

Moon Meets Mars

We know that it's going to fly by Mars and most likely going to miss, but there's a possibility of an impact.

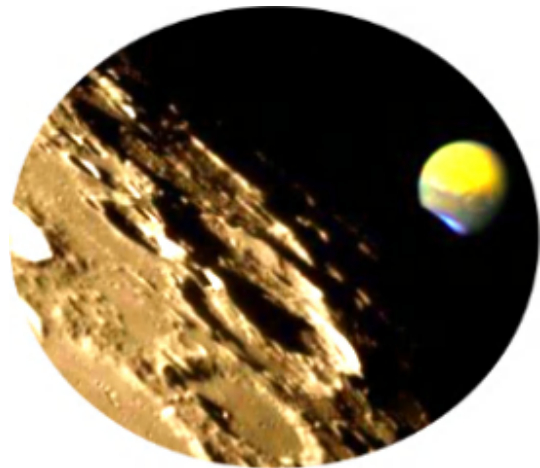
- Steve Chesley, Astronomer, NASA

Ok, it's not a quote that refers to the Moon actually hitting Mars; the comment refers to an asteroid in route to Mars. Coincident to the tracking of this possible impact was the increased brightness of the planet as well as the apparent closeness of Mars to the Moon from planet Earth - so at least the two appear to be in collision at the time of this article.

I have never been a stargazer; never really was interested in the extraterrestrial, the cosmos or astronomy. Except for learning about such things in school and a faint memory of some of the NASA missions - most notable, the landing on the Moon by Neal Armstrong - I have preferred to keep some light years away from the science, the wonder and vastness of our space and beyond.

Looking back on this side of the Black Hole, friends and acquaintances have tried to muster some participation on occasion; perhaps they had a telescope or were planning a trip to the observatory. Of all such opportunities, few have harnessed any level of sincere interest - but merely a kind gesture aimed at trying to share in their enthusiasm or show some respect for their knowledge, hobby and otherwise focus on objects far and away.

Not to altogether excuse myself from the higher elevations, as aerospace and Biblical topics do hold my attention and, in the case of later, my aspirations for the life hereafter. Aircraft have long been a mild interest - stemming from a few air shows as a kid and young adult. Who could resist the acrobatics of these flying



aces and crack pilots of all vintage and vantage of flight? Who should resist the truth of the Bible and the coming-return of Jesus to gather his family and to dispel the strangers? For either, there is a certain fear from the possibility that life could end at any moment; but in the later, a certain intrigue and wanting that life could truly begin at any moment. Both are in some way related to the higher elevations - the one obviously falling short of the galaxies, the other being the creator and master of them.

As a Psalmist looked into night's bright sky, he spoke with deepest of reflection and awe: *The moon and the stars which you (God) have set in place; what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him...*

In this reflection was the clear expression of the mystery of God and his creation: why did God create us? Though clearly ahead of his (the Psalmist) time, the follow-on issues of this reflection would be: why did he come to Earth in flesh (after the fall of man), live among his creation, die on the cross, and rise again to return to heaven? For the Psalmist, the *clear expression* is more a question than an answer that, while God did do (or has done) all these things, we do not know why; moreover, that he did so for us as but a spec in the vastness of night's bright sky.

In the modern age we live, the Psalmist would be more in awe with the findings of science to explain that the limits of *the vastness* are, well, more limitless. This poet would have the findings of history (which would be his future) as well - but I don't believe that the passing of time has done much to aid mankind's deserving of God's mercy and special attention. With history and science working against - rather than toward - the unveiling of the mystery of God, what steps might follow? The Psalmist could look to the vastness in the contemporary and, on pure coincidence, find that the Earth's moon and some distant planet (or star) appears to be close - but then he might not even care or consider it relevant. He could delve further into the depths of science and astronomy, but the outcome would more likely lead to more questions rather than answers; questions of some

common ideas as the Black Hole, Light Years, and other such terms and theories afforded by science. Like most of us, he would marvel at the accomplishments of flight and technology within human sight - he himself even willing to board a craft and experience the aerial view from the bird's eye. With much more information available and conceivably supporting of the mystery of God, he would seem to be further resolved toward an answer to his wonder and awe.

From my humble view however, he would be even less convinced of the reasons - for God's special attention - but even more wanting of the desire to know and experience the presence of the Holy One. As the testimony of some gives rise to this experience - through the Holy Spirit - he might follow in pursuit of Holiness in a time when the Spirit lives within the soul to transform it to a Christ-likeness or Christian being. Whether he would follow the traditional or mainline theology, a mega-church or the Pentecostals, I do not know; but I think he would begin in his homeland of Israel and perhaps work his way (or his mind) to the outer realms of the church - both Judaism and Christianity.

In the imaginary state of the Psalmist in modern society lies a lesson for all who have taken flight, who have been exposed to modern developments and who have pursued Holiness in this church or that; the lesson being that the more we know about our world (and beyond), the less we know about God as maker (and savior) of his creation. Whereas the Psalmist had far-limited resources (in his day) from which to draw this fundamental question, we have countless-more from which to overlook or negate the question in sight of our bigger picture of God's creation without God. The potential risk for us all is that the more we know - or think we know - the less we consider the wonder and awe of God and our place beneath him and his far, ever-reaching creation. As for the mystery, it has and will be with us until he returns; the Moon and Mars may never meet, but they may want to pal around when the cosmos rises to the occasion that the time is nearing.