

The God Who Puts It All In Perspective

Psalm 29

Studies in the Psalms #30

© 2016 Daniel R. Hyde

ALL week long the image I've had in my head of Psalm 29 is that it explodes off the page. While I read scholar after scholar belabor how it resembles ancient pagan poetry to other false gods and how David may have just inserted the Lord's name in the place of Baal, for example, what Psalm 29 should do to us is jump off the page because it is so different from the Psalms before it. Here are the kinds of pleas we've been hearing from David in Psalms 25–28:

Let not my enemies exult over me...I am lonely and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged...Consider how many are my foes and with what violent hatred they hate me. (25:2, 16, 17, 19)

Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity...I do not sit with men of falsehood, nor do I consort with hypocrites...Do not sweep my soul away with sinners. (26:1, 4, 9)

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war rise against me, yet will I be confident...my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the LORD will take me in. (27:1, 3)

To you, O LORD, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit...Do not drag me off with the wicked, with the workers of evil, who speak peace with their neighbors while evil is in their hearts. (28:1, 3)

But then the first thing we hear here is the sound of worship: **Ascribe**

to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength (v. 1). And then the last thing we hear here is what we seek in the Lord's worship: **May the LORD give strength to his people! May the LORD bless his people with peace!** (v. 11).

We've come here today weak from a week's worth of hand-to-hand combat with the world, our own sins, and the Devil. We've come here today with our minds and hearts full of strife. Some of us have sick family members. Some of us suffer the effects of a fallen world in our minds and emotions. Some of us battled all week at work just to get through. Some of us a scraping by financially. Some of us know people in other parts of the world suffering and we're suffering with them. And the list goes on. What Psalm 29 does at it jumps off the page at us is to remind us of *the God who puts it all in perspective*.

The God of Glorious Holiness

Verses 1–2 put it all in perspective because we have a *God of glorious holiness*. These verses may not seem comforting to you because while we have so many problems down here on earth, verses 1–2 are a fourfold call to worship commanding the voice of heaven to glorify the God of glorious holiness. One of my favorite things to do every Christmas season is to go to a

playing of Handel's *Messiah*. Of course, I can't do that consistently every year as I used to with all the kiddos in tow, but at least I can listen on my computer or in my car. There's something about pausing from all the stress and busyness of the Christmas season to listen to the voice of worship. And that's what verses 1–2 do.

David reminds us that while we struggle down here remember who God is up there, so to speak. Remember what is going on in heaven. And so it's a call to worship by the **heavenly beings** or literally “the sons of God” (“*elim*”), which is used in Scripture in many senses, but here of the angels. Three times they are called to **ascribe to the LORD**. Ascribe what? **The glory due his name** (vv. 1, 2) **and strength** (v. 1). Then it's capped off with verse 2: **worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness**, which is the splendor of his holiness.¹

These are the angels Isaiah 6 described. Let's turn there. Isaiah “saw the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple” (v. 1). If just the train of his robe filled the temple, how immense is the Lord? “Above him stood the seraphim.” These are the angels of our Psalm. And look at how Isaiah describes them: “Each had six wings:

¹ As evidenced by the following verses. Futato, 119.

with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet”—Why?

Because the Lord is holy and cannot be looked upon and the place where he

is, is holy ground!—“and with two he flew” (v. 2). Then we hear their song:

“And one called to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;

the whole earth is full of his glory!’” (v. 3) Children, do you know whose glory

the ancient prophet Isaiah saw here in Isaiah 6? Do you know whom the

angels were praising? Ask your mom and dad to read John 12 with you this

afternoon for the answer...but trust me, you already know the answer!

The God of Infinite Power

We see here the God who puts it all in perspective because he is a *God of infinite power*. I want you to think about that for a moment. God has *infinite power*. That means it is not finite. That’s a way of saying his power is limitless. We’re living in a time in which the injustices of our nation’s founding are manifesting themselves again. We’ve fought a civil war over slavery and the full humanity and rights of African-Americans. We’ve passed law after law, but here we are. We recognize as Christians—or at least we should—that the problem is a spiritual one and the solution is beyond us. Our nation needs the Lord’s infinite power to change hearts, which will lead to changed actions.

It's that infinite power of God in the midst of all his problems that David proclaims here. Are you ready for it? Here it goes: **The voice of the LORD.** "Wait. What? Where's the strong hand of God to grab my enemies and squish them to nothing?" David uses the surprising demonstration of God's power by reminding us of his voice. Just his voice? Yes, with just his voice he can do the following.

His voice...is over the waters; the God of glory thunders (v. 3). In the Ancient Near East the waters were a god. The thunder was a god. But the Lord is over them all! The **waters** are also used in the Old Testament as a symbol of all the powers that stand opposed to God. So David says, **The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty** (v. 4).

His voice...breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon (v. 5). He's referencing here the legendary forest north of Israel. The cedar is the central symbol on the modern-day flag of Lebanon because it is so iconic a symbol of strength.

His voice...makes Lebanon to skip like a calf, and Sirion (another term for Mount Hermon) **like a young wild ox** (v. 6). Just like a farmer's

voice gets his herd moving, so the voice of the Lord moves nations!

His **voice...flashes forth flames of fire** (v. 7). The image here is of the lightning. Recently meteorologists released a study of the longest bolt of lightning over the state of Oklahoma. It was 200 miles long, or, 1/3 the length of the state!

His **voice...shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh** (v. 8). From the far north in Lebanon to the far south in **Kadesh**, where Israel languished in the wilderness,² the Lord's power is known.

His **voice...makes the deer give birth and strips the forests bare, and in his temple all cry, "Glory!"**

What's your struggle today? The Lord's power puts it in perspective, doesn't it?

The God of Eternal Kingship

David mentions one final thing about the God who puts it all in perspective. And it's really a summary of everything he's said so far. Because the Lord is a God of glorious holiness and infinite power he is a *God of eternal kingship*: **The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits**

² For some reason Longman says this is a *northern* region. *Psalms*, 155, 156. In contrast, see "Kadesh" in *New Bible Dictionary*, (1962; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, second edition, 1982), 650; Motyer, 73.

enthroned as king forever (v. 10). That word for **flood** (*mabbul*) is important as it's the same word that's only used in the Flood story in Genesis 6–9. David is saying God is king over my life today while I am surrounded by so many enemies just like he was king in Noah's day while he was surrounded by a world of evil. David is applying the biblical story of Genesis to his own life. We apply Noah and David to our lives today.

Jesus once demonstrated all this. There was a great storm on a sea while he and his disciples were in a boat. He simply said, "Peace! Be still!" His disciples responded by saying, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:35–41)

How has the world weakened you and caused strife in your life this week? How have your sins weakened you and caused strife in your life this week? How has the devil weakened you and caused strife in your life this week?

May the LORD Jesus Christ's glorious holiness, infinite power, and eternal kingship put it all in perspective and **give** you **strength** and **bles** you **with peace** as you go back out there (v. 11). Amen.