

Malyuta S.

DISCOVERY OF MARS

Mars is the fourth planet in our solar system and is about 228 million km from earth. Even being so far away, people throughout time have looked up at the heavens and have been able to clearly see the orange-red planet.

Many civilizations throughout our history seemed to relate a red color of Mars with something evil or bad. The Greeks and Romans used the reddish color to name the planet after their God of War: "Mars". In the past, many people thought that the stars and planets were in control of their lives and they named many of the constellations after their Gods and stories that were told.

Mars isn't that big of a planet. You could almost fit two earths inside Mars and it's about two times the size of our moon. It gets the reddish color due to a fine layer of rust that covers the entire planet.. None of the other planets and stars showed up in the sky with that kind of color, and so they were afraid of what power it might have.

When people in the past studied the constellations, they noticed that Mars and Earth seemed to have a very close cycle around the sun. The Earth takes 365 days to go completely around the sun and it takes Mars 320 days. When they watched the planets, people saw that Mars was a lot like Earth and might have been a kind of guardian or warrior.

Since Mars was red, it made people afraid. When they thought that there were Martians living so close, this made people even more fearful. They began to write books and stories about Martians coming to earth.

Today, we have sent many missions to Mars and know that it has just a tiny bit of atmosphere but no life. The Mars rovers have taken a lot of samples from the planet and we know that the rusty colored dust may be all over the planet, but it isn't very thick. Thanks to the rovers, Spirit and Opportunity, we have also seen that Mars has some of the largest dust storms in the galaxy and they can cover the entire planet in a very short amount of time.

At least 34 million miles separates Mars and Earth (the distance between the two planets varies during their elliptical orbits around the sun)