

Psalm 8: The Ruling Man

The Apollo 11 astronauts left a silicon disc on the moon embedded with goodwill messages. One of those messages includes the text of Psalm 8.

After Psalms 3-7, personal psalms of praise and devotion by David, Psalm 8 opens the scope. It is recognisably a *psalm of praise* but gives reasons for praise unlike other praise psalms.

Structure

v1-2: Global Praise to the LORD

v4-8: The Dignity of Humanity

v3-4: What is mankind?

v5-8: What mankind is, or will be

v9: Global Praise to the LORD

Themes

The LORD: The name Yahweh (LORD). Praise for his name starts and finishes this psalm.

- The Psalms will meditate deeply on 'the name of the LORD'
- It denotes God's *identity*—it is *this* God, Yahweh, who is to be praised in all the earth
- More, it denotes God's own *revelation of his character*
 - o Through Exodus, God reveals his greatness, glory, and character (cf Ex 33:18-34:7)
 - o To praise the name of the LORD = to praise him for all he has shown himself to be
- God's glory is displayed through the weakest vs human rebellion and arrogance (v2)
- **NB** the 'bookends' of this psalm show us **this is a psalm about God's rule in glory**

Humanity: Psalm 8 has long been seen as a poetic reflection on Genesis 1:26-28

- Humans are small and weak. We're not the centre of the universe we sometimes think!
- **But** we have been given a station above our natural weakness by God
 - o **NB** v5-6 the repetition of 'you' – God has placed humans where we find ourselves
- Humans in God's image are given stewardship—v7-8 cascades through *all creation*.

God displays his rule through human rule

An Incomplete Story: The question is: do we see this? Are humanity ruling like this?

- Since Genesis 3, the answer is 'only partially'
- The Hebrew of Psalm 8 is ambiguous in number: 1 man or all people generally?
- The NT overtly applies the psalm to Jesus:
 - o Matt 21:16. The Son of David: The ruler of Ps 2 is the appropriate subject of Ps 8
 - o 1 Cor 15:20-28: Jesus is the 2nd Adam who will see all things placed under his feet
 - o Hebrews 2:5-18: Jesus fulfils Ps 8, being fully human, made lower for a time and now ruling over all things, so that we can find Ps 8 fulfilled in us through him

God displays his rule through human rule fulfilled in Jesus

Suggested Questions for Study

- “What is a human?” How do people tend to answer that question today?
- What is the significance of Psalm 8 calling God LORD, and praising his name?
- How does/should humanity display God’s rule and glory? (*Cf Genesis 1:26-28*)
- How does humanity fall short of the picture painted by this psalm?

Look at Hebrews 2:5-9

- How does Hebrews apply this psalm to Jesus?
- How does trusting Jesus mean this psalm is fulfilled for and in us?