



July 12, 2024

### **To Infinity and Beyond!**

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast of Alabama. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

One of my favorite past times in my youth was to sit in solitude and gaze up into the heavens. As I age, I am finding the time to do so more often, and doing so is good for the soul.

Although when the coldest temperatures occur during winter the skies are clearer, we still are blessed to be able to see clearly even during the dog-days of summer once the sun is set and night is apparent. The stars seem brighter also when the cloud cover is away, a rarity here in lower Alabama.

We've lived in several different states and places over the years. We've pastored and traveled around this globe. But, the location where the stars always seemed brighter to me on a clear night, was my wife's home town of Milton, Wisconsin, especially during the winter months.

I have learned over the years to identify some of the star groupings – called constellations. When you locate the Big Dipper (part of Ursa Major) you use the stars that make up the end of the cup to point the way to locate Polaris at the end of the handle of the Little Dipper (part of Ursa Minor). These two stars are called "pointer stars."

Years ago I found an interesting web site that showed these constellations, and when one pointed his/her mouse at the stars in the graphic, the lines were drawn that showed the outlines of the two Dippers and the line from the pointing stars.

Today there are several apps that will do so similarly. Smart phones do have their helpful points.

Actually the Big and Little Dipper are each an 'asterism', a highly recognizable part of a constellation. We can find two of the best and brightest galaxies in the sky just above the two stars that form the neck of the Bear — they are M81 and its neighbor M82. Since the earth's North Pole points to Polaris and the earth rotates around its poles, all the constellations seem to rotate around Polaris, including the Big Dipper.

Those that came before us, the ancients, looked into the heavens and observed and identified star groupings and named them. Interestingly, the Scriptures mention several names. We recall when God confronted Job with the following. *"Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades, or loose the belt of Orion? Can you bring out Mazzaroth (Heb. mazzarah) in its season? Or can you guide the Great Bear (Heb. 'Ayish) with its cubs?"* (Job 38:31-32)

[Here are some commentarial thoughts I found interesting: From "Mazzaroth; the twelve signs of the zodiac" (Family Bible Notes). "Mazzaloth (to which Mazzaroth here is equivalent) displays into the sky the signs of the Zodiac at their respective seasons—the twelve lodgings in which the sun successively stays, or appears, in the sky.

Arcturus—Ursa Major. His sons—the three stars in his tail" (JFB Commentary)

The Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon explains mazzarah as referring to "the 12 signs of the Zodiac and their 36 associated constellations." This Lexicon also explains 'Ayish as referring to "a constellation, 1a) Great Bear, Ursa Major, 1b) Arcturus."

Not all commentaries agree with the above identifications of the Hebrew words in Job 38 and Job 9. I don't suggest the above as the final word, but it is obvious that Job was keenly aware of some of the star arrangements in the sky and the names for them.

One Commentary comments on Job 26:13: By His spirit He hath garnished the heavens; His hand hath formed the crooked serpent. He interprets “crooked” as “implying the oblique course, of the stars, or the ecliptic.” He and others interpret this as referring to “a figure of stars shaped like a serpent” and this is called “Draco, the dragon.”

Again, this is interesting, although partly commentaries speculation. The “ecliptic” is the great circle on the celestial sphere that represents the Sun’s apparent path (as viewed from the earth) among the background stars in one year. The plane of the ecliptic corresponds to the plane in which the Earth orbits the Sun.

One more mention of constellations in the book of Job is as he answers one of his friends. *“He alone spreads out the heavens, and treads on the waves of the sea; He made the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades, and the chambers of the south.”* (Job 9:8-9)

Bullinger in his work “Witness of the Stars” makes the suggestion or argument that the constellations of the 12 signs of the Zodiac are indicative of events in God’s plan. Others offer similar observations.

Genesis 1:14 has inferences as well. We know that ancient pagan religions often developed their own mythologies and gods and goddesses based on real individuals and events that they then corrupted. Bullinger states concerning these religions that “they themselves are a corruption and perversion of primitive truth.”]

I also mention these stars and constellations in part because when I traveled to Santa Rosa, Colombia on several occasions, and looked into the heavens on multiple evenings while walking home on lightless streets, and saw the glory of the heavens, it helped me to honor and praise our Creator God. One feels pretty small and insignificant when gazing up to such vastness! Sometimes you just have to get away from all the cities and lights to see His creation more clearly. I’ve

never really enjoyed staying in cities for any length of time. I prefer wide open spaces and fields where only an occasional light here or there on a barn shimmers.

The Psalms inform us about God. *“He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name.”* (Psalm 147:4)

Isaiah also comments on the greatness of the true God. *“Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, By the greatness of His might And the strength of His power; Not one is missing.”* (Isaiah 40:26)

We read in Psalm 8:3-6, 3 *“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; 4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? 5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. 6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet”.*

You know what is amazing to me is that same Creator that designed and brought into being the stars and the heavens also created you and me. We’ve got an awesome potential don’t we! I think mankind has only scratched the surface of the size of the universe. I don’t think we’ve grasped our incredible potential fully either.

May you be encouraged this Sabbath by reviewing God’s precious truths, promises, and plan for you and me. Consider the heavens He’s made! Keep focused on the positive, good, and holding on to that vision of Christ’s return and His promises...When He returns it’s really only a beginning...and as a famous animated movie character exclaimed, *“To infinity and beyond!”*

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.



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