

Summer Psalms

*¹ Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
² but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.
(Psalms 1:1–2 ESV)*

*Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.
(Psalms 29:2 ESV)*

How Majestic Is Your Name In All The Earth!

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Psalm 8

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Introduction:

Good morning! Open your Bibles to Psalm 8; that's on page 450 in your pew Bibles. It is quoted three times in the New Testament, once by Jesus and twice by the Apostles about Jesus. It is a Gospel Psalm and it covers all the bases. We will read it, we will enjoy it and we will be affected by it. Hear now the Word of the Lord:

¹ O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. ² Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger.

³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴ what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?

⁵ Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. ⁶ You have given him dominion 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 along the paths of the seas.

⁹ O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! (Psalms 8:1–9 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God!

It is sometimes said that we read the Bible to learn about who God is, who we are and how he has saved us in Jesus Christ – all of those themes are gloriously represented in this Psalm. Let's notice first what it says to us about the person and nature of God.

Who God Is

It says first of all that:

1. God is a God who reveals himself in the heavens and in history

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! (Psalms 8:1a ESV)

You will notice first of all that the first use of the word “LORD” is in all capital letters and the second is in lower case letters. I’m sure you’ve heard before that anytime the personal name of God is translated from Hebrew into English some Bible translations observe the custom of rendering that by means of a capitalized LORD. The personal name that God revealed to the Israelites is the name “Yahweh” or “Jehovah” depending on how you vocalize that. The Jewish people made a decision at some point in their history that to avoid breaking the 3rd commandment they would simply never actually SAY the name of God. Many modern day Christian scholars believe that was a foolish and unnecessary decision. God would not have told us his name if he didn’t want us to use it. J. Alec Motyer for example, who uses the name YAHWEH throughout his new translation of the Psalms refers to this custom of the Jews as a totally false sense of reverence.

“No, no. He has granted us the privilege, and we should learn (belatedly) to live in the benefit of it.”¹

God is a God who reveals himself. Christians, this is a very important point. We worship the God who is THERE and who SPEAKS. If God didn’t reveal himself then we wouldn’t know anything about him. But he does speak. He does reveal himself. He reveals himself first of all, the Bible says, in the heavens:

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. (Psalms 19:1 ESV)

This is what Bible scholars refer to as “natural revelation” – God revealing himself in nature. Now, Psalm 19 goes on to talk about the fact that natural revelation is universal – there is no one

¹ J. Alec Motyer, *Psalms By The Day* (Geanies House: Christian Focus, 2016), 10.

who can't know what God says about himself in nature. Everyone should be able to look at the heavens and figure out that there is a God up there who is large and in charge. He is orderly, beautiful and good. The Apostle says that everyone knows that about God – whether they admit it or not. He says:

¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (Romans 1:19–20 ESV)

Nobody can stand before God at the Final Judgment and say: “I didn't know you existed! I didn't know that there was a good God in the heavens.” Open your eyes man! You know very well that this world cannot be here by accident. You know that. You CHOOSE to NOT KNOW THAT so that you could live however you want. That's the truth. Paul said that in the previous verse. He said it isn't that they don't know this it is that they don't WANT TO KNOW THIS. Paul says that this world is filled with people:

who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (Romans 1:18 ESV)

This world is not filled with people who DON'T KNOW the truth – it is filled with people who don't WANT TO KNOW THE TRUTH – who SUPPRESS THE TRUTH - because if they admit the truth that there is a good God in the heavens then they would need to bow before this good God and acknowledge him as their proper Sovereign – and they don't want to do that – therefore, Paul says, they are without excuse. Natural revelation is sufficient to DAMN US – but because of our hardened hearts – it is not sufficient to SAVE US. And therefore God in his kindness has also spoken to us in history.

The God up there became the God down here. That's what the New Testament says! When the angel announced the coming of Jesus he said:

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). (Matthew 1:23 ESV)

He is God up there – and he is God down here – he is God over the heaven and he is God with us. That's who God is! He is the God who is THERE and he is the God who speaks.

Secondly, according to this Psalm he is:

2. God is a God of great majesty

¹ O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

The word translated there as “majestic” can mean: “mighty, noble, majestic, splendid.”² It conveys a sense of power, Sovereignty and transcendence. Verse 1 also says that while God communicates within creation, his glory is OVER and ABOVE creation. The Bible is not pantheistic – we don’t believe that nature IS GOD we believe that it comes from God and that it reveals God but that God is GLORIOUS ABOVE IT. The most common form of idolatry in the Old Testament was worshipping the creation as if it was the Creator. Paul spoke about that in Romans 1. He said that people had:

exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. (Romans 1:25 ESV)

Psalm 8 rebukes that tendency and reminds the worshipper that God is not to be identified with his creation – he is to be understood as infinitely and transcendently ABOVE IT. And yet, Psalm 8 also reflects upon the fact that:

3. God is a God of great mercy

He is majestic and yet in verse 2 David says:

Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger. (Psalms 8:2 ESV)

This great God above the heavens – this God who is HOLY and POWERFUL and SOVEREIGN – this GOD is also present and active among the weak, among the powerless among even children. Jesus quoted this verse in Matthew 21:16. Some children were singing Psalms of praise to Jesus and the Pharisees took offence.

“Do you hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read, ““Out of the mouth of

² KM Hebrew Dictionary Accordance Version; H117.

infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise'?" (Matthew 21:16 ESV)

God is not just the God of the heavens – and he is not simply content to reign over the cosmos – he is interested in dwelling among men. Among the children of Adam. And in particular among children. Jesus said this kind of thing again and again and again. He said:

“Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 19:14 ESV)

“I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children
(Matthew 11:25 ESV)

“Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
(Matthew 18:3 ESV)

Jesus came because God is interested in little children and he promised a wonderful blessing on all those who would join him in his pursuit of and ministry to them; he said:

whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. (Matthew 10:42 ESV)

Let me translate that into street level English. Do you want to make sure that you receive a reward from Jesus? Then do something to contribute to the faith of children. You could, I don't know, serve at VBS for example. You could sponsor a child in the Dominican or perhaps shortly, in South Africa. I will walk a long way, uphill in the snow to help a child grow in their walk with Jesus because of this verse and I invite you to come with me. And WOE unto the one who opposes the faith of a child. Jesus reserved his most frightening warning in the Bible for those who would oppose the faith of children:

whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. (Matthew 18:6 ESV)

That sounds serious! When the God of the universe threatens to drown you in the depths of the sea you need to pay attention; you need to do whatever he is trying to get you to do – in this case you need to get out of the way of his little ones. The God of the universe – the God who sits enthroned ABOVE the COSMOS cares – A LOT - for little children. He is saving and raising

friends from among his foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger. That is who God is and He is GLORIOUS.

Secondly this Psalm has a great deal to say about who we are.

Who We Are

It says first of all that:

1. Human beings are the special objects of God's consideration and care

David marvels over this, he says:

what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?
(Psalms 8:4 ESV)

The universe is so BIG and God is so MAJESTIC how can it be that God is interested in us?
How can it be that his mind is full of thoughts about a lowly, humble, broken creature such as us?
What are we that God thinks so much and cares so intimately for us?

The words that David chooses here are intended to communicate our smallness and frailty. The word “man” as in “what is man that you are mindful of him” is the Hebrew word *enosh* – not the usual word *adam*. The word *enosh* sounds like the Hebrew word for weak and therefore it came to mean ‘humankind in all its vulnerability and feebleness’. How is it that the GOD OF THE UNIVERSE cares so much for weak and frail people like us? The second term he uses, the “son of man” – that phrase literally means the offspring of Adam – man in his mortality. We are small and we live for but a moment – we’re a vapor - how can we hold the attention of an eternal God? And yet we do. God is fixated on us. Job spoke about that, he said:

¹⁷What is man, that you make so much of him, and that you set your heart on him, ¹⁸visit him every morning and test him every moment? ¹⁹How long will you not look away from me, nor leave me alone till I swallow my spit? ²⁰If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher of mankind? Why have you made me your mark? (Job 7:17–20 ESV)

Why are you so intensely interested in me, Job asks. Why does everything I do seem to impact

you? Are you not the God who is OVER THE HEAVENS? Why then are you so near to me? Job asks a good question and the answer comes to us in the second thing that David says about humanity. He says that:

2. Human beings were meant to be more than we are

Look at verse 5:

Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.
(Psalms 8:5 ESV)

Now, the Hebrew here is difficult to translate, the phrase “a little lower” can equally mean “for a little while”; it can refer to either a small degree or a short time. Both are grammatically possible but the Apostles understood it to mean “for a little while”. Look at how this verse is translated and used in the New Testament. In Hebrews 2:6-7 we read:

⁶“What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him?” ⁷You made him **for a little while lower than the angels**; you have crowned him with glory and honor (Hebrews 2:6–7 ESV)

So the Apostles were very clear that in this Psalm David was reflecting upon the fact that human beings were meant by God to eventually be OVER the heavenly creatures. We were meant to rule OVER ANGELS. The Apostle Paul says that very thing in 1 Corinthians 6. He says:

Do you not know that we are to judge angels? (1 Corinthians 6:3 ESV)

We are going to be OVER the angels in the end just as we were meant to be in the beginning. According to the Bible God made humanity TO RULE. That’s in Genesis 1:

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion (Genesis 1:26 ESV)

The original PLAN was for humanity to be UNDER GOD and OVER everything else – OVER EVERY CREATED THING. Let me ask you a question: Are angels created things? Yes they are. The only uncreated thing in existence is God himself. That’s what it means to be God. God is the uncreated Creator. He is eternal and he has within himself the power of life. Angels are not eternal – angels are immortal. They will exist forever into the future but they did not exist

forever in the past. Only God has existed forever. So everything other than God is part of creation – it is part of God’s “handiwork” and according to Psalm 8 all of his handiwork is intended to be under us.

You have given him dominion over the works of your hands (Psalms 8:6 ESV)

You have to understand this to understand the fall. According to the Bible God made humanity with the purpose and intention that human beings would exercise dominion over all created things – including angels. According to Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2 God put humanity FOR A LITTLE WHILE lower than the angels. In essence Adam and Eve were on probation. He made them lower than the angels FOR A LITTLE WHILE until they could learn to love and obey God. Only then would they be promoted OVER THE ANGELS and over all created things. So the fall is about how a created thing – an angel – invaded our probation and interrupted our learning and essentially usurped our authority over all created things. You have to understand this to understand the Bible. The devil is not at war with God he is at war with us! God is doing fine. There are no challenges to his authority in the universe – it is our AUTHORITY that has been threatened. It is our PLACE in the cosmos that the devil DESIRES. The Apostle Paul calls the devil:

the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2 ESV)

What is the air? It is the space between heaven and earth. It is the space UNDER GOD and OVER ALL CREATION – that is the place presently occupied by the devil and that is the place God made for you. He is in our place, not the place of God! That’s why the Apostle Paul said:

our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 6:12 NIV11-GK)

Its that place under God and over all that is presently contested. The contest is between us and the devil; a fallen angel who did not want to spend eternity subject to us. That’s what is going on. That’s how we fell – that’s why we are not now what we sense we were created to be. We are fallen. We were deceived. We have been enslaved.

But thanks be to God for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! I told you that we read the Bible to

learn who God is, who we are and how he has saved us in Jesus Christ and that is where the Apostles turn this Psalm of David. They use it to talk about how God redeemed us and rescued us and is restoring us to all that he meant for us to be.

How God Has Saved Us In Jesus Christ

For this part of the message turn to Hebrews 2:5-9. Look at how the Apostles understood this Psalm of David. The author of Hebrews says:

⁵ For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. ⁶ It has been testified somewhere, “What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him?” ⁷ You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor,

⁸ putting everything in subjection under his feet.” Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. ⁹ But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

¹⁰ For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering (Hebrews 2:5–10 ESV)

In this Psalm the Apostles are seeing the story of our salvation! They are seeing the plan of God for human beings to be under him and over all creation. They are seeing the probation of Adam and Eve who were meant to learn obedience and to learn God’s goodness so that having learned those things they could assume their place under God and over all created things. But they are also seeing our fall. They are seeing the near total ruination of the human species. They are seeing the devastating destruction that has been wrought by the mischief of our enemy. But thanks be to God they are also seeing the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ! They are seeing a RESCUE MISSION whereby Jesus comes DOWN to lift us up! He defeats our enemy, completes our probation, pays our reparation and carries us all the way home! Jesus – the KING OF HEAVEN – comes down lower than the angels and he joins us in our humiliation and he TASTES DEATH FOR EVERYONE so that he may save and win and redeem SONS AND DAUGHTERS FOR GOD. That’s the Gospel! That is God doing for us what we could never do for ourselves. That is God – in Christ – reaching down, changing everything and bringing us all the way home.

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! (Psalms 8:9 ESV)

How Should Psalm 8 Affect Us?

Now, the Psalms are not meant simply to be understood; they are meant ultimately to be experienced. This is the SONG BOOK and the PRAYER BOOK of the church! These Psalms are supposed to pass into our hearts and flow out of our mouths. They are supposed to change us! And so before we end our time together I want to spend some time talking about how God means for us to be AFFECTED by Psalm 8.

i. It should CALL US into praise and worship

I love how Psalm 8 ends:

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! (Psalms 8:9 ESV)

When you see who God is and you see who we are – and when you understand what God has done to secure our redemption through the life and death of Jesus Christ that should FILL YOUR HEART and FLOOD YOUR MOUTH with praise. People who know grace and who know God ooze and breathe gratitude! Praise is the native language of saved people! Psalm 8 – properly understood should summon us into praise and worship.

ii. It should encourage us in our faith and mission

If what the Apostles have said about Psalm 8 is true then we don't need to be afraid of our enemy. Jesus has come down into our failed probation – into our helpless estate and he has done for us what we could never do for ourselves and he has defeated, unarmed and humiliated the enemy that stands against us. That's what God has done for us in Jesus Christ Paul says:

He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.
(Colossians 2:15 ESV)

Brothers and sisters you do not need to fear the devil anymore! If you are in Christ then he has gone before you and he has disarmed the devil and put him to open shame. Listen, I don't claim to be an expert in martial arts, but I know this. If my next bout is against a guy that just got the

snot kicked out of him by Jesus Christ, then I'm going to do ok. I'm going to fine. Jesus has gone before me, who then can stand against me? Psalm 8 properly understood should give us boldness and courage in our Christian life and mission.

iii. It should sustain us in our hope and longing for eternity

If you are in Christ then you are going to be all that God created you to be. He came down to lift you up. He knows how to restore all that the locust has devoured. So you haven't lost anything. If you are in Christ then eternity is going to be good; its going to be great. You are going to have everything God meant for you to have and you are going to be everything God meant for you to be.

And it doesn't matter what the devil has tricked you into in the past. It doesn't matter even what he has taken from you in the past. It doesn't matter because Jesus has defeated the strongman. He has plundered him and so now everything he stole from you is being kept safe for you in the heavens. You have lost nothing. It is all there for you in Christ. That's what it means to be saved! It means to be rescued, it means to be restored, it means to be returned, it means to be recompensed! You will have what you were created to have and you will be who you were created to be. That is what God has done in Christ for us.

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!
(Psalms 8:9 ESV)

Pastor Jody, will you come and lead us in a time of worship?