

CHRISTIAN WORKER

“We are workers together with Him...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

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DOES GOD EXIST?

Branyon May

Often the answers to the simplest of observations can yield the greatest insight. Consider the following questions. Where did all the stuff in our Universe come from? Who or what put order and design in nature? How did we end up on a life-bearing planet? By answering these questions, we can form a reasoned argument that our Universe is not an accident but a purposed result (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20).

Natural Existence Demonstrates the Need for Supernatural

The simple old adage, “There is no such thing as a free lunch,” reminds us you cannot get something from nothing. Every known effect is the result of a prior cause. Our daily lives revolve around the push to achieve desired results and the necessity of work to produce them. Such a practical cycle of work (cause) and results (effect) is no less true within the natural world. In science, this principle is termed simply the Law of Cause and Effect, and it forms the foundation for scientific inquiry. Everything from understanding planetary orbits to tracking hurricane formation to criminal investigations relies on making observations and investigating their causes. Yet, the greatest observed effect is the existence of all matter and energy within our Universe.

Humans understand the simple truth that we are not the creators of matter or energy, and as such have formulated scientific principles including the First Law of Thermodynamics, which states, energy (or matter) cannot be created or destroyed. Did scientists give the Universe this law? Certainly not, this truth is based on observation and found to have no exception. Further, could humans or any other physical component within the Universe have created the entire Universe? Certainly not, for that would mean something could cause its own creation. The very existence of our natural Universe establishes there must exist a supernatural (outside of), preexisting (prior to) Creator.

Observable Design Demands an Intelligent Designer

It is easy to acknowledge skill, beauty, and design as you walk the halls of museums and art galleries, seeing masterpieces. Is it not then easier to consider the totality of the art, science, and minds of these human creators and proclaim, “What a beautiful masterpiece by an exceptional Creator”? When we look at the awe-inspiring bodies in the heavens or study the interconnected systems of Earth or appreciate the diversity of life that surrounds us, how can we ignore their organization and design?

Utilizing the common sense principle of cause and

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SOME BIG QUESTIONS

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FROM THE EDITOR:

Is Jesus the Son of God?

Cody Westbrook

When Jesus and the twelve reached Caesarea Philippi, He asked them a very important question: “Whom do men say that I the Son of man, am?” (Matt. 16:13). Naturally, there were many thoughts and rumors of the Savior’s identity circulating Judea at the time—John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah—just as there would continue to be throughout history. Peter, however, answered the question correctly: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). That Jesus claimed deity is beyond dispute (cf. Matt. 17:1-5; Mark 2:5-12; John 8:24; etc.), the question is, how do we know His claims were, and are, true? How did Peter know? What had he seen and heard that would drive him to the correct conclusion, that Jesus is the Son of God?

The reality of Jesus’ deity has been proven more than adequately. Those like Peter, who saw and heard Him on earth, believed because of His miracles—“Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did” (John 2:23)—and because of His preaching—“And as he spake these words, many believed on him” (John 8:30). Scripture testifies to the fact that Jesus is, indeed, the Son of God (cf. John 20:30-31). This, of course, assumes that the scripture can be trusted and the miracles, testimony, and other evidence of Jesus’ deity it puts forth, should be accepted as fact. Other articles in this Christian Worker edition will deal with those questions. Our purpose is to explore one primary form of evidence for the deity of Jesus—the Resurrection.

Christianity stands or falls on the resurrection of Christ, and so does His claim to the the Son of God. Our hope stands upon the resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3) and without it we are most miserable (1 Cor. 15:15-19). Paul wrote that Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4) and Jesus predicted His resurrection on multiple occasions (cf.

John 2:19-21; Matt. 17:9; Luke 9:22-27; etc.). Therefore, if Jesus did not actually rise from the dead, then He was a false prophet, and certainly could not be the Son of God. Though there is a great body of evidence proving the reality of Jesus’ resurrection, consider three brief, but fundamental arguments.

First, the empty tomb. After Jesus was buried, Pilate placed guards at the tomb, and sealed it with a heavy stone to prevent Jesus’ body from being stolen (Matt. 27:62-66). Those guards were witnesses to the resurrection and were bribed by the chief priests to lie and say that the disciples stole the body, the very thing which they were stationed to prevent (Matt. 28:11-15). Later, the apostles began to preach that Jesus has raised from the dead. A claim that easily could have been rebuked by the Jewish leaders simply by producing His body. But the reason the Jews never produced Jesus’ body to prove His disciples to be liars, is the same reason they bribed the soldiers to lie. The tomb was found empty, and remains empty to this day, because Jesus did indeed rise from the dead. Rest assured that His enemies would have left no stone unturned in order to produce His body or any evidence at all that would prove the claim of resurrection to be false. Yet, they cannot.

Second, the existence of theories explaining the empty tomb. The Jewish authorities were not the only ones who would scramble to explain why the tomb was empty. Throughout history, several theories have been suggested attempting to explain away the resurrection. The swoon theory suggests that Jesus did not actually die on the cross but fainted due to exhaustion and was revived in the tomb. Another idea is that Jesus only appeared to His disciples through spiritual visions or even hallucinations. Further, it has been suggested that the resurrection account is simply a legend that grew over time in Palestine and spread throughout the world. While there are a number of problems with these

ideas, and many more like them, it is beyond the scope of this article to explore those problems. We simply want to make one observation, and that is that the very fact that these theories exist is evidence that Jesus' did not remain in the tomb. It if had, there would be no need for outlandish explanations for its disappearance.

Third, the spread of Christianity and the faith of the disciples. As Gamaliel recognized, many religious movements have come along throughout history, and none with permanent staying power (Acts 5:34ff). That cannot be said about Christianity. How could one explain the spread of a religious movement centered around a lowly Jewish carpenter in first century Palestine to a globally recognized religion more than 2,000 years later? How could one explain the willingness of so many in the first century to suffer terrible persecution and even death because of their faith in the risen Lord? How could one explain the radical change in Saul of Tarsus from an elite Jew who persecuted Christians, to an apostle of Christ and greatest preacher the world will ever know, save Christ? These things cannot be explained apart from the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

God has never intended for anyone to believe anything without adequate evidence. He has revealed Himself clearly in creation (cf. Ps. 19:1) so that those who deny His existence do so without excuse (Rom. 1:20). Likewise, the incredible claim of the resurrection of Jesus. The evidence for the truth of that claim is so overwhelming as to put its reality beyond dispute. This article has only touched the hem of the garment, in exploring that evidence. It is an absolute fact that Jesus rose from the grave, and it is an absolute fact that He is, indeed, the Son of the Living God.

CW

DID MIRACLES REALLY HAPPEN?

Kevin Cauley

Christianity is a religion of miracles, and the Bible records the historical fact of them. Passages such as 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 declare this. The truthfulness of the Bible's message rests squarely upon miracles (John 20:30-31). Christianity is a historical religion with historical evidence for its truthfulness, and miracles are the key witness.

Many have challenged the Bible's claims of miracles. The

philosopher David Hume wrote, "A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined."¹ Hume argues that regular human experience precludes miracles as follows:

- A. All real events operate according to the laws of nature.
- B. Miracles are not events that operate according to the laws of nature.
- C. Therefore: miracles are not real events.

His first premise defines real events in terms of the laws of nature; it assumes what must be proved, namely, that there are no real events outside of the physical laws of nature. However, miracles are real events that operate outside of the physical laws of nature. Just assuming that they are not real (by definition) does not prove they are not real.

C.S. Lewis questioned his second premise.² He argued that miracles operate in cooperation with the laws of nature. They are only a rearrangement of nature by means of control over such laws, but not in violation of them. The miracle of the withering of the fig tree was not a violation of the laws of nature, per se, but simply an acceleration of those laws.

Hume's argument against miracles entails the assumption of empiricism, the philosophy that only the five senses give knowledge. To say this, however, presents an immediate difficulty. The claim, "only the five senses give knowledge" cannot itself be verified by the five senses. So, it must not be knowledge. Abandoning empiricism opens up the possibility of knowledge beyond the five senses. This includes knowledge of miracles by credible witnesses.

Because miracles are improbable events, one would rather believe the witnesses were insane or lying. The fact that many who claim to witness and/or perform miracles are actually insane or lying seems to warrant the thought. However, this does not mean that all of them are. The possibility of God's working in the world miraculously entails being open to credible testimony that God has done miracles.

What testimony would be credible to warrant one's belief in any miracle? Those testifying would need to be men of integrity with a strong aversion to lying and come from a culture with strong aversions to lying. Public lying was strictly prohibited in Israel (Ex. 20:16).

Such men should also themselves express skepticism. It is reasonable to question that a miracle has happened. The apostles were initially skeptical of Jesus' resurrection. Mark

¹ David Hume. "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding," in *The Empiricists*. (New York: Anchor Books, 1974), 391.

² C. S. Lewis. *Miracles*. (New York: Harper One, 2000), 94.

16:11 says that they all doubted. John 20:24-29 records the case of Thomas who refused to believe unless he could see the post-mortem wounds in Jesus' hands and feet.

A significant number of witnesses to a miracle gives it more credibility. Paul records that the twelve apostles, a crowd of above 500, and he all saw Jesus alive after His crucifixion and death (1 Cor. 15:1-8). The numbers are there.

Witnesses are credible that affirm their message even in the face of persecution and death. Stephen and James were early martyrs (Greek: witnesses) for the Christian faith (Acts 7, 12). The apostles suffered persecution early and often for affirming the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 4, 5). Traditional history records that all the apostles (save John) were martyred. They believed their own message.

If miracles really happened, an adamant opponent to Christianity would be a great witness. Saul of Tarsus was that enemy. He saw the resurrected Christ, and, based upon the evidence, he became a witness for God's doing miracles. Credible witnesses to miracles existed.

What about the source of these witnesses' beliefs? Is it credible? Was Jesus insane? Did He just orchestrate an elaborate hoax to deceive people into acting the way they did? C. S. Lewis replies to this thought in his book, *Mere Christianity*.

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronising nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.³

Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend: and consequently,

³ C. S. Lewis. "Mere Christianity," in *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*. (New York: Harper One), 50-51.

however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God.⁴

Given the evidence, we must conclude that miracles really did happen!

⁴ Lewis, 52.

CW

CAN THE BIBLE BE TRUSTED?

Rob Whitacre

The authenticity of Scripture is one of the three pillars of faith: God, the Bible, and Christ. If any of these fail, the entire Christian system falls. We are living in a growing culture of skepticism and unbelief. Believers in Scripture no longer represent the vast majority; at best, it is 50-50. If we are going to change these numbers, we need to go on the offense. An offensive Christian is an evangelistic Christian. The purpose of this article is not to defend the truth but to train the saved to teach the lost. Several years ago, we published an evangelistic tool titled, *Believe the Bible*. This three-booklet series is fashioned after *Back to the Bible*. The question format is designed to take one from unbelief to faith in God, His Word, and His Son. Lesson B is titled, *Bible Inspiration*.

Because the Bible claims God as its author, it is unique in all the world, regardless of your belief in its teachings. Observe that people are not investigating the writings of Shakespeare and Poe for divine authorship for an obvious reason—they do not claim God as the author! The Bible makes this claim clear and complete from Genesis to Revelation. There should not be any resistance to this affirmation as you provide several examples from the text. Here are a few excerpts from the study:

Genesis 6:15

Noah was instructed to build the ark using the length of _____, the breadth of it _____, and the height of it _____.

*The ratio he used to build the ark is 30:5:3. This is the perfect ratio for building a large vessel for seaworthiness and not for speed. The US Navy used this ratio in WW2 to build the U.S.S. *Jeremiah O'Brien* to carry cargo!

Job 38:24

The Lord told Job that light could be _____, which scatters the east wind upon the earth.

*When a narrow beam of sunlight passes through a prism, it is divided into a spectrum. This was supposedly not discovered until the time of Sir Isaac Newton.

Genesis 17:12

God told Abraham to circumcise male children on day _____.

*On day 8, a male has the greatest blood clotting ability in all of life. It is the perfect day to perform surgery.

Deuteronomy 23:12-14

Did the Bible command Israel to bury their human waste?

*The Black Plague was a result from improper disposal of human waste; 13 million people died.

Leviticus 11:3, 29-31

God forbids eating reptiles. Name a few reptiles that are specified as unclean. _____

God states these reptiles are unclean and forbids touching them even when they are _____.

*As high as 90 percent of reptiles are carriers of Salmonella bacteria.

Although these are greatly abbreviated due to space, they are sufficient to demonstrate a supernatural influence. There are only two choices: 1) The Bible is lucky when it makes these accurate pre-scientific statements, or 2) The Bible is inspired. The conclusion will be obvious. Since most of us are not scientists, notes are included below some questions to provide you with the information needed to find the correct answer.

Perhaps no internal evidence is more powerful than prophecy. There are two important points you will need to make for this section to reach its full impact. First, emphasize the notes below each question. The time frame between the prophecy and fulfillment make educated guesses as an explanation impossible. Second, emphasize the mere volume of these prophecies. We are not talking about a few lucky guesses but rather hundreds and hundreds of divine statements. The premise of all prophecy is Jeremiah 29:8. If it does not come to pass, then the Bible is not inspired. I doubt any other book is willing to withstand the scrutiny of such a difficult test! Once again, the reader is left with two choices: lucky guesses or divine knowledge. Here are a few excerpts from the study:

Zechariah 11:12

How many pieces of silver did the prophet Zechariah foretell would be used for hire?

Matthew 26:14-15

How many pieces of silver did they promise Judas to betray Jesus?

Zechariah 11:13

The prophet said the 30 pieces of silver would be cast unto the _____.

Matthew 27:6-10

What did the chief priests purchase with the 30 pieces of silver?

*There are over 500 years between Zechariah's prophecy and Matthew's record.

Isaiah 50:6

What would they do to His face, according to the prophet Isaiah?

Matthew 26:67

What did they do to the face of Jesus?

*There are over 700 years between Isaiah's prophecy and the record of Matthew.

As the evidence builds, we transition from the internal to the external. The Bible is not only a book of science and medicine but also a book of history, geography, and archeology. Unlike fairy tales and writings of fiction, the Bible accurately describes real nations, people, places, and events with precise detail. Here are some examples:

Archeology**Exodus 23:28**

God was going to help Israel drive out the Hivite, Canaanite, and the _____ nations.

*Outside of the Bible, there was no evidence of the Hittite nation and some claimed this was a Biblical error. In 1906 Hugh Wincker discovered the Hittite capital and more than 10,000 clay tablets from its library.

Daniel 7:1

In the first year of _____ king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed.

*Outside of the Bible, there was no record found of this this Babylonian king until 1876. Sir Henry Rawlinson discovered more than 2,000 tablets concerning Babylon that confirmed Belshazzar became king.

Luke 3:1

Pontius Pilate was the _____ of Judah during the reign of Tiberius Caesar.

*There was no evidence this famous Bible character ever existed until 1961 when a stone tablet was found with this inscription: "Pontius Pileate, Prefect of Judah."

Ethics

Matthew 5:44

Jesus said we should not hate those who are our enemies; in contrast, we should _____ our enemies.

Romans 12:20

Paul said if your enemy is hungry, _____ him; if he thirst, give him _____.

Luke 6:28

Jesus said, "_____ them that curse you, and _____ for them which despitefully use you."

The study ends by appealing to common sense. If men had wanted to write the Bible, they could not have written it, and if they could have written the Bible, they would not. It contains an ethical code found nowhere else in societal code. If men wrote the Bible, what society can explain its high ethical and moral code? Who would have written a book that defies natural human responses? There is only one logical explanation to the origin of the Bible, and any open-minded, honest prospect will be forced to agree that the Bible contains characteristics of divine origin, and that God is the only logical explanation.

CW

Is God Good?

Jim Lloyd

Someone may be described as "good" if they are useful or fulfill a purpose ("He's a good baseball player", "She's a good surgeon"). However, "goodness" is also appropriately defined in terms of moral character and uprightness. The Bible tells us that with God both definitions are appropriate. God Himself is good, generous, and benevolent (1 Chron. 16:34, Ps. 103:8). Everything He created was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). The Bible tells us God is working in this world and on our behalf to combat evil with His intentional goodness (Gen. 50:20). And when this

difficult life is over, God will have worked all things together for the ultimate good of those who love Him (Rom. 8:28-30).

However, many are not guided by what the Bible says, and are instead informed only by what they see, feel, and how they interpret their experiences in this life. I think we would all agree that challenges and painful experiences can and have driven people away from the conclusion that God is good. In fact, Atheists often argue that the very presence of evil, pain, and suffering in our world are enough to deny the existence of the benevolent God described in the Bible.

One reason for the alleged discrepancy between what the Bible affirms about God's goodness and what the world concludes when they see evil, pain, and suffering is a failure to properly define what the Bible is actually affirming when it describes and defines God as good. It is an enormous leap in logic to say that the existence of difficulty and tragedy lead to the necessary conclusion that God cannot be good. God's moral upright character implies He will always love good and hate evil, that He will love us and do what is best for us (for humanity), and that He graciously forgives, but it does not necessitate Him intervening to stop every evil deed or every painful experience. Many also erroneously assumes suffering has no value or purpose. What if God was using these experiences to humble us, help us learn, grow, empathize, etc.? Let's also not forget how humanity's free will plays a chief role in explaining why the world is corrupt.

Those who take the time to read the Bible will quickly find out that God dedicates a lot of ink acknowledging and addressing man's pain and his battle against evil. The Bible in no way tries to hide the fact that things have gone horribly wrong in God's world. The Bible tells of sibling rivalries, family feuds, criminal activities, war, famine, disease, and more. The book of Job provides a 42-chapter record of one man's misery. Job cries out with every question someone suffering might ask, and it is a powerful story we can relate to because it hides none of the uncomfortable and ugly parts of life. The real value of the book comes from the fact that God did not abandon Job, and in the end Job did not abandon God either. Of great consolation is the fact that God had been watching him closely the entire time.

It is important to note that the very idea of moral goodness demands the existence of God. While the atheist makes his argument against God based on the supposition that "goodness" exists, and that the presence of evil must negate the reality of God, the logical requirement here is actually the opposite – that "goodness" demands God's exists. In

other words, if the universe only consists of matter, then there can be no such value as good or evil. One can have an opinion about things, but they cannot ascribe absolute objective moral value. To recognize that there is good and evil in the world, is to admit there is an objective moral standard by which we determine what is good and evil, right and wrong.

Skeptics will continue to argue that a good God, with the ability to extinguish evil, must do so or else He cannot be good, but this argument fails as the Bible provides a reasonable and alternative explanation for why there is evil in God's world. God tells us He opposes evil and hates sin with its devastating consequences, and that He has gone to the greatest length to rescue humanity (Rom. 5:8). God is in fact so good that He will one day "wipe away every tear from our eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

Those who seek to deny God's existence by pointing to the evils of this world are denying the only One that can save them from such. Others who attack God by saying He is not good are not qualified to stand in judgement of the Almighty. Job tried to question God, but he quickly found out his knowledge and wisdom was greatly diminished when God started asking questions (Job 38-41).

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor" (Rom. 11:33-34)?

CW

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

effect, when we observe design within the Universe we must honestly admit a Designer has caused such to exist. We rightfully have taken great steps to protect the rights of artists, acknowledging they have put forth the work to place observable design into their art. Now let us make the reasonable extension, where the supernatural, preexisting Creator has the right to be acknowledged for the observable design found in His creation.

How often does it happen that our conversations turn to matters of the weather, speaking about the extremes of hot or cold, wet or dry? Yet, how often do we stop to notice the unique, privileged habitation we humans enjoy? Granted, every day's weather is not a rainbow of perfection, but the fact that we live in an environment where beautiful flowers grow in an array of colorful blooms is astounding. Where this same environment also provides innumerable life-giving cycles such as the cycles for water, oxygen, soils, plant life, insect life, marine life, and animal life. A recognition of uniqueness and design existing on Earth stands in stark contrast to the expectations of chance, randomness, and undirected natural processes. Our fully-functional, life-sustaining, and diversity-abundant environment is an oasis in the vastness of space (Isa. 45:18). Though the temperature may not be to our liking or the humidity comfortable, where else in our Solar System would you rather live? How about living on Mercury's sun-blasted surface or Venus's continuous 900 degree sauna? Or, maybe you would prefer Mars's oxygen deprived atmosphere, or the depths of Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, or Neptune's crushing gravity and thick gases? No, our habitable Earth has been finely-tuned so life not only lives, but thrives.

Earth shows the hallmarks of being designed to match, accommodate, and sustain mankind. At every scale, from the cells in our bodies to Earth's place in the Milky Way Galaxy, we find ourselves privileged to be located within the bounds life requires. Are we and our place a cosmic accident? No, such amazing results demand the purposeful eye of a loving Creator, Who not only brought our Universe into existence, but made Himself known by its design and finely-tuned the particular place we call home.

Conclusion

When we consider the alternative question, "Is it reasonable not to believe in God?" We have to begin with the recognition that nature on its own has no mind or direction, cannot create something from nothing, and has no purpose for man to hold such a privileged place. Therefore nature cannot be the answer to why we exist in such a purposed and privileged place, nor can it answer why a physical Universe exists at all. Scientific understanding and biblical faith are not mutually exclusive. Instead a strong faith in God is a reasoned response to common-sense, scientific principles we use everyday. The existence of our Universe, its observable design, and our privileged place within it speaks to God's preexistence, His creative intention, and His love for all mankind.

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From the Director's desk



Steven Lloyd
Director
SWSBS

The fourth quarter is, in some ways, the most challenging quarter of the school year due to the number of extra curricular activities. Camp Hensel is right around the corner (June 11-16) and there are other activities as well. It is a rollercoaster schedule.

The school hosts Servants' Academy June 25-30, and we will be preparing for graduation the first week in July. If you have a student between the ages 15-18 and they would like to learn how to study the Bible and present a lesson, we encourage you to go to the school website and sign them up. Students are brought to Southwest on Sunday evening for worship services on June 25 and stay with us until the Friday evening dinner and program. Our theme this year is "Lasting Lessons from the Prophets." Brother Trent Kennedy will direct, and faculty and former graduates from the school will be on staff to teach. Further details can be found on our website at Swsbs.edu.

Concerning the upcoming school year, 2023-2024, our list of applicants is growing. A few potential students have applied from outside the United States. The challenge for some will be for the US Embassy to grant them entrance to the United States.

We have already approved six students from the US, and have sent the link to our online application to half a dozen more. I foresee three or more joining us in August.

Thinking of the upcoming events of the fourth quarter, I would be remiss not to thank the many members of the Southwest congregation for all they do to help us with the tasks of feeding students during Servants' Academy and preparing the Annex for the graduation dinner. It is amazing to see it all come together.

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