

THE GREATEST UNDERSTATEMENT EVER MADE

Inconspicuously penned like a hurried postscript to a lengthy letter, we find what is perhaps the greatest understatement ever made, unadorned and unpretentious. The sum total of this incomprehensible little notation expends only five words in the Bible: "He made the stars also." (Genesis 1:16).

The naked eye can discern only about 3,000 stars at any one time. But the heavens' vast expanse extends far beyond the horizon of physical perception to embrace an estimated 200 billion billion stars in the known universe.

Struggles to visualize just a single billion, much less billions of billions, incite my puny brain cells to rebel. A billion dollar bills placed end to end, for example, would circle the globe about four times. And if I could continuously pick up one bill per second, it would take me almost thirty-two years to become a billionaire.

Scientists have assigned names to only a few stars. But man's inability to catalog the heavens' immenseness thwarts not God: "He counts the number of the stars; He gives names to all of them." (Psalm 147:4). And of the blessing in store for the patriarch Abraham, He would encourage, "Now look toward the heavens and count the stars, if you are able to count them.... So shall your descendants be." (Genesis 15:5).

For a moment, ponder the unseen vastness of the heavens that God pointed Abraham to. About 30,000 light-years separate Earth and the center of the Milky Way, the galaxy to which our solar system belongs. And each light-year equates to 5.88 trillion miles, roughly 63,000 times the distance to our sun.

Though 100 billion stars supposedly comprise the Milky Way alone, estimates point to more than a billion galaxies. The Milky Way's closest galactic neighbor resides about 200,000 light-years distant. This seemingly unending expanse of stars is one of the yardsticks of God's limitless mercy toward us. "The moon and stars to rule by night, for His mercy is everlasting." (Psalm 136:9).

In his hymn "The Love of God," Frederick Lehman penned, "The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell; it goes beyond the highest star, and reaches to the lowest hell...." And of God's concern for man, Israel's King David likewise declared, "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).

In moments of discouragement, should I not praise God to the same degree that His creation praises Him? "Praise Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all stars of light!" (Psalm 148:3).

And is He not able to take care of me in the ensuing months, even though they be pockmarked by tribulation, turmoil and terroristic threats? Undoubtedly, for "He made the stars also."
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