

## The Glorious Magnificence Of God.

Text: Acts 17:24-31

Suggested Hymns:

442, 198, 152, 176, 522

1) Is Revealed In The Creation Of The World

2) Is Revealed In The Preservation Of The World

3) Is Revealed In The Final Judgement Of The World

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Acts 17:24–31, ***24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.***

***26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’***

***29 Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising.***

***30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Our text is a portion of St. Paul’s wonderful sermon on Mars Hill, addressed to certain Greek philosophers who prided themselves upon their keen intellect and deep thinking. Paul’s purpose was to convert them from their paganism to Christ, their Saviour and Redeemer.

The great majority of the people on the Australian continent today do not worship idols, but many of them are guilty of idolatry nevertheless. One of the idols which they worship is what is usually called Science. Science often reigns supreme in many people's lives. Even the God-inspired accounts of the Bible about the origin of the world, and of man, are expected to yield to it.

Paul, in his day, opposed the superstition of the Greek philosophers by extolling and magnifying the true God, by showing who He is and what He does.

If Christians of the 21st century are to do their part toward deposing the god of false science from the idol-throne to which it has been elevated by those who worship it they must follow St. Paul's example. They must focus the light of the Bible on the Creator of the universe and His wonderful works. They must extol and glorify His holy name. Our text does just this.

Let us give attention to these words, showing *The Glorious Magnificence of God*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. The Glorious Magnificence Of God Is Revealed In The Creation Of The World**

One question which has puzzled scientists through many ages is the question of the origin of the world. Of what origin is this world? Paul gives us not only the most reasonable but also the only correct answer to this question when he says, "***God, ... made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth.***" Moses, in the first verse of the Bible, puts it this way, <sup>1</sup> ***In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.***<sup>1</sup>

What do both these inspired men mean when they say "made," or "created?" They can mean only one thing, and that is, that God caused the world to exist, that He formed it out of nothing. How did God do this? By no other means than by the power of His word. God spoke, and whatever He commanded came into existence. That is the reason why the psalmist says, "<sup>6</sup> ***By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.***"<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, consider the size of the earth, the huge amount of water contained in the oceans, its incomprehensible weight. Consider the vast variety of climate and vegetation on the surface of the earth, the great deposits of metals in the bowels of the earth, and the constant changing of the seasons.

Consider the distance of the sun from the earth and the obvious existence of eight planets other than our earth, some of which are larger than our earth. Consider that these are all said to be rotating about their own axes and revolving in definite orbits, yet never have collided with each other and never have decreased in their rate of speed.

The mechanical perfection of a Big Ben in Westminster Abbey in London gains and loses time, and our most reliable and up-to-date trains may run off their tracks; but the planets, though covering millions of kms in their orbits, never are late nor ever have run off their “tracks” in these six thousand years since their creation. How marvellous!<sup>3</sup>

Is it sane to assume that all this is the result of mere chance? How preposterous! No, it is God who in His infinite wisdom and power has created these things, has given them their volume, their shape and content, and who has prescribed the purpose each heavenly body is to serve and the manner in which it is to do this.

Again, let us not overlook the fact that the apostle says, “*God, ... made the world and everything in it.*” Is not man the crown of all created things on earth? And when we investigate the various organs of our body, must we not then with the Psalmist exclaim and say, <sup>14</sup> *I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*<sup>4</sup>

Why is it that your eye, no matter how cold it may be, never freezes, whereas all the other members of your body must be protected against low temperatures? Is it not because the eye becomes useless when covered, whereas all the other members of one’s body may still serve their purpose even if they are covered?

Why is it that your heart remains in action whether you think of it or not, whereas some muscles of your body ordinarily move only when you want them to do so?

How is it that the temperature of your body ordinarily does not vary much, that your lungs continue to breathe whether you are awake or asleep, that you can feel extremes of cold and heat, that the white corpuscles in your blood-stream literally consume disease germs, and that the red carry oxygen to the remotest parts of your body?

How is it that your stomach produces the very juices necessary to digest the food you have eaten, no matter whether it has ever produced these same juices before or not?

Is it reasonable to assume that all these and many other phenomena in the human body are the result of mere chance? No, most emphatically, no. In all these wonderful things which we observe in our own bodies we see the work of the all-wise and almighty God, who has created us.

Add to this what the apostle says in our text, that it is God who *gives to all life, breath, and all things*. It is overwhelmingly clear that the God we worship is a truly magnificent God, far different from the idols adored by the worldly-wise about us.

For also to these idols the words of the psalmist apply, <sup>5</sup> *They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see;* <sup>6</sup> *They have ears, but they do not hear; Noses they have, but they do not smell;* <sup>7</sup> *They have hands, but they do not handle; Feet they have, but they do not walk; Nor do they mutter through their throat.*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.*<sup>6</sup>

## 2. The Glorious Magnificence Of God Is Revealed In The Preservation Of The World

But more than this. God has not only made the world and all things therein, He also preserves all things that He has made. The apostle says in our text, *“He is not far from each one of us; <sup>28</sup> for in Him we live and move and have our being.”* Accordingly, God is not like a manufacturer, who does not concern himself about his products after the warranty has ran out, or after they have left the factory. No, He is near us, in fact, nearer to us than the water is to the fish; *“for in Him we live and move and have our being.”*

The life that God has given us He also preserves. How? By the power of His word.<sup>7</sup> At the beginning of time God gave this command, Genesis 1:20, <sup>20</sup> *Then God said, “Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens.”*

And in Genesis 1:24, <sup>24</sup> *Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind”;* and it was so. And the waters and the earth obeyed His voice.

They obeyed it then, and they obey it now; for they are still bringing forth. His word is still effective in nature. And if in the northern regions of the temperate zone the earth does rest for a while, God Himself covers it with a white blanket and says, as it were: *“Now sleep for a while and rest.”* But when God, after the earth has recuperated from its labours of the preceding year, takes away this white blanket, the earth, mindful of its Creator’s omnipotent word, again commences to produce. Thus it continues so long as it is God’s will. Seed-time and harvest do not cease.

Somewhere in the world the farmer is always seeding, and somewhere in the world he is always harvesting.

That is God’s way of providing food for all flesh. That is His way of giving all their food in due season. No wonder that millions and billions of eyes are looking heavenward for food.

However, do not the scientists tell us that the energy which man obtains from his food originally comes from the sun? What if it does? Is not also the sun a product of God’s almighty decree? Indeed. Moses tells us so in Genesis.

Hence also the sun is only a means which God has created for the purpose of preserving His creatures on earth; a means by which He gives light and heat for the production of food; a means by which He causes water to rise in the form of vapour from land and lakes and seas, which is later condensed and comes down again in the form of rain, refreshing both plant and animal life. How wonderful!

What if we had to carry or pump all the water necessary for the production of the food which God’s guests consume? Truly, the interior of none of the five continents in the world nor of the larger islands would be inhabited, and millions now living would never have been born.

How overwhelmingly glorious is therefore our God, who not only preserves, but according to His unfathomable wisdom has also conceived ways and means far beyond human comprehension in order to preserve us! On the other hand,

how utterly foolish to imagine that the wonderful working together of the forces of nature is the result of mere chance!

Nor are these all the evidences of God's magnificence. No, the apostle continues, ***6 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings.*** How wonderful!

God creates one man, Adam, endows him with the power of reproduction, and six thousand years later the earth is peopled with the descendants of this one man. Man, who of all the visible creatures of God comes closest to his Maker as far as his intelligence is concerned, also wishes to fill the earth with the products of his hands and brains; but he cannot simply make a product and endow it with powers to reproduce itself.

No; man, although a highly intelligent being, must make every one of his products individually. But though God, through the creation of one specimen, has in reality created the total number of those who are of that one species, He does not permit the production of that one species to get beyond His control, if that were possible.

No; according to our text He has determined the time and also the place where and how long the individual nations shall play an important role in the affairs of the world.

Does not history show the correctness of Paul's statement? Where are the former mighty empires of the Medes and Persians, of Alexander the Great, and of the Roman Caesars? Hardly a trace of their glory is left. Hence, though God has of one blood created all nations of men, and though He gives life and breath to all, sustaining them and all His creatures in a most miraculous manner, yet He controls their existence both individually and collectively.

And what is the purpose of all this? Why does God give man such a superabundance of evidence in the realm of nature of His magnificence and transcendent glory? Paul says in our text, ***27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him.*** Oh, what a glorious purpose!

God has revealed Himself in the Book of Nature. We read in Romans 1:20, ***20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen,***

***being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.***

But the knowledge of God gained from His wonderful works of creation and preservation is not sufficient unto man's salvation. However, God's chief concern in man is man's eternal bliss and happiness. That is the principal purpose for which He has created man and for which He preserves him.

In order that man may be saved, God has given him the Bible. In the Bible He tells man more than in the Book of Nature, He tells him how he may be saved. But man is by nature not interested in the contents of the Bible.

For this reason God has so clearly revealed His existence, His wisdom, and His power in His works of creation and preservation that man might become interested in Him, might desire to find out more about Him than the Book of Nature reveals, might find the Bible, might come to faith through what the Bible says of Him, and might ultimately be saved. Yes, what a magnificent God, the God of our salvation!

### **3. The Glorious Magnificence Of God Is Revealed In The Final Judgement Of The World**

Finally, the glorious magnificence of our God manifests itself in His judgement of the world. Though He has previously preserved the world in a most wonderful manner, He will not always preserve it.

No; the day shall come ***in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.***<sup>8</sup>

Then all nations will be gathered before the Son of Man, before Him who has redeemed them, not with gold or silver but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death. What is the purpose of this gathering of all nations before the Son of Man?

The apostle says, <sup>31</sup> ***because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained.*** Who is this Man? It can be none other than the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer. For our text continues, ***“He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”***

The situation, then, is this: When God will cease to uphold all things by the word of His power, the whole number of those who have descended from Adam and Eve will be gathered before the judgement-seat of Christ that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad as we read in 2 Cor. 5:10.

The number of these, now living, is commonly accepted to be eight billion. Some one has ventured an estimate of those already dead and has set their number at about thirty-four billion.

If that number is correct or nearly so, then, if Judgement day should come today, there would be over forty billion people assembled before the Son of Man for the purpose of being judged.

If we consider that earthly judges at times require days, weeks, and even months before they are able to judge a person on the charges that have been raised against him, what a magnificent Judge must He be who is able to judge over forty billion sinners at once on all the charges which God's holy Law shall bring against them!

Truly, our power of imagination fails us when we try to visualise the grandeur and magnificence of that Judge. But what we are unable to visualise now we shall some day see. — Are you prepared for that day?<sup>9</sup>

May God grant that on that Day we shall not be frightened by His splendour and glory, but shout for joy with all the company of heaven and say, ***Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever.<sup>10</sup> Amen.***

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

---

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:1

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 33:6

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Job 38:3-7; Psa. 104:24

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 139:14

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 115:5-7

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 115:3

<sup>7</sup> Heb. 1:3

<sup>8</sup> 2 Peter 3:10

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Matt. 25:1-13

<sup>10</sup> Revelation 7:12