

**Do You Know? Have You Heard?**  
**Isaiah 40:12-31**  
**June 30, 2013**

**Introduction**

Have you ever misjudged someone you didn't know? Sure you have. We do it all the time. I recall with fondness the lady in my choir who threatened to leave the church because I wanted them to sway to the music of a Black Gospel anthem. Later she became one our best friends at that church.

I remember being terrified as a first grader by one of the second-grade teachers doing playground duty during recess. She always wore a dark dress; her graying hair was in a bun and she was VERY STRICT. In my imagination, this is how I remember her:



There were two classes in each grade level at my school. I remember praying, "O Lord, don't let me get the witch next year." Well, I did. She was probably one of the best teachers I ever had. I learned a lot. My self-confidence grew. And I can't remember ever feeling more loved by a teacher.

There was professor in the music department at Biola that scared me as well in the first three semesters I was there. Not all professors in that department had their doctorate at that time, but he did. He was dignified and had the reputation of being very demanding. He was also dealing with some political wrangling in the music department at the time and it showed. He was intimidating. Every time I walked by his office, I wondered what went on in there. There seemed to be an aura of mystery and just a bit of terror that emanated from the door.

After my third semester, I was assigned to him for voice lessons. He was demanding, yes. But if there is anyone who would be the personification of "mentor" for me, it would be Dr. Bill Lock. It was Dr. Lock who took me as a student when other faculty thought I was a hopeless case. He was the only professor who gave me a personal key to his office so that I could practice in privacy rather than have other students staring at me. It was Dr. Lock who volunteered and gave me private conducting and composition lessons because he saw gifts and potential in me. It was

he and his wife who would frequently have me over to his house for ice cream and conversation. It was Bill who held the tissue box for thirty minutes as I bared my wounded soul to him during my last semester. It was Bill Lock who, a year after I graduated, shared and prayed with me until three o'clock in the morning at a music conference where he was teaching. A far cry from the dark and brooding professor who had intimidated me my first semesters in college.

Do you know who God is? Do you really know what he is like? A.W. Tozer has written, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." Our view of God is the most reliable predictor of our spiritual life and progress. Our view and practice of worship rises and falls on our understanding of who God is. The importance of evangelism is rooted in our view of God. Our very experience of life – whether it is characterized by frustration and angst or by peace and joy – ultimately hinges on what we really believe to be true about God.

The Hebrew prophet, Jeremiah, lived and worked in a culture that was hostile to the God of the Bible. Instead, they venerated the little gods of human intellect, power, and strength. God would eventually have the last word as they were humiliated and carried off into exile for seventy years. Jeremiah's counsel to them is timely for us who also live in a culture that is increasingly hostile and ignorant of God.

This is what the Lord says:

“Let not the wise boast of their wisdom  
or the strong boast of their strength  
or the rich boast of their riches,

but let the one who boasts boast about this:  
that they have the understanding to know me,  
that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness,  
justice and righteousness on earth,  
for in these I delight,”  
declares the Lord.

Jeremiah 9:23-24

### **The World of Isaiah**

One hundred years before Jeremiah, another significant prophet brought God's word to his people. Isaiah was probably from the ruling class of Judah, perhaps even related to the king. His calling to ministry occurred after the death of the powerful king Uzziah and he ministered through the reigns of both good and evil kings. He promised to bring the word of God to the people even though he was told that they would not listen. In the worst years of his ministry, King Ahaz would even sacrifice his own children to pagan gods. In the face of this blatant evil

and idolatry, Isaiah brought dire warnings which are recorded in the first half of his written record and glorious promises of restoration in the final chapters of the book.

Chapter 40 of Isaiah marks the beginning of the good news of the prophecy. For fully one half of the book, the prophet has tried to turn the people from their sin and idolatry. He as well as other prophets of the time have foretold of a coming exile, forced upon them by their defeat at the hands of the Babylonians. The prophecies are dire and sure. Babylon is a terrifying foe. Chapter 40 is a beautiful counterpoint of the opening woe of judgment and it opens with the assuring words, “Comfort, comfort my people.”

### **Q & A for the Skeptic – vs. 12-26 (1120)**

Isaiah did not suffer any delusions about who God was. His calling, recorded in the first eight verses of chapter six, was terrifying. He saw the glory of God – high and lifted up – and he was undone. His words were, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! ...for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” Isaiah’s words always reflect a high view and understanding of God’s power and being. In these verses, he confronts the arrogant skeptics, whether they are Jewish idolaters or Babylonian pagans who have no knowledge of the one true God.

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?  
 Who can fathom the Spirit of the Lord,  
 or instruct the Lord as his counselor?  
 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?

(vs. 12-14)

There is no language on earth that can adequately describe the nature of God. Scripture is left to metaphors and similes – word pictures that try to describe his attributes. The words here are lofty as the prophet asks his rhetorical questions. Can you even fathom what is being expressed here?

- All of the waters of the earth being held in his hand?
- Marked off the boundaries of space with a stretch of his hand?

For the skeptic who considers God to be irrelevant or the powerful who are arrogant enough to believe that they owe allegiance to no one, the prophet points his finger in their face. “Do you really think you know more than God?”

There are no words to fully describe God’s greatness, so the prophet resorts to over-the-top word pictures:

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.  
 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. (vs. 15-17)

In the day in which Babylon conquered Judah, there was no other nation on earth equal to them in military might and economic power. Read the Book of Daniel and you will observe their arrogance. In God’s eyes, mighty Babylon was less than a teardrop in a five gallon bucket – or a “dustbunny” in the city landfill. The same could be said for ancient Rome, or Hitler’s Nazi War Machine, or even America’s “superpower.” There is no forest large enough that could be set ablaze to offer a sacrifice worthy of Almighty God. Get the picture? The greatness of God is beyond description!

All of the nations that surrounded God’s people in the Hebrew Scriptures were idolaters. They didn’t know the one true God, so they made up their own imposters. The prophet addresses his next words to them and to those in Judah who turned from God to the phony dieties.

With whom, then, will you compare God?  
 To what image will you liken him?  
 As for an idol, a metalworker casts it,  
 and a goldsmith overlays it with gold  
 and fashions silver chains for it.  
 A person too poor to present such an offering  
 selects wood that will not rot;  
 they look for a skilled worker  
 to set up an idol that will not topple.  
 (vs. 18-20)

Are you grasping the drama of this debate? The prophet is not flinching one bit at military, economic, or the demonic power of pagan gods. He takes them on forcefully. In-your-face. He

doesn't back down and he asserts the supremacy of God over all others. (Hear this with your heart as well as your mind...)

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

“To whom will you compare me?  
 Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One.  
 Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:  
 Who created all these?  
 He who brings out the starry host one by one  
 and calls forth each of them by name.  
 Because of his great power and mighty strength,  
 not one of them is missing. (vs. 21-26)

### **Q & A for the Downhearted – vs. 27-29**

Is this the God you know? Is this the One on whom you have placed your faith and fixed the “gaze of your soul?”

If so, let me ask you, “How big are your problems?” Write down your biggest problem on your bulletin. Is there anything that God doesn't know? Is there anything that he cannot do for you?

Why do you complain, Jacob?  
 Why do you say, Israel,  
 “My way is hidden from the Lord;  
 my cause is disregarded by my God”?  
 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.

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

(vs. 27-29)

### **How Big is Your God? – vs. 30-31**

So let me ask you another question, “How big is your God?” What comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you. If your problems are too big, then your God is too small. If this God – the one we’ve just read about and pondered – is the God whom you worship, then all the concerns of your life will be put in the proper perspective and you will be at peace. How big is your God? The question before you and me this morning is what you think about God. And here is the paradox: The God whose glory can never be fully described by the language of men is seeking men and women with humble hearts to whom he will gladly reveal himself. The indescribable God of the Bible has revealed himself through the man, Jesus Christ, so that he may be known by you.

I don’t know what issues or burdens you carry today. But whatever they may be, they pale before awesome power and goodness of God.

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

(vs. 30-31)

The great hymn-writer, Isaac Watts, has written:

Eternal Power, whose high abode  
Becomes the grandeur of a God:  
Infinite lengths beyond the bounds  
Where stars revolve their little rounds:

Thee while the first archangels sing,  
He hides his face behind his wings:  
And ranks of shining thrones around  
Fall worshipping, and spread the ground.

Lord what shall earth and ashes do?  
We would adore our Maker too;  
From sin and dust to Thee we cry,

The Great, the Holy, and the High.

Earth, from afar, hath heard Thy fame,  
 And worms have learn'd to lisp Thy Name;  
 But O! the glories of Thy mind  
 Leave all our soaring thoughts behind.

God is in heaven, and men below:  
 Be short our tunes; our words be few;  
 A solemn reverence checks our songs,  
 And praise sits silent on our tongues.

It seems we have lost the art of reverence. We need to recapture a right understanding of the nature of God...

This awesome God, whose attributes challenge the very language we speak, is knowable. And the heavenly hosts invite us into adoration in song with them:

*Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty...*

**Benediction – Hosea 6:3**

*Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord;  
 His going out is sure as the dawn;  
 He will come to us as the showers,  
 As the spring rains that water the earth.*

*Go then, in the knowledge of the Lord  
 that will give you wings to soar like eagles and feet to run in the race of life..  
 In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit;  
 Blessed Trinity the Three in One.  
 Amen.*