



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Is Atheism Dead? – Part 1

Guest(s): Eric Metaxas

Air Date: March 7, 2022

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Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener-supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

Roger Marsh: Hello, and welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh and Family Talk is the radio home of Dr. James Dobson. Dr. Dobson has been coming to you every day for over 44 years, providing his clinical expertise on matters affecting your children and your family. Along with that, you get a dose of his steadfast commitment to defending righteousness in the culture and his biblical interpretation of the ever-changing world around us. Who else has stood in such bold defense of the family for over four decades running? Well, he and his colleagues certainly show no let up. Dr. Dobson was instrumental in the explosive growth of religious radio broadcasting in the late 1970s and I am fortunate enough to be one of the beneficiaries of that explosion. He has paved the way for many of today's conservative Christian thought leaders. And today on Family Talk, we're going to hear from one such leader, Eric Metaxas.

He's been a guest with Dr. Dobson many times before and is always a favorite here at Family Talk. Eric Metaxas, as the author of many bestselling books, including *Bonhoeffer*, *Amazing Grace*, *If You Can Keep It*. And his latest book, *Is Atheism Dead*. His writings have been featured in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, and the *New Yorker*. Eric Metaxas has appeared as a cultural commentator on CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC. He is also the host of the *Eric Metaxas Show*, a nationally syndicated daily radio program on the Salem Radio and Podcast Networks. Eric lives in New York City with his wife, Suzanne and their daughter.

Dennis Prager has this to say about *Is Atheism Dead?* This latest book features Metaxas versus atheism, and it's not a fair fight. Read, *Is Atheism Dead?*, and you'll understand why. Well, let's go now to Eric's presentation from fall 2021 right here on Family Talk.

Eric Metaxas: Bob, I am here. Of course, I'm here, but I really have to go. I was just leaving. I hope you don't mind. We're friends. You can deal with that, right? So I'll give you a minute, but got a lot of important things to do in the lobby. My name's Eric Metaxas, and I'm honored to speak before you eat, because I know when

you're eating food, you're digesting food, you're going to miss some stuff. And I don't want you miss anything because I have some things to share with you. Frankly, I am so excited. It's difficult not to sound like you're speaking hyperbolically but I have never been as excited about a book as the one that I'm talking about tonight. That's a fact. But what I say is when the Lord gives me something, it's not like He gives it to me in a mystical way.

I have had dramatic miraculous experiences. I've had visions from God and what fascinates me, is that when God speaks or does anything, He does it very differently from one time to another. So I asked many, many friends if they'd ever had a miraculous experience and some of them would tell me a story. And I would say, well, that sounds like it was a blessing, but it doesn't really rise to the level of a miracle. A miracle is a miracle when you just go, "Oh my gosh, that was just, I can't believe God did that." It would be like if the Lord said, you're going to meet a person riding a bicycle along the way, and they're going to give you a check for the amount you owe the person you're sitting next to right now. And you know who you are.

But the point is, if that happened and then you went outside and that happened, you'd say, there's nothing else to call it. That's a miracle of God. So I've had things, something like that, I really have. And in my book about miracles, I wrote about all the different experiences. Some things are more subtle, but we serve a God who is alive and He doesn't do the same thing twice. We understand how creative He is and how amazing He is. So there have been times when I have gotten what I would think of as a general nudging from the Holy Spirit, or sometimes in retrospect, you say, there's no doubt the Lord did that because now where I am, I get it. I didn't see it coming. When I wrote the book *Miracles*, I had been aware, I got saved in 1988.

Okay. I better backtrack a tiny bit to give you at least a little bit context. My parents met in New York City in 1956. My mom came from Germany. My dad came from Greece, from war-torn Europe and they met in an English class. And when you're raised by a Greek and a German, that means you will be raised Greek. I think you understand, that's just the way the Greeks are. They don't really care to pretend that they're not the best nationality and we're not going to get into the whole Dutch thing here. I'm just going to tell you that's the Greeks. That's how they feel.

So, I grew up in a very warm environment in the Greek Orthodox church, but like many people who went to church, and you might have even gone to a Baptist church or a Dutch Reform church, it happens in all kinds of denominations, but sometimes you just don't get the goods. You don't get the heart of it. It's just religion. It's just be a good boy, study hard, whatever it is. And so it was a wonderful experience for me, but I never was clear on the relationship with Jesus or do I read the Bible every day? I was not one of those people. And most of the people in the world, aren't those people. They think that people who are like that, who have a quiet time with a cup of coffee and the Strong's Concordance and the highlighters. Anybody still do that? You guys

are back sliding. Look, if the Strong's Concordance was good enough for the Apostle Paul, you should be using one.

But I'm saying I wasn't raised that way, and so I had the fortune or misfortune to go to Yale University. I was an English major. And those places, as you ought to know, are the most spiritually dark places on the planet. They are deeply secular. They're preposterously leftist. And I go in there as a son of immigrants, loving America, went to church every Sunday, and I'm bombarded with that world view. And it was really an eye-opener, because if you're not sure what you believe, you're going to drink that Kool-Aid. So I drank that Kool-Aid and if you drink that Kool-Aid, you will not really think much of those who are conservative or very patriotic or who are Christians. And I really kind of just drifted out of college. Now, I always say that if you go to a place like Yale, the key is to not go there with an open mind.

If you go there an open mind, you're dead. I went there with an open mind. I took in the garbage and I didn't become some radical, but I graduated and wasn't sure what to do. Now, I also think the key at places like that is they don't, and this gets to the heart of this book, they don't have the answers to the big questions. Let's be honest. If you say, what are the big questions? I mean, all of education is footnotes to the big questions. Who am I? What is it to be a human being? Is there a God? Can I know that God? What's the nature of that God? Where do we come from? Where are we going when we die? Is there anything beyond this world? Those are the questions that every human being has had since the beginning of humanity.

So, in modern universities, they go far out of their way not to answer those questions, not even to ask those questions. Why, because they've taken in the idea that started, well, started in the garden of Eden, but for our purposes here, it started with Darwin in 1859 when he wrote *The Origin of the Species*. And this idea is that we got here without God. There doesn't need to be a God. And the problem, the title of my book is, *Is Atheism Dead?*, The problem is that nobody, including secular leftist, Yale pseudo-intellectuals, and the people who run, the cognoscenti who run our news media and our universities, none of them really, really, really believe that there's no God. Why, because whether they want to believe it or not, they happen to be made in his image. There's nothing they can do about that. And so they're stuck longing for meaning and truth and love and all the things that we find in Jesus.

So, they're not going to really be able to come out and be explicit about their atheism, because to be explicit about atheism is to pretty quickly realize it doesn't make sense. So you kind of fudge it. You've all had conversations with people, that they're holding two conflicting things. And you're trying to get them to see that they conflict and they don't want to. They change the subject. Well, that's the issue with something like atheism. In other words, you don't have to be a born-again believer, but the idea that there is no God, if you follow it to the end, it's gruesome. So even people who say there's no God, they almost never follow it to the end because it would mean there's literally no meaning in

the universe. In other words, if there's no God, and we all evolved out of the primordial soup, out of nothing, by random chance, it literally would mean what is ultimately incomprehensible to us.

That life has no meaning. There is no such as thing as meaning. It's impossible to think about that in the same way it's impossible, if I said, try really hard to think about a square circle, try, just try. You just would just, you just vibrate and then explode because you can't. Well, it's the same thing with trying to imagine a world without God, even though there are people that they don't want to hear about God, they say they hate God or whatever they ... To try to imagine a world where there is no God ultimately is not possible. I'm here to tell you that. And what they do is they fudge it. So if you say to them, okay, if there's no God, and you evolved out of the primordial soup, your life has no more value than a cockroach or a rat or a rock. And you understand that, right? And they'd say, "Well, I create my own meaning." They'd say something silly like, I create my own meaning as if you could do that. If you create your own meaning, then you're not talking about meaning, you're talking about some fantasy or something like that.

So, at a place like Yale, and I just say this, because I happened to go there. But at all these places, they fudge it. What they really do is they don't go there, ever. They kind of imply it, but what they really do is tell you, get a great job and work really hard and be a success and that'll distract you from these big haunting questions, which probably have really depressing answers. Like your life has the value of a beetle and the love you have for your parents and your children and your spouse, that's not transcendent, that's just chemicals. The species is perpetuating itself. This is extremely bleak stuff. So they don't talk about it because it won't sell well. The alumni will give less.

People will say, I don't know if I want my kid to absorb that nihilism, it's really destructive. Because if you follow it to the end, it leads you to either say, well, obviously I'm going to kill myself or I could kill everybody in this room and it makes no difference. There is no good or evil. Who can even fathom that, much less live that way, so they ignore it. So, the key is, out of places like Yale, get a really good job and you won't think about this for a few decades and on the weekends there's alcohol and golf and sports and stuff. Just distract yourself. Well, my problem, of course, was I was an English major. I wanted to be a writer, therefore, I did not get a good job. I floundered and floated and had plenty time to think about the big, horrible questions, like the meaning of life.

It was very depressing because I had been taught that the smart people don't talk about that, they don't ask those questions. Well, things got so bad that I ended up moving back in with my parents. Now my parents, as I said earlier, are working-class European immigrants who didn't get the opportunity to go to college, much less Yale, much less have food on the table every night, because they were living through World War II. So, when Eric comes home, you know like, "Hey, I'm looking for the meaning of life. I don't know what's going on."

They gave me what, you probably aren't familiar with, there's a guy named Dobson. He used to talk about tough love.

They never heard of Dobson in the seventies. Let me tell you, my parents, they never heard of Dobson, but they had no problem with the tough love issue. So when I came home from college at 19, whatever it was, it was in the eighties. They were looking at me like...My sophisticated friends had parents who would be like, oh, Eric's trying to find himself. It's wonderful, isn't it? He wants to be a poet or something. And my parents are like, yeah, Eric's trying to find himself. Well, we'd love Eric to find himself a job because we worked really hard to send him to Yale or as my father still calls it, the Yale. Yeah. It's the Greek thing, they always have to put the article in front of it, you know, the Yale.

So, I floundered and floated and I couldn't make sense of this and God, in His mercy, to cut to the chase, around age 25, spoke to me in a dream. Now again, if there's any Dutch Reform people from Holland or whatever, wherever you're from, you don't believe this. I can't help. I had the dream. I didn't want to have the dream. It just happened. I was pretty much unconscious at the time, I was sleeping. So the Lord spoke to me and revealed these things to me. And I was born again, praise the Lord.

But I say this because having come out of this dark, elite Ivy League background, now I'm kind of thinking, man, my friends are going to think I'm nuts. And of course, most of them did. And so I started reading a lot of books. And I stumble on the books of a guy named Hugh Ross. Anybody here know Hugh Ross? You know Hugh Ross? You can leave because I'm just going to talk about him. No, I'm not just going to talk about him, but I stumble on his books maybe 1990. Now Hugh Ross is this like, I don't know how you describe a guy like him. He's an ultra-genius, he's so smart that it's funny. Have you ever met anybody like that? Like no matter what you throw at them, they can give you a long answer and everything is correct. He's a genius.

And so, I start reading his books and he starts talking about a lot of things having to do with faith and science. But how many people are familiar with the concept of the fine-tuned universe? Okay, so some of you, but I read a lot of this stuff and it was so compelling to me. Now, the fine-tuned universe, just so you understand the basic idea is that if you have any decent amount of science, you can study things that you couldn't study a hundred or 200 years ago, and you can see things today with our science that make it crystal clear that the way things are is not normal. There's no way the world could be the way it is supporting life, a universe supporting a planet like this. The more you look at it, the more you realize there's not a ghost of a chance this just happened, which is what science says.

How many people here knew that the earth, if it were a little bit bigger or a little bit smaller, there would not be life on earth? Did anybody know that? I mean, we all watched *Star Trek*. You just assume anything could be anything. We could have a planet a billion times, bigger billion times, what does it matter? Well,

science has discovered, fairly recently, again, this is the irony. Because remember, there was a narrative that science is at odds with faith, mostly since Darwin, but in the last 150 years. Science has discovered that every single thing has to be the way it is, that if our earth, for example, we're just a tiny bit bigger, the gravity would pull down ammonia or whatever it is, our atmosphere would be a mess, we couldn't breathe. Breathing is important. I don't know about you, but I breathe almost all day. Right, honey?

And you think who would ever thought of that? That if our earth were a little bit bigger, a little bit more gravity, no life. If it were a little bit smaller, you can look at Mars. If it were a little bit smaller, the magnetosphere. Who knows what a magnetosphere is? I didn't until I wrote this book. You discover that science has discovered crazy stuff. Like if the earth were smaller, it wouldn't be strong enough to give us the atmosphere that we have. It's different from the other thing. And you look at Mars, it has no atmospheres, it escaped into outer space. So I was reading all this Hugh Ross stuff and thinking, this is crazy because this is science. This is not theology, it's science. And the science says that it looks like some intelligent designer, really intelligent, really powerful, created everything with a level of exquisite calibration that just stops your heart.

It's unbelievable. But the irony is that it is science that's showing us this. You're not going to get this from the Bible. The Bible will tell you things that make that kind of sense, but it's not giving you the specifics. The Lord has allowed us to proceed along through the centuries so that science reveals these things to us. So the great narrative under which we have all grown up, that science has somehow at odds with faith, the opposite is true. It's not just not true, the opposite is true. So I remember reading that book, these books by Hugh Ross. So, when I wrote my book *Miracles*, which a publisher kind of badgered me into writing, I said, you know what I'm going to do, I'm going to sneak in some of this fine-tuned stuff.

I said, I'm not going to talk about angels and all this stuff. My friends have had amazing miracles. And I want to write about those with journalistic detail. But I said, I've got to write about the fine-tuned universe. I've got to write about the greatest miracle of all, which is God's creation of a universe that shouldn't exist on any level. Shouldn't support life on any level. And again, I'm not giving you enough details, but the more you hear, the more you just think, this is crazy. God has... I'll just mention one more thing before I move on. The planet Jupiter, largest planet in our solar system, does anybody here know enough to be able to look in the night sky and spot Jupiter? Nobody? That's embarrassing. I don't either, but I know that there are plenty of people who do, they would look up and they would say, well, that's Venus. And that's sometimes rarely you could see, it's very rare, but it's a tiny, tiny, tiny pin prick, 400 million miles away. It's unbelievably large. But from us, it's this tiny pin prick.

Science now tells us that if Jupiter weren't there, think how insane this is. You can ain't even spot it in the night sky. And even if you could, it's a pin prick. Science says, if it weren't there with its tremendous size and tremendous

gravity, we wouldn't be here. Why? Because it has so much gravity that it pulls away the asteroids and the meteorites and the comets sufficiently that we are not bombarded with them every day. And it says, science says, that even one large asteroid or whatever, we're hit by them all the time, but they're fairly small and it's fairly rare. But one of them hit Tunguska, Siberia, some of you know the story, 1908, it was like 180 feet. I don't know, what would it be, like the size of this room? And it instantly flattened 80 million trees instantly with the explosive power of 1000 Hiroshima bombs. So you start thinking, huh, I'm taking the fact that's not happening tonight in Colorado Springs, kind of for granted.

I never thought that somebody, maybe it was just chance, put a planet, a gigantic planet, right there, 400 million miles away to pull away most of those things so that we can have our dinner. The list goes on and on and on and on. So, I wrote about that in my book *Miracles*. And when the publisher told me, this was about 2014, said to me, you know, Eric, you need to write some op-eds to promote the book just like I'm writing op-eds to promote *Is Atheism Dead?* Take some ideas, put it in an op-ed and somebody will publish it. So I said, I'm going to write about the fine-tuned universe. And I wrote about it in 800 words, which is really hard. And I sent it to the Wall Street Journal. They published it day before Christmas or Christmas Day actually, it was in the paper. And the title was, "Science Increasingly Makes the Case for God."

And it went more viral than anything they've ever published. In fact, it was the most shared thing they ever published by a factor of more than double. 650,000 Facebook shares. Why? Because my writing was so amazing? That was part of it. No, of course, it's because everyone in America wants to know. Is there meaning in life? Is there a God? Does science refute faith? We've been hearing that forever. And when you read that maybe science is leading us to faith. You just think what? And in *The Wall Street Journal*, how did that slip by the firewall of the secular editors? What happened? So it went crazy. And it went so crazy, I thought, you know what, I probably need to write a book at some point where I go into this more. And then I thought of this paradigm of science versus faith. And I thought of a high watermark in 1966 when *Time Magazine* said, "Is God Dead?"

It really was the high water mark. And I said, based on the evidence that's coming in, somebody should write a book today called, *Is Atheism Dead*, because most educated Christians like you all, even you haven't bumped into this stuff because we're living in a world where this information doesn't make it very far. Maybe if you're really into apologetics, but generally speaking, people don't know this and the secular world will never hear this stuff. So, I decided to write the book called *Is Atheism Dead?*

Roger Marsh:

An intriguing and hopefully encouraging first half of Eric Metaxas's presentation about his new book called, *Is Atheism Dead?* Eric made this presentation at a recent JDFI event here in Colorado Springs. And I will tell you that the crowd was absolutely riveted during his talk. Make sure you tune in again tomorrow to

hear the conclusion of his presentation here on Family Talk. Now, if you'd like to learn more about Eric Metaxas, his broadcast called, *The Eric Metaxas Show* or his book titled *Is Atheism Dead?*, you can find all of that information and more at our website at drjamesdobson.org/broadcast.

Well, that's all the time we have for today here on Family Talk. Join us again tomorrow as Eric Metaxas will continue sharing about his book, *Is Atheism Dead?* Don't want to miss the compelling evidence for our creator, God, that Eric will be presenting. That's coming your way tomorrow right here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.

Dr. James Dobson: Hello everyone, this is James Dobson inviting you to join us for our next edition of Family Talk. Every day we come to these microphones with someone in mind, whether it's a busy mom looking for tips on discipline, or a husband who wants to learn more about connecting with his wife. We want to put an arm around your family in any way that we can, so join us next time for Family Talk, won't you?