

Psalm 8  
Psalm 8  
Luke 2:1-20

“The Son of Man”

December 25, 2022

When you hear the question, “what is man?”

You may tend to expect a philosophical answer.

You might expect a discussion of Genesis 1-2,  
and the creation of man in the image of God.

And Psalm 8 calls us to do that—but perhaps in a different sense than we are used to.

The question “what is man?” has a different tone than we might use.

To understand the question, think about how it is used in the OT – for instance, 2 Samuel 9:8.

When Mephibosheth (son of Jonathan and grandson of Saul) comes before David,  
he falls on his face and pays homage.

When David promises kindness to Mephibosheth for the sake of his father, Jonathan,  
Mephibosheth says, “What is your servant,  
that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?”

Likewise, in 2 Kings 8:13, when Elisha speaks to Hazael of Syria,  
prophesying of how Hazael will torture and destroy Israel,

Hazael responds, “What is your servant, who is but a dog,  
that he should do this great thing?”

Or David’s response to Saul in 1 Samuel 18:18,

when Saul offered him his daughter in marriage:

“Who am I, and who are my relatives, my father’s clan in Israel,  
that I should be son-in-law to the king?”

So the phrase “who, or what, am I” is used frequently to express a sense of subordination –  
a posture of humility.

It is also used that way with God, the great King.

In Exodus 3:11, we have perhaps the most famous:

Moses says to God, at the burning bush,  
“Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh  
and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

David also speaks in 2 Samuel 7:18,

after God has established his covenant with him,  
saying, “Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house,  
that you have brought me thus far?”

Solomon asks in 2 Chronicles 2, who am I to build a house for God?

The question, “who am I,” that you should do such kind things for me,  
is the background to Psalm 8.

What is man, that God would give him dominion over all things?

Who are we, that God would crown us with glory and honor?

Sing TPH 8B  
Read Luke 2:1-20

The song of the heavenly host has strong echoes of Psalm 8!

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

“O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!”

And the message of the angel is very much the central message of Psalm 8:

“You have made him a little lower than the gods,  
and crowned him with glory and honor.”

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

And the sign is very similar to Psalm 8:

“Out of the mouth of babies and infants...”

“you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.”

In other words, the message of Psalm 8 is the message of Christmas!

Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people!

In order to communicate that well, I’ve given you a chiastic structure in your outline –  
because the text is centered on verse 5 –

and so verse 5 is what the sermon is driving towards!

So I will deal with the “A” sections first –  
the Majestic Name of Yahweh!

And then I will deal with the “B” sections –  
the glory of God revealed in the heavens, the earth, and the seas.

Before turning to Man and the Dominion that God has given to Man (the “C” sections) –  
(that’s appropriate, I suppose – the Son of Man comes by “c-section”)

Concluding, of course, with the Son of Man crowned with glory and honor!

### **A. The Majestic Name of Yahweh (v1a)**

*O LORD, our Lord,*

*how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

The Psalm begins, where it should, with Yahweh.

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

We have seen that the Psalter begins with the blessed man,

the one who walks in the way of the Lord—and not in the way of the wicked.

Psalm 2 then speaks of the Son of God, the Davidic King, the Messiah,  
the one who inherits the nations.  
And Psalm 2 closes with the call, “blessed are all who take refuge in him.”

Psalms 3-7 then explore the theme of refuge,  
showing that the Lord is our refuge, who delivers us from all our enemies.

Psalms 9-18 will return to the theme of refuge and deliverance,  
alternating between thanksgiving and petition,  
so in one sense Psalm 8 may seem out of place.

But when you understand the question “what is man?”  
as the response to divine and royal blessing,  
then you understand Psalm 8 in its context:  
Psalm 8 is a psalm of praise which gives thanks to God for his marvelous grace  
to the House of David!

You might think that Psalm 8 is talking about creation.  
That is true—but it is not talking about Genesis 1-2.

### **B. The Glory of God above the Heavens (v1b-3)**

*You have set your glory above the heavens.*

<sup>2</sup> *Out of the mouth of babies and infants,  
you have established strength because of your foes,  
to still the enemy and the avenger.*

<sup>3</sup> *When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,*

But, you might say, verse 3 speaks of looking at the heavens,  
the work of your fingers, the moon and stars, which you have set in place.”

Yes, and verse 6 speaks of God giving man dominion over the works of his hands,  
putting all things under his feet—all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,  
the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea.

But still, I cannot say that he is talking about the creation in Genesis.  
He is using the language of Genesis to talk about a different creation—the new creation.

Look at verse 2:

“Out of the mouths of babes and infants,  
you have established strength because of your foes,  
to still the enemy and the avenger.”

What does this verse have to do with the rest of the Psalm?  
If you say that the rest of the Psalm is talking about Genesis,

then verse 2 makes no sense.

In the Garden – before the fall – there were no babies,  
and there were no “avengers” (there was an enemy –  
but until sin entered the world, there was no need for vengeance!).

Besides,

Adam’s dominion over the creatures was lost.  
Genesis 3 makes it clear that Adam will now toil in the creation,  
no longer is he the master of creation, but a wretched laborer.  
He does not command the earth, but when he seeks to bring forth crops,  
the earth will torment him with thorns and thistles.

But Psalm 8 *does* speak of man in the glorious language of Genesis 1-2.

“You have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings”

(literally Elohim, God/gods)

“And crowned him with glory and honor.

You have given him dominion over all the works of your hands;

You have put all things under his feet.”

The reason that Psalm 8 can speak in this way,  
is because Psalm 8 is speaking of the new creation.

In Exodus 4, God declares, “Israel is my son, my firstborn.”

When God called Israel out of Egypt, he caused the new creation to begin.

Just as he brought the earth out of water in the first creation,

so also he caused the Israelites to be brought through water in the Red Sea.

And just as he caused his Spirit/breath to be breathed into Adam—the original King,

so also he caused his Spirit/breath to come upon Saul and then David.

We saw in Psalm 2 how God has declared the Son of David to be God’s own son!

The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.” (2:7)

What you have in OT Israel is a picture of the Kingdom of God,

a picture of the new creation.

And so in Psalm 8, David rejoices in the picture.

He sees by faith that the kingdom of God is being restored.

He sees the son of man sitting on the throne in the midst of the Promised Land,

and sees the fulfillment of what God had promised to Adam.

“O Yahweh, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.

Out of the mouth of babes and infants, you have established strength.”

Israel is a puny, feeble nation—and yet because the God of heaven and earth dwells here,  
because he has put all things under the feet of the Son of David,

this will still the enemy and the avenger.

And so David reflects,

**C. What Is Man That You Are Mindful of Him? (v4)**

<sup>4</sup> *what is man that you are mindful of him,  
and the son of man that you care for him?*

“What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?”

Yes, this can be understood as the whole of Israel—the new humanity in David’s day—  
but especially it must be understood of the son of God—the Davidic king.

The Davidic king is the new Adam—the new son of God—the Messiah (recall 2:6-7).

God promised David that he would establish the throne of his son forever.

This promise cannot refer ONLY to Christ,

because God says, “when he commits iniquity,

I will discipline him with the rod of men,

with the stripes of the sons of men.” (2 Sam 7:14)

And we dare not say that Jesus ever sinned!

So all through Israel’s history,

they were to look to the Son of David as the second Adam,

the Son of God—the Anointed One.

And yet, Israel could not help but see the failures of his kings.

They could not but earnestly desire to see the day

when what they sang in Psalm 8 was as true in reality as it was in faith.

This is why the song of the angels in Luke 2 brings such joy to the shepherds!

Because when God cares for the Son of Man –

he cares for *all humanity!*

How do I know that God loves me?

Because Jesus came in our flesh.

He took on our flesh and blood in the womb of the Virgin Mary!

Because of that *you know* God’s love!

And he will not turn away *anyone* who comes to him in faith!

**D. Made a Little Lower than Gods – Crowned with Glory and Honor  
(v5)**

<sup>5</sup> *Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings<sup>[b]</sup>  
and crowned him with glory and honor.*

And so yes, for centuries they sang Psalm 8 – longing for the day  
when Psalm 8 was as true in reality as it was in faith.

And that day has now come.

Hebrews 2 tells us that Psalm 8 was not talking about Genesis 1-2.  
Hebrews 2 tells us that Psalm 8 was talking about the Davidic king.  
(Hebrews 2:5-8)

*For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. <sup>6</sup> It has been testified somewhere,*

*“What is man, that you are mindful of him,  
or the son of man, that you care for him?  
<sup>7</sup> You made him for a little while lower than the angels;  
you have crowned him with glory and honor, <sup>[a]</sup>  
<sup>8</sup> putting everything in subjection under his feet.”*

*Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.*

In Jesus Christ, what was spoken of in faith in Psalm 8 has begun to come about.

Hebrews admits that *“at present, we do not yet see everything subject to him—but we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.”*

He was higher than the angels—indeed,

Hebrews 1:1-3 tells us that the Son was the one “through whom God created the world,”  
This Jesus was made lower than the angels for a time.  
(Hebrews 2:10-18)

*<sup>10</sup> For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. <sup>11</sup> For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. <sup>[b]</sup> That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, <sup>[c]</sup> <sup>12</sup> saying,*

*“I will tell of your name to my brothers;  
in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”*

*<sup>13</sup> And again,*

*“I will put my trust in him.”*

*And again,*

*“Behold, I and the children God has given me.”*

*<sup>14</sup> Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup> and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. <sup>16</sup> For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. <sup>17</sup> Therefore he had to be made*

*like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup> For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

What is man, that you are mindful of him?  
What is the son of man, that you care for him?

What is man?

I'll tell you who man is.

Man is no longer Adam.

Man is no longer the rebel and the cursed one.

Man is now Jesus Christ.

Man is now the obedient and glorious one.

Jesus has been made perfect through suffering.

Jesus has been crowned with glory and honor as the Second—indeed, as the Last Adam,  
the one who restores humanity to the fellowship of God  
and the dominion over creation.

Hebrews explains that the incarnation of Christ was necessary for salvation.

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood,  
he himself likewise partook of the same things,  
that through death he might destroy the power of death, that is, the devil,  
and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”

The children of God were in bondage—like that of Egypt—only worse!  
Because this was no mere mortal who held sway over us.

The devil held us captive—for he had usurped the dominion of the earth.  
The only way for man to be restored to his rightful place,  
was for a man to destroy the one who had the power of death.  
But, as the Psalmist had pointed out centuries before,  
“What is man, that you are mindful of him?”

How could man—bound in slavery by the devil—  
overthrow his evil captor?

How could one who lived under the power of death, destroy death?

The offspring of Abraham—the Seed of the Woman—was bound by the fear of death.

Isaiah spoke of this predicament in the days of the kings:

“Yahweh looked, and it displeased him that there was no justice.  
He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede.”  
(Isaiah 59:15)

It is an interesting phrase: “he saw that there was no man.”

But weren’t there lots of men in Israel?

No.

There was no “man” in Israel.

There were lots of men and women held under the power of death,  
living in the fear of death.

And even some who hoped in the salvation that God would bring—  
even some good kings who sought to embody that hope.

But there was no “man”—no Adam who would intercede for his people.

There were pictures and shadows—but no man.

So Isaiah continued:

“Then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him.

He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head;

he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak....

And a redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgressions,  
declares the Lord.” (Isaiah 59:16-20)

Only God can save.

That is why it was only the eternal Son of God who could redeem us from our sins.

But only man could correct man’s fault.

The king must be one of your brethren.

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood,  
he himself likewise partook of the same things.”

Why?

Because there was no way for God to bring salvation,  
unless one who was true man “might through death,  
destroy the one who has the power of death.”

As the Nicene Creed puts it, “who, for us men, and for our salvation,  
came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit by the Virgin Mary,  
and was made man.”

How can it be that Jesus Christ is true God and true man?

It is beyond our comprehension—but unless it is true, we have no hope for salvation!

It took our fathers nearly 300 years of wrestling, debating, and fighting,  
to come up with this answer.

But they confessed at the Council of Chalcedon,  
that our Lord Jesus Christ is

“at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting  
also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and  
at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart  
from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his  
manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer; one

and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.

One person in two natures.

Let me say this very simply:

Persons act.

Natures exist.

People sometimes say that it was Jesus' human nature that wept.

That's impossible.

Natures don't weep.

Natures don't *do* anything.

It was Jesus—the person—who wept,

according to the properties of his human nature.

In the same way, Jesus did not will to do two different things.

There was never a day when his divine will wished to do one thing,  
and his human will wished to do another.

Some have tried to say that in the garden of Gethsemane,  
it was his human will that balked at going to the cross.

But that is absurd.

It was Jesus—the person—who pled with his Father to take the cup from him.

And Jesus—the person—denied himself, took up his cross,  
and obeyed the will of his Father.

From the moment of his conception,

the human nature of Christ was so united to the divine nature,  
that while he did indeed have two sets of characteristics,

two sets of properties—both human and divine,

nonetheless, he lived, and he died, as one person, with one purpose.

The unity of the person is so profound

that we may speak of the actions appropriate to the one nature,  
as the actions of the person—even described in the other nature.

So in Acts 20:28 Paul calls the elders to

“care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.”

It is proper to say that God died on the cross (according to the properties of his human nature).

This is why the Decree of Chalcedon refers to Mary as the God-bearer.

Mary bore God in her womb.

Not as though she gave birth to the entirety of the Godhead!

But she did bear the eternal Son of God in her womb,  
and was his mother, according to the flesh.

What is man?

Man is Jesus Christ—and therefore all who are in him.

To reject Jesus Christ is to reject humanity.

In Jesus Christ, humanity has found its meaning and purpose.

And so Peter declares in 2 Peter 2:3-4,

*“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.”*

In Jesus Christ, now you may partake of the divine nature,

not indeed to the same extent that Jesus does—he is, after all, one person.

You partake of the divine nature through being united with Christ.

All of the benefits and blessings that have come to humanity

through the incarnation of the Son of God, are yours in Christ.

#### **C'. Dominion over the Works of God's Hands (v6)**

<sup>6</sup> *You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;  
you have put all things under his feet,*

#### **B'. The Creatures of the Earth and the Seas (v7-8)**

<sup>7</sup> *all sheep and oxen,*

*and also the beasts of the field,*

<sup>8</sup> *the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,*

*whatever passes along the paths of the seas.*

#### **A'. The Majestic Name of Yahweh (v9)**

<sup>9</sup> *O LORD, our Lord,*

*how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

And this is why we baptize!