

AWE # 2

The LORD and AWE

Job 38, Isaiah 40

Our God is awfully awesome



Everyone likes to be awestruck;

- to be utterly amazed / astounded at how incredibly / wonderfully good something is;
- = to be in awe of how awesome something is;
 - tautology to use word awe 3x in 1 sentence;
 - but works because awe is such a rich / profound word;
 - so far as I know
 - ∃ no richer word to describe how great we feel about something.

Everyone likes to be awestruck;

- wants to be awestruck;
- **lives to be awestruck.**

This is essence of where we got to last week in beginning to open up concept of awe;

- **applies** to pretty well **everyone** on this **planet**;
- awe is connection word – unites all people;
- everyone - no matter their colour / creed / belief / unbelief;
 - everyone wants to be in awe
 - live in awe of something / somewhere / sometime.

Last week we described this as part / parcel of being made in **image of God**

- universal to human constitution;
- of course, ∃ reason why we are the way we are;
- of course, reason is because God made us this way after His own image;
- at heart of this is fact : **God is fundamentally / intrinsically / infinitely awesome**;
- we created in His image to enjoy intimate relationship w Him;
 - to be in awe of Him – find our awe in Him.

This is where we finished last week: **WSC 1: What is man's chief end?**

Man's chief end is to glorify God & enjoy Him forever;

⇒ Man's chief end is to **live in awe of God**.

(Our tendency to be in awe of ourselves)

Now in a **fallen world**, humanity has **lost sense** of the awe of God;

- blinded / hardened to awe of God;
- but still want awe ⇒ tendency is to end up **in awe of ourselves**.

Our tendency as Christians is to **think** immediately of **unbelievers**;

- they are the ones in awe of themselves – we are the ones in awe of God;
- reality is not quite like that;
- we often like to think it is / speak as if it is / act as if it is – but it is not.

God given us book of **Job** as **antidote** to this type of thinking;

Who was Job?

- lived amongst early patriarchs – earliest written book of Bible;
- suggests this is somehow fundamental to understanding human condition.

Job 1(1) There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job,
and that man was blameless and upright,
one who feared God and turned away from evil.

- a man of God / believer / God-fearer;
- as saw last week - word fear / awe closely connected
⇒ awe of the Lord is beginning of wisdom;
- Job said as much to his friends:

28(8) 'Behold, the fear of the Lord (awe), that is wisdom,
and to turn away from evil is understanding.'

We don't have time to follow whole **roller-coaster ride** thru book of **Job**;

- men considered this on Man Up last 2 days – ask one of them to fill you in;
- gist of it is:
 - God set Job up on pedestal – as trophy of His grace;
 - to mock Satan for failing in his attempt to ruin whole human race;

1(8) And the LORD said to Satan,

“Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth,
a blameless & upright man, who fears God & turns away from evil?”

- Satan retorts : Job only serves God for his own selfish ends – what He gets;
- so God says : OK, prove it
 - you can take away from him whatever you want;
 - He is mine – He is gold – He won't fail / cannot fail.
- so then it is on for young / old / demon / devil;
- poor Job is pushed / pummelled from pillar to post;
- loses farm / family / health;
- friends falsely accuse him of all sorts of sin.

To cut long story short:

- God **proves power of His grace** to sinners - rescuing / redeeming sinners from sin;
- so yes, Job does sin;
- but like our late brother Paul Saberton: *I hate my life, but I don't hate God*;
- his suffering is not on account of sin – but like all of us – he does sin.

You know how **when we accused** ⇒ we tend to go on **defensive** – not best response;

- when being defensive ⇒ tend to be uptight – overstate the case;
- Job does too;
- that's where we want to pick up story this morning – **Job 31**

- 31(5) "If I have walked with falsehood and my foot has hastened to deceit;
 (6) (Let me be weighed in a just balance, and let God know my integrity!)
 (7) If my step has turned aside from the way & my heart has gone after my eyes,
 and if any spot has stuck to my hands,
 (8) ⇒ **then let me** sow, and another eat, and let what grows for me be rooted out.
 (9) If my heart has been enticed toward a woman,
 and I have lain in wait at my neighbour's door,
 (10) ⇒ then let my wife grind for another, and let others bow down on her ...
 - continues on defending himself against charge of sin;
 - continues on proclaiming his uprightness in great detail for whole chapter;
 (16) If I have withheld anything that the poor desired ...
 ⇒ then let my arm be broken from its socket;
 - at end:
 (35) Oh, that I had one to hear me!
 I would give him an account of all my steps;
like a prince I would approach him.
 (Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer me!)

Job is a **bit too full of himself**;

- true he is declared righteous before God – but he is bit **too much in awe of himself**;
 - a bit too ready to justify himself;
- the Lord God has something to say about that:

(Our God is awful over everyone)

Job 38(1) Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:

(2) "**Who is this** that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?"

(3) Dress for action like a man;

I will question you, and you make it known to me.

⇒ then God lets him have it – 2 chapters worth of pertinent Qs;

(4) "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?"

Tell me, if you have understanding.

(12) Have you commanded the morning since your days began,
 and caused the dawn to know its place?

(17) Have the gates of death been revealed to you,
 or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?

(18) Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth?

Declare, if you know all this...

- Job told to dress for action like a man – then getd thorough **dressing down**;

Finishes off with:

40(1) And the LORD said to Job:

(2) "**Shall a faultfinder contend** with the Almighty?"

He who argues with God, let him answer it."

Job has no answer – knew it was time to lay his hand over this mouth – **say nothing**;

- Lord God continues ...

(6) Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind (again) and said:

(7) (again) "Dress for action like a man;

I will question you, and you make it known to me.

(8) Will you even put Me in the wrong?

Will you condemn Me that you may be in the right?

- Lord launches into another 2 chapters worth of Qs;

⇒ Job is in **awful trouble**.

Job is not the only one who has ever been bit too much in awe of himself;

- applies to **each & everyone** of us too;

- when accused / criticised ⇒ defensive overreaction;

- when not appreciated ⇒ offensive self-promotion;

- when appreciated ⇒ proud self-satisfaction;

- when our rights infringed ⇒ self-assertive or feel sorry for self;

- we may not say it – but our response indicates: we feel God got this wrong;

- all a bit too much in awe of ourselves.

Our God says we are in awful trouble

But notice: God's approach:

- God not answer Job's Qs about suffering – why he going thru what going thru?

- God gives Job what he really needs - a proper perspective on Himself – **awe!**

(Our God is so dreadful)

What does all this tell us about God Himself?

- the word I'd use to describe God might surprise you – I'd say He is **awe-ful**;

- awful in sense of dreadful;

- horrible in sense of awakening horror at how we treated Him;

- terrible in sense of instilling terror re what we deserve;

- any sin / all sin is such a horrendous affront to God / His grace;

- God wants us / needs us to see how horrific / horrendous sin is;

- only One who can correctly convey that to us is God Himself;

- so God rightly instills in us a sense of dread;

- God is awful.

This is **not some vengeful God** of OT – replaced by super-softy God of NT;

- NT says exactly same thing;

- Hebrews – writing to Christians in danger of being complacent / too comfortable;

10(30) "The Lord will judge his people."

(31) It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

- fearful / dreadful / awful ...

If you want an example of that – we can go back to book of **Job**;

- hear what God had to say to Job's 3 friends – miserable comforters / accusers;

Job 42(7) The LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite:

"My anger burns against you and against your two friends,
for you have not spoken of me what is right ..."

Now consider how this **extends to unbelievers**:

- 1 Pet 4(17) For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God;
 and if it begins with us,
what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?
 (18) And "If the righteous is scarcely saved,
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"
 - outcome is truly awful!

We say / sing: **Our God is an awesome God** – true;
 - but also true that our God is an **awful God**;
 - our God is awful over everyone.

As an aside - v interesting to consider words **awful / awesome**:

- both describe something that fills us w awe;
 - but that awe can be extremely pleasant or extremely unpleasant;
- just as God in His holiness is either wonderful if we are in Christ;
 - or terrible if we are on our own outside of Christ;
- sometimes awesome & awful are used as opposites:
 - *The acting in that play was awesome;*
 - *No – the acting in that play was awful.*
 - but not quite as simple as that;
- awesome is always positive – extremely positive;
- awful is often negative – instilling fear of God / dread of God / terror in sinner;
 - but interestingly awful can also mean great:
 - *It was awfully kind of you to do that for me;*
 - *The inheritance he received was an awful lot of money;*
 - awful can simply mean great.

⇒ why I love word “awe” – rich term covering **both sides of gospel**;
 - awfulness of sin / judgement – awesomeness of grace;
 - but major / dominating / overwhelming emphasis is so positive;
 - everyone lives for awe – **everyone wants awesome**.

We could go back thru **Job 38-41** in detail – would see this;

- but in order to emphasise that this is not just Job – pervades all Scripture;
- I thought I'd take you on another 1500 yrs or so to divided kingdom era;
 - when God's people were again a bit too much in awe of themselves;
- God sent prophet Isaiah to minister to them;
 - 39 chapters reminding them : God says : in awful trouble;
 - 27 chapters reassuring them : God is an awesome God;
 - focus in on 1st of these chapters – **Isa 40**
 - I want to look at in 2 parts:

Our God is awesome over creation

Children – your song My God is so big, so strong & so mighty- can help us along here:

Our God is so big

Isa 40(12) Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand
and marked off the heavens with a span,
enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure
and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?

(15) Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket,
and are accounted as the dust on the scales;

behold, He takes up the coastlands like fine dust.

(17) All the nations are as nothing before him,
they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.

- even my illustration likening world to **dust** is to magnify the world too much;

- in comparison to God all nations are nothing – less than nothing;

- no comparisons: finite to infinite – no comparison can work;

⇒ our God is an awesome God!

Our God is so mighty

(22) It is He who sits above the circle of the earth,
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
and spreads them like a tent to dwell in.

(25) To whom then will you compare Me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.

(26) Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these?

He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name,
by the greatness of His might, and because He is strong in power
not one is missing.

= why we have **this picture** as our series image;

= one reason why we have our **Man Up** men's retreat out under the stars;

- does soul good to gaze up into heavens- imagine God stretching out;

- assigning particular place to each star – knows by name;

⇒ our God is an awesome God!

X

Our God is so wise

(13) Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows Him his counsel?

(14) Whom did He consult, and who made Him understand?

- the **more we know** about universe ⇒ **more** we realise we don't know;

- the more we know about quantum theory ⇒ more we realise we don't know;

- the more we know about human psychology ⇒ more we realise we don't know;

- nothing as deterministic as we once thought - everything far more profound;

- **∃ this article** in ABC news on Friday about bacteria which looks like it has tail:

- used word Awe: **The awe-inspiring bacterial flagellar motor**

It is a nanomachine a millionth the size of a grain of sand

that can rotate five times faster than a Formula One engine

and can change direction faster than a mosquito beats its wings.

And it's able to change its structure, dynamically,

while it is rotating at up to 100,000 rpm

- the equivalent of a Formula One car changing the number of pistons
in the engine while driving around the track.

- deeper we look into nature – more complex / more marvellous things appear;
- more awe-inspiring everything is;
- ⇒ our God is an awesome engineer!

[X]

Our God is so just

(14) Who taught Him the path of justice?

- man **intrinsically pursues justice** – never finally / completely / utterly attains it;
- but God exudes ultimate justice – cannot be anything but just – ever;
- brings absolute perfect justice to every single creature in universe - guaranteed;
- ⇒ our God is an awesome God!

∃ a 2nd part to awesomeness of God set before us in **Isa 40**;

- if what we seen is awesome – this is **awfully awesome**;
- this is going beyond realm of creation into realm of new creation;
- this is taking sinners – transforming them into saints;
- this is rescuing / recovering / redeeming sinners from dire depth of rebellion.

Our God is awfully awesome over redemption

Our God is so tender

(1) Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

(2) Speak tenderly to Jerusalem.

(11) He will tend his flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs in his arms;

He will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.

- **this God** who is so big that he sits above circle of earth – we like grasshoppers;
- this God before whom nations are like less than dust – less than nothing;
- this God is **same God** who gathers each of us like lambs in arms;
- holds us so close – like we cradled in His bosom.

⇒ our God is awfully awesome!

Our God is so forgiving

(2) Cry to (Jerusalem) that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

- **this God** who is absolute in His justice – who must punish sin perfectly;
- this **same God** has devised way to do that – yet also pardon iniquity;
- revealed in due time as His taking that punishment on Himself in His Son;
- ⇒ our God is awfully awesome!

Our God is so rewarding

(10) Behold, His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him.

- reward is to deliver double for all her sins – not only pardon but peace;
- not only declared innocent but righteous;
- ⇒ our God is awfully awesome!

Our God is so empowering

(29) He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might He increases strength.

(30) Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted;

(31) but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength;

they shall mount up with wings like eagles;

they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

- it is **in our weakness** / weariness / tiredness / exhaustedness / overwhelmedness;

- that His coming alongside is all the more empowering / enervating / uplifting.

⇒ our God is awfully awesome!

(Conclusion)

Our privilege to be in awe of God and abide with Him

We can see this so **personally** / **particularly** if we go back to Job;

Job 42 (1) Then Job answered the LORD and said ...

(3) I have uttered what I did not understand,

things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

(6) therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

- Job realised : not only was God an awesome God;

- he had **no right to know** / **enjoy** that;

- he has forfeited that birthright;

- He enjoying this revelation of God as inestimable privilege;

- God the inexhaustible / indescribable / unfathomable

is opening Himself / receiving / embracing him;

⇒ **awesome beyond imaging!**

True for Job – **true for you & me!**

Pray

Sing Shine, Jesus, shine

Lord, I come to your awesome presence, from the shadows into your radiance.

Benediction: 1 Tim 1(17)

To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God,

be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.