

What are UFO's?

Selected Verses

We're on part 2 of our series "More Big Questions About God, the Bible, and Life". Last week, we answered the question, "What does the Bible say about suicide?" It is a trending topic nowadays and I thought it was appropriate for us to address the issues surrounding it which I hope you were satisfied with.

Another trending topic is the mysterious UFO's and the existence or non-existence of extraterrestrials. Just 10 days ago, CNN reported the news that "The US Navy has finally acknowledged footage purported to show UFOs hurtling through the air... The objects seen in three clips of declassified military footage are 'unidentified aerial phenomena,' Navy spokesperson Joe Gradisher confirmed to CNN."

Let me show you a videoclip from CNN.

VIDEO

What are UFO's then? Are they operated by extraterrestrials? Do they come from another planet? Are we not alone in the universe? What's the real deal?

I believe as Christians we need to be well-versed in this subject matter. Our children are exposed to this. Many science fiction movies deal with the idea of extraterrestrials or life in another planet like Star Wars, Star Trek, Prometheus, Alien, X Files, Transformers, Avengers, and the like. When they ask, is there life in another planet, what do we tell them? As youth workers, how do you answer the ET questions of your teenage students, and how can you capably address this topic with your non-Christian co-workers or friends or relatives?

Let me confess that years ago, when I was in high school, I myself became interested in UFO's and aliens. A friend introduced me to these when he lent me a book entitled "Chariots of the Gods" written by Erich von Daniken. The book

postulates the idea that the technologies and religions of many ancient civilizations were given to them by ancient astronauts who were welcomed as gods. I read this book with fervor and liked it and began to believe the arguments of the author. Until he talked about the miracle of the feeding of the 5000 by Jesus. The author apparently is an atheist and so he tried to debunk this miracle of Jesus. He argued that the ancient astronauts gave Jesus the bread by dropping them down from their flying saucer. According to Daniken, what happened was that Jesus Christ, himself an extraterrestrial, asked all people to close their eyes as he prayed just so no one would see the bread in huge nets being dropped slowly to the ground from the flying saucers above. It seemed to make sense until you realize that aside from men and women, there were also children present as the Bible says. And they could number in thousands as well.

Now, I can accept that all adults are obedient and respectful and all had their eyes closed. But children? Do you think that not even one of them, among the thousands of them, not even one of them had their eyes open? When we have prayer for the children here, do you notice how many of them have their eyes closed and how many of them have their eyes open? I tell you, out of 10 children, only four have their eyes closed. Some are playing, some are looking around, some looking at me. So, wouldn't it be reasonable to argue that some of the children when Jesus was praying, had their eyes open and, therefore, would have seen the flying saucers and bread coming down and react in a way that would have caught the attention of the people?

And so, I stopped reading that book about aliens because that flawed argument of the author just goes to show that his claims about extraterrestrials were just a product of his overactive imagination. In fact, that's the conclusion of several reviewers as well.

So, how did this interest in UFO's and ET's begin? Many point to the year 1947 as the beginning. It was during this year when reports surfaced that a flying object crash-landed in a field in the town of Roswell in New Mexico. The Roswell Army Air Field initially said a "flying disk" had been recovered, but a second press release clarified that the object was from a weather balloon. Since then, a number of supposed witnesses have said they saw the military take away the flying disc -- and bodies of aliens.

Afterwards, it stirred up quite a frenzy among UFO enthusiasts. Numerous claims of UFO sightings were reported by people and all these were documented in Project Blue Book which was started by the US government in 1948 and closed down in 1969 because of its cost. The Air Force investigated all these claims and although many were still unidentified, they concluded that "No UFO reported, investigated, and evaluated by the Air Force has ever given any indication of threat to our national security." The program also concluded that the "unidentified" sightings were not advanced technology or extraterrestrial vehicles.

This did not dampen the interest in UFO's and ET, however, because people continued to report sightings and even encounters with alien beings. They said they were abducted, brought into spaceships where they were interrogated, physically inspected, and all that stuff.

So, this afternoon I'd like to share with you eight things you should know about UFO's. And these things I'm going to share with you, except for the last one, are based on an article written by Bobby Brewer of the Christian Research Institute.

1. IT'S NOT JUST A FRINGE BELIEF ANYMORE

In an issue of *Popular Mechanics* in 1999, Kenneth Neelson, a scientist on the National Academy of Sciences Subcommittee for Solar System Exploration, said, "The search of life is no longer a fringe type of thing." Politicians, scientists,

astronauts, and various celebrities concur that intelligent extraterrestrial life must exist within the universe and that it is “arrogant” to presume that humanity is the only intelligent life form. Need proofs that UFOlogy has permeated the American worldview? Consider the following:

The American Public: A recent Gallup poll of 1,522 adults in the United States found that one-third of respondents believe extraterrestrial spacecraft are visiting Earth.

Astronaut Gordon Cooper: “I believe that these extraterrestrial vehicles and their crews are visiting this planet from other planets and are obviously more advanced than we are here on earth...”

U.S. Presiden: Jimmy Carter: “I don’t laugh at people anymore when they say they’ve seen UFOs. I’ve seen one myself.”

U.S. Senator: A caller on *Larry King Live* asked Senator Barry Goldwater, “Do you believe that the government is withholding information on UFOs?” Goldwater replied, “Yes I do.”

Scientist: Carl Sagan was perhaps one of the best-known scientists to have expressed a belief in the *possibility* of extraterrestrial intelligence. In 1977, he was instrumental in the launching of the Voyager spacecraft, which transports a gold-coated phonograph with recorded messages of music and sounds of Earth in the hope of communicating our existence to other beings.

2. PEOPLE REALLY ARE SEEING THINGS

On the evening of March 13, 1997, hundreds of people in Arizona observed a very unusual formation of lights that was well documented by video and eyewitness accounts. The incident created a flurry of speculation concerning the nature of the lights, with the most popular being extraterrestrial. The Air Force acknowledged the occasion with the explanation that the lights were actually flares.

This was not the first time that such a report has received widespread attention. Fifty years earlier, in 1947, the term *flying saucer* entered the American lexicon when Ken Arnold reported seeing nine “flying saucers” near Mount Ranier, Washington, traveling at speeds well beyond the capabilities of any conventional aircraft at the time. His report received international coverage. Approximately one week later the so-called “Roswell Incident” took place, which also received international attention. Almost overnight, a foot was in the door for the emergence of a worldview that raised the question: Are beings from outer space visiting us?

Military and airline personnel, engineers, air traffic controllers, police, and people of all walks of life across the globe have made UFO reports. It is true that a significant number of reports are hoaxes and intentionally fraudulent but the fact remains that credible people are witnessing events that they cannot explain. We should, however, not conclude that because something is unidentifiable that it has extraterrestrial origins. Which brings us to the next point.

3. NO HARD EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT THERE IS ETI

To date there is no nut, bolt, spaceship, carcass, or transmission to provide overwhelming and convincing proof that ETI exists. This is not to deny that credible people are seeing inexplicable aeronautical and cosmic incidents. It is noteworthy, however, that the vast majority of UFO reports are easily explainable. Thus, the overwhelming majority of UFO reports have earthly origins.

As I mentioned earlier, the United States Air Force officially studied UFOs under the name “Project Blue Book.” Of the 12,618 sightings reported, 11,917 (94 percent) were solved. The Air Force concluded that the sightings were of earthly origins. And the military has gone on record to state that many of the UFO reports are probably the result of experimental projects. What does the Bible say about this?

4. BIBLICAL REVELATION LENDS NO SUPPORT TO ETI

The Bible does not refer to intelligent life on other planets. The focus of the Bible, instead, is on humanity's need for redemption. When Jesus commissioned the disciples to preach the good news, He directed them to spread the gospel to the "uttermost parts of the *earth*" (emphasis added), not to the uttermost regions of the galaxy or universe (see Acts 1:8). One doesn't have to read between the lines to understand that God has a great interest in people on earth, whereas we have no specific revelation demonstrating God's interest in intelligent life outside of Earth. A dogmatic belief in ETI simply cannot be justified from Scripture.

You see, the focus of the ministry of Jesus Christ is on the human race. The most famous verse of the New Testament probably is John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." It's true that the Greek word for "world" (*kosmos*) can also be translated as "universe," but the claim that this verse validates and biblically proves the existence of ETI is not only a massive stretch but also a hermeneutical (rules of biblical interpretation) violation. First, the word "kosmos" is used in other places in the New Testament specifically to refer to humanity (see, e.g., John 1:9). Second, such an interpretation would be out of context with the entire Bible as a whole because its message is clearly focused on the human condition and need for redemption.

What about the "wheels" in Ezekiel? There is a passage in the book of Ezekiel that says "This was the appearance and structure of the wheels: They sparkled like topaz, and all four looked alike. Each appeared to be made like a wheel intersecting a wheel." (Ezek. 1:16) It initially does indeed sound like an ancient UFO report, and UFO enthusiasts regularly cite this passage in an attempt to verify their claims of extraterrestrial interventions in the course of human history. A closer examination of the text, however, clearly demonstrates that

Ezekiel was communicating a vision from God (vv. 26–28) and not an extraterrestrial visitation. Basic hermeneutic rules are violated when it's assumed that the “wheels” of Ezekiel are spaceships.

You see, biblical events seen in visions are not necessarily literal but often symbolic and metaphorical. In this case, the creatures and wheels are most likely representations of angels, who are presented as God's attendants delivering a message for Israel from God to Ezekiel (cf. Isa. 6:2).

So, the Bible doesn't mention ETI but

5. PROOF OF ETI WOULD *NOT* UNDERMINE CHRISTIANITY

Even if extraterrestrials do exist, God is their Creator, too. According to Genesis 1:1, “God created the heavens and the earth.” Such a discovery, therefore, would *not* nullify Christian doctrine but rather confirm the extent of God's creative capabilities. From Scripture and from creation, we see clearly that God delights in His creativity. For example, when He created angels, He didn't create just one type but rather many different kinds. It shouldn't surprise Christians if other life forms exist in the universe. We shouldn't be dogmatic and say, “No, there's no life in other planets” rather “There could be”. But we have to point out that there's no proof at this point in time.

The bottom line for humanity, nevertheless, is that we on earth are spiritually corrupt and in need of a Savior for forgiveness and everlasting life that is available only through Jesus, regardless of the existence of ETI.

But, you know why we should be careful about connecting UFO's with ETI? It's because

6. THE UFO PHENOMENON TENDS TO HAVE OCCULT QUALITIES

Some people have claimed to be abducted by aliens. Speaking generally, UFO abduction encounters are not pleasant and wholesome experiences. For the most part, they are nightmarish events that often plague victims for years, if not for

the rest of their lives. These abduction encounters are obviously not the work of benign and benevolent “space brothers.”

Significant also is the fact that the aliens consistently proclaim a different gospel. The religion of these beings is typically a version of Eastern mysticism or New Age philosophy, which is, in actuality, very old — so old, that it goes back to the Garden of Eden with the temptation to “be like God” (Gen. 3:5). Paul warned the church in Galatia to beware of false teachings regardless of how impressive the source might be. “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!” (Gal. 1: 8).

There have been numerous reports of contact with aliens, and yet none thus far has acknowledged Jesus Christ as *the* Son of God. They almost always sanction various Eastern and New Age groups instead as their official spokespersons. A significant percentage of all alleged contactees have admitted to being involved in some form of occult beliefs or practices. It is therefore reasonable to presume that in some cases a spiritual dimension is within the UFO phenomenon, and it is obviously outside the presence, activity, and authority of the Holy Spirit.

This is the assertion of a movie produced by Creation Ministries International entitled “Alien Intrusion: Unmasking a Deception”. It came out last year. The movie claims that extraterrestrials are actually demonic beings who pretend to be alien beings. I haven’t seen the movie yet but I think it’s worth looking at judging from the movie reviews. Some said that it was well-documented and scientifically sound. They also claim that the second part of the movie was the best part which can make someone emotional.

VIDEO

7. THE UFO PHENOMENON IS INDICATIVE OF A SPIRITUAL QUEST

One of the characteristics of our postmodern society is spiritual curiosity. This helps explain why books such as *Left Behind* and *Harry Potter* that are poles apart in their worldviews can simultaneously share a secular bestseller list. The popularity of spiritual topics, in my opinion, is a reflection of a society that is hungry for meaning and purpose in life, which they mistakenly believe will be fulfilled via contact with extraterrestrial civilizations or proof that life exists outside of planet earth. In effect, for some, the search and hope for ETI amounts to a quest for an extraterrestrial savior.

We have seen, then, that the proof for ETI is deficient and lacking. Regardless of the existence of ETI, humanity needs redemption, which is exclusively available through Jesus Christ. The assumption that an advanced alien race could solve the world's problems is misleading and deceptive. Such a hope is a cloud without rain. Christ alone is able to provide a solution to the problem of sin, and we have been commissioned to spread this good news to the uttermost parts of our planet. We must focus our attention on the Gospel.

Which leads us to #8.

8. We are the Real Aliens with a Mission

1 Peter 2:11 (ISV) “Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and exiles to keep on abstaining from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul.”

Who is Peter writing to here? Is he writing to E.T.? No, he's writing to Christians. You see, Christians are the real aliens. They're not of this world although they live in this world. Jesus says that his followers are “not of the world”. (John 17:16a) In fact, they have a different citizenship. Their citizenship is in heaven as Phil. 3:20 says.

If our citizenship is in heaven, then why are we here on earth? Because since the beginning of time God has given us a purpose in life. And that purpose is to bring as many as we can to the place where God is. That is our mission. In

Matthew 28:19-20, our leader, Jesus, gave us our marching orders. “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

Our mission as aliens in this world is to lead many people to the Savior so that they can leave this world and go to heaven as well. We’re not just tourists here to see all that we can see and do all that we can do to have fun. We have a purpose for being here, and that purpose is to save people from sure destruction.

And finally, to wrap it up,

9. There is an ancient intelligent being and his name is Jesus.

It’s clear that Jesus is not of this world. He is God who came down from heaven to earth to save us from our sins. He is **the “Ancient of Days”** referred to in Daniel 7:9. He is the God of the universe who created all things with his intelligence and wisdom.

Let me tell you something. As you know, the Solar System which our planet is in is located in the **Milky Way galaxy**. The Milky Way galaxy is just one of the billions of galaxies that exist in this vast universe. But I want you to look at a galaxy that is called the Whirlpool galaxy and is so, so far away from our own galaxy. **The Whirlpool Galaxy** is believed to contain a central black hole surrounded by a ring of dust. That is the core of the galaxy. And you know what, in that very core is an image which scientists call the “X” structure. And you’ll understand why it is called as such when you see this.

Picture

That’s amazing! In the center of that amazing galaxy is the amazing imprint of the cross of Jesus. He is the center of the universe. Amen? But he is not far away. Because he is here, he is with you, right now. He is interested in you and wants to have a relationship with you.