

Cosmonauts, Astronauts, The Bible and GOD

On April 12, 1961, aboard his Vostok 3KA-2 spacecraft, Yuri Alekseyevich Gagarin became the first human in outer space and the first to orbit the Earth. It was reported that he said, after exiting the earth's orbit, *"I don't see any God up here."* Actually, according to Colonel Valentin Petrov, it was likely said by the then Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, during a Communist Party meeting on anti-religious propaganda. *"Khrushchev gave the party and Komsomol [the Communist youth organization] the task of engaging in this propaganda and said, 'Why should you clutch at God? Here is Gagarin who flew into space but saw no God there.'"* Then, in 1963, Russian astronaut Valery Bykovsky told newsmen that **no Soviet cosmonaut believed in God and none of them had seen anything to change their minds during their space flights.** (Someone wryly quipped, "If a cosmonaut wants to see God, all he has to do is exit his craft and take off his space suit. He will meet God.")

This was in sharp contrast to their American counterparts – United States Astronauts – who reflected, at least initially, something of the reverence for God and the Bible that marked this country from its birth. For example:

Apollo 8 was launched from Cape Kennedy, FL., at 7:51 a. m., EST, on December 21, 1968. Two hours 50 minutes later, trans-lunar injection was performed; and astronauts Col. Frank Borman, (the commander), Capt. James A. Lovell, Jr., (the command module pilot), and Major William A. Anders, (the lunar module pilot), became the first humans to journey to the Moon. Apollo 8 entered lunar orbit on Christmas Eve, December 24, 69 hours 8 minutes after liftoff. That evening, before retiring, the astronauts did a live TV broadcast to Earth, showing pictures of the Earth and Moon as seen from their capsule. At the end of the broadcast:



Lunar Module Pilot William Anders said,

- *"For all the people on Earth the crew of Apollo 8 has a message we would like to send you." He then read Genesis 1:1-4: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness."*

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Command Module Pilot Jim Lovell then read Genesis 1:5-8,

- *"And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day."*

Commander Frank Borman completed the reading with Genesis 1:9-10,

- *"And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good."*

Commander Borman then closed the broadcast with these words:

"And from the crew of Apollo 8, we close with good night, good luck, a Merry Christmas, and God bless all of you—all of you on the good Earth"



Apollo 11: It was estimated that one billion people, (a quarter of the Earth's population and the largest world-wide TV audience in history), watched and listened as Neil Armstrong announced,

*“Houston, Tranquility Base here.
The Eagle has landed.”*

Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin stepped onto the lunar surface on July 20, 1969. Because the avowed (and now deceased) atheist Madalyn Murray O’Hair had filed suit against NASA (a suit eventually rejected by the courts) due to the Apollo 8

crew’s reading from the **Bible**, Aldrin was asked to forego his plan to read publicly from the **Bible** while on the Moon’s surface. He complied with this request, but, while still on the Moon, he radioed to Earth the following:

- *“Houston. This is Eagle, the LM Pilot speaking. I would like to request a few moments of silence. Over. I would like to invite each person listening in, wherever and whomever he may be, to contemplate for a moment the events of the past few hours and to give thanks in his own individual way.”*

While still on the Moon, Aldrin read John 15:5 to himself, words that imply the humility of a man who was awed by God’s power and depending on Him for a safe return home:

- *“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.”*

On the return to Earth, during a television broadcast by the astronauts the evening before splashdown, Aldrin quoted Psalm 8:3-4:

- *“When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that Thou visitest Him?”*

Apollo 15: Two years later, in July 1971, astronaut James B. Irwin walked on the moon. Speaking about that lunar mission, Irwin said: *“I felt the power of God as I’d never felt it before.”* After spending the first day exploring the rough lunar landscape, Irwin said he was reminded of his “favorite Biblical passage from Psalms,” which he then quoted by radio to Mission Control in Houston,

- *“I’ll look unto the hills from whence cometh my help.”*

Apollo 17: (December 1972) Eugene A. Cernan, commander of the last Apollo mission left the lunar surface with these words:

“We leave as we came and, God willing, as we shall return, with peace, and hope for all mankind.”