

The Final Frontier  
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With thanks to Wikipedia for the Plot Summary

**Sermon Notes: Ray Bagnuolo, January 10, 2010**

The year is 2287, and following the events of Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home, the crew of the USS Enterprise (NCC-1701-A) is on break enjoying shore leave, as the newly built starship's shakedown cruise goes poorly while it undergoes repairs in spacedock. On planet Earth at Yosemite National Park, Captain James T. Kirk is on a camping trip with half-Vulcan First Officer Spock and Dr. Leonard McCoy.

Their leave is interrupted when the Enterprise is ordered by Starfleet Command to rescue Terran, Klingon and Romulan hostages on the desolate planet of Nimbus III (also referred to as the Planet of Galactic Peace). Learning of the Enterprise's mission, the Klingon Captain Klaa aboard a Bird of Prey, the Okrona, with the encouragement of his First Officer Vixis, decides to engage Kirk in combat for his own personal glory after growing tired pursuing and targeting derelict space debris.

Upon arrival at Nimbus III, the Enterprise crew discovers that a renegade Vulcan named Sybok (who is later revealed to be Spock's half-brother), is behind the hostage crisis. Sybok demonstrates that the hostage situation was a ruse to lure a starship to Nimbus III in order to reach the mythical planet called Sha Ka Ree, the place from which creation began.

Sha Ka Ree is located behind a seemingly impenetrable barrier near the center of the galaxy. Sybok uses his unique ability to reveal the innermost pain of a person and help them emotionally heal themselves, in a bid to gain the trust of both the hostages and crew members. While McCoy and Spock agree to interact with hallucination imagery, Kirk refuses Sybok's offer, telling him that his emotional pain is part of what makes him human. Later however, Sybok reluctantly decides to declare a truce with Kirk, realizing he needs his leadership experience to navigate the Enterprise to Sha Ka Ree.

The Enterprise successfully breaches the barrier pursued by Klaa's vessel and discovers a lone blue planet. Sybok, Kirk, Spock, and McCoy journey to the surface, where Sybok calls out to his perceived vision of god. An entity appears, and when told of how Sybok breached the barrier, demands that the starship be brought closer to the planet.

When a skeptical Kirk inquires, "What does god need with a starship?", the entity attacks him in retribution.

McCoy in turn, begins to realistically doubt the entity as a god who would purposely inflict harm on people for pleasure.

The entity then tries to exploit the Enterprise; requesting to "join with it", in an attempt to depart from the surface.

Soon Sybok starts to distrust the entity as genuine, at which point he suddenly sacrifices himself in a physical struggle with it to help the others escape. Kirk then orders the Enterprise to fire a photon torpedo at their location, killing Sybok while simultaneously disabling the entity.

Spock and McCoy are beamed back to the ship, but Klaa's vessel attacks the Enterprise before Kirk can be transported aboard.

On the planet below, Kirk is about to be killed by the entity when Klaa's vessel destroys it in a barrage of disruptor fire.

Kirk is beamed aboard the Bird of Prey and learns that Spock and the Klingon hostage General Korrd have forced Captain Klaa to stand down.

A reception is held aboard the Enterprise with the Klingons to celebrate the new détente, as Kirk, Spock and McCoy return to their vacation at Yosemite.

In a time like this or the imagination of a future time it make sense to seek answers, the *final frontier* even, in outer space, supposing, trusting that answers well emerge from the yet unrevealed mysteries of the time-space continuum, the pre-expanding universe, the pre-Big Bang event.

In some ways the trajectory of future science and its companion *science fiction* are parallels of the ancient reasoning used to explain the world through myths and magic.

In the middle of the two, we have always been, looking back, trying to understand where we came from in birth, how we arrived here, now, in the conditions we share, wondering what the future – and death's role in that future will hold.

Integrated in it all have been certain fundamentals of the human spirit: among them a deep sense that we belong to it all, a sense that there is more, a belief over time that God is with us, and it appears, even in the year 2287 the vastness and wonder of God is yet fully comprehended, and ultimately those pretending to be God can survive for just so long before the "truth meter" built in to us humans go off and the curtain reveals the impostor. In the process, progress in made, advances are noted and integrated into our lives: spiritually and scientifically, human narrative completes another chapter.

Relieved that the impostor is not God and that God would not harm God's own creation or necessarily even *want* a spaceship, there is still a disappointment that the face-to-face encounter with God has been postponed again, the questions remain, and the seeking continues.

But we adapt, as we do, and, in our own way, as did the crew of the Enterprise, we return to Yosemite and await our next assignment.

The Final Frontier has yet to be reached. Or has it. Is in fact the Starship like some grand prosthetic device that in the macrobiology of a universe always return us back, through whichever significant or other boundaries we cross or breakthroughs we make – doesn't it always turn us back into who we are?

Luke, the surgeon, we believe, the careful master of words, science, and Gospel could have been the first Gene Rodenberry, the creator of Star Trek for the scene he describes some 2000 years ago, except the events around which today's Gospel revolves were real.

People were still looking to the heavens, but instead of going to the heavens – they looked for the heaven to come to them, somehow. There were reported Messiahs all the time. There were the prophets, the early cable system between God and the masses. The science was of a different nature, but the effect was the same: anticipation, wonder, and hope for the same answers we seek today.

And John the Baptist must have been an amazing prophet, enough to be thought of as the possible Messiah himself.

Crowds gathered around the Jordan on this day that John describes, there must have been some buzz, for even the “brood of vipers” had arrived to prepare for penance and salvation. And then Jesus walks through the crowds, out of the wilderness – we don’t know, we just know that he enters the river and is baptized by John, and when he is gathered with **others** and praying - something happened. Luke says the skies opened and the voice of God spoke God's pleasure with this son, with whom God was well-pleased.

Warp-speed, indeed!

Something happened together while they were praying, after they had been baptized and cleansed and in Jesus' company – and he in theirs. Did the skies part, did the Spirit fill them as it fills us in such a way that they knew who this man was and what he was about to mean to them – in ways they could never know?

Or did they know that, indeed, the answer had arrived. The frontier final or otherwise was no more. The answer to the questions of purpose and meaning were now with them and in them as they are now for us. The frontier was now replaced with the Good News and the Great Commandment, for the Kindom of God was not only at hand – it was here.

Remember that the evangelists painted pictures with words to effectively convey meaning, not necessarily specific details. Multimedia was much more compressed and imagery was in the telling of the story to raise the heart and the Spirit so people would know Jesus and his Gospel.

It is still the same today, it's just that people get a little goofy sometimes around God. The myth competes with the science and the validity of the story comes to rely upon: “It happened or it didn't.” Depending on your point of view, you can quickly expect to be categorized as belonging to one group or another (which I hope you will just ignore, if that should happen).

Ronald McDonald House story of the anointing that is so much more than the details. A story, which, in its own way the skies open and there was a voice a Spirit that said, “I am well-pleased.”

In the Acts Reading it's the same.

Story about the laying on of hands: Anyone who has ever layed hands on someone – or had hands lain on them will attest to the power, the Spirit.

The Final Frontier has been passed, we have been in the service mode trying to get it right for the last 2000 years:

Story about the man who came in last night with an intravenous in his arm in hospital pants

We are about answering who we are by the things we do. There are no more trees or forests to be cleared, the power has been given to us inside of who we are, through prayer, faith and support of all on their journeys to God.

It is not the spaceship that will take us where no human has gone before, it is what it always has been that will do that:

The courage and the joy that comes from the Love of God shared with one another, no exceptions or boundaries. Jesus took care of those.

Kirk, you ask what does God need with a starship, nothing it seems, at least not anymore. Sorry. But, nonetheless, may you, us and all we serve, live long and prosper.

Peace.