

THE AWE OF GOD
A Scripture reading for two readers with comments by Verna
(to be read by a narrator)

VERNA'S INTRODUCTION: Inspired by a visit to the Grand Canyon, and experiencing the awe of it, I set out to explore one "new" aspect of my God – the fact that He is BIG! I began to notice and meditate on the word pictures in the Bible that describe God's bigness. How I enjoyed them!

[Isaiah 40:12-18, 26, 28]

1 – Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens?

2 – Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance?

1 – Who has understood the mind of the Lord, or instructed him as his counselor? Whom did the Lord consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way?

2 – Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding?

1 – 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.

2 – Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires, nor its animals enough for burnt offerings. Before him all the nations are as nothing; they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing.

1 – To whom, then, will you compare God? What image will you compare him to? "Who is my equal?" says the Holy One.

2 – 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 his mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

1 – Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.

2 – He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

Oh, how I loved the passages in Isaiah 40 that talk about God's hand – big enough to hold a whole ocean as he was measuring out the waters; big enough to mark off the heavens with a span; big enough to hold a scale on which he weighed the mountains and hills! If his *hand* is that big, how big is the rest of him?? Surely, in comparison, the nations *are* like a drop in a bucket, and if that is true, how big am I? I must be like a particle of dust from the earth, which he holds in a basket, according to verse 12. Surely he cannot be compared to anything! No one is even his *equal*! He is the Mighty Creator, the Holy One.

Of course, I knew that this passage from Isaiah was poetry, and the rules of poetry apply in its interpretation. I did not think God really stretched out the heavens like a canopy; in fact, I knew he did not really have literal hands! But to this day I thoroughly enjoy thinking over this wonderful chapter with the poetic images in my mind as if they really happened as stated. The next image also comes from Isaiah, the vision that he had as recorded in chapter 6.

[Isaiah 6:1-8]

1 – In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple.

2 – Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying.

1 – And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

2 – At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

1 – “Woe is me!” I cried. I am ruined! I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”

2 – Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

1 – Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said,

1 & 2 – “Here am I. Send me!”

He saw the Lord “seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple.” The train of his robe! I thought of the train on a wedding gown and wondered: if a bride was walking down the aisle and the train of her robe *filled* the church, how would we feel? Could we even see high enough to glimpse her face? In fact, could she even fit into a church building? Might we be frightened? Who would want to, or dare to, marry her? Well, if God’s train filled the whole *temple*, how big is he?? How can we not have some fear of him mixed in with our love and reverence? And how could we help but feel like guilty, dirty nothings in his holy, pure presence, like Isaiah did? And after being cleansed by him (imagine that!) how could we help but eagerly say, “Gladly, Lord” to anything he asked us to do for him? And how could that service be anything but a joy?

The third image comes from [Acts 7:48-50], where Isaiah is being quoted in part: “However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men. As the prophet says: ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things?’ ”

I already knew from the other passages that God could not fit into any house, but now I relished the thought of his using the whole earth as a footstool! I would look “up” in awe and think: if God needs the whole earth as a place to rest His feet, how big is the rest of Him? Out of sight, of course. Awesome! And the complementary thought was also there: then how small are we? I could see that God is over all, and that our proper place is at His feet where we need to respect and honor Him, for He could so easily destroy us with one step.

Isaiah 8:13,14 says, “The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread, and he will be a sanctuary.” And Hebrews 12:28b-29 says this: “Let us be thankful, and so worship him acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.” God, who is holy, big, powerful, and awesome, offers to be a sanctuary – a place of safety and peace – for anyone who will trust in him. Isn’t that amazing?

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