

# 24-1016wc Transcript

**24-1016wc - Christian Apologetics, p75, Tom Freed**

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## 24-1016 Wed. Class - Christian Apologetics, p75

Transcript (0:04 - 23:52)

### Transcript

**Teacher:** Tom Freed

(0:04) Last week, we started looking at signposts where things point towards God. (0:12) We can't point to one magic bullet to say that there's absolute proof that God exists. (0:23) There's a lot of evidence, but there's not just one thing you could look to and say, (0:27) oh, this is going to convince everybody.

(0:30) And even if we could, many people would still not believe. (0:34) We gave birth to earth and spoke like no other man, performed miracles, (0:41) lived a sinless life and rose from the dead, and many still did not believe, (0:45) having witnessed all these things. (0:47) You can't convince everybody.

Even Jesus didn't convince everybody. (0:52) The only shallow truth can be proven absolutely. (0:55) The deepest answers of life are beyond absolute proof.

(1:01) This chapter is not offering coercive proofs for God. (1:06) Christianity cannot be proven in that sense, though it can be justified. (1:13) It can and should be trusted.

(1:15) Instead of proof, consider the following arguments to be signposts. (1:21) Signs say or signal something, but it is impossible to interpret them (1:26) according to mistaken frameworks or to ignore them altogether. (1:32) Just like with that Dale Tackett video, the evolutionist, the atheist, (1:38) want to follow the evidence until it leads to God, and they won't follow it anymore.

(1:44) So as Christians, we don't mind following the evidence to point to God, (1:51) but some of these people refuse to believe no matter how much proof there is. (1:58) But there are ways around signposts. (2:00) The question is, what take on these signs provides the deepest, richest, (2:08) and most coherent view of reality? (2:10) The question posed in this section can be used to prompt others to consider (2:16) the best way to interpret these signs.

(2:19) The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility. (2:24) The fact that it is comprehensible is a miracle. (2:29) It's written from Albert Einstein, Physics and Reality.

(2:35) Why can we make sense of the universe? (2:39) The world is something that we can understand, not fully, but we can understand it. (2:44) We are so accustomed to being able to comprehend aspects of the world around us (2:48) that fundamental questions are quickly passed over. (2:53) What makes science and understanding in general possible? (2:58) Why is it that the structure of the universe can be charted mathematically? (3:04) The belief in God does make better sense than the secular frameworks (3:08) for understanding this phenomenon.

(3:11) Christianity has shown itself to be in some sense ahead of its time (3:16) in providing a framework for explaining the intelligibility of the universe. (3:24) So that's true, Christianity gives us reason we can point to these things in the universe. (3:31) You know, a lot of these things can't just happen by random chance.

(3:36) Alasdair McGrath writes, (3:37) God created the world with an ordered structure, (3:42) which human beings are able to uncover by virtue of being the image of God, (3:47) or bearing the image of God. (3:50) What makes sense of this universe? (3:53) We can make sense of this universe because God created it (3:58) and gave us intelligent minds to comprehend it. (4:03) Why is it that the universe seems fine-tuned for life? (4:08) Increasingly, there is growing awareness that a great deal had to go right for life to occur.

(4:13) By now, imagine the universe being regulated by a complex system of dials, (4:20) which each having to be surgically precise in a precise position for life to exist. (4:27) These include the cosmological constant, the strong electromagnetic forces, (4:34) carbon production in stars, the proton-neutron difference, the weak force in gravity. (4:40) How are all these things possible? (4:42) Did it just randomly happen? (4:44) Did we just randomly end up in a perfect position (4:49) away from the sun? (4:50) Did we just randomly, by chance, all the food on this earth for us? (4:55) You know, everything created so we could have oxygen, have water (4:59) in the right amounts.

(5:01) Is all that just by chance? (5:03) I don't think so. (5:05) And these examples of fine-tuning needed for conditions for life to occur (5:10) range from 1 part in 10 to 1 part in 10<sup>53</sup>. (5:17) If one were off, even the slightest human existence would not be possible.

(5:24) There are so many things that have to go into having life on this earth, (5:29) it's impossible to be all by chance. (5:34) Randomly dealing a deck of 52 playing cards in perfect order (5:39) presents the odds of 1 to 10 to the 68th power. (5:46) So imagine that, randomly dealing 52 cards in the perfect order.

(5:51) That's almost impossible. (5:55) Physicists express the odds of randomly arranging universal physical contents (6:02) in the present arrangement using numbers more like 1 to the 10th (6:08) to the 120th power. (6:12) You can imagine to randomly have this universe come out the way it is, (6:17) it'd be 10 times 10, 120 times.

(6:23) One out of that would be the odds. (6:25) The number's almost so big you can't even calculate it. (6:33) We can obviously see that, you know, having God create the universe (6:40) makes much more sense than it just randomly happening.

(6:45) What makes best sense of the consensus that the universe had a beginning? (6:50) Another great question. (6:52) What makes most sense of the beginning of the universe? (6:55) Did it just explode out of nowhere? (6:58) The question of whether the universe had a beginning (7:02) or if it has existed eternally has been debated throughout history. (7:06) Aristotle, for instance, believed in

the eternality of the universe (7:11) while Christians and Jews have long believed that the universe had been created.

(7:18) For a lengthy portion of time, the belief in the eternality of the universe (7:23) became the dominant scientific position in the West (7:27) until the study of such things as the red shift in light from faraway galaxies, (7:33) cosmic microwave background and thermodynamics (7:36) that pushed this consensus the other way. (7:39) Currently, most scientists agree that the universe had a beginning. (7:44) The more we get to know about our universe, (7:46) the more the hypothesis that there is a creator God who designed the universe for a purpose (7:52) gains in credibility as the best explanation of why we are here.

(7:57) That's a quote from John Lennox. (8:00) Those who disagree with the consensus sometimes argue (8:03) for an infinite regress of causes with no beginning. (8:07) But this is not something that any type of scientific study has ever shown.

(8:14) It seems to be a theory positive to get around the conclusion that the universe had an origin. (8:22) But ironically, this theory still points us to another realm outside of what we can observe in nature (8:29) to try to explain the universe. (8:32) Experience in this world points us to the conclusion (8:35) that everything that began to exist has a cause.

(8:40) Since the universe began to exist, the universe has a cause. (8:47) Well, one thing, if you say that God created the universe, (8:50) a lot of people ask, who made God? (8:54) You ever get that question? (8:57) The question sometimes posed in response to the point in this section, (9:03) well, then who made God misunderstands the point. (9:07) Everything that begins to exist has a cause.

(9:11) But God never began to exist. (9:14) God has always been eternally existing outside of time and space. (9:19) The person who made the computer is not inside the computer.

(9:23) He is outside, just like God is outside the universe, (9:27) and has existed eternally. (9:30) But he's always been there. (9:31) It's kind of hard to wrap our head around that sometimes.

(9:35) But God has always existed. (9:37) He didn't have a beginning, and he has no end. (9:40) He's eternal.

(9:44) Does this consensus that the universe had a beginning (9:47) lead to the affirmation of divine cultivation? (9:50) Not for everyone. (9:53) Some have speculated that the universe was created in a quantum vacuum. (9:58) Question.

(10:00) For in this case, where did the quantum vacuum, (10:02) a kind of universe-making machine, come from? (10:06) Likewise, some will say the laws of physics created the universe. (10:11) But again, where did these laws come from? (10:13) Laws of physics do not create. (10:17) Again, to be clear, neither this nor any other point made so far (10:22) in this chapter demonstrates a personal holy God of Christianity.

(10:27) Yet the current scientific evidence does so well (10:30) with the claim Christians have long made. (10:34) The universe had a beginning and a cause, (10:37) and a cause because it was created by God. (10:43) So where is the evidence point? (10:45) We have all the explanations in the Bible (10:48) where the universe was created, (10:51) how everything is set up for life.

(10:56) You know, the atheists, they don't really have answers to all these questions. (11:01) If you look at the evidence as points, (11:04) more probable that there is a God. (11:08) And we know it is the truth, (11:12) and it's a God of the Bible.

(11:15) So how can moral realism be grounded? (11:19) Morality is irresistible, (11:23) even if one refuses to assent intellectually to moral realism. (11:28) Denying that morality exists independently of our perceptions or feelings, (11:33) people find moral judgments to be an irresistible practice. (11:39) We cannot help but assume moral realism.

(11:42) The French secular humanist philosopher Luc Ferry (11:46) makes this point by asking his readers to consider, (11:50) for example, their gut reaction to extreme violence (11:55) in the Bosnian Serb Armed Forces, (11:58) which they used against the Bosnian Muslims (12:02) in the 1955 Sri Lanka massacre. (12:09) Before the slaughter, they amused themselves by terrifying their victims, (12:14) shooting them in the legs, (12:15) making them run before mowing them down, (12:20) cutting off their ears, (12:21) torturing and then murdering them. (12:25) I've yet to meet anyone, materialist or otherwise, (12:28) who is able to dispense of value judgment, (12:33) says Luc Ferry.

(12:37) Nobody would think that's okay. (12:39) Nobody would say, oh yes, (12:42) only the strong survive, (12:43) it's okay to torture and kill. (12:46) Nobody thinks it's okay to kill a baby.

(12:50) Why do we think that? (12:53) You might ask the unbeliever, (12:54) if there was no objective standard of morality, (12:58) why do we so viscerally feel that this is wicked? (13:01) Is this only a feeling or is it actually wicked? (13:06) To Ferry that such actions are wicked is self-evident (13:09) because those men, like all other human beings, (13:12) had a choice to act differently than they did. (13:16) If they were wild animals, (13:17) he would not bring moral judgments against them. (13:20) But as men, they clearly had a choice (13:22) and can therefore be condemned for their actions.

(13:26) Though we're not like animals, we do have a choice. (13:31) We do have morals. (13:33) We have it ingrained in us, (13:36) ingrained in us from God.

(13:38) You can't avoid feeling this way. (13:41) Of course, as Ferry stresses, (13:43) many materialists will argue (13:45) that all value judgments are illusory (13:47) and determined by cultural conditioning. (13:51) The problem with this idea, however, as Ferry explains, (13:54) is that no human alive, short of a sociopath, (13:59) can do away with value judgments altogether.

(14:04) Even materialists, starting with Marx and Nietzsche, (14:09) have never been able to refrain (14:11) from passing continuous moral judgments (14:13) on all and sundry, (14:16) which their whole philosophy might be expected (14:18) to discourage them from doing. (14:21) The underlying reason materialists (14:24) pass moral judgments, of course, (14:25) is that though they deny it in theory, (14:29) they cannot help but to believe (14:31) humans have the ability to make choices (14:34) for which they should be held accountable. (14:37) This fundamental inconsistency (14:39) is why materialists' position, (14:42) why their position is unsustainable.

(14:45) It's simply not livable. (14:46) It crumbles the minute philosophers (14:48) walk out of this, out of this study (14:51) and into the real world. (14:53) Ferry, recognizing this reality in himself,

(14:56) admits that he cannot invent (14:59) the imperatives of the moral life (15:02) and that truth, beauty, justice, and love (15:05) seem to impose themselves on him (15:09) as if they came from somewhere else.

(15:13) How might we ground this morality from elsewhere? (15:17) Humans are moral beings. (15:20) Even if we deny real morality with our minds, (15:24) we live as moral beings, (15:26) inevitably making ethical judgments. (15:30) How might this morality that we all seem (15:32) to affirm in practice, (15:34) if not also in theory, be grounded? (15:39) Look at grounding morality in culture.

(15:42) Some have argued that morality (15:43) is completely dependent of culture, (15:45) cultural attitudes and assumptions. (15:49) In other words, we judge as good or bad (15:52) based on our social locations. (15:55) What is viewed as good in one culture (15:56) is viewed as bad in another.

(15:59) While dialoguing, you can agree (16:01) with this last statement. (16:03) Cultures often view things differently. (16:06) But the question is not whether cultures differ, (16:09) but rather, is there any way to judge (16:11) some cultural view or individual behavior (16:14) as right or better, (16:16) and the opposite as wrong or inferior? (16:20) If someone answers positively, (16:23) then they admit that there is something (16:24) that transcends culture to determine morality.

(16:29) If we say, for instance, that it's better (16:31) for cultures to allow women to have (16:33) the same rights as men, (16:34) then we are admitting there is something (16:36) that stands above culture. (16:38) If they answer negatively and claim that (16:40) there is nothing that stands above culture, (16:43) then some more questions are necessary. (16:48) As C.S. Lewis famously pointed out, (16:51) what then can we conclude about Nazi Germany? (16:57) Is our condemnation of the Holocaust (17:00) or our advocacy of human rights (17:03) not just a reflection of our cultural bias? (17:07) If someone goes so far to answer yes, (17:10) we have no right to call a cultural practice evil.

(17:15) And you should ask them how they make (17:17) a moral judgment that someone does not have (17:19) the right to call a cultural practice evil (17:23) in this position and practice. (17:29) In other words, grounding morality (17:30) in relative cultural norms collapses (17:33) in on itself and is unlivable. (17:39) We look at grounding morality in science.

(17:43) Attempts have been made to claim that (17:45) neuroscience and naturalistic evolutionary theories (17:48) can explain morality. (17:51) How might you respond to this? (17:53) You can affirm that science is helpful (17:55) in describing physically certain aspects of morality. (18:00) Science can help us explore the questions of morality.

(18:04) But quite a bit is riding on what is meant (18:06) by explaining the morality. (18:09) The term morality is used to mean (18:11) at least three different things in these discussions. (18:14) One, morality is used to mean the realm of right and wrong. (18:20) Morality in this sense prescribes something. (18:23) There's an obligation. (18:24) This is sometimes called real or authoritative morality.

(18:28) Two, morality is used to mean the social rules (18:31) and practices of a given society (18:34) at a purely descriptive level. (18:37) In this sense, the morality of a culture is described. (18:41) But it is not evaluated on the basis (18:43) of what is really right or wrong.

(18:46) Three, morality is used to mean something (18:48) that is more practical or instrumental. (18:51) In this meaning, something is being prescribed. (18:54) There is a do this, don't do this sense.

(18:58) But it is not a moral obligation (18:59) in the same sense of the first type of morality. (19:05) Instead, it is more instrumental. (19:07) If you want to score a goal, you should shoot.

(19:09) In other words, a should is directed (19:11) to achieving a purpose. (19:13) But it does not say whether the purpose is really good or bad. (19:18) So distinguishing these three definitions (19:20) helps us to avoid talking past each other in a conversation.

(19:26) Empirically based scientific studies (19:28) can address the second two types of morality. (19:32) But are unable to address adequately (19:34) the third type, the third category, (19:38) or the first category, real morality. (19:42) However, sometimes attempts at explanations (19:45) will end up, as James Davis Hunter and Paul Lewisky points out, (19:51) looking like a shell game.

(19:53) The claim is made that real morality is being addressed. (19:57) But then, through a sleight of hand, (19:58) one of the other forms of morality are put into play. (20:03) And that's what conflates the meanings of the terms.

(20:09) In other words, various secular scientists (20:12) can describe a goal within a society, (20:14) or even how to best achieve a certain goal. (20:18) But they cannot provide the goal, (20:20) what goal one ought to pursue. (20:23) This is why Thomas Nagel admits that (20:27) from a Darwinian perspective, (20:29) our impressions of value, of constructive, (20:32) realistically are completely groundless.

(20:37) And if true for basic value, Nagel adds, (20:41) it is also true for the entire elaborate structure (20:45) of value and morality that is built up from them (20:50) by practical reflection and cultural development. (20:53) Science does not provide moral obligation. (20:57) For instance, the goal of life, (20:59) according to Darwinian science of survival, (21:02) which is often a bloody affair, (21:05) most recognize that violence in nature (21:07) is not a model for how society should operate.

(21:12) We can look at it. (21:14) We don't live by only the strong survive. (21:17) We can see that the Nazis were wrong (21:19) with how they went about it.

(21:23) If only the strong survived, (21:24) the Nazis would have been correct. (21:27) They viewed that they had to kill the weak. (21:30) They viewed that they could take over (21:32) whatever they wanted to by force.

(21:35) So we can see that morality that we have as humans, (21:41) we know that that's wrong. (21:44) We don't judge bears to be wicked (21:46) for slaughtering their prey. (21:49) But as Luke Perry's example reminds us, (21:51) we do hold humans morally accountable for such acts.

(21:56) Once a claim that science can provide morality (21:58) is exposed as a shell game, (22:01) it becomes clear that moral theorists (22:03) have largely abandoned the possibility (22:05) of empirically demonstrating real morality, (22:08) which is related to things like value, duty, and rights. (22:12) Despite the inability of science to explain (22:15) adequately morality in the fullest sense, (22:19) atheist philosopher Thomas Nagel (22:22) can't shake the belief that good or bad, (22:26) good and bad are more than individual personal preferences. (22:30) For Nagel, that pain is really bad (22:32) and pressure is really good.

(22:34) It's just how they literally seem to be. (22:38) However, hard I try to imagine the contrary, (22:43) and I suspect the same is true of most people. (22:46) So even the atheist has to agree (22:50) that morality comes from somewhere.

(22:54) It comes from somewhere just beyond, (22:57) you know, people living as individuals. (23:01) It comes just from something beyond culture. (23:04) It transcends that.

(23:06) So that's the one thing atheists can't explain is morality. (23:11) Where do they get their morality from? (23:12) Why should they believe that you shouldn't kill your neighbor, (23:16) take everything they have? (23:19) If evolution was true, (23:21) then there shouldn't be anything wrong with it. (23:24) So we'll stop here.

(23:27) I'll close with a prayer. (23:29) Thank you, Lord, for this day. (23:31) Thank you for everybody that made it here tonight.

(23:36) Watch over us. (23:38) Help those on the prayer list. (23:41) Help all of us with our problems and struggles.

(23:43) Thank you for being merciful to us. (23:45) Not punishing us like you should when we sin. (23:49) Help us throughout the week.

(23:51) In Jesus' name, amen.