

A photograph of a stone church building with a large arched window and a cross on the roof. White blossoms are visible on the right side of the image.

Weekly Newsletter: 23 September 2025

Reflection: Power + Beauty = Majesty

By Joe Barnard

“On the glorious splendour of your majesty...I will meditate” (Ps. 145)

How do you meditate on majesty? What even is majesty? These are not academic questions of no consequence. To ignore majesty is to ignore God. No one can worship the Almighty who is ignorant and unexperienced in the majestic.

It is worth saying that majesty is like a colour of paint that has been altogether stripped from the modern world. Whereas in most cultures human beings have been surrounded with the hues of majesty, we have to look hard to find any hint of it. This is true even in a country where kings and queens are present. The majesty of the modern world is not the same as that of the ancient world. To stand before King Solomon would be a very different experience than standing before any modern monarch, at least in the West. To be in presence of Solomon would be like entering the orbit of an immense planet or star. Gravity would change as the soul felt a need to drop prostrate to the floor and stay silent until a voice summoned, “Rise and speak!”.

Now, what is majesty? There are two essential ingredients: beauty and power.

Raw power is not in itself majestic. It may be coercive; it may be threatening; it may be overwhelming, but power by itself is not worshipful. The emblem of this is technology. There are plenty of potent factories and powerplants and modes of transportation that inspire a degree of awe, but such awe is not the by-product of majesty. Such feats of engineering make our bodies feel small and impotent, but they do not (usually) touch the soul. This is why poetry and art that celebrates industrialism is all but indigestible. A windmill does not move the heart to the same degree as does an oak tree or waterfall. The one exudes power; the others are glorious.

At the same time, beauty by itself is not majesty. Beauty comes in many different forms ranging from gentle daisies to giant tidal waves. Beauty can be placid and quaint; it can also be destructive and terrifying. To stand beside Niagara Falls is one experience of beauty. To hold a newborn infant is another. At times, majesty catches hold of beauty like a cloud refracting the sunlight, but not always. Just because you are in the presence of beauty does not mean you are in the presence of majesty.

So, what is the distinctive recipe of majesty? Majesty is power – especially divine power – draped in the robes of beauty. The Psalms are strewn with language to represent this. See it once and you will catch sight

of the same truth again and again. Take, for example, the opening lines of Ps. 104: "O LORD, my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendour and majesty, covering yourself with light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a tent." The language of creation, or power, is unmistakable. The heavens are there because God has made them. They are a product of His might. At the same time, the hue of beauty is also present. In the Psalm, God unveils himself in a palpable glory. He wears light, we are told, as a garment.

It's worth probing a bit more the reason why beauty is such an important aspect of majesty. The thing to see is the unique way in which beauty touches the soul. There are various ways in which God can inspire obedience. One is to convince by reason. Another is to command by power. Yet, there are times when God seeks to affect us in a less domineering way. It is at these times that beauty is a choice instrument.

The wonder of beauty is that it moves the will without coercing it. Just as gravity gives weight to the body, so beauty gives weight to the soul. When beauty is present, we find ourselves drawn toward something without any need for force or argumentation. This is why CS Lewis sometimes speaks of beauty as having the ability to slip past the dragons of the heart. The blessing of beauty (which can also be a danger) is that it touches the will without us realising what is happening. We find ourselves on bended knee saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy!" before we even know what we are doing.

This, I think, helps make sense of why majesty is such an important aspect of God's self-revelation. Sometimes God sits on His throne and speaks commands with the voice of thunder. Other times he subdues the mind through the irrefutable reasoning of a prophet or an apostle. Yet, these are not the only ways in which God communicates with us. There are other times he paints the sky in cobalt or dapples the heavens with a million spots of shimmering light. As we see such evidence of His power, we do not feel threatened; neither do we feel convinced. We are simply moved. Like the gentle hand of a musician, something touches the heart, and worship is the result. When this happens, something is present. We've have just felt the special power of majesty.

Beauty + Power = Majesty. Keep this recipe in mind as you read the Psalms. Keep this recipe in mind as you experience God.

Gifts to Our Missionaries

By Shona MacDonald

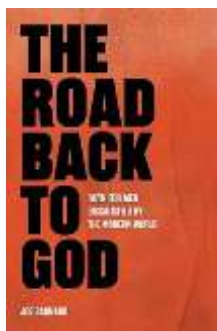
With the generous legacies from Maureen Gowans and Kathleen Forsyth, it was decided by the elders and Mission Team to give £10,000 each to both Lorna and the Sorsamos. A gift of £5000 has also just been arranged for James. It has been wonderful to pass this money on from two of our congregation who so lovingly prayed and supported our missionaries over the years.

A note from **James** "I would like to thank Holyrood especially for their exceptional donation from the legacies of Kathleen and Maureen. We miss both of them very much and their devotion to the Lord's work was lifelong and inspiring to so very many. It is humbling to be remembered in this very generous way and the donation will be put to a special use in due course."

Lorna has said "Thanks to those who decided to gift part of the legacies. I am really overwhelmed by the generosity".

Hazel has written "The one-off gift was a complete surprise and a timely reminder of God's faithful provision. Just a few days ago, I was reflecting on our finances and praying that God would provide and help me grow in trusting Him more fully. It is also really meaningful to receive something from the legacies that Kathleen and Maureen left. They supported us faithfully over many years—not only financially but also through prayer and encouragement. Their kind notes and emails were always a blessing."

The Road Back to God by Joe Barnard



Joe's recently released his new book **The Road Back to God: Faith for Men Dissatisfied by the Modern World**. This book was written as a guide for men who are drawn to Christianity, but don't know where to begin. It is a great evangelistic tool and copies can be bought [here](#) or contact Liz@holyroodevangelical.org and we can get you a copy.

Also, if you've read it, please consider leaving a review on Amazon. It's a help to others who are looking at the book. Thank you!

Student Lunches

We're looking forward to welcoming some students this month and next. The Mission Team have arranged for couples or families to offer hospitality after our Sunday morning services to any students. Here are the details of who is hosting and please point students in the right direction –

- 28 September: Norma and Ernie Shippin
- 5 October: the Barnards
- 12 October: Nick and Jean Archer
- 19 October: the Scotts

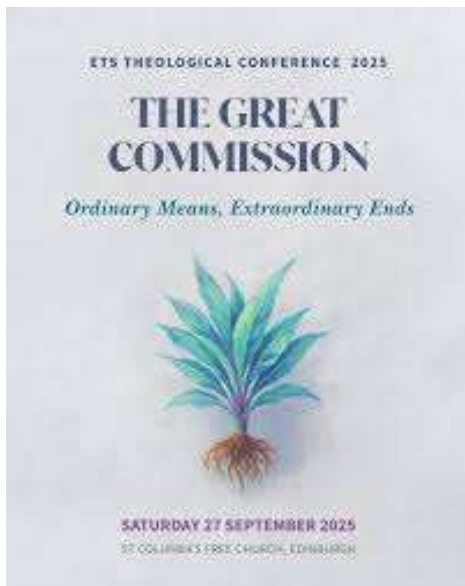
A Thank You from James – Summer Appeal

To all at Holyrood: Thank you all so much for the very generous gift which has just found its way through the system. Year in, year out, the support in all ways from Holyrood continues to be exemplary, and it is a real blessing and encouragement to have such faithful support. Thank you one and all for your kindness.

East of Scotland Gospel Partnership – Sunday 26 October

Save the date! As a church we are part of the East of Scotland Gospel Partnership and one of the aims of the partnership is to express unity by coming together for a yearly Gospel Partnership evening service. This will take place on **Sunday 26 October at 7pm at Charlotte Chapel**. There will be no evening service at Holyrood and we look forward to attending the joint service instead.

Edinburgh Theological Seminary – Annual Conference



Just before the ascension, Christ told his disciples: 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age' (Matt 28:18-20).

What do these 'marching orders' mean? How does the church relate to common social concerns—and how do individual Christians? How, in fact, are disciples made? What significance does this have for church planting and revitalization today?

Come along **this Saturday from 9.30am at St Columba's Free Church** as we take up these questions as part of our theme on the Great Commission, the mission of the church, and the ministry of the gospel.

For tickets (cost is £15) go here - <https://ets.ac.uk/annual-conference/>

Church Calendar

For your info and prayers:

- Wednesday: Home Groups meet across the city (contact Liz@holyroodevangelical.org for more details)
- Thursday:
 - Women's Bible Studies from 10.30 – 11.30am in the church
 - Session meeting at 7pm in the church
- Sunday:
 - Morning service at 10.30am – Joe Barnard preaching (live streamed)
 - Evening service at 6pm – Joe Barnard preaching (live streamed)
- Monday: Baby and Toddler Group: 10am – 11.30am



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