

PSALMS

God's Glory and Man's Dominion (Psalm 8)

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The Psalms are not well received by many people. Sadly, they are also not regarded as a choice portion of God's written Word.

The Psalms should not be looked upon as irrelevant to the spiritual upliftment of all human beings in respect of their relationship with God – the Creator.

Monks in monasteries usually go through the book of Psalms once a week. It is said that Patrick of Ireland in the fifth century and several other individuals read it daily. At certain periods in history, ministers were not ordained unless they knew Psalms thoroughly. At times the requirement was that a minister must know the whole book of Psalms by heart!

The early church probably used some of the psalms in their worship (**Eph. 5:19**). We still sing songs based on **Psalms 8, 19, 23, 100**, and others.

Psalm 8

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, 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!*

The Psalms is not only God's inspired written Word to man, but also a collection of the best of man's words to God.

Psalm 8 is generally regarded as one the psalms written by David with a wide range of emotions expressed. By category, it is regarded as **the creation psalms – the CREATOR and the creature**.

WHO GOD IS Psalm 8:1-3

The root of our problems is a misunderstanding or a misapplication of who God is and what He can do.

When the Sadducees asked Jesus Christ about resurrection, marriage, and the first commandment - Jesus' answer was first targeted on how they do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God. He said they were greatly mistaken because they do not know who GOD is.

Jesus later emphasized that man's first and whole duty is to acknowledge that there is GOD, that there is only one GOD, and give HIM all of man's **Mark 12:18-29**.

Our society believes the most important question to answer is: Who are we? Who is man? Man exalting himself to a position equal to that of God, determining what is most suitable for God, such as turning to dumb, lifeless idols, forsaking of worship and fellowship events, teaching of doctrines of men, vengeance, oppression, immodesty, cultism, ritualism, etc.

Such belief has led man to seek schemes only beneficial to himself **Ecclesiastes 7:29**.

But "*Who God Is,*" to us is so crucial. It helps to understand the Source of our existence, it gives us insight into how we can appreciate the Source and develop an effective Creator-creature relationship with the Source.

Psalm 8 begins with the expression of wonder as David reflected on the splendor and magnificence of God as Creator.

David declared his belief in God and accepted HIM as his God. He addressed God as LORD (Yahweh, the covenant keeping God of Israel, the sovereign over all His creation including His people).

To David, the Name of God is sacred. Anyone who use the Name of God must mean something (honorable) by it.

For one to use the Name correctly, one must take it in service and obedience - serve by the power of that name. Using the Name without obedience to His words equals lawlessness **Matt. 7:21-23, Matt. 6:10.**

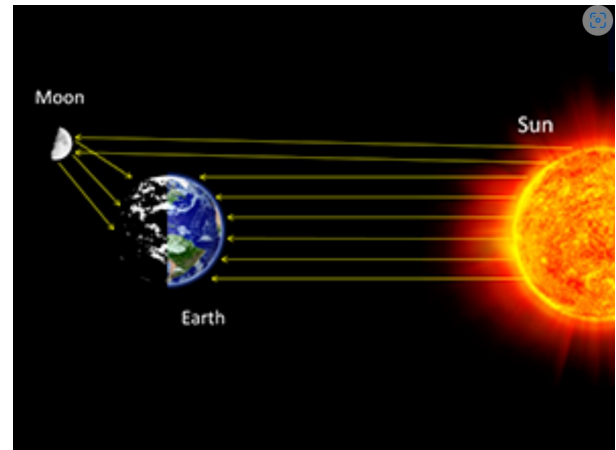
David meant God's revealed character is high above all creation; He is much greater than anything He has made. Not only is God above the heavens, but His splendor exceeds that of the heavens.

In addition to, even the weakest human beings bring praise to their Creator. David's point was that even small children acknowledge and honor God, whereas older, more sophisticated adults often deny Him (**cf. Matthew 21:16**).

The Moon, as well as the planets, Sun, and other stars all testify to the Source responsible for their creation.

The Moon literally "witnesses" to the reality of the Sun, conveying to night viewers of the sky the sunlight that they cannot see first-hand.

The Moon literally "reports" what it is "seeing" first-hand to those who cannot see first-hand what is being reported. Every time we look up and see the Moon, we are simultaneously seeing its witness to the Sun. [Consider this image.]



The Moon with its reflective capacity enables us to see the higher reality of a Creator who designed the Universe in such a way that we are beneficiaries of His cosmic marvels.

We read, "*But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him*" (**Habakkuk 2:20**).

God is Lord— "All the earth" is to follow His commands. God is absolute— "be silent." Since His ways arise from an absolute goodness, no one should question Him; all should submit.

Hebrews 12:29 says that our God is "*a consuming fire*" and we come before Him in awe.

Since, as Christians, we have much greater privileges, we can expect even surer punishment if we fail to do God's will.

In David's words, the earth and the heavens acknowledge, honor and praise the excellency of God's name, the sacred nature, His works and the glory which surpasses all understanding.

In 2016, during a flight from Warri to Lagos the plane flew at a particular altitude, that you can see some forms of water like a river in between the clouds, bumps in form of irregular motions in the atmosphere, etc. I was amazed by the fingers of God in creation.

In 2018/2019, on a thrilling speed boat ride to Aroton, for a burial ceremony, at a point along the sea/river, I could see nothing from all sides - back, front, left and right - except co-passengers.

There are still places (*like the Bermuda Triangle*) in the world, that scientist, geographers, researchers are yet

to solve the mysteries behind it despite technology advancement.

These are evidence of God's awesome power. They are meant to inspire us to reverence God absolutely.

Sadly, many misunderstand this and used it as an occasion to seek for idols, demons, gods, etc, localized in such territories.

There is no one higher than God. You talk about the greatness of God. He is described as the Most High over all the earth and heavens. His greatness is unsearchable.

Job 38 - 42, the last five chapters tell how the voice of God spoke to Job out of a whirlwind. Job had challenged God to answer him. Instead, God questioned him. He asked Job more than eighty questions, and He asked them so rapidly that Job would not have had time to answer them even if he could have.

The questions involve phenomena which are observable in the world about us yet are beyond our understanding.

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" Who planned and laid out the earth? Who fixed it in its orbit? Who started it spinning on its axis? "Have you ever commanded the morning?"; "Have you entered into the springs of the sea? Or have you walked in the recesses of the deep?" "Have you entered the storehouses of the snow or hail?" "Where does ice come from?" "Can you cause rain, lightning, or thunder?"

I had seen hail before and had heard of its potentially destructive force. In 2006, at Yobe state, in a football match centre, suddenly we heard cracking unpleasant noises, a violent storm packed with rain, high velocity winds—and hail. Everyone was careful to avoid being hit by such hails.

Recall, the seventh plague in Egypt in which crops, men, and animals were destroyed (**Exodus 9:13-35**). This affliction was intended to convey to the Egyptian authorities that *"there is none like [God] in all the earth" and that "the earth is the Lord's" (Exodus 9:14,29).*

In every case, God utilized His natural creation to portray His power and presence, and to reaffirm the necessity of

man's humble submission to His will. Such awesome omnipotence merits careful consideration and recognition. Proper respect is due the Creator and Controller of the Universe.

God was making an important point to mankind through Job: *If we cannot fully understand the workings of God in the world about us, how can we propose to understand the workings of God in the spiritual realm?*

All of God's questions were intended to ask, **"Who is man to question God?"**

If Job could not understand how these physical creations came about and continued to operate, how could he understand what had happened to him?

How can we understand spiritual designs if we cannot even explain His workings in the physical world?

We know neither how nor why God takes some actions, but we must trust that He knows how to order this world, and our lives as well.

We would be at a loss to know how to run the universe if God turned it over to us. Suppose God set aside His power, stopped the universe, and said to man, "There it is. You take over and run it from now on." There would not be enough knowledge or understanding in the whole world to get it going again.

If God knows how to run this universe, surely, He knows how to order our lives for our spiritual and eternal good.

Let Him have your life. He knows what to do with it. If He does something with your life that you do not understand, it will not be the only thing you do not understand.

The understanding of God's workings is not what we need; what we need is faith in God's workings.

WHAT IS MAN Psalm 8:4-5

Ezekiel, a prophet in the Old Testament, in one of his lamentations, prayed that God would send a man who would stand in the gap between God and the Hebrew people.

In our local Warri term, we usually say, *Na Man You be.*

This means there is something about mankind.

David said *what is man*. He seems to be thinking very solemnly and seriously.

There is no wonder that Gladstone, one of the great prime ministers of England, said that man is the crowning wonder of the creation, and the nature of man is the greatest study that the world affords.

When we look at the loftiness of man, we have to understand it in two different ways.

One way is to view man as someone made in the image of the Almighty. Because of this, he stands elevated above all the creatures God has made.

The story is told that Socrates, one day, was carrying on a conversation with a man from India. As they talked, Socrates said, *I am trying the very best I can to understand man and life*. The Indian replied, I ought to tell you now that you will never understand man or life unless you understand man in the light of the God that made him; you cannot understand him without understanding God first of all as the One who has brought him into being.

The second way, unfortunately, is to view man from his low side. Man can become a brute. The tragedy is that when he decides to abase himself, he ordinarily goes farther down than the brutes of the field ever do.

Humanity's ability to do horrible things to fellow humans – injustice, oppression, kidnapping, ritualism, cultism, cannibalism, genocide, slavery, homosexuality, sadism, greed, rape, incest, etc – the cruelty of man.

All of us feel at times a bit ashamed that we have to be identified with a brute who dares to call himself a human being.

Lord Orrery wrote a book on Dean Swift called *His Life and Letters*. When Lord Macaulay read it, he wrote on the flyleaf of one chapter, *After reading this chapter, I am ashamed to call myself a human being*.

David hints at what it is that God has placed upon mankind as a responsibility or a duty in life. *What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?*

Psalm 139:14 – David said *I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well*.

Mankind is special. Think about our forefathers - research shows that many of our ancestors were very intelligent. Take, for instance, the ancient Egyptians. They built great pyramid-shaped “tombs” in which to bury their dead kings. One of these tombs, known as the Great Pyramid, stood nearly 500 feet high (almost as tall as the Washington Monument—the tallest stone structure in the world!)

The Great Pyramid was made of over two million blocks of stone that had to be cut, transported, and assembled to create the almost six-million-ton structure. To this day, modern man still does not know exactly how the Egyptians built these great pyramids.

By reading just the first **six chapters** of **Genesis**, we learn that:

(1) *Adam was created with the ability to speak a language (naming all of the animals God brought to him the very day of his creation—2:19);*

(2) *Jubal, one of Cain's descendents, “was the father of all those who play the harp and flute” (4:21);*

(3) *Tubal-Cain, Jubal's half-brother, formed tools out of bronze and iron (4:22); and*

(4) *Noah built an ark bigger than many modern-day cruise ships.*

Furthermore, **Job 28** indicates that our early forefathers were capable of tunneling through rock, and mining precious metals from deep within the Earth. All of these things were accomplished without modern-day power tools or lightening-fast computers.

Truth be told, our ancestors were no dummies; man has been intelligent since the beginning of time. God made us that way. He created us in His own image (**Genesis 1:26-27**), and crowned us with glory and honor (**Psalm 8:5**).

It is truly marvelous that we have a God who is mindful of us. We have a God whom we can approach in an hour when we want to pray. We have a God who has

supplied our every spiritual need. We have a God who is taking care of our material needs. He has set us down in the world where we have all the physical things we require to live happily. God is mindful of us.

Yet, the supreme mindfulness of God is displayed in the fact that God sent His only begotten Son into the world to live and eventually die on the cross that we might be saved.

He is seen as Son of man (***Psalms 8:4-6***) who, 'made [for] a little [while] lower than the angels.'

Hebrews 2:9-11 - *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. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.*

It is difficult to understand how God would ever be able to love people who have been rebellious against Him all their lives.

Think what it means for God to have sent Christ into the world. First of all, Christ came in the form of a man in order that He might point the way to eternal life for us. He provided a living model for us.

I can know by Christ's life and example something of the way that God wants me to live. Jesus stands as a model for all men. I marvel at the fact that Christ was able to build up in His own life so many different attitudes, which He expressed appropriately in given situations.

Jesus was a holy terror when he saw the money changers in the temple. They were not there because of a love for God but because of their passion to make money. Our Lord, in His righteous indignation, drove them out of the temple and said, *My house shall be called a house of prayer: but ye make it a den of robbers* (***Matthew 21:13***).

Our Lord also knew how to be humble and tender. All of us admire the

many moments in Jesus' life when He could reach down with a tender emotion and help someone who had fallen along the way.

For example, in ***John 8:3-12***, our Lord found the woman taken in adultery. He knew she had done wrong, and there was no pretense on His part to defend her.

How wonderful it would have been if men knew how to stand up for correct principles, and, at the same time, not lose their love for a fallen human being.

Many times, we look down upon the people who have fallen along the wayside.

We stand off and condemn them as though we are living models of the way men ought to live.

What a unique ability it is for a person to be able to say that the path someone has pursued is leading in the wrong direction, but at the same time harbor in his heart the tenderness and the love for that one who is doing wrong. The right attitude will bring that one back to the right way. This attribute is not found in many human beings. Our Lord uniquely stands as One who possessed it.

We marvel at the love of Christ. Even when people nailed His hands and feet to the cross, Jesus loved them. Our Lord could pray for them because He knew they did not know what they were doing. They did not see the enormity of their own transgression.

God took His Son in heaven, allowed Him to be clothed with the form of man, and let Him exemplify in Himself the highest kind of life to which God wants all men to aspire.

Jesus took the form of a man because He wanted us to take the image of God upon ourselves. He wanted us to live our lives the way God wants us to live them. He wanted the best possibilities that we have in us to be brought out. When one lives in the way Christ wants him to live, there is the respect for the authority of God in his heart, there is the desire to be obedient to all God said for him to do.

There is the side that represents the greatest of all challenges to us: to lift ourselves up, to live lives that are noble and

right, and to emulate not only our Lord, but God Himself. That is the loftiness of man.

Solomon gave us this conclusion: *Fear God and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man (Ecclesiastes 12:13)*. That is what life is all about.

MAN'S DOMINION *Psalm 8:6-8*

After creating the animals, God created the first human beings, setting them apart from the animal kingdom by creating humans in His own image (*Genesis 1:27*).

Humans possess a soul—a spirit—that lives on after the death of the body (*Ecclesiastes 12:7; Zechariah 12:1; Luke 16:22-31; Hebrews 12:9; James 2:26*).

Animals do not share this spiritual dimension in common with humans. Animals are not human and are not to be regarded as such.

The Bible speaks directly to the question of the relationship between humans and *all the works of God's hands - sheep and oxen—even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas*.

Matthew Fontaine Maury was an accomplished sailor. He was born in 1806 in Virginia and joined the U.S. Navy at age nineteen.

By the summer of 1839, Lieutenant Maury had been around the world with the U.S. Navy, and was famous for improving the science of navigation.

One rainy night, the stagecoach on which he was riding tipped over. His legs were hurt badly. He could not serve on the open seas again, so he put his energy into writing.

Maury's scholarly reputation earned him a position in 1842 as Superintendent of the Depot of Charts and Instruments.

He was determined that captains should have charts that would enable them to sail as quickly and as safely as possible around the world.

However, he never forgot his belief in Scripture. He was fascinated by passages that mention the sea, such as *Psalm 8:8, Psalm 107:23-24, and Ecclesiastes 1:7*.

Whoever studies the sea, Maury contended, "must look upon it as a part of that exquisite machinery by which the harmonies of nature are preserved, and then will begin to perceive the developments of order and the evidences of design" (1859, p. 57).

Lieutenant Maury was right! When captains used his charts, they saved many days and a lot of money. Matthew Fontaine Maury became known as "The Pathfinder of the Seas," because he showed the best "paths" for sailing ships.

Maury knew full well that these views clashed with those of his colleagues. Before five thousand people at the founding of the University of the South in 1860, he proclaimed the following:

I have been blamed by men of science, both in this country and in England, for quoting the Bible in confirmation of the doctrines of physical geography. The Bible, they say, was not written for scientific purposes, and is therefore no authority in matters of science. I beg pardon! The Bible is authority for everything it touches. What would you think of an historian who should refuse to consult historical records of the Bible, because the Bible was not written for the purposes of history? The Bible is true and science is true (as quoted in Lewis, 1927, p. 99, emp. in orig.).

However, Lieutenant Maury was more than a great naval officer and scientist—he believed God's Word with all his heart. Some people told him that the Bible made many scientific mistakes, but he showed that the Bible always got its facts right. Everything he studied about the oceans—from currents, to winds, to the smallest creatures beneath the waves—made him believe that God created our world.

One of Mr. Maury's favorite passages in the Bible comes from *Psalm 8: 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.*

God placed all living creatures under the control of Adam and Eve before the Fall, and when they fell He did not withdraw this privilege (*cf. Genesis 9:1-3; Genesis 9:7*).

God intended that mankind should be over all things and be crowned with glory, but the first humans brought sin into the world.

As a result, man has never been able to fulfill the destiny for which God created him, namely, to be king of the earth.

All things were not subject to mankind. *Hebrews 2:8 - For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.*

God's purpose for mankind was not realized until Jesus Himself became, temporarily, like us "in all things" (*Hebrews 2:17*).

As a result of Jesus' becoming like us, God's plan for mankind can at last be realized.

Man's responsibility is to maintain order in creation, not to let it control him. Man may use any animals, domesticated or wild, for his purposes, including food (*Genesis 9:3; 1 Timothy 4:3-5*).

When the money which God has given to us, the means of livelihood, our relationships, the strength to plan, the tongue to speak, the time to execute plans, the talents, the skills, the heart, the beauty – begins to control us – we have lost dominion. We are no longer in control.

Regaining our dominion is for us to go back to the first point – acknowledging who God is, accept Him as the only God, glorify and serve Him.

Failing to do this, we stray away from God and the proper view of life and human existence provided in His inspired Word.

Romans 1:25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

CONCLUDING REFLECTION ON GOD'S MAJESTY *Psalm 8:9*

Psalm 8 ends with the expression of wonder as David reflected on the splendor and magnificence of God as Creator.

This psalm closes with a repetition of the psalmist's amazement at God's marvelous ways in entrusting so much responsibility to insignificant humans.

This psalm extols the majesty of God. He is a remarkable sovereign because He has entrusted His magnificent creation to feeble humankind.

While this psalm points out the frailty and failures of man it also glorifies man as being the capstone of creation and God's chief concern in creation. It is one of the greatest revelations of the dignity of man.

CONCLUSION

Many of our spiritual problems, our faith problems, our moral and ethical problems, would be resolved if we could ever come to know who God is to us, just who we are and what we have in Jesus.

We are to show forth the praises, the excellencies of Him who created us and who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

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