



Title: Story and Song – Psalm 8

Text: Psalm 8

Date: July 31, 2022

Main Idea: Because of God’s majesty and might, humanity is valuable.

Personal Study Guide

READ ENTIRE TEXTS: PSALM 8

Highlight – What stands out?

1. What images are mentioned in this text?

2. Did you read any words, phrases, or ideas that were familiar to you? Any that were unfamiliar to you?
3. Did these passages remind you of any other passages you have read or studied before? Write those down.
4. Is there a verse, phrase, or idea that stood out to you, convicted you, or spoke to your life experience? Write that down.

Explain – What does this mean?

*Note: These introductory notes to the psalms will help as you study these first 8 psalms this summer.

The psalms can generally be divided into 3 categories:

- Orientation: Telling you what life is supposed to be like
- Disorientation: Telling you what life is like
- Reorientation: Telling you what life will be like after deliverance (future or present)

There are also different genres of psalms:

- Lament – the life that is struggling
- Thanksgiving – the life that is delivered
- Praise/Hymn – the life that is content

1. Based on these explanations above, what kind of psalm is this one? How would you explain your answer?

2. Notice the introduction and conclusion of this Psalm: “how majestic your name is in all the earth!” Everything in the middle verses is an inspiration to join in the worship of God’s MAJESTY. Make a list of everything in this passage that inspires David to worship.

3. In this psalm, David is contrasting between the concept of strength and weakness. Using the table below, write down all the words that fall into the two categories (some words may serve double duty).

Strength	Weakness

The bottom line is: ALL strength belongs to Yahweh, our Lord! ALL that we have was made by HIM and given to us from HIM.

5. Look up the following passages and match them with how they relate to Psalm 8:

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1. <u>Genesis 1:14-19</u> | a. reminder of God’s care for man |
| 2. <u>Genesis 1:26-30</u> | b. God defines “what is man” |
| 3. Matthew 21:15-16 | c. God establishes Jesus’ position |
| 4. Luke 12:24 | d. out of the mouth of children... |
| 5. Ephesians 1:22 | e. Jesus’ position gives hope of the completion of “everything” under man’s feet |
| 6. Hebrews 2:5-11 | f. the creation of the heavens |
| 7. 1 Corinthians 1:27 | g. the praise of God’s people, although they are weak people, silences God’s enemy. |

Apply – How does this change me?

1. According to Psalm 8, what is man's relationship to God? What is man's relationship to the rest of creation? Based on your two answers, think of at least one current world issue in which the Christian viewpoint is so radically different from the 'norm' of our age?
2. Psalm 8 is the praise referenced in chapter 7's last verse. What have you been through in the recent past that deserves a psalm of praise? What are you going through currently that requires a psalm of praise?
3. How has Psalm 8 changed or enhanced your understanding of your value and purpose in light of Mighty God?

Respond – What's my next step?

1. Is there a relationship you have that could use some inspiration from Psalm 8? Let your awe and wonder of God's Majesty infuse and influence your relationship with that person. Let it serve as a reminder

that the world needs to know the loving and purpose-filled truth of God's word. As children of the Most Majestic and Mighty God, instead of fear or anger, let us have more tender love for the world when we have a different viewpoint than them. Remembering that they so desperately need to know the value they have in God, may we share the truth in love and ultimately magnify God's name even higher!

2. Notice this pattern from how we matched Psalm 8 with multiple parts of scripture:
 - *David* studied and knew the Word of God that was given to Moses to write down.
 - **Jesus, his disciples, Paul, and the writer of Hebrews** knew the scriptures that both Moses and *David* wrote.

What does this pattern look like in your lives? What do you know about God that inspires your worship of him?

3. Which part of the passage most inspires you towards worship? If you were a co-writer with David and he asked you to add another reason to worship God's majesty, what would you add?

Commentary: Taken from “The Way of the Righteous in the Muck of Life” by Dale Ralph Davis

MAJESTIC NAME

PSALM 8

For the music leader.

To the Gittite melody [?]. A psalm of David.

- 1 Yahweh, our Lord,
how majestic your name is in all the earth—
where your splendor is recounted across the heavens!
- 2 Out of the mouth of children and infants
you have established strength
on account of your foes,
to put an end to the enemy and the one seeking revenge.
- 3 When I look at your heavens,
the works of your fingers,
the moon and the stars which you have put in place,
- 4 what is man, that you pay attention to him?
Or the son of man, that you show concern for him?
- 5 Yet you have made him a little less than God;
and with glory and dignity you crown him.
- 6 You cause him to rule over the works of your hands;
you have placed **everything** under his feet—
- 7 sheep and oxen—all of them,
and even the wild animals,
- 8 the birds of the sky and the fish of the sea
—whatever passes through the paths of the seas.
- 9 Yahweh, our Lord,
how majestic your name is in all the earth!

Have you noticed how the packaging of a product is meant to give you a specific impression? You may spot a bag of ginger snap cookies on the grocer's shelf—in some cases they are in a heavy brown paper bag, with plain lettering and no glitzy cellophane. The intent is to 'say': these cookies are an old-fashioned (the words may actually be on the package for the non-subtle purchaser), non-fancy, back-home, down-to-earth treat. The packaging means to give you that basic, back-tograndma attitude about them. That is the way it is with Psalm 8, with its top and bottom 'wrapping' in verses 1a and 9. No, not to stir an appetite for cookies but to tempt you to delight over the splendor of God. By packaging the psalm within such wrapping David wants to excite you over the majesty of God and incite you to adore him for it. Then in the psalm David gives the reasons why you should be so taken with Yahweh's majesty. Of course, David speaks in the first person; but the heading of the psalm indicates its use in public worship—so David is assuming that what he says of Yahweh, you also will gladly say.

The irony of your strength

First, David says to Yahweh: you are to be adored because of the irony of your strength (vv. 1b–2). We usually pick up on irony when we see it; it's like a leaky pipe in a plumber's house, or when a worker for the national revenue service gets convicted for tax evasion. And David nails a bit of irony here: though Yahweh's splendor is splashed across the heavens, he has 'established strength' out of the mouth of children and infants, of all things. There is this contrast in the text between the foes, the enemy, the seeker of revenge and the children and infants, between these hairy-chested brutes who flex their muscles and show off their tattoos and these helpless babes. We needn't worry about whether David is thinking of a specific instance (or instances) or simply using a figure. The point is: what seems inconsequential has overwhelmed what is mighty.

What 'strength' is it that God establishes from the mouths of children and infants? It is likely the strength of *praise*—that's the way the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) took it (see Matt. 21:15–16). So David is speaking of the lethal punch that praise packs; praise of God is highly powerful even if—or especially when—it comes from sources we would consider weak. There is a strange wallop in the praises of God's people that silences God's enemies. That seems to be the idea.

In this connection I think of how James Robertson describes the loss of T. J. Jackson (later, Gen. 'Stonewall' Jackson). His wife Ellie had given birth to a stillborn son, then she suffered an uncontrollable hemorrhage; in a brief time on a Sunday afternoon, Jackson's whole world caved in and he was utterly crushed. The next day he wrote his sister Laura; he told her he thought he could submit to anything if God strengthened him for it; but he made no attempt to cover his sad despair. But then there in the middle of his note there is a most moving one-liner. He says: 'Oh! my Sister would that you could have Him for your God!' Can you imagine that? Can you think of anyone 'weaker' than Jackson, dashed and devastated by the Lord's 'taking away'? Here is a man beaten and crushed who nevertheless says, Oh! that you could have Him for your God. What defense does the suave, narrowed-eyed agnostic have for that? Sometimes the mightiest weapon in God's arsenal is not argument nor brilliance nor eloquence nor philosophy but praise. And the humblest believer can use it.

The mystery of your care

Secondly, David tells Yahweh: you are to be adored because of the mystery of your care (vv. 3–4). David considers all the data. He is not in a secular world: these are 'your heavens,' the 'works of your fingers,' heavenly bodies 'you have put in place.' David's is not a God-vacated world but a God-directed world. On a clear night David could likely see 2,000–3,000 stars. What if he'd had a good

pair of binoculars? Up to 100,000. What if David knew (as Philip Yancey has put it in his book on *Prayer*) that if the Milky Way galaxy were the size of the entire continent of North America, our solar system would fit in a coffee cup, and that the Milky Way is one of perhaps 100 billion such galaxies in the universe? He probably would have been even more staggered than he was—but he had enough to stagger him, to be impressed with the massive vastness of his world over against his apparent insignificance. He considers this impressive data and yet holds to a marvelous truth: You ‘pay attention to’ man, you ‘show concern for him.’ He loses breath in saying it. When he exclaims, ‘What is man?’ he is speaking in baffled wonder and perplexed joy! Only the condescension of God can hold together astronomical vastness and individual concern. It gives David liturgical goose-bumps.

Of course, even pale reflections of such condescension amaze us. Patrick Kavanaugh tells of Mozart being accosted by a beggar in the streets of Vienna. The composer had no money to give, so brought the fellow to a coffee-house where Mozart quickly dashed off an entire Minuet and Trio, gave them to the fellow along with a letter, and sent him to his publishers. An astonished tramp soon possessed five guineas. Why didn’t Mozart give him the buzz-off? Why should the fellow matter to him? Why should he care? Why invest time and effort?

‘What is man ... or the son of man?’ Why should a mere speck of dust on the light years of God’s calendar matter to 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.

The clarity of your revelation

Next, David tells God: you are majestic and adorable because of the clarity of your revelation (vv. 5–8). But why is it that David knows that God pays attention, that God cares, that his creature of dust, Man, matters to him? David says: Because the Bible tells me so. Note that verses 5–8 are simply a poetic summary of Genesis 1:26–31 (note especially verse 28). But some people never appreciate home until they try to run away from it—so you may not appreciate your Bible and you don’t appreciate Bible answers unless you hear the other answers given—how they answer that question, ‘What is man?’, for not all ask that question with the hushed wonder and joy of David.

Consider the answer of paganism. I mean ancient, Mesopotamian paganism. Such a man-on-the-street pagan would say, ‘When I look at the heavens, the moon and the stars, I fall down and worship them, for I believe they represent the powers of the universe; they are capricious and unpredictable—yet I am caught in their crunch, for they control my fate.’ Check out the Babylonian ‘creation myth’, *Enuma Elish*; note there how *man is an*

accident, how *man is a slave*; he is the garbage-man and janitor for the gods, doing the drudge work of providing the gods and goddesses with nourishment and satisfying their physical needs.

Or consider the answer of nihilism. What is man in the vastness of such a universe? He is nothing—only a piece of flickering warm rubbish at the dump, as important as a newborn maggot inside your garbage can on a hot summer day. *Man is junk*. James Sire (in *The Universe Next Door*) alludes to Samuel Beckett's play *Breath*. It's a 35-second play, no human actors. A pile of rubbish sits on stage, lit by a light that is dim at the first, gets some brighter but never fully so, then becomes dim again. No words; only a recorded cry at the first, an inhaled breath, an exhaled breath, and another recorded cry. Man is trash—trash that breathes momentarily, but trash nonetheless.

Or there is the answer of humanism. 'As in 1933,' says *Humanist Manifesto II* in 1973, 'humanists still believe that traditional theism, especially faith in the prayer-hearing God, assumed to love and care for persons, to hear and understand their prayers, and to be able to do something about them, is an unproved and outmoded faith.' 'We can discover,' they write, 'no divine purpose or providence for the human species.' We can't take space to dispute this, only to note it. They are simply saying that *man is alone*, and one gets the sense that they haven't the sense to see that that is sad.

But we have the answer of revelation in verses 5–8. When David asks 'What is man?' in verse 4 he is not cynical; he doesn't ask it with a curled lip; he asks it in wonder. Why does he know man counts? Where did he get that idea? That is, where did he get what he declares in verses 5–8? From reading his Bible, from Genesis 1—a word from *outside*. And that word says *man is royal*. God said: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them rule ...' (Gen. 1:26). We don't take this position because we finally got it figured out, finally reasoned out what man's place is and so postulated that man is a higher form of life. No, God has stooped down and told us. Does this make a difference? Yes, it does. It makes a difference even in the assumptions one makes. Think of Jesus' word in Luke 12:24: 'Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!' That last statement—how does Jesus know that? Because Psalm 8 and Genesis 1 say so. Does it matter? Yes; it assumes that if ravens get road-killed the Father will surely see that you are sustained. After all, there's no comparison between ravens and royalty.

The certainty of your plan

Finally, David tells Yahweh: I want to praise you because of the certainty of your plan. Here I want to focus on verse 6 and draw in Hebrews 2:5–9 as well.

Well, it's all very nice (someone might say)—man ruling as Yahweh's vice-regent over his whole created order, but of course there's a big little word that makes the whole affair doubtful. And there it is in verse 6, the little word 'all' or

'everything' sitting like a sore, throbbing thumb in emphatic position in the text: 'you have placed *everything* under his feet.' But we don't see that. We don't see man ruling and controlling the whole created order; it seems more like cancer rules, or tragedies rule, or political tyrants rule. That's what the writer of Hebrews said. He quoted a bit of Psalm 8, including verse 6, and his response was: You know, we don't yet see that. *But we see Jesus!* His argument is: No, we don't yet see God's plan in final, living color, but we do see one man—Jesus! (Note our Lord's *human* name). Because of his suffering of death he has been crowned with glory and honor and reigns already over the whole created order (Heb. 2:5–9; cf. Eph. 1:22)! And he will bring many sons to glory to share in his reign. Man as such does yet enjoy the destiny mapped out in Psalm 8 but *One Man* does—and that gives us solid hope.

In *The Empty Cross of Jesus* Michael Green provides a helpful parallel for the situation in our text. He alludes to the speculation in European circles during the Middle Ages about whether there was a sea route to India, a way to the land of spices around the southern tip of Africa. No one could be sure, but many believed there was. Attempts at rounding that cape had failed—hence it was the Cape of Storms. But one sailor was determined to try once more. He succeeded in rounding the Cape and reaching the East. So ever since Vasco da Gama sailed back to Lisbon in triumph it has been impossible to doubt that a way to the East exists around what is now called the Cape of Good Hope.

That is the point of Hebrews 2. It says: Psalm 8 is not a pipe dream. We don't yet see it full-blown. But we see Jesus—one man is already reigning! And that is the assurance that redeemed man, his brothers and sisters, will one day rule as well. 'He has made them a kingdom, priests, to our God, and they shall reign on earth' (Rev. 5:10). How can you doubt your royal future when the Man Jesus has already begun enjoying it?

So, in light of these reasons, what should you do? The 'wrapping' of the psalm tells you. For a starter, why don't you fall down and say, 'Yahweh, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!'¹

¹ Dale Ralph Davis, [*Way of the Righteous in the Muck of Life: Psalms 1–12*](#) (Scotland, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2010), 95–102.



Group Study Guide

*This lesson is for the Group Leader to use to teach the lesson and facilitate the discussion. It is not intended that you will use every question in this guide during your group time. You will likely only be able to cover 4-5 questions, depending on how discussion goes. This guide is longer than what you will

need but provides the freedom and flexibility to pull questions out for discussion that will best serve your group time.

Tip: You may want to pull one question from each section for discussion or spend more time on a particular section than another on. It's totally up to your discretion.

Introduction

Icebreaker Question:

Can you name a disagreement believers have with nonbelievers?

OR

Can you think of a time when you got distracted and forgot the purpose of a task or event?

READ ENTIRE TEXT: PSALM 8

Highlight – What stands out?

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2. Did you read any words, phrases, or ideas that were familiar to you? Any that were unfamiliar to you?
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Explain – What does this mean?

***Note: These introductory notes to the psalms will help as you study these first 8 psalms this summer. It might be helpful to introduce this every time you meet as a Group this summer.**

The psalms can generally be divided into 3 categories:

- Orientation: Telling you what life is supposed to be like
- Disorientation: Telling you what life is like
- Reorientation: Telling you what life will be like after deliverance (future or present)

There are also different genres of psalms:

- Lament – the life that is struggling
 - Thanksgiving – the life that is delivered
 - Praise/Hymn – the life that is content
1. Based on these explanations above, what kind of psalm is this one? How would you explain your answer?
 2. Notice the introduction and conclusion of this Psalm: “how majestic your name is in all the earth!” Everything in the middle verses is an inspiration to join in the worship of God’s MAJESTY. Make a list of everything in this passage that inspires David to worship.
 3. In this psalm, the psalmist is contrasting between the concept of Strength and Weakness. Using the table below, write down all the

words that fall into the two categories...some words may serve double duty since Scripture tells us He uses the weak to shame the strong.

Strength	BOTH	Weakness

The bottom line is: ALL strength belongs to Yahweh, our Lord! ALL that we have was made by HIM and given to us from HIM.

3. Look up the following passages and match them with how they relate to *Psalm 8*:

Note: You could print this question for your Group and have them work on it in a group of 2-3. Or you could have your Group look up these verses and summarize how each verse relates to Psalm 8.

Genesis 1:14-19

Genesis 1:26-30

Matthew 21:15-16

Luke 12:24

Ephesians 1:22

Hebrews 2:5-11

1 Corinthians 1:27

- a. reminder of God's care for man
- b. God defines "what is man"
- c. God establishes Jesus' position
- d. out of the mouth of children...
- e. Jesus' position gives hope of the completion of 'everything' under man's feet
- f. the creation of the heavens
- g. the praise of God's people, although they are weak people, silences God's enemy.

Apply – How does this change me?

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What does this pattern look like in your lives? What do you know about God that inspires your worship of him?

3. Which part of the passage most inspires you towards worship? If you were a co-writer with David and he asked you to add another reason to worship God's majesty, what would you add?

Additional Resources:

Podcast + Extra Resources: [Help Me Teach The Bible: Mark Futato on the Psalms](#)

Extra Commentary by Mark Futato

H. Psalm 8

NOTES

8:TITLE *a stringed instrument*. The meaning of Heb. *gittith* [1665, 1787], which occurs only here and in the titles of Pss 81 and 84, is uncertain.

8:1 *our Lord*. To address Yahweh as Lord (*'adon* [113, 123]) is to address him as king (see 97:5; VanGemeren 1991:110). The expression *'adonenu* occurs only 12 times: 2 times for a human master (1 Sam 25:14, 17), 4 times for a human king (1 Sam 16:16; 1 Kgs 1:11, 43, 47), and 6 times for Yahweh (8:1 [2], 9 [10]; 135:5; 147:5; Neh 8:10; 10:29 [30]). Psalm 8 has numerous connections with Ps 2; the use of *'adonenu* [113/5105.1, 123/5646] (8:1 [2]) and *'adonay* [136, 151] (2:4) is one of them.

name. Psalm 8 is the fulfilling of the vow made in 7:17 to “sing praise to the name of the LORD” (Brennan 1980:28).

Your glory is higher than the heavens. The first two words in Heb. (*'asher tenah* [834/5414, 889/5989]; “which” + “give!”) are difficult. The form *tenah* is apparently an imperative, but the syntax of *'asher tenah* would be unparalleled; so too, if *tenah* is taken as an infinitive construct. Craigie (1983:105) follows Dahood (1965:1.49) in emending to *'asharetannah* (“I will adore/serve/worship”; Piel of *sharath* [8334, 9250] with an energetic Nun). (For other suggested emendations, see Kraus 1988:178.) But the Piel of *sharath* never takes a word like *hod* [1935, 2086] (splendor, glory) as its object. The best solution is the proposal in BHS to emend to *'asher nathattah* (you who have put). The relative pronoun plus the perfect would be syntactically analogous to the participle with (or without) the definite article, which is frequent enough in hymnic praise (e.g., 103:3–6; 104:2–4). For *'asher* plus the perfect in hymnic praise, see 46:8 [9] and 71:19, 20. The closest text to Ps 8 in this regard is Ps 135, where Yahweh is addressed as *'adonenu* [136/5105.1, 151/5646] (135:5) and then praised with a hymnic participle (135:7a) and then with the relative *sha* [7578.7, 8611] plus a perfect (135:8, 10). The emended phrase from the MT *'asher natattah* begins the second stanza (8:1a [2a] being the first stanza) of

the hymn, after the fashion of 103:3, and 8:1a [2a] and 8:9 [10] thus form a precisely parallel *inclusio* (contra Kraus 1988:185).

8:2 to tell of your strength. Lit., “you have founded strength.” Since the word ‘oz [5797, 6437] means “strength” or a “stronghold,” why do the LXX and NT (Matt 21:16) use *ainos* [136, ZG142] (praise), while the Latin Vulgate uses *laus* (praise)? Since ‘oz is often ascribed to God in praise (see 29:1; 59:16–17 [17–18]; 68:34 [35]; 96:7; 118:14), it appears that 8:2 [3] is a case of breviloquence, a form of ellipsis: “You have established² [the praise of your] strength.” The LXX, NT, and Latin Vulgate capture the part of the figure elided in the MT.

enemies. Two different words are used in 8:2 for “enemies:” *tsorer* [6887A, 7675] (as in 6:7 [8]; 7:4 [5], 6 [7]) and ‘oyeb [341, 367] (as in 3:7 [8]; 6:10 [11]; 7:5 [6]). The enemies in Ps 8 are not “the chaotic forces that God conquered and ordered in the sovereign act of creation” (McCann 1996:711) but are the king’s adversaries encountered in Pss 3–7.

8:3 night sky. Heb. *shamayim* [8064, 9028], translated “heavens” in 8:1.

set in place. This is the same verb translated “prepare” in 7:13 [14]; the Divine Warrior who will “prepare” his weapons to fight for the psalmist is the Creator who has “set in place” the moon and stars.

8:4 mere mortals. Heb. *ben-adam* [1121/120, 1201/132] (lit., “son of man”) is used for an individual person (“son of a person” according to DCH 128). If there is a difference between ‘*enosh* (NLT, “human beings”) and *ben-adam* in Ps 8, the movement would be from the generic (humanity) to the specific (individual): “What are we as a race, not to mention as individuals, that you should have any concern for us?” On the other hand, *ben-adam* is used only two other times in the Psalter, and in both cases the *ben-adam* is a royal person (80:17 [18]; 146:3). So from one perspective the *ben-adam* is the ‘*ish* [376, 408] (NLT, “those”) of Ps 1:1, but from another, he is the *melek* [4428, 4889] (king) of Ps 2:6 (see Miller 1993:92).

human beings. Heb. ‘*enosh* [582, 632] is used in the sense of an individual man, a frail mortal, and as a collective for the human race (DCH 334). Some have suggested that the second sense is activated here (e.g., Kraus 1988:182), but given that Ps 8 is looking back to Gen 1:26, the sense is not likely that of the *frail mortality* of humanity; rather, it is used here as a *generic term* for people.

8:5 God. The LXX, Syriac, Targums, Latin Vulgate, and NT (Heb 2:7) use terms for “angels” (Craigie 1983:108). Since Yahweh is being addressed in the psalm, we should presumably translate ‘*elohim* [430, 466] as “angels” (see Kraus 1988:183).

glory and honor. These are attributes of royalty, be it divine (24:7–10; 145:4–13) or human (21:5 [6]); see Futato 1984:13.

8:6 You gave them charge. The Heb. *mashal* [4910, 5440] signifies the exercise of royal dominion (see 1 Kgs 4:24 [5:1]).

everything you made. Lit., “the works of your hands.” This expression echoes “the works of your fingers” in 8:3 [4]. The former refers to the earth, while the latter refers to the heavens.

8:7 flocks and herds. Heb. *tsoneh* [6792A, 7556] is an orthographic variant of *tso’nah* (HALOT 3.1037; Zorell 1963:696).

COMMENTARY

At its center, Psalm 8 raises a most fundamental question: How is it possible that “mere mortals” can be of any concern to God (8:4 [5])? What significance do people have? Where do we fit into the universal scheme of things? Why would God care about us or for us? The chiasmic structure and the content of Psalm 8 provide two complementary answers.

Human beings are the center of the universe! In the structure of the psalm the question pertaining to “mere mortals” stands in between the heavens above and the earth beneath. Psalm 8:1b–3 focuses on the heavens, as is clear from the *inclusio*-forming repetition of *shamayim* [8064, 9028] in 1:1b–3. The magnificence of the heavens on the one hand and the glory of the Lord that transcends the heavens on the other hand converge to evoke the question, “What are ... human beings that you should care for them?” Psalm 8:5–8 focuses on the earth. The earth is the sphere where people, having been crowned with royal glory and honor, exercise their dominion over the sheep, cattle, wild animals, birds, and fish. “The Creator and world ruler Yahweh assigns the world to the human being as to a king installed by God (cf. Ps. 2:8)” (Kraus 1988:183). By placing the question in between the heavens and the earth, the psalmist is providing an implicit answer to his own question: “Mere mortals” are the center of the universe! The heavens and the earth revolve around us. The explicit affirmation of human dominion underscores our uniqueness and central position in creation. As the center of the universe, we are the objects of God’s thoughts and care. While we are the center, we are not thereby ultimate, however.

Human beings are not ultimate in the universe! The structure and content affirm that our glory and authority are derivative, not ultimate. For one thing, the Lord made us a little lower than the angels, the Lord gave us our glory and honor, and the Lord put us in charge of the earth. All that we are depends on him. Apart from him we are nothing. But we are not “apart from him.” The central question is raised with the interrogative pronoun *mah* [4100, 4537], which is the same word used in 8:1 [2] and 8:9 [10] (*mah-’addir*

[117, 129], traditionally translated “How majestic!”). This repetition of *mah* ties our identity as humans to God’s and reinforces the answer to the question raised: Our glory and authority are not ultimate but are derived from the Lord’s ultimate glory and authority. Our centrality in the poem and the universe is itself structurally surrounded by the majesty of the Lord’s own name. Our glorious dominion has doxology as its beginning and its end. “*Doxology gives dominion its context and legitimacy. Praise of God without human authority is abdication. But to use human power without the context of praise of God is to profane human regency over creation and so usurp more than has been granted*” (Brueggemann 1984:37–38).

But how does 8:2 fit in? Does it not mar this beautiful portrait of divine majesty and human dignity? The theme of children giving God praise fits in well enough, but what of the silencing of the enemies? As indicated, Psalm 8 is the fulfilling of the vow made in 7:17 [18]. Psalm 7 is a prayer for protection against the “enemies” encountered in the previous psalms (3:7; 6:7, 10), as well as in Psalm 7 itself (7:4–6). The juxtaposition of Psalm 8 and Psalms 3–7 teaches that human suffering and glory are not mutually exclusive; more than that, it teaches that the path to glory is through suffering. The person crowned with glory and honor and given dominion over all things (Ps 8) is the person who still needs protection from enemies, especially from enemies who attack verbally (Pss 3–7). The Lord only needs an army of praise-wielding infant warriors to “silence” these enemies! Even the kings and rulers of “the earth” (2:2, 10) will be silenced by children praising him whose majestic name fills “the earth” (8:1, 9).

David understood that the glory and authority articulated in the psalm had not yet been realized in history. “The historical reality, according to Paul and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, is—and will be—fulfilled in the risen Christ” (Craigie 1983:110). “We have not yet seen all things put under their authority” says the author of Hebrews (Heb 2:8) about the truth of Psalm 8. “What we do see is Jesus, who was given a position ‘a little lower than the angels’; and because he suffered death for us, he is now ‘crowned with glory and honor’ ” (Heb 2:9). As “the Son of David” (Matt 21:15), he suffered verbal opposition (as in Pss 3–7) from his enemies, opposition that was silenced with the words, “You have taught children and infants to give you praise” (Matt 21:16). But more than that, he “suffered death for us” (Heb 2:9). But suffering was his path to “glory and honor.” As surely as Jesus suffered and was crowned with glory and honor for us, we too will experience the glory and honor held out in Psalm 8, but only at the end of the path of the suffering of Psalms 3–7.

Psalm 8 is an interlude of glory during a cantata of suffering. It pointed David to the future; it pointed him to Christ. It points us to “the future world”

(Heb 2:5); it points us to Christ—the truly royal human being who “radiates God’s own glory and expresses the very character of God” (Heb 1:3).²

² Mark D. Futato, [“The Book of Psalms,”](#) in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Vol 7: The Book of Psalms, The Book of Proverbs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2009), 51–55.