

Commentary on Psalm 8:1-9

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Series*) for Sunday, **October 3, 2010**, is from **Psalm 8:1-9**. Five **Questions for Discussion** follow the *Bible Lesson Commentary*. I do encourage you to write your own verse by verse notes and questions before reading the notes and questions below. The **International Bible Lessons** can be read at: <http://internationalbiblelessons.com/>. New *International Bible Lessons* are published each Saturday.

Psalm 8:1 O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

In his address to God, the psalmist calls God by the name God revealed to Moses: “LORD” = YHWH. God exists, as his name indicates and reveals. More than just existing, the psalmist proclaims that “LORD” befits his name, for God rules as sovereign. He is ruling over and working through all that he created. God’s name is majestic over all the earth, unlike the tribal gods of Israel’s neighbors. The psalmist could recall all that God did before and after Moses, as God ruled from above the heavens and continues to do so.

2 Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.

Even babes and infants demonstrate some knowledge of God, even though they may not articulate their faith as a studied theologian might. The fact that babes and infants indicate some sense of right and wrong at a very early age, and show the realization that they are accountable to a power higher than themselves, reveal that God has written his law on their hearts. The spiritual foes of God are silenced, because they cannot truly account for or understand how the development of infants in speech and behavior happens and how they have a true appreciation for God at a very young age. The development of infants gives a strong argument for the existence of God, as God has revealed himself in the Bible.

3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established;

We know how difficult it is for us to build a magnificent temple. Thousands of laborers built the great pyramids using muscles and primitive technology. By contrast, using the words of poetry, the psalmist proclaims that our great God and Creator created “all that is” easily and without effort. Poetically speaking, God only needed “fingers,” the muscles in one hand, to create the heavenly host above the reach of man at that time; therefore, God is truly magnificent.

4 what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

One human being could not create a giant pyramid in Egypt alone. God created the heavens with a word. The psalmist is very aware of the insignificance of human beings when compared to God, like an ant compared to a person. Yet God cares for each of us, and Jesus said that God even cares for the birds of the air. Imagine the difference between an ant and a person. Imagine a person caring for just one ant moment-by-moment, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Now, remember that God, Who is far greater than the people he created, is caring for us as individual persons moment by moment, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. God is that loving and magnificent.

5 Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.

We are insignificant in our own eyes when we compare ourselves to our sovereign God, the King of the universe. Yet, God did not make any person insignificant. Each person has value and worth because they are created in the image of God – only a little lower than God himself. We have many, if not most, of God’s attributes in finite miniature. Whereas our existence depends on God, God is so great that God’s existence does not depend on anything or anyone. Now, remember that this God has crowned people with glory and honor. We need to live humbly, yet in a way deserving the glory and honor that God has crowned us with.

6 You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet,

God is the sovereign King and Lord over all. But under God, God has made people kings and queens over his works. The things God has made, “all things,” are beneath the human beings that God has created, because God created people in his image to care for and rule over all things. God has also given us the Ten Commandments and other laws in the Bible so we will treat him, others, and “all things” rightly.

7 all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,

Sheep are under us to serve us and meet our needs. Sheep provide clothing and food and in some sense companionship to the shepherd. In the Old Testament, sheep provided a sacrifice for people to offer to God for their forgiveness and cleansing from sin. Oxen worked for them (and us in places) and make our labor easier, if we try to plow a field or pull a wagon of produce using oxen. Beasts of the field give interest to life and God has put “all animals,” wild and domesticated, under our rule as human beings.

8 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

The psalmist wants to be as exhaustive as possible in listing the groupings of the “all things” in the animal kingdom that we rule over. People are different in kind from all the animals. Because we are lords over them, we should never worship them or an image of them. We should care for them, and not abuse them, even though God made them to meet our needs of food and clothing, and for some people, shelter.

9 O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

The psalmist once again returns to the praise of who God is. God is the beginning and the end. The Lord is majestic over all the earth and no one and no thing is or ever can be greater than the Lord. God is worthy to be praised, and no idol or god of our imagination is worthy to receive the honor of the true God of the Bible.

Five Questions for Discussion

1. To you, what is the most important truth that this psalm teaches? Give a reason for your answer. Make a list of what others say in your class or group.
2. If you found question 1 to be a difficult question, what two truths competed in your mind with regard to which truth was the most important truth to you? Give a reason for your answer.
3. What are some of the reasons you like to read the psalms? If you do not enjoy reading the psalms, why not? How might you use a psalm to praise God? To pray to God?
4. What does it mean to you personally when you think of God himself crowning you with glory and honor. How can a person demonstrate humbly the fact that God has so crowned him?
5. What difference does it make to remember that God has created human beings different in kind to animals? What are some of the consequences when people do not view others as having been created in the image of God? How can disbelieving in, or not teaching the true value of human beings as are created in the image of God, lead to the dehumanizing of other people? How might the church teach others the true value of all human life? How might this change society?

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