

How Great is our God

Psalm 8

Introduction

American astronauts, Anders, Lovell and Borman were the first human beings to orbit the moon / see the far side of the moon during the space mission of Apollo 8. [1968]

One of the things they did – which drew the ire of outspoken atheist Madelyn Murray O’Hare – was to read the Bible from space

In fact – she filed a lawsuit against Nasa – because the astronauts - - - government employees read the Biblical creation account - - - to a national tv audience on Christmas Eve! [The supreme court eventually dismissed the case due to lack of jurisdiction]

While orbiting the moon – the men read the first 10 verses of Genesis

Genesis 1:1 - 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.'

They concluded with

Genesis 1:10 - 'And God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters, He called seas; and God saw that it was good.'

Robert Poole recalls the event

Robert Poole: 'Anders promptly turned off the transmitter; seconds later Apollo 8 dipped once more behind the Moon, leaving the earth in radio silence to absorb the impact of the words. Gene Kranz [Nasa director] said of that moment: 'For those moments I felt the presence of creation and the Creator.'

Poole: 'The writer William Styron was in Connecticut in a house filled with noisy festivity. His host, a teacher, a hardened space sceptic, had to be persuaded to switch on the tv for the live pictures of the Moon. Then, recalled Styron, 'the murmur and laughter of the party diminished and died, and we watched in silence. At the reading of *Genesis*, a chill coursed down my back and an odd sight went through the gathering like a tremor . . . I glanced at my host, the mistrusting and scornful teacher, and saw on his face an emotion that was depthless and inexpressible.' Such scenes were multiplied across the United States on Christmas Eve, 1968.'

Between 1968 and 1972 – eleven Apollo missions took place – nine went to the moon

Some of the astronauts found that the sight of Earth from the moon [238,000 miles away] hit them with the force of a deep religious experience

Gene Cernan - of Apollo 17 - 'Looking up at the cobalt earth immersed in infinite blackness, I knew science had met its match. What I saw was almost too beautiful to grasp. There was too much logic, too much purpose, it was just too beautiful to have happened by accident . . . God . . . has to exist to have created what I was privileged to see.' [Earthrise, p. 105]

In Psalm 8 – David considers the heavens – the work of God's fingers

Perhaps during his years as a shepherd out watching the sheep - - - he turned his attention up at the night sky and marveled at the beauty of God's creation

Psalm 8:3-4 - 'When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained; What is man that Thou dost take thought of him? And the son of man that Thou dost care for him?'

God is portrayed as a master craftsman in Psalm 8 - - from his workshop come forth galaxies / planets / the moon / the stars - - - even man himself

Psalm 8 is a celebration of God's glory and might

Eventually Nasa turned to unmanned space exploration - - - such as the Voyager program – sending satellites to the far reaches of our solar system

In February, 1990 – Voyager captured an image of six of the eight planets. From four billion miles away - - - the earth looked like a pale blue dot

Carl Sagan: 'Look again at that dot. That's home. On it everyone you know, everyone you have ever heard of, every human being that ever was, lived out their lives . . . on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam.'

Sagan knew the universe is literally an awesome reality – but it did not lead him to acknowledge the Creator

David – on the other hand - - - shows us the proper way to see the creation - - - it is God's handiwork - - - and it leads David to declare the greatness of our God

I. Maker of Heaven and Earth - vv. 1-3

O Lord, Our Lord - - - David actually uses two different terms for God

O YHWH our Adonai

YHWH is the personal name of God – and Adonai is more descriptive of His power - - - He is the almighty / the sovereign One

It is God's power / might displayed thru the creation that evokes this Psalm of praise

David stops to ponder the creation – the work of God's fingers

Creation itself begs the question as to where this all came from

Why is there something rather than nothing?

The stars in the sky / the sun / moon / planets / earth itself?

Isaiah 45:12 - 'It is I who made the earth, and created man upon it. I stretched out the heavens with my hands, and I ordained all their hosts.'

Psalm 19:1 - 'The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.'

One of the classic apologetic arguments for the existence of God – is referred to as the cosmological argument

Κοσμος = world

Where did the world come from? / who or what caused it to exist?

In our experience every effect has a cause

We don't look at the pyramids and think - - - they just happened - - - we know someone built that

We don't look at the automobile or airplane and think it just came together all by itself - - - someone designed it - - - and put the parts together to function together

Did someone design our world?

Millard Erickson: 'If we were to find a watch lying on the sand, we would immediately recognize it as a watch, for all of its parts are ideally suited to the purpose of recording and displaying the time. We would *certainly* not say, 'what an amazing coincidence!' We would recognize that some able person must have planned and brought about the amazing way in which each part fits in with the other parts. Similarly, the way in which each part of nature meshes so well with every other part, and the striking fashion in which various components of the whole seem adapted to the fulfillment of certain functions, cannot be dismissed as a fortuitous

concatenation of circumstances. Someone must have designed and constructed digestive systems, eyes, properly balanced atmospheres, and much else in our world. All of this argues for the existence of a supreme designer, a wise and capable creator."

The answer of Scripture is that God created us and our world – brought this all into existence

Revelation 4:11 - 'Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed and were created.'

The atheist – Christopher Hitchens – who often debated creationists – was once asked; 'What is the strongest argument of the creationists?'

Hitchens replied rather quickly: 'the fine-tuning argument . . . you have to spend time thinking about it, working on it. It's not a trivial argument. We all say that.'

What is the fine-tuning argument?

Eric Metaxas: 'The fine-tuning argument is that the universe and the planet on which we all live did not come into existence by accident but were deliberately and intentionally created.'

The earth happens to be just the right distance from the sun to have a temperature range suitable for life. [liquid water in abundance] [too hot – the water would burn off / too cold – it would simply be frozen]

Take away water – we die

Neptune – much further from the sun – has an ave. temp of – 353 degrees F

On Mercury [the closest to the sun] – during the daytime - - - temps can reach 800 degrees F/ at night temps can drop to – 290 degrees F [because Mercury has virtually no atmosphere to hold in the heat]

The earth happens to have just the right combination and percentages of gases such as oxygen, carbon dioxide and nitrogen suitable to sustain life. [change that number – life ceases]

CO₂ = carbon dioxide – makes up .04% of our atmosphere - - - that small amount in our atmosphere helps the earth retain heat – it's referred to as the green house effect – it's actually part of God's good design to keep our planet habitable - - but science has sounded the alarm that we are creating too many greenhouse gases - - and we need to be careful or we'll mess up the whole eco-system

The whole climate change issue is a contentious political issue of our day – it may point to a couple of realities:

One – there is a recognition that we live in a finely tuned universe – even on a razor’s edge

That should lead us to recognize a creator- - - but for some it leads to fear – or using fear to manipulate people

There are huge studies and alarms being sounded over methane emissions from cows around the world – [Those friendly bovine creatures that give us milk and beef – are adding to the climate crisis]

Some people are even advocating a more ‘green’ diet - - - give up that Big Mac for the environment

Al Gore, in his 2006 global warming documentary "An Inconvenient Truth," Gore predicted that the global sea level could rise as much as 20 feet "in the near future."

Between 1993-2021, the sea level has ticked up 3.8 inches, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). At that rate, it would take approximately 1,136 years for the world's sea level to rise 20 feet.

We may as well worry about the Milky Way and Andromeda galaxies colliding – which science says will happen in 4.5 billion years

Stephen Hawking himself stoked some of the fears – when he cautioned that within the next 100 years – man needs to colonize Mars or have a sustainable outpost on the moon - - - to avoid human extinction which could come thru climate change / nuclear war / disease of some kind

If you don’t believe in God - - - your response to our finely tuned universe may be fear that we can do something to fall off that razor’s edge

Climate change rhetoric – has led to a somewhat new phenomena called *eco-anxiety*

A 2021 study conducted by five UK universities surveyed ten thousand young people between the ages of 16 and 25 in various countries including the United States.

Among the results - - - 60% believed the planet was doomed because of climate change

Nearly half said their fears for the environment was negatively impacting their mental health on a daily basis

The bottom line – our world was created by God - - - with incredible precision

What is David’s response: ‘O Lord, our Lord – how majestic is Thy name in all the earth!’

We should be teaching the next generation to praise God for His creation – and for the One who saves from sin – Jesus – the Redeemer

Global warming is a false day of judgment - - - in which man is now urged to saved himself by his own actions

The Day of the Lord is a true day of judgment - - - in which man can only be saved by the grace of God / trusting in Jesus Christ

God created the sun, the moon, the stars / our planet earth

The earth orbits the sun – which is 94 million miles away from us - - - It takes light from the sun about 8 minutes and 20 seconds to reach us

Douglas Adams: 'The fact that we live at the bottom of a deep gravity well, on the surface of a gas-covered planet going around a nuclear fireball 90 million miles away and think this to be normal is obviously some indication of how skewed our perspective tends to be.'

We should stand in awe - - - and render praise to our God

The heavens magnify the glory and power of God

David Jeremiah: 'When we study creation itself - its very existence and intricate design shout the necessity of an intelligent source.'

David Jeremiah: 'Our Milky Way Galaxy is rotating at almost 140 miles per second while speeding thru the universe at nearly 190 miles per second like a roller coaster spinning while plunging down its tracks. In the minute it has taken to read this paragraph - you have actually travelled thousands of miles. What's more - you are spinning on a globe that is revolving on its axis at the speed of nearly 1000 miles per hour and orbiting the sun at a speed of 66,000 mph. If you had a plane capable of that speed - you would travel across the United States in 3 minutes. Yet God has so fine-tuned the ride that you feel no movement at all. One slight miscalculation in these intricately inter-related movements would doom everything to a gigantic cosmic train wreck, yet everything moves with the precision of a vast machine designed by a master engineer.'

We're travelling thru space right now - - - but we don't feel it

Why? because God knew what He was doing

II. Maker of Man - vv. 3-9

As David considers God's universe – He asks the question:

What is man?

Here we are – on this planet – how did we get here?

Did we come from the hand of God / or - - - is life something akin to an accident or fluke of nature - - - hitting the jackpot in a lottery - - - we got lucky?

Stephen Jay Gould, Harvard paleontologist gives this understanding of man:

Stephen Jay Gould: 'We are here because one odd group of fishes had a peculiar fin anatomy that could transform into legs for terrestrial creatures; because comets struck the earth and wiped out dinosaurs, thereby giving mammals a chance not otherwise available (so thank your lucky stars in a literal sense); because the earth never froze entirely during an ice age; because a small and tenuous species, arising in Africa a quarter of a million years ago, has managed, so far, to survive by hook and by crook. We may yearn for a higher answer- but none exists.'

In other words, he believed that there is ultimately no reason or purpose for the existence of life or of mankind. We are simply the product of chance.

The founder of Peta – Ingrid Newkirk says, 'what is man?' - - - just another random animal – highly evolved – 'there is no rational basis for saying that a human being has special rights . . . a rat is a pig is a dog is a boy.'

Such systems do not tend to lead to highly ethical behavior

That baby in the womb has no more rights or value than a rat

The Psalmist looks at man and says- he is the direct creation of God – made in His image – given dominion over His earth

Genesis 1:26 - 'Then God said, "Let us make man in Our image, according to our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'

Genesis 1:27 - 'And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.'

A Christian anthropology – says we came from God

The creation of Adam and Eve was a supernatural event

Francis Crick who shared the Nobel prize for discovering the molecular structure of DNA –
'an honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have had to have been satisfied to get it going.' [The Case for a Creator, p. 42]

Man as a thinking, reasoning, speaking, relational creature – able to develop written languages – write plays and books – able to invent things like radio and automobiles – and airplanes. He alone among God's creatures writes music and symphonies – investigates the planets thru telescopes – practices medicine – develops financial markets and economies – and is able to worship God –to pray – to give thanks to God - - - to do good or evil - - to obey or rebel

The clue to the answer of 'what is man?' – is to know where man came from

God said – 'Let us make man . . .'

As Jesus put it:

Matthew 19:4 - 'Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female.'

God made the two genders / male and female - - - instituted marriage

There has actually been discussion in the field of anthropology over labeling human fossils as male or female - - because who knows? The person may have identified as something other than their biology / physiology would suggest

It is God who created us – male and female

Genesis 1 – refers to man being given dominion over the earth

We exercise our dominion by farming / planting / constructing buildings / effecting the landscape / we form governments / nations / we establish homes and families / culture / etc.

When the Egyptians built the pyramids - - - they were exercising a kind of dominion over the earth

Our dominion emphasizes the dignity of man - - - places man above all the other creatures

Some of the early theologians conjectured that the creation of the world and man may have in part precipitated the Fall of Satan [Satan – who is a fallen angel]

Justin Martyr and Irenaeus said that Satan fell when he became jealous of Adam – because he occupied such a dignified place in God’s creation

Isaiah 14 would point to Satan’s pride and wanting to be like God

What we know for sure – is that by the time we get to Genesis 3 - - - Satan is a fallen being – with wicked intent

Man who was endowed with intelligence / gift of speech
Ability to reason / has a conscience
He is able to worship God

But - Man has twisted his great potential to evil use

He can develop a cure for polio / do heart transplants /fly airplanes around the world – go to the moon - - - **and** he can develop bombs to kill millions of people / he can fly those same airplanes into buildings to kill people - - - he can trample upon his fellow man – rebel against the God who created Him

Human beings are capable of doing good or evil

Man as he stands now - fallen into sin / has a corrupt nature in need of redemption

Does God care for him?

The ultimate expression of God’s love and care is redemption

I John 4:10 - 'In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.'

Conclusion

It took the Apollo 11 travelers 3 days to reach the moon – July 1969

Had the astronauts not been equipped with special pressurized suits – equipped with oxygen / their own artificial environment - - - stepping out onto the moon would have meant instant death – its environment is not suitable for life - - - the moon is utterly desolate with no sign of life

As Buzz Aldrin turned to look back at the earth - - - it was no bigger than the size of his thumb

On the 3 day journey to return home – on the night before splashdown in the Pacific -- the men gave a brief message for tv land

Buzz Aldrin: 'Personally, in reflecting on the events of the past several days, a verse from Psalms comes to mind: 'When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him?'

The creation should cause us to say with the Psalmist – “O Lord, our Lord – how majestic is Thy name in all the earth.’

Thank you God for – creating us

Thank you for redeeming us - - - that sinners anywhere on this planet - - - if they turn to Jesus - - - they find salvation thru His shed blood