

Psalm 8
God's Revelation in Creation

Introduction

The Psalms have been described as “The most loved and used portion of the Old Testament” and – for many- of the whole Bible. Attractive because of their beauty, and because they give us means, in perfect words, of expressing inmost feelings – worship, thanks, sorrow for sin, fears, puzzles over life's mysteries, help and guidance, response to God's word and to his revelation in nature. Perfect hymn and prayer book. Provide us with strength, hope, comfort, also challenge and rebuke us.

Sung by Jews in Temple and at great feasts. Well loved in days of early Christian church, hence the many quotations in New Testament. Sung in early Christian centuries everywhere, eg. Athanasius, Jerome and Augustine, who stressed their value. Martin Luther said “In the Psalms we look into the heart of all the saints”.

Regularly sung in Anglican worship. Some monasteries get through all 150 every month. In parts of Scotland, Psalms alone are sung because, unlike “man-made hymns” they are inspired words, pure worship. The very same argument was raised when hymns were introduced into Baptist churches 300 years ago, leading to splits. Easily neglected in free church worship where people can pick and choose easily.

Psalm 8 is a great hymn of praise to God for his revelation in creation with all its glory and wonder. It is dealing with general revelation. General revelation is made to all people everywhere, in creation, conscience, and history, as opposed to special revelation, which refers to Jesus Christ and Scripture.

Psalm 8 composed by David on plains of Bethlehem (?), probably at night because it refers to moon and stars. Probably chanted in the Temple antiphonally, like the alternative responsive singing in a Cathedral. Quoted three times in the New Testament. Matthew recalls Jesus quoting from it when the High Priest, priests and scribes were indignant at children crying “Hosanna Son of David” (Matthew 21:16). Also **He has put everything under his feet** is quoted in 1 Cor. 15:27, and Hebrews 2:6-9 applies part of the Psalm to Christ.

Praise of God in Nature

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth (v1,9). First and last verses are the same. These verses enclose the Psalm as a jewel is set forth in its setting. He lifts up his eyes and sees glories of God in natural world all around. Whole creation is full of his glory and radiant with his power. Wherever you look, sky above, field, mountain or forest, or depths of oceans with all their varied creatures, see beauty, wisdom, power and goodness of God revealed. Whole universe leans on eternal arm. Animal world, flowers, trees and mighty oceans cry “God made us all, and God is good”.

God's hand is seen in 1000 wonders. There is no place where he is not. He is everywhere and always at work. Marvellous heavens cannot contain his glory; it is set above the heavens. Heavens on starry night display God's handiwork in special remarkable way. NB. Moon and stars were especially conspicuous in clear eastern sky. They give an insight into the vastness, variety, and mystery of God's creative work. Everywhere nature sings God the Creator's praise, and speaks of his wonders.

Among worshippers among mankind are babes and sucklings, as Jesus reminded priests and scribes who denounced them. From children's speech, God builds a tower or bulwark, like some border castle to bridle and silence enemy. Feeble instruments can become strong enough to silence evil speakers. How often the simple piety and faith of children are a sterling rebuke to unbelief and cynicism of adults, reminding them of a God they have long forgotten. Church history offers illustrations. Foxes Book of Martyrs records the burning of a Mr Lawrence at Colchester in the reign of Mary Tudor because of his protestant faith. Children around the fire were heard to say "Lord, strengthen thy servant and keep thy promise". George Wishart, Scottish martyr burnt at St Andrews, his enemies said he was a devil. Child spoke up "A devil cannot speak such words as yonder man speaketh". Whitfield, preaching in Moorfields, little children sat round him. Often pelted with eggs and dirt, but he never gave way. He said that every time he was struck, the children turned up weeping little eyes and "seemed to wish they could receive the blows for me".

I recently received a letter from a Strict Baptist Church in London asking for help in getting a Pastor. The letter went on: "Majority of neighbours are Muslims and Hindus. We wish to witness to them effectively.... There are a large number of children in the congregation, most of whom attend Sunday School before the morning worship. We are committed to the children being present for the preaching. A good number of the children take their own notes on the sermons".

By way of glaring contrast – the insignificance of Man

When the Psalmist considers wonders of heavens and vast universe, he is left with one inexplicable mystery. **What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man** (i.e. really "man" again, not the Lord's title Son of Man which was a Messianic title) **that you care for him?** (v4). His breath is taken away, left speechless. How can God have any interest in or care for the merest speck, which lasts for briefest moment on face of vast boundless universe? Far greater knowledge of astronomy and science would lead to greater appreciation of natural world and therefore the power and wisdom of the Creator. Consider the vastness of the universe, its great age, the movement of the stars, cycle of the seasons, ebb and flow of tides, marvels of human body, exquisite beauty of tiny flower. Unbelievable. And we are asked to believe it is all the product of accident and pure chance.

*"Something lives in every hue
Christless eyes have never seen"*

Our earth is only one tenth the size of Jupiter. The sun is 93 million miles from earth; its diameter is 865,000 miles (Earth's diameter is a mere 7000 miles). The Pole star is 400 light years away. The light we see shining from the Pole star left that star just about when Shakespeare was writing his plays, and travelling 186,000 miles per

second ever since. 186,000 X 60 (for a minute) X 60 (for an hour) X 24 (for one day) X 365 (for one year) X 400 years. Hence Pole star is that number of miles from earth. Our galaxy contains about one million million stars. More than 100 billion galaxies in known universe, each containing 100 billion stars or more i.e. 10,000 billion billion stars in known universe.

Then asked to believe God knows in detail about one tiny portion of this vast universe. It contains 6 billion people. No wonder we are told **the nations are like a drop in a bucket** (Isaiah 40:15). He individually knows and is interested in one of those 6 billion people – you and me. Knows, loves, cares for, and hears prayers. And we know more than the Psalmist. Second person of the eternal Godhead, about 4BC, took human nature in womb of virgin and was “made sin”, knowing level of suffering beyond belief because it was not just physical but spiritual. All this to ransom specks on earth’s surface, who were rebels and utterly unholy, all because he loves them. The Psalmist is overwhelmed – how much more should we be. How this puts us in our place. How we need to see ourselves in true perspective. Our understanding is so twisted and warped and distorted. Who on earth are we? Difference from God in character and ability is impossible to describe in words.

Yet what importance and dignity he has conferred on us. Made man crown and apex of creation. Man was made in God’s image with will, reason, and consciousness, able to know and love and serve the Creator. Just **a little lower than the heavenly beings** (v5). “Heavenly beings” NIV, or “angels” AV, or “God” RSV. The Hebrew used can have generic sense of supernatural beings. Greek equivalent is αγγελους. **Crowned him with glory and honour** (v5). Given dominion and rule. Viceroy of God over other creatures. **You put everything under his feet** (v6), beasts of field, fowl of air, fish of sea – man is made the king of all creation.

Therefore we are responsible to use natural world and treat creation with respect, care, and kindness. In quoting this verse in Hebrews 2:6f, the writer points out that man does not have complete dominion over earth because frustrated by sin. But Jesus was perfect man, died to make us the men God intended us to be. He is **now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death** (Heb. 2:9). One day, in and through him, redeemed man will exercise full dominion over all created things, including angels.

Conclusion

Practical consequences. Need to sit down and just think about God. So caught up with petty little selves and so much trivia. Consider the created universe, the wonders of the natural world. God is everywhere, knows all, all-powerful, utterly holy and pure, knows, loves and cares.

Then consider the unbelievable condescension and grace to totally insignificant rebels. **He did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all** (Romans 8:32). Let these truths sink in. They will take our breath away. What can we do but worship, bow down, and submit? And to think he is our God! Belongs to us, and we to him. What love! What condescension! How grateful we should be.

Then these facts demonstrate enormity of man's sin. The great and glorious Creator, ignored and denied by insignificant, frail, finite beings. His name is blasphemed, his word unopened, the Saviour spurned. **The sinful mind is hostile to God** (Romans 8:7). People only turn to him in panic, then simply ignore him and carry on with lives without him. He is just there to be used and then forgotten. Then people insist they are not sinners, not much wrong with them.

Fact of God should dominate whole of believer's life. Need to get things into perspective. Should be greatest fact in our lives. Getting to know him should be the most important thing in life. Only thing that matters in life is doing his will and living to please him. Then promoting his honour and glory. Anything less is a waste of a life.

Need to prepare hearts as we gather at church. Think deeply about who God is, what he has done, whether we are right with him. Longing for him to speak to us. In so many churches it is like a beer garden right up to the start of the service. Laughing and joking about everything under the sun till two seconds before the first hymn announced. How can the unprepared heart sing the first hymn with meaning, and call on soul to give praise to king of heaven, if hearts and minds are miles away. The congregation must learn to prepare, sit quietly, think about God, about entering the courts of the king of the universe, entering the king's presence, seeking God, concerned to be in touch with him. Let us examine our hearts.