

# APOLOGETICS



Keep The Faith

## Episode 4 – Cause for Kalam

Welcome to part 4 of the companions that go along with our exciting apologetics series on the podcast!

In last week's episode we reviewed the Kalam Cosmological Argument and how the big bang theory plays into our understanding of the universe and how it relates to God. We also started looking at an interaction I had with a young lad in which I used this argument! This week, we began looking at our first premise!

But before we really get going, let's remind ourselves of our argument:

- P1. Everything that begins to exist has a cause
- P2. The universe began to exist
- C. Therefore, the universe has a cause

That's it, top to bottom.

This week, we looked over P1. Everything that begins to exist has a cause.

To begin, I'll give you the transcript and notes of the podcast, then I'm going to take you through an objection to this first premise and how to dismantle it! Exciting, no?

Last week, I offered you the sarcastic observation that no one, ever, at any time, sees things just pop into being magically.

This is down to a little something called causation! An effect is preceded by a cause.

For example, the tablet or phone you likely listened to the episode on was constructed from parts that were branded with the intention to sell en masse to consumers, made from metals that were sold from a mine in which they were dug out after having been formed over years, etc...

All that is to say you can quite happily take this premise as true based on your own

experience.

That's not all, though! In addition, you can also be confident this premise is true because, if it wasn't, there's no explanation as to why things don't just randomly pop into being all the time! This means if there's no first principle stating things need a cause to begin existing, then what rule is there to stop things just suddenly appearing? There wouldn't be one, and yet we never observe it!

I then shared with you an experience I had utilizing this part of the argument. I once had someone, a young lad, stop me at this point in the argument and ask me an interesting question.

He asked "ah, but what caused GOD?"

I'm hoping you took the time to stop the podcast and think about this at this point, like I asked.

My response was "nothing. God is the uncaused first cause, if He wasn't uncaused then whatever caused Him would be God".

Now, when I've dropped that particular gem in the past, people who perhaps don't quite understand what's been said will respond "that's awfully convenient", but... is it? Is it simply convenient? As if I've just given an answer that isn't true but sounds good for my argument so I'll use it.

I replied "well, it's not convenience, it's logic".

Because an infinite regression of causes isn't logical!

An infinite regression of causes means that you can keep going down the line of cause-effect all the way through infinity, without ever reaching an end (or, rather, a beginning) of the causation.

This is known as the 'first cause' from Aristotle's musing in ancient Greece, wherein he contemplated the unmoved mover (Ancient Greek: ὁ οὐ κινούμενον κινεῖ, *romanized: ho ou kinoumenon kinei*, *lit.* 'that which moves without being moved') or prime mover as a primary cause (or first uncaused cause) or "mover" of all the motion in the universe.

This influenced Thomas Aquinas, a medieval theologian, who first considered the idea of a contingent natural universe needing an exterior non-contingent cause. Thomas's five proofs for the existence of God take some of Aristotle's assertions concerning principles of being. God as *prima causa* ("first cause") comes from Aristotle's concept of the unmoved mover and asserts that God is the ultimate cause of all things.

These philosophers both argued that causes can't descend into infinity, but rather there must have been a cause that began all of the effects, the things we observe, in motion.

But why is it illogical to have an infinite regression of causes?

Two major reasons – the first is that an infinite regression would require an infinity of time to have passed, and that an actual infinite regression is a logical absurdity.

Let's go one-by-one.

Firstly, when we started this whole premise last week, what did we say the big bang was? The beginning of time, space, matter and energy.

It's the beginning of time that's really key here.

If we have an infinite regression of causes, we need an infinite amount of time to have passed.

When we consider the big bang being the beginning of all of time, then we *know* that there

hasn't been an infinite amount of time.  
There's lots of evidence for this, but we'll review that next week.

Secondly, there's also just the issue of an infinite regression of time and causes being logically absurd.

Let's consider an example. Let's pretend that for every 1 rotation around the sun Jupiter does, Neptune does 2.

If Jupiter has gone around the sun 1000 times, Neptune has done 2000, okay?

If there's an infinite amount of passed time, then how many rotations have Jupiter and Neptune done?

You might answer Neptune has done twice as many as Jupiter, and you'd be right! But you might also say they've both done an infinite number of loops, and also be right! But, hang on, how can Neptune have done double infinity rotations?

It can't, that's logically absurd.

Let me give you another example, which is kind of mad so do your best to hang in there with this. It's called Hilbert's Hotel.

Hilbert's Hotel was a thought experiment by mathematician David Hilbert, which he used to demonstrate that a fully occupied hotel with infinitely many rooms may still accommodate additional guests, even infinitely many of them, and this process may be repeated infinitely often. It shows the absurdity of infinity, basically. Let me take you through it:

Suppose you run a hotel, and that your hotel has infinitely many rooms, numbered 1, 2, 3, etc. All rooms are occupied, when a new guest arrives and asks to be put up.

What do you do?

It's easy. Ask the guest in room 1 to move to room 2, the guest in room 2 to move into room 3, the guest in room 3 to move into room 4, and so on. If there were only a finite amount of rooms, the guest in the last room would have nowhere to go, but since there are infinitely many, everybody will find a new room. You'll have to ask the guests to move simultaneously though, because if you ask them to move one after the other, the move might take an infinite amount of time, since infinitely many guests have to move.

Using this trick, you can actually accommodate any finite number of new guests. If  $[n]$  new guests arrive, simply ask each existing guest to move to the room whose number is  $[n]$  plus the number of their existing room. As an example, if there are  $[8]$  new guests, then the guest currently in room  $[10]$  needs to move into room  $10+8=18$ .

But things get better still. Suppose an infinite number of new guests arrive, forming an orderly queue outside the hotel. In this case, ask each existing guest to move into the room whose number is twice the number of their current room. So, a guest staying in room  $[x]$  moves to room  $[2x]$ . After this manoeuvre only the even numbered rooms are occupied: rooms  $2 = 2 \times 1$ ,  $4 = 2 \times 2$ ,  $6 = 2 \times 3$ , and so on. The odd numbered rooms are all free, so you can put your first new guest into room 1, the second new guest into room 3, the third new guest into room 5, and so on. Everybody is happy.

This isn't all. Suppose an infinite number of coaches arrive, each carrying an infinite number of new guests. Assume, for simplicity, that the coaches are numbered 1, 2, 3, etc, and that the seats in each coach are also numbered 1, 2, 3, etc. You start by asking each existing guest to move into the room whose number is twice the number of their current room, as

before. This leaves the odd numbered rooms free again. Now tell the passenger of coach 1 with seat 1 to move into room 3, the passenger of coach 1 with seat 2 into room  $3^2 = 9$ , the passenger of coach 1 with seat 3 into room  $3^3 = 27$ , and so on. In other words, the passenger of coach 1 with seat  $[n]$  moves into room  $3^n$ . Any power of 3 is odd, so all these rooms are guaranteed to be free.

It goes on and on from there, with multiple new coaches and things like that arriving, but that's the basics of the thought experiment.

It shows, quite clearly and concisely, that an actual real-world infinity is not actualisable.

All that was to say that we need to consider a first cause for the universe.

It needs to be a first cause that has enough power to create a universe *ex nihilo* as well, from nothing. But we'll get to that in time.

Suffice to say, we cannot say that things that begin don't need causes, and if someone asks what God's cause is, we can be confident in asserting that God is the first cause.

Now we come to me putting my money where my mouth is, once again, and engaging with a rebuttal of this premise.

There are a couple of things people can say at this point, most of which are obviously incorrect so it's not worth the time to go through (such as assuming the argument is *question-begging*, assuming the premise to be true and then arguing to it, which is patently false as this is a deductive argument).

We will be dealing with something called the 'fallacy of composition'.

At this point, people might say something along the lines of "hang on, just because the things in the universe need a cause for their existence doesn't mean the universe has the same requirement!"

They'd sort of be right, let me explain what they're saying.

The fallacy of composition is the fallacy of reasoning that because every part of a thing has a certain property, therefore the whole thing has that same property. While wholes do sometimes possess the properties of their parts (for example, a fence, every picket of which is green, is also green), this is not always the case. For example, every little part of an elephant may be light in weight, but that does not imply that the whole elephant is light in weight.

The objection here is that just because the things in the universe require a cause for their existence, does not mean the universe also needs one.

What do you think of this? You could jot some notes down or have a think before I reveal the answer...

Well, first of all, we haven't argued that – we never said that the things in the universe all need causes therefore the universe does too. We have given a few reasons which are unaffected by this:

1. *Something cannot come from nothing.* To claim that something can come into being out of 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. Nobody believes that things like sharks or blanchmanges can just pop into being without a cause.
2. *If something can come into being from nothing, then it becomes inexplicable why just anything or everything doesn't come into being from nothing.* Think about it: why

don't rhinos and blancmanges and skyscrapers just pop into being from nothing? Why is it only universes that can pop into being from nothing? What makes nothingness so discriminatory? There can't be anything about nothingness that favours universes, for nothingness doesn't have any properties. Nor can anything constrain nothingness, since there isn't anything to be constrained!

3. *Common experience and scientific evidence confirm the truth of premise 1.* Premise 1 is constantly verified and never falsified as we talked about with our own experiences. It is hard to understand how any atheist committed to modern science could deny that premise 1 is more plausibly true than false in light of the evidence. So, as you can clearly see, this is not an issue of fallacy of composition! There are a lot of things we're drawing on to make our case with this first premise. I'll give you another one, but instead of giving you my experience of rebutting something, allow William Lane Craig to regale you with the following objection:

*"Objection: If the universe began to exist, then it must have come from nothing. That is quite plausible, since there are no constraints on nothing, and so nothing can do anything, including producing the universe.*

*Response: This objector seems to be hopelessly confused about the use of the word "nothing." When it is rightly said that nothing preceded the universe, one doesn't mean that something preceded it, and that was nothing. We mean that it was not preceded by anything. Reifying negative terms has been the butt of jokes as old as Homer's story of the Cyclops and Odysseus. Imagine, if you will, the following dialogue between two people discussing the Second World War:*

*"Nothing stopped the German advance from sweeping across Belgium."*

*"Oh, that's good. I'm glad it was stopped."*

*"But it wasn't stopped!"*

*"But you said that nothing stopped it."*

*"That's right, nothing stopped it.."*

*"That's what I said. It was stopped, and it was nothing that stopped it."*

*"No, no, I meant they it wasn't stopped by anything."*

*"Well, then why didn't you say so in the first place?"*

*The objector, in thinking that nothing produced the universe, seems to be guilty of exactly the same sort of mistake. Nothingness has no properties, no powers; it isn't even anything. Therefore, it is wholly misconceived to say it produced the universe.*

*To say the universe was caused by nothing is to say the universe had no cause; it wasn't caused by anything. That is surely metaphysically absurd. Out of nothing, nothing comes.*

*This is a classical principle of metaphysics that goes back to at least Plato. In his classic dialogue, the Timaeus, Plato wrote the following:*

*We must in my opinion begin by distinguishing between that which always is and never becomes and that which is always becoming and never is . . . everything that becomes or changes must do so owing to some cause; for nothing can come to be without a cause. . . . As for the world – call it that or 'cosmos' or any other name acceptable to it – we must ask about it the question one is bound to ask to begin with about anything; whether it has always existed and had no beginning, or whether it has come into existence and started from some beginning. The answer is that it has come into being. . . . And what comes into being or changes must do so, we said, owing to some cause.”*

Hopefully you found those illuminating and helpful!

Here's our scripture of the week!

Colossians 1:16-17 – *“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together”*

So, why is this our scripture this week?

Well, we're considering the advent of the universe! We're considering God as the first cause of everything, so it's good to know that the Bible has got our backs on this.

Nothing that was created was done so without God's will and permission for it to be created. Nothing that was created was done so without going through Him.

That's the awesome God we're exploring right now!

Anyway, our question of the week is this – what would you say if someone asked you what caused God?

Have a practice at it, and we can review it Thursday night in debate club!

Next week, premise 2!

As always, don't be afraid to get into the youth whatsapp chat and let us know how you are, what you're up to and what you're thinking. Get your prayer requests ready for Thursday and get involved in our Bible study! And you can grab us on Instagram @chawnyouth.

Speak to you next week!