

FAITH *Matters*

Written by **Matt Dodrill**,
Senior Pastor, Pulaski
Heights Baptist Church



I'm going to write about something that puts me at risk of becoming the laughingstock of Hillcrest. But that's only because this topic has been relegated to the intellectual basement of pop culture and fantastical speculation, and the people who take it seriously have typically been pushed to the margins — until recently.

So here goes. I'm going to talk about UFOs.

To put it bluntly, the existence of UFOs (or UAPs: "Unidentified Aerial Phenomena") is no longer contestable. In 2017, The New York Times released the first of a series of groundbreaking stories that disclosed the Department of Defense's long-held interest in UAPs, including Pentagon-issued footage of these mysterious objects. Indeed, high-ranking government officials are now openly admitting the existence of UAPs, and there's even a bipartisan(!) proposal to throw more spending at UAP research.

According to the reports (and the footage!), these wingless objects move at hypersonic speeds without any means of

propulsion, they can travel 70-plus knots *underwater*, and they can accelerate and decelerate instantaneously, such that no human operator could survive the g-forces.

It's truly remarkable and, frankly, inexplicable. While it would be imprudent to dismiss all terrestrial explanations, we cannot ignore the fact that modern aerial technology — an incredibly advanced field in its own right — is lightyears behind the technology on display here.

I don't have any definitive answers. But I *do* have three questions that I believe people of faith should be asking in light of these discoveries.

1. If UAPs are the smoking gun that points to extraterrestrial life, are we willing to expand the scope of salvation (Christianity), exilic return (Judaism), awakening (Buddhism), Moksha (Hinduism), etc.? Speaking as a Christian, I know that we've only just begun to take seriously the place of non-human animals in God's salvific project. Should we consider the place of non-terrestrial creatures, too?
2. Should we re-examine the supernatural and cosmic characters found in our sacred stories? Many religious texts include stories of angels, demons, gods, and hybrid creatures like the Nephilim. Previously, we thumbed our noses at ancient people's belief in "the gods" (not to be confused with capital-G *God*, the "I AM" of Moses' burning bush encounter: the ground and source of all creatures — including gods). But maybe they were right. Maybe there really are cosmic creatures that exist on a higher plane in the hierarchy of being, and we're encountering them anew.
3. Are we prepared to make a paradigm shift in the way we think about cosmology? The Near Eastern cosmos in the book of Genesis eventually gave way to a Ptolemaic universe. Then came the Copernican revolution, followed by the Newtonian shift, which gave way to relativity theory. Our conceptions of the universe are changing all the time. Is it possible that UAPs exist in a "parallel" dimension that we've only barely begun to perceive, which would partly explain why these objects can perform maneuvers that defy the laws of physics and aerodynamics? That sounds crazy, right? Well, Copernicus *also* sounded crazy — at first.

It feels somewhat deranged to type these words on a page. So, consider this an exercise in intellectual humility — a posture we're all going to have to take as these revelations continue to unfold.

Lecture Title: The Gravity of Joy



PULASKI HEIGHTS
BAPTIST CHURCH



Location: Pulaski Heights Baptist Church Sanctuary

June 19, 2022
6:30PM
Margaret Kolb Lecture Series

Guest Speaker:
Dr. Angela Gorrell, Assistant Professor of Practical Theology at Baylor's George W. Truett Theological Seminary

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