

APOLOGETICS



Keep The Faith

Episode 5 – Began, Begun, Begone

Hi guys and welcome back to another companion for this exciting series of the podcast! Last week 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're going to begin looking at our second 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

This week, we're just going to look over P2. The universe began to exist.

Before we power on with this, I want us to stop for a moment and re-focus.

Recently I met up with some of you guys from the youth in the park to hang out and have fun, but also to connect and check-in with one another (believe it or not, I love seeing you guys and making sure you're all right).

While we were there and talking about the podcasts, Iz voiced some concern that she did not want her faith to be overly-intellectual. It was a great, mature and wise concern that she had, and I valued it so much that it sparked a great discussion.

We discussed it a bit and I think that conversation and the beats we hit would be useful to re-affirm so we know the value in what we're doing here!

Firstly, when I say we need a foundation to our faith of reason and evidence, I do not mean that we believe in God due to reason *at the expense of* experience. Far from it – as I reasoned in week 2, our faith and its justification is founded first and foremost in our experience of God! Your first moment of *true* belief, was the moment you first experienced

God's presence and impact in your life. This is the 'properly basic belief' we discussed in week 2. We're totally justified in believing in God purely because we have experienced Him... but that isn't often enough to *endure* our belief.

Let me put it this way – when the experiences stop, when you go through a dry period and a tough season (which we all go through), if you have nothing other than this experience to rely on then we are in danger of losing faith.

This whole series is called Keep the Faith for a reason – if experience is all we have and the experience stops, we do what most humans do when they stop getting positive feedback... they give up!

When the experience stops, but you have a *rock-firm foundation* in the knowledge that, apart from your own current experience, God *exists*, categorically; Jesus *lived, died and rose*, absolutely; your life has *purpose, meaning and value*, without exception, then your faith isn't tied to how or what you feel. It has this unmoving anchor from which it will not float away.

Secondly, if we go back to Matthew 22:37, we see Jesus say the greatest commandment is that "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind*". Many translations and references to this commandment in Deuteronomy 6:5 also include the word 'strength'. As I've said before, it's all about Jesus, so we should take this seriously.

What percentage of those ways to love the Lord are intellectual in nature? Well, depending on the translation, it's either 33% or 25%. That's not a lot.

I, much like the commandment, do not suggest we out-weigh the love of the Lord with our heart, soul and strength with the loving the Lord with our mind.

I put emphasis on the intellectual side, however, for several reasons:

- I can't remember the last time I heard a preach in a church that extolled the virtues of having an intellectual element of faith – this is the remit of youth, children and student ministries, in addition to the teaching at the home
- People in the world do not live in the world of feelings and experiences, and even if they did you can't share them – they want a *reason* to believe
- The world and its culture, regardless of how it may seem, is becoming more focused around the learning institutions (universities etc) and they are setting the standard for truth (wrongly) and culture – engaging with these people requires reason not feeling
- We're commanded, regularly, in the Bible, to work on the intellectual side of our faith! 1 Peter 3:15, Matthew 22:37, Matthew 18:28-30, 2 Corinthians 10:5, just to name a few, all extol this element of our faith
- One day you will likely have children and they will have questions! Doesn't it seem important to be able to answer these instead of letting the culture, which based on the way things are going will be *even worse* than it is now, teach them the answers? It sure does to me

These reasons all put this ministry in a great position to equip you all for your life with Christ. My guess would be you have had virtually a lifetime of being coached in how to have an experiential relationship with God. You at least have a decent idea of how to love the Lord your God with your heart, soul and strength. Most young people I have met in my time, and there's been a hell of a lot of them, have not had any preparation to love the Lord their

God with their *mind*. It's so often neglected.

I want you guys to be Christians, following and passionate about Christ, until you breathe your last! If I can give you another part of the foundation to make this happen it's my duty before God to do so.

So, that was largely the discussion we had on a 30 degree, sunny day in the park recently. I wanted to make sure you guys knew why we're here.

It's all about JESUS, and following Him forever.

This is a piece in that puzzle.

Anyway, back to our premise!

We have already begun to dig into this in places, such as in our week 3 companion where I dismantled an article from a brother in Christ who was claiming the big bang theory was a replacement for God in the creation narrative, and last week when we looked at the impossibility of an actual infinite.

These were philosophical and logical arguments that were presented, but in this episode we take a look at the scientific underpinning of this claim, because that's important too. If people want to frame a conversation about God's existence as a scientific one, we need to be able to do that, at least a little bit.

So, you're probably already pretty confident saying that the universe began to exist. Allow me to give you some extra firepower.

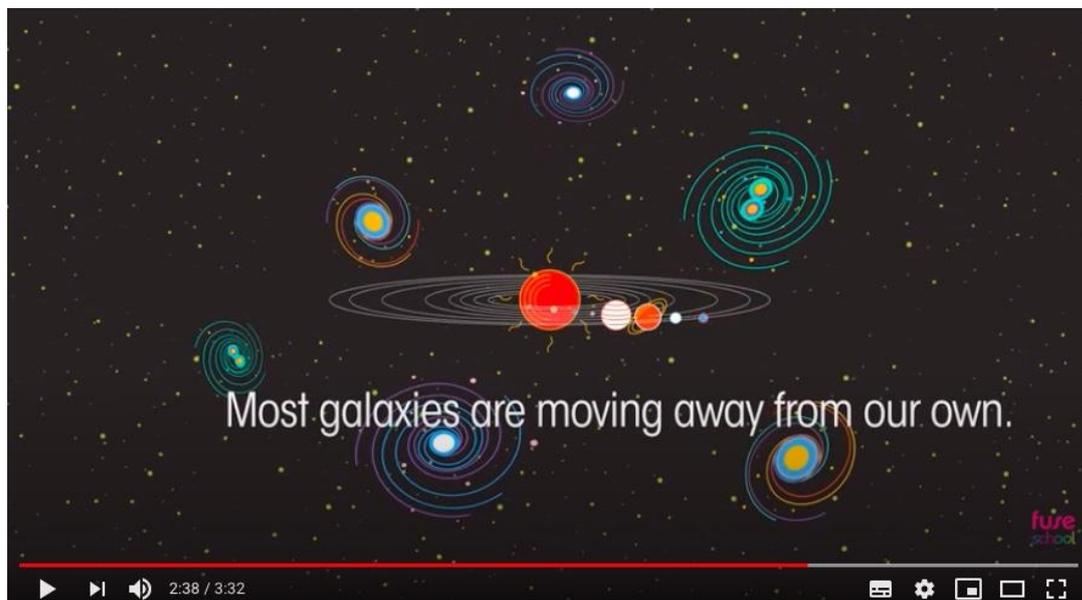
First off, Georges Lemaître noted in 1927 that an expanding universe could be traced back in time to an original single point, a 'singularity'. That's our starting point of the universe.

After that, we had Edwin Hubble in 1929 discovering 'red light shift' where light shifts to the red of the spectrum when two astral bodies move further from one another, which shows the universe is expanding out from a previous singular point. We also had Penrose & Hawking's work on an inevitable singularity state in the finite past, and Alan Guth showing the theory of the rapid expansion of the universe.

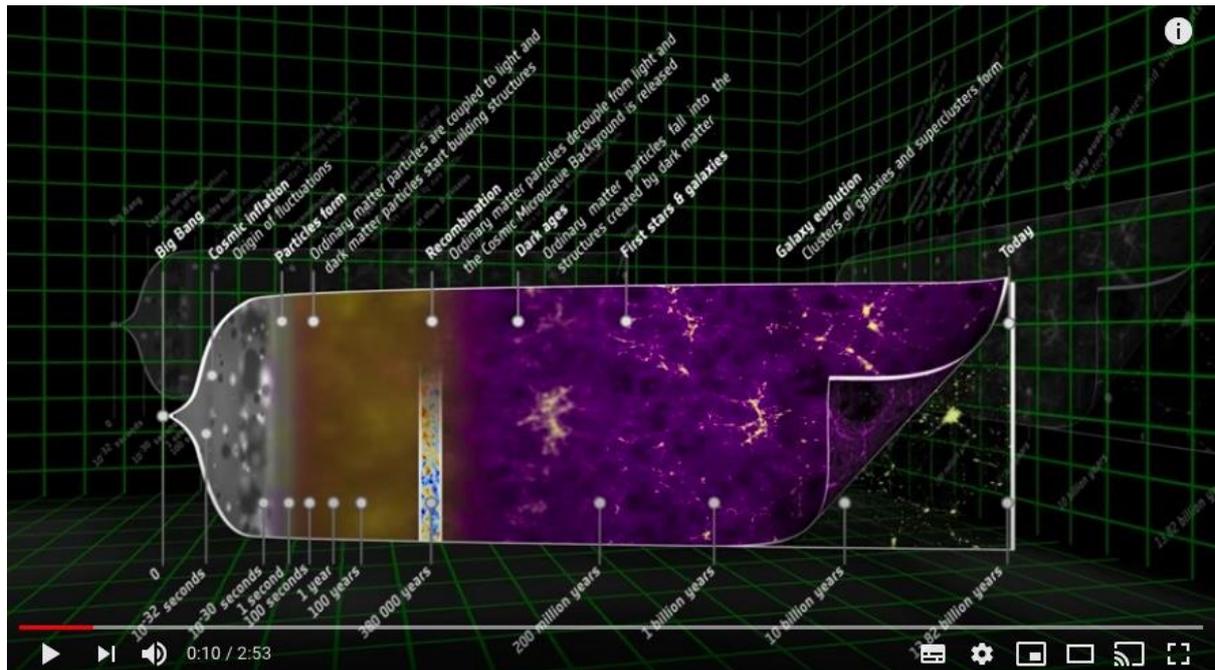
I am not a scientist, I do not pretend to be, but I would suggest you, like myself, get a working understanding of these topics in order to best understand and defend this premise.

With that in mind, here are some resources for you!

Here is a great video about this red light shift:



And here's a cool video with the man himself, Alan Guth, explaining his model of expansion in the universe:



The crux of this all is to say that, on the standard and virtually-unanimously accepted model of the Big Bang and rapid expansion of the universe, all come back to this singularity – the point at which time, space and matter began.

We do not, as some atheist debaters and commentators sometimes say, have a universe that has existed for eternity. There's no scientific basis upon which to make this claim and anyone who frames a conversation as a scientific one and then states this has defeated themselves before they have even begun the conversation.

You can see more on this here:



Beside this, there is something known as 'entropy' – the state in which a closed system will slowly degenerate into disorder. That is to say, any system that cannot have more energy put into it (like our universe) will eventually run out as what we have available (a finite amount) becomes less and less able to power things as it gets spread too thin (as the universe expands).

In the episode I gave this analogy initially – if you're a slender young man who's about 5'10 and 9 stone, and you put 2500 calories into your body every day you will, most likely, put on weight. As you gained weight, this amount of calories would slowly become too few for you to gain weight any longer. Let's say you somehow defeat the basics of calories in/calories out and you continued to gain weight anyway. Your energy expenditure would eventually exceed your intake and you would begin to die. If for some strange reason you continued to gain weight you would eventually run out of the required energy to power your massive body and die. Your energy intake never changed, but you died as it became too thin to power you.

It's a flawed analogy, as most analogies are, but hopefully that explains it a bit better for you.

As I was thinking in the podcast, however, I came up with an even better analogy to explain this!

Imagine you have a small child and you give them 3000 calories. That's all the energy their system will ever get. This might well be enough to power them for some time, but as they grow and require more energy as things get more spread out, that simply is not enough. The system will eventually die out without more energy being added in.

Thankfully, in real life, a child can eat and add more energy and be fine. In our universe, however, due its nature as a closed system, there is no way to add energy into the system! Anyway, this shows that we can't possibly have a past eternal universe – if we did, we would have run out of energy by now!

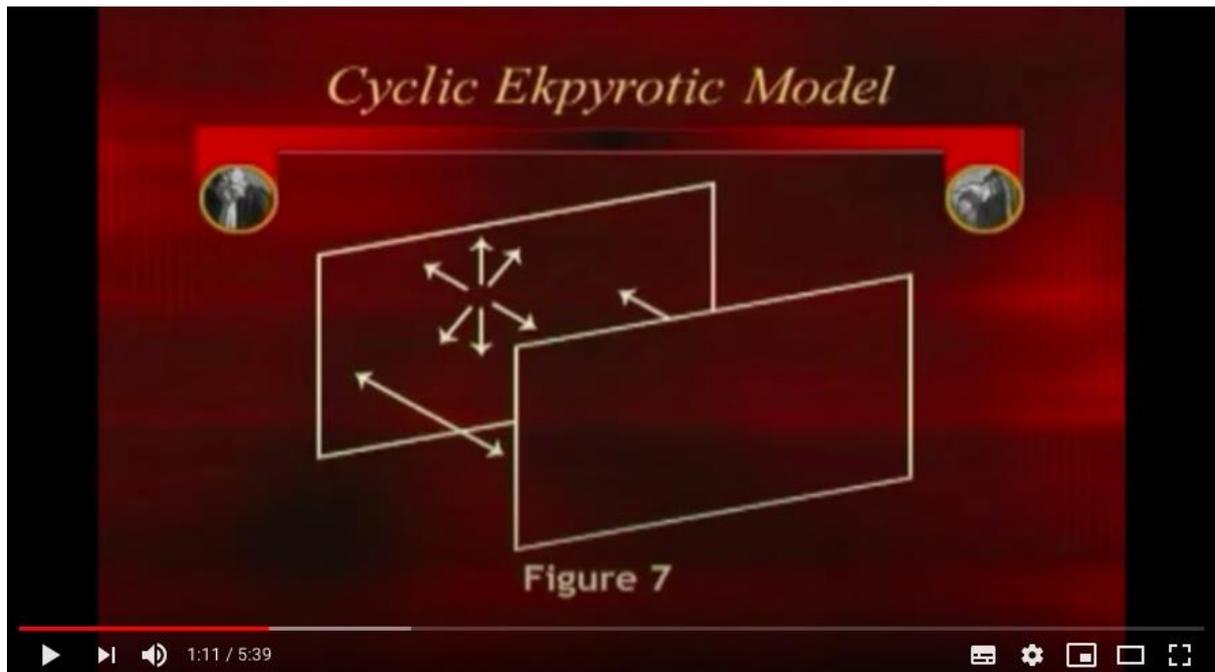
Now, some of your more astute and learned friends might say "well, imagine if there's like an undulating or wave effect in the universe – every singularity is just the collapse of the previous universe being reborn!"

It's an interesting idea!

This is a model which was put out some time ago called the cyclic model, in which every big bang is followed by rapid expansion, then rapid regression, and then something called a 'big crunch', which would look like a singularity, which would spawn a new 'big bang', and so on. It's an interesting and compelling theory!

Unfortunately, however, it doesn't work. Remember that entropy thing we discussed earlier? Well, entropy is a constant and would not be reduced or reset with these 'crunches'. If there had been a few of these 'bangs' and 'crunches' we would have run out of useable energy by now. If the universe was past-eternal, then there would have been an infinite amount of these expansions and crunches...

We can get a good explanation of this in the following video:



Often, people may switch gears then and say “well, this is just one universe out of loads, so it isn’t God that’s created the universe, there’s a multiverse of infinite universes all being created by a universe generator”.

I won’t go into this too much now as we’ll be coming back to the idea of a ‘multiverse’ when we discuss fine tuning, but there’s a fairly easy rejoinder for us right now.

“What caused the universe generator?”

Boom.

You see, the reason this works is that in order for there to be something generating universes that is *itself* a universe or other material thing, then it still requires an explanation for its existence.

If they decide that no, this isn’t a material thing doing the generation, then congratulations – they have described God. An immaterial, spaceless, timeless, powerful being that has created a universe...

Ultimately, the key thing to remember here is we are making the intellectual price tag of rejecting the idea that the universe began to exist really, really high. If someone were to continue rejecting this premise, they would be arguing against their own request to frame the conversation as scientific.

All this helps us to move the conversation toward the probable existence of a creator...

As the Bible tells us (and the guys in the article in week 3 did a bit of a rough job of interpreting) “*in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth*”.

Right, I think that’s enough!

Hopefully you can see now the wealth of information and evidence we have at our fingertips to support this premise.

Our scripture this week is the one we just used – Genesis 1:1 “*in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth*”.

Why is this our scripture of the week?

I often find that we, as Christians, don’t often know what to do with Genesis and the creation narrative, so we kind of just... skip over it.

My suggestion to you is to read Genesis, particularly chapters 1 and 2, and read it from the perspective of mytho-history. What is the author trying to convey? What are we supposed to learn from this?

I would suggest that we are to learn the grandest truth of all – God created the universe, *ex nihilo*, at a point in the finite past, to show both His awesome power and sovereignty, but also out of love for the creation He had planned. How this happened is up for debate, we can assume it was as literally as the bible writes, or we can use the brains God gave us to uncover the amazing intricacies of the universe He made, furthering our reason to believe in Him. The big bang theory is not in opposition to the Biblical narrative, it simply fleshes it out. The Kalam Cosmological Argument uses this information to reinforce the Biblical narrative that God creates.

Finally, here is our question of the week – if someone rejected the idea that the universe began to exist, what would you say?

We'll pick that up on Thursday in our debate club.

Next week, the conclusion!

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!