

GENESIS 1:14-19  
 “THE ONE WHO STRODE AMONG THE STARS...”

Nicolas Copernicus was at the centre of a revolution. He was born in Poland in 1473; he was a priest who developed an interest in maths and astronomy. By 1530, he had finished his life’s work ‘On the revolutions of the Celestial Spheres’ and the theory that he presented to the world was that sun was at the centre of things and the planets circled the sun. We have lived with that idea ever since, but in his day Copernicus was a revolutionary: till then everyone believed that the earth was the centre of the universe; the earth was stationary and everything else went round the earth. His theory was published in 1543 and Copernicus died in the same year. From what I read, some suggest that he delayed publishing his book because he was afraid that people would laugh at his ideas and that they would be controversial and against the Bible. Of course, they’re not! His ideas, revolutionary in 1543, are now accepted, are seen to be true, and there is nothing in the Bible to say otherwise.

Genesis chapter 1 is not about the ‘how’ of creation; it is not meant as a science text-book to prove one theory or another. Genesis chapter 1 is about the ‘why’ of the universe, that God has created everything and has made it to be good and has made it for His glory. Here, in Genesis 1, is a man of faith looking at the world around him and declaring “God made this!” Last week, we could picture him sitting looking at the trees, the plants, the animals, the sea, in all their variety and splendour and declaring “God made this”. Today, the same man is looking into the sky and during the day marvelling at the sun and the warmth that it gives and then at night watching the moon travel across the sky and trying to count the stars, and again declaring “God made this”. What people like Copernicus have done is to help us understand how this universe works, and even more so now we see the scale of what is out there, the detail of the stars, and planets, and galaxies and even more in awe and wonder, we declare – “God made this!”

It is simply written, but it has huge consequences: “*And God said...*” (*Genesis 1:14f*) So Genesis 1 describes the sense of God creating the sun, the moon and, in almost a throwaway line “*He also...*” (*Genesis 1:16*) There’s something about the scale of this creation that goes up a step with this piece: we can grasp the land and the sea because that is all just about our planet and we can travel around the planet, seeing the land and the sea. But now, the scale has just gone up: God also created the universe in all its scale. Sun, moon, and stars – these too are the works of God’s hands, His creative word speaks and the universe comes into being. All that we see in the books we read or on our television screens simply serves to accentuate how great is our God; God who made the universe is great beyond our wildest dreams. Andromeda Galaxy is the nearest to the Earth and is 2.5 million light years away; which means that when we look at it through space what we see today is what it was like 2.5 million years ago! The numbers are just mind-blowing! God made this!

This is not just about the physical universe, but what it does: “*Let them serve...*” (*Genesis 1:14*) God has created time: now, we’re in the region of ideas that I’m not sure I understand, but the sun, moon and stars are markers of time for us. Day and night: the rhythm we were talking about earlier comes from the earth spinning round on its axis; the rhythm that shapes the life we live, our work patterns, our rest patterns and so on. The seasons of year, summer, and winter, and again we now understand that these are shaped by the earth travelling round the sun, sometimes closer, sometimes further away. Years: put all of that together and we have a sense of time passing, and it has a pattern to it. God created the sun, moon and stars, and with them created and marked time in our world. Some have tried to change these patterns, but these patterns of day and night, the seasons and years are for our benefit; God has made them and they are good and they are for our good too. All of this is part of the universe God has created and it is good.

At the centre of all of this stands the huge figure of Jesus. Colossians 1:15-23 is all about the greatness and supremacy of Jesus. Line after line tells us something else about how great He is and how He is worthy of worship and trust. In the midst of all of these lines about Jesus, there is this: *“for by him...” (Colossians 1:16)* At the centre of the whole of creation stands the huge figure of Jesus: He is the One who gave creation its life; He stands at the centre of the universe; He is Lord and King of the universe, He is Lord of time and eternity, He is the One who is worthy of worship and praise and honour; there is none like Him. The wonder of the gospel is that this Christ, this awesome figure at the centre of creation, - He came to live in our world, born in a stable in Bethlehem, a helpless child in his mother’s arms; *“The one who strode among the stars and called each one by name, lies helpless in a mother’s arms and must learn to walk again” (Kendrick)*

There are two things that Colossians 1 says about Christ that are as important today as they ever were. First of all, Christ is **supreme**: *“In everything...” (Colossians 1:18)* Who do we worship? Do we worship sun? We talk about people who spend lots of time sunbathing, topping up the tan, as sun-worshippers; we don’t really mean it that way, but the ancient world had its sun gods. Paul is writing in a Greek and Roman culture where they had gods for everything: Apollo, Helios, Ra in Egypt and these gods were all worshipped; people made their offerings to the sun, built statues and made offerings to keep these ‘gods’ happy and try to make sure that the sun would keep shining. Into that culture comes the notion that Jesus stands at the centre of creation, the One who gave the universe its life and who created the sun; the One who created the sun, moon and stars is supreme over all of them.

Jesus is also **sufficient** as a Saviour. There were people around places like Colossae who would try to persuade the Christians that Jesus is not enough of a Saviour; you can have Jesus if you like, but you need more than Jesus; you need to add in other things to help you, just in case Jesus falls short! As soon as you say need Jesus plus something else, you take away from Jesus. Paul’s point is this: Jesus has the power to create and sustain the universe; the same Jesus has enough power and grace to completely save and sustain His church! We don’t need anything more than Jesus; in Jesus we have everything we need for life, salvation and everything else. Even if you don’t take time to examine every line in the Colossians 1 passage, grasp the sweep of this passage which simply tells us of the greatness of Jesus and that having Jesus we need no other Lord, no other saviour.

You’re not a sun-worshipper? What about the stars: *“He also...” (Genesis 1:16)* Did you read your horoscope yesterday? What did it tell you? What does the week ahead hold in store for you? Can your life be governed by the stars? Astrology has existed for hundreds of years; it is thought that the wise men who came to see Jesus were astrologers watching the stars. It is a whole industry now, and the stars are supposed to be able guide you in all sorts of ways, shaping your life by what is in the stars for you. Why would we need our life to be shaped and ordered by impersonal, unfeeling stars when we trust that life is shaped and guided by the One who made the stars, by One who is full of grace and compassion? Jesus is supreme, the Lord of the stars; Jesus is sufficient, able to save and help us completely and we have no need of the stars when we have Jesus. The same is true of superstitions: we touch wood: how can wood help us? Why trust the inanimate, unfeeling wood we touch when we can trust the One who made the wood and who loves us more deeply than we will ever know?

God made the sun, the moon, and the stars. That is an easy sentence to say, but it does three important things for us:

1. It opens up the scale of creation: the universe that God created is huge, beyond numbers, beyond imagination; we are still discovering its scale and new technology continues to open new doors. We explore space and when the first people went into space they wondered if they would see God. The scale of creation is huge; be in awe at the universe that God has made! Let’s explore space and find new things!

2. It reveals something of the greatness of God: God who made this huge universe is God of infinite power and glory. "*His eternal nature and divine power*" (*Romans 1:20*) are revealed in what we see. God's power and glory are beyond our imagination; be in awe at the God who holds the universe in His hands, who made the sun, moon and stars, who created time and eternity, who has our world, and our lives in His hands. Christ stands at the centre, "*All things...*" (*Colossians 1:16*) He is the Lord of infinite glory; this Lord of infinite glory who walks among the stars, once came down to live in our world; how amazing is that!
3. Jesus is the One to worship and to trust. He is supreme, the first and greatest, the centre of the universe. He is sufficient: having Jesus as our Saviour, helper, and friend, we need no-one or nothing else to guide our lives; we don't worship the sun, nor trust the stars, nor superstitions. Having Jesus, we have everything we need and so much more besides.

Here's the start of new revolution! The "Me-generation" thinks that everything revolves round 'me'! Here is the News! The world doesn't revolve around "me"! Theologically, the world revolves around Jesus. He is the centre of everything: He is the One to worship; He is the One to trust. "*All things...*" (*Colossians 1:16*) Do you see? Do you get this? Do you grasp the scale of what we are saying today? Creation is not about a few trees, animals, and birds; God created the universe, the sun, the moon, and also the stars, millions of light years away; He created time and eternity. This is huge! Massive! This is beyond our grasp! Faith looks at the universe and says "God made this!" Jesus is the centre of the universe; the same Jesus also needs to be the centre of our life. Is He the centre? Or is He a side-line hobby? He deserves to be centre; everything turns around Him!