

The Heavens Declare God's Majesty

By Rolaant McKenzie



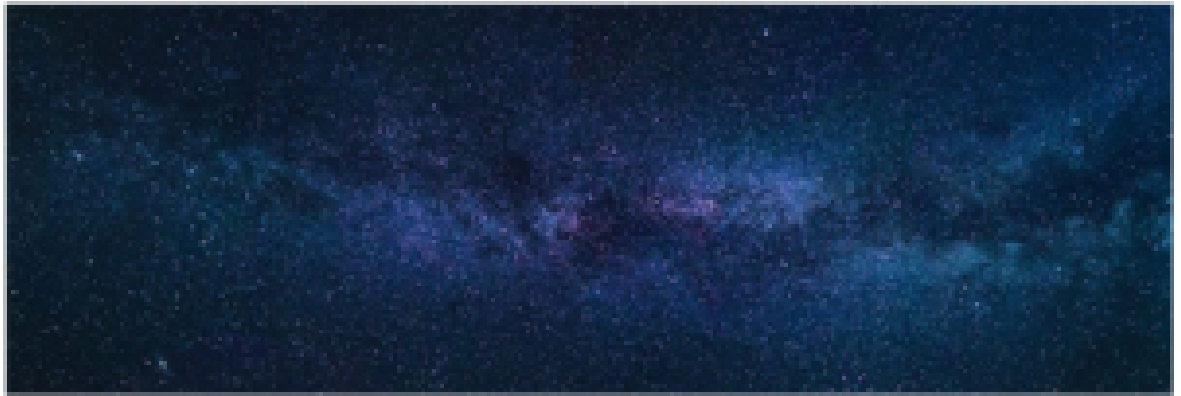
October 9, 2022

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” (Psalm 19:1-4)

Stories in the Sky

One of my favorite things to do during the weekend is to sit on the deck of our home and enjoy the night sky. Despite living in a suburban area, a cloudless night reveals a multitude of stars that can be seen with the naked eye. It always amazes me that many of the very same stars that I view from my deck were seen by people thousands of years ago. As they did for them, the twinkling lights hang like brilliant jewels displayed on a dark velvet backdrop forming various interesting shapes and patterns.

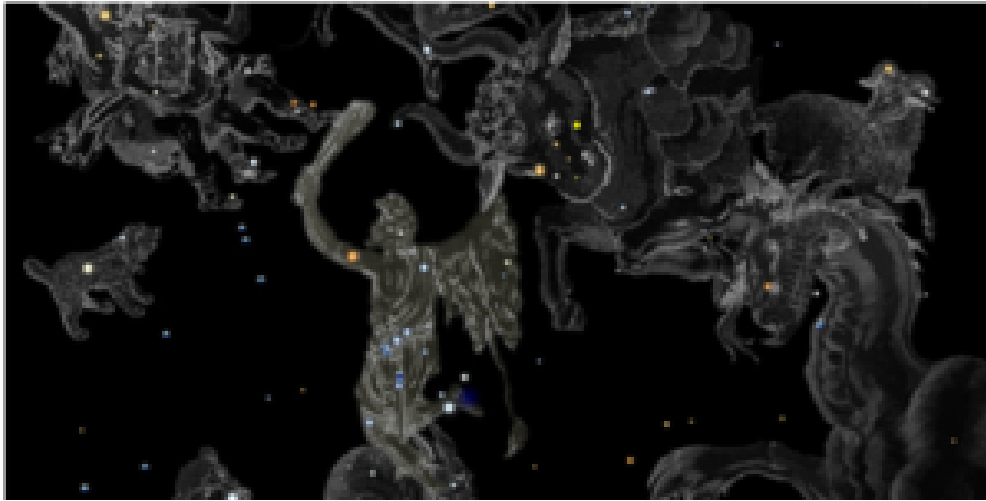
Called
constellations,
those
of
ancient



times perceived many shapes and patterns representing animals, mythological people or creatures, or inanimate objects. They were often used to relate stories of their beliefs, experiences, creation, or mythology.

Job, considered by many Biblical scholars to be the oldest book in the Bible, mentions the Big Bear, the Serpent, Orion, and the Pleiades (Job 9:9, 26:13, 38:31-32). God is described as bringing forth the constellations in their season, guiding them in their proper times of appearance on the earth. In Acts 28:11, the apostle Paul sailed on an Alexandrian vessel that had as its figurehead Castor and Pollux, a reference to the constellation Gemini (the Twin Brothers of Roman and Greek myth).

God made the stars and the constellations we still see today not merely for our enjoyment, but to convey important information. They were created to mark signs, seasons, days, and years (Genesis 1:14-15). They are a universal language to all people of all times and places declaring who He is. Without words they proclaim His divine, majestic, and eternal power over the universe (Psalm 19:1-40; Romans 1:18-20).



While people in ancient times associated stars and constellations with stories meaningful to them, it is the truth of

the inerrant, infallible written word of God that allows me to enjoy the pictures in the sky and be reminded of various aspects of the story redemption.

A Virgin Births a Lion Who Crushes Cancer

Known as “the great lion” by the Babylonians as early as 4000 BC in Mesopotamia, **Leo** is one of the oldest constellations in the night sky. The brightest star, Regulus, is actually a four-star system composed of two pairs of stars approximately 79 light years away. It was known as “the star that stands at the Lion’s breast,” or the King Star. Both the constellation and its brightest star were well-known in most ancient cultures.

When I see Leo in the sky, I am reminded of the Lion of Judah, the coming King and Savior, Jesus Christ.

“After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, ‘Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.’ Abram said, ‘O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?’ And Abram said, ‘Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.’ Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ‘This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.’ And He took him outside and said, ‘Now look toward the heavens, and count

the stars, if you are able to count them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness." (Genesis 15:1-6)

"Indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." (Genesis 22:17-18)

This promise was fulfilled with the birth of Isaac (Genesis 21:1-8), who was the father of Israel (Genesis 25:19-28), who was the father of Judah (Genesis 29:32-35). Shortly before he died, Israel gathered his sons and prophesied over them. Regarding Judah, the promise of a king was foretold:

"Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down to you. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, and as a lion, who dares rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples." (Genesis 49:8-10)

While this prophecy was partially fulfilled about 640 years after it was made with the reign of David, Judah's first dynasty of kings, it met its complete fulfillment with the arrival of Jesus around 960 years later. He is the Shiloh which is mentioned in the passage. He is the rightful King.

"Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ." (Galatians 3:16)

All the nations of the earth will be blessed by the righteous and everlasting rule of the Seed of Abraham, the Son of David, Jesus Christ.

Virgo, whose name means “virgin” in Latin, is one of the largest constellations in the night sky. Its brightest star is Spica, a binary system located 260 light years from Earth. One Greek myth depicts Virgo as the virgin daughter of Icarus. Another myth identifies this constellation with fertility and agriculture, with Spica meaning “ear of grain” in Latin.

Cancer, whose name means “the crab” in Latin, is one of the faintest of constellations. Its brightest star is Al Tarf, is a binary system consisting of an orange giant and red dwarf, about 290 light years from Earth. Greek mythology describes Cancer as the giant crab sent to kill the hero Heracles (Hercules), but he defeated it by crushing it underfoot.

Virgo reminds me of the woman through whom the Seed would come, the Virgin Mary. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God proclaimed what has been called the protoevangelium (the first gospel).

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.” (Genesis 3:15)

The good news from God is that ultimately this battle was between Satan and the Seed of the Woman (a foreshadowing of the virgin birth of Christ). I am reminded of this when I see Virgo the Virgin, and Leo the Lion ready to crush the head of Cancer the Crab in the sky. Born of the Virgin Mary, the Lion of Judah, has delivered the fatal bruise to the serpent’s head. Though the serpent bruised the heel of the Messiah at the cross, his head was crushed with a mortal blow when Jesus by His death and resurrection secured the redemption of lost humanity.

The Good Shepherd Who Heals the Sheep

Boötes, traditionally portrayed as a herdsman, is a large kite-shaped constellation in the night sky. The red supergiant, Arcturus, is its most luminous star that lies

about 37 light years from Earth.

When I see Boötes in the sky, I am reminded of how all we like sheep because of our sins have gone astray (Isaiah 53:6-12), but the Lord being the Good Shepherd (Psalm 23; Luke 15:4-7) seeks for the lost sheep. And He provides for, defends, and gives His life for the sheep.

“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.” (John 10:11-16)

Because the Lord Jesus is such a good shepherd, He able to save and keep all those who trust in Him. He sees to it that His sheep make it safely home (Hebrews 13:20-21).

Serpens the Serpent is another constellation viewable from my deck. Unukalhai, its brightest star, is located about 74 light years from Earth. It is represented in Greek mythology by the snake on the staff of the healer Asclepius, which continues to this day as a symbol of medicine. Asclepius was said to be able to bring people back from the dead with his healing powers.

Serpens is reminiscent of the bronze serpent made by Moses, which was set on a standard so that anyone who was bitten by the poisonous serpents in the camp could look at it, be healed, and live (Numbers 21:5-9).

Jesus Himself referred to this in the Gospel of John:

“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.” (John 3:14-15)

“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” (John 12:32)

All have been mortally bitten by the serpent of sin, but those who look solely to the Son of God will be healed in the truest sense and have eternal life, for Jesus is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25-26).

Rescued by the Hunter

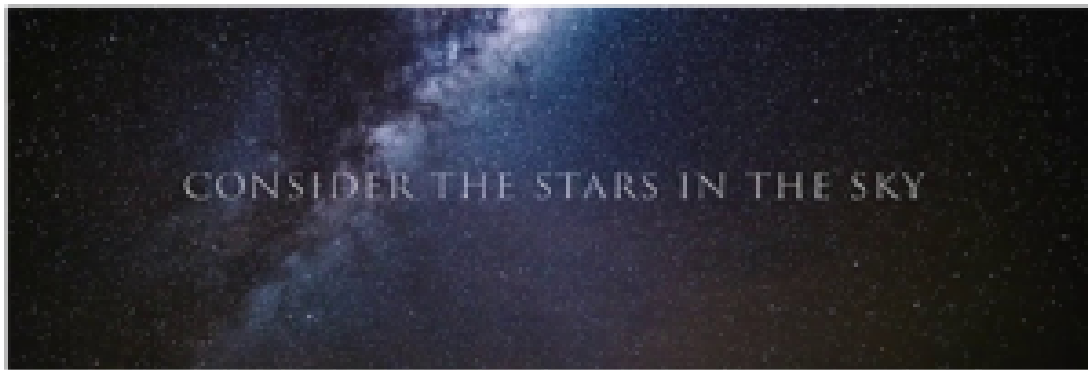
Orion is one of the brightest and probably most recognizable constellations in the night sky. Known since ancient times, it represents the mythical hunter of Greek legend, who is depicted with shield and arm raised in victory as he defeats his enemy.

Several of the brightest stars in Orion include the blue supergiant Rigel (the brightest due to it being a triple star system), and red supergiants Betelgeuse and Bellatrix. They lie approximately 773, 643, and 240 light years from Earth respectively. The three bright stars in the constellation's middle represent Orion's belt. Three stars pointing downward and the Orion Nebula together represent the sword.

Taurus is the constellation found immediately to the west of Orion, and representing a snorting bull charging the hunter. Its brightest star, Aldebaran, is a giant orange star located 65 light years away from Earth and depicting the Bull's Eye.

Nearby within the constellation of Taurus are the **Pleiades**, one of the most beautiful open star clusters in the night sky, as well as one of the easiest to spot. It is located about 440 light years away, and seven of its brightest blue stars that can be seen with the naked eye are named after the Seven Sisters of Greek mythology beloved by Orion. It is estimated

that this cluster contains up to 1,000 stars.



Certainly, Orion is the constellation I look forward most to seeing on

a clear night. And typically, I cannot see Orion without seeing Taurus and the Pleiades. For me, it displays a beautiful picture of the love and protective power of Jesus for His church and His victory over Satan. As I see them in the sky, Orion represents Jesus, Taurus the devil, and the Seven Sisters the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 1:4-3:22.

Jesus, conqueror of death and the grave, by His Almighty power defeats the attempts of the devil from beginning to end to destroy the church, whom He loves and has redeemed by His blood. Thus, fulfilling His promise that the gates of Hades would never overcome the church (Matthew 16:15-18).

He Knows Your Name

Please keep in mind that just as many of us have personal signs, mementoes, or events of life that have important meaning and bring to memory important truths in Scripture, so when I view with wonder the beauty of the stars and constellations that God has created, I am reminded of the love and redemptive power of Jesus Christ through the gospel in Holy Scripture.

I am in awe of the fact that God not only has created the stars by His Word, and that He has named each one and leads them through the cosmos in the paths He has established, but He cares for me. Jesus actually knows my name and loves me.

“He counts the number of the stars; He gives names to all of them. Great is our Lord and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite.” (Psalm 147:4-5)

“‘To whom then will you liken Me that I would be his equal?’ says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing.” (Isaiah 40:25-26)

“When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him?” (Psalm 8:3-4)

This same Jesus, God in the flesh, who created the entire universe by His power, who sustains it by His might, loved us so much that He has delivered us from the wrath of God and has granted forgiveness for our sins by His death on the cross and resurrection from the grave.

“For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.” (Colossians 1:13-18)

Just as Jesus is the source and sustainer of the universe, He is the founder and keeper of all who trust solely in Him for forgiveness of sin and salvation. He remains always the one

Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), and the One from whose love nothing in the universe can separate us (Romans 8:38-39).

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