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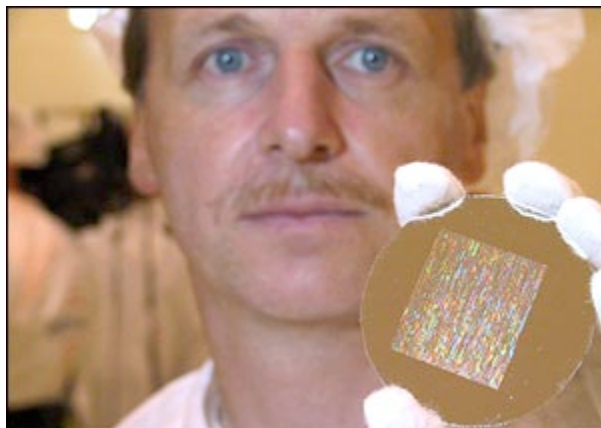
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# Cosmic message in a bottle



The inscription of Genesis in 1,000 languages  
*(Photo: Astrium)*

A cosmic "message in a bottle" is to be left in space as a relic of the world's languages.

A disc engraved with the first three chapters of Genesis in 1,000 native tongues will travel to a distant comet.

It will be carried on the European Space Agency's (Esa) Rosetta mission, set for take-off some time in 2003.

The unmanned spacecraft will orbit the ball of ice, matter and dust, and then put a lander on the comet's surface.

The inscription, attached to the outside of the main spacecraft, is designed to act as a relic of the languages on Earth.

Once the mission is over, the mother ship could end up circling for thousands of years until it breaks up or collides with a planet.

## Contemporary version

The space mission is named after the famous Rosetta Stone - carved with inscriptions in



## Rosetta space delay

### Latest news

- New targets
- Long delay
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- Rocket fault
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- Problems start

### Background

- Cosmic message
- Q&A: Comet science
- Q&A: Mission plan

### KEY LINKS

- Rosetta (Esa)
- Astrium
- Arianespace
- Comets (BBCi)

### See also:

12 Dec 02 | Science/Nature  
Flagship space mission in doubt

### Internet links:

- Imperial College London
- The Rosetta Project

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Egyptian and Greek - found by a French soldier in Egypt in 1799.

The discovery of the basalt stone slab, written at the beginning of the 2nd century BC, unlocked the secrets of ancient Egyptian writing.

The spacecraft words, corresponding to 7,000 pages of a book, have been produced by the Rosetta project of the Long Now Foundation in San Francisco, US.



Comets may hold secrets about the origin of the Solar System

The organisation, which is trying to save the world's languages, fears most will die out within the next century.

The global collaboration of language specialists and native speakers is working to develop a contemporary version of the historic Rosetta Stone.

"Fifty to 90% of the world's languages are predicted to disappear in the next century, many with little or no significant documentation," said a spokeswoman for the Long Now Foundation.

It hopes the process of creating a new Rosetta Stone will help draw attention to "the tragedy of language extinction as well as speeding the work to preserve what we have left of this critical manifestation of the human intellect".

Sending words, music or memorabilia into space is becoming a tradition.

### **Rocket failure**

Messages in many languages and music by the likes of jazz great Louis Armstrong flew on the US space agency (Nasa) Voyager spacecraft in the 1970s.

The earlier Nasa Pioneer 10 and 11 probes

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carried metallic plates containing information about humans and Earth.

Rosetta is due to take off from a base in Kourou, French Guiana, on an Ariane 5 rocket.

The original launch date had to be postponed after a newer version of the rocket veered off course and had to be destroyed in December.

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