

# Does God Exist? In the Beginning . . .

*“The beginning seems to present insuperable difficulties unless we agree to look on it as frankly supernatural.”*

— ARTHUR EDDINGTON

## MEMORY VERSE

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1).*

## REVIEW OF THE CONCLUSIONS FROM THE EVIDENCE SO FAR:

Does Truth Exist? Of course! It is self-defeating to deny it. In this lesson, we will begin looking at scientific evidence that points to God.

## WHAT KIND OF GOD?

To start a discussion of religious beliefs, we need to first define our terms.

**1. Describe briefly what these religious world-views believe and which major religions are represented by these views:**

- **THEISM**
  
- **PANTHEISM**
  
- **ATHEISM**

An agnostic literally means “not to know.” With regard to God, an agnostic is someone who does not know whether or not God exists.

## THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT:

### The Beginning of the End for Atheism

Either God created us or we created God. If we created God, then there is no ultimate meaning or purpose to life. There is no objective right or wrong and it doesn't matter how we live because we're just going to return to dust anyway. We are completely on our own.

However, if God created us, then there is an ultimate meaning and purpose to life. The Creator has put us here for a reason. How do we know there was a creation? How do we know the universe had a beginning, and how do we know that the beginner was God?

Although we don't physically see God because He is not a material Being, we know He exists by His effects. One effect appears to be the universe itself. This argument for God's existence is known as the Cosmological Argument.

### 2. In logical form, state the Cosmological Argument.

## SURGE

For many years, scientists thought that the universe was eternal. In the last century, five lines of scientific evidence came to light showing that the universe did have a beginning. Scientists call it the "Big Bang." Now, there is a difference between the evidence for the Big Bang and the naturalistic Big Bang Theory supported by atheists. We'll get to that and the age of the universe later.

### 3. The five lines of scientific evidence that the universe had a beginning are represented by the acronym SURGE. What does SURGE stand for?

S

U

R

G

E

## **S - THE SECOND LAW OF THERMODYNAMICS**

The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that the universe is running out of energy. There is a finite amount of energy in the universe and it is being used up. This Law is also referred to as the Law of Entropy. This means that the universe is moving toward disorder rather than order—it is falling apart over time much like a car or a building falls apart over time. The Second Law ensures that nature will turn a building into a pile of bricks, but it will not turn a pile of bricks into a building.

**4. How does the Second Law of Thermodynamics prove the universe had a beginning?**

**5. The Second Law is also known as:**

**6. How does the increasing disorder of the entire universe show that the universe had a beginning?**

## **U - THE UNIVERSE IS EXPANDING**

In 1929, Astronomer Edwin Hubble observed a red shift in the light from distant galaxies. That red shift indicated that the galaxies are all moving away from one another. In other words, the universe is expanding.

**7. How does the expanding universe imply that the universe had a beginning?**

## R - THE RADIATION FROM THE BIG BANG

Good scientific theories often predict future discoveries. In 1948, scientists predicted that there would be heat left over from the Big Bang explosion. However, none found the "smoking gun" to the Big Bang until two scientists discovered it by accident in 1965. This Nobel prize-winning discovery of the radiation afterglow was made by Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson working at Bell Labs in Holmdel, New Jersey. The radiation afterglow has the patterns of wavelengths exactly consistent with the heat and light produced from a great explosion.

The "steady state" theory claims that the universe is in an eternal steady state—that the universe did not have a beginning. Here's what agnostic Astronomer Robert Jastrow wrote about the steady state theory after the discovery of the radiation afterglow:

*"No explanation other than the Big Bang has been found for the fireball radiation. The clincher, which has convinced almost the last Doubting Thomas, is that the radiation discovered by Penzias and Wilson has exactly the pattern of wavelengths expected for the light and heat produced in a great explosion. Supporters of the steady state theory have tried desperately to find an alternative explanation, but they have failed. At the present time, the Big Bang theory has no competitors" Jastrow, God and the Astronomers, pp 15-16.*

## G - GREAT GALAXY SEEDS

Scientists have found slight variations (or ripples) in the temperature of the cosmic background radiation that Penzias and Wilson had discovered. These temperature variations are extremely precise (1 part in 100,000) which some astronomers say allowed the galaxies to form in the early universe. This evidence shows that the Big Bang was not a chaotic, random explosion. It was a highly fine-tuned explosion, as if someone was guiding it along.

**8. Some atheists claim that if macroevolution is true (it's not as we'll see later), there is no need for God. How does the discovery of the great galaxy seeds show that an Intelligent Designer is still necessary regardless of the truth or falsity of macroevolution?**

## **E - EINSTEIN'S THEORY OF GENERAL RELATIVITY**

Einstein's theory of General Relativity shows that time, space, and matter are co-relative. That is, they are interdependent—they came into existence together.

**9. If space, time (really spacetime) and matter had a beginning, why must the cause be supernatural rather than natural?**

In summary, the SURGE evidence shows that time, space, and matter came into existence together. In other words, the universe exploded into being out of nothing. Scientists call this the "Big Bang." Theologians call creation out of nothing "ex nihilo."

**10. Where in the Bible is ex nihilo creation taught or implied?**

## **THE KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT**

One of the most convincing philosophical arguments for the beginning of time is the Kalam Cosmological Argument. It goes like this:

- An infinite number of days has no end.
- Today is the end day of history.
- Therefore, there were not an infinite number of days before today (the universe had a beginning).

**11. In your own words, explain why this argument shows that there must be a beginning to time.**

**12. Find a New Testament verse that states that time had a beginning.**

**13. If you ask an atheist, "If there is no God, why is there something rather than nothing at all?" (Or, "If there is no God, why does anything exist?"), and the atheist responds, "The universe is eternal!" What would you say?**

### **THE ARGUMENT FOR A THEISTIC GOD**

**14. The following are among the attributes we can discover about the First Cause from the evidence presented in this lesson. How do we know that the First Cause is:**

- Spaceless?
- Timeless?
- Immaterial?
- Powerful?
- Intelligent?

### **WHO IS A THEISTIC GOD?**

The evidence shows that the universe had a beginning and thus needs a cause. From just the Cosmological Argument we can see that the First Cause is spaceless, timeless, immaterial, personal, powerful, and intelligent. These are the attributes of a theistic God identified without reference to the Bible! Now this doesn't necessarily mean that Christian theism is true. All we know now is that we have a theistic God.

**15. Read Psalms 104, 8, 19, 33, 65:5-8 and 145. What characteristics mentioned above are in these verses?**

**16. If an atheist says: "Who made God?" How would you answer him?**

*"Almost everyone now believes that the universe, and time itself, had a beginning at the Big Bang."*

— Atheist Stephen Hawking

### **GOD OF THE GAPS?**

Some atheists claim that we are committing the "God of the Gaps" fallacy when we conclude that God created the universe. That's not true. We are not plugging God into a gap in our knowledge but simply following the evidence where it leads. We don't simply lack a natural cause for the universe, but we have positive evidence *for* a supernatural cause.

One atheist accused me (Frank) of this at the University of Michigan. He said, "If you give us enough time, science will find a cause of the universe." I said, "First of all, that sounds a lot like faith. And second, you will never find a natural cause for all of nature. The cause of nature cannot be nature itself. To say what you are saying would be like me saying, 'if you give me enough time, one day I'll discover how I actually gave birth to my own mother!'"

Indeed, saying that “science” will find a natural cause, is actually a “natural law” of the gaps. It is also a faith position! In fact, it is a blind faith position because we will never find a natural cause for all of nature. Nature itself was the effect, so nature can’t be the cause.

## HOW OLD IS THE UNIVERSE?

Some Christians don’t believe in the Big Bang because they think it conflicts with the Bible. We think it fits with the Bible. Think of it this way: we believe in the Big Bang—we just know who banged it! The Bible summarizes the creation event in the first verse, **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”** (see Genesis 1:1). In other words, we don’t believe in the naturalistic Big Bang Theory, but we do believe there is good evidence for the beginning of all creation by a Big Bang.

Some will claim the Bible teaches that the universe is very young, only thousands rather than billions of years old. Other Christians say the biblical and scientific data point to an older universe. While many Christians think the age of the universe is a big issue, we don’t. While we understand the passion some people have for this topic, we think **that God created** is more certain and important than **when God created**.

This topic is actually a bit beyond the scope of this study. But since it is such a controversial topic, we’ve decided to adapt an excerpt from the *I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist Curriculum* published by Apologia and available from [www.ImpactApologetics.com](http://www.ImpactApologetics.com). Here it is:

*The age of the universe was never much of a controversy in the early church. In fact, Augustine thought that the Bible did not tell us how old the universe is. The bigger controversy that eventually arose 400 years ago was whether or not the earth moved. The Bible seems to be clear that the earth is stationary. The Bible says that the sun rises and sets (see Ecclesiastes 1:5); the “world is established; it shall never be moved” (see I Chronicles 16:30; Psalm 93:1; cf. Psalm 104:5); and “the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s, and on them He has set the world” (see I Samuel 2:8).*

*We soon came to realize that our interpretation of the Bible was incorrect. We learned by observations of nature that the earth is not the immovable center of the universe and that the sun does not literally rise and set. This is not controversial today. We do not accuse people of “giving up the Bible” for believing heliocentrism (that the planets revolve around the sun). Instead, we recognize correctly that the Bible often uses observational or phenomenological language as we do ourselves. Even modern day weathermen say, “Sunrise will be at 6:15 tomorrow morning.” They do not say, “Earth rotation will become obvious at 6:15 tomorrow morning!”*

*We think the current debate over the age of the universe, like the old debate over heliocentrism, is not about the inspiration of Scripture, but rather the*



*interpretation of Scripture. God has written two books—the book of Scripture and the book of nature. The Bible itself teaches a “book of nature” (see Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:18-20; Romans 2:12-15), which is also called “General Revelation.” While some of our interpretations of the Bible and nature may contradict one another, the two books don’t actually contradict one another because God is the Author of both.*

*We should use both revelations that God has given us to discover truth. In fact, we can’t even understand what the Bible is saying unless we first understand certain truths from the book of nature such as the laws of logic and the law of causality.*

*Since both old and young interpretations require assumptions that cannot be proven, there is room for disagreement on this issue. While most scientists think the universe is billions of years old, they have to make assumptions in order to arrive at that age. If they assume that the speed of light hasn’t changed, then the universe appears to be about 13.7 billion years old. (That assumption is partially based on the principle of uniformity, which we’ll discuss in Chapter 5.) But what if that assumption is wrong? What if the speed of light was different in the past? Then the light from the stars can’t show us how old the universe is.*

We also have to make assumptions when interpreting the length of creation described in the book of Genesis. How is the word “day” used, and can we use those “days” to discover the age of the universe? There appears to be at least four possible ways the word “day” may be used in the first two chapters of Genesis:

- 1. Twenty-four hours.*
- 2. Twelve hours (as in Genesis 1:5 which calls the light “day” and the darkness “night”).*
- 3. A longer period of time or era, as in Genesis 2:4 which uses “day” to refer to the entire creation period. (We use the word day in this sense when we say, “Eli Manning was one of the best quarterbacks in his day.”) This sense could also be the case with day three and day six which seem to require longer than twenty-four hours (the growth of fruit bearing plants, and the naming of the animals).*
- 4. An indefinite period of time as in the seventh day, which, according to Hebrews 4:3-5, hasn’t ended yet (God is still at rest from creating). In other words, the seventh day is certainly longer than 24 hours.*

*Yet even if the days of Genesis 1 are all 24 hours, the creation of the heavens and the earth takes place before the first day begins. The creation of the heavens and earth is stated in verse 1 and 2, but the first “day” begins in verse 3 with the phrase that begins all seven days: “And God said...” How much before “day” one did all this take place? The text doesn’t say. Therefore, regardless of the length of the days in Genesis 1, one could make a good case that the Bible leaves the age of the universe and the age of the earth indeterminate.*

*This ambiguity does not impact a fundamental of the faith. When you die God isn't going to base your salvation on how old you believed the universe to be—He's going to base it on your acceptance of Christ (see Romans 10:9).*

*In fact, being dogmatic on the age of the universe may be counterproductive. Most scientists think the evidence for an old universe is much stronger than a young universe. Therefore, some people may reject all of Christianity because you ask them to believe something that, in their minds, is demonstrably false. **That** God created is more important and certain than **when**.*

*Some will say that there is no possibility that the universe is old because there could not have been animal death before the fall. But this is a failure to read the Bible closely. Romans 5:12 says that death came to all men, not all life. Moreover, Satan's fall preceded man's fall and may have impacted animal life. Yet, even if man's fall is responsible for animal death, it may have done so before Adam actually fell. Just as the effects of salvation were in place before Christ went to the cross (the Old Testament saints were covered by the blood of Christ), the effects of the fall on the rest of creation could have been in place before Adam actually sinned. This is implied by the very fact of a "Garden." Why did God need to create and portion off a Garden for Adam and Eve if the entire world was a paradise?*

*Finally, more time doesn't ensure "evolution" as we'll see later. Nor do those who believe in an old universe necessarily believe in theistic evolution instead of a literal Adam and Eve. There are reasonable scientific and biblical grounds to believe in an old universe and a recent literal Adam and Eve.*

*In summary, the universe could be old or it could be young. The evidence is not definitive either way. Therefore, Christians need to focus on defeating the arguments for naturalism—not on the arguments of other Christians who agree that God created the universe and Adam and Eve, but may disagree on when those events occurred. The foe is liberalism, not different stripes of conservatism. If Christians start spending their time refuting naturalists rather than their fellow Christian supernaturalists, then real progress will be made advancing God's Kingdom.*

## **17. What are some assumptions made in dating the age of the universe?**

**18. Identify the two types of God’s revelation and what they have to do with the Age of the Universe question.**

**19. Why do you think the age of the Universe is so controversial for some Christians?**

## **HOW DID YOU COME TO THAT CONCLUSION?**

The next time you hear someone say: “The universe has always been here!” or “There is no God!” ask that person, “How did you come to that conclusion?” Remember, when someone makes a statement, it is not your job to refute that statement—it is his job to support his statement. So ask for the reasons they have for their assertions!

Once they’ve answered, you can provide them with some evidence for the beginning of the universe by asking them “Have you ever considered the SURGE evidence and the Kalam Cosmological Argument?” That should help you direct a conversation that should, at the very least, get them thinking about whether or not their own worldview is true. In fact, before someone accepts your worldview, that person normally must begin to doubt his own worldview. Good questions often help do that.

## **TOOLBOX**

- For the age of the earth conflict see *Seven Days That Divide the World: The Beginning According to Genesis and Science* by John C. Lennox.
- If you would like to read what some intelligent Christians say who believe the universe is young, visit [www.icr.org](http://www.icr.org). If you would like to read what some intelligent Christians say who believe the universe is old, visit [www.reasons.org](http://www.reasons.org).
- For answers to many questions about the Cosmological Argument, see the book *Reasonable Faith* by William Lane Craig and his website [www.reasonablefaith.org](http://www.reasonablefaith.org).