

PSALM 8

THE DOMINION OF MAN FOR THE GLORY GOD

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INTRODUCTION: At the time of creation, it was God's revealed and stated intention that man (Heb., Adam) be His "image"-bearer and representative, created for the purpose of exercising "dominion" overall all the "earth" (cf. Gen1:26-28). In his fall into sin in the Garden of Eden (Gen3:6), man forfeited his right to rule on God's behalf, and that right was forcibly usurped by Satan (cf. Matt4:8-10; Luk4:5-8).

The Apostle Paul calls the Lord Jesus Christ "the second man" and "the last Adam" (1Cor15:45,47), since in the incarnation God the Son became a man and came to earth to complete what Adam had failed to accomplish¹. A comprehensive understanding of this Christological element in the plan of God necessitates a premillennial understanding of future history, since there must be a time on earth when the Lord Jesus Christ exercises dominion over all the earth (as a Man²); this will occur during the 1,000-year reign of Christ in the Millennial Kingdom (cf. Rev20:1-6). Psalm 8 is a messianic psalm that anticipates the future rule of the Lord Jesus Christ over all the earth (Cp., Ps2:6-9).

- [1] The psalmist addresses God using both His personal name (i.e., "LORD", which by convention translates the Hebrew tetragrammaton; JEHOVAH) and a fitting title (i.e., "our Lord" translates the Hebrew Adonai). A Hebraism is employed, in which the "name" of God is used to represent His entire person (Cp., Jn1:12; Act4:12). God's "name" is "excellent ... in all the earth", which is the domain over which man is to exercise dominion (Gen1:26). In contrast, God has set His "glory above the heavens".
- [2] This verse is quoted in part in Matthew 21:16 and applied to the Jews who rejoiced at Jesus' work of expelling the money-changers from the Temple at His first coming. The idea is that a day will come when Christ will be universally praised and exalted by "babes" (i.e., common men and women), in contradistinction to the opposition of His "enemies" (which in Matthew 21:16 were the educated religious elites of Jewish society; e.g., "chief priests and scribes"; Matt21:15; Cp., 1Cor1:26-29). The ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy awaits the second coming of Christ.
- [3] The psalmist "consider[s]" the seemingly most glorious aspects of God's creation; namely: "the heavens", "the moon", and "the stars". The creation, though called into existence and formed by God's spoken word (cf. Gen1:3; Ps33:6), is here termed "the work of [God's] fingers" (Cp., Exod8:19; 31:18; Jn8:6), perhaps emphasizing its extraordinary craftsmanship. Note that the heavenly objects were "ordained" to "be for signs and for seasons,

¹ This has numerous far-reaching implications, one of which is that during His earthly ministry Christ had to voluntarily forsake the exercise of His divine attributes and prerogatives in order to live as a mere Man (cf. Philip2:5-8).

² Conservative and fundamentalist churches are often so focused on asserting the full Deity of Christ that the reality and necessity of His genuine humanity is neglected (cf. 1Jn4:1-3; 2Jn7).

and for days, and years ... to give light upon the earth" (Gen1:14-15); that is, all the heavenly objects were created to serve a purpose "upon the earth" (i.e., the centerpiece and focus of God's glorious work is on earth, not in the heavens; Cp., Heb1:13-14).

- [4] In the context of the glories of God visible in the heavens, "What is man?" This was the very contemplation of Job (cf. Job7:17-18), which calls attention to the fact that the prioritization of the role of "man", the centerpiece of God's work of creation and goal for history, is often minimized rather than rightly recognized by men themselves. Unbelievers see "man" as just one among many species of animals, often regarding him as of lesser or even least value. But even the common Christian view is skewed by focusing on man in his fallen condition rather than in his redeemed and glorified future state. While it is true that God had to "humble" Himself to become a Man (cf. Philip2:7-8), that is a distinction between the Creator and the creature (cf. Isa55:8-9), not a distinction among creatures.

One way of viewing the priority of the role of "man" is to note that God "visitest him" alone. That is, in the incarnation God became a Man to redeem men, and he did that for no other creature (cf. Heb2:14-16). Here, "the son of man" is introduced as a messianic title (cf. Dan7:14) that emphasizes His humanity³. This is the title that Christ most used of Himself in the Gospels, which comports with the view that Christ's work at His first coming was associated with His role as "the second man" and "the last Adam".

- [5] In the incarnation, Christ was "made a little lower than the angels" as a mortal Man. This verse is quoted in Hebrews 2:9, where the purpose for this is asserted to be "for the suffering of death ... that he ... should taste death for every man". But this is a viewpoint from after the fall. After the fall, men are lower than angels relative to the fact that men die and angels do not, but it was not God's original intent that men should die; death was an enemy of man introduced at the fall (cf. Gen3:19).
- [6] In His resurrection and ascension (as a glorified Man), Christ was exalted above the angels (cf. Eph1:20-22), as the Body of Christ will be as well (cf. 1Cor6:2-3; 15:51-57). When Christ returns to establish His millennial kingdom, then He will exercise "dominion over the works of [God's] hands" (thus fulfilling the original role God created for man; cf. Gen1:26,28). The fact that God will "put all things under his feet" is an assertion that Christ will have ultimate and eternal victory over all His enemies (Cp., Ps2:8-9; 110:1-2; Philip2:9-11; Rev19:15-16).
- [8] In vv7-8, land, air, and sea creatures are enumerated (in an illustrative, not exhaustive, way) to demonstrate that in the millennial kingdom Christ, as "the last Adam" will finally rule

³ The common Biblical expression, "the son of ..." (when used in a figurative sense) is a Hebraism. Since a son has the same nature as his father, this idiom is a designation of nature. Thus, "the son of man" has the nature of a man, whereas "the Son of God" has a divine nature (Cp., Jn10:30-36).

over the earth and all its creatures, as was God's original and intended role for Adam; note that the enumeration here is asymmetrical to that given in Genesis 1:26 (i.e., sea, air, and land creatures).

- [9] The psalm closes exactly as it opens in praise of the "name" (i.e., Person) of JEHOVAH "our Lord" with a particular focus on His purpose and ultimate triumph "in all the earth".