

Series FolkSongs of Faith

This Message The LORD Reigns in Majesty

Scripture Psalm 93

The Psalms we are thinking about in this series are linked together in several ways. Two of the common themes are the exalted majesty and the authority of God. We will discover similar statements about God's everlasting existence and His sovereign right to influence and control the lives of people in the Psalm we will think about today as well as in the future Psalms we will think about.

Let me review some of the significant verses which have informed us of God's nature and activity. Some verses called attention to the everlasting existence of God: "Lord, before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world; from everlasting to everlasting you are God" (*Psalm 90:1-2*).

Concerning the sovereign authority of God, we read that the Lord is able to "turn men back to dust" and "sweep men away in the sleep of death" (*Psalm 90:3, 5*). We read that those individuals who do not confess their sins "are consumed by his anger and terrified by his indignation" (*Psalm 90:7*) but those "who dwell in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty" and "will not fear the terror of night nor the arrow that flies by day" (*Psalm 91:1, 5*). Those verses called attention to the hope and eternal security that God's people can have. Last week we learned that the LORD's "enemies will perish," but the "righteous will flourish" (*Psalm 92:9, 12*).

We have also read and thought about several of the names and titles for God. His names are descriptions of Who He is. The most frequent name in these Psalms is "Yahweh," translated "LORD" and written in small caps. Yahweh was the covenant name by which God identified Himself to the Israelites. In order to distinguish God from the pagan gods of the surrounding nations, the Psalm writers referred to Yahweh as "the Most High," and the "Almighty," inferring that He is the Lord over all others. Those individuals who had a personal relationship with Yahweh referred to Him as their "Fortress" and "Rock."

As the Creator of all, Yahweh has the undisputed right to reign over all that exists. Beginning with Psalm 93, and continuing through Psalm 100, the emphasis is on the kingship authority of Yahweh. The key phrase is “the LORD reigns.” We will be reminded of this throughout this series of messages.

Read Psalm 93

The launching point for Psalm 93 is actually in the preceding Psalm. I didn’t have time to mention this last week, but Psalm 92 was written in a specific poetic form, which can be described as the “up-the-mountain, then down-the-mountain” form of poetry, also sometimes identified as an “arch-form” structure. The “mountain peak,” the “apex” of Psalm 92 was verse 8, which is the verse at the center of the Psalm. In the Hebrew language, there are an equal number of words before and after this central verse. The writer cleverly used this and special other poetic techniques to give strong emphasis to the most important thought he wanted his readers to know: “You, O LORD, are exalted forever.” The statement can also be translated, “But You, O LORD, are on high forever,” or “You, O LORD, are over all forever.”

Psalm 93 picks up on that statement about the exaltation of the LORD with the words, “The LORD reigns,” and verse two declares that He is “from all eternity.” When we look up the word “reign” in the dictionary, we discover that it refers to “sovereignty” — to the “supreme control, rule, influence, and authority” of someone. The dictionary definition applies to earthly sovereigns who reign in individual kingdoms, such as Nebuchadnezzar in the Old Testament or the Queen of England today, but in the context of the Psalms, we are informed that the LORD/Yahweh possesses the sovereignty and the right to rule over all creation.

Verse 1 describes the personal characteristics of the LORD. “He is robed in majesty and is armed with strength.” *[In the original Hebrew language, the implication is that Yahweh clothed Himself and armed Himself.]* “Majesty” is one of those words that everybody has heard and perhaps used. However, most of us are hard-pressed to give an adequate definition, especially when applied to God. The root meaning is “greatness.” “Majesty” is a word used in the Bible to express the awesomeness of God — a greatness which is beyond human comprehension. A synonym is often “splendor.”

God's majesty includes His unsurpassed authority, highest eminence, unparalleled exaltation, unlimited power, unsullied purity and holiness, and unmatched glory. These are concepts for which human descriptions are inadequate. I'm sure you've heard the expression, "Clothes make the man." If it is true that clothing says something about the person wearing it, then Yahweh is robed with unique, supernatural, unfathomable characteristics. The only single word that fits Him is "majesty."

Yahweh is also "armed (or "girded") with strength." This is a poetic way to explain Yahweh's power and His ability to do whatever He wants to do. This is another of His unfathomable characteristics. For example, in Genesis chapter 1 He only needed to speak in order to bring the universe into existence. Words like "majesty" and "strength" are poetic ways to explain the work of Yahweh in the physical creation of the universe and His sovereignty in sustaining that creation. That's what Psalm 93 is all about.

Notice the statements in the second part of verse 1 and into verse 2. These words speak of the establishment of the "world" and the establishment of Yahweh's "throne." In my opinion, the "world" and the "throne" are one and the same thing. The study of the beginning of Genesis reveals the central truth behind the creation account: that God created the universe to be His throne room. The cosmos was created to be His dwelling place, the place where He could exist in a physical environment outside of His own self-contained spiritual nature. The cosmos was God's temple dwelling. It required the vastness of the universe to properly reflect the greatness of God.

The most remarkable aspect of God's vast creation is that He wanted to be "Immanuel," God dwelling with His people here on earth. The outcome of God's creative efforts was a physical setting so perfect and pure that God was able to have close fellowship with His human creatures. In the language of Genesis, Adam and Eve were created in the image and likeness of God and the LORD God was able to be with them "in the garden in the cool of the day." The finished creation, the cosmos and everything in it, was exactly the way that God needed it to be. The cosmos was created to be a place suitable for God to dwell in and the earth was designed to meet the needs of humanity. Those are the reasons, briefly stated, why I think God's world and God's throne are the same.

We are informed that God's world is firmly established and that "it cannot be moved" (*cf Psalm 104:5*), just as God's throne and His existence was established before the work of creation began and will last for all eternity. In spite of that fact, verses 3 and 4 remind us that there have been multiple attempts to rebel against Him. In Scripture the sea is often a metaphor for the turmoil of nations and of the unrest of the peoples on earth. There is a verse in Isaiah which states that "the wicked are like the tossing sea which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud" (*Isaiah 57:20*). In another passage from Isaiah the noise of a pagan army hostile to Israel is likened to the "roaring of the sea" (*Isaiah 5:30*). In the New Testament letter written by Jude, false teachers are compared to the "wild waves of the seas" who "foam up their shame" (*Jude 13*).

And there's another verse I find interesting. In his description of the conditions which will come after the end of this earth's history, the Apostle John wrote: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea" (*Revelation 21:1*). This was John's reference to the fact that the sea is identified with the old sinful order of humanity.

It is true that in some Scripture passages, the sea represents good things such as the righteousness of God and the spread of spiritual truth. It is the context in which the metaphors of the sea appear that determines the symbolic meaning, and in Psalm 93 the meaning is clear. It is mentioned three times that "the seas have lifted up" their voice and that they "pound at" their boundaries with great force. However, we are assured in verse 4 that the waters, as mighty as they are, are no match for Yahweh. He, the LORD on high, is "mightier."

History is filled with the stories of the many potentates who have vainly imagined themselves as gods to be worshiped and honored. They have not been content to live within the limitations or "boundaries" or constraints which God imposed on the human race. These rulers have tried to control the course of human activities according to their own desires, rather than submit to the LORD who is over them.

Psalm 2 states this situation succinctly: "Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. 'Let us break their chains' (of authority), they say, 'and throw off their fetters (restraints)'" (*Psalm 2:1-3*).

The disobedience of Adam and Eve quickly led to full-blown rebellion against the Creator-God. Their first-born son, Cain, did not have an attitude of faith and obedience, and, even though he was personally warned by Yahweh Himself to change his attitude, Cain became so angry that he killed his brother. In the generations which followed, conditions on earth became increasingly violent and corrupt and evil. In general, people have refused to give glory to God and follow His ways. They are like the “tossing sea” waves which “cast up mire and mud.”

However, in spite of the rebellious behavior of humanity, the LORD God continues to reign supreme in His universe. There is no power above Him. He has been the King over all since the beginning of time. He has no fear of the surging, pounding sea. His throne, the symbol of His sovereignty, authority and power over the earth, was established long ago, before the time of creation. His purposes and plans and desires for His creation will never change. There is no power on earth that will cause Him to change. All He wants to accomplish will come to pass. Remember, “He reigns.”

When verse 5 declares that His “statutes stand firm,” it is yet another way of declaring that “the LORD reigns.” His purposes and plans will never be altered. As the sovereign Creator, He brought forth this world and everything in it. As the sovereign Ruler who has established His throne, He has the right to exercise His authority over all His creation. Because He is from eternity, His “statutes,” or, more literally, His “testimonies,” are as firmly established as His throne. These “testimonies” refer to His eternal purposes and intentions.

The evidence of God’s purposes is revealed in the “testimony” He has given about Himself and what He has done. This is undoubtedly what the Apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote, “What may be known about God is plain to them (all people). For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (*Romans 1:19-20*). God’s divine nature is referred to in this Psalm as His “majesty.” His “majesty” is the sum total of Who He is.

In an ultimate sense, God is defined by His holiness and righteousness. The world as created by Him had to be perfectly holy and pure for Him to dwell in it. He is not able to abide in any condition that is not completely devoid of imperfection and evil. The creation lost its purity and holiness when Adam and Eve sinned, but that same creation will once again become a suitable place for God in the future. Scripture declares this will happen when the first heaven and the first earth pass away. God will restore everything to its pristine holy state in the future, and He Himself will dwell once again with His people. These facts are among those statutes mentioned in verse 5, “statutes which stand firm.”

God will have a house, a dwelling, in which He will reside for eternity. His “house” will someday be on earth again. When the Apostle John described the new earth, he wrote: “I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away’” (*Revelation 21:2-4*).

This Psalm is short, only 5 verses, but what a depth of significance is in them. I hope it has impressed on your hearts and minds the need to let the LORD reign in your life.