

# TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

## 210 - The Sun, Moon & Stars

### 1. Introduction

In the ancient world pagan cultures worshiped heavenly bodies and ancient deities were often represented by celestial objects. Some nations, such as the Babylonians, watched the heavens for a number of reasons and many cultures built structures marking the position of the sun at critical points in the year. How are these objects represented in the Bible and is there any emphasis placed on them? In this study we'll examine **The Sun, Moon & Stars** as we answer this question.

### 2. Perspectives on ancient religion and the Bible

There are many who believe that the writings of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, are made up of elements borrowed from other cultures. Some believe that practices and elements appearing in the Law of Moses for instance are nothing more than Hebrew variations of Egyptian, Canaanite, Babylonian and Assyrian religions. If that's true we'd expect to find similarities between the Bible and cultures outside the Hebrew nation, but upon examining the text we find that isn't quite the case.

In our study of symbolic elements anything representing deity is of interest and informative for a number of reasons. Evidence leading us to conclude that the Bible is just another version of what everyone else was doing would contradict the idea that the scriptures are the word of God. In contrast, an absence of these similarities would supply a powerful argument in favor of divine inspiration. It would also neutralize arguments that the Old Testament is a collection of Hebrew folk tales emerging very late in the history of the Jewish nation. In this study we'll take a look at

1. Similarities between ancient cultures and their beliefs
2. The sun as it appears and is used in the scriptures
3. The moon and God's use of it as a figure and ....
4. The physical and symbolic appearance of the stars

### 3. Similarities between ancient cultures and their beliefs

A casual comparison of ancient cultures reveals a number of recurring themes in their belief systems. A variety of deities are represented by slightly altered versions between societies. Some of the more well known of these are the gods of ancient Greece and Rome whose names are different but were obviously influenced by each other. The gods of Egypt are also fairly well known and while the deities may not bear a striking resemblance to Greek or Roman gods they still embody the same themes. In the Babylonian, and specifically the Chaldean religions, the stars and motions of celestial bodies were mapped, studied and thought to exert influence on

## TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

### 210 - The Sun, Moon & Stars

events. Assyrian deities and beliefs are similar to those of the Babylonians, and like the Greek and Roman cultures, share many of the same attributes. In other areas of the world we see a focus on the heavens and their corresponding deities as well. From South and Central America, Mexico and the American Southwest to the iconic monument at Stonehenge, the ancients had a preoccupation with the sky and its objects.

Corresponding to this are representations of the gods by the sun, moon and planets among other things. Stories were created to explain the creation of the world, the afterlife, death and behavior of the elements. In each culture the idea of a hierarchy of gods generally suggests the ideas of good, evil, reward and punishment. The nature of these stories, or myths, have a different quality than those recorded in the scriptures. The tales of the ancient pagans border on the fantastic and although some events recorded in the Bible are miraculous, there's a lack of similarity in the writing, how the events transpire and the outcomes. Pagan myth embeds morality tales and other things in figurative ways but the Bible, even when speaking figuratively, has a unique character that sets it apart from pagan cultures and their beliefs.

This isn't an in-depth study of the beliefs of pagan culture but we have enough familiarity with their stories to understand what they meant to those societies. Pagan culture and their associated mythic expressions preserved their cultural heritage attempting to explain the world, life, reinforce principles of morality and preserve law and order. Within the various belief systems we see a concrete mentality that sought to explain things in the natural world in a simplistic and somewhat limited fashion. Cause and effect relationships were based on what could be seen and experienced. Deductions and conclusions were made based on subjective reasoning that attempted to explain the observable by means of the unknowable. This gave rise to schools of thought ranging from the primitive to the complex. The ancient Canaanite tribes were somewhat basic, primitive and organic with their interpretations. Other cultures such as those in India and China developed more complex explanations and beliefs based on introspective subjective states.

Ancient culture and pagan religion has a multitude of variations but at the heart there are core themes of morality and judgment that appear. From Joseph Campbell's ideas of comparative mythology to Julian Jaynes theories of the emergence of consciousness from primitive hallucinatory states, pagan religion remains rooted in the identifiable thought process of humans. We can note two main characteristics that identify pagan thought. The first of these is a one to one correspondence to the organic material world. The second is the assignment of characteristics to deities, spirits and others that are merely extensions of human thought and behavior. When we turn to the Bible, none of these characteristics or connections are found. There are a number of individuals who have worked very hard to show that the Bible is just another system of perceiving and interpreting reality in the same way that other ancient cultures did but when we consider the text, that idea can't be supported.

## TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

### 210 - The Sun, Moon & Stars

To begin we can note the most obvious differences. God isn't characterized as having human emotions or desires. Nowhere in the scriptures is there an image created to represent God or a command to create one. Although there are figurative expressions describing the power of God, such as those in the books of Job and Psalms, these are vastly different from pagan lore. Although there are some parallels in pagan writings such as the Gilgamesh Epic and the story of Noah, the character of those in the Bible have a unique quality that pagan myth doesn't possess.

Another difference, and probably the most significant, is the volume of fulfilled prophecy in the Bible. Predictions of ancient sages were unreliable, subjectively based and arrived at through methods that defy explanation in the modern world. In the scriptures there are hundreds of prophecies linked to and fulfilled in Christ. Other predictions about the fate of Israel, Judah and world powers speak clearly and have a distinct nature that sets them apart from pagan writings.

Having this summary in mind we can turn to the Bible and examine elements that may be similar to pagan writings and practice. If the Bible is just another version of what everyone else believed then we should expect to find examples that support that conclusion. I've focused on the sun, moon and stars since these are some of the most common elements appearing in a number of ancient religious systems. Let's start by taking a look at what the Bible has to say about the sun.

#### 4. The sun as it appears and is used in the scriptures

Genesis introduces the sun on the fourth day of creation as one of the "*lights*" in the firmament (**Gen 1.14**). The purpose for these lights, including the sun, is summarized for us. "*And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide 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 firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.*" (**Gen 1.14-15**). The sun is referred to as "*the greater light to rule the day...*" (**Gen 1.16**). Focusing on the sun we can list the functions it was created to perform. These are ...

1. Dividing day from night
2. For signs and the
3. Passage of seasons, days and years

At a casual glance we see the obvious function of forming a boundary between day and night, or light and darkness. The third function is an extension of marking the passage of time. Days would pass and the movement of the Earth in its orbit would bring about changes in the seasons. The sun would then be an instrument that could be used to identify these cycles. Throughout the ancient world structures were built that aligned with the solstices, identifying

## TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

### 210 - The Sun, Moon & Stars

Summer and Winter, and the equinoxes signaling Spring and Autumn. These were important times to be aware of as they provided indicators for planting and harvesting crops among other things.

The second function is more interesting and one that we generally don't think about. God stated that the sun would be for signs. This expression may have included the changes in seasons but in the biblical narrative there are instances in which the sun was used by the Lord to show his power and confirm his word. We have examples of this demonstrating God's ability to control the heavens and perform his will. One of these incidents occurred following the destruction of Ai and the treaty the Israelites made with the Gibeonites. Adonizedek, the king of Jerusalem, feared the approaching army of the Hebrews and enlisted the aid of four other kings to fight against the children of Israel. ***“Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, the king of Eglon, gathered themselves together, and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it.” (Josh 10.5).*** The Gibeonites sent an urgent plea to Joshua to help them as the Amorite armies approached.

Two things took place that demonstrated the power of God. As the armies retreated from the children of Israel and Joshua, God ***“cast down great stones from heaven upon them” (Josh 10.11).*** Joshua, in pursuit of the Amorites then made a request of the Lord. ***“Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.” (Josh 10.12-13).*** An additional note is provided explaining the unique nature of this event. ***“And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the Lord fought for Israel.” (Josh 10.14).***

Some might conclude that this was a figurative expression or may attempt to identify a natural cause for the occurrence. The reality is that this was an act by the God who had brought the nation of Egypt to its knees through ten plagues, appeared at Sinai, led the people through the wilderness for forty years and preserved the Hebrews. As Jeremiah states, nothing is too hard for the God who made all things (**Jer 32.27**). This might sound fantastic to us but this was an age in which the Lord acted in physical ways to accomplish his will and aid his people.

A second instance of God's use of the sun to demonstrate his power took place during the reign of Hezekiah. The king had become ill and was near death when the prophet Isaiah came to him with a message to set his house in order. ***“Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, And said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.” (Isa 38.2-3).*** God heard Hezekiah's prayer and sent the prophet to tell him that He would add fifteen years to his life (**Isa 38.5**). The Lord added an

## TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

### 210 - The Sun, Moon & Stars

additional blessing by delivering the city from destruction by the Assyrians (**Isa 38.6**). As an assurance that God would do this he stated, “*Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.*” (**Isa 38.8**).

Hezekiah had been faithful to God by destroying idols, cutting down sacred groves that were being worshiped and destroying the brass serpent Moses made in the wilderness because it was being worshiped as an idol. The nation of Judah had been falling away from the Lord which caused God to allow them to be afflicted by their enemies, but Hezekiah determined to observe the commands of God. Once more God affirmed that he was with his people and visibly provided proof of his power.

God prohibited the worship of idols and specifically mentioned heavenly bodies. In Moses farewell address to the children of Israel, recorded in the book of Deuteronomy, we see this stated several times. Moses warned against becoming like the pagans in Canaan where they were going and prohibited the worship of a variety of items. He specifically forbids worship of the sun (**Deut 4.19**) and includes this in a list of practices that were an abomination (**Deut 17.3**). Such practices were accompanied by other sinful actions included in pagan worship all of which would corrupt the people and draw them away from the Lord.

In spite of warnings and commands from God not to worship the sun we find this was violated. Following the reign of Hezekiah the next two kings of Judah were active in their pursuit of idolatry. Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, was evil and restored idolatrous worship that Hezekiah had eliminated. “*For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. And he built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord said, In Jerusalem will I put my name. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord.*” (**2 Kings 21.3-5**). His son Amon followed in his footsteps and “*did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh did*” (**2 Kings 21.20**). He was killed by his own servants and the people then made his son Josiah king (**2 Kings 21.24**). During his reign, Josiah restored the worship of the Lord and once more purged the land of idolatry.

“*And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven.*” (**2 Kings 23.5**). “*And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the Lord, by the chamber of Nathanmelech the chamberlain, which was in the suburbs, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire.*” (**2 Kings 23.11**). The adoption of the pagan worship of the

## TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

### 210 - The Sun, Moon & Stars

Amorites and others had corrupted the kingdom of Judah and eventually brought about their destruction as Moses warned about centuries earlier.

Surveying the scriptures we find the sun employed in a number of ways both physically and figuratively. Following is a summary of some of these that appear in the scriptures.

The sun, in a physical sense, is often used as a figure for the power of God and to demonstrate the order of creation and cycles in the heavens (**Psm 19.4, Psm 148.3, Job 9.7, Psm 74.16**). God's blessings on all mankind are stated by Christ who notes that God causes the sun to rise on the just and the unjust (**Matt 5.45**).

The physical nature of the sun is used as a figure for various attributes of God and his provisions. The stability and promise of God's mercy is compared to the power of God that created the great lights including the sun (**Psm 136.7-8**). The sun is used as a figure for the protection the Lord provides for his people ( **Psm 84.11**). God's throne is described as like the sun in **Psm 89.36**.

Christ describes the shallow faith of some which springs up quickly but lacks commitment. These were compared to plants on stony ground that wilt and die in the sun (**Matt 13.5-6**). Those who are righteous and fear the Lord are said to "*shine forth as the sun*" in **Matthew 13.46**.

In the writings of the prophets the sun is described as darkened or going down referring to the work of God that overshadows the power of the world (**Joel 2.10, Jer 15.9, Joel 3.15**). False prophets are rebuked in the writing of Micah who states that the "*sun shall go down over the prophets*" because of their error for which they would receive no vision or answer from the Lord (**Micah 3.7**). Speaking of the tribulation to come on the nation of Judah, Christ stated that the "*sun would be darkened*" referring to the upset of physical powers (**Matt 24.29**).

The people of God were rebuked for their continued idolatry as they fell away from the Lord which brought about their destruction by the Babylonians. In a vision Ezekiel was shown the idolatry being practiced in Jerusalem as the inhabitants worshiped the sun in **Ezekiel 8.16**.

These are only a few of the statements that can be found in the scriptures. If we compare what the Bible has to say about the sun we find a clear distinction between the Bible and writings from other cultures that practiced idolatry. Nothing was to be worshiped or elevated above the Lord. The sun remains a figure of God's power over creation and was used as a sign or figure for the majesty, power and judgment of the Lord. The conclusion that we can draw based on these statements is that there's no similarity between the inspired word and the ideas of man that existed in other cultures. The worship of the sun was forbidden by God and its presence in the



## TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

### 210 - The Sun, Moon & Stars

nation of Israel and Judah notes a failure to be faithful to the Lord.

#### 5. The physical and symbolic use of the moon

In the ancient world the moon was used to measure time. In many cultures it was also associated with a variety of deities, many of which were viewed as lesser gods than those associated with the sun. In some cultures phases or lunar states and cycles represented events. The dark of the new moon could signal evil and an eclipse may be a sign of disaster or other things. When we turn to the scriptures there's a significant difference in how the moon is employed.

There are many theologians and archaeologists who contend that the religion of the Hebrews contained elements that were borrowed from other cultures. As proof of this, finds in Palestine indicating the prolific worship of idols among the Israelites, are put forth. Citations from the scriptures that reference certain pagan gods with a lunar association are also used to show that the Hebrews simply incorporated pagan worship into their own ritualistic religion. But is this a valid conclusion? The answer is no, and we'll take a look at why that is in the summary at the end of this lesson. For now let's take a look at how the moon is represented and used in the scriptures. By doing that we'll be able to determine what God's attitude is toward the veneration of the moon by his people.

The moon first appears in the account of creation in Genesis one. On the fourth day the Lord created two great lamps for specific functions (**Gen 1.14-16**). We can list these for the moon as we did earlier for the sun. These are:

1. To give light upon the Earth
2. To rule the night as the sun ruled the day
3. For signs, seasons, days and years

The physical aspects of the moon are obvious and we're well aware of their existence and significance. The phases of the moon assist in marking the passage of time. We've also become aware of how the moon affects tides in the ocean and can indicate changes in the weather. The moon also has an effect on the growth of some plants and a statement about this was included by Moses in his farewell address. Speaking of Joseph's inheritance he stated, "***And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon ...***" (**Deut 33.13-14**). The psalmist states that God "***appointed the moon for seasons***" (**Psm104.19**) and notes that thanks and praise should be given to the one who made "***the moon and stars to rule by night***" (**Psm 136.9**).

## TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

### 210 - The Sun, Moon & Stars

Like the sun, the moon is a testament to the power of God who ordered the universe and set the celestial bodies in motion. God's promise was to preserve Israel for the purpose of saving mankind. The moon is included in a statement of the assurance of God's promises. ***"Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever."*** (Jer 31.35-36).

The stability of the physical universe and the motion of bodies such as the moon is used as an example of the sure nature of God's promises. In a messianic reference the psalmist states, ***"Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah."*** (Psm 89.35-37). The throne refers to the reign of Christ, brought into the world physically as a descendant of David, whose reign over God's people will never end. Once more we see that the motions of the moon, its orbit and regularity, have been decreed by God and can be relied on, just as the fulfillment of his promise of salvation through the Messiah.

The power of God is confirmed in a number of statements that include the heavens. David speaks of the Lord's might stating, ***"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained..."*** (Psm 8.3). Paul also speaks of evidence for God found in the physical world when he writes, ***"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead..."*** (Rom 1.20).

God's care for the faithful is stated in similar terms. ***"He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations."*** (Psm 72.4-5). In each of these images, physically and figuratively, God is described as greater than the physical universe but his majesty can be seen in its nature and stability. In these references, and throughout the scriptures there's no indication that God is to be represented by anything physical. On the contrary there are statements in the Law that forbids the worship of the moon as well as the sun or other heavenly bodies.

Moses warned the children of Israel that they were not to engage in idolatry and worship the heavens. They weren't to worship the sun or moon as I referred to earlier (**Deut. 4.19 & 17.3**). One of the characteristics of God's people in their decline is the violation of these prohibitions. Eventually God allowed their enemies to overtake them for their sin. The children of Israel began to follow the practices of the pagan cultures around them, neglected the law and eventually suffered the consequences for those actions as Moses had warned them.



## TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

### 210 - The Sun, Moon & Stars

The moon appears as a figurative element in the life of Joseph the son of Jacob. ***“And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me....”*** (Gen 37.9). Years later, after being sold into slavery and imprisoned, Joseph would interpret Pharaoh’s dream about a coming famine. As a result of that Joseph was elevated to a position second to Pharaoh and organized measures to preserve the nation. His brothers would eventually visit to buy food and fulfill this prophecy (Gen 39 - 45).

Prophetic language uses the moon as a figure depicting the defeat or overthrow of worldly powers. These are linked with the judgment of God against them and represent consequences for evil. The prophet Isaiah delivered God’s pronouncement of judgment against Babylon. ***“Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.”*** (Isa 13.9-10).

Ezekiel’s prophecy against the nation of Egypt includes several elements depicting the upset of their power. ***“And it came to pass in the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt ... And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light.”*** (Ezek 32.2,7).

The moon also appears in references that predict the coming of the Messiah. One of the most familiar of these appears in the book of Joel. He writes, ***“The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood..”*** (Joel 2.31). This is fulfilled on the day of Pentecost as Peter preaches the first gospel sermon. The things seen by the people that day were from the Lord. Answering those who thought the apostles were drunk, Peter declares, ***“this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel...”*** (Acts 2.16) then quotes the prophecy from Joel chapter two. Joel speaks of the time in which the Messiah will come into the world and what will take place as these things are fulfilled. ***“The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.”*** (Joel 3.15).

As Christ answered the disciples questions concerning the fate of Jerusalem and his return, he describes that time in similar terms. ***“For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light..”*** (Matt 24.28-29). I’ll discuss Matthew twenty-four in more detail in another lesson but this prophecy refers to the fall of Jerusalem in

## TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

### 210 - The Sun, Moon & Stars

A.D. 70. Mark records this in his Gospel account (Mk 13.24). Luke also records this and adds Christ's statements describing the general state of the world. "***And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.***" (Lk 21.25-26).

Similar images appear in the book of Revelation as John speaks of the persecution of Christians and God's judgment against the world. John writes, "***And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood...***" (Rev 6.12). The moon appears again in statements concerning God's judgment (Rev 8.12) and the woman who gives birth to a child representing the church which is then persecuted by Satan (Rev 12.1).

In the scriptures there are also statements including the moon referring to righteousness and the blessings of God's people. The moon appears as a figurative image as Isaiah describes the healing of God's people and the magnitude of the blessings in store for them (Isa 30.26). Isaiah described the future salvation of God's people in similar terms that include the moon. "***Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.***" (Isa 60.20). The Psalmist also speaks of God's care stating, "***The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.***" (Psm 121.5-6).

Finally the moon is used as an image depicting beauty in the Song Of Solomon. "***Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?***" (Song 6.10). Solomon also wrote the book of Ecclesiastes and employs the moon as an image in the aging process. "***Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain...***" (Eccl 12.1-2).

This is a sampling of passages that appear in the Old and New Testaments that incorporate the moon. Even when used figuratively the moon doesn't have the same presentation or meaning as it does in pagan culture and writings. There's an absence of an example or directive to represent any aspect of the Lord using the moon. In some passages there are references to pagan gods associated with lunar deities but these appear in the context of sin and digression, not as part of the faithful observance of the Law of Moses.

## TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

### 210 - The Sun, Moon & Stars

#### 6. The physical and symbolic appearance of the stars

Ancient cultures watched the stars and ascribed various mythic ideas to them. The Chaldeans were known as some of the first stargazers who derived a number of ideas from them including their influence on events and individuals lives. Their observations and detailed record of the positions of the stars provided the ability to track the length of years and change of seasons. The ancient Egyptians, Greeks and other cultures also observed the stars and ascribed mystical connotations to them as well as using them for practical purposes.

Physically we see stars made on the fourth day of creation along with the sun and moon (**Gen 1.14-16**). These were to rule the night along with the moon (**Psm 136.9**) and Paul points out that there are differences between stars (**1 Cor 15.41**). The stars were used by God to represent the offspring Abraham would have in accordance to the Lord's promises to the patriarch (**Gen 15.5, 22.17, 26.4**). Moses reminds the children of Israel that this promise had been fulfilled (**Ex 32.13, Deut 1.10**).

The stars are used figuratively to denote the power of God. Job compares the majesty of God who is above the stars noting how high they are in the sky (**Job 22.12**). The psalmist uses the number of the stars as a figure representing the knowledge of God who knows their number (**Psm 147.4**). Like the sun and moon, the stars were set in motion by God and serve to rule the night, mark the passing of time and as signs (**Psm 8.3**). Jeremiah notes that the stars were created as a light by night (**Jer 31.35**) and Amos calls on the people to "*seek him that maketh the stars*" referring to their need to acknowledge the power of God and repent (**Amos 5.8**). As the work of rebuilding Jerusalem proceeded, Nehemiah stated that they labored from early morning "*till the stars appeared*" (**Neh 4.21**).

The stars are used as signs in visions from time to time by God. Perhaps the most well known of these are the dreams of Joseph. Joseph told his family "*Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.*" (**Gen 37.9**). This led to his brothers hating him enough to want to kill him but they decided to sell him into slavery instead. Years later, during seven years of famine, Joseph's brothers did bow down to him, and later learned that this had been God's plan to save them all.

Like the sun and moon, the stars are used figuratively to represent conflict, the overthrow of earthly powers or events that were to take place as a result of God's judgment. The victory of Israel over the Syrians led by Sisera contains an image of the stars (**Judg 5.20**). As powers are judged and cast down, the stars are said to be darkened, indicating the overthrow of worldly kingdoms as a judgment from God (**Isa 13.10, Ezek 32.7, Dan 8.10, Matt 24.29**). Obadiah's prophecy against Edom stated that although they had set their nests "*among the stars*" they couldn't escape the judgment of God and would be overthrown (**Obad 1.4**).

## TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

### 210 - The Sun, Moon & Stars

Events surrounding the coming of the Messiah and his kingdom are represented by the stars (**Joel 2.10, Joel 3.15**). The Messiah was referred to as a star that would come out of Jacob (**Num 24.17**) and the righteousness of Christ in the lives of believers is referred to figuratively by Peter as he cites the transfiguration that he along with James and John witnessed. “*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts...*” (**2 Pet 1.19**).

When the Messiah, Jesus, was born, there was a physical sign sent by God in the form of a star that announced his birth. “*Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.*” (**Matt 2.1-2**).

In the book of Revelation Christ is described as having “*seven stars*” in his right hand which are later defined as the “*angels of the seven churches*” being addressed in the book (**Rev 1.16, 20**). Stars are used figuratively throughout the book of Revelation and represent worldly and spiritual powers that are overthrown (**Rev 6.13, Rev 8.12**). Other figures that appear in the book refer to these themes as well such as those in (**Rev 8.10-11, Rev 9.1, Rev 12.1, 4**). As the beginning of the book of Revelation indicates these images are “*signs*” or symbols and need to be understood as nonliteral references.

This is a sampling of many references that can be found in the scriptures but the bottom line is that the stars aren't objects of worship. Moses warned the children of Israel not to worship the stars (**Deut 4.19**). As God's people fell away from the Lord, idolatry, including worshiping the stars is a characteristic of their digression and is condemned. Amos writes, “*But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose name is The God of hosts.*” (**Amos 5.26-27**). Stephen quotes this passage in his recounting of the history of unfaithfulness by the Jews. “*Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.*” (**Acts 7.43**).

## 7. Summary

As I noted at the beginning of this lesson there are many who believe that the religion of the Hebrews and the scriptures represent elements that were borrowed from other cultures and edited to fit their needs. Some cite the presence of artifacts in Palestine representing Canaanite gods while others draw comparisons with Egyptian, Assyrian and Babylonian influences.

## TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

### 210 - The Sun, Moon & Stars

Archeologists have come to the same conclusion based on the number of idol images found in what was once the kingdom of Israel. A statement made by Jeremiah however demonstrates how these discoveries have confirmed what the Bible says. Jeremiah writes, ***“Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them. Then shall the cities of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem go, and cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incense: but they shall not save them at all in the time of their trouble. For according to the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up altars to that shameful thing, even altars to burn incense unto Baal...”*** (Jer 11.11-13).

Because of their idolatry, the Lord did exactly what Moses prophesied centuries earlier. God rejected the people of the day and allowed their enemies to destroy them as a consequence. The Lord stated, ***“Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble.”*** (Jer 11.14). The Bible has nothing in common with ancient religions around Israel as we can see in God’s condemnation of the worship of things such as the sun, moon and stars. Artifacts may have been found in Palestine, but the fact remains that the scriptures mention such things in a negative context.

Moses notes that this is not the will of the Lord in his final remarks to the children of Israel as he reminds them of what they did and didn’t see at Sinai. ***“Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.”*** (Deut 4.15-19).

#### 8. Next

In the next lesson I’ll shift focus and talk about some principles for understanding Biblical symbolism. The writings of the prophets are filled with figurative language and references and since we can’t talk about all of them in a study like this, we need to be aware of some guidelines and principles for interpreting them. Join me in the next lesson for a discussion of **Prophecy, Symbolic Language & Interpreting The Bible**.