

The Old Paths

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“The Stars Of Heaven”

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On January 5, NASA released the largest picture to date of our closest galactic neighbor in the universe, the Andromeda Galaxy. The picture shows only a section of the entire Andromeda Galaxy and shows over 100 million stars. It is hard to fathom — 100 million stars in one piece of one galaxy. This doesn't count the millions of stars in our own galaxy! Astronomers and other scientists estimate there may be as many as 100 billion galaxies in the universe!

When I saw the picture¹, I was amazed at what man has been able to discover. I was also humbled because such pictures brought to mind the words of God relative to the stars of Heaven (Ps. 147:4) and also concerning His people. Please read the following.

To Abraham and Isaac, God said,

- ♦ *“Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be”* (Genesis 15:5).
- ♦ *“By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand*

which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Gen. 22:16-18).

- ♦ *“And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed”* (Gen. 26:4).

God's word to Jeremiah was:

“As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me” (Jer. 33:22).

In addition to these passages, please read Exodus 32:13; I Chronicles 27:23; Nehemiah 9:23, and see God's repeated promises concerning His people being like the stars of Heaven.

When we read the New Testament, we can read divine commentary of Genesis 15 and 22 in the book of Hebrews. There, the Holy Spirit said, *“Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable”* (Heb. 11:11-12).

As always, man is trying to

“catch up” with the words of God. God knows His creation, and states things in a correct manner even before man understands it fully! God stated the promise of Abraham's descendants being like the stars of Heaven long before man even had a telescope! Think about it, God already knew how Abraham's descendants would be, and stated it before Abraham and Sarah had their son Isaac! Abraham had physical descendants that became nations of people (Both “circumcised” and “uncircumcised” people). Yes, conservative estimates would place the number of these people in the millions! Yet, when we read the New Testament, we see the full extent of God's promise. Read passages like Romans 4:12-13, Galatians 3:26-29 and I Peter 3:6, and be impressed with the fact that God's promise to Abraham continues to be fulfilled to this good day! In addition to his physical descendants, beginning in Acts 2, every person who becomes a Christian also becomes a child of Abraham (Gal. 3:29)! Thus, God's promise to Abraham touches lives today every time someone becomes a Christian (Mk. 16:16)!

Are you a Christian (Acts 2:38)? If so, I pray that the thought of God promising Abraham's seed will be as the “stars of heaven” will humble you. Let us shine like the stars, and let us be grateful to a loving and merciful God who made a way that we can be saved (Matt. 20:28), and considered part of His family (Rom. 8:16-17) that is as innumerable as the stars!!

Endnote:

1. Andromeda Galaxy picture URL - <http://youtu.be/udAL48P5NJU>

BIBLE PREACHING

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Jeremiah 6:16 says, *“Thus says the LORD, Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it, then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, we will not walk in it.”* This passage in Jeremiah gives us great insight as to how we are to preach the gospel. If we break this verse down, we can notice four things that are required when we preach. First of all, we must appeal to authority. The verse begins by saying, *“Thus says the Lord.”* It is sad to say, but a lot of preaching today has nothing to do with God’s authority. Many today are using stories or other things as a matter of authority in their sermons. The second thing we find in this passage is that we must challenge others to investigate the scriptures. The verse goes on to say, *“Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths.”* It is a shame but there are some who will go through a lesson and not ever open up God’s Word. Have you ever heard a preacher say, “just shut your Bibles for now?” Why are we turning away from the Word of God? The next thing we find from this passage is that we are to walk in obedience. The verse says to, *“Walk in it.”* Walking in the way of scriptures shows that we are obedient to what the scriptures say. When we preach the gospel, we must encourage others to always walk in the way of obedience. Finally, we see that we must preach of what is to come. The verse says, *“Then you will find rest for your souls.”* If we neglect to preach how one may gain salvation, then we have missed it all. We must show others of the things that are to come after this life. We must show them

what they must do in order to live in Heaven for all eternity. On the other hand, we must teach them about what is to come for those who will not accept the gospel of Jesus Christ. If we look through the sermons that are recorded in the scriptures, we see these four points preached.

Let us begin by looking at the sermon Christ gave beginning in Matthew 5. If you notice, Jesus did not begin as the other preachers did and appeal to authority. This is because Jesus is the Lord. He is the authority (Matt. 7:28-29). However, notice the other three points we made are found here in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus challenged those who were present to investigate the law (Matt. 5:17-20). Jesus also challenged those present to be obedient to Him. This is seen throughout the whole sermon. Jesus then finished His sermon by speaking of the things to come, salvation (Matt. 7:13-29).

Another sermon we have recorded for us is the sermon Peter gave on the day of Pentecost. Peter began by telling those present that the things which were happening were the very things the Lord had promised (Acts 2:17). With this statement we see the appeal to authority. Peter quoted what was said by the Prophet Joel (Acts 2:17-22), and what was said by David (Acts 2:25-28). This is the investigation

of the scriptures. As you continue to read through this sermon you find that they were pricked in the heart and asked what they must do. Peter then tells them to be obedient and he tells them what they must do in order to gain salvation. He says in Acts 2:38, *“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”*

The last sermon we will notice is the sermon offered by Paul at the Areopagus in Acts 17. Again, we find in this text the four things that should be present when we preach the Gospel. Paul began by appealing to the authority. He said beginning in verse 22, *“Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you.”* Paul continues on to tell them of what all God has done (vs. 24-29). In verse 30 we see the call to obedience. Paul says, *“Truly these times of this ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.”* Paul finishes his sermon by telling them of the judgment to come (vs. 31).

Through all of these sermons we see that there is an appeal to authority, an appeal to investigate the scriptures, a call to obedience, and a warning of what is to come. Let us strive, when teaching others about Christ, to do the same.

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