



# Out of this World; the Bible in Space

by Ken Clapham

*Throughout history, humans have sought for greater understanding of our own planet and the universe beyond. The Bible has always played an important part in that journey, writes Ken Clapham.*

**The Revd Ken Clapham is an Anglican minister who would like to be the first clergyman in space. After many visits to space stations, he counts astronauts among his friends and is a regular speaker and broadcaster on the subject.**

Christopher Columbus, speaking of his voyage to the Indies, is reported to have said "There is no question that the inspiration was from the Holy Spirit through the Holy Scriptures".

The invention of the telescope in the seventeenth century enabled humans to observe the surface of the planets in greater clarity. This led to the desire to reach out to them and the launch of the first liquid propelled rocket, by Goddard in 1926, led to the dawn of the space age. The USSR announced the successful flight of Sputniks I and II in 1957, followed by Yuri Gagarin being the first human to orbit the earth in 1961. America's NASA responded in May 1962 when John Glenn, a committed Christian, spent nearly five

hours in orbit. The space age had truly arrived.

On Christmas Eve 1968 the crew of Apollo 8 became the first humans to orbit the moon and observe its surface from 70 miles up. As they emerged from behind the moon, the crew sent Christmas greetings to earth, prayed for peace and the world heard the first Bible reading from space. The astronauts quoted from Genesis 1: "In the beginning when God created the universe."

In July 1969 the Apollo 11 crew lifted off from earth to be the first humans in history to walk on the lunar surface. Following a safe touch-down on the dry, dusty moon, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin shared in a Communion service, quoting from John 15.

Aldrin later wrote out part of Psalm 8: "When I look at the

sky, which you have made, the moon and the stars which you set in their places – what is man that you think of him?”

During their moon walk Buzz Aldrin placed the text he had written on the lunar dust, thus making it the only verse of the Bible to be left on the moon in history.

July 1971 saw the launch of Apollo 15 to the Appenine Mountains, the highest mountains on the earth-facing side of the moon. This crew were the first to spend three earth days on the lunar surface during which time they drove the lunar rover searching for the famous white rock, known as the “Genesis Rock”. Returning from the mountains to base camp, Dave Scott remarked to Jim Irwin how beautiful the mountains looked with the sun shining on them. Jim replied by quoting Psalm 121: “I look to the mountains, where will my help come from? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth.”

Following the safe return of Apollo 15, Jim Irwin visited many countries sharing his moon experience and his faith. He would always say, “Jesus Christ walking on this earth is more important than man walking on the moon”.

Charles Duke, who visited the moon in April 1972 with Apollo 16, always quotes Psalm 19: “How clearly the skies reveal God’s glory! How plainly it shows what he has done.”

For many who have flown in space on earlier missions as well as those who fly as Shuttle crew today, the Scriptures are important. As astronauts view earth hanging in the blackness of space, many have called to mind Job 26.7: “God stretched out the heavens and hung the earth on nothing.”

During a visit to our home and parish the late Jim Irwin described science in the following words: “It is discovering God’s laws which control and sustain the universe, and are revealed by him in the Bible.”