



Sermon Notes 1/23/2022

“The Truth about the Beginning”

The “Cosmological Argument” for the existence of God:

1. Whatever begins to exist has a _____.
2. The universe _____ to exist.
3. Therefore the universe has a _____.

What does the Bible say about the beginning?

1. God _____ the heavens and the earth.
Genesis 1:1
2. _____ things were made by God.
John 1:3
3. God created all things visible and _____.
Colossians 1:16
4. God created the universe through _____.
Hebrews 1:2

Small Group Discussion Guide

Lesson 3: “The Truth about the Beginning”

1. Most students were taught the “Big Bang” theory in school. What theories have you heard about the cause of the “Big Bang”?

Today we are going to consider the “*Kalam* Cosmological Argument” for the existence of God. While this argument is not enough to confirm the truth of Christianity, it is powerful evidence for the existence of an all-powerful Creator who transcends time and space. The argument is based on the following syllogism:

1. Whatever begins to exist has a cause.
2. The universe began to exist.
3. Therefore, the universe has a cause.

William Lane Craig is a well-known Christian scholar and debater who has some excellent resources on this topic. He writes,

When I first published my work on the kalam cosmological argument back in 1979, I figured that atheists would attack premise 2 of the argument, that the universe began to exist. But I didn’t think they’d go after premise 1. For that would expose them as people not sincerely seeking after truth but just looking for an academic refutation of the argument. What a surprise, then, to hear atheists denying premise 1 in order to escape the argument! For example, Quentin Smith of Western Michigan University responded that the most rational position to hold is that the universe came “from nothing, by nothing, and for nothing”—a nice close to a Gettysburg Address of atheism, perhaps!¹

¹ William Lane Craig, *On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2010), 76.

The reason many atheists are attacking the first premise is because of all the evidence that supports the second premise. Science confirms that the universe had a beginning. Science also teaches us that the universe is all time, space, and matter. The Law of Cause and Effect says that every effect must have a cause. Nothing comes from nothing. Everything that has a beginning must have a cause. Therefore, all time, space, and matter must have a supernatural cause, something very powerful that transcends all time, space, and matter. God is the only one who meets all those qualifications.

However, to claim that the universe came into existence from nothing requires far more faith than believing in an eternal Creator who transcends all time, space, and matter. As Craig illustrates,

Something cannot come from nothing. To claim that something can come into being from nothing is worse than magic. When a magician pulls a rabbit out of a hat, at least you've got the magician, not to mention the hat! But if you deny premise 1, you've got to think that the whole universe just appeared at some point in the past for no reason whatsoever.²



² Craig, 75.

2. Why do you think “scholars” spend so much time, money, and energy trying to figure out the origin of the universe? How is the origin of the universe relevant to us today?

3. Read the following passages and discuss what Bible teaches us about the beginning:

Genesis 1:1

Job 38:1-4

Psalms 8:1-9

Psalms 33:6

Ecclesiastes 3:11

Isaiah 40:25-26

John 1:1-3

John 17:5

Romans 1:20

Colossians 1:15-16

Hebrews 1:1-2

Revelation 4:8-11

4. When you consider the universe and all the amazing things that God created, what is your response?

Some Definitions

COSMOS: Cosmos is a Greek word. Here is the definition from *Vine's Expository Dictionary*:

Primarily "order, arrangement, ornament, adornment"...is used to denote the "earth," e.g., Matt. 13:35; John 21:25; Acts 17:24; Rom. 1:20 (probably here the universe: it had this meaning among the Greeks, owing to the order observable in it).³

UNIVERSE: The Universe is all of space, time, and everything that exists therein, including all planets, stars, galaxies, the contents of intergalactic space, the smallest subatomic particles, and all matter and energy.

MATERIALISM has two common definitions:

1. a tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values.
2. a philosophy that nothing exists except matter and its movements and modifications.

For this lesson we are using the second definition for "materialism." The TV show *Cosmos* used to open with Carl Sagan saying, "The Cosmos is all that is or was or ever will be." This belief about the beginning was based on his presupposition of materialism. What Sagan said about the Cosmos is almost identical to what the angels say about God in **Revelation 4:8**.

There are two scientific theories about the origin of the universe.

1. The Steady State Theory: The universe has always existed.
2. The Big Bang Theory: The universe exploded into existence out of nothing.

³ W.E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 685.

Today, most scientists agree that the universe had a beginning.

“Almost everyone now believes that the universe, and time itself, had a beginning at the Big Bang.”—Stephen Hawking

“With the proof now in place, cosmologists can no longer hide behind the possibility of a past-eternal universe. There is now no escape, they have to face the **problem** of a cosmic beginning.”

—Alexander Vilenkin

Vilenkin called this a “problem” because the scientists who were holding on to materialism did not want to believe that the universe had a beginning.

However, scientific discoveries have confirmed that the universe had a beginning. These discoveries have been abbreviated into the acrostic **SURGE**.

SURGE: the Scientific Evidence for a Beginning

Second Law of Thermodynamics

Universe is Expanding

Radiation Afterglow

Galaxy Seeds

Einstein’s General Relativity

Second Law of Thermodynamics

This law states that the universe is running down; it is running out of usable energy. All matter and energy is in a state of decay. If the universe was eternal, it would have burned up all of its energy a long time ago.

Universe is Expanding

In the late 1920s astronomer Edwin Hubble discovered a red shift throughout the universe that indicates that the universe is expanding. The “Big Bang” theory was developed shortly after this discovery.

Radiation Afterglow

After Hubble discovered the expanding universe scientists predicted that if the “Big Bang” was true we should be able to detect some kind of radioactive afterglow from the explosion. In 1965 Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson, Scientists at Bell Labs accidentally discovered this cosmic background radiation. In 1978 Penzias and Wilson were awarded Nobel Prizes for their discovery.

Galaxy Seeds

These are ripples in space showing precise temperature variations necessary for galaxies to exist. In 1992 these ripples were discovered by the COBE satellite (AKA the Cosmic Background Explorer). These ripples are finely tuned with the exact precision necessary for the formation of each galaxy. George Smoot was the leading astronomer of the project. He said that these ripples are “the machining marks from the creation of the universe” and the “fingerprints of the maker.”⁴

Einstein’s General Relativity

In 1916 Albert Einstein published his theory of general relativity. However, this was before the theory of the Big Bang. He and most scientists believed in the steady state theory where the universe was eternal. Einstein did not like the implications that the universe may have had a beginning but if his theory was true then that would mean that time, space, and matter had a beginning. In 1929 Edwin Hubble invited Albert Einstein to the Mount Wilson Observatory. That’s when Einstein said, “I now see the necessity for a beginning.”

Dr. Robert Jastrow is a world-renowned astrophysicist and an agnostic. However, in his book *God and the Astronomers*, Jastrow concludes that the universe must have come into existence by supernatural forces.

⁴ Norman Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 82-83.

Jastrow writes,

Astronomers now find they have painted themselves into a corner because they have proven, by their own methods, that the world began abruptly in an act of creation to which you can trace the seeds of every star, every planet, every living thing in this cosmos and on the earth. . . . That there are what I or anyone would call supernatural forces at work is now, I think, a scientifically proven fact.⁵

Several Nobel Prize winning scientists agree with the Bible. Arno Penzias – “The best data we have (concerning the Big Bang) are exactly what I would have predicted had I had nothing to go on but the five books of Moses, the Psalms and the Bible as a whole.”

Robert Wilson – “Certainly there was something that set it all off.... I can’t think of a better theory of the origin of the universe to match Genesis.”

George Smoot – “There is no doubt that a parallel exists between the big bang as an event and the Christian notion of creation from nothing.”

Here’s the bottom line for Dr. Robert Jastrow:

For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; He is about to conquer the highest peak; As he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.⁶

5. How can you use the question of origins to help someone grow in their faith this week?

⁵ Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers* (New York: Readers Library, 2000).

⁶ Jastrow, 116.