

Psalm 8

1 (To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm of David.) O LORD our Lord, how excellent *is* thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

Observe first that, setting aside the salutation, this Psalm begins and ends with the same statement: **O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!** When you get hit twice in one short Psalm with the same exact language, you're wise to take note.

The Lord's name is famous around the world. There is a great celebrity that accompanies the name of Christ. Every day the Associated Press provides a listing of birthdays for famous people around the world – they are known by their name. Here are some Bible samples of this concept: **There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.** (Genesis 6:4). **A good name is better than precious ointment[.]** (Ecclesiastes 7:1). **Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.** (Philippians 2:9-11). Of these samples, the last one greatly captures the meaning of Psalm 8:1.

No famous human – past, present or future -- comes anywhere near the scope, extent and magnitude of the excellent name of our Savior. It's a miracle that our Lord's name has been on the lips of mankind now for centuries on end. The works of creation and providence evince and proclaim to all the world that there is an infinite being, the fountain of all existence, power, and perfection; the sovereign ruler, powerful protector, and bountiful benefactor of all creatures. How great, how illustrious, how magnificent is the glory of this being in all the earth! The light of it shines in men's faces everywhere. **For the invisible things of him from the creation**

of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse[.] (Romans 1:20).

In 1898 the ship *Belgica* took a historical trip to Antarctica and soon became trapped in a snow pack. The sights filled the boat's crew with reverential awe. "You feel that there is something else besides the earth," the captain described. "This sort of religiosity makes you sense a God, not a specific God, but a vastly superior being." (Julian Sancton, **Madhouse at the End of the Earth**, p. 234). The heathen captain confirmed Romans 1:20.

Also inherent in the psalmist's prose is the notion that the day will come when the gospel is spread beyond Israel and will extend to the whole earth. From *The Treasury of David: In all the earth; not only in Israel, to which the name and knowledge of God was confined, Psalm 76:1 2 147:19, but among all nations; which shows that this Psalm speaks of the Messiah, and the times of the New Testament. See Isaiah 40:5 Malachi 1:5, &c.*

And finally as to this verse, this glory or fame reaches to the heavens, and indeed above all the visible heavens, even to the heaven of heavens, where the throne of glory is established, where the blessed angels celebrate the Lord's praises, where Christ sits at the right hand of God the Father in glorious majesty, from whence he pours down excellent gifts. **If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.** (Ecclesiastes 5:8). **But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?** (1 Kings 8:27).

2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

This verse commences with a reference to little, new babies, just in the opening days and months of life, as opposed to children old enough to play outside. **The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst: the young**

children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them. (Lamentations 4:4). Note the difference between a “sucking child” and “young children.” **For death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets.** (Jeremiah 9:21). The reference here is to the weakest and most vulnerable, not youngsters who can function and spend hours “without” the home.

The Savior appears to refer to this verse in Matthew 21:16: **And said unto them, hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise.**

Interpretations of this language are all over the map. The likely meaning, though, is that God has made those who are most feeble the instruments of accomplishing a great work. A sample of this concept is found at Acts 4:13: **Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.** And we see further of this idea in this verse: **At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.** (Matthew 11:25). Paul says God has chosen the **foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.** (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).

The phrase “babes and sucklings” aptly describes the children of God making their way through this hostile world. On the face of it, logically, they would never survive. They are weak, and foolish, and contemptible and harmless persons. But when all the dust settles and the story is told, these people overcome all enemies, including the avenger himself. They stop the mouths of those who hate God. Going back to Acts 4, quoted above, the very next verse tells us: **And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.** (Acts 4:14). The mouths of those enemies were effectively stopped. In Acts chapter 6, we are told that Stephen, being full of faith and power, **did great wonders and miracles**

among the people. When disputers surfaced, **they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he (Stephen) spoke.** (Acts 6:8, 10). That's the way it is!

3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

The Psalmist is talking about a result of his considering, looking upon and scanning the vast heavens that God alone made. He made them with his fingers, instruments used to construct a piece of work skillfully. **Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands.** (Psalm 102:25). When the ancient Egyptians were stricken with lice, and the magicians' enchantments had no answer, **the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said.** (Exodus 8:19). During his earthly ministry, Jesus told his detractors: **But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.** (Luke 11:20). As these passages show, reference to the fingers or hands of God denotes his strength, power and unique skill.

Heavenly bodies are very glorious creatures, always worthy of man's contemplation and consideration. Doing so is extremely humbling, awe-inspiring and overwhelming. Man is drawn to such splendor, although we have scarcely scratched the surface of what's out there. Observing the solar system is catching a glimpse of the power, majesty, wisdom, goodness and greatness of God. We are filled with amazement and admiration at the vast spaces the stars occupy along with their mighty movements in the measured orbits. All for the benefit of God's children: **They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.** (Judges 5:20).

4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

Against the backdrop we just examined, what is man? What is that pathetic, sick and corrupt human being against such splendor is the question. *What is man - What claim has one so weak, and frail, and short-lived, to be remembered by time? What is there in man that entitles him to so much notice? Why has God conferred on him so signal honor? Why has he placed him over the works of his hands? Why has he made so many arrangements for his comfort? Why has he done so much to save him? He is so insignificant his life is so much like a vapor, he so soon disappears, he is so sinful and polluted, that the question may well be asked, why such honor has been conferred on him, and why such a dominion over the world has been given him.* (Barnes).

Here are the components:

- **Mindful:** God, who is so vast and glorious, with all the starry worlds and endless universes to claim his attention, is mindful of man. That is to say, God remembers man, thinks of him, attends to him, cares about him and confers great favors upon him. **Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!** (Psalm 144:3).
- **Visits:** The word here used means a visitation for any purpose – for inspection, for mercy, for friendship, for judgment, for salvation and so on. These visitations are constant and persistent, carrying with them new and fresh proofs of favor. **And the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.** (Exodus 4:31). **Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it.** (Psalm 65:9). **Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation.** (Psalm 106:4).
- **Little lower than the Angels:**

This text is referenced and embellished at Hebrews 2:7-9, which gives us more light on the meaning and tells us that this passage transitions from a discussion of created mankind to a specific reference to Jesus Christ: **Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.**

The merger that is featured in this verse of created man with Christ is hard to capture. In that regard, perhaps Gill's observations will help: *[C]ould it be interpreted of man, as made by God, it might be thought to refer to the creation of him in the image and likeness of God; but as it must be understood of the human nature of Christ, it may regard the wonderful union of it to the Son of God[.] * * * [T]his clause refers to the humiliation of Christ in his human nature[.] * * * Christ was made low as to nature, place, estate, reputation, and life; he who was the most high God, in the form of God, and equal to him in the divine nature, was made frail mortal flesh, and was in the form of a servant in the human nature.*

- **Crowned him:** Again, we have to look at mankind's experience that then merges with Christ. Created man was imbued with noble faculties and capacities. When God gave man his being, that amazing structure or house, he distinguished him from inferior creatures and qualified for dominion over them. **But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night; who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?** (Job 35:11, 12). The creation story clearly tells us that newly-created man had **dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.** (Genesis 1:26). This is how mankind was crowned.

Now, linking that up to the crown Jesus has received consider what Poole says: *Hast crowned him, i.e. man, fallen and lost man; who is indeed actually crowned and restored to the glory and dominion here following, not in his own person, but in Christ his Head and Representative, who received this crown and dominion, not so much for himself, who did not need it, as for man's good and in his stead; which also he will in due time communicate unto all his members. And so the two differing expositions of this place concerning mankind and concerning Christ may be reconciled.*



[6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:](#)

[7 All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;](#)

[8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.](#)

These three verses combined for consideration continue the theme just touched on having to do with man's dominion. More detail is provided as to the "works" of God's hands, specifically sheep, oxen, beasts, birds, fishes and sea monsters, a listing while not exhaustive or comprehensive is nonetheless representative of the entirety of the animal kingdom.

To whom is this dominion given? **Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.** (1 Corinthians 15:23). Paul expands on this thought and elevates it into a higher sphere when he writes: **For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him,**

then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. (1 Corinthians 15:27, 28).

Also included in this precious concept is that reflected in Romans 16:20: **And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.** Along those lines, we learn from Psalm 91:13: **Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.** And finally, consider this all-encompassing pronouncement found at Psalm 47:2, 3: **For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.**

Closing this loop, I give you the words of Matthew Henry: *What is man, so mean a creature, that he should be thus honoured! so sinful a creature, that he should be thus favoured! Man has sovereign dominion over the inferior creatures, under God, and is appointed their lord. This refers to Christ. In Heb 2:6-8, the apostle, to prove the sovereign dominion of Christ, shows he is that Man, that Son of man, here spoken of, whom God has made to have dominion over the works of his hands. The greatest favour ever showed to the human race, and the greatest honour ever put upon human nature, were exemplified in the Lord Jesus.*

9 O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

Reminder – this is how the Psalm opened. The Psalmist begins and ends with this note of admiration and wonder. This is an example of a *quod erat demonstrandum* [Q.E.D.] meaning “which was to be demonstrated” or “what was to be shown.” This abbreviation is often placed at the end of mathematical proofs. Here, the writer is emphasizing the proposition he started off, which he now assures us has been proven by the intervening text. *Appropriately, the writer closes this brief but pregnant and sublime song of praise with the terms of admiration with which it was opened.* (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown).

At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord. (Zephaniah 3:20).

P.S. – Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews*, p. 65 /

What is Man?

Here, then is, we believe, the true interpretation and application of Psalm 8. The verses quoted from it in Hebrews 2 refer not to Adam, not to mankind as a whole, not to Christ Himself considered alone, but to His redeemed. The Holy Spirit, through the Psalmist, was looking forward to a new order of man, of which the Lord Jesus is the Head. In the Man Christ Jesus, God has brought to light a new order of Man, One in whom is found not merely innocence, but perfection. It is of this “man” that Ephesians 2:15 speaks: “To make in himself of twain (redeemed from among the Jews and from the Gentiles) one new man”; and also Ephesians 4:13: “Till we all come in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” As God looks at His incarnate Son He sees, for the first time, a perfect Man, and us in Him. And as we, by faith, “see Jesus crowned with glory and honor,” we discover both the proof and pledge of ourselves yet being “crowned with glory and honor.” * * *

Here then is the Divine answer to the question asked by the Psalmist long ago: “When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast made – What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?”

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