

• *The last in group 5-8*

• *A night-time psalm*

• *David is facing enemies*

• *Admiring God's majesty*

• *Three contrasts*

1. The all-powerful Creator uses weak and despised people

• *Even children and people as weak as children*

2. God's great power combined with minute care

• *God watches over us and sends grace to help when we need it*

In Psalm 8 (as in Psalms 3-7) David is oppressed by enemies ^{☞1}. It is not simply a psalm of praise; it is also a song written in a particular situation of hatred and animosity. Again he is writing a meditation in the night-time ^{☞2}. Psalm 8 is the closing psalm in a group that began in Psalm 3. The struggles of David against Absalom ^{☞3} led him to pray late at night ^{☞4} and early in the day ^{☞5} for God's help. At one point he was in great depression ^{☞6} but then rose to strength and triumph ^{☞7}. In Psalm 8 he is **still** out in the night-time, **still** with no place to rest except the countryside, **still** facing 'the enemy and the avenger'. The flow-of-thought in Psalms 3-8 suggests we have here a context for the last in the group.

It begins by admiring God's majesty in the world around us.

^{1a,b} *O Yahweh, our Sovereign One,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

God's name is his character. When we look at the earth we see God's amazing character. He brought it into being. He is its Creator. He is the one who rules it. He uses it to bless men and women. He also uses it to punish men and women. When we sin against God the very planet turns against us. This thought leads David on to make three powerful contrasts.

1. The all-powerful Creator chooses to use very weak and despised people

^{1c} *You have set your glory above the heavens
Out of the mouths of babes and infants,
²you have set your strength on a sure foundation,
because of your foes,
to silence the enemy and the person seeking revenge*

When we think of God's immense power and wisdom seen in the wonders of creation, it makes us marvel that he should be willing to use such weak people as you and me. Even children are able to serve God in their praises; we remember how Jesus mentioned in Psalm 8 'when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple' ^{☞1}. Although God is so great he likes to use 'babies and infants' — or people who have the weakness of children — to achieve his will. Although our strength is weak and wobbly, God stands firm in his character. His kingdom will not be defeated.

2. In God, great power is combined with minute care. In the light of creation David is amazed at God's care for men and women

³*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
⁴what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?*

One might think God is so great that he could not care much about such weak people as ourselves. But God thinks about us; he is 'mindful' of us, and he watches over us in order to care for our needs. The earth is a fallen place and men and women suffer in it. But when we have God as our Father, Jesus as our Saviour, the Holy Spirit as our guide, we shall make the discovery that amidst the fallenness of our world we have a God who cares for the entire human race. He is capable of setting a limit to our troubles, and of sending grace to us to help in times of need.

^{☞1} See 8:2

^{☞2} as 8:3 shows

^{☞3} see Psalm 3,
title

^{☞4} 3:5; 4:4, 8; 6:6

^{☞5} see Psalm 6:3

^{☞6} Psalm 6:1-7

^{☞7} Psalm 6:8-10

^{☞1} Matthew
21:14-16

3. Human-kind now compared with God's intention

3. A third contrast is what humankind is now, compared to God's intention for the human race. God has planned a destiny for them. The writer is thinking of God's plans when he says -

⁵ Yet you have made them for a little while lower than the angels, and crowned them with glory and honour.
⁶ You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet,
⁷ all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,
⁸ the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

• Lower than the angels

God made us only 'for a little while' lower than the angels. He always intended that eventually the human race should be above the angels ¹. In God's plan it was intended that men and women should get to be 'crowned with glory and honour' by their loyalty and obedience to God.

¹ see Hebrews 2:5

• God's plan – glory, honour, dominion and kingship

God's plan for the human race includes dominion and kingship. But we have to be kings over ourselves before we can be kings over planet earth. We have to get back into God's will, get back into relationship with God. The fall of the human race damaged man's hope of fulfilling his destiny.

(i) Not fulfilled in mankind
(ii) Fulfilled in Jesus

In the New Testament, Hebrews 2:8b-9 makes two points in this connection.

(i) We do not yet see this psalm fulfilled in men and women.
(ii) But we do see it fulfilled in Jesus. The point is that Jesus fulfills this psalm first, and then we fulfill it only as Jesus 'brings many sons to glory' ¹. It is becoming loyal to God through faith in Jesus that enables us to fulfill our destiny.

¹ Hebrews 2:10

• Fulfilled in us through Jesus

Finally our writer comes back to his initial point, and praises God for his greatness.

• God's greatness

⁹ Yahweh, our Sovereign One, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

• David stays calm by focusing on God

We must keep in mind that David was writing this psalm amidst discouragements and conflicts. This is the way to stay steady and calm when enemies and avengers confront us with their malice and their schemes. We stay calm because we have a God who cares for the human race and who will bring his people to reign and rule with him.

¹ Some translations follow the Greek in 8:2 (*praise instead of strength*).



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