

Psalm 8

Have you ever looked up into the sky on a brilliant starry night? Sometimes the beauty of a night filled with stars can take your breath away. It can cause you to ponder the meaning of life. In a universe so big, so huge, who am I?

This is what Psalm 8 is about. It is a poetic reflection of the creation account in Genesis 1. It takes us back to the beginning and it tells us about God and our relationship to Him. Psalm 8 reveals the greatness of God and the place of man within creation. But as we will see from the New Testament the psalm points to Jesus Christ and the new creation to come.

O LORD, our Lord,
How excellent is Your name in all the earth,
Who have set Your glory above the heavens!
(Psalm 8:1)

Our song begins with joyful praise to God. The first word translated “LORD” with all capital letters is from the Hebrew word Yahweh. This is God’s personal name, like my name is Chuck. Yahweh means “I am who I am.” It is a shame that some Bible translations hide God’s name with the title “LORD.”¹ Doing this goes back to an ancient Jewish tradition to never speak God’s personal name because it is too sacred. But God revealed His name to us² and He did so over five thousand times in the Old Testament.

Yahweh wants us to know who He is. The name Yahweh, I am who I am – points to God’s eternal self-existence. He is the only uncreated being in the universe. Yahweh is totally self-sufficient. In the New Testament, in Acts 17, the apostle Paul spoke to a gathering of Greek philosophers and he declared that God is not,

worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.
(Acts 17:25)

Yahweh is the source of all there is and all that there ever will be. The second word “Lord” in Psalm 8:1 is the Hebrew title Adonai, meaning Master, Sovereign, King, Lord. Our psalmist sang,

¹ One modern translation that reveals God’s personal name, Yahweh, is the Holman Christian Standard Bible® Copyright © 2003, 2002, 2000, 1999 by Holman Bible Publishers.

² The first time God revealed His name was to Moses in Exodus 3:15

O Yahweh, our Sovereign Master,
How excellent is Your name in all the earth,
Who have set Your glory above the heavens.

All of the earth and all of the heavens reveal God's great glory and power. The New Testament tells us this too. It is written in Romans 1:20,

For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse

In other words all of creation points to the fact that there is a Creator God. Psalm 19:1 states,

The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork.

All of the wonders of heaven and earth should convince us that there is a God who created all things. In fact, there is enough evidence for God, the Creator, in the complexity of the human body. Anyone willing to think honestly and not suppress the truth can conclude that we are not just the product of millions of years of evolution. The human brain has 10 billion nerve cells that all work in harmony to allow us to function as we do. Our eyes have 100million receptor cells in each retina. These cells make billions of calculations every second and send information to our brain which has more than a dozen separate vision centers to process it all.

Scientists, even those who promote Darwinian evolution, have estimated that the probability of a human evolving by chance processes alone is 1 in 10 to the 2 billionth power—essentially no chance at all!³ Francis Crick is a Nobel Prize winner and co-discoverer of DNA. Here is what he said about life:

An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have had to be satisfied to get it going.⁴

³ These scientists include Francis Crick, L.M. Murkhin and Carl Sagan.

⁴ From the "Appendix" in *The Creation Hypothesis*, IVP, pp. 270-293. Also from the same appendix is this quote on evolution made by Sir Fred Hoyle, founder of the Cambridge Institute of Theoretical Astronomy, "The chance that

To those who do not suppress the truth in order to run away from God, all of creation points to how excellent God, Yahweh, is in all the earth.

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.
(Psalm 8:2)

What does this mean? Well, in one sense it means that even the sounds of a new born baby praise God. The words "ordained strength" can be rightly translated "perfected praise." The birth of a baby is still such a wonderful and marvelous event that the first cries of a new born display God's greatness. It often happens that people who never think about God begin to think about Him with the birth of their first child.

But also, Jesus Christ quoted this verse in Matthew 21. On what is known as Palm Sunday Jesus rode a donkey and triumphantly entered Jerusalem. After cleansing the temple he healed the blind and the lame. Seeing all of this, children began to shout "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Christ's enemies, the chief priests and the scribes became very angry about what the children were saying. But Jesus replied,

Yes. Have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise'?"

Sometimes children can see truths that the smart and sophisticated miss or deny.

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 are mindful of him,
And the son of man that You visit him?
(Psalm 8:3, 4)

As I mentioned earlier, it is hard to look up into a sky filled with stars and not feel a sense of wonder. At that moment you know there is something or someone much bigger than you. You feel small, insignificant, but you want to connect to that something or someone big. And that someone is Yahweh.

King Solomon, in Ecclesiastes 3:11 tells us that "God has put eternity in [our] hearts." In other words, we are made for fellowship with God and to enjoy

higher life forms might have emerged [through Darwinian evolution] is comparable with the chance that a tornado sweeping through a junk yard might assemble a Boeing 747 from the material therein."

His eternal purposes for us. And nothing in this life, without God, can bring us complete satisfaction. True joy comes from fellowship with God and Christ. The apostle John wrote,

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—² the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—³ that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And these things we write to you that **your joy may be full.**
(1 John 1:1-4) [my emphasis]

God calls us to know Him and the Lord Jesus Christ so that our lives our full of joy. Back in Psalm 8, the psalmist asks,

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 are mindful of him,
And the son of man that You visit him?
(Psalm 8:3, 4)

When we consider the vastness of the universe, what is man? What value do we have?

It is interesting that the first word “man” in verse 4 comes from the Hebrew word enosh, which speaks of our frailty and mortality. In Psalm 144:3, 4 it is written,

LORD, what is man, that You take knowledge of him?
Or the son of man, that You are mindful of him?
⁴ Man is like a breath;
His days *are* like a passing shadow.

When we look at the starry sky what is man? A person is born, grows, thinks, works, loves and then dies. His or her life is like a passing shadow. Was the famous scientist Carl Sagan right when he said, “The cosmos is all there is or ever

will be"?⁵ What is man? What value do we have as humans? Let's return to Psalm 8 for the answer.

What is man that You are mindful of him,
And the son of man that You visit him?
⁵ For You have made him a little lower than the angels,
And You have crowned him with glory and honor.
⁶ You have made him to have dominion over the works of
Your hands;
You have put all *things* under his feet,
⁷ All sheep and oxen—
Even the beasts of the field,
⁸ The birds of the air,
And the fish of the sea
That pass through the paths of the seas.
(Psalm 8:4-8)

What is man? Mankind has been made a little lower than the angels. Actually the phrase "the angels" is from the Hebrew *Elohim* which means God! The universe is vast and filled with billions of stars, but we are made a little lower than God! Our psalm writer, David, is referring back to Genesis 1, where God created man in His own image and likeness.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

²⁷ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸ Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."
(Genesis 1:26-28)

God created man, male and female, in His own image. And He gave to humanity the noble role of ruling over all the earth. Psalm 8 remembers and celebrates that event.

⁵ From the PBS television series "The Cosmos."

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 are mindful of him,
And the son of man that You visit him?
5 For You have made him a little lower than the angels,
And You have crowned him with glory and honor.
6 You have made him to have dominion over the works of
Your hands;
You have put all *things* under his feet,
7 All sheep and oxen—
Even the beasts of the field,
8 The birds of the air,
And the fish of the sea
That pass through the paths of the seas.
(Psalm 8:3-8)

David could have written that we were made a little higher than the animals. We were. He could have said, “Consider the animals for you are made a little higher than them. But no—God calls us to look up to and consider the heavens. You are made a little lower than God. We discover who we are and our purpose as human beings not by studying the animals, but by knowing God!

What is man? He is created in the image of God to rule over creation as God's representative. He is a king; the lord of the earth. He—she, is crowned with glory and honor!

Wait a minute. Really? Are you kidding me? Man is lord of the earth? We may have some dominance. We have accomplished some remarkable feats. But animals can kill us. Even microscopic bacteria can kill us. We are often at the mercy of nature and natural disasters. We often destroy the earth not nurture it. And look at all the horrible things that we do to each other?

What happened? Sin happened. Rebellion against God happened. Adam and Eve sinned⁶ and a sin nature has been passed on to all of us. We've lost the dominion over the earth. People have lost fellowship with God. And our world and all of creation suffers from a curse.⁷ But God promised to renew the earth. In Isaiah 65:17 Yahweh declared,

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;
And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.⁸

⁶ Genesis 3

⁷ Genesis 3:17-19

⁸ See also Romans 8:18-21, 2 Peter 3:10-14, Revelation 21:1-4

And God promised a Savior from sin. And He has given that Savior. He is the Man whom the Word of God calls “the last Adam”—the Lord Jesus Christ.⁹ Psalm 8 is made true and fulfilled in him. The man made a little lower than God is Jesus Christ. The man who is crowned with glory and honor is Jesus Christ. The man given the dominion and rulership of the whole earth is Jesus Christ. This is what the New Testament tells us.

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, 4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?
(Hebrews 2:1-4)

Give heed to the Word of God you have learned in this teaching. Give heed to the reality that all that we see in creation is the work of the Creator's fingers. Give heed to the truth that we are made a little lower than God. And we were given dominion, but sin has robbed us of glory and honor. Give heed to the fact that when the Lord Jesus began to preach the message of salvation God confirmed Christ's message with signs and wonders. There is a new day and a new world coming!

For He [God] has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. 6 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?
7 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.
8 You have 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 do not yet see all things put under him. ⁹ **But we see Jesus**, who was made a little lower

⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:45

than the [God], for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

¹⁰ For it was fitting for Him [God], for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

¹¹ For both He [Jesus] who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified *are* all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, ¹² saying:

*"I will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.
(Hebrews 2:5-12)*

Jesus Christ suffered death on the cross to pay for our sins. But God has raised him up from the dead. And because Jesus Christ was obedient to God in all things he has been crowned with glory and honor. When we come to Jesus Christ by faith he is the captain of our salvation. And he sanctifies us, setting us apart from a world that is perishing¹⁰ to inherit the new world that is to come. The Lord Jesus Christ is not ashamed to call us brethren! Romans 8:16, 17 declares that by faith we are "children of God...heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ."

O LORD, our Lord,
How excellent *is* Your name in all the earth,
Who have set Your glory above the heavens!
² 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.

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 are mindful of him,
And the son of man that You visit him?
⁵ For You have made him a little lower than the [God],
And You have crowned him with glory and honor.
⁶ You have made him to have dominion over the works of
Your hands;
You have put all *things* under his feet,
⁷ All sheep and oxen—
Even the beasts of the field,

¹⁰ 1 John 2:15-17

⁸ The birds of the air,
And the fish of the sea
That pass through the paths of the seas.
⁹ O LORD, our Lord,
How excellent *is* Your name in all the earth!
(Psalm 8:1-9)

How excellent indeed is Yahweh's name. How excellent is His power, love, mercy and grace to us through Jesus Christ. Let us live our lives in the light of the truth that we have been made a little lower than God. Through Jesus Christ we are crowned with glory and honor. And we shall inherit everlasting life in the world to come.