

Divine Design and the Pine Tree

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The naturalistic explanation given by evolutionists for the existence of the created order cannot meet the dictates of logic that characterize the unencumbered, unprejudiced human mind. The more one investigates the intricacies and complexities of the natural realm, the more self-evident it is that a grand and great Designer is responsible for the existence of the Universe. In fact, the evidence is overwhelming and decisive.

Take, for example, the pine tree. Some 120 species and subspecies of the pine tree exist worldwide (“What Are...?” n.d.). The Ponderosa pine tree (*pinus ponderosa*) is one of America’s abundant tree species, covering approximately 27 million acres of land (“Ponderosa Pine,” 1995). A young Ponderosa pine has brownish-black bark that changes to a distinctive orange-brown color as the tree grows older. The bark is segmented into large plate-like structures whose appearance has been likened to a jigsaw puzzle. This unusual design has a purpose. If the tree catches fire, these plates pop off as the bark burns. The tree, in effect, sheds its burning bark! This design, along with the great thickness of the bark, allows the tree to be very resistant to low intensity fires (“Ponderosa Pine,” n.d.). Since design demands a designer, who is responsible for **this** intricate design?

Another species of pine tree is the Lodgepole Pine (*pinus contorta*), so named since Native Americans used Lodgepole pine for the “lodge poles” in their tepees. This amazing pine tree grows cones that are slightly smaller than a golf ball, are tan when fresh, but turn gray with age. These serotinous cones remain closed until the heat of a forest fire causes them to open. After the fire, the cones open and reseed the forest. The species thus regenerates itself—even though the forest fire kills the tree itself (“Lodgepole Pine,” n.d.). Since such design demands a designer, who is responsible for **this** ingenious design?

Yet another species of pine tree is the Whitebark Pine (*pinus albicaulis*). This tree possesses a symbiotic relationship with a bird species known as the Clark’s Nutcracker. The tree is dependent on this bird for reproduction, while the seed of the tree is a major source of food for the bird. This mutualistic relationship is further seen in the fact that Whitebark pinecones do not open and cast seed when they are ripe. The cones remain closed until the Nutcracker comes along, pries the cone open with its bill, and stores the seed within a pouch beneath its tongue. The bird then caches the seed to be used later as a food supply. Some

of these seed caches are forgotten, or are not needed, thus enabling the tree to reproduce (“Whitebark Pine,” n.d.). Such amazing design—with no Mind behind it? Illogical!

The interdependent, interconnected, interpenetrating features of God’s Creation are beyond the capability of man to trace out—let alone to “manage” or “assist.” Neither a pine tree nor a pinecone is sentient. They have no thinking capacity or consciousness. They possess no personhood, soul, or spirit. Pine trees did not get together and discuss the threat of forest fires to their future survival, and then decide to produce pinecones that would remain closed during a fire only to open afterwards. The standard explanations by evolutionists for such wonders of creation are incoherent and nonsensical. Elihu reminded Job: “Behold, God is exalted in His power; Who is a teacher like Him? Who has appointed Him His way, and who has said, ‘You have done wrong?’ Remember that you should exalt His work, of which men have sung. All men have seen it; man beholds from afar” (Job 36: 22-25—NASB).

Indeed, the realm of nature literally shouts forth the reality of the all-powerful Maker Who alone accounts for the intelligent design of the created order. As the psalmist so eloquently affirmed: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.... There is no speech, nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” (Psalm 19:1-4). Indeed, “since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made” (Romans 1:20). Only a foolish person would conclude there is no God (Psalm 14:1).

REFERENCES

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Q In the introductory comments to Jesus' oft-quoted sermon recorded in Matthew chapters 5-7, the first verse sets the stage for His "astonishing teachings." Matthew indicates that "seeing the multitudes," Jesus "went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him" (emp. added). When Luke gives the setting for Jesus' masterful sermon, he says that Jesus "came down with them and stood on a level place" (emp. added). The question that has been asked by many people is why Matthew recorded Jesus preaching this sermon from a mountain, while Luke said it was while He stood on a level place. Could Matthew or Luke have made a legitimate geographical error here, or is there a reasonable explanation for the difference that exists?

A First of all, for these passages to be contradictory one must assume the two sermons were delivered at the same place and at the same time. But, as H. Leo Boles stated in his commentary on Luke, this sermon "may have been repeated a number of times and Luke gives a record of the sermon which was repeated at some later time than the record given by Matthew" (1940, p. 134). It is more than possible that Jesus repeated His teachings on various occasions. He easily could have preached the beatitudes in Capernaum as well as in Cana. He could have taught the model prayer in both Bethany and Beth-

saida. Who are we to say that Jesus preached the principles and commands found in Matthew 5-7 **only once**? There are some men today who travel to a different city nearly every week preaching the same sermons—and do so effectively. Could Jesus not have done something similar?

A more likely solution to this geographical "problem" is simply to understand that Matthew and Luke were referring to the same sermon, and that Jesus was preaching it while being both on a mountain and on a "plain" (KJV) at the same time. The word "plain" (*tópon pedinoú*) simply means "level place" (Wycliffe, 1985), and is translated thusly in nearly all modern versions of the Bible. Since a mountain can have level places on it, no one can assert logically that Matthew 5:1 and Luke 6:17 are contradictory. I have been to the top of a mountain in Anchorage, Alaska, that is so level it is known as "Flattop Mountain." To say Jesus stood on a level place on a mountain is no oxymoron.

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 Wycliffe Bible Commentary (1985), Electronic Database: BibleSoft.

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IN THE NEWS

In an Associated Press article posted June 9, 2005 on the *USA Today* Web site, it was reported that the Tulsa Zoo would soon display an exhibit "featuring the biblical account of creation" ("Biblical Account..."). This display was the result of several complaints to the city board about other religious symbols maintained by the zoo, one of which is an elephant statue of the Hindu god, Ganesh, without a representation of biblical ideas. Dan Hicks, an architect in Tulsa, spearheaded the seemingly successful effort to include the Genesis account that God created the world in six days ("Biblical Account..."). Even the mayor of Tulsa, Bill LaFortune, solidly backed the Creation display.

Yet, just one month later, the decision to display the biblical account of Creation was reversed. In another Associated Press article by Shaun Schafer, released July 7, 2005, it was reported that the board had a change of heart and voted 3-1 to exclude the display. The lone board member to vote for keeping the display was Mayor LaFortune (Schafer, 2005).

Is it not telling that a zoo, supported by public funds can put on display religious icons and ideas that pertain to the polytheistic worldview of Hinduism, yet when a suggestion is made to put on display the biblical account of Creation, it is met by a mass of criticism and political pressure. Has our "Christian" nation veered so far from its origins that it

will allow anything but truly Christian ideas to be openly disseminated through public media resources? The sad truth is that, in many sectors of our country, we must answer "yes" to this question. Many of those who shout tolerance the loudest, will tolerate practically anything, except the accurate, biblical view of origins. The apostle Paul wrote about individuals who "did not like to retain God in their knowledge" (Romans 1:28). That same attitude is clearly seen in the most recent decision of the city board to exclude the display about Creation. Dan Hicks hit the nail on the head when he commented, "There must be something very special about the Genesis account for opponents to fight so hard to suppress those words" (Schafer, 2005). Very special indeed! The Genesis account is nothing less than God's own description of His creative actions.

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