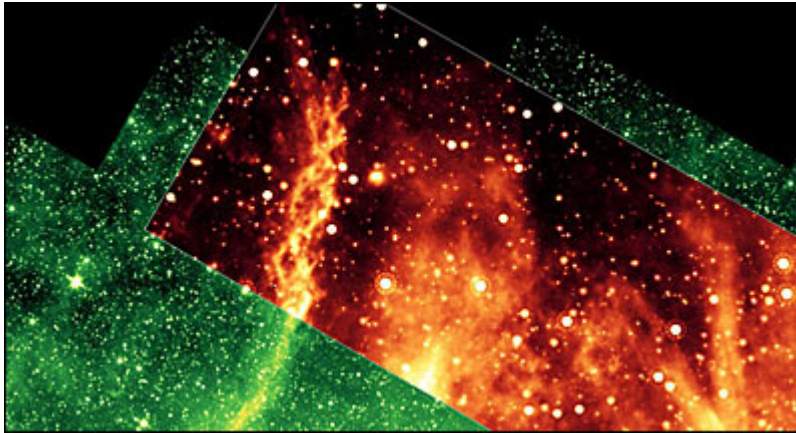


God's Strongest Argument For Intelligent Design



Eph. 5:21

Introduction

I want to begin tonight with a picture that was featured in this week's news (**Slide 1**). I am quoting directly from an article published by Reuters that was featured on America Online News:

“Cosmic nebulae usually look like blobs in space, but astronomers using the Spitzer Space Telescope reported on Wednesday they have found a nebula twisted like the double helix of DNA (**Slide 2**).

‘Nobody has ever seen anything like that before in the cosmic realm,’ said Mark Morris of the University of California at Los Angeles. (**Slide 3a**) Most nebulae are ‘formless, amorphous conglomerations of dust and gas,’ Morris said in a statement, adding that this one ‘*indicates a high degree of order.*’ The discovery of the twisted nebula, which stretches across *80 light-years* at the center of the Milky Way, the galaxy that includes Earth, was reported in the current edition of the journal, *Nature*. (By the way, just to give you some perspective on this—a light-year is the distance light travels in a year or about 6 trillion miles. So 80 light years would mean that this nebula is 480 trillion miles long). Now back to the article.

(**Slide 3b**) ‘We see two intertwining strands wrapped around each other as in a DNA molecule,’ said Morris, lead author of the *Nature* article. DNA, which forms the basic material in chromosomes, has a molecule that looks like a twisted ladder, known as a *double helix*. The strands of the nebula may be torqued by twisted magnetic fields at the Milky Way's center, Morris said by telephone.

So why are we scientists *just now* discovering this unusual nebula? Because this nebula is more than 25,000 light-years away from earth (Or 150,000 trillion miles away!!) Scientists couldn't even begin to see this until (**Slide 4**) NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope (which was launched into outer space in 2003) gave scientists the ability to detect infrared energy emitted by objects in space with an incredibly high sensitivity and resolution.

Keep in mind that this nebula has been out there *for a long time*—but only recently have we been able to clearly see its distinctive shape. What should we make of it? **(Slide 5)**

Question: Is this simply a coincidence or is it another *proof* of Intelligent Design?

As believers, in one sense we are awed by such things. But in another sense, we really are *not* surprised. We understand that the Universe, and everything in it, didn't just happen. It is not the product of random chance. It didn't merely evolve out of chaos. All around us there is overwhelming evidence of *order* in the universe—and behind that order, an *orderly* Creator-God.

So what do we do with this information? Do we throw it into our evangelistic tool box and bring it out on Monday morning around the office water cooler? Perhaps. Certainly God did not put it out there to be ignored. But for those of us who are tempted to make this into a persuasive argument to win our unsaved friends, I would add this caveat. **(Slide 6)** As exciting as all the phenomena of nature are, as much as these things profoundly enumerate God's glory and point to an orderly Creator—they actually take a back seat to a far more compelling argument for *God's Intelligent Design*. And do you know what *that is*? Before I answer that question—let's step back for a moment and look at the “Big Picture” of Scripture. **(Slide 7a).**

The Big Picture of the Bible's Message: **(Slide 7b) Creation – (Slide 7c) Fall – (Slide 7d) Redemption - (Slide 7e) Re-Creation.**

But how is God accomplishing all this? What is He up to? Where is all this going on? That is precisely the question that the book of Ephesians answers.

God is pursuing His *redemption and re-creation* in and *through His Church*. **(Slide 8a)** He chose us before the world began (1:4). **(Slide 8b)** He sent His Son to redeem us (1:7) **(Slide 9b)** and to re-create us (2:10). **(Slide 10)** He reconciled us to Himself and each other (2:16). **(Slide 11)** And He has done all this to display His wisdom—*His intelligent design* before the angels (Read 3:10). **(Slide 12)** In the end, God's blueprint for restoring the whole universe will be submitted and completed in and by Jesus Christ. In Him all things will finally *fit*. All the bricks will line up with the Cornerstone, Jesus Christ. All of history will finally make sense because it will demonstrate that in Christ alone is sin finally destroyed and the harmony of the universe forever restored (1:9-10).

(Slide 13) Currently He is *re-creating* His glorious image through the Church by *filling* the Church with all the fullness of God (1:22-23; 3:19). What does it mean to be filled with the fullness of God? It means being restored to what it means to be truly human. To accurately reflect the character of God in our lives. To think like Jesus. To act like Jesus. To *be more and more* like Jesus. Not just as individuals—but as a body of believers. As *His* body! Sounds good. But as Paul moves from chapters 1-3 into 4-6, you suddenly hear the squeal of tires as the rubber of God's great plan of redemption and re-creation meets the road of life in a presently sin-cursed world. Not to worry. That is all part of God's plan. He has thought of everything. The Father didn't merely send His Son into the

world to die for us. But to live for us. And His living was not only to provide our righteousness in justification but to model holiness for our progressive sanctification. And so in Ephesians 5:15, our Intelligent Designer who has chosen the Church to be an object lesson of His wisdom and intelligent design for the universe calls you and me to walk or live in wisdom.

According to Ephesians 5:18, walking in wisdom involves being filled *by* His Spirit. Remember that the Spirit isn't exclusively *what* fills us. His constant work in our lives is the means by which Jesus fills us with His fullness, His perfection. This process won't be complete until glory—but in the meantime we as individual believers and corporately as members of this local body have the privilege and duty of partnering with Jesus in this incredible renovation project. So how do you know if you are cooperating with God's Spirit? What evidences are there that His wisdom is being worked out in your life?

There are three evidences:

- Spiritual communication with God and each other (worship and discipleship).
- Giving thanks in all things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And tonight we come to the last evidence—and frankly the most perplexing to us.
- Submission.

That word can really seem like a difficult one to swallow. After all, which of us has not been in a situation where we felt taken advantage of by a person whose authority we were under. What really makes the word so onerous is our own national heritage. Our nation was born by virtue of a revolt against what our founding fathers believed to be a tyrannical ruler. And there is probably no word in our culture that is more widely revered than the word, liberty. None of that easily squares with the word, "submission."

So some look at this text and try to redefine the word, "submission." They do so on the basis of the word that follows it, "*one another*." "Submitting to one another" must mean a completely different idea since you can't have two people in equal authority *over* each other. So they explain this passage as being, "mutual submission." One of my NT Greek dictionaries even defines submission in this verse as "to be thoughtful and considerate; to act in love." I have no doubt that the Scriptures teach this. But that is not the point in *this* text. Certainly if you could go back to the first century and use the same word that Paul uses here, a first century listener would not understand this word that way. It *never meant* that. Whenever this word is used in the NT, it *always* refers to submission to authority.

It is used of the submission of Jesus to the authority of His parents in Luke 2:51. It is used of demons being subject to the disciples in Luke 10:17—(clearly the meaning "act in love, be considerate" cannot fit there). It is used of citizens being subject to government authorities in Romans 13:1, 5; in Titus 3:1, and in 1 Peter 2:13). It is used of the universe being subject to Christ in 1 Corinthians 15:27 and Ephesians 1:22). Of unseen spiritual powers being subject to Christ in 1 Peter 3:22. Of Christ being subject to God the Father in 1 Corinthians 15:28. Of church members being subject to church leaders in 1 Corinthians 16:15-16 and 1 Peter 5:5. Of wives being subject to their

husbands in Colossians 3:18, Titus 2:5, and 1 Peter 3:5. It is used of the Church being subject to Christ in Ephesians 5:24. Of servants being subject to their masters in Titus 2:9 and 1 Peter 2:18) and of Christians being subject to God in Hebrews 12:9 and James 4:7.

In none of these relationships is submission ever reciprocated. In other words, husbands are never told to be subject to their wives, the government to citizens, masters to servants, or the disciples to demons, etc. The word is never “mutual” in its force; it is *always one-directional* in its reference to submission to an authority.

But you ask, how do you explain the idea of “one another?” If submission is not “mutual,” then how is it Paul uses a word that seems to demand a reciprocal relationship. Of course most of the time, the pronoun “one another” has an *everyone to everyone* sort of usage. Like in Ephesians 4:25 where Paul says that we should always be truthful with our brothers and sisters because we are “members of one another.” Or in John 13:34, where Jesus commands us to *love each other*. And so on. But there are also contexts where the clear meaning is not “everyone to everyone” but is rather a “some to others” kind of meaning.” (Slide 15) For example, in Revelation 6:4, “so that men should slay one another” means “so that *some* would kill *others*” (not “so that every person would kill every other person,” or “so that those people being killed would mutually kill those who were killing them,” which would make no sense). Over in Galatians 6:2 Paul writes, “Bear one another’s burdens.” That doesn’t mean that “everyone should exchange burdens with everyone else,” but “*some* who are more able should help bear the burdens of *others* who are less able.”

If we believe in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures, we can’t allow ourselves to change the fundamental meaning of this or any word. (Slide 16a) The word Paul uses is **hypotasso**. It comes from two words (Slide 16b) hypo (lit. under) and (Slide 16c) tasso (to arrange in an orderly manner). Hypo is a word you might recognize. A hypodermic needle literally gets *under* your “dermos” or skin. Tasso is another word that shows up in English as well and it also happens to be used in an English word connected with skin. A taxidermist (from tasso and dermos) means what? Somebody who *arranges* skin. Hey, that would have come in handy this morning when our speaker, Mark Dutton asked me how my skin looked so young. I should have told him I go to a taxidermist!

When you put these two words together, you get: **hypotasso**—which in this construction means “to submit to,” “to subordinate oneself to,” “to be subject to,” “to yield to.”

So how does this make God's case for His Intelligent Design for His people. It affirms God's Order. God has order in the Trinity. Father sent the Son. The Son obeyed the Father. Jesus said in John 5:29: “For I seek not to *please myself*, but him who *sent me*.” The Father and the Son sent the Spirit who continues the work that the Father planned and the Son accomplished when He died and rose again.

God ordained that the same order that existed in the Trinity would exist in His relationship with man and in man’s relationships with others. It is as we mirror that divinely ordained pattern that we begin to make God’s case for His Intelligent Design not

only of His Creation in general, but that part of His Creation that most specifically reflects or *images* His character. And so what Paul is saying here is that when believers live out divinely assigned roles—specifically in the home—that we begin to demonstrate the wisdom of God before a watching world and *even the angels*.

Ephesians 5:21 contains not only the third characteristic of a life filled *by* God's Spirit, it is also a pivotal verse that leads into a detailed application of what submission looks like. As Paul addresses domestic relationships (which were considered so critical to the well-being of a nation in the ancient world), in each paragraph, he begins by addressing the one who is in the role of being in some form of submission to authority. Wives—then husbands (5:22-32). Children—then parents (6:1-4). Servants—then masters (6:5-9). And notice how he couches the instructions. Submission is done out of reverence for Christ. Out of respect for and a commitment to reflecting God's Intelligent Design—His Orderly plan before a chaotic world! And this is not only stated here—it is stated in each specific example as well. Wives—"as to the Lord." Children—"In the Lord." Slaves—"As you would obey Christ!"

Do you see what is at stake here? Do you see how Paul ties this order in the home life with God's bigger order of things in the church and the whole universe? Do you see the evangelistic and worship implications?!

Now I know what some of you are thinking and likely struggling with. What about the down side of this? Why is it that our minds quickly drift to the ways that people can abuse this truth. Like the man who treats his wife like he owns her. Or his kids like he has the right to do with them as he pleases. We'll talk about the workplace implications of this passage later. That is a good point. So let's *be clear* right now. ***This passage in no way excuses or even permits a believer who is in authority to demean or take personal advantage of someone under his or her authority. If that ever would happen to a member of this congregation in a way that relationships in the home were seriously affected—those under that authority and affected by its failure have a right to appeal to this church body for help.***

So, you might be wondering—why does Paul seem to single out those in roles of submission. Why does he seem to overlook the husbands, and parents and masters? Let me answer that by quoting Peter O'Brien who wrote a very helpful commentary on the book of Ephesians: "Those in authority have *different* roles with **greater** responsibility, but they are not **better** roles!" (Repeat). [Explain the "axe on the neck"]. Paul isn't letting anybody off the hook. He is not singling out wives or children or slaves. I believe he is recognizing where they are going to struggle most and he seeks to help them by motivating them that they have a reason to follow their particular assignment that is bigger than *their own* situation. Far from being chauvinistic or insensitive, Paul recognizes the challenge of doing this post-Genesis 3! Which brings me to a concluding remark.

What about the failure that happens all too frequently in relationships? The breakdowns caused by sin (on both sides)? Isn't that what for many makes submission so onerous and

leadership so hazardous? That brothers and sisters is the *genius* of God's all-wise plan. For it is against the backdrop of a sin-cursed world that we live out this plan—this Intelligent Design. It is precisely this backdrop that enables us to attract the attention of the angels along with an unbelieving Christ-denying world and make a powerful case for the existence and power and relevance of the Gospel!

Does that sound like a back-breaking assignment? God knew that ahead of time as well. So He sent His own Son to be our second Adam. He came into our disorder to restore order. And to do what the first couple failed to do. To submit. But unlike that first couple who were in a perfect environment—and still managed to get out of God's divine order—the Second Adam came and obeyed the Father under far different circumstances. In a desert after having gone without food for 40 days. But that was only the beginning. His ministry ended by submitting to the Father he has loved for all Eternity—and having to face the full fury of His infinitely righteous wrath. A submission that for a moment broke fellowship with the One He loved! Think about that the next time you struggle with submission—regardless of which side of that fence you happen to be on.

So what does this mean? Submission has to be dealt with (from both sides) with our eyes ever fixed on a Savior who embodied submission for us and now is doing it through His Spirit who works in us.

Conclusion

Submission (and the corresponding responsibility of leading) is a little like dancing. Both have partners have to be willing to dance to the same tune. But what do you do when you have different music? You have to give up your own tune and dance by another's tune to stay in step together.

And that is so hard. There are times I pursue it. And times where I almost seem to forget about it as I become distracted by my own wants and wishes. There are times I try to do it and my wife doesn't seem like she is dancing to the same tune. And vice versa. Sam with the kids. This passage is reminding us that we are not just dancing with our wives, kids, parents, etc. We are the church. And we are ultimately dancing w/ our Bridegroom—even when we aren't with our human counterpart. And that is what makes our witness so compelling. We dance *with* Him and *for* Him and *unto* Him. And that is something not even an atheist can explain away!