

On Another Planet

by James Henderson

Stop the world, I want to get off!

What with all the political shenanigans that constantly assail us, and the general parlous state of the world, I've felt often like that in the past few weeks.

And now there appears to be somewhere I could go to. It's called K2-18b, and, according to scientists, it may be able to support life. The reason for this is that K2-18b appears to be in the Goldilocks Zone, meaning it orbits its nearest star at a distance which makes it neither too hot nor too cold, and just right for the existence of liquid H₂O, otherwise known as water.

What's more, the planet is roughly twice the size of Earth, so there would be plenty of room to get far away from the madding crowds.

There are, however, a couple of drawbacks. I would need to lose some weight as the gravity is much stronger than here on Earth. And there are intense UV rays, so I would need to put on lots and lots of sun block. I would also have to wait around until we develop much faster interplanetary space craft as, currently, it would take a million or so years to get there.

But let's not be negative. As Angelos Tsirias, an astronomer at University College London, said:

A fanciful travel poster from the future, advertising Kepler-16b, which orbits a pair of stars. Unlike K2-18b, it is a gas giant similar to Saturn, so it would have no solid surface to stand on. The view here imagines a nearby moon. Prospects for life on this unusual world aren't good, as it has a temperature similar to that of dry ice.

"This is the first potentially habitable planet where the temperature is right and where we now know there is water". He continued: "It's the best candidate for habitability right now".¹

It has been argued that, if life is found outside our own blue jewel of a planet, then Christianity becomes irrelevant because it's only about how Jesus saves earthbound human beings. Wrong, actually!

Christianity is much more than that. Jesus Christ came and will come again to restore and reconcile all things—not just humanity—to God. Because of Jesus, the Bible says "All the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe—people and things, animals and a t o m s — get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant h a r m o - nies".² Even those dead

places where life is unlikely or where life might exist, but not quite as we know it.

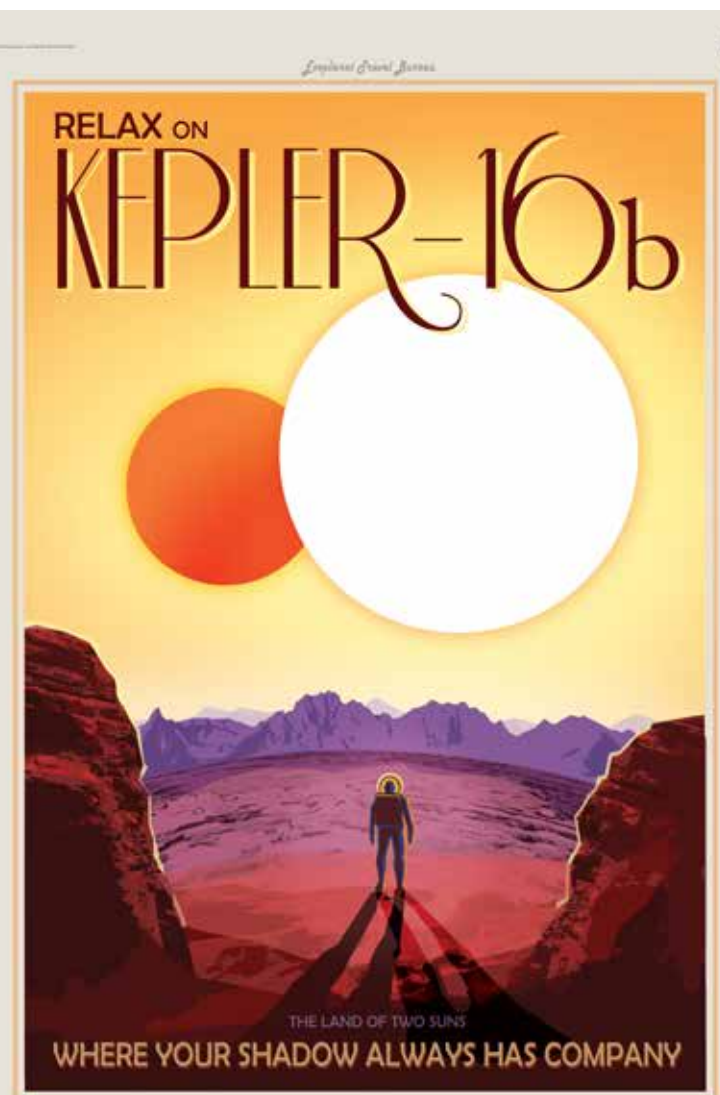
A renewed universe, wouldn't that be great? Then maybe we could get off this world and boldly go explore somewhere new and exciting.

Fancy a trip to K2-18b?

Notes

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2019/sep/11/rockysuper-earth-k2-18b-named-most-habitable-known-world-beyond-solar-system>

² Colossians 1:20, *The Message* version.



Like Luke Skywalker's planet "Tatooine" in Star Wars, Kepler-16b orbits a pair of stars. Depicted here as a terrestrial planet, Kepler-16b might also be a gas giant like Saturn. Prospects for life on this unusual world aren't good, as it has a temperature similar to that of dry ice. But the discovery inspires that the world's comic book heroes in anything but science fiction.

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