

Isaiah 40, 12 - 31: God - The Great King

"God is great!" Have you ever heard this sentence? Or sung it? Or even said it to someone? I definitely have. Sometimes because of something that happened and when I really was astonished about God's greatness and sometimes just out of a Christian habit where I actually wasn't really thinking what I was saying. And God is indeed great, but then the question is, how great is he? Do we have a picture about God's greatness that is not really sufficient? Maybe not in regard to how he looks like, but regarding the things we believe about him and the confidence we put in him in our daily lives. And is the foundation for our picture of God our thinking and feeling and other peoples opinion or is it the word of god? Today we are going to examine what the bible has to say about the greatness of God and the consequences of that in Isiah 40.

How Great is our God?

Let's start at verse 12 and read through to verse 17:

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 in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance?

13 Who has understood the mind of the LORD, or instructed him as his counsellor?

14 Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding?

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.

16 Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires, nor its animals enough for burnt offerings.

17 Before him all the nations are as nothing; they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing.

Look at your hand for a second and then think of the biggest thing that you can hold with it. Depending on the size of your hand this would maybe range up to a basketball if you have really big hands. And then think about the last time you were at the sea or think back to the pictures you saw on TV of one of the big floods in recent years. We read here, that God measures all this water in the hollow of his hand. You have a hard time holding a ball in your hand, and he is able to hold all the waters of the earth in his hand.

And now think about the biggest stone you would be able to carry around. Even if you are a strong man I think you would prefer using some technical equipment if you build a house instead of carrying all the stones around with your hands. God weighs the biggest mountains on the scale. Just think of the picture: He could take up all the big mountains in our country and put them on a scale and then put them back again. Unbelievable but in fact God is able to do that.

Yes, he even measured the heavens, a thing that we can't do as our universe is so big that even today we still don't know for sure whether it has an end or not. That's such a strength and power that I can only look at the heavens or look at the sea and marvel about God who created all that.

But it isn't that physical strength alone that's astonishing: when we read on we see that God's mind is greater than everything else and that he is independent of any counsel. You see, since we were little children, we were dependent on other people to teach us about life. First on our parents, then on our teachers and on many other peoples, who taught us or corrected us when we were wrong. Also in our Christian lives we need teachers and leaders and furthermore we are totally dependent on the Holy Spirit living and working in us. We are always so dependent on the help and wisdom of others. Does God need any of that? Does he need his archangels to give him counsel in a tough decision? Does he need humans

to help him, when we think he does something wrong? No, says Isiah. He has all knowledge, he has all wisdom, he is sovereign and full of glory. He is perfect. As humans, we almost always act out of a lack of something. We need things that we long for but that we don't have. We need love, we need forgiveness, we need help, we need acceptance. God doesn't need any of that. God never acts out of a lack of something. He is perfect. He didn't send Jesus, because he would require fellowship with us, he would still have all the glory if none of us could come to him. He is not depending on what we do for him, it was never the case, that the situation was out of his control and he had to repair it. That is why he can love us unconditionally and before we love him. That is why he can give himself for us, out of real love, that comes from a fullness that we don't know and don't have.

In fact that is what we mean when we talk about God being "holy". The Hebrew word for holy is quadosh and it means that something is put apart and separated. When we realize that God is holy we realize that he is unique, that he is different. If you take all the creatures that ever existed, you could make up a group with all the animals that lived, another one with all humans and another one with all the angels. But there is no group that you can put God in. He is totally different to any of us, he is unique and you can compare nothing to him. He is unique in his love, no one has ever loved like God loves us, he is unique in his righteousness, as no one is as righteous as him in his judgement, he is unique in his strength and wisdom, we just read that he holds the whole universe in his hands and that he never needs any advice.

You know I often struggle to understand God's holiness and what that really means. And sometimes it takes time to understand it and sometimes it's good to get an even better description. So I'm really thankful that Isiah doesn't stop here but that he goes on describing God's magnificence further: If I take a glass of water and pour out a bit of it, there will be thousands of tiny drops falling on the floor. We read here, that all earthly kingdoms are no more than one such a drop of water in comparison to God. Austria, Germany, Israel, the United States, the Romans, each tribe and nation that ever existed, they are no more than one drop in comparison to the one true God. Nations that conquer lands, nations that persecute and oppress, nations that kill and destroy and in the end believe that they are invincible, in God's eyes they are nothing. He regards them "dust on the scales". When we look back at the history of mankind there were so many rulers that wanted to conquer the whole world and that had earthly power and abused it. But none of them, neither Hitler nor Stalin, nor anyone else, was able to act one day longer than God allowed it to happen. He blows just a little bit and their power is gone like grass in the wind. That is how great God is.

Does your picture fit?

Let's pause here for a second and ask those questions that arise now when we read on in verse 18:

18 To whom, then, will you compare God? What image will you compare him to?

19 As for an idol, a craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and fashions silver chains for it.

20 A man too poor to present such an offering selects wood that will not rot. He looks for a skilled craftsman to set up an idol that will not topple.

21 Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood since the earth was founded?

It is one thing to describe God's greatness but it's a different thing to be addressed personally and to be asked how that relates to you: "To whom will you compare God?" Could it be that you compare God to an image you have of him? That this image does not fit

the description we just got? That you made experiences that made you believe that God is not almighty, that he is able to do a whole lot of things, yes, but that in your life he can't help you? That he depends on you in order to accomplish something? That there is sin he won't forgive? That there are circumstances he can't change?

Maybe you didn't craft an idol of God with your hands, but crafted one in your mind. Maybe even other people assisted you, like the goldsmith here, to create an image that limits God, that limits his abilities and that makes him fit into a system that you can understand and that fits your world view. Ask God to tear that idol down and focus on him and learn how he really is. We can't focus on two things at the same time. If you look at your circumstances you will lose sight of God and only see him small from far away, and your picture will be way too small. But if you focus on him, then your circumstances get smaller and he reveals his greatness to you.

He reigns

And when God reveals his greatness to you more and more, it does change your attitude towards this life. You realize that "Jesus is Lord" is not only true for your life, when you belong to him, but that he is the King and has been given all authority in heaven and on earth and under the earth. When we read on in verse 22 we see that:

22 He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in.

23 He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

24 No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.

25 To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal? says the Holy One.

26 Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

The Lord reigns! That is the message of the bible from beginning to end. He is the creator of the universe, he is eternal, the same yesterday, today and forever. He sits on the throne and it's not an earthly throne, but a heavenly one above the circle of the earth. No earthly kingdom can compare to his kingdom and we are reassured here again, just as we read before, that earthly rulers are reduced to nothing before him. He is the one that holds history in his hands, that holds nations in his hands and that reigns sovereign. He is the one we can entrust our lives to as he is able to cope with it.

God owns everything, all the universe is his by his right. Every creature is his, all the gold and the silver are and all the stars in the heaven, as well. Not one is missing before him, because he is not a bad King, that does not care about his kingdom. No he is careful and jealous about his property. All the stars he knows by name, even those that we have never seen from our earth and that no man will ever see, because their light is not strong enough to reach our planet. He cares about the details and that is the answer to the question that we certainly come up with when we see how great God is: "How can a God that reigns the whole universe be interested in my life?" He can and he is, because he is a caring God, who displays his love in the details, just pick a flower, look at it and you will realize that. Even if you don't know him, even if you have never cared about him for your whole life, he knows where you are and what you are doing, he created you and like every other creature you are his property. You might think that your life mainly evolves around you and your wishes and desires but when you are confronted with the fact that he is the eternal creator, we have to confess that this life can not be about us, but about him. He indeed is able to also satisfy

our needs and desires but in order to do that we must turn to him, so that we realize he is the one who works in our life. And that brings us to the last point, and it is dealt with when we read on.

Does he reign your life?

27 Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God?

28 Do you not know? 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.

29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;

31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Until now we have seen how great God is, we have seen, that if we try to put him into a system or limit him, we will fail, and we were brought to the confession that God reigns. All of that is true, no matter if you believe it or not, no matter if you care about God or not, all these things about him remain objective truth. But now in the end, we come to that question that affects you, now we see were all this really connects to our life. Because now the question arises: Can you say with Isaiah, that God is not just God, but that he is your God? Does he reign your life? Is he your king? You know it's one thing to know that George Bush is the president of the United States, just as you might know that there is a God somewhere out there. But if you want to go to the White House and talk to George Bush, you will have a hard time explaining that you know him, if he does not know you. If there is no personal relation between you and him, you will not get a personal audience. If there is no personal relation between you and God, you have the same problem, you don't have access to bring before him your daily problems and your life in a personal audience.

That is the one question that decides your life, the question if God is not just a king, but if he is your king. You know, even the youth grows tired, even young man fall, we just read. Just as we will fall when we sit on the throne of our life and want to keep that throne. This throne has not been made for us, we have not been made to live for ourselves. And we fail with such a life and will fall in the end, because we stumble over the stone that has been laid by God himself, and this stone is Jesus Christ. The bible says in **1. Peter 2,7-8**: "Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone, and, A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. They stumble because they disobey the message- which is also what they were destined for."

We stumble, when we disobey the message. Which message? The message that God is revealing himself to us through Jesus Christ. The message that even though God is so different from us, even though he is so much greater than we are, there is a way to him. The message that even though we hate it to give it up to be King in our own life - and deep inside we actually know that it won't work out in the end if we are on the throne - God can transform us and give us a new heart so that we can love him, so that we want him to be the King of our life.

God reconciled us with him himself, before any of us loved him. Jesus Christ died for all our failures on the cross, especially for our first and foremost error, that we do not give him the place he deserves but live for ourselves. He was risen and now is sitting on his throne. He did this so that we could come to him, to display his greatness in our lives as we can now submit our lives under his reign and live for the purpose we were created for. He is

standing with open arms to come to him with our broken lives and become part of his kingdom. If you are here today and know that Jesus is not the Lord of your life, than please deal with him, start to find out more about him and stay afterwards and talk to those that know him already.

And if you know that he reigns your life already, if you know that Jesus Christ is your Saviour and Lord then let me ask you the question Isiah asks God's people here: Why do you think so often that he disregards you and don't put your hope in him to be great in your life as well? He will not grow tired and he will not grow weary. If you think that the circumstances of your life are out of God's control you err. He gives you strength to cope with the situation you are in, he increases your power if you are weak and has done so through the history of mankind so many times in people's lives. No matter if you are persecuted for your faith, no matter if you are accepted and respected because you belong to God and others admire that: he will renew your strength to live your life with him. When we put our hope in him we look at him to give us all that we need, we pray to him and come to him in our weakness and then we can be assured by his promise that he will renew our strength to live with him in our daily live.

And you know what makes me soar like an eagle and walk with God and not grow tired? It's the knowledge that there is nothing in this life that I have to achieve for my own anymore because I already have what is most desirable on this earth, Jesus Christ and I already am, what is most desirable, I am a child of God. The one true and living God that created the universe and holds it in his hand and reigns it. I can trust in him, because I know his power and I can rest in him because I don't need to seek any further. God himself is the treasure I was longing for and it glorifies him when I'm satisfied with him and when I am deeply content with my life in his hands.