

The Millennium Forecast

The Book of Isaiah

Text

Isaiah 40:12-31

Topic

Our God is *the* awesome God

Title

***“You’ve Got to Ask Yourself One Question: Do I Feel Awestruck?
Well, Do Ya Pal?”***

The Great Pyramid of Giza, the Eiffel Tower, the Hoover Dam, and the Panama Canal.

These are on most lists of extraordinary feats of engineering. If you grab the brochure while touring any of these sites, you will be awed by numbers and comparisons. Hoover Dam, for instance:

Imagine a four-foot-wide sidewalk wrapped completely around the Earth at the equator. That’s a lot of concrete! That’s how much concrete it took to build the Hoover Dam. It’s amazing when you think about it. The dam is 726 feet tall and 1,244 feet long. That’s almost a quarter of a mile. At its base, the dam is a whopping 660 feet thick. That’s longer than two football fields stretched end-to-end! At its top, Hoover Dam is 45 feet thick. That may seem thin compared to its massive base, but it’s still nearly as wide as a four-lane highway. It is estimated to weigh 6,600,000 tons. More than 5,500,000 cubic yards of material were excavated.

Impressive.

Wanna talk about a few genuine marvels? The "waters," the "heaven[s]," the "dust," the "mountains," the "hills," and the heavenly "host."

There is no building, or tomb, or canal, or dam, or tower that can compete with its setting on the Earth in the universe created by God out of nothing in six days around six thousand years ago.

Every new marvel of human resourcefulness, we ought to smile and direct attention to our passage in Isaiah:

Isa 40:12 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?

Isa 40:26 Lift up your eyes on high, And see who has created these *things*, Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name...

We agree our God is awesome. Are we sufficiently awestruck? I'll organize my comments around two questions: **#1 Are You Awestruck At The Lord For His Creation?** and, **#2 Are You Awestruck With The Lord As His New Creation?**

#1 - Are You Awestruck At The Lord For His Creation? (v12-20)

"The second half of the Book of Isaiah, consisting of the last twenty-seven chapters, is the sublimest and richest portion of Old Testament revelation."

- The first thirty-nine chapters focused on the crisis that was in the *present*, the Assyrian threat of invasion.
- Chapters 40-66 looks 150yrs ahead to the *prophesied* crisis of Babylon and the 70yr captivity.

We learned in verse eleven that the LORD *comforts us* by reminding us of His *coming for us*. If you have any doubts that the Lord can comfort us while we patiently wait for Him, the remainder of chapter forty will drive them away.

Isa 40:12 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?

I can hardly think of anything more insignificant than dust. Yet God used it to create the first man, arguably the greatest of His creations. It ought to humble us that our

progenitor, Adam, was made not from anything precious. I recall a StarTrek original series episode in which something was removing all the fluids from the crew, leaving only a pile of minerals behind.

Think of yourself as the Peanuts character, Pigpen. A cloud of dust accompanies him wherever he goes. We are a little like that. Maybe not outwardly, but spiritually. The Lord cleanses us once-for-all by the Cross; and we need to daily be washed by the water of His Word because the world is a dirty, dusty place.

What is dust? According to the nearly infallible on-line resource that is Wikipedia, "Dust is made of fine particles of solid matter. On Earth, it generally consists of atmospheric particulates that come from various sources such as soil lifted by wind, volcanic eruptions, and pollution. *Dust in homes is composed of about 20 - 50% dead skin cells.*"

God knows about each sparrow that dies; He numbers the hairs on your head; He saves your tears in His bottle; and He can tell you how much dust there is by whatever measure you ask.

Our God is the creator and caretaker of dust - *not some dead idol that merely collects dust.*

Isa 40:13 Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has taught Him?

Do we not try to "direct" and "teach" the Lord rather than learn to be directed by the Spirit? Look at the way you pray. Do you, do I, extol God for His awesomeness... Or am I directing Him to do what I want done? Do we seek counsel from the ungodly?

Isa 40:14 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?

I don't know what the bidding was like to build some of the so-called Modern Marvels. I would guess that the architects and engineers who bid had credentials commensurate to the projects.

The God of the Bible is the only Person who is accredited to build universes and human beings. He alone has sufficient "knowledge... and understanding."

What does "justice" have to do with it? Adam & Eve forfeited their rule over creation by disobeying God. God, Who is infinitely holy, cannot merely overlook sin, passed on to us as an inheritance and by imputation. God therefore devised a way of saving us by remaining both *just* and the *justifier* of sinners. That way is the death & resurrection of Jesus, the God-man, as the only acceptable sacrifice for sin and as our substitute. Do you believe that?

Isa 40:15 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.

If you combined all the nations of the world, through all of human history, their power and might would be similar to a drop in the bucket of God. It's a pretty big bucket. He created water and oceans and lakes and rivers and streams and aquifers. He is responsible for the morning dew and for the snowpack.

Do you dust-off your scale before getting on it? No, because it is insignificant to how much you will weigh. Nations are like "the small dust on the scales."

Insignificant doesn't mean *unimportant*. Nations, cultures, and geographic boundaries exist both now and in eternity.

Isa 40:16 And Lebanon *is* not sufficient to burn, Nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering.

If the famous forest and all its life could be burned it would fall short of a sacrifice that would honor the LORD.

Isa 40:17 All nations before Him *are* as nothing, And they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless.

Nations are "nothing" and "worthless" *when compared to God*. Theologians explain the comparisons this way:

God is both transcendent over and immanent in, His world. These nineteenth-century words express the thought that on the one hand God is distinct from His world and does not need it. While on the other hand, He permeates the world in sustaining creative power, shaping and steering it in a way that keeps it on its planned course.

Isa 40:18 To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him?

Isa 40:19 The workman molds an image, The goldsmith overspreads it with gold, And the silversmith casts silver chains. [Idols were often hung from a ceiling by "chains"].
Isa 40:20 Whoever is too impoverished for *such* a contribution Chooses a tree *that* will not rot; He seeks for himself a skillful workman To prepare a carved image *that* will not totter.

It's almost comical to realize that your idol is man-made from the God-made elements. Any idol, therefore, is inferior to the LORD. Not only that, idolatry by definition is worshipping the creation instead of the Creator.

Idolatry is ultimately replacing obedience to God with your own passions and pursuits. It is a "Me first" approach to living. A life built on sand will not stand.

The apostle Paul rebuked the Thessalonian believers for turning to God *from* idols. If you are not saved, you are an idolater.

Being awestruck with creation doesn't mean we go camping more often, in order to marvel at the stellar heavens. God was telling His chosen nation that creation was a guarantee that His promises & plans for them, "plans to prosper [them] and not to harm [them], plans to give [them] a hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11) will most assuredly be fulfilled. The Creator didn't create then walk away. He is involved, seeing to it all necessary things come to pass.

We have a guarantee as well. In the NT Book of Ephesians, we read that "having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory" (1:13-14). Regarding the word "guarantee" Warren Wiersbe writes,

"[The word] means 'engagement ring.' Isn't an engagement ring an assurance - a guarantee - that the promises made will be kept? Our relationship to God through Christ is a personal experience of love. He is the Bridegroom and His church is the bride. We know that He will come and claim His bride because He has given us His promise and His Spirit as [our] engagement ring. What greater assurance could we want?"

Be awestruck about this: God the Holy Spirit permanently indwells you, making you the Temple of God on earth. You might think, "I'm no Sistine Chapel or Norte Dame Cathedral. No, I'm a much greater Temple.

#2 - Are You Awestruck With The Lord As His New Creation? (v21-31)

We could have, and maybe should have, started with verse twenty-seven. God addresses "Jacob" and "Israel," saying, "Why do you say, O Jacob, And speak, O Israel: "My way is hidden from the LORD, And my just claim is passed over by my God"?"

God addresses the descendants of Abraham, the twelve tribes born from Jacob, the nation of Israel. They currently faced the Assyrian threat. In their future they would be captives in Babylon. After that, their pilgrimage on earth would be a rough & rocky road through history.

It continues to this very day. I'm not talking only about the war. Antisemitism is at a fever pitch. In Sydney, Australia, outside the Opera House, thousands of people chanted, "Gas the Jews."

Suffering on the scale of Israel's generates doubts. Those doubts eventually lead to a lament that God no longer looks upon them with love, and has taken away their "claim" to His promises and given them to others - the Gentile nations of the world.

It is not possible for any of God's promises for plans for ethnic Israel to fail.

Isa 40:21 Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

Isa 40:22 *It is* He who sits above the circle of the earth...

I see in this a reference to God's special creation of the universe:

- It speaks of "the beginning," as "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."
- "Foundations" have to do with the perfect placement of the earth in the greater universe around us.
- The "circle of the earth" probably refers to the horizon.

I don't care what unbelievers say. There is design in the universe, **and design requires a designer.**

A quick word about creation. There are old earth creationists and young earth creationists:

- God could have created the world over billions of years. Last week a story suggested the universe is now twice as old as scientist had previously speculated - 26b yrs.
- He could have done it in six 24hr days & nights.

We favor the young earth teaching.

It makes the most biblical sense with the reading of Genesis from a literal, historical, grammatical point of view. If the earth seems billions of years old, it is because God created it with the appearance of age. Take Adam for example. When the LORD formed him from the dust of the earth, he looked like he'd been alive for a while. He wasn't an infant or a toddler. He wasn't an awkward adolescent. He might have only been 5minutes old, but he looked like a mature man.

Isa 40:22 *It is* He who sits above the circle of the earth, And its inhabitants *are* like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.

The heavens are like a wilderness within which God condescends to live in a tent, e.g. the wilderness Tabernacle and later, the Temple.

Isa 40:23 He brings the princes to nothing; He makes the judges of the earth useless.
Isa 40:24 Scarcely shall they be planted, Scarcely shall they be sown, Scarcely shall their stock take root in the earth, When He will also blow on them, And they will wither, And the whirlwind will take them away like stubble.

The Bible presents a series of human empires that interact with Israel: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome are prominent. God raised them up to chastise the Jews. Each of them would fail, mostly because they would swell with pride.

You are born dying, deteriorating, decaying. At best you've got 100 years before you die, *but you could die at any moment.*

No one looks forward to waiting in line, or at an office. It is not uncommon to complain about it, saying something like, "My appointment was at 3pm and it is 4:15pm now."

There is one appointment you are more than happy to wait for.

You have an appointment with death. "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

Isa 40:25 "To whom then will you liken Me, Or to *whom* shall I be equal?" says the Holy One.

Isa 40:26 Lift up your eyes on high, And see who has created these *things*, Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, By the greatness of His might And the strength of *His* power; Not one is missing.

You think you're something? Maybe when compared to other people. But can you both number & name all the celestial bodies in the universe?

Isa 40:28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable.

In plain language God was saying, "I won't give up on you!" He won't become exasperated and toss away His chosen people.

God may not, but humans will. Antisemitism is to be expected from the world. What about the Church? After the apostles died, Jew-hating became a majority opinion in the church. Origen (185-251AD) maintained that "the blood of Jesus [falls] not only upon those who lived then but also upon all generations of the Jewish people following afterwards until the end of the world." St. Gregory of Nyssa (died 394AD) called the Jews "confederates of the devil... Sanhedrin of demons, accursed, utterly vile... enemies of all that is good." In the late fourth century St. John Chrysostom described Jews saying "[T]hey murder their offspring and immolate them to the devil." "For the crime of deicide, there is "no expiation possible... no pardon." He concluded ominously that the Jews are like an old plow horse that is "marked for slaughter.

Skip ahead many centuries. The Great Reformer, Martin Luther, wrote *The Jews and their Lies*. Among other things he said, "Their synagogues should be set on fire, their homes should likewise be broken down and destroyed."

Isa 40:29 He gives power to the weak, And to *those who have* no might He increases strength.

Isa 40:30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall,

Isa 40:31 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.

Spiritual burn-out has become a popular topic in the church. The main solution being suggested is that you take time off from serving the Lord to 'recharge.' Pastors, for example, are taking sabbaticals. One organization that assists pastors says (unashamedly), "A true Sabbatical is a season of Sabbath for prolonged rest. It's like stringing together a number of Sabbath days. It's an extended time in which you do no work. You do no pastoring, no leading, no ministering, no visioning the future of the church, no sermon planning. You don't try to accomplish anything big. *You just do nothing!*"

The Jews were described as "weak, having "no might," "faint," and "weary." Then in verse thirty-one there is a dramatic change. "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."

What made the difference? Was it a sabbatical? "But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew *their* strength." The word for "wait" is better rendered *hope*. We can think of it as *hopeful waiting*. It is having hope in the Lord's coming while we wait for Him.

Our verses compare us to "eagles." Jeremiah made a similar exhortation using horses: "If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, Then how can you contend with horses?" (12:5a).

God expected Jeremiah to have the spiritual energy of a man who could outrun horses.

Burn-out? Think about it. If you are a believer, you are permanently indwelt by God the Holy Spirit. He is an endless, immediate source of oil for your flame. You can 'fly like an eagle' and outrun horses to the extent you yield to Him and are led by Him.

The apostle Paul claimed that "If anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (Second Corinthians 5:7). Albert Barnes commented, "*There is a change produced in the renewed heart of man that is equivalent to the act of creation, and that bears a strong resemblance to it - a change, so to speak, as if the man was made over again, and had become new.*"

It is mind-blowing, but Paul understood the conversion of a sinner to be as much a working of God as was creation itself. "The change is so great as to make it proper to say that he is a new man. He has new views, new motives, new principles, new objects and plans of life. He seeks new purposes, and he lives for new ends."

We sing that we are "filled with wonder, awestruck wonder," at the mention of the Lord's name. Because we remain in our bodies of flesh, with their propensity to sin, things seem to peak, then fade as we walk with the Lord. We are told, for instance, that we can & do leave our first love.

The same is true of our being filled with awestruck wonder at the mention of the name of Jesus.

If it has been a while since you've been awestruck, you can get it back, because our God IS the awesome God.