

## God and the universe, one in the same?

**MARK PAVILONS**

And God saw all that He made, and it was very good.

Genesis 1:31

After decades of looking out into the deep reaches of space, Hubble sees all that He made. And it is beautiful.

The Hubble Space Telescope is more than remarkable. It has answered just so many of those fundamental questions that people have been asking about the cosmos since people were able to ask questions. John M. Grunsfeld

If you get a chance, locate some Hubble images online, or through NASA's website. The gallery of photos are some of the most breath-taking images you will ever see. Some of the latest images to be released of far-off galaxies, look like celestial Christmas light displays, on the scale that only God himself could muster. It's so amazing and humbling, it really does make you sit back and think. Tracy K. Smith wrote that you can't look at these images and not feel like something else is going about its business out there. Something else, indeed. Even Billy Graham weighed in on the subject, noting even Hubble hasn't found the end of this universe, adding we don't know that it has any end. The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. Psalm 19:1-2 At this most-Christian time of year, we prepare to huddle together, in the midst of a pandemic, and be thankful. Our family units may shrink a bit, but it's by no means any less meaningful. In-person church services are now gone in lockdown zones such as ours. Of course, we can likely find a handful online or perhaps take a road trip to churches who will welcome parishioners. It will definitely be a very different Christmas this year. But that doesn't mean we should ignore it or skip the beauty of it all. And by all, I mean all creation. As an armchair astronomer, I've been fascinated with the heavens above since my high school years. I devoured books on space and became a dyed-in-the-wool Trekkie. I still love sci-fi adventure tales, which explore the endless possibilities of what's out there. I hope I live long enough to see concrete proof of life on other worlds. The vastness of the expansive universe is mind-boggling. We are relative newcomers in this universe of course. Our Earth is only perhaps 4 billion years old, and the rest of the universe is estimated to be roughly 14 billion years old. Maybe, God became better at his craft in recent eons, perfecting his planet-building skills when it came to Earth. After all, He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. The source of all things is, according to the theorists, the Big Bang the massive single explosion that created everything. It gets better. Just how big is the universe? Scientists speculate the visible universe is roughly 93 billion light-years in diameter, but others say the Bayesian model of averaging puts it at least 250 times that, or 7 trillion light-years in diameter. We are but specks dust, tiny microbes in this huge tapestry. Scientists have been trying to figure out the origins of the universe for thousands of years. We've made only baby steps in that regard. Like the proverbial missing link in our species' evolution, there are many missing pieces in this massive cosmic puzzle. Just what conditions or elements came together at just that moment to set off such a cascade of wonder, and stardust and life? What was going on before that momentous occasion? How can something come from nothing? Some argue that science and religion are at polar opposites, but that's not true. In fact, they can go hand in hand in some respects. No one argues that the universe is a breath-taking wonder that cannot be fully explained. As such, it's open to speculation and educated guesses. Maybe, God awoke from a slumber, that day some 13.8 billion years ago, and hit the reset button. Maybe he felt it was time to begin anew. Just recently, in the skies above we saw a rare occurrence. Jupiter and Saturn were visible low in the southwestern sky. They appeared extremely close on the night of Dec. 21. This could be similar to what our ancestors witnessed on the night of June 17, 2 B.C., called the Star of the Magi. Venus and Jupiter were so close they seemed to touch and this was deemed a sign from Heaven. Are planets and celestial objects just bopping around the void of space, in no particular pattern, orbit or purpose? Or are these magnificent creations part of God's magical canvass? Look up, and be humbled. My friends, whatever your beliefs, embrace one another for we all are incredibly unique creations, on par with any star or nebula! All the best and let's hope and pray for better things in 2021.

