

Psalm 8 • The Working of God's Majesty

Introduction

This Psalm is a very good example of how to study many of the Psalms. It contains a literal meaning for David at the time he wrote it which has many applications for us as individual believers, but also contains deeper spiritual meanings applicable far beyond David's original time and place. Therefore this lesson will actually go through this Psalm twice to first look at its most literal meaning and then the more deeper meaning. The Psalms are essentially God's commentary provided to expound on the deeper meaning of Scripture throughout the whole of His given Word in both the Old and New Testaments.

For the choir director; on the Gittith. A Psalm of David.

¹O LORD, our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all the earth,
Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!
²From the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have established strength
Because of Your adversaries,
To make the enemy and the revengeful cease.

³When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;
⁴What is man that You take thought of him,
And the son of man that You care for him?
⁵Yet You have made him a little lower than God,
And You crown him with glory and majesty!

[Read v.1-2]

Q: What is the first and most obvious meaning of this Psalm where David is concerned?

A: It is a Psalm of praise for God's calling and work through David and the events of his life. It speaks of God's working in David's personal life which can be applied to His working in any believer's life.

Q: Why would David assert that God "established strength" out of "the mouth of infants and nursing babies"?

A: Because David's calling as a child literally represents the spiritual. David is acknowledging God's greater sovereignty at work in spite of not being qualified according to the world's standards and even being less than fully mature by God's measure.

Q: David engaged in many battles with enemies and adversaries both within Israel and the Gentiles without. How does David summarize his success where these conflicts are concerned?

A: According to v.2 David attributes the success to God on his behalf.

Application: If David had reason to praise God, someone known to be a man after God's own heart, how much more that we should praise Him, for whom Christ died. David provides a personal example that a right spiritual walk always begins with an attitude of praise for He who is greater Who is at work within us.

[Read v.3-5]

Q: What attribute is David exalting in man's relationship with God in these verses?

A: David is expounding on man's position.

Q: What probably makes man the greatest of everything God created?

A: Because man was made "in the image of God". (Gen. 1:26-27)

Q: How would you contrast this biblical teaching about the position of man to what the world commonly teaches?

A: The world's teaching lowers man to the level of an animal who has rejected the image of God.

Application: When God is removed from the throne of man's heart and his humanity debased, man forgets his obligation as a creature made in God's image in general, and even more so the greater obligation of believers to be renewed in God's image through Christ His Son.

[Continued on the next page.]

*For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;
Romans 8:29*

⁶You make him to rule over the works of
Your hands;
You have put all things under his feet,
⁷All sheep and oxen,
And also the beasts of the field,
⁸The birds of the heavens and the fish of
the sea,
Whatever passes through the paths of the
seas.
⁹O LORD, our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all the
earth!

[Read v.6-8]

Q: What is the third attribute given to man that David is here speaking of?

A: Power. The phrase “make him to rule” is a reference to kingly dominion, and that “kingdom” is here described as “the works of Your hands”. The subsequent verses illuminate this as meaning over the things of this earth.

*God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”
Genesis 1:28*

Q: How does this apply to believers today? How has power been restored to us?

A: Today we reign in new life through Christ.

*For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.
Romans 5:17*

Overall Application: To what does David attribute his personal praise for the granting of man’s position and power in God’s kingdom? “Your name”. In other words, it is not man’s name by which these things are accomplished but exclusive devotion to His name alone.

Observation

Q: First there is the literal meaning of this Psalm where the person of David is concerned and its application for all believers to imitate him. But how do we know that there are other, greater spiritual meanings to this Psalm?

A: This Psalm is quoted in the New Testament and directly applied to the person of Christ. This makes this a messianic Psalm.

[See Mt. 21:15-16; Heb. 2:6-8; 1 Cor. 15:27; Eph. 1:22.]

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Who have displayed Your splendor above
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²From the mouth of infants and nursing
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Because of Your adversaries,
To make the enemy and the revengeful
cease.

[Re-read v.1-2]

Q: What is the contrast of the location of God’s glory in the OT versus the NT?

A: Whereas in the OT God’s glory often resided in the Tabernacle or the Temple, in the NT it now resides “above the heavens” in Christ and in the hearts of believers who have now become the Temple.

Q: How is v.2 an obvious reference to Jesus’ ministry on earth?

A: He was praised neither by priests nor kings, but by the little children in the temple. (Mt. 21:15-16)

Q: What is the main teaching we can glean from Hebrews 2 and 1 Corinthians 15 where this Psalm and Christ is concerned?

A: Christ regained all that Adam lost because of sin and has been exalted above the heavens to the glorification of God's name. (Eph. 1:19-23; Heb. 1:1-3)

Point: Christ came and fulfilled God's Word in its entirety but probably not in the ways man anticipated. The work of His first coming was to overcome sin and be established in heaven as a prelude to the completion of His whole work at His second coming.

³When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,

The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;

⁴What is man that You take thought of him,

And the son of man that You care for him?

⁵Yet You have made him a little lower than God,

And You crown him with glory and majesty!

[Re-read v.3-5]

Q: How do these verses apply specifically to the Messiah?

A: In general they speak of the depth of God's love for mankind that He would go to the greatest of lengths for him, even to the point of sending His Son. In the scheme of all creation, everything else pales compared to God's personal concern for mankind.

Q: What title is contained here which is often associated with the Messiah?

A: "The son of man". (v.4)

Q: And what did God do in order to address His personal concern for mankind?

A: God made His Son "a little lower than God", a dramatic way of indicating the dual humanity and divinity of Christ. Because of Christ's obedience in carrying out His earthly ministry, the result is for God to "crown him with glory and majesty".

Q: What might be the greater spiritual meaning of "the moon and the stars, which You have ordained"?

A: Throughout Scripture these are often symbols teaching about believers. The moon has no intrinsic light of its own and can only reflect the light of the sun, just as believers can only reflect the light of the Son.

For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking. But one has testified somewhere, saying,

"WHAT IS MAN, THAT YOU REMEMBER HIM?

OR THE SON OF MAN, THAT YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT HIM?

YOU HAVE MADE HIM FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS;

YOU HAVE CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR,

AND HAVE APPOINTED HIM OVER THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS;

YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET."

For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

Hebrews 2:5-9

Point: Whereas the philosophy of the world places man as just another denizen among the whole of the universe, God places him at the center of all considerations even to the point of sending His own Son to reconcile man to Him.

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You have put all things under his feet,
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⁸The birds of the heavens and the fish of
the sea,
Whatever passes through the paths of the
seas.

⁹O LORD, our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all the
earth!

[Re-read v.6-8]

Q: What is v.6 referring to where Adam and mankind are concerned?

A: Through Christ the dominion lost through Adam is restored.

*YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET.” For in
subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to
him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.*

Hebrews 2:8

Q: How were these verse literally fulfilled in Christ’s first coming?

1. Christ ruled over the fish. (Lk. 5:1-6; Mt. 17:24-27; Jn. 21:1-6)
2. Christ ruled over the fowl. (Lk. 22:34)
3. Christ ruled over the beasts. (Mk. 1:13; 11:1-7)

Point: *No one on earth has ever been able to control nature the way Christ did.*

Q: How are these things probably representative of something greater spiritually?

1. “*Sheep*” represent the common members of the church.
2. “*Oxen*” represent those within the church who labor in the Word.
3. “*Beasts of the field*” represent those who are alien and outside the kingdom of God, individuals who are often fierce and cruel. (Is. 11:6)
4. “*Birds of the heavens*” represent those overcome by pride and vanity.
5. “*Fish of the sea*” represent those immersed in worldly pleasures.

Point: *Everything and everyone is subject to Christ – for believers awaits their inheritance and rewards in Christ, for non-believers final judgment and destruction.*

Overall Application

Christ’s work on the cross was not something which merely addressed the issue of Adam’s sin in order to return us back to the original position enjoyed by Adam, but rather supplied us with much, much more. As a result we are no longer adhering to the image and likeness of Adam, but the image and likeness of Christ.

*For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. **For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.** The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Romans 5:17-21