

When I Consider the Heavens

by Earl R. Clark

Earl R. Clark's sermon explores the majesty of God in creation and the profound significance of humanity's relationship with Him amidst the vastness of the universe.

Duration: 40:23

Scripture: Psalm 8:1-8, Revelation 10:1-3

Topics: "Man"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of investigating and studying the scriptures to find eternal life and reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. The sermon also highlights the need for believers to live in a way that proclaims the glory of God to those around them. The psalm being discussed is Psalm 8, which speaks of the majesty of God and His creation. The speaker mentions greetings from friends and fellow believers in Rochester and emphasizes the vastness of God's glory in the earth and heavens.

Transcript

Would you turn with me please to Psalm 8, a gem, nine verses long, with which I think most of you are well familiar, but we'd like to read it together this morning. Psalm 8, a psalm of David. O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth, who has set thy glory above the heavens.

Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the Son of Man that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands, thou hast put all things under his feet.

All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth. Before we begin to discuss this psalm, I'd like to fulfill my promise to some friends in Rochester and bring you greetings from David and Doris Logan, who I expect will be back at the Park of the Palms in the will of the Lord after Christmas.

And from Charlie and Jean Reed, who have enjoyed fellowship with you here before and may be back again. And also from our brother John Bramhall, who was in Rochester not long ago, and when he heard that we were coming down this way, he said, please give my love to all the saints there. The psalm that we read is a psalm of immense scope.

In verse 1 it takes in all the earth. In verse 3 it takes in the heavens. That is what we call the sidereal heavens or the heavens in which the stars and the planets and our moon move.

And then in verse 1 it takes in something more. It speaks about the glory of God or the majesty of God above the heavens. The very abode of God himself is included in this psalm.

And then in verse 2 we have also included the moral and the spiritual world. Something perhaps outside of the material creation, something additional to it, and possibly something even more important than the material universe that God has made. First of all, then, we have the earth brought before us.

And of course you all know, we all realize that the earth is shrinking, not so much literally as it is in terms of the amount of time that it takes for us to fly around the earth or to travel about it in some other fashion even. Driving down from Rochester, New York to Florida wasn't so much of a chore really as it used to be with most of the interstate highway completed and we can travel along comfortably at 70 miles an hour. Automobiles are better than they used to be and the distance from Rochester to Florida does not seem to be only perhaps about half as great as it used to be 20 or 30 years ago.

Nevertheless, the earth is still immense and if we think about flying in a jet airplane from, say, Miami airport to New York, if we happen to have a very, very clear day and if we were flying at, say, 25 or 30,000 feet as is usual, we might possibly be able to see as far as 50 miles out of either side of the plane and thereby cover visually, not too well at the edges, but to some extent cover visually a swath 100 miles wide and perhaps 1,200 miles long, something of that order. Well, that's a lot of territory to see and yet we would have seen something much less than 1% of just the land areas of this earth in that trip. And we would have to travel that distance with that visibility for five days a week for roughly a whole year in order to see just the land areas of the earth.

And the land areas are only one-third of the earth's surface because two-thirds of our planet is covered with water. That isn't the only reason we're interested in scuba diving, but it's an interesting fact. And so you see that the earth is still quite large, even by today's standards of travel, and none of us are very likely to see any very great percentage of the earth's surface in our lifetime.

But this earth, God has given us as human beings dominion over it. Now you might wonder, possibly, about the verse that we read here in Psalm 8, the sixth verse, Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands, thou hast put all things under his feet. You might wonder whether really this is spoken about you and me, or whether it's really spoken about the Lord Jesus.

But if we go to the first chapter of Genesis, there can be no question about it, can there, that there the Lord made man after his own image, and he said that he is giving to us dominion over all the earth. Now, dominion means rule, doesn't it? It means lordship. And God has put into the hands of man the responsibility for the government of this earth, and all the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea.

Not only the ones we saw in pictures last night, but many, many more as well. Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas, all of this God has put under the hand of man. Now, this is rather interesting, I think, particularly because man has done a rather good job of fulfilling that responsibility that God has given him as far as the physical sphere is concerned.

As we look at this earth of ours in our mind's eye, we can see thousands upon thousands of brooks and rivers and bays. We can see thousands upon thousands of square miles of land area. And do you know that every one of those rivers and brooks and bays has a name that man has given it? And every piece of land, someone has a title deed to it.

He thinks he owns it, really belongs to God. But we have title to various pieces of land, and there's not a piece of land anywhere on the face of the earth that you can just walk out and say, well, nobody owns this, so I'll lay claim to it. Because some person or some government owns even a small rock sticking out of the water way down in the vastness of the Caribbean Sea.

We've seen some of these small pieces of land, and we've inquired about them. There's no water on them, they're not habitable, but somebody owns them. And man has put his stamp upon the whole of the face of this earth and has subdued it in some sense or another.

And furthermore, we've built tremendous bridges to link the land areas together. We've built huge ships and airplanes to link the continents together. We've built huge buildings and we inhabit them and use them for business purposes and for dwellings.

And we've built all sorts of things. We've built communications, we have television, a satellite so that we can link the continents by sight as well as by sound, and so on. Well, we won't spend a lot of time on that this morning, though of course we could go on and describe the accomplishments of man for a long time.

And the more we did so, the more we would realize that man has been fulfilling this command of God in one sense of subduing the earth. That is, in the physical sense. Except, of course, that we're just beginning to work on the atmosphere and on the seas.

We were flying while we flew home from St. Croix when we were working down there on the Kodak underwater photo project. And we had a beautiful flight into New York City. Very calm, very smooth air, beautiful weather, sunshine, and all the rest.

And when we got into New York, the weather was beautiful there. And as we left New York, it looked like the same type of a flight home to Rochester. Only 45 minutes in the air, as against three hours and a half from St. Croix to New York.

And we were looking forward to landing in Rochester on time with no problems at all. But it didn't work out quite that way, because one thing man has not learned to control is the atmosphere. And there were tornado warnings all throughout New York State that day.

We didn't know that. We hadn't listened to the news at all. But we passed through three storm fronts between New York City and Rochester.

And they were very rough, and our plane was just shaking like a baby shakes a rattle. All the while we were passing through these storm fronts. And our 45 minute flight took us two hours, and we detoured 50 miles out of the way in order to avoid the worst of those storm fronts.

And as we were being thrown around in the air, we realized, well, the powers of nature, which is only one aspect of the powers of God, are much greater than the powers of man. And we haven't learned how to tame these things. And as we were flying through those tremendous storms, the thought would occur to us, well, what is man in view of the majesty and the power of God and the scope of his works? What is man that God is mindful of us? The oceans we've scarcely touched.

We've begun to explore them a little bit. We've done very little about subduing them. We do use them for fishing, of course, and a large part of the world's food supply comes from the oceans.

And then one might ask about, well, what about the moon? We're beginning to explore the moon now. Will we subdue the moon? And if so, is that part of the dominion that God has given us? Is the moon our only satellite, really part of the earth, or isn't it? I'm not going to try to answer that question. I don't know how to answer it.

But it's an interesting question in any event. And so we find that the Lord's name is excellent in all the earth, because the more we learn about the earth, the more scientists find out, the more we realize the immensity, the complexity, and the beauty of God's creation when he made this earth. But then we think about the heavens.

When I consider the heavens the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man? And this has bothered mankind quite a little bit, this thought. It didn't bother David a bit, because he knew the answer to it. And as we read the Scriptures, we know the answer to it, too.

But men who are not well acquainted with the Scripture are troubled by this thought that the heavenly universe is so immense, what is man? Just a tiny speck, you see. We talked about how large our earth is in our eyes, and yet the sun is 1,297,000 times larger than the earth. And there are some stars that are 10 to 30 diameters larger than our sun, which is just then a sort of a medium-sized star.

Well, you take 400 of our suns and they form a solar cluster in our Milky Way system. And the Milky Way system of which our sun and our earth and all the planets around the sun is just a small part, why, that Milky Way system consists of 500 million stars like our sun. And the diameter of the Milky Way system is so large that we can't talk about it in miles.

But astronomers will speak about it, of course, in terms of light years. Now, light travels 186,000 miles a second. It will go around the earth seven or eight times in one second.

And yet the diameter of the Milky Way system is so large that it takes a pulse of light 100,000 years to traverse that distance. Well, some people get very discouraged when they think of man in relation to this immense universe. It doesn't discourage those who know the Lord.

It doesn't discourage us a bit, but rather it fills us with awe and wonder because we realize that the Lord who made all this, and the Lord Jesus did make it all. It says so in Colossians. Without him was not anything made that was made when we realize that he made it all and that he loves us personally and individually with a love so great that he went to the cross and laid down his life for us and bore our sins for us.

It only makes me all the more amazed to realize that I have such a Lord, such a Savior who could make all this beyond even the imagination of man to really comprehend and yet he loves me with a personal love so great that he wanted me for his own and was willing to give himself for me. This doesn't discourage me

to think about these things. It makes my heart glow with love and appreciation and adoration for such a wonderful God and such a wonderful Lord and Savior.

And so you see, the name of God is excellent in the heavens as well as in the earth. But there's another thought. What men say, men have said, and there's been a lot written about this down through the centuries, that while the universe is so great and man is so puny, how can God possibly pay any attention to such a tiny part of his universe? How can he be really interested in man when we're just, in his eyes, just a tiny speck of dust? But you know, that line of thought, among other things, fails to take into account that God is not only a God of infinite greatness, but he's a God of infinite minuteness as well.

Now we can read in the scriptures that God knows how many hairs we have on our heads. He's not only interested in man, but he knows every part of us and all about us. And he knows when a sparrow falls to the ground.

But you know, if we take the thought of greatness and go from man to the earth, to the sun, to the Milky Way, to the galaxies beyond the Milky Way, and there are untold numbers of them, hundreds of millions of galaxies like our Milky Way out in space, well, if we go in that direction in four steps, we can go in the other direction in four steps and find God in all of those steps just as well. We can go from man, you see, into the microcosm, first of all, into the microscopic world. And we can take a drop of water, as you well know, out of Brooklyn Lake, put it under a microscope and magnify it 500 or 1,000 times with an optical microscope, and in it we can see hordes of life.

We can see teeming life in that drop of water, protozoa of various types. Tiny animals, so small that we can't see them without optical aid, but they are there and they, like us, move and have their being as well. And God knows about every one of those creatures because he made them all.

They're all part of the creation of this earth. They pass through the paths of the seas as well as the huge sharks and the whales, or the tuna, or the other fish. But that's just a small start in investigating the microcosm.

We can go down in the atomic world as well, and we know how much power there is in the atom. We know more about that than we used to a few decades ago. One gram of matter, 128th of an ounce of matter, has the energy in it of 1,000 tons of coal.

The atomic bomb that was exploded at Hiroshima was equivalent to 20,000 tons of dynamite, and yet it only weighed a few pounds. And the hydrogen bomb is 100 times more powerful than the atomic bomb that was used at Hiroshima. But if we think about the atom, well, it's so small that we cannot see it.

Even with the electron microscope, which can magnify 15,000 times, we still cannot see the atom. It's much too small. And we only know the atom, its size and shape and effects, by the things that happen.

By the physical measurements that we can make, we can describe the atom to some extent. But then we can go from the atom into the subatomic world as well, because we know the atom is not the ultimate particle of matter, but rather the atom consists of a tiny nucleus surrounded by electrons which revolve about it at tremendous speeds. And if we were to squeeze all of the space out of the atoms in the human body, so that there was nothing left but the nucleus of each atom and the electrons, well, then the human body would be reduced to a single speck of microscopic dust.

All the rest of it is just empty space, and that's the way God made the atom. There is as much empty space proportionately in the atom as there is in the sidereal universe, you see. Just as the sun is a tremendous distance away from us, so the electron of an atom is a tremendous distance away from its nucleus.

It consists mostly of empty space. Why, then, does it seem solid? Well, simply because of the tremendous energy associated with it. Like, you know, if you turn on a fan and let it revolve, the single blades seem to weld into a surface, into a solid surface, and so the electrons spinning around the nucleus of the atom are revolving so fast that they have the manifestation of being solid.

The electrons of the hydrogen atom rotate a hundred thousand million times a second. Well, you see, God made all that, and he knows far more about it than we do. What is man that thou art mindful of him? Well, man, you see, is as much bigger than the subatomic particles as an island universe of stars is bigger than we are.

We stand somewhere in the middle of God's scale of creation, not at the bottom of it. Nevertheless, I don't think any of this is too awfully important in another way. And yet it does seem important in one way.

Our brother Sheffield spoke in prayer about our bringing our problems to God, and he said that any of us who have problems should bring them to God. Now, I'm very sure that when he said that, that he was speaking to every one of us here. I don't think there's anybody here that doesn't have problems.

I don't think I've ever met anybody in the course of my life that didn't have problems. We all have problems. And success in life does not consist on whether you happen to have problems or not, but how you handle those problems.

That's what success in life is. Now, we've been talking about the God who made the atom, and the God who made the island universes of stars. And that's the God to whom we can bring our problems.

I wonder what happens to our problems when we bring them to God. I wonder if we still have problems if we really do bring them to God, as our brother Sheffield was suggesting in his prayer. Alex Beale in London, England wrote this poem that I'd like to read you in that connection.

He's got the whole world in his hands. And now, Lord, you have my problems. My seemingly insoluble problems which I have been worrying over incessantly.

My own million-dollar, 24-carat problems. And I leave them with you. If you can keep the earth revolving, if you can keep the galaxies in place, if you can supervise creation, I guess you can manage my problems.

They're yours now, Lord, these million-dollar problems. My task is not to worry now. I've got to trust you, believe you, love you, and not interfere with your resolution of what once were my problems.

Thank you, Lord. But there is another aspect of this whole thing, and that is all that we've been talking about really doesn't amount to anything at all, because it's all been based on man's idea that God's interest in him is somehow related to the magnitude of his size. Whether man is big in the eyes of God or whether man is small in the eyes of God in terms of his material being is, of course, absolutely of no consequence at all.

Do you think that love is measured by the pound? Do you think that we love our little grandson that's this big less than we do our other grandson that's two pounds heavier? Is size the thing that counts? Is God less interested in us because we are small in relation to the universe than he would be if we are large? What is God interested in? He's not interested in physical size. By any matter of means, the material things are almost an incident in God's creation. We spoke about a fourth aspect.

We've talked about all the earth. We've talked about the heavens. We haven't yet talked about above the heavens, although the clock doesn't beat me to it.

I'll get there. But we also mentioned the moral and the spiritual world. Now, this is what God is really interested in.

He's really interested in the moral and spiritual side of man, not his material side so much. That's much less important. The thing that counts is how are we related to God in terms of spiritual relationship.

Without the Lord Jesus Christ and his death on the cross, we have no relationship with God except the relationship through creation, which has been destroyed by sin, so that we have no claim left upon God by virtue of the fact that he created us because we've walked out on him. We've chosen our own ways. Every one of us has gone our own ways.

We please ourselves. We say, I'll live the way I want to live. I'll do the things I want to do.

Sometimes we challenge God with that sort of a statement. Other times we just quietly do it without admitting it. But we read in the book of Romans what is very true.

We have turned everyone to his own way. We've walked out on God. And we're not about to walk back in again at our own discretion.

This is in God's hands, not ours at this point. But he's made a way back for us, has he not? We know that way. The Scripture tells us about that way.

It's the way of the cross. It's the sacrifice of Christ. It's his death upon the cross that's given us access to God, spiritually speaking.

Because we are dead in trespasses and sins. We have no spiritual life having sinned before God. The wages of sin is death.

But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. He died for us. He gave himself.

And we can get back into God's presence and have spiritual relationship with God by believing in the work that Christ did in the cross as sufficient for our sins. Because God says it's sufficient. And if he says it's sufficient, who are we to argue with him about the matter? And so God says if we trust in Christ, if we believe in Christ, we have new life.

We're born again into the spiritual world, into the spirit-filled world. The Holy Spirit of God is given to us as the gift of God. He indwells us.

He makes us a new creature or a new creation in Christ Jesus. And then we are related to God in a new way that transcends the material relationship of natural creation as a family relationship transcends a mere friendship or even more so. In the second verse, the psalmist David speaks about the enemies of

God.

We might almost wonder how the God who made all the universe could possibly have enemies. And yet we know that Satan raised himself up in pride. And that Satan and the fallen angels, the demons, are all enemies of God.

And man's task that God gave him was to subdue and conquer this world. But now Satan is the god of this world. And mankind has aligned himself with Satan instead of with God by and large.

And so while man has made a tremendous success of subduing the world in a material sense, morally and spiritually, man is a complete failure. Now we could cite proofs of that for the rest of the day. We'll only mention one or two things.

In the First World War, 8.5 million men were killed. In the Second World War, 52 million men were killed. And that doesn't count the wounded and the prisoners and all the rest of the suffering that these two great wars of our day have brought to mankind.

Today, as we look out upon the world, it's a sorry mess. The question is whether it will be war or whether it will be pollution of our atmosphere and our waterways that will bring an end to mankind, naturally speaking. This is all apart from what God will do.

And it looks as though mankind is wrapping himself up in a smothering blanket of fog or killing himself through the desecration of that great gift of God, our waters. And if we don't do that, we'll probably blow ourselves up off of this planet or destroy ourselves by fighting one against another, something of that sort. Now this doesn't take into account the possibility of some astronomical catastrophe or something of that sort, to be sure.

But most of all, it doesn't take into account the fact that God is not going to let all this happen, because God is still governing this universe in spite of all that man may think as he looks out upon it. And we know that this earth is headed not toward a man-made catastrophe, but toward a judgment of God that will come after the church. Those who believe in Christ are taken up out of this world after the so-called rapture of the church.

There will be a period of tribulation, Jacob's trouble, and it will be followed by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ personally to take over the reins of government of this earth. And then these scriptures will be fulfilled in such a way that God can be perfectly satisfied because the Lord Jesus will fulfill all of the responsibility that God has given to man to subdue this earth, not only in a material sense, not only in a governmental sense, but in a moral and spiritual sense as well. And Christ will reign as king and as prophet and as priest.

All three offices combined in one man. And this world will be perfect before God outwardly at that time. Although this does not change the heart of man, I'm sorry to say.

Even the millennial reign does not change the heart of man. The heart of man, Jeremiah tells us, is desperately wicked. Now, we made an illusion last night to the fact that we were more afraid of a careless person in a powerboat, in an outboard motorboat, than we are of the sharks or other creatures of the sea.

And there was a man by the name of Chaim who expressed this thought in a much more broad sense. He said, the beasts are harmless compared with men. Man, the beast of prey, has broken loose.

Brute egoism demands its rights. One man becomes his neighbor's devil. This is the moral failure of man to govern himself under God.

The second man is going to take care of all that. The second man, the Son of God who has become a man, is going to redeem this creation. He has defeated Satan at the cross.

He has redeemed us personally, but he's going to redeem this whole creation. And as we close, perhaps we can just look in the fifth chapter of Revelation where this is brought before us in a very effective way. In the fifth chapter of the book of Revelation, the Apostle John says, I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book.

Now, this book is the title deed of earthly dominion. We've been talking about man's dominion. Here is the deed to it.

A book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof? Now, no turbulence of evil has progressed one hair's breadth beyond the limit set by God's permissive will. But many are seeking the honor of possessing the dominion and executing the judgment against this evil that is typified here by this book that is sealed.

And no one is worthy. There is no one in the sight of God who is worthy to do this except one. No man in heaven or in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

And I wept much because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weak not, behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book. And that, of course, is our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, he is worthy to open the book. He is worthy to execute judgment against all evil. He says, All judgment is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Why? Because he is the sinless, the perfect one, upon whom no judgment can come except that he bore our judgment in his own body on the cross. He is worthy to open the book. He is worthy not only to judge this world because of sin, but also to take up the reins of government over it, to have dominion over all the earth because he always did his Father's will.

And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders stood a lamb as it had been slain, the Christ of the cross, glorified in heaven, having seven horns, a figure of omnipotence, seven eyes, a figure of omniscience, and the seven spirits of God, a figure of omnipresence, sent forth into all the earth, the Lord Jesus, God himself, in the person of the Son. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne." And then we have three concentric circles of adoration. The four living creatures in verse 8, who are the redeemed presented in a figure of administration, and then the twenty elders, the redeemed presented in the figure of priestly maturity.

That's the first concentric circle of adoration. In verse 11, the voice of many angels round about the throne, the second concentric circle, the angelic host. In verse 13, every creature which is in heaven and on earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, all creation, forming the third concentric circle.

And all of them, heard I saying, blessing and honor and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the lamb forever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshiped him that liveth forever and forever.

Now you see, we're in the realm of that sphere above the heavens, the very abode of God himself. And if you'll turn with me for just one moment to chapter 10 of this same book, I saw another mighty angel, it's Christ himself, come down from heaven clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow was upon his head and his face was, as it were, the sun and his feet as pillars of fire. Verse 3, he cried with a loud voice as when the lion roared, his public claim to the whole of the earth.

And when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. This is the endorsement of his claim from the very throne of God. You remember in John chapter 12 that the Lord Jesus prayed, Father glorify thy name and the Father says, I have glorified it and I will glorify it and the people standing by said it thundered.

They did not understand the words of God, but this is the endorsement of God to the claim of the Lord Jesus Christ for the whole of the earth and he will rule over it in power and in glory and in majesty. Now, dear friends, the countless multitudes on high that tune their songs to Jesus' name all merit of their own deny and Jesus' worth alone proclaim. How about you as you stand before God this morning? Would you present yourself in the value of your own worth before God? Or do you present yourself before God in the value of the blood of Christ who died for you on the cross of Calvary? Your only entrance into heaven is through the work of Christ.

There is no other way. If you do not have Christ as your Savior, we plead with you this morning. Investigate this matter.

Study the scriptures. Let us help you as we turn from one scripture to another to show you that your only hope of eternal life, your only hope of enjoying God and his Christ through all eternity is to submit yourself into the hands of God as a sinner and to receive forgiveness and reconciliation through the work of Christ on the cross. For those of us who know the Lord Jesus as Savior, I leave you with just one last word.

Does your life proclaim the glory of God to those round about you? God will have glory in his people. We are glorified in him, but he is glorified in us. And the practical outworking of this is to devote your life, you and me, to devote our lives to the Christ.

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