

READ I Peter 2:9-12

As Peter writes to those disciples who are a part of a diaspora or scattering throughout the Gentiles lands of that time, he seeks to encourage them to find joy even in the midst of suffering through the living hope that has been so graciously extended to them through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (**I Peter 1:1-5**). In order for them to live with such a hope, it was necessary for them to prepare their minds for action, be sober-minded, and set their hope on grace that was made available through the coming of Jesus (**1:13**). This preparation would lead them to live holy lives before God in all of their conduct (**1:14-16**). If they lived in this way, then they would find themselves fulfilling their role as *"a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession..."* so they would be able to proclaim the praises of the One who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light (**2:9**). They would move from not being a people to being the special people of God who would live this life in a unique way as strangers and exiles who abstained from the sinful desires that dominate this world. They would find themselves as different from the rest of the world (**2:11,12**).

We would do well to recognize that such a unique and special people would only be such through their following of a unique and special leader. Certainly no leader can claim to be any more unique and special than the God of heaven who has made all of this possible (**1:3**). As we continue to think upon the idea of seeking to know God in 2021, we will use our time of study this morning in thinking upon the unique nature of God. Few single texts of Scripture do a better job of detailing just how unique and special God is than that of **Psalms 89**.

The Psalm is attributed to Ethan the Ezrahite, a Levite musician who is mentioned in **I Chronicles 15:17-19**. This is one of the more perplexing Psalms because it is written in a very unsure tone concerning God's covenant that He established with David concerning his eternal reign on the throne of Israel. We are not given much by way of exact detail concerning what prompted the writing of this psalm, but we can infer Israel is at a low point when the author fears as if God and even accuses God of having *"repudiated the covenant with Your servant"* (**Psalms 89:39**). This is truly perplexing to the Ezrahite because of God's incredible and unique nature that is alluded to in the first half of the Psalm. This Psalm, which closes book three of the Psalter, goes on to show appreciation for having appointed the line of David to such a glorious position as the king of His people and asks for confirmation that God will not abandon His people because of His *"faithful love"* (**89:14**). His faithful love has no comparison, and we'll see, specifically from **Psalms 89:5-18**, that nothing about God finds comparison in anyone else.

Who Can Compare With The Lord? (Psalm 89:5-18)**A. No one compares among the spiritual beings of the heavenly unseen realm. (vv.5-7)**

1. As the author praises God for His faithful love to all generations (**89:1**), he shows just how incredible, incomparable, and unique God is in every respect. Before he gets to the ways in which mankind can exalt Him, the author begins by showing His incomparable and unique nature to those who exist in the heavenly unseen realm. We can rightly recognize this as the setting of these first three verses by the language that is used to identify location. First, the heavens and the skies are identified as the places of residence for those mentioned in these verses. Ancient Near Eastern peoples *"viewed the sky as a vault resting on foundations—perhaps mountains—with doors and windows that let in the rain. God dwelt above the sky, hidden in cloud and majesty."* (<https://www.moreunseenrealm.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Heiser-Genesis-and-Ancient-Near-Eastern-Cosmology-FSB.pdf>) For the author to speak of the heavens praising God's wonders and to ask *"who in the skies can compare to the Lord?"*, clearly indicates he has spiritual beings of the heavenly unseen realms in view.

2. This becomes even more clear when we consider who he specifically mentions. *"The assembly of the holy ones"* & *"the council of the holy ones"* should be understood as the spiritual beings who surround God's throne in service to Him. Twice in **Job 5:1 & 15:15**, Eliphaz speaks of God's holy ones in a way which shows their dwelling in the heavens. This is also further established by the mentioning of *"heavenly beings"* which is a form of the word *elohim* which we have previously discussed in the lesson we did on angels at the end of last year. Such a term denotes a place of residence which is a heavenly unseen realm residence. Such a term can and is used of God Himself along with a host of other spiritual beings.
3. The author's point in highlighting these beings is to show how much greater, incomparable, and unique God is to these beings. None of them can compare. None of them are like the Lord. He is so much greater than they that He is greatly feared, revered, and inspires awe from these beings. Why is this the case? (Heiser, Michael S., *The Unseen Realm*, pg.31)
 - He is King and sovereign over all other *elohim*. (**Psalm 95:3**)
 - He created all other spiritual beings. (**Psalm 149:1-5**)
 - He is the only *elohim* worthy of worship. (**Psalm 29:1**)
 - He is declared by Nehemiah, *"You, Lord, are the only God."* (**Nehemiah 9:6**)

B. No one compares with the strength He possesses to control and create. (vv.8-13)

1. God's incomparable and unique nature is expounded upon by the author as he asks, *"Lord God of Armies, who is strong like you, Lord?"* The title alone given to God is enough to recognize the strength that He possesses as the one who commands all of the hosts of heaven. Yet, this descriptor is further built upon as the author speaks of God's power to control all things and even bring all things into existence. He first speaks of God ruling over the raging sea and stilling the surging waves. This was powerful language to those ancient people because they viewed the sea as something untamable, powerful, and overwhelming. For it to be said that God is able to rule and calm such is a truly impactful claim.
2. Even more incredible was the claim that God crushed Rahab who was known as a mythological sea creature that was bent on creating chaos and disorder. For this claim to be paired with the next line of God scattering his enemies can also be understood as Rahab standing as a moniker for the forces of evil who are seeking to wreak havoc and chaos in God's creation. This is showing His absolute control and sovereignty even over that which can cause so many problems from our point of view. His powerful arm has complete and total control over His enemies.
3. He also has total control over the creation as a whole as the One who founded the heavens, the earth, the world and everything in it. From the north to the south, from Mt. Tabor to Mt. Hermon, it is God's mighty right arm and powerful hand that has created, subdued, and continues to provide for all things. The languages is all encompassing, and further speaks to God's incomparable and unique nature.

C. No one compares with His attributes & how they bless His people. (vv.14-18)

1. The last portion of this section of **Psalm 89:5-18** focuses on God's incomparable and unique attributes and how they benefit and bless those who serve Him. Four qualities are stated as being the foundation of God's throne. Righteousness, justice, faithful love, and truth are the pillars on which God rules and governs the world. As a result, it is said that those who know the joyful shout (worship) are happy, they walk in the light of His face, they rejoice in His name all day long, and they are exalted by His righteousness. These truths certainly do show God as being unique because such a description cannot be claimed by any earthly rulers of their day or even our own. Wickedness, injustice, and falsehoods have always been perpetrated by earthly rulers, but God shows His incomparable nature in being the perfect ruler of His people.

2. These perfect attributes are not present only for the sake of being able to claim such, but they are very pragmatic in nature in that those who serve God are strengthened and empowered as they serve Him. This is clearly seen within the history of Israel. As they served Him well, they prospered in all they did. This was especially true when it came to Israel's kings. As they faithfully served God, they were strengthened and prospered in magnificent ways! The author recognized this and therefore states concerning the shield (**Psalm 84:9**) or Davidic king that he belongs to the Lord who is the Holy One of Israel. The Lord alone is perfect in His attributes as the God of Israel and the people, as led by their king who was chosen as a specially appointed servant of God, greatly prospered because of it. As he protected and defended the people, it was seen as an extension of the protection and defense of unique God who finds no comparison throughout all that exists.

From this text, we come to know about God:

1. No being, spiritual, physical, seen, or unseen, can be compared to Him in any way.

- a) Everything possible is mentioned within this Psalm, and yet there is not a thing that is said to be comparable to God in any way at all. This can be seen as true from the standpoint that everything else is created by God, and He alone stands as the only uncreated or independent God. We spoke of this last month as we studied from **Acts 17** concerning the necessary nature of God. He simply is and is without beginning or end. Further, it was He who has brought everything into existence whether spiritual, physical, seen, or unseen. Everything that exists is dependent upon Him bringing it into existence and allowing to continue on. Nothing exists apart from Him, but He is not dependent on anything else for His own existence. As the totally independent God, He is without comparison and wholly unique.
- b) However, these same things could be said about Jesus from what we see within the New Testament which is an important truth to point out since our faith is based upon Jesus being God, and some would try to deny these attributes as belong to Jesus. Some have tried to take the beautiful truths of **John 3:16** and use the language of Jesus being God's "*only begotten Son*" (KJV, NKJV, NASB95) to claim a point of creation for Jesus. However this usage of *begotten* as a "birthing" term simply isn't an accurate usage of the Greek term *monogenēs*. While it was once believed to be a verb, Greek scholars have now discovered that it is a noun meaning class or kind. Therefore, for Jesus to be the "*only begotten Son*" of God is to mean He is "one of a kind" or "unique". (Heiser, Michael S., *The Unseen Realm*, pg.36,37) This is made all the more clear when we consider a text such as **Hebrews 11:17** which also uses the term *monogenēs* in reference to Isaac as Abraham's "*only begotten son*." We know that Abraham had other sons, but there was not one who could compare to Isaac as his unique son of promise (**Genesis 21:1-7**).
- c) Therefore, Jesus stands as the incomparable and unique Son of God who also is able to claim superiority to the heavenly beings as angels came and ministered to Him during His time of need (**Matthew 4:11 & Mark 22:43**). He is also seen as having complete control over the sea and its waves (**Mark 4:35-41**) as a part of the creation He helped to create (**John 1:1-5**). He is also seen to be He who is defined by righteousness, justice, faithful love, and truth throughout His ministry in all that He did. If we can make these claims about God and believe for Jesus Himself to be God, then we must be able to prove these as being true about Him which I believe the Scriptures do clearly show.

2. His unique nature allows Him to uniquely bless those who serve Him.

- a) Finally, recognizing the incomparable and unique nature of God is necessary and beneficial to us because it will help us to ourselves probably fear and revere God as even do the

council of His holy ones. However, we are also greatly benefitted by these truths because His uniqueness allows for us to live our own uniquely blessed lives through Him. We'll finish where we began in **I Peter 2:9,10** to see just how this takes places. Let's first recognize these unavoidable similarities that exists between the way we are described as members of God's people and the way Israel was described as God's people. We are both called a chosen race (**Deuteronomy 7:6**), a royal priesthood (**Exodus 19:6**), a holy nation (**Exodus 19:6**), and a people for His possession (**Exodus 19:5**). If Israel was His special people out of all of the people of the earth, then surely we ought to see ourselves as a unique people, as well.

b) Yet, what truly separates us from the rest? It isn't only that God has chosen us, but it has much to do with the results of being chosen. We are able to be the ones out of the whole earth who proclaim His praises. We are a people who have been called out of the darkness and made unique by being able to live in His marvelous light. We went from not being a people to being this special and unique people. We go from not having received mercy to being a unique and special people who have received mercy (**I Peter 2:9,10**) Being such a people alone makes us unique, but we are to truly live out this uniqueness by living differently from the world around us. We are to not allow our sinful desires to control us, but we are to stand strong in God's grace by resisting and abstaining from the wicked ways of the world. It is by His grace and the transformation and strengthening of His Spirit that we are able to stand apart and unique to the world as we follow our incomparable and unique God.

Main Point/Conclusion: *God's incomparable & unique nature allows us to live as incomparable & unique people.*

Unique, incomparable, and one of a kind are often descriptors used in our world to show the special nature of this or that, but there truly is nothing that compares to our God. He truly is unique and one of a kind in every way, and we would do well to allow this truth to impact us in a real way. He alone can claim certain truths for Himself, and we ought to allow these truths to cause us to fear and revere Him unlike we do anything else.

Yet, we should also be extremely thankful for the blessings these truths allow us to enjoy. Because He is incomparable and unique... so are we! In this hopeless and painful world, we are blessed to live with hope and joy for tomorrow because it is simply another step closer to eternity with Him. What a true blessing that is, and it is all made possible by our incomparable and unique God whose faithful love has led Him to shower us with His amazing grace.