

## A Message in the Stars

**Intro: Go out tonight and gaze at the heavens. There is a lot to learn just by looking at those stars in the sky. They may be saying more to us than we realize.**

**In the book of Job as God spoke, He made a number of fascinating statements about the heavens; but consider one of them in this lesson from chapter 38. In v. 31-33 God speaks of His knowledge of astronomical features of our universe.**

*Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion? Can you lead forth a constellation in its season, and guide the Bear with her satellites? "Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, or fix their rule over the earth? (Job 38:31-33)*

### **About Stars**

***From ancient times earth dwellers have been star gazers. Ancient man was fascinated by the sky above and used the stars for various purposes:***

For marking out time

For determining times for planting and harvesting

For navigational purposes

These seem to be in line with God's own declaration of the purpose of these heavenly bodies

*Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. (Gen. 1:14-15)*

***Perhaps as an aid to their use, ancient people like the Babylonians and Syrians began to draw mental pictures as they connected various groupings of stars. From culture to culture stories grew up around these star groupings. These stories were embraced and incorporated into Roman and Greek mythology. The Muslims gave them Arabic names and many of the modern names are simply transliterations of Arabic names.***

**This passage in Job mentions two groupings of stars with a fascinating insight into them.**

#### ***Orion***

The constellation of Orion is one of the most outstanding star groupings in the heavens. Photographs of this brilliant association with its giant stars reveal an immense halo of gas and dust in which practically all its stars are immersed. Even now when you go out you can see the three brilliant stars that make up His belt. And the reddish Orion Nebulae that make up his sword. The brightest star is Betelgeuse (from the Arabic word for "armpit")

Orion formed in ancient thought the picture of a mighty hunter in the Zodiac. Various myths and stories grew around the constellations perhaps in part to entertain those who viewed the stars or as memory

aids to becoming familiar with them. In Greek mythology, Orion was a mighty hunter, who spent his life chasing women, especially the 7 daughters of Atlas represented in the sky as the pleiades or seven sisters. While drunk he raped his betrothed, Merope, and was then blinded by her father. His vision was restored by the rays of the sun. At his death Artemis turned him into a constellation.

It is interesting that in the Hebrew text Orion is called “kesil” which is related to the Hebrew word for “fool”. Some ancient Hebrew sources associate the constellation with Nimrod who is mentioned in Genesis 10 as establishing a powerful empire contrary to the prophecy of God concerning the descendants of Ham.

*Now Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, “Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord.” And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went forth into Assyria, and built Nineveh and Rehoboth-Ir and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. (Genesis 10:8-12)*

The ancients Hebrews appropriately named the mighty hunter, “Kesil” meaning “foolish” because of His rebellion against the Lord!

### ***The Pleiades***

In the second line the Lord refers to The Pleiades. These stars are not a constellation but an asterism or collection of stars within the constellation of Taurus, the bull. (The Greeks referred to them as the Seven Sisters). Today there are only six stars in the Pleiades that are easily visible with the naked eye. In reality, the seventh star is just at the limit of human vision in terms of brightness. The Japanese word for Pleiades is Subaru! (Note the logo on Martha’s car with 6 stars!) The telescope, however, reveals that the whole cluster is made up of about 500 stars in a spherical group about 50 light years across and nearly 410 light years away. Photographs reveal some of the component stars veiled in a faint diaphanous blue haze of gas and dust, which beautifully reflects the glory of the stars enrobed in it with their various colors.

In the Hebrew text this star grouping is called “kimeh” meaning “a heap or collection”. Keil remarks that one translator translates the Hebrew word “a rosette of diamonds”.

Having identified the references...

**Did you notice the peculiarity of God’s expression about these two star groupings?**

***Can you “bind the chains of the Pleiades”? Can you “lose the cords of Orion”?***

***It is clear that God expects Job to answer “no” to both questions and to affirm that He can do what Job cannot! But notice this interesting feature of the two star groups mentioned:***

*Modern astronomers are now able to confirm that these two star groupings are really different in their relation to each other.*

Orion

Despite its size of about 350 light years diameter and despite the vast quantities of gas and dust it contains, the whole system is gravitationally unstable and is steadily expanding outwards. The gravitational "bands" holding the constellation together have indeed been "loosed", just as God said to Job. Not only that, but even the smaller clusters of stars within the association are fragmenting. What that means is that the stars of constellation are moving in different directions and are not bound together. *"At the present time this band consists of an almost perfect straight line. In the course of time, however, the two right-hand stars, Mintaka and Alnilam, will approach each other and form a naked-eye double; but the third, Alnitak, will drift away eastward so that the band will no longer exist. Thus, these stars that we see forming one of the bands of Orion are like three ships out on the high seas that happen to be in line at the present moment, but in the future will be separated by thousands of miles of ocean. In fact, all these stars that at the present time constitute the constellation of Orion are bound for different ports, and all are journeying to different corners of the universe, so that the bands are being dissolved.* (Astronomer, Garrett Serviss)

Pleiades

The cluster of the Pleiades is an odd one out as far as star clusters go. Because of the small amounts of dust and gas between the stars in the cluster, it is called a galactic or open cluster, but unlike many such open clusters, it is not breaking up. It is the classic example of a "bound" cluster. *The Pleiades stars may thus be compared to a swarm of birds, flying together to a distant goal. This leaves no doubt that the Pleiades are not a temporary or accidental agglomeration of stars, but a system in which the stars are bound together by a close kinship.* (Robert Trumplet, Lick Observatory)

Thus the stars of Orion are "loosed"; the stars of the Pleiades are "bound".

### Some practical lessons

*First we are reminded of the awesome power of God in creating such star systems, energizing them and controlling their relationship to each other. He who made the Pleiades and Orion and changes deep darkness into morning, who also darkens day into night; who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the surface of the earth, The Lord is His name. (Amos 5:8)*

***Second, how could any man have known by looking with the naked eye that these two groupings of stars possessed different gravitational relationships.***

Is this not clear evidence that the information contained in this statement could not have originated from man before the discovery of the telescope. Is it mere coincidence that these two opposing terms are used and that they fit their respective constellations perfectly?

Such pre-scientific statements confirm that the Bible is indeed not the product of man whose knowledge of the world is incomplete and inaccurate, but from God who knows what men could not have known about the vast reaches of the universe. 2 Tim. 3:16-17

***Third, if we are only now discovering the extent of God's wisdom about such things, does it not also reinforce in our own minds the need to trust in His wisdom?***

God wanted Job to realize that, as a man, there was so much he did not know about the world. He did not know how God created the world. He did not know intimately the instinctive functions of the various creatures God made nor how God instilled the wisdom God placed in them. He did not possess the power to create and control this vast universe. How then could he presume to criticize God and how he rules His universe?

Even if the language of Job 38 is intended to say nothing different about these two constellations, the truth conveyed would still be true. As human beings we do not possess the knowledge and power of God. How can we stand in judgment of the actions of God when we know so little? When we can do so little compared to Him?

**Conclusion: So the next time you look up into the sky maybe you'll see more than before. Who knows what secrets are yet to be revealed? But one thing should become increasing clear. The God who created the world is worthy of our service and praise and to question the way He governs the universe is irreverent.**