

## Psalm 8: Find Our Rightful Place in the Universe

Psalm 8 is one of the most beautiful of all Psalms. Derek Kidner says, “This Psalm is an unsurpassed example of what a hymn should be, celebrating as it does the glory and grace of God, rehearsing who he is and what he has done, and relating us and our world to him, all with a masterly economy of words, and in a spirit of mingled joy and awe.” Kidner goes on to note that the Psalm takes us not only above the heavens (v.1) and back to the beginning (v. 3, 6-8) but also, to the very end (v.6). The question “What is man?” is found in three other places in the Old Testament and in the New Testament a picture of Christ’s incarnation, death and reign showing just how significant man is to God.

**Outline:** Verses 1 and 2 declare the unsurpassed glory of God as seen in nature as well as in the response of men when they truly meet Him. Verses 3 and 4 depict the insignificance of man along side of God, his glory, and His creation. Verse 5-8 picture for us the actual place that man has been given in God’s creation. Verse 9 is a repeat of verse 1 and allows us to conclude the Psalm with the same note of praise with which the hymn began.

The Psalm will focus on man and his place within the created world but as James Montgomery Boice notes, “The psalm does not begin by talking about man. It begins with a celebration of the surpassing majesty of God, and this places men and women within the cosmic framework. It is a way of saying from the outset that we will never understand human beings unless we see them as God’s creatures and recognize that they have a special responsibility to their creator.” (Boice p. 67)

The Psalm begins with the English words, “O LORD, our Lord.” In the Hebrew there are two different words used for Lord. The first is **Jehovah** which is the name used to depict the covenant God of Israel. The one whose glory is seen in creation gives meaning to man is the God of creation who has chosen to reveal himself as the special God of Israel and the one who would later send His Son to establish another special people called the church. This is the “I am that I am” of Exodus 3:14

In addition, He is known as “**Adonai**.” Adonai translates the same as Lord, so we have “O LORD, our Lord” but the word has a slightly different meaning. Adonai was used to describe the lordship of one over another as a king would be lord over his subjects. The two are often used together and the King James translation tried to keep the two words for Lord separate by using all capital letters when it translated Jehovah (LORD) and just a capital “L” for Adonai (Lord). Together they projected the creator of the universe who had chosen Israel as his people and the one to whom the people were committed as Lord of their lives. It is significant that David in this Psalm declares that the LORD, Jehovah, is *OUR* Lord. Unless there is a personal commitment to Him as Lord then the message of the Psalm loses its meaning.

This LORD of Lords is filled with majesty and that majesty is seen in all of his creation. David looking at the stars saw two things. He saw a reflection of the majesty of God and he saw the

smallness of man. The heavens reflected the glory of God. In all their vastness, beauty and complexity, however, they can only reflect a portion of that majesty. His glory is above or beyond even that displayed in creation. This is expressed in v.2 where we read that He has set His glory above the heavens.

David sees the heavens and in verse 3 he sees God and then as he continues to look at them he contemplates the place of man in all of this. What is the place of man in all of this? David sees man as significant because of what God has done for him and the position God has given him.

David declared that God cares for man and then wrote that this caring springs from creation itself. That God would actually care about man is astounding. How insignificant man seems in comparison! In comparison to all that is going on in the universe at any given moment what right have we to assume that God is even aware of man let alone willing to come to us, communicate with us, talk to us and give us directions on how to live etc. What right does man have to assume that he has a position of honor and glory (v.5)? How unique that such a majestic God would even know of our existence and visit us in any way let alone become like us so that He might suffer for us.

We were created “a little lower than the heavenly being” and the footnote in the NIV really sets it straight by saying that man has been created a little lower than God Himself. The Hebrew word is “Elohim” which is the general O.T. word for God or gods. Read Genesis 1:26

That brings us to the heart of the sin problem. While we were created to have fellowship with God, this fellowship was possible only so long as we were holy for God is holy and can only fellowship with that which is holy. When sin entered into man our holiness was lost and the whole purpose of creation was gone. As Adam and Eve stood in the garden after sinning they were incapable of fellowship. But God had a plan to care for sin and the moment Adam and Eve sinned God declared that he had prepared one who would be born of a woman who would offer the reversal of that sin. God not only designed us to have fellowship but desired that His purpose be complete, so He provided for sin through His own Son.

David goes on in verse 5 to describe the place of man in the order of the created world. Man has the ability to rule in this world that God created. The Bible tells us this is not an inherent rule but designed and assigned as a part of creation. We have the position that we do in the world because God determined that this would be part of what He would give to us.

We begin by remembering how majestic God is and how marvelous His creation is. Then we remember that when He created us He did so after His own image so that He could have fellowship with us. Then when we sinned He used that same majestic power that is seen in creation to provide us with a means of redemption through the death of His own Son. Today when we look up into the sky or read another scientific report on the intricacies of something like DNA, remember that the God who created it created us just a little lower than Himself, so He could fellowship with us and that He loves us so much that He visited us to reveal Himself to us.

We are loved beyond imagination and have worth beyond anything this world can imagine. You and I as individuals are so valuable to God that He would have sent His Son just for you. You and I are worth an infinite amount to God, and for that we can and must continually praise Him and rest in the assurance that if we are worth that much He will do only that which is good for those of us who now belong to Him. When that truth grips you as it did David you will conclude your worship as he does, with a declaration of God's majesty. God's love for man and willingness to come to him and bless him is another demonstration of his majesty and glory and so we declare, "How majestic is your name in all the earth."