

**'Making Sense of the Psalms No.3'**  
**Armagh: Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2009**  
**Psalm 8:1-9**

## **Introduction**

This is now the third Psalm we have looked at in this series that I have called, "Making Sense of the Psalms." We looked at Psalms 1 & 2 by way of introduction. Psalm 1 we called 'Blessed is the Man' and Psalm 2 – 'Behold the King!' Psalm 1 was all about 'Two ways to live' – Godly or ungodly; for God or against God. Psalm 2 introduced us to the one who can make us right with God – The Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Son of God who has already been crowned King of kings and Lord of lords, by virtue of his death and resurrection. We saw that nothing that could ever happen in this world will ever change that. He is already seated on His throne.

Tonight we are moving ahead to Psalm No.8. Again in some ways it is still an introductory Psalm, because it asks a fundamental question – **"What is man?" (v.4)**. Who are we? What is life all about? What are we here for? These are the foundational questions that all of us must ask and all of us need an answer to at some stage in our lives. The interesting thing about Psalm 8 is that it only answers these questions in the context of what **God** is like. It doesn't start with man and put him under the microscope in some laboratory and try to figure out who he is, what he is like, and what he's all about, in and of himself. No, the Psalmist, who we're told in the title is David, starts with God. He starts with...

### **1. The Majesty of God (vs.1-2)**

He starts with an exclamation of worship:

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

Why does he repeat the word 'Lord' at the beginning of this Psalm? Well in fact he doesn't. Notice that the first Lord is in capitals LORD. That is how our English translators write down the holy unutterable name of God. In the original it is four letters: 'YHWH'. Some people think we should pronounce this Jehovah, and others think it should be pronounced Yahweh. The important thing to understand is this is the name of God. The Jews never pronounced it – they thought it was too holy a name and that they were too sinful a people to ever utter the name of God, and that's why we have the uncertainty as to how we should pronounce it today. But the Psalmist is referring to the name of God - The God who created the heavens and the earth. The God who chose Abraham out of all the nations of men, made a solemn covenant with him, and then made his descendants into God's own special people, God's own nation – special among all the nations under heaven – God's chosen people. That is the God that the Psalmist is referring to - Jehovah, or Yahweh, the Covenant making and the Covenant keeping God. And so he's saying, 'O Jehovah, (or O Yahweh) you are our Lord.'

All the nations of the world at that time had their own gods – who were really no gods at all – they were just dumb idols and images. But ‘Yahweh, you are *our* Lord.’ You are the one whose name is majestic throughout the earth! You are the King of all the earth! All these other idols and images are only national or tribal deities, but our God is King over all the nations of men throughout the whole earth. Our God is King of kings and Lord of lords – this is a bit like what we saw in Psalm 2. The Son of God is already King of kings and Lord of lords.

But not only is our God king over all the earth, He is more than that – He has ‘*set his glory above the heavens.*’ In other words he is not just to be worshipped here on earth - he is worshipped throughout the heavens as well. All the heavenly beings and angelic hosts worship Him. In other words He is the God who made the heavens *and* the earth. Therefore He has the right to be worshipped by all that he has made in heaven and on earth. There is no greater God; there is no other God – full stop!

He is **majestic** – **King** of kings and Lord of lords, and he is **glorious** – He will not share his glory with any other – He is the **only** living and true God! That is David the Psalmist’s starting point. He starts with God, before he looks at man. Because anything that we are, we are because God has made us that way. We have nothing in and of ourselves – only what has been given to us by God. We are nothing without God. God must be our starting point as we ask this question, “**What is man?**”

And yet having thought about the Majesty and the Glory of God, David goes on to say

*‘From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.’ (v.2)*

What does that mean? If God is so majestic and so glorious, how come that he allows even children and infants to praise him? In those days it was a bit like in Victorian times when the old adage held sway: ‘*children should be seen and not heard.*’ They were kept out of the way. If a king wanted to boost his sense of importance and make himself look more majestic and more glorious, he got the most important people and the dignitaries in to make a whole show and fuss with lots of pomp and ceremony. Children would never have been part of the picture. But our God is different.

He doesn’t **need** anybody to tell him how great he is. He is magnificent and glorious already. He is secure in his own position, if you like. But because of this he loves to hear children, even little children praising and worshipping him. They know who He is, they want to worship him, they don’t have to be told to do so, or forced to do it, unlike older people who think they can run their lives without God, or think they can rebel against him and don’t need him in their lives. God loves to hear children praising and worshipping him in their own simple child-like way. After all Jesus quoted this verse when he was here on earth. The Son of God loved to have children worship him.

See Matthew 21:16. It was on the occasion of what we call Palm Sunday. The day that Jesus rode on a donkey into Jerusalem with crowds all around him shouting,

*“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes  
in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” (v.9)*

Then Jesus made his way into the Temple – the place where people should have been worshipping God, but instead of hearing worship and praise there, he heard the sound of buying and selling, wheeling and dealing, and all kinds of animals squawking!

So he drove them all out and said, *“My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers!”* (v.13). After he drove them out he proceeded to heal the lame and the blind who came to him there. But the chief priests and the teachers of the law – the religious dignitaries, who counted themselves professional worshippers – saw what he was doing and the children singing, *“Hosanna to the Son of David”* and what did they do? They became indignant and objected to what the children were doing. To which Jesus replied, *“Have you never read:*

*‘From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise’?”(v.16)*

He quoted from Psalm 8 showing not only that he was willing to accept the praise of children, to confound these religious leaders – his foes and avengers (as Psalm 8 calls them), but he was also showing that He was none other than the God of heaven and earth come down to live among men as the Son of God! He was worthy to be praised by all **men**, but when *they* wouldn't worship him, the **children** still knew who he was!

That brings us secondly to...

## **2. The Insignificance of man (vs.3-4)**

David the Psalmist, having contemplated God in all his glory and majesty and remembered that his God had created the heavens and the earth, looks up and probably looking at a night sky says,

*“When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars which you have set in place,  
what is man that you are mindful of him,  
the son of man that you care for him?”*

In other words in the light of who God is – in all his majesty and glory, and in the light of all God has made – the vast universe of sun, moon and stars, how come a God so vast, who made a universe so vast, has any time at all for one of the most insignificant things he has made – a human being? In terms of size, we are minute in comparison to all that God has made, and yet for some reason he still thinks of us!

In comparison to the majesty of God, we have here the insignificance of man. And so we have the question at the very heart of this Psalm – **“What is man?” (v.4)**

Why is God mindful of us? Why does God even care about us? We are so insignificant. There are over 6 billion of us on this planet, but as Isaiah said, in God's eyes we are like grasshoppers! (Read Isaiah 40:21-26)

How many billions of stars and planets are there for God to look after? How many other animals and creatures are there on earth for God to take care of? How many angelic beings are there in heaven for him to spend his time with? And yet he thinks about us! He cares about us! Why?

What is man? In terms of our size in the grand scheme of things we are insignificant. So where does our *significance* come from? The only answer to that question is...

### **3. The Dignity God gave to man at Creation (vs.5-8)**

Look what David says in answer to his own question, "What is man?" in v.5. Speaking of God he says:

*"You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings  
and crowned him with glory and honour.*

*You made him ruler over the works of your hands;*

*You put everything under his feet:*

*All flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air,  
And the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas."*

There are two important things that David says here:

1. That God made man a little lower than the heavenly beings, and
2. That God made man ruler over everything that God had made.

That's where man gets his dignity from. That's what makes man more important than any other creature that God has made.

If you read the opening chapters of the Bible - Genesis 1 & 2 you discover that man was the last thing that God made. He was the pinnacle of God's creation. On days one to five God was making an environment suitable for man to live in. First of all on day 1 God created day and night – man was going to need a cycle to his life. The day would be for working, the night would be for sleeping. He would need both work and rest. On day 2 God created an atmosphere to give man the right kind of air to breath. Genesis 1:6-7 talk about an 'expanse' which God called 'sky' but this is what it is talking about – an atmosphere with the right gases and the right moisture to enable man to live and breath. But God knew that man couldn't live in the water all the time, so he gathered it into certain areas called seas and allowed the dry land to appear. God was making a habitat suitable for man to live in. On day 3 man was going to need something to eat, so God caused vegetation to grow, and seed-bearing plants and fruit-bearing trees. God had provided a vast array of food for man to eat and it had tremendous variety as well. On day 4 God made the sun, the moon and the stars, to give light on the earth day and night, and to mark off the days, months, seasons and years. And to give us a sense of just how vast our God is to make such a universe, so that one day David would look up at this great vast array and say, "*When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?*" (Psalm 8:3-4).

And it should prompt us today to ask the same questions!

On day 5 God made the fish of the seas and the birds of the air, and on the morning of day 6 he made all the land animals – wild animals, livestock and creeping things. And God saw that all he had made was very good.

But in Genesis 1:26 for the first time we read about a conference between the 3 members of the Godhead before man was created. Man was the pinnacle of God's Creation, but before he made us he said to himself, *“Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”*

In other words what God said here about his creation of man is the exact same as David says in Psalm 8:5-6.

(i) God made Adam a little lower than the heavenly beings. Do you know what that actually says in the original Hebrew language? God made Adam a little lower than Elohim (the word for 'God'). God made Adam a little lower than Himself. And that is completely true – Adam was made in the image and likeness of God – just a little lower! That's where the dignity of man comes from. We are made in the image and likeness of God!

(ii) And before the fall God made Adam “ruler over the works of his hands, and put everything under his feet” – What did God put under Adam's rule and control? (Psalm 8:7-8 tells us – all the flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, and all that swim the paths of the seas. God put all that he had made under Adam. He was God's representative here on earth – just a little lower than God! With sovereign control over everything else that God had made! That's the dignity that God gave to man – the most important creature that God made.

***So what is man that God should be mindful of him,  
or the son of man that God should care about him?***

- Man is made in the image and likeness of God. That's what gives him his special worth and dignity in God's sight. That's why God loved this world of men and women so much that he gave his one and only Son to die for them on the cross, so that whoever of them would believe in him, would not perish, but would have everlasting life! That's how much God loves and values the men and women and children that he has made.

- But something else, if it had not been for the Fall, mankind would still be ruling over everything else that God had made. There was a time when all the animals were under man's control. God brought them all to Adam so that he would name them and take care of them and look after them. But today we live in a fallen world where many of these animals are too wild and savage for man to really rule over them anymore. And what's more, because of the Fall and the sin that has entered into the heart of man we have played our part in actually making many of these species of birds and animals and reptiles extinct – instead of looking after them, we have wiped them out!

So what's the answer? Well the writer of the NT Book of Hebrews helps us here, because under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he saw in Psalm 8...

#### **4. A Pointer to the Son of Man (vs.4-6) (See Hebrews 2:6-9)**

In Hebrews 2:6ff, the writer takes up some loose ends from Psalm 8 and points us on to their fulfilment in the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Yes the Psalm answers the question “What is man?” as we have seen tonight. But it also points us on to the Son of Man, a term that Jesus liked to use of himself while he was here on earth.

Did you notice in Psalm 8:4 as well as asking the question “What is man that you are mindful of him?” the next line goes on to say, “Or the Son of Man that you care for him?” It is that second part of the question that allows the writer to the Hebrews now to apply these verses to Jesus.

Because of the Fall we have trouble believing that Psalm 8:5 really applies to us today. In what sense have we been made a little lower than the angels?

We feel as if we're far lower than the angels because of our sin!

In what sense have we been crowned with glory and honour today?

It doesn't often feel like it, does it?

And in what sense today can we really say that God has put everything under our feet? It more often feels as if we are under someone else's feet!

So what does the writer to the Hebrews go on to say? (Hebrews 2:8-9).

*“In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him.*

*Yet at the present time we do not see everything subject to him (i.e. us/man).*

***But we see Jesus (The Son of Man) who was made a little lower than the angels (or ‘who was made for a little while lower than the angels’ NIV f/n), now crowned with glory and honour (why?) because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.”***

The point that the writer is making is then spelled out for us in vs.14-16.

*“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death..”*

Or as Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 in a passage that again quotes Psalm 8:

*“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man (Adam), the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he ‘has put everything under his feet’. Now when it says that ‘everything’ has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, (why?) so that God may be all in all!”*

And that's how David finishes Psalm 8:9 – the way he started - in worship and awe at...

## **5. The Majesty of God (v.9)**

*“O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!”*

Our God really is King over all things in his Universe. He causes all things to work together towards that end – the day when Jesus brings all things once again under his complete control – all enemies brought into submission, even the devil, himself, and then he will hand over the kingdom to God the Father, and all glory will go to God!

### **Conclusion**

This Psalm asks the question, “What is man?”

But it really gets each one of us to ask, “Who am I?”

I hope you have found the answer to that question this evening.

If we leave God out of the equation, we are nothing, we are worthless. Our lives are expendable, and that’s why there are so many abortions being carried out in our world today, and so many lives being taken in murder and conflicts all around the world, and even why the lives of old people are thought of us expendable in the whole euthanasia debate.

But if we see ourselves as God sees us, remembering that we are the pinnacle of God’s Creation, it changes everything:

We are not over-developed monkeys; we are God’s special creation.

We are made in the image and likeness of God, and originally given the authority to rule over the rest of his creation.

And then if we see the lengths the Son of God has gone to, because of the Fall, to bring us back into a right relationship with his heavenly Father:

That He has died for us and risen again for us, and that one day he’s coming back for us, and that on that day he will put everything under his feet and then hand us back as a gift to God the Father.

...Surely that invests your life and mine with great meaning and great significance. We are loved by the God whose glory is above the heavens, and whose name is so majestic in all the earth. Surely our only response should be to fall down and worship him for who He is, and for all that He has done for us – and be amazed that He ever thought of us at all!!