



Sunday School Lesson for March 5, 2006
Released on Thursday, March 2, 2006

"God Made Us Special"

Printed Text: **Psalm 8:1-9**

Devotional Reading: **Genesis 1:26-31**

Background Scripture: **Psalm 8**

Time: Anywhere from 1030 to 971 B.C.

Place: Judah

PSALM 8 (NKJV)

To the Chief Musician. On the instrument of Gath. A Psalm of David.

- 1 O LORD, our Lord,
How excellent *is* Your name in all the earth,
Who have set Your glory above the heavens!**
- 2 Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants
You have ordained strength,
Because of Your enemies,
That You may silence the enemy and the avenger.**
- 3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained,**
- 4 What is man that You are mindful of him,
And the son of man that You visit him?**
- 5 For You have made him a little lower than the angels,^[b]
And You have crowned him with glory and honor**
- 6 You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands;
You have put all *things* under his feet,**
- 7 All sheep and oxen--
Even the beasts of the field,**
- 8 The birds of the air,
And the fish of the sea
That pass through the paths of the seas.**

**9 O LORD, our Lord,
How excellent *is* Your name in all the earth!**

TODAY'S AIM

After participating in this lesson, each student will be able to:

Describe the position of human beings in creation.

Explain how knowledge of humanity's place in creation enhances his or her self-worth and gives life meaning.

Sing a song praising God as creator or complete a self-worth chart based on truths from the lesson

INTRODUCTION

There is nothing more awe-inspiring to me than when I observe nature. Whether it be the light that the moon emits-bright enough sometimes at night to literally read a book by, or the enormity of the waters on the earth-so deep some of them are that man has not yet created equipment durable enough to withstand the extreme pressure to dive down to see what possibly lives there. NASA is exploring space more frequently than ever before, and oil rigs continue to tap into the ground to extract the rich resources that continues to be the center of political pacts, many wars, and much confusion. Even the animal kingdom is mind-boggling. There are one-celled amoebas, and 150-ton blue whales. Through all creation, God's eminence is evident.

However, we must remember that God created everything to His glory and for man's use and enjoyment. Most notably, God created us in a special way--that is, in *His* likeness. This cannot be said of His other creations, and this is what differentiates us from the rest; that and our intelligence. Psalm 8 is a reflection of creation as found in Genesis 1, but in addition to God's nature, this psalm also concentrates on God's creation of people. [Christian artist Richard Smallwood does an outstanding job of setting Psalm 8 to music in the song with the same title that is found on his "Persuaded: Live in D.C." compact disc (2001, Verity Records). You can check out a sampler at www.amazon.com.]

For sure, we have a place and purpose in the big picture of His design. Today's lesson shows God's excellence in His construction of the universe. And while we are not the *center* of His creation, we are a very significant part of it. Our position as God's *creation* is to acknowledge and revere Him as *Creator*. We should recognize that He rules over all that He has made, and understand that we are to worship *Him* and not *what* He has created.

QUESTIONS

1. What did David place at the heart of our thinking in Psalm 8? (v. 1)

In Psalm 8, David begins and ends with the same declaration. That is, the name of God is most excellent in every way. In fact, there are words known to man's vocabulary that describe God's high character. The best we can do is say that God is

God. David makes his starting thought in Psalm 8 God's character. This scriptural *sandwich* (vss. 1 and 9) frames a central subject: people were created by God to reflect His majesty. Isaiah 42:8 also points to the main thrust of Psalm 8. In it God states, "I am the Lord, that is My name; and my glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images" (NKJV).

2. Why did David refer to the praise of "babes and sucklings?" (v. 2)

David refers to the praise of "babes and sucklings" in Psalm 8:2 because he knew that God can elicit praise even through small children—who are the very picture of weakness. God's glory is "above the heavens" (v. 1), but it is also evident in the smallest parts of His work. In fact, when is God's glory more evident than in His victories through the use of weak vessels? First Corinthians 1:27 reads, "But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the *weak* things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty."

3. When did Jesus make reference to this verse? (v. 2)

Psalm 8:2 was also quoted by Jesus in Matthew 21:16 when children were praising Him after His triumphant entry into Jerusalem and He needed to silence the critical religious leaders by stating that even a child can have some level of appreciation for God. This reality holds true even today... if adults will not glorify Him, God will cause children to do so. If rocks can be made to praise God, then why not children? (See Luke 19:40 in reference to Jesus' statement that if He made His disciples be quiet, "the stones would immediately cry out" praises in response to His majesty.) That God could build a stronghold to confound His enemies out of such unlikely materials—such as children—shows His greatness!

4. Why did David refer to God's "fingers?" (v. 3)

David was in awe—as most observers of nature are—at the splendors of God's creation. The wonders of nature lead him to praise its Creator—even the universe with its infinite distances was the work of the Lord's *fingers*. As a young shepherd, David had plenty of occasions where he witnessed God's handiwork as he gazed up into a pitch-black sky that held an incalculable number of shimmering stars. Some might contend that God does not have actual fingers, but if you consider how a sculptor uses her hands to create artistic masterpieces, so did God when He designed His creations so perfectly.

5. What is the significance of the use of the word "visitest" in verse 4?

God consciously make us the object of His thought and remembers us—thus the mention of His being "mindful" in verse 4. He also cares for us—in that He is concerned with every detail of our existence. "Visitest" can additionally mean *to look after*. In this vein, because God as Father does take an interest in His creation—His children, He will not allow them to go unpunished if they live in rebellion. Proverbs 3:11-12 reads, "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction; for whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights." We should be thankful that God loves us enough to spank us when we are disobedient to His way. It's all done in love.

6. What does it mean that God has made man "a little lower than the angels?" (v. 5)

The question arises regarding this scripture: is man being made exalted *over*, or seen in a lesser position *to* angels? The Hebrew word for angels in verse 5 is "elohim"-which is also a name for God Himself. If David is saying that man was created just a little lower than God, his emphasis is on man's privileged position; and because man was created in God's image, he has been given great honor and responsibility. If this scripture, however, refers to the more popular interpretative that angels were created a little *higher* than man, then it is clear from this belief that although man may be temporarily lower than the angels in the sense of being bound by a body, he is certainly not lower in importance in the sight of God.

7. Why does Hebrews 2:9 make reference to Psalm 8:5?

Hebrews 2:9 says, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone" (NKJV). This verse cites part of Psalm 8:5 to point out that Christ, through His humiliation, suffering, death, and resurrection, has gained for us what Adam lost-the original calling for human beings to rule over God's creation. In His great love, God the Son became a man so that He could die for our sins. As a result, He was crowned with glory and honor.

8. In what way does the praise of man in this psalm serve a messianic purpose?

In His incarnation, Christ in a sense became lower than the angels-but only for a time. By faith in Christ, we are united with Him and become partakers of His glory and resurrection. Christ's coming fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament-especially what is Psalm 8 points to. Man's dominion over God's creation, which has been marred by Adam's Fall, is a picture of the dominion the Second Adam-Jesus Christ-will have over a redeemed creation. We should be very grateful that God is so wise in having planned a way for our redemption through Jesus Christ, and has remembered us in His creation by "crowning" us with "glory and honour" (Psalm 8:5b) Everything about God's creation points to His wonderful majesty. Nothing is out of sync. He does *all* things so very well. Hallelujah!

9. What two principles must man balance as a steward of the earth?

Man has a great responsibility to God to be a good steward of the created world. Part of this stewardship-or accountability-includes making good use of the natural resources God has provided. Another aspect is not harming the world by poisoning our air and water, or spoiling its beauty. Keeping these two aspects of stewardship in balance continues to be a challenge for us-as is evident in the many problems we face with water and air pollution and the depletion of the earth's natural resources. We must remember that the world was created to serve man's purposes and not the other way around. While man rightfully exercises control over the world, because of sin, he often uses this control in the wrong ways and without regard to the God who is his Maker and rightful King.

10. What is meant by the "beasts of the field?" (v. 7)

"The beasts of the field" refers to all the wild animals of the earth. James Montgomery Boice noted that man occupies a mediating position in the universe—that Psalms 8 places man midway between the angels and the beasts of the field. Because of man's sin, however, his dominion over wild animals is not as obvious as with the domesticated ones. Recall before the Fall in Genesis 2:19-20 that the animals came to Adam and he named them. He evidently had a good relationship with them, and there was no enmity. After his fall, the effects of which culminated in the Flood, Adam's relationship changed. Nonetheless, even those creatures that seem the farthest from man today are still under his dominion according to the Bible.

CONCLUSION

It seems clear from Psalm 8 and other biblical passages that God has focused His attention on people and the special earth He has provided for them. Psalm 8 provides a biblical understanding of the believer's position in the universe. First of all, it calls for humility by placing God, not man, at the center of all things. The psalmist David praised the Lord for His greatness, as reflected in the universe He was created. The believer holds the piece of the puzzle that enables him to have a clear picture of man's place in the world. We understand that a powerful yet loving God rules over *all* things.

PRACTICAL POINTS

God's glory fills all creation! We should be aware of His presence everywhere we go (Ps. 8:1).

God uses the weakest and simplest begins to express His glory most profoundly; whoever you are, you can be His servant (vs. 2).

Even the "best" of humans is unworthy of God's gracious attention and care (vss. 3-4).

Despite your unworthiness, God has given you preeminence among His creatures (vss. 5-6).

There is no area of creation that God has not put under the authority of His servants (vss. 7-8).

We should constantly keep in mind the majesty of God (vs. 9).

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Acknowledge your place and role in creation.

PRAYER

Father, Your name is indeed excellent! May our lives be dedicated to glorifying and praising Your excellent name. As we consider Your works, may we always be mindful of the hand behind them. Guide us in fulfilling our role within Your creative plan. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

How God controls the operation of natural forces will be discussed. Read about the flood of Noah's time and the significance of the rainbow in Genesis 7:1-9:17, and then study the scripture text, Psalm 104:1-13, to see how the covenant with Noah was confirmed, because as the title indicates, "God Created Wonderful Things."

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY:

Kimbley Y. Baker-Richardson

kimbley@jesusisall.com