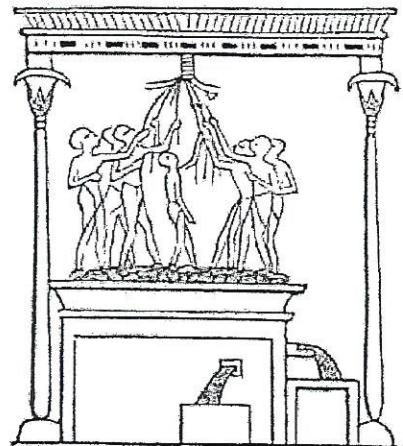




Putting Man in His Place

Psalm 8

Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.



INTRODUCTION:

1. The Title of the Psalm includes:

- the audience: the Chief Musician
- the author: David
- the accompaniment: the instrument Gittith

- a. The Gittith was an instrument or possibly a tune invented in Gath (Goliath's hometown), probably brought by David after his return from living in there with Achish, king of Gath (1 Samuel 27:2).
- b. The term may also be derived from Gath, a winepress, being used on occasions of joy, involving a merry melody in the treading out of the grapes. All three psalms which have this title are songs of joy (Ps. 8; 81; 84).

2. The Theme of the Psalm

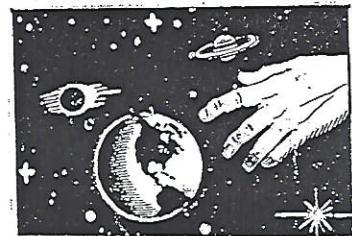
The message of Psalm 8 could be expressed in a variety of ways. A helpful summary of the message of the psalm is given by Allen P. Ross:

God has chosen to display His majesty by enabling weak and vulnerable mortals to play a part in carrying out His plan for creation. (*The Commentary on the Psalms*, I, 298 [This recent 3-volume commentary by Ross has no equal in the English language and will be the standard exposition of Psalms for many years to come.])

1A. The Excellent Name of God: 8:1-2

- 1b. His majesty in the heavens

- 1c. The disclosure of the name:



"O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!"

"O Yahweh" – God, the covenant keeper –Salvation – personal Savior
"our Adonai" -- Lord, Ruler, Master –Sovereignty – powerful Sovereign

- 2c. The distinctiveness of His name:

The name in the Hebrew mind relates to the image and expression of a being, his very nature.

3c. The display of His glory

2

The glory of God is a display of any or all of His attributes. Here the glory in the heavens manifests His sovereignty, power and skill.

2b. His praise from infants: 2a

Sucklings refer to children to the third year after which the Hebrew women used to nurse their children. (1 Samuel 1:22, 24)

Charles C. Ryrie has fittingly remarked,

"From nursing babies to heavenly bodies, God is Lord of all." (*The Ryrie Study Bible*, 802)

Even tender children can praise their Creator, whereas older, more sophisticated adults often deny Him (Matthew 21:15, 16). The chief priests were extremely displeased at the "Hosannah's to the Son of David."

[It is said that a young **child of an atheist couple** once asked his parents, "Do you think God knows that we don't believe in Him?"]

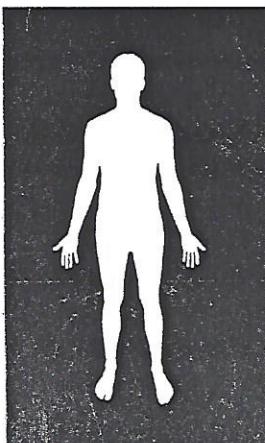
3b. His subduing of the mighty:

God chooses the weak things of this world to correct and confound the strong (1 Cor. 1:27)

By man's lowliest weakness, God overthrows man's great enemies. All adversaries are motivated by the great enemy, Satan, who accuses believers day and night (Rev. 12:10).

2A. The Extraordinary Nature of Man: 8:3-8

1b. The distinctiveness of man: 3-5



1c. The contrast with the universe: 3

The psalmist scans the heavens by day and night and sees the greatness of God. He compares God to a sculptor who effortlessly creates the vast universe with His fingers.

2c. The contrast with Jehovah: 4

What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that Thou visitest him?

1b. Man's finiteness

What is man? [enosh] – frail man

What is the son of man? [Adam] – earthy man

As Allen P. Ross has well stated,
The descriptions are of humans, people in general, and not of males as opposed to females; they portray humans as frail and insignificant, especially when placed in the context of the expansive universe (Op. cit., I, 294).

2b. God's condescension

being mindful of man – speaks of consideration when absent
visiting man – refers to God's presence and bestowing of favor

The **Son of God** became the Son of Man so that the sons of men could become the **sons of God**.

3b. God's concern

The sovereign Creator of the universe stooped to shower His favor on frail, feeble man.

3c. The contrast with angels: 5

Psalm 8:5 – ***For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels [elohim], and hast crowned Him with glory and honor.***

1d. The Glory of Mankind:

Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels.

Angels [elohim] can refer to God, to the angels or human judges or princes (Psalm 82:1, 6-8).

The translators of the Septuagint (LXX) and the writer of Hebrews understood *Elohim* to be a reference to the angels. (Hebrews 2:7-9)



The words **glory** and **honor** (s.v. Psalm 19:1; 96:6) are words that usually refer to the divine majesty. The first stresses dignity and importance, the second the external splendor in which God manifests Himself. God graciously crowned mankind with **glory and honor**; the coronation of men as kings of the earth will take place in the Millennial Kingdom. Commentators suggest that this is just another way of God saying that humans are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26).

Thomas Aquinas noted that man in the middle position between the angels and the animals. He is lower than the angels, yet higher than the animals. However, no angels are ever said to be crowned with "glory and honor." (Gen. 1:26f). He shares His "glory and honor." But with whom? With frail, finite man who by God's goodness and grace rules with Him as His vice-regent and reflects the heavenly Father's glorious attributes. God puts man in his place—but what a place! The sinner and slave to Satan becomes a sovereign!



2d. The superiority over the angels:

4

Jamieson, Faussett, and Brown have stated the psalmist's argument well:

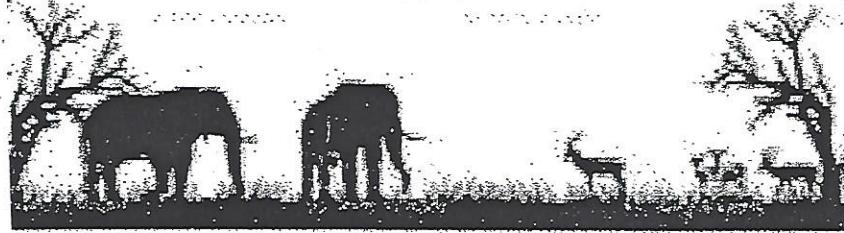
The argument is, man through God's favor, originally made but a little lower than angels, who have heavenly thrones assigned to them near God, has a universal dominion awaiting him in Christ far above the angels... *Angels* are called *Elohim*, similarly as exercising power under God, and ministering to man benefits for him. (*Commentary of the Bible*, 1943, III, 119; italics in the original)

2b. The dominion of mankind: 6-8

God placed the universe and all the living creatures under the control of Adam and Eve before the fall. However, because they fell into sin, they were unable to fulfill their destiny to be kings of the earth. That which the first Adam lost, the last Adam regained (**Heb. 2:6-11**; Rom. 8:7-21; 1 Cor. 15:27). Brethren theologian Erich Sauer has devoted an entire volume to man's original and ultimate destiny, ***King of the Earth***. English-Swiss scholar A. E. Wilder-Smith, a strong creationist, approaches man from a more scientific viewpoint in his masterful, ***Man's Origin – Man's Destiny***.

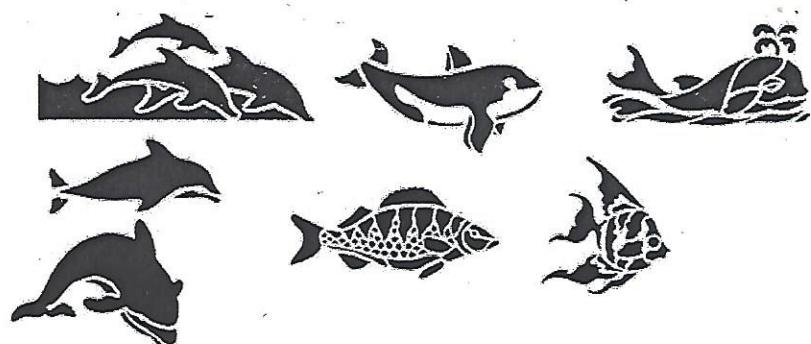
- 1c. Dominion over the universe: 6a "works of thy hand". – c.f. "the works of thy fingers," v. 3
- 2c. Dominion over animals of the land: 7
- 3c. Dominion over animals of the air: 8a
- 4c. Dominion over animals of the sea: 8b
- 5c. Dominion over the angels (Church age believers. 1 Cor. 6:2-3)

BIRDS OF THE AIR



BEASTS OF THE FIELD

FISH OF THE SEA



The psalm begins as it ends, with a paean of praise: "*O Yahweh, our Adonai, How excellent is Thy name in all the earth*".

The burst of praise in verse 1 is the language of fervent hope. In verse 9 the psalmist extols God's name for the consummation of redemption. Man's lost dominion over nature shall be restored in Messiah's Kingdom. Every believer should anticipate this glorious future!

Merrill F. Unger has well noted the psalms special application to Israel:

"The heavens declare the glory of God " (19:1)... His is a glory that is above the heavens. This outburst of praise will flow from the hearts of His redeemed people, Israel, at his second advent; redeemed by the blood of Him whom they once cast out, delivered from their oppressors, restored to their land and their covenanted blessings, they will utter these praises. (See 66:1-4) The nations of the earth will share in the paean, when His name will be gloriously splendid in the earth. (*Unger's Commentary of the Old Testament*, 2002, 757)

CONCLUSION:

-- God's Concern:

The entire psalm extols the majesty of God. As a gracious sovereign, He entrusted his magnificent creation to frail, fallible humans, as His vice-regents. Man is the glorious capstone of His creation and the focus of God's concern and care.

-- God's Creation and Creatures:

Apart from the spiritual significance of the Psalms, the poem lends itself better than perhaps any other passage of Scripture to demonstrate that there are no extraterrestrial creatures. The psalm lists all of God's creatures: angels, man, and animals of the land, air and sea. Outside the triune God, His angels (both elect and evil) and man, there are no other personal beings in the universe.

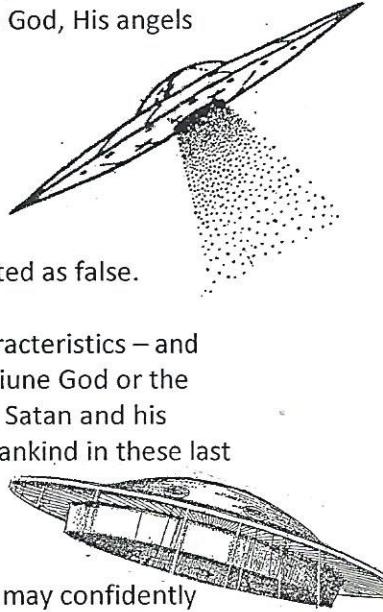
-- Efforts to search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI) are doomed to failure.

-- The vast sums of money spent on such a useless quest should be applied to a more practical use.

-- Reports of extraterrestrials arriving in UFOs or of alien abductions can be discounted as false.

-- If there are sightings of unearthly, unidentified objects displaying superhuman characteristics – and we have reports by many credible witnesses -- they would not originate with the triune God or the holy angels. By a process of elimination, they must be of satanic or demonic origin. Satan and his demons may have the ability to materialize and bring confusion and terror upon mankind in these last days.

-- As the psalmist indicates, God is the **Creator and Sustainer** of His creation, and we may confidently trust in Him to protect us from whatever evil and fiery darts might be directed against us (Eph. 6:16).



Below is one of the several poems Isaac Watts (1664-1748) wrote on Psalm 8, expressing the sublime truth of David's composition and showing its special application to Christ in Hebrews 2.

Psalms and Hymns of Isaac Watts

PSALM 8

Christ's condescension and glorification.

O LORD, our Lord, how wondrous great
Is thine exalted name!
The glories of thy heav'nly state
Let men and babes proclaim.

When I behold thy works on high,
The moon that rules the night,
And stars that well adorn the sky,
Those moving worlds of light;

Lord, what is man, or all his race,
Who dwells so far below,
That thou shouldst visit him with grace,
And love his nature so?

That thine eternal Son should bear
To take a mortal form;
Made lower than his angels are,
To save a dying worm?

[Yet while he lived on earth unknown,
And men would not adore,
Th' obedient seas and fishes own
His Godhead and his power.

The waves lay spread beneath his feet;
And fish, at his command,
Bring their large shoals to Peter's feet,
Bring tribute to his hand.

[These lesser glories of the Son
Shone through the fleshly cloud;
Now, we behold him on his throne,
And men confess him God.]

Let him be crowned with majesty,
Who bowed his head to death;
And be his honors sounded high,
By all things that have breath.

Jesus, our Lord, how wondrous great
Is thine exalted name!
The glories of thy heav'nly state
Let the whole earth proclaim.

