

EXTRASOLAR PLANETS, ET LIFE AND UFOS

I. ARE THERE OTHER SOLAR SYSTEMS?

Astronomers have only indirect evidence of planets outside the solar system ("extrasolar planets"). There is no reason scientifically or biblically that extrasolar planets could not exist, but **claims for such planets are based more on evolutionary theorizing than on real observations.**

To many scientists who believe in evolution, life should be evolving throughout the cosmos. **There should be other solar systems with inhabited planets.** Sometimes this desire to find other planets and solar systems leads to misleading newspaper and magazine headlines.

Sky and Telescope once published an issue with the cover story, "New Planets Discovered,"¹ and *Astronomy* magazine printed an article entitled, "Two New Solar Systems."² Titles like these give the impression that astronomers have indeed made new planetary discoveries. The question we must ask when we see such headlines is, What did the astronomers really observe? **With current technology, it is impossible for astronomers to see planets outside the solar system directly.** Because planets shine only by reflected light, any such planets would be too dim to see. Stars are the only directly observable objects outside the solar system.

II. WHY DO SOME ASTRONOMERS BELIEVE THERE ARE OTHER SOLAR SYSTEMS?

Claims of extrasolar planets are based on observing stars with certain characteristics. Some astronomers then assume that these characteristics are signs of new planets. **Most stars, for example, are members of close-knit star systems in which most of the stars are dim and therefore not easily visible.** Alpha-Centauri is such a system. Alpha-Centauri used to be thought of as a single star. Then Alpha-Centauri was found to have a companion star, making it a "double" or "binary" star system. Eventually astronomers discovered another star in the Alpha-Centauri system. Thus this system has at least three stars, but two of them are relatively dim.

In a star system like Alpha-Centauri, the dimmer stars tug on the brighter one, making it "wobble." The stellar companions of Alpha-Centauri were suspected to exist long before they could be seen, because astronomers could see Alpha-Centauri wobble. Observations of the dim companions came later. Astronomers have now carefully studied these dim companions and have found them to be stars, not planets.

Since most stars are in star systems, most stars wobble, pulled by unseen stars too dim to see. If the unseen companions orbit a star preferably (but not necessarily) like the sun, astronomers sometimes assume that the dim companions must be planets in a kind of solar system. This was the case in the *Sky and Telescope* and *Astronomy* articles mentioned above. These articles acknowledged that the alleged planets might be dim stars. *Sky and Telescope* even acknowledged that all previous claims of new planets had been "debunked," including the earlier "New Planets Discovered" headline.³

A second property of some stars is that they are surrounded by clouds of gas. These stars are quite unstable

and throw off gases explosively from time to time.

Evolutionists think of such a gas cloud as a solar system in formation. According to this idea, our own solar system evolved over billions of years from a cloud of gas, so why should the same thing not be happening elsewhere?

But the solar system did not evolve, and what's more, laboratory tests confirm that it's impossible for small particles of debris somehow to stick together and begin forming a planet. **The debris surrounding some stars really means that the cosmos is self-destructing.** It is dying, because it is "groaning" under the curse of sin (Romans 8:20-22).

III. IS THERE EXTRATERRESTRIAL (ET) LIFE?

According to much of the media, ET life thrives in outer space. Some scientists used to think that ET life might exist on the moon. In 1969 the Apollo 11 astronauts were kept in quarantine for a time after returning to earth because of the fear they might have been infected by harmful lunar microbes. This was discontinued in later lunar missions because scientists came to realize that the moon is absolutely lifeless.

Some astronomers have proposed that strange forms of life might exist on other moons, such as Io and Europa (moons of Jupiter), or Saturn's moon Titan. But there is no evidence of any life on these moons. Astronomers have found no evidence of ET life anywhere.⁴ Nevertheless, some scientists have coined the term "exobiology" to refer to the study of extraterrestrial life. Theodosius Dobzhansky, an evolutionist known worldwide in academic circles, noted that exobiology is the only scientific discipline whose "subject matter has never been observed and may not exist."⁵

Most "exobiologists" would in fact like to find *intelligent* ET life. **But despite the popularity of SETI, the Bible makes no mention of any life living outside the earth except God and the angels.** This is significant, because the Bible was not written to apply only to the earth. **The Bible applies universally.** It begins with Genesis chapter 1 making sweeping statements of purpose for the heavenly bodies throughout the entire cosmos (Genesis 1:14-18).

What are these purposes revealed in Genesis 1:14-18? The heavenly bodies are to provide light and serve as time-tellers by marking off intervals of time - seasons, days, and years - *for the earth's life*. **As Creator, God has the right to tell us why He made the heavenly bodies, and we have the responsibility to accept what He says as sufficient.** We do not have the right to insist that God must have or should have created the stars to support life of their own. Neither do we have the right to insist that the stars must have spiritual purposes the Creator has left unrevealed. This is the error of astrology, the pseudo-science that insists that stars must have purposes besides the ones revealed by the Creator.

IV. WHAT IS LIFE?

The secular community believes that detection of biological systems on extrasolar planets would satisfy the goals of SETI, but real life is spiritual, not merely physical. **The Author of all life would be dead according to the standard biological**

definition of life, for He does not change, metabolize, grow, or reproduce. Thus the biological definition of life is not the ultimate definition of life. **"Life" is ultimately not the same as being biologically viable.**

A system may be biologically viable and yet may not be truly "living" in the Biblical sense. Many entities included in biology do not have the "breath of life" mentioned in Genesis chapter 1 which an organism must possess to be "living." **Loosely speaking, the "breath of life" corresponds to the soul and spirit.** Entities such as viruses, bacteria, or even plants are thus arguably not genuinely alive, though they are classed as biological organisms.⁶ Maybe botany should be thought of as a physical science, not a life science! 😊

Though it is hardly likely that the domain of botany will be redefined, this means that the search for ET life cannot be confined to the detection of viruses or bacteria (though even these have not been found anywhere except earth). **SETI must ultimately involve a search for spiritual life.** Hebrews 4:15 tells us about genuine "ET life," our Creator who is the Author of all life. He is not a fearful alien. He can "be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." **We are not alone.**

Many evolutionary scientists have realized that SETI is really a search for spiritual intelligence.⁷ But instead of searching for extraterrestrial intelligence, each of us must find spiritual life in the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting Him alone for personal salvation. Those who have found true life in Christ can anticipate an eternity with Him, a future far more wonderful than the most imaginative science fiction.

V. WHAT ARE UFO'S?

UFO stands for "unidentified flying object." Many UFO sightings turn out to be clouds, ordinary planes, weather balloons, or artificial satellites high in the sky that have been misidentified as something strange. **Of the small remaining number of UFO sightings, most probably involve military technology not yet made known to the public.** Flight tests of this technology seem strange and unfamiliar to anyone who happens to see it from a distance.

The stealth technology developed to shield military aircraft from radar detection has been tested since at least the 1950s, but was not shown to the public until the 1980s. For many years, some people who thought they were seeing flying saucers from outer space may have been seeing stealth aircraft being tested in flight. One Air Force officer has reportedly claimed that the military has technology that is "so far beyond the comprehension" of the average person as to seem "alien."⁸

The "Area 51" military base in Nevada is known among UFO enthusiasts as a site of alleged UFO activity. In fact, Area 51 is nothing more than a launching and storage base for advanced military aircraft, some still classified.

Many unidentified flying objects may be classified military craft, but there is also the possibility of demonic influence in at least some UFO phenomena. Possible associations of UFO sightings with demonism and spiritism have been documented.⁹

How can we put this possibility in perspective?

Astronomy has been an especially fertile ground for satanic deception. Cosmic evolution and astrology trap many people

in systems of belief preventing them from coming to Christ for salvation. An obsession with UFOs is one more possible trap.

For some, a belief in UFO intelligence may be another way of avoiding their personal accountability to God. For instance, the so-called "Roswell incident" of 1947, in which extraterrestrial beings allegedly landed near Roswell, New Mexico, has become an obsession for perhaps millions of people. Whatever happened at Roswell, the Roswell incident has convinced many people that wisdom and intelligence are to be found, not in God's Word, but somewhere out in space. Satan, the god of this world, is pleased to use any tactic that will keep a person from looking to the God of Creation for true salvation and intelligence.

Furthermore, like SETI and the belief in ET life, UFOs feed into the belief system of the New Age and Hinduism, with "alien abductions" being characterized as "out of body experiences" and reincarnation, both of which are central tenets of these pagan systems.¹⁰

VI. MODERN MAN'S SPIRITUAL HUNGER

The spiritual quest of SETI researchers comes through clearly in what they say. **The alleged "scientific" basis for ET life is often a cover-up for spiritual concerns.** As one writer has said: "The rationale for SETI is straightforward, yet awesome: If life exists elsewhere ... in the Milky Way galaxy, and if other civilizations have arisen on distant planets, they may have been broadcasting radio messages to call attention to their presence. The earth has the means to receive these messages, in the form of giant radio telescopes being used for astronomy, and for communicating with spacecraft. By enlisting them in a systematic listening program, man may finally be able to answer those age-old questions: Is anyone out there? Are we alone in the universe?"¹¹

God answered these questions thousands of years ago in His Word. **However, if man has evolved, alien races must have evolved, too. And if other races evolved, maybe they can show us our future:** "It would be encouraging, SETI scientists say, to learn that other races survived the perils of nuclear technology, genetic engineering, and pollution, and continued to progress. Knowledge of very advanced races might give mankind a clue to the future of its own evolution."¹²

The Creator has told us about our future. Christians must not confuse ET claims with science.

References

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