

# OpenTheo

## Will All Religions One Day Be Proven Wrong by Science?

July 13, 2023



### #STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about how to respond to the claim that “all faith-based religions will one day be proven wrong by science” and whether or not students will continue to show up to youth group if you start training them by role-playing objections against the faith.

\* How would you respond to the claim that “all faith-based religions will one day be proven wrong by science”?

\* Will students continue to show up to youth group if we start training them by role-playing objections against the faith?

### Transcript

Welcome to another episode of hashtag STRask. The podcast from Stand to Reason where you send in your questions, and then I ask Greg to answer them. And then I just throw in a few things after I let them do all the hard work.

A little bit here and there totally bests me. But it's a good question. I'll start with a question from Matt Euler.

I recently had a discussion with my brother and a friend. I was asking the friend why he left the faith. He responded with this objection, paraphrased.

All faith-based religions will one day be proven wrong by science. My brother agreed. How would you respond? Well, I guess again the question is again, tell me more.

Okay, what do you mean by that? And though that's the model question, there's lots of ways that this can be characterized. So there's confusion here. First of all, I want to know, yeah, tell me more.

Explain that a little bit more clearly to me. Maybe I'd say that. And then it will help.

It will force them to get more information out on the table. Okay, this is really important because many times when people, and we discussed this in a prior show, when people

offer either a slogan, or in this case, a point or opinion or rationale. And they're required to give more information.

Once they do that, it doesn't sound as convincing as it did at first blush. So all faith-based claims are going to be proved to be false by science. Okay, I'm not sure I follow your point.

Help me to tell me more. Well, science has had a lot of advancements, right? And science has a lot of things that we thought were false. I'm sorry, we thought were answered by religious things.

It turns out science answers those questions too. Okay, so anything that faith-based religions that have questions about what he means by faith would have said like what? Like the afterlife. The existence of the afterlife will turn out to be false.

Okay, so now I got more information on the table. And I mean, I just characterized a possible response. And I actually wasn't thinking about the ramifications of it.

I was just thinking, here's what they might say because faith-based religions, or let's just call it religion. Because faith and religion in their mind goes completely together and faith, I suspect, means a mere belief without any rationale or reason. All right? That would, that would be a subject of other questions for clarification sake.

If that was a challenge offered to me. But the afterlife is a huge component in other religions. The heaven or hell or reincarnation just to kind of cover the three major world religions, the theistic and non-theistic religions, it kind of covers those.

Well, great. How is it then? How is it that given this is a big part of religion, the afterlife? How is it possible, my question to them, for science to adequately invade in against the possibility of an afterlife? How can science prove that there is no afterlife? Okay, that's a question that needs to be asked. This person is saying, well, there are certain things that science will prove to be false that are part of it.

Okay, Christians believe in the Trinity. How would science prove that the Trinity is, they believe that God exists? How does, how in principle, I'm interested in hearing, in principle, how would it prove that God does not exist? Okay? So, how would science in principle prove that heaven and hell cannot exist, that there is no afterlife? Now, I hope people see the impossibility of a materialistic means of examining the material world, the impossibility of that in veying against anything in the immaterial world. Now, I've written about this in Street Smarts, which is coming out in September, but it's something I've been talking about all of my life.

You can't weigh a chicken with a yardstick. Okay? Kind of a funny way of putting it. No, yardstick was meant to measure something different than weight.

It was meant to measure length, but that doesn't mean that the chicken has no weight simply because the yardstick can't measure it by the same token. Scientific enterprise is a means of knowledge of a certain type, but that doesn't foreclose on knowledge of a different type or in a different arena than science is able to measure. And this is what the presumption is.

The presumption is science will be able to invade adequately against all of these things that religious people believe. Okay, how is that possible? Now, I think it's possible in some cases, oh, that person believed such and so got healed. Well, guess what? They went to the doctor and the doctor took a scan and they still have cancer.

They weren't healed. So there you have a process, an empirical process that can invade in against an empirical claim that turns out to be false. But what the science can't do is it can't say miracles can't happen.

That's not science that says this, that's philosophy and that's materialistic philosophy in particular. So the confusion here is the area of a scientific methodology, or I should say a methodology to gain knowledge about one arena of reality. And then assuming that is the only arena that any knowledge could possibly be gained from, that would be a philosophical imposition, an idea called materialism.

And that's a whole other issue. Science is not capable of establishing a metaphysical point or establishing a metaphysical principle. It is subject to metaphysical principles that are determined by other means.

So it's curious. Now, this is a variation and a much more modest variation of someone who says you can't know anything unless science teaches you. Okay, that's much more expansive and that's self-refuting.

But this is just saying all the religious claims that people believe are going to be refuted by science. Hmm. Wait a minute, how is that possible? How can science say prove there is no afterlife? That's a question.

I'm waiting for the answer. Notice the dead air. That's what you're going to get.

Science is not capable of doing that. Not even in principle. It's metaphysically presumed to be the case because of the imposition of materialism on it.

There is no afterlife, but that's a metaphysical philosophic point of view. It is not a conclusion of science. I think it's important to note here that this isn't actually an argument that this person has made.

Notice he says all faith-based religions will one day be proven wrong by science. Now, he's got hidden premises here that I think you've addressed with your questions, Greg, but he hasn't actually explained to them. All he's done is what they accuse Christians of

doing, which is he's made an argument of naturalism of the gaps.

We don't know how it happened, but we know naturalism did it. We don't have evidence for it, but someday we will have the evidence for it. Which is circular, by the way, because it presumes the truth of naturalism, which is part of what's at stake in this discussion.

Right. This isn't actually how Christians argue for anything related to science. They don't just say we don't know how some naturalistic process could have created DNA.

Therefore, God did it. That's not how Christians argue. They actually make an argument explaining that what we see in DNA, the type of meaningful information only comes from a mind.

That's a positive argument. It's not just we don't know how it happened. Therefore, God did it.

But if he's saying one day they'll be proven by science, he's saying, I don't know how it did it. But therefore, naturalism did it. It's interesting.

That is a faith statement. It's blind faith. Yeah.

That is meant to counter the so-called blind faith statements of religious folk. So it's important to note, well, you know what? I think we should go by the evidence we have now. I mean, it doesn't make sense to reason on evidence we don't have yet.

Exactly. Because how do you know that evidence is ever going to show up? You're just expressing trust in your worldview, but you're not giving reasons. So I would press him for reasons.

But I think the point you're making is a really important one, Greg. And that is, there are arguments that have nothing to do with science, like philosophy, the column cosmological argument, that there's no way even in principle. I mean, I guess if science could discover things creating themselves of some kind, kind of nonsensical.

I don't think that's even possible. All science can do is say, there it is. And we don't know where it came from.

They can't conclude that it created itself. Actually, that is philosophically coherent. You have to be something to create yourself before you can create yourself.

But it could say, someone could say it's not caused. But that's all we all we can say empirically is the cause is not evident to us. We don't know what the cause is.

You can't say it's uncaused. And we have a very powerful metaphysical principle in play that affects the result of causes. That science supports, by the way, depends on.

Yeah, so science in a lot of ways supports Christianity. So what you could say is, you know, well, let's look at what science actually supports rather than, like you said, Greg, make the distinction between naturalism and science. But I think you will probably also have to address the statement here, all faith based religions, because there's a lot assumed in that statement.

He's assuming that by faith based, it's just there's no evidence for it at all. So he's starting off with that assumption. So I would just start by saying, well, what do you mean by faith based? Okay, so you mean that there's no reason for that people don't have reason? Are you aware that people do have reasons for? Well, here are the reasons.

How do you see science showing this is false later on? Make him give arguments for his statement. Yeah. And by the way, even if his claim or what seems to be the presumption that all religions are based on a mere belief and have no evidence to them, his arguments or his declarations would still not go through.

It might be that there are all kinds of beliefs about the immaterial realm that people have no good reason to believe. But that doesn't mean that some means of measuring the physical realm is going to disprove these beliefs about the non physical realm. So again, even if they're not substantiated by those who believe them, it still doesn't mean that his own claim is going to go through and be sound.

Okay, Greg, let's go on to a question from Brandon Handy. And this one is about youth groups. Do students continue to show up after we implement role playing objections against the faith? I want to equip them, but usually students seem to be looking for fun.

So will they come back if you challenge them with, say, role playing objections? Well, I can't. I can't answer that regarding his group or even in general regarding other groups. But I think that my suspicion here is the tale is wagging the dog in because the presumption seems to be, and maybe this is the way it is with a lot of churches.

It's our job to give young people a place to get together at. Now, what we do with them is a matter of debate. It depends what they want.

If they just want to have fun, then it's our job to help them get together to do something. And that's what they want. So maybe we'll give them that.

And if we don't give them fun, then they won't meet together and we will not be meeting our responsibility. Okay. But in my view, that's not the reason you should have a youth group to provide not the main reason, not even the, not even the even a partial reason, you know, unless you want to, we want to keep these kids off the streets and out of trouble so they can, you know, be at our church at Winstonites or something like that.

The reason that you get together with the youth is to disciple the youth. Okay. That's what I would say.

This is a church. The church is the place where we are the ecclesia, the called out ones. We are called out of the world in general.

And we come out of the world at certain times of the week to be together and be built up characteristically Sunday or Sunday evening or Wednesday night or youth group or something like that. And, and so then what is the purpose is to build up the body of Christ in various fashions. It's discipleship.

Okay. Well, our people, our kids just want to have fun. Well, then go to Chuck E. Cheese's don't come to the church.

Well, then they won't come to the church, but if we're coming to the church, just to have fun and eat pizza hang out together, then how are you fulfilling anything spiritually meaning in their life. And see, this is why I think Confucia with the youth groups is now J one walls, love youth groups for a long time. And, and he got sick and tired of what he saw happening.

And he said, I'm going to stop throwing candy at kids. This is a decision he made regarding the, the, the purpose of his groups. And he said, here is my purpose with you guys.

You spend four years with me, you know, freshman year to senior year, whatever. And my goal is that when you leave, you never leave Christ. Okay.

So he had a very clear vision for what he wanted to accomplish. Now, when he raised the bar with his people, some people left and other people came. The point is he was doing something useful and meaningful.

He wasn't throwing candy at them. He wasn't just feeding them pizza and they're playing crazy games. He was discipling them.

No, that doesn't mean you can't have pizza. That doesn't mean that there can't be fun associated with those times of getting together. A young life is an example.

I can think of they do all kinds of crazy things, but there's still a, a, or has been historically a, a core of gospel and discipleship training that's involved there. And so that's what the person has to ask any youth leader. Why am I here? Now, I have another, another friend, Rob Sheldon.

I haven't seen for many, many years, but he was a youth leader in a church in San Antonio, Texas when relativism came out, that was over 20 years ago. He had Frank Beckwith out and, and I out to give a session on that, a Saturday on relativism. Well, he had a youth group there.

And in his statement, and I think we haven't posted somewhere in our website because

it's so great. And I was just, I saw it the other day in my own records. He says basically what his youth group is all about.

And to paraphrase, he says, first of all, I'm not a babysitter. I'm not a talk show host or a game show host. I'm not a travel agent.

I'm not your mother. I'm not a restaurant. You know, I'm your pastor.

I'm not a pastor in training. You know, how they take the pastors and train them, give them to the kids, the youth group. He said, I'm your pastor.

And that means it's my job to build you up in the, in the word and make you disciples. And since Christianity is word based, if, if when you come to our meetings, you bring your Bible in a notebook. And if you don't bring your Bible in your notebook, you don't come.

Because that's what this is for. You want in, you want out, you make your choice, but this is what we're doing. Now, what was really cool about Rob is Rob's dad was military, you know, so he's a military kid and he's kind of got this bearing, you know, he's kind of a tough guy, you know, he doesn't know nonsense guy.

But, but that resonated with the students, the students responded to the challenge. And I did a number of events over at that church. Had a great time with Rob and his team.

And what was characteristic about those events was that the youth would bring their parents instead of their parents dragging the youth. Because they were so committed to what they were learning and getting the good stuff. They're saying, Mom, Dad, you got to come to this.

Come on. Come here, these guys are whatever they're doing. So if you raise the bar, people are going to respond, especially young people who are, tend to be on the idealistic side anyway.

Are you going to lose some people? Right. Sure. But if you, if you, if you're, if your purpose is to provide a place of fun for youth to get together who are associated with the church, you're likely going to lose them all in the long run.

Once they go off, they're not around all these people that are encouraging them in a certain way. They have no substance themselves really spiritually. Then they're off.

They're gone. And other things will entice them. So it's, to me, it's worth paying the price of raising the bar and, and making sure that the youth group is about something substantive for them as Christians and the other things are just add-ons, not the other way around.

I think it's admirable to want as many people there as possible. Obviously we want

people to know Jesus, but you have to remember the numbers aren't for their own sake. We don't want numbers just so that we have numbers.

There's a purpose like you pointed out, Greg, and the purpose is to disciple them. And I, I can say I've been on apologetics mission trips with Brett and I've seen these kids and the kids that you will... Brett Conkel, he used to be with St. And there's a reason how he's with them. Yes.

So he would take, he still does this with Maven and he would take his high school students and I think maybe even younger, but high school and college. And they would, he would train them and they would go and they would talk to atheists and Mormons and depending on what the trip was for. And these kids were so committed and the satisfaction of doing something meaningful, of knowing God in a deeper way and of being able to share the truth with others in a meaningful way.

That, that is something real and it, and it's something different. Like you pointed out, Greg, they need to understand why they're there. You give them a reason to be there.

You give them a real deep, meaningful reason to be there and the ones that stay are the ones you want to be there. Right. Right.

And of course you can keep bringing new people in, but I wouldn't look at the youth group as merely an outreach. The youth group is a, I mean, I think churches have difficulties with this issue also seeing their churches in outreach rather than as a place to disciple the followers of Christ. So, um, that's all I have to add.

Greg, you did a such a good job. I, I think it's, I just think it's so important to do what we're called to do in these youth groups. Come what may.

And if you have five people that you end up discipling in a really deep way, you're going to have a way bigger influence on your community for Christ than if you had a hundred people that you never disciplined in that way. All right. I guess we've said that a few different ways.

We're passionate about it. And actually, um, when Jay Warner Wells filled in for you, Greg, I can't remember if it was the end of May or the very beginning of June, he talked about the training model of how to train new people. So if anyone's interested, go to our website, [STR.org](http://STR.org) and our weekly broadcast, either the end of May or the very beginning of June and look for Jay Warner Wallace.

And by the way, he was one of the persons that worked regularly with Brett. Right. Yeah.

Doing these, uh, these immersive, um, experience, things over at Salt Lake City or Berkeley, California. Yeah. He and Brett developed those and they did these, you know, atheist role-played, prepare the kids, then they would bring in actual atheists and the



atheists would interact with them.

And so they've done a lot of work training kids to know how to respond to these challenges. All right. That's it, Greg.

Thank you, Matt and Brandon. And we'd love to hear from you. Send us your question on it on Twitter with the hashtag STR.

Ask or go through our website. Look for the hashtag STR. Ask podcast and you'll find a link there to send us your question.

This is Amy Hall and Greg Coco for Stand to Reason.