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Introduction:

The Wonder of Astronomy

Who has not looked into the heavens on a starry night with a sense of wonder? We see in the night sky the vastness of the universe. We have the feeling that some awesome power is responsible for it. Did you know that God designed us to respond this way?

The Bible in Psalm 19:1 tells us that “the heavens declare the glory of God.” God made us in His image so we are able to sense

His handiwork in the heavens. This makes astronomy one of the most fascinating sciences. It is also one of the most misunderstood sciences. As we will see, it has been twisted into corrupted forms more than perhaps any other science. Millions of people trust in the satanic perversion of astronomy called “astrology,” or the atheistic perversion of astronomy called “cosmic evolution.”



Astronomy is not astrology, nor is it cosmic evolution. Genuine astronomy is one of the most beautiful sciences because it shows us the glory of God in His creation.

Chapter 1

WHAT IS ASTRONOMY?

Astronomy is the branch of science dealing with the sun, the moon, the planets, and the stars. The word “astronomy” comes from two Greek words meaning “knowledge of the stars.” An astronomer is a person who has scientific knowledge about the stars and other heavenly bodies.

Astronomy should not be confused with astrology. Astrology is a false science which comes from ancient paganism. It is the belief that the stars can predict our future and set the course for our lives. The Bible teaches that only God can guide our lives, a truth repeated again and again in verses like Psalm 143:8 and James 4:13–15.



A view of the earth and moon as seen from outer space.

What Do Astronomers Study?

Astronomers study the sun, the moon, and the planets and their moons, all of which are considered to make up the solar system. What is the difference between moons and planets? We picture planets orbiting the Sun, and moons orbit planets.

Astronomers also study stars outside the solar system. Stars produce their own light, but planets shine by reflected light. All the objects in the heavens are called “celestial bodies.”

The only star in the solar system is the sun. The sun’s gravitation holds nine known planets. There may possibly be undiscovered planets beyond the ones we know. Most of the planets have one or more moons which orbit them. The earth has one moon, and at the other extreme some planets have many known moons. Mercury and Venus have no moon.

Aside from the sun, all other stars are far outside the solar system. They are in groups called galaxies, and the galaxies themselves are in larger groups called “galaxy clusters.”

Astronomers estimate that the portion of the universe we can see has about 100 billion galaxies, each with an average of about 100 billion stars. The solar system itself is located in the Milky Way Galaxy which has somewhere between 200 and 300 billion stars.



The sun



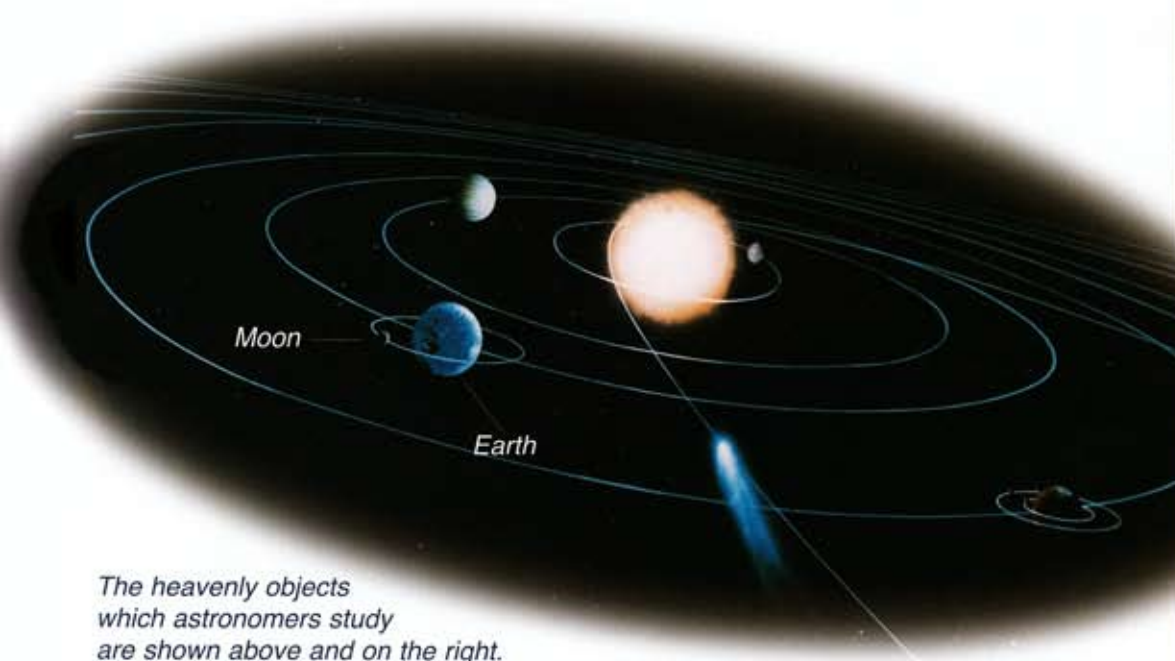
The moon



The nine planets



Stars and galaxies of the universe.



The heavenly objects which astronomers study are shown above and on the right.

One thing we have in common with the ancients is that all of the human race has gazed at the night sky, and the bright morning, and wondered, "What's out there?" Our universe is so vast and awe-inspiring that to learn about it is to learn about ourselves.



The Astronomy Book will teach you:

- What long-ago astronomers thought about other worlds.
- Solar system facts.
- How constellations relate to astrology.
- The history of space exploration.
- Black holes — do they exist?
- The origin and age of the moon.
- Why Mars doesn't support life.
- The composition of stars, supernova remnants, and the myth of star birth.
- Asteroid legends and the extinction of the dinosaurs.
- Are there planets outside our solar system, and could they be home to intelligent life?
- What are UFOs?
- The age of comets and meteor showers.

Learning about the universe is huge fun! In the almost infinite expanse above us, we can examine planets, galaxies, and phenomena so beautiful and complex that we never outgrow a childlike wonder. We see our own reflection in the moon, the stars, and in comet trails. The more we learn, the less we fear!

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