
For the Chief Musician; on an instrument of Gath. A Psalm by David.

PSALM 8: 1 LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth, who has set your glory above the heavens!

The glory and excellence of God manifested by his works, Psa 8:1, Psa 8:2; particularly in the starry heavens, Psa 8:3; in man, Psa 8:4; in his formation, Psa 8:5; and in the dominion which God has given him over the earth, the air, the sea, and their inhabitants, Psa 8:6, Psa 8:7, Psa 8:8 : in consequence of which God's name is celebrated over all the earth, Psa 8:9.

The inscription to this Psalm is the following: To the chief Musictan upon Gittith, A Psalm of David. This has been paraphrased, "To the conqueror, concerning the wine-presses;" and has been supposed to be a Psalm intended for the time of vintage: and as that happened about the time of the year in which it is supposed the world was created, hence there is a general celebration of those works, and of the creation, and the high privileges of man. The Chaldee gives it a different turn: "A Psalm of David, to be sung upon the harp, which he brought out of Gath." That the Psalm has respect to our Lord and the time of the Gospel, is evident from the reference made to Psa 8:2, in Mat 11:25, the express quotation of it in Mat 21:16, and another reference to it in 1Cor 1:27. The fourth and sixth verses are quoted Heb 2:6-9. See also 1Cor 15:27, and Eph 1:22. The first and second Adam are both referred to, and the first and second creation also; and the glory which God has received, and is to receive, through both. It relates simply to Christ and redemption.

Verse 1

O Lord our Lord - יהוה אדנינו Yehovah Adoneynu; O Jehovah our Prop, our Stay, or Support. אדני Adonai is frequently used: sometimes, indeed often, for the word יהוה Yehovah itself. The root דן dan signifies to direct, rule, judge, support. So Adonai is the Director, Ruler, Judge, Supporter of men. It is well joined with Jehovah; this showing what God is in himself; that, what God is to man; and may here very properly refer to our Lord Jesus.

How excellent is thy name in all the earth! - How illustrious is the name of Jesus throughout the world! His incarnation, birth, humble and obscure life, preaching, miracles, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension, are celebrated through the whole world. His religion, the gifts and graces of his Spirit, his people - Christians - his Gospel and the preachers of it are everywhere spoken of. No name is so universal, no power and influence so generally felt, as those of the Savior of mankind. Amen.

Thy glory above the heavens - The heavens are glorious, the most glorious of all the works of God which the eye of man can reach; but the glory of God is infinitely above even these. The words also seem to intimate that no power, earthly or diabolical, can lessen or injure that glory. The glory and honor which God has by the Gospel shall last through time, and through eternity; and of that glory none shall be able to rob him, to whom majesty and dominion are eternally due. This has been applied by some to the resurrection of our Lord. He rose from the dead, and ascended above all heavens; and by these his glory was sealed, his mission accomplished, and the last proof given to his preceding miracles.

PSALM 8: 2 From the lips of babes and infants you have established strength, because of your adversaries, that you might silence the enemy and the avenger.

Verse 2

Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings - We have seen how our Lord applied this passage to the Jewish children, who, seeing his miracles, cried out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Mat 21:16. And we have seen how the enemy and the avenger - the chief priests and the scribes - were offended because of these things; and as the Psalm wholly concerns Jesus Christ, it is most probable that in this act of the Jewish children the prophecy had its primary fulfillment; and was left to the Jews as a witness and a sign of the Messiah, which they should have acknowledged when our Lord directed their attention to it.

There is also a very obvious sense in which the mouths of babes and sucklings show forth the praises of God; viz., the means by which they derive their first nourishment. In order to extract the milk from the breasts of their mothers, they are obliged to empty their own mouths entirely of air, that the eternal air, pressing on the breast, may force the milk through its proper canals into the mouth of the child, where there is no resistance, the child having extracted all air from its own mouth which in this case resembles a perfectly exhausted receiver on the plate of an airpump; and the action of sucking is performed on the same principle that the receiver is exhausted by the working of the airpump. Of this curious pneumatic action the child is capable the moment it breathes; and, its strength considered, performs it as perfectly the first hour as it does in any other period of its childhood or infancy. What does all this argue? Why instinct. And pray what is instinct? You cannot tell. But here is an operation by which the pure Boylean vacuum is made; and this by an infant without any previous teaching! Do you suppose that this is an easy operation, and that it requires little skill? You are mistaken. You have done this yourself while an infant under the sole guidance of God. Can you do it now? You are startled! Shall I tell you what appears to you a secret? There is not one in ten thousand adults, who have had their first nourishment from the breasts of their mothers who can perform the same operation again! And those who have had occasion to practice it have found great difficulty to learn that art which, in the first moment of their birth, they performed to perfection! Here is the finger of God; and here, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, he has ordained such a strength of evidence and argument in favor of his being his providence, and his goodness, as is sufficient to still and confound every infidel and atheist in the universe, all the enemies of righteousness, and all the vindicators of desperate and hopeless causes and systems.

The words may also be applied to the apostles and primitive preachers of the Gospel; to the simple and comparatively unlearned followers of Christ, who, through his teaching, were able to confound the wise among the Jews, and the mighty among the heathens: and in this sense our Lord uses the term babes, Mat 11:25 : "I thank thee, O Father - because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes."

We may also witness, in the experience of multitudes of simple people who have been, by the preaching of the Gospel, converted from the error of their ways, such a strength of testimony in favor of the work of God in the heart and his effectual teaching in the mind, as is calculated to still, or reduce to silence, every thing but bigotry and prejudice, neither of which has either eyes or ears. This teaching, and these changing or converting influences, come from God. They are not acquired

by human learning; and those who put this in the place of the Divine teaching never grow wise to salvation. To enter into the kingdom of heaven, a Man must become as a little child.

PSALM 8: 3 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have ordained;

Verse 3

When I Consider thy heavens - *כי אראה* *ki ereh*; Because I will see. He had often seen the heavens with astonishment, and he purposes to make them frequent subjects of contemplation; and he could not behold them without being affected with the skill, contrivance, and power, manifested in their formation.

The work of thy fingers - What a view does this give of the majesty of God! The earth is nearly eight thousand English miles in diameter: but to form an adequate conception of its magnitude, we must consider it in its superficial and solid contents. Upon the supposition that the earth's polar diameter is seven thousand nine hundred and forty miles, and its equatorial, seven thousand nine hundred and seventy-seven, (estimates considered to very near approximations to the truth), the whole superficies of the terraqueous globe will amount to about one hundred and ninety-eight millions, nine hundred and eighty thousand, seven hundred square miles; and its solid contents, in cubic miles will be expressed by the following figures: 264,544,857,944, i.e., two hundred and sixty-four thousand five hundred and forty-four millions, eight hundred and fifty-seven thousand, nine hundred and forty-four. Great as we have shown the bulk of the earth to be, from the most accurate estimates of its diameter it is but small when compared with the bulks of some of the other bodies in the solar system. The planet Herschel, or Georgium Sidus, known on the continent of Europe by the name of Uranus, is eighty times and a half greater than the earth; Saturn, nine hundred and ninety-five times greater; Jupiter, one thousand two hundred and eighty-one times greater; and the sun, the most prodigious body in the system, one million three hundred and eightyfour thousand, four hundred and sixty-two times greater. The circumference of the sun contains not fewer than two millions seven hundred and seventy-seven thousand English miles; and a degree of latitude, which on the earth amounts only to sixty-nine miles and a half, will on the sun (the circle being supposed in both instances to be divided into three hundred and sixty degrees) contain not less than about seven thousand seven hundred and forty miles, a quantity almost equal to the terrestrial axis. But the immense volume (in cubic miles) which the solar surface includes amounts to the following most inconceivable quantity: 366,252,303,118,866,128, i.e., three hundred and sixty six thousand two hundred and fifty-two billions, three hundred and three thousand one hundred and eighteen millions, eight hundred and sixty-six thousand, one hundred and twenty-eight. Notwithstanding the amazing magnitude of the sun, we have abundant reason to believe that some of the fixed stars are much larger; and yet we are told they are the work of God's Fingers! What a hand, to move, form, and launch these globes! This expression is much more sublime than even that of the prophet: "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out the heavens with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure; and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance!" Isa 40:12. This is grand; but the heavens being the work Of God's Fingers is yet more sublime.

The moon and the stars - The sun is not mentioned, because the heavens - the moon, planets, and stars - could not have appeared, had he been present. Those he wished to introduce because of their

immense variety, and astonishing splendor; and, therefore, he skilfully leaves out the sun, which would have afforded him but one object, and one idea. To have mentioned him with the others would have been as ridiculous in astronomy, as the exhibition of the top and bottom of a vessel would be in perspective. Various critics have endeavored to restore the Sun to this place: and even Bishop Horsley says, "It is certainly strange that the sun should be omitted, when the moon and the stars are so particularly mentioned." But with great deference to him, and to Dr. Kennicott, who both show how the text may be mended I say, it would be most strange had the psalmist introduced the sun, for the reasons already assigned. The Spirit of God is always right; our head is sometimes, our hearts seldom so.

Which thou hast ordained - כּוֹנְנָתָה conantah, which thou hast prepared and established. Made their respective spheres, and fitted them for their places. Space to matter, and matter to space; all adjusted in number, weight, and measure.

PSALM 8: 4 what is man, that you think of him? What is the son of man, that you care for him?

Verse 4

What is man - מַה אֲנוֹשׁ mah enosh, what is wretched, miserable man; man in his fallen state, full of infirmity, ignorance, and sin?

That thou art mindful of him? - That thou settest thy heart upon him, keepest him continually in thy merciful view.

And the son of man - וּבֶן אָדָם uben Adam, and the son of Adam, the first great rebel; the fallen child of a fallen parent. See the note on Job 7:17. Some think eminent men are here intended. What is man in common; what the most eminent men; that thou shouldst be mindful of them, or deign to visit them?

That thou visitest him? - By sending thy Holy Spirit to convince him of sin, righteousness, and judgment. It is by these visits that man is preserved in a salvable state. Were God to withhold them, there would be nothing in the soul of man but sin, darkness, hardness, corruption, and death.

PSALM 8: 5 For you have made him a little lower than God, and crowned him with glory and honour.

Verse 5

Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels - The original is certainly very emphatic: וַתַּחַסְרֵנִי וּתְחַסְרֵנִי מֵאֱלֹהִים vattechasserchu meat meelohim, Thou hast lessened him for a little time from God. Or, Thou hast made him less than God for a little time. See these passages explained at large in the notes on Heb 2:6 (note), etc., which I need not repeat here.

PSALM 8: 6 You make him ruler over the works of your hands. You have put all things under his feet:

Verse 6

Thou madest him to have dominion - Jesus Christ, who, being in the form of God, and equal with God, for a time emptied himself, and made himself of no reputation; was afterwards highly exalted, and had a name above every name. See the notes referred to above, and those on Phi 2:6-9 (note).

Thou hast put all things under his feet - Though the whole of the brute creation was made subject to Adam in his state of innocence; yet it could never be literally said of him, that God had put all things under his feet, or that he had dominion over the work of God's hands; but all this is most literally true of our Lord Jesus; and to him the apostle, Heb 2:6, etc., applies all these passages.

PSALM 8: 7 All sheep and cattle, yes, and the animals of the field,

Verse 7

All sheep and oxen - All domestic animals, and those to be employed in agriculture.

Beasts of the field - All wild beasts, and inhabitants of the forest.

PSALM 8: 8 The birds of the sky, the fish of the sea, and whatever passes through the paths of the seas.

Verse 8

The fowl of the air - All these were given to man in the beginning; and he has still a general dominion over them; for thus saith the Lord: "The fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every Beast of the Earth, and upon every Fowl of the Air, and upon all that Moveth upon the Earth, and upon all the Fishes of the Sea; into your hand are they delivered;" Gen 9:2. To this passage the psalmist most obviously refers.

PSALM 8: 9 LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Verse 9

O Lord our Lord - The psalmist concludes as he began. Jehovah, our prop and support! his name is excellent in all the earth. The name of Jesus is celebrated in almost every part of the habitable globe; for his Gospel has been preached, or is in the progress of being preached, through the whole world. Bibles and missionaries are now carrying his name, and proclaiming his fame, to the utmost nations of the earth.

The whole of this Psalm, and the seventh and eighth verses in particular, have been the subject of much spiritualization in ancient and modern times. I shall give two examples: one from the pious Bishop Horne; the other from the ancient Latino - Scotico - English Psalter, mentioned before.

That of Bisnop Horne, on the Psa 8:7 and Psa 8:8, is as follows: "Adam, upon his creation, was invested with sovereign dominion over the creatures, in words of the same import with these, Gen 1:28, which are therefore here used, and the creatures particularized, to inform us that what the first Adam lost by transgression, the second Adam gained by obedience. That glory which was set above the heavens could not but be over all things on the earth; and accordingly we hear our Lord saying, after his resurrection, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and earth,' Mat 28:18. Nor is it a speculation unpleasing or unprofitable to consider that he who rules over the material world is Lord also of the intellectual or spiritual creation represented thereby. "The souls of the faithful, lowly, and harmless, are the sheep of his pasture; those who like oxen, are strong to labor in the Church, and who by expounding the word of life tread out the corn for the nourishment of the people, own him for their kind and beneficent Master. Nay, tempers fierce and untractable as the wild beasts of the desert, are yet subject to his will. Spirits of the angelic kind, that, like the birds of the air, traverse freely the superior region, move at his command; and these evil ones, whose habitation is in the deep abyss, even to the great leviathan himself, all, all are put under the feet of the King Messiah; who, because he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, was therefore highly exalted, and had a name given him above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, whether of things in heaven, or things on earth, or things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father; Phi 2:8, etc." Thus far the pious bishop.

I shall now give, as a singular curiosity, the whole Psalm, with its translation and paraphrase, from the ancient MS. already mentioned; inserting first the Latin text; next, the translation; and, thirdly, the paraphrase. The Latin text seems to be the old Itala, or Antehieronymian; at least it has readings which have been thought peculiar to that version. Psa 8:1-9 Psa 8:1

Domine Deus noster, quoniam admirabile est nomen tuum in universa terra.

Trans. Lord our Lord, qwat thi name es wonderfull in al the Erde.

Par. The prophete in louing, bygynnes and says: Lord of al, thow ert specialy our Lord that dredes the, loves the. "Thi name" that es the ioy and the fame of thi name Ihesu: for the creaturs that thu hes made and bought qwat it es wonderful. Als so say withouten end: for nane suffis for to knaw al creaturs: in qwilk wonder of the, and that in al the Erd, nought in a party anely.

Quoniam elevata est magnificentia tua super Celos.

Trans. For lyfted es thi worchyp aboven hevens.

Par. That es at say, thu ert mare worthy to be loued and wirchepyd than any Aungel or haly Saule may thynk. Psa 8:2

Ex ore infancium et lactencium perfecisti laudem, propter inimicos tuos, ut destruas inimicum et ultorem.

Trans. Of the mouth of nought spekand, and sowkand, thou has made louying, for thin enmys, that tbou destroye the enemy and the venger.

Par. Nought anely thow ert loued of perfite men, bot of the mouthe of barnes that spekes nought: Zit there er tha that kan nought speke the wisdom of this werld: and of soukand, the qwilk gladdely resayves the lare of haly Kyrk theare moder. Thow has made thi luf thug perfyte for thin enmys: fals cristen men, to schame and to schende for thai er wer than er haythen men. That thu destroye the enemy; that es, he that es wyse in his awen eghen; and wil nought be underloute til thi wil: "and the

venger": that es he that defends his Syn; and sais that he synnes nought; or that his syn es les than other mennes. Psa 8:3

Quoniam videbo celos tuos, et opera digitorum tuorum, lunam et stellas quas tu fundasti.

Trans. For I sal se thi hevens werkes of thi fyngers the mone and the Sternys the quilk thow groundid.

Par. Thow destrues al that es contrariand til the; bot i in al thying confourom me to do thi wil, for thi i sal se in lyf withouten end. "Thi hevens", that es Aungels and Apostels the qwilk er werkes of thi fingers: that es, that er mode perfyte thurgh the Haly Gost, of qwam es seven gyftes. Of he be bot a Spirit, als mani fyngers er in a hand. And i sal see the "Mone", that es haly Kyrk: and the sternes that es ilk a ryghtwise man by hym selfe, the qwilk thu groundid in charite. Psa 8:4

Quid est homo quod memor es ejus; aut filius hominis, quoniam visitas eum?

Trans. What es man that thu ert menand of hym: or son of man for thou visites hym?

Par. Als it war with despyte, he sais "man", erdely and synful, qwat es he, that thu has mynd of hym. Als fer sett fra the; at the lest gyfand hym hele and ese of body. Or "son of man": that es, he that es gastely, and beres the ymage of heven. Qwat es he, for thou visits hym. Als present the qwilk es nere the for clennes of lyf. Or "son of man" he calles Crist, thurgh qwam he visits mannes kynd. Psa 8:5

Minuisti eum paullo minus ab angelis: gloria et honore coronasti eum; et constituisti eum super opera manuum tuarum.

Trans. Thow lessed hym a littil fra aungels; with ioy and honor thu coround hym: and thu sett him aboven the werkes of thi hend.

Par. Crist was lessed fra aungels, for he was dedely, and mught suffer pyne; but a littel; for in other thyng, es he abouen aungels, thair Kyng and Sychthu thou coround hym with ioy, that es with brighthede of body, na mare sufferand pyne; and honor, for he es honorable til al: and thou sett hym abouen aungels and al creatures. Psa 8:6, Psa 8:7

Omnia subiecisti sub pedibus ejus: oves et boves insuper et pecora campi.

Trans. Al thynges thu underkest undyr his fete: schepe and oxen al over that, and the bestes of the feld.

Par. That undyr hys Lordschyp and hys myght, in has cestyn al thyng: tha er "schepe" that er innocentes, als well aungels als men. "And oxen", tha er, traveland men gastely, in haly Kyrk, "over that"; and the "bestes of the feld"; thai er lufers of this werld, wonnand, in the feld of fleschly lusts; noght in hillis of vertus; and so be the brode way thai ga til hell. Psa 8:8

Volucres celi et pisces maris qui perambulant semitas maris.

Trans. Fowls of heven and fysche of the see, that gas the wayes of the see.

Par. "Fowls of heven", er prowde men that wald hee thair setil abouen al other. "Fysches of the see", er covaytus men, the qwilk in the ground of the werld, sekis erthdly gudes, that all stretes in the see, sone wither oway. Al thir sal be underlout til Crist onther herts in grace, or thare in pine. Psa 8:9

Domine Deus noster, quam admirabile est nomen tuum in universa terra.

Trans. Lard our Lard qwat thi name is wonderful in al the erth.

Par. Als he bigan swa he endes, schewand that bygyning and endyng of al gode, is of Gode; and til his louing agh i for to be done.

The reader will no doubt be struck with the remarkable agreement between the pious bishop of Norwich and this ancient translator and paraphrast, particularly on the Psa 8:7 and Psa 8:8. The language also is in several respects singular. The participle of the present tense, which we terminate with "ing", is here almost always terminated with "and." So "Spekand, sowkand, gyfand, sufferand, traveland", for speaking, sucking, giving, suffering, travelling, etc.

As the participle signifies the continuance of the action, the termination and seems much more proper than ing; speak - and, i.e., continuing to speak; give - and, continuing to give; suffer - and, suffer more; travel - and, travel on, etc. There are some words in this ancient MS. which I have met nowhere else.