

# How Majestic is Thy Name

---

## *Psalm 8*

### **INTRODUCTION**

- A. John Calvin used to tell his students Cicero's story about Simonides, the ancient Greek poet, who was asked by Hiero the Tyrant what God was.
  - 1. Simonides requested a day to consider the question, then another day, then another day.
  - 2. Finally he concluded that the question only became more baffling the longer he thought about it.
- B. Imagine trying to describe God - our vocabulary simply isn't large enough to describe God's holiness, God's love, God's forgiveness, and so forth.
  - 1. Our vocabulary especially fails when we attempt to describe God's majesty.
  - 2. This psalm describes God's majesty in feeble, human language. We want to explore this psalm this morning that we might get a better picture of God's majesty.

### **THE MAJESTY OF THE LORD, vv. 1-2**

- A. The psalmist both begins and ends this psalm with "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth!"
  - 1. That this psalm both begins and ends with God's majestic name demonstrates that this is the theme of the psalm - this psalm is about how great God's name is.
  - 2. Interestingly, this is the first time we see the name Yahweh in the Book of Psalms - that's quite appropriate since this psalm is about the greatness of God's name.
  - 3. The Lord's name is majestic in all the earth.
    - a. The Hebrew root of the word for "majestic" refers to something which is superior to something else. Hence, the KJV's use of "excellent" in the verse.
    - b. The Lord's name does not simply refer to his name Yahweh, but his name refers to his character, his being. God's name describes who he is.
      - 1) The meaning is that God is superior over all; he is the sovereign of the universe.
      - 2) God has absolute power and sovereignty over this world.
        - a) "Your divine throne endures for ever and ever. Your royal scepter is a scepter of equity" (Ps. 45:6).
        - b) "At once I was in the Spirit, and lo, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne!" (Rev. 4:2).
- B. God's glory is chanted above the heavens by the mouth of babes and infants, v. 1b.
  - 1. This is, admittedly, a quite difficult passage to understand; how is it that God's glory is chanted above the heavens by the mouth of babes and infants?
  - 2. We need to remember that the psalms are poetry, and just as we can't take everything in modern poetry literally, we can't take everything in the Psalms in its most literalistic reading.
    - a. This seems to be a poetic way of saying that mankind, even the youngest among us, ought to praise God.
      - 1) Psalm 148 calls upon all mankind to praise God - "Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth! Young men and maidens together, old men and children!" (v. 13).
      - 2) Thus, all of us, from the oldest to the youngest, need to give God praise and devotion. Are you giving God praise and devotion?
    - b. This passage is used quoted by Jesus in Mt. 21:16 when he was praised by children in temple.
- C. The bulwark mentioned at the end of v. 2 could refer to praise or mankind or the heavens - we really can't be certain.
- D. Regardless of to what the bulwark refers, the meaning of this passage is quite obvious: God has great majesty, and we, as mankind need to give him praise.

## THE MAJESTY OF THE LORD'S CREATION, vv. 3-8

- A. The Lord cares for man - "When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the which thou hast established; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?," vv. 3-4.
1. God's handiwork is quite amazing.
    - a. God created the universe and all contained therein.
      - 1) "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1).
      - 2) "The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in shrines made by man" (Acts 17:24).
    - b. I know I've used the following numbers previously, but try to fathom the implication in these numbers:
      - 1) The Milky Way Galaxy is thought to have some one hundred to two hundred billion stars, and is thought to be about one hundred thousand light-years across.
      - 2) The nearest galaxy bigger than the Milky Way is the Andromeda Galaxy, containing some two hundred to three hundred billion stars and located about two million light-years away.
  2. God is mindful of man, and he cares for man.
    - a. The word "care" in the RSV or "visitest" in the KJV has been said to have caused more trouble for translators than any other word in the Hebrew language.
      - 1) The basic meaning of the term seems to be to change the condition of a subordinate either for good or for ill.
      - 2) The parallelism with "mindful" obviously shows that this care is positive - God is concerned about the plight of man.
    - b. God cares about what goes on in our lives.
      - 1) "Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Lk. 12:7).
      - 2) "Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you" (1 Pet. 5:7).
  3. Regardless of what burdens we bear, regardless of what struggles we face, regardless of what sins we commit, God cares about us.
  4. That's the irony of it all.
    - a. The psalmist is intentionally painting this dichotomy - a dichotomy between lowly man and a powerful God.
    - b. God created all things, God has all power, God has the ceaseless praise of the angels in heaven- and God cares about what goes on in your life!
- B. "Yet thou hast made him little less than God, and doest crown him with glory and honor," v. 5.
1. God has made man a little less than God.
    - a. The Hebrew term "Elohim" here translated "God" can mean one of three things: God, divine beings, or angels.
      - 1) Most of the ancient translations translated this as "angels"; this passage is used in Heb. 2:7 and the word there is "angels."
      - 2) The meaning is that in some way God has made humankind just a little lower than divine.
        - a) Man bears God's image: "Then God said: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'" (Gen. 1:26).
        - b) "A man ought not to cover his head, since his is the image and glory of God" (1 Cor. 11:7).
    - b. One way in which God has made man a little less than divine is through the sovereignty that God has given man. Verse 6 states that man has dominion over the works of God; God has dominion over the universe, and man exercises dominion over the animal kingdom.
  2. God has crowned man with glory and honor.
    - a. Man is the apex, the crowning achievement of God's creation, God has given man glory and honor.
    - b. Unfortunately, man is taught that he is not the crowning achievement of Creation; man is, according to many, simply the result of eons and eons of evolutionary development.
      - 1) Is it any wonder, then, that so many people act like animals? If we are made in the likeness of a chimpanzee rather than the image of God, what ethical obligations do we have?
      - 2) I firmly believe that if people understood that they were the crowning achievement of God's work they would behave vastly differently—man would probably treat his fellow beings more humanly.
- C. Man has dominion over the work of God's hands, vv. 6-8.

1. The Hebrew word for “dominion” means “to exercise oversight or to rule.”
  - a. God has given man the oversight of his Creation.
  - b. God created man with the intention that he have oversight of the Creation - “God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth’” (Gen. 1:26).
2. All things have been put under man’s feet - all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the sea, vv. 7-8.
  - a. This passage - along with other passages - presents a biblical view of animals.
    - 1) God said to Noah, “The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every bird of the air, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are delivered” (Gen. 9:2).
    - 2) “Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him also the beasts of the field to serve him” (Jer. 27:6).
  - b. Here is what the Bible is teaching us about animals.
    - 1) Mankind has been given dominion over the animals, because man is a higher created being than they.
    - 2) Animals were put here for man to use - if you want to eat an animal, eat it; if you want to wear an animal’s skin, wear it; if you want to use an animal in the field, use it; if you want to test a new cancer medicine on mice, test it.
    - 3) You’ve seen People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals protesting the circus or stores that sell leather or restaurants that sell beef. But, the biblical ethical treatment of animals is that we have dominion over them, and we ought to use them - God put them here for that purpose.
3. Newspapers in Los Angeles reported the strange story of Raymond Lopez.
  - a. Mr. Lopez, an 80-year-old retiree, is starving so that he can feed the birds in two city parks.
  - b. The weak Mr. Lopez explained, “I don’t care about myself anymore. I’m only interested in helping all things that suffer and all things that are hungry.”
  - c. Most of Lopez’s social security check and pension goes to pay the delivery man who comes every Tuesday with 2,800 pounds of feed for the birds.
    - 1) The bill is about \$150 a week.
    - 2) While friends have encouraged Lopez to take a trip, relax, or enjoy material things, he replies, “I’d rather go hungry myself than let my birds go hungry.”
  - d. While we should not intentionally mistreat animals, we need to understand that animals were put here for man, not the other way around.

## CONCLUSION

- A. As previously mentioned, this psalm ends the same way it begins: “O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth!”
- B. I’ve already said that the fact that this psalm begins and ends with a declaration of God’s majestic name tells us that that’s the point of this psalm: God’s name is majestic.
  1. This psalm demonstrates that God’s name is majestic in two ways: Through the creation of the universe and the creation of man.
  2. You were created with the sole purpose of bringing majesty to the name of God, glory to God’s name. Are you fulfilling your purpose?