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GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Answering Atheists: Does God Exist? – The Beginning of the Universe

TEACHING SUMMARY

This teaching begins with two claims it identifies in Genesis 1:1: the universe had a beginning, and God exists. It asks why anything exists and whether there are reasons to affirm a creator. A ball discovered in the woods illustrates the need for an explanation; increasing the ball's size does not, the teaching argues, remove that need, even when it becomes as large as the universe.

The teaching first argues against an infinite past through philosophical illustrations. It distinguishes a sequence that continues to grow from an actually completed infinity of past events. Hypothetical orbits of Jupiter and Saturn and a sequence of falling dominoes are used to argue that a beginningless series could not account for reaching the present.

It then cites scientific developments as support for a beginning. The discussion includes predictions of cosmic expansion, Hubble's observations, and the Borde–Guth–Vilenkin result concerning a universe that has expanded on average throughout its history. The teaching uses these points alongside its philosophical reasoning to defend the premise that the universe began to exist.

The argument is organized as the Kalam Cosmological Argument: whatever begins to exist has a cause; the universe began to exist; therefore, the universe has a cause. The teaching argues that the universe cannot cause itself, since that would require it to exist before it existed. It also rejects the idea that something can begin without any cause or explanation.

The teaching then reasons from the universe's beginning to the nature of its cause. Since space, time, and matter belong to the universe, it argues that their cause must be beyond them. It identifies this cause as a powerful, immaterial, intelligent mind independent of space and time, and connects that description with God.

The final discussion answers the question of what caused God. The teaching stresses that its first premise concerns things that begin to exist, not everything that exists. It describes God as an uncaused, necessary First Cause and the universe as contingent. Its conclusion returns

to Genesis: the teaching considers its philosophical and scientific arguments reasons to affirm a beginning and a creator.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Genesis 1:1 supplies the teaching's opening claims about a beginning and God.
- The ball illustration argues that size does not remove the need for an explanation.
- The teaching challenges the possibility of an actual infinity of past events.
- The planetary-orbit and domino illustrations support its philosophical argument for a beginning.
- Cosmic expansion and a past space-time boundary are presented as scientific support.
- The Kalam argument concludes that the universe has a cause from two stated premises.
- Self-causation is rejected because it would require prior existence.
- The cause is argued to be beyond the space, time, and matter it brings into existence.
- The argument applies causal explanation to whatever begins to exist, not to everything without qualification.
- God is described as necessary and uncaused, while the universe is described as contingent.

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK

Basic

1. The opening Scripture about God creating the heavens and the earth is Genesis _____.
2. The discovered object used to illustrate the need for an explanation is a _____.
3. The falling-object illustration compares past events with a sequence of _____.
4. The named argument presented in the teaching is the _____ Cosmological Argument.
5. The first premise states that whatever begins to exist has a _____.
6. The second premise states that the universe _____ to exist.

Challenging

1. The planets used in the hypothetical orbit comparison are Jupiter and _____.
2. The astronomer whose 1929 observations are cited concerning expansion is Edwin _____.
3. The teaching says a universe expanding on average cannot be infinite in the _____.
4. Because matter began with the universe, the teaching describes its cause as _____.
5. The response to “What caused God?” identifies God as the uncaused First _____.
6. The universe is described as existing _____ because it could have failed to exist.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the ball illustration address the question of why the universe exists?
2. What distinction does the teaching make between an endlessly growing sequence and an actual infinity of past events?
3. How are the philosophical illustrations and scientific examples used together to support a beginning?
4. State the two premises of the Kalam argument and explain its conclusion.
5. Why does the teaching reject the universe causing itself, and what attributes does it assign to an external cause?
6. How does the precise wording “begins to exist” shape the teaching’s answer to the question “What caused God?”

ANSWER KEY – GROUP GUIDE

Basic

1. 1:1
2. ball
3. dominoes
4. Kalam
5. cause
6. began

Challenging

1. Saturn
2. Hubble
3. past
4. immaterial
5. Cause
6. contingently