

# The Knowledge of God—Creation and Human Nature

Let us begin at the beginning then.

## The Nature of Creation

God, by definition, is not part of the universe that He created. In fact, common sense makes it clear that a thing cannot also be part of the thing that it produces. It must be distinct from it. This does raise the question of how we are sure that the universe had a producer outside of itself.

Obviously, we cannot claim that the universe made itself. That would be absurd. Also, it does not exactly help to think that the universe is the production of an infinite chain of universes outside of itself. This argument still needs an explanation for how the first universe in the chain came to exist in the first place. If there is no first universe in this infinite chain, on the other hand, then how does anything exist at all? We also cannot pretend ignorance as to how the universe came to exist because if something exists, there are only two ways to explain its existence: Either it has always existed or something outside of it made it.

The real question then is whether the universe has always existed or whether something outside of itself made it.

How can we hope to find an answer to this? It should be obvious to us from the foregoing that we cannot expect to find a meaningful answer by mere philosophy. We have to approach the question realistically. Perhaps there is some philosophical merit to an infinite regress, but there is no real merit to it otherwise. We DO have the physical universe around us. We DO have a working intellect. What do we perceive then in the world around us? What does the evidence of our own eyes, ears, and hands tell us?

If it tells us nothing, surely it tells us that the universe changes all the time. It is stable enough to have a discernible definition, but it does change in quality. We need not go so far as to explore all the worlds far away from us; we can judge from the planet on which we live. At this very moment, we are inundated with news about climate change at least. In our own lifetimes, we do see things change around us. Whether through accumulated human activity over several centuries or millennia or through natural processes independent of human activity, we do see much change. Deserts form. Lakes form and disappear. Whole rivers dry up. Whole species disappear. Even those atheistic academics believe that our planet has gone through multiple ages, eras, or epochs defined by great change<sup>1</sup> even if their ideas of these changes are also atheistic. That is, in the end, we all agree that the universe is subject to change. It is in its very nature to change.

What does this mean? Well, why do things change? In our collective human experience, unless the change in an entity is brought about by a conscious choice of its own, it is inflicted upon the entity by some external entity or phenomenon. Proceeding from the former, if the change is brought about by its own conscious choice, why would it choose to change if the change is not in pursuit of perfection? A perfect entity cannot become more perfect. It can only become imperfect. Why then would the universe choose to change—if it does possess the ability to make choices—if it were already perfect? Common sense says that it would not choose to change if it was already perfect and conscious of its own perfection unless of course itself or something outside itself persuaded it that it was not perfect.

From this reasoning, we know that change already proves that the universe is not perfect even if we allowed that it is sentient. That is already enough proof that it cannot be God.

But to be clear how it is, we only need to remember that God is necessarily perfect. Whatever is truly God cannot be less than perfect. Therefore, it would not be changing in pursuit of perfection.

Proceeding from the latter, on the other hand, if we erase the idea that the universe as a thing possesses free will (because it obviously doesn't), then, obviously, the change is being inflicted upon it by something outside of it. Interestingly, this is pretty much what the Bible itself says (cf. Job 38-41).

<sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; <sup>21</sup> because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.  
Romans 8:20-21 (NKJV)

<sup>12</sup> "Have you commanded the morning since your days began,  
And caused the dawn to know its place,

<sup>13</sup> That it might take hold of the ends of the earth,  
And the wicked be shaken out of it?

<sup>14</sup> It takes on form like clay under a seal,  
And stands out like a garment.

<sup>15</sup> From the wicked their light is withheld,  
And the upraised arm is broken.

Job 38:12-15 (NKJV)

If then we agree that the changes that the universe experiences are due to the exertion of an external will, then the universe cannot be God. It is subject to whatever changes it. This is what the Bible teaches too.

The conclusion then is that the most obvious thing that we can hear creation saying is that it is not itself God. It can't be since it is neither perfect nor sentient. A true God would necessarily possess both qualities. This can also be understood to mean that the universe presents as proof that there is something outside of it that is responsible for its existence.

As we can see from all the foregoing, this is where common sense reasoning brings us. One need not read the Bible to come to this conclusion. One need only be honest in one's appraisal of apparent reality. However, this is also where any honest reading of the bible brings us (Genesis 1:1; Job 38-41; Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:20; Revelation 4:11). Everything that exists points to something outside of this universe as the reason that it does.

### Natural Revelation

The above is part of what is called "natural revelation." That is, this is information that God has supernaturally provided to all human beings without using any special tools or means such as visions, dreams, or prophets. No matter what anyone believes or prefers to believe, no matter where they are or what they care about, all of us have the same access to the world around us and all of us possess the natural human qualities that enable us to draw this conclusion that there is a God who made all things.

This is why the Bible says,

<sup>1</sup> The fool has said in his heart,  
"There is no God."  
They are corrupt,

They have done abominable works,  
There is none who does good.  
Psalms 14:1 (NKJV) (cf. Psalm 53:1)

That is to say that there is no more natural conclusion to draw from anything than the conclusion of God's existence from the evidence of the universe around us. The rejection of the clear implication of all that evidence is like the greatest foolishness that anyone can display no matter how "wise" or smart they prove in any other endeavor.

However, we can easily see that if this God is good, then it only follows that He will tell us enough about Himself from the same creation to give us good reason to seek to know Him. That is, being creatures with free will and such limited capacity to apprehend reality fully, the knowledge of God's existence may not in and of itself be sufficient to get any of us to go seeking after God. We may say, "God exists, so what?" On the other hand, the knowledge of His existence might terrify us into trying to get as far away from Him as we can.

Beyond the bare fact of His existence, the universe tells us about God's character. That is, it not only tells us that He exists, but it also tells us what kind of person He is and therefore what we can expect of Him (Acts 14:17; 17:24-31).

<sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world ***His invisible attributes are clearly seen***, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, Romans 1:20 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> "But now ask the beasts, and they will teach you;  
And the birds of the air, and they will tell you;

<sup>8</sup> Or speak to the earth, and it will teach you;  
And the fish of the sea will explain to you.

<sup>9</sup> Who among all these does not know  
That the hand of the LORD has done this,

<sup>10</sup> In whose hand is the life of every living thing,  
And the breath of all mankind?

<sup>11</sup> Does not the ear test words  
And the mouth taste its food?

<sup>12</sup> Wisdom is with aged men,  
And with length of days, understanding.

<sup>13</sup> "With Him are wisdom and strength,  
He has counsel and understanding.

<sup>14</sup> If He breaks a thing down, it cannot be rebuilt;  
If He imprisons a man, there can be no release.

<sup>15</sup> If He withholds the waters, they dry up;  
If He sends them out, they overwhelm the earth.

<sup>16</sup> With Him are strength and prudence.  
The deceived and the deceiver are His.

<sup>17</sup> He leads counselors away plundered,  
And makes fools of the judges.

<sup>18</sup> He loosens the bonds of kings,  
And binds their waist with a belt.

<sup>19</sup> He leads princes away plundered,

And overthrows the mighty.  
<sup>20</sup> He deprives the trusted ones of speech,  
And takes away the discernment of the elders.  
<sup>21</sup> He pours contempt on princes,  
And disarms the mighty.  
<sup>22</sup> He uncovers deep things out of darkness,  
And brings the shadow of death to light.  
<sup>23</sup> He makes nations great, and destroys them;  
He enlarges nations, and guides them.  
<sup>24</sup> He takes away the understanding of the chiefs of the people of  
the earth,  
And makes them wander in a pathless wilderness.  
<sup>25</sup> They grope in the dark without light,  
And He makes them stagger like a drunken man.  
Job 12:7-25 (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God;  
And the firmament shows His handiwork.  
<sup>2</sup> Day unto day utters speech,  
And night unto night reveals knowledge.  
<sup>3</sup> There is no speech nor language  
Where their voice is not heard.  
<sup>4</sup> Their line has gone out through all the earth,  
And their words to the end of the world.  
In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun,  
<sup>5</sup> Which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,  
And rejoices like a strong man to run its race.  
<sup>6</sup> Its rising is from one end of heaven,  
And its circuit to the other end;  
And there is nothing hidden from its heat.  
<sup>7</sup> The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul;  
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;  
<sup>8</sup> The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;  
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;  
<sup>9</sup> The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;  
The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.  
<sup>10</sup> More to be desired are they than gold,  
Yea, than much fine gold;  
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.  
<sup>11</sup> Moreover by them Your servant is warned,  
And in keeping them there is great reward.  
Psalms 19:1-11 (NKJV)

As we can see from the passage in Job above, the power of God can be terrifying to contemplate. If that were all that the Lord left us with, we would be unable to live life in this world.

Without doubt, God is to be feared. Any power that can make the universe that we see every day is not to be taken lightly. It is good to be aware of this because it should

ordinarily humble us so that we will not endanger ourselves through recklessness in dealing with the God to whom we must answer. But that is not all that God has left for us in the universe.

The universe also witnesses to the goodness and graciousness of God, to His generosity and mercy, to His love and kindness, to His joy in forgiving sinners, and to His patience with His enemies. The passages in Acts referenced above speak to this. Despite the antagonism or just plain ignorance of men displayed toward Him, God is still gracious in providing sustenance for all people everywhere so that everyone has ample opportunity to seek Him and find Him and avail themselves of His mercy.

The universe shows this to us through the provisions that are constantly made available to us through it. As Paul and Barnabas put it in Acts 14 and as our Lord Jesus Himself put it in Matthew 5:45, God provides all that we need to live in this world. Whether it is the shining of the sun that puts gladness in our hearts, or it is the rain that gives us food for sustenance, He does not withhold His hand even from His enemies.

Whether any given person or nation believes the Bible or not, this is always the case even for them. No one need be good in order to benefit from the natural blessings that God bestows on all mankind. Everyone is provided with the good things of this life in some measure. We may not always appreciate what we have or be content with it, but we do have what we need. The world is filled with witnesses of God's love and kindness so that we are not terrified by His power that is displayed in the magnificent and awe-inspiring creation that surrounds us.

This is all to say that the universe around us is filled with a sufficient and proper introduction to God that does not overwhelm us with dread or leave us without sufficient impression to cause us to have at least a thought about Him.

This is not all, however. If the universe outside of us is designed to tell us about God, what about us? What makes us able to hear what they say? The witness of creation around us would be meaningless if we could not perceive it. Another way to put this is: Is everyone able to perceive this witness?

### **The Witness of Human Conscience**

Acts 14:17 and Acts 17:26-27 make clear that everyone of us can perceive this witness. How is this possible? Why are we all in this same boat? Why can it not be argued, as some atheists would, that some of us are privileged to perceive this witness of creation about God and others are not? The following passage in Romans 2 offers the answer.

<sup>14</sup> for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, <sup>15</sup> who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them  
Romans 2:14-15 (NKJV)

That is to say that God put something inside of us that makes us able to recognize His signature in the world around us. We call it a conscience, and Paul calls it "the work of the law written in [our] hearts." We can perceive morality, that is, we can tell the goodness and badness of things in a moral sense. Thus, we can perceive moral character. Therefore, we can perceive God's character in His works.

A God who filled the universe with pleasurable experiences despite the difficulties and pains of life has to be a good God. A God who has such absolute power and does not have to take the insolence of His creatures but does anyway must be a merciful God. A God who is powerful enough to create such a pervasive universe and must therefore have an irresistible appearance but who hides Himself (Isaiah 45:15) must be a God who values the free will choices of His moral creatures. These are common sense judgments that any human being capable of reason can make from contemplating the universe around us.

Because we can contemplate, think, consider the world around us, and because we have an innate moral compass that enables us to perceive moral character, we can learn plenty about God from the universe around us. We may not learn His specific identity, but we will learn of His existence and His character from creation.

But what would even lead us to contemplating the world around us? Why would we be bothered to find out what creation might be about?

### **Eternity and the Testimony of Death**

<sup>11</sup> He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.  
Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NIV)

By nature, human beings don't look forward to the termination of life. We naturally want an eternal existence. This is a natural longing for all human beings. Beyond this, there is also a large yearning in the hearts of human beings for an experience bigger than this temporary life we have here. We see this play out in all the efforts we make to immortalize ourselves in one way or another.

Death, therefore, is not a welcome experience for human beings in general. We don't want to die. We want to live forever and to have experiences that last forever and fill us up in every way.

This, however, is not what we actually experience. What we get rather is a truncation of the meager existence that we manage here on earth. Nothing says more emphatically how little control we have over anything than the reality of death that can happen at any moment to us despite what we do to avoid it.

Not long after any of us comes into this world, we realize that death is not "right." That realization is what drives us to think about our time in this world and what our lives mean.

In pursuing meaning (the drive of eternity in our hearts), we begin to listen to the world around us and to consider what it says in light of the law written in our hearts. If we are honest, this contemplation will naturally lead us to the truth of God's existence, of His power, and of His basic goodness to us.

This introduction to Him is what prepares us to start exploring the question of His identity, a matter that falls outside of the purview of natural revelation.

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<sup>1</sup> NASA & Chaisson, E. J. (2004, August 6). Three eras of cosmic evolution. In John Billingham (Ed.), *Life in the universe*. National Aeronautic and Space Administration. Retrieved May 22, 2021, from <https://history.nasa.gov/CP-2156/ch0.htm>