

THE QUESTION OF EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE

Many Christians have bought into the idea of extraterrestrial alien life. But is this idea really biblical?



Are there extraterrestrial life-forms out there? The question of life on other planets is a hot topic in our culture today. Science fiction movies and television shows often depict strange creatures from far-away planets. But these ideas are not limited merely to science fiction programming. Many secular scientists believe that one day we will actually discover life on other planets. There are even projects like the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence (SETI) that scan

the heavens with powerful radio telescopes listening for signals from intelligent aliens. Many Christians have bought into the idea of extraterrestrial alien life. But is this idea really biblical? The Christian should constantly examine ideas in light of Scripture and take “every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” ([2 Corinthians 10:5](#)).

The Evolution Connection

The idea of "[extraterrestrial life](#)" stems largely from a belief in evolution. Recall that in the evolutionary view, the earth is “just another planet”—one where the conditions just happened to be right for life to form and evolve. If there are countless billions of other planets in our galaxy, then surely at least a handful of these worlds have also had the right conditions. Extraterrestrial life is almost inevitable in an evolutionary worldview.



However, the notion of alien life does not square well with Scripture. The earth is unique. God designed the earth for life ([Isaiah 45:18](#)). The other planets have an entirely different purpose than does the earth, and thus, they are designed differently. In Genesis 1 we read that God created plants on the earth on Day 3, birds to fly in the atmosphere and marine life to swim in the ocean on Day 5, and animals to inhabit the land on Day 6. Human beings were also made on Day 6 and were given dominion over the animals. But where does the Bible discuss the

creation of life on the “lights in the expanse of the heavens”? There is no such description because the lights in the expanse were not designed to accommodate life. God gave care of the earth to man, but the heavens are the Lord’s ([Psalm 115:16](#)). From a biblical perspective, extraterrestrial life does not seem reasonable.

Problems are multiplied when we consider the possibility of *intelligent* alien life. Science fiction programming abounds with races of people who evolved on other worlds. We see examples of Vulcans and Klingons—pseudohumans similar to us in most respects but different in others. As a plot device, these races allow the exploration of the human condition from the perspective of an outsider. Although very entertaining, such alien races are theologically problematic. Intelligent alien beings cannot be [redeemed](#). God’s plan of redemption is for human beings: those descended from Adam. Let us examine the conflict between the salvation message and the notion of alien life.



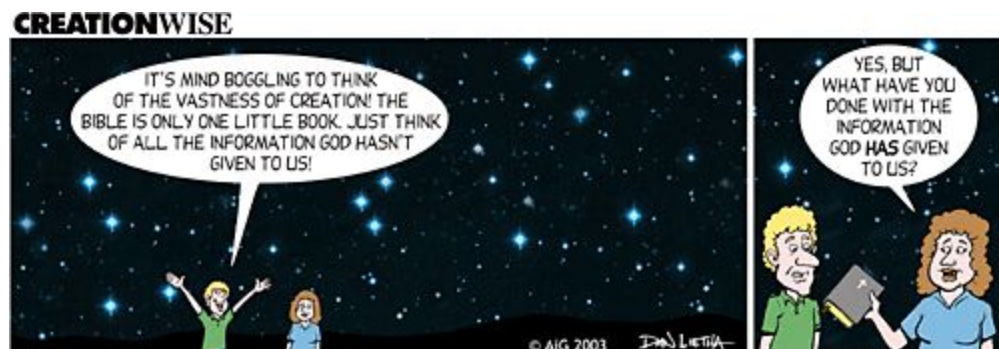
The Redemption of Mankind

The Bible teaches that the first man, Adam, rebelled against God (Genesis 3). As a result, sin and death entered the world ([Romans 5:12](#)). We are all descended from Adam and Eve ([Genesis 3:20](#)) and have inherited from them a sin nature ([Romans 6:6, 20](#)). This is a problem: sin is a barrier that prevents man from

being right with God ([Isaiah 59:2](#)). But God loves us despite our sin and provided a plan of redemption—a way to be reconciled with God.

After Adam and Eve sinned, God made coats of skins to cover them ([Genesis 3:21](#)). He therefore had to kill at least one animal. This literal action is symbolic of our salvation; an innocent Lamb (Christ—the Lamb of God) would be sacrificed to provide a covering for sin ([John 1:29](#)). In the Old Testament, people would sacrifice animals to the Lord as a reminder of their sin ([Hebrews 10:3](#)) and as a symbol of the One to come, the Lord Jesus, who would actually pay the penalty for sin.

The animal sacrifices did not actually pay the penalty for sin ([Hebrews 10:4, 11](#)). Animals are not related to us; their shed blood cannot count for ours. But the blood of Christ can. Christ is a blood relative of ours since He is descended from Adam as are we; all human beings are of “[one blood](#)” ([Acts 17:26](#)). Furthermore, since [Christ](#) is also God, His life is of infinite value, and thus, His death can pay for all the sins of all people. That is why only the Lord Himself could be our Savior ([Isaiah 45:21](#)). Therefore, Christ died once for all ([Hebrews 10:10](#)).



The Redemption of ET?

When we consider how the salvation plan might apply to any hypothetical extraterrestrial (but otherwise human-like) beings, we are presented with a

problem. If there were Vulcans or Klingons out there, how would they be saved? They are not blood relatives of Jesus, and so Christ's shed blood cannot pay for their sin. One might at first suppose that Christ also visited their world, lived there, and died there as well, but this is antibiblical. Christ died *once* for *all* ([1 Peter 3:18](#); [Hebrews 9:27–28](#), [Hebrews 10:10](#)). Jesus is now and forever both God and man; but He is *not* an alien.

One might suppose that alien beings have never sinned, in which case they would not need to be redeemed. But then another problem emerges: they suffer the [effects of sin](#), despite having never sinned. Adam's sin has affected all of creation— not just mankind. [Romans 8:20–22](#) makes it clear that the entirety of creation suffers under the bondage of corruption. These kinds of issues highlight the problem of attempting to incorporate an antibiblical notion into the Christian worldview.

Extraterrestrial life is an evolutionary concept; it does not comport with the biblical teachings of the uniqueness of the earth and the distinct spiritual position of human beings. Of all the worlds in the universe, it was the earth that God Himself visited, taking on the additional nature of a human being, dying on a cross, and rising from the dead in order to redeem all who would trust in Him. The biblical worldview sharply contrasts with the secular worldview when it comes to alien life. So, which worldview does the scientific evidence support? Do modern observations support the secular notion that the universe is teeming with life, or the biblical notion that earth is unique?

Where Is Everybody?

So far, no one has discovered life on other planets or detected any radio signals from intelligent aliens. This is certainly what a biblical creationist would expect. Secular astronomers continue to search for life on other worlds, but they have

found only rocks and inanimate matter. Their radio searches are met with silence. The real world is the biblical world—a universe designed by [God](#) with the earth at the spiritual focal point, not an evolutionary universe teeming with life.

When it comes to extraterrestrial life, science is diametrically opposed to the evolutionary mentality. We currently have *no* evidence of alien life-forms. This problem is not lost on the secular scientists. It has been said that the atomic scientist Enrico Fermi was once discussing the topic of extraterrestrial life when he asked the profound question, “Where is everybody?” Since there are quite possibly multiple billions of planets in our galaxy, and since in the secular view these are all accidents, it is almost inevitable that some of these had the right conditions for life to evolve. And if some of these worlds are billions of years older than ours, then at least some of them would have evolved intelligent life eons ago. The universe should therefore have countless numbers of technologically superior civilizations, any one of which could have colonized our galaxy ages ago. Yet, we find no evidence of these civilizations. Where is everybody? This problem has become known as the “Fermi paradox.”

This paradox for evolution is a *feature* of creation. We have seen that the earth is designed for life. With its oceans of liquid water, a protective atmosphere containing abundant free oxygen, and a distance from the sun that is just right for life, earth was certainly [designed](#) by God to be inhabited. But the other planets of the universe were not. From the sulfuric acid clouds of Venus to the frozen wasteland of Pluto, the other worlds of our solar system are beautiful and diverse, but they are not designed for life.

What about UFOs?

Sometimes after I speak on the topic of extraterrestrial life, someone will ask me about UFOs. A UFO (unidentified flying object) is just that—an object seen in the

sky that is unidentified to the person seeing it. People often want me to explain a sighting of some unknown flying object which they or often a friend have claimed to see. (Sometimes the implication is that if I can't explain it, it somehow proves that it must be an alien spacecraft; but such reasoning is completely vacuous.¹) These kinds of questions are unreasonable. It is one thing to be asked to interpret evidence that we have, but it is unrealistic to ask someone to interpret undocumented second- or third-hand stories with no actual evidence available for inspection.

There is no doubt that some people sincerely have seen things in the sky that they do not understand. This is hardly surprising since there are lots of things “up there,” which can be misunderstood by people not familiar with them. These include Venus, satellites, the international space station, the space shuttle, rockets, Iridium flares, manmade aircraft, internal reflections, meteors, balloons, fireflies, aurorae, birds, ball lightning, lenticular clouds, parhelia, etc. However, a person unfamiliar with these would see a UFO, since the object is “unidentified” to him or her. It is how people interpret what they see that can be questionable.

Remember that we always interpret evidence in light of our worldview. It is therefore crucial to have a correct, biblical worldview. The fallacious worldview of atheism/naturalism may lead someone to draw erroneous conclusions about what they see. From a biblical worldview, we expect to occasionally see things that are not easily explained, since our minds are finite. But UFOs are not alien spacecraft, and of course, there is no tangible evidence to support such a notion.

Why the Hype?

In the 1990s the television series *The X-files* entertained millions of fans with stories of aliens, government conspiracies, and one dedicated FBI agent's relentless search for truth. The show's motto, “The truth is out there,” is a

well-known phrase for sci-fi fans. But why is there such hype surrounding the notion of extraterrestrial life? Why is science fiction programming so popular? Why does SETI spend millions of dollars searching for life in outer space?

The discovery of intelligent extraterrestrial life would certainly be seen as a vindication of evolution; it is an expectation from a naturalistic worldview. But the desire to meet aliens, especially intelligent, technologically advanced ones, seems much more deeply felt than merely to vindicate evolutionary predictions. What is the *real* issue? I've heard a number of different answers from secular astronomers.

In some cases a belief in ETs may stem from a feeling of cosmic loneliness: "If there are aliens, then we would not be alone in the universe." In many cases it comes from an academic desire to learn the mysteries of the universe; a highly developed alien race might have advanced knowledge to pass on to us. Perhaps such knowledge is not merely academic; the hypothetical aliens may know the answers to fundamental questions of existence: "Why am I here? What is the meaning of life?" and so on. An advanced alien race might have medical knowledge far exceeding our own—knowledge which could be used to cure our diseases. Perhaps their medical technology would be so far advanced that they even hold the secret of life and death; with such incredible medical knowledge, perhaps human beings would no longer have to die—*ever*.

In a way, a belief in extraterrestrial life has become a secular replacement for God. God is the one who can heal every disease. God is the one in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are deposited ([Colossians 2:3](#)). God is the one who can answer the fundamental questions of our existence. God alone possesses the gift of eternal life ([John 17:3](#)). It is not surprising that the unbelieving scientist would feel a sense of cosmic loneliness, having rejected his Creator. But we are not alone in the universe; there is God. God created us for fellowship with Him; thus, we have an innate need for Him and for purpose.

Although human beings have rejected God, in Adam and by our sins as well, our need for fellowship with Him remains.

When I think of the majority of intelligent scientists who have studied God's magnificent creation but have nonetheless rejected Him and have instead chosen to believe in aliens and millions of years of evolution, I am reminded of [Romans 1:18–25](#). God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—are clearly revealed in the natural world so that there is no excuse for rejecting God or suppressing the truth about Him. The thinking of man apart from God is nothing more than futile speculations. Exchanging the truth of God, such as creation, for a lie, such as evolution, and turning to a mere creature such as hypothetical aliens for answers is strikingly similar to what is recorded in [Romans 1:25](#).

But when we start from the Bible, the evidence makes sense. The universe is consistent with the biblical teaching that the earth is a special creation. The magnificent beauty and size of a universe, which is apparently devoid of life except for one little world where life abounds, is exactly what we would expect from a biblical worldview. The truth is not “out there;” the truth is *in there*—in the [Bible](#)! The Lord Jesus is the truth ([John 14:6](#)). So, when we base our thinking on what God has said in His Word, we find that the universe makes sense.

Footnotes

1. The argument is that alien spacecraft could not be explained by a natural phenomenon. Therefore, it is suggested that witnessing something that cannot be explained naturally must prove the existence of alien spacecraft. This is a logical fallacy called “affirming the consequent.” It's equivalent to

saying, "All white dwarf stars are white. Fred is white; therefore Fred is a white dwarf star."