

(How to Understand the KJV Bible) 09 Psalm 8

by Keith Simons

Psalm 8 celebrates God's greatness and power, while also highlighting humanity's place in the world and the role of King Messiah in restoring right relationships.

Duration: 22:18

Scripture: Genesis 1:26-28, Psalm 8, Matthew 21:16, John 1:3, Hebrews 2:6-8

Topics: "KJV Bible", "God's Sovereignty", "Humanity's Dignity"

Description

Keith Simons teaches on Psalm 8, emphasizing its prophetic nature and the significance of its title, which connects it to the ancient Hebrew tradition. He explains how the psalm praises God's excellence and reflects on humanity's place in creation, highlighting the paradox of God's care for mankind despite their insignificance. Simons elaborates on the imagery of the wine press and the dominion given to humanity, ultimately pointing to the role of the Messiah in restoring order and relationships in the world. The psalm concludes with a reaffirmation of God's greatness and the hope of a future where all creation honors Him under the reign of the Messiah.

Transcript

Hello, my name is Keith Symons. I'm a Bible teacher from England and welcome to the next in our series of talks on how to understand the King James Version of the Bible. Today we're looking at another of the great Psalms of prophecy in the Bible.

This time it's Psalm 8. So as usual we'll be looking through the Psalm verse by verse and phrase by phrase and word by word to understand what the Bible is teaching us. Psalm 8 begins with the title and people ask sometimes whether if they're reading the Bible in church, whether they should read the titles or not. And the answer to that question is that Bibles, even King James Bibles, often have a modern title to aid the reader to find a given passage or to understand a given passage.

Often those titles are not really very helpful, they shouldn't be read. But in the Psalms there are titles which have come to us from the most ancient of the Hebrew manuscripts and from those ancient copies of the Bible they've always been passed along with the Psalms and in a Hebrew Bible they're actually shown as verse one of the Psalm and the subsequent verses come a verse number later than appears in our Bibles in English. And those titles should be read because they are part of the original Psalm or if perhaps they're not part of the original Psalm, people have read them with the original Psalm for a very very long time.

There is such a title on Psalm 8 and it helps us with the meaning of the Psalm. So it's worth looking at. It says, to the chief musician upon Gittith, a Psalm of David.

Okay, a Psalm of David means a Psalm written by King David. The chief musician was the leader of the music in God's house which became the temple in Jerusalem. And then we have one word which the King James translators didn't translate and which we characteristically, with the more English and Hebrew pronunciation, probably read as Gittith.

And that word is not a word of unknown meaning, it's just the King James translators thought that maybe the meaning would confuse so they didn't translate it, they just transferred the words into English characters. But the meaning of Gittith is well known, it is a wine press. And that is helpful for us to know as we look at this Psalm because this Psalm has references in it to the practice of using a wine press.

Now what people used to do when they harvested grapes to turn the juice into wine, firstly they had to extract the juice from the grapes. And to do this they put the grapes into a large container called a wine press and then they themselves climbed into the wine press. And with bare feet they would crush the grapes.

And so we're going to see in verse 6, thou hast put all things under his feet. And we're also going to see references to the defeat of enemies, verse 2, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. Because when people trod out the grapes in the wine press, the grape juice would splash on their clothes and on their bodies and leave a red stain for a while.

And the Hebrew Bible sometimes compares that to the defeat of enemies, it speaks of enemies being crushed under the feet of the victor. So there's special reasons to think that this is indeed one of the songs which the people used to sing as they trod out the grapes in the wine press. So I've said this is a prophetic Psalm, but as you read it you could imagine in parts that it's about the creation of the world or the world now.

But how does the Psalm begin? Verse 1, O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! How excellent is thy name! That's not a question. You'll see an exclamation mark put after the word earth to say this is an exclamation, it's saying God, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! It's more excellent, more wonderful, more great than anything we can imagine. Thy name, the name of God.

This Psalm begins with the name of God, O Lord our Lord. That O means that you're speaking to the Lord. So O Lord means that you're speaking to God.

And Lord is in block capitals there because it's using the special name of God in the Hebrew Bible. The name that we sometimes write down is Jehovah. It's saying I'm speaking to Jehovah, our Lord, our Master.

So O Jehovah, our Master. Not because it's Jehovah Witnesses. We don't endorse the Jehovah Witnesses or approve of that.

But what it's saying is the Hebrew word they translate Jehovah and that appears in Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah, the Christian hymn. O Lord our Lord. It's addressing God and it's saying to God how excellent, how wonderful, how great is the name of God.

And yet we ask is God's name great in all the earth now? Well it is in a way because God rules heaven and earth by his power. He's always ruled heaven and earth. He always will rule heaven and earth.

But at the present time we see much in this world that's in rebellion against God. Much in this world that opposes God. It continues the Psalm.

Who has set thy glory above the heavens? Although it begins who again it's not a question. It's saying the Lord is the one who has set his glory above the heavens. The Lord God is the one who rules in power and might above the heavens.

Whose honour is above anything we can imagine. That his greatness is above anything that we can imagine. This is the great God to whom we pray.

This is the great God who we trust. This is the great God who rules our lives. Verse two.

Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies. Babes of course is babies. Sucklings is children who are so young they're still feeding at their mother's breast.

People did that longer in ancient times than they do today. So it might be a three-year-old or a four-year-old. But those little children God has ordained or given strength because of his enemies.

He's given strength to their words. They are speaking their words to praise God, to give honour to God and that is the power that this great God uses to defeat his enemies. God has chosen to use their words and answer their prayers in the fight against his enemies.

God isn't depending on human strength or human power. He's depending on the devotion of these simple children who put their trust in him. These simple children who declare his word and who declare his praise.

And he's using this that he might, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. Still, put an end to their evil acts, stop them. He's using their words to defeat the enemy.

Their statements of trust in him are defeating the devil. They're defeating the avenger, the cruel one who opposes God. When I consider, continues the psalmist in verse 3, when I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars which thou hast ordained.

So that's the start of it and then it leads to question in verse 4. So let's look at verse 3 first. When I consider, when I think about them, when I think about the greatness of heaven which you've made, when I think that the great heavens, the skies above us and the dwelling place of God above that, when I think about these great things, I remember they are the work of your fingers. You made them, you made them by your hands.

I look at the moon and the stars, it's you who placed them in their places. It's you who caused them to shine across the night sky, each in its own place. And when I think about those things, he asks in verse 4, what is man that thou art mindful of him and the son of man that thou visitest him.

In the Hebrew language there's different words for what is man and the son of man, even though it's the same word man in the English. In the first place it's saying, he's asking God what is a mortal man, a man who dies. Man's so weak, he dies, he's not like the moon and the stars which you've placed in heaven.

He's so weak, he's as weak as those babies and those little children we referred to in verse 2. In fact he's weaker still because he's going to die. And yet you God, you think about him, you're aware of him, you care for him. How have you, the God who's made heaven and earth and the moon and the stars, how have you chosen to care about people? And he goes further, the son of man, just an ordinary man, the child of a man, why do you care about him? Why do you think about someone who seems so insignificant? Now this phrase son of man is one that Jesus used often and he used it to refer to the title of the Messiah.

So we've got another meaning creeping in here. The Messiah means God's king, the king whom God has chosen, the perfect king who will rule over all things. And God has his eye on the son of man.

God cares about the son of man, God cares about what he's going to do through the son of man, the king Messiah. Verse 5, for thou hast made him a little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honour. If you look at a Hebrew Bible you'll see that the word that appears here as angels is in fact the ordinary word for God.

But if you look at the use of that in the Bible you understand why the King James writers preferred angels. Because the word for God doesn't just mean God, it can mean a powerful ruler or a judge or someone like that. So the ancient translations of the Bible like the Septuagint and the ancient Jewish commentators understood this reference to mean to the angels here.

But really what it's saying here is that man, man living on this earth, even the son of man, even king Messiah is lower than the inhabitants of heaven. He's got a lower rank and a lower place than God and the angels. And God has placed him in this place where he is between God and the angels on the one side and as we'll see later in the psalm the animals and the birds on earth.

God has placed him in that lower place and yet although he's placed in that lower place on earth, God has given such glory and honor to him. It says in the book of Genesis that God gave him dominion over the beasts and over the inhabitants of earth. God made him like a king with glory and honor, greatness.

And God's given such honor to him. God has been in verse 4 mindful of him. God has visited him.

God cares about him and God gives him honor. We're not saying that man as opposed to woman here has honor. It's saying that people have received great honor from God because God has given them dominion over the works of God's hands.

And God gives especially his king messiah dominion over the works of God's hands. Verse 6. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands. Thou hast put all things under his feet.

The author of the Hebrews quotes this verse and he comments but we don't now see all things under his feet. We don't now see that people have dominion over all the things in the world. No, there are many many things in this world that are in rebellion against people.

The order for which God created things with man as a sort of, with people as a sort of king ruling this earth on God's behalf, that order has been destroyed. That order has been ruined. Where people do have control over the things in this world, they use their control and they use their power so often in a bad way.

They destroy the environment. They cause trouble for other people who are weaker than them. They ruin the order which God has created.

God wanted it to be that people would rule this world on his behalf and that he would be their king above them. But people have ruined it and they've ruined it through their evil deeds. They've turned away from God.

They've not trusted God. They've not put their faith in him. They've not believed and obeyed his commandments.

And so where does King Messiah come into all this? Well it's King Messiah who takes their place. It's King Messiah who, in the words from the New Testament, now sits at the right hand of God. It's King Messiah who sorts out the mess that people have made of this world and restores people to the place that God has for them.

And what a wonderful place that is. So in verse 7 it describes the world, the world that God has created and the inhabitants of that world that people will rule over in a right and good way, in God's way, when King Messiah has restored the relationships that people have broken through their evil deeds. Then we will see what God created, that under the rule of people as they faithfully serve God are, firstly verse 7, all sheep and oxen, the animals which people already have under their control, the sheep which people have a duty to look after, the oxen, the heavy farm animals like cows which would in those days pull the plough and thresh the grain, that willingly choose to obey people today.

Yeah, yes, not just them. And the beasts of the field, that's a poetic phrase that the Bible uses to refer to the wild animals. So they're coming under the control of people who faithfully serve God when King Messiah rules, when he sorts out the world.

The scriptures talk about the lion lying down with the lamb and the child who can safely play with a snake or this kind of thing. King Messiah is coming to restore right relationships in this world. And so he continues, verse 8, the fowl of the air, the birds in the air.

And if the air is under the control of people in this wonderful situation, so are the fish of the sea. In fact, whatever passeth through the paths of the seas, the great animals, the whales and the sharks and the dolphins and whatever other animals there may be in the seas, over which people can have no control. Yet God, by the words of Genesis, gave people dominion and rule over them.

And when King Messiah restores right relationships, again they will have that right relationship with even the sea and even the air, things that they can't physically control. Everything in them will give honour to God because they respect the rule of man, because King Messiah has set things right. Not ruling over the world to destroy it, but ruling over it to produce that perfect world that God wants.

And it's in that perfect world, verse 9, repeats the thought at the in all the earth. Because when King Messiah rules, everything is set right. Please do write to me.

My email address is 333kjb at gmail.com. Let me read you the psalm again. Psalm 8. To the chief musician upon Gittith. A psalm of David.

O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth, who has set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels and has crowned him with glory

and honour.

Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands. Thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea. And whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth.

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