

GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide SB 10.24.2021

ERIC METAXAS: "IS ATHEISM DEAD?"

Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week's message? Discuss with your group.

In 1966 Time magazine ran a cover story asking: Is God Dead? In the same year, astronomer Carl Sagan announced that there were two important criteria for a planet to support life: The right kind of star and a planet the right distance from that star. Given the roughly octillion—1 followed by 27 zeros—planets in the universe, there should have been about septillion—1 followed by 24 zeros—planets capable of supporting life. With such spectacular odds, the search for extraterrestrial intelligence launched in the 1960s. The large and expensive search was sure to turn up something soon. Scientists listened with a vast radio telescopic network for signals that resembled coded intelligence. But as years passed, the silence from the rest of the universe was deafening. What happened? As our knowledge of the universe increased, it became clear that there were far more factors necessary for life than Sagan supposed. His two parameters grew to 10 and then 20 and then 50, and so the number of potentially life-supporting planets decreased accordingly. The number dropped to a few thousand planets and kept on plummeting. As factors continued to be discovered, the number of possible planets hit zero, and kept going. In other words, the odds turned against any planet in the universe supporting life, including this one. Probability said that even we shouldn't be here. Today there are more than 200 known parameters necessary for a planet to support life—every single one of which must be perfectly met, or the whole thing falls apart. The odds against life in the universe are simply astonishing. Yet here we are, not only existing, but talking about existing. Let's get into our study....

1. If you were to flip a coin six times, the probability of the coin landing on heads six times in a row is a low 1.563%. The odds against life in the universe are so low, probability says we should not be here. What do you think about this probability?
2. At what point is it fair to admit we cannot be the result of random forces?
3. What stood out to you during this week's sermon?

Digging Deeper in God's Word: Life Lessons

The fine-tuning necessary for life to exist on a planet is nothing compared with the fine-tuning required for the universe to exist at all. For example, scientist now know that the values of the four fundamental forces—gravity, the electromagnetic force, and the "strong" and "weak" nuclear forces—were determined less than one millionth of a second after the "big bang". Alter any one value and the universe could not exist. For instance, if the ratio between the nuclear strong force and the electromagnetic force had been off by the tiniest fraction of the tiniest fraction—by even one part in 100,000,000,000,000,000—then no stars could have ever formed at all. Multiply that single parameter by all the other necessary conditions, and the odds against the universe existing are so astronomical that the notion that it all "just happened" defies common sense. It would be like tossing a coin and having it come up heads 10 quintillion times in a row.

1. Atheist Christopher Hitchens had heard all the debates in the world trying to prove the existence of God. What do you think is the best argument for the existence of God?
2. Christopher Hitchens and his colleagues thought the best argument for the existence of God was the fine-tuned argument. The fine-tuned argument is simply that there are certain things about our universe—and about our planet—that seem to be so extremely and perfectly calibrated that they can hardly be coincidental. Why do you think the fine-tuned argument is thought to be a good logic for proving the existence of God?
3. The fine-tune argument cuts into the narrative of the "scientific" establishment. The constant stream of scientific discoveries continues to prove God exists. Why do you think so many of us have not heard of the fine-tune argument?

Visitation/Restoration in 2021

Fred Hoyle, the astronomer who coined the term “big bang,” said that his atheism was “greatly shaken” at the developments of the fine-tuned argument. He wrote that “a common-sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super-intellect has monkeyed with the physics, as well as with chemistry and biology . . . The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question.” Theoretical physicist Paul Davies has said that “the appearance of design is overwhelming”. Oxford professor Dr. John Lennox has said “the more we get to know about our universe, the more the hypothesis that there is a Creator . . . gains in credibility as the best explanation of why we are here.”

4. The Bible is clear that God commanded even the very substance of all created things into existence from nothing. The big bang theory suggests the universe began as just a single point, then expanded and stretched to grow as large as it is right now—and it is still stretching. What is a major flaw in the Big Bang theory proving again the existence of God? (Psalms 33:6, Hebrews 11:3)
5. Although there are some people who profess to be atheists, the Bible indicates that there is no such thing. Everyone knows that God exists, even though some may verbally deny it (even to themselves). Romans 1:18-21 teaches that God has made evidence of His existence so abundantly obvious to all mankind that there is no excuse for denying Him. If the evidence is so clear, why do you think people deny the existence of God? (John 3:19).
6. When Galileo offered those in disbelief to look into his telescope to see the earth rotated around the sun, many refused for fear the facts might change their opinions. In the same way, many do not want to know the truth of Jesus. Why do you think this is? (Thessalonians 2:10-12).
7. The more we know about our universe, the more God reveals His fingerprints. How does this encourage you? (Isaiah 40:12).
8. A Christians hope is in Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:3-6). What hope does the Atheist have? (Psalm 37:2, 14:1-2).

Applying God’s Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

One of the many passages to proclaim God as Creator is Isaiah 40:28, “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.” Genesis 1:1 says “in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Which means that, before Genesis 1:1, there existed no heavens and no earth. God spoke them into being (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9). He is God. He is not limited by our understanding, nor by time, space, or matter. God is the all-wise Originator and Designer of all things (Psalm 104:24). The Creator of the universe knows you by name and He want a relationship with you, your family, your friends, and those you encounter in life.

1. Just as people did not want to look through Galileo’s scope to see the earth orbits the sun, people might not look through the scope to see Jesus. How can you be prepared to prove and show others of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
2. Who will you share the Good News of Jesus this week?

PRAYER

Lord, You hung the stars in the sky—the Dipper, Orion, the Pleiades, and the stars of the south. We cannot understand all the great things You do. To Your miracles there is no end. Thank you for Your creation and thank You for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous ...

Jesus said, “I AM the Way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6)