

Interstellar



Cooper, the Father, promising his daughter he'll return

"Interstellar" came out in 2014. It's about time and family, but it contains a theological explanation of covenant family and dominion also. Long before seeing it and while sitting in a doctor's waiting room, I picked up a magazine and noticed an article about the movie. It explained that the makers went to an actual theoretical physicist to learn how to represent a black hole and a worm hole in the movie's special effects. The scientist allegedly took the equations governing the theoretical operations of these phenomena and matched it with special effects software for a video representation. But when they actually saw the image the equations created, they had made an entirely new scientific discovery as to the operation of the phenomena. Perhaps the first time that a scientific discovery occurred within the special effects process in the making of a movie.

Matthew McConaughey plays the main character, Cooper, a NASA pilot, living in the earth of the future, where crops are dying to blight, and the future of mankind looks bleak. NASA is no longer acceptable to the public as an institution because farming has become far more important. Therefore, Cooper feels like a fish out of water but does the "socially responsible thing" of farming.

As for the deeper meaning of the movie, that is summed up at the end when Cooper's daughter tells her dad: "I knew you'd be back because my Dad promised me." That is the main theme of the movie, which is about time and family more than it's about space. The rest of this discussion will point out the tips and hints that appear throughout the movie. I'll address them chronologically - for the most part.

Every word in this movie is important, but there are three conversations which on the surface appear to be headed one way or mean one thing, but in reality, they are

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stating the key theme of the movie. First, Cooper's discussions with his father-in-law, played by John Lithgow, about his purpose in life and what has happened to humanity in his day. Second, Cooper and Dr. Brand's emotional debrief as to what went wrong on Miller's planet, the first planet their team visits. Third, the discussion as to which planet to travel to after the team's disastrous visit to Miller's planet, a planet covered in water. (A tip of the hat to the judgment flood of Noah?) In that discussion, the consummate scientist, Dr. Brand, speaks of love as an element that transcends time and space, as something upon which science should depend as an element in its analysis as to what is best not only socially but also scientifically. Although Cooper disagrees with her analysis in that scene, he ends up living it out and uses his faith in the love his daughter has for him to communicate with her the scientific solution, which becomes humanity's salvation. As this discussion will detail later, Professor Brand (played by Michael Cain), the father of Dr. Brand, and Dr. Mann (played by Matt Damon) reject love and focus solely on the survival of humanity as a "species," and they end up not loving nor saving humanity. Cooper focuses on loving his daughter and ends up saving humanity too.

Cooper is a farmer, a tender of a Garden, but first there's a Fall, or a Crash, caused by an "anomaly." Cooper's father-in-law, who lives with Cooper and his family, a son and daughter, tells Cooper, "Repopulate the earth," which repeats a portion of the Dominion Covenant of Genesis: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." Genesis 1:27-8.

Watching the movie for the fourth time, I began to question whether the word "earth" in Genesis 1:1 need be restricted to one planet. Or could that word refer to all firm pieces of land in the entire universe? All planets? Cooper, whose view of dominion reaches far beyond the confines of our small planet, made me question what "earth" means. Cooper to his father-in-law: "We used to look up and wonder about our place in the stars; now we look down at our place in the dirt." He later expounds that "Mankind was born on earth but was never meant to die here."

Sovereignty appears in the saying, "Anything that can happen will happen." He names his own daughter after Murphy's Law, and he considers it a good thing. Of course, nothing can happen without a personality causing such to happen.

Murphy speaks about a rogue drone her father downs using computer technology, and Cooper says he'll put its solar batteries to a "socially responsible" use, powering a combine. All must go toward the goal of tending the Garden, feeding mankind. His son likes farming, and his Father thinks he'll be great at it.

Another religious message: There's a dust message in his daughter's room, and Cooper's father-in-law says to clean it up "when you finish praying to it." By the way, the message is from a Father communicating through dust, which is what man is made of, and the Father is perceived by Cooper's daughter as a person, so she calls it a ghost. What Father uses dust to write a message that would lead to the salvation of mankind by means of a Ghost [Holy]?

There's an Apocryphal tribute to the female contribution to humanity when Cooper pursues geographical coordinates that lead him to a NASA facility where he learns of the Lazarus mission. His daughter says to her father: "You wouldn't be here if it wasn't for me." Cooper's daughter had persisted in the face of family ridicule trying to learn what the messages from the "ghost" meant. Even so, a fundamental message of scripture indicates the importance of the contribution of the woman to life itself. "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." I Corinthians 11:8-9.

In looking for the location revealed by the code in the dust, Cooper reaches a gate guarded by a robot with a bright light and taser. An angel? Cooper first says that the coordinates for the location which would result in mankind's salvation were revealed "supernaturally."

Another explicit biblical reference: The missions that were the pioneering exploration missions before Cooper's were called "Lazarus," whom Jesus raised from the dead. Cooper was predestined to fly the Interstellar mission, for those overseeing the Lazarus mission tell Cooper that he was "trained for the Interstellar mission without even knowing it." Who sent Cooper? "They." He later explains that "Heading out there is what I was born to do." He was chosen by someone, trained without knowing where he was headed or what he was training for, sent by someone, and ends up doing what he was born to do. This is his "calling."

Science, represented by Professor Brand and Dr. Mann, promised salvation but didn't keep its promise. However, the Father kept His promise in Cooper's promise to his daughter. "I love you forever, and I'm coming back," promised Cooper to Murph. Covenant family promise prevails over the promises of scientific materialism. And

"the remarkable Dr. Mann" demonstrates the total depravity of man, no matter his intellect and promise. Another Calvinist reference: The space station is called "Endurance," thus perseverance is an element of the salvation experience.

As Cooper and his crew are headed out toward Saturn, one of the crew expresses his concern about being surrounded by space and the near-instant death it threatens. Cooper tells him that the space station they were traveling in is their boat. He tells him this after giving him what looks like a Walkman or mp3 player carrying sounds of a rain storm. Ark? Flood? No, it wasn't an 8-member crew.

Cooper tells his daughter, Murph, that "they chose me." They also chose Murph. And Murph, the covenant daughter, is a vast improvement over Professor Brand. She fulfills Murph's grandfather's statement to Professor Brand: "Maybe [Murph] should come make a fool out of you." She does. Brand is exposed as a fool and a deceiver. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men." I Corinthians 1:25. Murph has the faith to persevere to the end whereas Professor Brand dies after having given up on saving humanity long ago.

Cooper's son sends out messages into the darkness, who because of the passage of decades with no word back, does not expect Cooper to hear them - the definition of unbelieving prayer. The years of waiting have worn down his faith. Murph refuses to send out messages at all. Ironically, Professor Brand is the most faithful in sending messages into space, but he's ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth. II Timothy 3:7. Deceiving and being deceived. II Timothy 3:13. Next to "the remarkable Dr. Mann," he is the most cynical and contemptible character in the movie. An evolutionist believing merely in human survival, like Dr. Mann, he says to his daughter at one time that we interstellar travelers must "think not as individuals but as a species." His messages are sterile, scientific lectures, not loving and personal communications. One thing he believes in that agrees with the bible is continuity, the continued propagation of the species.

Covenant family for Professor Brand means sending his daughter into space based on a lie to the human race, that is, that he's trying to save living human beings. But all he cares about is the perpetuation of the human species, not the individuals and families themselves whom he actually believes will all die one day. He's a consummate politician in other words, secretly seeking funding for a project he considers in his elitist scientific opinion as more important than any other. Dr. Mann reveals later both Professor Brand's and his own philosophy: "Survival instinct - our single greatest source of inspiration." Dr Mann is inspired by survival, and he later proves that that is

all he believes in. That's the only "ethic" of evolution - survival, even if it means the death of others. Promise, covenant family, love - all disappear within the evolution worldview.

The Father (Cooper) thinks of the survival of both - his family and the human race. Dr. Mann thinks of the human race, but he ends up thinking only of himself. Professor Brand's daughter, Dr. Brand, a member of Cooper's crew, speaks of something transcendent. Love, which unlike science, is not something that mankind invented. For her, love may transcend both time and space. It must be considered by scientists trying to make a decision. Her argument is rejected as unscientific by Cooper and the other member of the team that is still alive. But at the end of the movie, she ends up being right in the context of the covenant family promise of the Father, Cooper, and the sovereignly ordained events that lead her and Cooper in the directions they eventually follow.

Dr. Mann, like the planet he has been exploring, is cold, calculating, and unloving. Evil is what Dr. Brand didn't expect to find in outer space. When she says, "This team represents the best of humanity," she's referring to the 4 members of the Lazarus mission and Dr. Mann. No evil there in her opinion. Cooper has a more realistic view of evil. He responds to her comment about there being no evil in space, by saying, "Just what we bring with us." He even sees himself in the light of man's sin: "Even me" is what he questions when she speaks about their team being "the best of humanity." Dr. Mann awakens from sleep and cries like a baby, as if he's being born. He tells Cooper and Brand that they "literally raised [him] from the dead." During the Dr. Mann meeting they learn the truth about Professor Brand's belief in the futility of the mission to save living human beings, and Cooper's daughter sounds like an Israelite in the wilderness after leaving Egypt: "Did you know? I just want to know if he [her dad] left us here to die." "Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." Exodus 14:12, KJV.

Dr. Mann ends up a Cain figure, attempting to kill his fellow scientist and explorer, Cooper, so he can captain the mission instead of Cooper and "save humanity." He's really a coward trying to save himself, and he dies in his own folly. Save the world by sinning, not by trusting the Father and the covenant family promise, is Dr. Mann's philosophy. Evolution, the survival instinct versus Cooper's love ethic, proves hollow to the core, for even murder is just part of the survival process for Dr. Mann.

Cooper ends up giving his life for Dr. Brand's daughter, and he becomes in charge of time, sovereign in a sense. As he's leaving his family earlier in the movie, he drives his truck away from the farm, and he looks like the classic portrait of Christ after being scourged. Cooper is a Christ figure, attacked by a Cain figure and misused by the unbelieving deceiver, Professor Brand, but it all works toward the Father's plan anyway.

The love of the Father causes the child to come to the Father to learn. That's what happens in Murph's room. And Murph sums it all up in the end when she explains the black hole data communication she figured out had come from Cooper: "Nobody believed me, but I knew you'd come back." Cooper: "How?" Murph: "Because my dad promised me." The Christian knows God the Father will sustain him and that Christ will be back because the Father promised. The promise of the Father is what led the prophets and believers of the Old Covenant to believe that Messiah, in Love, would come.

The movie ends with a new Garden of Eden and a new Adam and Eve - Cooper and Dr. Brand, the daughter of Professor Brand. In an ironic reversal or confusion of roles (not sure which it is), Professor Brand is like the serpent in the Garden, deceiving his own daughter and the new Adam, Cooper, into thinking that science can provide eternal life for man before they discover otherwise and return to the Garden.

Conclusion: The Father has sovereign power over time and uses it to communicate to His children by means of the Holy Ghost - books ("Bible" means book) and writing in dust, the essential element of man; thus he proves that His promise to come and save is faithful. Cooper said it perfectly as he left her to go into space not knowing when he'd return: "I love you forever, and I'm coming back, Murph." Although Murph, like the Israelites in the wilderness, goes through a stage of unbelief, thinking that her father had left her to die on earth, she eventually realizes he's communicating with her across impenetrable dimensions of time and space. Evil claims to save, and though faithless science may claim it has the answers to life, it doesn't. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are the ultimate covenant family upon which all covenant families are based. The Creator God of infinite time and space communicates with us, the dust, His message of promised salvation. He uses elements we can understand - human language inspired by the Holy Ghost. We just have to put our faith in those promises, no matter how much suffering we go through and no matter how much time passes.