

“The LORD Reigns!”
 by Pastor Jason Van Bommel
 Psalm 93

¹ *The LORD reigns; he is robed in majesty;
 the LORD is robed; he has put on strength as his belt.
 Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved.*

² *Your throne is established from of old;
 you are from everlasting.*

³ *The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
 the floods have lifted up their voice;
 the floods lift up their roaring.*

⁴ *Mightier than the thunders of many waters,
 mightier than the waves of the sea,
 the LORD on high is mighty!*

⁵ *Your decrees are very trustworthy;
 holiness befits your house,
 O LORD, forevermore.*

- Psalm 93, ESV

In the summer of 2010, when our kids were very young, we had an opportunity to go to the Ft Lauderdale area for a family vacation. We went to the beach and the waves were crashing quite nicely. None of my kids was old enough to go very far into the ocean by themselves, but they all wanted me to carry them and take them out to where the waves were crashing. This was fun – at first. On our second day, the waves were more intense, and they had posted rip tide warnings. This is when things became much less fun. I got swept off my feet a couple of times while carrying kids, and as I went under the water and lost my grip on them (They were wearing floaties and no one got hurt), we decided we needed to reconsider this idea. Checking the forecast led us to head across to the Gulf Side of Florida and Sanibel Island, where we had a much better time with much calmer waters. I found out that day that, though I was the big, strong daddy, I was not mightier than the waves of the sea – not by a long shot.

Confident Proclamation

Psalm 93 is a confident proclamation of the strong, majestic, and unshakable reign of the LORD. *The LORD reigns!* The opening line proclaims. The Christian Standard Bible has an

exclamation mark after reigns and makes the opening proclamation stand alone, where the ESV and many other translations combine it with “he is robed in majesty.”

I like the exclamation point, which seems to reflect well what this opening line of Psalm 93 is – not just a mere statement of fact, like “The sun rose at 5:39 this morning.” It is rather a joyful and confident proclamation – *The LORD Reigns!* – more like the newspaper headlines at the end of World War 2 – “Germany Surrenders” took up half of the front page of the *Baltimore Sun* on May 7, 1945, while the *New York Herald Tribune* ran the single word in giant print – VICTORY

We should not just believe and agree with the truth that the LORD reigns, but we should be filled with confident joy over this fact, and we should willingly and boldly proclaim it. The fact that the LORD reigns makes all His promises reliable, all His plans and purposes sure, and our future hope absolutely secure. If the LORD does not reign, all of these are thrown into question. But, praise God, the LORD reigns!

I. The Majesty and Splendor of God’s Reign (vv. 1-2)

After making the confident proclamation that the LORD reigns, verses 1-2 go on to describe the character of the LORD’s reign:

*he is robed in majesty;
the LORD is robed; he has put on strength as his belt.
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved.
Your throne is established from of old;
you are from everlasting.*

The LORD’s reign is majestic, strong, and eternal. And the LORD’s eternally strong and majestic reign makes His world very secure and stable.

The LORD is robed in majesty. This language is similar to what we heard from Psalm 104 last week – “*You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering yourself with light as with a garment.*”

Majesty. What exactly is majesty? James Montgomery Boice said, “Majesty is hard to define, but it has to do with dignity, authority of sovereign power, stateliness, and grandeur. It is

the proper characteristic of earthly monarchs, who have often gone to great lengths to enhance the impression of their majesty by multiplications of trappings of power. But it is supremely the attribute of Him who is the Monarch over all and who does not need to multiply the trappings of His power.” He also said, “Majesty is an attribute that links God’s holiness and sovereignty.”

God’s essential attribute is His holiness – His splendid and radiant otherness – that He is in a category all by Himself, without rival or peer, the Father of lights with whom there is no shadow of turning. When God’s holiness shines in His sovereign rule over all things – this is majesty!

The LORD is not only robed in majesty, but He is belted with strength – “*he has put on strength as his belt.*” This is a picture of the LORD in action. When a king went to war, he would rise from his throne, set aside his outer robes, and tie a belt around his waist. The LORD’s belt is unopposable, unimaginable strength.

*Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved.
Your throne is established from of old;
you are from everlasting.*

The LORD’s sovereignty, majesty, and strength are nothing new. He is not growing in His rule or holiness or splendor or might. We sometimes talk about God’s kingdom advancing in the world. By that, we mean that more and more people are coming to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords and are coming to God through King Jesus. But God’s rule over His world is eternal and absolute. Because of this, God’s purposes for His world stand secure and cannot be altered.

II. The Undefeatable Power of God’s Reign (vv. 3-4)

Now, this absolute sovereignty of the LORD and His eternal majesty and unopposable strength do not mean that God is actually unopposed in His reign. Verses 3-4 speak of the uprising rebellion against God’s rule –

³ *The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
the floods have lifted up their voice;
the floods lift up their roaring.*

*4 Mightier than the thunders of many waters,
mightier than the waves of the sea,
the LORD on high is mighty!*

In Mark 4:35-41, we read of Jesus riding in a boat with His disciples across the Sea of Galilee –

35 On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” 36 And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. 37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. 38 But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” 39 And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40 He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?” 41 And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (ESV)

Jesus showed He had power over the raging tumult of the waters that seemed to be overwhelming and about to drown the disciples. Some of the disciples were men who had spent their lives on the Sea of Galilee, and they were terrified, but Jesus showed He was far mightier – and more terrifying – than the crashing waves of the Sea.

In the ancient worldview, the sea represented chaos and danger, and the flood waters represented forces of destruction and evil. Verses 3-4 are not speaking of literal waters. All creation in the natural world obeys God’s voice perfectly. But the floods and the thunders of many waters are primarily being used symbolically here to refer to the rebellion of the world against God.

There’s an intensification of the opposition of the flood waters in verse 3 – from “*have lifted up*” to “*have lifted up their voice*” to “*lift up their roaring.*” This is a serious, committed, ongoing rebellion against God. And it is powerful. “*The thunders of many waters*” and “*the waves of the sea*” are indeed mighty; they are far mightier than we are, but they are not as mighty as the LORD.

This powerful, raging opposition of the world is described elsewhere in the Bible. Psalm 2 opens by asking –

*Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying,
“Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us.”* – Psalm 2:1-3, ESV

If you want to know the root cause of the out-of-control problems in our society, I can give it to you in a single word: **autonomy**. Autonomy means “self-law” or “self-rule.” It is the root problem with fallen humanity, arising from the root sin, pride. In their pride, the nations say, “*Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.*”

This is what caused Adam and Even to sin in the Garden of Eden. Satan had convinced them that God was holding out on them and that if they would only eat the forbidden fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, they would be more like God, able to determine good and evil for themselves and not needing His guidance.

People ever since have been convinced that we can rule our own lives, and we can determine for ourselves what is right and wrong. And what does the world use for the basis of its moral self-determination? 1 John 2:15-16 tells us –

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. (ESV)

But then, what does the very next verse in 1 John 2 tell us?

And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. – 1 John 2:17, ESV

And what does the very next verse in Psalm 2, after the raging of the nations, tell us –

*He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.*

*Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
“As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill.” – Psalm 2:4-5, ESV*

It is very easy to get distressed about the raging rebellion of the nations and especially of our own society. After all, what has America’s committed crusade for autonomy gotten us? Since the societal upheaval of the 1960’s, when autonomy took center stage in American life, we’ve seen the legalization of abortion lead to the slaughter of over 65 million innocent unborn children.

Autonomy has led the cheapening of marriage vows and the devaluation of marriage, which has led to 40% of children being born to single parents. About 1 in 4 children in America live in a household with only one parent and no other adults, compared to just 7% of children worldwide who are living in single-parent families. While many single parents are doing an incredible job with this impossible task, being raised by a single parent is the single biggest risk factor for poverty and incarceration by far. On top of this, almost 50% of children in America experience their parents getting divorced, which has devastating consequences of its own. I once heard someone who works at a college say that he knew that if he met someone who lived with both of their parents who were still married to each other, they likely came from a Christian home.

In more recent years, America’s raging rebellion of autonomy has brought a dramatic increase in mental health problems, especially for those under 25 years old. Rising drug abuse rates and deaths by drug overdose, suicides, hospitalizations, and incarcerations are all symptoms of a culture that is deeply sick with the infection of autonomy. Instead of being encouraged to find their identity, security, hope, and meaning in being ruled by a sovereign, holy, all-powerful, eternal and loving God, people are being told they need to define themselves and order their own lives, which simultaneously is what people say they want and also what creates immense pressure to figure out who you are and what you want and what would make your life meaningful – That’s far too much pressure for so many people, who opt out of get crushed under the weight of it all. It turns out we can’t handle being our own gods after all.

And so, the raging rebellion of the nations in attempting to overthrow God has failed. The flood waters have lifted up their roaring voice, but God remains securely on His throne.

Instead, those flood waters have drowned the people of the nations under the thunder of their pounding. Can you feel the weight of them, pressing in on your life, on your family?

What can we do? We can do what the psalmist does and cry out to God over this tragic reality. Notice the first line of verse 3 – *“The floods have lifted up, O LORD.”* The Psalmist isn’t just crying about the floods; he’s crying *to the LORD* about the floods. That makes all the difference. When the floods lift up their thunderous raging against the LORD, and the sound and fury of it all threatens to overwhelm your soul, take it to God and cry out to Him. Worship Him and be reminded of Who is truly sovereign and mighty!

III. The Trustworthy Holiness of God’s Reign (v. 5)

And this brings us to verse 5 –

*Your decrees are very trustworthy;
holiness befits your house,
O LORD, forevermore.*

When we worship the LORD and focus our attention on Him, we see how trustworthy His decrees are. Now, the LORD’s decrees are of two kinds, and this is important for us to understand: He has secret decrees and revealed decrees. Ephesians 1:11 says, *“In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will”* So, God *“works all things according to the counsel of His will.”* As we saw two weeks ago in Psalm 103, *“The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.”*

But God has not revealed everything to us. Deuteronomy 29:29 says, *“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”*

So, which decrees of the LORD are very trustworthy, His revealed decrees that we find in Scripture, those things He shows us about Himself and His ways that we are called to believe and obey, or the secret things that He has not revealed? Of course, ALL of the decrees of the LORD are very trustworthy, and we are called to trust what He has told us as well as what He has not revealed.

How? Well, based on what God has revealed and what He has done, we can know His wisdom, power, and holy character. Especially in the full revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ and in His death and resurrection, we can see the love of God in sending His Son to save us, the power of God to defeat sin, Satan, death, and hell, the wisdom of God in planning all things so well and so unexpectedly, and the righteous and holy character of God shown in His incredible mercy and perfect justice.

So, we allow the revealed Word of God to lead us to a deeper understanding of the incarnate Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and His saving work in His death and resurrection. This shows us the true heart and character of God, which strengthens our faith in Him. This allows us to trust God even when His secret decrees order things for us and our lives or our nation that confuse and overwhelm us. We take that confusion and overwhelming hurt to the LORD and cry out to Him, trusting that He is mightier than the thundering flood waters and ALL His decrees are very trustworthy.

And this brings us to the final lines of Psalm 93 – *“holiness befits your house, O LORD, forevermore.”* Perhaps a more literal translation could be *“holiness beautifies your house, O LORD.”* Holiness is beautiful. The LORD Himself is holy, holy, holy, dwelling in unapproachable light and praised by angels continually. But the LORD, through the redemption of Jesus, makes all in His house, all His true people, holy. The Bible commands us to *“Be holy, even as the LORD your God is holy.”* And this command is also a promise of what God has done, is doing, and will do through Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 10:14 says, *“by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”* *“Those who are being sanctified”* means *those who are being made holy*. We are in the process of being beautified with the holiness of God, but we have already been perfected in holiness for all time.

Or, as 1 John 3:2 puts it: *“Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”* We are the children of the holy, holy, holy God, and one day, we will be just like His perfectly Holy Son when we see Him face-to-face.

So, when Psalm 93 concludes *“holiness beautifies your house, O LORD, forevermore,”* what we read here is at the same time a statement, a calling, and a promise. Psalm 23 famously ends with David's confident hope: *“I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”* God is holy, holy,

holy, and He dwells in in approachable light, and no one may see His glory and live. So, how can David be so confident that he will dwell in the house of the LORD forever? The same way we can – by God’s call and promise in Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ the Righteous One, the Holy One of God, is the only human being rightly qualified to beautify the house of the LORD with His presence. By faith in Jesus, all that He has becomes ours, and all that He is in His human nature is true and is becoming true of us. And so, we are called to be holy, and we are promised that we have been made holy and will be made holy in Jesus forever.

Do We Really Believe the Bible?

All of this brings us to our closing question: Do we really believe the Bible?

The Bible tells us that the LORD reigns in majesty and with strength, eternally and sovereignly supreme over all things. *Do we really believe the Bible when it tells us this?*

The Bible tells us that the LORD on high is mightier than all the raging rebellion of the nations. *Do we really believe the Bible when it tells us this?*

The Bible tells us that ALL the decrees of the LORD are very trustworthy, those we see and understand and those we do not. *Do we really believe the Bible when it tells us this?*

The Bible tells us that, in Jesus Christ, we have been perfected for all time and we are being made holy, so that we can adorn the house of God forever. *Do we really believe the Bible when it tells us this?*

If we do believe the Bible, and we take God at His word by faith, how is that changing the way we live? Are we resting in His sovereignty when the news distresses us? Are we looking to Him in our distress as the Rock that is higher and stronger than we are and stronger than the raging rebellion of the world? Are we submitting by faith to His decrees? Are we looking in hope to the day when we will, in holiness, adorn the house of the LORD forever?

May the LORD be pleased to write His word so deeply in our hearts that it changes everything about us.

