

“Blessings: Stars, Planets and Eternal Order”

Genesis 1:14-19; Revelation 21:1-5 June 21, 2020

PRAY

In January, or February or March, there finally comes a day when the sun shines, and it seems like we haven't seen it for months. The sun brings real joy after a dark winter or after a long rain spell. How are you blessed by the sun?

We can't always see the 'sun that rules the day,' but we know it is out there somewhere...beyond the clouds, giving us heat and light and life...and then on a clear night there is the night sky.

Have you ever gone out to count the stars? Who can see the stars from their house? Who has been somewhere far enough from the city lights to really see the stars? Do any of you know the constellations well enough to pick them out? Which ones?

As a young adult, after several boyfriends, as I hadn't found a life-mate in high school like my mother had, I began to think I would be single forever. One night I was looking at the stars and talking to God and I saw three stars in a row. The middle one was a little out of line, but they were equally bright and looked like they belonged together.

In my mind I decided that when they got lined up right, I would know that I had found the right man...I know this sounds kind of silly now, but for a number of years I watched those three stars on the occasions when I was able to see them. I even remember the times as I dated several more men, when I prayed to my God who created those stars, asking if this was 'the one.'

Yet the three stars never came together. After a few more years, I gave up on the stars. After all...Really? What was I thinking? Soon after I found my life-mate, Bob and sometime after that I saw the stars and they were in alignment. I now know them as Orion's Belt.

The Babylonian star catalogues of the Late Bronze Age – somewhere around 1500 years before Christ, name Orion "The Heavenly Shepherd" or "True Shepherd of Anu" - Anu being the chief god of the heavenly realms.

In ancient Egypt, the stars of Orion were regarded as a god, called Sah. In the Pyramid Texts, from the 24th and 23rd centuries BC, Sah was the god of the afterlife.

The Bible mentions Orion three times: Two of them are found in the book of Job 9:7-10 This is part of one of Job's speeches. "Who commands the sun, and it does not rise, even seals up the stars; stretched out the heavens alone and trod on the waves of the Sea; made the Bear and Orion, Pleiades and the southern constellations; does great and unsearchable things, wonders beyond number?"

Job 38:31-33 is written as one of God's speeches to Job: "Can you bind Pleiades' chains or loosen the belt of Orion? Can you guide the stars at their proper times...Do you know heaven's laws, or can you impose its rule on earth?"

Differing cultural traditions around the world have their own ideas what Orion represented. In old Hungarian tradition, "Orion" is known as the Archer, or the Reaper. In recently rediscovered myths he is called Nimrod, the greatest hunter. In other Hungarian traditions, "Orion's belt" is known as "Judge's stick." The Chippewa Native Americans call this constellation the Winter Maker, as its presence in the night sky heralds winter.

The three stars of Orion's Belt are very useful as an aid to locating other stars. It consists of the three bright stars in Greek named: Zeta, Epsilon, and Delta. Zeta is around 800 light years away from earth and is 100,000 times more luminous than the Sun.

Epsilon is approximately 1340 light years away from Earth, and is 375,000 times more luminous than the Sun. Delta is 915 light years away. It is 90,000 times more luminous than the Sun and is a double star: the two parts orbit each other every 5+days.

How many of you learned the solar system when you were in school? Starting near the sun, see if you can name them with me: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, (Pluto)...2008 – news headlines read "Pluto is not a planet." Pluto was first discovered in 1930 by Clyde W. Tombaugh at the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff Arizona. Astronomers had long predicted that there would be a ninth planet in the Solar System, which they called Planet X.

After a year of observations, Tombaugh finally discovered an object in the right orbit, and declared that he had discovered Planet X. The Solar System now had 9 planets, the newest named Pluto (no, it wasn't named after the Disney character, but the Roman god of the underworld). Over the last few decades, powerful new ground and space-based observatories have completely changed previous understanding of the outer Solar System.

Pluto and its moons are now known to be just a large example of a collection of objects. Astronomers estimate that there are at least 70,000 icy objects, with the same composition as Pluto. And according to the new rules, Pluto is not a planet. It's just another object.

Well, I'm not an astronomer or an astrologer. I will leave that to the 'wisemen'...But all of this information – from my young adult dreams all the way back to those who first looked at the sky and wondered, tells us a story of a great Creator God. We may keep learning more and more, but we are a long way from total discovery when it comes to our knowledge of the Universe.

Today we have the **Hubble Telescope** which has been photographing space for 30 years. (Slide Show)

A friend of mine worked on the development of a lesser known space project entitled **NuStar**, which is a telescope sent out to explore black holes!

Think of it, your God is the God of the whole universe, much more than just the sun by day and the moon by night. That puts the concept of 'heaven' in whole new terms...

What did the ancient Hebrews think when they looked at the sky? The story in Genesis of two lights seems small within what we know now because we can see beyond the sun and the moon. But that was what they knew.

Their world was divided between day and night. This brought order to their existence. They worked hard during the daylight and they had to sleep for lack of electricity, at night. There were oil lamps, but oil was precious and not to be frittered away.

Besides, hard labor requires rest, something that I sometimes forget... how about you? There is comfort in order. As followers of Jesus, who took time to rest...as followers of John Wesley, who was all about order in his life, as followers of God's Word for us, we can rest in the order of life and here is peace within us.

If we work too long or sleep too long, if we work too little or sleep too little our minds and bodies begin to live in disorder. When things get out of order in our lives, we become anxious.

Even so, disorder does come into our lives. An orbit changes or a star burns up A pandemic spreads over the earth and we wait with little or few answers or understandings about what life will look like in the future...and we wonder why disorder has entered our existence.

Where is God now, we wonder? Think of it, your God is the God of the whole universe, much more than just the sun by day and the moon by night. That puts the concept of 'heaven' in whole new terms...Just as we don't know the whole universe, we can't understand God who is even more - vast.

So we are offered the opportunity to trust; to have faith in the one who made us; and in the promises and future we have gained through Jesus Christ. When John wrote about his Revelation, he talked of a new heaven and a new earth. He had known Christ, he had heard the promises and he was finishing off what would become the final book in this set of books we call the Bible.

Jesus had said "I am the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end." We can hear that today as the Genesis and the Revelation. The one who came not to explain the stars, the sun, the planets, the earth... not to define the creation as much as to explain about the Creator.

When I asked God to straighten out the stars for me, I was seeking God's order for my life. God has done that for me, not only in the wonderful husband that I have, but also in sending me a deeper relationship with Jesus, and through him, the Creator God of the Universe.

Do you know how to find the 'Jesus Star?' Many Christians see the star as a miraculous sign to mark the birth of Christ the messiah. Some theologians claimed that the star fulfilled a prophecy, known as the Star Prophecy from Numbers 24:17 "I see him, but not now; I look at him, but not nearby. A star comes from Jacob; a scepter arises from Israel."

Astronomers have made several attempts to link the star to unusual astronomical events, such as a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, a comet or a supernova. Another question that goes unanswered, but is it the right question to be asking? The better question might be: where do the stars lead you? That answer may be "to the source of the universe...the one who brings order to my life. What a great blessing..."

PRAY