is what is the meaning of Ezekiel 36:27? This passage is talking about what happens to us when we become Christians. When we repent and are baptized, we receive the indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). This Spirit "convicts us with regard to sin" and "guides us into the truth." (John 16:8,13). The Holy Spirit does indeed work in our hearts to help us to follow God and to fulfill the commitment we made when we became disciples of Jesus. God is willing to guide us and to help us, but this is a very far thing from predestination. Ezekiel 36:27 is a reference principally to what God does to us AFTER we are saved, making it a particularly bad passage to use to teach about predestination with regard to salvation. This is a good example of how believers in radical predestination interpret scripture. They scan the Bible looking for passages which, if taken out of context, can imply that God forces us to be saved or to be condemned. They do this without regard to so many clear statements in the Bible with regard to our freedom of choice to follow Jesus or not.

Why did John question Jesus about who he was if he already knew?

I have thought about this often and not come up with a completely satisfactory answer. Some people say that John doubted and that he really was unsure. It appears that you do not agree with this interpretation. I am inclined to agree with you. John the Baptist was well aware from all the way back at the time he baptized Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17, John 1:26-27).

Let me share my speculation as to what was going on. Bear in mind that this is somewhat of a guess. I believe that John the Baptist was well aware that Jesus was the Messiah. It is my opinion that John was testing the faith of his own followers. He hoped that they would hear the truth from Jesus or his followers and be made to believe. Perhaps John was using this as an opportunity to help some of his followers move into the camp of Jesus, as he was well aware that his ministry was coming to an end. This apparent moment of doubt was not the doubt of John the Baptist, but of his believers. He used the opportunity to shore up their faith in the one "the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." to use John's own words.

Can you clarify these passages for me? (Acts 7:15-16), (Matthew 9:18 / Mark 5:22-23) and (Matthew 27:8-10). In Acts it says that Abraham bought the tomb from the sons of Hamor, but it seems to conflict with what Geneses says. In the first Matthew passage compared with Mark, did the daughter die or was she dying? Matthew gives Jeremiah credit for the prophecy of the 30 pieces of silver, but I did not find it and it is vague in Zechariah.

Genesis 50: 12 says So Jacob's sons did as he had commanded them: They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre, which Abraham had bought as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite, along with the field.

Here is my explanation. Acts describes the cave and field as being bought from the sons of Hamor at Shechem. It seems quite possible that one of the sons of Hamor was in fact Ephron the Hittite. If Hamor was a Hittite, then the "discrepancy" is easily explained.

About Matthew 9:18/Mark 5:22-23: Matthew has the man saying "my daughter has just died." Some manuscripts have a different reading of this passage. Some Greek manuscripts have, "My daughter is now dying." Mark 5:22 has "My little daughter is dying." It is likely that a later copyist was aware of the "discrepancy" and was trying to "improve" Matthew 9:18. Such copyists did not do God or the Bible a favor by trying to "improve" it! It would be nice if I could say that the second reading of Matthew 9:18 is the correct one, but probably it is not. The gospel accounts are from eye-witnesses (Matthew) or from people who heard eye-witnesses (Mark). We can expect some very minor discrepancies because they are the best recollection of different witnesses. It is hard to see that there is any significant difference between these two eye witnesses. The quotes we have from Jesus and others in the New Testament are obviously not word-for-word transcripts. We can expect extremely minor differences in the memories of the eye witnesses such as that found in Matthew or Mark. Is there any conceivable important difference between these two accounts? Obviously no. Whether she was dead or in the process of dying seems insignificant. Either way, the girl was dead when Jesus arrived at the house, and Jesus raised her from the dead. The very slight differences between the gospel writers show that they are indeed independent witnesses to the events, which gives us more confidence than a single witness to the events.

As to Matthew 27:8-10, the prophecy referred to was in fact Zechariah. It is entirely possible that Jeremiah also prophesied this event, but it is not recorded in any of the canonical books of the Old Testament. Did Jeremiah actually make such a prophecy, or was Matthew correct about the prophecy but mistaken about the prophet? I am not sure, but either way, the prophecy was made and it was fulfilled in Jesus. It is possible that Matthew made a mistake. Even if he did, the point is that this amazing event was prophesied. This is clear evidence of the inspiration of the Bible! I definitely do not agree that Zechariah was vague. The prophecy has God saying "thirty pieces of silver.... the handsome price at which they priced me." God (in the form of Jesus) was betrayed for thirty pieces of silver. Not twenty, not forty, thirty!!! This is just about the most specific prophecy in the Old Testament. The inspiration of the Bible or lack thereof is not changed by whether or not Matthew made a small mistake in naming the prophet from whom the prophecy came. Remember, I am not even sure he is wrong, but it is possible that he is.

David Eastman and John Oakes

THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

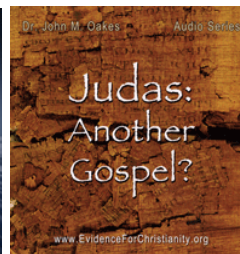
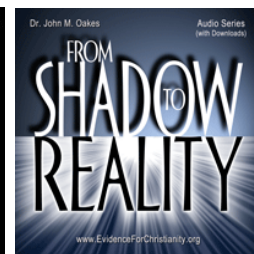
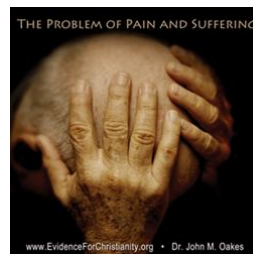
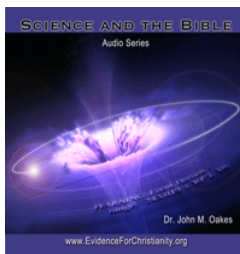
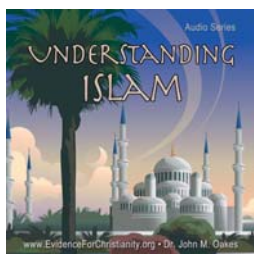
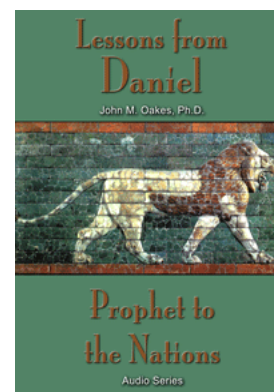
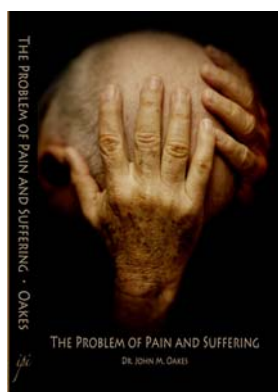
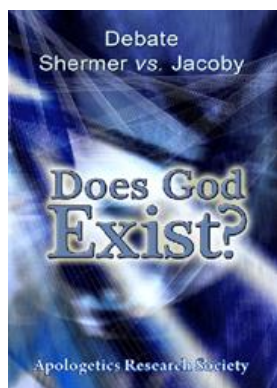
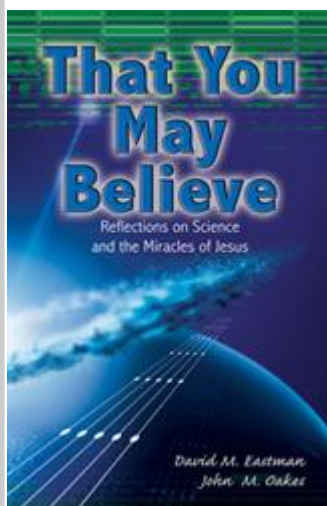
Reflections on Science and the Miracles of Jesus

In Acts 2, there are three words used to define supernatural works:

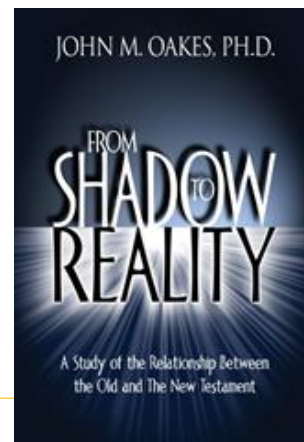
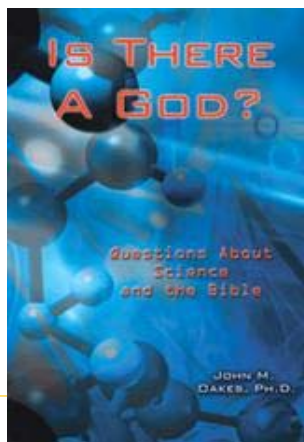
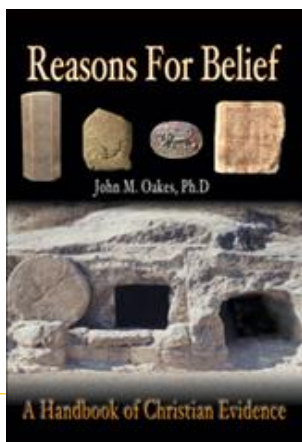
“Miracles” is the Greek word *dunamis*, defined as “power, ability, physical or moral, as residing in a person or thing.” “Wonder” is the rendering of the Greek noun *teras*, literally, “something strange.” The emphasis is on events that cause the beholder to marvel. “Signs” is the Greek word *semeion*. The word means sign or signal. It implies a thing which can be used for identification. The emphasis is that miracles and wonders are signs of divine authority.

There are unbelievers who deny miracles ever happen. Even among liberal “believers,” the miracles of Jesus are doubted or explained away. But none of those who spent time around Jesus, even among his enemies, ever denied his miracles. Instead, they sought to discredit him in various ways, attributing his miraculous power to Satan or demons. The records we have in the New Testament accurately document what Jesus accomplished in the realm of the miraculous.

You will marvel as you meditate on his miracles, watch him create the universe, heal the human body, bend the laws of physics, manipulate creation, read the thoughts of others and resurrect the dead. Think beyond the doubt and absurd fantasies of unbelieving scholars, and understand what he accomplished. Apply these ruminations to your own life, and come to believe, in a fuller and more mature way, what he is capable of achieving in and through you. “The work of God is to believe,” so strap in, observe, marvel, and be prepared to believe as never before!



Books Published



Christian Evidences Workshop in Toronto, Canada

Date: **05/16 – 05/18/2008**

This teaching weekend will be sponsored by the Toronto Church of Christ. Classes will include Science and God for teens and college on Friday night, From Shadow to Reality on Saturday and History, Archaeology and the Bible on Sunday. For information contact Mike Luzine mluzine@rogers.com

2008 International Apologetics Conference

Date: **06/06/2008 - 06/08/2008** Time: **TBA** Place: Chicago, IL We will be having our second International Apologetics Conference in Chicago June 6-8. The theme will be Apologetics and World Religions. There will be a three-way debate/forum on the question: What is the true legacy of Abraham? The participants will be a leading scholar of Islam, Shabir Ally, one of Judaism, Rabbi Schmuley Boteach and Dr. Douglas Jacoby, who will be defending the Christian viewpoint. This event will be Saturday evening. There will be an evangelistic event on Friday evening, an apologetics-focused service on Sunday, many classes on both Friday and Saturday, field trips and more. Cost will be \$120. Student registration will be \$90. For information contact Jan Oakes joakes01@san.rr.com

Apologetics Teaching Visit to the UK

Date: **06/20/2008 - 06/30/2008** Time: **TBA** London, England

This will be my fourth annual teaching visit to the UK. Events will be held in Surrey/South London (June 20th), Central London (June 21st), Edinburgh, Scotland (June 22nd), Thames Valley/Reading (June 27th) and East London (June 29th) Topics to be announced. For local information please contact Tim Dannett at Tim_Dannett@icoc.org

Teaching Tour in Eastern Europe

Date: **07/01/2008 - 07/12/2008** Time: **TBA** Moscow, Minsk, Kiev, Bucharest, Zagreb, Tirana, Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Hungary, Croatia, and Albania. The details of this teaching tour are still to be ironed out. Cities/countries to be visited include Moscow Russia 7/1-3, Minsk, Belarus, Kiev, Ukraine, Bucharest, Hungary and Zagreb, Croatia and Tirana, Albania 7/12-14. All presentations will be in English, with translation into the native tongue. The details of the trip are being arranged by Shawn Wooten who resides in Kiev, Ukraine. His contact information is, shawnkiev@mac.com phone: 38 (063) 222-9658

Teaching Tour of Brazil

Date: **08/06/2008 - 08/17/2008** Time: **TBA** Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Recife, Brazil

Elizabeth and John Oakes will be traveling to Sao Paulo, with side trips to Rio De Janeiro and Recife in order to teach and encourage churches in Brazil. All lessons will be taught in English and translated into Portuguese. US contact for this visit is James Schults jameseschults@cox.net. For information in Brazil, contact Jorge Bittencourt (bittencourt.jorge@gmail.com)

Letters to the Editors

Dear John:

Recently my Dad passed away and I made a trip to Guatemala for his funeral. During that trip I visited an Aunt. When I went into the room she had prepared for me, there was your book **Reasons For Belief**. I immediately started to "devour" it because that is an area that intrigues me a lot. I'm not much for books on theology, but yours made it through. Later on my cousins came home. During our conversation, one of them said, "Augie, I have a book I want you to have. I know you are going to love it. The author himself gave it to me at church." To this I responded, "I am already reading it and I was planning to break the eighth commandment (you shall not steal) and take the book home to San Diego with me." We laughed and when I left my Aunt's house, happily and proudly, your book went with me. I read it the whole time I was in Guatemala and I just finished it last night, here in San Diego. What took you to Guatemala? Thank you for mentioning my country in your book. I was told you live here in San Diego. I would love to meet you What an honor it would be

to have your signature in my book, Would you like to have a cup of tea with me and my wife?

I know you are busy, but remember that even Jesus took a break. (Mark 6:31)
God Bless You,
Augie Monroy

John,

I just wanted to thank you for the absolutely EYE OPENING study of the Book of Hebrews on Saturday at the conference. I always enjoy hearing you speak and could sit for HOURS listening to your awe-inspiring perspectives. I was the one who asked the question about the one thing that could cause a person to lose their salvation (regarding denying the Christ as Lord and not repenting or falling away). As always, thank you for sharing your knowledge with us all. You made the Book of Hebrews come alive for me.

Blessings,

Mrs. Roseshel O'Rourke

Dear Dr. John Oakes,

This note is simply to express my heartfelt

thanks to you for making that incredible teaching trip to Douala-Cameroon last month. The truth is that disciples in Cameroon were greatly impacted by the deeper insights in to the Scriptures that came out of everything you taught and shared. The young Church in Bamenda where I'm based has been enjoying great spiritual feeding through the teachings I've had the privilege to share from your book: From Shadow To Reality.

Every mid-week has become a time no disciple wants to miss and even our language has been deeply impacted as I hear disciples alluding to the amazing insights even in daily conversation.

I've already embarked on the translation of some articles from your website starting with the one: The Problem of Pain and Suffering, because I can relate to it given my past experience with cancer. I look forward to staying in contact with you to continue to benefit from the wisdom that flows from your teaching and walk in the Lord.

Once more thanks a million that you came!
Gilbert.

DEAR JOHN,

As you are aware that here in Malawi we are thirsty about being taught and hearing the word of God. I read that you were in South Africa, but some of us were unable to come and attend. Can't you make a program to come to Malawi to teach us also as you always do with other countries?

Please consider us since we can not manage to attend some of your conferences because, we can not afford to go. But I for one am very very desperate to attend one of the conferences so that I can teach to my fellow Christians in my church. I am a teacher but I am lacking some teaching skill and knowledge about the bible.

Please John assist if you can, am very desperate.

GOODSON

John:

Recently, a co-worker gave me this *Newsweek* article to read.

Can God Love Darwin, Too? (Sep 17, 2007 Issue) <http://www.newsweek.com/id/40907>

I have shared a few of Doug's CD sets with him and I guess he expected me to be resistant to evolution because of my religious convictions. He was quite surprised to learn that I had accepted the reality of evolu-

tion. The article mentioned Richard Colling, Ph.D., who is a biology professor at Olivet Nazarene University. Colling is listed as a theistic evolutionist on the Wikipedia site (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theistic_evolution#Contemporary_advocates_of_theistic_evolution) and is also author of the book, *Random Designer*. He has a website by the same name (see <http://www.randomdesigner.com/>). He offers a free DVD to anyone who requests it (<http://www.randomdesigner.com/dvd.htm>). I just received mine today and I have viewed the first of the two lessons. I have added his book to my "wish list". I thought I would mention this to you because I expect you will appreciate it if you have not already read it. Also, I saw that a new book, *Thank God for Evolution!*, is also soon to be released. (see http://www.amazon.com/Thank-God-Evolution-Marriage-Transform/dp/1571782109/ref=pd_bbs_sr_1/103-3289595-3935801?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1192932895&sr=1-1)

I think both of these resources will be very useful in illustrating the compatibility of science and faith. Take care!

John Lang

Dear John,

I would like to send you a mail to say thank you for changing my life 20 years ago. I was a 1st year student in UCSD when you delivered a lecture on "Does God Exist?" on the campus in 1988. I was a Biochemistry major back then and logic (evidence) was very important to me to get me started to study the Bible. No one, until I came to your lecture, was able to provide me with the evidence on how Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies from the OT and able to prove that he is really the Son of God in a logic and scientific way. I came to that lecture with my roommate (who brought me there and he was an Atheist) and we sat on the 2nd row in the lecture hall that evening. I started attending BT after the lecture and became a disciple in May 88. I am married for 15 years this coming May and have 2 daughters who are 8 and 10. It was a pity that I was on business trip when you came to visit our Hong Kong church and I could not thank you in person. But I hope that we could meet someday (maybe in heaven) and will be praying for your continuous awesome work in the Lord.

Love,

Andrew Lee

A Note From The Authors

The newsletters contains questions and answers from that month, new articles, information about future events, and letters to the editors. Send letters to john.oakes@gccd.edu or reply to joakes01@san.rr.com. Send links to other sites, book reviews and the like, any suggestions or ideas for articles, format of the newsletter, ideas for the web site www.evidenceforchristianity.org.

The purpose of the Apologetics Research Society is to disseminate and discuss materials relevant to the evidence supporting faith in Jesus Christ and in the Bible. Relevant topics will include science and the Bible, historical and archaeological evidence, theological questions, answers to common criticisms of the Bible (such as supposed inconsistencies and errors), questions about the text of the Bible, prophecies, miracles, and others. Our goal is not necessarily to give THE answer, but to give out useful information, bring up a variety of points of view, and incite people to think about why they believe what they believe. We will remain as non-denominational and non-sectarian as we can.

ARS is incorporated, and is exempt from California state franchise and income tax. We now have IRS 501 (c)3 tax exempt status. We are currently raising funds for the teaching schedule of John Oakes' teaching ministry, the sending of apologetic materials to developing countries, translations and other projects. Please mail donations to Apologetics Research Society 5758 Avenida Sanchez San Diego, CA 92124, or by credit card at the Make A Gift page of www.evidenceforchristianity.org.