

"Impossible Possibilities: An Incomparable God" by Rev. Dr. Peter Thompson

Psalms 89:5-18
Isaiah 40:12-31

God, the God in whom we worship and praise, the God in whom we declare sovereign and worthy of our loyalty and allegiance, is the ONE and ONLY True God. (2x)

"Our God is greater, our God is stronger; God, You are higher than any other," are the words to a worship song written by Chris Tomlin. God is healer, awesome in power. Bigger, stronger, most powerful of all gods, and none can stand against Our God.

When we declare "God as the ONE and ONLY True God" what are we declaring? Do we think of God as one God among other gods or do we take it to mean that God is the only God? The background to these lyrics from Tomlin, and more importantly the text Dave read a moment ago in Psalm 89, give us insight into this.

The ancient Hebrews lived in a world full of idolatry and competing deities. As was true of the Egyptians, Romans, and Greeks with their pantheons of gods, so also the Canaanites, Assyrians, and Babylonians had their own deities to worship and fear. Generation upon generation the Hebrews found themselves amid various nations and gods. The families of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had demonstrated a mix of religious loyalties, not always being true to the God of Abraham. Under Moses and Aaron's tenure, the people had fashioned a golden calf, likely a version of Ba'al, fertility god and god of the thunderstorm. The stories continue with Joshua calling the people to follow his example of following only Yahweh. Not much changed during the subsequent period of the Judges.

For Israel, however, only Yahweh (God) was to be worshipped and praised and glorified. All other idols and gods were called to be set aside to worship the God they believed was the ONE and ONLY True God. Why? Why didn't the Israelites just catch a ride and join with all the others? According to history the Egyptians, Romans, and Greeks had quite the life living with their gods and because of this it was quite the test of temptation for the Israelites. But the Israelites had a different God to worship, a God believed and witnessed and experienced to be incomparable to all the rest. Yahweh was the One Moses claimed had heard their cry in Egypt, and who under Joshua had led them to reclaim the land promised to Abraham.

Listen to these words written in Isaiah 40:12-31. Eugene Peterson, author of The Message translation titles this section, "The Creator of All You Can See or Imagine."

**Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, *scooped up the ocean in his two hands,*
or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens, *measured the sky between his thumb and little finger?***

Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket,
or weighed the mountains on the scales
and the hills in a balance?

¹³ Who can fathom the Spirit of the LORD, told God what to do
or instruct the LORD as his counselor?

¹⁴ Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, *what expert would he have gone to for advice*

and who taught him the right way, *what school would he attend to learn justice?*

Who was it that taught him knowledge,
or showed him the path of understanding?

¹⁵ Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket;
they are regarded as dust on the scales, *a mere smudge on a window*;
he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust.

¹⁶ Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires,
nor its animals enough for burnt offerings.

¹⁷ Before him all the nations are as nothing;
they are regarded by him as worthless
and less than nothing, *a minus*.

¹⁸ With whom, then, will you compare God? *Who even comes close to being like God?*
To what image will you liken him?

¹⁹ As for an idol, *some no-god idol*, a metalworker casts it,
and a goldsmith overlays it with gold
and fashions silver chains for it.

²⁰ 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, *some no-god idol*, that will not topple.

²¹ Do you not know? *Have you not been paying attention?*

Have you not heard? *Have you not been listening?*

Has it not been told you from the beginning? *Haven't you heard these stories all your life? Don't you understand the foundation of all things?*

²² God 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.

²³ He brings princes to naught, *God ignores what all the princes say and do*,
and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ **“To whom will you compare me? *Who is like me? Who holds a candle to me? Or who is my equal?*” says the Holy One.**

²⁶ **Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:
Who created all these? Who do you think made all this?
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.**

²⁷ **Why do you complain, Jacob?**

**Why do you say, Israel,
“My way is hidden from the LORD;
my cause is disregarded by my God? *God has lost track of me and doesn’t care what happens to me?*”**

²⁸ **Do you not know? *Don’t you know anything?***

**Have you not heard? *Haven’t you been listening?*
The LORD is the everlasting God, *God doesn’t come and go*, God lasts,
the Creator of the ends of the earth, *of all you can see or imagine*.
He will not grow tired or weary, *doesn’t pause to catch his breath*,
and his understanding no one can fathom, *he knows everything, inside and out*.**

²⁹ **He gives strength to the weary, *energizes those who get tired*,
and increases the power of the weak.**

³⁰ **Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;**

³¹ **but those who hope in the LORD, *who wait upon God*,
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.**

The God proclaimed and proclaiming in this text is the ONE and ONLY True God, Yahweh, and it is to this God, we are to make our covenant promises and place our trust and faith and worship and praise and glorify. Yahweh is an incomparable God.

Worshipping the ONE and ONLY True God was not just an early Israelite tradition left behind. Yahweh, the God of Israel, is also the God of the New Testament, born in the image of Jesus as God incarnate. In Jesus, God became personal, living among humanity to show the way. Jesus, as God, became the example of faithfulness and hope of salvation for all people. Jesus, as God, came to expand the glory and revelation of God beyond the Israelites (Jews) into all surrounding areas and eventually around the world.

Was it clear to everyone who the supreme God was? Unfortunately, not. Idols continued to be worshipped and other gods continued to gain allegiance. The battle of gods raged in many

ways around the world. The golden calf and wooden statues were upgraded to more gold and silver, leaders sought more power and had more greed toward things they wanted, regardless of who was in the way. Even into today, we can witness the battle of gods among us; money is a god, work is a god, politics are a god, self-preservation is a god, sports are a god, cars are a god, alcohol and drugs are a god, medication is a god, exercise is a god. There are many gods. We can tend to make idols quickly. We can latch on to the latest philosophy or self-help book or trend or pattern.

In the early church, the good news of Yahweh, God, spread among the people. Ephesians 1:19 reads that God's power is '**incomparably great**'. God's power is beyond comparison because there is no other power in heaven or on earth that can come anywhere near it. Like God himself there is nothing up there on that level that we can say 'God's power is like this.' Like God himself, his power is one of a kind. Paul goes on to state that God's power is 'for those who believe.'

All this can mean something to us today. It can mean we don't have to spend time creating idols or worshipping small gods. It means we need to understand the limit of power we are to give these other things over our lives because there is only ONE True God. It means for those who believe in God and Jesus, God's power is possible to be felt and witnessed and experienced. It means God's awesome, incomparable power is on our side, active for us not against us. All that God did in and through the incarnation and life of Christ, and through his death and resurrection was done for us, with us and our eternal well-being in mind. All the defeat of sin, death, and Satan that his power achieved was done for us. All the amazing work of regeneration, redemption, and renewal – all of the power of God that brought this about ... was active for us. No other god is like the ONE and ONLY True God, "**far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given ...**" (Ephesians 1:19-21)

"And if Our God is for us, then who could ever stop us? And if Our God is with us, then what can stand against?" (*Our God* (is greater), Chris Tomlin)

God, the God in whom we worship and praise, the God in whom we declare sovereign and worthy of our loyalty and allegiance, is Yahweh, the ONE and ONLY True God. May all glory honor and praise be to God, forever and ever. Let all God's people say... Amen.