

## CHAPTER 3: AN UNDISCOVERED WORLD

**Log date:** Unknown

**Location:** Zovitalia

**Log note:** To boldly go

GENESIS 1:16 TELLS US that on the fourth day God made “two great lights” – the sun to rule over the day, and the moon to rule over the night. Then, almost as a footnote, we are told that God “made the stars also”. This is one of the most staggering understatements in the Bible. The creation of the universe is an astounding feat. The Lord did more than just create the Earth; He also created trillions upon trillions of planets and stars – and He formed them all out of *nothing!* The size of what the Lord created is beyond astonishing. The fact that God created all of it with a mere command is a breathtaking display of His divine power.

It is impossible for mankind to truly understand the scale of what God created. The universe is simply vast beyond all comprehension. Now, a mile is something that the human mind can understand. People can walk a mile, or drive a few miles down a road, or even fly several hundred miles across a country – yet in space, a mile is nothing. A beam of light can travel 186,282 miles in a single *second*. Yet even that great speed is nothing when it comes to traveling across the universe. The stars that we see in the night sky are dozens or even hundreds of light-years apart – which means that light, with all its incomprehensible speed, still takes *years* to travel between the stars. The Milky Way galaxy is a breathtaking 120,000 light-years across – which is a 'mere' 704,950,698,240,000,000 miles. But who can understand a number that large? It seems to brush up against infinity itself.

And yet there are things much larger than that. After all, the Milky Way is just one galaxy in a vast universe. There are more than 100 billion other galaxies scattered throughout the depths of space. When one considers that there are galaxies which are 13 *billion* light-years away, one begins to get an idea of just how vast space really is. Yet, even that is just the contents of *this* universe. It does not take into account the realms that lie beyond – such as the one in which the Most High God dwells with His angels and His saints.

The universe is a vast treasure-trove of secrets. Some of these secrets are easy to find, while others will elude all but the most careful adventurer. This, too, is not an accident. Proverbs 25:2 tells us that it is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honor of kings to search it out. The Lord has hidden countless things all around us and it is our privilege to find them. Some of these things may be found quickly, while others may never be uncovered. The more one probes at the boundaries of our knowledge, the more one learns that there are even more treasures to discover than we ever imagined. The riches of an entire universe are incomprehensibly vast.

Mankind, in all its wisdom, was convinced that this vast universe was empty and mankind was alone. The three previous generations of Nehemiah probes found nothing, and Dr. Mazatl was convinced that the fourth would be no different. In fact, even in the later years – when Judgment Day was passed and the Lord had made all things new – people still believed that space no longer held any secrets from them. But they were greatly mistaken.

As it turns out there was a secret race, hidden in a pocket that was inaccessible from the rest of the universe. This race minded its own business and went about life quite happily, never really

giving much thought to what was just beyond the boundaries of their knowledge. Then one day an unexpected event caught their attention and drew their focus to something new.

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The undiscovered planet that inhabited this anomalous pocket of space did not orbit a star. Indeed, there were no stars at all in that island in the void. Instead there was just a single world – the living world of Zovitalia – and nothing else. Yet those who lived there did not dwell in the darkness, for their world was full of endless wonder and ceaseless light. They did not call their world Earth, as mankind did; instead they called it Home. It was their place of creation and it was where they had lived during the long ages of time. They had no desire to go anywhere else, for their world contained everything they needed. To them it was a marvelous place. In fact, they were so content that for the longest time they never even wondered if there *were* other places.

Like Earth, their world was a rocky one with a solid surface. The planet was kept warm by interior heat that came from an ongoing reaction deep within the world's core. Zovitalia was a bit smaller than the homeworld of mankind, at just 4,000 miles in diameter, but unlike Earth it was not covered in oceans. It had some lakes and streams, but the giant seas that cover so much of Earth were unknown to these beings.

Home, though, was *alive*. It did not simply *contain* life or *support* life; it was itself alive. The world was a giant living being, with a crust of rocks and a heart of fire. It was intelligent and aware of the billions of life-forms that lived on its surface. The world provided for them and cared for them. The Zovians would have been puzzled at the existence of a world of inert and lifeless rocks. In their experience life was everywhere.

On the surface of the world was a great forest that spanned more than a thousand square miles. The trees of this woodland were unlike anything Earth had ever seen. These trees were all colors of the rainbow – red, blue, yellow, green, purple – and had leaves that covered the light spectrum; most were solid but some were transparent. All of the trees of the wood emitted light. Not only were the trees alive, but they could move and respond to the desires of those who lived among them.

The children of men built Star City out of glass and steel. The Zovians took a very different approach. They had learned long ago how to talk to the woods and shape the trees to their own desires. This gave them the ability to grow living buildings. The massive trees contained rooms that housed their families and civilization. Mankind built their homes and painted them; the Zovians transformed theirs through a mastery of chemistry and biology.

The capitol of the Zovian government was housed in the largest tree on the planet. It was simply called the Elder Tree. This rainbow-colored giant was more than a thousand feet tall and as old as the world itself. It was where the leaders of the world gathered to discuss the matters of the kingdom.

On this particular day it was night at the Elder Tree. Now, night was not taken for granted there, as it is on the worlds of men. Although Zovitalia did rotate, there was no sun to provide the day/night cycle that is so familiar to us. Their light was not provided by a distant star, but by flocks of living creatures that saturated the sky. These tiny insect-like creatures ceaselessly raced through the high stratosphere, bathing the world below in their brilliance. When they were present, it was light;

when they were gone, it was night. Yet the night was not completely dark, for the trees themselves radiated light. Even the darkest night was brighter than the twilight on Earth.

The Master of Light was the one who orchestrated this dance. He made sure that the lightbringers were healthy and received the nutrients they needed to stay aloft. Each of these tiny winged creatures were fairly small – no bigger than an inch across – but yet provided a brilliant light, thanks to a cold fusion reaction that occurred within them. Each insect could soar through the sky for hundreds of day/night cycles before needing to be recharged.

As the hours passed the night waned. The daylight approached from the east and would soon illuminate the forest. When daybreak drew near, the First One rose from his room in the Elder Tree and stepped outside to watch the break of day.

The First One was so named because he was the first being that God created and placed in the forest. The rest of his kind had not been formed until later. Since he was given the responsibility of being the Steward of that world, he guided his race with the wisdom that the Lord had given to him. It was his job to provide leadership, and he had done so faithfully since the day he was created.

When the First One floated out to the balcony, leaving a trail of rainbow particles in his wake, he saw that the Master of Light was already there. “Has the night treated you well?” the First One asked.

“All is at peace,” the Master of Light replied. “The dawn is coming, and with it a new day. This day is a momentous one. The plan that you put in place is about to come to pass.”

“Yet success is not guaranteed,” the First One commented. He paused as the first streaks of light became visible over the horizon. Each new day was a gift – as was their very existence. The Lord did not have to create them, and yet He did. God did not have to give them a world full of wonder and joy, and yet it pleased Him to do so. The gift of existence was not one to be taken lightly. He knew they had been given an endless life, and yet that only made each moment even more precious. Time was not a thing to be wasted; it was a treasure to be managed and used with wisdom.

The light was growing stronger now. The First One resumed speaking. “For the first time since the Most High God created us, our race is going to venture into the unknown. We will go where none of us have ever gone, and no one can say what we will find. We have never been in this situation before.”

“This is true. Yet, although we do not know *what* we will find, we do know *Who* made it. All of space and time, and all that they contain, was made by the Lord. This world is His handiwork. If there are other worlds, they are His handiwork as well and carry His design.”

“Which is an encouraging thought. Indeed, it is our motivation to go – to see what else our Lord has done. We will be thinking God’s thoughts after Him. The Lord created all things to bring Him glory and honor, and each new discovery brings Him praise. I am very eager to see what else our Lord has made. What other wonders has He created? What other stories has He told that we have not yet heard? Of all the treasures of the universe, the knowledge of God is the greatest one. I want to know more about Him.”

“That is indeed our purpose,” the Master of Light agreed. “We were created to glorify God and enjoy Him forever – as were all things in all places.”

By now the lightbringers had appeared over the horizon and flooded the Elder Tree in a beautiful morning light. The dawn had now come, and the very air was filled with the melody of joy. Soon the forest would stir to life.

“I will see you again, my friend,” the First One said. “But now I must attend to my duties.”

"I will ever be here," the Master of Light replied.

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The First One left the balcony and circled down to the ground. Like all members of his race he had no fixed form. The plants and creatures were made of a type of physical matter, but the Zovians consisted of a highly energetic, low-temperature plasma that could be reformed at will. He could take whatever shape was required to accomplish the task at hand. In this case he transformed into one of the great birds of his planet and soared into the air.

Down below, other beings were coming out of their trees and into the woodland paths to greet the morning light. The First One flew down to the road.

"Good morning!" the First One sang out.

"Indeed it is a fine morning!" a small creature sang back. "Have you ever seen such a fine morning as this? It's so full of possibilities! I think today will be a *great* morning. There's a new adventure to be had today, isn't there?"

The First One smiled. Everyone called that small creature Joy, for that was her specialty.

"Indeed there is!" the First One replied. "Are you going to attend the launch of the *Vaughn* this afternoon?"

"Of course! I wouldn't miss it. Such a magnificent occasion! I think everyone in the forest is going to be there. The story of this day will be recounted in all the ages to come! To think that a ship is going to depart – not to sail across the sky, but to go *beyond* it. Who could have imagined such a feat? Yes, I will be there. What a day!"

The First One bid her farewell and flew on. A little further down the path a voice called out to him. "Have you had your morning meal yet?"

The First One stopped his flight and landed on a branch. "Indeed I have not, most noble Baker. What do you have for us on this fine morning?"

The Baker reached into his pocket and tossed a large purple fruit into the air. The First One grabbed it with his claw and ate it. "These berries just came in. I picked them myself an hour ago! It's best to harvest them just before dawn, you know. They're as fresh as can be."

"They are indeed most fresh. That was delicious. Thank you."

"Of course," the Baker replied. He waved goodbye and then went back into his tree. A moment later he appeared again, hauling a large basket of ripe purple fruit. While he set up his fruit stand, the First One flew on. *His business will do well today*, the First One thought. *Those are prized berries and will be enjoyed by many.*

The First One flew on, through the trees and into the deep parts of the forest. When the echo of the Event reached them, the Zovian people realized that they did not have the means to respond to it. A new structure had to be built. Due to the unusual nature of this research the First One decided to build it well outside the city. In the past the trees of the forest had provided for their needs, but this new facility was so large that it was beyond the ability of the woods. Therefore the First One worked with the planet itself to form the building out of the crust of the ground.

It had taken many cycles to complete, but the initiative was a success. The underground facility had a dozen floors and more than a million square feet of space. It was much larger than anything the Zovians had built before. Inside the building was the most advanced equipment that

they had ever developed. That equipment had been used to build something entirely new: a living starship that was about to be launched into space.

As the First One reached the launch facility he saw that the *Vaughn* had already been brought to the surface and was surrounded by a crew of engineers. When the First One saw the Chief Engineer standing near the crew, he landed and took the form of a four-legged creature.

"Good morning," the First One said.

"Oh – good morning!" the Chief Engineer replied. He was holding an electronic gadget in his hands and was deep in thought. He eventually pressed a series of buttons and then looked back at his allies, who were standing around a satellite dish. "How's that?"

"Better," a voice called back. "Thanks!"

"Is there anything I can do to help?" the First One asked.

The Chief Engineer shook his head. "No, no, everything's fine. We're having a few issues but nothing that isn't to be expected. We've never done anything like this before, you know. I've built ships that have crossed the sky, but nothing that has gone where this vessel is going to go. But I have no doubt that we'll be ready to launch this afternoon."

"That is good news indeed. Even so, there is no reason for haste. If a problem arises we can simply delay the launch until it is resolved. Since we are doing a new thing we can be sure we will face new challenges, and those will take time to overcome. Rest easy, Chief. The anomaly that we hope to use has been stable ever since it appeared. There is no reason to think it will change."

"That's true," the Chief Engineer agreed. "But I like to stick to the schedule as much as possible. Schedules do exist for a reason, after all."

"Has the ship's crew arrived yet?"

The Chief Engineer nodded. "They're down below, going over the mission plan. They wanted to do a few more training sessions before boarding the ship."

The First One grinned. "How many times have they done that? Haven't they been through hundreds of simulations?"

"Yes they have – which is the whole point. By the time they do it for real, they'll have practiced it so often that it will be easy for them. That will mean they'll make fewer mistakes."

"Very good. I'll go down and talk to them – for a moment. I don't want to distract them from their preparations."

"Thanks. They will appreciate your visit! Please, go right on in."

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The First One walked into the facility. He waved at the receptionist, walked over to the elevator, and pressed a button. When the elevator arrived he entered it.

"Where would you like to go?" the elevator asked.

"I've come to see the crew. I believe they are training for their departure. Do you know where I could find them?"

"I do. I'll take you right there. One moment, please."

The elevator was quite large. The Zovians did not usually use machines for travel; after all, they could easily change into any form that they desired. However, in this facility it was sometimes necessary to move very heavy equipment. The most practical solution was to build some sort of motorized room that could aid in transport. The elevator was a marvel of engineering. It was not

limited to simply going up and down a vertical shaft, but instead could travel throughout the building. Like nearly everything on Zovitalia, the elevator was a living thing. It was friendly and always willing to help – and it could quickly reach any part of the facility.

There was no security anywhere in the building – or in the whole world, for that matter. Zovians who had work to do on the project came and did their work, and those who had no connection to the building stayed away. The Zovians would not have understood the concept of trying to force someone to stay out. Why would anyone attempt to gain access where they were not wanted or needed? It just didn't make any sense. Locks and keys simply served no purpose here.

After a few seconds the elevator came to a stop, and the doors opened. “Here you are. The crew is right down the hallway – the third door on the right. Is there anything else you need?”

“No, thank you. I appreciate your help.”

The First One left the elevator and made his way down the hall. Even though he was underground, he still felt very much at home. Since the facility had been grown by the planet itself to provide a comfortable environment for research and study, the passages and rooms resembled the familiar woodlands on the surface. The hallways were wide and tall and had a strong organic feel to them. There were no straight lines or hard corners. Instead there were plants, and branches, and all sorts of colors and light. The facility was designed to be warm and inviting – and to reflect the joy of the one who had made it.

When the First One reached the door, it opened for him. “The Elevator told me you were coming,” the door said. “Welcome back.”

“It is a privilege to be here,” the First One replied graciously.

The training room was enormous. It was filled with complex equipment that existed nowhere else on this world. This is where the crew of the *Vaughn* learned how to pilot the ship, how to lift off into space, and how to function outside their world.

There were four Zovians present. The Navigator was the one who would pilot the ship. He had much experience piloting vessels of the air, but no one had attempted what he was about to do. The Specialist was responsible for analyzing the anomaly. He would determine its properties and potential uses. The Engineer was given the task of watching over the ship's health and fixing anything that went wrong. The fourth crewmember was the Messenger, who managed communications between the ship and the homeworld.

The crew was standing around talking to each other when the First One entered the room. When they saw him they immediately called out. “Good morning!” the Messenger exclaimed. “The Chief told us you were coming. How can we help you?”

“I have come to see how I can help you. Do you have everything that you need? Is there anything that you lack?”

The Engineer spoke up. “I think we're in good shape. Of course, there's no way to know until we actually depart. That's when this mission will get very interesting. The only thing we've ever launched before are satellites, and those have just orbited the planet. We've never sent anything into the void before.”

“Think how much we'll learn!” the Specialist said excitedly. “I can't wait to reach the site of the anomaly. It has such vast potential.”

“Do we know what created it?” the First One asked.

"All we have right now is speculation," the Navigator said. "We know that it is not eternal, for we received the echoes of its creation. It must have been formed by some unimaginable force. The energies needed to warp space and time at that level are beyond anything we have ever seen."

"Which is also very exciting," the Specialist commented. "Was it created by some sort of natural process, or was it made by an intelligence? Is it possible that there are other races and other worlds? Did one of these races form the anomaly as a part of their own scientific research? What if we make contact with them?"

The First One smiled. "I have no doubt that you will learn much on this voyage. Perhaps you will usher in a new age of exploration and travel. One day even I might leave this world and venture out to see the new wonders you will find. But today you are the explorers. Today you will embark on a quest that will be long remembered. I have no doubt that you will find something that will be worth finding."

The Messenger nodded. "And as soon as we find it I'll let everyone know. The ship will stay in touch with Home. We may be distant, but we will still be connected."

"Which is wise. Tell me, what were you practicing this morning? Is there some part of this journey that you are not yet prepared for?"

"We were just going over the evacuation plan," the Engineer said. "The *Vaughn* was built to reflect our best knowledge of the void, but it's entirely possible that we've overlooked something important. There's just so much we don't know. In the event that the mechanical pieces of the ship break down – or the mission fails for some reason – we need to make sure that we can still return home."

"Right," the Navigator said. "Even if the ship won't move, we can still evacuate ourselves and the living heart of the ship, and leave its mechanical shell in space. We don't want to be trapped out there. Now, I'm not saying that's going to happen, but it's certainly a possibility."

"Your precautions are wise," the First One replied. "I am sure that the Lord will bless your efforts and will bring you safely home."

The Specialist spoke up. "Speaking of the Lord – you don't suppose that we will find Zion, do you? I mean, it has to be somewhere, doesn't it?"

"That is the great question that we all wonder about. We know that the Most High God dwells in inapproachable light. We know that He has His own country and His own home, where He rules over all His realms from His mighty throne. This heavenly realm exists, but we do not know where it is or how to get there. What we do know is that our God is so large that the Universe itself is not able to contain Him. If I had to guess I would say that He lives in some spiritual plane that is beyond our reach and understanding. It would be astonishing if He dwelt on a planet, as we do, among beings such as ourselves. At this point we simply do not know, for the Lord has not revealed this knowledge to us. But He has given us a way to leave our own world and venture beyond. We may find things that we do not expect."

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That afternoon the crew finished their final preparations. The starship was stocked with supplies and, at long last, was ready to go. The heart of the ship was installed, and the mechanical vessel became a living thing. The crew boarded the *Vaughn* and waited in its underground hangar for the First One to give the command to depart.

On the surface above a small stage had been created. It was an elegant platform of oak, and offered the First One a chance to speak before the ship's journey began. A microphone had been placed on the stage, and a set of speakers would magnify the First One's voice so all could hear it.

As Joy had predicted, everyone in the forest had come to see the *Vaughn* depart. The field was packed with Zovians of all shapes and sizes, as were the surrounding trees and the skies above. No one wanted to miss the departure of the first starship.

When everyone was in place the First One walked up to the microphone. "Good afternoon to you all! Thank you for coming to see the launch of this expedition. This is truly a momentous occasion – a turning point in our history. We are on the verge of making contact with something entirely new.

"The reason we are here today is due to the work of our most noble Astronomer. He is the one who noticed the echoes rumbling through the fabric of the void, and who traced them back to a tear in spacetime. To this day we do not know who or what created it. All we know is that some incomprehensible force shattered space and time itself, and created an anomaly that defies our understanding. The Specialist, who is now on board the *Vaughn*, believes that this curious rift might function as a gateway to a new realm. Since it pierced through the boundaries of our own reality, it might be possible to use it to reach areas that were previously inaccessible.

"In the past, space travel has been limited to mechanical probes that we launched into orbit around Home. However, this time we have decided to take a different course of action. Since it is impossible to know what we might find, we could not build a machine to handle the situation. Only a thinking being can handle the unknown and react to it. Therefore, after an Age of cycles, and with much careful design and experimentation by the Chief Engineer and his allies, we have built the first starship our world has ever seen. The crew that has boarded the *Vaughn* is about to take that ship and become the first Zovians to ever leave Home. I will look forward to their triumphant return.

"Crew, you are cleared to depart. Godspeed to you all. May the Lord of Zion watch over you and bring you safely home."

As the First One stepped back from the microphone, the crowd burst into a loud cheer. The ground began to quake as the massive hangar doors slowly opened. Once the doors were opened, the *Vaughn's* mighty engines roared to life. The ship then began a slow vertical ascent out of the underground facility. When it cleared the hangar doors and became visible, the crowd cheered again.

Once the *Vaughn* was above the treeline, it rapidly accelerated. It then soared through the skies and vanished, leaving behind a rainbow trail of light.

But the crowd did not disperse. The ship was no longer visible, but the journey had only just begun. The Chief Engineer took out his electronic pad and walked up to the microphone. "It looks like we had a successful liftoff. So far all systems are green. It will take the *Vaughn* about an hour to leave our atmosphere, and several more hours to reach the Departure Point. If all goes well the ship will leave our realm just before nightfall."

The Zovians cheered once more and then settled in to wait. They were in no particular hurry. They chatted among themselves about what they had just witnessed. Some talked in wonder at the nature of the voyage itself. Others speculated about what the brave astronauts might discover. Two of the Chief Engineer's allies carried a holoprojector onto the stage, and after a few minutes they were able to project a giant map that showed the *Vaughn's* current position.

The crowd spent the rest of the day talking and laughing, as their civilization's first space adventurers approached the Departure Point. As the ship drew near the Point the crowd's conversation became quieter. Soon there were just minutes left – and no one was saying a word.



The Chief Engineer spoke quietly to the First One. "So far things are going very well. However, the real work doesn't begin until after they leave our space. This is just the initial portion of the journey."

The First One nodded but did not reply. He watched the hologram intently as its indicator counted down the final seconds.

When the indicator reached zero there was a flash of white light in the sky – so brilliant that it could easily be seen in the growing twilight, despite the ship's great distance. Then the vessel disappeared off the holographic projection and was gone.

The crowd let out a chorus of cheers. The *Vaughn* was now in new territory, and was off on its journey of discovery. The launch was an unqualified success.

As the beings finally began to disperse, the lighbringers disappeared over the horizon and a gentle twilight fell upon the land. One by one the Zovians left and returned home. Yet the First One did not go anywhere. He stood on the stage and stared up at the sky, lost in thought.