



THE BEREIA PAGE

“Examining . . . to see if these things are so” ~ Acts 17.11

Science and God

“Polling data now show that an increasing number of young people, including those from religious homes, doubt even the existence of God.” So writes Stephen Meyer (Ph.D. philosophy of science, Cambridge, and Director of Discovery Institute’s Center for Science and Culture in Seattle) in an article that appeared in *The Federalist* (article [here](#); see Meyer’s website [here](#)).

“Play[ing] an outsized role in cementing disaffection with religious belief” are “the claims of putative spokesmen for science” who have convinced the doubters that “the findings of science make the existence of God less probable.”

The spokesmen to which he refers are the “new atheist” writers whose ranks include Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Bill Nye, and Stephen Hawking and whose best selling books have convinced many that science has “rendered religious belief implausible.”

“In fact,” Meyer argues, “three major scientific discoveries during the last century contradict the expectations of scientific atheists (or materialists) and point instead in a distinctly theistic direction.”

He then summarizes the evidence from cosmology, the fine tuning of the universe’s physical laws, and molecular biology and points readers to his book, *Return of the God Hypothesis: Three Discoveries That Reveal the Mind Behind the Universe*, recently published by HarperOne. If interested, use ISBN # 9780062071507 to search for it.

Learning, Hearing, and Teaching in Ephesians (1)

David Anguish

How challenging would it have been for a recently converted member of the comparatively small Christian community in Ephesus to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling” (Eph 4.1)? In [“We Can Do This”](#) (Vol. 2/4, Jan. 15, 2021), I asked that question in light of Paul’s call for the Ephesian believers to live holy lives in a society with antagonistic religious, socio-economic, and moral norms. Whatever the level of difficulty, Paul’s tone in his ethical instruction in chapters 4-6 exuded confidence that the “saints” could succeed (cf. 1.1, 15, 18; 2.19; 3.8, 18; 4.12; 5.3; 6.18).

In [“Occupy the Premises!”](#) (Vol. 2/7, Mar. 17, 2021), I considered Ephesians 4.17-24 where Paul said that in abandoning the indecent, impure, and greedy behaviors of their society, they had rejected its futile thinking and darkened understanding for a new outlook in which they “learn[ed] Christ” (v. 20 NASB). They had done this, not by absorbing the culture of their new community (the *ekklēsia*), but because they had “heard Him and [had] been taught in Him” (v. 21 NASB).

But what exactly had they heard and learned? Throughout the letter, Paul revealed at least some of the content in his reminders about the believers’ new status and how it came to be. In Ephesians 1, for example, they were recipients of every spiritual blessing in Christ, chosen before the world’s foundation to be holy and blameless, and “predestined (*προορίζω, proorizō*) for adoption . . . through Jesus Christ” (1.3-5). They had this status because they had been redeemed and forgiven by God’s grace according to the eternal plan brought to completion in Christ (1.7-10; cf. 2.1-10; 3.8-11). In confidence found in having received the Holy Spirit as a down payment of the eternal promise, they could be enlightened to know the hope of their calling and empowered for holy living (1.13-23).

“Have You Not Read?”

Using the Bible software on my computer and tablet, I have recently been working through Matthew’s gospel. In parallel columns, I compare the English text with the Greek and/or one basic tool that briefly identifies and gives minimal information about selected words or resources. At this stage, my aim is to make notes of my observations and/or questions for future study, not explore other expositions.

Among the things I have noticed is the repetition of a question Jesus asked those who challenged him. In 6 of the 7 places where Matthew used the verb *anaginōskō* (ἀναγινώσκω), it is in a question that begins, “Have you not read . . .?” (12.3, 5; 19.4; 21.16, 42; 22.31; cf. 24.15). By comparison, Mark (3 of 4 times), Luke (2 of 3), and John (0 of 1) used the verb just 5 times in that question and 8 times in all.

I’ve not looked, but suspect some commentator[s] has expounded on what this might indicate about the nature of Matthew’s gospel in comparison with the others. Inferences can also be made from what Jesus’ use of the question may indicate about the interpretative and application practices of his opponents who had doubtless read the holy text.

Without discounting the merit of such considerations, I propose that Jesus’ repetition of the phrase shows something more important: he revered God’s word and saw it as the final authority for all questions of faith and practice. Thus, his default starting place on any matter was always, “What do the Scriptures say? Read them. Study them. Now, apply what you learn.”

In response to an idea currently espoused in our culture, it is important to point out that Paul was not saying the Christian worldview was merely “their truth,” a social construct unique to the outlook of their group. He was confident about the realities of their status because they had been validated by the time-and-space events that gave rise to the Christian faith. Jesus had really come and preached (2.17), had really given himself for humanity by shedding his blood on the cross (2.13, 16; 5.1), had really been raised by the powerful God who enabled them (1.20; 2.5-6), had really ascended above the heavens (4.10), and had really revealed the mystery of God’s plan to Paul and others (3.3-5; cf. 2.20).¹ These events constituted “the word of truth, the [good news] (εὐαγγέλιον; *euangelion*) of . . . salvation” they had heard (1.13).

That we are on the right track in seeing the events of Jesus’ story as the framework for what Paul had in mind when he spoke of learning, hearing, and being taught in Christ is supported from Luke’s record of his preaching in Ephesus. He spent two years in the hall of Tyrannus reasoning and persuading concerning God’s kingdom,² a teaching program that saw all Asia hear the word of the Lord (19.8-10). After the encounter with Sceva’s sons and the conversion of some who had practiced the magic arts, the Lord’s word kept increasing (19.20). In his opposition to the apostle, Demetrius the silversmith affirmed that Paul had denigrated idolatry (19.26). When Paul reviewed his work in Ephesus, he said that in his teaching he had testified about repentance, faith, God’s grace, and the kingdom (20.20-21, 24-25, 30-32). Indeed, he had declared God’s whole plan (20.27), including a saying from Jesus not otherwise known to us (20.35).

Such was the teaching Paul had given the Ephesians, the instruction he was confident would equip them to live holy lives in a decadent culture guided by futile and darkened thinking. In a society influenced by similar futility, we are right to keep teaching as Paul did, in content and, as we’ll explore in part 2, method.

www.davidanguish.com

Notes

¹ My point here is not that the claims about these events *made* them true, but that Paul was calling them to mind as the basis for the spiritual realities he referenced. Other passages present the framework for showing the evidence to authenticate the truth of the claims.

² Cf. Acts 17.2-4 where Jesus’ suffering and resurrection parallels Acts 19’s reference to the kingdom as the subject of Paul’s reasoning and persuading.

*All Scripture quotations not otherwise designated are from the ESV.
Permission is granted to reprint original materials with the credit line,
“Reprinted from David Anguish, ‘The Berea Page,’ April 5, 2021.”*