Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

If you have a Christmas tree at home, it probably has a star on top. And there are stars on Christmas cards and star shaped chocolates and carols that refer to a star. And that is because of *that* star, the one that led the wise men to where the infant Jesus was. And God willing, we will say more about that star on Christmas morning. But there are actually around 100 billion stars in our galaxy alone. And there are estimated to be around 1022 stars in the universe. And how many is 1022? Well, if you were to set a computer to count a trillion of those stars every second, it would take the computer 300 years to count to 1022! That’s a lot of stars, isn’t it! And just look at how the creation of this vast number of stars is described in Genesis – all we get is those three words after the hyphen at the end of verse 17: “–*and the stars*.” It almost reads like an afterthought, as though God suddenly remembered, “Oh, that’s right, I created the stars too. Moses, just write down … um… Yeah, just there … ‘–and the stars.’ Perfect. That will do the job, nicely.” Now, that is not how it happened, of course. As with all of Scripture, every word is intentional and with purpose. And we will say more about why the creation of the stars is described so briefly, shortly.

But today we come to the fourth day of creation week. And our approach will be the same as it has been with the three previous days – we will hear a **Creation Explanation**, then we will consider some **Creation Implications**, and we will conclude with a few **Gospel Implications**.

1. So, let’s begin with a **Creation Explanation**. And here we want to walk through each of the elements that make up the activity of the fourth day and see how the lights of heaven *shine out* the glory of God!
   1. In verses 14-15, we get the **announcement** phrase “*And God said*,” which reminds us again that the power of creation is the word of God; He spoke and it came to be. And then we get the words He spoke, which were the **command**: “*Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth*.” And then we get that beautifully understated **result** phrase: “*And it was so*.”
   2. And what “*was so*” is described in the **activity** portion of these verses, which is verses 16-18. They begin by telling us told that God made the sun and the moon and the stars. So, here are a few facts and figures about the sun, moon, and stars:
      1. The sun is 109 times the size of earth. Its surface is 5,504oC! And although it is 150 million km’s away from earth, it provides the exact amount of heat energy and light to sustain life on our planet.
      2. And boys and girls, what colour is the moon? It’s basically black. But it looks white because it reflects the light of the sun back to earth. And its size and location in the sky is very important for earth. You see, it is the moon that causes ocean tides and ocean currents. And if we didn’t have tides and currents, the water in the oceans would become stagnant and poisonous, and our beaches would be ugly and no fun at all.
      3. And I have already mentioned the stars – around 1022 of them! And that word “**around**” is important because of what we read in two places in the Bible:
         1. In Genesis 15, we read about a time when the Lord visited **Abraham**. God had promised to make a great nation from Abraham, and Abraham believed God’s promise, but he was now very old, and he wasn’t sure how the Lord would keep this promise. So, the Lord “*brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then He said to Him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’*” And the inference in God’s words was that Abraham could *not* count the stars!
         2. We see the same thing in **Jeremiah 33:22** where the Lord says, “*As the [stars] cannot be numbered and the sands of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the offspring of David my servant*.”
         3. Now, maybe that means that we will never be able to definitively count all the stars. Or, maybe we will get a more accurate number, one day, with advances in telescopes. But the point is that you and I simply can’t go outside and count the stars. But listen to what **Psalm 147:4** says about God: “*He determines the number of the stars; He gives to all of them their names*.” And not only does God know exactly how many stars there are in the universe, but **Psalm 8:3** says that God set each star in its place. So, in a single moment, sometime on the fourth day, God placed each one of the around 1022 stars in its place in the universe!
      4. So, next time you look up at the sun and moon and stars, be like the Psalmist. In **Psalm 8**, He said, “*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place*…” “*O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens*.”
   3. Well, verse 18 ends with the **approval** formula: “*And God saw that it was good*.” Again, incredible understatement! And then we have the **numbering formula** of verse 19: “*And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day*.”
   4. Now, one last point here; notice that there was **no declaration element** on the fourth day. On each of the other days, God called what He had just made a name. But He did not do that on the fourth day. And we will see the most likely reason for the absence of any declaration in our second point.
2. And that is where we turn next as we now consider three **Creation Implications**. And here we see that the lights of heaven are but a *dim reflection* of God’s glory.
   1. We just noted that God did not give what He made on the fourth day a name. I have been referring to the creation of the sun and moon, but notice there is no mention of the words ‘sun’ or ‘moon’ in this whole passage. We read about “*lights*,” and a “*greater light*” and a “*lesser light*,” which clearly *refer* to the sun and moon, but they are not called the sun and moon. And we have also already noted that all that this passage says about the stars is those three words in verse 16: “*And the stars*.” And the most likely explanation for why this is so is the situation of the original readers of Genesis. They were the people of Israel who had just been rescued from slavery in Egypt. And what were the main gods that were worshipped in Egypt? That’s right – the sun, moon, and stars. And they were gods according to the nations in Canaan where the people of Israel were headed. So, to demonstrate and make crystal clear that the sun, moon, and stars are not gods but things created by God, He did not even use the names by which they were commonly known at that time, even though those names are used later in Genesis. And He kept the description of their creation intentionally understated. And **what He did emphasize was their functional purpose for** human beings on earth. For notice that everything that God says about the function of the greater light and lesser light is repeated twice in this section – we see it in the *command* section and the *activity* section.
      1. And we know that worshipping the sun, moon, and stars was a massive temptation trap for the Israelites, because God repeatedly and explicitly forbade them from doing it in His law.
         1. In **Deuteronomy 4:19**, for example, we read, “*And beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, things that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven*.”
         2. And in **Deuteronomy 17**, we read that any person found to be worshipping the sun or the moon or any of the stars was to be stoned to death.
         3. And so, knowing that the worship of the sun and moon and stars would be a massive temptation for Israel, God made it very clear that they are *just* created things that have as their purpose *our* comfort and delight.
      2. And what was a temptation back then remains a temptation now. **Romans 1** teaches that all human-beings should worship God the Creator. Even the most basic details of the sun, moon, and stars that I have given you today proclaim an eternal and almighty and good God. For those things simply cannot be *what* they are and *where* they are and *how* they are by accident! They were put there by an almighty God. That is the only explanation that makes sense. But Romans 1 explains that people “***suppress the truth***” about God. And to supress is to muffle or keep down or silence. You see, if the God of the Bible is who He claims to be, then, because He created us, we are under obligation to keep His law. But in our natural condition, we hate God and His law, and we *cannot* and do not want to keep it. So, we just suppress the truth about God. And that is what some of you are doing right now. You know God is there, but you will not be ruled by Him! And instead, you are worshipping the environment, or science, or a false god, or pleasure, or money, or anything except Him. And we will have more to say about the worship of God in our third point, but just as God threatened judgment for the worship of the sun, moon, or stars in Old Testament times, refusal to worship God today will bring eternal condemnation if you do not repent and believe.
   2. But in terms of the **function** of the sun, moon, and stars, we are told that they were “*to separate the day from the night*,” by providing different quantities of light, and to be for “*signs and for seasons, and for days and years*.”
      1. Up until this, the fourth day, it was the special light that God created on day one that gave the earth the darkness and light that made each day. But now, the Sun and moon **took over that role**. And this further reinforces the stupidity of worshipping the sun and moon as the origin of life. The earth and light existed *before* the sun, moon and stars. So, God, as the Creator of light and life, and of the sun, moon and stars, deserves our worship. And so, again, we see that the sun, moon, and stars are **signs** of God’s glory.
      2. And God made this point Himself in **Job 38**. For Job was demanding that God explain why so many hardships had come into His life, but God ‘put Job in his place’ by referring to how He, God, had arranged the stars into constellations; He said to Job, “*Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades or loose the cords of Orion? Can you lead forth the [constellations] in their season, or can you guide the Bear with its children*?” And every night, provided the sky is clear, we can look up and see those constellations. And we know that they include billions of stars, and they cover vast distances, but they exist in the exact same place that God placed them on the fourth day of creation.
      3. And of course, the sun, moon and stars have literally been used as signs by **sailors and travellers** throughout human history, because they give us fixed points in the sky, by which to navigate. And a special star was used by God as a sign **to bring the wise men to Bethlehem around 2022 years ago**!
      4. But the sun and moon were given also to provide **seasons**. **Psalm 104:19** says, “*[God] made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting*.” And this means that the earth was already on its perfect 23.5o tilt in creation week. For this tilt is why we have the four seasons in the 365 days that it takes for the earth to rotate around the sun.
      5. And although there had already been three days marked off by the earth rotating in relation to God’s special light, now the **days** were how long it took the earth to rotate in relation to the Sun and a **year** was how long it took the earth to rotate around the sun.
   3. And for our third creation implication, perhaps you have heard Christianity criticized because when **Galileo** published his belief that the earth revolved around the sun, the church objected because it said that the Bible teaches that the sun revolves around the earth! Well, the truth of the matter is that the major part of the church’s intellectuals were on the side of Galileo, while the clearest opposition to him came from the secular world! For, the Bible no where teaches that the sun revolves around the earth. It sometimes uses language that suggests that, because, from our perspective on earth, it looks like the sun travels across the sky. And even the most rigorous scientist who knows that it is the earth rotating around the sun will not suggest to his wife that they go walk on the beach when the ‘earth has rotated enough so that our line of sight is almost tangential to the horizon.’ What he will say is “Darling, let’s go and watch the sun set.’ But as we have seen today, the earth travelling around the sun is a clear implication of what is recorded here in Genesis 1!
3. Well, those are a few **creation implications** from the fourth day, but let’s finish with some **Gospel Implications**, as we see that THE light of heaven is the perfect image of God’s glory.
   1. We have noted already that rather than using the word sun, the Lord used the word **light** in this section. And one reason was to warn the Israelites and everyone else away from idolatry. But the word light also has a positive use. You see, the Hebrew word translated as “light” in these verses is used also to refer to the light of the lampstand in the tabernacle and temple. And this means that light points us to the Saviour, to salvation, and to service:
      1. First, light points to **the Saviour**: **Psalm 27:1** says, “*The LORD is my light*.” And in **John 8:12**, Jesus said, “*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life*.” And the tie between light and lamp and Jesus is made explicit in **Revelation 21:23**, where we read that heaven “*has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb*.” So, as we saw with Day One and God’s special light, the light of the fourth day also points us to Jesus Christ.
      2. And in so doing, the light also shows us **salvation**: **Psalm 43:3** says, “*Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling!*” And in the same way that light chases the darkness out of a dark room, there are many references in the New Testament to our natural condition as being a spiritual darkness that can only be overcome by the Holy Spirit shining the light of truth in Christ into our heart and mind. **2 Corinthians 4:6** says, “*For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*.” So, if you are one of those who until now has suppressed the truth about God, please ask Him to shine the light of salvation in your heart. He does it through the reading and preaching of the Bible. For it is only there that we learn that we are wretched and guilty sinners whose only hope of salvation is believing in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.
      3. And then, thirdly, for believers, light is a picture of **service**: The calling of Old Testament Israel was to be a light to the nations through her worship of the one true God and obedience to His commands. But she failed in this task and instead become just like the nations – idolatrous and disobedient. And so, Jesus Christ came. And He worshipped God and obeyed His commands and called people to glorify God. And in the same way that the moon reflects the light of the sun, we are to reflect the light of Jesus. In **Matthew 5:14-16**, Jesus said, “*You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven*.” God has declared each believer spotless and blameless, through faith in Christ. In terms of salvation, that is our standing in His eyes. So, we should count it a privilege to strive to become in practice what He has declared us to be in principle. Does this describe how you try to live, boys and girls, young people, adults?
         1. And because the lampstand was a part of the worship of God in Old Testament times, one way that we can let our light shine before others is as we **strive to worship God *the right way***. The French reformer, John Calvin, said, “The lampstand taught the Israelites "that they were directed by God Himself as to how they were to worship Him [the right way].” Jesus said that “*the Father seeks those who worship in spirit and truth*.” And today is not the day to go into the detail of this, but this basically means worship as God commanded and worship that is God-oriented. But we live in a world where people worship false gods or in seeking to worship God they offer false worship – worship that is man-made and man-oriented. So, as another commentator has put it: “With all the religions available to people in our global village, our light has a chance to teach that the triune God is to be worshiped and served only through the Son in the power and fellowship of the Holy Spirit.”

Well, by way of conclusion, we have seen that one of the functions of the sun and moon was to provide us with days and years and seasons. And after the flood, the promise of God was this: “*While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease*.” So, don’t believe the catastrophic warnings of climate change activists about a dying planet. But there is something that unbelievers should fear. For Jesus spoke of a sign involving the sun, moon and stars. He said that there will come a time of great tribulation. And He said, “*Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*.” And then He will judge every human being. And those who have refused to worship Him will be cast into eternal darkness. It is only those who have received Him as Saviour and Lord *in this life* who shall enjoy the light of His presence in eternity. So, let us live in such a way that we glorify God, and let us call all people to worship He who is the light of the world. Amen.