

## Has God been around forever?



I was speaking at a church in the Seattle area recently, and a young boy approached me at my resource table. He was only about 10 years old but was clearly one of the deepest-thinking children I have ever met.

Among other questions, he asked, “What was God doing all that time before He created the universe?” Good question! Well, kind of. In the interest of transparency, I wondered the same thing when I was young.

Why do I add that caveat (i.e., “kind of a good question)? It contains a hidden assumption, which, if unnoticed, can lead to difficulty providing an appropriate answer. I’ve discussed hidden assumptions in previous articles, but this will serve as a good review.

As a reminder, a hidden assumption is something that makes it difficult to answer a question in a straightforward manner. A classic example is, “Have you stopped beating your dog?” The hidden assumption is that you were, at least at some point, beating your dog. If you never have, how do you answer that question? Whether you reply with “yes” or “no,” neither would be an accurate response: worse, it would wrongly incriminate you.

What’s the hidden assumption in the young boy’s question? (“What was God doing all that time before He created the universe?”) The hidden assumption is that “time” existed before God created the universe.

I think most people, at least subconsciously, think of time existing before the universe began, whether or not they believe in God. Think about it. If there was no “time,” you could not have any physical events occurring that might lead to the creation of the universe or anything else. However, if there is no supernatural being, then where did time come from? And no, it wasn’t purchased off of Amazon Prime!

Let’s think about this briefly.

If there was ever a point in the past when absolutely nothing existed (and I mean ABSOLUTELY NOTHING, no god, no matter, no energy, no quantum vacuum, etc.), what would be here today? The obvious answer is, “nothing.”

However, we know there is something here today—tons of stuff! Therefore, there has always been something. Our options for that “something” is either an eternal universe (i.e., matter and energy), or an eternal supernatural (non-physical) being. Keeping this very short for now, even secular scientists agree that the universe cannot be eternal. One reason is related to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, indicating that if our universe had been around forever, it would have run out of gas a long time ago!

# Question of the Month

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Coincidentally, the Bible tells us that God has always existed (Psalm 90:2). Time is part of God's supernatural creation. When the Bible says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the Earth" (Genesis 1:1), it refers to not only the universe but the creation of time itself. God was not sitting around for millions and millions of years, and then He decided He might like to create a universe. He exists outside of time. We can somewhat envision Him existing outside the physical space of our universe, but picturing Him existing outside of time is beyond our ability to comprehend. And I'm OK with that. In fact, I genuinely hope there are things about God I can't grasp. My mind is certainly limited, so I fully expect there to be attributes about God that go beyond my ability to comprehend.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Here's one other way of working through this. If there is no God, how do we explain the existence of the universe? You see, for the universe to have come into existence, certain very powerful events would have to occur. But for any events to occur, time would have to already exist. So where did "time" come from? You can't say some physical entity created it because that would lead to asking, "Where did that physical entity come from?" And you can't say, "Well, that physical entity came from some other physical entity," because it would beg the question of, "Where did that other physical entity come from?" As we already mentioned, it cannot continue into the infinite past because physical entities cannot exist forever. Time itself would have to be called into existence by a non-physical, eternal entity. Hmmm. Sounds like God!

Again, Christians don't invent the idea of God to solve challenging problems like this. We start with two things. (1) His "general revelation" to us (nature) and add to it, (2) His perfect "special revelation" (the Bible). Then, we are able to make sense of the world around us. This response is not "God of the gaps," meaning just throw God in there as an answer anytime something seems complicated.

So, what was God doing all that time before He created the universe? Time did not exist until He created the universe. Time is an intricate part of this universe we live in. Can I fully comprehend that? Not even close. However, you either have to believe in the miracle of nothing whatsoever creating everything, or the miracle of something creating everything. You choose. I already have!

Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you (Jeremiah 32:17).

If you have any questions about this or any other issue, please don't hesitate to [contact us!](#)