

From the Pastor's Desk

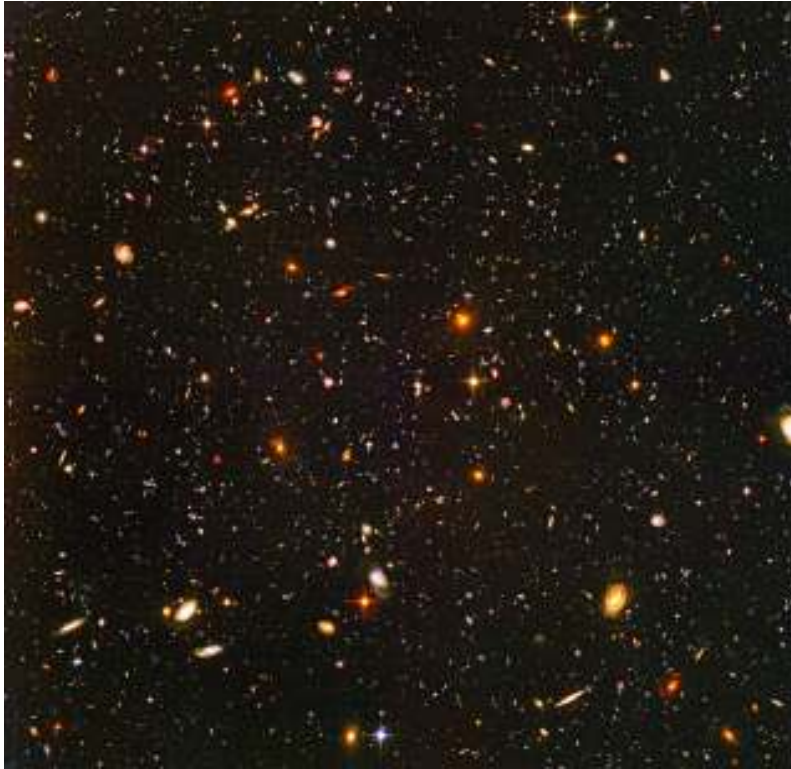
Intelligent Ignorance



Presently, we are traveling at about 19 miles per second or about 66,000 miles per hour around the sun and we will cover about 600 million miles during our yearly orbit. In comparison, a bullet fired from a rifle travels about 1-2 miles per second. During earth's orbit, we are also spinning about 1000 miles per hour to make one rotation in 24 hours.



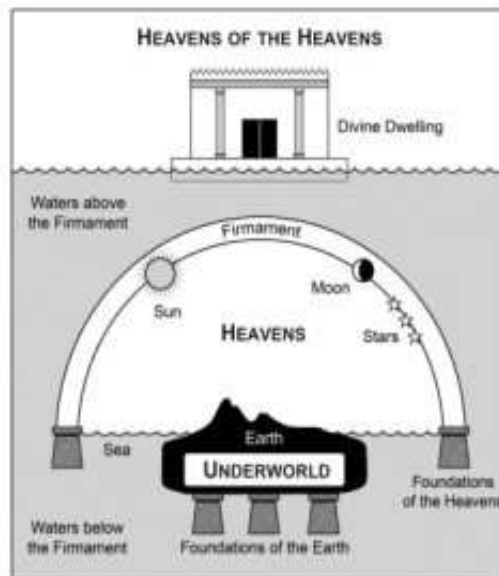
To complicate this, our sun and its planets are orbiting the Milky Way Galaxy at about 135,000 miles per second and takes approximately 225 million years to make one orbit, which is referred to as one Galactic Year. The earth has made about 20 galactic orbits since its formation and in the short span since humans have been on the earth, we have hardly moved in this orbit.



Hubble Deep Space Image

Scientists estimate that there are at least 50 billion planets in the Milky Way Galaxy and at least 500 million of them in the not-too-hot and not-too-cold goldilocks zone where life may exist. When the Hubble telescope focused its lens into deep space, scientists were amazed to find that what at first looked like stars were really galaxies, billions of them, each containing billions of suns with estimated billions of planets in the goldilocks zone.

Biblical Understanding of the World



Much has changed in our understanding of the universe since the Bible was written where the known universe was understood to be comprised of three tiers—the underworld, earth and heaven. The sun was perceived to revolve around the earth, and the Milky Way Galaxy, much less the billions of other galaxies each with billions of stars, were not known to exist.

How do these new discoveries in cosmology effect our understanding of God who created a universe far more vast than the Biblical authors could ever imagine?

In the Old Testament, God tried to humble Job by asking him to look at creation. Job had taken God to task about how things were in the world, and God said to Job: “*Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Speak if you have understanding!*” Job 38:4 Job’s response was: “*I am unworthy—how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. I spoke once, but I have no answer—twice, but I will say no more.*” Job 40: 4-5

As Job was humbled while contemplating the majesty of creation; how much more should we, after viewing images from the Hubble Space Telescope, put our hand over our mouths and declare our ignorance. This ignorance however, is *intelligent*, rather than *ordinary* or *willful* ignorance.

Ordinary ignorance is a lack of knowledge of one kind or another. For example, one may not know what the weather is like in Kenya, or what color shoes Prince William wore to his wedding, but this ignorance can be overcome with the correct information.

Willful ignorance is far more dangerous. It is a condition where a person knows they are ignorant and also knows that information is available to overcome this ignorance, but chooses not to become informed.

Paradoxically, *intelligent* ignorance comes with knowledge. It can be described as a process of awakening. The more we are aware of the limitations of our knowledge, the more awake we are to the complexity of the world and how our finite minds can never contain the infinite. On the other hand, the willful ignorant are in a state of wakefulness, but one that pretends to be asleep, intentionally restricting the horizon of their daylight world. For example, when Galileo looked through his telescope in 1610 and observed that the earth was rotating around the sun and not visa versa, his opponents chose to remain in willful ignorance. After discovering the moons of Jupiter, he invited his skeptical inquisitors to look through the telescope and see for themselves. They refused to look because their world-view and interpretation of the Bible would have to change. Galileo's inquisitors where anything but inquisitive. They had all the answers before asking any questions.

Today, we see the work of the willfully ignorant in places like Afghanistan where they recruit docile, uneducated and economically destitute young people who can easily be indoctrinated with propaganda. You will never see the willfully ignorant strapping on a suicide vest and igniting it in a crowded marketplace. That is left to their willing young students whom they have controlled with their propaganda.

At the root of willful ignorance is the fear that additional knowledge will change the reality in which we live. During the process of education, we are all faced with a fork in the road. One leads to an unknown horizon of new possibilities and the other to willful ignorance where one chooses to close the book or refuses to look through the telescope in order to maintain their predictable and comfortable world-view. This is being played out in our own society when educators attempt to present biblical stories of creation as science, when in reality they are religion.

Whether it be Islam, Christianity or any other religion, willful ignorance can disguise itself as

religious piety in an attempt to marshal the authority of God himself. In this process, religious texts or individuals are given divine attributes in order to trump whatever is perceived as a threat. Ultimately, in addition to hindering the development of a civil society and scientific exploration, the real loser in this enterprise is religion whose mystery was replaced by certainty only later to be proven false.

On the other hand, intelligent ignorance is a friend to both scientific inquiry and mystery. It is eager to use all intellectual means possible to understand the universe, yet finds peace and joy in bowing to mystery it is unable to understand. It perceives religious texts to provide insight into the “why” of creation, but understands that the “how” is best left to science.

Intelligent ignorance’s favorite festival is Pentecost, which is all about the mysterious energy of God that permeates our lives and the whole universe. It gives us courage to lay aside willful ignorance with its certitudes and walk courageously into the unknown, trusting the Holy Spirit to bring insight and resources when they are needed. As we look through the telescope, Christ our Redeemer becomes the Cosmic Christ whose death and resurrection has redeemed all of creation in the billions and billions of galaxies throughout the cosmos.

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