

# RS 503: The Christian Worldview I

Rev. Sean Whitenack

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**Course Summary:** God has not only saved Christians *from* something (sin), He has also saved believers *to* something (a new kingdom where Christ is Lord). As we better understand what God has revealed in the Bible, we realize that the Christian faith affects the way we understand every aspect of life in this world. All Christians need to develop and understand a systematic and comprehensive biblical way to understand our world, to live in a Christian manner in the world, and to thoughtfully communicate a Christian way of life with those with whom we rub shoulders. Christian leaders need to help disciples think and act in a way more consistent with their profession.

The Christian faith gives relevant, solid answers to complex issues that our culture faces in the twenty-first century. We must ask, does God have anything to say about philosophy or anthropology or politics or work? He certainly does, and for God's people be salt and light in a fallen world, we must be able to understand how his word applied to every area of our life and our world.

Building piece by piece this course will use Genesis 1-3 as a basis to examine six different aspects of one's worldview: theology, philosophy, ethics, anthropology, science, and history. After we establish a biblical understanding of these topics, we will compare the Christian understanding of them with the predominant American cultural understanding, focusing particularly on secular humanism in its modern and postmodern forms. We will study the people and ideas that have most influenced our cultures way of thinking.

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## **Course Objectives**

### **Regarding Knowledge – to know ...**

- both the biblical perspective and our culture's perspective on theology, anthropology, philosophy, science, history, and ethics.
- the consistent and logical nature of the biblical worldview.
- the consistent/inconsistent, logical/illogical nature of competing worldviews, especially secular humanism.
- the consequences of ideas and one's worldview.

### **Regarding Skills – to be able to ...**

- rightly articulate the biblical perspective and our culture's perspective on each worldview area.
- argue effectively and winsomely for the biblical worldview.
- reveal, in a winsome way, the inconsistencies and illogical of our culture's worldview.
- discern assumptions and worldview perspectives from current media productions.
- continually examine our personal thinking and actions to discern where we have been taken captive by the worldview of our culture.
- continually examine our actions to discern inconsistencies with our profession of a biblical worldview.

- take a stand for truth without wavering or overly regarding the consequences.

**Regarding Character – to be ...**

- winsome – having an approach to everyone around us that is so attractive that even the most contrary individual would be drawn to give audience and to have sensed the winsome presence of God.
- compassionate – having a deep compassion for those who have been captured by the empty and vain philosophies of this world.
- zealous – having the zeal to see the lost reconciled with God and the wayward believer seeking God with all their heart.
- hopeful – having a strong sense of the power of God and His truth to transform the lives of men and our culture.
- honesty – ready to admit when personal thoughts, attitudes, and actions are contrary to a biblical worldview position.
- humility – devoid of any arrogance in my apologetic; considering others more highly than myself.
- steadfast – standing for biblical truth without wavering.

**Required Texts:**

1. Dr. David A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times*, Revised 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (pub) ISBN 0936163003 (510 pp; 246 this semester)
2. Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction* () ISBN 0891077383 (344 pp; 124 this semester)
3. *Humanist Manifesto I, II, and III* (available online)
4. Select one book from the following list to read and report on:
  - a. Colson, Charles, and Nancy Pearcey. *How Now Shall We Live?* Tyndale House, 2004.
  - b. Mathison, Keith. *A Reformed Approach to Science and Scripture*. Ligonier Ministries, 2013.
  - c. Pearcey, Nancy. *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*. Crossway, 2008.
  - d. Poythress, Vern. *Redeeming Science: A God-Centered Approach*. Wheaton Ill.: Crossway, 2006.
  - e. Schaeffer, Francis A. *The God Who Is There*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1998.
  - f. Schaeffer, Francis A. *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture*. Crossway, 2005.
  - g. Sproul, R. C. *Lifetimes: Understanding the Ideas That Shape Society Today*. Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1986.
  - h. Sproul, R. C. *The Consequences of Ideas: Understanding the Concepts That Shaped Our World*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009.
  - i. Sire, James. *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*. 3rd ed. InterVarsity Press, 1997.
  - j. Veith, Gene Edward. *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*. Turning Point Christian Worldview Series. Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 1994.

- k. Wolters, Albert M. *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*. 2nd ed. Eerdmans, 2005.

**Assignments:**

1. **Reading:** Complete all assigned textbook readings (see schedule below).
2. **Book Report:** Select a book from the list below, read the book, and provide a 500-1000 word summary of the book's contents. The book summary is due by the end of module 4.
3. **Worldview Overview:** For each worldview area, students will fill out a Worldview Overview Page (format provided and a sample of Theology is provided below), listing key verses of an applicable attribute of God, key verses of an applicable attribute of man, relevant passages from Genesis 1-11 demonstrating how God intended us to think about this aspect of our understanding, and key points contrasting positions of the biblical worldview and one of the prevailing worldviews of our culture. Students should pick either the Secular Humanist view or the Postmodern view and consistently use that view (only) for all Worldview Overview Pages. The Overview should demonstrate that the student understands and can apply the material from the Understanding the Times book. Topics due are listed on the Schedule (below).
4. **Current Events Article:** For each worldview area, students will submit a current events article from the Internet, a newspaper, or a magazine that typifies our cultures worldview in that around that topic The article should not be a static web page, but a news event, recent blog post (with large readership), or editorial (within the last month). Attach a summary paragraph describing the worldview perspective represented. Summaries should be approximately 250 words in length.

**Grading:** Credit requirements are as follows:

**Assignments:**

- Book Summary
- Worldview Overview Pages
- Media Articles with Summaries

**Term Paper:**

*TED and the Christian Worldview (5-7 pages):*

TED is one of the most influential and effect methods of communicating “ideas worth sharing” in our world today. Most of the speakers teach from a secular humanist or postmodern perspective. I think of TED as secular humanist “church.”

Each student will watch a TED talk and address the communicated worldview through the lens of a biblical worldview. The paper will be graded based upon the student's ability to correctly and clearly articulate the concern the speakers are trying to address, analyze the worldview presented (including the way it addresses the six worldview aspects discussed this semester), compare it with a biblical worldview, and provide a way of thinking through the concern of the speaker. The student should look for explicit worldview statements and implicit worldview assumptions of the speaker.

The student may consider any of the TED talks on the site (with professor permission; look for talks that are more explicit about the worldview presented). Below are a suggested set of talks you can use.

- [http://www.ted.com/talks/hans\\_rosling\\_religions\\_and\\_babies](http://www.ted.com/talks/hans_rosling_religions_and_babies)

- [http://www.ted.com/talks/jonathan\\_haidt\\_on\\_the\\_moral\\_mind](http://www.ted.com/talks/jonathan_haidt_on_the_moral_mind)
- [http://www.ted.com/talks/helen\\_fisher\\_tells\\_us\\_why\\_we\\_love\\_cheat](http://www.ted.com/talks/helen_fisher_tells_us_why_we_love_cheat)
- [http://www.ted.com/talks/sandra\\_aamodt\\_why\\_dieting\\_doesn\\_t\\_usually\\_work](http://www.ted.com/talks/sandra_aamodt_why_dieting_doesn_t_usually_work)
- [http://www.ted.com/talks/ron\\_gutman\\_the\\_hidden\\_power\\_of\\_smiling](http://www.ted.com/talks/ron_gutman_the_hidden_power_of_smiling)
- [http://www.ted.com/talks/martin\\_seligman\\_on\\_the\\_state\\_of\\_psychology](http://www.ted.com/talks/martin_seligman_on_the_state_of_psychology)
- [http://www.ted.com/talks/dan\\_ariely\\_asks\\_are\\_we\\_in\\_control\\_of\\_our\\_own\\_decisions](http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_ariely_asks_are_we_in_control_of_our_own_decisions)
- [http://www.ted.com/talks/dan\\_ariely\\_on\\_our\\_buggy\\_moral\\_code](http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_ariely_on_our_buggy_moral_code)
- [http://www.ted.com/talks/dan\\_dennett\\_cuteSexySweetFunny](http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_dennett_cuteSexySweetFunny)

Final Exam: The final will be a closed book, two-hour exam consisting of essay and objective questions covering the reading and lecture material.

Grade Scale:

Requirement	Percent
Assignments	50%
Term Paper/Project	25%
Final Exam	25%

Schedule:

DATE	Worldview Area	UTT(1) Reading Due	IFD(2) Reading Due	Assignment Due	NOTES
Module 1	1: What is a Worldview? 2: Theology: Who is God?	Introduction Chapter 1 – Theology	Introduction Idols of Religion (chapter 6)	Theology (Article only)	Read Humanist Manifesto I, II, and III
Module 2	3: Philosophy 4: Ethics 5: Anthropology: Who is Man?	Chapter 2 - Philosophy Chapter 3 – Ethics Chapter 5 – Psychology	Idols of Humanity (chapter 2)	Philosophy Ethics Anthropology	
Module 3	6: Science	Chapter 4 – Biology	Idols of Nature (chapter 4)	Science	
Module 4	6: Science 7: History & the Larger Story 8: Introduction to Social Order	Chapter 10 – History	Idols of History Chap 1	History	Book Summary Due
Final Exam					<b>Final Exam Due</b>
Term Paper					<b>Term Papers Due</b>

(1) UTT--Understanding the Times; (2) IFD-- Idols for Destruction

## **Recommended Works**

- Baker, Hunter. *The End of Secularism*. Crossway Books, 2009.
- Colson, Charles, and Nancy Pearcey. *How Now Shall We Live?* Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2004.
- Davis, Percival, and Dean H. Kenyon. *Of Pandas and People: The Central Question of Biological Origins*. 2nd ed. Houghton Pub Co, 1993.
- Frame, John M. *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*. P & R Publishing, 2008.
- Hiebert, Paul G. *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2008.
- Hunter, James Davison. *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Keller, Timothy J. *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*. New York: Dutton, 2008.
- Kuyper, Abraham. *Lectures on Calvinism, The Stone Lectures of 1898*. Cosimo Classics, 2009.
- MacArthur, John, Richard L. Mayhue, and John A. Hughes. *Think Biblically!: Recovering a Christian Worldview*. Crossway Books, 2003.
- Mathison, Keith. *A Reformed Approach to Science and Scripture*. Ligonier Ministries, 2013.
- Meeter, H. Henry. *The Basic Ideas of Calvinism*. 6th ed. Baker Pub Group, 1990.
- Noebel, David. *Understanding the Times*. Harvest House Publishers, 1994.
- Pearcey, Nancy. *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*. Stg. Crossway Books, 2008.
- Poythress, Vern. *Redeeming Science: A God-Centered Approach*. Wheaton Ill.: Crossway Books, 2006.
- Schaeffer, Francis A. *The God Who Is There*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1998.
- Schaeffer, Francis A. *How Should We Then Live?: The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture*. 50 Anv. Crossway Books, 2005.
- Schlossberg, Herbert. *Idols for Destruction: The Conflict of Christian Faith and American Culture*. Crossway Books, 1993.
- Sire, James W. *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept*. IVP Academic, 2004.
- . *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*. 3rd ed. InterVarsity Press, 1997.
- Smith, James K. A. *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2009.
- Sproul, R. C. *Lifeworlds: Understanding the Ideas That Shape Society Today*. Old Tappan, N.J.: F.H. Revell, 1986.
- . *The Consequences of Ideas: Understanding the Concepts That Shaped Our World*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009.

Veith, Gene Edward. *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*. Turning Point Christian Worldview Series. Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 1994.

Wolters, Albert M. *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*. 2nd ed. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005.

### **Other Resources**

- World Magazine
- I highly recommend the daily broadcast on cultural issues from a Christian worldview, provided by Albert Mohler, available through iTunes and [www.almohler.com](http://www.almohler.com).
- Omnibus I, II, III, IV, V, VI (published by Veritas Press) – As a homeschooling parent, I have really enjoyed working through this Middle and High School material with my children. It takes the student through many well-known theological, historical, and literary works and helps the student discover the worldview elements of each book. Because my own background is from a science and math oriented public education, I have found (as an adult) that this reading has been transformative in the development of my own worldview.

## Christian Worldview Research Worksheet

**Worldview Area:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Attribute of God that is critical to this area: \_\_\_\_\_
- Key Verses revealing this attribute (Include relevant passages from Genesis 1-11):
- Attribute of man that is critical to understanding this area: \_\_\_\_\_
- Key verses revealing this attribute (Include relevant passages from Genesis 1-11):
- Other primary truth revealed in the Scriptures regarding this area (principles, observations, examples, etc.) :
- The Biblical Christian worldview in this area:
- The secular humanist worldview in this area:

## Christian Worldview Research Worksheet

### Worldview Area: Theology

- Attribute of God that is critical to this area: **God's existence**
- Key Verses revealing this attribute:  
**Genesis 1:1** - God was in the beginning  
**Exodus 3:13-14** - The very nature of God is that of existence  
**Romans 1:18-21** - God is visible in everything
- Attribute of man that is critical to understanding this area: **Man's dependence**
- Key verses revealing this attribute:  
**Psalm 14:1** - All things are impossible without God, man is dependent upon providence.  
**John 3:16** - Without God redemption is impossible, man is dependent on God's redemption  
**John 17:3** - Life has no meaning without God, dependency upon God giving meaning to life  
**Psalm 119:89** - Without God ethics are impossible, dependency on God's ethical standards.
- Other primary truth revealed in the Scriptures regarding this area (principles, observations, examples, etc.) :  
*Special Revelation: Not only is God's existence set forth in the Bible, but it is assumed. Even more than that the characteristics of His existence are set forth by the Scriptures. God is personal, holy (Is 6), sovereign, humble (Matt 11:28-30, as discussed in class), just (Ex 34:7), loving (1 Jo 4:8), triune (Matt 28:19-20), and so on. We are at no loss in specific attributes of the God of the universe.*  
*General Revelation: God clearly demonstrates Himself in nature, though the wholeness of His character is not obvious in nature. Were it not for sin, one should be able to deduce God from nature, it is so clear to mankind.*
- The Biblical Christian worldview in this area:  
*God exists, therefore man is dependent upon God for all things. Man cannot have a meaningful (truthful, actual) existence without God.*  
*Christian Theism (Trinitarian) – Absolute Personality; Lordship – Control, Authority, Presence*  
*Therefore, we need God to make sense of this world and depend upon Him for understanding in all areas of our worldviews. We must go to Him for understanding of our universe (Gen 1), our place in the universe (Ps 8), and mostly for redemption as we have fallen short of His perfect standard (Ps 3:23, 6:23).*  
*Ultimately, there is One to whom we are accountable for our actions and to Whom we must answer to for our lives, which are a gift from Him.*
- Our culture's worldview in this area:  
*God does not exist, or he is impersonal (and non-trinitarian), distant, or irrelevant to understanding and living in this world. The atheism of secular humanism a theological statement as it makes a metaphysical statement about the universe. Even in the supposed 96% of America*

*that believes that God exists, most of it is a practical atheism. Most of our culture does not act as though their life is a gift from the Most High God. Most of our culture does not act as though they are held accountable for actions upon this earth.*

*All this to say that even though many say that they believe in God, the Secular Humanist has won the hearts of most people in practical matters. We are here by chance (naturalistic evolution), we are not accountable (naturalism), there is no ethic to appeal to (naturalism), and he who dies with the most toys wins (materialism). These are the tenants of secular humanism that are in our schools, our newspapers, our workplaces, and everywhere around us.*

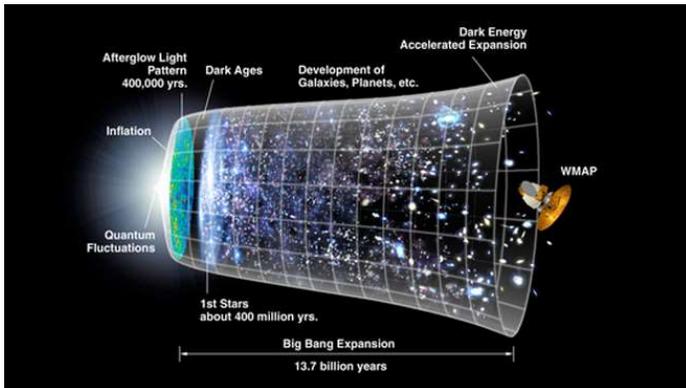
**Sample Article**

Scientists find cosmic ripples from birth of universe

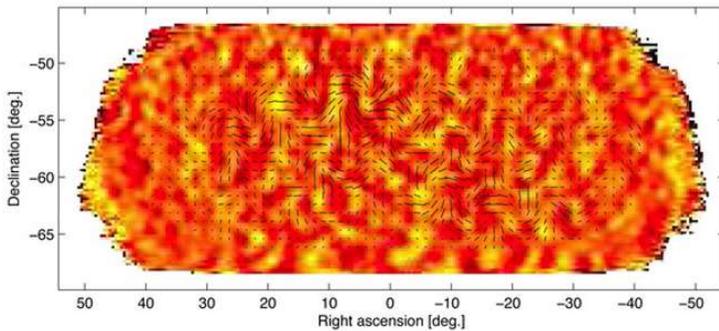
<http://www.foxnews.com/science/2014/03/17/major-discovery-smoking-gun-for-big-bang-expansion-found/>

Published March 17, 2014 /

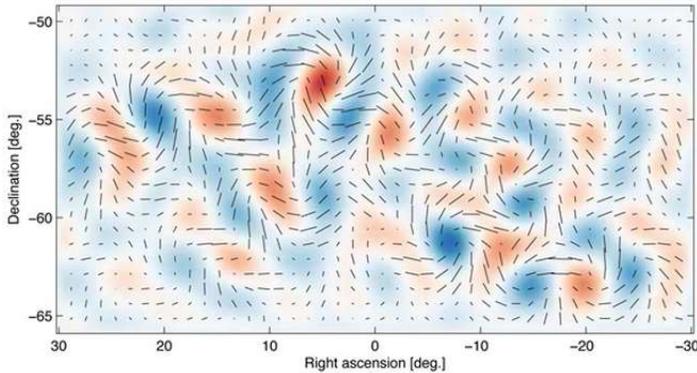
FoxNews.com



This NASA graphic shows the universe as it evolved from the big bang to now. Goddard scientists believe that the universe expanded from subatomic scales to the astronomical in a fraction of a second after its birth. (NASA/WMAP)



Gravitational waves from inflation generate a faint but distinctive twisting pattern in the polarization of the cosmic microwave background, known as a "curl" or B-mode pattern. For the density fluctuations that generate most of the polarization of the CMB, this part of the primordial pattern is exactly zero. Shown here is the actual B-mode pattern observed with the BICEP2 telescope, which is consistent with the pattern predicted for primordial gravitational waves. The line segments show the polarization strength and orientation at different spots on the sky. The red and blue shading shows the degree of clockwise and anti-clockwise twisting of this B-mode pattern. (BICEP2 COLLABORATION)



The tiny temperature fluctuations of the cosmic microwave background (shown here as color) trace primordial density fluctuations in the early universe that seeded the later growth of galaxies. These fluctuations produce a pattern of polarization in the CMB that has no twisting to it. Gravitational waves from inflation are expected to produce much a fainter pattern that includes twisting ("B-mode") polarization, consistent with the pattern observed by BICEP2, which is shown here as black lines. The line segments show the polarization strength and orientation at different spots on the sky. (BICEP2 COLLABORATION)



The sun sets behind BICEP2 (in the foreground) and the South Pole Telescope (in the background). (STEFFEN RICHTER (HARVARD UNIVERSITY))

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Astronomers have discovered what they believe is the first direct evidence of the astonishing expansion of the universe in the instant following the Big Bang -- the scientific explanation for the birth of the universe some 13.8 billion years ago.

Scientists believe that the universe exploded from a tiny speck and hurled itself out in all directions in the fraction of a second that followed, beginning just 10 to the minus 35 seconds (roughly one trillionth of a trillionth of a trillionth of a second) after the universe's birth. Matter ultimately coalesced hundreds of millions of years later into planets, stars, and ultimately us.

And like ripples from a ball kicked into a pond, that Big Bang-fueled expansion caused ripples in the ancient light from that event, light which remains imprinted in the skies in a leftover glow called the *cosmic microwave background*.

Scientists still don't know who kicked the ball.

But if confirmed, the newfound ripples would be amazing proof of what has long been mere theory about what happened in those first millionths of a second.

*'[It's] a direct image of gravitational waves across the entire sky, showing us the early universe.'*

*- John Kovac, of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics*

“The implications for this detection stagger the mind,” said Jamie Bock, professor of physics at Caltech, laboratory senior research scientist at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) and project co-leader. “We are measuring a signal that comes from the dawn of time.”

"It would be the most important discovery since the discovery, I think, that the expansion of the universe is accelerating," Harvard astronomer Avi Loeb, who is not a member of the study team, told Space.com. He compared the finding to a 1998 observation that opened the window on mysterious dark energy and won three researchers the 2011 Nobel Prize in physics.

The groundbreaking results came from observations by BICEP2, a telescope at the South Pole, of the cosmic microwave background -- a faint glow left over from the Big Bang.

Beginning a fraction of a fraction of a second after the universe's birth, according to the current theory, space-time expanded incredibly rapidly, ballooning outward faster than the speed of light. The afterglow from that expansion is called the cosmic microwave background, and tiny fluctuations in it provide clues to conditions in the early universe.

For example, small differences in temperature across the sky show where parts of the universe were denser, eventually condensing into galaxies and galactic clusters.

Since the cosmic microwave background is a form of light, it exhibits all the properties of light, including polarization. On Earth, sunlight is scattered by the atmosphere and becomes polarized, which is why polarized sunglasses help reduce glare. In space, the cosmic microwave background was scattered by atoms and electrons and became polarized too.

“Our team hunted for a special type of polarization called ‘B-modes,’ which represents a twisting or ‘curl’ pattern in the polarized orientations of the ancient light,” said Bock.

The team presented their work at a press conference Monday at Harvard -- the discovery of that characteristic pattern of polarization in the skies, which they called proof of the gravitational waves across the primordial sky.

“This work offers new insights into some of our most basic questions: Why do we exist? How did the universe begin? These results are not only a smoking gun for inflation, they also tell us when inflation took place and how powerful the process was,” Harvard theorist Avi Loeb said.

## Theology Article Discussion (Sample)

By Sean Whitenack

Scientists find cosmic ripples from birth of universe

Fox News (3/18/14)

This article discusses the recent discovery providing evidence for the scientific theory of “inflation”, the idea that the universe began through a sudden burst and quick expansion. For years, scientists have been looking for evidence of this rapid expansion and they recently claim to have found some evidence for this expansion in the form of “light ripples” imprinted in the skies in a leftover glow called the cosmic microwave background. The article compares these light ripples with a person causing water ripples in a pond after kicking a ball into a pond.

In reading a few articles on this topic, the one in Fox News is the only one I saw that identified what was not answered by this new scientific data—who started the process to begin with. The authors leave that open by stating, “Scientists still don’t know who kicked the ball.”

Mankind has always been trying to answer questions about their existence. The article ends with the teleological and existential questions people ask, “Why do we exist? How did the universe begin?” As scientists work to provide theories to our existence, the one thing they generally refuse to do is to acknowledge a Creator is the cause of our material universe. They analyze all things from an atheistic worldview, looking at impersonal forces as the origin of our existence, as if the Lord is not Creator. As they do, they fundamentally ignore that the universe was created for the glory of God so that we might praise him in all that we see (Psalm 19; Romans 1:18-32).