

God is Majestic

The Character of God—part 5

Isaiah 40; July 29, 2018

What is the “majesty of God?” What difference should His majesty make in our lives?

DAY 1: The majesty of God in Psalm 8

Psalms 8:1 O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

² From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.

³ When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

⁴ what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

⁵ You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.

⁶ You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet:

⁷ all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field,

⁸ the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

⁹ O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

1. What pictures does David use to describe or illustrate God’s majesty?
2. What are these images of God’s majesty meant to evoke in you and me?
3. As David ponders that stunning difference between mere mortal man and the majestic God, what two questions does he ask of God? (v. 4)
4. In spite of the relative smallness of man, David wonderfully marvels at all that God has done for man, starting in verse 5. What strikes you about David’s observations of what God has done for us?
5. What strikes you about the majesty of God in Psalm 8?

DAY 2: God is greater than ...

1. For the first thirty-nine chapters of Isaiah, the prophet's message is mostly a message of coming judgment for sin. Beginning in Isaiah 40, the prophet proclaims a hope of God rebuilding His people.

2. Isaiah compares the greatness of God, His majesty, as greater than things we already consider majestic. Fill in the blanks below with how God is greater.

3. God is greater than _____.

Isaiah 40:12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth on a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales...?

4. God is greater than _____.

Isa. 40:15 Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust.

5. God's people felt at the mercy of the prevailing world powers of the day: Babylon, Assyria, Egypt. They stood in awe of their power and felt afraid and insignificant. They compared their resources, hopelessly outmanned, outgunned, and out financed.

6. God is greater than the _____.

Isaiah 40:22 It is He who sits above the circle of the earth and whose inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them like a tent to dwell in.

7. What strikes you about the majesty of God?

DAY 3: God is greater than ...

1. God is greater than _____.

Isa. 40:23 ...who brings princes to naught and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

2. How hard is it for God to change world leaders?

Isa. 40:24 Scarcely are they planted, scarcely are they sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth when he blows on them and they wither, and the whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.

3. God is greater than _____.

Isaiah 40:25 "To whom will you compare me that I should be like him? Or, who is my equal?" says the Holy One.

Isaiah 40:26 "Lift up your eyes and see! Who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, because of his great power and mighty strength not one is missing.

4. Physicists cannot number the stars. The number is beyond trillions, yet God knows them by name; not one is missing.

5. Look back over the last two days of notes, particularly at what Isaiah sees that God is bigger than. What strikes you from this list?

6. How does Isaiah shift about how you see the majesty or greatness of God?

Key: page 2: nature; nations; world; Page 3: world leaders; stars/universe;

DAY 4: In light of God's majesty, how then shall we live?

Isaiah 40:27 Why do you say, O Jacob, "My way is hid from the Lord and my right is disregarded by my God?"

1. Isaiah points out to the people that they have leveled two complaints against God. Below, put each complaint in your own words:

a. *"My way is hid from the Lord."*

b. *"My right is disregarded by my God."*

2. How would you answer each complaint?

a. *"My way is hid from the Lord."*

b. *"My right is disregarded by my God."*

3. How does God answer their two questions?

Isaiah 40:28 "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom."

4. How do you handle it when you have felt despondent, or wondered why God is not doing more about something in your life?

5. How would verse 28 help you?

DAY 5: In light of God's majesty, how then shall we live?

Isaiah 40:29 He gives strength to the weary and to him who has no might he increases strength.

1. There are times in life where we come "to the end of our rope."

a. What are some different ways YOU have felt "weary?" Is this just a physical weariness? Have you felt "weary" in a relationship? "Weary" at work? With finances? With life? etc.

b. Isaiah describes someone with "no might." This is someone who has given up on something, a project, a job, a career, a relationship, or health. Where have YOU felt that you had "no strength?"

2. Isaiah is talking to desperate people, who are looking for supernatural strength and/or involvement.

Isaiah 40:30 Even youths shall grow faint and be weary and young men stumble and fall.

a. What does he say about people you appear optimistic and strong?

b. What does he say to people who appear to have it all together?

Isaiah 40:31 But those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall soar on wings like eagles. They shall run and not grow weary, they shall walk and not faint.

3. What does it mean to wait for the Lord? (or to put your hope in the Lord)

4. What do each of the following images imply about different seasons of your life?

a. Soaring on wings like eagles-

b. Run and not grow weary-

c. Walk and not faint-

5. In this passage Isaiah appeals, not to the love of God but to the majesty of God to inspire trust.

Extra material:

1986. When Henry Norris Russell, Princeton astronomer, had concluded a lecture on the Milky Way, a woman came to him and asked: "If our world is so little, and the universe is so great, can we believe that God pays any attention to us?" Dr. Russell replied, "That depends, madam, entirely on how big a God you believe in."

Isaiah speaks to people like today, "Despondent, cowed, secretly despairing, against whom the tide of events has been running for a long time." Packer, p77

Living paraphrase: How can you say, "The Lord doesn't see my troubles and isn't being fair?"

"Perennial Grievance." When your belief is that God's prime duty is your comfort He will always be a disappointment." JB Philips, p48-50

Spiritual despondency. It's not just that we are a victim; we bring this on ourselves. We secretly, quietly accuse God of wrong, of not being fair, or of not caring. There is not much difference between spiritual despondency and spiritual sulking.

Consider Isaiah's plight. He had been "prophesying for fifty years...without any indications in the people of the beneficial results of his mission." H Comm, p34

Isa. 6:9 "Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving."

2. Complaining about God Breeds Despondency.

His words only hardened the people! Half a century! He had spoken with the tenderest love and with the most awful sting. Nothing moved the people, so stubborn in their determination to live life their way. "Invasion after invasion swept over the land; he had just seen the people panic-stricken at the approach of the dreaded Assyrian army.... Another and darker invasion, which would carry them captive to Babylon, had shaped itself before his prophetic eye.... The people were buried in a" God-ignoring position. HC, p35

God has not abandoned you. It is as false as it is irreverent to accuse God of forgetting, or overlooking or losing interest in, the state and needs of his own people. If you have been resigning yourself to the thought that God has left you high and dry, seek some grace to be ashamed of yourself. Such unbelieving pessimism deeply dishonors our great God." P79. (leaves you in a position of "justified sulking."

There is a difference between being a "religious" people and an "obedient" people. They were saying, "What good does it do to do what God wants us to do? What's the use of being your people? If God is so great, why isn't he doing anything about our plight? Apparently, God is too busy to take care of us!"

500 years ago, two theologians were debating. Martin Luther told Erasmus, "Your thoughts of God are too human." "Our thoughts of God are not great enough; we fail to reckon with the reality of His limitless wisdom and power. Because we ourselves are limited and weak, we imagine at some points God is too... Put this mistake right... Learn to acknowledge the full majesty of your incomparable God and Savior." P79

“Our most trying experiences, whether from without or within, are not only known to Him, but are under His absolute control.” Vine p97

It’s not the movers and shakers who have all the answers who get divine strengthening. It’s not those masquerading that they have it all together. The secret to living with power is first acknowledging my human weakness. “He aims at making us realize our utter incapability, so that we may take hold of his strength instead of despairing under the affliction.” Vine, p97

It’s not our strength he wants us to be impressed with and depend on; it’s His strength!

Isa. 40:28 “Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.”

“Everlasting” – “implies the thought of One to whom past, present, and future are one now.” AC, p35

“Wait” – not like waiting for a cab; “a trust and confidence which characterizes our hope.” Vine, p97-98. Confident, that he will accomplish his purpose for our lives.

Results: **Fly:** a perspective that transcends the problems. Phil. 4:6-7. **Run:** strenuous exertion. The power to keep facing whatever is in front of me, moving into the chaos and problem. **Walk:** Steady perseverance, patient endurance under long trials.

Conclusion: 1895. Charles Lindbergh, the first man to fly solo across the Atlantic. “It’s hard to be an agnostic here in the Spirit of St. Louis when I am so aware of the frailty of man’s devices. If one dies, all God’s creation goes on existing in a plan so perfectly balanced, so wondrously simple and yet so incredibly complex that it is beyond our comprehension. There’s the infinite magnitude of the universe, the infinite detail, and man’s consciousness of it all—a world audience to what, if not to God.”

Read: *Daniel 5:1-6*. Tell Dan. 5:7-17.

Daniel 5:18-19 O king, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendor. Because of the high position he gave him, all the peoples and nations and men of every language dreaded and feared him.

Look at all God gave Nebuchadnezzar. Did Neb. turn to God in gratitude and devotion of heart?

Dan. 5:20-21 “But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like cattle....”

“Arrogant”= “Look what I’ve done.” God took it all away! Everything his heart was set on was lost! Lost his throne, his things, and even his mind, for a while...

Dan. 5:22 “But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this.”

Humble self before God, primary loyalty and devotion to God. God is in charge, not even kings!
Not even me!

Daniel 5:23 You have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand.

How did he set himself up against the Lord of heaven? “You had the goblets...” Things of the Lord were not important to him! He used them to exalt himself rather than God. He wrapped his affections and heart around the silver and gold; what was valued, admired, impressive.

Human beings haven’t changed much in this regard over 2,700 years, have they? Think of it. Modern man still wraps his affections around silver and gold: investments and money. Bronze: big towers. Iron: great cars. Wood: houses. Stone: jewelry, precious gems. Idolatry is more than bowing down before some image or idol. Idolatry is wrapping your heart around anything more than God.

People resolve themselves to live their lives without submitting to God’s plan or God’s word.

Dan. 5:23d But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways.

Repentance, following God, not accountable to anyone, especially God. Not have to answer to him. Live as if that were true. Not lived in his service, devoted ourselves to his honor (v. 24)

Dan. 5:25 mene, mene, tekel, parsin

“Mene” = “Numbered.” Twice: “and finished.” “Your kingdom is over. Done!”

“Tekel” = “you are weighed (in the balance) and you are too light.” He is not weighed in man’s scales, but God’s scales. Those scales, contrary to American pop culture are just and correct.

“Parsin” = play on words: (1) Divided. “Your kingdom is divided from you.” (2) Persian. To be ruled by Persia.

Dan. 5:30 That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain.

“Self-degradation of ...idolatrous people. Alas, the folly of making and worshipping any but the(ir) true and living God.” Vine, p96