

Introduction

"God is an imaginary friend." Some years ago, I struck up a conversation with an attorney at the Summit County Courthouse who was also an atheist. During the course of our conversation, He discovered I was a Christian and said that to me. He pointed out that children make up imaginary friends that make them feel good. **"It's the same with Christians,"** he then declared, **"God is an imaginary friend that they believe in to make them feel good."** Is he right? Is God just an imaginary friend that we believe in to make us feel good? Or is He is real? If He is real, what is the implication of that to us? The text we read earlier, Psalm 102:25-28, tells us.

What Is Real

Most of you know what a worldview is. It's what we know and believe about the world and life in it. The knowledge and beliefs that make it up are vital because they dictate how we think, feel, and act. Do we buy things on credit, for instance, or encourage our small children to play organized sports? What we know and believe determine whether we do or don't. That illustrates that our worldview is the single most influential aspect of our lives. So, we need to make sure it's a good one.

Doing so requires that we ask and answer five worldview questions. The first of those is the reality question. That question is, **"What is real?"** That means, **"What exists or is true?"** That's the first worldview question and what I want to address today. What is real?

God Is Real

The Psalmist gives two answers.

Look at the words **"earth"** and **"heavens"** in verse 25. Those words in the Old Testament refer to what we call "the universe." The universe is all the matter (matter = atoms) that exists. We don't just believe that

the universe is real. We know it's because we experience it with our senses every second of every day. We all know that countless numbers of hydrogen and oxygen atoms combined into molecules cover our yards. I'm talking about snow of course. We see and feel it.

But the material universe isn't all that is real. Look at the personal pronouns "**You**" and "**Your**" in every verse of the text we read. They refer to "**God**." God, according to verses 25 and 26, is a living spiritual being who created the universe. He conceived and made every atom that exists and bound them together to comprise the universe as we know it.

Those then are two answers to the question, "**What is real?**" God is real. And the universe is real. If our worldview is to be a good one, we have to know not just believe both of those.

Tragically, not everyone does. According to a George Barna poll two years ago, 20 million American adults claim to be atheists or agnostics or to have no religious faith at all. Javier Sancez, for instance, is a 21 year-old biology major at George Mason University. A former born again Christian, he gave up his belief in God two years ago and is starting an atheist club at school. What is real? Sancez and other atheists answer, "**Matter is. God is not.**" He's nothing more than an imaginary friend.

Are the atheists right? Is God real or not real? Is that even a question to which we can give a definitive answer? Can we just believe that God is real or not real or can we actually know it? Listen to what Psalm 14:1 says in that regard, "**The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'**" Please understand that is literally true. Atheists are fools. An atheist organization called the United Coalition of Reason paid for a series of anti-God billboards over the Christmas season. One of those said, "**Seasons reasoning.**" The truth of the matter is that atheists aren't reasoning or at least aren't reasoning objectively and well. Psalm 14:1 teaches us, and correctly so, that atheism is intellectual suicide. In the face of evidence and good logic, the only reasonable conclusion is that God is real, that He exists. It's unreasonable to conclude otherwise.

Take the material universe, for instance. How do we explain its

existence? Only one of three things can be true. #1 – something came from nothing. Matter popped into existence for no reason and was formed by chance into the universe as we know it. #2 – matter is self-existent. It has the power of being within itself (has always existed) and was formed by chance into the universe as we know it. And #3 – God created the universe. A living spiritual being who has the power of being within Himself (has always existed) created matter from His own energy and formed it into the universe as we know it.

There are no other possible explanations for the existence of the universe. One of those three must be true. #1 can't be true. It's illogical that something could come from nothing - also that chance, which by definition is nothing, can form anything. #2 can't be true. It's illogical that something non-living has the power of being within itself – also that chance, which by definition is nothing, can form anything. That leaves us with #3. It can be true. It's logical that something living could have the power of being within itself and could use its own energy to create and form matter. Since one of those three things must be true and since only #3 can be true, then #3 must be true.

That is just one of various proofs of God's existence but it's enough to illustrate the point. The question "**Is God real?**" is a matter of knowledge. It can be answered definitively beyond any doubt, "**Yes, He is.**" I don't just believe that He exists. I know He does just as surely as I know that the universe and I do.

That then is the first worldview question and its first two answers. What is real? God is and so is the universe and everything in it.

The Dominant Reality

Now, notice what the Psalmist teaches us about those two realities. Verse 25 – God is creator and the universe creation. Verses 26b,c and 27a – God is unchanging and the universe changeable. And verses 26a and 27b – God is eternal and the universe temporal. The contrasting natures of God and the universe make the psalmist's point a clear one.

God is the dominant of all realities.

He's a separate, special, and superior kind of reality. Nothing else is the same as or opposite of Him. Even angels and human beings, who are made in His image, are not even remotely like Him. Think of it this way. There are ultimately only two kinds of reality: that which is God and that which is not God. Consider the difference in nature between the highest of all created beings, the archangel Gabriel, for instance, and a chicken. Then consider the difference in nature between God and Gabriel. The difference between God and Gabriel is unimaginably greater than the difference between Gabriel and the chicken. God is infinite and eternal. Everything else is finite and temporal. He is, therefore, the dominant of all realities.

Let God Run Our Lives

It's imperative that we know that, not just believe it, but also know it. That's because its implication, in verse 28, is profound. The psalmist says there that God is committed eternally to His people and their posterity. He will care and provide for them forever. But notice how the psalmist designates God's people. They are His "**servants.**" That designation puts Him and us in our proper places. He is our sovereign. We are His servants. We belong to Him in other words.

That reveals the profound implication of God's existence as the dominant of all realities. He is ultimately in charge of our lives. We are not free to be and do what we want. We are bound to be and do what He wants instead. He should be running our lives, not us. That is the implication of God's existence as the dominant of all realities.

But it's one that many if not most people bitterly resent. They're intoxicated with self and take exception to anyone, including God, telling them what to be and do. They view themselves as the dominant reality of the universe. They're committed, therefore, to what they want, not what He wants. They think that they should be running their lives and do.

That's why almost all atheists are atheists. The truth is that

atheists don't live the way they do because they're atheists. They're atheists because they live the way they do. They want to be and do whatever they want without fear or guilt. They deny God's existence, therefore, so they can. They choose belief that endorses behavior.

One of the most celebrated atheists who ever lived, Aldous Huxley, admitted just that. People hailed Huxley as a giant intellect but he confessed in a candid moment the real reason he was an atheist: **"I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning; consequently assumed that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption. The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is concerned to prove that there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do. For myself, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation, sexual and political."** That is a stunning confession. It illustrates that atheists deny God's existence for moral not intellectual reasons. They want to run their own lives.

That's also why people dabble in innocuous nirvana spiritualities like Buddhism, Hinduism, and the various New Age presentations. I know two people, for instance, who were raised in Christian homes but attend Buddhist meditation groups every week. I know another person who was raised in a Christian home but participates in the Wicca movement. Nirvana spiritualities like those are growing and thriving in America and here's why. Like atheism does, they allow us to run our own lives. They do that by divinizing physical nature. There is no personal God who is divine. What are divine are the universe and the people who inhabit it. We're in charge of our own lives, therefore, and can be and do as we please. The bottom line is that we get the benefits of being spiritual without having to answer to a personal God who is sovereign over us. That's the appeal of all of those nirvana spiritualities out there.

But let's go back to the objective answer to the reality question. What is real? God is. And He is ultimately in charge of our lives because He is. We aren't free to be and do what we want. We're bound to be and

do what He wants instead. He should be running our lives, not us, and so, we let Him. That's our call today. Let God run our lives and here's how. It's by doing two things.

First, learn what He says. He runs our lives by speaking to us and telling us what to do. He speaks to us through His written word the Bible and through the Holy Spirit's still small voice. So, we study the Bible and learn what He says in it. We also listen for the Holy Spirit's still small voice and learn what He says through it. I studied the Bible, for instance, and learned something He tells me to do in Proverbs 6:25, Job 31:1, and Matthew 5:28. Don't lust in my heart. Don't use a person's visual image to cultivate sexual desire. I learned what God says.

We let Him run our lives by doing a second thing. Do what He says. Once we learn what He tells us to do, we make and carry out the decision to do it. We try or train, which I've explained in detail before. A *Victoria's Secret* commercial comes on the television screen, for instance, and I do what God tells me to do. I don't lust by turning my eyes away.

I use lust as an example because of the Aldous Huxley quote and the fact that our culture has sexualized practically everything. I don't know about you but I'm not sexually liberated like Huxley and most Americans. I'm not in charge of my life when a *Victoria's Secret* commercial comes on. God is. It's a detail I know. But it's precisely in the details like that one that we let God run our lives. We learn and do what He says.

Conclusion

We do that because He's real. I've read that children commonly make up imaginary friends between the ages of 2½ and 6. I don't know about you but I've never had an imaginary friend. And you know what? I still don't. I'm an objective pursuer of truth. I want to know what's real and what isn't, come what may. Which is why I'm letting God run my life. It's because I've examined the evidence and my own experience. And using good logic, I know this beyond any doubt. God isn't an imaginary friend. He is the dominant of all realities instead.