

## How Big is God

The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.  
Day after day they pour forth speech  
night after night they display knowledge  
There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.  
Their voice goes out into all the earth,  
Their words to the ends of the world. Psalm 19:1- 5

So, what are the heavens saying to us about our Creator? We're going to take a little jaunt into the heavens and see what we can learn.

As we leave this earth, we'll try to catch up to Voyager I. Voyager I is an unmanned space probe that was launched by NASA in September, 1977. That was 27 years ago.

To give you a little measure of the time involved, just think for a moment! What were you doing in 1977? How old were you? How old were your children?

Since 1977, Voyager I has been speeding out into space at the rate of approximately 38,000 miles an hour. (38,439)

And where is it now? As of November, 2004 Voyager I had travelled over 10 billion miles. (10,109,000,000 miles). That's 10 with 9 zeros. It is just now approaching the outer edge of our solar system. It is either in or very close to what is called the "Heliopause". This is where the solar winds of about 700,000 miles an hour are slowed down to approximately 100,000 miles an hour as they start encountering interstellar gases. Beyond that is what is called the "Termination Shock". This is the outer edge of our solar system where solar winds no longer exist and interstellar space takes over.

Now as we are going to leave our solar system behind we would find it difficult to continue measuring distance in earth miles so we'll have to convert to "light years". And just how far is a light year? We learned that in school, didn't we? A light year is the distance light travels in a year's time. I always knew it was a long way, but I didn't know exactly how far until I figured it out. We know that light travels at the rate of 186,000 miles a second. Multiplying that by 60 to get per minute, then by another 60 to get per hour, by 24 to get per day and by 365 to get per year, I was quite amazed to find that in a year's time light travels 5,865,696,000,000 miles. A light year is almost 6 trillion miles. That is 6 with 12 zeros.

With that in mind, let's take a minute to look around our new surroundings. Just how big is our Milky Way? They tell us our galaxy is about 100,000 *light years* in diameter. That would be 6 with 17 zeros in earth miles. And remember, this is just our galaxy.

And how many stars does it have? Approximations vary. In searching the web, I found a NASA site said the Milky Way has about 100 billion stars. The Royal Greenwich Observatory says about 200 billion. The University of California, San Diego Center of Astrophysics and Space Sciences says about 400 billion. So it seems there are anywhere from 100-400 billion stars in our galaxy. That's a lot of stars!

Up until 1920 the Milky Way was considered to be the only galaxy in the universe. But with the development of more powerful telescopes Edwin Hubble determined that some of the haze in the Milky Way that was thought to be just gases, was actually distant galaxies. Now with evermore powerful

telescopes, scientists are finding more and more galaxies and it is estimated that there could be as many as 100 billion galaxies in the universe.

Hm! Stop and think. If there are somewhere between 100 and 400 billion stars in our galaxy (and who knows how many in others), and if there are as many as 100 billion galaxies, how many stars do you think there might be all together? I'm sure scientists have wrestled with this very thing for centuries.

At an astronomers conference in Sydney, Australia in 2003 it was reported that a team of astronomers from some of our leading universities had undertaken to determine the number of stars in our universe. Do you know what they came up with? They said there are more stars in the sky than there are grains of sand in all the beaches and deserts of the world. And this count, they said, was the most accurate ever made.

So, if you take a handful of sand and look at all the tiny grains, they are so small you can't even see the space between them with the naked eye. NOW think about the size of stars and the distances between them.

Our sun is our nearest star. Earth is 7,900 miles in diameter, almost 8,000 miles. The diameter of the sun is more than 800,000 miles in diameter, (865,000), more than 100 times that of earth. Our sun is 93 million miles away, that is about 8 light minutes. The next nearest star is 4.27 *light years away*. Are you beginning to feel a little stretched?

Currently, NASA's Hubble Space Telescope orbits the earth every 97 minutes and from its vantage point in space it has a clearer view of the great beyond. One of its photographs published in The National Geographic, December, 2003 showed a multitude of faint galaxies that they said were more than 12 billion light-years away. 12 billion light years? That would be 72 with 21 zeros in earth miles.

This photograph was included in an article called "Eye on Infinity". Could it be that God is giving us just the faintest glimpse of *infinity* in the heavens? With nothing to attach the word "infinity" to, we knew it was big but we didn't have anything tangible to attach it to. It was like my concept of light years. I knew a light year was "big" but I didn't know how big until I multiplied it out. Now with all these zeroes that are far beyond our ability to comprehend, it seems God is giving us just the faintest glimpse of His greatness. He seems to have pulled back the curtain ever so slightly to reveal just the very *edge of infinity*.

Yes!

*The heavens declare the glory of God  
and the firmament shows His handiwork*

And are you ready for a little more stretching? The Psalmist says our Lord . . .

*. . . counts the stars and calls them all by name.*

Try, again, picking up a handful of sand and think about counting each little grain. Then, try attributing a name to each one. That would be just *one* little handful. Need I say more?

Now, we might think: Hm! If the Lord is so meticulously counting all the jillions of stars and if there are more stars in the sky than grains of sand on all the beaches and deserts of the world, could it be

that He is so busy taking care of the stars that He has no time for what is happening on a tiny, little ball bobbing around on the edge of the Milky Way?

Not so! Jesus assures us that His Father is so tuned in to what is happening on this little globe that not even an insignificant sparrow falls to the ground apart from the Father's will.

Yes, our Lord counts the stars in the vast universe. He also counts the hairs on your head. Yes, He watches over the seemingly endless heavens. He is also intimately involved in the creation of every little baby formed in his mother's womb from the very moment of conception.

Before we were even born He saw our lives as if they were already lived. He knows our every word before we speak it, every thought before we think it, every move we are going to make before it happens.

David expounds on this in Psalm 139:

Oh, Lord, you have searched me and know me  
You know when I sit and when I stand  
You understand my thoughts afar off.

You know my going out and my lying down  
And are acquainted with all my ways.

For there is not a word on my tongue,  
but lo, Oh Lord, you know it altogether.  
You hem me in behind and before  
and have laid your hand on me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,  
Too lofty for me to attain.

Where can I go from your Spirit?  
Where can I flee from your presence?  
If I ascend into heaven, you are there.  
If I make my bed in the depths, you are there.  
If I take the wings of the morning  
and dwell in the depths of the sea.  
Even there your hand will guide me  
and your right hand will hold me fast.

If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me,  
and the light become night around me."

Even the darkness will not be dark to you.  
The night will shine like the day.  
The darkness and the light are both alike to you.

For you created my inmost being  
When I was woven together in my mother's womb.

I will praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Your works are wonderful, and that my soul knows right well.

My frame was not hidden from you  
when I was made in the secret place.  
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,  
Your eyes saw my unformed body.

All the days ordained for me were written in your book  
before one of them came to be.

How precious to me are your thoughts, O Lord.  
How vast are the sum of them.  
Were I to count them  
they would outnumber the grains of sand  
When I awake, I am still with you.

Yes, His power is beyond our capacity to comprehend, His knowledge is infinite, beyond anything we could even imagine. **But just as vast and inconceivable is His love, His grace and His compassion.**

Who could conceive of the King of Glory, the great Creator Himself, ever stepping down and abandoning His heavenly throne? How could He lay aside His royal robes and leave behind all the glories of Heaven, all the praise and dignity that were rightfully His, all the love and adoration, knowing well what he would encounter in a sinful world?

Just think what it would be like for Him to leave an environment of utter holiness to descend into a world of sin and corruption to be born as a little baby human, helpless, and completely at the mercy of sinful beings. Well that's what He did, isn't it? And He lived life to perfection even though He was tempted in every way, just like we are.

But He died as a common criminal. Can you imagine what it would be like to be nailed, *naked*, to a cross, completely exposed to all the ridicule, jeering, mocking and obscenities of an angry mob?

Could you love me enough to endure such rejection and humiliation? Could I love you that much? I have wondered, if we could even endure that for our children, or is it completely beyond human ability to love in this way?

But added to the humiliation and complete rejection he endured from humankind, was the excruciating, physical pain. Crucifixion: said to be the most horrible torture man could invent.

Now add to this all the filth of man's sin being imposed on His purity and innocence. All the rotten things that you and I have ever done were put on Him. Beyond that, He died not only for our sins, but for *the sins of the whole world*. All the depravity of mankind was put on him. Think for a moment of the atrocities that man is capable of. I think of Saddam Hussein's sons.

When Pat Robertson was returning from a trip to the middle east, he said he sat next to an American diplomat returning from Iraq. This man told him that if Saddam Hussein's sons passed by a party in progress, they would go in, and take the most beautiful and promising young woman. They would rape her and then sit and smoke cigars while they watched her being torn apart by lions.

Jesus was MADE SIN for US!

Because of the filth of our sin, even God the Father was forced to turn away from Him and He cried out in desperation:

*My God, My God! Why have you forsaken me?*

I realize I might be treading on shaky theological ground here, but I understand the worst part of Hell is to be completely separated from God. This is what He endured.

So, what did He suffer? We'll never know!

Shame, humiliation, ridicule beyond measure!

The worst physical torture that man could impose on another human being!

His purity and holiness being turned into the filthiest of sins.

And then, ultimate rejection from both God and man.

How can we ever know the anguish and torment he suffered.

And He didn't *have* to endure all that. He could have called 10,000 angels to His rescue, but He knew there was no other way. **His love for us could only be satisfied by His offering Himself as the ultimate sacrifice for our sin.** He took the punishment that was due us.

*He, (the Son of God, the God of creation) was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we (His sinful creatures) might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*

How Big is God? There are no words in our human vocabulary to describe Him. It is impossible for the human brain to begin to comprehend his greatness. We are created finite beings. Our God is ***infinite!***

His power has no limits.

His knowledge is far beyond our ability to comprehend.

His love has no measure.

(A Solo of "How Great Thou Art!" is an appropriate conclusion.)

P.S. According to NASA: In about 40,000 years, Voyager 1 will drift within 1.6 light years (9.3 trillion miles) of a star in the constellation of Camelopardalis. In some 296,000 years Voyager 2 will pass 4.3 light years (25 trillion miles) from Sirius, the brightest star in the sky. The Voyagers are destined, perhaps eternally, to wander the Milky Way. They have the capacity to transmit information back to earth until 2020.