

THE VASTNESS OF GOD

Jonathan Corrado

HOW BIG is God? Outside of the obvious difficulty in answering such a question, it should make us tremble to consider the magnitude of a God who cannot be measured by any of our feeble metrics. Referring to what God is like, the Bible tells us to lift our eyes up to contemplate the starry heavens (Isaiah 40:26). With advances in modern knowledge of the universe, that counsel is more relevant than ever.

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Suppose we had access to a NASA space shuttle. It can travel at the very high speed of eight kilometres (five miles) every second—that's 29,000 km/hour (18,000 mph)! Even at that incredible speed, to reach our star, the sun, would still take us about seven months.

Now suppose we were to set out to travel from the sun to the next closest star to us in our galaxy, Proxima Centauri. It is one of three in the gravity-bound triple-star system, Alpha Centauri. Its distance from us is about 40 trillion km (25

trillion mi), or 4.24 light-years. How long would the journey in our shuttle take?¹ Surprisingly, it would take 158,549 years! So, if a person had boarded a space shuttle at the time of Christ and started travelling to Proxima Centauri, by now they would be only about one-eightieth of the way there!

Next, consider how many stars there are in the universe. Astronomers currently estimate there are at least 200 sextillion stars—that is, 2 followed by 23 zeros! Conveyed differently, there are roughly 10,000 stars for each grain of sand on all the beaches of the earth.² We've seen that to go in our shuttle from one star to the next closest one would take over 150,000 years. And that's only travelling between two stars out of 200 sextillion!

For our spacecraft to cross just the diameter of our own Milky Way Galaxy (fig. 1) would take some 3.7 billion years. And there are hundreds of billions, possibly even trillions, of galaxies in the universe.

How far apart are those galaxies from each other? To say that the distance between them is exceedingly vast is a massive understatement. Consider—Andromeda is the nearest galaxy to our own. Yet it is so far away that our shuttle would take about 1.5 *trillion years* to cover that distance! To get from



Earth to some of the most distant galaxies from us would take many thousands of *times* longer than that.

Expressed plainly—everything in the universe is incredibly, stupendously, enormous. Just the unbelievable number of stars is beyond human comprehension.

Our God—infinately awesome

Once more then—how big is God? Bigger than words can describe. More than that, God is transcendent—existing outside of (but capable of operating within) space and time. He is so ‘big’, and so far outside of our normal three-dimensional experience, we can never fully comprehend Him. Small wonder that the Second Commandment forbidding graven images (Exodus 20:4) opposes any attempts to try to depict Him, who is spirit (John 4:24).



Fig. 1. Reconstruction of what the best available observations to date suggest our Milky Way Galaxy would look like: Top: From ‘above’; Bottom: Side on. The arrow points to the location of our solar system, which is ultraminuscule within the Galaxy. At the centre is a supermassive black hole. As matter falls towards and swirls around it, it is heated to very high temperatures, which is what we perceive as radiation (including visible light) emitted from the central region.

To help further grasp how big God is, try removing all limits from your mind concerning any of His attributes. If He has the minutest amount of any attribute, He is infinite in that. For instance, since He has love, He has infinite love. In fact, 1 John 4:8 says that He *is* love. Similarly, His justice, His power, and so on, are infinite. He is the standard by which everything else is measured.

Psalm 103:11 says, “For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him.” This means that God’s love to those who fear Him is comparable to the height of the heavens above the earth. How high is that? Considering the universe’s immensity, it’s clear the Bible is telling us that this love by God is, quite simply, limitless.

Psalm 19 opens with “The heavens declare the glory of God”. Our Creator is ‘big’ enough to make a universe that we have no hope of being able to fully comprehend, let alone explore it all.

God is the great “I am”. He is “the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Revelation 22:13).

Yet, we are astounded that, in light of His absolute holiness, sovereignty, and limitlessness, He would crown mankind “with glory and honor” (Psalm 8:5). More so, that He would even call those He has redeemed His “friends” (John 15:14–15). ■

References and notes

1. Lea, R., Alpha Centauri: Facts about the stars next door, space.com, 5 Mar 2023.
2. Shahmoradian, F.S., *Reign of the Essence: Encyclopedia of critical thinking*, AuthorHouse, Bloomington, IN, 2022.

Jonathan Corrado B.S., M.S., M.S. (hons.), M. Div, Th. M., Ph.D.

Dr Corrado has qualifications in nuclear, mechanical, and systems engineering, and theology. He has extensive experience in management, research, and nuclear engineering issues, including with the US military. For more: creation.com/corrado.

On 1 February 2003, then US President George W. Bush addressed his country, with the world looking on, from the White House. He looked into the camera and said,

My fellow Americans, this day has brought terrible news and great sadness to our country. At nine o'clock this morning, Mission Control in Houston lost contact with our Space Shuttle *Columbia*. A short time later, debris was seen falling from the skies above Texas. The *Columbia* is lost; there are no survivors.¹

Shortly thereafter, he quoted from Isaiah 40:26 (NIV):

“Lift your eyes and look to the heavens. Who created all these? He who brings out the starry hosts one by one and calls them each by name. Because of His great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.”

This passage serves to remind us that God is the sovereign Ruler of the universe. He is supreme among and over all things, including the heavenly bodies that He created.

The President then looked back at the camera and said,

The same Creator who names the stars also knows the names of the seven souls we mourn today. The crew of the shuttle *Columbia* did not return safely to Earth, yet we can pray that all are safely home.

For those among them who truly were, by His grace, “in Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:17), that safe homecoming is assured.

1. Office of the Press Secretary, *President Addresses Nation on Space Shuttle Columbia Tragedy*, [georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov](https://www.archives.gov), 1 Feb 2003.

LIFTING UP OUR EYES IN TRAGEDY

