

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, most Kind, most Merciful



Surat al-Anbiya 21:30

أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
أَنَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ
كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا
وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

Do the unbelievers not see that the heavens and the earth were joined together and We unravelled them, and We made every living thing out of water? Will they not then have faith?

Learning Objectives

- To explain that Allah created the universe
- To compare and contrast the Qur'an's description of the creation of the universe with that of modern science
- To describe at least two reasons why the Big Bang theory points to the existence of a creator

Key Words

فَاطِر	Fatir creator; Originator
سَمَاوَات	Samawat heavens; skies
أَرْض	Ardh earth

Creation of the universe

The universe in which we live is amazing. There are at least 10 billion trillion stars in it. There are probably more stars in existence than grains of sand on all of the earth's beaches. The universe is so vast that whenever we look out into the night and gaze at stars we are actually experiencing how they looked in the past. This is because the stars are so far away that the light we see has taken a long time to travel across space to reach our eyes.

DID YOU KNOW?

The ninth brightest star in the night sky is called Betelgeuse. It is found in the constellation of Orion. The name of this star is derived from the Arabic term *yad al-jawza*, meaning 'the hand of Orion'.

Betelgeuse is 640 light-years away from earth. This means that Betelgeuse is so far away that the light we see from it today actually left the star around the 1370s.



AL-ASMA AL-HUSNA The 99 Beautiful Names of Allah

الْفَاطِرُ AL-FATIR 'the Originator'

Al-Fatir is the word Allah uses to describe Himself as the Originator. *Fatir* is different from *Khaliq* (Creator). *Fatir* means one who does not copy a previous example or imitate other creations. Imam Ali (a) describes this unique quality of Allah in Sermon 1 of *Nahj al-Balaghah*:

He [Allah] initiated creation and commenced it originally, without undergoing reflection, without making use of any experiment, without innovating any movement, and without experiencing any aspiration of mind.

How did this endless amazing universe we live in come into being? This question has always fascinated mankind.

Allah is the creator of the universe

Allah gives us the answer to this most fundamental question in the Holy Qur'an:

Surat ash-Shura 42:11



فَاطِرُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

The Originator [is He] of the heavens and the earth.

In the first *ayah*, Allah tells us that it is He Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, i.e. the entire universe.

Surat al-Anbiya 21:30



أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا
فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ
شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

Do the unbelievers not see that the heavens and the earth were joined together and We unravelled them, and We made every living thing out of water? Will they not then have faith?

In the second *ayah*, Allah explains how the creation of the universe took place. He says that everything was once joined together and then He split them apart.

Today, the generally accepted 'standard universe creation' theory on how the universe began agrees that this is indeed how the universe was born.



Once, Rasulullah (s) came across an old woman who was turning her spinning wheel in order to make thread and cotton buds.

Rasulullah (s) asked her whether she believed in Allah. At this, the woman replied,

“Yes by the grace of Allah I am a Muslim.”

Rasulullah (s) asked her,

“What made you believe in Allah?”

The woman took her hands off the pedals of the wheel and said, “Rasulullah (s), this spinning wheel of mine is an evidence of the existence of Allah – as long as I keep spinning the pedals of the wheel the wheel keeps working. As soon as I stop pedaling the wheel stops to spin. So if this simple little wheel requires a spinner to spin it, then how is it possible that the rising and setting of the sun and the moon, and the coming of the day and the night, keep happening without the help of a force or creator of force that sets all these things in motion?”



DID YOU KNOW?

Allah has described the fact that the stars are moving away from each other and that the universe is expanding.

In the Holy Qur'an:

Surat adh-Dhariyat 51:47

وَالسَّمَاءَ بَنَيْنَاهَا بِأَيْدٍ وَإِنَّا لَمُوسِعُونَ

We have built the sky with might, and indeed it is We who are its expanders.



REFLECTION

Mafatih al-Jinan

The 25th of Dhul Qa'dah is known as *Dahw al-Ardh* (the spreading of the Earth). There are a number of *a'mal* recommended.

According to the *ahadith* and supplication, can you recall any reasons why this day is important, and some of the *a'mal* recommended on this day? For example, it is highly recommended to fast on this day.

The Big Bang theory

Up until the early 1900s, material scientists and philosophers held the theory that the universe existed in infinite time and that there was no 'moment of creation'. The idea of an infinite universe fits in very well with atheism. It is not hard to see why. To say that the universe had a beginning would mean admitting that it was created and therefore required a creator. Georges Politzer, a renowned 20th century philosopher, wrote:



“ The universe was not a created object, if it were then it would have to be created instantaneously by God and brought into existence from nothing. To admit creation, one has to admit, in the first place, the existence of a moment when the universe did not exist, and that something came out of nothingness. This is something to which science cannot accede.”

However, it would not be long before Politzer would have to take back his words and that science itself would show that the universe indeed had a beginning and was brought into existence from nothing. Discoveries in astronomy and physics have shown beyond a reasonable doubt that our universe did in fact have a beginning. Prior to that beginning there was nothing; during and after that moment of beginning there was something: our universe. Therefore, just like Politzer himself declared, if there is creation, then there must also therefore be a creator!

In 1929, the American astronomer Edwin Hubble made a number of discoveries that rocked the scientific world. In short, he discovered that the stars and other heavenly bodies were not only moving away from the earth, but that they were also moving away from each other. The only conclusion that could be derived from a universe where everything moves away from everything else is that the universe was constantly expanding.

The consequence of this discovery that the universe is constantly expanding is that if you go back in time, you will find that all of the matter in the universe was compacted into a small dense singularity.

The Big Bang theory states that this is when the universe began, with an expansion at this singularity that caused all the matter in the universe to expand. The gas moved away from the centre of the universe much like debris from an explosion. As the gas expanded it cooled, allowing structures like stars, galaxies, and planets to form. This is exactly how Allah explains it to us in the Holy Qur'an in *Surat al-Anbiya:30* at the beginning of the lesson.

Even the fact that the planets were created from hot gas is described to us:

Surah Fussilat 41:11



ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ
فَقَالَ لَهَا وَ لِلْأَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا أَوْ
كَرْهًا قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا طَائِعِينَ

Then He turned to the heaven, and it was smoke, and He said to it and to the earth: 'Come! Willingly or unwillingly!' They said: 'We come obediently.'



Even the Big Bang theory requires an originator

The Big Bang theory made some predictions about the universe, and these were confirmed by observations. Not surprisingly, the theory soon became popular and was generally accepted as the 'standard' universe creation theory. However, there are some things that the Big Bang theory is unable to explain:

- How the immense amount of matter and radiation in the universe originated. According to the theory, prior to the singularity, nothing existed. So where did the singularity appear from?
- Who or what caused the Big Bang to occur.
- The formation of planets, stars, and galaxies. An explosion should produce, at best, an outward spray of gas and radiation. This gas should continue expanding, not form intricate planets, stars, and entire galaxies.
- What existed before the Big Bang.

All these questions can be answered by accepting that Allah is the Creator of the universe. Nothing comes out of nothing. There had to be Allah to create the universe.



Faith in Action

One way of showing our gratitude for the blessings of the earth that Allah has created for us is to do our part in helping to preserve it.

Research one environmental concern that the earth is facing. What can you do to help prevent this and not waste the resources that Allah has given us?

Put this into practice.

DID YOU KNOW?

It is not only the universe that is continually expanding. The continents are also moving apart. Allah says in the Qur'an:

Surat an-Nazi'at 79:30

وَالْأَرْضُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ دَحَاهَا

And after that He spread the earth.

The lands of earth once formed a single land mass called Pangea that broke up and drifted apart into the continents we know today, and these continents are still moving.

DID YOU KNOW?

In several places in the Qur'an, Allah says it is He who created the universe in *sittah ayyam*.

This phrase has often been translated as 'six days', which has led to a lot of criticism.

These critics question how the Qur'an can be right when we know the universe is billions of years old, therefore it could not have been created in six days. What these critics fail to realise is that the word *yawm* (plural of which is *ayyam*) in Arabic has several meanings, including 'a period of time', and not simply 24 hours.

For example, in *ayah* 22:47, Allah mentions that the day can be 'like a thousand years'. In *ayah* 70:4, He says that a day is like 'fifty thousand years' of our reckoning. Hence the term 'six days' cannot be taken literally to mean six days, but should be understood to mean six periods of time.

Alternative creation theories

Because the Big Bang theory is unable to explain the answer to the questions above, scientists are continuously proposing new theories and modifying old ones.

Many of these theories have some merit, but they all have some problems. In particular, they nearly all fail to answer the fundamental question of what caused existence in the first place!

Allah's signs are evident in His creation and are described to us in the Qur'an. Despite this, many people still choose to deny:



Surah Ghafir 40:81

وَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ فَأَيَّ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ تُنْكِرُونَ

He shows you His signs. So which of the signs of Allah will you deny?

Creation is not a coincidence

Some scientists and atheists still argue that the creation of the universe is nothing more than the product of a long and complex sequence of coincidences, i.e. it is mere chance that the universe exists.

Roger Penrose, a famous mathematician, tried to calculate the probability of this universe coming into existence simply by coincidence. According to his calculations, this probability is so tiny that it is hard to even grasp what it means.

In practical terms, in mathematics, a probability of 1 in 10^{50} (1 followed by 50 zeroes) means 'zero probability' i.e. impossible. Penrose's probability is more than a trillion trillion trillion times less than this.

Fred Hoyle, the famous astronomer, described this improbability in an even more colourful way. For random events to produce even a single protein is so improbable, let alone the entire universe. He describes the improbability by saying it is as improbable as a whirlwind spinning through a junk yard and leaving behind a fully assembled jumbo jet!

Today's science has proven the truth of the creation of the universe. It is for us to see this truth and derive a lesson from it and firm up our belief.

Surah Maryam 19:65



رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا
فَاعْبُدْهُ وَاصْطَبِرْ لِعِبَادَتِهِ هَلْ تَعْلَمُ
لَهُ سَمِيًّا

[He is] the Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them, so worship Him and be steadfast in His worship. Do you know anyone who could be His namesake?



Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a) was asked by Mufaddal:

O my master, there is a group of people that claim that this [creation] is the doing of nature [itself].



Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a) said:

Ask them about this nature, does it have knowledge and power to carry out such actions [as creation] or not? For if they answer that it has knowledge and power, then what is preventing them from acknowledging the existence of a creator? For verily this is His creation. If they claim that nature does these actions without knowledge or without purpose while they see the exactness and wisdom in these [actions], it is [obviously] known that this is the work of a very wise creator, and what they have called 'nature' is the very system running through creation.



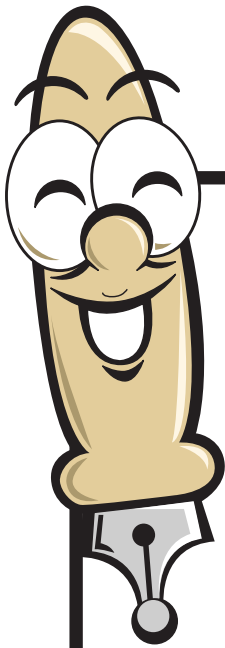
ACTIVITY AND IDEAS

Throw the pieces of a Lego set into the air together with pieces of blue tack and see if you can get them to land into any useful assembled object!



Read the story of the creation of the universe in the beginning of the *Old Testament*. Then consider the order of the creation of the sun and the plants and what we know from science today, and write a short essay comparing the two versions of the creation of the universe.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal orange lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no other markings or text on the paper.



KEY POINTS

- 1 Allah is the Creator of the universe.
- 2 Discoveries in astronomy and physics have shown beyond a reasonable doubt that our universe did in fact have a beginning.
- 3 According to the Big Bang theory, our universe came into existence around 13.7 billion years ago. Prior to that moment there was nothing, but during and after that moment there was something and then our universe expanded into existence from a 'singularity'.
- 4 The Big Bang theory does not explain numerous issues such as where the singularity came from or who or what caused the expansion.
- 5 Allah tells us in the Qur'an that He is the one who caused the expansion from the singularity.



TEST YOURSELF

- 1 Name one *ayah* in which Allah states that He created the universe.

- 2 How is the description of the creation of the universe that Allah gives in the Qur'an similar to that given by the Big Bang theory?

- 3 List two reasons why the Big Bang theory also points to the existence of a creator.

- 4 Give one reason why the creation of the universe cannot be simply a matter of chance.
