

Three Arguments Used in “God’s Not Dead”

Argument 1

Questions:

1. What is the common ground to which Josh appeals?
2. What is Josh’s view of creation and evolution? Does he affirm the same order of events as Gen 1? Does he hold to a young earth or old earth view?
3. What does Josh believe about the Big Bang theory?
4. Would you classify Josh’s approach in the first argument as classical, evidentialist, fideist, or presuppositional?
5. Do you think Josh holds to a strictly biblical approach in his methodology? Why or why not?

Josh Wheaton: Atheists say that no one can prove the existence of God, and they’re right. But I say that no one can disprove that God exists. But the only way to debate this issue is to look at the available evidence, and that’s what we are going to do. We are going to put God on trial; with Professor Radisson as the prosecutor, me as the defense attorney, and you as the jury.

Most cosmologists now agree that the universe began some 13.7 billion years ago in an event known as the big bang [video image illustrating the big bang in the background]. So let’s look at theoretical physicist and Nobel Prize winner Steven Weinberg’s description of what the big bang would have looked like. And since he’s an atheist, we can be sure there isn’t any believer bias in his description.

“In the beginning there was an explosion, and in three minutes, 98% of the matter there is or ever will be was produced. We had a universe.” [*On-screen animation of the big bang*]

For 2,500 years most scientists agreed with Aristotle on the idea of a steady-state universe—that the universe has always existed with no beginning and no end. But the Bible disagreed. In the 1920s, Belgian astronomer Georges Lemaitre, a theist, who was actually also . . .

Female Student 1: What, what’s a theist?

JW: A theist is someone who believes in the existence of God. He said that the entire universe, jumping into existence in a trillionth of a trillionth of a second, out of nothingness in an unimaginably intense flash of light, is how he would expect the universe to respond if God were to actually utter the command in [Genesis 1:3](#), “Let there be light.” In other words, the origin of the universe unfolded exactly how one would expect after reading Genesis, and for 2,500 years the Bible had it right, and science had it wrong.

You see, in the real world we never see things jumping into existence out of nothingness, but atheists will make one small exception to this rule; mainly the universe and everything in it.

Female Student 2: But, in his book, *The God Delusion*, Richard Dawkins says that if you tell me God created the universe then I have the right to ask you who created God.

JW: Dawkins' question only makes sense in terms in a god who has been created. It doesn't make sense in terms of an uncreated god, which is the kind of God Christians believe in. And even leaving God out of the equation, I then have a right to turn Mr. Dawkins own question back around on him and ask, if the universe created you, then who created the universe? You see, both the theist and the atheist are both burdened with answering the same question of how did things start. What I'm hoping you'll pick up from all this is that you don't have to commit intellectual suicide to believe in a Creator behind the Creation. And to the extent that you don't allow for God, you'd be pretty hard pressed to find any credible alternative explanation for how things came to be.

Professor Radisson: Well, I imagine you're quite pleased with yourself. I see you carefully avoided the fact that Steven Hawking, the world's most famous scientist and who's not a theist, has recently come out in favor of a self-designing universe.

JW: I haven't avoided it, I just didn't

PR: You just didn't know about it. Well, let's see what professor Hawking, Lucasian Professor of Physics at Cambridge who occupies a teaching chair once held by Sir Isaac Newton, has to say about the origin of the universe. And I quote, "Because there's a law such as gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing spontaneously. Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something instead of nothing; why the universe exists; why we exist. It's not necessary to invoke God to set the universe in motion," end quote. So you may have never come across his comment but his point remains. How do you answer it?

JW: I don't know.

PR: You don't know? I prick the balloon of your entire argument with a single pin and you don't know. Huh?

JW: Well, I mean, I'd like to tell you I have the perfect answer, but it doesn't shake my underlying faith.

PR: OK. So the greatest scientific mind of all history says that God is not necessary, but first semester freshman says, "Oh, yes He is." Wow, you know, it's gonna be a really tough choice. Well, I look forward to next week's lecture. Class is dismissed.

The Second Debate

1. What biblical principles of apologetics are in evidence in this debate?
2. Does Josh in any way compromise the authority of Scripture?

3. What is Josh's view of creation and evolution? Does he believe in a young earth? Old earth?

Here is a transcription of the second debate discussing biological evolution for you to examine:

JW: [Stephen Hawking] also wrote a book called *The Grand Design* which says the following, "Because there is a law such as gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing." To be honest, I didn't know how to refute that. I mean, after all, Hawking is clearly a genius. But, Professor John Lennox, who teaches mathematics and philosophy, has demonstrated that there are not one, even two, but three errors of logic contained in that one simple sentence, and it all boils down to circular reasoning. Hawking is basically saying that the universe exists because the universe needed to exist, and because the universe needed to exist it therefore created itself. It's like this, if I say to you that I can prove that Spam is the best tasting food that's ever existed because in all of history, no food has ever tasted better, you'd probably look at me strange and say I haven't proven anything, and you'd be right. All I've done is restate my original claim. But when Hawking claims that the universe created itself because it needed to create itself and then offers that as an explanation as to how and why it was created, we don't immediately recognize that he's doing the same thing, but he is, prompting Lennox to further comment, "Nonsense remains nonsense even when spoken by famous scientists, even though the general public assumes they are statements of science."

PR: This is the height of hubris. Are you telling me that you, a freshman, are saying that Stephen Hawking is wrong?

JW: No, what I'm saying is that John Lennox, a professor of mathematics and philosophy, has found Professor Hawking's reasoning to be faulty, and I agree with his logic. But, but, if you can't bear to disagree with Hawking's thinking, then I suggest that you turn to page five of his book where he insists philosophy is dead. And if you're so sure of Professor Hawking's infallibility, and philosophy really is dead, then, uh, well, there's really no need for this class.

[Laughter from the class; followed by a break in the debate scene to a counseling session between the pastor and Professor Radisson's Christian girlfriend.]

JW: Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, for the last 150 years, Darwinists have been saying that God is unnecessary to explain man's existence and that evolution replaces God, but evolution only tells you what happens once you have life. So, where did that something that's alive come from? Well, Darwin never really addressed it. He assumed maybe some lightning hit a stagnant pool full of the right kind of chemicals—Bingo—a living something. But, uh, it's just not that simple. You see, Darwin claimed that the ancestry of all living things came from that one single simple organism which reproduced and was slowly modified over time into the complex life forms we view today, which is why after contemplating his own theory Darwin uttered his

famous statement, “*Natura non facit saltum*,” meaning, “nature does not jump.” Well, as noted, author Lee Strobel pointed out that if you can picture the entire 3.8 billion years that scientists say life has been around as one 24-hour day, in the space of just about 90 seconds most major animal groups suddenly appear in the forms in which they currently hold, not slowly and steadily as Darwin predicted, but in evolutionary terms almost instantly. So, “nature does not jump” becomes “nature makes a giant leap.” So how do theists explain this sudden outburst of new biological information?

“And God said, let the waters teem with living creatures and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky. So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems according to its kind, and God saw that it was good.” Genesis 1:20

In other words, Creation happened because God said it should happen. And even what looks to our eyes to be a blind, unguided process could really be divinely controlled from start to finish.

The Third Debate

Questions

1. What is Josh’s basic approach here: classical, evidential, fideist, or presuppositional?
2. Does Josh take a position on the origin of righteousness?
3. What is Raddison’s presupposition about God?

Here is a transcription of the final debate scene discussing the problem of evil for you to examine:

JW: It has been said that evil is atheism’s most potent weapon against the Christian faith. And it is! After all, the very existence of evil begs the question [sic], “If God is all good and God is all powerful, why does He allow evil to exist?” The answer, at its core, is remarkably simple: free will. God allows evil to exist because of free will. From the Christian standpoint, God tolerates evil in this world on a temporary basis so that one day those who choose to love Him freely will dwell with Him in heaven free from the influence of evil, but with their free will intact! In other words, God’s intention concerning evil is to one day destroy it.

PR: Well, how convenient. “One day, I will get rid of all the evil in the world, but until then you just have to deal with all the wars and holocausts, tsunamis, poverty, starvation, and AIDS. Have a nice life.” Next he will be lecturing us on moral absolutes.

JW: Well, why not? Professor Radisson, who's clearly an atheist, doesn't believe in moral absolutes. But his course syllabus says he plans to give us an exam during finals week. Now, I am betting that if I managed to get an A on the exam by cheating, he will suddenly start sounding like a Christian, insisting it is wrong to cheat, that I should have known that. And yet, what basis does he have? If my actions are calculated to help me succeed, then why shouldn't I perform them? For Christians, the fixed point of morality, what constitutes right and wrong, is a straight line that leads directly back to God.

PR: So you are saying that we need a god to be moral? That a moral atheist is an impossibility?

JW: No, but with no God there is no real reason to be moral; there is not even a standard of what moral behavior is. For Christians, lying, cheating, stealing, and my example, stealing a grade I didn't earn, are forbidden as a form of theft. But if God does not exist, as Dostoyevsky famously pointed out, "If God does not exist, then everything is permissible." And not only permissible, but pointless. If Professor Radisson is right, then all of this—all of our struggle, all of our debate, whatever we decide here—is meaningless. I mean, our lives, our deaths are of no more consequence than that of a goldfish.

PR: Come on, this is ridiculous. So after all of your talk, you are saying that it all comes down to a choice—believe or don't believe.

JW: That's right. That's all there is. That's all there's ever been. The only difference between your position and my position is that you take away their choice. You demand that they choose the box marked "I don't believe."

PR: Yes, because I want to free them. Because religion is like a . . . it's like a mind virus that parents have passed on down to their children. And Christianity is the worst virus of all. It slowly creeps into our lives when we're weak or sick or helpless.

JW: So religion is like a disease?

PR: Yes, yes. It infects everything. It's the enemy of reason.

JW: Reason? Professor, you left reason a long time ago. What you are teaching here isn't philosophy; it's not even atheism anymore. What you're teaching is anti-theism. It's not enough that you don't believe, you need all of us to not believe with you.

PR: Why don't you admit the truth? You just want to ensnare them into your primitive superstition.

JW: What I want is for them to make their own choice. That's what God wants.

PR: You have no idea how much I am going to enjoy failing you.

JW: Who are you really looking to fail, Professor: me or God?

JW: Do you hate God?

PR: That's not even a question.

JW: Okay, why do you hate God?

PR: This is ridiculous.

JW: Why do you hate God?! Answer the question! You've seen the science and the arguments. Science supports His existence. You know the truth! So why do you hate Him?! Why?! It's a very simple question, Professor. Why do you hate God?!

PR: Because He took everything away from me! Yes, I hate God! All I have for Him is hate!

JW: How can you hate someone if they don't exist?

PR: You've proven nothing.

JW: Maybe not, but they get to choose. Is God dead?

Students [*as they stand*]: God is not dead. God is not dead. God is not dead. God is not dead. God is not dead