

# *The Centre Of The Universe*



IO, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto are the names of the four largest moons of the planet Jupiter. They cannot be seen by the naked eye, even on the clearest night from the highest mountain. In fact they were not seen by anyone until 1609 when the astronomer Galileo observed them through a telescope. Over several days he watched the four moons. Each night they changed their position. The discovery of these four moons was important in the history of science, because they were the first objects in the sky to be observed which did not go around the Earth.

Everything we can see in the sky with our own eyes seems to go around the Earth. The Sun goes up in the east, goes across the sky and goes down in the west. The Moon goes up in the east, goes across the sky and goes down in the west. The stars go up ... Well, you get the idea. It's only natural that people think that the Earth is the centre of the Universe and everything else in the sky revolves around it.

Have you ever met someone like that? Someone who thinks that they are the centre of the universe? Someone who thinks that everything revolves around themselves? If someone else hurts them, they make it all about themselves. If they hurt someone else, they still find a way to make it all about themselves – about how they can't help hurting other people because they are hurting so much inside, because their parents were so cruel to them, when they were little children. Or something like that. You know the kind of person. They don't say sorry. They can't say sorry. They don't check to see if the other person is all right. They are too busy justifying themselves – everything revolves around them.

Of course it's only natural to think this way. We see the world through one pair of eyes. We can see to the far horizon. But in the middle of everything is ourselves. And unless we can read minds, we only have access to our own thoughts. We've got no idea what other people are thinking. For all we know they're not people at all, just robots put here to do what we want. It's only natural that as we go from one experience to another we think of our life like the story in a book with ourselves as the main character. And everyone else exists to make us happy.

## **Psalm 8**

*Lord, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name  
in all the earth!*

*You have set your glory  
in the heavens.*

*Through the praise of children  
and infants you have established  
a stronghold  
against your enemies,  
to silence the foe  
and the avenger.*

*When I consider your heavens,  
the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars,  
which you have set in place,  
what is mankind  
that you are mindful of them,  
human beings, that you care  
for them?*

*You have made them  
a little lower than the angels  
and crowned them  
with glory and honour.*

*You made them rulers over  
the works of your hands;  
you put everything  
under their feet:  
all flocks and herds,  
and the animals of the wild,  
the birds in the sky,  
and the fish in the sea,  
all that swim the paths of the seas.  
Lord, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name  
in all the earth!*

## PREACH THE WORD!

### The Real Centre Of The Universe

BUT in Psalm 8 we learn that what actually lies at the centre of the Universe is the God who made it all, the God who is above and beyond the Universe, the God whose special love and care is for us.

Psalm 8 begins and ends with these words, 'O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your Name in all the Earth.' The first two words, 'O Lord,' remind us that this psalm is in fact a song of praise addressed to God. It is not a poem addressed to you about Him. It is, in fact, a prayer to God addressed to Him. Again and again the psalm mentions the word 'You', and by the word 'You' he doesn't mean 'you'. He means the Lord.

*'How majestic is Your Name in all the Earth.'*

*'You have set Your glory above the Heavens.'*

*'From the lips of children You have ordained praise.'*

*'When I consider Your Heavens, the work of Your hands ...'*

In the very first line, from the very first syllable, Psalm 8 directs our attention away from ourselves and to Someone else. Another Person. With thoughts and plans and feelings.

A Person who speaks and hears and promises and answers. A Person who is more fit than we are to take His proper place at the centre of the universe. He is the Lord, the Creator of Heaven and Earth.

Not only is He the Lord. But He is our Lord. 'O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your Name in all the Earth.' He is not just the impersonal God who lives way up there somewhere above the dome of the sky. But He is the personal God who has made us for Himself. He is our God. And we are His people. We belong to each other – not just because He has made us, but because He has give us His great and precious promises so that our destiny is not just to be born and to live and to die and to return to dust, but to live with Him forever as He wishes.

It is this God, our God, whose glory and praise and majesty are sung in this psalm. 'O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your Name in all the Earth. You have set Your glory above the Heavens.' Every corner of the globe, every extremity of the universe bears witness to the wisdom and power of its Creator. From the beauty and strength of diamonds found in mines deep under the Earth, to the heart of suns where diamonds are made in the heat and pressure of that furnace.

They all proclaim the glory of the God who made the cats and dogs and dodos and dinosaurs; the God who made the Moon, the moons of Jupiter and the moons of distant planets in the furthest galaxy; the God who smashes continents together to pile up the highest mountains; the God who tears them apart again to form the depths of the seas; the God who sends the rain not just to fill our dams and to water our crops, but so that the rivers will run to water all the Earth; the God who acts not for our pleasure and convenience, but to do His will and to fulfil His purpose. His praises are sung as much by the dance of the stars at night and by the cries of infants and babies in their need and distress as they are by the largest choirs in the tallest cathedrals. He is the Lord. He is our Lord.

In verse 3 we see David, the writer of this psalm, standing under the stars. He is possibly thinking back to a time when he was caring for his father's sheep, remembering a cloudless night when the stars shone, their light not drowned out by the bright city lights but shining like precious jewels in the sky. David does not know that the closest one is 40 thousand billion kilometres away. He does not know that the furthest one he can see is 20 billion billion kilometres away. He has no idea that all those stars form a spinning disc we call a galaxy, which contains 5000 stars he can see and another 100 billion that he can't. He will never know that if the galaxy was only as large as the Earth then the Earth would be smaller than the finest particle of dust. But as he stands under the dome of the night sky, as he feels its immensity pressing upon his mind, he can't help but feel incredibly small.



## PREACH THE WORD!

### God – So Inconceivably Immense

'WHEN I consider Your Heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have set in place ...'

And yet the Scriptures teach him that behind the vastness of space is a God so inconceivably immense that the universe is simply the work of His hands, and the stars have been set in place with His fingers. So David's mouth erupts in questions that can't even begin to express adequately his astonishment.

'What is man that You remember him? What is the son of man that You care for him?'

If our planet is nothing more than the dust that floats in a sunbeam, then who are we to think that we are special to the God whom the whole universe is too small to contain? Who are we to imagine that our petty concerns are of interest to Him? Who are we to presume for a moment that the whole world revolves around us?

But the Scriptures teach us that God's love is upon us. He has made us to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him. He has given us life, He fills our hearts with joy and He has given us

the curiosity and determination to search out the Earth and space to discover all its secrets. Our Creator has made us to be creators too so that we can imagine, design and build things of beauty and usefulness. He has stooped so low, like a grandfather bending down to play with his grandson, in order to communicate with us and He invites us, even commands us, to speak with Him in prayer. The night sky with all its vast emptiness can make a man small, but the God who made it all can make him stand tall.

'You have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings. You have crowned him with glory and honour. You made him ruler over the works of Your hands. You put everything under his feet, all flocks and herds and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air and the fish of the sea.'

If only it were true. If only we were able to live up to this great dignity. If only we were able to match this great power that is within our grasp with even greater responsibility. For we can dam up rivers so that our crops never die. We can carve through mountains so that our cars drive fast and straight. We can bridge wide valleys. We can sail the widest ocean. We can put a human being on the moon. We can tame all animals so that they obey us and yet we cannot tame ourselves so that we do what is good for ourselves.

The Lord has made us only a little lower than Himself. We have the power to build or to destroy, to imagine possible futures and to make the one we choose come true, yet we cannot match that God-like power with a God-like love and care for our world or for our neighbours.

The French philosopher Blaise Pascal said that humanity is both the glory and the shame of the universe. How can we believe, as Psalm 8 says, that all things are under our control, when we cannot even control ourselves?



## **PREACH THE WORD!**

### **Who Is In Control?**

HEBREWS chapter 2 answers this question by saying that only Jesus fulfils the great destiny revealed in Psalm 8. Only He could match His God-like powers with His God-like love and care. We do not see everything under our control. But we do see Jesus. For a little while He too was made a little lower than the heavenly beings. He became one of us. The Creator of the Universe became a creature of flesh and blood, but now He is crowned with glory and honour because He suffered death for us all. Of all human beings He was the most worthy to make Himself the Centre of the Universe, to bend everything to His will, to use all others for His own purpose and plan. Even so, He bowed His head to His Father's purpose and gave His life to fulfil His Father's plan. He took our sin and suffered on the cross for our shame. God gave us life but we turned our back on Him and chose death instead, so Jesus took it from us and restored us to life again.

By His life and death Jesus showed us that to live in God's good world and to live well, to live according to the purpose for which we were made is to set the Lord, our Maker, our Creator, not only in the centre of His universe, but at the centre of ours as well. All our hopes, all our plans, all our desires must take their proper place in revolving around the will of our heavenly Father, whose will for us is that we might live with Him and for Him, for the Father raised His obedient Son Jesus to life and crowned Him with glory and honour. Jesus has been made the Lord, our Lord. At the right hand side of God sits the true heir to the promises made in Psalm 8, and we long for the day when He will return and everything will be placed under His feet, when every tear will be wiped away and we will be made new according to God's original purpose.

### **Jesus – Alpha And Omega**

SO Psalm 8 begins and ends with the same words, 'Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your Name in all the Earth! Only now we are wiser and better able to appreciate just exactly what they mean: 'O Lord, our Lord, our Maker, our Creator, who became our Brother, our Friend, how majestic is Your Name in all the Earth – the great Name of Jesus, the One who truly belongs at the centre of our universe.'

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