

**Title: Exile ID?****[Slide 1]****Text: Galatians 4:8-19****Which Path?****The Methusaleh Star:****[Slide 2]**

Did you know that the oldest star known to astronomers is, in astronomical terms, just around the corner? Star HD140283 in the constellation Libra is just 190 light years from earth. By analyzing its light, astronomers have discovered that it is the oldest known star in the Universe. Its nickname: The Methusaleh Star.

**[Slide 3]**

People have been looking to the sun, the moon and the stars in since the dawn of history. The Pharaohs build elaborate temples with inner chambers that only saw the light of day on the holiest days of the year.

**[Slide 4]**

Stonehenge was built in alignment with the winter and summer solstice. The greatest ancient astronomers were the Chinese, who have been keeping track of the cosmos for over 3500 years by careful observation of the heavens.

We now measure the heavens in light years – distances defined by *time*. No longer are we dependent on the sun's shadow to tell the time of day, or its northernmost rising to tell us that Summer is here. But the lights in the heavens are still our oldest clocks, and teach us to "number our days."

**The Path to the Starry Hosts:****[Slide 5]**

The sun, moon and stars held the supreme place in the ancient world. Their regular and predictable movements made it possible to know when to plant

crops and expect rain. They were considered manifestations of the gods and goddesses in heaven. We still call the planets by the names of Roman gods and goddesses: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and far distant Pluto.

For pagans, the heavenly bodies offered a glimpse into the ways of the gods and perhaps even a way by which they would communicate with humans. No wonder, then, that the sun, the moon and the "starry hosts" were worshipped by every society in biblical times. So powerful was the seduction of the sun, moon and stars that evil kings of Judah like Manasseh turned Yahweh's Temple into a temple for the stars:

**[Slide 6]**

*2 Chronicles 33:3 NIV*

*He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had demolished; he also erected altars to the Baals and made Asherah poles. He bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshiped them.*

Time itself was the sacred basis of all reality. Anything that told the Time was worthy of worship.

**The Path to the Creator of Heaven and Earth:**

But there was another even more powerful path for humans to take. It was – and is – the path not to the stars and whatever message they may or may not offer, but the path to the One who made them.

The Bible's Creation Story reveals to us not the mysterious messages of planets and stars, but the Creator who spoke them into existence:

**[Slide 7]**

*Genesis 1:14-19 NIV*

*And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God*

*saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.*

It was the Creator God who gave us the gift of telling time and of knowing our place in His great world. His sun and stars carry a silent message that only points back to Him:

**[Slide 8]**

*Psalm 19:1-4 NIV*

*The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

*Day after day they pour forth speech;  
night after night they reveal knowledge.*

*They have no speech, they use no words;  
no sound is heard from them.*

*Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,  
their words to the ends of the world.*

Two paths: One leads to a closed system in which we grope about in the dark, hoping to decipher meaning from the world around us. The other leads us to the glorious freedom of living in the light of the One who made us.

**Exile ID?**

**Paul's Question:**

In his Letter to the Galatians, Paul is writing to young Christians, many of whom have only recently turned away from that first path of trying to find meaning and direction from pagan gods. They had lived all their lives in that "closed system," worshiping and trusting in gods and goddesses which were no more than aspects of the creation dressed up as deities. Paul reminds them of their former ways when he writes:

**[Slide 9]**

*Galatians 4:8 NIV*

*Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods.*

Now he wants to know if after being set free by Jesus Messiah, they actually want to go back to that spiritual slavery:

**[Slide 10]**

*Galatians 4:9 NIV*

*But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?*

There is the choice: Exodus or Exile. They have joined the Exodus Journey into a personal, loving relationship with not the Creation, but the Creator. They know Him, and even more importantly, *they are known by Him!*

But they are tempted to turn back to their old ways. The phrase “weak and miserable forces” referred to the pantheon of pagan deities represented by the sun, moon and stars. To go back to worshipping them was nothing less than a return to the very slavery from which Jesus had set them free.

Paul’s question burns with irony: “Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?”

**The Slavery of Time:**

Paul spells out how they are being once again seduced into slavery, and it all has to do with Time:

**[Slide 11]**

*Galatians 4:10-11 NIV*

*You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.*

Special days, months, seasons and years were the hallmark of the religions of Paul’s time, including Judaism. And just how did you know when a special day or special festival began? It was all in the sun, moon and stars. It was, in effect, a “closed system” in which the world around you told you all you needed to know. It was a “slavery of Time.”

How tempting to think that if you got the calendar right, *you were right*. All the power resided *in you*. You could be like Adam and Eve, “knowing good and evil” simply by experiencing the world around you.

### **Exile ID:**

But this path of knowledge and power is the path of Exile, not Exodus. It is the same dark path away from the Creator. Whenever we put our trust in the Creation instead of the Creator, we initiate another Exile Journey. Whenever we think that the answer to our problems or the secret to our joy is strictly in mastering the world around us, we take that dark journey into exile. Instead of gaining our Exodus ID, we revert to an Exile ID, and all the futility that comes with it.

### **Christ formed in You!**

#### **Paul’s great desire:**

So how do you convince a person to abandon the Exile Journey and its false promise of power and knowledge? Paul temporarily steps back from the arguments of theology to make a personal appeal to his friends and fellow believers in Galatia.

#### **[Slide 12]**

*Galatians 4:12 NIV*

*I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you. You did me no wrong.*

He reminds them of their intense care and love for each other. They had all joined together on the Exodus Journey, discovering their true identity in Jesus Messiah. They had become the vanguard of God’s New Creation. Now, however, all of that seems to be at risk. Paul concludes his appeal by saying:

#### **[Slide 13]**

*Galatians 4:19-20 NIV*

*My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!*

No stargazing here! Paul's focus is on living out what it means to know God and be known by Him. What's at stake is nothing less than their very identity:

*"...I am in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you...!"*

### **Christ Formed in You!**

You and I face the same stark choice as that facing the Galatian Christians. Will we worship the Creator or His Creation? And the temptation to worship the Creation will be just as subtle for us as it was for them. Little did they know that when they put a religious observance above their trust in Jesus that they were walking back into the exile of spiritual slavery! It just seemed like the right thing to do. Getting the day of a festival or religious activity right might make the difference between God being happy with me or not!

And yet, Jesus came to offer a totally different way of knowing and being known by God. Jesus offered a direct, "face to face" relationship, one that could only be described as Father and Child. This is a *new identity* that works because we love God and are loved by Him. He takes *first place*.

This Exodus Journey takes us *away from everything we know about ourselves and our world* so that we can discover the only One who knows us and our world. When we make this journey, instead of trying to coax messages out of an inanimate world, we discover that the Creator Himself is speaking to us. After celebrating the wordless messages of the heavens, David then says:

### **[Slide 14]**

*Psalm 19:7-14 NIV*

*The law of the LORD is perfect,  
refreshing the soul.*

*The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,  
making wise the simple.*

*The precepts of the LORD are right,  
giving joy to the heart.*

*The commands of the LORD are radiant,  
giving light to the eyes.*

*The fear of the LORD is pure,  
enduring forever.  
The decrees of the LORD are firm,  
and all of them are righteous.*

**[Slide 15]**

*They are more precious than gold,  
than much pure gold;  
they are sweeter than honey,  
than honey from the honeycomb.*

*By them your servant is warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward.*

*But who can discern their own errors?  
Forgive my hidden faults.*

*Keep your servant also from willful sins;  
may they not rule over me.  
Then I will be blameless,  
innocent of great transgression.*

*May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart  
be pleasing in your sight,  
LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.*

These are the words of a person who chose the harder journey, the Exodus Journey. This is the prayer of a man who wants to be restored and rebirthed in the image of His Creator. These are the words of a man who has learned what it means to know God and, more importantly *to be known by Him*.

These are the words of a man who has discovered his true ID.

**[Slide 16]**