



## STAR STRUCK

*He determines the number of the stars;  
he gives to all of them their name*

1

## Scripture

*Praise the LORD. How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him! (Psalms 147:1 NIV)*

*The LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the exiles of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. (Psalms 147:2–3 NIV)*

*He determines the number of the **stars** and calls them each by name. (Psalms 147:4 NIV)*

2

## Scripture

*Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit. The LORD sustains the humble but casts the wicked to the ground. (Psalms 147:5–6 NIV)*

*Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make music to our God on the harp. (Psalms 147:7 NIV)*

3

## Scripture

*He covers the sky with clouds; he supplies the earth with rain and makes grass grow on the hills. (Psalms 147:8 NIV)*

*He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call. (Psalms 147:9 NIV)*

4

# Scripture

*His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of a man; (Psalms 147:10 NIV)*

*the LORD delights in those who **fear him**, who put their hope in his unfailing love. (Psalms 147:11 NIV)*

5

# Introduction

If you're like most people, you've probably **wondered** occasionally how many **stars** are in the sky at night.

And again, if you are like most people, you've probably **given up** any attempt to count them, finding them not only to be too numerous for counting, but also a task that seems overwhelming.



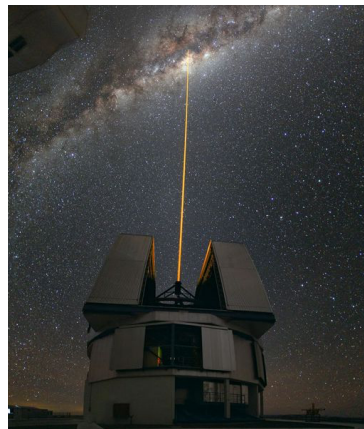
6

# Introduction

Turning to **astronomers** does little to help us come up with a meaningful number of stars.

Some estimates put the number at around **100 octillion stars** -- that's 1 with 29 zeros after it.

Other studies have suggested around **300 sextillion stars**, or a 3 followed by 23 zeros.



7

# Introduction

**David Kornreich**, a professor at Ithaca College and founder of the “**Ask an Astronomer**” service at Cornell University, when responding to a question about how many stars there are, said, . . .

“I don't know because I don't know if the universe is **infinitely large** or not.”

Well he might not know, but we do know someone who knows.



8

# Star-Name-Registry

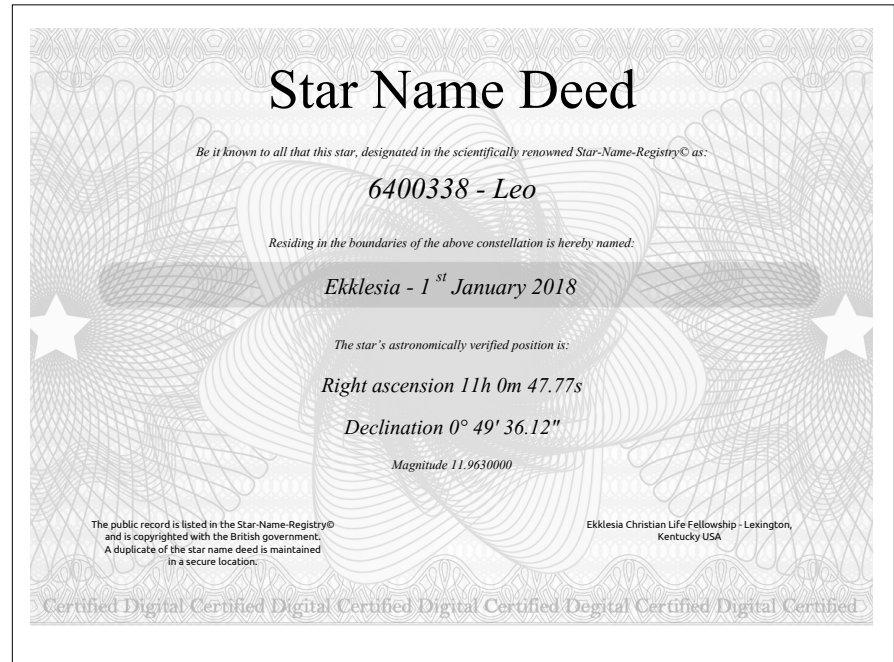
I don't know if you know this or not, but there is a **web site** that gives people the ability to name stars in the sky.

For as little as \$19.95, you can pick your very own **star and name it** after for example your dog, significant other, children or grandchildren.

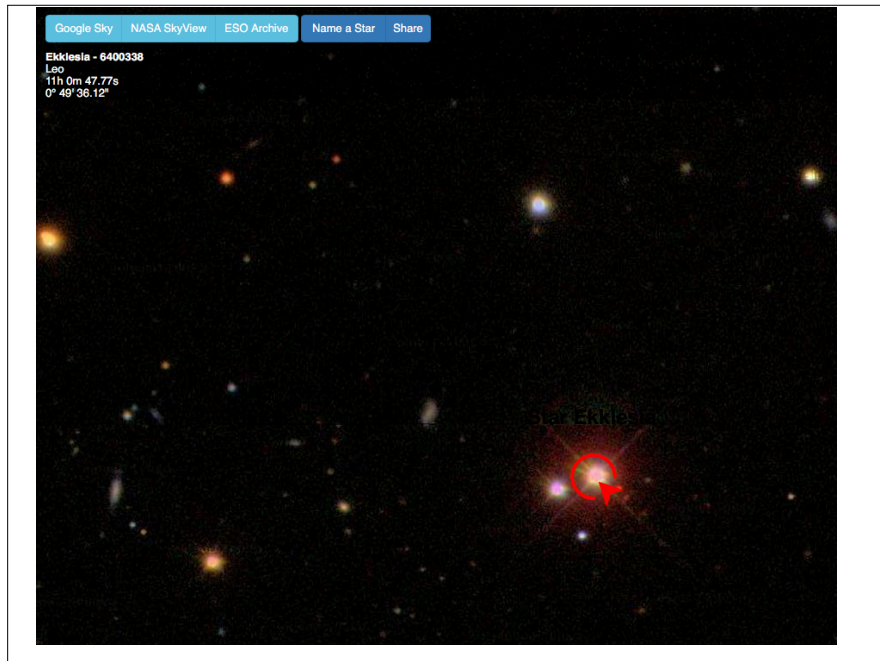
To try this out, I went on [star-name-registry.org](http://star-name-registry.org) and named a star after our church, "**Ekklesia**."

So **star 6400338** in the constellation of Leo is now called, **Ekklesia**.

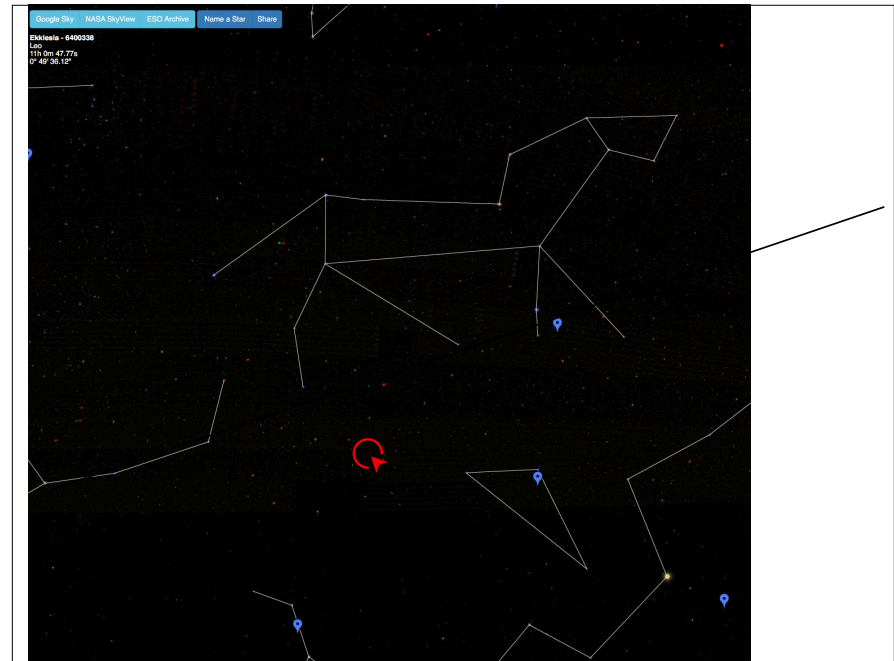
9



10



11



12



13

## The Nature of God

So, when the psalmist said in **Psalm 147** said that God *determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names, he was really saying something!*

In **Psalm 8**, the writer, living thousands of years before the **Hubble Space Telescope**, recognized something of the immensity above us when writing, . . .

*When I look at your **heavens**, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?* (Psalm 8:3-4).

14

## The Nature of God

With all of that in mind, here's a **question** that might seem more important to us in the earthly plane than how many stars there are: . . .

Is it okay to pray to the God who determines the number of the stars, and in our prayer ask that same God to help us find our **car keys**?



15

## The Nature of God

There's a good chance you have to think about that a moment before answering.

One woman told her pastor that this very thing happened to her.

She had misplaced her car keys and ransacked her house trying to find them.

Finally, she decided to **pray** for God's help, and within three minutes, she found the keys.



16

# The Nature of God

The reason she told her **pastor** about the incident was because she felt as though she'd disrespected God.

She explained,

**“I felt like I was misusing God.”**

“He's got the whole world to care for.”

“Surely he can't be concerned about where I absentmindedly leave my keys?”

17

# The Nature of God

The **larger question** behind her specific one is about the nature of God and where God chooses to be involved with us.

That's a key question for religion, for, in fact, **no religion can be greater than its concept of God.**

In fact, what we are talking about is the **Transcendence** (Vastness) and **Immanence** (closeness) of God.

18

# Transcendence

Psalm 147 sees **God** as high and lofty, the one who **created** the universe and the world and named the gazillion stars.

In other words, God is so far above us that the **divine** is virtually unfathomable.

19

# Transcendence

Theologians even have an expression for thinking of God this way.

They talk about the **transcendence** of God.

This word is from the Latin meaning **“to surpass,”** and it refers to the **“beyondness”** or **“otherness”** of God and to God being above creation and outside of human comprehension.

That is to say, **God is wholly other than what we are.**

20

# Transcendence

In fact, God must be **transcendent** or God is no God at all.

A being who can be fully understood by human thought isn't big enough to be God.

Instead, the God of the Bible is one who is neither bound by human frailty nor stymied by human limits.

Again, we need a God that big, whose **ways**, as Isaiah tells us, *higher than our ways* (Isaiah 55:2), and who at times appears to *hide himself from us* (Isaiah 45:15).

21

# Immanence

Yet, we should not miss something else Psalm 147 asserts -- that in addition to determining and naming the stars, God *heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds*.

That is, the same God who created the stars and knows their number is also involved with us and concerned about what goes on in our daily lives.

This divine interaction with us speaks to another aspect of God's nature: the **immanence** of God.

This word is from a Latin word that means “to remain in” or “dwelling in.”

22

# Immanence

Thus, the answer to the woman's question about praying for help to find her keys should be evident.

**Yes, God cares about the things that trouble us.**

Or, as one elderly Christian woman put it, “**She who does not have a God to thread her needle, does not have a God to give her salvation either.**”

23

# Both Sky and Earth

The Bible, by the way, does not argue for *transcendence* over *immanence*.

Rather, it tells us that God is both transcendent and immanent.

In other words, **God is God of both the skies and the earth.**

24

# Both Sky and Earth

An interesting way to understand *immanence* is to describe our mothers.

Mothers care about what happens to us day-in and day-out.

Some of us phone our mothers regularly just to chat about our **daily activities**.

And if we need a little help there's a good chance that Mom will be right over to help out.

25

# Both Sky and Earth

She is *immanent*, “remaining in” the day-by-day routine of our lives, even though we no longer live in her house.

If we can't find our **keys**, she might even come over and drive us on our errand in her car.

Mom's *transcendence*, however, is limited. As a fellow human being, she faces the same kinds of limitations that all humanity does.

For moving mountains, we need someone who has the strength and power to do miracles. **Someone who is all powerful.**

**Our heavenly Father!**

26

# Israel & Aram

Consider, for example, an event narrated in **1 Kings 20**, where both Israel and an opposing nation, Aram, learned that God is Lord of both the hills and the plains.

When **King Ahab** ruled Israel, the Aramean army marched against Israel and attacked.

Although the Aramean army was stronger than Israel's, King Ahab and the army of Israel surprisingly routed them.



27

# Israel & Aram

The skirmish left the Arameans licking their wounds, but they were not ready to give up.

Some of the king's advisers came up with an **idea**, which, unfortunately for them, was based on a faulty assumption.

The battle they had just lost had been fought in the **hills**, and the Arameans, knowing nothing about Israel's God, assumed the Israelite god was geographically defined as “**god of the hills.**”



28

## Israel & Aram

They concluded, therefore, that what Aram needed to do was fight Israel on the plains, where, presumably, Israel's "god" would have no effect.

*"Their gods are gods of the hills, and so they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they"* (1 Kings 20:23), the advisers told the king.

So that's what the Arameans did. They invaded the plains of Israel and waited for Ahab's army to attack.

29

## Israel & Aram

Meanwhile, however, a **prophet of the Lord** visited Ahab and told him of the assumption the Arameans had made about Israel's God, and he told Ahab that the Lord was going to give Israel victory in the battle so that Ahab would know that **Yahweh was the Lord**.

And, when the battle took place, that's exactly what happened; Israel soundly defeated Aram, putting an end to Aram's troublemaking against Israel.

30

## Israel & Aram

Militarily, the Arameans were **stronger** than the army of Israel, but their assumption that God did not involve himself in the things of the plains was sadly mistaken.

God is not just a god of the hills.

God is God of both the hills and the plains, the heavens and the Earth, the universe and the kitchen.

31

## Summary

God is both *transcendent* and *immanent*, high above us and right beside us.

That helps us understand how God relates to us and how we can relate to God.

What's more, if God is both power and love, then God not only wants to help us, but is also able to help us.

32



# Conclusion

Because God lives not only in the **hills of heaven** but also on the **plains of Earth**, we have God with us when we walk in dark shadows and when we are simply going about our routine lives.

God holds the **keys to heaven**, but God also cares about the distress we are caused when we cannot find the keys to our car.

That's part of what makes God God, and it is **sufficient reason** for us to give God **the keys to our heart** and surrender to His will.