

Psalm 8 – How Excellent is the Name of the LORD!

INTRODUCTION - V 1 – Names are important to everyone. Our names define who we are. As creatures with self will, most parents give names based on their hopes and aspirations. Names are also important in the Bible. The LORD Himself changed Jacob's name to Israel. Jacob means "usurper", whereas "Israel" means "the prince of God". A change would occur in Jacob's life whenever his new name was used. The LORD changed Abram's name ("exalted father") to Abraham, which means "a father of many nations or multitude". If earthly names of God's servants have such great significance, how much more the Name of God! The Bible says that one day, at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow and every tongue will have to confess Jesus Christ as Lord! (Phil 2:10-11) The power that is in God's name is the theme of Psalm 8.

The name of God used here is LORD (Jehovah - the covenantal name of God to Israel). Yet the content of this Psalm is not limited to the people of Israel but applies to all man. This demonstrates that David, like all of God's servants, including Noah and Abraham, believed that the LORD is also the God of the whole universe! He is not only the God of Israel but also the whole world. The LORD controls all the affairs of every nation throughout the ages. The LORD is not a localized God, which was a prevalent concept in biblical times, and even today. David's call was to all man, to acknowledge the excellency of the Name of his LORD.

The excellency or majesty that is in God's name is not arbitrary. The LORD's name will be compared with His power as seen in Creation, and in His dealing with His enemies. The pinnacle of God's creation is man. Therefore, His treatment of man will be included in this Psalm. "Who has set thy [the LORD's] glory above the heaven" is not a question but a declaration of fact and greatness! There is nothing above the heavens. The heavens are the highest and most unreachable part of all of God's creation. Yet, the LORD's glory is above the heavens! The LORD is higher than the highest of all His creation. He is so transcendent that the only way David could compare the greatness and transcendence of the LORD was to compare Him with the heavens. As the heavens cover the whole earth, so is the excellency of the Name of the LORD.

The rest of the Psalm describes the excellency of the LORD's Name.

- I. **HE STILLS THE ENEMIES - V 2** – God's mortal enemies abound on earth. They are described here as "enemy and avenger." The generic use of these terms points to a total disregard by the LORD as to their numbers. No matter how large they might be to gang up against the LORD, they will be put down. The LORD will "still" them as if they are totally impotent. The word for "still" is "Sabbath" which means "rest." They will be put to rest for going against the LORD.

David says that the LORD will use babes and sucklings to deal with these enemies. Babes and sucklings are at the most helpless stage. Yet, they would easily defeat the

enemies of the LORD. David demonstrated his confidence in His LORD by this analogy. Christians must never be afraid of powerful men who have the money and majority of supporters on their side. Truth and obedience to God's Word and Work bear no regard to money and the majority. The LORD knows who are His. The thing believers must bear in mind is to ensure that they are on the LORD's side and the LORD is on their side. If this is true, then Christians have nothing to be afraid of. Babes and sucklings can defeat the greatest foe, for the LORD declares that from the mouths of babes and sucklings He has laid the foundation (meaning of "ordain") of strength to still the enemy and the avenger. No proper words can come out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. They babble. In other words, the LORD is saying that He can even base His strength on nothing to defeat the might and power of His enemies and all who desire to take revenge against Him!

- II. **HE VISITS MAN - V 3-4** – When David observed and studied the heavens, the moon and the stars which the LORD had ordained, what is man that the LORD is mindful of, or remember him! The meaning of "ordained" is "to bring into existence." David described these celestial beings as the LORD's heavens, moon, and stars. The LORD made them and therefore He owns them all. They belong to Him. These celestial beings are stupendous in magnitude and beyond man's comprehension. They are so great and glorious that man does not have sufficient words to describe their fullness and greatness. David calls them the work of the LORD's fingers, like an artist who paints with his fingers, who with great care and detail completes his work. The LORD did the same with the millions of stars in the stratosphere, with the moon to shine by night and the brilliant sun to give light, heat and life to all on earth by day.

Out of all the greatness of the LORD's creation, why would He want to take notice of man who is so insignificant compared to the vastness of the heavens, moon, and stars? Man is so small and puny. David used two rhetorical questions to emphasize his point about man's insignificance. In the first rhetorical question, David described man in terms of his mortality. He is frail as he falls sick, grows old, and soon dies. In comparison, the heavens, moon, and stars are eternal. Generations of men come and go, but these celestial beings remain unchanged. Yet, the LORD remembers man. The LORD helps, strengthens, provides, and loves man even though there is nothing lovely in man for Him to love!

The second rhetorical question emphasizes man's humanity. The LORD does not visit any of His other creatures, but He visits man. The word for visit means, "to pay attention", with the idea of caring. The LORD gives to humankind the first gospel hope immediately after the first man sinned against Him. The LORD continues to plan for man's salvation throughout the ages, despite man's arrogance and rebellious nature. The LORD made His home in the midst of His people Israel via the

Tabernacle, and later the Temple. He worked miracles in the midst of His people that they might know Him and repent of their sins. He sent his servants and prophets to rebuke and call His people back unto Himself, so that they might be a light to a world that is in spiritual darkness and sin. The LORD did not give up on them even though they rejected Him. Finally, the LORD sent His only begotten Son Jesus Christ to die for man; He did not do it for the rest of His Creation, not even for the angels who fell.

These acts of the LORD should be more than sufficient for man to bow down in humility and acknowledge the LORD as his God! Truly, His Name is excellent and is above every name!

III. HE CROWNS MAN WITH GLORY - V 5-8 – The LORD bestows honour on man. He made man a little lower than God Himself as the Hebrew word here means. Perhaps the reason the KJV translators translated it here as “angels” is because of Hebrews 2:9. However, the comparison is more appropriate if it is translated as “God” (Elohiym), for David then would be understood as comparing man with God where God is said to have made man a little lower than Himself! This elevates the imagery to a higher level, for indeed that was what David meant to do. The LORD did this by crowning man with glory and honour, which the LORD alone possessed. How did the LORD crown man with glory and honour?

The LORD did so by making man to have dominion over the works of His hands and by putting them under his feet. God has bestowed upon insignificant man the power to dominate His creatures! These creatures include all sheep, oxen, the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, the fish of the sea, and whatsoever that passes through the paths of the seas such as dolphins and whales. These are all the magnificent creatures that the LORD had created which gives Him the right to rule them alone. Nevertheless, He gave this privilege and honour to undeserving man (Genesis 1:26-28)! These creatures can swim and run faster, fly, and are stronger than man, yet they were put in subjection to man because the LORD decreed it. The excellency of the name of the LORD is seen in the honour He gave to man.

CONCLUSION – V 9 – David ended this psalm by repeating the words of verse 1. He deliberately sandwiched the central theme of this psalm with these words, “O LORD our Lord, how excellent *is* thy name in all the earth” for emphasis. The three reasons are: the power of the LORD is defeating His enemies through the “strength” of babes and sucklings; His care and concern for man despite his frailty; and the privilege and honour bestowed upon man by making him a little lower than Himself and to have dominion over His creatures. How can believers not praise the Name of the LORD? They must! This is the cry of

David! We who know Christ as our Lord and Saviour have so much to praise Him for as our Creator and our covenantal LORD!