

# 11. How great is our God!

September 28, 2014

Tutankhamun, the 13th Century B.C. Egyptian king; Alexander the Great, the 4th Century B.C. world conqueror; Louis XIV, the 16th Century French emperor, they all have one thing in common – dead. Though they all thought that there was no one greater than themselves, they are all dead.

There is an interesting story regarding Louis XIV of France. In 1715 he died after a reign of 72 years. He had called himself “the Great,” and was the monarch who made the famous statement, “I am the state!”

His royal court was the most magnificent in Europe, and his funeral was equally spectacular. As his body lay in state in a golden coffin, orders were given that the cathedral should be very dimly lit with only a special candle set above his coffin, to dramatize his greatness. At the memorial, thousands waited in hushed silence. Then Bishop Massillon began to speak; slowly reaching down, he snuffed out the candle and said, “Only God is great.”

The greatness of our God is not something the followers of Jesus concocted so that we can feel better and demand others to follow or otherwise, behold them like that peaceful religion Islam. Though it is plain and simple to see, people adamantly refuse to acknowledge who God is and His greatness, because it only shows their desperate wickedness. It has been said, “People do not reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts their lives.” That is so true.

In chapters 40-42, the Lord will teach us that He is greater than all of our circumstances, difficulties, fears and sinful past. I believe that we will find comfort and encouragement from His Word this morning.

## A. OUR GOD IS GREATER THAN OUR CIRCUMSTANCES

*Isaiah 40:3-4 The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth;*

*Isaiah 40:10-17 Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, And His arm shall rule for Him; Behold, His reward is with Him, And His work before Him. 11 He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young. 12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, Measured heaven with a span And calculated the dust of the earth in a measure? Weighed the mountains in scales And the hills in a balance? 13 Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, Or as His counselor has taught Him? 14 With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, And taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, And showed Him the way of understanding? 15 Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, And are counted as the small dust on the scales; Look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing. 16 And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, Nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering. 17 All nations before Him are as nothing, And they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless.*

In ancient time, when a king traveled, there was an advanced team which made sure that all the roads were easy to travel for their kings. The Lord Jesus is coming to His

people as a triumphant King, who has the road prepared before Him so He can travel in glory and ease. Every obstacle in the way must be removed.

Here is a word picture of the idea of preparing the way of the Lord, because the real preparation to receive Him must take place in our hearts. Of course, this portion of the Scripture reminds you of the ministry of John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus.

I love the way Isaiah described the Lord as a Gentle Shepherd in v11. Then, we find the greatness of God over anything in the universe in v12-17. He can measure the entire universe with a span of His hand. By the way, the region visible from earth is a sphere with a radius of about 46 billion light years and the scientists believe that the universe is continuously expanding.

Of course, this is another example of what we call an anthropomorphism – speaking of God in human terms so we can partially understand who He is and what He does. God is not a being with the body of a giant, so large that all the waters of the earth could be cupped in His actual hand, or so large that the universe could be measured by the span of His hand.

I also love the way Isaiah said about the nations “a drop in a bucket ” in v15. All the super power nations showing off their military power might impress us, but to our God, they are less than nothing. To our infinite God, all finites are equal.

But listen to me, my brothers and sisters, if you ever feel so small and insignificant that you wonder if God really cares about you personally, remember that He knows the name of every star and your name as well.

*John 10:3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.*

The same God who numbers and names all the stars can heal your broken heart, if you let Him.

*Psalm 147:3-4 He heals the brokenhearted And binds up their wounds. 4 He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name.*

Someone has defined “circumstances” as “those nasty things you see when you get your eyes off of God.” Not bad. If you look at God through your circumstances, He will seem small and very far away; but if by faith you look at your circumstances through God, He will draw very near and reveal His greatness to you.

## **B. OUR GOD IS GREATER THAN OUR DIFFICULTIES**

*Isaiah 40:29-31 He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength. 30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, 31 But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.*

After explaining all the greatness and glory of God, now Isaiah explains another benefit we can receive from our God – He gives to the weak, like us, His great power. If we trust our own strength and our own intelligence, we will faint and fall, but if we wait on the Lord by faith, we will receive strength for the journey of our lives.

In one occasion, I met a man at his late 50's or possibly early 60's. His life was difficult for him. As we talked, the Holy Spirit revealed to me that he was depressed and lost. He had money and tried everything to fulfill his void, yet nothing satisfied

him and he was still lost. I looked into his eyes and asked him, "Haven't you made enough mess in your life?" I know that was not a good conversational way to make a friend, the Holy Spirit still uses a fool's direct approach. That man was stunned for a moment at what I said, but he nodded his head and said, "Yes, I have." I asked him, "Isn't it about the time for you to ask the Savior Jesus to come into your life and be the Lord?" Again, he agreed. So, I led him to the Lord Jesus and he accepted Jesus into his heart.

Look at others, and be distressed. Look at yourself, and be depressed. Look to God, and you'll be blessed. When the outlook is bleak, we need the uplook. God is able to take your life, with all of the heartache, all of the pain, all of the regret, all of the missed opportunities, and use you for His glory.

V31 is my all time favorite Bible verse. There are many verses I love in the Bible, but this stands out in my heart. Please note the word 'wait'. Its Hebrew word is "qavah" and it does not suggest that we sit around and do nothing. It means to 'look eagerly for'. It means to look to God for all that we need and it involves trusting in His unchanging character and promises, praying, and seeking to glorify Him.

The Hebrew word of 'renew' is "chalaph". It means "to exchange". We exchange our weakness for His mighty power. As we wait before Him, God enables us to soar when there is a crisis, to run when the challenges are many, and to walk faithfully in the day-by-day demands of life.

Notice the order, because it seems strange. First we mount up with wings like eagles. Then we run. Finally we walk. Does it seem out of order to you? Not at all. First, we recognize that we soar up into heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Then we set ourselves on the course to run the race. Then we are in the good place to walk the walk as the children of God. Because our life journey requires steady walking in the power of God step by step as He leads us, not just flying high and running.

### **C. OUR GOD IS GREATER THAN OUR FEARS**

*Isaiah 41:8-11 "But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, The descendants of Abraham My friend. 9 You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, And called from its farthest regions, And said to you, ' You are My servant, I have chosen you and have not cast you away: 10 Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.' 11*

*"Behold, all those who were incensed against you Shall be ashamed and disgraced; They shall be as nothing, And those who strive with you shall perish.*

Here is the most frequent command in the Bible – "Fear not". He doesn't just tell us to fear not and leave us alone. He promises us that He is with us.

Lately the news about ISIS fills the news programs and newspaper. Without a doubt, they are evil people. Now that we start to see the followers and sympathizers of ISIS within the United States, more and more people are in fear. Obviously ISIS hasn't met American rednecks yet, especially in Arizona. We don't just kneel down and wait for them to behead us. No, siree.

Some Christians often take a cue from unbelievers to think that our God has limitations. They think God is a God of the past, but not of the present. They think God is a God of a few special favorites, but not of all His people. They think that God is

God of one kind of difficult trial, but not of another kind. We need to remember that our God has no limit and He doesn't have a pet believer.

#### **D. OUR GOD IS GREATER THAN OUR SINFUL PAST**

*Isaiah 42:1-9 "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. 2 He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth. 4 He will not fail nor be discouraged, Till He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands shall wait for His law." 5 Thus says God the Lord, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, And spirit to those who walk on it: 6 "I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles, 7 To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the prison, Those who sit in darkness from the prison house. 8 I am the Lord, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images. 9 Behold, the former things have come to pass, And new things I declare; Before they spring forth I tell you of them."*

NKJV and NASB rightly capitalize 'Servant,' because the context demonstrates this is a clear reference to Jesus. Additionally, Matthew quotes Isaiah 42:1-5 and plainly says it is a prophecy fulfilled in Jesus in Matthew 12. So in this, the Lord commands all peoples to put their focus on Jesus, not just Hebrew people.

There are lots of reeds growing around the Jordan River. Because they are top heavy, they tend to bent over and get crushed often. The Lord uses reeds in reference of the people whose lives have become crushed by the weight of the world and by the burden of sin. When a hurting sinful person comes to Jesus, He doesn't break them by rejecting them as unforgiven sinners, rather He restores them to wholeness and completeness in Christ.

The smoking flax is a reference to the last portion of wick in an oil lamp. It is just about gone and useless, no oil and no light. You might feel like this dying oil lamp and smoking flax, because you are burned out of your life. Jesus can pour the fresh oil out of the Holy Spirit into your life and fan your flame back into a bright light. Jesus Christ is not a party crasher or threat to those who need Him. He only wants to help us and heal us from our sinful past like He did to the sin ridden Jewish people from the Babylon exiles.

Please go back to v8:

*Isaiah 42:8 I am the Lord, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images.*

So far, the Lord promises us all these protections from harm. But in whose authority and power? The Lord's. In your Bible, I am sure you noticed that 'Lord' in all capital letters. This is the famous tetragrammaton, or name of four letters, which we write 'Jehovah' or 'Yahweh'. The letters are 'Y H W H.' The Jewish people never pronounce it, and the true pronunciation is utterly unknown.

With His name, there are power and authority in Him and He does not give His glory to any one else. Our God is a jealous God. He does not share our love with anyone, any idol, or anything for that matter. It is not because He is an insecure God,

rather He knows what would happen to us at the end if we put our allegiance with the ungodly. He is jealous for us, our safety and our eternal future. After all, our God is a loving, merciful and gracious God.

### ***E. APPLICATIONS***

1) Look at others, and be distressed. Look at yourself , and be depressed. Look to God, and you'll be blessed.

2) Our God is a jealous God. It is not because He is an insecure God, rather He knows what would happen to us at the end if we put our allegiance with the ungodly. He is jealous for us, our safety and our eternal future.