



The Incredible
Journey



Message **FROM THE** **STARS**

GARY KENT

MESSAGE FROM THE STARS

*"The heavens declare the glory of God;
and the firmament shows his handiwork.
Day unto day utters speech, and night
unto night shows knowledge. There is
no speech nor language, where their
voice is not heard."*

Psalm 19:1

THE WONDER OF SPACE

Space!

Incalculable numbers!

Incomparable speeds!

Immeasurable distances!

The reality of space is truly awe-inspiring. Its sheer vastness, along with the trillions upon trillions of objects in the many billion galaxies of the universe, is almost incomprehensible to the human mind.

From ancient times, humans have been awed by the night sky, and counting the stars has been a subject of fascination. For instance, the Greek scientist Hipparchus (190BC - 120BC), who also founded the discipline of trigonometry and measured the earth-moon distance accurately, compiled a star catalogue of over 850 stars. According to Hoffleit and Warren's (1991) *Bright Star Catalogue*, the number of stars that can be seen from Earth with the naked eye is approximately 9000. From the

sixteenth century, telescopes have been developed and used to enable humans to study the stars in more detail. These have enabled us to view literally millions of stars. Yet this number probably only faintly reflects the actual number of stars, which some scientists estimate to be 200 *sextillion*; that is, 2 with 23 zeros (Jackson, 2021).

It is hard for human beings to grasp just how large these stars really are. For instance, our sun could contain 1.3 million planets the size of Earth. Yet our sun is only small compared with other stars like Betelgeuse, a red giant about 700 times larger and 14,000 times brighter than our sun.

It is astounding to think of the size of even a single star like Betelgeuse. But what of the size of the universe itself? It takes light, travelling at the speed of approximately 300,000 km per second, about eight minutes to reach our earth.

The next closest star to Earth, after the sun, is Alpha Centauri, a triple-star cluster just 4.35 light years away from earth. A light year is an astronomical measure of the distance light travels in one year, which is approximately 9.461 trillion km. That's 9, followed by fifteen zeros. That means Alpha Centauri is approximately 41 trillion km away from Earth—and it is a close neighbour! The brightest star in the night sky in both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres is Sirius. Part of the reason for its brightness is, again, that it is relatively near, at a mere 8.7 light-years away from Earth.

The Andromeda Galaxy, two million light years away, is the most distant object that can be seen with the naked eye. Scientists estimate that the entire universe is almost 28 billion light-years across—and still more amazing, there is evidence that the universe is expanding!

The myriad of planets, suns and stars contained in the universe are also travelling at tremendous speeds. Scientists estimate that Earth moves around our sun at a velocity of nearly 30 kilometres per second, or 107,000 kilometres per hour. At the same time, our sun, with its solar system, is moving around the centre of our galaxy at about 220 km/sec, or almost 800,000 km/hour.

When you pause to think about it, the universe is an amazing place. Perhaps you are wondering, how is it that all these objects of tremendous size, which move at such tremendous speeds, do so without major collisions? How is it that such massive objects, and indeed the universe itself, doesn't collapse under its own weight? By exploring more of the mysteries of the universe, we may be able to better understand our place in the cosmos, and how this world came to be. In this booklet, we will look at

what God's Word, the Holy Bible, says about the heavens, the stars, and about God who created all these things.

THE QUEST FOR PURPOSE

The Bible contains a number of claims that are unique, and outstanding. The Bible says that God created all things, including the stars, planets, and other bodies in space (Genesis 1:1). When God first made everything in nature, it showed exactly what He is like – His beautiful character of love (Romans 1:20; Psalm 19:1; 1 John 4:8,16). Originally, everything was perfect. But Adam and Eve, the parents of all human beings, sinned in the Garden of Eden when they disobeyed God's plain command (Genesis 2:16,17; 3:1-6). This was the start of evil in our world.

Some of the children, grandchildren and so forth, of Adam and Eve, chose to follow God (Genesis 5). Others, like Cain, Ham, and Nimrod, rejected

God (Genesis 4; 6:1-6). Instead of worshipping God, they and their descendants worshipped things in nature, like the sun, stars and planets. Although nations such as the Egyptians and Babylonians made some amazing observations about the stars, and kept records that are valuable to us today in establishing historical dates and other data, they wove legends about the stars that mixed these facts with deceptive falsehoods which subtly undermined the truth about what God is really like. They denied the truths taught by nature and the Bible – that God is powerful and intelligent, but also full of love and mercy (Numbers 14:18). They twisted the truths nature told about God into lies (2 Peter 3:16).

God was sad to see the myths created by those who rejected Him. Besides this, nature became corrupted by the results of sin. It no longer reflected exactly what God was like. Animals adapted

ways to hunt and kill one another. Beautiful flowers developed thorns, and weeds sprang out of neglected patches of ground. So God inspired prophets, people especially chosen by Him, to record the truth about what He is like in the Bible (2 Peter 1:19-21). The Bible prophets also recorded amazing truths about nature, facts that were far ahead of their time. For instance, we noted earlier that scientists have observed that the galaxies in the universe appear to be moving away from one another. This is scientific evidence that the universe is expanding. And actually, the Bible supports this. For instance, Jeremiah 10:12 says,

"He has made the earth by his power, he has established the world by his wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens by his discretion."

Isaiah 40:22 says that God *"stretches out the heavens like a tent"*.

These incredible statements, made thousands of years before the invention of modern astronomical technologies, are powerful evidence that the Bible is reliable, and that God, who inspired it, is far wiser than we as humans can even imagine.

In this booklet, we will consider more amazing facts that the Bible reveals about nature, facts that were far ahead of their time in terms of scientific discovery. But nature also tells us about God. Some of these messages in nature have been hidden because of the effects of evil in our world. But when we study the Bible, it explains what nature tells us about God. In this booklet, we will look at some examples of what things in space show us about what God is like – His character.

EARTH

Space is an amazing place, but let's begin with our own home – the whirling planet of Earth. It rotates gracefully every twenty-four hours, suspended in space, and moving with perfect precision. But still more spectacularly accurate than the perfectly timed rotation of our earth is its movement through space, which creates our year.

Our earth, in its huge elliptical orbit around the sun, moves about 946,294,272 kilometres or 588,000,000 miles. Yet, riding in perfect poise at 107,826 kilometres or 67,000 miles an hour, our earth makes its yearly voyage without even the loss of a thousandth of a second in thousands of years!

In the book of Job, we read,

"He hangs the earth upon nothing"
(Job 26:7).

Thousands of years ago, the Bible writers recognised that our Earth is an orb suspended in space.

However, they also knew that God had not just created our world, and the other stars and planets, and left them to themselves. Psalm 119:90, 91 says,

"Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides. They continue this day according to Your ordinances, For all are Your servants."

The word 'ordinances' here means laws. Since God created all things in nature, He also created the laws that govern them. The great German astronomer Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), identified three great laws of planetary motion, which enabled Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727) to formulate the law of gravitation. Kepler, Newton, and many other scientists of the Renaissance Period studied nature and

its laws to understand more about God and what He is like. They studied the laws of nature, to learn about the God of nature. The prophet Jeremiah also wrote about the *"ordinances of the moon and of the stars"* and *"the ordinances of heaven and earth"* (Jeremiah 31:35; 33:25). What do these laws show? One thing they demonstrate is the truth that *"God is not the author of confusion but of peace"* (1 Corinthians 14:33). God is orderly, and organised. He manages our universe wisely. The basis for all His laws is love (Matthew 22:36-40).

Although God uses laws such as the law of gravity, He is personally involved in caring for His creation. In the days of ancient Israel, the priests in Nehemiah's day sang, *"Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, ...and thou preservest them all"* (Nehemiah 9:6 KJV; see also Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:1-3). And the prophet Isaiah wrote,

"Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing" (Isaiah 40:26).

We see here that God calls the stars by their names. His hand, unseen, guides them in their circuit of the heavens. Did you know that God also knows the name of every person on Planet Earth? Many times in the Bible, God sent angels to specific people, with specific messages, and every time, the angel knew the person's name (see, for instance, (Genesis 18:13; Acts 9:11; 10:5,6)! And God knows your name too. In Isaiah 43:1, He says,

"I have called you by your name; you are mine".

Many people wonder, does God care about me, personally? Yes, He does. And He placed the stars in the night

sky to remind you that He knows your name, and that He loves you.

As we noted, God calls the stars by name. Let us look more closely at three specific star groups that are named in the Bible.

THE PLEIADES CLUSTER

The Pleiades are mentioned three times in the Bible:

"He made the Pleiades and Orion; He turns the shadow of death into morning And makes the day dark as night; He calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the face of the earth; The Lord is His name" (Amos 5:8).

"Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and the Pleiades, and the chambers of the south" (Job 9:9).

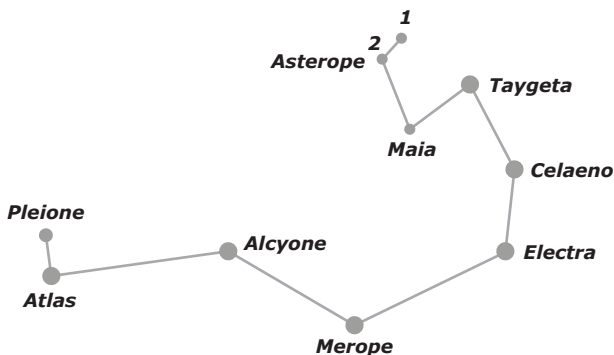
Job 38:31 is an especially interesting verse. The book of Job explores the age-old question of why those who strive to do what is right experience suffering.

At the end of the book, God asks Job a series of unanswerable questions, that remind Job of just how wise and powerful God is. Some of the questions that God asks Job are about stars. In Job 38:31, God says, *"Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades?"*

Let's consider closely the significance of this question. In essence, here God asks, "Job, can you keep the stars in the Pleiades cluster together while they travel through the sky?" Let's consider what an amazing scientific fact this rhetorical question conveys.

Scientists now know that the Pleiades are an open star cluster in the constellation of Taurus that is visible to the naked eye. Astronomers have identified more than 800 stars in the group, which is located approximately 410 light years from Earth. It is possible to see up to 14 of the stars with the naked eye where there is no light pollution. But what is so interesting, is that these stars are

not just randomly held together. The brilliant but little-known scientist John Michell (1724-1793) was the first to recognise that there are special bonds of gravity holding these stars together. Michell's work provided evidence for Isaac Newton's assertion that the law of gravity extended throughout the universe, and encouraged the work of William Herschel, who discovered many other so-called "stellar binaries", or groups of stars held together by gravity. Michell was the first to apply the laws of

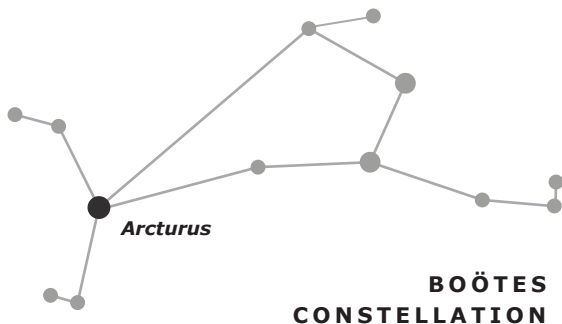


PLEIADES CLUSTER

probability to these stars, to show that “the Pleiades group cannot possibly be a chance near-alignment” (Hughes, and Cartwright, 2007, p. 96), just exactly as the Bible says.

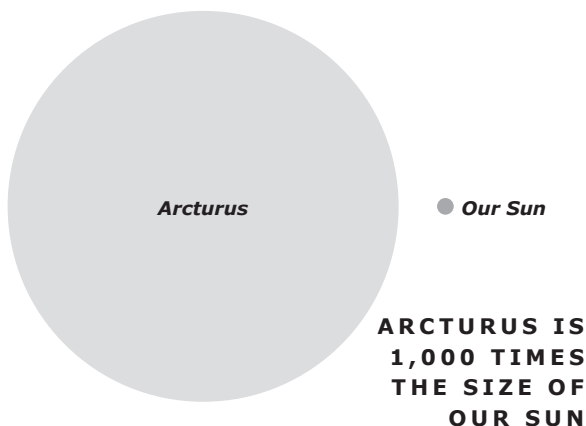
ARCTURUS THE RUNAWAY

Job 38:31 tells us about the gravitational forces holding the stars of the Pleiades together. In contrast, in the next verse, God asks Job, “*Can you guide Arcturus with his sons?*” Arcturus, or the ‘bear guardian’, is a giant red star in the constellation of Boötes, ‘the herdsman’; in fact, Arcturus is the brightest star in the northern half of the sky!



In the southern hemisphere, Arcturus can only be seen in Spring and Summer, however, in the Northern Hemisphere, it can be seen all year except during winter. Arcturus is 1,000 times the size of our sun, which makes it 1.3 billion times the size of our Earth. It is a relatively close star, which scientists calculate is approximately 37 light-years away from Earth.

Let's consider more closely the Biblical statement quoted above, with what we now know about the amazing Arcturus.



There are two points that are especially significant. First, this verse speaks about the 'sons' of Arcturus. To the naked eye, Arcturus appears to be travelling alone. However, with the large magnification possible through modern telescopes, astronomers have discovered the 'Arcturus Stream', a group of at least 52 stars that are travelling with Arcturus in his path through the heavens. The Bible was right: Arcturus does not travel alone!

The other key point about this verse is that God asks Job if he can *guide* Arcturus. To guide someone or something, is to move it in a particular direction. And this is significant when it comes to Arcturus, because this star is a runaway!

When humans look at the stars from Earth, they appear to move, due to the spin of the earth and the fact that Earth is also travelling through space. Of course, stars themselves are travelling

through space at terrific speeds, as we have seen. All of the individual stars that can be seen from Earth with the naked eye are in the Milky Way galaxy. Like our solar system, they orbit around the centre of the Milky Way, held in place by massive gravitational fields.

Observations of Arcturus, however, show that this star moves in a very different way. In 1738, the French astronomer Jacques Cassini pioneered calculations that showed that Arcturus is actually travelling at a different angle to most of the stars in our galaxy. Yet despite the fact that Arcturus and his 'sons', the Arcturus Stream, are cutting a seemingly-chaotic path through the orbits of other stars at unbelievable speeds, they do this without colliding with other stars or planets. As humans, we cannot even imagine guiding the sun, let alone a runaway star like Arcturus. But God is guiding this star.

Do you ever feel like your life is out of control, like runaway Arcturus? God can guide you, just as He guides this giant star (Proverbs 3:5,6).

ORION, GATEWAY TO ETERNITY?

The Bible describes both Arcturus and the Pleiades with astonishing accuracy. Let's now consider perhaps the most incredible wonder of all: Orion, and its fabulous nebula.

The constellation of Orion is located on the celestial equator, and thus is one of the very few star collections that can be seen from any place on Earth, at some time during the year. Orion is named after a hunter in Greek mythology. Its brightest stars are blue-white Rigel (Beta Orionis) and red Betelgeuse (Alpha Orionis). These two stars are in the top ten of brightest stars in our night sky.

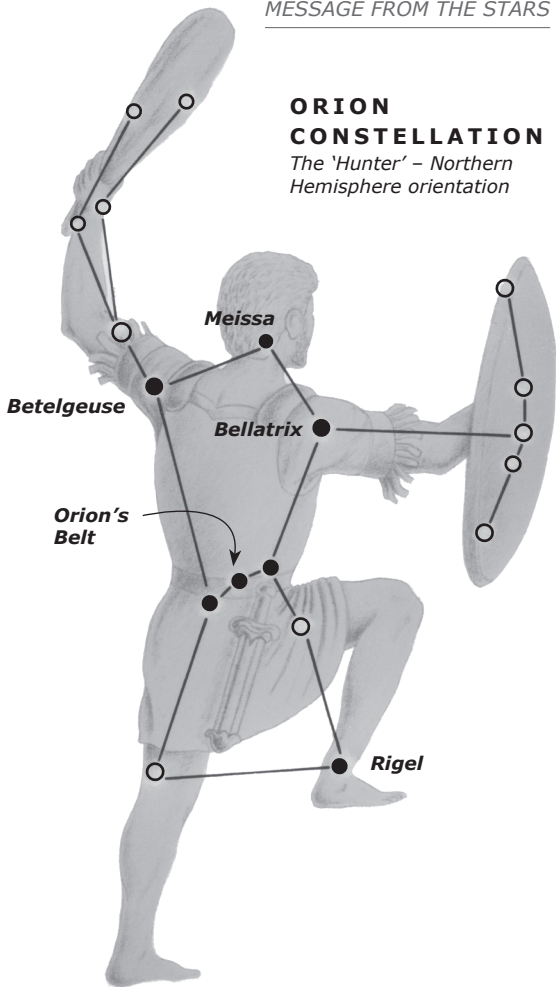
Betelgeuse is 1000 times brighter than our sun and is the star in the Orion constellation on the right shoulder of the 'Hunter'. Betelgeuse is 56,3270,400 kilometres (350,000,000 miles) in diameter; by comparison, the diameter of our sun is a mere 1,384,035 kilometres (860,000 miles). Betelgeuse star is so large that if it were as close to us as our sun, it would completely fill our horizon, making it impossible for us to see beyond it.

Yet Betelgeuse is only one bright star looking down at us from the constellation of Orion. The blue supergiant Rigel is even brighter, being 47 times more luminous than Betelgeuse. Rigel is about 870 light years from our earth.

Let's consider now what Job 38:31 says about Orion, because once again the words of Scripture are very significant. God asked Job whether He could bind Pleiades, or in other words, keep this star cluster together. In contrast, God

ORION CONSTELLATION

*The 'Hunter' – Northern
Hemisphere orientation*



asks Job if he can loose, or undo, the bands of Orion. These words refer to the "belt" of Orion, the three stars forming the linear "band" at Orion's waist.

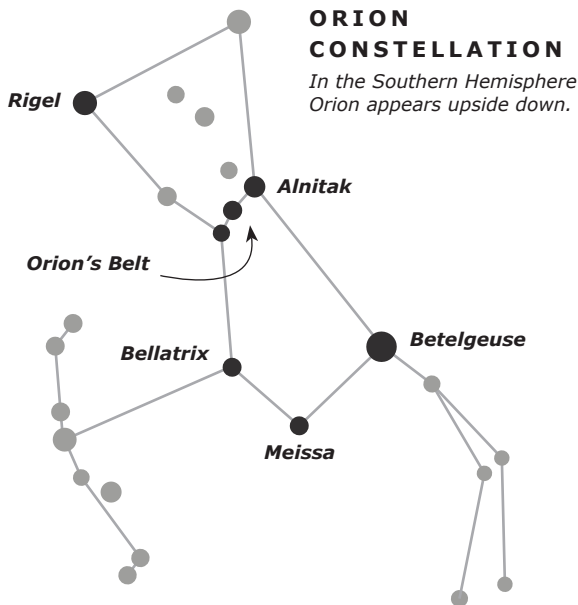
Here God challenges Job to do to Orion exactly the opposite of what He challenged him to do to Pleiades. The question is, why? Let's find out.

Orion's Belt is an asterism, or a pattern of stars of similar brightness, of three stars that appear about midway in the constellation. These three stars appear to form a belt in the hunter's outfit. Orion's belt is one of the most famous asterisms used by stargazers and amateur astronomers.

Spotting the belt is actually one of the easiest ways to find the constellation of Orion. The three stars that traditionally make up the belt are, from west to east: Mintaka, Alnilam and Alnitak. The names of the outer two both mean "belt" in Arabic, while Alnilam comes from an Arabic word that mean "string

of pearls,” as it is a triple star system on the eastern edge of Orion’s belt.

These stars, along with all the other stars forming Orion, are not gravitationally bound like those in Pleiades. Instead, astronomers say that the stars of Orion’s belt are heading in different directions.



At the present time, these beautiful stars are equally spaced in an almost perfect straight line, Astronomers predict that the two right-hand stars, Mintaka and Alnilam will approach each other and form a naked-eye double star, but the third, Alnitak, will drift away eastward, so that the "belt" will no longer exist.

Unlike the Pleiades clusters, the stars in the band of Orion do not share a common trajectory. Orion's belt will be loosened, just as God told Job.

But the wonders of Orion may not end there. In all the skies, the Orion nebula is amongst the most beautiful of sights to behold. The Hubble telescope gives a glimpse of what appears as a radiant portal in the sky, a grand and iridescent gateway. Hubble images reveal a cavern that may be up to 100 light years deep. A vast canyon in the skies, indescribably beautiful, this certainly would be a corridor fit for a King. Could this be a star-studded waymark to the city of

God? Some scientists have suggested it could well be the entrance to the dwelling place of the King of kings.

Many people wonder what heaven will be like. Some people even wonder whether heaven is a real place. The Bible speaks of Heaven as a real place where God lives. Jesus Himself said,

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-3).

We see from this that there are real buildings in heaven. We cannot tell just how far the precise location of heaven is beyond the Orion nebula, but one thing is certain: heaven is real. Although we cannot see heaven

through our telescopes, it is a place as tangible as the earth on which we live. More than this, events on Earth show that Jesus' promise to return to take His people back to that glorious place, will soon be fulfilled. That will be the greatest rescue mission of all time! We won't need spacesuits, oxygen tanks or rockets to meet Him in the air. Gravity will be powerless to hold us here on earth as we start the trip of a lifetime—a journey through space to the heavenly home that God has prepared for us!

The apostle Paul wrote:

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17).

Will we stop and visit other planets and galaxies along the way? I hope so! But as we reach the celestial city, the glorious climax to this never-to-be-forgotten space trip will be the words of Jesus as He swings wide open the gates of the city and says to His people,

"Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

Many people today are uncertain about their direction and purpose in life. Society today seems to have lost its moral and spiritual compass. Perhaps you have wondered if the universe is friendly or unfriendly. But we can find answers to our questions by reading the messages in the stars. The stars point us to the One who is behind it all. The amazing facts about the heavens, revealed in the Bible, are incredible evidence that the claims God makes about Himself are not empty boasts;

they are eternal truths, truths that we as humans can hold onto during the darkest moments of our lives, and even of our planet's history.

The second coming of Jesus Christ has been the hope of God's people throughout history. The most important question for each of us to answer is, "Am I ready for that great day?" Perhaps this is the first time you have asked yourself this question. You may also be wondering, "How can I be ready to meet Jesus Christ?" Or you may have already accepted Christ, and would like to renew your commitment to Him.

Although God is the Creator of the Universe, remember, the message of the stars is, that He loves You and wants to save you. He invites you to come to Him (Matthew 11:28-30). He invites you to pray to Him every day (Psalm 62:8). If it is your desire to become a follower of Jesus Christ, and be ready to meet Him when He comes, I would

invite you to pray a short prayer like this, right now:

"Dear Lord, Thank You so much for creating the beautiful stars and other things in the universe. I believe that You love me, and want to save me. Please forgive me for the wrongs I have done, and give me strength to do what is right from this moment onwards. In Jesus' name, Amen."

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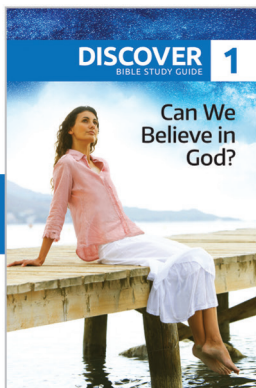
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Australia

0481 315 101

info@tij.tv

The Incredible Journey
GPO Box 274
Sydney NSW 2001

New Zealand

020 422 2042

infonz@tij.tv

The Incredible Journey
PO Box 76673
Manukau, Auckland 2241



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From ancient times, humans have been awed by the night sky, and counting the stars has been a subject of fascination.



The Incredible Journey



Pastor Gary Kent is Speaker for The Incredible Journey ministry. He holds a B.A. in Theology, M.A. in Ancient History & Archaeology, and M. in Divinity. He has produced and presented numerous documentaries on subjects including the Bible, Bible prophecy, world events and natural health. His passion is to share the good news of Jesus' imminent return.

The Incredible Journey

Website: www.tij.tv

Facebook.com/TheIncredibleJourneyMinistry

Australia

0481 315 101

info@tij.tv

New Zealand

020 422 2042

infonz@tij.tv