

In Awe of God

Text: Psalm 8:1-9

Introduction:

1. The Title: The heading of the Psalm gives us a couple of details:
 - “To the chief Musician” = the Psalm is specifically entrusted to the head of temple worship.
 - “upon Gittith” = likely a reference to an instrument. It is interesting to note that the other Psalms that bear this title are also of a joyful, thanksgiving character (See Psalm 81 & 84).
 - “A Psalm of David” = a clear reference to the authorship of this Psalm. No doubt David draws on his shepherding experience to pen this Psalm. As a shepherd he would have had many a night sleeping under a blanket of stars.
2. Theme: “The psalmist marvels that the glorious Lord of heaven whose name is excellent in every way should even give thought to a human let alone exalt him and give him dominion over all creation.” (Allen P. Ross) The praise of God for creation is a frequent theme in the Psalms (e.g., 19, 29 & 104).
3. The Typology: This is a Messianic Psalm, being quoted 4 times in the N.T. with reference to the Lord Jesus (Matt. 21:16, 1 Cor. 15:27, Eph. 1:20-22 & Heb. 2:6-9).
4. Structure & Overview: The whole Psalm is bracketed by the refrain of Vs.1a and 9. Between these verses the Psalmist considers the glory of God and His gracious bestowal of dominion to mankind. John Phillips writes, “Psalm 8 is the “envelop Psalm” because the opening and closing statements wrap up the truth which lies between.” Concerning the scope of the Psalm, Flanigan notes, “The scope of the Psalm is very wide, looking back to Eden and forward to the glorious reign of the Messiah, from the first Adam to the Last Adam.”
5. We will divide the Psalm under five headings for our expository study. The Psalmist stands in awe of:

I. THE WONDERS OF GOD BEFORE MAN (Vs. 1)

The Psalmist expresses his profound admiration of the Person and Power of God.

A. The Wonder of God's Person (Vs. 1a)

1. In His Relationship to His People – “O LORD our Lord”.
 - a. The Psalmist uses two names of God.
 - i. ‘LORD’ = Yahwah (Jehovah).
 - ii. ‘Lord’ = Adonai (Sovereign Master).
 - iii. The whole Psalm is addressed personally to God.
 - b. The people of God know Him personally – “**our** Lord”. This is something we should never take for granted and is a frequent refrain in the Psalms. To know the Only One True God is the greatest privilege in the universe.
2. In His Renown in the Earth – “how excellent is thy name in all the earth!”
 - a. The word ‘excellent’ means powerful, majestic, lofty, high, noble, splendid, great, glorious, wonderful, magnificent, renowned. The Psalmist is lost for words!
 - b. God's name is excellent in that His glory is evident throughout His creation. Spurgeon writes, “There is no place where God is not. The

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miracles of his power await us on all sides. Traverse the silent valleys where the rocks enclose you on either side, rising like the battlements of heaven till you can see but a strip of the blue sky far overhead; you may be the only traveller who has passed through that glen...but God is there in a thousand wonders, upholding yon rocky barriers, filling the flowercups with their perfume, and refreshing the lonely pines with the breath of His mouth. Descend, if you will, into the lowest depths of the ocean, where undisturbed the water sleeps, and the very sand is motionless in unbroken quiet, but the glory of the Lord is there, revealing its excellence in the silent palace of the sea. Borrow the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, but God is there. Mount the highest heaven, or dive into the deepest hell, and God is both hymned in everlasting song, or justified in terrible vengeance. Everywhere, and in every place, God dwells and is manifestly at work. Nor on earth alone is Jehovah extolled, for his brightness shines forth in the firmament above the earth. His glory exceeds the glory of the starry heavens; above the region of the stars he hath set fast his everlasting throne, and there he dwells in light ineffable.”

- c. We echo the words of Nehemiah 9:6, “Thou, *even* thou, *art* LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all *things* that *are* therein, the seas, and all that *is* therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.”
- d. God’s name is excellent in that it is adored and magnified throughout the world by His people.
- e. God’s name is excellent in reality despite the blasphemies of wicked men to the contrary.

B. The Wonder of God’s Power (Vs. 1b)

1. God’s glory is manifest in His creation. We know that from the previous statement about the excellence of God’s Name being known throughout the earth. Isaiah 6:3 “And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: **the whole earth is full of his glory.**”
2. God’s glory is manifest above His creation – “above the heavens”. There are three heavens in Scripture:
 - a. The atmospheric heaven.
 - b. The stellar heaven.
 - c. The heaven of heavens – described in Hebrews 9:24 as “heaven itself”. This is the location of God’s throne. We get some glimpses of the kind of glory that shines in the heaven of heavens in the Book of Revelation.
3. Summary: You get the sense the Psalmist is lost for words to fully express His deep admiration and adoration of God. Do we have this sense of awe and wonder of the God with whom we have to do?

II. THE WISDOM OF GOD WITH MAN (VS. 2)

The Psalmist progresses to show how that God in all His power, might and majesty uses weak and insignificant things to fulfill his purposes.

A. The Mouths God Uses (Vs. 2a)

1. Do you see the contrast? We go from the heights of God’s glory in heaven (Vs. 1) to a small and weak child through Him God is able to display His

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power. "In the sky, the massive orbs, rolling in their stupendous grandeur, are witnesses of his power in great things, while here below, the lisping utterances of babes are the manifestations of his strength in little ones."
(Spurgeon)

2. Jesus Christ quoted this verse in defence of the children who cried "Hosannah" in the temple. Matt. 21:16 "And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, **Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"**
3. Sometimes you can hear more truth from the lips of a child than a blinded adult. Childhood some negative things such as foolishness that have to be addressed but childhood also has some good qualities that are commended of God. In fact, for an adult to be saved, they have to come to Christ in child-like faith!

B. The Men God Silences (Vs. 2b)

1. In some way God is able to silence the mouths of the enemy through the simple testimony of a small and seemingly insignificant child.
2. Illustration: Foxe's Book of Martyrs tells the story of a Mr. Lawrence who was burnt by the Roman Catholic church in Colchester. He was carried to the fire in a chair because he would not walk on account of the cruel torcher he had received at the hands of the Papists. Several young children came about the fire and cried "Lord, strengthen thy servant, and keep thy promise." God answered their prayer and he dies firmly and calmly. (Cited by Spurgeon)

III. THE WAY OF GOD WITH MAN (VS. 3-4)

The Psalmist now expresses his awe and wonder at the ways of God with man.

A. The Psalmist's Meditation (Vs. 3)

The Psalmist's meditation is upon the glories of the night sky. He considers:

1. The Handiwork in the Heavens Generally (Vs. 3a)
 - a. "When I consider" = David took time to contemplate the greatness of God and His power as displayed in the creation.
 - b. "thy heavens" = David acknowledges that they are the work of God and belong to Him. The universe belongs to God, not man! (See Psalm 24:1, 1 Cor. 10:26, 28)
 - c. "the work of thy fingers" = the Bible speaks of God's arm (Isaiah 53:1), God's hand (Ez. 7:6) and God's fingers (Ps. 8:3). Metaphorically, it only took God's fingers to make the planets and the stars. But it took the might of His arm to accomplish the work of salvation! The "fingers" speak of God as the Master craftsman. He has embroidered the skies with a heavenly beauty. It also impresses upon us the magnitude of God's power that the innumerable number of stars and the moon could be simply attributed to the work of God's fingers. Gen. 1:16 "...he made the stars also."
2. The Heavenly Bodies Specifically (Vs. 3b)

B. The Psalmist's Questions (Vs. 4)

The Psalmist poses two questions:

1. Why would God think of us?
 - a. The word 'man' means "a mortal" and refers to man in his weakness.
 - b. The word 'mindful' is frequently translated 'remember' in the Old Testament.

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- c. Contemplating the greatness and majesty of God lead David to sense of his own smallness and insignificance. It produced a humble spirit in him and a worshipful wonder that God would condescend to care for mortal man. "When the Psalmist looks at God's creation, the first feeling is a sense of being overwhelmed – people are just a tiny part of God's creation...he has a sense of his own smallness and apparent insignificance in the face of the vastness and majesty of creation."
(Ross)
 - d. Meditation on the power and majesty of God as seen in creation (i.e., the night sky) is good for the soul and will help keep you humble as a Christian.
2. Why would God visit us?
- a. "son of man" = here the Hebrew word for man is 'adam' meaning dust.
 - b. In light of the vastness of the universe and the infinite greatness of God, the Psalmist is in awe that God would give such loving attention to frail and weak men.
 - c. The ultimate visitation of God took place when He sent His only Son to this earth to die for our sins. Why would God so love us? Worship must be our answer to that question as we cannot even begin to plumb the depths of the mysteries of God's infinite, immeasurable love. It is way beyond the reach of our tiny minds and finite wisdom.

IV. THE WILL OF GOD FOR MAN (VS. 5-8)

This point is connected to the previous. The Psalmist now enlarges upon the condescension of God in the commission he has given mankind. "Although man may indeed be insignificant and frail, Jehovah has given him a certain greatness in the creation." (Flanigan)

A. The Destiny of Man (Vs. 5)

1. A lowly position – "a little lower than the angels". Man was not created as a supernatural being. However, we get the sense that this was only to be temporary. Had man passed his probation, he was destined to rulership even over angels.
2. An elevated position – "crowned with glory and honour". "The picture is of the crowning of a king. Man was crowned to be the king over the earth. As the only creature made in God's image, His destiny was to have dominion over the creation." (Ross) Mankind was the pinnacle of God's creation and endowed with special honour by the Creator. This was not to give mankind license to be an abuser of creation but rather to be a caretaker and overseer of God's creation.

B. The Dominion of Man (Vs. 6-8)

"Man's dominion was threefold – he could look around, or look up, or look down. The beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, were all in his domain." (Flanigan)

1. It's Past fulfillment – this dominion was known for a brief period in Eden under our first parents. Adam's naming of the animals was an exercise of that dominion.
2. It's Present fulfillment – mankind does exercise a measure of dominion in the earth today but not in the fulness of God's original intent before the fall of man.

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3. It's Prospective fulfillment – ultimately in the Millennium we will exercise this dominion as we rule and reign with Christ. Allen Ross explains, “In the New Testament the apostles point out that because of the presence of sin, mankind has not ruled over God’s creation as intended. Creation is not in submission, but in chaos. The message in the New Testament explains how this plan will be fulfilled. By the incarnation, the Son of God took on mortal flesh and was made a little lower than the angels. He never ceased being Divine, but he did empty himself to become the second Adam. Even though all dominion and authority has been given to him, we do not yet see all things put under his feet. That will happen at the end of the age. Paul emphasizes that he will not simply put created life under his feet. He will subdue things visible and invisible, and the last enemy that he will subdue will be death. Those who trust in the Lord will share in that dominion, for they will reign with him (Rev. 5:11). Then the human race will fulfill its destiny, in and through the new Adam.”

V. THE WONDERMENT AT GOD BY MAN (VS. 9)

“The Psalm is like a jewel enclosed by, and encased in, two golden clasps. The Psalm concludes in the same spirit of worship with which it began.” (Flanigan)

A. The Magnificence of His Name (Vs. 9a)

B. The Magnitude of His Name (Vs. 9b)

Conclusion:

1. Theological lessons (what we learn about God)

- God’s power and majesty are indescribable.
- Creation bears testimony to the power of God.
- God takes a special interest in mankind (He is mindful of us and visits us).

2. Practical/Spiritual lessons (what we learn about the Christian life)

- Pride is seen for what it is, a grievous sin when we consider the greatness and majesty of God. We need to get a sense of both the greatness of God and our own smallness.

3. Soteriological lessons (what we learn about salvation)

- Salvation past: Jesus Christ humbled Himself at the incarnation and was made “a little lower than the angels” in order to suffer for our sins and rescue us from ruin.
- Salvation future: One day the earth will be subject to Christ’s reign and we will reign with Him.