

BEYOND TODAY

A Magazine of Understanding

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ALONE?**

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BEYOND TODAY

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Scott Ashley
Managing editor

Man's Search for Meaning in the Universe

Thinking about outer space inevitably brings me, and likely many of our readers, back to childhood memories. One of my earliest is lying on a blanket in the back of my grandfather's pickup truck with my two brothers and a cousin watching for a satellite to pass over. I don't remember which of the early satellites we were hoping to glimpse—Sputnik, Vanguard, Explorer or another—but I do remember watching the tiny pinpoint of light silently gliding across a sea of stars and wondering what it all meant.

Mostly I was puzzled that the adults—my mother, an aunt and uncle, and my grandparents—were so excited about a little dot of light moving across the night sky. I couldn't comprehend that my grandparents, who grew up in horse-and-buggy days, were now witnessing mankind's first tentative steps to leave the bounds of our planet.

The "space race" and outer space were background themes to life in the 1960s. Like many boys I had a collection of plastic toy spacemen to go with my toy soldiers and cowboys and Indians. An uncle worked for aerospace contractors and occasionally presented me with a model rocket courtesy of his company.

My older brother liked things that moved fast and made loud noises, so he gravitated toward model rockets that actually flew. He made several that would disappear in a flash of smoke and light, hurtle several hundred feet into the air and disappear from sight before returning to earth with a small thud. He let me help with some of the launches, although in hindsight I'm wondering if that wasn't motivated by a curiosity as to what might happen to a somewhat pesky little brother if one of his rockets were to explode on liftoff.

And then there was the burning question: Was there life in outer space? Tabloids and magazines featuring UFOs were popular on newsstands. TV series like *The Invaders*, *The Outer Limits*, *The Twilight Zone* and *Star Trek* explored

strange new worlds, sought out new life and new civilizations and boldly went where mankind had never gone before—assuring us that other planets teeming with alien life forms existed all around us.

Now, more than half a century later, what do we know?

We have sent men to walk on the moon—starting 50 years ago this month. We have sent probes to every planet in our solar system, and even to some of those planets' moons. We have driven remote-controlled vehicles across the surface of Mars. We have flown spacecraft past Saturn's famous rings, past frozen Uranus, Neptune and Pluto and out beyond the edge of our solar system. We have even landed spacecraft on an asteroid and a comet!

Through the astounding photos produced by the Hubble Space Telescope we have glimpsed wonders in the universe previously unimagined. We have been able to peer billions of years back in time to see the formation of suns and galaxies. We have gazed across countless light-years of distance at marvels we could never visit in a billion lifetimes of travel. For decades we have scanned the skies with powerful radio telescopes looking for transmissions

indicating the presence of intelligent life.

And in all this time, and with all this effort, what have we found?

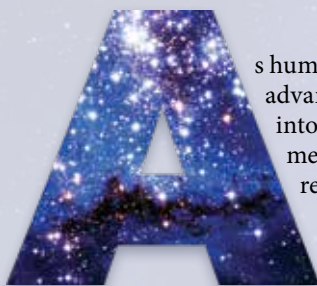
We've found *zero* evidence of intelligent physical life beyond our planet—or of any other physical life at all, for that matter. And considering the astounding distances involved—the star nearest us, Alpha Centauri, is 4.367 light-years away (more than 276,000 times the distance from earth to the sun!)—there's no way any of us will visit a planet outside our solar system anytime during this physical life.

This is not to say these questions about life and the universe and our role in it are not important. They certainly are! Humankind seems to be "wired" to want to explore, to learn, to reach out, to understand why we are here and where we are headed. In this issue we explore some of these all-important questions, because they are key to giving *your* life meaning and to understanding your future! **BT**



Over recent decades mankind has spent billions of dollars and untold hours searching for life outside of planet Earth. What's driving this desperate search? What do we hope to find? And do we understand what we're really looking for?

by Steven Britt, Ph.D.



As human civilization advances and we reach out into the cosmos, we are met with a deafening, reverberating *silence*. Nevertheless, the dramatic, headlining article from the

March 2019 *National Geographic* magazine boldly proclaims, “We Are Not Alone.” From such a matter-of-fact title statement, one might gather that evidence of alien life forms has finally been found! The article boasts, “New discoveries reveal it’s almost certain we’re not alone in the universe.” However, the *opposite* is in fact true. Not one scrap of material or observational evidence indicates the existence of other physical life in the universe.

The article, for its part, focuses on the various attempts to find alien life, giving an insightful look at the amazing precision technologies developed to that end. Over the last 60 years, governments and scientists have invested billions of dollars in hundreds of experiments, generating a staggering amount of data that has been pored over, consuming untold hours of human and computing resources—all with the possibility of detecting alien life as a primary motivator.

These endeavors have yielded a great deal of scientific knowledge revealing the wonder and majesty of God’s creation, and have also resulted in rapid advancements in consumer technology as a side benefit—but they’ve been fruitless in finding physical life outside of our planet.

In the total absence of evidence, why does the scientific “certainty” of alien life persist undaunted? Where does man’s fascination with life outside of our planet come from? Does the Bible inform us at all concerning other life forms in the universe? The Word of God holds surprising answers!

What makes a planet “habitable”?

The discoveries touted by *National Geographic* are based on conclusions from the Kepler Space Telescope’s mission to identify exoplanets—planets outside of our solar system. Over the last decade, the mission has yielded impressive results.

Kepler’s analysis focused on a small area of space containing 150,000 stars, and discovered about 4,000 exoplanets. This is tremendous progress, considering that the first conclusive exoplanet discovery was in 1995—just 24 years ago!

Scientists now widely agree that our universe is fine-tuned for life—that physical life wouldn’t be able to exist at all if certain constants like the relative strengths of the different forces or the rate of the expansion of the universe were different to even the slightest degree. In the study of exoplanets, it’s becoming increasingly clear that the earth itself is fine-tuned for life.

Life on earth is tenacious, often appearing in even the most impossible habitats our planet can muster. But in comparison to the harsh environments of space, it becomes clear that life in fact needs *just the right conditions* to survive. No one expects to find living organisms in the empty vacuum between planets and stars, or on the unimaginably hot surface of a star or within the crushing gravity of a black hole. Life is only considered viable on planets within a narrow range of characteristics.

There is widespread disagreement over these characteristics, and the classification of currently known exoplanets as “habitable” is highly speculative. The word itself conjures up the image of an earth-like environment, but in its current astronomical usage it is based on rough parameters that by no means guarantee life could actually survive.

These, by necessity, include only quantities we can measure from earth via telescope, including the distance of a planet from its star and the intensity of radiation and heat coming from its star. Other relevant factors include the size of the planet, the nature of its orbit and the composition of the planet. For example, some planets are tidally locked to their star as our moon is to earth, meaning only one side of the planet ever receives light. This would result in wild extremes of hot and cold as opposed to the much milder seasonal temperatures across the earth’s surface.

As scientists further evaluate the question of habitability, more and more specific earth-like criteria are added. It’s also speculated that the best chances for life will be on a planet with a rocky

A person stands on a rocky peak, looking out over a vast, glowing landscape under a starry night sky. The scene is illuminated by a bright, golden light source, creating a dramatic silhouette of the person. The background is a deep blue and purple sky filled with numerous stars and nebulae. The overall mood is one of awe and wonder.

The Search for Life

Are We **ALONE?**



surface, an atmosphere that's neither too thick nor too thin and that has liquid water on the surface.

Applying all of these factors to the 4,000 or so exoplanets we know of dramatically reduces the number of “habitable” planets to about a dozen. But even this is deceptive, because there may be any number of currently unknown factors preventing a planet from actually being capable of nurturing life.

Why the insistence on aliens?

The dramatic contrast between the number of stars in the observable universe (billions of trillions!) and the number we actually have the time and resources to point a telescope at is staggering. Due to this limitation, we have no choice but to look for general patterns to extrapolate from. As a result, many definitive-sounding statements about the great unseen expanses of the universe involve massive leaps of speculation.

With that in mind, the best available interpretations of the Kepler telescope's analysis of a relatively tiny corner of the universe suggest that there should be *billions* of habitable planets in our Milky Way Galaxy alone—and our galaxy is one among *trillions* of galaxies in the universe!

Evolutionary thinking dictates with certitude that there will be other life in the universe. If human life is merely a cosmic accident, a biochemical byproduct of a complex physical system, then it is inevitable in a large-enough universe that this accident must have recurred countless times over on many different planets. Not only that, but there should be many civilizations that have advanced far beyond our own.

As the thinking goes, human intelligence, just as human life, is not uniquely designed and imbued by a Creator, but is a product of random chance over time. Starting from this assumption, it's regarded as absurd to think that human beings were the *first* intelligent species to develop in the long eons of an incomprehensibly expansive universe!

Consider the rapid advancement of our own civilization, whether on the scale of the last 200 years since the industrial revolution or even the last 20 years of the digital revolution. It becomes impossible to imagine what an alien race might be capable of with a developmental head start of just a few thousand years—let alone millions of years. Yet, according to the typical secular viewpoint, the inescapable conclusion is that this should be the norm throughout the universe, and that we should find widespread and highly advanced civilizations everywhere we look.

The immense material and human resources dedicated to the task of finding such life are acts of faith—faith rooted in the false belief system of evolution.

Where is everybody?

It is only in very recent times that powerful telescopes have unveiled the vast glory of God's creation. For those entrenched in a godless view of the universe, however, this led to an agonizing question: “*Where is everybody?*”

This question was famously asked in 1950 by astrophysicist Enrico Fermi, earning it the title “the Fermi Paradox.” As deeper exploration into the heavens revealed an innumerable amount of stars in every direction, the secular scientific world



In recent times powerful telescopes have unveiled the vast glory of God's creation. For many atheists this has led to an agonizing question: “*Where is everybody?*”

realized that, if evolution is true, there is no logical reason for intelligent life to be limited to the earth. In fact, it is virtually *unthinkable* under that assumption!

This realization was formalized by another astrophysicist named Frank Drake. In 1961, Drake developed an equation that captures the numerous variables affecting the probabilities of alien life. Specifically, the Drake Equation, as it came to be known, aims to predict how many intelligent civilizations we should expect there to be in the universe. It includes such parameters as the rate of star formation, the percentage of stars with planets around them, the percentage of those planets in the habitable zone and so forth.

By Drake's original calculation, at a time when many of these parameters could only be guessed at, scientists proposed that there should be between a thousand and a million advanced civilizations in the Milky Way Galaxy alone!

Drake had almost no observational evidence on which to base many of those parameters. After all, that was 34 years before the first exoplanet would be discovered! But projects such as that carried out by the Kepler telescope have enabled more refined estimates that still result in the equation yielding a great many millions. Yet various estimates remain highly conjectural.

Since the heydays of Fermi and Drake, the estimated number of stars in the observable universe has increased by orders of magnitude, raising the stakes even higher, with no answer to Fermi's Paradox—and not for lack of trying!

Searching for life in all the wrong places

Drake was a pioneer of the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence project (SETI) and conducted the first experiment to listen for alien radio-wave transmissions at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory in Green Bank, West Virginia. According to the SETI Institute, more than 100 such experiments have been carried out by astronomers throughout the world, including a 20-year SETI project at NASA that was ultimately cut by Congress in 1993.

The Berkeley SETI Research Center recaptured the public imagination with their "SETI@home" application, available since 1999, that became famous for allowing individuals to contribute the power of their personal computers at home. The software has more than 1.7 million users worldwide and utilizes their computers' idle time to help analyze the mountains of data being collected.

In 2015, billionaire Yuri Milner breathed new life and excitement into the game by investing hundreds of millions of dollars in his Breakthrough Initiatives, a diverse collection of projects all aimed at discovering alien life.

A commitment of \$100 million over 10 years was made to the Berkeley SETI group and other participating institutions for a project named Breakthrough Listen. Dedicated to the traditional SETI goal of detecting an alien signal, it represents one of the most sophisticated efforts to date. The project now uses the Green Bank Observatory—a former part of the same National Radio Astronomy Observatory utilized by Frank Drake nearly 60 years ago.

Given the unfathomable distances that would separate us from other civilizations even within our own galaxy, only such signals, traveling at light speed, are considered a viable means of detecting them. While the signals would originate from thousands, millions or even billions of light years away and take as many years to reach us, it's believed these are much more likely to reach us than any physical alien presence.

The original SETI project scoured the airwaves for deliberate alien broadcasts via the electromagnetic spectrum, including radio frequencies.

Radio signals are primarily known for their use in broadcasting music and television, so we may take for granted that they are actually a form of nonvisible light, part of the electromagnetic spectrum. When used on earth, their transmission feels instantaneous since they travel at the speed of light. But they take far longer to reach the stars.

Our own intraplanetary broadcasts are increasingly being supplanted by fiber-optic cables, which also use light as an information vehicle but with far less interference since they travel through a dedicated cable rather than over the air. Nevertheless, for interstellar communication, radio transmissions are the best method humanity has discovered, and we use them for sending signals to and from the various spacecraft we send out.

As the search drags on with a disappointing lack of results, other ways to use light signals have been imagined and developed.

Previous efforts focused on searching for a deliberate signal from an advanced alien society, but scientists now search for signs of even rudimentary alien microbes by examining the visible and infrared light reflected from distant planets for hoped-for telltale signs of life.

But it's no easy task. There is a reason it took so long to discover distant planets, and it continues to impede progress: Stars are much brighter than the planets that surround them. Imagine trying to make out the details of a postage stamp that is stuck to a bright floodlight from a distance. To even notice that it's there is quite a feat!

To make out any detail is difficult. To capture images of planets therefore requires high-precision techniques for blocking out the light from a distant star to make the light from any surrounding planets visible. In most cases, even our most advanced telescopes are not up to the challenge. Scientists are developing theoretical approaches in eager anticipation of the next generation of telescopes currently being built in hopes of finally capturing better images of exoplanets to analyze.

From these images, the light captured can be analyzed against the spectral patterns known for particular atoms and molecules. It can thus be determined if a planet might contain large amounts of methane gas, for example, or water. This kind of analysis of exoplanets leads to them being characterized as "earth-like" or "super-earths" and other vague language intended to subtly reinforce the idea that they harbor life, despite the lack of evidence.

One hope is the detection of planets containing significant amounts of oxygen. Oxygen is vital to many life forms on earth, though not all of them (as there are many anaerobic organisms that don't require it). From the standpoint of detecting alien life, oxygen is a highly reactive element that does not typically accumulate without a driving force. If the presence of both oxygen and methane gases were identified in the atmosphere of a planet, it might indicate the presence of biological activity.

Yuri Milner's other Breakthrough Initiatives focus on yet more ways of exploring the universe with the express goal of making contact with intelligent aliens. He has given another \$100 million to Breakthrough Starshot, aiming to develop a spacecraft capable of interstellar travel at 20 percent of the speed of light (nearly 1½ times around the earth per second!). He also offered a \$1 million prize to Breakthrough Message for the best design of a signal that could be sent out into the universe, additional millions to Breakthrough Watch to aid in the discovery of more exoplanets, and most recently Breakthrough Enceladus, a collaboration with NASA to privately fund an exploration probe to Saturn's moons to search for life.

A lot of money, time and brainpower are being put to this massive undertaking. Such a heavy investment must reflect great confidence that there will be positive results.

Yet, without saying so, these increasingly deep and exotic ways of searching for alien life are *an admission of failure* to meet the predictions of the theory of evolution as applied to our universe. The search for extraterrestrial life has, in the last 60 years, transformed from expectation of discovering signals from an advanced civilization to desperately hoping to detect even the most minute trace of rudimentary life

hidden in some distant abyss!

What these continued efforts will eventually unveil remains to be seen, but we are certainly *not* bumping into intelligent alien species left and right on every intergalactic corner. On the contrary, *we can't even seem to find them scraping the bottom of the cosmic barrel!* And this causes a disturbing unease in the minds of secular thinkers, scientists and philosophers alike.

Excuses, excuses

Speculations abound in glossing over the embarrassing lack of evidence of alien life after so much enormous effort and expense. Instead of conceding that Earth may in fact be the only planet in the universe that hosts life, most remain convinced that there must be some other reason we can't find what we're looking for.

A recent *Forbes* article by Ethan Siegel titled "What If It's Just Us?" takes a far more objective view of the scientific evidence—or, more accurately, the total lack of it—and discusses the proclivity of scientists and average citizens alike to romanticize and fantasize the issue: "When it comes to the question of extra-terrestrial life, humans optimistically assume the Universe is prolific . . . If the same ingredients are everywhere and the same rules are at play, wouldn't it be an awful waste of space if we're alone?" (April 3, 2019).

Are other civilizations just *so* advanced by comparison that they simply don't bother with our meager race, the same way that we wouldn't attempt to "make contact" with ants on our own planet? Or have more intelligent species recognized that interacting with others in the universe is dangerous and should be avoided? Or, on a more fatalistic note, do advanced cultures tend to create technologies that lead to their own destruction, as mankind appears intent on doing?

According to Siegel, "These proposed solutions usually leave out the most obvious option . . . that when it comes to intelligent life in all the Universe, it's just us."

However, there is yet a far more obvious option that is rarely considered in this light!

Is anyone out there? And why are we here?

We are continually in awe of the beautiful images of the universe that come to us every time a telescope is pointed in a new direction. Mankind is not obsessed with finding alien life forms merely for the sake of trying to confirm evolution. While that may be the surface rationale, the deeper, unexpressed desire is *a search for meaning and purpose* that is simply aimed in the wrong direction. There is a need to know we are not alone in the universe—that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. But where is it to be found?

Looking out into the heavens, we ask the question: Is anyone out there? And the clear and unmistakable answer is *yes*—the Creator God who made us all, and for a great purpose!

The ancient Israelite king Solomon wrote that God has "put eternity in [man's] hearts" (Ecclesiastes 3:11)—we can feel there is something more to life than what we see. We have an inherent longing for a connection to it, but we're not able to find it by our own efforts, scientific or otherwise. The Bible is



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a revelation of knowledge from God, and its truth is the only source able to properly fill that longing!

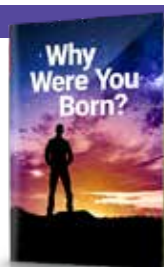
So many are desperate to encounter an advanced alien race, but few consider that God is, Himself, an extraordinary extraterrestrial life form of supreme intelligence! Not only that, but He *has* made deliberate contact with mankind in numerous ways!

God appeared to individuals—known as prophets—throughout history. They recorded His words and incredible personal interactions with them. He did miraculous works for the nation of Israel that terrified the world of that time. He sent other spirit beings known as angels to the earth to carry out His will in various ways.

The Creator of the universe even came to earth eventually to communicate in person when Jesus, "the Word" who existed eternally as God with God the Father and through whom all things were made, "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:1-3, 14). What we today call the New Testament is the irrefutable eyewitness testimony of His life, death and resurrection—yet it largely falls on deaf ears.

In stark contrast to our search for nonexistent alien signals, we as a species have refused to hear the glaring, repeated and undeniable transmissions of our loving Creator.

The truth of man's existence is at the heart of the search for extraterrestrial life. From the Bible, we learn that human life is not the cosmic accident of a cold, uncaring universe, but the unique, intentional creation of a loving God who is reaching out to communicate and form a relationship with you! **BT**



LEARN MORE

Man searches for the answers to many questions, but what is the answer to the most important question of all, *Why Were You Born?* And what does this have to do with the vast universe? Download or request your free study guide today!

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Surprising Discoveries About Our Universe's

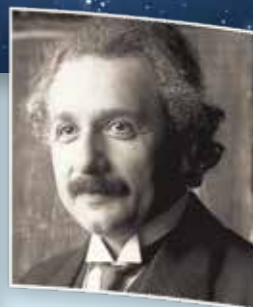
ORIGINS

Modern science has discovered that the universe had a beginning, is expanding and is fine-tuned by natural laws allowing us to exist. But the Bible revealed this long before!

by Mario Seiglie



Edwin Hubble



Albert Einstein

It was an epic encounter, although those involved did not know it then. The time was January 1931. The meeting took place above the mountains overlooking Los Angeles in southern California. Two eminent scientists would come together here, one a physicist and the other an astronomer—Albert Einstein and Edwin Hubble.

One of the great secrets of the universe was about to be confirmed—and this finding, along with others that followed, has a lot to do with you and me.

The necessity of a beginning—and a First Cause

Einstein had traveled from Germany to the United States to peer through the largest telescope in the world, the 100-inch telescope at Mount Wilson Observatory. He wanted to see the mounting evidence for himself. He wanted to confirm if the findings that the universe was expanding were correct or not.

Edwin Hubble showed him photographic plates of distant galaxies and other evidence that pointed to a cosmos that was expanding outward in every direction. A remote galaxy receding is marked by its light being shifted to the red end of the spectrum. The farther away the galaxy appears, the more pronounced is the redness of its light. A newsreel of the time showed Einstein looking into the telescope and then declaring, “I now see the necessity of a beginning.”

Those were momentous words, for then scientists the world over had to seriously contemplate the idea that the universe had a beginning—with its theistic implications of a divine Creator. Even Einstein, like most scientists before him, had thought the universe was stationary and eternal. But now the incontrovertible evidence of outward expansion indicated a beginning point to this expansion—a point of origin. Scientists would have to reexamine their own beliefs and ponder the



beginning of the cosmos—and the possibility of a Beginner who had caused it all to emerge out of nothing!

Other related findings came later in the 20th century, such as the faint cosmic microwave background, thought to be a remnant of the universe’s formation, and the discovery that the universe’s expansion is accelerating, which some have proposed is due to the gravitational effects of mysterious dark matter and energy.

In any case, extrapolating backward from the expansion brings everything down to a single moment *when the cosmos appeared out of nothing*. Hardly anyone in academia at the time had expected that result—though it was written in the first verse of the Bible thousands of years before: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

Perhaps the scientist who best expressed this startling discovery was the famous astronomer and former NASA director, the late Robert Jastrow. He candidly admitted: “A sound explanation may exist for the explosive birth of our Universe; but if it does, science cannot find out what the explanation is. The scientist’s pursuit of the past ends in the moment of creation. This is an exceedingly strange development, unexpected by all but the theologians. They have always accepted the word of the Bible: ‘In the beginning God created heaven and earth.’ It is unexpected because science has had such extraordinary success in tracing the chain of cause and effect backward in time.

“Now we would like to pursue that inquiry farther back in time, but the barrier to further progress seems insurmountable. It is not a matter of another year, another decade of work, another measurement, or another theory; at this moment it seems as though science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation. For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries” (*God and the Astronomers*, 1978, p. 116).

Through physics and astronomical observation, Einstein and Hubble were providing evidence for the universe having a beginning and, without intending it, pointing to a First Cause that had brought it all about.

The fine-tuning of the universe

Yet scientists were very uncomfortable with these results that led to a Creator God. Even the great British astronomer Sir Arthur Eddington remarked in 1931: “I have no ax to grind in this discussion, but *the notion of a beginning is repugnant to me* . . . The expanding universe is preposterous . . . incredible . . . it leaves me cold” (quoted by Robert Jastrow, “Have Astronomers Found God?” *New York Times Magazine*, June 25, 1978, p. 5, emphasis added throughout).

Clearly, those in the academic scientific community were

The Multiverse Cop-Out

Various theorists have tried to explain the vast improbability of the fine-tuning of the universe that makes our existence possible by resorting to the idea of the *multiverse*, the notion that many other universes exist besides our own—perhaps an *infinite* number. The idea is that with an enormous number of universes, while most would not support life, some would emerge with the impossibly rare fine-tuning that allows for life to exist.

Physicist Paul Davies remarked on the motivation behind this idea in the face of the fine-tuning: “At this stage, atheists began to take an interest. Unhappy that the fine-tuning of the laws of physics smacked of some sort of divine design, they seized on the multiverse theory as a neat explanation for the uncanny bio-friendliness of the universe” (*Cosmic Jackpot: Why Our Universe Is Just Right for Life*, 2007, p. xi).

What concrete evidence is there for the so-called multiverse? Frankly, the short answer is that *it only exists in the minds of the theorists proposing it*, and the theory has been losing its initial popularity among scientists as more fine-tuning examples

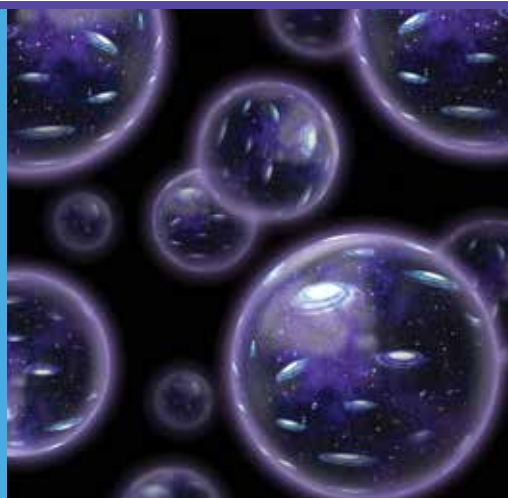
are turning up. Moreover, the most powerful telescopes have not even found the edge of this universe, let alone some other theoretical universes beyond our own. Philosopher Neil Manson candidly calls this theory “*the last resort for the desperate atheist*” (*God and Design: The Teleological Argument and Modern Science*, 2003, p. 18).

It’s even harder to explain the origin of the multiverse. Is there a “multiverse machine” spitting out universes until it gets the right one to work properly? Is a master brain behind such efforts, or is it all by luck? The attempts by atheists and others to account for our fine-tuned universe by saying there must be infinitely more out there belies the fact that they would still have to explain who or what is behind the generation of the vast number of universes if they really did exist.

As physicist Peter Bussey notes about the multiverse theory: “Suggestions such as these stretch our notion of what is reasonable beyond normal limits. They are not forced upon us by observation, needless to

say, but by theoretical ideas that are considered by their proposers to be attractive! . . . We need to think very hard about the criteria for judging concepts that are logically consistent but which seem to destroy understanding rather than extend it, or even destroy the need for understanding” (*Signposts to God*, 2016, pp. 116-117).

We should recognize that belief in a multiverse, which has no evidence whatever to support it, is an act of either blind faith, which is ironic enough in people who denigrate religion, or is willful denial of reality to avoid what is otherwise clear—the existence of a Creator God!



not about to give up!

But things would become yet more uncomfortable as evidence began to pile up—as it continues to do today—for *exquisitely calibrated laws* governing the entire universe.

The physicist Brandon Carter coined the term “anthropic principle” in 1973 in reference to our man-centered, fine-tuned universe, its many physical laws and constants carefully balanced and coordinated to allow for us to exist.

More recently, author Eric Metaxas wrote the following in *The Wall Street Journal*: “Today there are more than 200 known parameters necessary for a planet to support life—every single one of which must be perfectly met, or the whole thing falls apart.

“Without a massive planet like Jupiter nearby, whose gravity will draw away asteroids, a thousand times as many would hit Earth’s surface. The odds against life in the universe are simply astonishing. Yet here we are, not only existing, but talking about existing. What can account for it? Can every one of those many parameters have been perfect by accident? At what point is it fair to admit that science suggests that we cannot be the result of random forces? Doesn’t assuming that an intelligence created these perfect conditions *require far less faith* than believing that a life-sustaining Earth *just happened to beat the inconceivable odds to come into being*?”

“There’s more. The fine-tuning necessary for life to exist on a planet is nothing compared with the fine-tuning required *for the universe to exist at all*. For example, astrophysicists now know that the values of the four fundamental forces—gravity, the electromagnetic force, and the ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ nuclear forces—were determined less than one millionth of a second after the big bang. *Alter any one value and the universe could not exist*. For instance, if the ratio between the nuclear strong force and the electromagnetic force had been off by the tiniest fraction of the tiniest fraction—by even one part in 100,000,000,000,000—*then no stars could have ever formed at all*. Feel free to gulp.

“Multiply that single parameter by all the other necessary conditions, and *the odds against the universe existing*

are so heart-stoppingly astronomical that the notion that it all ‘just happened’ defies common sense. It would be like *tossing a coin and having it come up heads 10 quintillion times in a row*. Really?” (“Science Increasingly Makes the Case for God,” Dec. 25, 2014).

Sadly, many reject the obvious conclusion (see “The Multiverse Cop-Out” on page 10).

The Bible laid out the truth long ago

Thanks to advanced telescopes, some that orbit the earth, and other technological breakthroughs, we have come to three great certainties: 1) the universe had a beginning; 2) it is rapidly expanding; and 3) it is fine-tuned and fit for life.

Is it just a coincidence that the Bible described these three scientific discoveries thousands of years ago? Let’s take a look at a listing of verses to see this.

The origin of the universe as described in the Bible

- Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”
- Psalm 33:6: “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.”
- Psalm 148:4-6: “Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, and you waters above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the LORD, for He commanded and they were created. He also established them forever and ever; He made a decree which shall not pass away.”
- John 1:1-3: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”
- Romans 1:18-20: “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse” (New International Version).
- Hebrews 1:1-2: “God, who at

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We are blessed with more information than at any time in history and can reasonably conclude **there is a Creator God** who brought forth this universe from nothing!

generation. You set the earth in place, and it continues to stand. All things continue to stand today because of your regulations, since they are all your servants” (God’s Word Translation).

- Jeremiah 31:35-37: “The LORD provides the sun to be a light during the day. He orders the moon and stars to be lights during the night. He stirs up the sea so that its waves roar. His name is the LORD of Armies. This is what the LORD says: Only if these laws stop working, declares the LORD, will Israel’s descendants stop being a nation in my presence. This is what the LORD says: Only if the heavens could be measured or the foundations of the earth could be searched, would I ever reject all of Israel’s descendants because of everything that they have done, declares the LORD” (GWT).

- Jeremiah 33:25-26: “This is what the LORD says: Suppose I hadn’t made an arrangement with day and night or made laws for heaven and earth. Then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and of my servant David. I would not let any of David’s descendants rule the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, I will restore their fortunes and love them” (GWT).

various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.”

The expansion of the universe described in Scripture

- Job 9:8: “He alone spreads out the heavens, and treads on the waves of the sea.”
- Psalms 104:1-2: “Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honor and majesty, who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, who stretch out the heavens like a curtain.”
- Isaiah 40:22: “It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.”
- Isaiah 42:5: “Thus says God the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it.”
- Isaiah 45:12: “I have made the earth, and created man on it. I—My hands—stretched out the heavens, and all their host I have commanded.”
- Jeremiah 10:12: “He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens at His discretion.”

The fine-tuning of the universe in the Bible

- Job 38:33: “Do you know the laws that govern the heavens, and can you make them rule the earth?” (Contemporary English Version).
- Psalm 119:89-91: “O LORD, your word is established in heaven forever. Your faithfulness endures throughout every

The fine-tuning of the universe and you

We have only briefly covered the evidence that points to these three great discoveries about the cosmos in the last century. We are blessed with more information now than at any other time in history to come to a reasonable conclusion about the existence of a Creator God who brought forth this universe from nothing, orchestrated its elegant expansion in space and made it fit for life—*human* life, yours and mine—through His fine-tuned laws.

I came to see much of this years ago at the young age of 17, as I examined the Scriptures and the predecessor of this magazine at that time, especially its articles on science. I realized I could not refute the evidence and decided to trust and follow God from then on. What a blessing it has been! Although I have fallen short at times, as we all do, God and the Bible have never failed me. Isn’t it time, if you haven’t done so already, to choose the same blessed path? **BT**

LEARN MORE



The world increasingly denies the existence of God, but what does the evidence really say? You need to know! To learn more, download or request your free copy of *Life’s Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* and *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?*

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What Is Mankind's Ultimate Inheritance?

Most assume that our ultimate reward is going to live in heaven when we die. But the Bible paints a very different, and more Inspiring, picture!

by Mike Kelley

Years ago a popular daytime TV program, *The Millionaire*, kept audiences enthralled with stories of million-dollar gifts given by a fictional multimillionaire. The storyline involved people in need, whether in dire circumstances or trying to benefit society, answering the doorbell and finding a sharply dressed man with a check for \$1 million, tax free, from this anonymous wealthy individual.

Lots of people wish they had a proverbial “rich uncle” who would leave them a large sum of cash. They feel it would solve all their financial worries. The financial planning industry thrives today as many strive to leave an inheritance to their children, church or favorite charities.

Let’s face it: Inheritances are important to people. Yet most today have no idea of the unimaginably immense inheritance ultimately available to them—the inheritance our Heavenly Father has in store for mankind!

King David knew

As a young lad leading his father’s sheep through the rugged hills of Judea, a future king David looked up at the night sky and the splendor of thousands of stars. As he lay on his back, looking up at the dazzling sky, he reflected on how

insignificant he was compared to those stars.

Years later, after he became king of Israel, David recorded his thoughts in one of the most memorable psalms: “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, *what is man that you are mindful of him*, the son of man that you care for him?” (Psalm 8:3-4, New International Version 1984, emphasis added throughout).

Yes, why should God, who created the vast universe, with billions upon billions of stars, galaxies and nebulae, be concerned at all with insignificant mortal human beings here on earth? The truth is astounding almost beyond belief, and includes an inheritance that staggers the imagination!

David knew the ancient Scriptures that revealed God had placed man over the entire *physical creation* here on earth.

He further wrote: “For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen—even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea” (verses 5-8).

These verses reflect the language from the first chapter of



Genesis where God said: “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing” (Genesis 1:26).

But it is apparent that God had revealed to David the core of a marvelous truth—that human beings are destined to rule *over a far greater and vaster realm than just the earth*. David was given understanding of something God had begun to reveal to the relative few He was working with in ancient times—that man was made in God’s image *to inherit and rule with God over His creation*.

Nearly 1,000 years after David’s time, after the New Testament Church had been founded, the author of the book of Hebrews restated and expanded on David’s words: “But there is a place where someone has testified: ‘What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet.’ In putting everything under him, *God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him*” (Hebrews 2:6-8, NIV 1984).

Notice that *God has not yet put everything in subjection* under mankind. Here lies the heart of this marvelous revelation. God created man to ultimately have dominion over *everything* He has made. The Greek wording translated “everything” is *ta panta*, meaning *the all*—literally *the entire universe*. As incredible as it may sound, *it is God’s intent that mankind share with Him dominion—rulership—over His entire creation*.

Yet this truth, clearly stated in your Bible, has been ignored, disbelieved or flatly rejected by all religions!

Mortal now—divine later

This can be too amazing for many to grasp. As mortal human beings, we are obviously a long way from being able to inherit “all things.” We need to clearly understand what man is now, that we are anything but immortal. We are physical beings composed of the basic elements of the earth. We are of “*the dust of the ground*” (Genesis 2:7) and are subject to death: “*The soul who sins shall die*” (Ezekiel 18:4, 20).

This goes against what most religions have taught. From ancient times to our day, Western religious thought has held that man is a nonmaterial spirit entity confined for a time in a physical, fleshly body. These religions have taught that a human being lives as an “immortal soul” encased in a physical body, and that at death the soul will continue as a living, conscious entity apart from the body.

However, this idea that human beings have an immortal soul—and even the *phrase* “immortal soul”—cannot be found anywhere in your Bible. This false assumption has come down over thousands of years from the superstitions of ancient religions and has become part of mainstream Christianity today. To repeat, *the Bible clearly tells us that our “soul” is mortal, not immortal*.

But how is it possible for human beings to pass from corruptible, sinful flesh into the fantastic spiritual state required for the ultimate dominion referred to in Hebrews 2? Let’s

Mankind: Unique in All the Universe?

Since, as shown in the accompanying article, the reward of the saved is not going to live in heaven when we die but becoming a part of the family of God and inheriting the whole universe, we should consider at this point the question of other intelligent life in the cosmos. Are there other sentient physical beings out there who also have an inheritance with God?

Our sun is but one smaller-than-medium-sized star in a galaxy of more than 400 billion other stars, according to astronomical estimates. And there are hundreds of billions of other galaxies, each with their own many billions of stars. We may wonder if some of these stars have environments that could support life.

Humanity is fascinated by the idea of life on other planets. It’s been the subject of books, movies and TV shows for nearly a century. But how much evidence is there?

The planet Mars, relatively close to earth at just 135 million miles away, seems to hold possibilities of other life due to its closeness

to the sun and having an atmosphere. But as early as the 1970s, NASA’s *Viking* spacecraft showed only a dry, sterile environment. More recently, NASA’s more advanced *Pathfinder* revealed only a rocky terrain lacking any surface vegetation or signs of life.

Several years ago NASA’s *Curiosity* rover collected a rock sample that some said showed ancient Mars could, in the distant past, have supported living microbes. A core sample that the rover drilled from sedimentary rock near what appears to be an ancient stream bed showed evidence of sulfur, nitrogen, hydrogen, oxygen, phosphorus and carbon—all key chemical ingredients for life.

However, some of these elements have also been found on the surface of the moon, and no one claims life ever existed there. Merely having some of the elements needed to support life is no proof that life ever existed on Mars.

More than 20 exploratory missions to Mars conducted since the early 1960s have failed to find conclusive evidence of life

on the red planet. Astronomers know that conditions on the other planets are far too hostile to life as we know it. Mercury and Venus are so close to the sun that surface temperatures are hot enough to melt many metals. Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune are too cold; they orbit so far from the sun that surface temperatures there are far below freezing. If Mars has failed to present evidence for life, how much less is the chance of finding this evidence on the other planets?

After more than 60 years of diligent and extraordinarily expensive search effort by multiple nations, scientists have found no hard evidence that other physical life exists in the universe. All evidence points to mankind being a unique creation in all of our vast universe—exactly as indicated in Genesis 1:26-27, which tells us that of all God’s creation, only mankind was created in God’s image and likeness—that we might become part of the family of God. (To learn more, see “The Search for Life: Are We Alone?” beginning on page 4.)

continue to read for the answer: “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone” (Hebrews 2:9).

Jesus Christ is the link to eternal life for every human being who has ever lived or ever will live. Since “*the wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23), it was necessary for Christ, who as the Word of God actually performed the work of creating the universe and mankind (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:1-2), to die to reconcile mankind to God.

Our destiny: A family relationship with God

What your Bible teaches—but has not been generally realized—is that *God is in the process of expanding the divine family*. God the Father and the Son want to reproduce Themselves in the form of perhaps billions of spirit beings, who will be like Them, sharing Their level of existence—although these will, of course, be in perfect submission to the Father and Christ forever.

The amazing truth is that God is a family, and just as individual members of a human family are distinct entities with unique identities, so will it be in the God family. God tells

trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:50-52).

These resurrected saints will have proven their dedication to God and His laws during their earthly lives, overcoming daily through the power of the Holy Spirit. God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son will have no reason to doubt their loyalty and obedience. They will rule in love and genuine concern for people, unlike the despotic and corrupt rulers we now see in many nations and throughout human history.

When some of His disciples asked Him “who will be the greatest in the kingdom?” Christ used it as an occasion to point out the right attitude of leadership. He told them: “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, he who governs as he who serves” (Luke 22:25-26).

It doesn’t end there. A thousand years is only a “blink of an eye” with God, but His plan encompasses all eternity. When David spoke of “*all things*,” he meant *the entire universe*. Again, space doesn’t allow for a complete discussion here, but the

Bible shows that those ultimately born into God’s family as divine spirit beings will not be confined to this earth, to this solar system, or even to this galaxy. God’s master plan

is for those in His family to share rulership and administration of the *entire universe with Him*. Who knows the awesome future God has in store for His family! (For more on this subject, download or request our free study guide *The Gospel of the Kingdom*.)

When we closely examine God’s Word, we must conclude that God has created human beings to receive an inheritance far beyond anything we could possibly hope to achieve in this life. We have glimpsed how incredibly grand and marvelous that inheritance is—to be ultimately given eternal life in the very family of God and to inherit the universe with Jesus Christ. In the very last book in the Bible, we see that purpose stated clearly: “*He who overcomes will inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son*” (Revelation 21:7).

This, then, sums up our inheritance, an inheritance far beyond anything possible in life on earth today—and far beyond the imaginings of the world’s religions. This astounding opportunity should radically change our direction in life to, as Jesus Christ said in Matthew 6:33, “*seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*”! **BT**

When we examine God’s Word closely, we see that God has created humanity to receive an inheritance that is far beyond our greatest imaginings!

us: “*I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters*” (2 Corinthians 6:18).

Just as a human family is bound together by genetics, history and shared values, so God’s Holy Spirit will cause the members of the God family to share a special oneness of mind, purpose and nature. We will not only share God’s spiritual composition, but we will be of one mind in our outlook and values (compare John 17:20-23).

There is so much more to tell about this amazing subject, but space won’t allow a complete discussion here. For more information, request or download our free study guide *Why Were You Born?*

Rule with Christ over all creation

So what will these members of God’s family be doing for all eternity? Will we just “float around heaven all day” on clouds, strumming on harps? Nothing could be farther from the truth!

God’s Word reveals that at the return of Jesus Christ, His dedicated, faithful, obedient followers, now resurrected and given eternal life, will assume rulership with Him over the entire world. Through Christ and the resurrected saints, God will institute His righteous government over the earth. Gone will be the effects of thousands of years of human corruption and mismanagement, replaced with government based on God’s law. Mankind will at last be at peace.

Those resurrected at Christ’s return will be raised as immortal spirit beings. Notice Paul’s words to the church at Corinth: “Now this I say, brethren, that *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption*. Behold, I tell you a mystery: *We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last*



LEARN MORE

Many other Bible passages discuss the glorious future God has in store for those who dedicate their lives to Him. To learn more about this truth, and how it can be your future as well, download or request our free study guide *Why Were You Born?*

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“We Came in Peace For All Mankind”



Fifty years ago America landed two men on the moon and returned them safely—accomplishing a goal set by President John F. Kennedy in 1961. Since then, space has largely been a quiet and peaceful place. Could this change? What is the future of space exploration?

by Darris McNeely

I was driving my dad’s 1959 Oldsmobile Ninety-Eight as fast as I could through the roads of southeast Missouri to get home in time to see the biggest televised event of the age. It was July 20, 1969, and NASA’s Apollo 11 mission had landed two men on the moon. Sometime late on that Sunday afternoon Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin would step out of their lunar module onto the surface of the moon—the first human beings to set foot on another world.

I had been spending the weekend with friends and was determined to watch this moment. With a few minutes to spare I pulled into our driveway, ran through the door and plopped down in front of our black-and-white television, hoping the set would not stop working, as it often did.

Within a few minutes the TV showed the surface of the moon and a lone figure emerging from the lunar lander. Neil Armstrong stepped onto the moon and in that moment history was made!

Thinking back on that time from today’s perspective, it seems near-miraculous that not only did the United States accomplish this monumental goal, but that millions of people could see and hear it as it happened. The amazing fact that these sights and sounds could be transmitted across the vast distance into our homes was something we did not take for granted in that day. It was a new world of technological achievement, and I was watching it unfold in the small living room of our modest home in Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

The Apollo 11 astronauts left a plaque on the moon displaying their names, that of then-U.S. President Richard Nixon, and the following words: “Here men from planet Earth first set foot upon the moon. A.D. 1969. We came in peace for all mankind.”

The words “*we came in peace*” speak loudly about the intent of the American effort to be the first nation to land men on the moon. While the advances in technology spawned by the space program benefited every corner of everyday life, there is also the fact that military applications also benefited from the burgeoning space program. Yet it was not to make war that America made this “giant leap” for mankind. It was to advance human knowledge and exploration.

That was then. Today we face a different reality.

The new reality of space war and cyber war

In May 2014, U.S. Air Force personnel monitored a space launch by Russia. Over the next few days they observed what they call a “kamikaze satellite” maneuver around a discarded piece of space debris. It was obvious the satellite was using engine thrusters to simulate an attack on another satellite. Clearly Russia had developed the capability to take out another nation’s satellites, an ominous prelude to something bigger.

Months later China launched a satellite with a large arm capable of reaching out and lifting another satellite out of its

orbit and neutralizing its capability. Such a weapon could be used in low-orbit positions to take out GPS satellites used for directional targeting of missiles and other military communication.

America depends on such space technology for early detection of nuclear missiles from hostile regimes. Such launches by China and Russia highlight the growing prospect of war in space. U.S. President Donald Trump has called for America to develop a “Space Force,” saying that space is “the next step, and we have to be prepared.”

A space war is not just a plot line for a science-fiction movie anymore. It is a real possibility and could quickly develop. A nation with smaller forces could easily level the playing field against a larger power with a few carefully coordinated insertions of lethal cyberattacks. What would a space war and cyber war against an advanced modern political power like the United States, Great Britain or the European Union look like?

It would start silently and without warning. It might even appear at first to be nothing but a minor “cyber hiccup.” Televisions would go dark. Internet connections would sputter. ATMs would malfunction.

But the big picture would be far more ominous. Vital communications satellites would be knocked out by either ground-based laser technology or the “kamikaze satellites.” The ability to monitor missile launches or counter with a coordinated attack would be quickly eliminated.

Beyond this, modern life would quickly grind to a halt. The Internet would go down. Financial transactions large and small—from Wall Street to the local ATM—would cease. Traffic lights would quit working. Trains, water-filtration plants and electric grids would grind to a halt. Airlines would be grounded. Weather satellites helping with forecasting would stop sending needed information.

Beyond increased vulnerability to direct attack, the social fabric of everyday life would quickly begin to unravel as food disappeared from store shelves and water no longer flowed from faucets. Much of modern life would be paralyzed.

Space, where men had gone in peace, would be turned into a killing field.

Preparing for a dangerous future

The noble effort of America’s first space program, “peace for all mankind,” has taken an inevitable turn. It’s been said that any weapon devised by the human mind is eventually used in war. So it is with the militarization of space.

While America remains dominant in space, its lead is rapidly diminishing. Last year Beijing launched 38 satellites into orbit while America launched 34. It has been 50 years since America last sent men to the moon. This year China landed a spacecraft on the far side of the moon.

Recently, acting U.S. Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan wrote of the need for the creation of an American Space Force. Its purpose would be to coordinate America’s response to the advances made by Russia, China and other nations in space technology—much of those efforts aimed at creating a counter to American leadership in space.

From America’s strategic perspective it appears space has become a “war-fighting domain.” Shanahan stated: “We would prefer that space remain free from conflict. Fifty years ago

the U.S. led humanity to the moon. To borrow the words of the plaque left on the lunar surface by Apollo 11: ‘We came in peace for all mankind.’ China and Russia make no such claim. Until they credibly commit to such a course, we must ensure our nation’s military remains the most advanced on Earth—and above it” (“It’s Time to Create an American Space Force,” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 30, 2019).

What about peaceful pursuits?

The weaponizing of space by Russia, China, America and any other political power creates additional peril for mankind’s future. Ironically, this rush to develop space as a battleground comes at a time when other voices call for America to lead a return to space exploration for the benefit of humanity.

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence has said America is going back to the moon. Calls for a permanent moon base are linked to such a return. Former Apollo 11 astronaut Buzz Aldrin recently wrote that Mars should be the next big leap for mankind:

“Mars is waiting to be discovered, not by clever robots and rovers—though I support NASA’s unmanned missions—but by living, breathing, walking, talking, caring and daring men and women. To make that happen, members of Congress, the Trump administration and the American public must care enough to make human exploration missions to Mars a national priority” (“It’s Time to Focus on the Great Migration of Humankind to Mars,” *The Washington Post*, May 1, 2019).

The United States is probably the only nation with the technology and resources to achieve a Mars landing and base. Aldrin’s call, however, contains a serious note to consider. As the article’s title says, he is calling for a “Great Migration to Mars.” He speaks of permanent settlement. This is truly the stuff of science fiction and Hollywood movies! Just putting a single person on Mars, much less establishing a human colony there, far transcends the challenges of a manned mission to the moon.

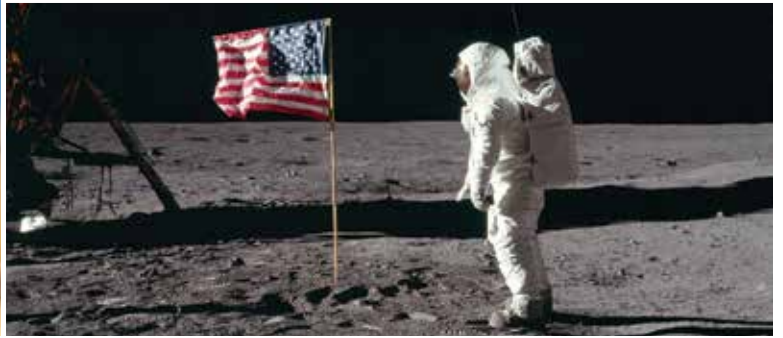
Aldrin continued: “As [a] matter of orbital mechanics, missions from Earth to Mars for migration are complex. That said, human nature—and potentially the ultimate survival of our species—demands humanity’s continued outward reach into the universe. Call it curiosity or calculation, strategic planning or destiny. Put simply: We explore, or we expire. That is why we must get on with it.”

For Aldrin, and for many others who ponder space travel and humanity’s future, such a mission to Mars is a matter of “the ultimate survival of our species.” Whether because of the threat of nuclear war or catastrophic environmental destruction by man or natural causes, many futurists see migration to another planet as the only hope for the survival of the human race.

Grim scenarios for a deeply divided nation

So we see two views of the future of space. One sees a place where the next global war could be triggered, perhaps by a stealth attack on satellites turning out the lights here below as prelude to a nuclear attack. The other sees a place where mankind must migrate to establish colonies—survival outposts if Earth’s ecosphere is destroyed. Which scenario will come to pass?

The economic cost in the face of either scenario is daunting. There’s no question that, given enough time and money, human technology could create smart weapons to thwart cyberattack.



It's even conceivable that the immense technical obstacles to a Mars migration could be overcome. But whoever attempts to do this would have to convince the public it is worth the cost. In America right now that would be a tough sell.

The immediate human problems of health care, economic security, national debt, immigration and war present demands for more money and resources. Is there a real appetite in today's public to spend billions to go further into outer space?

In 1960s America there were large social demands requiring money and time that nearly ended the space program on several occasions. But back then there was a great will to land a man on the moon. Today is a different time with a different national mood. The divisions in American culture may be deep enough to hinder the national will needed to sustain the high goal of leaping forward in space exploration.

A prophecy from the days of Moses speaks to a time when a nation's will to exercise power and accomplish would be broken because of sin and the resulting deep fractures in the national life. God said: "I will break the pride of your power; I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. Your strength shall be spent in vain . . ." (Leviticus 26:19-20).

America is at a moment when its pride in who and what it is has been attacked and weakened. Events of the past 50 years have sown the seeds of cultural and spiritual death. Recent decades have produced a growing cancer within the body that is now rapidly metastasizing from head to toe. The cultural catastrophe erupting in America is a sad and poignant counterpoint to the day 50 years ago when the first men stepped onto

the moon. In those 50 years we have come to a point where space could no longer be a place of peace but a place of war.

Looking back at the day Apollo 11 landed is to see a different America from that of today. Where will we go from here?

There are voices today that call out the nation for its past sins. And indeed there have been many sins, some of which have, as 19th-century U.S. President Abraham Lincoln put it, been paid with blood "drawn with the sword."

Yet this country has served in many vital ways to benefit the world. Why? The fact is, the technological prowess to design and build a spacecraft to take men to the moon and return them safely to earth is a part of the story of God's promises to another man named Abraham. It is a remarkable story, one you need to become familiar with. What America could use at this moment of remembrance is a clear understanding and appreciation for what God has provided by His grace and faithfulness! **BT**

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Is Today's Technology Foretold in Bible Prophecy?

Three specific prophecies recorded thousands of years ago foreshadow our amazing age of advanced technology!

by Justin Palm

The rapid advance of technology is transforming civilization in ways no one expected—in ways that are exciting and scary, ways we are only beginning to understand. Tech seems on the verge of recreating human beings into something new—something altered, bionic, computerized, robotic, *superhuman*.

The Internet “spiderweb” has descended and covered nearly all elements of civilization. The *smartphone*, *smartwatch* and *smart home* are growing into the “*smart world*.”

Thinking about modern technology—considering hopes and fears, pros and cons, joys and worries—has led some to wonder if our unprecedented digital age was foretold in Bible prophecy. Is what we are seeing today outlined in any way in the pages of a book written many centuries ago?

Some readers may recall the words given to the prophet Daniel more than 25 centuries ago in Daniel 12:4 that at the time of the end “many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.” Not until recent history have we seen a time when millions of people rapidly fly all over the globe, reaching destinations in hours that in previous centuries took months or even years.

And as for knowledge increasing, an item at the Digital Journal website noted this staggering trend: “Until year 1900, human knowledge approximately doubled *every century*. However, by 1950 human knowledge doubled *every 25 years*. In 2000, human knowledge would double *every year*. Now, *our knowledge is almost doubling every day*” (Tim Sandle, “Knowledge Doubles Almost Every Day, and It’s Set to Increase,” Nov. 23, 2018, emphasis added throughout).

This should certainly make us pay attention to how quickly our world is changing—and with it, how previously puzzling Bible prophecies might now be fulfilled. Let’s look at how three specific Bible verses foreshadow today’s interconnected Internet/smartphone/Big Data era and how prophecy is being or might be fulfilled.

Matthew 24:14: The gospel reaching all nations

In Matthew 24, Jesus Christ’s disciples asked Him what would signal His return. Here is one thing He said would happen: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in *all the world* for a witness unto *all nations*; and then shall the end

come” (verse 14, King James Version throughout).

When Jesus spoke this prophecy, it was a very different world. Communication was limited. Messages were carried by foot, by ship or on horseback. It took time, sometimes a lot of time, to get the word out.

No more.

What started with the movable-type printing press in 1439 eventually matured into the Internet and smartphones—instant fingertip access to anything at any time! Today roughly 2.7 billion people worldwide own a mobile phone, putting man’s collective fund of knowledge within reach at any moment.

Christ’s words in Matthew 24:14 have never made more sense than in this era. The Internet in everyone’s pockets means the potential now exists—as never before—for the true gospel of God’s coming Kingdom to be preached, truly, to “all nations.” *Beyond Today* magazine, in print and through the Internet, reaches all but a handful of nations around the globe.

The stage is set for God to reach vast numbers with the true gospel. And the context of this prophecy is just before Christ’s second coming.

Revelation 11:9: Instant live global news

The second technology-prophecy verse is in the much-discussed-but-little-understood book of Revelation.

Among its many prophecies, one, found in chapter 11, involves two servants of God called the “two witnesses.” Here we find a clue pointing to today’s advanced technology.

Here is the setting of the two witnesses: The final time of the end has begun for mankind in rebellion against God. The Day of the Lord—the time of God’s wrath—is underway. God gives the two witnesses power to preach on His behalf for 1,260 days. They do miracles, work out of Jerusalem and cannot be harmed (verses 3-6).

But after they finish their job, God allows them to be killed (verses 7-8).

A curious thing happens next, something previous generations could never explain: “Their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city [Jerusalem] . . . And they of *the people and kindreds and tongues and nations* [all nations!] *shall see their dead bodies* three days and a half . . . And *they that dwell upon the earth* [again, all nations!] shall rejoice over them, and

make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth” (verses 8-10). The two witnesses are then raised from the dead.

How do people all over the world see the two witnesses’ dead bodies in Jerusalem? This was impossible in any other age! Previous generations could only guess and scratch their heads. Of course God *could* supernaturally use some kind of divine jumbotron in the sky to broadcast the event to all peoples. But there is no evidence of this in the Revelation account.

What this passage describes fits only with conditions following the dawning of the technologically connected, smartphone age. It is easy to picture the masses described in Revelation incessantly checking news or social media websites for updates on events surrounding these two witnesses and to imagine them all tuning in to the breaking-news live-streamed deaths of these servants of God.

Here in Revelation 11:9, then, we see today’s technological advancements foreshadowed!

Revelation 13:15-17: A global system of unprecedented control

Now it gets eerie.

Many verses show the rise in the last days of a world-ruling superpower centered in Europe called “the Beast.” God’s Word shows it will exercise unprecedented control over people—like the vast Roman Empire but bigger and modern, with religion playing a major role. (To learn more about this coming Beast system, read our free study guide *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.)

Revelation 13:15-17 shows how the religious leader of this end-time superpower will honor the civil aspect of this power, and will punish and kill those who refuse to worship the Beast: “And he had power to give life to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast *should be killed*. And he [the false religious leader] causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that *no man might buy or sell*, save he that had the mark . . .”

Note how those who refuse to be part of this Satanic system are cut off from buying or selling—their economic tap is turned off. Then think of our soon-coming cashless society. Every transaction is rapidly becoming electronic. It will not be technically difficult for people to no longer be able to buy and sell if they do not fall in line with the Beast power.

While other verses imply that this mark is most likely figurative, representing being part of the false worship system—following society in embracing practices adopted from paganism and rejecting the signs of true Christian worship that identify God’s people—it’s not a stretch to conclude that advanced technology will be a big part of this Beast power.

Technology may not be the actual mark of the Beast, but it will almost certainly be used to *enforce* the mark.

Nowhere to hide

Even today, we are already seeing governments and companies use technology in ways that are frightening millions of people. A recent article in media outlet *Vice*—titled “I Gave a Bounty Hunter \$300. He Located Our Phone”—begins, “T-Mobile,

Sprint and AT&T are selling access to their customers’ location data, and that data is ending up in the hands of bounty hunters and others not authorized to possess it, letting them track most phones in the country” (Joseph Cox, Jan. 8, 2019).

Another alarm was sounded when professors Woodrow Hartzog and Evan Selinger revealed how technology is robbing us of our privacy: “Technology is making it impossible to hide in plain sight . . . Facial recognition technology poses a danger to society . . . If its use continues to grow and the right regulations aren’t instituted, we might lose the ability to go out in public without being recognized by the police, our neighbor and corporations” (“Why You Can No Longer Get Lost in the Crowd,” *The New York Times*, April 17, 2019).

The professors also showed how this will affect people’s *religious* lives: “You might have thought you could skip church without anyone knowing, but churches are being marketed facial recognition systems that will make sure your absences are duly noted. It won’t stop there.”

Every aspect of our lives, including our religious choices, could soon be used against us.

Not always a force for good

The Wall Street Journal’s editor at large, Gerard Baker, pulled back the curtain regarding the “benefits” of technology in an April 2019 article titled “Technology Isn’t a Force for Liberation After All.” He wrote:

“In the hands of competent and exploitative forces, such as, let’s say, the People’s Republic of China or Facebook, the *long march toward enslavement by technology* continues apace. For all its benefits, artificial intelligence of the sort that drives facial-recognition software and a million other capabilities is proving an extraordinarily useful implement in *the furtherance of repression* . . . governments are using AI and other technologies in myriad ways to *silence dissent, undermine opponents* and promote their own ideologies . . .

“Even during the Arab Spring, technology demonstrated it could be a double-edged sword, with autocratic governments using then-emergent technologies to *track and hunt down troublemakers*. And now, in less than a decade, advances have accelerated. China leads the way, but governments of an authoritarian bent are eagerly acquiring and adapting similar tools . . . *The possibilities are chilling*.”

Truly they are! Again, Bible prophecies foretell the rise of a powerful authoritarian government—with a size, scope and level of control mankind has never seen. And advanced technology will almost certainly be one of the Beast’s greatest tools—one of its most effective *weapons*!

A massive system of control

China’s social credit system is by far the most sobering real-world application of technology today.

The Guardian describes it this way: “China’s social credit system [is] a big-data system for monitoring and shaping business and citizens’ behaviors . . . The system, which has been compared to an Orwellian tool of mass surveillance, is an ambitious work in progress: a series of big data and AI-enabled processes that effectively grant subjects a social credit score based on their social, political and economic behavior. People with low scores can be banned or blacklisted from accessing

services including flights and train travel; while those with high scores can access privileges. The Chinese government aims to have all 1.35 billion of its citizens subject to the system by 2020” (Kelsey Munro, “China’s Social Credit System ‘Could Interfere in Other Nations’ Sovereignty,” June 27, 2018).

Think of this! A government system that monitors more than a billion people, tracks every aspect of their lives, and then ranks people with a score and doles out punishments and fines for not acting in accordance with whatever the government decides is right and wrong!

And this is not merely hypothetical! The system has already had real-world consequences: “Would-be air travelers were blocked from buying tickets 17.5 million times last year for

Conditions are getting scarier for the average citizen, and technology will continue to be used for a mixture of good and evil.

‘social credit’ offenses including unpaid taxes and fines . . . Others were banned 5.5 million times from buying train tickets, according to the National Public Credit Information Center” (Joe McDonald, “China Bars Millions from Travel for ‘Social Credit’ Offenses,” Feb. 22, 2019).

Think back to Revelation 13 and how all this can be used to influence and control people’s religious practices and every aspect of their lives. The foundation is being laid.

Tech-fueled religious persecution

The Washington Post added more detail about how China is using technology to control people, as laid out in a Human Rights Watch report: “Chinese authorities in the western Xinjiang province are building a comprehensive database that tracks the movements, mobile app usage and even electricity and gasoline consumption of people in the heavily Muslim region . . . [These] controls by Beijing . . . are part of wider crackdowns in Xinjiang that include the internment of an estimated 1 million Muslim citizens and far-reaching surveillance equipment . . .

“After denying the detention centers’ existence for a year, Chinese authorities have recently argued that Xinjiang’s network of detention centers are built for educating and de-radicalizing a Muslim population that became increasingly influenced by extremist Islamist ideology.

“International rights groups and Western countries say . . . [it is] a law enforcement approach that punishes seemingly lawful behavior or *standard religious practices*” (Gerry Shih, “‘Police Cloud’: Chinese Database Tracks Apps, Car Location and Even Electricity Usage in Muslim Region,” May 2, 2019).

According to the author of the Human Rights Watch report, researcher Maya Wang, *everyone’s* freedom is under attack. “‘This is not just about Xinjiang or even China—it’s about the world beyond and whether we human beings can continue to have freedom in a world of connected devices,’ Wang said. ‘It’s a wake-up call, not just about China but about every one of us.’”

An article in *The New York Post* chillingly reports: “One of the ways that people can improve their own social credit score is to report on the supposed misdeeds of others. Individuals can

earn points, for example, for reporting those who violate the new restrictions on religious practice, such as Christians who illegally meet to pray in private homes . . . Of course, as the state progresses ever closer toward its goal of monitoring all of the activities of its citizens 24 hours a day, seven days a week, *society itself becomes a virtual prison*” (Steven Mosher, “China’s New ‘Social Credit System’ Is a Dystopian Nightmare,” May 18, 2019).

All this is shocking, sobering and even hard to believe. But these trends will only grow worse!

Our troubling future

Powerful technology is already in the hands of people at the top of huge companies and governments. Many are wielding what could be used for good for bad, so that a digital sword of Damocles hangs over the heads of billions of people.

Many who are concerned are calling for government regulators to intervene. But what happens when governments are themselves the worst offenders?

No one knows exactly how this will all play out, or how these great prophecies will *specifically* be fulfilled. But within today’s picture of how technology is being used to control and harm people, the outline can be seen of the coming Beast power tracking dissenters, taking away their ability to conduct business and commerce, and eliminating those who won’t conform.

A few things are certain: Conditions are getting scarier for the average citizen of any government, and technology will not bring a hoped-for manmade utopia. Technology will continue to be used for a mixture of good and evil, because man’s nature is part good and part evil.

You can know!

Long ago, the Creator God—the Master Designer and Architect of our physical world—knew our day would come. He knew that human beings, left to our own devices and given enough time, and with minds capable of creating and working together in ever-closer cooperation, would startle and amaze even themselves with their inventions.

As we’ve seen in three specific prophecies, God foretold the kinds of advanced technology we are seeing today. And beyond what we’ve seen here, you can know even more about what He recorded for our time!

God’s servants understand the big-picture framework of His plan. The prophet Amos was inspired to record: “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He reveals His secret unto His servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). These “secrets” were revealed to God’s prophets and apostles and have now been handed down to us through the Bible! **BT**



LEARN MORE

There is much more to learn about these great prophecies. Download or request our free study guide *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* to understand what the Bible says lies ahead for mankind, and to learn how you can escape what is coming!

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New abortion laws draw both sides' battle lines

The debate over abortion in America appears to be coming to a head, as conflicting abortion laws have been passed in state legislatures in recent months. "This has been the most active legislative year in recent memory," said Steven Aden, general counsel of Americans United for Life, an anti-abortion group" (Sabrina Tavernise, "The Time Is Now: States Are Rushing to Restrict Abortion, or Protect It," May 15, 2019).

On one side, some state governments wanting to maintain and promote the legality of abortion have passed radically permissive measures. On the other side, some states have imposed tight restrictions, with legislators eager to protect life and possibly spark a challenge to the U.S. Supreme Court's infamous 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling that legalized abortion throughout the country.

This comes in anticipation of the matter possibly being taken up by the Supreme Court following Justice Brett Kavanaugh's appointment to the court last fall. Many see him as a conservative who might help overturn *Roe v. Wade* (which is why liberals vehemently opposed his nomination in U.S. Senate hearings).

The debate over abortion is a major divide in the United States. Some brand it a political issue we should avoid discussing. But the fact is that this is a *directly moral issue*. Intentionally taking the life of an unborn human being is *murder*. And we must stand up for the protection of the innocent (see Proverbs 24:11-12).

Some new state restrictions have become known as "heartbeat laws" for prohibiting abortion after six to eight weeks of pregnancy, the point at which a fetal heartbeat can be detected. Besides being upset with that limited window of time, the pro-abortion crowd

is up in arms over the new prohibitions being without general exceptions for cases of rape and incest—rather, only when the mother's life is at risk. But attacking the narrow time frame and lack of exceptions is really aimed at overthrowing restrictions altogether.

USA Today reports: "Just 1% of women obtain an



abortion because they became pregnant through rape, and less than 0.5% do so because of incest . . . Yet the battle over exceptions for both has garnered outsized attention in the national abortion debate" (Alia Dastagir, "Rape and Incest Account for Hardly Any Abortions. So Why Are They Now a Focus?" May 24, 2019).

Such extreme cases are touted to provoke the public into immediate emotional rejection of anti-abortion legislation—a tactic that often works. However, the lack of exceptions for rape and incest in the new laws

takes the issue head on, making the case for the unborn as human beings.

Consider that if a horrific act such as rape results in a new human life, the answer to that sin is not to kill the baby—an innocent third party. Rape is an awful reality of this corrupt world, but adding another sin against someone else's on top of it only compounds the wrong.

Of course, one of the biggest arguments made in favor of abortion is that lawmakers shouldn't be able to tell women what to do with their bodies. But there are many laws that tell people what they can or cannot do with their bodies, such as prohibitions of illicit drugs, of public indecency, and especially of actions that can harm another. And abortion definitely harms another. Are you entitled to drop an infant if it is in *your arms*?

Yes, a pregnant woman carries a new life in her body, but it's not *her* life that's being terminated. When the heart inside the mother is stopped during abortion, it's not the mother's heart that is stopped. It's the new heart in the new, separate human life that is stopped.

If the circumstances that brought about the child are unbearable for the mother, she should be helped to cope during the pregnancy and after. And if keeping and raising the child after the birth are too difficult for her, there are other options. Many are eager to adopt.

The abortion debate is a matter we should remain acutely aware of. A nation's tolerance of the murder of the innocent is revealing of its morality and character. And failure here is a cause for God's judgment (see Numbers 35:33). For decades the United States and other countries have been horrible failures in this regard.

If you haven't already, read "Thinking of Getting an Abortion? Don't Do It!" in our January-February 2019 issue. (Sources: *The New York Times*, *USA Today*.)

Drone delivery to impact jobs and privacy

On April 23, 2019, Wing Aviation became the first certified drone delivery company to be awarded an Air Carrier Certification from the United States Federal Aviation Administration ("FAA Certifies Google's Wing Drone Delivery Company to Operate as Airline," NPR, April 23, 2019).

This clears the way for fast direct-to-home delivery of packages by unmanned aerial drones, potentially reducing shipping times to a matter of hours in many cases for online shopping. Wing Aviation is owned by Alphabet Inc., the parent company of Google formed during a 2015 restructuring of the company. Online retail giant Amazon has also been developing a commercial drone delivery service for years and will surely not be far behind.

This would impact daily life in obvious ways, with delivery drones zipping about becoming a common sight and perhaps even an occasional hazard. But the real story is how this could potentially impact jobs and raise privacy concerns.

E-commerce sales are increasingly replacing traditional brick-and-mortar shopping and are widely credited with increasing store closures. If a drone can deliver a package almost as quickly as a person can drive to the store and purchase it and do so at a comparable cost, a further decrease in traditional in-person shopping is inevitable, along with a loss of the jobs that in-person shopping provides.

Meanwhile, these drones require cameras to fly, and the data-hungry companies behind them are eager to leverage the visual data they could collect into

additional profit. While current attitudes toward user privacy would make this extremely unpopular, nevertheless "Amazon has patented technology that allows a drone to scan and collect data from houses it passes on its flight path" ("Amazon's Drones May Collect Valuable Data on Their Fly-Over," *Forbes*, Aug. 28, 2017).

Consumer fears about how large technology companies might collect more data than anticipated have grown in recent years. Google, Amazon and Apple deny that their digital assistants analyze or store recordings when not called into use. However, that unnerving potential does exist and could one day become a reality.

Long before Alexa, Siri and Google Home were common, Google was already snooping on the text of its users' emails to place individually targeted advertisements—the primary motive imagined for such covert data collection. Still, fears about the many ways this data could be used to manipulate and spy on consumers or be misused by criminals if it falls into the wrong hands.

The growing trend in modern society is to sacrifice our privacy for convenience, and by participating in these technologies we have willingly entrusted vast amounts of our personal information in the hands of for-profit corporations. Large-scale drone delivery takes this a step further, as it could expose the data of even those who are not participating if their home is on a drone delivery route.

Could such information gathering be commandeered by increasingly tyrannical government? The Bible points to a European-centered surveillance state on the horizon controlling people's participation in the marketplace (see "Is Today's Technology Foretold in Bible Prophecy?" beginning on page 19). (Sources: *Forbes*, NPR.)

Failed Brexit plans lead to May's resignation

In 2016 the British stunned the world when they voted to leave the European Union. That was three years ago. Prime Minister Theresa May failed to get a proposal passed on going forward with Britain's exit, or Brexit. On May 24, 2019, she resigned as prime minister with a tearful statement in front of 10 Downing Street, headquarters of the Government of the United Kingdom and the prime minister's residence.

May had presented three proposals for withdrawing the nation from the European Union, but all had failed. After Members of Parliament rejected the third deal on March 29, a new exit deadline was agreed on by the EU and the UK—October 31 of this year.

Key points in the withdrawal agreement include:

- How much money the UK will have to pay the EU in order to break the partnership—that's

about £39bn [or \$49 billion].

- What will happen to UK citizens living elsewhere in the EU, and equally, what will happen to EU citizens living in the UK?

- How to avoid the return of a physical border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland when it becomes the frontier between the UK and the EU" ("Brexit: Your Simple Guide to the UK Leaving the EU," BBC News, May 21, 2019). One of the biggest points of contention has been how to handle the Irish border.

If a new prime minister were to put together a deal that's quickly approved by Parliament, Brexit along these terms could happen before the Oct. 31 deadline. Or there could be a Brexit with no deal, which some warn will have serious economic repercussions, while others see it as freeing Britain's economy to thrive. Or Brexit could be put off further and further, or perhaps even overturned.

We shall see how aggressively the next prime minister acts on Britain's withdrawal from the EU. (Source: BBC News.)

German chancellor warns of "dark forces" in Europe

In an extensive interview with CNN's Christiane Amanpour, Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel gave a strong warning about Europe's future, stating that "dark forces" are rising across the continent.

An article reporting on the interview began: "German Chancellor Angela Merkel has said 'there is work to be done' in Germany to face up to the dark forces that are finding mainstream support there and in other parts of the world.

"In Germany, obviously, they always have to be seen in a certain context, in the context of our past, which means we have to be that much more vigilant than others,' she said" (Luke McGee, "Angela Merkel Warns Against Dark Forces on the Rise in Europe," CNN, May 29, 2019).

Also discussed was a recent upsurge in anti-Semitic attacks: "In recent days, German Jews were warned by a leading government official not to wear kippahs [Jewish skullcaps or yarmulkes] in public, following a rise in anti-Semitic attacks. Addressing the rise in anti-Semitism, Merkel said that Germany has 'always had a certain number of anti-Semites among us, unfortunately.'

"There is to this day not a single Synagogue[,] not a single daycare center for Jewish children, not a single school for Jewish children that does not need to be guarded by German policemen,' she added."

The chancellor further spoke of facing up "to the specters of the past" and of needing to head off the negative effects that come when younger generations lose touch with history's lessons: "We have to tell our young people what history has brought over us and others."

Hearing these words from a European leader whom some have called the most powerful woman in the world, we should ask: What lies ahead for Europe?

Most do not realize that God's Word, the Bible, contains much about Europe's past, involving the rise of great empires over many centuries, as well as its future. One final imperial power is foretold to rise again. The Bible shows that today's "dark forces" will soon grow much darker. To learn more about what's prophesied, download or request our free study guide *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* (available at ucg.org/booklets). (Source: CNN.)

Australia election shock as conservatives hold power

Upending poll indications, Australians in May 2019 voted to keep the conservative Liberal-National Coalition in power, with leader Scott Morrison remaining as prime minister. (He had become prime minister in August 2018 after challenges between other party leaders.)

The New York Times reported: "Scott Morrison, Australia's conservative prime minister, won his first full term in office on Saturday [May 18], confounding expectations that the country's voters were ready for a change in course after six years of tumultuous leadership under his party. The polls had pointed to a loss for Mr. Morrison's right-leaning coalition for months" ("Morrison Wins in Australian Election, Confounding Pollsters," May 17, 2019).

Morrison called the result a "miracle" in his victory speech.

Conservative-leaning populism seems to be a growing trend among the world's democracies. Economist Tyler Cowen observed in a Bloomberg opinion piece:

"Sometimes political revolutions occur right before our eyes without us quite realizing it. I think that's

what's been happening over the last few weeks around the world, and the message is clear: The populist 'New Right' isn't going away anytime soon, and the rise of the 'New Left' is exaggerated.

"Start with Australia, where Prime Minister Scott Morrison won a surprising victory... Before the election, polls had almost uniformly indicated that his Liberal-National Coalition would have to step down, but voters were of another mind. With their support of Morrison, an evangelical Christian who has expressed support for President Donald Trump, Australians also showed a relative lack of interest in doing more about climate change. And this result is no fluke of low turnout: Due to compulsory voting, most Australians do turn out for elections" ("The New Right Is Beating the New Left. Everywhere," May 20, 2019).

While such a shift may be welcome in various respects, we should ponder where these trends will eventually lead. Much has to change to bring about end-time developments foretold in Bible prophecy. Yet far-reaching change is proceeding. (Sources: Bloomberg, *The New York Times*.)

How can you make sense of the news?

So much is happening in the world, and so quickly. Where are today's dramatic and dangerous trends taking us? What does Bible prophecy reveal about our future? You're probably very concerned with the direction the world is heading. So are we. That's one reason we produce the *Beyond Today* daily TV commentaries—to help you understand the news in the light of Bible prophecy. These eye-opening presentations offer you a perspective so badly needed in our confused world—the **perspective of God's Word**. Visit us at ucg.org/beyond-today/daily!



“And They Worshiped Him”

What has been the reaction of those who have come face to face with the reality of who Jesus Christ is? As we see in Scripture, it has been to bow hearts and lives in grateful praise and worship.

by Robin Webber

Unlike meeting any other person who’s ever walked the earth, when encountering Jesus of Nazareth a decision is made that affects one’s every future outcome. All people, you included, will either accept Him or reject Him. You might ignore Him, but that is just indirect rejection. Jesus’ ageless, piercing question of “But who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15) is always before us. And He wants to see how we will respond.

Even our positive response like that of the disciple Peter—“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (verse 16)—is merely a starting point and not the finish line of our journey of life-altering acceptance of Jesus’ beckoning of “Follow Me.” The walk of faith encompasses an expanding awareness of whom we follow, as we become further convicted of His self-disclosure, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

This revelation is given new life, again and again, as we are confronted and molded through life’s experiences toward one inevitable response—our personal worship of Jesus Christ along with our Heavenly Father. Yes, the One the Father gave us as the centerpiece of His plan of redemptive salvation (John 3:16; Ephesians 1:10).

How then do we come to actively do this, acknowledging this One of whom the Father said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17)—and thus express worship? Let’s explore how Scripture integrates faith and worship regarding this One who was called both the Son of Man and the Son of God, as capsulized in the prophecy of Isaiah 9:6—“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given . . .” We will come to see that from His birth until now, Jesus is rightly worshiped and praised.

What is worship, and whom are we to worship?

The original biblical Greek term most frequently translated into the English word “worship” is *proskuneo*, defined as “to make obeisance, do reverence towards” (*Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*)—showing deep adoration and submission.

To whom should this be directed?

In revealing to ancient Israel His mind and heart through the Ten Commandments, God specifically states in the First Commandment, “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3). And He specifies in the Second Commandment against idolatrous images: “You shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God” (verse 5). Later in Isaiah 42:8 He exclaims, “I am the LORD,

that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another.”

Why is God so adamant here? The all-powerful Creator is above the entire created realm. People—and for that matter the spiritually created angelic realm—do not possess the unique characteristics of God. Moreover, God is not dependent on other life forms for His continuing existence, having life in Himself, solely and completely.

It is God who creates, forgives sin, foretells the future, heals and raises the dead, and only God is deemed worthy of wholehearted devotional reverence, homage or praise—of worship!

All that said, do you realize that during His earthly ministry Jesus never forbade or refused people’s worship of Him? This is unlike the angels who would hastily reply to any worship of them, “Don’t!” (see Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9). How can this be?

The apostle John provides the answer in John 1. He states in verses 1-4: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, *and the Word was God*. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made [created] through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life [inherent existence], and the life was the light of men” (emphasis added throughout). The apostle then solidifies who this “Word” is by stating in verse 14: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us [referring to Jesus, the Son of Man], and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

So before anything else there were two who were both God, sharing the same glory. And One, the Word, became a human being—God in the flesh who was still worthy of worship. In fact, God the Father has ordained “that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father” (John 5:23).

Worship of Christ in His human life

Let’s notice a few examples in the Gospels of Christ being worshiped while on earth and draw some personal lessons.

We begin with the wise men of the East who came from a distance following the starry GPS God provided to guide them to the King who had been born. “And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and *fell down and worshiped Him*. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense and myrrh” (Matthew 2:11).

Symbolically, the gold pointed to Christ’s kingship, frankincense to His holiness and function as our High Priest, and myrrh, often used as a burial ointment, to His sacrificial death for us.



“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, *and the Word was God* . . . All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”

Now, in responding to the calling of “Follow Me,” it remains for us to answer these questions: Are we, like the wise men, willing to go the distance? Are we willing to kneel—not only on our knees but allowing our hearts to kneel before Christ and the Father? And will we give our best, whatever it may be—spiritually, mentally, emotionally or in offering—in personal worship of the One who was born to be our King?

Later during Christ’s earthly ministry we discover Him being worshiped again and again. We see where “a leper *came and worshiped Him*, saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean’” (Matthew 8:2).

We further discover the disciples out in the midst of a stormy Sea of Galilee with Christ walking towards them (Matthew 14:22-31). And when He and Peter got into the boat (after Peter’s faith lesson on water), “the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat *came and worshiped Him*, saying, “Truly You are the Son of God”” (verses 32-33).

“I was blind but now I see!”

Perhaps one of the most telling stories involving worshipping Jesus is found in the entirety of John 9. It’s the story of a young man blind from birth being healed by Christ. His neighbors can scarcely believe it. Yet his rejoicing is dimmed by confrontation with the religious authorities of that day. His own parents distance themselves from him due to the pressure. And he is ultimately cast out of his “hometown congregation.”

The newly sighted man has a gradually expanding perspective of who healed him. He first identifies Him as “a Man called Jesus” (verse 11), and then under further examination by others declares, “He is a prophet” (verse 17). But he has still further to go.

When the healed man is thrown out of the House of the Lord, the Lord of the House, as the Good Shepherd, searches and finds him. And Jesus asks him a question: “Do you believe in the Son of God?” (verse 35).

Then the man “answered and said, ‘Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?’ And Jesus said to him, ‘You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.’ Then he said, ‘Lord I believe!’ *And he worshiped Him*” (verses 36-38).

This story of the man who proclaimed, “I was blind but now I see!” (verse 25, New International Version) grants us insight into how we grow in awareness as we stay the course on the path set before us.

Increasingly, we see that Jesus Christ is far more than a good man or another man of God, but is *the* Son of God, who was God in the flesh and is now returned to divine glory with the Father—and that He is worthy of worship. He is unique—utterly distinct from any other entity humanity elects to follow or worship.

His was a very real hand that extended to the leper and healed him. And it’s the same sacrificial hand extended for healing us from the spiritual leprosy of our sins.

It’s the hand extended to Peter in the stormy seas, raising him up with assurance of further opportunity to walk this walk, while calming the storm for the others in the boat. This same hand of the very Prince of Peace

calms our own storms, around and within, as He reminds us, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

This is the same One who knows exactly where we are when others have abandoned us, as with the newly healed man, and who as God along with the Father promises us, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrew 13:5; see Deuteronomy 31:6). The risen Christ told His disciples before He departed from them, “And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

May our response be as theirs when He ascended to heaven: “*And they worshiped Him*” (Luke 24:52).

True worship!

Our ultimate worship of Almighty God, both the Father and His Son, is a matter of the Spirit that arises not from terror-driven compulsion and appeasement, but from out-flowing love, gratitude and trust with amazement and awe.

And our fullest form of worship toward God the Father and Jesus Christ is not a momentary acknowledgment through choice words or bended knee, but a transformed Christlike existence in which far more than a knee bends. Our whole heart is molded into seeking our Heavenly Father’s will and not our own.

Ultimate worship is giving our *self* away every day and, as the Father wills, submitting to Christ as the Lord of our life, allowing Him to sit on the throne of our hearts and guide us into becoming “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God” (Romans 12:1).

Surely such worship prompts our Heavenly Father to lean over to Christ at His right hand and say, “These are My beloved children, in whom I am well pleased.” **BT**



A Glimpse Into Your *Eternal Future*

Welcome to the last lesson in the “Bible Prophecy and You” series, in which we peer even further into eternity!

In previous lessons we covered the Millennium, which begins at the second coming of Christ. During that 1,000 years of peace and prosperity, humanity, under the leadership of Jesus Christ and the spirit family of God, will make thorough preparations for the second resurrection.

We then explored how the many billions of people who have never received the knowledge of salvation will be raised in the second resurrection to live through the Great White Throne Judgment period, during which time they will have their opportunity to repent and be converted and accept the gift of eternal life.

In this lesson, we pick up the story from there.

What will take place after the Great White Throne Judgment? As Peter said, we “look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13). What will this be like? The Bible does indeed give us glimpses into our glorious eternal future!

Let’s compare our spiritual journey to the story of Abraham. The patriarch Abraham and his wife Sarah are role models of faith and long-range vision—vision of the next life in a city prepared for them by God (Hebrews 11:10).

Abram (whose name was changed to Abraham) grew up in a pagan culture. It seems he was wealthy and had a comfortable life (Genesis 11:31). But he came to understand there is only one God, the Creator, and God gave him a very special calling. God told him to leave his comfortable life behind and become

a nomad. Abraham responded with living faith—faith that is demonstrated by obedience to God—and thus became “the friend of God” (James 2:20-24).

“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:8-10).

All the great examples of faith “died in faith, not having [yet] received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland” (Hebrews 11:13-14).

Abraham’s story has many important lessons for all of us. Above all, our short, temporary human life should be used as a preparation time for the next life. Godly people should think of themselves as *foreigners* in this evil world, who by faith “seek a homeland”—eternal life in the Kingdom of God!

Someday, the suffering of this life will seem a very small sacrifice!

Someday—after living for thousands or millions of years—we will look back at all human suffering as what the apostle Paul called “our *light affliction*” that was “but for a *moment*” and “working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:17, emphasis added throughout).

We may think of it as the dark of night just before the dawn of a new day. In fact, speaking of the returning Jesus Christ,

the prophet Malachi was inspired to write, “The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings” (Malachi 4:2).

And the Bible several times compares the birth or deliverance of a nation following suffering to the joy of childbirth after the labor pains leading up to it (Micah 4:9-10). Compare that with the trials of our physical lives being followed by the greatest joy of all: receiving ultimate new life—a glorious and eternal spirit life—in the family and Kingdom of God!

In parallel, consider these words Jesus spoke to His disciples before His crucifixion, which would be followed by His resurrection: “You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and *your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you*” (John 16:20-22).

Regarding the life to come, Paul further said, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are *not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*” (Romans 8:18; see also verses 19-23).

► Will those who faithfully trust and obey God and Jesus Christ be rewarded in the coming Kingdom?

“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha

spiritual fruit of his or her life. Jesus illustrated this with His parable in Luke 19 in which each faithful servant is rewarded with rulership over a corresponding number of cities.

► What will be the end of those who after they have received their opportunity for salvation *still refuse to trust and obey God and Jesus Christ?*

“Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:14-15).

“But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8).

“But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell [*gehenna*]; yes, I say to you, fear Him!” (Luke 12:5).

Those who knowingly reject God’s loving offer of forgiveness and eternal life will experience the “second death”—the permanent death. They will be burned up in “the lake of fire.”

The lake of fire is also referred to several times in the New Testament, such as in Luke 12:5, by the Greek word *gehenna*, which is from the Hebrew *Gai Hinnom*, the Valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem where refuse was cast and burned up. Various Bible versions translate *gehenna* as “hell,” but this confuses matters, especially as some translations, like the original King James Version, also use the word “hell” in rendering the Greek word *hades* (which the KJV once correctly translates as “the grave”). For a thorough understanding of this subject, request or download our free study guide *Heaven and Hell: What Does the Bible Really Teach?* (at ucg.org/booklets).

In the long run, rebellion against God the Father and Jesus Christ brings great unhappiness. The Bible teaches that those who remain obstinately rebellious will experience the second death—the permanent death from which there is no resurrection—rather

than being allowed to live forever in misery.

► What is God’s ultimate goal?

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13).

“For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Hebrews 2:10).

“And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people . . . I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,’ says the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:16, 18).

The Kingdom of God is also the *family* of God! God the Father and God the Son have planned for a very long time to expand the God family with many “children.” In essence, God is in the process of spiritually reproducing Himself by

God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son have planned for a very long time to expand the God family with many children.

and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:12-14).

“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (Revelation 20:6).

“Then came the first [servant in one of Christ’s parables], saying, ‘Master, your mina [an amount of money] has earned ten minas.’ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.’ And the second came, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned five minas.’ Likewise he said to him, ‘You also be over five cities’” (Luke 19:16-19).

As we learned in previous lessons, everyone whose sins are forgiven, who then lives a life of obedience and service, and who remains “faithful until death” will receive “the crown of life”—eternal life (Revelation 2:10).

The “tree of life” also symbolizes eternal life. Each one will be rewarded with a level of responsibility according to the

“bringing many sons to glory.” God, with His infinite love and power, desires to save everyone by seeing them repent so they can receive eternal life in the Kingdom of God (2 Peter 3:9)!

How many “sons and daughters” will that be? Evidently many, many billions. It’s hard for us to imagine such a large family, but we will eventually get to know and love all of our brothers and sisters!

► Why does God plan for “new heavens and a new earth”?

“But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

“Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless” (2 Peter 3:7-14).

God designed this planet to be perfect for human habitation and enjoyment. But after the Great White Throne Judgment period (explained in the previous lesson), the vast majority of those who have ever lived will have been transformed into divine spirit beings in the Kingdom of God, while the rest (we hope a relatively few) will no longer exist because they will then be burned up.

Peter uses this prophecy to remind us of some spiritual lessons, asking, “Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness . . . ?” He gives several answers in the rest of the chapter, including that we should “be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless” (verses 11, 14).

► What will the new heavens and new earth be like?

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’ Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ And He said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true

and faithful” (Revelation 21:1-5).

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people; the voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying” (Isaiah 65:17-19).

Revelation 21 and 22 describe many exciting things John saw in vision about the new heaven and new earth. He wrote that “the first heaven and the first earth had passed away” and also that “there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:1, 4). The Bible gives us ample evidence that eternal life in the Kingdom of God will be *paradise!*

► Will Christ move back to heaven and take His spiritual family with Him?

“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal . . . But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

“And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life” (Revelation 21:10-11, 22-27).

Instead of the family of God being taken to heaven in the end, God the Father is coming to earth! As we quoted in response to the last question: “Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God . . . ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men [all remaining having been transformed into divine glory], and He will dwell with them” (Revelation 21:2-3). Later John saw another vision of “the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God” (verse 10). Then the rest of the chapter is a description of the New Jerusalem.

The length, breadth and height of New Jerusalem will be “twelve thousand furlongs” (verse 16), which is about 1,500 miles. (For comparison, that’s about the distance from Los Angeles to Minneapolis.) The city could be a giant cube or perhaps a giant pyramid or a mountain within a square area—in any case as tall as it is wide.

The area covered is hard to imagine, the square stretching east to west about as far as from Kuwait City, Kuwait, to Athens, Greece, and from south to north about as far as from Mecca, Saudi Arabia, to the north coast of Turkey on the Black Sea. And the height is even more difficult to imagine, as it will be that same distance straight up. The tallest building on earth is just over half a mile high. Mt. Everest is only about 5½ miles high (from sea level). The earth’s atmosphere now tops out at 300 miles. New Jerusalem will be a *big city!*

► Will the dominion of the God family be limited to earth?

“He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son” (Revelation 21:7).

“For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. But one testified in a certain place, saying: ‘What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet.’ For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him” (Hebrews 2:5-8).

Even though the new earth with the New Jerusalem will be the permanent home and headquarters of God and His Kingdom, the God family will rule over and enjoy the entire universe! “He who overcomes shall inherit *all things*” (Revelation 21:7).

Speaking of mankind, the book of Hebrews states, “You have put *all things* . . . under his feet,” and then says, “Now we do not yet see *all things* put under him” (Hebrews 2:8).

This passage is quoting from Psalm 8, where the context mentions “Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars” (Psalm 8:3). Since “new heavens” are foretold,

Instead of the family of God being taken to heaven in the end, heaven and God the Father are coming to earth!

perhaps the stars and planets will be much more beautiful than they are now!

Given the vastness of the universe, it seems logical that the God family will be responsible for ongoing development of the awesome creation God has laid out before us. It’s really exciting to imagine the infinite possibilities!

► Why doesn’t God reveal even more about our long-term future?

“Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!” (Romans 11:33).

“But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

“And he [an angel relaying prophecy to Daniel] said, ‘Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand’” (Daniel 12:9-10).

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

“Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise” (Hebrews 10:35-36).

God has far more in store for us than we could ever comprehend in this life—yet He gives us glimpses through His Word and Spirit. It’s amazing—and a priceless blessing—that God has revealed what He has about the future! And God told Daniel that in “the time of the end . . . the wise shall understand [much more about what is to come]” (Daniel 12:9-10). “The wise” are God’s servants who trust, obey and serve Him.

Each time a prophecy is fulfilled, we have another proof of God. God has given us mountains of proof “that He is [exists], and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). We don’t need to know every detail of our future, since we have God to lead us every step of the way. God has revealed all we need to know about how to live our lives *now*. Bible prophecy should greatly motivate us to avoid the prophesied consequences of disobedience and to seek the prophesied rewards of obedience!

► With all this insight into the future, what should we do?

“But Jesus answered him, saying, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God”’” (Luke 4:4).

“Now behold, one came and said to Him, ‘Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?’ So He said to him, ‘. . . If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments’” (Matthew 19:16-17).

“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38).

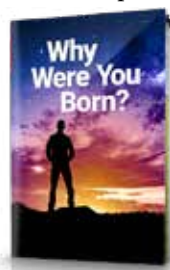
There are many parts to the answer—many more than can be cited here. Jesus said we should live “by every word of God” (Luke 4:4). He also said, “If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17). Peter said, “Repent, and . . . be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

In addition, reading and meditating on 1 Thessalonians 5 is recommended as a worthwhile personal Bible study and an excellent conclusion for this “Bible Prophecy and You” series.


We in the United Church of God, which produces the *Beyond Today* magazine and TV program, strongly encourage you to continue your study of the Bible. Stay informed about world events and trends and try to understand them in the light of Bible prophecy. Reading *Beyond Today* magazine and our study guides on prophecy will be especially helpful in that regard.

Apply now

You’ll find it interesting to compare the description of the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2:8-17 with the beautiful garden-like description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 22:1-5.



Take some time to think about this inspiring vision and write down the things you are most looking forward to in God’s eternal Kingdom.

And to learn more about the astounding future God has planned for you and your loved ones, be sure to download or request our eye-opening free study guide *Why Were You Born?* 



To Kill a People: Abortion and the Soul of America

The Silent Holocaust—yes, very well said. Normally the safest place for a child would be in its mother's womb. With 60 million little ones slaughtered that is no longer the case. There will be consequences for this atrocity, to all those who practice and support it. We will be ripped from our safe places for we have gone to the point of no return.

From the Internet

One redeeming factor that might be holding off God's just punishment is millions of Bible believers who are praying for an immediate end to abortion in America and in the world. Without those redeeming prayers, America might soon be "toast"!

From the Internet

The world is a very sick place and cannot be fixed by man. Every day, you think you've heard it all, and the next day brings something more troublesome. I pray to God every day to let Jesus Christ come to this earth, to end this misery and to execute His justice. "Thy kingdom come"!

From the Internet

Looking for a church location

I am interested in your church. I belong to a Sabbath-keeping group, but I have been visiting your website since 2007 and I really enjoy all your materials. I want to be a member of this church, but the problem is that the United Church of God is not found in my country, Papua New Guinea. I am a mother of two kids with a lovely husband. My question is, is there any possibility my family members and myself can be baptized and become members of this great church? Please let me know.

Reader in Papua New Guinea

We are very glad to hear you're being spiritually edified by our material. Since there's no congregation near you, we recommend you reach out to the office listed as the contact for the region of the world you are in (which can be found on page 31). They can give you counseling and direction for your specific situation.

"We Preach God's redemptive Word every week in our friendly Sabbath services," it says on the web page for your local congrega-

tion. The Sabbath is sundown Friday to sundown Saturday—is that the Sabbath you refer to, the true Sabbath? Or is it the Sunday "Sabbath," which was changed by the Catholic church?

From the Internet

Yes, we observe the Sabbath day as instituted by God, which you correctly identified as beginning at sunset on Friday and concluding at sunset on Saturday. As you've already discovered, we have a list of all our congregations at UCG.org/congregations for those who'd like to join us in worshipping our great God together.

Positive feedback for church literature

I was searching Google Books for Christian literature and found your study guide *What Happens After Death?* When I read it, to my surprise I realized that I had to change some of my viewpoints. Your booklet is very easy to follow, and you base everything on the Bible for me to prove myself. I then downloaded all your other booklets and am totally thrilled that I have found you. Could you please send me your magazine *Gute Nachrichten* [the German-language version of *Beyond Today*] from now on?

Reader in Germany

I was baptized on March 17, and I really feel like I am part of the right family. I am getting lots of spiritual food, and I know that I have to share it with others. Thank you, and God's blessings to you all.

From the Internet

I am a mailman and delivered your magazine today. I accidentally noticed the ad on the back cover of your magazine. Please send me your magazine and the requested booklets. May God bless your work.

Reader in Germany

I almost abandoned my faith because of the teachings of others. Some of them contradict the very nature of God as the God of love. Then I found your website. I find your teachings interesting and would like to learn more about them. I love the way you teach what God is like.

From the Internet

Please renew my subscription to *Beyond Today*. It is the only publication that tells it like it is. The articles are very well written and easy to understand. Thank you!

From the Internet

I have subscribed to *Beyond Today* for around maybe three years. I truly love this magazine. I renewed my subscription online today with a very modest donation. I collect your wonderful magazines, reread them, and share the truth of God's Word with many who call themselves Christians, but are still groping in the dark. Thank you for your great work in bringing the truth of the Bible to so many.

Reader in Sri Lanka

Published letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address your letters to Beyond Today, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A., or email BTinfo@ucg.org (please be sure to include your full name, city, state or province, and country).

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I really enjoy Beyond Today magazine. It gives a good understanding of the Bible and highlights information not given in mainstream Christian faiths. I highly recommend this magazine to all.

—K.T., Facebook fan



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To find the WGN America channel locations in your area please visit: wgnamerica.com/channel-finder/ and enter your zip code. You will be shown the providers and channel number(s) on which you can watch WGN America in your area.

BROADCAST TV

Alaska
Anchorage ch. 18, Tue 9 p.m.
California
San Diego ch. 18, 19, 23, Mon 5 p.m.
San Francisco ch. 29, Sun 6:30 p.m.
Michigan
Detroit ch. 38.5, Sun 10 a.m., Fri 3 p.m.

Ohio
Toledo ch. 69, Sun 5 p.m.
Oregon
Gresham/East Portland ch. 22/23, Sun 7:30 p.m.
Milwaukee ch. 23, Sun 6 a.m.; Mon 11:30 p.m.,
Wed 4:30 p.m.; Thu 7 a.m.; Fri 5:30 a.m.;
Sat 8:30 a.m. & 4:30 p.m.
Oregon City ch. 23, Sun 2:30 p.m.; Thu 10:30
a.m. & 2:30 p.m.; Fri 4:30 a.m.; Sat 3 a.m. & 4 p.m.
Washington
Everett ch. 77, Wed 5 p.m.
AUSTRALIA
9GEM Sun 7:30 a.m. nationwide

CANADA NATIONWIDE CABLE TV

Vision TV Sun 6 p.m. ET
Hope TV Sun 1 p.m. ET
See local listing for the channel in your area.

NEW ZEALAND

Prime Television
(simulcast on Sky satellite platform) Sun 8:30 a.m.

SOUTH AFRICA

Cape Town DSTV
Sun 8:30 a.m. ch. 263 and open ch. 32, 67

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