

Psalm 8

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Psalm 8

Introduction

- This Psalm has been called a nature Psalm, but it is much more than that. It has been called a lyrical echo to the Creation Story, but it is much more than that too. It is a Psalm of God and His Creation, yes, but it is also a Psalm to how God holds us up as His ultimate creation.
- It is a Psalm of David and shows us the depth of his mind and spirit as he seamlessly ties the universe, earth, and heaven together.
- It's introduction says it is “For the Choir Director, on the Gittith” or “according to the Gittith”. This is also found in the titles of Psalm 81 and 84. Some have suggested it is somehow tied to the Philistine city of Gath while others see a subtle reference to a wine press, hinting that the Psalm was intended for the vintage festival as a part of the Feast of the Tabernacles. But in the end, no one really knows anymore what the Gittith refers to.
- We would do well to remember that when David wrote this, he did not write it as a poem to be read, but as a song to be sung. Contemporary Hebrew comes with vowel points in and around the letters as there have never been vowels in the Hebrew alphabet. The vowel points serve to aid in both pronunciation and also to serve as notes so that the cantor of the synagogue can properly sing the scripture passage. Psalm 8 then is an anthem to the glory of God.

Vss. 1-2

- “majestic”: glorious, powerful, delightful
- “Name” means so much more than what you are called. Here it carries with it the very person and presence of God. This is how the magi are said to be kings. They would have never undertaken the journey without the permission of their respective kings, nor would they have brought such gifts to the King of the Jews without coming in the name of their kings. So as they came into the stable it is not wrong to say the kings themselves were there as the magi

came in the name of their kings. Therefore the opening line of the Psalm could rightly read, "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic are YOU in all the earth!" Perhaps this is what helped to inspire Elizabeth Barrett Browning when she wrote, "Earth's crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God..."

- God sets His splendor above the heavens. Where did the choir of angels come from that night above the shepherds? Carl Sagan, the astronomer who became famous on TV, once said that if life on other planets was never found then the universe is a great waste of space. He had a friend who was an Episcopal priest who would challenge him on such points, arguing that perhaps the stars are there purely for us to see the beauty and glory of God. "God?" Sagan would shoot back, "how can you, such an intelligent person, believe in God?" "Carl!" the priest would fire back, "with you being such an intelligent person, how can you not?!" The rest of Barrett's poem laments how so many people fail to see the glory of God all around them, let alone how they miss it looking through a telescope.
- I put vss. 1 and 2 together because Psalm 8 is a story of contrast. Vs. 1 is all about the power and grandeur of God. Vs. 2 is about infants and nursing babies. What or who could possibly be weaker? And yet it is in these weak vessels that God has established His strength. Is this not His theme throughout? He chooses the smallest nation, Israel. He chooses an 80 year old fugitive to lead Israel out of Egypt. He chooses the youngest boy from the poorest family, Gideon, to lead Israel against its Midianite oppressors. He makes the same choice for king in David, the youngest of Jesse's sons. He chooses a carpenter and his betrothed from Galilee to be the parents to Jesus. (1 Cor. 1:18-31)

Vss. 3-5

- Here we see more contrasts: God's greatness and humanity's smallness.
- David is staring into the night sky, marveling at God's artistry, the work of His fingers, as He decorates the heavens with light and order and beauty and it gives David pause. He stops and "considers". He is thinking through Creation and mentally works to extract some meaning. One Bible teacher has said that if you only give three minutes to the study of Scripture, then give one minute to reading and two minutes to consider what you just read.
- Most of the time when we think about God's Law, we think about morality: "Don't do this. Don't do that. But DO this!" But given that God is Creator of all things then physics are a part of

God's Law. Mathematics are part of God's Law. So the ordering, symmetry, and physics of the universe are all part of God's Law. The Laws of Science are merely a part of God's Law. In a world that seems to be utterly filled with chaos, the consistency of the moon and the stars have a way of bringing a sense of hope and peace, a tangible truth you can count on: the sun WILL come up tomorrow. Until God says different, this is God's Law.

- And then there is humanity. We are so small and our little lives are so short, like grass, we are nothing compared to God! Who are we that God should ever think of us? The insignificance of humanity has been a subject for poets since ancient times and it often is pointed to with a sense of depression and fatalism. "We really don't matter at all, so eat drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die" is the prevailing sentiment.
- "Son of man" is often a messianic title in the Old Testament and is used as such by Jesus repeatedly in the New Testament. Here and in Ezekiel it is used to point to the insignificance and mundane nature of humanity.
- "Yet"...God has made us only a little lower than Himself! David sees that the Word of God from Genesis has proven to be real in that God has placed humanity as the pinnacle of Creation and the steward of Creation. Jesus echoes this same idea in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:26 and again in Matthew 10:29-31. What David realizes as he "considers God's Heavens" is that we are worth more to God than the stars themselves. As amazing and beautiful as the stars are, God holds us far higher and crowns us with glory and majesty that outshines the stars.

Vss. 6-8

- David then goes on to offer a final contrast as he lists the creatures that God has given humanity dominion over. These creatures are amazing and great, but humanity is more amazing and greater still. David would have been well acquainted with the great beasts of the land and surely had heard stories of great beasts in the sea, but being a man of the desert he was not an expert on the sea, so he adds that we rule over "whatever passes through the paths of the seas." Again, David is celebrating how in his own experience he has seen God's Word borne out (Gen. 1: 26-28). So overwhelmed at the thought, David stops abruptly to consider this revelation.

Vs. 9

- David, being the marvelous poet and songwriter he was, repeats the first line of the first verse as a chorus. And this serves not only a wonderful means to end the song, but also to make sure everyone is in their proper place. God is the Ultimate One. Man comes behind him always. Where we sin is when become so enamored with our own power and brilliance that we place ourselves above God and this never turns out well. Placing ourselves above God is breaking one of God's Laws and ends about as well as when we try to break God's Law of physics by taking a 25 mph curve at 75 mph. It never ends well. It is God who is the One who is majestic over all the earth, not us.