



THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE FIRMAMENT

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David, spending the night in the open air, under a clean atmosphere without a moon or the lights of today's cities, being either a shepherd as he was, or persecuted by his enemies up on the mountains, used to gaze at the magnificent pageantry of the heaven, praising and glorifying the Creator of the Universe with Psalm 19:1-4. *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."*

Heaven is the firmament lying above the hemispherical horizon, which, during a clear night, is ornamented with billions of shining stars and lights resembling huge diamonds. The semicircular arch or arc, as it appears with its countless, myriads over myriads of stars, is the so-called Milky Way, which means the spiral Galaxy containing the solar system, visible as a milky, luminous band in the heaven. This luminous band, the Galaxy, numbers over a hundred billion stars and suns, as estimated by astronomers. The spires, containing the spiral Galaxies, are located one over the other and in astronomical distances from one another; they are estimated to be well over one hundred billion in number. With the use of modern radio electronic equipment, these spires, shown one after the other, look like a shining nebula, making it impossible for the eye to separate and estimate into Galaxies.

David, with the use of his naked eye and his enlightened mind by his faith for the Creator, speaks of the heavens, and not only of one heaven, which declare the Glory of God. We now, as the New Creation, have also been taught by the Lord Jesus to pray: *"Our Father which art in heavens"* and not heaven. In the Greek text it is heavens and not heaven (Matthew 6:9). How many heavens? Countless for human beings. Does time have a beginning? Does the extent of the heavens and the area beyond them have a beginning and end? They do not. Anything contrary to that is incomprehensible.

God is self-existent — He has no beginning nor end. He is not able to die, and He is the Lord of all seen and unseen things. If He wishes to create worlds He does not lack space, materials, time, wisdom or power. Apostle Paul says in Romans 11:33, *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"*

Let us now focus on the meaning of some other declarations in the Scriptures regarding this grandeur of God and His works. *"Praise Him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens"* Psalm 148:4. Concerning the heavens of heavens, our comments were given above. But what about the waters that are above the heavens? In the beginning of the Book of Genesis we read about the earth's creation. *"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."* (1:2)

Brother Russell writes in Volume 6, page 18: “In the very beginning of the first day of that creative week, the earth *was*—though without form (order), and void (empty)—waste, empty and dark.” The earth was not of its present form with land and seas and was not of a permanent, circular shape, rotating around its axis and around the sun. It was a shapeless, gassy or liquefied situation, or in other words, a nebula of materials as comets seem to be of, occupying an area infinitely multiple to that of its present day firmament, and without its present day rotational period.

This is what David’s Psalm 148:4 explains with the phrase “*the waters that be above the heavens.*” It is the vast, uncreated space and extent. The heavens have a beginning, and so do the intelligent creatures of God, with the firstborn of every creature the “*Logos,*” our Lord Jesus, (John 1:1; Colossians 1:15, 16) having the high distinction above all others.

There was a time when God was “Alone” without the Logos or His angels. This is definite and self-evident since both the heavens and God’s sons have a beginning; it is only God that is self-existent. It is only God that has no beginning. However, even at the time when God was alone, He was neither bored, unhappy or lacking anything, since He is complete. “*The fulness of Him that filleth all in all.*” (Ephesians 1:23) He is the light and no darkness; there is no disorder or bottomless pit-abyss-chaos for Him. He is “*Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment*” (Psalm 104:2), “*dwelling in the light.*” (1 Timothy 6:16)

God’s present creation, which had a beginning, the heavens of heavens, were not created by God for His own happiness but so as to bring happiness to His sons, “*bringing many sons unto glory.*” (Hebrews 2:10) God is “*the Father of Glory.*” (Ephesians 1:17) And His dominion in the Universe is a glorious power. And “*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*” (James 1:17)

Let us note some other phrases relating to the continuous expansion of God’s creative work, having to do with “*waters that be above the heavens*” in the vast Universe. “*I my hands, have stretched out my heavens, and all their host have I commanded.*” (Isaiah 45:12) “*He hath made the earth by His power, He hath established the world by His wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by His discretion.*” (Jeremiah 10:12) “*Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain.*” (Psalm 104:2)

In these scriptural verses, and in many more, the word “stretch out” is repeatedly used, which means to widen, to extend, to increase the boundaries of my works. The heavens already created, are areas granted by God to His intelligent creatures. The Earth has been granted to mankind, and the heavens has been granted to angels.

The New Creation, the one created during the Gospel Age by our heavenly Father, is going to be the heir of all things in heavens and all things in earth. We will inherit the nations—Christ as head and body, as Kings and priests during the Millennial Kingdom. It is also true, that the New Creation, The Sons of God, will be the heir of heavens of heavens and the waters that be above the heavens.

Brother Russell in his Volume 6, page 722 writes: “They are chosen *out of the world,* and constitute but a ‘little flock’ in all, called to be the Lord’s Kingdom class, to bless the world during the thousand years of millennial age—subsequently, we may be sure, occupying some very high and responsible position, and doing some very important work, in the carrying out of further divine purposes—perhaps in connection with other worlds and other creations.” And, in the Photo-Drama of

Creation, Page 96 he writes: “As God made not the earth in vain, but to be inhabited, this same principle doubtless applies to the other planets of our solar system, and to one thousand millions of other worlds of which Astronomy tells us. They are all to be peopled, and the things learned in the sin-experience of our Earth are to be their instruction. It is the Divine decree that the Logos shall be the honored agency through whom all creative work shall be accomplished in the future, as in the past, and His church, His Bride, will be with Him in all His glorious hereafter.”

Natural man can in no way perceive the glory of this self-existent God. Neither can he perceive His existence because “*man that is in honor, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.*” (Psalm 49:20) “*But, as it is written Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit.*” (1 Corinthians 2:9, 10)

Regardless of all this, even the New Creation itself, we, who have in the flesh received the holy spirit, cannot fully perceive the glory of God and the glory of our Lord Jesus. Our Lord Jesus, in his last prayer before being crucified, said and pleaded with our Father for us: “*Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.*” (John 17:24)

As for the Lord’s glory; when prophet Ezekiel was among the captives by the river Chebar of Babylon, he “*saw visions of God.*” After declaring these highly significant dreams which were given to him, he concludes with verse 28 of chapter 1: “*This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.*”

The vision to Ezekiel speaks of the likeness of four living creatures: Man, Ox, Lion, Eagle. These are the symbols for Divine justice, power, love and wisdom and are very well known to us. The vision also speaks of wings on the faces of creatures, which every two, were joined one to another. We know that in Revelation 12:14 the two wings which were given to the woman (the church) that she might fly into the wilderness, symbolize the complete word of God, Old and New Testaments. The fact that they were completely joined one to another means to symbolize the perfect joining together in unity of purpose and action of the Old and New Testaments. Psalm 91:4 also speaks of God’s wings for the trust of His people.

It speaks of wheels in the middle of a wheel, full of eyes. James in 3:6, speaks of the tongue “*that it setteth on fire the course* (in the Greek text the word wheel is used instead of course) *of nature.*” (In the Greek text the word life is used instead of nature). We may thus accept that the wheels or cycles, symbolize the wheels—cycles of the plans and works of God. Accordingly, we may accept not only the dispensations mentioned for Earth, but all the dispensations through eternity in the Universe, one succeeding the other, or one intervening within the other. There are cycles in God’s creation that are huge in time and space, such as those of the Galaxies. Parallel to those cycles, other smaller cycles creatively intervene within the first ones. Such smaller cycles are the seven Epoch-days of the Earth. There are also other even smaller cycles such as the three dispensations. “The world that then was,” “present evil world,” “the world to come.” There are even smaller cycles as concerns mankind. “The Jewish Age,” “The Gospel Age,” “The Messianic Age,” The “Jubilee” of Israel, are wheels of mankind’s life as well.

As to the creation of God’s intelligent beings, the angelic beings and later on mankind, there are wheels—cycles of creation. “In the beginning was the Word.” And other beginnings came in turn as the various angelic orders were one by one created.

Since Jehovah himself is from everlasting to everlasting, he had no beginning. (Volume VI, page 18) All these cycles, upon being revealed to us by the Holy Spirit and through the study of God's word, inspire us with awe and we fall on our face, falling down and worshiping God with fear and trembling. Moreover, the more our knowledge increases and we are filled with the Holy Spirit, the more God's wonders astonish us.

When the Earth was without form, it is said in the Scriptures that "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." And, in Ezekiel's vision, it is said that "*the spirit of the living creatures* (the divine qualities) *was in the wheels.*" (1:20, 21) The spirit of God perceives and plans and in cooperation with Divine justice, power, love and wisdom, creates grand and wonderful worlds. This is why we are told in Verse 18 that the cycles were full of eyes. "*Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*" (Heb. 4:13)

It speaks of a likeness of a throne above the firmament. The throne symbolizes God's dominion in the Universe. "*The mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north*" where Lucifer wanted to ascend his throne so that he "*will be like the Most High.*" (Isaiah 14:13-15) It also speaks of a whirlwind that came out of the north, and of a fire infolding itself with brightness as the color of amber, symbols referring to the present day situation of the world, that of the Presence of our Lord Jesus.

Jeremiah, "*what seest thou?*" asks God unto him. "*I see a seething pot; and the face thereof is toward the north.*" Then the Lord said unto him: "*Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land.*" (Jeremiah 1:12-14) Prophets speak of these symbols—signs of the Lord's Presence and we have accepted their words and their interpretation as ours. This of course is true for those of us who possess the present truth. For instance, David in Psalms 97, verses 3-5 says: "*A fire goeth before him and burneth up his enemies round about. His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.*" Joel 2:3 using similar words and being very descriptive, speaks of this whole subject as well.

Using similar descriptions and in chapter 10, Ezekiel presents the Lord clothed with linen standing between the wheels and scattering coals of fire over the city. The words "*scatter*" and "*coals of fire ... over the city*" (nominal Jerusalem—Christendom) are quite characteristic since they contain the meaning of all plagues aimed at all directions. The Lord is surely using, as he had said, an instrument—channel; "*a faithful and wise servant*" "*clothed with linen*"—a garment of sacrificial service, as a writer with inkhorn (9:2, 3). And, as the phrase in Psalm 45:1 reads: "*My tongue is the pen of a ready writer,*" for the great work of the present seventh trumpet.

The Lord is glorious with Divine Nature acquired upon his First Presence when he rose from the dead and not with His linen garment which was what he was clothed in while on this earth. He is to be accounted, however, for the work of the "*Faithful and Wise Servant*" with the linen garment; this work is carried on by the faithful members of His body.

Lastly, Ezekiel's chapter 10 closes with: "*And the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.*" (Verse 19) Over the cherubim, the wheels, the cycles and the works of His creation, small or large, is the Self-Existent Creator. His works of wisdom, understanding and knowledge as it is written: "*The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath He established the heavens. By His knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.*" (Proverbs 3:19, 20)

His supreme work of love, wisdom and power is the “Zion or New Creation,” through which His glory will shine on all He has already created and all that He is going to create, as it is written: “*Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.*” (Psalm 50:2) And through this perfection the manifold wisdom of Him might be known, as claimed in Ephesians 3:10, 11: “*To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

Oh, how great this privilege is!! As concerns this, the Lord Jesus spoke to us, the New Creation, “*rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.*” (Luke 10:20) Oh, how great the beatitude about the overcomers is—the 144,000 saints, who are to see God (Matthew 5:8). And they are to be where our Lord Jesus is that they may behold His glory as He Himself prayed to the Father for them (John 17:24). Oh, how great will our surprise be, when, immediately after our change, we consider our new body—our divine nature above the brightness of the sun. (Acts 26:13).

But to whom is this glory to be given? Let us cite two confirmations made by Jesus Himself. “*Blessed are the pure in heart. For they shall see God.*” (Matthew 5:8) “*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*” (Rev. 3:21) These are two basic principles for the acquisition of this eternal legacy. It is the true conservation of our hearts and not a simple confession of our lips. Because God sees all those not truly His and those truly His.

What follows is victory for the full duration of our lives. Victory over the self-will: that we are not to seek to please ourselves, but to please God. Victory over sin which means holiness. “*As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.*” (1 Peter 1:15)

However, dear brethren, we are living in the midst of a world, the present generation, which is very crooked and perverse and this demands great watching. “*He that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.*” (Rev. 22:11)

The time of the deliverance and exaltation of the Church is at hand, when this great vision of God in Christ, head and body will reveal itself. “*For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.*” (Romans 8:19) When this cycle of divine creation has been completed—when the whole church of Christ has been glorified, “*then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*” (1 Corinthians 15:28)

