

THE DIVINE SON MADE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS

Psalm 8

INTRODUCTION

One Sunday morning when my two oldest sons, Jared and Justin were about 11 and 9 years old they were complaining about having to go to church because “it was so boring.” At the time we were living in Illinois and being surrounded by Chicago Bulls fans, they had become extreme fans of the leader of the Bulls, Michael Jordan. So I said to them, “Boys, I didn’t want to spoil the surprise for you but this morning Michael Jordan is going to be in church.” Their eyes grew wide and they excitedly asked, “Really? Michael Jordan is coming to our church?” I said, “No he is not coming but the one who made him and gave him every ability he possesses will be there.” They said, “Aww---Dad.” I said to them, “Sons, you need to think. Who is more impressive, Michael Jordan or the one who made him?”

My two sons revealed that morning the heart of sin: we are impressed with people and the pleasures of this creation but we are not impressed with the one who made it and sustains it all. The fact that we all are infected with sin is evidenced by the fact that we are impressed with the majesty of created things but we are not impressed with the majesty of the Creator who made all things. It is for this reason that Jesus came into the world. He came to take upon himself God’s anger against us for our preferring of creation to our Creator and so obtain forgiveness for our perversity. He came to gain for us the mighty work of the HS who gives us hearts that now desire to love God more than creation. The Christian church for thousands of years has used the Easter season each year to fix our attention upon this great and glorious Son of Man so that we might be impressed anew by his majesty. During this season we pay particular attention to the ultimate reason for which Jesus came to this earth, to rescue God belittling sinners from the just wrath of God so that by saving us the glory of God in his grace and in his justice might be fully displayed in the universe in and through our joy in him.

So on this Palm Sunday we are going to examine Psalm 8 in order that we might both see the glory of Christ and grow to love and trust him more. You might be wondering how looking at this short poem will enable us to see the wonder of Jesus when it was written almost 1000 years prior to his coming into the world. It is clearly a hymn of praise to the Creator God based upon the account of God’s creating the universe and human kind in Genesis 1 & 2. This God whose personal name is Yahweh is creator and Lord of all and he made man in his own image and put all of creation under the dominion of human kind. Clearly David, the author of the psalm is marveling at the glory of God to be seen in creation and the grace of God revealed in his taking notice of human kind and placing all things under our feet. However, there is more to this psalm than meets the eye. Portions of this psalm are directly quoted four times and alluded to several other times in the NT in relation to Jesus the Messiah. Therefore, the majesty that is set forth in this psalm is the majesty of the eternal Son of God who became the man Jesus. While David did not understand fully all that he wrote, yet he knew, as we are told in 1 Peter 1:10-12, that he was writing about the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow his suffering. So we are going to see in this psalm three ways that Jesus is the most majestic of persons so that we will rest and rejoice in him more than anyone or anything else.

MAIN POINT

Jesus is the most majestic of persons because...

I. He is Yahweh, creator and Lord of all things (vv.1-3)

As we heard read for us in Matthew 21, Jesus quotes the first line of the second verse of this psalm on the day he entered Jerusalem five days before his crucifixion. On that first Palm Sunday he entered to the acclaim and praise of the crowds who were coming to Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish Passover. The people placed palm

branches and their garments on the road to Jerusalem as Jesus rode a donkey's colt up to the temple. These were the actions a people would take to welcome their king home from victorious battle. These crowds of Jewish people were welcoming Jesus into the capital of the Jewish nation, expressing their hope that Jesus, as David's great son, would establish the kingdom of God upon the earth and destroy the Romans and all their enemies. Upon arriving at the temple with the singing and praising crowds around him he entered it and drove out all those who were making money in the temple. After clearing the temple the lame and the blind came to be healed by him in the temple. However, we are told, when the Jewish leaders saw him healing and heard the children in the temple continuing to sing, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant.

How can you watch a man heal the blind and the lame and be indignant, be angry with him? They were indignant with him because he cleared out the money making operation which they had established for their own gain. They were indignant because they were jealous of his popularity. They were indignant most of all because he was being acclaimed as the Messiah and yet he did not respect them and their authority. They believed they were the most faithful people in Israel to God and thus Jesus had to be a deceiver, an imposter since he did not complement them on their righteousness but denounced them for their hypocrisy and refused to live by their religious rules. So they challenge Jesus by saying to him, "Do you hear what these children are saying about you?" As if to say, "How can you permit people to acclaim you as the Messiah when you know very well you are merely a human being?" Jesus said to them, "Yes, have you never read, 'Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise?'" That is the first line of v. 2 in Psalm 8. What is shocking about that quote is that in Psalm 8 it is Yahweh, the creator who is being praised by the children but it is this man Jesus who is being praised by the children in Matthew 21. Jesus clearly identifies himself as the majestic God to whom Psalm 8 is addressed.

So what do we find out about Jesus in these first three verses of Psalm 8? First, he is Yahweh, that is, he is the covenant making God of the nation of Israel. Yahweh is the personal name of God which he revealed to Moses at the burning bush. Jesus is the eternal "I AM." (We know this because the word "LORD" translates the personal name of God, Yahweh.) He is the God who saved Noah and his family but destroyed the rest of the world in a flood. He is the God who called Abram and promised to make him into a great nation. He is the one who spoke to Moses and destroyed Egypt and led Israel through the Red Sea while destroying the Egyptian army. In short, Jesus is the God who speaks and acts in the OT. Second, he is the Lord of all things. He is the owner and master of everything and every person. He alone rules and determines the course of all events in the universe and in every human life. Third, it is he who has determined that children will praise his glory in such a way that all of his enemies are put to shame. While it was literally children who were praising Jesus in the temple which provoked his quoting of this psalm to the Jewish leadership, yet, the children from whom the Son of God has ordained praise are all those human beings who become as little children in their relationship to him. This is the most common metaphor Jesus used to refer to his disciples. Listen to how Jesus says much the same thing as this verse in Matthew 11:25, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children..." Here is the same fact we saw last week when the donkey rebuked the proud prophet Balaam. God uses the weak things of the world to shame the wise. His strength is made perfect in weakness. He does not save strong people but weak people, children as it were. Children have no power or authority and they are entirely dependent upon adults for everything. You cannot be a Christian without knowing and acknowledging that you have no strength, no ability to obtain the favor of God but are entirely dependent upon him to be gracious to you. You, as a child, cannot save yourself but need God to save you through Christ. This is what it means to be a child and it is from the lips of such people that God has established praise which will, in the last day, put to shame all his proud enemies, who refused to become as little children in relation to him.

Finally, you will notice in v. 3 that the heavens belong to Jesus, that his fingers made this vast universe, the moon, the stars, all of the universe Jesus himself set in place. The apostle John says of him, "All things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made." The apostle Paul writes about him in Colossians 1:15-17, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or

authorities- all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” This Jesus who was born of a virgin, who submitted to his parents and lived in obscurity in a rural village for thirty years, who was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist, who went about healing and raising people from the dead, who was betrayed and unjustly tried and tortured and hung on a cross and then was raised from the dead on the third day is no less than the creator and sustainer of all things. He is the promise making, promise keeping God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. O that we would be little children who marvel at so great a Savior. As little children excitedly describe the smallest wonders they observe, might we excitedly declare the strength of our God and Savior Jesus who is the Creator and Sustainer of all things.

Jesus is the most majestic of persons because...

- *He is Yahweh, creator and Lord of all things*
- *And because...*

II. He was made lower than the angels (vv.4-5a)

Quite clearly when the NT writers looked at this psalm they saw the glory of Jesus both as the Creator God and as the divine Son of God who took on human flesh and so became the “Son of Man”, the Son of David, the Messiah. We heard Hebrews 2:5-9 read for us in which the author clearly identifies the reference here to the “son of man” made lower than the angels as Jesus. But the question I have is this: Did King David, who wrote this psalm have any idea he was writing about his greater Son, the Messiah and Savior of the world? There are several times in the OT where God gives a prophet information about the future in a dream or vision and commands that he write it down but the prophet does not understand a thing about what he wrote down. Probably the most famous is Daniel, who at the end of his book tells us that he asked one of his angelic visitors to explain to him the meaning of what he had seen and wrote down and the angel said to him, “Go your way Daniel for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end.” In other words, Daniel wrote down things God told him and yet he had no understanding of them and God refused to explain to him what he wrote. However, usually the prophets had some understanding of what they were writing about. They knew, as I mentioned before from 1 Peter that they were writing about the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow.

David knew because God told him so as recorded in 2 Samuel 7 that one of his sons, a human being who was descended from him was going to be given his authority, his throne forever. In other words, one of his sons was going to be the king over God’s eternal kingdom. In addition, God tells David as recorded in 2 Samuel 7 that this royal but human son of David was going to also be called, the son of God. So in David’s psalms this divine, human son shows up on several occasions. First in Psalm 2 David himself records God’s determination to make one of David’s sons a ruler over all the nations. This divine yet human son will be the judge of all mankind. The only humans who will not be destroyed by him are those who “kiss the Son.” In other words, in Psalm 2 the people who survive the great warrior king who is the Son of God are those who submit to him, trust him and love him. Then in the most quoted OT chapter in the NT, Psalm 110, David explicitly identifies his son as his lord and thus God. David says in Psalm 110: 1, “The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” Again, LORD in all upper case letters in our English Bibles has the personal name of God, Yahweh, behind it. Thus, as Jesus and the apostles point out David says that Yahweh tells David’s divine Lord to sit at his right hand. David’s Lord is his son. The deity of Jesus and the Triune nature of the one God is not first revealed in the NT but comes from the OT.

If you will notice, Psalm 8 begins with the same two words, God’s personal name “Yahweh” and his title “Lord”. David says, “O Yahweh, our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth...” Thus when he writes in v. 5, you made him (the son of man) a little lower than the angels he is saying that Yahweh, made the Lord, the Divine Son, a little lower than the angels. Here is a prediction of the incarnation, the humanity of the Son of God. In v. 4 David is expressing wonderment not just that the God who made such a glorious universe would make human beings in his image and place creation under humanity’s control but that his care for humanity is so great that he sent the Son to take on human flesh. David is astonished that this great Creator would care so

deeply about us that he would descend from his glory to become lower than the angels. The one who made the angels and whose command the angels obey became a human being at the command of Yahweh. God sent his only Son into the world as a human being because of his love and concern for human beings. This is cause for astonishment and wonder and praise.

David says in this psalm in seed form what Paul expresses more fully in Philippians 2:5-7 that Jesus "...who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." It was enormous, voluntary suffering on the part of the Son of God to take on human flesh and to enter into all the miseries of human existence. He who was worshipped by angels from eternity became a little lower than the angels. But not only that, he also took on human flesh so that he could die on a cross. He did not take on human flesh so that he could become a human king but so that he could be our servant and die in our place.

There is another doctrine stated in seed form in these two verses in Psalm 8. There is a clear identification between the divine Son who became lower than the angels and the first man, Adam. The first man made lower than the angels failed to obey God and thus brought God's curse upon all of his descendants. That is the point to be seen in the psalm. Yes, in Genesis 1 & 2 the created order was in submission to Adam but after Adam sinned, the creation rebelled. Thus, it is not true that humans have dominion over all things. Thus the psalm must be about another "Adam" who was made lower than the angels. As Paul describes in Romans 5, it was through the disobedience of the one man that death came to all men. It was through the transgression of the one man that condemnation came to all men. Death reigns over humanity because of that one man's sin. However, the second Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ, did not fail to obey God. He performed perfect righteousness. Thus through his obedience many will be declared righteous. All those who receive the free gift of right standing with God that is given through the obedience of Jesus will reign in life with him. Thus, Jesus, the second Adam, the true son of man has obtained by his obedient life and willing death salvation for all who trust in him.

There is no other person in the universe like our Lord Jesus. I want you to think about the most impressive human being you know; your favorite athlete or politician or actor or musician or Christian celebrity. Think about that person you get so excited about, who you would love to meet personally and ask yourself, did he or she give up any of his or her wealth or fame for you? Did he or she die for you? My friends, how is it that we are so excited about human celebrities and find Jesus who willingly became lower than angels so he could obey God for us and die for us to be boring and unimpressive? How is it that he is not the center of all our attention and confidence and affection and desire and love?

Jesus is the most majestic of persons because...

- *He is Yahweh, creator and Lord of all things*
- *He was made lower than the angels*
- *And because...*

III. He will return to put all things under his feet (vv.5b-9)

The exaltation and lordship of the son of man that is the subject of this last part of the psalm is the main thing that is quoted and alluded to in the NT from this psalm. There is first the exaltation of the son of man. He is crowned with glory and honor. He is given dominion over all the works of God's hands. All things are placed under his feet right now. Right now, because Jesus suffered as the "lower than angels" son of man, he is seated at God's right hand, having all authority on heaven and earth given to him. This is what Paul says in Ephesians 1:20-22, "...he (God the Father) raised him (God the son) from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church..." There is nothing and no one who is able to do anything apart from his decree and

order. There are no rebellious powers which can resist his will or thwart his plans. He is exercising his sovereign power on behalf of his church, his people. Satan does not have free reign upon this earth. Evil is not winning. Humans are not in control. Our crucified savior is right now exercising his lordship over this earth for our sake. Nothing comes to us except by his will and direction. So do not fear. You might lose all your money and your health and your loved ones and you will one day lose your life but you cannot be harmed because Jesus has been crowned with all glory and honor and all things are under his feet for our sake.

However, the places in the NT where the fact of God's placing all things under the feet of Jesus is most often referred to is in reference to the final return of Jesus. In that great chapter demonstrating the fact of the resurrection of Jesus, 1 Corinthians 15, Paul shows the inevitable future that must flow out of the fact that Christ was raised bodily from the dead. The greatest fruit of his resurrection is to be found in vv. 24-26, "Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For 'God has put all things in subjection under his feet.'"

What a day is coming upon this world when our risen and exalted Lord Jesus breaks into this world for the second time to make visible upon this earth his now invisible dominion over all things. At that time all of his enemies will be destroyed including that greatest of all enemies, death. All who refused to bow to him in this life will be forced to bow the knee to him on that great Day of Judgment and then they will be cast with the devil and all his angels into that great lake of fire where they will be tormented forever and ever. Ah but at that time, dear Christian, he will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body. He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. He will welcome us into his glorious kingdom where his Father will display his mercy and love to us forever. In that day we will, in and through and with our Lord Jesus, exercise that dominion over God's creation that we were intended to exercise. The curse will be gone. We will return to the garden and live in unbroken fellowship with God forever. We will not be able to sin again because we will not want to sin by the mighty sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. All this will be ours because our great savior was made a little lower than the angels so that he might be crowned with glory and honor and given dominion over all of creation, having all things placed under his feet.

We live in the midst of hope destroying circumstances. All around us the world despairs of the future. Government is going bankrupt, schools are failing, climate change is coming, the economy totters on the brink of depression, jobs are scarce, terrorists act with impunity, the Middle East is in chaos, China is taking over... and on and on it goes. Friends, we have no reason to despair. We can be full of joyful anticipation of our glorious future because our Lord Jesus, made for a little while lower than the angels will one day return and put all his enemies under his feet and bring us to live with him in his Father's kingdom of love forever.

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- *He was made lower than the angels*
- *He will return to put all things under his feet*

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