Johann Kepler 1571-1630

About the time the Reformation was proclaiming Christ rather than the Pope as the head of the Church, science was announcing that the sun rather than the earth was the center of our planetary system. A leader in this changing scientific perspective was the German scientist Johann Kepler, born in 1571 – died in 1630. Kepler was the first scientist to accept Copernicus' theories that the earth rotated about the sun, and he was an important forerunner of Isaac Newton in systematizing science.

A devout Lutheran, Kepler was studying theology and planning to become a minister when he was called to teach mathematics in Graz, Austria. He realized he could glorify God through is mathematical and astronomical studies, and his scientific notes were often mixed with prayers and praise to his Lord.

Kepler believed that there was an art and orderliness in God's creation and that the more Christians recognized the greatness of creation, the deeper their worship would be. Didn't God Himself encourage the heathen to look carefully at creation so that they might come to know God? God created man in His image, and He wants us to recognize and know His design for the universe.

He wrote: "The chief aim of all investigations of the external world should be to discover the rational order and harmony which has been imposed on it by God and which He revealed to us in the language of mathematics." In his astronomical research, Kepler only wanted to, as he put it, "think God's thoughts after Him."

Kepler believed that there was a mathematical precision and orderliness in the universe; the scientist's duty was to discover what mathematical formula God has used. In Kepler's day, scientists believed the orbits of the planets were perfectly circular, but that theory did not fit the empirical data.

Kepler persisted in his observation and calculations of the planetary movements until he could show that the planetary orbits were ellipses, with the sun as one of the epicenters. His calculations proved Copernicus' theory to be fact. Through further observation, Kepler established laws for planetary velocity and for the relationship

between orbital periods and the distances of planets from the sun. His three laws for planetary motion are the basis for our understanding of the solar system today.

Throughout his scientific work, Kepler never sought any glory for himself, but always sought to bring glory to God. At the end of his life his prayer was: "I give you thanks, Creator and God, that you have given me this joy in Thy creation, and I rejoice in the works of Your hands. See I have now completed the work to which I was called. In it I have used all the talents You have sent to my spirit."

Johann Kepler – a man who let the heavens declare the Glory of God.