

Can You Count The Stars? (Rev. Dr. John Bartol)

“Two things fill the mind with ever new, increasing wonder and awe - the starry heaven above me and the moral law within me.” Immanuel Kant, Philosopher

As a child, I remember several occasions when I tried to count the stars. Later I learned that with a clear sky, away from city lights, up to 4000 stars can be seen with the naked eye. Our solar system is part of a huge galaxy containing more than 100 billion stars. Estimates reveal at least 100 million galaxies in known space. Even with larger and more sophisticated telescopes, cosmologists tell us they have never found the end.

Science fiction makes space look much cozier than it really is. Actually, the distances are beyond all comprehension; recorded not in miles but light years. A light year is 6 trillion (6,000,000,000) miles.

What about interstellar travel? Our closest neighbor is Alpha Centura Proxima, 4.5 light years or 26,000,000,000,000 miles from planet Earth. If we could build a space – ship that could travel 1/10 the speed of light, or around 63,000,000 mph, it would take approximately 42 years to complete the journey one way.

I have been asked, “Is your faith threatened by new discoveries about the immensity and complexity of the universe?” My answer – absolutely not! In fact, it has been the opposite; the vaster the universe, the greater my God becomes. I cannot find words to adequately express the magnitude and wonder of this universe we call home.

So precise is the clockwork of the heavens that we can know with mathematical precision the position of a star, comet, or eclipse at any time, past, present or future. So, the thoughtful person asks – “How did this mind – bending reality, with such order and precision come into existence?” Everywhere we look we see design, intelligence, law and order. Is this a result of a cosmic accident or are we witnessing this majestic order created by God? The answer is extremely important. For if God exists, then you and I have a responsibility to know him and discover his will for our lives.

Many years have passed since I tried to count the stars. I confess that there were times when heaven seemed hidden by the temporal sights and sounds of this world. Perhaps, once again, we all need to experience something of the wonder and awe of our childhood. To lift up our eyes and behold the glory of God displayed in the heavens.

How big is God? Great enough to rule this mighty universe, and yet small enough to live within your heart and mind. That same all-powerful Creator loves us and longs for us to trust him with our lives – body, mind, and spirit. In the person of

Christ he has come close to us and we can experience endless wonder through a personal relationship with Him.

“The heavens are telling the glory of God”(Psalm 19:1).