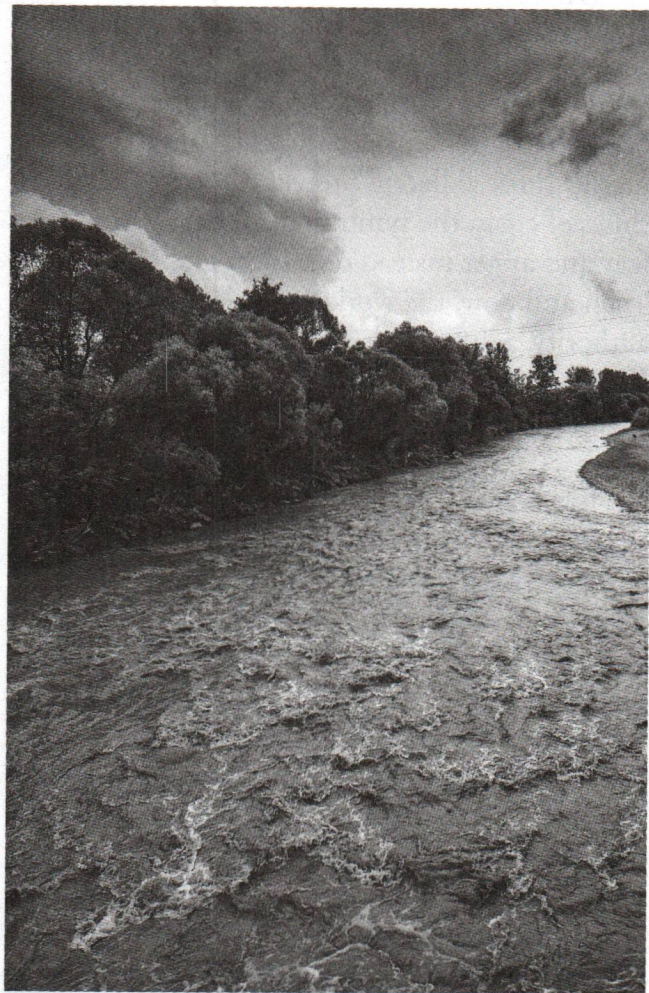


The Lord Is Majestic

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 52:1-12
Background Scripture: Psalms 47; 93

Psalm 93

- ¹ The LORD reigns, he is robed in majesty;
the LORD is robed in majesty and armed
with strength;
indeed, the world is established, firm
and secure.
- ² Your throne was established long ago;
you are from all eternity.
- ³ The seas have lifted up, LORD,
the seas have lifted up their voice;
the seas have lifted up their pounding
waves.
- ⁴ Mightier than the thunder of the great
waters,
mightier than the breakers of the sea—
the LORD on high is mighty.
- ⁵ Your statutes, LORD, stand firm;
holiness adorns your house
for endless days.



Key Text

The LORD reigns, he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed in majesty and armed with strength; indeed, the world is established, firm and secure. —Psalm 93:1

A King Forever and Ever

Unit 2: Our God Reigns

Lessons 6–9

Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Identify what God is “mightier than.”
2. Compare God’s actions as Creator to his actions as Ruler.
3. State which of Psalm 93’s five verses speak most closely to his or her current situation and why.

Lesson Outline

Introduction

- A. Power and Authority
- B. Lesson Context

I. God’s Reign (Psalm 93:1-2)

- A. Strong and Secure (v. 1)
- B. Without Beginning (v. 2)

Long Live the Queen

II. God’s Words (Psalm 93:3-5)

- A. Mighty in Power (vv. 3-4)
Can You Hear Him?
- B. Great in Holiness (v. 5)

Conclusion

- A. Praise to the King!
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

Introduction

A. Power and Authority

What images do you associate with the highest government authorities? For people in the United States, the White House, Capitol Hill, or even the Constitution might be the most powerful images. In a monarchy, perhaps the face of a king or queen comes to mind, or a palace or crown. While these images might not always have positive connotations, they are typically linked to authority and power. All these symbols of authority are meant to evoke respect and inspire confidence in a nation’s citizens.

The world of the Bible had its own symbols of power and authority. Kings wore colorful robes and golden crowns. They built public monuments and enormous palaces to honor themselves and celebrate their accomplishments.

But human authorities, even good leaders, fall short of perfection. They fail, often spectacularly. Those called to protect can cause harm. In times of crisis, the symbols of authority can evoke fear and anger instead of respect and confidence. Then and now, the world longs for a new kind of authority, a different king. Psalm 93 celebrates the King we have been seeking.

B. Lesson Context

How do we describe things we have never experienced? One way is to use our imaginations to compare what we have not experienced to what we have. We gain an approximate understanding of things we have not seen by likening them to things we have seen. So it is with this psalm. We have not directly seen the glory and power of God, but we can compare God’s glory and might to the glorious and powerful things we have experienced, knowing he surpasses them all. In a sense, our text is an exercise in imagination directed by God’s inspiration.

This psalm uses two literary devices extensively. One is *personification*. This convention uses images and descriptions of human life to describe God. This is personification not because God is an impersonal power, but because he is not confined to human characteristics, especially not

physical human characteristics. Indeed, we have not seen God. But John's Gospel reminds us that Jesus Christ, the divine, incarnate Son of God, revealed God through his real, tangible presence in the world (John 1:18). In Jesus, the Creator God has become not just near to us but one of us. In Jesus, God's majesty and power became visible among real people in a real time and place. Only in Christ's incarnation could we literally talk about, say, what God wears.

The other device used here is *parallelism*. This technique builds an image through repeating or nearly repeating one phrase or idea. Doing so strengthens the power of the description (consider especially Psalm 93:3, below). Understanding these features of Psalm 93 (and many others) allows us to join the worship and appreciate the beauty of Hebrew poetry, which is so different from our own and yet still powerful.

Many psalms begin with a superscription that ties the poem to a specific psalmist or occasion (examples: Psalms 3, 50, 121). These headers provide some context for the psalm at hand. The risk of misunderstanding based on vague or missing context is low; we might contrast reading a psalm with reading one of Paul's epistles. The psalms were written from personal experience, whether of praise, lament, both, or other occasions, but they were used as the hymnbook of ancient Israel. We could compare our own singing of hymns; the context for the lyrics can be powerful, but the experiences we bring to our singing are what ultimately give the song real power to speak to us as we sing to the Lord.

Psalm 93 does not contain a superscription, but it is set in a collection of kingship psalms (Psalms 93–99 or 100, with the possible exception of Psalm 94; see 93:2, below). As the phrase suggests, *kingship psalms* celebrate the king, though sometimes this might be a Davidic king and other times the Lord. Or sometimes it might be that one of the kings wrote the psalm, and so it has a kingly aspect.

There was a time in biblical scholarship when this collection was considered to be part of an enthronement festival in Jerusalem. However, many points against this hypothesis have largely

discredited the idea. For one thing, there is no biblical record of such a festival. We might expect to see such a time mentioned in Leviticus 23. Without any evidence, we have no reason to assume such a time was observed. For another, enthronement festivals in other ancient Near Eastern cultures suggested a *beginning* or *renewal* of a god's reign (compare Psalm 93:2, below). The Babylonian god Marduk was enthroned every year, for instance. God had no need of such a ceremony to renew his reign.

I. God's Reign

(Psalm 93:1-2)

A. Strong and Secure (v. 1)

1a. The LORD reigns, he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed in majesty and armed with strength;

The LORD (with small caps) translates God's proper name, often transliterated as "Yahweh" for English speakers. This name is first recorded in Exodus 3:14, when Moses asked how to refer to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Tetragrammaton (which refers to the name *Yahweh*, only four letters in Hebrew) means "I am who I am" or "I will be what I will be." The name conveys God's reliability to be himself, not fickle or changing as people or pagan gods can be.

To speak of God's clothing is to personify him—that is, to describe him with human characteristics even though he is not human (compare Isaiah 59:17). The descriptions here are appropriate for a king. But whereas a human king might be clothed in "fine linen" (1 Chronicles 15:27) and royal colors (Esther 8:15), God is *robed in majesty* (compare Psalm 104:1; Isaiah 26:10) and *strength* (compare Psalms 21:1, 13; 65:6; 105:4).

How to Say It

Archimedes	Ar-kuh-meed-eez.
Gilgamesh	Gil-guh-mesh.
Marduk	Mar-duke.
pharaohs	fair-oz or fay-roez.
Tetragrammaton	Teh-truh-grah-muh-tawn.
Yahweh (Hebrew)	Yah-weh.

God's character alone is so wonderful to perceive that no further adornment could heighten the experience. His authority in all things rests on himself, not any other trappings of power.

A belt would be girded around one's waist (Psalm 45:3). This accessory could hold the robe close to the body or help to gather the bottom part of the robe around and between the top of the legs, allowing free, quick movement. This special preparation for action, especially battle, is what girding oneself signified. In God's case, the action is taken on behalf of his people, to do battle for them. God needs no sword or other weapon to be armed for battle because he is *armed with strength* (Hosea 1:7).

What Do You Think?

Why is it important to remember that while God can be described in human terms, he is not?

Digging Deeper

What pitfalls can we avoid when we use many different ways of describing God rather than focusing on only one (e.g., King or Father)?

1b. indeed, the world is established, firm and secure.

Archimedes (lived about 287–212 BC) is quoted as saying, "Give me the place to stand, and I shall move the world." The mathematician was undoubtedly overly excited about how a fulcrum could be used to shift massive objects. The psalmist would beg to disagree with Archimedes.

The world does not exist on its own but was created by God. It can only be spoken of as *established* and immovable because of God's intention for it and his power to accomplish what he wills (compare Psalm 96:10). Should the Lord wish it, all of creation would tremble and fall to pieces. Paul touched on this while preaching in Athens (2 Peter 3:7). God expressed his contentment after he finished creating the world (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31), and it is his continuing broad concern for *all* his creation that the psalmist celebrates (example: Matthew 10:29).

B. Without Beginning (v. 2)

2. Your throne was established long ago; you are from all eternity.

Ancient kings were fond of exaggerating the extent of their power and influence (examples: 2 Chronicles 32:10-19; Daniel 4:28-30). Many rulers, like the pharaohs, believed themselves to be direct descendants of the gods, worthy of all the honor and glory associated with that status. Maps from various ancient kingdoms show their own territory as the center of the world. Stories of kingly exploits suggest the king was a larger-than-life mythical hero. For instance, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* recounts the semi-mythical King Gilgamesh's exploits and quest for immortality.

God has no need for exaggeration. In keeping with the royal description in Psalm 93:1a (above), the *throne* is a symbol of a king's authority (examples: Exodus 11:5; Esther 1:2). God's throne is generally understood as being in Heaven (examples: Psalm 103:19; Ezekiel 1:26; Revelation 4), while the earth is considered his footstool (examples: Isaiah 66:1; Matthew 5:34-35; Acts 7:49). One exception to this is the ark of the covenant. As the place where God would meet the high priest, it represented God's throne on earth (Psalm 99:1; compare Exodus 25:10-22; 1 Samuel 4:4; 2 Samuel 6:2). Another possible exception is Zion at large (Psalm 9:11). Revelation 4 offers an awe-inspiring description of the worship around God's throne in Heaven.

This psalm does not concern itself with where the throne is or any description of it. The most important characteristic of this throne is its ancient—indeed timeless—existence (compare Psalm 55:19). There was never a time when our everlasting God was not King. This stands in contrast to other ancient Near Eastern gods who were enthroned by the people each year. God had no need of any human intervention to affirm his kingship.

All else that exists has a beginning, a beginning in God's creative act (John 1:1-3). All else that exists is, therefore, dependent on something else for its existence, namely, on God. But God exists forever, without cause. There can be no greater ruler. The Lord is the world's only King.

Long Live the Queen

In 2022, most Britons experienced something they never had before: the death of their monarch. Queen Elizabeth II had reigned for over 70 years when she died at age 96. For some, her death reignited questions about why Britain should be a constitutional monarchy. For others, this was the end of a glorious era. There was no succession crisis or political upheaval, but still, the people mourned for the figurehead they had lost. Her mere presence, whether appreciated or not, had been a constant for many years.

This feeling resembles the imagery of an eternal throne described in Psalm 93:2. In constitutional monarchies, the reigning monarch symbolizes stability and continuity. Similarly, while a constitution may limit their powers, the inherited position and representation of a long-standing lineage bring comfort and security to people. By drawing this analogy, we can better understand how God, who is eternal and unchanging, offers a constant source of comfort and safety for those who trust in him. But, of course, the analogy can only go so far. God's reign will never end. In God's kingdom, there is never a question of succession or whether the king still has a vital role to play. He offers true comfort, safety, and stability to his people. How do you celebrate the reign of your King?
—O. P.

II. God's Words

(Psalm 93:3-5)

A. Mighty in Power (vv. 3-4)

3. The seas have lifted up, LORD, the seas have lifted up their voice; the seas have lifted up their pounding waves.

The translation *seas* appears to be the translators' way of making sense of the image of *waves* (compare Psalm 24:2); it also neatly parallels Psalm 93:4 (below). But the imagery is more like that of a violent flood. The people of Israel lived in an arid region. Some of their homeland was true desert, but all of it depended on seasonal rains. Most rain fell between November and March, with very little from June to September. This climate lent itself to *wadis*, a term that can refer to

seasonal creeks that are sometimes dry or to small year-round brooks. These wadis were prone to flash flooding and could suddenly become violent, rushing torrents, sweeping away anything in their banks. The image here is likely of a swollen, violent river in the midst of flooding. Jesus used this image in his parable of the wise and foolish builders (Matthew 7:24-27): the sand is a foolish place to build because it marks the bed of a seasonal river.

The heaping up of flood imagery (*lifted up, lifted up their voice, lifted up their pounding waves*) emphasizes the ferocity of the water. We might hear in this frightening, rising tide echoes of Noah's flood (Genesis 6-9). Far from the peaceful sound of an afternoon shower, these floods raised a cacophony.

What Do You Think?

If you were contextualizing Psalm 93 for your current hometown, what natural force might you refer to as particularly destructive?

Digging Deeper

Does thinking about this image in terms of your context enhance your grasp of this psalm? How, or why not?

4. Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea—the LORD on high is mighty.

The imagery seems to shift from floods to *the sea*, though the concepts are used in parallel to one another, building on the same idea. For the people of Israel and others in the ancient Near East, the Mediterranean Sea was familiar, as it formed the western boundary of the promised land (examples: Exodus 23:31; Numbers 34:6). Familiarity did not breed comfort, however. Water, especially the sea in the ancient Near East, often represented chaos. The sea was powerful and unpredictable. It was home to giant creatures. Its waves and storms posed a mortal danger to those who dared to sail upon it.

Though a river might not typically evoke the same sense of danger, a flooded river surely would.

The danger of water, whether by flooding or violent *breakers of the sea*, is not *the thunder* of it, though this can be greatly alarming. But compared to God's might, the *great waters* could be described with Shakespearean language: "[They are] full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" (*Macbeth*). The Lord separated the waters at the beginning, creating order where there had been only chaos (Genesis 1:1-2, 6-10). He commands the waves to be still (Psalms 65:7; 107:23-30) and stay within the boundaries he sets (Job 38:8-11; Psalm 104:7-9). Indeed, he commands the waters to sustain the creatures he has made (104:10-18), and he rules over the mighty creatures of the deep oceans (104:24-28). Little wonder that Jesus demonstrated his divine nature and power by stilling storms to protect his vulnerable disciples, or that they exclaimed in wonder that the one who stills the storm must be the Son of God (Matthew 14:33; Mark 4:35-41).

What Do You Think?

Considering how you recontextualized verse 3, how can remembering God's power over that force help you trust him more?

Digging Deeper

How can you share this confidence with others as the psalmist shared his with us?

Can You Hear Him?

Nothing can replace the local congregation with its preaching, teaching, discipleship, and fellowship. Even so, a good podcast can be an enriching supplement. What if, instead of listening to the radio, you found a podcast of daily devotions, historical information about biblical history, or interviews with Christian leaders? You might find podcasts a valuable medium for attuning your ear to God rather than the noise of the world.

Just as the waters in Psalm 93:3 lifted up their voices, so the cacophony of our world can become overwhelming. But God's voice cuts through whatever chaos we encounter. As you navigate life's mighty waves, what helps you listen for God every day?

—O. P.

B. Great in Holiness (v. 5)

5a. Your statutes, LORD, stand firm;

We might think the final verse decisively moves away from nature to civilization. But this is a distinction the psalmist would not make. The same laws and *statutes* that ordered the waters also created order for God's people. God's word went forth and created an ordered world (Genesis 1:1-27); God's laws taught the Israelites how to coexist both with one another and with the land that God granted them (see Deuteronomy 4:40).

Two laws regarding rest illustrate how God's care for people could also overlap significantly with his care for animals and the wider creation. Every seven years, the land was to be allowed to grow wild without cultivation. Doing so allowed the land to replenish itself through natural processes while also providing food for the poor *and* for wild animals. And on every seventh day, the people were to observe the Sabbath and rest along with any foreigners, slaves, and animals in their midst (Exodus 23:10-12).

The Lord's testimonies are not like those of unreliable humans, who often either do not know the truth or alter it to fit their own interests. God's word is not like that of human kings, who twist the truth with words to magnify their power. God's word is *firm* like a huge stone, unmovable even in the greatest flood.

5b. holiness adorns your house for endless days.

Like the robe and the throne (Psalm 93:1-2, above), the ancient king's *house* was intended to demonstrate the extent of his wealth and power. In Israel, Solomon's palace became legendary for its grandeur (1 Kings 7:1-12). And the physical temple that Solomon built to be the Lord's house was a beautiful structure (6:2-36; 8:13). The temple was not truly God's house until he filled it with his glory to such a degree that the priests could not minister there because of it (8:4-11; compare Exodus 3:5). A house could also refer to the family within the home (examples: Genesis 12:1; 2 Samuel 3:6).

As Solomon acknowledged at the temple's dedication (1 Kings 8:27), God's primary residence is not the temple. For that reason, it is

appropriate that the psalmist did not describe God's house by its literal building materials, such as cedar or gold. Instead, it is defined by *holiness*, one of God's core attributes (Revelation 4:8). One aspect of holiness is uniqueness. When we speak of the holiness of God's people, we often talk about being "set apart" in the sense of being dedicated to following the Lord (Exodus 19:6; Ephesians 1:3-4). This includes seeking to live by his laws and grow into his likeness (see Romans 8:9).

Given the destruction of Solomon's temple in 586 BC, *for endless days* cannot refer to the longevity of the temple in Jerusalem. God's throne is in Heaven, so we can appropriately consider that his home (examples: 1 Kings 22:19; Psalm 11:4). And some psalms celebrate all of creation as God's habitation (examples: 24:1; 33:5; 47:2, 7), emphasizing that no place (and no people) are outside of his concern. Those of us who follow Christ are also now God's house in a spiritual sense (1 Peter 2:4-5), as the Holy Spirit forms us into his people in the likeness of Jesus. Knowing that collectively and individually, we are his temple (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19), we commit ourselves to reflect his glory wherever we are, whatever we do. Wherever God chooses to reside, that place is holy.

What Do You Think?

What emphasis does your congregation place on holiness?

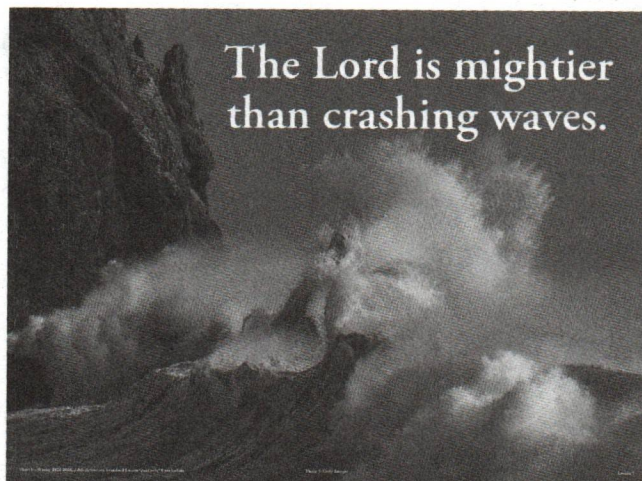
Digging Deeper

To what degree is holiness attributed to us versus a state believers seek to attain? Provide scriptural evidence for your answer.

Conclusion

A. Praise to the King!

As we look to God as King, we recognize his powerful authority over all that he created. He is greater than any threat. Given the Lord's majestic and holy reign, how should we join the psalmist in worship? We, too, express our wonder at what God has done simply because of who he



Visual for Lesson 7. Point to this visual as the class discusses the questions associated with verse 3.

is. We celebrate in song and in deed the rightness of being part of God's kingdom. We express our submission to his authority by following his teaching and example, living according to his great love, especially as revealed in Jesus. We extol God's power by relying on him to provide for us and protect us, emboldened by his Spirit to serve others as he has served us. In this, we honor our King.

What Do You Think?

What is your most surprising takeaway from studying Psalm 93?

Digging Deeper

How can that insight be applied in your life this week?

B. Prayer

O Lord Almighty, you are majestic in strength and holiness. We are greatly blessed because of your care for us and your creation. We put our trust in you because your reign is sure, and your words are true. As we are reminded of your inestimable majesty, we ask you to strengthen and guide us to live under your reign so all may know you are the world's true king. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

The Lord reigns!

Involvement Learning

Enhance your lesson with NIV Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at www.standardlesson.com or in the back of the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

Into the Lesson

Challenge participants to work in pairs to write a short poem. Three suggested forms are a couplet (two rhyming lines), a haiku (three lines with 5-7-5 syllables), or a free verse (four lines with no rhyme or rhythm but with repetition or personification). *Option.* Provide a theme for learners to all focus on; love and nature are both good starting options.

Allow five minutes to work, then ask volunteers to share their poems with the group. Have them talk about their writing process. What was challenging? What benefit is there in using a poetic form to express praise to God?

Alternative 1. Bring a copy of one of your favorite short poems to class. Have a volunteer read it aloud. Invite learners to point out words, rhymes, or repetitions that stand out and explain why they are important to the poem.

Alternative 2. Ask learners to divide into two groups. One will be pro-poetry, arguing its merits. The other will be anti-poetry, arguing its deficits. Allow about 10 minutes for groups to brainstorm an opening statement, several key points, and a closing statement. After the debate, ask the class to discuss in pairs how their perception of poetry in general does or does not affect how they value poetry (like the psalms) in the Bible.

Say, "Poetry can help us see things in a new way. When we creatively play with words, we can spark other people's imagination and draw attention to, or emphasize, valuable truths they may not have considered before. Today's passage of Scripture is a poem; as you read it, pay attention to what images it brings to your mind and what truths it reminds you of."

Into the Word

Ask a volunteer to read Psalm 93 while other learners sit still and listen. Ask another volunteer

to reread the psalm, but this time allow learners to jot down any words or phrases that jump out to them. Allow a few minutes for pairs to discuss their initial reactions to this psalm.

Split the class into two groups: the **Majesty Group** and the **Strength Group**. Have both groups reread the psalm together and determine which images or phrases in the verse fit with the theme of their group, either majesty or strength. While the class works, draw a simple Venn diagram on the board (two circles with some overlap), labeling one circle "Majesty" and the other "Strength." After several minutes, bring the class back together. Ask the groups to share what images/phrases they identified with their theme. Write any shared answers between the circles. Once the groups are finished answering, discuss what overlaps (if any) they saw and what this suggests about God's majesty and strength.

Alternative. Divide the class into pairs and distribute copies of the "The Lord, the King" exercise from the activity page, which you can download. Allow time for the pairs to complete the exercise as indicated. Then, discuss their findings as a class.

Into Life

Give each learner one minute to consider Psalm 93 and find the verse from this short psalm that most resonates with him or her today. Invite volunteers to share their responses. Then, challenge each learner to brainstorm a short plan to keep this verse in mind in the week ahead. *Option.* Distribute the "My Key Verse" exercise from the activity page to be worked on individually as directed before discussing with a partner.

Ask learners what praise choruses Psalm 93 reminds them of. If you have a musically inclined class, choose a well-known chorus to sing together. Close class with a prayer praising God for his majesty and holiness.