

# Psalm 8

## Who is God? What is Man?

<sup>1</sup> O LORD, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You who set your glory above the heavens.

<sup>2</sup> Out of the mouth of babies and infants,  
you have established strength  
because of your foes,  
to still the enemy and the avenger.

<sup>3</sup> When I look at your heavens,  
the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

<sup>4</sup> what is man that you are mindful of him,  
and the son of man that you care for him?

<sup>5</sup> Yet you have made him a little less than God;  
and with glory and honour you crowned him.

<sup>6</sup> You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;  
all things you have put under his feet,

<sup>7</sup> sheep and oxen – all of them,  
and also the beasts of the field,

<sup>8</sup> the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,  
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

<sup>9</sup> O LORD, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Whether he looks “up” or “down” in the Psalm, David’s gaze terminates with the LORD whose majesty is in all the earth.

God’s glory is expressed in his strengthening of the weak and his stilling of the strong.

Looking up,  
David is impressed by  
the transcendence of  
God and his intimate  
care for Man.

Looking down he is  
impressed by his  
likeness to God and  
the role God has  
given Man.

Man’s glory is expressed in his dominion of the lower creation.

Whether he looks “up” or “down” in the Psalm, David’s gaze terminates with the LORD whose majesty is in all the earth.

Psalm 8 is one of the key creation Psalms, because Psalm 8 takes us to the key relationship in creation – the relationship between God and Man. It is the first full-blown Psalm of praise and the only Psalm of praise which is addressed wholly to God (vv. 1,9). It uses the language of creation – the nouns of Genesis 1 on days 4, 5 and 6, laid it out in a way that puts Man at the centre and the head (vv. 3-8).

Three times the Ps. uses the word which means “what?” or “how?” in vv. 1, 4, 9.

### 1. Who is God?

The first word which is the key word: LORD. Who is God? The LORD is God! This is shameless political incorrectness. The ancient world was pluralistic – just like today. All religions, all opinions, all lifestyles are treated with equal “respect” – but none of them is allowed to be actually “right” in such a way as to make all the others absolutely “wrong”. We reject this when we confess, “O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!”

“All” is a key word in Psalm 8. In verses 6-8 it defines the extend of the dominion of Man: God placed everything under his feet. In verse 1 the word “all” defines the universal Lordship of Yahweh – his name is in all the earth.

Who is God? The LORD is God: the Triune God who reveals himself in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the Creator of heaven and earth, the majestic sovereign of the nations of the world.

But this is, of course, an unwelcome confession nowadays. But we have to go on confessing him. Verse 2 says that the simple confession of the absolute sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ is God’s strong bulwark against the aggressive pluralism of the world.

### 2. What is Man?

It is only when we know who God is that we can know what Man is. So Ps. 8 gives an answer to the question “what is Man?” which pagans and secularists cannot.

(a) Pagans and secularists say Man is a tool. Psalm 8 says *Man is the object of God’s care*. “What is mere mortal man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?” “David at least has no doubt that he *does* matter; he’s just baffled to bits over *why*. When he says, ‘What is man?’, he is not asking a question but making an exclamation – he is really saying, ‘What a God!’ He is not posing a mental teaser; he is engaging in breathless praise,” (Dale Ralph Davis).

(b) Pagans and secularists say Man is a meaningless. Psalm 8 says *Man is the image of God’s likeness*. “Yet you made him a little less than God and with glory and honour you crowned him” (v. 5) – an allusion to Genesis 1:26.

But of course, this is not what we see. Instead we see frustration, and futility. So it is hugely significant that the New Testament takes this Psalm and applies it to Jesus. “Now we see not yet all things put under [Man]” says the author of Hebrews 2. “But,” he says, “we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.”

Jesus is the answer to the questions “Who is God?” and “What is Man?” He is the key to the relationship between God and Man.