

What Does the Bible Teach About Life on Other Planets?

(Compiled by Paul R Blake)

Introduction:

A. In April 1997, thirty-nine members of a UFO cult called Heaven's Gate cult led by Marshall Applewhite, killed themselves believing after their deaths they would join an alien race they said was riding on a comet. This event brought to the forefront just how many people actually believe in UFOs and aliens. Although Heaven's Gate represents the radical fringe of a global UFO movement, there are millions of less-dedicated, everyday followers who believe in alien life. In 1997, one poll suggested 40% of Americans believe aliens have visited our planet. Currently, 52% believe in extraterrestrial life. Surveys suggest that more than 20 million Americans believe they've seen a UFO in the sky. Other data suggests more than 3 million inhabitants of this planet say they have had a personal encounter with a being from another planet, or with a UFO. How do we fit UFOs and aliens into our Biblical understanding. They aren't mentioned in the Bible. Unfortunately most Christians are confused and have no answer for alleged paranormal activity.

B. We live on a very small planet circling a modest and ordinary star in a sparse neighborhood of a small galaxy that is barely noticeable in a unimaginably vast universe populated by more than one septillion (1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000) stars. Folks reason that if God created this enormous and awesome universe, it seems either supremely arrogant or provincially foolish to believe that He placed life only on this tiny planet in an insignificant galaxy. However, this is the human point of view based on our limited perspective that, instead of being awed by the creative power of God, sees it instead as something too big for any creative effort.

1. The Scriptures do not directly say that intelligent life exists only on earth; however, to suggest that there is life elsewhere is logically unnecessary and loaded with serious doctrinal conflicts.

I. WHY SO VAST A UNIVERSE WITH SO MANY STARS?

A. Why would God create such a vast universe if it is only for those on the planet Earth? What purpose does the universe hold?

1. Light, time-keeping, and navigation - Gen. 1:14-15
2. Glorifying the Creator - Psalm 19:1, 8:1, 3, 9

B. The large scale of the universe has nothing to do with its complexity. The overwhelming intricacy of the human body is much more awesome than the cosmos of stars. The large scale of the universe is about the same as the small scale of the micro cosmos of the atom (An atom is about 99.9999999999996% empty space), gloriously complex and incredibly overbuilt, all of which testifies to the infinite power and unlimited wisdom of God.

1. Psalm 19:2-4, 148:3-5, 8:4, 139:14; Rom. 1:18-21

C. But from God's point of view, the earth, far from being insignificant, is the central focus of His creative, sustaining, and redemptive activity.

1. The earth was made first, and the other heavenly bodies made on the fourth day were for signs and seasons for the earth
 - a. Gen. 1:10, 14

2. There is no scientific reason for assuming life on other planets, or even for insisting on the existence of a planet outside our solar system uniquely suited to sustaining life as is earth. The reason why many want to believe that life on other planets is reasonable is the result of evolutionary speculation. If the evolution of life can happen once, by chance, then it could have happened elsewhere with so many stars which could have planets.

II. ANSWERING CLAIMS OF EXTRATERRESTRIAL ENCOUNTERS

- A. Strange ring-like patterns discovered on July 27, 1991, near Silbury Hill in Wiltshire, England, and in 1992 in Durham, North Carolina. They were the efforts of people trying to generate a hoax. After being caught doing it, they demonstrated for news media how and when they did it.
- B. An estimated 10,000 cases of cattle mutilations reported in which the animals had their blood removed. Even after the mutilators were caught or when forensics demonstrated it was predator activity, some still want to believe aliens are the cause.
- C. A series of flying saucers caused a stir in southern England before being revealed as hoaxes, complete with sound effects from built-in batteries and speakers.
- D. Jim Cantore has a long series of documentaries on the Weather Channel of weather phenomenon that the less informed often report to be alien sightings or UFOs.
- E. Conspiracy theory advocates believe the U.S. government has withheld proof of extraterrestrial life forms for years from the American people. Before WWII, there were almost no reports of UFO sightings. Now, around the world every day, there are about 150 anomalous sightings, but still no hard evidence of a visiting alien. An estimated 4,100,000 sightings in 75 years, and not a single visit has left any solid forensic evidence or their presence, other than the highly subjective testimony of uninformed witnesses. Even conceding the unlikely scenario that the US government is colluding with the news media to keep these things hidden, it is not possible that they have the capacity to suppress those reports and so called evidence all over the world simultaneously.

III. HAS ANYONE NOTICED?

A. How much alien and UFO genre permeates our culture? How that 17 of the top 20 films of all time are about monsters, aliens, or space travel? We entertain ourselves with extraterrestrials. It naturally follows that the many claims of seeing them is a function of a wish fulfillment bias built into our thinking. For example: a little boy in bed at night is afraid of monsters, so when he sees something moving at his window, he sees a monster. That is, until he turns on the light and realizes it is his bathrobe hanging on the curtain rod moved by the night breezes. If we are expecting to see an alien, our perceptions tell us that any phenomenon we encounter must be an alien.

B. How that faithful members of the Lord's church do not see UFOs and are never abducted by aliens? One would think that with 4.1 million UFO sightings or alien abductions in 75 years, the odds are one of them would be a faithful Christian. This segment of the population seems to be the only one immune to alien activity. In fact,

UFO witnesses are persons who have already subscribed to another lie (denominational doctrines of men, false religions of men, humanism, et al); it should be no surprise that they would believe another falsehood - 2Thes. 2:9-12

C. How that just as there is a link between sound Christians and the absence of UFO activity, so there is a link between those who experiment in the occult and the presence of UFO activity? The same persons who believe in or claim to have seen UFOs and aliens, also often believe in or claim to have seen Sasquatch, Yeti, ghosts, séances, the Bermuda Triangle, Elvis Presley is alive in a government lab, etc.

1. "People who report UFO contact, even only close encounters of the first kind (UFO sightings), immediately begin to experience poltergeist-like activity and out of body experiences. UFO sightings seem to parallel poltergeist activity." (Michael Mannion, Project: Mindshift)

D. How that aliens seem especially hostile to Christianity, except when it's seen as just an alternative path to the divine. When it is taught as the only true way, it is bitterly opposed. Sounds more like our world's philosophy than another world's viewpoint. "Why would all these hordes of E.T.s cross time and space simply to teach New Age philosophy, deny Christianity, and support the occult?" (Chuck Missler, Alien Encounters). Consider a few testimonies abductees claim came from aliens:

1. "Gaia [Mother Earth] is not happy with you. She is going to go into great travail soon as she purges herself of the toxins you have poured out upon her."
2. "You will find that all your religions are false, based on a controlling, cold-hearted, patriarchal movement, when in actuality it is the mother goddess who is behind all things."
3. "Sin is an archaic concept developed by the patriarchal religious systems to place man in bondage and guilt."

E. How those UFO activities occur mostly at night? Are aliens night owls or late sleepers? Perhaps the alien activity at night reflects more on the nature of the people who claim to see them.

F. How woefully backward aliens are in medical technology? While other aspects of UFO technology seem to advance with our own technical advances, the "medical" practices of abducting aliens seem stuck in the Nazi operating rooms of Doctor Josef Mengele. If these aliens are so advanced, why is their medical technology so primitive? And if this is all about genetic research, why do they need to be so invasive when even non-medical persons know that if you want genetic material, all you need is a cheek swab? Once again, this is more of a reflection on the person who claims to be abducted rather than any matter of reality or reason Interesting: they can build spaceships that traverse the universe and defy modern physics, but their medical technology is barely on a par with humans, if not quite a bit behind.

G. How that there is a common thread that runs through nearly all encounter stories? If there were thousands of extraterrestrial species visiting earth, as some claim, one would expect some variety in their appearance, technology, ships, and purposes. But contact stories seem to follow the same formula. Is it possible that those who claim to have encountered aliens are copying from other accounts? It seems that most of their stories plagiarize Close Encounters of the Third Kind.

H. How that aliens sometimes are described in the form of various animals or insects: reptiles, birds, preying mantises, etc.? It seems more than a coincidence that so many ancient gods and idols were also in these forms. It appears that ersatz alien abductees are gradually drifting toward idolatry.

IV. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT IT?

A. The heavens, the earth, and everything therein were created in six days, and humankind is the crowning glory of creation; all creation is to be subject to him

1. Ex. 20:11; Gen. 1:26-27; Psalms 8:5-6; Deut. 4:19

B. Because of Adam's sin, all creation is cursed and subject to futility and in "bondage to decay."

1. Civilizations on other planets, presumably sinless, would then have to share in the effects of this cursed cosmos - Rom 8:19-21

C. Eve is described in the scriptures as the mother of all living - Gen. 3:20

1. All living is an absolute. Any intelligent, self-determinant life must come from her.

D. The final catastrophic Judgment is described as one in which the very elements will burn with fervent heat, and in which the heavens and earth will be rolled away, passing away with a great noise, and no place will be found for them. Such a cosmic, universal catastrophe would mean that any other civilizations that would exist in the universe also would be annihilated in the same destruction. In other words, one must believe that God would destroy another race of potentially innocent beings in His efforts to destroy the world of men.

1. 2Peter 3:10; Gen. 18:25

E. It was on this earth that the Creator Himself became flesh, and bled and died for the human race, and because of His redeeming action, all creation will one day share in the impact of the redemption of the righteous. For beings unrelated to Adam to share in the cosmic effects of both curse and restoration of humankind dismisses the nature of the scriptural account of the origins and destination of life. Christ died once for all. He is not going to be crucified and resurrected again on other planets.

1. Rom. 6:10; 1Peter 3:18; Heb. 9:26

2. The Bible makes no provision for God to redeem any other beings, any more than it does to redeem fallen angels - Heb. 2:16

F. It seems disingenuous of God to reveal His word that has a distinctively exclusive Earth and humankind centric theme, only to have other worlds with other peoples He has kept from us. It is not honest to imply that we are the only intelligent people He has created, if that is not the case. To choose to believe that God created life elsewhere after implying to us that we are alone the crown of His creation suggests that God lied by omission, and therefore His word cannot be trusted. It brings all of revelation into question.

G. Since God is the one who made the universe, it can scarcely be big to Him. Humans struggle with its vastness because our comprehension is limited to the created time/space dimensions within which we exist, and it is mind-bending to try and comprehend anything beyond our dimensional existence. Size and time are only relative to us as inhabitants of this universe. God is infinite; regardless of how large this universe is, it is still finite - Psalm 147:4-5, 145:3; Isa. 40:12, 28, 57:15

V. ANSWERING MISTAKEN OBJECTIONS

A. Heb. 11:3 - "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

1. The word 'worlds' appears in the KJV translation and some others, leading some to claim that it refers to other inhabitable planets. However, the word is αἰῶν (aiōn), from which we derive the word "eons." Thus modern translations render the word as "universe" (entire space-time continuum) because it correctly describes "everything that exists in time and space, visible and invisible, present and eternal." Even if it was referring to other planets, it is unwarranted to presume that intelligent life exists on them.

B. John 10:16 - "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd."

1. In this context, these "other sheep" are a reference to the Gentiles, not extraterrestrials. Jesus' teaching was causing division among the Jews (vs. 19), because they believed that salvation from God was for them alone. Jesus was reaffirming that He would be Savior of all humankind.

VI. WHAT CAN WE DO?

A. Be calm and rational about this.

1. This is just another error that has cloaked itself in a subjectively scientific costume, just like the General Theory of Evolution, Secular Humanism, and the Da Vinci Code
2. Deal with it and the persons who subscribe to it with the same approach we would use with others ensnared by a false doctrine
3. 2Tim. 2:24-26

B. Teach the truth.

1. The word of God will remain absolute truth regardless of whatever cultural beliefs are currently in fashion.
2. Years ago, science said that the earth was flat and in the center of the universe. When science learned that the earth is round and not in the center of the universe, the Gospel of Christ was not threatened and continued to contain the power of God.
3. And, when what is fashionable to believe in contemporary science discovers that we are alone in the universe, that General Evolution is nonsense, and the Da Vinci Code is an expression of paranoid minds, the Gospel of Christ will not be threatened and will continue to contain the power of God.
4. Teach the firm, eternal, essential word of God; and waste little attention on cultural alternatives to it - 2Tim. 4:2-5; 1Tim. 6:3-5

C. Pray for discernment. Pray for Jesus' return to bring to an end the nonsense of this fallen, deluded world. Pray for your own spiritual well-being in the interim.

1. 1John 5:13-15

D. Remember the absolute and unchangeable facts:

1. God is

2. God created all things
3. God created humankind in His image
4. God has spoken
5. God sent His Son to save humankind
6. God will destroy this universe in the end
7. If any story, speculation, testimony, or belief is in conflict with any of those facts, then the story is in error. The facts are objective and always will be. The beliefs and testimonies of men are subjective and always will be - Prov. 2:2-9

QUOTES BY OTHER AUTHORS:

“This country has a UFO problem, after all. You might not have been aware we have one, or thought about it in these terms, but we do have a UFO problem: namely, we don't seem to understand what UFO really means. So here it is: a UFO is an unidentified flying object. So any time we see some object flying in the sky that we can't positively identify, we've seen a UFO. But in the same way the words paranormal and supernatural have been conflated, we now equate UFO with alien spacecraft. How this came to be is easily understandable. If we've learned one thing already, people don't like the unknown very much. And so, if we believe we're being visited by other civilizations, we've read the piles of books and articles on unexplained lights in the sky, then we fill in the massive gaps with wild tales of alien races, interstellar technology, and government conspiracies.” (Steve Volk, Fringe-ology)

“There's a fascinating frailty of the human mind that psychologists know all about, called “argument from ignorance.” This is how it goes. Remember what the “U” stands for in “UFO”? You see lights flashing in the sky. You've never seen anything like this before and don't understand what it is. You say, “It's a UFO!” The “U” stands for “unidentified.” But then you say, “I don't know what it is; it must be aliens from outer space, visiting from another planet.” The issue here is that if you don't know what something is, your interpretation of it should stop immediately. You don't then say it must be X or Y or Z. That's argument from ignorance. It's common. I'm not blaming anybody; it may relate to our burning need to manufacture answers because we feel uncomfortable about being steeped in ignorance.” (Neil deGrasse Tyson, Space Chronicles)

“They were once fairies and elves. And people saw fairies and elves, but now no one sees them. Now they see creatures from beyond the stars, because they no longer believe in anything but humans. The UFOs were nothing more than the collective fantasies of a stressed out society... The world into which UFOs had appeared was one of under-the-desk siren drills against nuclear annihilation. Society had made a new myth, a communal idea of something outside of a species apparently intent on dooming itself. The first UFOs reported in modern times, just before the crash at Roswell, were boomerang shaped and were reported as 'flying saucers' to describe the motion of their flight, like a saucer skipping over water. Yet immediately after, people saw and photographed saucer-shaped objects. Boomerang-shaped objects were rarely seen. Now people mostly report seeing large triangles instead of discs or boomerangs, because that is what they are told to expect to see.” (Thomm Quackenbush, Artificial Gods)