

## God's Majesty

### Psalm 8

<sup>1</sup> O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. <sup>2</sup> Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.

<sup>3</sup> When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; <sup>4</sup> what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? <sup>5</sup> Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. <sup>6</sup> You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, <sup>7</sup> all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, <sup>8</sup> the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

<sup>9</sup> O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

In our scripture, David bursts forth in praise as he gazes upon the vast splendor of the heavens God created: "O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" David's adoration is inspired by his recognition of a fundamental contradiction: How can God, whose glory is set "above the heavens," whose fingers establish the moon and stars (v. 3) in their place, be "mindful of " humanity (v. 4)?

David's awe is not difficult to understand. Few fields of learning are more daunting than astronomy. The lens of a telescope awakens our soul to the sheer enormity of God's creation. Our galaxy alone is spread over a 100,000-light-year expanse and is estimated to be one among millions in the universe. As David wrote Psalm 8, his eyes saw only .001 percent of the 100 billion stars in our Milky Way. Indeed, our understanding the heavens confronts us with two important thoughts: the incomprehensible greatness of our Creator and our own very small and inconsequential stature in the universe.

If contemplating the heavens reveals to us the majesty of God and our smallness, what then is the answer to David's bold question: "What is humanity?" Scripture reveals that God has dignified us, man and woman, by placing the divine image in us, making us "a little lower than God" and thus crowning us "with glory and honor" (v. 5). This royal coronation is manifested in the way God has "given *us* dominion" over all of God's works

and has "put all things under *our* feet": "sheep," "oxen," "beasts of the field," "birds of the air," "fish of the sea" (vv. 6-8).

David's meditations on Genesis 1, the Biblical story of Creation, however, raise the question: What does it reveal about our God that God would choose to place God's image in the small, apparently inconsequential humanity, in us? Stated another way, why—when so much else God created in the universe clearly displays God's power, glory, wisdom, and greatness—would God confer the divine image upon humanity?

The writer of Hebrews begins to unfold the answers to these questions in Hebrews 2:5-9. After quoting most of Psalm 8, he points to its fulfillment in Christ: "We do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone."

According to Hebrews, the psalmist's question, "What is humanity?" may be answered most fully in the person of Christ: Christ alone circumscribes true humanity. Christ alone reveals God to us in human flesh. Christ alone is the archetype from which humanity is patterned.

We are invited by the author of Hebrews to read David's thoughts on Genesis through the life of Jesus Christ. When we do this, we see that God's subordination of the beasts of the fields, birds of the air, and fish of the sea to humans at creation pictures a much bigger drama played out in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Just as God crowned the first man and woman "with glory and honor" and "put all things under their feet," the writer of Hebrews makes clear, this divine act that David ponders is ultimately patterned after Christ, on whom ultimate glory and honor is bestowed because of his suffering and death. Thus, according to Hebrews 1:3, Christ *is* "the reflection of God's glory" and bears "the exact imprint of God's very being." Therefore it is *Christ's image* that we were actually created to bear.

Among the most important things Christ proclaims in the Gospels is his relationship to the Father. In John 14:8-11 he responded to Philip's request to "show us the Father" with this amazing declaration: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. ... Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?" Jesus explained that the works he does *are* the works of the Father who dwells in him. In other words, *the image* that the Son bears is that of the Father; thus the Son's work is intended to *reveal* the person of the Father. Furthermore, Jesus explains in Matthew 11:27 that "no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." In Matthew 11:29 Jesus instructed his hearers, "Learn from me; for *I am gentle and humble in heart.*" One of the things the divine act of creating humanity after the image of God reveals is that we have a humble God. The divine revelation of the Father to us through the incarnation, life, and death of the Son is one great demonstration of the humility of our Majestic God. **Bonnie L. Pattison**

We are like David and ask: Why does God continually choose to love us, knowing who we are, knowing the smallness of our minds? Our lives are driven by the quest to find solutions. We think that if we can make a little more money, our problems will disappear. If we can get our children in the right schools, they will be contented fifty years later. If we can only do *this*, then *that* will be fixed; but the amount of this and that keeps growing. There are always answers we have not considered and questions we have forgotten to ask. The life built around answers is a life propelled by anxiety, but a life focused on God's majesty is one of peace. Either we live in disappointment when yesterday's answers are rendered obsolete, or we live on guard, protecting today's answers from tomorrow's destruction. The psalmist calls us to live not by anxiety but by the wonder of God's majesty. What if, instead of trying to solidify our formulaic descriptions of God, we sang with the angels, "Holy, holy, holy!"? Would we have less anxiety? Would our families, churches and nations fight less and praise more? Who knows? **James Mctyre**

Gazing up at the heavens, David stood in amazement before a Majestic God who both could hang magnificent orbs in the sky and also be mindful of humanity. A millennium later, the second person of the Trinity, Jesus, entered David's lineage through the power of the Holy Spirit to reconcile humanity to our heavenly Father. Hours before his death Jesus explained the significance of this to his disciples by speaking about the work of the Spirit: "He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:14-15). As Christ revealed the Father, it is now the Holy Spirit's task to take what Christ humbly revealed and manifest it through us. Thus it is by the power of the Spirit that we cry with the humility of a child, as Jesus did to our Majestic God, "Abba! Father!" **Bonnie L. Pattison**

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