



**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

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READ ENTIRE TEXTS: PSALM 8

## Highlight – What stands out?

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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. <b>Matthew 21:15-16</b>   | c. God establishes Jesus’ position   |
| 4. <b>Luke 12:24</b>         | d. out of the mouth of children...   |
| 5. <b>Ephesians 1:22</b>     | e. Jesus’ position gives hope of the |
| 6. <b>Hebrews 2:5-11</b>     | completion of “everything” under     |
| 7. <b>1 Corinthians 1:27</b> | 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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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?**

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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**

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# 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!'<sup>1</sup>

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