

Sermon 25: Big Bang or Creation

OUTLINE

Big bang
Creation

INTRODUCTION

In my last talk on apologetics we dealt with the objection to miracles, that was the first of three talks on the scientific objections to Christianity. Today we want to consider the objection to the Christians view of the beginning of the universe, and next week we will look at the objection to the Bible's teachings on the origins of life. Today many people believe that the Bible's view of Creation is incorrect and that a Big Bang cosmology has done away with the problem of a Creator and makes them satisfied atheists. Big bang cosmology has a very different shape of how the universe came into being than the straightforward reading of the Bible. Today we want to look at Big bang cosmology and then think about how as Christians we hold the biblical teaching in light of this modern attack.

Big Bang

A simple summary of the Big Bang accounting for the universe goes something like this:

'1. Between ten and twenty billion years ago (fifteen billion is the current favourite) all the matter of the universe was concentrated in a speck of matter smaller than a pinhead, and commonly defined as a 'singularity'. The temperature was so hot that no atoms or even subatomic particles could exist in it, and the matter was so dense that the laws of physics would not have applied. It is therefore commonly accepted that any description of the universe can go back only until a point one ten-millionth of a trillionth of a trillionth of a second (10^{-43}) after the Big Bang....

At this point, the universe underwent a period of cosmic inflation, and this rapid, accelerating expansion created ripples (the so called 'quantum fluctuations') in the fabric of space. This ensured that matter was not evenly distributed in the newly expanding universe, preparing the way for the later formation of galaxies, stars and planets. This cosmic inflation also ensured that the resulting universe would be at critical density, so that it would keep expanding forever, though the rate of expansion would slow down endlessly.

2. After one ten-billionth of a trillionth of a trillionth (10^{-34}) of a second, the temperature dropped below 1,000 trillion trillion degrees (10^{27}), enabling quarks (the components of protons and neutrons) and electrons to form. By this time, the cosmic inflation has already ended, having expanded the universe a million trillion trillion times (10^{30}), and from this point on the expansion gradually slowed down by the pull of gravity.

3. At about one-ten-thousandth of a second into the life of the universe, the temperature had cooled to 10^{15} degrees, enabling quarks to bind together to form protons and neutrons, which (along with electrons) are the building blocks of the atom.

4. After some three minutes, the temperature had dropped to about a billion degrees, enabling protons and neutrons to bind together and form the nuclei of hydrogen and helium, the component elements of the stars. At this stage, the universe was about the density of water, and would continue to expand and cool in this state for about 300,000 years.

5. After 300,000 years, the temperature fell to 3,000 degrees, allowing electrons to bind together with the hydrogen and helium nuclei to form hydrogen and helium atoms.

6. Over the course of the next billion years, gravity began to pull clusters of hydrogen and helium atoms together to form the first quasars and stars, leading eventually to the formation of the Milky Way and other galaxies.

7. Another five billion years on (about five billion years ago), the burning hydrogen and helium in the interior of stars produced heavier elements such as carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and iron, which were dispersed by stellar winds and supernova explosions. Some of those elements produced new stars, while others condensed around stars to create planets. In this way, the system of planets orbiting our sun was formed, planet Earth becoming one of these.

8. Two billion years later (about three billion years ago) our planet has produced a suitable atmosphere and sufficient water to sustain life.¹

Now the interesting thing about Big Bang Cosmology is that it is a new arrival on the scene. Ironically this view has led to more belief in God not elss. Previous to this view of things was the belief among atheists that the universe was always there. Alistair McGrath writes, 'The first decades of the twentieth century were dominated by a scientific belief in the eternity of the universe. It had always existed. Religious language about 'creation' was seen as mythological nonsense, incompatible with cutting-edge scientific knowledge.

This belief played an important role in the great 1948 debate between two leading British philosophers—the atheist Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) and the Christian Frederick Copleston (1907–90)—that's widely regarded as a classic exploration of the issues. Russell thought this scientific consensus was more than sufficient to put paid to the whole God question once and for all. The universe is just there and there's no good reason to think about what brought it into being.

But things have changed since 1948. During the 1960s it became increasingly clear that the universe had an origin—the Big Bang.² When William Lane Craig and Anthony Flew, who was an atheist at the time but later converted to Theism, had a 50 year anniversary debate the terms of the debate had changed. Russell's confident dismissal of the cosmological argument was no longer able to fly in light of the revolution in science.

We need to tell this story because science has progressed and changed, and even had to radically review its perspective. We call these major shifts paradigm shifts, the change from Newtonian physics to Einstein's theory of relativity; the shift from an eternal universe to the Big Bang. Many Christians have delighted themselves in the Big Bang theory thinking that it can 'prove' the Bible, that the Bible is finally built on credible evidence. But I want to sound a warning here. There is some helpful discussion that points towards the Bible's teaching on creation. For example, the first law of thermodynamics which basically says that matter cannot be self-created or destroyed. This law is helpful in silencing those views that rejected the Big Bang trying to build a theory called the 'steady state' theory which taught that matter continuously sprang into existence out of nothing. This principle is a two edged sword for the big bang theory because it criticizes other scientific theories with it, and yet it cannot answer the question itself, 'Where did the original 'singularity' which had all the matter of the universe in it come from?' It can be a useful way to introduce the cosmological argument which reminds us that something cannot come from nothing and points us to a Creator.

¹ Does God Believe in Atheists, 254-5.

² McGrath, A. (2011). [*Why God Won't Go Away: Engaging with the New Atheism*](#) (pp. 84–85). London: SPCK.

But lest we get too exultant and think that Big Bang cosmology is the new savior of modern apologetics we must remember that it is a model and not fact, it is a theory that has a number of problems which may eventually lead to the theory being replaced with another one. We are pleased to show that the Big Bang if anything leads to belief in God and not a denial of Him, but we must not hitch our theological wagons to this theory. We are glad to point out the contradiction of the one who holds to the big bang but denies the need for a Creator, but our confidence for what we believe does not sprout from this new science.

What we can say at this point is that Big Bang cosmology with its acceptance of the grounds that matter cannot spring into existence is a good starting point to talk about a Creator. However, scientists are unhappy with a universe that has a start and have proposed the closed system of an oscillating universe where the universe begins with a big bang, ends in a big crunch and repeats ad infinitum in a big bounce. Or another model is an ever expanding multiverse, and there are many others. This will never be a fool proof way to prove God.

Creation

How do we as Christians hold our faith in light of these sorts of theories? Some Christians are what have been called Concordists, those who read God's two books, the book of nature and the book of the Bible so as to make them agree with each other. The assumption is that God does not lie and so because nature is categorized as general revelation and the Bible as special revelation, these two must agree when taken together. In many instances this has led to Christians joining unbelieving scientists in their critique of the Bible's version of creation. Six twenty four hour days, a universe that is not billions of years old, the instant creation of mankind not evolution as the origins of life, the historical figures of Adam and Eve, the historical account of the temptation, and the entrance of sin and death as a judgement from God, these and many other teachings are the casualties. Today there are even those who claim to be conservatives or Reformed who have moved away from the traditional teachings. It is quite fashionable for modern day apologists to rest strongly on the big bang cosmology to prove creation, this is often accompanied with theistic evolution and other unbiblical teachings.

Sola Scriptura must guide us here. It is true that God has given a certain witness to Himself in nature, but this revelation is not infallible nor is it to compete with the authority of the Bible. We must also make a distinction between the things observed in nature, and the theories and models scientists use to interpret the data. Among those believers who hold to the authority of the Bible and have wrestled with what science has turned up, and the interpretations that go with it, there are a variety of views.

There is the gap theory which holds that there is a primordial history hidden between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2 which has the billions of years, the dinosaurs, and the fall of Satan in it. The water in Gen. 1 is the flood that God judged the world with in order to restart with Adam and Eve. I think this theory is amazing and I wish it were true, but there is no biblical evidence to substantiate it.

There is the view of progressive creationism which is also the day age theory. This view sees the days of Gen 1 as representing periods of time. A third theory can be added to this one where God showed Moses a sped up nature movie on the mountain over a 24 hour period, showing him a much longer time but sped up like modern day nature programs do. This view often says that macro-evolution does not exist, and cannot be proven scientifically but that God allowed periods of micro evolution to occur and then periodically intervened with special acts of creation to advance it to the next step.

There are theistic evolutionists who claim to believe in all the key doctrines like the fall, the historical Adam, the entrance of death as a judgement, etc, but who also believe in theistic evolution. I am dead set against this view, I agree they may be believers, as we are saved by grace not orthodoxy, but they have made to my mind a terrible compromise with modern science and created a Trojan Horse from which all sorts of attacks will come. There is the framework theory which views Gen. 1 as poetic not historic. Those who hold to a framework view do not necessarily teach or deny theistic evolution. I think there are definite poetic elements in chapter 1, but that it is not a choice between history or poetry but a case of both and.

I am a young earth six day Creationist. I don't like most other Creation Science views and find I have some differences with them all. I am not a scientist I do not believe in this view because after evaluating the evidence this is the most compelling scientific conclusion. I believe it because of my commitment to the Bible. Many Christians who share this commitment may disagree in their outcomes and this will be because of a difference in hermeneutics not because they don't have the Spirit. My basic reading of the Bible leads me to see it as history. So how do I navigate as a believer who believes the Bible yet encounters all these theories on creation? There are four key things that inform my own thought.

Firstly, the Bible is supreme. This may sound childish, but it is a careful epistemological foundation that a lot of thought has gone into. I am finite, I am a sinner, men are liars and prone to error. I cannot discover truth, I need it revealed to me. God has spoken in His word and the light of His word is the light by which everything else can now be seen. My present, my past, my future, my identity, my purpose, the things that are, and how I know what I know, the Bible fills me in. In any conflict it is my final resting place.

Secondly, science is a house divided against itself. I like the way Frank Turek put it, 'Science doesn't say anything, scientists do.' Scientific paradigms have come and gone, theories have been multiplied and changed. Scientists do not agree with each other, the different schools of science don't agree with each other. I feel no pressure to accept science as if it were inerrant and could possibly turn something up that would contradict the Bible. Science helps us to get medicines, develop technology but it cannot tell me about the past, the future, morality, or the spiritual world. It is limited and I must acknowledge its limits and not made the product of man's mind a functional word of God in my life.

Thirdly, created with age. No matter what theory you hold, except perhaps for theistic evolution, you have to hold that God created the world with the appearance of age, to some extent. When God made mountains, mountains are the result of two tectonic plates colliding and pushing up the earth's mantle, or the result of two plates separating and molten rock escaping to create a ridge. Rivers are the result of water over time following gravity along the path of least resistance, the deeper the river the older it is. When God made Adam and Eve He made them with the appearance of having lived several years as they presented as adults. Their hair appeared to have grown over a period of time they did not exist. Did Adam have a belly button, did God make it appear as if he had been born? Did the first trees have rings? My answer is yes. God created a system and broke into it giving all the appearance of age. The light between the stars and Earth which is billions of years old was created already there, the various rock layers of the earth, etc. Some have said that this is deceptive, but that is ridiculous. Was it deceptive that Jesus fooled the people at the wedding into thinking that the best wine had been kept back. I could speculate and say that God gave us a world with a history so that we could study it to get a

bearing on how things worked. He did not put us into a blank slate world but a world from which we could learn about history and how things developed.

Fourthly, catastrophism. I believe in the world wide flood, I believe that that event would have upset all the layers of the earth. In my own studies I have come across those evidences which seem to argue for a flood with an ice age following and this would quickly create tectonic plates, the continents, the appearance of many years in the layers of the earth, the distribution of animals, etc.

These theories I hold tentatively, but my commitment to scripture is final. I am happy to wait for the Lord to reveal all mysteries, I don't feel any pressure to think that man has got it right. I constantly hear about how Richard Dawkins or some other scientist speaks of the very real possibility of the present paradigm of science upon which he rests so much can be gone in one generation with new discoveries. The word of the Lord stands forever, and upon it I am happy to rest. It may seem foolish but at this point I have to stand against the world and its wisdom and boldly stand upon the word and I would encourage you to do the same. One day I will have to give an account to God for how I held His truth, and so will you.

In conclusion, the big bang or any other scientific view of the beginning of all things will always be faced with the problem of something coming from nothing to which the Bible gives an answer; it will a man-made theory which will go the way of all flesh; God will still have spoken in His and we will still need a place to stand that is certain. Study deeply, but do not fear to stand upon the Word of God.

Here are a few observations about how the Bible and the Big Bang disagree. Despite the agreement between a beginning and light coming first, there are many differences. Firstly, the timing of the billions of years verses the six days of creation. Secondly, the order of creation is very different. The big bang models have evolutionary models of gradual development and using the ordinary laws of physics and nature, where Creation is instant and miraculous. A question that confronts those who hold to big bang cosmology who claim to be Christian is the question about how it will all end. Do they believe that God will interrupt history at the second coming and make a new creation or will time go on as usual? According to big bang cosmology the universe will probably fizzle out, humanity will be replaced with better organisms, and the promises of the Bible will go unfulfilled.