

STARS COME OUT AT NIGHT

“And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth” [Gen. 1: 16-17]

Astronomy [science of the heavenly bodies], astrophysics [study of the physics and chemistry of heavenly bodies] and astrology [study of the influence of stars on human affairs] are very popular subjects for both scientists and spiritualists alike. Understandably, the study of the stars has the biggest fascination for human beings that are always anxious to know what is beyond the physical realm.

*We all know our Zodiac signs and most of us read daily in the newspapers the **horoscope** [prediction of a person’s future based on observation of the disposition of planets, etc, at a certain moment especially at a person’s birthday]. For example, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the 3 Wise Men who came from the East said, “we have seen His star in the East and are come to worship Him” [Matt. 2:1-2. We call our celebrities in any field of human endeavour stars. For example, Tiger Woods (golf), Nelson Mandela (leadership) and Mother Theresa (religious piety and service) are well known stars all over the world. While under the influence of the Spirit of God, Balak spoke about the first advent of Jesus as follows: “there shall come a Star out of Jacob and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel” [Num. 24:17]. We also rank our hotels by stars. For example, a “five-star” hotel is a top-rated one and commands premium room charge. Therefore, it is a good thing to be associated with stars. But what are they?*

*When God created the **cosmos** [the universe as a well-ordered whole], He made the sun the greater light to rule the day and the moon and stars the lesser lights to rule the night [Gen. 1: 14-15]. In other words, no matter how we have glamourised the stars, **they come out only at night!** Can human stars have the same humility to come out only at night, i.e., as lesser lights that are not going to steal the limelight from other stars, or even from Jesus Himself? What lessons can we learn from the cosmos to help our walk as true stars? Today’s lesson will attempt to address those issues.*

1. Let's learn a little about the stars

One night, God brought out Abraham (then known as Abram) and told him, “look now toward heaven and tell the stars if thou be able to number them” [Gen. 15:5]. Of course, God Himself knows because “He telleth the number of stars; He calleth them by their names” [Ps. 147:4]. Till date, scientists do not know how many stars there are but they believe that they number hundreds of billions¹.

The **galaxy** (band of stars) that we can easily see when we look out at night is called the **Milky Way**. It is said to be about 100,000 light years in diameter (i.e., from one end to the other through its centre). A light year is the distance that light travels in a single year. One light year is 5.88 trillion miles, and a trillion is one million million millions! The nearest star (other than the sun) is 4.3 light years away², that is, 25.3 trillion miles! No wonder the Bible says, “behold the height of the stars, how high they are!” [Job 22:12]. Even with the broad band of glorious light that the Milky Way represents, it is said to block light from a full 20 percent of the cosmos. The totality of the hundreds of billions of stars was created by God to provide the lesser light! No wonder the psalmist says, “the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork” [Ps. 19:1].

Out of curiosity, let us examine the hierarchy of lights recorded in the book of **Genesis**. In **Gen. 1:3**, God said, “let there be light” and this light separated light from darkness [v.4]. In **Gen. 1: 14-15**, God said, “let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.” We know that the second set of lights is associated with the sun, the moon and the stars. But, what of the first light? In **John 8:12**, Jesus says, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” Talking about the Word of God that became flesh, John writes, “in Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” [Jn 1:4-5, 9]. The psalmist says, “for with Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light shall we see light” [Ps. 36:9]. So, we see that the Triune [three-in-one] God was present at creation: “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” [the Holy Spirit], and God [the Father] said [The Word, i.e. the Christ], “let there be light” [again the Christ of God that became the man-God, Jesus]!

What is the implication of our analysis above? It is that it is the Light of Christ that has given light to the stars. That is why He was called “a Star out of Jacob” [Num. 24:17], and His birth in Bethlehem was announced to the 3 Wise Men by “His Star” [Matt. 2:2]. After God had shown Abraham the stars, He promised him, “so shall thy seed be” [Gen. 15:5]. In other words, Abraham’s descendants shall be stars in number and character, “and if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs

¹ See Renée C. Kraan and Ofer Lahav, “Galaxies behind the Milky Way” www.sciam.com/1998/1098issue/1098laham.html

² Units for Stellar Distances, <http://csep10.phys.utk.edu/astr162/lect/distances/units.html>

according to the promise” [Gal. 3:29]. *We, believers, are stars like our elder brother, Jesus Christ!* The challenge for us then is to live like stars.

2. The true qualities of stars

We need to note the following qualities about stars:

(a) They are very high up and yet shine brightly

Stars are trillions of light years away from the earth and yet they still give glorious light in a dark night, especially when the moon is “off duty.” Jesus has said to us through His Sermon on the Mount, “ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven” [Matt. 5:14, 16].

(b) They are numerous but God knows each of them by name

Only God can tell the number of stars that He has created but He knows each of them by name [Ps. 147:4], and “one star differeth from another star in glory” [1 Cor. 15:41]. Similarly, human stars run into billions but, as God has told us through Israel, “I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine” [Is. 43:1]. God called Abraham His friend [Is. 41:8], and David “a man after His own heart” [1 Sam. 13:14]. So, each of us is special to God.

(c) They are constant and manifest God’s glory

Julius Caesar once said, “I am as constant as the northern star.” The moon has phases but the stars are there every night all the time. As you look at them, you marvel at the glory of God. They are always on duty to perform the purpose for which God created them, namely, “to give light upon the earth” [Gen. 1:17]. As human stars, our constancy is measured by our faithfulness to God in all things because “faithful is He that called you” [1 Thes. 5:24]. By our fruits, the world will know that we are the children of the Most High God [Matt. 7:20-21].

(d) They are a symbol of the King

Jesus is the Star of Bethlehem [Matt.2: 2]. When He appeared to John in the island of Patmos, He held seven stars, representing the “angels of the seven churches” [Rev. 1:20], the bride of the Lamb of God. The Star of David [a figure of two interlaced triangles] is a famous Jewish and Israeli symbol. The U.S. flag is referred to as “Stars and Stripes.” The National Football team of Ghana, the first African country (beside Ethiopia) to gain political independence is called the “Black Stars.” We have already seen that celebrities, kings in their chosen fields of human endeavour, are referred to as stars. So, in many respects, the star is a

symbol of royalty. If believers are stars, they must learn to carry themselves as members of a royal family.

(e) Stars come out at night

With all the sterling qualities we have seen about stars, God created them to be subordinate to the sun and the moon. This is a measure of humility, which every believer needs to cultivate. As soon as Jesus' profile began to rise, John the Baptist deferred to Him, saying, "He must increase, but I must decrease" [**Jn 3:30**]. The Apostle John outran Peter to reach the empty tomb where Jesus had been buried but he waited for Peter to enter first [**Jn 20:3-6**]. That kind of humility is quite rare today among followers of Christ. This was manifested early in church history by the number of denominations that we have today for "every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" [**1 Cor. 1:12**].

Nighttime also symbolises danger for "Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth" [**Ps. 104:20**]. Therefore, God requires His stars to come out at night and stand in the gap for those in need. The deliverance of the children of Israel through Moses came at night [**Ex. 12:12-31**]. When **Nehemiah** came to Jerusalem to repair the broken wall, it was at night that he and his chief men made the first inspection [**Neh. 2:12-13**]. It was at night that Nicodemus came to Jesus to understand the concept of being "born-again" [**Jn 3:2**]. It was at midnight that Paul and Silas prayed and sang and their deliverance came [**Acts 16:25-34**]. The return of Jesus is going to be unpredictable. "Watch ye, therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning" [**Mk 13:35**].

Nighttime is also the time to sleep and rest [**Ps. 104:23**]. That suggests two things. First, that is not the time for stars to get drunk [**Is. 5:11**], or get involved in shady deals [**Matt. 27:64**] or engage in immoral acts [**Prov. 6:23-35**]. Second, it is during the period of dark patches (hardship, trials and tribulations, etc) that the stars are known for God will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are stayed on Him; because they trust in Him [**Is. 26:3**].

From the foregoing, it is clear that humility is the true mark of stardom.

3. Rewards of humility

Stardom is more difficult to manage than failure. Top artistes and athletes have been known to resort to drunkenness, drug addiction, immorality, or even suicidal tendencies after attaining stardom. It was after David had become king that he started to have siestas, instead of leading his troops in battle. It was when he woke up one evening from a long siesta that he saw beautiful Bathsheba washing herself. That led to adultery and murder, and a stain on his previously excellent relationship with God

[2 Sam. 11:1-27]. It takes continuous humility to remain in true perspective of what God has called us to do, and here are some of the rewards:

(a) *The road to honour and riches*

“By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life” [Prov. 22:4]. When God asked Solomon what he wanted, he asked for wisdom so that he would be able to rule over his people. The answer pleased God so much that, in addition to granting his request, He added “both riches and honour so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days” [1 Kgs 3:13].

(b) *Brings blessings and grace, and insures God’s presence*

God gives grace to the contrite and lowly in heart [Prov. 3:34; Jam. 4:6] “for thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” [Is. 57:15]. In response to Solomon’s prayers during the dedication of the temple, God said, “if My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” [2 Chron. 7:14].

(c) *Guarantees exaltation and makes one truly great*

Jesus told His disciples, “except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” [Matt. 18:3-4]. Jesus humbled Himself in obedience to His Father’s will and took the form of a human being, suffered and died that mankind should be saved from eternal damnation. “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every mouth should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” [Phil.2: 9-11].

4. Conclusion

God sees you as a star. Learn to act as one. Stars come out at night. Learn to be humble by recognising other stars and working with them to achieve God’s purpose for your calling.