

The Immensity of God (2LCF 2.1e)

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[0:00] Now in 1 Kings chapter 8, what's going on is, if you recall, Israel having passed through the wilderness and passed through the Jordan River, they entered into the promised land, into Canaan, the conquest, and at the time of the judges, there was no king in Israel, and everyone did what was right in their own eyes. And then there was a king in Israel, which was Saul, and then following Saul, there was King David. And when David became king in Israel, in Jerusalem, he built for himself a great house. And he thought, he himself dwells in this big house, and yet the Lord's dwelling place with him is this tabernacle, this little tent, this portable tent sanctuary. So he wanted to likewise build a big house for God to dwell in with them. But that, of course, gets appointed to Solomon, his son.

And then after David, when Solomon is king, when the temple is built as a dwelling place for God, Solomon gives this speech in 1 Kings chapter 8. But I'm going to go back a little bit for context and start in verse 10. I'll read from verses 10 to 27.

And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud. For the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord. Then Solomon spoke. The Lord said he would dwell in the dark cloud.

I have surely built you an exalted house and a place for you to dwell in forever. Then the king turned around and blessed the whole assembly of Israel. While all the assembly of Israel was standing, and he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who spoke with his mouth to my father David, and with his hand has fulfilled it, saying, Since the day that I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I have chosen no city from my tribe of Israel in which to build a house, that my name might be there. But I chose David to be over my people Israel. Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a temple for the name of the Lord God of Israel. But the Lord said to my father David, Whereas it was in your heart to build a temple for my name, you did well that it was in your heart. Nevertheless, you shall not build the temple, but your son who will come from your body, he shall build the temple for my name.

So the Lord has fulfilled his word, which he spoke, and I have filled the position of my father David and sit on the throne of Israel as the Lord promised. And I have built a temple for the name of the Lord God of Israel. And there I have made a place for the ark in which is the covenant of the Lord, which he made with our fathers when he brought them out of the land of Egypt. Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven.

[3:09] And he said, Lord God of Israel, there is no God in heaven above or on earth below like you who keep your covenant and mercy with your servants who walk before you with all their hearts. You have kept what you promised your servant David, my father. You have both spoken with your mouth and fulfilled it with your hand as it is this day. Therefore, Lord God of Israel, now keep what you promised your servant David, my father, saying, you shall not fail to have a man sit before me on the throne of Israel, only if your sons take heed to their way that they walk before me as you have walked before me. And now I pray, O God of Israel, let your word come true, which you have spoken to your servant David, my father. But will God indeed dwell on the earth?

Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain you, how much less this temple which I have built. Our great God, we praise you that you are infinite and that you transcend both space and time. And your essence is beyond our comprehension. But yet you have revealed yourself to us that we may account for who you are, that we may apprehend the truth you have revealed and know you and in knowing you that we may adore you and marvel at your excellencies and wondrous works. We pray as we seek to do to sit under the ministry of the word this evening, that

you would bless the ministry of the word. We pray that you to bless the hearing of the word and that we pray, Holy Spirit, that you would illuminate your word to us and grow us in faith and obedience. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, what we see going on here is that God is immense and not spatially limited like corporeal creation. It's a short sentence, but there's a lot packed in there and some big words. We'll say it again. God is immense and not spatially limited like corporeal creation. So we'll work that out. Now, children, have you ever, for the kids, have you ever asked your parents a question? When you see something big, do you say, is God bigger than that? Or have you ever asked your dad, have you said, is God bigger than you? And of course, parents are not going to say, no, God's smaller. So yes, God is bigger. And then maybe you see a tree, a really big tree, and you say, is God bigger than that tree? And of course, God's not smaller than that tree. And then maybe you see a mountain and you haven't seen anything bigger than this mountain. And you say, is God bigger than this mountain? And of course, God's not smaller than the mountain. So in one sense, yes, God is bigger because God has created all of creation. But what we're asking is a question about measurement, a measurement of how much space something fills up. Maybe that big tree that you saw, let's say it was 90 feet tall. So is God, is the space that God fills more than 90 feet tall. So we have a bit of a problem with the question, because God is not confined by space, like your dad is, or like that tree is, or like that mountain is. God is immense. And God is not confined to space. So the first point is that creation is corporeal. So what does this word corporeal mean? It means physical material form. An example that we can take from it is, let's say, a human body, a human body, all of us that are here, we are living, breathing people. We have a body and a soul. And what happens when the soul is no longer united to the body? What's left is a corpse.

It is, the corporeal is the physical material form. So going back to 1 Kings chapter 8, David, King David, he required a house to dwell in, and he built himself a great house. And when he was in the house, he was nowhere else but in the house. If he was in his house, he wasn't out at war fighting battles. And if he wasn't in his house, maybe he put out a sign that said, gone fishing, be back at three. And he was not at the house. If you went to his house and knocked, David would not be there.

David required the dwelling place, and David was confined by the dwelling place when he was inside of it. And when he was not at home, he was not in that dwelling place. So he was neither exclusively, sorry, he was either exclusively at one place or exclusively at another. Same with the rest of us.

[7 : 59] Now David is who we read about here, and then we think of all of Israel. Israel was geographically located, and within the geographic location of Israel was the temple. And the temple, which we read of, was a geographical, physical, tangible place for the people to congregate for the localized presence of God with his people. So already we've come to a bit of a conundrum. We've come to a little bit of a challenge here. But God, who made all things, and we're talking about David, who dwelt in his home, but when David was not at home, he wasn't in the house. But we're saying God, who created all things, dwelt with his people. So already we're confronted with the reality that scripture uses analogical language to describe God. There's no language that we use that on a one-on-one level describes and explains to us God that we may comprehend him. It is all analogical. But what we see quite often is what is called, and I've said this before, and the kids seemed to nod that they were going to go. So you know what this word means, but anthropomorphisms, according to the manner of men.

An example of that is in Genesis, when they heard the sound of God walking in the garden. Now let's process that. We say, well, God is a spirit. God does not have a body. And the sound of walking, you'd think of maybe footsteps on the ground, or the weight of a foot on a stick snapping twigs, or perhaps crunching leaves under feet. And while God doesn't have a body, what would be the sound of God walking in the garden? This is anthropomorphic language, because we cannot relate to God, but it is what can bring us to best comprehend the situation as it's perceived by man, as it's perceived by the people, not by God. So what is that whole setting of hearing the sound of God walking in the garden?

Well, with the fall after Adam and Eve had sinned, Adam hid from God. And you think, that seems a little bit ridiculous, because God knows all things, and God is everywhere. God created all things. God fills all space. How can Adam and Eve hide from God? And it's not that they were hidden from God, that God was not in that hiding place, and did not know that they were there. But what is

important about it, is that God called them back to himself. That sinful fallen mankind does not seek God, but seeks to hide from God, to run away from God, and it takes God calling sinful mankind back to himself. So we see what's called anthropomorphic language, or analogical language. So we need to take that, as we start to further understand God dwelling with his people, that it does not mean that God is excluded from other places.

Jeremiah 23, 23, going back to the sound of God walking in the garden, and Adam hiding from God, as though God did not know where they were, or that God was not there. Jeremiah 23, 23 says, Am I a God near at hand, says the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places? So I shall not see him, says the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth, says the Lord. And now we're getting more to the essence of the immensity of God, that God's divine essence fills heaven and earth. It fills all space and time, but yet is not confined to any particular space. So we see from David dwelling in his house that creation is corporeal. And then when we shift our focus on God, we see that God is immense. Now, when it refers to God's dwelling, God's dwelling with his people, God's dwelling is in confinement, like it is with David. When David is in his house, he is confined to that space. When it says that he built a temple for God to dwell in with his people, it does not mean that God is confined to that space, like corporeal creation is.

[12:44] Uh, further taking first Kings eight further, acts seven, eight says, however, the most high does not dwell in temples made with hands. As the prophet says, heaven is my throne and earth is my footstool.

What house will you build for me? Says the Lord. Or what is the place of my rest? My has my hand not made all these things. We cannot read scripture without being confronted with the fact that it uses analogical language to describe God. Kind of like when we were looking at divine impassibility, um, that God relented of making Saul King, but God is not a man that he should relent. Uh, in this text, it, it, it demonstrates for us the analogical use of language to accommodate our creaturely understanding, um, to explain God.

Because notice how it says the most high does not dwell in temples made with, with hands. Human beings use their hands to make things, right? And then it takes that concept further. It says, what house will you build for me? Says the Lord. Or what is the place of my rest? Because God cannot be confined by anything. He made all of these things and he made these hands that made the temple.

And it goes on. He says, has my hand not made all these things? We cannot escape the fact that analogical language is used to describe God because you say, well, God is a spirit. God does not have a body. But it says here that he has a hand. It says, has my hand not made all these things? So does God have a body? And if God has a hand, how big is his hand? Maybe it would be a divine hand breadth in length, but God does not have a body. And we know that from scripture and scripture does not contradict itself. What it's getting at here is using language that we understand to accommodate our understanding.

And it gets to the fact that says that though human hands made temples for gods to dwell in, because the Greek and Roman gods, they believed would actually dwell in these temples that were made by the hands of people. But yet God says by his hand, all these things were created.

Everything was created.

[15:13] Not that he has a hand, but by his creating, working ability and power. So by saying has my hand, it's not saying that God is matter, which fills space, which can be measured and has a body and has a hand, but it's what it signifies, what it's getting at analogically.

So to take a little bit further, asking the question of, well, with temples and with the Roman, Greek and Roman gods dwelling in these temples, located and confined to these temples, which were built by hands, who determines who inhabits where? To not only discredit these Greek and Roman gods, but to go even further than that. Acts 17, 24, it says, 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, nor is he worshiped with men's hands as though he needed anything, since he gives to all life, breath, and all things. And he has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord and the hope that they might grope for him and find him, though he is not far from each of us. So you see that the Lord has pre-appointed, determined and pre-appointed the boundaries of their dwellings, not that creation determines the boundaries of

God's dwelling in a temple. But anyways, this text goes on to say, though he is not far from each one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being. God is not far from every single person who exists, because it is from him and through him and to him that all things exist, and it is in him that we live and move and have our being. Our very movement, every little movement you just made, every breath that you just take, is God upholding and sustaining your life. God is not far, God is sustaining your very life.

So God is not measured by space. Like in comparison to that tree, that 90 foot tree, it takes up 90 feet of space. Is God bigger? How much space does God take up that we can measure?

God is not measured by space. So to some further notes on the doctrine of divine omnipresence, God's omnipresence is that he is everywhere, and it speaks to the immensity of God.

[18:02] But God is neither excluded nor included in any space. So what exactly does that mean? It means that he's neither shut in nor shut out of any space. Like David, if David was not at home, if he's gone fishing, he is out of his dwelling. If David is in his dwelling, he is shut in, and he is not somewhere else, but not God. God is neither shut out of any place nor shut in. And this isn't a physical transcendence. When we say that God's infinity is that he transcends in space, it's not that God physically is transcendent, that he is above space, but it's a categorical transcendence of spatiality.

Now, if you hear that and you say, what? What does that mean? Well, let's unpack a little bit. God is not confined to space. So when David is in his dwelling, he is confined. When there's a dwelling for God, God is not confined to that dwelling place because he fills all space. So also, nor does God physically located in space. We cannot say that. God is currently east of us, and that's where he is. He's not confined by space nor physically located in space. But divine omnipresence, omnipresence is God's being everywhere, which means that God is all present. And that's what omnipresent means. It means all present. God fills all space essentially. His essence fills all space with his presence. And yet, the space of the entire universe cannot exhaust the immensity of God. God fills all space in the entire universe, but the entire universe in itself does not exhaust the immensity of God.

God. Omnipresence refers to the magnitude of the divine substance filling the entire universe and not contained by it. And Thomas Watson, writing on the immensity of God or the omnipresence of God, he said, the humble heart, the heart of the believer, the humble heart is the throne in regard of his gracious presence. And heaven is the throne of his glorious presence. And yet, neither of these thrones will hold him, for the heaven of heavens cannot contain him. So this is starting to get at something that we need to flesh out a little bit, is a distinction of God's omnipresence. A distinction between God's being presence everywhere. And that distinction is God as maker and sustainer of all things, and the distinction of God as covenant Lord. So why does it say God's dwelling place with his people if God fills all space and time and is essentially present in all of creation of heaven and earth? Does God not then dwell everywhere? What is the point of saying God dwells in this tabernacle, in this tent, or in this temple, this box made for the dwelling place of God? What is that actually getting at? What does that actually signify? So first of all, the distinction of God as maker and sustainer of all things. Like previously mentioned, in him we live, move, and have our being. Wherever there is creation, there is God sustaining and upholding and governing and limiting and controlling all things as God, as maker, as sustainer of all things. God is there. So wherever something exists, ask the question, does it exist? Yes, and God is there.

It is by God as first cause and source of all life. As creator, he is there sustaining its being. So you might then ask the question, well, hell is creation, because anything that's not God is creation.

[22:11] Before the foundation of the world was just God, as it were, and everything else is creation. So there's God and creation. If it's not God, it's creation. Hell exists. Hell is a creation. Is God there?

In Psalm 139.8, it says, if I ascend into heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, you are there. Now, if we consider Sheol as the place of the dead, it is not spatially separate from God. The place of the dead is not spatially separate from God. But even further, to think of hell as God's judgment against the unrepentant, despite what the world and some of their cartoon comics might depict, hell is not a party without God there to chaperone it and ruin everyone's fun.

Rather, eternal hell, or the lake of fire, is the absolute absence of God's favor. It's not the absence of God. It's the absence of God's favor and the pouring out. It is the pouring out of his judgment and wrath. God is present in hell, and it is the manifestation of God's holiness.

So, the distinction then between God as maker and sustainer of all things, and the distinction with God as covenant Lord. So, to go back to 1 Kings 8, God as creator and sustainer is everywhere, but yet it says that God dwells in this box, this temple, in a geographical location with his people. So, this distinction that we make is God's presence as covenant Lord. So, when we hear things such as his face shining upon you, or his countenance, or his covenantal favor, it's speaking as though locational presence, even though God is omnipresent. So, what does this mean then when we read Revelation 1 about Christ walking in the midst of the lampstands, which are the churches? Christ is present with the churches. What does this mean for them, for the presence of Christ in the churches? It's a particular distinction of presence, first of all. So, we think, well, Christ ascended, is in heaven. How can Christ, who has ascended into heaven, then also be in the churches, because of the person of Christ, and the human nature, the human nature can't be omnipresent, which is why it's important to understand the two natures united in the one person, according to each nature. So, the human nature of Jesus is ascended and sitting in heaven, while the divine nature, God the Son, or the Word beyond the flesh, remains to be God, and is infinite, immense, and eternal. And we see in Scripture the promise of the presence of Christ by the Spirit in the churches. Now, this distinction of presence, in 1 Kings chapter 8, what Solomon is getting at, about God's dwelling place, what Solomon is getting at is that God has a special covenantal presence of God with his visibly assembled people. Remember that, because what is visible and tangible in the Old Testament helps us, it's a sign, it signifies what is spiritual and unseen in the covenant of grace. But what does this mean for the church? If what Solomon is getting at is a special covenantal presence of God with his visibly assembled people, what does this mean for the church? The church, which is the spiritual temple, and a temple being a dwelling place of God with his people.

[26:07] That there is an intensity of God's presence, his special covenantal saving presence with his people. So, when we call on him in the name of Jesus, there is an intensity which is greater than his presence as creator, an intensity which is greater than his universal cosmic presence, which fills the entire universe, but yet the universe cannot contain. So, what does this mean for glory of God's people dwelling with God, when glorified believers will be in the presence of God? Revelation 21:3 says, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people.

God himself will be with them and be their God. It's not that God is absent from anywhere else or excluded from everywhere else, and so he's therefore geographically in heaven, but what it's getting at is the special covenantal presence of God with his assembled people. And in Psalm 16:11, it says, In your presence is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Now, another note about the immensity of God or omnipresence is that this attribute of God is incommunicable. In other words, it's not shared. It belongs to God alone. So, when we think then to go back to Christ, Christ, the body, the human nature, where Christ, if this is not communicated or not shared with creatures, then what's going on or where is Christ during the Lord's Supper? And this is an area where the Roman Catholics and the Lutherans and Reformed differ. The human nature, this is why it's so important to have that distinction between the divine nature and the human nature in the one person of Jesus Christ forever, and that there's not a conversion or a mixture or a confusion of the two natures, but each nature operating according to its nature.

So, at the Lord's Supper, where is Jesus? Well, according to the human nature, he is ascended in heaven and seated at the throne. According to the divine nature, he is omnipresent, and he, according to Revelations 1-7, is spiritually, by the Spirit, present with the assembled people of God in a more intensified and special covenantal way. We'll come back to that.

[29:02] One more note. No, we'll skip over that. So, concluding uses to take from this. The distinction that's made is that man is corporeal and God is immense, and we don't want to collapse those two. We don't want to collapse the creator and creature distinction and predicate our creaturely experiences and limitations on the divine essence. Because I am limited by space, and that's all that I can relate to. I don't want to predicate that onto God, and therefore, God must be limited by space. Also, all secrets are laid bare before God.

Adam was not able to hide from God. God fills all space and time with his essence. All secrets are laid bare before God, even all your secret thoughts that nobody knows about. Actually, we'll flip there quickly, but Psalm 139, which we sang earlier. Psalm 139, verses 7 to 10.

It says, Where can I go from your spirit, or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend into heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, you are there. If I take the wings of the

morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. There is nowhere in creation that God is excluded from. And this is a terrifying reality, reality to the unrepentant. Because as much as somebody might think that they've done something in secret, in violating God's law, it is not secret from God. God is all-present. He is omnipresent.

So while it is terrifying to the unrepentant, because all things, all secrets, whether they be actions, or words, or thoughts, will be made bare, and they will give an account on the day of judgment. So while this fact is terrifying to the unrepentant, it is very comforting for the believer, for those who do repent. Because Christ's once-for-all satisfaction for sin is not just for the ones that were actioned in public. Christ's payment for sins of his people are not just the ones that other people know about. But Christ's once-for-all satisfaction for sin is even for the sinful desires in your thoughts.

[31:42] And this is immensely comforting for believers. Let's go back to Psalm 139, but this time I'll read verses 1-6.

Every single sin committed in action, in word, or in thought of every person is known by God because God is there. God is omnipresent. For the unrepentant, this is terrifying, to those who are in Christ and have had all of their sins paid for on the cross in Christ's once-for-all satisfaction of divine justice is immensely comforting for the believer. Because there is no secret sin that will pop up on the day of judgment unpaid for to condemn us. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. So third, God is not distant from you. John Owen wrote, So in other words, God is inescapable. You cannot escape God's presence. And there is no circumstance that you are experiencing where God is not there controlling, limiting, and governing.

That situation. And maybe you have heard the phrase *Corum Deo*. If you read Ligonier articles or Table Talk, you've definitely heard it.

But it means in the presence of God. So to live *Corum Deo* is to live being conscious that we are in the presence of God. We are called to live, live being conscious that we are living in the presence of God.

So I want to make one more note about where is Christ during the Lord's Supper. And taking what we've learned about in 1 Kings 8, God's special and intense covenantal presence that is beyond his cosmic universal presence as creator and sustainer.

[34:23] But at his presence, his covenant presence, his presence is imparting blessings through the means of grace. So at church where there's the means of grace, which is the word and the sacraments and prayer, it's not just that we all love Jesus and we get together to sing about it.

There's something much more going on. And what's going on in the church and the means of grace is, according to the promise of scripture, is God communicating grace to his people.

As free pastors being nourished, being fed, God is imparting grace, blessings, the benefits of redemption to the redeemed in a more intense, special and covenantal way with his presence.

And that's what the means of grace are so important for the church service. The preaching of the word, the hearing of the word of God, which is made effectual for faith and obedience.

The sacraments is the word in visual form. And as mentioned this morning, baptism, visualizing. So when you think of your baptism, it's visualizing the gospel promises of having died by being united to Christ's death and all of our sins paid for on the cross, being buried and being raised to new life as a new creation under grace instead of under works and condemnation.

[36:00] And that's invisible form. The promises of the gospel are brought to us in visible form. And then when you think of the Lord's Supper, so whereas baptism is the initiatory oath sign, the Lord's Supper is the ongoing oath sign where the word, the gospel promises are brought to us in visual form for our taste and our touch and our eyes.

So if you're in the middle of the week and you're having a difficult week, whether it's just being confronted by the fact that it's a broken, fallen, sin-cursed world or remaining corruption within yourself and maybe even doubting salvation, with these subjective experiences, think back to last week of the Lord's Supper that you observed or partook of or look forward to next week's, next Lord's Day's partaking of the Lord's Supper, where we have the promise from Scripture of God's presence in the partaking and of the observing of these things.

And the gospel promises, the word brought in visible form. It's more than just remembering that Christ died for our sins. There's actual working grace of the Spirit in believers.

While we may not feel it in the moment, with time there is a nourishing and a nurturing that's going on. And with the gospel promises brought to us in visual form and partaking and observing of these sacraments, Christ is present, is spiritually present with a more intense and special presence, a covenantal presence nourishing his people as sheep who are feeding on green pastures. Let's pray.