

(Devotional #9) Psalm 8:1-9 – Part 3
DEATH OF THE CHAMPION: Psalm 8:1-9 – Part 3

OPENING SCRIPTURE –

He stretches out the north over empty space and hangs the earth on nothing – Job 26:7

What is man that You magnify him, and that You are concerned about him, that You examine him every morning, and try him every moment? – Job 7:17-18

John Walton, in his book, *THE LOST WORLD OF GENESIS ONE*, wrote: *“Perceiving the majesty of the Creation is a beginning point in understanding the majesty of God Himself – for the universe is his temple.”*

David didn’t have the Hubble Telescope – he just had his two eyes. If David had access to the technology we have today, the awe for God he felt in the fields with his flocks would be eclipsed many times over, and his awareness of **GOD AS CREATOR** would be even more certain. *(It is a shame modern thinking has moved in the opposite direction.)*

In the Bible, God’s Power – His Omnipotence – often is described using three figures of speech: (1) **His ARM**, (2) **His HAND**, and (3) **His FINGERS**. David says the creation of the universe, in all its majesty, required – not God’s Arm or His Hand ... but only His Fingers – This is how Powerful David viewed the Creator.

As David penned this psalm, he pondered the work of God’s Fingers as he considered the vastness and magnificence of the heavens, then in contrast, his thoughts turned toward people – mankind. Why would so great a Creator care? Why does he even think about us?

Since Psalm 8 most likely was written after David slew Goliath, could it be when David says: *“What is man that you remember and care for him,”*? he is thinking about the Israelites, who failed to act because of their fear of Goliath? Why would God care for people like that ... people who, despite being blessed and in a covenant relationship with Him, were not willing to trust His Word?

The English word ‘Man’ appears twice in verse 4, but these two occurrences translate two different Hebrew words.]

- The first occurrence in verse 4 [*“WHAT IS MAN THAT YOU TAKE THOUGHT OF HIM”*] is the word **’enosh**¹ – It means, *’mortal man; man in his weakness.*’ When God sought us, He did not seek out heroes, but He came to us in our weakness, in our mortality, *in our fallenness*. This is exactly where the nation of Israel was as they faced Goliath – weak, mortal, afraid, and unsure of God’s ability to give them victory over the oppressor.
- The second occurrence of the word **’man**’ in verse 4 [*“AND A SON OF MAN THAT YOU VISITED HIM”*] is the Hebrew word **’adam** – *(the term that can be translated as ‘man’ or as ‘Adam’)*. Actually, David uses the phrase **ben-’adam** (*’a son of man’*). God sought out the sons of Adam – the race of Fallen Men.

The term, **’adam**, bespeaks of man in his origin (*as God’s Creation*) ... But we are sons of *’the Fallen Adam.*’ Specifically, **’adam** is derived from a word that means **’RED DIRT,’** the substance from which man was created – So I guess there was **Red Dirt in the Garden of Eden.**

¹ **’enosh** is a term that never was used of man before the Fall.

(This proves ... by the way ... that **the Garden of Eden** was somewhere in **Oklahoma** – Probably somewhere up around **Norman** – but I digress ... by the way, this is a joke.)

Yet despite man's weakness, God is ACTIVE in the lives of his people. He does remember. He does care.

What is in view in Psalm 8 is the wonderment with which David contemplates why God takes note of us at all. John Phillips points out how wonderful it is that God cares more for us than He does the stars and planets².

Based on what we have learned, a good *paraphrase* of verse 4 would be:

'What is mortal man that you would even think of him, and ... the fallen descendants of Adam, that you would have compassion on them?'

David's answer is found in the verses that follow: God created man and set him in a position lower than the angels. But God also gave man a certain glory and honor³ by creating him in His own image. This makes man unique among all the creatures God made. The evidence of man's glory and honor is that the Creator Himself gave to man dominion over the earth.

The Hebrew text of verse 5 reads: ***"You have made him (i.e., MAN) a little lower than God"*** (Heb., *'elohim*). Even without delving into the details of what this phrase means, we can conclude that man occupies a place **(1) lower than God Himself, but (2) higher than the members of the animal kingdom.**

Notice the text does not say, ***'You have made man a little higher than the animals.'***

WHAT A DIFFERENCE IS THE MESSAGE OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT FROM THE PREDOMINANT THEORIES REGARDING THE ORIGIN OF MANKIND! (*Slightly lower than the angels is qualitatively different from saying, 'man is slightly higher than the apes.'*)

From the beginning, man has been ranked above the animals. This is presupposed by the Genesis accounts. Man alone is created in the image of God (***Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7***). Furthermore, Adam gave names to all the animals (***Genesis 2:19-20***). (*In the Ancient Near East, naming something was an expression of dominion over the thing named.*)

Man is **NOT** simply a more intelligent animal – We share BIOLOGICAL LIFE with the animal kingdom – but we are **CREATED** as bearers of the Divine Image of God and that makes man qualitatively different. Unlike the animals, we are designed to have an eternal relationship with God. But having fallen, and now contaminated by sin, the only way for this eternal relationship to be realized is if God intervenes on our behalf ... and He did just that through the incarnation and the atonement.

The vocabulary of Psalm 8:5 in the three major Biblical Sources⁴ is interesting.

- The Masoretic Text reads *'elohim*: ***"You have made him a little lower than God."***
- The Septuagint reads *angeloi*: ***"You have made him a little lower than angels."***
- The New Testament (***Hebrews 2:7***) also reads *angeloi*: ***"You have made him a little lower than angels."*** (*Obviously the NT author was quoting from the Septuagint.*)

² *Exploring Psalms*, Vol. 1, Pg. 66, by John Phillips

³ *Glory and honor originate with God, not with man. These virtues are inherent to God's own character – (His Name). God 'gifts' these virtues to man in an act of grace (cf. 1 Timothy 1:17; Revelation 4:11).*

⁴ **The Masoretic Text** [i.e., the Hebrew Old Testament], **the Septuagint** [i.e., the Hebrew Old Testament translated into Greek], and the New Testament **Book of Hebrews** [that cites Psalm 8:5].

If you research the Hebrew term *'elohim*, you find it is used most often of God, but also occasionally of *JUDGES* and sometimes of *ANGELS*. It is used of judges because judges are supposed to reflect in their decisions the justice that finds its origin in *God's Attribute of Perfect Justice* (cf. *Exodus 22:8*). And it is used of angels because compared to man, angels are of a higher order (cf. *Psalm 8:5*; and possibly *Psalm 97:7*). And though the term used here is *'elohim*, it means: ***God made man – lower than the angels.***

Yet He crowns us with *'glory and honor'* – these words speak of God's character. We not only are *"fearfully and wonderfully made,"* but also we are given the authority to rule as kings. *"To crown"* speaks of kingship. God has placed a crown upon our heads and given us a territory and subjects.

The writer of Hebrews links this statement of man's subordination to angels ... to Jesus. Jesus, as the 2nd Person of the Trinity, is fully God, But He set aside THE PRIVILEGES of his deity and took on flesh – ***(and thus for a while He occupied the same lower position in which mankind was created),***

So ... for a brief time, Jesus, in His humanity, also was made *'a little lower than the angels,'* so He could redeem mankind from the ravages of the Fall.

When Queen Elizabeth of England was a teenager, World War II broke out in Europe. When she came of age, she went to King George VI and asked his permission to join the armed forces to serve England as others her age were doing. George VI agreed to let her join the *Auxiliary Territorial Service* as a Private. She had a superior officer, who took advantage of his rank and enjoyed making life difficult for this special young private. When he would order her to do something, the difference in rank permitted her one reply only: ***'YES SIR.'*** Elizabeth set aside her Royal Privilege, and for a time took a position a little lower than the non-commissioned officer, whose will she was obliged to obey – and she did this willingly for the sake of her service to England.

On February 6, 1952, Elizabeth received word that her father, George VI, had died. At the time God Himself had chosen, she no longer was a Private subject to the will of her superiors ... she was from that moment forward, the Queen of England, Her Royal Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. On that day, she entered into the position for which she had been born, a position from which she had resigned willingly to serve her country.

IN A WAY, THIS IS WHAT JESUS DID ... He willingly set aside – ***NOT HIS DEITY but THE PRIVILEGES OF HIS DEITY*** – and he became for a while, a little lower than the angels He Himself had created, so that ... when He resumed his rightful position as ***LORD GOD***, He could take with Him the Redeemed from Adam's race as joint heirs of ***the GLORY*** that always was rightfully His.

With verse 9 – The Psalm ends as it began – ***"Oh Yahweh our Lord, how Majestic is your Name in all the earth"***! The evidence of God's Majesty is seen in the creation: the stars, the sun, the moon, and the symmetry of the universe. And it is this same Creator, who came to meet us where we are, and redeemed us through his own blood, so that we might share in HIS Glory for eternity.

So, it is no wonder David concludes the Psalm exactly where he began – ***"O LORD, our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth"***!

When David took on the challenge of facing Goliath, he did not understand that his actions foreshadowed the defeat of an even greater enemy. He did not know that his youth and small stature was a picture of the Messiah subjecting Himself to ***THE LIMITATIONS OF HUMANITY***. For a time,

He became ***LOWER THAN THE ANGELS*** so that He might strike the fatal blow on man's behalf that put to rest the Angelic Conflict that raged even before Adam was created. Nor did David fully appreciate then that it would be his descendant – his own son – who would fulfill the Promise made in Genesis 3:15 ... that the Seed of the Woman – his progeny – would defeat the Evil One, who had brought such havoc on mankind.

Even now, as we ponder how to respond to the Coronavirus, as we expend energy, time, and resources ... and perhaps along the way even ask, "***where is God in the midst of all this***"? May we suggest that we spend time considering God as Creator and ponder the many ways in which God cares for us and honors us. May the end of each of our days echo the words of David: *'I am awed by your care and concern for me. I am prone to forget you and act in fear, but you never forget me or refuse to care for me. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.'*