

PSALM 8

I. BIBLICAL TEXT

**For the Choir Director: on the Gittith.
A Psalm of David.**

1 O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth, who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens! 2 From the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have established strength because of Your adversaries, to make the enemy and the revengeful cease. 3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; 4 what is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him? 5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God, and You crown him with glory and majesty! 6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, 7 all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, 8 the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, whatever passes through the paths of the seas. 9 O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!

II. INTRODUCTION

A. TYPE OF PSALM

1. PRAISE PSALM

- o One of 16 praise Psalms

2. A MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

a. Instructions to the Choir Director = “On the **Gittith**”

- Two other Psalms with this notation = **Psalm 81** and **84**

b. Gittith—possible meanings

1. “wine press”

- a. Joyous celebration at time of grape harvest

b. Possibly associated with the Feast of Booths

- ▲ During September—October
- ▲ At the conclusion of the in-gathering
- ▲ Marking the end of the agricultural year

2. Kind of harp?—a ‘Gittite Harp’

- From the Philistine city of Gath

3. Type of song sung by people of Gath?

- a. David lived in Gath while in exile—and Saul stopped hunting him—**I Sam 27**
- b. David lived with Achish, son of Maoch (King of Gath)

c. With 600 men and two wives—Ahinoam (Jezreeelitess) and Abigail (Carmelitess)

B. AUTHORSHIP—DAVID

C. OCCASION

1. AS YOUNG SHEPHERD?—AWED BY THE GRANDEUR OF CREATION

- o Looking into the starry night—from a hillside outside Bethlehem

2. AFTER A GREAT VICTORY?—CELEBRATING GOD'S FAVOR ON HIM

- a. After defeating Goliath?—[I Sam 17](#)

- b. After defeating the Amalekites?—while in Gath—[I Sam 27](#)

3. AS KING?—REFLECTING ON THE AUTHORITY GOD GRANTED HIM

- o *You crown him with glory and majesty*—v5

- o *You make him to rule over the works of Your hands*—v6

4. AS PROPHET—AND MESSIANIC PROTO-TYPE

- o [What is man?]. . . *And the son of man that you care for him?*—v4

- o Sovereignty over all creation—vv 6-8

D. THEMES

1. COMPARATIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND HUMANITY

- a. God's **ultimate and absolute sovereignty** as Creator—over all created order

- b. Humans' **delegated and limited sovereignty**—stewards over created beings

2. CONTRASTING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND HUMANITY

- a. God's **majestic** and **ultimate glory**—His name is over all the earth

- b. Human dignity—glory—**derived** from God—**subordinate** to His—**insignificant** by contrast

E. STRUCTURE

Verses 1-2 Opening Praise of God's Majesty

Verses 3-4 Reflections on Human Dignity

Verses 5-8 Human Worth as Stewards of Creation

Verse 9 Closing Praise of God's Majesty [repeated]

F. BIBLICAL CONTEXT

1. Verse 4—*What is man, that You take thought of him? And the son of man that You care for him?*

- o Similar questions raised elsewhere:

- ▲ Job 7:17
- ▲ Ps 144:3
- ▲ Heb 2:5b

2. Mt 21:16—quotes verse 2a—*Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself.*

3. I Cor 15:27—quotes verse 6b—*He has put all things in subjection under His feet.*

4. Heb 2:6-8—quotes **verses 4-6**

III. EXPOSITION

A. Verses 1-2—OPENING PRAISE OF GOD'S MAJESTY

1 O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth, who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens! 2 From the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have established strength because of Your adversaries, to make the enemy and the revengeful cease.

1. SEPTUAGINT RUNS VERSES 1-2 TOGETHER

- o Highlights contrast between God's glory and human frailty
- o Highlights contrast between God's power and enemies' impotence [they are stopped!]

2. *O LORD, OUR LORD*—JEHOVAH ADONAI

a. Jehovah

1. Covenant name—of the God of Israel—YHVH

2. But *more* than just the God of Israel

a. Jehovah—used as Creator God—in **Gen 2**

- ▲ The Lord God—**Jehovah Elohim**—**Gen 2:4, 5, 7, 8, 9ff**

b. *Elohim*—is just the way of describing Him—as above all so-called gods

c. *Jehovah*—is the **very name of God** Himself—**Ex 3:14**

b. Adonai

1. ‘Lord’—‘Master’—the One who rules [over all]

2. Used **53 times in Psalms** to describe God

3. Vowel points used to pronounce Jehovah [sometimes Elohim vowel points are used]

c. “Adonai Jahweh” [Jehovah]

- Combination used 310 times in Bible
- Usually by prophets—introducing an oracle—***thus saith the Lord God***
- For example **Is 3:15**

3. ***HOW MAJESTIC IS YOUR NAME IN ALL THE EARTH***

- a. Jehovah—is this name
- b. His fame is known by all people everywhere
- c. Even if people do not know his name—they know Him by reputation

Rom 1:20—***For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.***

4. ***WHO HAVE DISPLAYED YOUR SPLENDOR ABOVE THE HEAVENS***

- a. The Lord’s **glory**—is above the highest order of creation
- b. He—and only He—is **supernatural**—above all nature
- c. Praise for His glory—is lifted *above* all creation
 - By angelic hosts—who raise it above their heavenly post
 - **Is 6:3**—***Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory***

5. ***FROM THE MOUTH OF INFANTS . . . YOU HAVE ESTABLISHED STRENGTH***

- a. Contrast
 - God uses the weakest of human instruments to give a strong testimony
- b. Such ‘infants’ and ‘nursing babes’ are old enough to speak
 - Terms used for children up to 3 years old
 - **Lam 4:4**—uses this language for children who ask for bread
 - **Jer 6:11** and **9:20**—uses this language for—children who play in the street
- c. LXX and Vulgate
 - Translate ‘strength’ as ‘praise’
 - ***From the mouth of infants . . . you have established praise***
- d. Two key points
 1. Only **humans**—have this *capacity* to speak—and *express* such thoughts

2. The inclination to **praise**—is instinctive—and begins at an early age
 - The guileless testimony—of the innocent—before corrupted by the world

6. BECAUSE OF YOUR ADVERSARIES, TO MAKE THE ENEMY AND REVENGEFUL CEASE

- a. Three terms—for those who oppose God
 1. Adversaries—foes—who try to **bind/limit** God—who ‘**harass**’ and ‘**vex**’ Him
 2. Enemy—who are **angry**—and **hate** God
 3. Revengeful—who bear a **grudge**—want to **punish** God
- b. Three terms—encompass **all God’s enemies**—anyone who opposes God
 - The last two terms—used *together* in **Ps 44:16**
- c. Jesus quoted this text—against *His* enemies—**Mt 21:16**
 1. After He cleansed the Temple
 2. Against the chief priests and scribes
 - Who opposed children proclaiming “**Hosanna to the Son of David**”
 3. Implications
 - a. He *did* possess authority to cleanse the temple
 - b. He *was* the Son of David—the Messiah
 - ▲ With all the authority claimed in **Ps 8:4-8** [below]

B. Verses 3-4—REFLECTIONS ON HUMAN DIGNITY

3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; 4 what is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him?

1. CONTRAST—GOD’S MAJESTY AND THE HUMAN CONDITION
 - a. God’s Majesty—**v3**
 1. Serves to show **magnitude** of His **love** in condescending to man—**v4**
 2. Serves to show how **insignificant** humans really are—by themselves—**v4**
 - b. **Verse 3**—uses four dependent clauses—to introduce the double question of **verse 4**
 1. Four independent clauses of **verse 3**
 - When I consider the heavens
 - The work of Thy fingers

- The moon and the stars
- Which You have ordained

2. Double question of **verse 4** When I consider thy heavens

- What is man—that you take thought of him
- And the son of man—that You care for him?

2. CONSIDERATION OF THE HEAVENS

a. Human Dignity

- God gives **only humans** the capability to reflect/express opinions about creation

b. Heaven itself proclaims God's glory

- **Ps 19:1—The heavens are telling of the glory of God, and their expanse is declaring the work of his hands.**
- **Ps 104:1-2—O Lord my God, You are very great; You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering Yourself with light as with a cloak, stretching out heaven like a tent curtain.**
- **Rom 1:20—**[again]—His invisible attributes, eternal power, and divine nature—are seen in nature

3. THE GLORY OF CREATION

a. The work of Your **fingers**

Ps 102:25—Of old You have laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of Your hands.

b. All creation **ordained** by God—made/sustained by Him—causes us to **stand in awe!**

Ps 33:6-8—By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and be the breath of His mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; he lays up the deeps in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.

4. **WHAT IS MAN THAT YOU TAKE THOUGHT OF HIM?**

a. Question raised elsewhere

- **Job 7:17—What is man that You magnify Him, and that You are concerned about him?**
- **Ps 144:3—O Lord, what is man, that You take knowledge of him? Or the son of man, that You think of him?**
- **Heb 2:5b—**quotes **verse 4** exactly

b. Centrality of Issue

1. This question is at the mid-point of the Psalm
 2. Question asked twice—for emphasis?
 - Two parallel lines—same in meaning and word order
 - This puts emphasis on this issue as central—no other element is repetitive
 - c. Frailty of man—compared to God
 1. Humans' lives are like grass—they wither—**Ps 103:15-16; I Pe 1:24**
 2. Brevity of human time—and life
 - 1000 years are like a day—**I Chr 29:15; Ps 90:3-6**
 - d. ***that You take thought of him***
 1. Yet—God really cares for His family—Is 45:18; 51:16
 2. He 'remembers' us
 - a. Cares enough to think about us
 - b. 'Remembers'—basic idea
 - To look for what is missing
 - To worry about—enough to do something for
- 5. AND THE SON OF MAN, THAT YOU CARE ABOUT HIM**
- a. Three meanings of 'son of man'
 1. Everyman
 - a. 'human being'—with emphasis on frailty—literally 'frail man'
 - b. Mere humanity—simply people
 2. Prophetic—favorite term used by Ezekiel for himself
 3. Messianic—Jesus' description of Himself—especially in the Gospel of Mark
 - b. Son of Man as Everyman—dignified by God
 1. By making us His stewards of creation—**Gen 1**
 2. By sending His Son incarnate among us
 3. By pouring out His Spirit upon us
 - c. Restoration of humanity—in the Son of Man
 1. The exalted Christ—everything subjected to Him

➤ I Cor 15:27—quotes **verse 6b**

➤ Heb 2:6ff—quotes **verses 4-6**

2. Christ—the Second Adam—exalted far beyond the First Adam

C. Verses 5-8—HUMAN WORTH AS STEWARDS OF CREATION

5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God, and You crown him with glory and majesty! 6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, 7 all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, 8 the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, whatever passes through the paths of the seas.

1. A LITTLE LOWER THAN GOD

a. Primary source of human dignity

- Created in the image of God—the *Imago Dei*

b. Two main versions

1. A little lower than **God**—NASB and many Greek mss
2. A little lower than **angels**—LXX, Vulgate, and KJV

c. Reason for two versions

d. A little lower than the angels—v5

1. *Elohim*—can mean several things

- God—NASB
- Angels—LXX
- gods—NIV
- a god—divine-like

2. LXX interprets *Elohim* in rare generic sense of supernatural beings—angels

- **Heb 2:7, 9**—uses the LXX for its source

2. **A LITTLE LOWER**—secondary meaning

a. **Little**—can also mean little can mean ‘**little while**’

b. This should be the interpretation of quote in **Heb 2:7**—applied to Christ

- For a little while—Christ is lower than the angels

3. **CROWNED WITH GLORY AND MAJESTY**

o Attributes of **royal dignity**—found elsewhere in Psalms

Ps 21:5—[referring to the king]—**His glory is great through Your salvation, splendor and majesty You place upon Him.**

Ps 45:3—[the king preparing for marriage]—*Gird Your sword on Your thigh, O Mighty One, In Your splendor and Your majesty*

4. ALL CREATION IS SUBJECTED TO MAN AND SON OF MAN—in **vv 6-8**

- a. From top to bottom—from the sky—to the earth—to the depths of the sea
- b. The order of creation is followed—but not in every detail
- c. All categories of animals
 - Domestic—sheep and oxen
 - Wild animals—beasts of field
 - Wild birds
 - Marine life—fish of the sea
 - Sea monsters—separate category—whatever passes through sea—see Gen 1:21

5. **YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS UNDER HIS FEET**

- a. God has given stewardship to humans in this age—**Gen 1**
- b. Eventually Christ will have total dominion over all
 1. Everything is not yet subject to him—but Christ is forerunner—pointing to that time
 2. Prophecy of Christ's eventual rule—**Ps 110:1**—Christ quoted as Son of Man—**Mk 12:36**
—

Ps 110:1—*The Lord says to my Lord, Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.*

3. Eventual victory over all will be won by Christ—**I Cor 15:27ff** and **I Pe 3:22**
4. We will participate in that rule with Him—**Rev 22:5**

D. **Verse 9—CLOSING PRAISE OF GOD'S MAJESTY** [repeated]