

# Examining the Cosmos

Session 7

*Unlocking the Mystery of Life*

Reference Document 8.

---

## **More Than Intelligent Design**

*By Hugh Ross*

Scholars involved in what has come to be known as the Intelligent Design movement deserve respect. They swim against the powerful tide of naturalism, and I applaud their efforts and integrity. At the same time, however, I sense a need to clarify a subtle but significant distinction between their goals and those of the organization I represent, Reasons To Believe.

Intelligent Design (ID) proponents refrain from making a specific identification of the Designer, and they have their reasons. Many work in academia and have firsthand awareness of ardent naturalists and outspoken nontheists resistance (to choose a mild term) to Christian theism. Because that wall of resistance seems so impenetrable, they propose a step-wise move against the reigning paradigm. They seek to establish first the *possible* existence of some undefined intelligent designer, then the *probable* existence of such a designer, and later, perhaps, to discuss the (possibly) discernable characteristics of the designer. At this last step, the Christians among them might propose the God of the Bible as the likely designer.

One irony of this painstakingly cautious approach is that naturalism may die of natural causes before ID advocates reach steps two or three. In the upper echelons of research and scholarship, naturalistic theories frailty is more and more freely acknowledged. Even if ID proponents do nothing to expose the inadequacies and inconsistencies of its explanation for the cosmos and life, naturalism may self-destruct.

Winning the argument for design without identifying the designer yields, at best, a sketchy origins model. Such a model makes little if any positive impact on the community of scientists and other scholars. Such a model does not lend itself to verification, nor can it make specific, credible predictions. On both counts, scholars, particularly scientists, would be reluctant to acknowledge the concept s

viability and give it serious attention. Nor does this approach offer them spiritual direction.

As I speak on university campuses and elsewhere, I see a larger challenge to Christianity than naturalism: the challenge of a vague or idiosyncratic spirituality, faith detached from objective truth and legitimate spiritual authority. In fact, virtually all forms of spirituality *except Christianity* seem in vogue with the new spiritual people, who tend to be less receptive than nontheists to the Christian gospel. In other words, leading a nontheist to a belief in an intelligent designer could do more spiritual harm than good.

Experience persuades me that the time is right for a direct approach, a single leap into the origins fray. Introducing a biblically based, scientifically verifiable creation model represents such a leap. It packs both a scientific and a spiritual punch. It builds trust, stimulates discussion, relieves unnecessary tension about hidden religious agendas, and turns attention quickly and fruitfully toward testing and predictions.

This creation model approach shows the kind of confidence that is willing to accept, rather than shy away from, vulnerability. Not only does this model welcome the kinds of critical scrutiny applied to nontheistic models, but it also invites refinement and critical comparison with other theistic and deistic models. Honest discussion and critique of various origins models, including various Christian origins models, can have a positive impact on furthering scientific endeavor as a whole. Entrenched dogmas and political correctness have for many years only hampered progress toward building a body of knowledge. The restrictive atmosphere seems palpable at times, as many professors and researchers I have met can attest.

Herein lies an opportunity to exemplify the freedom that exists in Christ. Truth holds no threat for the Christian. Truth in the scientific arena, which can be directly or indirectly tested, will always be consistent with truth in the spiritual arena. And, despite protestations from all sides, truth in nature must be connected with something, or Someone, beyond the natural realm the something or Someone responsible for nature's existence and characteristics. The most important feature of the creation model approach is that it challenges spiritual vagueness and subjectivism head on. It demonstrates, as well as defends, the legitimacy of biblical authority and the truth-claims of Jesus Christ. The bottom line for me and for my colleagues at RTB is this: truth always points the truth-seeker to its Source, the one person in history who could make and back up the claim, I am the truth. That's what makes science so fun and fascinating.