

**Does God exist? How can we know?**

How did the universe get here?

How did people get here?

Doesn't science disprove the Bible?

Doesn't the Bible contain errors, contradictions, and cultural biases?

Doesn't the Bible condone slavery, discrimination, homophobia, and even genocide?

Are there moral absolutes?



What makes Jesus different from other great religious leaders?

Aren't there many paths to heaven?

Aren't people basically good?

Is hell real? How could a loving God send people there?

Why is there evil and suffering in the world?

Why are Christians such hypocrites?

**CAN WE KNOW TRUTH?**

Today we continue looking at our first issue: Does God exist? How can we know?  
We title this one: "Save the pygmies!"

If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)	So to be saved, I must trust in Jesus?
That's what the Bible says. Repent in the name of Jesus.	But what if I've never heard of Jesus?
What do you mean?	Think about people that live in remote areas. They have no Bible and have never heard of Jesus.
Ummm....	Through no fault of their own, they never heard of Jesus. Yet God condemns them to an eternity in hell.
Well, I guess...	Millions of people, sent to hell without a chance. That doesn't sound very loving to me! Believing in NO god is better than following a god like that!

**How would you respond?**



Remember our friend from the first lesson? We're about to have another conversation with him.

How would you respond to your friend? What about those people in remote places? Would God send them to hell even though they never even heard the gospel? And if so, would we be right to reject the idea of such a God?

Right about now, you might be screaming "That's why we send missionaries!" True enough. But what about that guy who died the day before the missionary got there? Isn't he going to hell without a chance?

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**How would you respond?**



It's also worth pointing something else out. Your friend's argument, whether right or wrong, doesn't apply to him! He has heard the gospel message – you just presented it to him!

This “what about people who have never heard the gospel” argument is one of the more commonly cited objections to Christianity. In my experience, it's often not presented in earnest. That is, someone is just looking to argue. Still, sometimes it is presented as an honest inquiry, and it deserves an honest response. But first, we need to cover some more ground...

*The universe shows that there is a God*

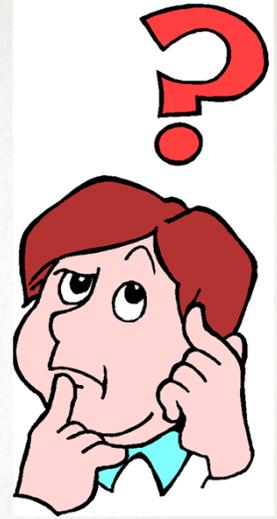
Every effect has a cause

Every creation has a creator

Design requires an intelligent designer

Communication needs a communicator

Moral law needs a lawgiver



*But how can we know what that God is like?*

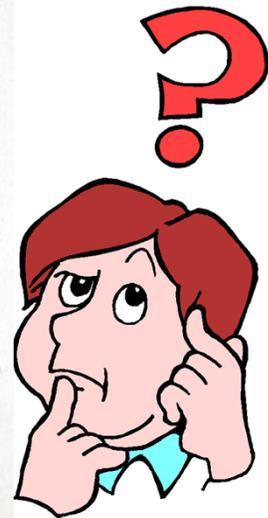
Last lesson, we examined several logical reasons that show that there is a God. But how do we know what that God is like? Oh, we all know the #1 answer: The Bible. God's word tells us what God is like.

But what about someone who doesn't have a Bible? Maybe someone who lives in a remote part of the world that doesn't even have a written language, and they don't have a missionary. How can they know about God?

*God has revealed Himself to us in multiple ways*

General revelation

- Creation



God reveals Himself to us in multiple ways. The first is through the creation. Look around you! What does that tell you about God?

Creation: Our complex universe shows evidence of a Creator. There are things that God reveals about himself through nature to everyone; this is known as *general revelation*.



Yesterday, I was at a petting zoo with my grandchildren (just visiting, none of us live there). We were feeding the goats and chickens. It occurred to me: I can't make a goat or a chicken. Well, if you give me a couple of chickens (and some mood music), I might be able to make more chickens. But that's just biology. I can't turn that chicken into a goat, or into anything else. Okay, with a little cooking oil and some flour, I can turn it into lunch. But you know what I mean. It takes someone much more powerful than me to create a goat or chicken, let alone the entire universe. Looking around, that someone must prefer order and beauty. That someone made a hospitable environment for me. That someone even made me, and that makes me accountable to them. There are plenty of other things on the list, but you get the idea. That's what God reveals to us as we contemplate the creation.

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“Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them: for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.” (Romans 1:19-20)



Paul addresses this very issue in the book of Romans. The book is a great theological treatise on justification, and in the first few chapters Paul explains how we are all condemned before God because of our sin.

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But before we can understand our condemnation before God, He must reveal Himself to us, God shows us things, invisible things, through the creation.

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In fact, we can't miss them! They are made obvious to us.

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What things? The eternal power of God, and his Godhead (divine nature).

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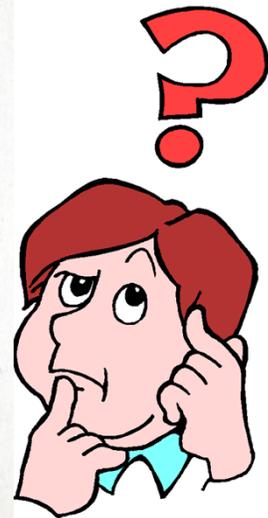


Creation speaks so loudly, we are without excuse if we miss it.

## *God has revealed Himself to us in multiple ways*

### General revelation

- Creation
- Conscious



We call this “general revelation” – God reveals Himself to us in a general way. There are many details we don’t know from this general revelation, but we can learn enough, so we are without excuse.

There’s another “general revelation” – God reveals Himself through our conscience. Creation comes from the outside; conscious comes from the inside.

Conscience: The moral law written on human conscience points to a Moral Lawgiver. This is also *general revelation*.



We took a quick look at this last week. We all have a common moral law, and that law points to a lawgiver. We have an inherent knowledge of right and wrong, and that implies someone who determines right from wrong. Furthermore, we understand our inability to consistently do what's right.

Conscience: The moral law written on human conscience points to a Moral Lawgiver.

“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.” (Romans 2:14-15)



Paul addresses this, as well. He points out that the Gentiles did not have the law, as the Jews did. But the Gentiles were still guilty before God. Why?

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Because the law was written in their hearts. They knew what to do but couldn't do it, and their conscience testified to that. They had to either accept their guilt or excuse it away.

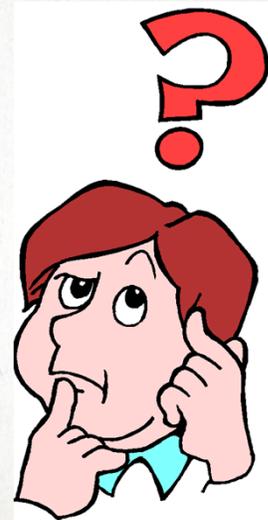
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General revelation

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Special revelation

- Communications



Creation and conscious reveal general things about God. But we can learn more specific things about him, because he more specifically reveals himself. He does this through (and I know you've been waiting for this...) His Word, the scriptures.

Communications: The Bible is a record of God revealing Himself to man. This is known as *specific revelation*, as these are things God revealed to specific people at specific times in history.



The Bible is God revealing Himself to man. Actually, it's a record of the things God revealed to specific people at specific times – but from that, we can infer what God wants to reveal about Himself to us today. Ever notice how most of the Bible is not religious “instruction” per se (although it is useful for instruction, 2 Timothy 3:16)? Instead, it's history, and poetry, and prophecy, and correspondence. It's the record of God revealing Himself to man so that we know about Him in detail.

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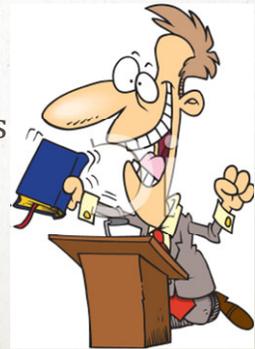
“What advantage then hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way; chiefly, because unto them were committed the oracles of God.” (Romans 3:1-2)



Again, Paul brings this out in Romans. If God reveals Himself to everyone (both Jew and Gentile) through general revelation, does the Jew have an advantage?

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Of course! The Jew also has the specific revelation – that is, the Word of God. At the time, Paul was referring to the Old Testament. How much more we have an advantage, as we have both the Old and the New Testament! Paul is arguing that (1) the general revelation is enough to show our need and the solution, and (2) the specific revelation shows that more clearly.

But – there is something that reveals more to us about God than the Bible does! (Gasp, what heresy is Steve about to pronounce?)

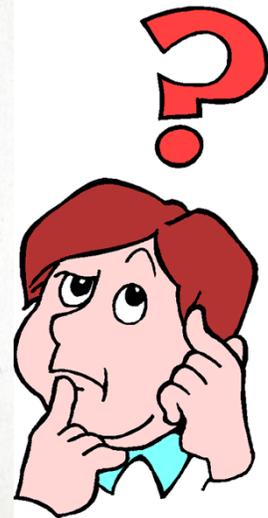
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### General revelation

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### Special revelation

- Communications
- Christ



My first year in college, I lived a couple hundred miles away from Lynn. We wrote letters to each other frequently, this being long before emails and cellphones. Okay, truth be known, she wrote letters to me almost every day, and I wrote letters to her, um, occasionally. But through those letters, we got to know each other better. You might say that through those communications, we revealed ourselves to the other. But you know what was better than the letters? When she came to visit!

Christ: The life and death of Jesus explicitly shows us the very nature of God – because Jesus was God.



So God has an even better way of revealing Himself to people than the Bible. That's showing up in person! That's what He did when Christ came to earth and lived among us. Since Jesus was (and is) God, seeing the life and death of Jesus explicitly shows the very nature of God. (John 14:9 – He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.) Of course, Jesus does not physically live among us today, but we do have the record of what he said and did when he did live among people (that's that communication part of specific revelation again). But there are recorded instances of Jesus appearing to people after his death (most notably, Paul and Stephen).

Christ: The life and death of Jesus explicitly shows us the very nature of God – because Jesus was God.

“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference.” (Romans 3:21-22)



So Paul says that we can know about God, that God has revealed himself to us – whether it is through the creation, through our conscious, through the Bible, or even through an appearance. His righteousness is made known, and it condemns us. But His mercy and grace is also made known to us.

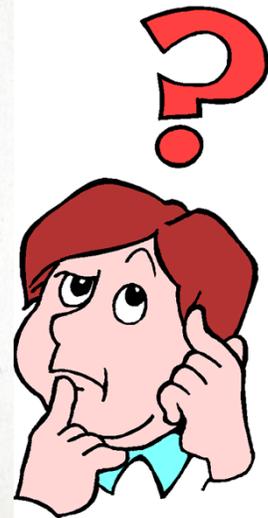
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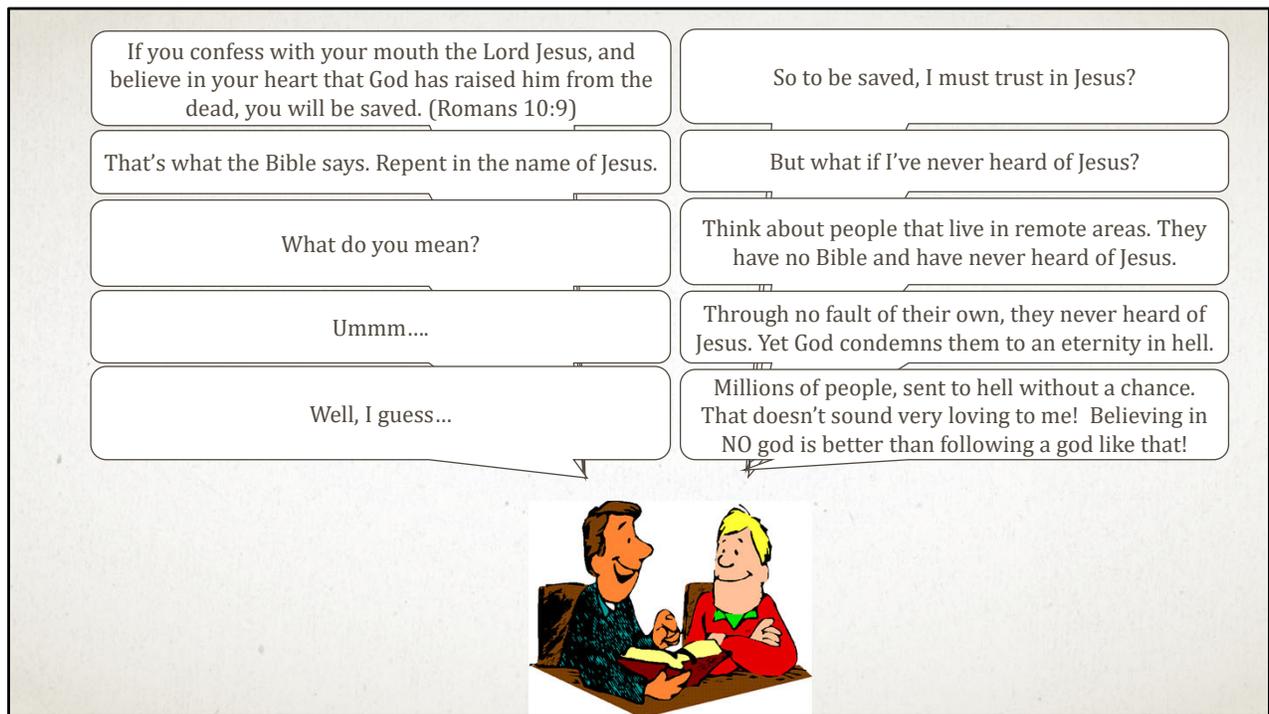
- Creation
- Conscious

Special revelation

- Communications
- Christ



We can know about God! So let's go back to that discussion you were having with your friend...



Your friend does raise an interesting point, about those that have not have the Bible. But you just learned that God still revealed enough about Himself through the general revelation that they can be saved. Of course, the specific revelation is more detailed. It's clearer. That's why we send missionaries.

Did the Old Testament patriarchs know about Jesus? Well, yes and no. They certainly didn't know him by name. They didn't know when he would live, or the details of his life, or the details of his death. They didn't know the Romans Road or John 3:16 or the sinner's prayer. But God still revealed enough that they could be saved when they trusted and had faith. Isn't that remote island guy in a similar situation? And ultimate, we can trust that God is just in his dealings with all men, to whatever extend they have understanding.

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**How did people get here?**

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**CAN WE KNOW TRUTH?**

Here's the takeaway from today: We not only know that God exists, we know much about what He is like, because He has revealed Himself to us. That's because he wants a personal relationship with us. And that's pretty awesome.

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**WHAT ABOUT SCIENCE?**  
Doesn't the scientific evidence prove the naturalistic origins (Big Bang & evolution), contrary to the first chapters of Genesis?

God send people there?

Why is there evil and suffering in the world?

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**CAN WE KNOW TRUTH?**

Next week, we shift gears and start talking about origins. How did the universe get here? How did people get here? And the million-dollar question: **WHAT ABOUT SCIENCE?** Doesn't the scientific evidence prove the naturalistic origins, contrary to the first chapters of Genesis? You won't want to miss this!