

God and Science
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Today we're going to be continuing on in the Defender series. In case you're visiting or maybe you've been out, away over the course of the summer, the Defender series is a little bit of a different feel for the sermons that we've been doing. It's different from what we typically do. Oftentimes in our church what we're doing is working through a series of passages where maybe the book of Mark or the book of Acts, things like that, and we work through them systematically going passage by passage, scripture by scripture. This summer...we conducted a survey to find out just what are the challenges, what are some of the different issues that you face, maybe you personally wrestle with, someone that you know or care about is wrestling with, or issues that, as you talk to people, they have a difficult time with regarding Christianity. And so we're seeking to set out to give a pattern for how we can defend the faith, how we can give explanation for the Christian faith. And we're working through different issues.

The issue that we're gonna be looking at today is the issue of science; in particular, the idea or the challenge that is sometimes made...and I know that this has personally been made personally to me not so very long ago...the idea that science has disproved the reality of both God and creation. Science has proven that God doesn't exist, and there is no Creator of the universe. That's what we're gonna look at today. And so, as we do, we need to first understand what is science, ok? Now I know probably everybody here has a working definition of science, but bear with me and you'll see why I'm explaining this.

Science—this is kind of a composite definition from a couple of different dictionaries and encyclopedias. It's basically just a system of acquiring knowledge based on the formulation and testing of a hypothesis, an idea that you have, a theory, by gathering empirical and measurable data through observation and experimentation in order to produce reliable explanations of phenomena, things that go on with reference to the material and physical world.

Why do I bring up this definition? Well, let's look at this. It's a system of gathering knowledge, or gaining knowledge, whereby you gather empirical and measurable data. That means it's tangible. It's something that you can touch, it's something that you can grab hold of; it's right there, you can have it right there in front of your face. Second of all, you do this by observing and experimenting. It means that you watch it and you can observe it in the wild, something like animals, ok? And you can sit here and study it. You can capture it on video and show it on National Geographic. Ok? Not only that, but you can oftentimes reproduce it in the laboratory. You can get your little test tubes and you can mix this and that, whatever, and make it go boom, and you can show, 'See? Right here, it works.' Ok? And all of this is done with reference to the material and physical world, meaning that it's part of the natural matter, space, everything else, right here, the laws of physics.

So if that's what science is, the question that I would have to ask is...is science the right tool to test for God? It's not! I mean, think about who God is by definition. God, by definition, is immaterial, is immaterial. He's spiritual. He's beyond the natural realm. He is beyond the issue, the space/time matter. He is beyond that. Ok? By definition. I don't care what Richard Dawkins says, the existence of God is not a scientific hypothesis. It just isn't, any more so than the existence of ideas is a scientific hypothesis. Trying to use science to test for God is like trying to prove that humidity exists by using a thermometer. Ok? Sorry, thermometer does not prove or disprove the existence of humidity when you're in the southern United States and, I mean, you step outside and you're already soakin' wet. Just because I can't read it on my thermometer doesn't mean it isn't there, ok? Science is not the right tool to test for God.

So here's the bottom line—in answer to this challenge, and this is kind of where we're going to go over the next twenty or thirty minutes, science can not...it can neither prove nor disprove the existence of God. It can't. We cannot prove or disprove the existence of God with science. However...but...science can point us in the right direction. It can point us toward what is the most likely answer, towards whether or not it is likely that there is a supernatural Creator of the universe. Does that make sense? You guys with me? Ok.

Well, here's what we're gonna do. We are going to approach this...and I hope that you will not get offended with me, but we're going to approach this in a manner that I call, that I'm just calling the 'Athens Approach'. Ok? Here's why I call it the 'Athens Approach'—Acts 17, Paul...he goes to Athens. What does he do? Everywhere else, everywhere else other than Athens he goes ahead, he goes to the place because he's speaking with people who believe in the Bible. He opens up the scriptures and he starts speaking from scripture to share the Christian message with them. In Athens he does something completely different. He doesn't even quote scripture, and

that's not how he starts off. It's like he throws it out and he says, 'Ok, I know you don't even believe this, so we're gonna set it aside for now.' And instead he quotes their own thinkers, their own philosophers, their own cultural touchstones. He goes from a common ground that they can agree on, some sort of common authority that we can agree on. Ok? That's what I'm going to do here. So, hope you won't get offended, but basically the next twenty or thirty minutes I'm not going to open up scripture at all, really. In fact, the one scripture at the bottom of this slide, that's the one scripture I'm gonna quote. That's the one scripture I'm gonna reference. Ok? So this is a little bit of a different feel, but I'm doing this because probably if the people who are struggling with this challenge...if we can't agree that there's a supernatural Creator of the universe, then we aren't gonna agree that this [holding his Bible up] has any authority whatsoever, ok? 'Cause if there's no supernatural Creator then this doesn't matter for anything, really, other than its good opinions, whatever. So what I'm gonna do is I'm not going to build on scripture at all, ok?

Second of all, we're gonna set aside for the time being, for the next twenty or thirty minutes, questions about the age of the earth or the theory of evolution or any of that sort of thing. Why? Because a lot of those sorts of things...I mean...I'm sorry, if you don't believe in a creator you're probably going to come down in a specific position or another depending on which...you'll...those issues a lot of times are influenced by whether or not you believe in a supernatural Creator. There's a lot of implications, ok? So we're going to set those aside. And really, we're gonna look at one question, one question in the next twenty or thirty minutes. It's just this—does science indicate that God created the universe as the Bible claims? Does science indicate that there is a supernatural Creator who started the whole thing, who brought the universe into existence? Yes or no?

What the Bible claims, in Genesis chapter 1 verse 1, very opening passage, very opening scripture of the Bible, first thing it says is

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

God made the universe. In the very beginning, when it all started, God brought it all into existence. Before that nothing existed except for God. Ok? That's what the Bible claims. So we're going to look at is that a likely answer. Does science kind of indicate that this is true? So here's what we're gonna do—we're going to look at this from...starting off with kind of a philosophical viewpoint, kind of just a reason...using reason, not necessarily science...and we're going to work toward a more scientific viewpoint, ok? So we're working just purely from reason and science.

And the first thing that I would start out with is the argument from 'first cause'. I start here because it's probably one of the oldest arguments around for the existence of God. It's been around for centuries. And to explain it, ok, let me give you this analogy. Let's say there is a book, and I really, really, really want to read this book. It's the best book ever; it's got all the world's best jokes; it's got all the answers to every question I want to know; it tells me everything that I'm going to do in my life. If I...it's the book that contains everything I want to know. Ok? I really want to read this book. But I don't have this book. So what I do is I talk to my parents. I say, 'Hey Mom! Dad! Can I read this book? You guys got this book.' And they say, 'Sure, we'd love to give you this book. But we have to borrow it from somebody else, ok?' So I say, 'Ok, cool, thanks!' 'We'll ask him for you.' My mom and dad ask that person, and they say, 'Yes! Excellent! I would love to give you that book, but I've gotta borrow it from someone else, ok?' And then that person has to borrow it from someone else, that person has to borrow it from somebody else, that person... You keep on going. Here's the question. If somebody does not just own the book, they don't have to borrow it from somebody else, if someone does not simply own the book am I ever gonna get to read it? You can respond...interaction. Am I going to be able to read the book if nobody doesn't just own it? No, I'm not. There has to be someone who owns the book and doesn't have to get it from anybody else. Ok? That's the argument of 'first cause'.

Here's how it works, and I'll show you. The book is like existence, ok? I get my existence from something else, which gets its existence from something else, which gets its existence...so on and so forth. I would not come to exist unless if something simply existed, and always has existed, that could start this whole chain of events and causes and effects which has led down to me. Does that make sense? That's kind of the basic summary. So here's how this works with the universe—it's the idea that there must be a prior cause to everything that comes into existence or that happens. It's just that if we see something happen we expect that it has a cause. I happened; I was born; I was conceived, I was born. Ok? Mountains rose. They fall. We have earthquakes. We expect that there are causes behind things. Ok? The universe is simply a vast, interlocking chain of things that have come into existence, things that have happened. As a result, that means that the universe itself must also have a cause. It has to have a prior cause that caused it to begin. Ok? Because the universe is something that came into existence. It's something that began. It's a whole vast, interlocking chain of events, so it has to have a cause.

What philosophy says, what this argument from 'first cause' would say, is that that cause is God. That's the whole idea here.

Now as I've shared this with somebody in the past, not so very long ago, this is something...and I've encountered it other times as well...a response you may get is 'Well, maybe some things just don't have a cause. I mean, you say God doesn't have a cause.' That's right, because God has always existed. Ok? God has always existed. He is 'uncaused'. We have to have something that is 'uncaused', otherwise...and has always existed...otherwise nothing will exist. Ok? That's just the philosophical implications. There is an argument made—'Well, it seems like science shows us that some things just come into existence.' This is what I would call the 'pop' theory, ok; things just pop into existence, no reason whatsoever, no cause, they just 'Poof!' There they are all of a sudden and there's no cause for it. No, I'm sorry, I don't accept that. It doesn't hold up to reason. And sometimes what is quoted is the uncertainty principle of quantum physics, because what it is just real briefly... (And I'm not gonna get into this too in depth, ok? Just hang with me here and you'll see why.) Sometimes people say, 'Well, things just pop into existence. I mean, we look at quantum physics and it seems like subatomic particles...they pop in and out of existence, and we can't really measure 'em and we can't determine the cause. So see, they just come and they're uncaused.' That's not what the uncertainty principle says, ok? The uncertainty principle is simply this; it's that subatomic particles are so small that there is a measure of uncertainty as we interact with them. Ok? If we try to measure, try to determine its location, the moment that particle...we determine its location we've just messed up its momentum as it's flying around, so we're gonna be uncertain about its momentum. If we measure its momentum we cannot do that and know its location in the atom as it's flying around and everything else. Ok? Basically, what it means is that there is a measure of uncertainty that we cannot determine because things are so small that if we try and determine it we mess it up. And so we can't determine exactly what the cause is because it's just too small.

Saying that we cannot determine what the cause is is not the same as saying that there is no cause and things just pop into existence. And that's a misunderstanding of quantum physics and everything else. But that's something that people occasionally throw out; and because they don't logically think through the conclusions, and so they try and get out of a sticky situation that way.

Well, we're gonna move on 'cause this isn't a science lesson on quantum physics. So here's what we're gonna do. We're gonna look at the next thing, which is the argument from design. Basically the argument from design is this. It's the idea that the universe is like this big computer or mechanical device, a radio or something like that, and it has these dials—there's about fifteen of 'em. Ok? And these dials control things like the strong and weak nuclear force, gravity, those sorts of things. They control the different physical laws, the forces that hold us together and push us apart, and make atoms hold together. Ok? Make matter stay together. All of these forces have to be exactly right. If any one of them was just even a slightly bit out of whack the whole universe would fly apart and matter would not...my body would disintegrate, basically. Ok? None of us would be here. The universe could not exist if any of them was slightly off. And so it's called fine tuning, because each of those little dials that control these forces have to be exactly, specifically, finely tuned to exactly the right amount of force. If they aren't, the universe ceases to exist.

Lee Smolin, who is an astrophysicist, he calculated the odds that this would happen just out of chance. Ok? Mathematician, he's doin' all these calculations. And what he came down to is that the chances that the universe would be finely tuned as it is to support life, or even stay together and be viable, is something like 1 in 1 times 10 to the 229th power (1×10^{229}), ok? What that means is that it's one in one, followed by two hundred and twenty-nine zeros after it. I don't know...that's a humongo wappid zillion... I don't know what number that is. Ok? That's...I mean, it's a big num... and basically what it's...he's sayin'...like it's pretty much, I mean it's next to impossible. Right?

Now, to give you an idea of how big of a number that is, let's imagine for a second that we have this catapult and silver dollars. We're gonna say that you all come together, and you go down to North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia. And you all just collect all the silver dollars that you can find, and you cover North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia two feet deep in silver dollars. Ok? Now then, you take one of these silver dollars and you paint it black, and you throw it somewhere out in the middle. Ok? You trackin' with me? Now then, I go ahead and I come all the way over to Connecticut, and I'm up here in Connecticut and I build the world's biggest catapult, ok? Now I blindfold myself, I put on my little aviator goggles and everything else, I climb in the little basket, and I say "Launch me." You guys go ahead and launch me, I fly all the way through the air all the way over here to land somewhere in the middle of North and South Carolina, Virginia, somewhere around there. Ok? I reach down, I land, I reach down, I'm rootin' around for a minute, and all of a sudden I come up and I pick up the one black silver dollar. Now here's a question—would you think that somehow, I mean aside from the whole catapult-launching, silver dollar... What are the chances that I would do that? Ok? What are the chances? Pretty small? Here's a

question—would it be reasonable for you to conclude that somehow that was rigged? I mean somehow I rigged it, somethin', this is some wacked-out magic trick that, I'm sorry, it's rigged. Here's the thing—the chances of me doing that successfully are only one in one point two times ten to the seventeenth (1 in 1.2×10^{17}). What that means is like a twelve with sixteen zeros after it. Ok? What that also means is that I would have...it is more likely that I could do the whole catapult thing thirteen times in a row, successfully on my first try...it is more likely that I would be able to do that than that the whole universe would be finely tuned as it is. So the observation I would make is simply this—if it's reasonable to conclude that somehow I had rigged that whole silver dollar thing, why would it not be reasonable to conclude that somebody rigged the universe and the laws of physics? That's basically the argument of fine tuning. It's just basically saying look, the odds are so far out there that it's pretty reasonable to conclude that somebody rigged it, somebody designed it to be just right.

Well, we're gonna look at one more thing here, the argument from science. In particular I think of the second law of thermodynamics. Ok? The second law of thermodynamics basically says when you fill up your car with gas, I don't care how good your fuel efficiency is, you are going to have to fill up again. Ok? You're gonna burn through gas. That's it, it's gonna be used up. A closed system will eventually run out of usable energy. Ok? The car does not keep running forever. I wish it would in, you know, days when gas prices are up, but I'm sorry, I've gotta go fill up again. It won't continue for an infinite time. That...another analogy is this. If I have a rubber ball and I just took this rubber ball and I threw it down, and I throw it as hard as I can, the moment it leaves my hand it has a specific set amount of energy stored up inside of it. It's gonna bounce, and it'll bounce high. It'll come back down and it'll bounce again. But each time it'll bounce less, and less, and less, and less, and less, until finally it's just motionless. Why? Because there is no more usable energy in it. The thing is the whole universe is that way. Everything in the universe, including the universe itself, is subject to the second law of thermodynamics. What that means is the universe is winding down. There will come a point in time where it is no longer in motion, if the universe lasts that long. Ok? Assuming that it lasted that long, there would come a point in time where it winds down and there's no more usable energy.

What's the implication of this? It's simply this—if it's winding down that means there has to be a point in time where somebody wound it up and set it started on winding down. There comes a point in time where I have the rubber ball in my hand and I release it, and it has a hundred percent (100%) of the energy that it contains right there. And from that moment on that energy is running out. Does that make sense? The universe is the same way. The second law of thermodynamics says that the universe cannot have always existed. It has to have begun at some moment in time. It's not eternal. Something...there was a point in time where all of the energy was put into the universe and was released; and from that moment in time everything has been winding down.

What that means is there's the thing called the Big Bang, ok, is that all matter, space, energy, time, the laws of physics, everything else, everything that science is telling us is that before the Big Bang none of that even existed. Space did not exist. Time did not exist. The laws of physics did not exist. Matter itself did not exist. What that means is that if we expect that the universe has to have a cause, and that cause had to have been before the Big Bang, the Big Bang has to have had a cause, then what that means is that whatever that cause is has to be outside the realm of matter, space, time, energy, laws of physics...whatever that cause is, has to be beyond the realm of science, because even science, the laws of science, came into existence at the Big Bang. You can say even there's theories about oscillating universes, that you have the Big Bang and then the Big Crunch, and it comes out and bounces again, and it goes... I'm sorry, it's still the rubber ball; you're still gonna run outta time. Even if you have the Big Bang and the Big Crunch you're still gonna...it had a beginning. Ok? Second law of thermodynamics tells us that.

So here's the summary of what we've covered. We see that, first of all, the universe must logically have a first cause. Ok? It's like that book analogy. I'll never get to read the book unless if something...it was a first cause...had the book to begin with. Ok? Otherwise I'm never gonna get to read it. The universe must have a first cause which began the whole chain of effects that we see today. Second thing that we see is that it really is reasonable to suspect that the universe and the laws of physics were rigged by somebody who would have to be beyond that and more powerful than that. And third thing that we see is things like the second law of thermodynamics, and there's plenty of other evidence and other things, all indicates that time, matter, space, energy, the very laws of physics and science came into existence at a single moment in time in our past. Before that none of it existed.

So what does all of it indicate? First of all I would remind you that science cannot disprove the evidence or the existence of God and His creation of the universe. Science cannot disprove it. Ok? That's outside the realm of science. However, if anything, when we look at science, it actually indicates the extreme probability, extreme probability, that there is some sort of a supernatural cause or creator. By supernatural that simply...it means that

there is something outside of the universe that is beyond the laws of space, time, matter, physics, everything else. There is something that caused the universe to come into existence that is beyond all of that, is above all of that. It's supernatural. As a result, what that tells us is that this first cause must be an infinite, eternal, immaterial, all powerful, infinitely intelligent, creative being not subject to the laws of physics. What do I draw this from? Well let's see...if space itself came into existence at the Big Bang and whatever caused it wasn't contained in space, it was beyond space. If you are beyond space you are, by definition, infinite. Eternal—if time came into existence at the Big Bang, and whatever caused the Big Bang is beyond time, then it is by definition eternal. Immaterial—if it's not made up of matter, which came into existence, then it is immaterial. If it contains enough energy that all of the power, all of the energy in the entire universe, was put into the system by this one cause, I'm sorry, then that means that it contains and it has all of the power. It's infinitely intelligent. It rigged this whole system such that it does better than any computer. It has all...it contains all knowledge that is to be had in the entire universe. It rigged the whole thing and put it together so it knows how the whole universe works. That is infinite intelligence. And it's a creative being. It's something that brought something into existence. It's something that created something else. It's creative. And it's not subject to the laws of physics, 'cause even those came into existence at a moment in time in our past.

And only a theistic worldview, only a worldview that says there is a God, there is one God, fits what science and philosophy, logic, reason, indicate about the origins of our universe. That's why I love this quote, and I'll read this quote to you just real briefly, 'cause I just love it. We're almost wrappin' up here, but this is kind of a concluding thought, and I just can't pass up. Robert Jastrow, he is an astrophysicist; he's an agnostic astrophysicist; a smart guy. But he was writing a book about things like the Big Bang and astrophysics, and all the things astronomy is learning about our universe and how it works; and more so than the way that it works, how it began. And when he was looking at it, this agnostic astrophysicist came to this conclusion, and this is what he said.

This is an exceedingly strange development, unexpected by all but the theologians. They have always accepted the word of the Bible—*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*. 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, and peek back into what is the universe's origins.

Ok? We're about to find out how it all began, is what he's sayin'.

And as he finally pulls himself over the final rock he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.

That's what this astrophysicist concludes, because as he looks at it he can come to no other conclusion. That is why he is not an atheist. He is an agnostic because he can come to no other conclusion than the fact that the universe has to have had some sort of supernatural cause. And so he says ok, there's got to be some sort of supernatural cause. I don't know what it is, but there's gotta be somethin' out there. And it's like this bad dream that you're wakin' up from, 'cause man, here you are, you're all proud of all this stuff that you're figuring out and you finally get there and here's these people that you've been mockin' for centuries, and they've been sittin' there for what seems like forever. It's like a bad dream.

That's why I would just simply conclude with this. Science has not disproved the reality of both God and creation. To the contrary, in fact, it has indicated both God's existence—I don't say proven, because science cannot prove it—but it has indicated both God's existence and His creation of the universe. And that's why when I read something like Genesis 1:1, where it says

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

...in the beginning He brought everything into existence, it really strengthens my faith.

Let's stand.

[Congregation sings the prayer song]

Go in grace.