

(Devotional #8) Psalm 8:1-9 – Part 2
DEATH OF THE CHAMPION

OPENING SCRIPTURES –

Yahweh is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation – Psalm 118:14

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me if you have understanding. Who set its measurements, since you know? Or who stretched the line on it? On what were its bases sunk? Who laid its cornerstone, when the Morning Stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy? Who enclosed the sea with doors when, bursting forth, it went out of the womb, when I made a cloud its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band? – Job 38:4-9

We began our study of Psalm 8 last week by placing this Davidic poem in the historical context of the encounter between David and Goliath that is recorded in 1 Samuel 17. We did this based on the testimony of the Hebrew Targums and the commentaries of the Jewish rabbis that date to before the time of Christ. The rabbis believed what appears in our English Bibles as the superscript to Psalm 9 (“*For the Choir Director on Muth-labben*”), should instead be the postscript to Psalm 8, referring to “*The Death of the Champion*” (1 Samuel 17:4).

So, Psalm 8 was written to proclaim the Majesty of God at a time, when young David faced what, by all accounts, should have been an undefeatable foe ... the giant, Goliath. But God proved Himself greater than the giant by giving David victory over the Philistine Champion.

Saul was surprised when David won the fight, but it was not a surprise to David, who had said previously, “*Yahweh, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine*” – 1 Samuel 17:37.

We learn from this story that there are no enemies greater than Yahweh. God has the Power to deliver His people from ‘*the paws of lions and bears,*’ and from any foe we may encounter in life. And it is this – ***GOD’S MAJESTY*** – that is proclaimed by David in Psalm 8.

Let’s turn now to the text of Psalm 8: [***Read Psalm 8:1-9***].

Today we are in the midst of a global pandemic which not only threatens our health, but perhaps equally as bad, our economy and way of life. Opinions vary on how to respond to the pandemic, and sadly, discussions quickly become shouting matches. Sides are taken – but even in our disagreements, in unison we all curse the darkness this plague has brought upon us. In Psalm 8, David reminds us there is a different response – a better response – the response of declaring with vocal gusto how majestic God is.

O LORD, OUR Lord, how MAJESTIC is YOUR name in all the earth.

It is noteworthy that David was not attempting to prove how excellent God’s Name is, nor to demonstrate God’s Power, nor to persuade anyone of God’s Might. These things he simply presumed. David was rejoicing in a conversation with God. He made a declaration that ***there is no name above God’s Name***. At the heart of this Psalm is David’s expression of majestic praise.

Verse 1(a) – David begins by setting ***the Name of the LORD¹ (Yahweh)*** above all other names:

¹ Notice the two spellings of the word **LORD / Lord**. When you see the word ‘**LORD**’ in **ALL-CAPS** ... the Hebrew term being translated is ‘**YAHWEH**’ ... (God’s Personal Name – His Covenant Name) ... the very Name David invoked against Goliath. A **Single Capital ‘L’** translates ‘**Adon** (‘**Lord**’ – or ‘**Adonai** ‘**Our Lord**’) – which is a title of respect (similar to our word, ‘**sir,**’). It denotes superiority but it is not a personal name.

Do you recall what David said to Goliath in 1 Samuel 17:45? ***“You have a spear and a sword, but I come to you in the Name of the LORD”*** ... and this is exactly how David begins and ends Psalm 8: ***‘Oh Yahweh our Lord, how excellent is Your Name in all the earth!’***

Not everyone in the world exalts the Name of Yahweh (*whom AFTER THE INCARNATION, and by means of PROGRESSIVE REVELATION, we now know as JESUS CHRIST*). Most people do not exalt that Name. And it can be shocking to visit other cultures and see such things as *people burning incense to Buddha* or *prostrating themselves before an ancient Bedouin moon-god, Allah*, or *groveling before countless graven images*, representing innumerable gods and goddesses.

More common in our country, atheists pay homage to Humanism, which stands in the place of God, as men exalt themselves above their Creator. But to those who know Him, the Name JESUS is above all other names – and the New Testament assures us that one day ***“every knee shall bow – in heaven and on earth – and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father”*** – ***Philippians 2:10-11.***

Goliath saw David and mocked the boy, who had the nerve to challenge the great Philistine Champion. But David saw things differently: David said in 1 Samuel 17:45: ***“You stand with SWORD and SPEAR, and it is IN THEM and IN YOURSELF that you trust. But I come before you in the Name of the LORD of Hosts”*** – (*the same One David proclaims in Psalm 8 to be ‘Majestic in all the earth’*) – ***“And by HIM ALONE I will defeat the Champion of the Philistines.”***

David uses two words in reference to God in Psalm 8:1 – ***Yahweh*** and ***Adonai***; the first is a proper name, and the other is a title.

- The proper name, ***Yahweh***, speaks of God as Transcendent, Sovereign, Eternal, Immortal, Omniscient, Omnipotent, the Creator, the King of kings and Lord of lords, and above all, the Ruler over all things.
- ***Adonai*** (*‘Our Lord’*) speaks of David’s ***relationship*** with Yahweh. *To David, Yahweh was Lord of his life, his king, his ruler* – And this is how all believers are to understand ***our*** relationship with the Lord. He is not distant or impersonal; He is ***‘the Lord,’*** with whom we have a relationship. We are bound to Him by a covenant.

Notice, as David gives praise, he connects himself with the rest of the family of faith by means of the word ***‘our’***. We, who are related to God by faith in Jesus Christ, also are related to each other. ***Jesus-the-Son is, in a sense, the Father from whom we derive our name: ‘Christians.’*** ***“How Majestic is Your Name.”*** The Hebrew word translated ***‘majestic,’*** means ***‘wide, great, high, noble, and mighty.’*** It speaks of God’s Victories, His Might, and His Rule.

If a person has an excellent or majestic name, it means he is invested with worth and honor. What David means is ... all other rivals are set aside. It is God’s Name alone that is excellent – not the name of any other. David doesn’t say, ***“How majestic is my name in all the earth.”*** Rather, he says, ***“O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is YOUR Name”!*** It is the person of the Living God, who has defeated all opponents, and who rules over all the earth. It is this Name David values.

It should be of great interest to note, when Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he began by saying, ***“Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed (or holy) be thy Name.”*** Why did Jesus address God in this way? Because to the Hebrew mind, ***‘the name of a person sums up who that person is.’*** God’s Name – *i.e.*, all of who God is – is Majestic.

God's Majesty is not reserved for heaven alone; His name is "***Majestic in all the earth***" – ***Now – Today!*** It is not just in religious spheres, or on occasions when we meet in a special building for Christian worship at Christmas or during Easter Services; it is not just when somebody is born or when somebody dies, or in some other circumscribed way, where 'religion' is allowed to enter, that God's Majesty is on display. The Majesty of the Lord is everywhere, all the time. Even where our enemies dwell, God's Name is there – Majestic. In all places, every day, across all the earth, God's Creation declares, "***How Majestic is your Name***"! ***During this unusual time in our lives, God's Majestic Name is not diminished because we are worshiping Him from our homes.***

(In) ***Verses 1^B-3*** – David sees the Power of God's Name demonstrated in the Acts He performs (***1st***) as Conqueror of the World, and (***2nd***) as Creator of the universe.

DAVID SAW GOD AS THE CONQUEROR OF THE WORLD – (verse 2) – And to our surprise, it is through the instrument of the weak (***through CHILDREN and even INFANTS***) that God establishes a stronghold against His enemies. David writes:

“From the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have established STRENGTH because of your adversaries, to make the enemy and the revengeful cease.”

This verse comes as a bit of a surprise, for David has been emphasizing the Power and Majesty of God, so we expect God to defeat the enemy, whether it is a giant like Goliath, or a silent invader like the Coronavirus, with a grandiose display of Divine Power and Might.

But that isn't what David said, is it? David learned something interesting about God in the Valley of Elah: ***‘God often addresses His enemies through weak and lowly vessels; sometimes God even uses children and infants – the weak – to bring His enemies to naught.’*** The young man, David, was like a child before Goliath, a young boy with a slingshot and five stones from a creek bed – but God used the weakness of a shepherd boy to defeat the strong man – the Champion of the Philistine Army.

It is God, not man, who has the battle in the palm of His Hand. Without exception, the victory will be won ... ***NOT BY THE BIGGEST GUN OR THE FASTEST AIRPLANE*** ... but by the man of God's own choosing.

Ultimately, God's victory was accomplished by an infant, a child, who came into the world ... ultimately to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. It will be ***THE SEED OF THE WOMAN***, the child of Genesis 3:15, who will deliver the ultimate, fatal blow to the head of Satan.

One of the most interesting ... and at the same time, most perplexing realities of God's relationship with His people is this fact: ***It is when we are weak that we come to see and experience God's strength.*** This principle is expressed clearly by Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9. After asking God three times to relieve him of what he calls, ***‘A Thorn in the Flesh’*** (likely some unnamed medical issue) ... Paul is told, ***“MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOU, FOR MY POWER IS MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS.”***

God is the Conqueror. He uses human instruments, but in a way that leaves no doubt about who won the victory.

DAVID ALSO SAW GOD'S POWER IN THE CREATION OF THE WORLD: Creation itself testifies to the Glory of the Creator. Verse 1^B reads: ***“You have displayed your splendor above THE HEAVENS!”*** This is the flipside of Isaiah's declaration: ***“Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of Hosts; THE WHOLE EARTH is full of his glory.”***

David's statement affirms God's Transcendence by distinguishing the creation from the Creator, then David marvels that these two are discernable. The author of 1 Kings, in Chapter 8, verse 27, agrees when he writes: "**Behold, the highest heaven cannot contain you.**" This is a major theological break from the pagan religions of Egypt and Canaan, both of which **EQUATED THEIR GODS WITH THE CREATION** ... And it validates Paul's assertion in **Romans 1:24-25 that 'it is a trait of the natural man to INVERT the Truth of God, with the result that mankind worships the Creation rather than the Creator'** – (which, of course, ultimately results in man worshiping himself).

In verse 3, David gazes in awe at God's Creation. As he looks into the sky, and then considers the smallness of man in comparison, he says: "**When I consider the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have ordained ... WHAT IS MAN THAT YOU TAKE THOUGHT OF HIM**" (verse 4^A)?

David was a shepherd boy. He had gazed into the heavens and watched the stars and planets all of his life – He was familiar with the night sky – and he marveled at it. David knew God had made the stars, created and counted them, and given names to each one.

*He counts the number of the stars;
He gives names to all of them.
Great is our Lord and abundant in strength;
His understanding is infinite – Psalm 147:4-5*

The vastness of the heavens points directly to the Majesty and Glory of the Creator Himself; and this caused David to wonder: "**Who am I? Why do you even think of me? How can you possibly use me? What value do you see in me**"?

When David asked these questions in verse 4, he used two distinct phrases. (1) *Why would God 'take thought of us' and (2) Why does God 'care for us'?* The word '**thought**' means '**to remember**,' while the word '**care**' means '**to pay attention to someone**.' The question, '*why would God think of us,*' or '*pay attention to us,*' baffled David.

For the answer to this question you will have to wait for next week's devotional. But during the coming days, take the opportunity to turn Psalm 8 into your own praise of God's Majesty, and silently declare it to Him in prayer. You may use words like: '*Your Name is Majestic, You are present with me always, You are my God, with whom I am intimately related, and You understand what I'm going through. There is no enemy greater than you and no power stronger than you*.' *Ask God to help you with whatever challenges you are facing. He remembers and pays attention to you!*