

SPACE TRAVEL AND THE BIBLE

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Introduction

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy set a goal for the United States, to put a man on the moon by the end of the decade. At the start of his second term in office, President George W. Bush set a new goal for the United States: to send men to Mars. Both announcements met with the same reactions: some lauded it as a worthy goal; others condemned it as a waste of time and money. Some Christians think the goal good, but the rationale—to find clues to the origin of life—ridiculous; others damned it as an affront to God, an invasion of God’s territory. Each point of view has its reasons and we will not go into an exhaustive evaluation of those views; we will focus here on evaluating the goal in terms of Scripture.

The contrary view

Those who oppose space travel in general, and human visitation to the astral bodies in particular, have several reasons: They point out that the sun, moon, and planets were made for signs, for seasons, and to give light upon the earth. Nowhere in Scripture does it say that these were made for man to inhabit or to subdue. (Gen. 1:14 v.f.).

1. They note that God gave man dominion over the earth and did not say that about anyplace else in creation. (Gen. 1:28).¹
2. They point to Psalm 115:16 which says, “The heavens, *even* the heavens, *are* the Lord’s: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.” They regard us as trespassers on God’s “turf” if we set foot on the moon or Mars.
3. They argue that man’s goal is the same as Satan’s² in Isaiah 14:12-13 which says, “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *how* art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the

¹ And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

² Virtually all modern versions disagree with this. They insist that the twelfth verse refers to the Lord Jesus Christ: the NIV says “Morning Star,” which is Christ, according to Rev. 22:16, and other versions say “Daystar,” which is Christ according to 2 Peter 1:19.

north.” That is, they think that man’s only rationale is to be like God.

4. Many, but not all, argue that man’s goal in space is to take God from his throne and take over from him. Or they see it as an attempt to get to heaven without God. They draw a parallel to the tower of Babel.

Dr. Peter Ruckman made a most intriguing and spiritually insightful point about the man to the moon program. In 1969³ he noted that when man sets foot on the moon, it means that the body of Christ (typed by the moon) has joined up with the world and has become apostate. In the light of Psalm 115:16, plus the observation that we are now in the Laodicean church age, the point is most cogent. (The Laodicean church is the only one of the seven churches of Revelation 2-3 that receives no commendation from the Lord, only condemnation.) Remember, too, blasphemy noted in footnote 2, which is found in all popular bibles produced by the Laodicean church.

We wrestle against spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph. 6:12). Laodiceans interpret “high places” to be presidents, kings, mayors, and popes—earthly rulers—but that is not what the Bible says. Isaiah 24:21-23⁴ teaches that these high places are in heaven, and, by contrast, the kings of this earth are in low places. Also note the presence of the moon’s confounding in the context. (See “The Bible and the Moon” elsewhere in this issue.)

The affirmative view

Those who support the effort for man’s going to the moon and planets also draw from Scripture. Here are their arguments:

1. The late Walter Lang used to argue for manned exploration of space. His rationale was that since the astral bodies were made for the earth, and since man was to subdue the earth, man was justified in extending his reach to the planets and the stars.

³ Ruckman, Dr. Peter, 1969. “Lunar Lunatics,” *Plain Preachin’* audio tape series, no. UT-4365. (Pensacola, FL 32534: Box 7135).

⁴ And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones *that are* on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, *as* prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.

2. Of course, space travel advocates also have to deal with Psalm 115:16. They point out that to be consistent in one's interpretation, one must then also argue that we should not fly in the atmosphere either, for it is the first heaven. There are people who have used this verse against the space program and yet fly in airplanes. They put an upper limit as to how high man can go and yet not violate the verse. Some set the limit at an eagle's limit, others at tens of thousands of feet. Obviously the limit is arbitrary. Some counter that and since the earth is the Lord's (Ex. 9:29; 1 Cor. 10:26, 28, etc.), it seems contradictory to say man should not venture into space simply because the Scripture says it, too, is the Lord's, especially since there is no express commandment against manned space travel. Then too, some object that if Psalm 115:16 bans man from all heavens, it must also forbid man's entry into heaven. Where does a believer go upon his death? If one argues that these are dead, not alive, then what of the translations of Enoch and Elijah? They went up in the flesh.
3. Advocates refer to Deuteronomy 4:19, which specifically says that the sun, moon, and stars are "divided unto all nations under the whole heaven." They argue that such division is meaningless unless man is intended, whether in this world or the world to come, to colonize space.
4. Christian advocates also point to scriptures that speak of the presence of man in heaven, possibly in mortal bodies. They point to Nehemiah 1:9,⁵ Isaiah 13:5,⁶ Matthew 24:31,⁷ Mark 13:27,⁸ and Obadiah 4.⁹
5. In addressing the matter of man going into space to be like God, or to overthrow God, or to get to heaven without God, supporters of the program note that though some may think this, indeed, most people know better than to think this. Such goals are meaningless. Indeed, it may be a consensus that the reason men built the tower of Babel was to climb to heaven in case there was another flood,

⁵ But *if* ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, *yet* will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.

⁶ They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, *even* the LORD, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land.

⁷ And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

⁸ And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

⁹ Though thou exalt *thyself* as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD.

or to bring God down, the Scripture states the real reasons were to make a name for themselves and for unity (Gen. 11:4).¹⁰

Those are the scriptural arguments put forth by believers who advocate the exploration of space by man and those who oppose it. Of these, the reader can make what he will.

The arguments have found new life with President Bush's goal of a manned Mars mission. The first step in that is to establish a working presence in space where men can assemble the vehicles necessary for the journey. A permanent station on the moon is not out of the question. Unlike the earth, of course, God did not create the heavens to make it easy for man to live there. The firmament is quite hostile to life, and a permanent facility may not exactly be what most would assume when one speaks of a permanent facility. Crews will have to rotate, be changed every few months or so. Yes, the moon and space are desolate. Water may or may not exist at the moon's poles; if not, it will have to be brought there and a recycling program set up to support life.

But water is only the beginnings of obstacles. Solar flares are huge explosions on the sun that shower high-energy particles to the earth, giving us the northern and southern lights. Men will have to be shielded from those, the strongest of which can be quite lethal. Cosmic rays are a constant presence; the flashes of light observed by all astronauts resulted from cosmic rays hitting the retina of the eye. These can add up fast, especially beyond the protection of earth's van Allen Belts. Even more powerful emissions, though somewhat rare, are potentially lethal. They come from nearby gamma ray bursters and magnetars. The latter are stars with extremely strong magnetic fields. A burst from a magnetar last December showered the earth with enough high-energy particles that for several seconds, the total energy rivaled what the earth receives from a full moon. Such things can be expected every few years. God certainly has not made it easy for us to live in space.

In conclusion we will make one secular note about the space program. There may be little in the way of spiritual fruit, and certainly it will not help against sin, but the moon program gave us the technology that went into CAT scanners, ultrasound, microcomputers, cellular phones, etc. These things have their good points and bad. Who knows what the Mars program may bring, but it will be both good and bad; that is certain.

These things are a mixed bag, as they say, and they do distract men from considering their spiritual state, but then so does all entertainment. Beyond that, there is one aspect of life that should be considered. A soci-

¹⁰ And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top *may reach* unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

ety, like any organism, must produce and eliminate waste. Traditionally that function has been filled by war, with the waste going to “wine, women, and song” during peacetime. In the last century, a new peacetime “war” was added to the list. That “war” was President Lyndon Johnson’s “War on Poverty.” Rather than eliminating the waste, however, Johnson’s new waste system pumped the waste back into society through social welfare programs that did little more than subsidizing the poor, increasing poverty, and requiring two incomes to allow a family to “get ahead.” The fruit of it was the destruction of the family and devaluation of work as a means of escaping from poverty. From my own, personal perspective, I would rather see the waste go into a space program that will give some benefits to society, the family, and the work ethic, than to spend it on destructive social programs or on destructive wars. And I say that knowing full well that regardless of what I say, the word of the Lord must be fulfilled: that men will wax worse and worse, and our peril will increase until men’s hearts fail them from fear (Lu. 21:26).

COMPREHENDING ENGINEERS—TAKE TWO

There was an engineer who had an exceptional gift for fixing all things mechanical. After serving his company loyally for over 30 years, he happily retired.

Several years later the company contacted him regarding a seemingly impossible problem they were having with one of their multimillion-dollar machines. They had tried everything and everyone else to get the machine work but to no avail. So in desperation, they called on the retired engineer who had solved so many of their problems in the past.

The engineer reluctantly took the challenge. He spent a day studying the huge machine. At the end of the day, he marked a small “x” in chalk on a particular component of the machine and said: “This is where your problem is.”

The part was replaced and the machine worked perfectly again.

The company received a bill for \$50,000 from the engineer for his service. They demanded an itemized accounting of his charges. The engineer responded briefly:

One chalk mark: \$1.00. Knowing where to put it: \$49,999.00.
It was paid in full and the engineer retired again in peace.