

Jesus: Our Mighty God

DARRELL DELANEY

When I think of might, I often think of muscular people who can lift heavy weights, and bodybuilding people who pose. Sometimes, might can refer to the size and physical strength of people, but it can also refer to so much more. In this episode of *Groundwork*, we want to talk about the concept of might, especially in the context of God, and how that can give us hope in any situation we might find ourselves. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we are in episode two of our four-part series on Advent, where we are exploring the names of God given in Isaiah 9: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. In this episode, we want to talk about *Mighty God*, and later on, we will talk about the other names.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and there is something that we mentioned in the first episode on Wonderful Counselor. We mentioned in the first part of that episode that sometimes in older Bible translations wonderful and counselor were made two separate names, and you hear it in Handel's *Messiah*, but it is actually each of these four names are a doublet—two words each; but there is something else going on here, Darrell, that you have noticed, that as you divide those two-word titles, there is a little bit of the divine and a little bit of the human in all of them.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, if you think about John 1:14, it says: The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. So, we know that when we study God's Word, that we find that Jesus is one-hundred-percent divine and one-hundred-percent human; and we know that, and we hold both of those together, because Jesus is very unique in nature; and so, if you look at these names, you will see a divine and human aspect, even though they are compound names.

So, we see Wonderful; that is definitely something that is a divine title. I mean, no one is beyond the wonder of God; and Counselor is something that actually humans can do...we can counsel one another; we can encourage one another; and use God's Word as a tool to do that. The same with Mighty God. Mighty is something that people can do in their strength. I talked about that in the intro; but God definitely is divine.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And then also, the *Everlasting Father*. Well, we know what fathers are from the human side, but to be everlasting, that is a divine trait. *Prince of Peace*: We have princes in our world, but only God can bring shalom...only God can bring the peace, which we will look at in the final episode of this series. Jesus is fully divine and fully human, and these titles reflect both divinity and humanity as well.

So, today we are looking at Mighty God—the second one; and clearly, Darrell, this cannot be the characteristic ultimately of any human king or ruler, you know. At the time when Isaiah wrote Isaiah 9 and gave us these four titles, Hezekiah was probably the king for at least part of that time, but we are not talking about Hezekiah here. We are talking about one who can only be God; or think of the next chapter, Isaiah

10:21:

A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob will return to the Mighty God. Not to any human king or ruler, but to God alone.

DARRELL DELANEY

Isaiah is trying to make sure that they see a divine intervention into their situation. There is no human king who is going to be able to turn this around for them. They are not going to have another conquering hero like they did in David's time, or like a judge they had in Joshua's time. No; this is something only God can fix, because their problem came from being exiled due to their forsaking God and sinning against God. You told us in the first episode, Scott, that we are in the judgment section, even though we are seeing these words of hope. So, God wants to make sure that they know they are not going to be wiped out by the judgment that is happening, but there will be a light in the midst of darkness. That is encouragement.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Because the Mighty God will finally be the one who will restore them. Ultimately, of course, this is going to be Jesus Christ. Seven hundred years or so before Jesus is born, Isaiah is foreseeing all of this...predicting this...both foretelling and *forthtelling*...which is always a characteristic of biblical prophecy...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is not just telling the future...foretelling; it is *forthtelling* a truth that we also need to know. So, we are going to need this Messiah. So, Mighty God; very, very interesting to think about. What does that mean beyond sheer physical strength?

DARRELL DELANEY

So, in this section, when you are talking about Mighty God, it is important for us to think about, not just the deeds of God, which are important, but also the character of who God is in this situation. You want to think about God's glory, honor and strength in victory. We actually sing songs about this. We sing songs about God's strength, God's power, God's majesty; but we need to understand that we are not trying to go triumphalist in this...we are not trying to act like there are no issues and there are no problems...but we want to make sure that we put God in his rightful place. He is above all of that stuff and nothing is too hard for him; and the Mighty God concept will help us to actually understand that. I think it gave Israel some hope in the middle of a despairing situation.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; you know, one thing that I have observed that I think you and I have probably preached about this in our sermons, and I am sure this has come up in past *Groundwork* episodes, too; but the one thing...we are going to look at some psalms in the next part of this program, ones that really punch the awesomeness of God...but the other thing you see all the time in the Psalms is that what really gobsmailed the Israelites...what really made their jaws drop open...wasn't just that God is almighty and strong, and so forth. You know, the Greek gods, like Zeus, you know, that is all they were...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

They were just strong and they were terrifying and they were powerful and they could unloose lightning bolts and so forth, right? But in the Psalms, like in Psalm 8 or Psalm 113, what really gobsmailed the Israelites was that all that almighty power didn't keep God from being tender with us; that God could make his power small; that he could come to us. What are human beings that you should care for us, Psalm 8 says; but you

do. Or Psalm 113: God *sees* women who are struggling to get pregnant. He *sees* people who cry. He *sees* Hannah, the mother of Samuel, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

God is always taking all that power and channeling it right into our little hearts; and that is an amazing juxtaposition, that the mighty God we serve can come to us in our littleness and not blow us away, but elevate us and love us and care for us.

DARRELL DELANEY

It's beautiful, too, to see that God himself does that in the incarnation...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

For a God to be so great and mighty, to become a helpless babe, is something that is nothing short of miraculous, and to live a life in this finite suit called humanity, and continue to live the way that we are called to live and endure the suffering that we have endured, that is something only a mighty God can do. If God can do all of those things, not even just the big things, but also the small things, to walk with us in our times of need, it takes a mighty God to become very small.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I like what you said about the incarnation. Philip Yancey, among other writers, has influenced me on this, but you know, when you think about it, Jesus is the Son of God—the second Person of the Trinity, right? He existed from all eternity. The New Testament teaches that he was the active power in creation. When God said: Let there be light, it was this Word of God—the Son of God—speaking those words. Wow! Just hugely galactic in power, right? And yet, when the incarnation happened, he became microscopic, you know; a zygote in a woman's womb is microscopic; and that was where God was. All of God's mighty power that you can only see under a microscope; and then, even once he is born, yes, just a helpless little baby. That is the awesomeness of God's power, that it always comes in service to us.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, as we continue in this study in the next segment, we are going to talk about what it means to be mighty, and we are going to see it in the Psalms. So, stay tuned.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Let's jump right back in, Darrell. We have been talking about the Psalms and the way the Psalms express the might and the power of God. We are looking at that Messianic title from Isaiah 9: Mighty God. Let's just take a quick tour through the Psalms and pick up some key verses on that theme.

DARRELL DELANEY

Psalm 24:8 says: Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

Psalms 29:4 says: The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is majestic.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Psalms 68:33[b]: to him who rides across the highest heavens, the ancient heavens, who thunders with mighty voice.

Psalms 89:8: Who is like you, Lord God Almighty? You, Lord, are mighty, and your faithfulness surrounds you.

Psalms 93:4: Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea—the Lord on high is mighty.

DARRELL DELANEY

Psalms 96:4 says: For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods.

Psalms 150, the last psalm, verse 2 says: Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.

So, these verses, Scott, just a smattering...there are so many, but you want to think about it in its context, where whatever you think is mighty on this earth, that brings you fear and trembling, God is mightier; God is par excellence; he is above the things that make us kind of tremble in our boots, because he is the mighty God. They are showing all types of different circumstances that God is better than and greater than in the Psalms.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; I like one of the ones we quoted just a minute ago, Psalm 29. Anybody who has ever read Psalm 29 knows that it is about a thunderstorm roaring across a lake and coming toward you. Those of us who live in Michigan...we have seen those storms come across from Wisconsin...come across Lake Michigan; and you know, it starts as a distant rumble and then it gets louder, and then it gets darker, and the wind kicks up; all of that is awesome: the lightning, the thunder, and Psalm 29 says and God is bigger than that! Our God does have that kind of amazing power. As we said in the previous segment, what really stunned Israel was not just that, but that God could harness all that power and put it in service of little old us to love us and to save us; but don't ever be mistaken: God *is* the galactically awesome one; awesome God, right? You said songs we sing: Awesome God. That is who God is.

DARRELL DELANEY

I am glad that you mentioned the word *awesome*, Scott, because these psalms are designed to make us look up and understand how big and transcendent God is. They are supposed to bring awe to us; and my definition of awe is when your jaw drops and you have nothing left to say. When you see God lifted up; when you see God as he proclaims to be; nothing left for you to say, like: Oh, my goodness; you are God—you are greater than us; and you love us! So, the fact that you are big and you could destroy us, but you choose to show us mercy. I think that is what Israel needed in this time, because they are in a dark time, and they need the light of hope in the situation, and that is what [Isaiah] Chapter 9 is explaining to them. There is hope coming.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, three chapters earlier here in Isaiah...in Isaiah 6, when Isaiah is called, he sees God high and lifted up; and he hears the heavenly chorus: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty; and what does he say? I think I am finished here...

DARRELL DELANEY

I'm undone.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Woe is me; this is too awesome for me. Of course, the angel comes and touches him and says: No; you are okay. God is not here to blow you away, literally, but this is the God you serve.

You know, again, Darrell, in Isaiah, the Israelites are on the cusp of going into exile, and in exile in Babylon, far from home, you know; we remember Psalm 137: ⁴ paraphrased How can we sing the Lord's song in a

foreign land? We are so far from home. They needed to be bucked up by this vision of a Mighty God in the coming Messiah; they needed to know that that is who God was going to be for them, and would always be for them.

DARRELL DELANEY

God is a God of hope, and he can bring hope into any hopeless situation. You felt discouraged; you felt stuck; you felt alone; you felt lost. I know I have, and God has found ways to bring people around me and resources around me to let me know that he hasn't forgotten about me; that he can address the situation that I am in, and that I can be encouraged, knowing that the Mighty God is working on my behalf. When God does intervene, if he chooses to in his own sovereignty, it doesn't happen the way we think it should and it doesn't always happen the way we expect, does it, Scott.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, right; and that actually leads us into sort of the New Testament. When Jesus of Nazareth came as the Messiah...as the Mighty God...a lot of the disciples, in a time of political occupation by Rome...what they *really* wanted, they thought, what they really *needed* most of all, they thought, was political liberation. So, they were hoping that Jesus would be the one to get rid of Pontius Pilate, get rid of King Herod, and above all, get rid of the Caesar and take his place. In fact, they persisted in that belief all the way into the book of Acts. Right on the day of the ascension, 40 days after Easter, the disciples gathered around Jesus and asked him: ^(1:6,7) "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷(Jesus) He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Jesus' almighty power as the Mighty God is going to come differently to the world, and it is not going to be in the political way some people were hoping.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, when Jesus goes to die on the cross, and he resurrects, that was totally not what they were expecting...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

They were expecting maybe David 2.0 or another conqueror like Joshua to take care of Rome; but of course, he came to do something far more important, which is to deal with the sin in our hearts...the ruler in our hearts...if you will. God will often answer a situation. In his wisdom and his mighty power, in a way different than we expect; and that we need to submit to, and trust his methods in that, because it might not materialize the way we expect.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That ties in with our first episode on Wonderful Counselor, where we said, too, that in the wisdom of God, which looks foolish to the world; it looks like getting saved by a crucified guy doesn't look very wise, but it is wise, that is the counsel we need to take. We need to adopt Jesus' posture. By the way, Darrell, some of our listeners probably know that in the New Testament there is this thing in all the gospels...it comes across really clearly in Mark...called the Messianic secret...

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Every time somebody tried to publicly identify Jesus as the Son of God or the Christ—the Messiah—Jesus said: Shh, shh, shh; be quiet; don't talk about that yet...don't talk about that yet. Why not? Because Jesus

knew that they were ready to coronate him as king right then and there, right? They wanted to rush in and make him the new Caesar, to take Caesar's place and establish a political nation of Israel. So, until Jesus could be crucified, and then show in that way that that is how you get things done as the Mighty God, only then... That is why the only person in the New Testament who ever identifies Jesus publicly as the Son of God and is not told to be quiet is the soldier at the cross.

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Surely this was the Son of God; and now that he was dead, it was safe to say that because now we know how God is going to use his mighty power to save us.

As we wrap up this episode in a minute, we are going to want look a little bit more at the New Testament and some take-aways for our lives. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*; and we are in part two of our four-part series on Advent. Last episode, we talked about *Wonderful Counselor*; this episode we are talking about *Mighty God*; and that is a title that can only be given to a divine being; it cannot be given to a human person; and even though some scholars thought that it was Hezekiah that would be doing that, actually Isaiah is saying: No; this has to be our Messiah, the one we are looking for; and that hope comes in the midst of discouragement.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we have said, too, that the Psalms make clear...we read a whole bunch of them in the previous part of this program...the Psalms make clear that whatever you think is strong, God is always stronger. He is almighty; he is awesome; God is greater than anything in the universe...anything we could imagine; and yet, that Mighty God is on our side; that Mighty God isn't here to terrify us with his power...

DARRELL DELANEY

I am so glad.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, indeed; he is here to channel that power right into our tiny little hearts and comfort us when we are in dark places, as Israel was in Isaiah's time, when they went into exile. When we are in a dark place, God's mighty power can shine a light; when we are in a lonely place, God's almighty power shows up as our friend; when we are confused, God's almighty power shows up to give us clarity. Isaiah is saying to Israel long ago, he is going to do that for you in and after the exile, but God is going to do it for us now, too. Now, as the New Testament people, Darrell, we know God is going to do that through Jesus.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, we have the advantage, Scott, of the whole full counsel of God—the sixty-six books of the Bible—and the Israelites had the Old Testament that they could refer to; and so, we have an advantage knowing that we can just turn to the end of the book and see what happens; and we have the prophecies that have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. We see that and the writers of the New Testament have harkened back to the Old Testament, saying: See, this is where it is fulfilled; see, this is where Messiah did this; see, this is what accurately happened. So, we can see that, and I love that we can look at the book of Revelation and see where this thing ends up and where the final power of Mighty God is fully displayed.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And again, listen to these words from Revelation 5, and we are going to see some of those paradoxes we have just been talking about. John writes: ⁶Then I saw a lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center

of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. ¹¹Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹²In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" ¹³Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" ¹⁴The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

So, there it is, Darrell, that paradoxical combination of what you might call slain might, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We are looking at a lamb that has been killed! Somehow, the Lamb looks like he has been dead; and yet, this is the one who is worthy in the song we just heard, to receive power and wealth and all the rest. This is our Mighty God, who looks like he let himself get slain, because he did!

DARRELL DELANEY

That is the irony. We talked about how it is really a great thing for a wonderful and mighty God to become very small. You talked about that in an earlier segment, how he did that microscopically; but now, we are seeing life come through death. Everyone in all creation is gathered around the throne, and they are worshipping this God, who is mighty in battle, and has been faithful in all things, yet shown as a slain lamb; and the idea is that it would blow your mind, and you would see that God is the one who is fully all powerful and able to help us in any situation. The book of Revelation just gives us a glimpse at the end of all things to know we are going to be there worshipping him.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; we talked about Psalm 8 earlier: Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! And yet, you pay attention to little old us; and yet, Jesus, who is majestic...he is on the throne of heaven, right? And this deafening chorus of Worthy is the Lamb, sung eventually, we are told, by every creature on earth, under the earth, in the sea; angels, everybody singing the song; it must be deafening; and he yet is a slain lamb in the middle of it, reminding us that he sacrificed himself, and it was through that sacrifice, through his *not* using his power in the way the world might expect, right? Hey, if you're the Son of God, they said to Jesus, jump on down! Or that hymn we sing: He could have called ten thousand angels to rescue him from the cross, but no; he had to let that happen so that he could take our place; and by his sacrifice, we are saved.

DARRELL DELANEY

And beautifully prophesied about. So, we see that if we talk about, just kind of take-aways from this episode, the fact that he is the one who we are waiting for. This first Advent, the birth of Jesus, has come. We talk about it in Luke 2 quite a bit in this season; and the different times we explain the story of his birth. We have seen the first Advent; we read about it; we taught about it. But now everyone...all of creation...and I mean all of creation...is waiting for the second Advent, where he will come back and establish justice permanently; full of love permanently; forgiveness and mercy permanently; and most of all, shalom, where nothing is missing and nothing is broken. Everyone is longing for that to happen, and because we know he is sure and it will happen, we can have hope now.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Resilience from that, right? In the tradition of the Church, Darrell, often the first Bible reading for the first Sunday in Advent is from one of the Olivet discourses, where Jesus talks about the end of time and when he will come again on clouds of glory. So, Advent as a season always has those two focuses, right? The Advent that was, in Bethlehem; the Advent to come, when he returns on clouds of glory to judge the living and the dead; and our confidence of that will happen and gives us hope. There is a lot in the news that could bring you down...a lot in the news that could make you despair on any given day, but we have hope that Christ

will come back and make all things new.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is not that we are putting our hope in a politician, or we are not putting our hope in our own human abilities; we are putting our hope in a God whose character never changes...never shifts like shadows; and he is the same yesterday, today and forevermore. And because he is who he says he is, and he always does what he says he can do, we can trust in his promises that he will bring the beauty out of the ashes, and he will bring encouragement in discouraging situations; and we can remind one another that we can hang in there because he has given us the ability to endure.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It reminds me of somewhere in the New Testament talking about Christ coming again. I think one of the apostles says: Encourage one another with these words.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Be encouraged; or we can end on a doxological note of giving praise to God: Ephesians 3:20, where Paul writes: Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

That is our Mighty God, thanks be to God.

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We hope you will join us again next time as we consider the next title Isaiah gives the coming Messiah: *Everlasting Father*; and what that means for us.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

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