

# First Christmas astronauts sent Genesis 1 Earth greeting

Since the Apollo 8 days of 1968, astronauts have spent many Christmases in space whether it's on the International Space Station or on a mission. The crew of the first mission — Frank Borman, Jim Lovell and Bill Anders — decided to be unique in their message. Knowing they had the largest audience in the world that Dec. 24 evening, they decided on reading the first 10 verses of Genesis 1. When asked several years later why they chose this, Lovell explained, “The first 10 verses of Genesis are the foundation of many of the world's religions, not just the Christian religion. There are more people in other religions than Christianity around the world so this would be appropriate to that, and so that's how it came to pass.”

Whatever your faith is, the Greek meaning for Gospel is “good news,” which is where the Christmas story comes from and it's something eve-



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The Sky's the Limit

rybody can use today. The men of 1968 and 2,000 years ago all wanted to share the “good news.”

## Sky watch

On Monday, Dec. 7 before sunrise look east to see the meeting of a crescent moon, Venus and the comet Catalina. Catalina will be visible all month before dawn.

If you're celebrating Christmas Eve, the full moon will be up all night before setting at sunrise.

We actually have two mild meteor showers this month. Geminid peaks on

Sunday, Dec. 13 just after midnight. The Ursid shower occurs on Tuesday, Dec. 22 after sundown when the earth moves through the centre of the dust trail left behind by the comet until the moon comes out before sunset. For more on all meteor showers check out the International Meteor Organization at [www.imo.net/calendar/2015](http://www.imo.net/calendar/2015).

The winter solstice arrives on Monday, Dec. 21 is at 9:48 p.m. This is officially the shortest day of the year and occurs when the sun reaches its most southerly declination of -23.5 degrees and likewise the North Pole is tilted 23.5 degrees away from the sun. Depending on the calendar, the December solstice occurs annually on a day between Dec. 20 and Dec. 23. On this date, all places above a latitude of 66.5 degrees north are now in darkness while locations below a latitude of 66.5 degrees south receive 24

hours of daylight.

## Public events

The monthly public stargazing at the Vulcan Tourism and Trek Station takes place on Friday, Dec. 11 starting at 7:30 p.m.

Come celebrate our fifth anniversary of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's Calgary chapter with cake and refreshments.

A short indoor presentation on “Christmas in the sky” will be followed by stargazing through an 11-inch Celestron telescope. All are welcome.

For further information, phone the Trek Center at 403-485-2994 or visit [www.vulcantourism.com](http://www.vulcantourism.com).

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