

Unpredictable Satellite

On Oct. 28, 1993, the U.S. Space Command watched as a two-ton chunk of Chinese satellite began to re-enter the earth's atmosphere.

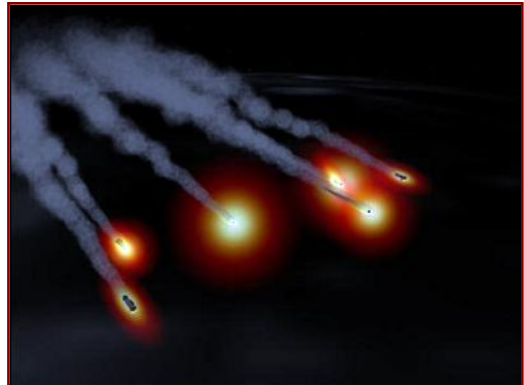
The Space Command tracks more than 7,000 manmade objects orbiting near Earth, and according to their calculations, this satellite would drop into the Pacific Ocean 500 miles west of Baja, California. When it plunged into the atmosphere, however, it skipped south and took an unexpected detour, landing in the Pacific Ocean west of Peru.

Maj. Bob Butt explained that space debris traveling 17,000 miles per hour takes unpredictable twists and turns when it breaks into the thickening atmosphere. It's like dropping a penny into water, he said. "Sometimes it goes straight down, and sometimes it turns end over end and changes direction."

This wasn't the first time the Chinese satellite had thwarted the predictions of scientists. It was launched October 8, 1993, carrying into space microgravity experiments. Ten days after launch, a capsule containing the experiments was to have separated and parachuted to Earth for retrieval. But on Oct. 18, when Chinese scientists radioed the re-entry commands, the satellite went out of control, split in two, and stayed in orbit.

The Chinese space agency predicted it would remain in orbit six more months. In fact, it stayed in orbit only 10 more days, coming down a few hours earlier than even the U.S. Space Agency thought.

Our lives are a lot like that Chinese satellite: unpredictable, defying our best-laid plans, filled with surprises. That's why God tells us to approach our planning and praying with great humility.



As we approach the New Year, considering resolutions and the direction we want our lives to take, keeping that advice in mind should be foremost.

A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps (Proverbs 16:9).

– Beecher Hunter