

"SUBJECT: SATELLITES OR STARS"

SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 2:1-2
From The Sermon File Of Dr. Doyce H. Nolan

Text: *Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.*

INTRODUCTION

A. THE FATHER OF PRACTICAL ROCKETRY

Eighty eight years ago, on February 10, 1910, a young graduate student at Clark University recorded in his thesis a wild vision and prediction that the presence of ice on the moon would allow human explorers and opportunity for existence and government off the earth. Needless to say, his thesis was the laughing stock and joke of the day, not only among the professors but the student body as well. His name-- Robert H. Goddard, the father of practical rocketry.

B. PROSPECTOR'S LUNER ORBIT

On March 5th, 1998 while in orbit around the moon, the rocket ship Prospector captured a definitive signal for water ice at both of the lunar poles. The available data indicated that a significant quantity of water ice, possibly as much as 300 million metric tons was mixed into the lunar soil at each pole. Robert Goddard's thesis has proven not to be such a laughing matter!

C. WHY IS WATER IS SO IMPORTANT IN THE SLOAR SYSTEM?

Because water is the most valuable natural resource for human life and rocket fuel. Water gives us oxygen to breathe and hydrogen to burn. Realistically and scientifically the Moon can become a breaking point for manned voyages to Mars and on beyond in years to come. Mars is so much like the earth it is believed that man can one day live on Mars. NASA expects to have man on Mars in next 20 years.

Mars Climate Orbiter was launch December 11, 1997 and arrived on Mars September 23, 1998. It orbited, and used atmospheric instruments and cameras to provide detailed information about the surface and climate of Mars. In January of 99 another space ship was launched (named the Mars Polar Lander) and landed near the southern polar cap on Mars. The lander was equipped with cameras, a robotic arm and instruments to measure the Martian soil composition and penetrate into the Martian subsurface to detect water ice.

The year 2001 the Mars Surveyer will be launched. Upon its arrival its purpose will be to check for the dangers that man might encounter once he lands on Mars, and to develop means to overcome these handicaps.

D. SCIENTIFIC & TECHNOLOGICAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

What an exciting day to live! For 35 years we have witnessed the scientific and technological accomplishments of man's attempt to explore outer-space. This space age has given us words that sounded strange a few years ago: "astronaut, cosmonaut, luner-rover, space-lab, climate

orbitor, pathfinder and satellite."

E. "SATELLITE" DATES BACK TO ROMAN EMPIRE

Matter had reached such a state of economic recession and violence that no person of importance dared walk the streets of Rome alone. Anyone with nobility and importance was always surrounded by armed body-guards known as "satellites", or "attendants."

1. In the year 1611, Johannes Kepler the astronomer, carried this word "satellite" over into astronomy while he was studying Galileo's discovery of secondary planets revolving around Juptier. To him these secondary plants reminded him of body-guards, or attendants encircling a person of nobility and importance walking the streets of Rome. So he gave the secondary planets the name "satellites."
2. The word "satellite" today refers to a man-made object that is shot into space from the earth and enters an orbit around the earth. a) The earth does not revolve around the satellite, the satellite revolves around the earth. b) The satellite does not control the earth, the earth controls the satellite. In other words, man on earth controls the satellite, the satellite does not control man.

F. UNUSUAL LUMINARY OBJECT APPEARED IN HEAVEN

On the night of our Savior's birth an unusual luminary object appeared in the heavens. It was not a satellite, for its origin was not earth. The earth had absolutely no control, no influence upon this shining object whatsoever. But it sure had influence upon the earth!!

1. It was the Christmas star! It was of divine origin, placed in the heavens by God Himself!!
2. The star influenced the wise men to such a degree that they began to follow it, the star did not follow the wise men. The influence of this star led the wise men to Bethlehem where the Christ-child had been born.
3. The Christ-child was the true Light of God Himself, entering this dark world riddled with economic recession and violence. This alone demands of us to seriously consider two facts that existed then, and still exist today:
 - The Prevailing Darkness
 - The Dispelling of Darkness

I. THE PREVAILING DARKNESS (vs. 1a)

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem..

Jesus was born into the prevailing darkness after the four hundred years between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

1. A Period of Great Intellectual Minds
 - a. This was a period where great intellectual minds of astronomy, mathematics and

philosophy was born. There seemed to be no end to man's advancement in knowledge and wisdom! BUT ALSO...

2. A Period of Great Moral Decay

- a. There had been no prophet, no word from God during these four hundred years. There had been no spiritual guidance at all.. morally things were really bad!!!

3. Intellectual Darkness Prevailed (1b)

- a. Wise men from the East came to Jerusalem. These wise men were students of astronomy, which is a study of the heavens, but in reality they knew very little. They sprinkled astrology over into astronomy. During this dark period of history not one of these intellectual minds had an answer for man's greatest need! Not one of them could lead a person to Jesus Christ!!

4. Moral Darkness Prevailed (3)

- a. When Herod the King heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Herod was troubled because he was afraid of losing his kingdom to another king. But why was all Jerusalem troubled? Because they knew their lives were not what they ought to be!! Cruelty, wickedness, and sin was a daily practice, and they were falling deeper and deeper into barbarism! Man needed some answers for his life!! Not one of these intellectual minds could supply that answer!! Not even :

- i. Alexander the Great! He was taught by the brilliant philosopher Aristotle! He had conquered the known world with military might! Yet died at the early age of 33 with yellow jaundice caused from his excessive use of alcohol!
- ii. Amplify! Survey made in 1992 of young adults in their thirties who began drinking alcoholic beverages in their early to mid-teens. The result was horrifying!! Their brain would not function as fast as those who had not used alcohol. Each and every test took longer for them to finish than those who had not used alcohol. They made a much lower grade on every test. Alcohol does have a lasting impact on the brain! Alexander the great had no answers for man's greatest need. Not even...

- b. Emperor Nero! Was taught by the brilliant philosopher Seneca. Nero had no morals at all!! In fact he was barbaric! He would arrest Christians and thrust poles upward in their bodies. They were then placed along the streets and set afire to give him light as he raced his chariot through the streets.

- i. He killed two of his sons on a rumor that they planned to take over his throne!
- ii. He paid to have his mother murdered because she disagreed with his actions in the killing of his sons.

- c. It is easy to see that these were days when man prevailed intellectually, when immorality knew no bounds. These were the dark days of history!
- i. Illustration: Black-out drills after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. For the duration of the 2nd World War black-out drills were practiced all across America. This was training in preparedness in case Japan pulled another sneak attack on our homeland. At any time during the night when you heard the siren, simulating an air attack, every light in every house, in every work place, all across our land had to be turned off and remained off until the all-clear siren sounded.
 - ii. A song was written from this experience entitled "When the Lights Go On Again All Over The World". Kate Smith made it famous. Actually, the lights have not gone on again all over this world! Even though man continues to advance intellectually, medically and scientifically, our world has degenerated into that of an immoral holocaust!! We have degenerated into a society that thrives on violence, sex, alcohol, drugs and guns!!
 - iii. Amplify: When a ten or twelve year old child feels more secure and safe on the streets than at home, it's a dark world! When:
 - children have to find love through alcohol, drugs, and sex on the streets, it's a dark world! When:
 - parents sexually molest their children, it's a dark world! When:
 - parents torture, beat and burn babies with cigarettes, and insert the aids virus into their veins, it's a dark world! When:
 - parents allow children to give them orders it's a dark world! When:
 - parents do not provide Christian and spiritual training for their children by example, it's a dark world!

This darkness needs to be dispelled! consider:

II. THE DISPELLING OF DARKNESS (2)

The wise men asked, *"Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."*

4. The Answer to Our Darkness is Jesus Christ!! (2a)

"Where is He who is born King of the Jews?" Concerning the night Christ was born, the hymn writer says: "Yet in thy dark streets shineth the Everlasting Light." Christ Himself said: "I am The Light of the World!" He is just that!!..

- For those searching for God He said, "I am The Way."

- For those seeking rest He said, "Come unto Me all of you that are heavily laden, and I will give you rest!"
- For those who thirst for a better life He said, "I am the water of life, he who drinks of Me shall never thirst!"
- For those who wish to rid themselves of sin He said, "I am the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world!"
- For those fearing death He said, "I am the Resurrection and the life!"

Amplify: Christ is The Light, He is The Star in your darkest day!

5. The Attributes of the star (2b)

"We have seen His star in the East, and have come to worship Him."

There are three:

- a. The Star Led to Jesus. What an important attribute for Christians! People in sinful darkness will never find their way out of this hopeless condition unless we as Christians lead them out!
 - i. The responsibility that God has placed upon us is heavy. We are to live as stars of God in this world, leading men to His Son, Jesus Christ, and not away from Him!
 - ii. Illustrate: Late 1950 Billy Graham Southern Crusade. Billy Graham was in one of our Southern cities for a crusade. The governor of the state assigned a state trooper to drive Mr. Graham around. The trooper was so impressed with Billy Graham's life that on the last night of the crusade he went forward accepting Christ as Savior. Truly a star of God!
- b. The Christmas Star was Elevated. The wise men had no trouble in following the Star because it was elevated so high. As Christians, we must never allow our high moral influence to slide downward. It is then that we become a fallen star!
- c. The Christmas Star was Conspicuous. It shined so brightly that they had no trouble following it. Does this best describe your life? As a Christian do you stand out in a crowd? If we are to lead the lost from their sinful darkness, we must stand out in daily living!!

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SATILLITES AND STARS?

We have talked about other planets, space ships, satellites and stars. Do you recall that: A satellite is a man-made object placed in orbit around the earth. It is controlled by earth, it is influenced by earth. A star is a divine creation of God placed in the heavens by God, it receives its influence from God. Psalm 148:3

says that stars of light are to praise Him.

Question: Are you a satellite or a star? In your daily living are you influenced by the earth, by the world, or do you influence the world as stars of God?

CONCLUSION:

It was the last Sunday before Christmas. The Sunday school lesson had been about the wise men and the star. In closing, the teacher looked at her children and said, "God has given everyone of you a star, and if you follow that star, it will lead you Jesus." A little boy raised his hand and the teacher acknowledged it. The little boy said, "teacher, you're my star."

Every Christian is a star on some ones horizon.. the question is.. where are you leading them?