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*“From Doctrine to Doxology”*

ROMANS 11:33-36

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## AT A GLANCE

After spending eleven chapters laying out the doctrine of God’s salvation, Paul erupts with praise. That’s the way it ought to go in our lives. Right doctrine leads us to right doxology. If our doctrine isn’t leading us to praise the glory of God, we’re doing it wrong!

## INTRODUCTION

As I said last week, Paul draws the section of doctrine, which fills Romans 1 through Romans 11, to a close with a word praise. He moves from doctrine to doxology. Doxa means glory or praise and logos means a word or to speak. Thus, doxology means to speak of the glory of God; to give a word of praise. God’s work of salvation, which Paul has belabored for eleven chapters to unfold for us, finds its culmination, in a crescendo of praise.

We can say that God’s work of salvation is supremely about His glory. Indeed, God’s work from Creation to the future new creation is supremely about His glory. According to the Westminster shorter catechism, the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

John Piper famously stated, “Missions exists because worship doesn’t.” All over this big blue planet there are people worshipping every god but Him. And this is not right. It is not right that the creature should deny the Creator of the glory due His name.

Thus, it is our primary goal now to go wherever people are not worshipping God and call them to worship God through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord, to Him be glory and honor forever! Because when people hear the truths of the Gospel, when they learn what God has done to save them, they worship Him! They go from doctrine to doxology. With this in mind, let’s get into today’s passage.

## Romans 11:33-36

**<sup>33</sup> Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! <sup>34</sup> “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” <sup>35</sup> “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” <sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.**

**Verse 33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!** The key to ascribing glory to God is giving up our own. *“Thus says the Lord: ‘Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me...’”* Jeremiah 9:23-24

In Jeremiah’s exhortation the Lord rebukes the three main glories of man: wisdom, strength, and riches. Here in Romans 11, Paul ushers us into the glories of God: riches, wisdom, and knowledge. These three characteristics of God are on full display in His saving work among the Jews and Gentiles, which is the immediate context of today’s passage.

First Paul speaks of **the depth of the riches** of God. In Ephesians 3:8 Paul speaks of the depths of the riches of God in allowing him to preach Christ to the Gentiles. In Romans 11, it is the riches of God in connection to His ultimately saving the Jews after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

In Ephesians 2 Paul refers to the immeasurable riches of God's grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. No amount of wealth could contain the richness of God's grace toward us in our salvation. What awaits us in Heaven far exceeds our imagination. It will be rich. It will be opulent. It will be paradise, to use Jesus' own words. But none of that would be possible had God not been deeply rich with grace toward us.

Second is the depth of the **wisdom** of God, which is expressed in what Paul called "this mystery" in Romans 11:25. Collin Kruse says the wisdom of God is this, "God is making Gentiles fellow heirs with the Jews of the promises of God fulfilled in Christ Jesus." *"When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ... This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."* Ephesians 3:4-6

Who could have ever predicted God's plan of salvation? Who could have even conceived of a plan of salvation that reconciles sinful man to the holy God through the life, death, and resurrection of the one and only Son of God?! Only the deep wisdom of God!

Finally Paul speaks of the depth of the **knowledge** of God. There is nothing about which God is ignorant. No concept, no idea, no person, place, or thing in all of creation evades God's knowledge. We call this omniscience. God is all-knowing.

Because God is all-knowing and we are not, Paul continues, **How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!** God is utterly beyond us. He is incomprehensible!

Kent Hughes supplies a humorous way of comprehending the incomprehensibility of God. It's an illustration of C.S. Lewis'. A shellfish wants to tell other shellfish what man is like. He has to speak in terms of their common experience. So, he tells them that man has no shell, is not attached to a rock, and does not reside in water.

To help the first shellfish get the idea across, other learned shellfish expand on his statements, finally concluding that man is a sort of amorphous jelly (he has no shell) existing nowhere in particular (he is not attached to a rock) and never taking nourishment (there is no water to drift it toward him). Conclusion? Man is a famished jelly existing in a dimensionless void."

That's sort of how it is with our finite minds trying to comprehend an infinite God. In the words of John Calvin, *finitum non capax infinitum*. For the non-Latin speakers out there, "The finite cannot contain the infinite."

Now just because God is incomprehensible, does not mean we cannot know anything about him. In the creation God has supplied what we call general revelation. And according to Romans 1, He has revealed enough to remove any excuse from any man. In the scriptures, God has supplied what we call special revelation. It is there that He has revealed His character, His Law, our nature, our need for the Savior, Jesus Christ.

Even so, I appreciate John MacArthur's disclaimer, "...no matter how diligently we may have studied his word, we must confess with David that *'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.'*" Psalm 139:6

**Verse 34 "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?"** (Isaiah 40:13). God needed no counsel when He formed the plan of salvation of Jew and Gentile. Even if He did, who could possibly provide it? Who could possibly imagine they discovered a truth, a reality, a thought, a plan that God did not know first? Before He even created, God knew all things.

Hear the wisdom of Martin Luther, “We are accustomed to admit freely that God is more powerful than we are, but not that he is wiser.” We do not like to admit that God’s ways are higher than our ways. This is something Job learned the hard way, “*Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know...therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*” Job 42:3, 6 God’s wisdom humbles us.

Like Job, we often cry out against God’s wisdom when tragedy comes our way. Even minor disruptions to our lives have us ready to lash out at Him. When these things happen some go to God not with a spirit of humility, seeking to understand, or to be shaped, nor even to be sustained, but rather seeking to counsel Him. They want to advise Him of the situation and more importantly, of how He should intervene in it.

This begs the question, “What’s the point of prayer?” If we cannot provide God with counsel, if we cannot change God’s mind, what is the point? To this R.C. Sproul answered, “Our prayers do change things - they change us. If God has determined to do something, what would possibly move him to change his mind as a result of communion with us?”

If I could change God’s mind or God’s plans, why in the world would I want to? How foolish would I have to be to imagine that my plans, my hopes, my desires, my counsel, based on my understanding of the world, corrupted by my flesh, even on my best days in my best frame of mind, would be better for me than God’s omniscient plan for me? What could I possibly offer God that would improve His situational awareness? So what is the purpose of prayer? Through prayer, Sproul says, “God gains our affection and reverence as we bow before him.” What a transformative way to think about prayer, amen?!

**Verse 35 “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?”** Here Paul quotes from Job 41. Here’s the simple truth: everything you give to God, whether that is love, service, time, energy, or money, you are only giving to Him what He already owns and has given to you to steward. After all, “*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights...*” James 1:17

Which leads us to Paul’s final declaration of praise, **Verse 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.** Paul says, **From him are all things.** God answered Moses’ question about who this God is who had called them out of Egypt and delivered them so powerfully. What is he like? What is His name? God’s response was an unqualified statement about His perfect completeness. “*I am who I am.*” Exodus 3:14

There was a time in which nothing existed except God and in that time, God was perfectly complete. He needed nothing. He lacked nothing. He was perfectly self-sustaining. Everything that is, came **from Him.**

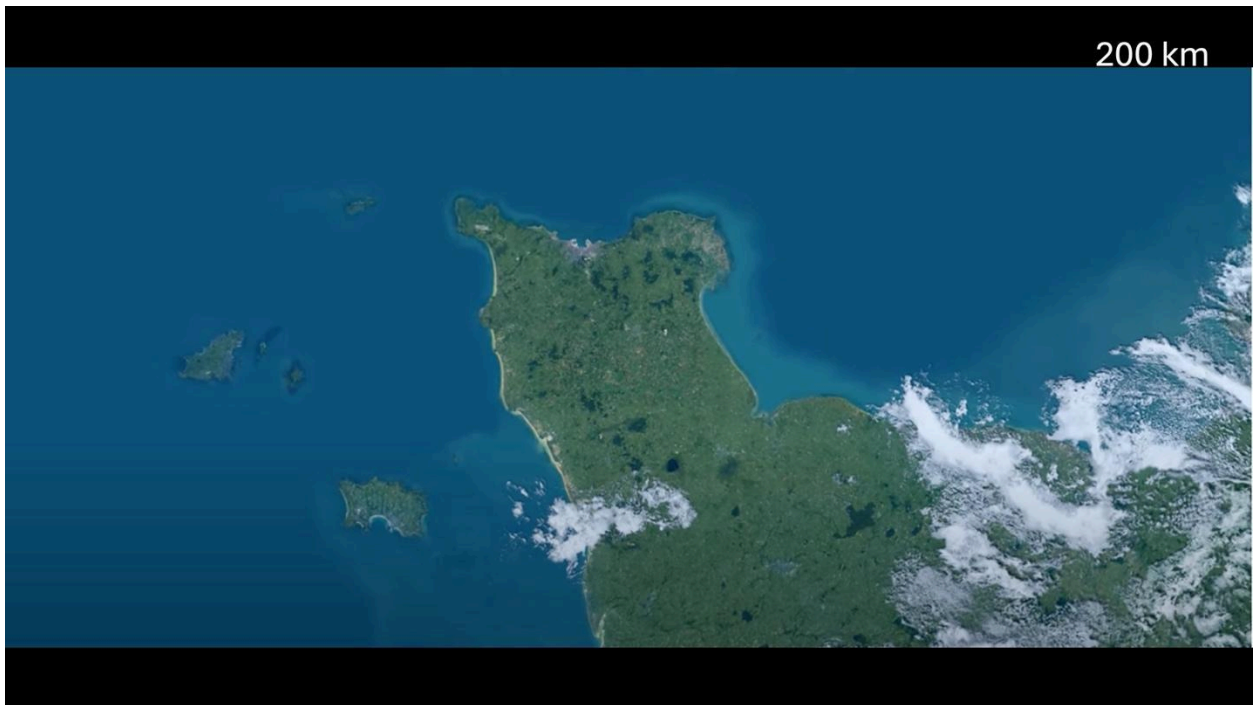
God created all things *ex nihilo* – out of nothing, which is what Paul means **through him are all things.** “*All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*” John 1:3 All things have their being **through Him.**

What could more dramatically illustrate this than the very first verse in the Bible, “*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*” Genesis 1:1 Now I’m afraid sometimes we forget just how much is packed into those five words, “The heavens and the earth.” I’d like to take you on a journey to the edge of observable space if you’ll join me!

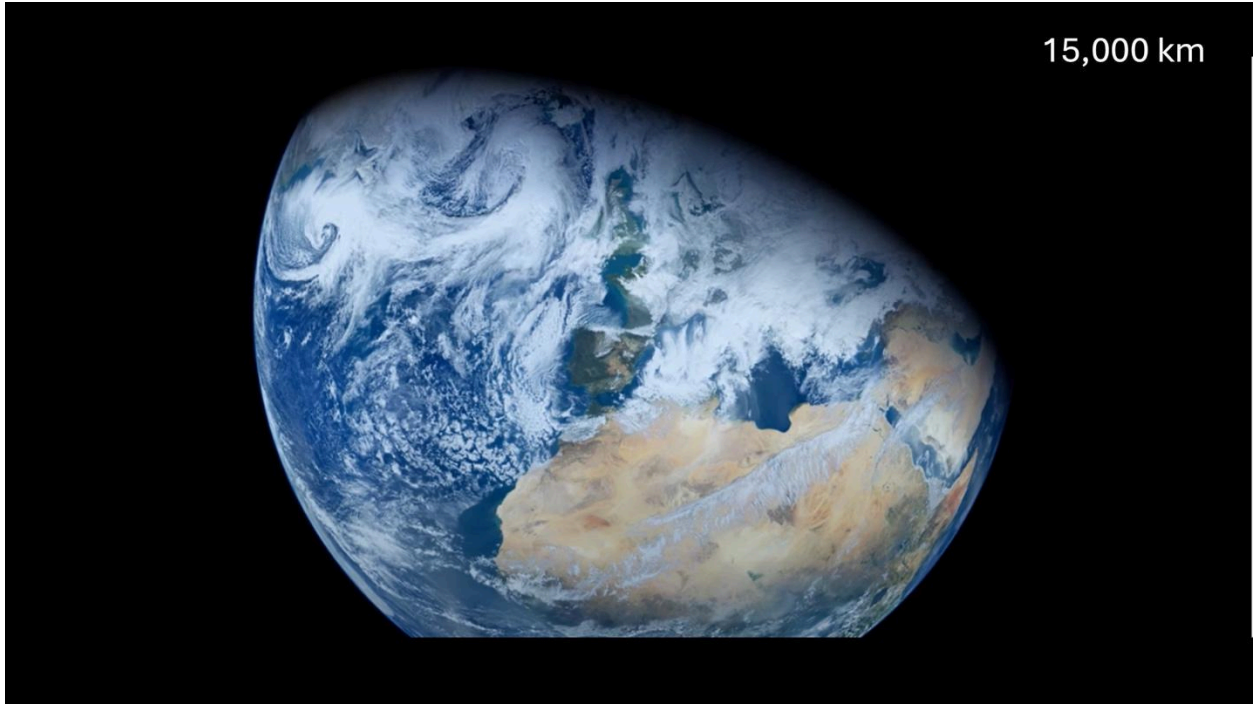
Slide 1 – We’re viewing earth from 1 km up. The view from this height pretty much captures our daily life. It represents our neighborhood, where most of our living takes place.



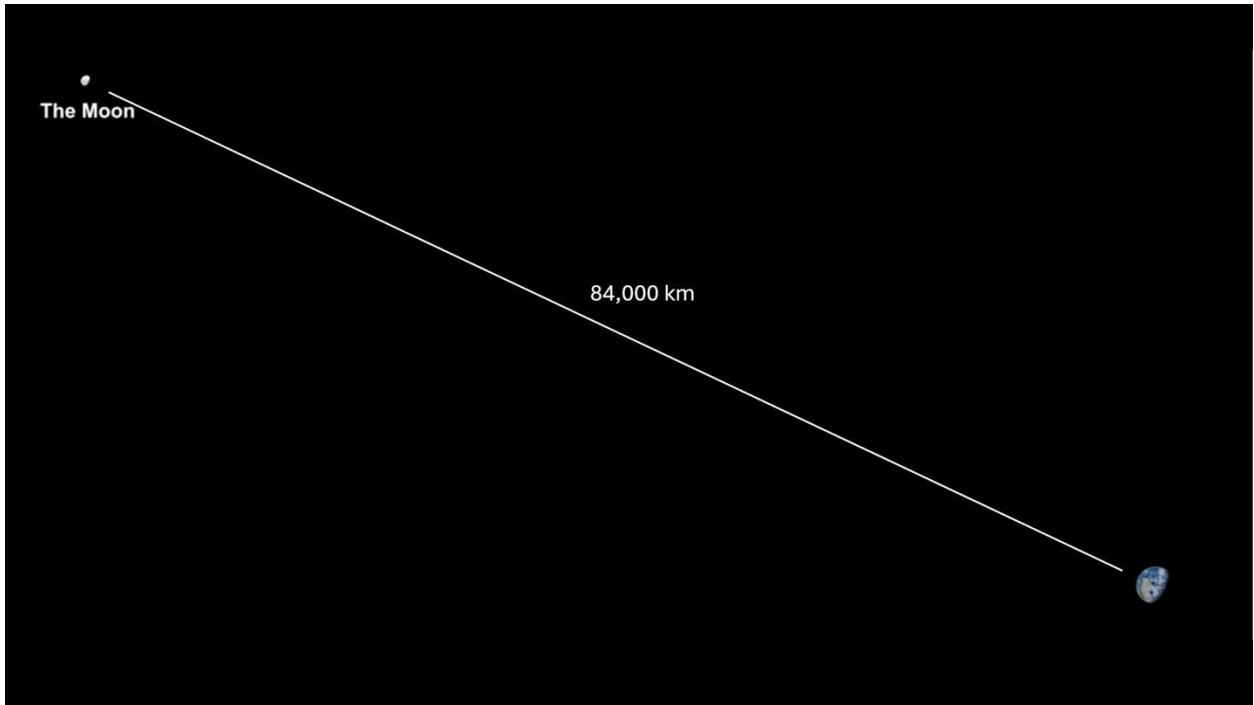
Slide 2 – Next we ascend to 200 km. This might represent the space we'd cover in a normal year; perhaps a business trip or vacation to the other side of the state.



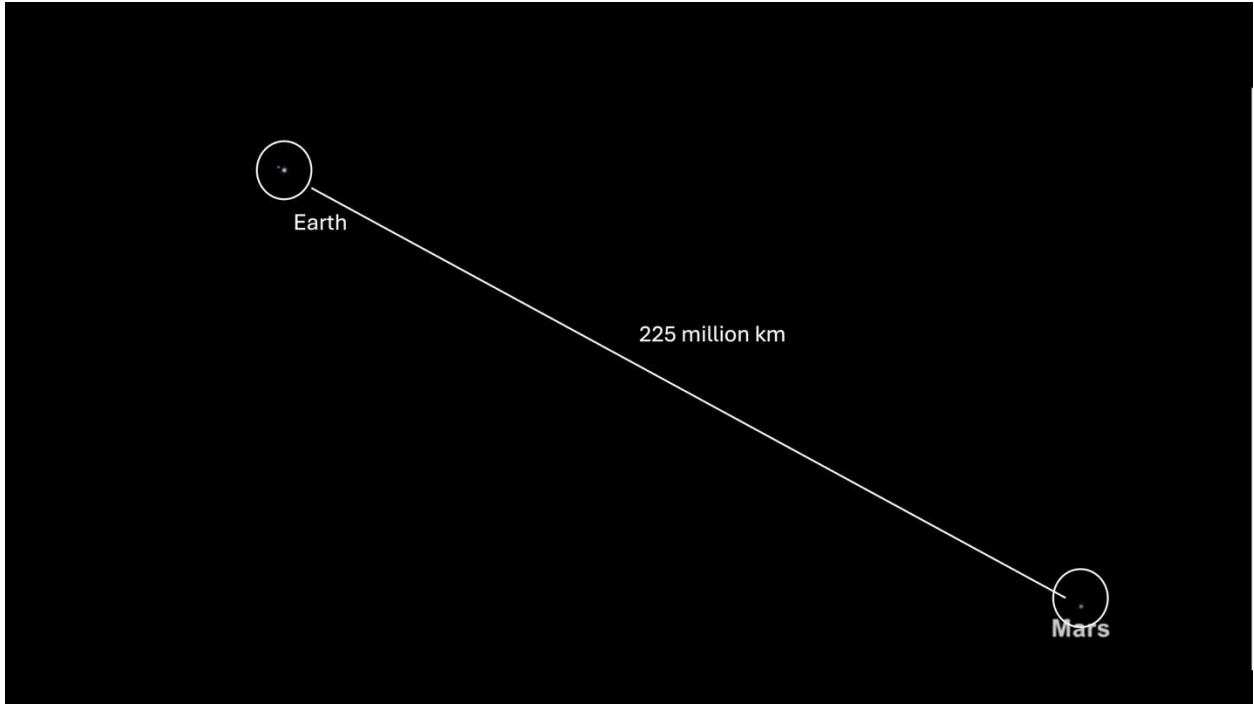
Slide 3 – We're now outside the atmosphere at 15,000 km. Only about 650 people in history have ever made it here.



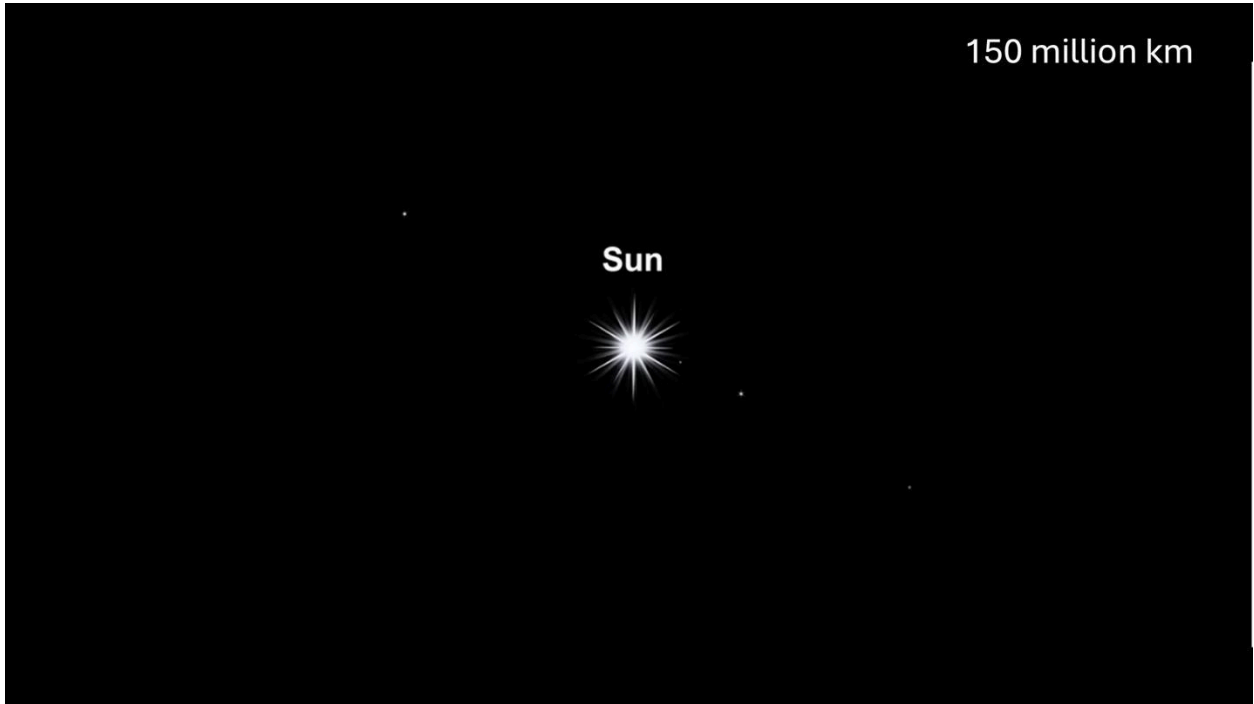
Slide 4 – Now we pull back and the Moon comes into view. It is 384,000 km from earth. Only 24 human beings have ever been there.



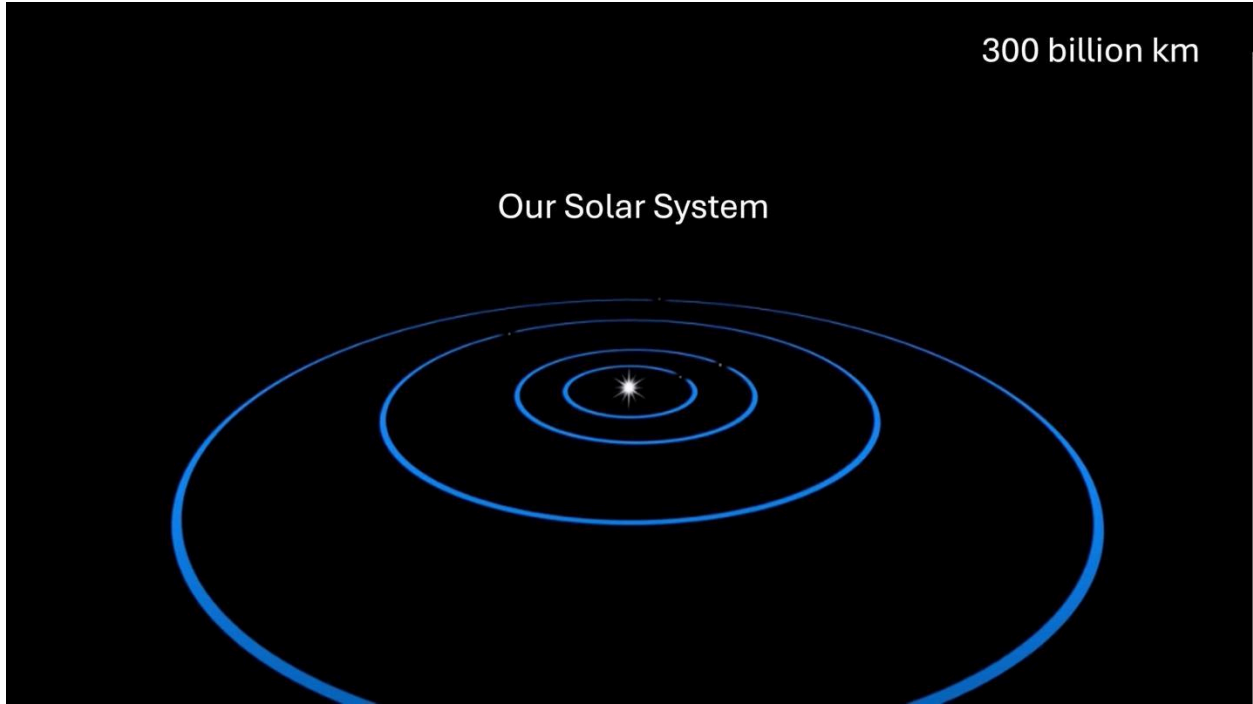
Slide 5 – Zoom out more and we see Mars, 225 million km from earth. We've now exceeded all physical human experience. No human has made it to this point in space.



Slide 6 – Next we see our Sun, which is 150 million km from earth.



Slide 7 – And again, now we see our solar system, 300 billion km in diameter.



Slide 8 – At this point we need to measure in lightyears. For a point of reference, a lightyear is 9.4 trillion km, 31 times our solar system.



Slide 9 – The nearest star to us is the Proxima Centauri, 4.25 lightyears away. That is 40 trillion kilometers! The closest little twinkling light in the sky would take thousands of years to reach with current technology.

40 trillion km

**Proxima Centauri**

- Is the nearest star to Earth after the Sun.
- Distance from the Sun: 4.25 light years.
- Number of orbiting planets: 3 (1 confirmed).
- With current technology it will take thousands of years to travel from Earth to Proxima Centauri.

Sun

Proxima Centauri

Alpha Centauri  
Star System  
A system of 3 stars

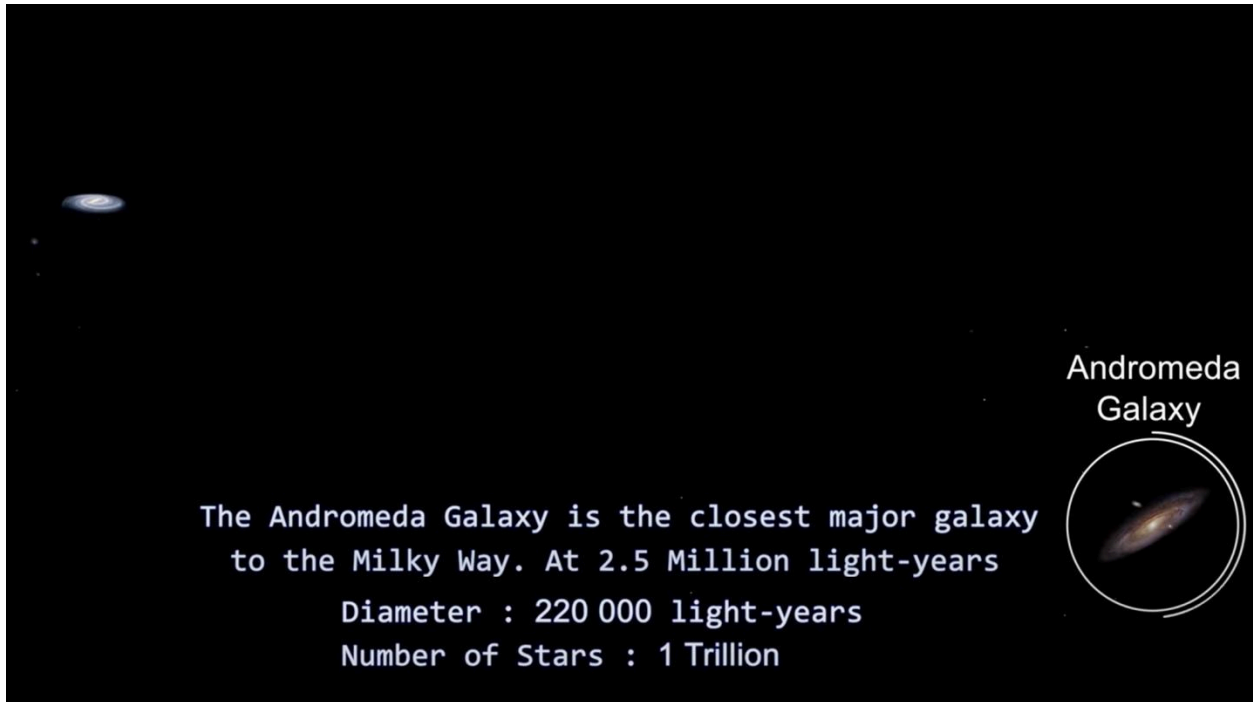
Slide 10 – Now we see the Milky Way galaxy. Our galaxy is 100,000 lightyears in diameter and contains hundreds of billions of stars.

Sun

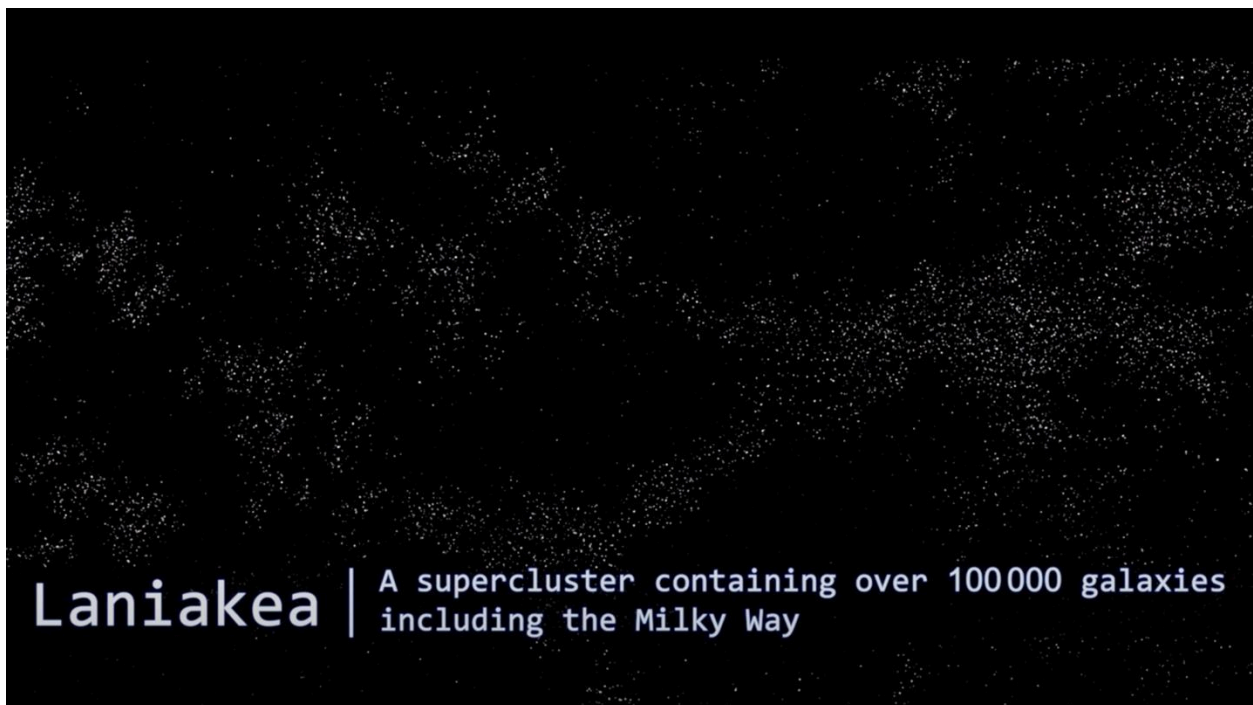
**The Milky Way Galaxy**

Diameter : 100 000 light-years	Number of Stars : 100 to 400 billion
Number of Planets : 5250 confirmed	

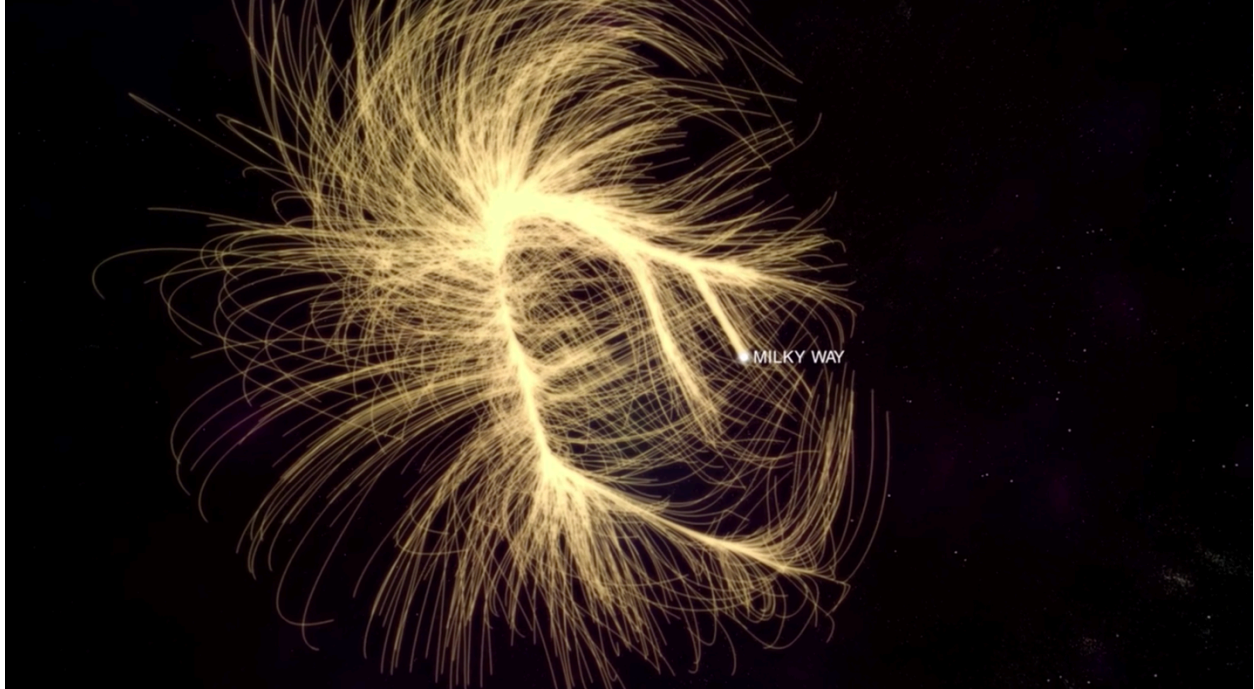
Slide 11 – But ours is not the only galaxy, not even close. The nearest galaxy to us, Andromeda, is 2.5 million lightyears away and is twice the size of ours with a trillion stars.



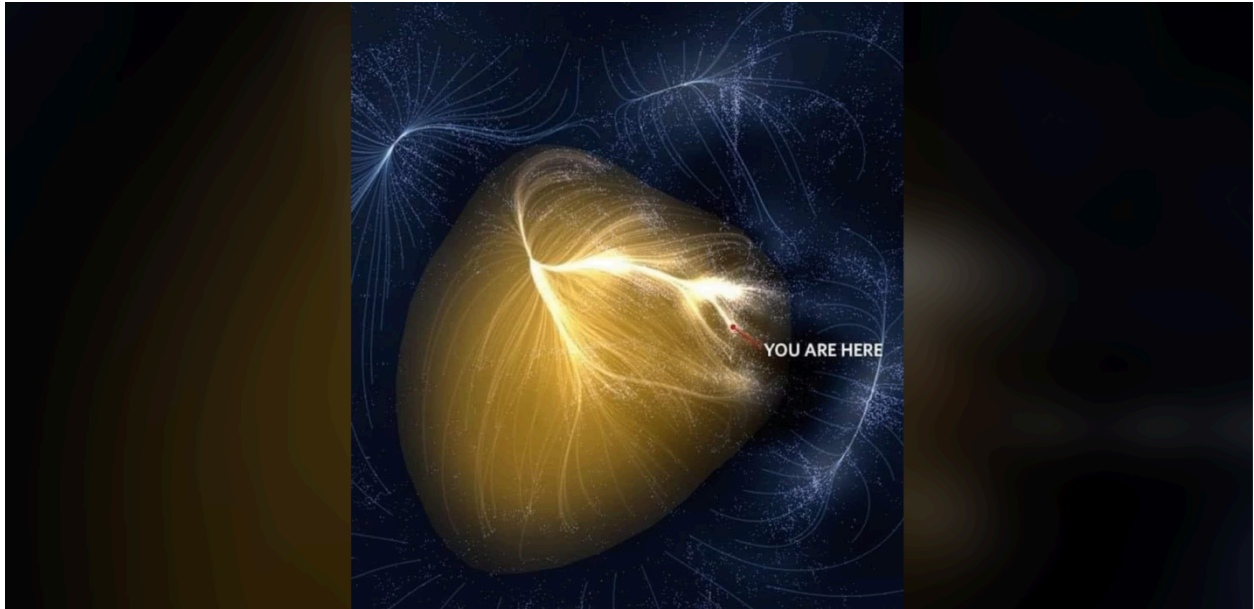
Slide 12 – Laniakea (lan-ee-uh-kay-ah) is supercluster of galaxies, not stars; that's 100,000 galaxies, each galaxy containing hundreds of billions of stars.



Slide 13 – This is what Laniakea looks like as depicted by scientists



Slide 14 – And this is an artist’s rendering.



Slide 15 – Finally, this is observable space. It is 93 billion lightyears across and contains 200 billion galaxies.

# THE OBSERVABLE UNIVERSE

Diameter: **93** Billion Lightyears

Galaxies: **200** Billion

(Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9WOMerccoM&list=PPSV>)

*“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.” Psalm 19:1 All of this came through Him and if He ever stopped holding it all together, it would not hold together. “...all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” Colossians 1:16-17 Kent Hughes reminds us that as it is, it is in perfect synchronicity, “the most perfect time piece ever.”*

God’s glory is the point of all things. This is what Paul means when he says **to\_him are all things**. His glory is the highest end of all things. His glory is why all things come into being. Sproul asks, “What is the goal of the universe? What is the ultimate purpose of all history?” God’s glory! What is the point of our salvation? His glory!

**To him be glory forever. Amen.** *“Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!” Psalm 115:1 To think that the Alpha and Omega, the creator of the vast universe called you by name and saved you by grace, having sent His own Son to die for your sin. To God be the glory!*

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