

### Who Gets to Narrate the Universe, Part 3

Grab your bibles. We will turn to a couple of places today and you might want to make some notes about what I'm going to speak about today.

Before we jump in, and before I do a little wrap up of the last two weeks, I want to remind us all of a really handy and important tool, a measuring tool that we always need to use when we're talking about most anything biblical or theological. And that's the idea of essential versus nonessential tenets of the faith. For the most part, the Church has agreed down through the ages on what the essential things are, the big chunks.

Now, sometimes you can have debates about whether something in the essential category should be in the nonessential category or vice versa. Folks really get really caught up about nonessentials and how essential they are. But for the most part the Church has agreed about what essential tenets are. Those are things that have to do with bedrock doctrines of our faith: the Trinity, the saving power of Jesus Christ, his work on the cross, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, future, coming again, etc.

The reason I say all of this is because over the top of most everything we talk about today, I want you to realize that much of this is nonessential. However, the questions that are being asked by people and the assumptions that are being made by folks do point to essential things: What do we believe in? What are our origins? Where do we come from? Are we alone in the universe? That kind of thing. And some of those questions start to nibble around the edges of essential tenets of the faith.

One of my concerns about all of this business about UFOs, aliens, etc. is not so much whether it is true or not, or what could it be, though we're going to talk about that some today. It's rather more about the questions that are being asked and will Christians be able to answer them well or have a dialogue with somebody about them.

To recap, I have said that over the last few months, especially starting with some congressional hearings, there's been a lot in the news about aliens and alien civilizations and UFOs and UAPs. I'll bet you dollars to donuts that you've seen some of this stuff in the news. It seems like there's something about it all the time in the news these days. And there are a lot of assumptions being made and there are a lot of questions being asked, but they aren't necessarily being made by or asked by Christians or from a Christian perspective. You've got scientists and whistleblowers and government officials and others who are pontificating, asking questions, talking about this, and along the way they're asking really important questions.

But at the same time, they're also kind of setting the narrative. So, the very first week, we talked about how we need to remember God's big story. It's the thing that ties everything together, and there are seven parts to it, and I'm hoping that you have committed those to memory so you can tell God's story whenever you're asked.

We also took a look at the idea “are we alone in the universe?” As I've said before, we Christians have never believed that we are alone in the universe. There is a plethora of things that we can't even begin to imagine that are right here on the planet that we haven't even discovered yet, much less all of the myriad of things that God created in the beginning.

We also talked about science and belief and how sometimes they get scrambled and mixed together and assumed that, say, science can answer belief. I gave you a quote last week that I want to repeat because I think it's a good starting point for today. This was Dr. Jill Tarter, an astronomer. She was the one on whom the character that Jody Foster plays in the movie “Contact” was based. She was among, at one point, “Time Magazine's” the 100 most influential people on the planet.

She says this: “Are we alone? When we used to ask the question, Are we alone? We used to ask priests and philosophers. We used to ask them, what should we believe? But what any of us believe isn't going to change the way the universe is. And so, the appropriate thing to do is a scientific exploration to go and try to find out what is we want to know, how we stack up against the cosmos? Are we unique? Are we one of many? And if we're one of many, how intelligent are we in relationship to something else out there?”

So, you see, just in that one little quote there, there's all kinds mixing together of science and belief. But the fact of the matter is, and you may have heard this before, science is not a settled matter. Science, by its very nature, is not settled.

In fact, you could make a case for saying there's no such thing as science. There are lots of sciences. But the idea that science is some sort of settled, monolithic, single unit is not so.

Now, that doesn't mean that science doesn't have a lot to say. We ought to listen. There are some good things to learn. Somebody once said that science very often is the ability to think God's thoughts after him. I like that idea.

But science cannot answer the fullness of the questions that are being asked, and science cannot answer the assumptions that are being made about the matters before us. I recently saw a figure that an estimated 80% of the world believes in UFOs or extraterrestrials. If that's the case, then we should know how to respond as believers.

So, what are these things? You remember that the government whistleblowers are saying we have evidence of alien craft, evidence of what they called “biologics,” ostensibly the pilots of these craft, and we have been visited by extraterrestrials for a very, very long time. But before we get into the possibilities of what it all might be, you need to know that there are lots of people out there talking about what the possibilities of this might be.

When you get on the internet and start looking at this material and dive in, you can really get your head spun around, because there's lots and lots and lots and lots of stuff about the possibilities of what all this might be. And some of it gets really wacky. Some of it is intriguing and interesting; some of it is theologically based.

You should know that there are some Christians whose walk I admire who are commenting on these phenomena. They seem to be good, Godly Christian people. I trust them. And the ones whom I admire and trust have what seem to be really good, balanced, Godly, Scripture-based responses. They remind their readers, and I think this is important, that they themselves don't know what it is ultimately, and that many of these things are not essential tenets of the faith. They admit that they don't have all the answers. I really appreciate that. We should take a note from them.

So having said that, here are some of the things that you're going to hear might be at the root of all of this business about UAPs, UFOs extraterrestrials, etc.

One of the things that you hear is that this is a massive government psychological operation, some sort of "false flag operation," that our government has put together for some geopolitical reason—that there's nothing real about any of it. And for reasons that I can't suss out, it's all been made up.

These days, people aren't exactly overcome with trust for the government. So, it's really hard not to get tangled up in your thinking about all of it. Should we trust the government here, but not over here? Perhaps in this area, but not this one? For the life of me, I can't think of what the reason would be, the purpose would be, the advantage would be [of such an operation] especially given that different arms of the government are fussing with each other about this issue right now. The whistleblowers themselves seem to be coming out of the government.

Is it a psychological operation? I don't know. It's possible, I guess. But that's one thing that you may hear.

You may also hear, number two, that these phenomena are real, but that they are earth-based, that they are earthly in origin, and that they are coming, say, from our government and or perhaps from global enemies. The idea is that we or others have super, top secret, highly advanced technologies. The idea goes that those governments would then blame the evidence on extraterrestrials, aliens, and so on, in order to distract from something else. I suppose that that's possible. I don't know.

I don't know what the purpose of that would be. Doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me, but I suppose it's possible.

Another thing that you will hear is that these phenomena are real and that they are extraterrestrial, and they are not from here but from other planets. The story goes that some in our government have been aware of this for a very long time, for years maybe—that we have the crafts and the bodies in our possession. That is, in fact, what someone said on the record under oath at the congressional hearing back in July. So that very statement is out there.

I suppose that's possible. But I don't know. There's an aspect or two to this line of thinking that really throws me for a loop, though. And it just sort of happens to hit me on my logical side: I don't think it makes a lot of sense that if there is an alien civilization, and if they're supposedly more superior to us, and have all of this far-superior technology and craft and so on, why would they travel huge distances across space to kind of show up, not want to be seen, and play hide and seek? That doesn't make a lot of sense to me. And if these craft are allegedly vastly superior, they have to at least be subject to the law of gravity because sometimes they crash. And that doesn't make any sense to me either. I can't wrap my noggin around that.

Does that mean that they are not extraterrestrial, somehow coming from other places to visit us? Somebody else has said, and you will hear this, that maybe what they're doing is studying us. And to that I say, if you're billions of years ahead of us, I'm not that complicated. It wouldn't take years and years to study me, and I'm not sure what would be gained in doing that anyway. That doesn't make a lot of sense to me.

So, here's my gut feeling on it—my personal opinion. I promised you I'd tell you: My gut is that some or perhaps even a lot of this has some kind of demonic source. I believe that there's something demonic about it.

Now, this gets into a tough area for many Christians. Maybe even some of you right now are recoiling a little bit because I said that something is demonic. It shouldn't because we know and believe that there are demonic forces that are militantly opposed to the kingdom of God.

And yet this gets into a tough area for some Christians because I can imagine that some find it easier to believe in extraterrestrials than, say, demons or fallen angels. And remember this: People who are not Christians, who don't believe in God surely don't believe in demons. But they do believe in this: that life has to spring from non-life. They're nontheists. They're Darwinists. So, for them, extraterrestrial life has become an article of faith. There has to be, in their mind, there has to be habitable planets and there has to be life out there, both intelligent and not. And so they say, "See, we're not alone." But as I said last week, we Christians have never believed that we are alone. It'd be easy to go along with them in their line of thinking if we're not careful.

Listen. God's big story does contain chapters that include some really weird things that we often gloss over or make excuses for or skip entirely in our Bibles. God's big story does include the demonic and a host of beings that we simply don't know much about at all. That's just the truth.

Christians have been thinking about this stuff for a long time. I found a quote from Augustine that really interested me. It's his opining about non-human intelligence. Here's what Augustine says. He writes that "the pagans were right about the existence of non-human intelligence with 'aerial bodies.' The mistake was to think that these spirits were gods when in fact they are demons who contrive to turn us aside and hinder our spiritual progress."

Isn't that interesting? The fact is our ancient enemy has been trying to hinder our spiritual progress from the very, very beginning. He and his followers rebelled against God, and he tempted our first parents to do the very same thing. God's story is full of examples of our ancient enemy trying to harm and confuse and poison and control, to destroy, to divide.

Our ancient enemy hates God. Our ancient enemy hates God's creation and therefore our ancient enemy hates you and he hates me. He hates everything that God has made us especially. Why? Because God made us in his very own image. God chose to do that with humankind.

There's a wonderful place in the book *Peralandra*, the second in the series of the C.S. Lewis "Space Trilogy" books, where the evil one is walking through this world, this other planet, "Peralandra," and as he walks along, he picks up little weird creatures and kills them and casts them aside for no reason, no reason at all. He just hates the creation. That's the image that I get when I think about our ancient enemy. He hates anything that God has made.

I've said before that wherever you see God doing something sacramental you find the enemy making a false version of it. The pinnacle of creation was male and female made in the image of God. God breathed life into us. And so, you can imagine Satan wanting to make a poisonous mockery of that very thing.

Genesis 6 seems to suggest that he did just that, and it's at the center of one of the possibilities for aliens that you're going to hear out there. Lots of folks out there are talking about Nephilim, and if you haven't heard it yet, you will, and you need to know what God's word says about that. So, turn to Genesis 6, would you?

This is one of those places where, when your average pastor is doing a study of the Book of Genesis, they get sick that week or give it a very sort of humdrum human interpretation.

Beloved as always, we've got to interpret Scripture through the context of those who wrote it and heard it would have understood it. So, let's look at Genesis 6, verse 1, and see what it says. This is God's word. "When human beings began to increase in number on the Earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God, (bene elohim) saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful and they married any of them they chose. Then the Lord said, 'My spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal. Their days will be 120 years.'"

This is the place in the next verse where the Nephilim business comes up.

"The Nephilim were on the Earth in those days and also afterward when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were the heroes of old men of renown. The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the Earth and that every inclination of the thoughts of the heart was only evil all the time.

“And the Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the Earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. So, the Lord said, ‘I will wipe from the face of the Earth the human race I have created and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground, for I regret that I have made them.’ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.”

What's the very next narrative that happens in your Bible? What's the next story that occurs? Noah and the flood.

So, look what's happening here. The word Nephilim comes from the Hebrew verb “the fallen ones.” Fallen ones. And they are said here in this passage to be the offspring of the bene elohim, the sons of God. Also, this word is used of angels.

Fallen beings, according to this passage, cohabitated with human women and produced Nephilim, some sort of hybrid offspring. Now, could that be part of Satan's strategy at this point in time in human history? God made humankind in his own image. So, he thought, “You know what? I'm going to make a weird hybrid, fallen version of that in my own image.”

That is the view of Genesis 6. It's the view embraced by the ancient Hebrews, it's the view embraced by rabbinical writings, and it's even the view embraced by the early church. And when the Hebrew was translated into the Greek, my understanding is that it gets even more specific.

And that view would have also included the “Book of Enoch.” Now you're going to hear in some of these discussions about aliens and Nephilim, you're going to hear something about the Book of Enoch. The Book of Enoch is ancient Hebrew text and tradition says it was written by the patriarch Enoch, who was the father of Methuselah and the great grandfather of Noah.

What you need to know about the Book of Enoch is a couple of things. First, it's filled with lots and lots of details, really unusual material, about the origin of demons and Nephilim and why some angels fell from heaven, and an explanation of why then, therefore, the Genesis flood was necessary because of this hybrid creation that happened.

But you also need to know that it's not considered canonical Scripture. It was not included in the canon of Scripture. So, we don't look for it to have the same authority as God's word. However, we do need to understand that it would have been read and understood and it would have been part of the contextual mindset of those who read and understood Genesis 6. They would have taken it for granted that these things are so because Enoch is in their vocabulary and in their narrative.

You may have heard that according to the Enochian narrative, these angels who are called their “Watchers” or “sons of God,” they fell, they rebelled, they came to humankind to share secret knowledge and take union with women.

You may have also heard that these Nephilim were nothing more than just the descendants of Seth. But that's not really a faithful reading of the Scripture in context with other Scripture. For

example, Jude mentions and quotes Enoch. [And the Epistle of Peter makes reference to events in Genesis that make best sense in light of a “supernatural,” Enochian interpretation]. So, there would be a general understanding that these things would have been interpreted again by early Hebrew readers, Second Temple Judaism certainly, rabbinical tradition, even the early church, that this has a, if I can use the word, “supernatural” interpretation.

Now, it is a long leap to say that because of that we now have aliens. And I'm not making that connection. But I am saying that there is far more unusual in this universe than we could possibly imagine. Our own scriptural tradition makes room for some pretty unusual things.

Some of the Christian folks who are taking a measured, good, and I think balanced, Godly look at this stuff, are suggesting that this business of Satan doing these things and fallen creatures uniting with earthly women may have happened more than once in Earth's history. All of that, once again, is speculation. But you will hear it brought up as a possibility or as perhaps a piece of the puzzle when it comes time to explain some sort of oddball, trans-dimensional, strange phenomenon that may be manifesting itself in our world today.

So, what do we do with all this? Well, first of all, let's admit that the questions being raised and the assumptions that are being made are important ones. We need to acknowledge that.

We need to listen. We need to be kind. We need to be grounded in our faith and God's big story.

There are some Christians who believe that these UFO things are benevolent extraterrestrials from some other planet. There are some Christians who want to take a wait and see approach—let's wait and see what [the aliens] have to say, and if it's something good, then we can determine whether it's actually Satanic.

There are some Christians who believe this is a massive psychological operation or massive cover up from the government.

There are some Christians who believe that all this points to a kind of last days deception involving supposed aliens or human/alien hybrids that are actually demons or the offspring of fallen beings.

I want to suggest to you that I don't understand it, but my gut tells me that there's something demonic about it—some sort of fallen creatures. I don't understand it, but we do need to realize that if we say that is Satanic or that it is demonic, we will likely be ridiculed.

And yet I want you also to know that Scripture provides for the demonic and the Satanic. If it's not demonic, my gut is that it would be at least used by our enemy for demonic purposes. Why? Because the preciousness and the sacredness of life uniquely formed human life in God's own image—our origins, the meaning of our existence, all of that—is being questioned. Those things are under attack, and if they aren't now, they will be. I really do believe that.

Do I know if it is somehow demonic? I don't. But I do know something about Satan and his aims and what he wants to do. His kingdom and his aims are furthered when the assumptions made and the questions asked shift away from God's story and onto other things.

I want to show you some Scriptures. You might want to jot these down. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11 says this: "The coming of a lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refuse to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason, God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie."

Jesus talks about end times in Matthew 24 and says this: Matt 24:24: "For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect."

What will those great signs and wonders be? I don't know, but there are some pretty spectacular things right now being suggested by all of this talk of aliens. Could that be part of a deception? I don't know.

1 Timothy 4:1 says this, "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later time some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and the doctrines of demons."

Beloved, we need to be on guard. We need to be on guard against the enemy. I don't know very much about extraterrestrials and alien civilizations. I don't know what those things are, what of the many possibilities that might be. But, again, I do know something about Satan, and he hates you and he hates me, and he hates God's creation. And he is a deceiver. We must be on our guard.

So, what do we do?

Number one: Don't panic. God is in control, always has been, always will be. That's where I stick my flag and stand. Don't panic.

Number two: Don't automatically follow and believe anything that comes along, no matter the source, just because. We don't need automatically to latch on one particular thing, no matter what the source is, we ought to be, in other words, skeptical.

Was it the Bereans who took to Scripture everything that they saw to measure it? That's what we ought to do.

There are some, as I said before, really good and Godly people online. One recently, we just lost him back in March. His name is Dr. Michael Heiser. I very much respect his theology scholarship. He talks a lot about this stuff. I admire him. He makes a lot of sense to me. Am I going to automatically believe that? No.



Next, let's don't automatically respond with some sort of knee jerk Christiansee bumper sticker slogan. I saw a recent Tweet that said this, "There are no aliens, only demons. Don't be deceived. The Bible is real. 100%." Well, I don't necessarily disagree with a lot of that, but golly, the way that it is presented is just really a creepy turnoff to me. Let's don't simply say, "There are no aliens." Well, there might be. I don't know. I don't know what God created in every part of his kingdom. I don't know. Demons. Yes, they are real. But do I know that all of this is absolutely, positively demonic? No, I don't know that.

You've heard people before, when you're trying to have a conversation with them, who say, "God said it, I believe it, and that settles it." Well, it's not possible to have a meaningful conversation with that person, so let's don't do that. Let's give informed and biblical responses to the phenomenon.

Here's another point: Let's don't get distracted by all the UFO talk. I've spent three Sundays talking to you about the questions and the assumptions we might have to return to this at some point, I don't know. But we don't need to get all tangled up in it and overly concerned. We don't need to be distracted by it. Instead, we need to understand and tell God's big story. Because God's big story is the only story that binds all of these things together and makes sense of the world and the universe and life.

We need to minister in the name of Jesus. We need to introduce people to Jesus. We need to preach his gospel in the power of God's Holy Spirit. That's what we need to do.

And above all, we will pray, and we will worship, and we will gather at Epiclesis, and we will encourage one another with words from Scripture like these: Hebrews 4: "Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it." Verse Twelve: "For the word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet he did not sin." And my favorite verse of all: "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

Let's pray: Father, we're going to hold fast to our faith. We're going to hold firmly, as the writer of Hebrews says, to the faith that we profess. And I pray that we would profess it and that we would tell your story.

Now, God, we don't know what all this alien stuff is about, I surely don't. But Lord, a lot of people are talking about it and they're making assumptions and asking questions that point to really awfully important things. I pray that we will study to find ourselves approved and be ready with a good, balanced, winsome Godly answer. Let us remember—Lord Jesus, help us to

do this—that your big story contains chapters of stuff in it that we don't understand and seems really strange, but it's not unfathomable to you. And I give thanks that you wrote the story from start to finish. Bless this congregation, Lord Jesus, and protect us, especially as the days grow more evil. And let us not be deceived by the enemy who does roam about and roars like a lion looking for someone to devour.

We love you and give you thanks and pray all of these things in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.