

# Manned Space Exploration Necessary for Human Survival, Says Hawking

Dear Teacher,

In churches that follow the liturgical calendar, this Sunday is the first day of the Christian year and the beginning of Advent. While not all denominations observe Advent per se, most Christians share a belief in what Advent symbolizes -- both the coming of Jesus 2,000 years ago and his coming again in the future.

The news story we've chosen for this week -- acclaimed astrophysicist Stephen Hawking's alarm about human survival -- suggests a future without counting on God. We think this news gives us a good opportunity to remind ourselves of the Advent message, so that will be the topic of this installment of *The Wired Word*.

Remember, if you wish to provide your class members with an abbreviated copy of the lesson, [click here](#), and you can send them a copy via e-mail today.

May God bless you as you teach the Scriptures this week.

The Editorial Team of *The Wired Word*



## Manned Space Exploration Necessary for Human Survival, Says Hawking

*The Wired Word* for November 27, 2011

### In the News

It will be difficult for the residents of Earth “to avoid disaster in the next hundred years,” renowned astrophysicist Stephen Hawking told *The Canadian Press* last week. He was speaking in lead-up to the premiere of the new U.K.-Canadian TV series “Brave New World with Stephen Hawking.”

Hawking, who has ALS (Lou Gehrig’s disease) and is now unable to speak, was interviewed by the Canadian news agency via e-mail.

“We are entering an increasingly dangerous period of our history,” Hawking said. “Our population and our use of the finite resources of planet Earth are growing exponentially, along with our technical ability to change the environment for good or ill. But our genetic code still carries the selfish and aggressive instincts that were of survival advantage in the past. It will be difficult enough to avoid disaster in the next hundred years, let alone the next thousand or million. Our only chance of long-term survival is not to remain lurking on planet Earth, but to spread out into space.”

Hawking went on to say that these factors are why he believes it is important for humankind to continue manned space flight and learn how to colonize outer space, which he sees as the key to the survival of the human race.

While Hawking has a large following in scientific fields, he also has his critics. Some philosophers and others

have criticized his conclusions about the origin and future of the universe. Some theologians and others disagree with his conclusion that there is no personal God. Many who study population and try to predict future trends disagree with his assumption that the number of people on earth will continue to grow exponentially; some predict instead that the world population will likely peak at 9.3 billion in the middle of this century.

More on this story can be found at these links:

[Human Survival Depends on Space Exploration, Says Stephen Hawking. \*Winnipeg Free Press\*](#)  
[Stephen Hawking Says Mankind's Survival Depends on Manned Space Exploration. \*beliefnetnews\*](#)

## **A Note on Advent and the Church Year**

Advent, which begins four Sundays before Christmas, is not merely a warm-up for the Nativity. Advent means “coming” or “arrival,” and it focuses attention on two periods where waiting expectantly is the predominant theme.

The first period was the time beginning with the Hebrew prophets who announced the “someday” restoration of Israel to take place with the arrival of a Messiah. Christians consider the coming of Jesus to be the fulfillment of that waiting period.

The second period began with the ascension of the resurrected Jesus into heaven and the promise of his return. As that return has not yet happened, Christians can be said to be living in a time between the two advents of Jesus: Christmas and the Second Coming.

Advent also includes the themes of preparation and anticipation. In some churches, Advent is observed as a penitential season to prepare oneself spiritually for Christmas, much as Lent is a penitential season to prepare oneself spiritually for Easter.

The seasons of the liturgical year are intended to reinforce the Christian story itself. Moving from the time before Christ (Advent) through his birth (Christmas), his life and ministry (Epiphany), his passion and death (Lent and Holy Week), his resurrection (Easter), the birth of his church (Pentecost), and his ultimate triumph (Christ the King Sunday), the liturgical calendar overlays the yearly cycle with a basis for hope.

But Advent plays a double role in that it represents the time before Jesus' birth *and* the time before his return.

## **The Big Questions**

1. What do we Christians mean when we say that the future is in God's hands? How is the Advent message related to the survival of humankind? If we say the future is in God's hands, what does this say about the importance of the choices we make? Does this lessen or increase the importance of our free will? Why?
2. What does the Bible say is the fate of the selfish and aggressive instincts that are part of our human makeup? Is the preservation of the human race a matter of selfishness or stewardship?
3. If we do experience some kind of worldwide catastrophe within the next hundred years related to population growth, resource shortages and the selfish and aggressive instincts of humankind, will that change the Advent message? Why or why not?

4. What reason is there to have a time of penitence prior to Christmas?

5. If we succeed in establishing colonies on other planets, do we have the right to assume we have dominion (in the Genesis 1:26 sense) over whatever species and resources we find there? Would “terraforming” (altering the environment of a planet to suit human habitation) be a matter of good stewardship of available resources, or would it be desecration?

### **Confronting the News with Scripture**

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

#### **Jeremiah 33:15**

*“In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.”* (For context, read 33:14-16.)

This verse is typical of the kinds of prophetic statements that created the expectation in Israel that a Messiah would come through the line of David. Israel was still waiting for that Messiah at the time Jesus was born. Thus, one feature of Advent is that it connects with the Old Testament and the time between the Testaments when oppressed Israel was anticipating the coming of a Davidic king to save them.

**Questions:** In what ways does imagining yourself in company with the Israelites waiting for a Messiah help you to appreciate Christmas more? In what ways does it help you understand yourself as still waiting for God’s final action? How can we experience the expectation of waiting while simultaneously knowing that Jesus has already arrived in our hearts?

#### **Luke 1:76-77**

*“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins.”* (For context, read 1:57-80.)

These words are part of the prophecy Zechariah the priest uttered when his son, John the Baptist, was born. While Jesus is the primary biblical and faith focus of the church, Advent is the one season when John the Baptist plays a strong role as the one who “prepares the way” for Jesus.

John had to fulfill his role carefully, for on at least one occasion, the messianic expectations of the crowds caused them to speculate whether John himself might be the Messiah (Luke 3:15).

**Questions:** In what ways do you identify with John the Baptist? In what ways do you identify with those to whom he preached? (See Matthew 3:1-6; Luke 3:1-17.)

#### **Acts 1:11**

*“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”* (For context, read 1:6-11.)

Immediately after the ascension of Jesus into heaven, two “men” (angels) spoke the words above to the disciples who had witnessed the event. Their statement is one of the scriptural foundations for the Second Coming of Christ.

**Questions:** Not all Christians understand the Second Coming in quite the same way. Many take it literally and look for a specific event where Christ returns to earth. Some see the Second Coming as a way of conceptualizing the life-changing hope found when accepting Christ individually. Still other Christians view the Second Coming as too mysterious to comprehend fully. Some perhaps don’t give

it much thought. How do you understand the Second Coming? Why? Regardless of how you view the Second Coming, what is the imperative that the angels are communicating when they chide the apostles for looking up into the sky?

### **1 Corinthians 15:22-24**

*“... for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power.”* (For context, read 15:19-28.)

Earlier in this chapter, Paul has been discussing the resurrection of the dead, and concludes that section saying, “If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied” (v. 19). He immediately adds, “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead” (v. 20) and goes on to talk about Christ’s subsequent work where God puts “all things in subjection under his [Christ’s] feet” (v. 27) and then, in the words above, Christ “hands over the kingdom to God the Father.”

That’s the time toward which Advent looks.

**Question:** Why should we anticipate that time? What is your mood this time of year? In what ways can Advent help you prepare for the story of Jesus from his birth through his resurrection? Is this preparation necessary for those who believe they have been saved through their faith?

### **Revelation 21:26-27**

*“People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”* (For context, read 21:10-27.)

In John of Patmos’ vision, he sees the “new Jerusalem,” a representation of God’s kingdom. In that kingdom, there is no threat from humankind’s penchant for selfishness and aggression, because “nothing unclean will enter it.”

This kingdom to come is part of Advent’s story. Because of Advent’s second focus on what is “not yet,” the season announces, in effect, “We have a story for you, but before we tell you how it starts, we’re going to tell you how it *ends*.” And how it ends is that *God wins*. Even if the machinations of humankind dissolve the earth in a cloud of nuclear dust or convert it to an environmental wasteland, God is not defeated, and those who stand with him join him in his kingdom.

**Question:** What are you thinking about when you pray, in the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy kingdom come”? What and where do you envision this kingdom to be? Are you a member of the kingdom now, or must you wait until its arrival, or is it possible to be both a member of Christ’s kingdom *and* be waiting for it?

### **For Further Discussion**

1. Hawking uses the motivation of fear as a reason to colonize space. What are some other -- perhaps more God-pleasing -- motivations for space exploration and colonization?
2. When humans are in space, are we in a realm where God’s rule over us is in any way different? Or, to ask it another way, how earthbound are God’s laws?
3. If we find intelligent life forms in space, should we send Christian missionaries to them? In other

words, should we assume that their races are also “fallen” and in need of a savior in the same way that humankind is? How would we be able to tell?

4. What do you make of the comment once made by C.S. Lewis that the distance between worlds might be part of God’s quarantine restrictions?
5. When we sing the hymn “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” which advent of Christ are we singing about?
6. Comment on the following story (from Rev. Karen deJong-Dermann): A woman once confessed that she’d gone to church for 30 years *waiting* for something to happen, and it never had. Everyone always thought of her as a pillar of faith, quietly going about the work of the church. The minister had always assumed that this lady was secure in her faith. Now he realized that the occasional sorrow he saw in her far-off glance was not the pain of long-ago hardships -- the pain of Lent, the dark days that come before the expected resurrection. No, the pain he saw in her eyes was unfulfilled hope. She was stuck in the dark days of perpetual Advent, still waiting to be made new.

What could the minister say to her? Maybe something like this: A miracle had indeed occurred -- a 30-year-long miracle -- and that miracle was her faithfulness. Waiting without an apparent reward is a common theme in Scripture. Abraham and Sarah waited for the fulfillment of God’s promise that they would have a child, Joseph waited in prison in Egypt and Job lamented how long he had to wait for God’s deliverance. Such faithfulness is its own reward.

Second, her waiting hadn’t been fruitless. She had been an example of faithfulness to others; in her caring and sharing she had helped keep the love of God flowing through her church. Instead of waiting for a gift, she might consider the possibility that through these 30 years, she herself has been the gift, the gift for others.

### **Responding to the News**

This is a good time to use the Advent themes as the basis for personal devotions, considering prayerfully how waiting for God’s kingdom to come can aid our perspective on our present time.

It’s also a good time to recall that the hope Advent encapsulates is an active one. It’s not “Hunker down and wait for God’s victory,” but “Work continually for the good and the right, in all the ways you can.”

### **Closing Prayer**

O God, thank you for sending Jesus to our world the first time, and for the promise of his return. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

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predominant theme.

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But Advent plays a double role in that it represents the time before Jesus’ birth *and* the time before his return.

### **The Big Questions**

*Here are some of the questions we will discuss in class:*

1. What do we Christians mean when we say that the future is in God’s hands? How is the Advent message related to the survival of humankind? If we say the future is in God’s hands, what does this say about the importance of the choices we make? Does this lessen or increase the importance of our free will? Why?
2. What does the Bible say is the fate of the selfish and aggressive instincts that are part of our human makeup? Is the preservation of the human race a matter of selfishness or stewardship?
3. If we do experience some kind of worldwide catastrophe within the next hundred years related to population growth, resource shortages and the selfish and aggressive instincts of humankind, will that change the Advent message? Why or why not?
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5. If we succeed in establishing colonies on other planets, do we have the right to assume we have dominion (in the Genesis 1:26 sense) over whatever species and resources we find there? Would “terraforming” (altering the environment of a planet to suit human habitation) be a matter of good stewardship of available resources, or would it be desecration?

### **Confronting the News with Scripture**

*We will look at selected verses from these Scripture texts. You may wish to read these in advance for background:*

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Luke 1:57-80

Acts 1:6-11

1 Corinthians 15:19-28

Revelation 21:10-27

*In class, we will talk about these passages and look for some insight on the big questions, as well as talk about other questions you may have about this topic. Please join us.*

# Scriptures for The Wired Word Online Bible Study for November 27, 2011

## Jeremiah 33:14-16

<sup>14</sup>The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>15</sup>In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. <sup>16</sup>In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

## Luke 1:57-80

<sup>57</sup>Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. <sup>58</sup>Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. <sup>59</sup>On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. <sup>60</sup>But his mother said, "No; he is to be called John." <sup>61</sup>They said to her, "None of your relatives has this name." <sup>62</sup>Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. <sup>63</sup>He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And all of them were amazed. <sup>64</sup>Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. <sup>65</sup>Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. <sup>66</sup>All who heard them pondered them and said, "What then will this child become?" For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

<sup>67</sup>Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy: <sup>68</sup>"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. <sup>69</sup>He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, <sup>70</sup>as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, <sup>71</sup>that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. <sup>72</sup>Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, <sup>73</sup>the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us <sup>74</sup>that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, <sup>75</sup>in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. <sup>76</sup>And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, <sup>77</sup>to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. <sup>78</sup>By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, <sup>79</sup>to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

<sup>80</sup>The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.

## Acts 1:6-11

<sup>6</sup>So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup>He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you

will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”<sup>9</sup> When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.<sup>10</sup> While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them.<sup>11</sup> They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

## **1 Corinthians 15:19-28**

<sup>19</sup>If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

<sup>20</sup>But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.<sup>21</sup> For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being;<sup>22</sup> for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.<sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.<sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power.<sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.<sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death.<sup>27</sup> For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “All things are put in subjection,” it is plain that this does not include the one who put all things in subjection under him.<sup>28</sup> When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all.

## **Revelation 21:10-27**

<sup>10</sup>And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.<sup>11</sup> It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal.<sup>12</sup> It has a great, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites;<sup>13</sup> on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.<sup>14</sup> And the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.<sup>15</sup> The angel who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls.<sup>16</sup> The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width; and he measured the city with his rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal.<sup>17</sup> He also measured its wall, one hundred forty-four cubits by human measurement, which the angel was using.<sup>18</sup> The wall is built of jasper, while the city is pure gold, clear as glass.<sup>19</sup> The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald,<sup>20</sup> the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst.<sup>21</sup> And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, each of the gates is a single pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass.<sup>22</sup> I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.<sup>23</sup> And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.<sup>24</sup> The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.<sup>25</sup> Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.<sup>26</sup> People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.<sup>27</sup> But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

The Canadian Press - ONLINE EDITION

# Human survival depends on space exploration, says Stephen Hawking

By: Cassandra Szklarski, The Canadian Press

Posted: 11/18/2011 2:16 PM | Comments: 0 (including replies)g | Last Modified: 11/21/2011 3:46 PM



Dave Chidley" title="British theoretical physicist Prof. Stephen Hawking gives a lecture in Waterloo, Ont. in this Sunday, June 20, 2010 photo. Hawking says the colonization of outer space is key to the survival of humankind, predicting it will be difficult for the world's inhabitants "to avoid disaster in the next hundred years. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Dave Chidley" height="485" width="648" border="0">

[Dave Chidley">Enlarge Image](#)

*British theoretical physicist Prof. Stephen Hawking gives a lecture in Waterloo, Ont. in this Sunday, June 20, 2010 photo. Hawking says the colonization of outer space is key to the survival of*

*humankind, predicting it will be difficult for the world's inhabitants "to avoid disaster in the next hundred years. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Dave Chidley*

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TORONTO - Stephen Hawking says the colonization of outer space is key to the survival of humankind, predicting it will be difficult for the world's inhabitants "to avoid disaster in the next hundred years."

The renowned astrophysicist explores some of the most remarkable advancements in technology and health with the new U.K.-Canadian series "Brave New World With Stephen Hawking," debuting Saturday on Discovery World HD.

Before its premiere, he discussed the earth's most pressing concerns in an email interview with The Canadian Press from Cambridge, England, declaring space exploration to be humankind's most urgent mission.

"We are entering an increasingly dangerous period of our history," said Hawking, who has Lou Gehrig's disease, leaving him almost completely paralyzed and unable to speak.

"Our population and our use of the finite resources of planet Earth are growing exponentially, along with our technical ability to change the environment for good or ill. But our genetic code still carries the selfish and aggressive instincts that were of survival advantage in the past. It will be difficult enough to avoid disaster in the next hundred years, let alone the next thousand or million.

"Our only chance of long-term survival is not to remain lurking on planet Earth, but to spread out into space."

Hawking said this is why he favours manned — or as he puts it, "personed" — space flight and encourages further study into how to make space colonization possible.

Hawking's five-part TV series touches on that theme, while putting the spotlight on scientific breakthroughs that promise to transform the 21st century. He introduces each episode while a team of experts travel the globe to delve deeper into various innovations.

The experts themselves represent a wide range of disciplines — they include naturalist Sir David Attenborough, author and evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, biologist and broadcaster Aarathi Prasad, and Canadian astronaut and neurologist Roberta Bondar.

More Canadian content comes by way of a segment set at the SNOLAB in Sudbury, Ont., an underground science lab specializing in neutrino and dark matter physics.

By email, Hawking says he's excited by work underway at the Perimeter Institute in Waterloo, Ont., which he visited in June 2010 and was named its first distinguished research chair.

"Perimeter is a grand experiment in theoretical physics and the institute's twin focus, on quantum theory and gravity, is very close to my heart and central to explaining the origin of the universe," said Hawking, also director of research at the Centre for Theoretical Cosmology at Cambridge University.

"I am hoping, and expecting, great things will happen there. And I hope to visit again soon."

In September, the institute expanded with a new wing called the Stephen Hawking Centre but the cosmologist was unable to attend in person and sent his regards by video.

Marvels featured in his new TV series include a computer in Switzerland that is powered by the brain, a driverless car that is smart enough to navigate the crooked streets of San Francisco and a baby-like robot in Italy that learns like a child.

Later episodes investigate the way brain disorders could be treated using laser light and genetically modified brain cells, how mobile phones can give experts access to our every habit and action and lasers that print objects in 3D.

"I have so much I want to do," Hawking says of his boundless curiosity about the world. "There are so many questions still to answer."

"Brave New World With Stephen Hawking" debuts Saturday on Discovery World HD.

**Find this article at:**

<http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/canada/breakingnews/human-survival-depends-on-space-exploration-says-stephen-hawking-134135238.html>

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## Stephen Hawking says mankind's survival depends on manned space exploration

posted by Rob Kerby, Senior Editor | 5:04pm Monday November 21, 2011

Atheist physicist Stephen Hawking says there's no hope for mankind here on Earth.

We face mass extinction unless we head for the stars, he told the Canadian Press wire service this weekend while promoting his new five-part television series, "Brave New World" on the Discovery cable channel.



Stephen Hawking

"Stephen says that there are only so many resources on earth, and with our constant population expansion and environmental changes, space really is the next frontier if we want to live at the same level," writes Ciara Famble for the website [Glittarazzi](#).

"Our genetic code still carries the selfish and aggressive instincts that were of survival advantage in the past. It will be difficult enough to avoid disaster in the next hundred years, let alone the next thousand or million," Hawking told Canadian Press reporter

Cassandra Szklarski, according to the [Winnipeg Free Press](#). "Our only chance of long-term survival is not to remain lurking on planet Earth, but to spread out into space."

Hawking says that between our growing population, use of finite resources and our genetic code we need to colonize outer space and soon, reports Susan Wilson for the website [Tech.Blorge](#).

"We are entering an increasingly dangerous period of our history," said Hawking. "Our population and our use of the finite resources of planet Earth are growing exponentially, along with our technical ability to change the environment for good or ill."

"But, Houston, we have a problem," notes Wilson. "Funding for space exploration is running into the same financial landmines as everything else. Even though the U.S. was the first country to put a man on the Moon, they might not be the first to colonize it. It looks like that honor may go to the Chinese according to [China Daily](#)."

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Then there are such problems as solar radiation — which once a spacecraft moves beyond Earth's magnetic field will likely prove fatal to astronauts. Weightlessness on an extended trip is also a serious problem — since atrophy of astronauts' muscles and bones renders them unable to walk even after the short trip to the nearest planet, Mars.

Even so, Hawking said he favors manned — or as he termed it in the interview, “personed” — space flight and encourages further study into how to make space colonization possible.

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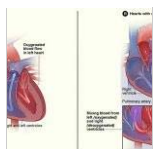
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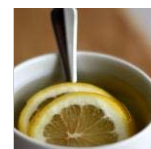
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**"Earthscraper" would bury an eco-friendly 65-story pyramid under Mexico City**

Faced with local regulations banning skyscrapers, a Mexico City architect wants instead to build a 65-story pyramid at the center of Mexico's religious and cultural hub. And bury it. Edwardo Su

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**Miracle cross inspires tree-cutting crew**

As landscaper Salvador Maya sawed into a large pine tree on the lawn of Escondido, California's First Congregational Church, he stepped back in awe, then spontaneously crossed himself. He yelled at his boss, Jim Rants, to come look. [caption id="attachment\_9922" align="alignleft"

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**American Legion: We wish Wisconsin atheists "would leave us alone"**

"We wish the people of Wisconsin would take care of their own business and leave us, and this statue, totally alone," says Michael Shepard, the commander of American Legion Post 108 in Whitefish, Montana. He is irked that a group of Wisconsin atheists are threatening to sue the U.S. Forestry

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