

A Hymn of Praise to God

Psalm 8

Psalm 8 - "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth, who have set Your glory above the heavens! Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, because of Your enemies, that You may silence the enemy and the avenger.

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him? The sons of men, that you care for them? For You have made man a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor.

You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen - even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas.

O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth!"

Background Notes

Psalm 8 is a hymn of praise for God's marvelous works of creation, and His great and wonderful plans for mankind.

The title of this psalm tells us that Psalm 8 is a psalm of praise by David, and it is also a hymn of praise for the choir director. "*According to gittith*" probably refers to a musical instrument, or a tune that had some connection or association with the city of Gath. Goliath came from Gath. It was one of the five major cities of the Philistines.

In view of verse 2, some Bible students have suggested that David may have been thinking of his victory over Goliath when he wrote this psalm. "*Through the praise of children and infants You have established a stronghold against Your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger*" (v2 NIV). God used David's youth, a few simple words, and a little slingshot to bring down the mighty Goliath, and thus the entire Philistine army.

Psalm 8 is also clearly a Messianic psalm. It is quoted three times in the New Testament, and all three times it is quoted in reference to Christ:

- After the Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem and into the Temple courts, He quoted from Psalm 8:2 - "Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' they were

indignant and said to Him, ‘Do You hear what these are saying?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Yes. Have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise?’” (Matthew 21:14-17).

- Speaking of the Lord Jesus, the apostle Paul quoted Psalm 8:6: “For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death, for ‘He has put all things under His feet.’” (1 Corinthians 15: 25-27).
- The author of Hebrews quoted Psalm 8:5-6 to show that the Lord Jesus is greater than the angels, even though he became Man. “But one testified in a certain place, saying: What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet” (Hebrews 2:6-8).

Notice that Hebrews 2:7 says “lower than the angels” while some translations of Psalm 8:5 says “lower than God.” The Hebrew word used in Psalm 8:5 is “Elohim,” which can be translated “God” or “gods” or “angels.” The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) renders it “lower than the angels” - and that is what the author of Hebrews quoted. A full discussion of this matter is quite involved, but I’m inclined to say that when an inspired New Testament author quotes from the Septuagint, we should go with that text and translation! So we have read Psalm 8:5 as “lower than the angels.”

What does “man was made a little lower than the angels” mean? Wasn’t mankind created in the image of God? Yes! But at the present time mankind is subject to limitations to which angels are not subject. The law of gravity, for example, does not limit angels and their travels. And of course angels don’t die - but man does die.

In Hebrews 2, the author of Hebrews was emphasizing the point that the eternal Son of God became true Man in the incarnation - lower than the angels at that time, in order to do the work of redemption. But that does not make Him inferior to the angels! No! The eternal Son of God was, and is, and will forever be greater than the angels - even though He became Man. He remains fully Man and fully God - forever!

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord is majestic in His works of creation!

Did you ever look up into the sky on a cloudless night and marvel at God’s amazing creation in the nighttime sky? David was clearly thinking about that in verse 3: “*When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained...*”

Most likely David was not aware of the concept of “light years,” as we are, and thus our sense of awe of God’s creation should be even greater as we gaze at the innumerable stars. And, in reality, many of the “stars” we see are entire galaxies! Notice that all this is the work of **God’s fingers**. Wow! We have a big God!

Some religions teach that “God is the universe,” or “the universe is God,” but there is no idea of that in the Bible. No, God is the **Creator** of the universe. He is **above** the heavens (v1). The universe is the creative work of His fingers (v3).

And nothing was random about the origin of the universe. **God ordained it!** *“Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained.”*

How can intelligent people believe the idea that the universe created itself out of nothing? And how can they believe that the overwhelming amount of intricate design in this universe came about by chance, as the result of a “big bang”? Talk about kissing your brains goodbye! Why, even little children know things don’t just create themselves out of nothing. Children honor God when they, in simple faith, acknowledge that the universe has a Creator (v2).

You’d have to be willfully blind to deny that there is a powerful and awesome Creator and designer behind this vast and intricate universe. The Lord is majestic in His works of creation!

2. The Lord is marvelous in His plans for mankind!

Did you ever see a diagram or model of the universe with a small arrow designating “You Are Here”? **From the human perspective**, we are just a speck of dust, on a speck of a planet, in one of the arms of a galaxy that contains billions of stars that are larger than our sun! And our galaxy is just one of billions of galaxies! We can certainly identify with David’s question of verse 4, can’t we? *“What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You [care for him, or are mindful of him]?”*

So how do we answer the question of verse 4? Are we just specks of dust on a tiny planet? No! **From the divine perspective**, we are very significant and important. God has created us in His image, and He has crowned us with glory and honor! *“For You have made him... and You have crowned him with glory and honor” (v5).*

God gave mankind the responsibility to rule over the other works of God’s creation, including the animal kingdom. *“You have given him dominion over the works of Your hands. You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas.”*

Obviously, this mandate does not give humans the right to destroy what God has made, or the right to abuse the privilege of dominion. No! Mankind's mandate is to care for and protect what God has created, including the environment – but we can wisely use the earth's resources for living, including trees for lumber, and oil for fuel, and animals for food. Mankind was given dominion over this earth - the earth does not have dominion over man!

Because of sin, mankind has failed to properly care for this world as God intended. However, when the perfect Man returns to this earth in power and glory, He will set things right! 1 Corinthians 15, where this psalm is quoted in reference to Christ, says that the "last Adam," our Lord Himself, will show forth all that God intended for man on this earth. Then all believers will share in the glorious reign of Christ on earth, where **all things** will be in subjection to Him.

The first and last verses of this hymn of praise look forward to that wonderful day: *"O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth!"* The Lord is marvelous in His plans for mankind.

Practical Application

Remember the illustration of "the businessman and his baby"!

Are you ever bothered by how small and insignificant you feel in our vast universe? If so, remember this little story that illustrates how important you are to God.

Think of a very powerful and wealthy businessman with holdings and interests all over the world. This tycoon travels the globe. He meets with world leaders, and he's involved in international negotiations that affect the world economy and global politics.

Now, think of a tiny baby in a small town that's located far away from the busy man's international travels and important meetings. Many people would consider the baby to be "insignificant," compared to the vast world of the businessman.

Except for one fact: that baby is the businessman's child! That baby is his pride and joy.

What a difference that makes! To the loving father, that small baby has significance and importance greater than all his global travels and international business dealings.

So - if you ever feel small and insignificant in a vast universe - remember the illustration of the businessman and his baby!