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Three Reasons To Praise The Creator from Psalm 8: A Biblical Theology with Attention to Intertextuality

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Abstract

Psalm 8 serves as the first creation hymn of the Psalter, and as such is worthy of an exegetical and theological analysis. This analysis will begin with an exegesis of the text, since exegesis rightfully precedes theologizing.[1] The exegesis will include a translation, examination of the historical and literary contexts, the genre classification, structure, and discussion of the literary features with special attention given to parallelism and conclude with a brief exposition. After the requisite exegetical analysis has been completed, a theological synthesis will be commenced progressing from the psalms location in its microstructural setting to its use in the New Testament before giving some concluding remarks about systematic usefulness. It is the goal of this examination to invoke praise from the reader so that they too might join in worship of the Creator יהוה for His special relationship with His vice-regent– mankind.

[1] Ken Gardoski. "Steps to Doing Theology." Clarks Summit, PA: Unpublished Class Notes from Doctoral Seminar TH1: Seminar in Theological Methods at Baptist Bible Seminary, Fall, 2020.

Keywords

Creation, Imago dei, divine name, image, Psalm, Psalm 8, creation psalm, hymn

Cover Page Footnote

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Introduction

Psalm 8 serves as the first creation hymn of the Psalter, as such, it is worthy of an exegetical and theological analysis. This paper begins with an exegesis of the text of Psalm 8, because exegesis rightfully precedes theologizing.[1] The exegesis presented in this paper includes a translation, examination of the historical and literary contexts, genre classification, structural analysis, a discussion of the literary features with special attention given to parallelism, and finally, a brief exposition. After the requisite exegetical analysis, this paper presents a theological synthesis which progresses from the Psalms, located in its microstructural setting, to its use in the New Testament. This paper concludes with remarks about the systematic usefulness of the Psalms. The goal of this examination is to invoke praise from the reader so that they too might join in worship of the Creator יהוה for his special relationship with his vice-regent–mankind.

Exegetical Analysis

This paper conducts its exegetical analysis by employing the historical-grammatical method while also seeking to largely employ the methodology of C. Hassel Bullock.[2] This analysis adds to Bullock's methodology a step which establishes the texts of the Psalm, and in this analysis, it listed under the heading of translation.

[1] Ken Gardoski, "Steps to Doing Theology" (Seminar in Theological Methods at Baptist Bible Seminary Clarks Summit, PA, Unpublished Doctoral Seminar Notes, presented at the Seminar in Theological Methods at Baptist Bible Seminary, Fall 2020).

[2] C. Hassell Bullock, *Encountering the Book of Psalms: A Literary and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018).

Translation

Below is an original translation of Psalm 8 from the text of BHS with the aid of appropriate lexicons. The translation is been formatted for ease of reference. Throughout this paper, verses are referenced in accordance with the text of BHS.

[1] To the music director upon the Gitith, a Psalm of David:

[2] Oh LORD, our Lord,
how magnificent is your name in all the earth,
That! Set your majesty, over the heavens.
[3] From the mouth of children and babies you have founded strength,
on account of your enemies,
ceasing the enemy and the avenger.
[4] When I see your heaven, the work of your fingers,
The moon and the stars which you have established,
[5] What is man that you remember him,
and the son of mankind that you watch him?
[6] And you have decreased him slightly from God,
And glory and majesty you have crowned him *with.*
[7] You have caused him to have dominion in the works of your hands,
all you set under his feet.
[8] The sheep and the cattle, all of them,
And even the beasts of the field,
[9] The birds of the heaven and the fish of the sea,
Pulling along the path of the seas
[10] Oh LORD our Lord,
how magnificent is your name in all the earth!

Context

Psalm 8 is written by David, assuming a ל *auctoris*, and is written for the choir director (via ל of direct object), as evinced in the first verse.[3] Psalm 8's

[3] Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch and Edward C. Mitchell, trans. Arthur Ernest Cowley, Kindle. (Omaha, NB: Patristic Publishing, 2006), 755.

genre should be classified as a Psalm of praise.[4] Bullock encourages interpreters to identify the speaker and audience. Though the speaker is David, the notation of "to the choir director" implies that this Psalm was delivered to the Levitical priest in charge of the cult-choir, and it was therefore to be used by the community (cf. 1 Chron 15). Furthermore, the speaker, singularly through the man David, is not just any man. By nature of his kingly office, David is presumably speaking on behalf of the entire nation, as kings were considered cultic leaders in the ANE, and the Israelite understanding of corporate solidarity would have surely come to expect this association.[5] Bullock further encourages interpreters to determine the purpose. Since this is classified as a Psalm of praise, and there is no petition, the purpose is purely to worship יהוה for his role as Creator. The emotional orientation, as will be seen below, is one of admiration, wonder, and amazement.

Though there is often a debate around the classification of Psalms; a debate that switches back and forth between structural and thematic classifications since the seminal work of Gunkel, this study operates under the assumption that structure implies meaning. Kevin J.Vanhoozer notes that, "a text is not simply a sequence of words and sentences but a 'composition,' a work with a particular genre and style, a verbal work … a text's structure imposes certain limits on interpretation."[6] This statement will surely go unchallenged by many of this text's readers. However, the question becomes: how does one delineate a genre? It is the second part of the quote, where Vanhoozer is reliant upon Paul Ricoeur, that the exegete must pay special attention. A text's structure is what aids in interpretation because it is the structure that places limitations upon the interpretive process. Since structure implies meaning and determines the way which one should interpret, then it should be considered authoritative in genre classification. This statement is in agreement with Westermann.[7] Particularly concerning the genre, Psalm 8 is a Psalm of the community, as noted by the 1st person pronominal suffix attached to אדני in v. 2.

Psalms of praise are typically divided into two parts, a call to praise and the reason for praise; however, Westermann notes that "This Psalm category does not have a concluding formula. Most of these Psalms end with the praise of the

[4] Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (Atlanta, GA: J. Knox Press, 1981), 139.

[5] Bullock, *Encountering the Book of Psalms*, 285.

[6] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 107.

[7] Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 139.

goodness of God without any set form of ending."[8] However, Psalm 8 is distinct because it repeats the first line of the Psalm forming an *inclusio* with a concluding call to praise. Westermann offers a helpful appraisal of Psalm 8's genre when he notes that of these "descriptive Psalms of praise are– more or less clearly – governed by the tension of the relation to each other of the two statements that God is enthroned in majesty, and yet is one who is moved with compassion."[9] Both of these elements are seen in the exegetical analysis below, but it forms a helpful lens by which to appraise the Psalm. Westermann also notes that "the creation Psalms are the only group of Psalms of praise in the Psalter in which one motif developed into an independent Psalm."[10] With the macro-structure of Psalm 8 described above, it is now left to determine the micro-structure before performing the exegesis proper.

The micro-structure of Hebrew poetry is often deduced through the breaking up of the poem into stanzas. David L. Petersen and Kent Harold Richards discussion of Hebrew Poetry in their work *Interpreting Hebrew Poetry* explains that stanzas, in Hebrew poetry, are an artificial construction which are foreign to the text.[11] However, stanzas are a helpful description which notes a significant change in the poem in regard to its topic, speaker, recipient, etc. "The term 'stanza' is most frequently understood to be a semantic unit, that is, a unit of meaning … stanzaic style does not appear in Hebrew poetry. Groupings occur within the constraints of parallelism, rhythm, and other stylistic devices."[12] These constraints can be grammatical or semantical and "signal the reader that units external to the bi-colon … hold lines together and separate them."[13] This poem appears to have 5 stanzas, the opening call to praise in v. 2, stanzas in v. 3, vv. 4–5, vv. 6–9, and a concluding stanza in v. 10 with the closing call to praise. The three central stanzas are determined through a shift in subject. In v. 3, David describes God's establishment of strength through the mouths of

[8] Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 130.

[9] Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 133.

[10] Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 139.

[11] David L. Petersen and Kent Harold Richards, *Interpreting Hebrew Poetry*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 60–61.

[12] Petersen and Richards, *Interpreting Hebrew Poetry*, 61.

[13] Ibid.

his people, but vv. 4–5 turn the subject of the verbs back toward David who is asking questions. Verses 6–9 return to the actions of God. These will be the structural delineations for the analysis below.[14]

Commentary

Stanza 1: Opening Call to Praise

[2] Oh LORD, our Lord,
how magnificent is your name in all the earth,
That! Set your majesty, over the heavens.

David opens his Psalm with an invocation in which he addressed YHWH, the God of the Israelites. Then David immediately describes the relationship between YHWH and Israel as Lord. As Westermann noted above, "descriptive Psalms of praise are … governed by the tension of the relation to … the two statements that God is enthroned in majesty, and yet is one who is moved with compassion."[15] Throughout the Old Testament, there is a distinct relationship between God's identity as Creator and his right to rule as Sovereign Lord. If there is a God of the universe who created the heavens and earth and everything in it, then he has the divine right to rule.[16]

[14] Jun Kim offers a chiastic structure which is appealing, but is based on thematic grounds as opposed to structural grounds though his analysis is similar with one exception, he takes the first stanza and divides it into two parts so that he has– A: Declaration of Praise (v.1a), B: God's dominion (vv. 1b-3), C: Human meanness (v. 4), C": Human Greatness (v. 5), B": Human Beings Dominion (vv. 6-8), C": Declaration of Praise (v.9). It is the idea of B where the heavens are considered God's dominion moves the emphasis unduly. There are many instances of Psalms which declare the heavens as God's dominion, and all such indicators are lacking in this Psalm. This is a forced structural implication, probably due to his goal of achieving an "ecological reading." Though this is laudable, the guidance he opens the article with when he cites Janecko that "To look for a 'theology of ecology' in scripture or in the Psalms in particular would be asking the Bible to provide answers that were not in the mind of the author" (12). This forced methodology is apt to lead to other textual abuses such as misplacing the emphasis on God's creation of the celestial being or trying to call it the domain of God as if God's transcendence, which is greater than the heavens and earth, is out of purview. Yet, it is exactly that greatness of God evinced in his transcendence which is the heart of this text. ("Psalm 8: An Ecological Reading," *KJCS* 101 [2016]: 11–30).

[15] Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 133.

[16] Paul R. House speaks of the importance of Genesis establishing "God as the Creator, sustainer and judge of all persons." He continues stating that, "clearly these verses" those speaking

The second line of the tri-colon begins with David asking the question, denoted by מה: "How majestic is your name in all of the earth?" This is obviously a rhetorical question, but it is descriptive parallelism seeking to describe the referent of the first line. Rhetorical questions in the Psalms have a strong emotional impact as Lynell Zogbo and Ernst R. Wendland note:

> Rhetorical questions are very prominent in Hebrew literature. They are especially important in poetry and are found throughout the book … the Psalms … In everyday speech, rhetorical questions (or questions that do not expect explicit answers) are used to express a wide variety of emotions and attitudes: confidence, joy, anger, sarcasm, distress, rebuke, or sadness. Because emotions are expressed so intensely in poetry, we are not surprised to find that rhetorical questions frequently appear in this context.[17]

Here one sees David awestruck at the name of God. A personal name, like that of יהוה, was often associated with the reputation of the individual in the cultures of the ANE. Names had power, and they revealed the character of a person.[18] The name of the LORD was powerful, and it was magnificent. The reputation of the LORD, as the one who delivered Israel from Egypt and exalted the fledgling Kingdom under David, was gaining wide acclaim. But Israel had a duty to draw attention to the fact that this was only possible because the LORD was the only true God of the universe, and that He was the Creator. It was Israel's duty to make God's name great throughout the entire earth and to become a blessing to all nations as they introduced the Creator to all of creation. And this is why David is so concerned, at this point in his life, with building the temple and ensuring its provisions (1 Chron 22). The term *magnificent* has the idea of something prominent.[19] God's name is prominent in the earth, and David, in humble adoration, acknowledges it as such.

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of creation, "stress God's sovereignty over creation" (*Old Testament Theology* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1998], 58–59).

[17] Lynell Zogbo and Ernst R. Wendland, *Hebrew Poetry in the Bible: A Guide for Understanding and for Translating*, Helps for Translators (New York: United Bible Societies, 2000), 47.

[18] John I. Durham, *Exodus*, vol. 3 of *WBC* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 37–40.

[19] HALOT, s.v. "אדיר"

The third line of the opening tri-colon is linked to the preceding line through progressive parallelism. God's name is magnificent in all of the earth, and David now requests that God place his majesty in the heavens. The demonstrative pronoun in the third line is absent from most English texts (usually translated as "which") which makes this line difficult to translate. "Which" does not easily make sense with the imperative that follows for the term "set" or "placed." Instead of describing a past action like the common "You have set your glory above the heavens," it should instead be read as a prayer. This prayer is an imperative of polite request or even a command to "Set your glory above the heavens!" In that case the relative pronoun would be translated as "that!" and would be emphatic and pointing back to the abstract idea of "name." David is praying that the Lord would take his majestic name and use it to set his magnificence above the heavens.

To set means that David is asking God, or commanding God, even to intentionally place hnis majesty in the heavens where the entire creation can see it. That term majesty implies kingship.[20] This is why the idea of creation is so theologically important, because God is the Creator, King, and magnificently majestic. However, one cannot simply gloss over the common term *heavens* when it is so closely juxtaposed to the term ארץ, which is considered a stock word pair.[21] Stock word pairs are an important literary device because they denote a commonly understood relationship. The relationship here is a separate and commonly understood literary device known as a *merism*.[22] Its two terms, expressing the polar extremes of a concept, is meant to cover everything in between these two extremes. Here then, one can see that God's glory and magnificence is seen throughout the heavens and earth, and everything in between. Creation is invited to praise God ultimately because God is praiseworthy as יהוה the Lord. It is not that God is some glory hungry monster in the heavens, but it is a due that he is worthy of praise. David requests that God himself would see to those ends. In this manner, it ironically seems that David is calling upon God to praise himself through displaying his glory in the heavens as seen in the imperative directed to God. However, the three reasons for praise which follow in stanzas 2–4 place the worship back on the community.

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[20] TDOT, s.v. "הוֹד"

[21] Wilfred G. E Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (Sheffield Academic, 2009), 128–42.

[22] J. Krašovec,, "Merism—Polar Expression in Biblical Hebrew," *Biblica* 64 (1983), 231–39.

Stanza 2: Reason for Praise A

[3] From the mouth of children and babies you have founded strength,
on account of your enemies,
ceasing the enemy and the avenger.

The first reason for praise is found in the idea of God's "founding" of strength in the mouth of children and babies. There are two main literary devices employed in this verse: ellipsis and repetition. Chisholm notes that "sometimes a speaker or author will emphasize a theme by repeating a 'key word.' This can be expanded to include whole phrases … or limited to the repetition of particles in certain positions."[23] Juxtaposing the near synonyms of children and babies serves to emphasize the theme of dependence on the referent. In fact, it is that referent which may be the most difficult aspect of interpreting this verse. Dahood finds this to be a type of self-deprecation on the part of the Psalmist when he says, "Before the majesty of God the Psalmist can but babble like an infant."[24] Peter C. Craigie is more generalized in his identification when he describes the clash between those who do not recognize the authority of the name of יהוה, and those who speak the divine name from a state of weakness and humility.[25] Craigie suggests that this communicative action shows that the humble child of God understands

> …the majesty and revelation of God which are implicit in that name. Thus, God may utilize the weak of this world, even the child, both to establish his strength, reflected in his nature and in his creation, and at the same time 'to put at rest' (or quiet) the opposition of enemies. Understood in this manner, v 3 sets the stage for what is to follow. Though the universe is vast and imparts to mankind a sense of smallness and insignificance.[26]

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[23] Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 49.

[24] Mitchell J. Dahood, *Psalms 1-50,* AB (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 49.

[25] Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1 - 50,* 2nd ed., vol. 19 of *WBC* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 2000), 107.

[26] Ibid.

The identification of the corporate entity, not restricted to David, is probably in view since the context shows that there are hostilities between God and certain enemies. Throughout the Psalter the enemies of God are the political, and typically foreign, enemies of the nation of Israel.[27] Israel, the congregation of God's people, are considered babies and infants as the newest nation, formed after the table of Nations in Genesis 10 through Abraham and his family. Here David shows their ultimate inability to compete with the powerful nations who are described as the foes of God. To be at war with Israel is to be at war with God, and to be at war with God is to be an enemy of God's people.

Semantically, the concept David is trying to express is abstract, if not difficult. The text states, through the piel 2ms form יסדת (meaning that God has founded), that babies and infants are God's means of establishing his strength. His strength is destined or appointed to come from the mouths of these little ones.[28] While Craigie was right to note that it was the invocation of the divine name which established God's strength against his enemies, it is important to note the limitations upon invoking that name, and the cultural considerations associated with names.[29]

Genesis 1, where the creation account is located, is part of a larger work, the Pentateuch.[30] The Pentateuch, and specifically the Exodus event, had significant ramifications on the Hebrew identity, and the revelation of the divine name to Moses also had drastic impact.[31] During this event, Moses asked God who he should say commissioned him to serve as the deliverer of the Israelite people. This is assuming that they would indeed ask him for the authority of his mission. Douglas K. Stuart notes that, "since the true God was known by various names and titles in the patriarchal era … specificity was desirable. Perhaps most importantly, however, was the assumption in that culture that to call on a god—that is, to pray to and worship him—involved calling on his name, specifically

[27] Bullock, *Encountering the Book of Psalms*, 26, 49–50, 59–60, 66–67, etc. Examples include Psalm 3, 22, etc.

[28] HALOT, s.v. "יסדת"

[29] John N. Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 57.

[30] John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 2.

[31] Ibid. 246-248

naming him in prayer and worship (cf. 1 Kgs 18:24–26).”[32] The ability to invoke the divine name by Moses, and subsequently by the Israelites, had certain advantages. The most import being that it qualified the user as a divine representative.[33] Durham rightfully cautions that the question also “must be interpreted in the light of the larger significance of the Hebrew word שֵׁם “name.” This word, according to BDB (1028), is a ‘designation of God, specific, of Yahweh …; = his reputation, fame …; especially as embodying the (revealed) character of Yahweh.’”[34] The third commandment of the ten words was meant to employ safeguards of the use of the divine name from abuses common in ANE literature. Durham explains,

> This commandment is couched in language deliberately chosen to permit a wide range of application, covering every dimension of the misuse of Yahweh’s name. Yahweh had not withheld his name but had freely given it to Moses and so to Israel as both a summary and an extension of the revelation of his Presence. His sovereignty is such that he was not subject to the manipulation of his worshipers, and thus he opened himself to his people with as much fullness as they could stand. Not surprisingly, there are no incantation texts in the OT. Yahweh could not be controlled, or even altered in his set purpose, by men.[35]

Therefore, while ANE thought commonly invoked idolatrous names through various incantation texts, the Hebrews were permitted from doing so. They had the right to employ the divine name in certain ways, as noted above, through prayer, worship, (and by extension visible in the Pentateuch itself), through teaching, and prophesy. They had no right to try and manipulate God through using his name to surrounding pagan nations. This biblical evidence then indicates that *the name* can be rightfully employed through prayer, praise, and witness. Employing *the name* through these means was the proper way to see God’s strength activated against the enemies.

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[32] Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2 of *NAC* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 120.

[33] Stuart, *Exodus*, 122.

[34] Durham, *Exodus*, 37–40.

[35] Durham, *Exodus*, 37–40.

There final literary device is employed, that demands attention, and is found in the last line of the tri-colon is the *ellipsis*. *Ellipsis* is when the author "purposely left out words to create or maintain a certain rhythm and balance, or to give themselves space to include more ideas in the second line of a parallelism."[36] In the last line there is no subject. There is only a verb and a direct object. In poetry, this serves to expand the thought from the previous lines. In this case, what is elided is the cause of the cessation. The enemy and avenger are the direct objects of the action of cessation. They are doing something that must be stopped. What causes the "cease-fire" is the mouth of the children and infants of the first line. The speech of the infants and children, as noted above, is the employment of the *divine name*. The *divine name*, in Hebrew theology, is employed through prayer, worship, and direct witness of divine speech through teaching or prophesy. In this stanza the explanatory flow draws attention to God's strength being activated (founded, destined, appointed) through verbal invocation of the divine name of יהוה, which God has granted because of his enemies causing their cessation. Though the reason for this switch from plural to singular is worthy of further evaluation, this must wait for the theological analysis below. However, it does serve to show that God has provided a means of care over his creation through worship– whether prayer, praise, or witness which defeats the enemies of God; the enemies of God who are by extension the enemies of God's people. The Psalmist is in an emotional state of amazement, and rightful trepidation, concerning his ability to invoke the divine name with such potency. The Psalmist then begins to view the bigger picture as he turns to the second reason for praise found in the third stanza.

Stanza 3: Reason for Praise B

4 When I see your heaven, the work of your fingers,
The moon and the stars which you have established,
5 What is man that you remember him,
and the son of mankind that you watch him?

The third stanza has no direct line of congruence that can be explained via parallel relationships (as would be commonly referred to) therefore being a case of "synthetic parallelism."[37] Though perhaps there is some contrast between

[36] Zogbo and Wendland, *Hebrew Poetry in the Bible*, 120.

[37] Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 2.

Yawhism and the heathen worship of the celestial beings, there is not enough in the text to sustain this as the author's logical progression.
Furthermore, the historical context, while suitable, would be pressed to fit here outside of extent textual data.[38] Regardless of the motivation for moving from the ability to invoke the divine name, the Psalm moves from describing the Israelites ability to activate the strength of God through the invocation of the name to a description of the powerful being whom the name belongs to. On this account, it would be best to see a specifying or descriptive parallel relationship linking the two stanzas. The author moves from utilizing third person voice, speaking of the infants and children, to the first person, where David reflects on his own experience of God caused by his view of the celestial bodies.

The first bi-colon employs breathtaking use of literary and poetic devices (henceforth used interchangeably). The Psalmist begins by describing his own emotional state when he views the celestial beings, and then he employs the common literary device of anthropomorphism where the author portrays "deity in human terms."[39] Here David sees the heavenly bodies, which the Genesis account states were made at the verbal command of God. David employs poetic license when he ascribes the creation of these beings to the hand of God via his fingers. This anthropomorphic language has caused consternation from some rigid literalists who struggle with poetry. Wayne A. Grudem, in his *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* addresses this issue suggesting that "all that we know about God from Scripture comes to us in terms that we understand because they describe events or things common to human experience. Using a more technical term, we can say that all that Scripture says about God uses anthropomorphic language."[40] Grudem notes that this has been a cause of

[38] Marc Van de Mieroop, *A History of Ancient Egypt* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 342; Ruth Horry, "Utu/Šamaš (God)," University of Pennsylvania Museum, *Ancient Mesopotamian Gods and Goddesses*, 2013; Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum, "Deities in Ancient Egypt - Ra," Museum Catalog, *Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum*, 2021; Jimmy Dunn, "Sah and Sopdet (Sothis), the Egyptian Astral God and Goddess," *Tour Egypt*, 2021; Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum, "Deities in Ancient Egypt - Thoth," Museum Catalog, *Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum*, 2021; Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *A History of Babylon, 2200 BC-AD 75* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 33.

[39] Leland Ryken, *Sweeter than Honey, Richer than Gold a Guided Study of Biblical Poetry*. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 50.

[40] Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 1994). 405.

consternation among many people, but this should not be so, because "if God is going to teach us about things we do not know by direct experience (such as his attributes), he has to teach us in terms of what we do know. This is why all that Scripture says about God is 'anthropomorphic' in a broad sense."[41] Further, this does not mean that Scripture is misleading since "this is the way that God has chosen to reveal himself to us truly and accurately."[42] Through beautiful anthropomorphic language, David is less concerned with trying to describe the process by which God created the earth, but instead focuses on the fact that God himself created even the most transcendent elements which were visible to his own eyes. Since David's creations were the works of his fingers, it is likely that it seemed good to David to ascribe the creative process to God's own fingers.

The second literary device employed in the third stanza is perhaps the most intriguing. When one would expect David to add a verb, he has actually not included the verb, and instead employed a device known as narrative gapping. *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* explains the concept of narrative gapping as follows:

> Texts do not supply all the information needed for their interpretation. Furthermore, the more widely agreed upon any specific information is, the more likely it is to go without saying … As a series of philosophers, literary theorists, and cognitive scientists have shown, a satisfying interpretation of a narrative sequence emerges from the interactions or joint work of a text and an audience … In the presence of a gappy text (and all texts are gappy), if there is no evidence to the contrary, audiences assume that a communication is intended.[43]

Concernign David and Psalm 8, the questions becoms: What information has David gapped, what came before the gap, what comes after the gap, and how is this important? David moves directly to employ a question (seen by the use of **מה**). As David looks at the great host of heaven, knowing God's sovereign role in their placement, he asks in Psalm 8:5, "What is man that you are mindful of him; or the son of Man that you care for him?" This idea of care helps to substantiate the interpretation of the first stanza which identified the children and infants as corporate Israel. God cares for his people, and he is mindful of David. The term

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] *Routlege Encylcopedia of Narrative Theory*, s.v. "Gapping."

mindful means to remember or to take notice, and it is juxtaposed in parallelism with פקד which here means "to make a careful inspection of."[44] God is both transcendent, having created the heavens and the great starry host, and yet God is immanent. God is making a careful inspection of each and every human being on this earth. With the surrounding information understood, the gapped verb of action is most likely a verb of thinking. This would give the effect of, "When I look at your heavens… I wonder what is man that you are mindful of him" (vv. 4–5). This emotion of wondering and sheer amazement of the transcendence of a God whose name is effectual to defeat the enemies of God's people, and yet immanent enough to carefully make an inspection of his earthly creatures known as mankind, is unfathomably wonderful for David.

As stanza three progresses, one can see a move which describes the Creator who strengthens the people of God from stanza two and shows that God is the Creator of heaven. The first bi-colon exhibits specifying parallelism which moves from the general (heavens) to the particular (moon and stars). The move from the first bi-colon to the second shows that the knowledge of God as Creator of the celestial beings causes David to be amazed, and thus this is an example of resultant parallelism. However, the last bi-colon moves from mindfulness to care. This is either resultant parallelism, or expansive parallelism where God is not only mindful of corporate Israel's situation, but he also moves from that transcendent state of omniscience, implied by a careful inspection, to providential care as the imminent benefactor. As David reflects on his emotional state in stanza three, he is driven back to a theological grid through which he must process his emotions. As David returns to the idea of creation from Genesis 1, he is able to answer the question of why mankind is so important to God. This will be David's third reason for praising the Creator.

Stanza 4: Reason for Praise C

6 And you have decreased him slightly from God,
And glory and majesty you have crowned him *with.*
7 You have caused him to have dominion in the works of your hands,
all you set under his feet.
8 The sheep and the cattle, all of them,
And even the beasts of the field,
9 The birds of the heaven and the fish of the sea,

[44] HALOT, s.v. "זכר"; "פקד"

Pulling along the path of the seas

Many standard English translations present an immediately apparent translation issue. How does one accurately translate and represent the אלהים in v. 6? Some choose to use "heavenly beings" (ESV, LEB); "angels" (KJV, NKJV, NIV,); God (NASB, NRSV, NLT). The context of the rest of the stanza draws a clear allusion to Genesis 1. Though the Genesis 1 account speaks of the ובכל-חיה הרמשת על הארץ (1:28), David instead focuses on the animals most dear to him as a former shepherd of צנה ואלפים כלם וגם בהמות (Psalm 8:8), and now the shepherd King.[45] The reference to the fish of the sea and the birds of heaven are clear allusions which present no difficulty. The lexical change between the words for "rule/dominion" רדה (root as appearing in Genesis) and משל (root as appearing in Psalm 8) seems to express a degree of variation which can be seen by comparing the available glosses. The term for *rule* in Genesis often describes one who must tread down opposition to rule, while משל seems to be used to describe more congenial relationships like that between husband and wife.[46] As David sits in his unified kingdom with the blessing of God, his rule probably seems worthy of description in more romantic terms than the prose narrative of Genesis. Through the analogy of antecedent revelation, and the clear references through the lexical and thematic parallels, one can see that this Psalm is referring back to Genesis 1. Thus Psalm 8 is speaking specifically about the creation of mankind in the image of God.[47] Craigie agrees with this assessment when he says, "There are certain affinities between the Psalm and Gen 1 (with respect both to creation in general and the place of mankind within creation)…"[48] The place of mankind within creation is the next point of concern for this work.

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[45] The imagery here should not be lost, in the ANE, a king was described as a Shepherd. As John Goldingay notes concerning the metaphor of shepherding, a king "is his people's shepherd; as Israel's king, YHWH is its shepherd (Gen 49:24; Ps 80:2 [80:1 [MT 2]), and is even the individual's shepherd (Ps 23:1). Like kingship, shepherding suggests on one hand absolute authority and the power of life and death, and on the other an obligation to see that the subjects of this authority and power are looked after properly." (*Old Testament Theology: Israel's Faith* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006]). (Kindle Locations 1122-1125).

[46] HALOT, s.v "משל"

[47] Kaiser Jr., Walter C.. *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching,* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition. Kindle Locations 1881-1883.

[48] Craigie, *Psalms 1 - 50*, 106.

The role of mankind in creation is introduced through the blending of the poetic devices of anthropomorphism and metaphor. The parallelism between the first bi-colon appears to be explanatory in nature, so that the crowning with glory and majesty is the process by which mankind was decreased lightly from God himself. This seems to be a self-deprecating way of saying that man was made to be second-only to God, and man was crowned with glory and majesty. The anthropomorphism is the idea of God crowning someone. A crowning ceremony in the ANE was an important ceremony that designated a transfer of power, and this was evinced in David's own life through taking the King of Rabbah's crown (2 Sam 12:26-31).[49] It is important to note that in the Israelite monarchy there was more emphasis on the anointing of a king in Scripture through the prophetic and priestly offices, and less emphasis on the physical transference of the crown. This may serve to show God's own sovereign rule over the land of Israel, the rulers service at his behest, and the debate on the charismatic leadership of the nation at God's ordination.[50] If this is the case, there is a wider audience than simply the King of Israel, but an extension to all of mankind who have been given a right by God to rule over the earth in some form or fashion. This is substantiated by wider Old Testament literature which is addressed below. However, from the text of Psalm 8, mankind as a totality, serves as God's vice-regent over creation– receiving kingly prerogatives with a right to rule (crown), and the ability to rule (glory and majesty). These adjectives, which man has been crowned with, give him a level of significance evinced by כבוד (to be weighty/heavy). This significance is recognized by all of the created beings and his majesty הדר (adornment/splendor/majesty), whereby man has been clothed for his Kingly office. Again, keeping in mind the antecedent revelation of Genesis 1 as an analogy by which to frame the current poem, the process by which God made man in his own image cannot be missed. Mankind alone was made in God's image, and to touch mankind is in some respects to touch God.[51] Because mankind serves as God's image on earth, they too have been crowned with honor and glory, but that honor and glory is a derivative of God's honor and glory which he has imprinted throughout all of creation in various ways.

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[49] Ryken, *Sweeter than Honey*, 185.

[50] Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 212–13.

[51] John Oswalt notes that "by doing things to the idol, one is simultaneously doing things to the god or goddess and to the natural force he or she inhabits" (*The Bible among the Myths*, 57).

It is not wrong to utilize the Genesis 1 account as a lens through which to view Psalm 8 with the multiplicity of lexical and thematic allusions which have been detailed above. Therefore, it is appropriate to discuss the *Imago Dei's* utilization in Genesis 1 in order to describe how this doctrine was to function. It is also appropriate to interpret the poem thereby. It appears that the primary use of the term צלם (image) in the Hebrew Bible is that of an image or statue of some type that served as an idol. Though the lexicographers make attempts to avoid this for the use in Genesis as evidenced in the *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew* DBL) which defines the term as "image, likeness, i.e., that which is a pattern, model, or example of something (Ge 1:26, 27; 5:3; 9:6), note: the exact reference of whether this is moral, ethical, physical, nature, etc. is not clear[52] The people of Israel, at the foot of the mountain in the plains of Moab receiving the Torah in final form, would have surely understood this term in the primary sense: that of an idol. How can the people of Israel, who believed in one God, and were forbidden from making idols, now assert the idolatrous position of man?

Israel's prophets represent the worship of idols as perhaps the most basic departure from Israel's ancient faith. They act as though the denial of idolatry was at the very heart of Israel's understanding of reality. Such a denial of idolatrous worship implies that God is not to be identified with this world. The second commandment was clear, "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them" (Exod 20:4–5a), and this commandment is the germ-form of the doctrine of transcendence. Oswalt rightly states that "God is not the world, cannot be identified with the world, and cannot be manipulated through the world."[53]

One is forced, by the significance of this term to the original audience, to make attempt at ascertaining what allows Israel and Moses to approve such terminology for the creation of mankind. When "on every side of Israel opulent religious practices centering on images were taking place."[54] Oswalt describes the cultural significance of this term throughout his work showing the view of the ANE inhabitants where:

[52] James Swanson, "צֶלֶם," *DBL*.

[53] Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths*, 65.

[54] Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths*, 65.

> The gods are always represented by images in the shapes of this world. The idol is an ideal representative of continuity [a philosophical principle that asserts that all things are continuous with each other. Thus, I am one with the tree, not merely symbolically or spiritually, but actually. The tree is me; I am the tree. The same is true of every other entity in the universe, including deity].[55]

Oswalt continues his explanation of this cultural significance and explains that:

> First of all, it is a part of nature, whether made of wood or stone or some other natural material; second, it is commonly in the form of a human; and third, it is ritually invested with the names and trappings of a particular god. Thus, the typical idol is at the same time divine, human, and nature. Furthermore, by doing things to the idol, one is simultaneously doing things to the god or goddess and to the natural force he or she inhabits.[56]

Moses' use of the term *image* communicate that mankind in some way not only resembles the appearance of God, which is where most studies have focused, but it also communicates how one's interactions with other humans made in God's image can influence how God reciprocates in his interactions with mankind. In some way, how one interacts with other humans impacts God, because man is made in God's image.

This is the highest possible view of mankind, as man is now seen as a type of pathway to worship. Though humans are not the direct object of worship, proper worship must include proper interaction with mankind who serves as an indirect object or mediator of worship toward God. Many of the ANE myths involved a low view of humanity and portrayed their god's by making mankind in the same fashion as other created beings. This was often the case whether they were created solely to serve the gods by providing sacrifices or whatever else. However, the biblical account portrays through the creation account that God desired to make man, the pinnacle of creation, like himself. Yet God still made man distinct since he was taken from the ground without "some automatic partaking of the "stuff" 'of God.'"[57]

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[55] Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths*, 43.

[56] Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths*, 57.

[57] Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths*, 69.

Stanza 5: Concluding Call to Praise

[10] Oh LORD our Lord,
how magnificent is your name in all the earth!

The final stanza is a brief bi-colon serving as a concluding call to worship, and forms an inclusio to the entire poem. An "inclusio… is actually another form of repetition. It refers to a repetition that marks the beginning and the end of a section, thus effectively bracketing or enveloping the marked-off material that belongs together."[58] Though repetition has been eschewed by modern man, it served an important function in ANE literature. Robert Alter explains in his work *The Art of Biblical Narrative* that, in "the more leisurely, simpler life-rhythms of the ancient Near East, so it would seem, every instruction, every prediction, every reported action had to be repeated word for word in an inexorable literalism as it was obeyed, fulfilled, or reported to another party."[59] Describing the functions of repetition in biblical narrative, Alter draws attention to the fact that a theme may be repeated to express "an idea that is part of the value-system of the narrative."[60] This repetitive theme of worshiping the LORD of Israel, who is the lord of the Israelite nation, is caused because of the magnificence of God's name in all of the earth. The above text of the poem shows a variety of ways in which this magnificence was displayed, but they all derive from the role of יהוה as the Creator. This being the case, the worship of mankind directed towards יהוה is the proper response of the created being, made in the image of God, to their Creator – who alone is worthy of worship. With the exegetical task performed, one can now move on to a theological analysis of the contents of the Psalm.

Theological Analysis

A theological analysis must move through a particular methodology as Millard J. Erickson has drawn great attention to in his foundational work

[58] Walter C. Kaiser and Moisés Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, Rev. and expanded ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007). Kindle Loc. 2521.

[59] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, Rev. (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 111.

[60] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 120.

Christian Theology.[61] An analysis of the theological contents of Psalm 8 would be worthy of a full monograph, however, this is beyond the scope of this endeavor. Therefore, only the most pertinent theological details will be provided. This process will move through the progress of revelation, analyzing the main theological themes found within the Psalm itself. This process is done in order to analyzing the theological impact of Psalm 8 within a particular sub-section of the Psalter, to the entire Psalter. Since it is assumed that the Psalter would have reached final redaction at a late date, the theology of the Psalter will include the theological weight of Psalm 8 compared with the entire Old Testament. Since this paper has worked from an understanding of the Psalms as part of the Christian canon, it is proper to examine the use of Psalm 8 in the New Testament, for which only one example will be provided. The paper concludes with a final theological application for the contemporary audience.

Individual Psalm

As was seen above, the Psalm 8 is a treasure of theological truth. For brevity's sake, this analysis will focus on three key theological themes that were expressed. The identity and power of God as יהוה, the works of יהוה as a witness to his majestic magnificence, and the role of mankind as the image and vice-regent of יהוה. These three theological themes follow along the main theological ideas found within the stanzas which detail the reasons for praise. These three themes are therefore an adequate reflection of the Psalmist's main theological assertions.

The Identity and Power of God's Name: יהוה

3 From the mouth of children and babies you have founded strength,
on account of your enemies,
ceasing the enemy and the avenger.

Verse 3 asserts that it is from the mouths of weak and vulnerable humans, denoting verbal actions, that God has "founded/established/ordained" his strength to go out, and that this was the case because of God's enemies. Furthermore, it shows that God's strength, when activated through the verbal action of his weak and beggarly people, will be efficacious and cease the hostile intentions of the enemy and avenger. The question becomes: What type of verbal action activates

[61] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 62–84.

the strength of God? As was seen above through antecedent revelation, the Israelite people were not permitted to use the name of יהוה in any way they should choose. Instead, it was only through those ways which God permitted his name to be employed that Israel could invoke the divine name. As one reads the Old Testament, it becomes apparent that prayers, songs, and instruction were all legitimate uses of employment of the divine name. Prayers were addressed to יהוה regularly, and it was to יהוה alone that Israel was allowed to pray. Furthermore, it has been clearly evinced in the Old Testament, and in David's life in particular, that God answers the prayers of his people to affect his will in the earth. Therefore, prayer should be understood as one's proper mode of utilizing God's name to evoke his strength to stop the hostilities of the enemy.

The second method in which the name of יהוה is employed without reprimand is in song. This Psalm itself, and others surrounding it written by David, show that singing Psalms to יהוה is appropriate, and that God had a way of evoking strength in the people of God as they sang praises to his name, or even songs of lament.

The third method in which the name of יהוה may be employed is for didactic purposes. The Torah was clear that the children were to be taught the great works of יהוה so that they may in turn pass these stories on to their children. Didactic functions began in the family, but they were not limited to these instances. The people of God were to discuss the teachings of יהוה daily as they carried out their tasks, and as they thereby were sanctifying the secular as they journeyed. Sometimes this didactic function included the necessity of correction and rebuke. This is clear through the ministries of the prophets as King David himself had to endure through Nathan after his sin with Bathsheba. David is seen rebuking Saul by invoking the name of יהוה on multiple occasions. These rebukes were not in vain. God continued to uphold David by securing him against his enemy so that Saul was unable to destroy David. From these Scriptures it is apparent that the name of יהוה can be employed through didactic functions. Further, this didactic function has the ability to cease the hostile actions of the enemy and establish God's strength among his people. Therefore, in conclusion, the following is apparent. As the people of God pray, worship and witness that God's strength is established, then the hostile intentions of the enemies are stopped, and that blasphemous fools are silenced by the power of the divine name of יהוה.

The Works of יהוה as a Witness to his Magnificent Majesty

4 When I see your heaven, the work of your fingers,
The moon and the stars which you have established,
5 What is man that you remember him,

and the son of mankind that you watch him?

The second stanza has a rhetorical and emotional effect that is unmatched in the rest of the Psalm. It describes David's gaze upon the night sky, and his attribution of the celestial beings to the work of יהוה as the Creator. This is done in anthropomorphic language which David was able to comprehend. As David looks at the sky, he is unable to put together a transition statement, but instead he gaps the necessary verb of thinking which is clearly implied. David is left in amazement to wonder about the two polar extremes of God's nature: immanence and transcendence. Only a transcendent God could create the celestial bodies, and only an immanent God could take notice of mankind and care for him. The God of David was both immanent and transcendent. However, it should be noticed that these two ideas were only evinced through creation. As mankind stops to examine the works of the יהוה they should be moved to worship as David is, and mankind should question the unfathomable gap which has in fact been bridged because of God's care for his creatures.

With this stanza there are two distinct works brought to the attention of David, and therefore the attention of the reader. The first work is God's work as the Creator of heaven and earth which is reinforced by the opening and concluding call to worship. יהוה has in fact set his majesty over the heavens, and in v. 5 that becomes evident to David. As David beholds the majesty of God in the heavens, tying God's role as Creator to his right to rule (implied in the term majesty), he is forced to reckon with the opposite truth that God is still concerned with beings who are infinitesimally less permanent or glorious than those celestial beings. It is this concern and care, which is God's second work, that stands as witness to the majesty and magnificence of יהוה. יהוה is not a God who is far off, but one who is still close at hand, intimately involved in the everyday affairs of his creatures, knowing their thoughts, knowing their ways, and caring for them through protecting them from the enemy. As David thinks about God's care for him, and others like him, he asks the humble question that should flow from one aware of their position before an omnipotent and omnipresent Creator: "What is man that you are mindful of him?" This leads David to reflect on the third great theological truth of Psalm 8. Man matters to יהוה because man has a special relationship to יהוה.

Man as the Image of יהוה Functions as Vice Regent

[6] And you have decreased him slightly from God,

And glory and majesty you have crowned him *with.*
7 You have caused him to have dominion in the works of your hands,
all you set under his feet.

The exegetical section dealt thoroughly with the analysis of how the allusion to the doctrine of the *Imago Dei* was displayed in Psalm 8 and its understanding via antecedent revelation. The theological impact of it still stands in need of further evaluation. Here the King of Israel, depicted as a world superpower in the Hebrew Bible, is now showing all of mankind to be crowned with majesty and glory. This had important ramifications for the King of Israel. It was clear in the law of the king, issued by Moses and expanded by Samuel, that the King of Israel was to come from among the "brothers" (Deut. 17:14-15, 1 Sam. 8:10-14, 10:25-27). The King of Israel was, from a human standpoint, the first among equals. He received divine authorization, and yet he was still a king over a nation which was supposed to be a nation of priests and kings. As such, his dealings with these other members of the society was to be conducted in such a way that their dignity was maintained, and their rights were upheld. David was not above the law, and he was to treat all within his realm as fellow dignitaries bearing the image of God. When David failed to do this, as he did in the sin against Uriah, he was duly chastened. The causal clause concerning dominion is important for understanding this idea. Mankind did not arise to power through their own devices, whether the ancestors, or David. It was through the causation of יהוה that mankind was given the right to rule. As such, their dominion is accountable to the ultimate sovereign. Kim draws attention to the fact that this dominion is to be exerted in a benevolent way as a caretaker recognizing the derivation of this authority from God.[62] Kim further summarizes the theological content much in line when he notes that the reasons of praise "emphasize God as "majestic Creator" whose creation invokes awe, and that God's care for his creation has been deligated to humans."[63] Despite Kim's own over-reaches for ecological concerns, he rightly draws attention to the nature of this derived stewardship. All men, David included, will be required to give an account for their stewardship of יהוה's creation. All men are liable to judgement for mismanagement.

Subsection: Psalm 3-10

[62] Kim, "Psalm 8," 14.

[63] Kim, "Psalm 8," 14.

It has been commonly assessed that Psalm 1 and 2 function as an introduction to the entire Psalter, and therefore it should be given for the sake of argument that it also forms an introduction to Book I of the Psalter, and by extension the first sub-section to which it is attached.[64] Walter C. Kaiser has elsewhere argued for Psalm 3–10 as an intentional redacted *inclusio* based on the content of the titles of Psalms 3 and 9, as well as upon acceptance of the argument that Psalms 9–10 were meant to be understood in final redacted form as two parts of one whole thus completing the acrostic left undone by Psalm 9.[65] As such, the placement within this proposed subsection should be addressed. Kaiser has described the relationship between acrostics, like that of 9–10, and the creation Psalms:

> Another important contribution to understanding the structure in book I is the location of four alphabetic acrostic Psalms (from the total of eight acrostic Psalms that appear in the Psalter). These acrostics are somewhat distinctive in their poetic form in that they do not always place the alphabet in its usual sequence in the consecutive verses. Significantly these acrostic poems are related to creation Psalms and usually follow a creation Psalm. Thus, there are only three creation Psalms in Book I (from a total of eight for the Psalter), yet in each case a creation Psalm precedes an acrostic Psalm.[66]

Kaiser is right to note that this is not "part of a random connecting of text; it was done to fill out a key theological concept."[67] After noting the reformed emphasis on the redemptive historical framework of the Old Testament, he brings attention to the key theological aspect which has been neglected:

> But what often gets neglected is the doctrine of creation that supplies another dominant theme from the older Scripture, in which the One coming as Redeemer is also to be seen simultaneously as the sovereign Creator Lord who rules over all princes, principalities, powers, and

[64] Walter C Kaiser, "The Structure of the Book of Psalms," *BSac* 174.693 (2017): 5–6.

[65] Kaiser, "The Structure of the Book of Psalms," 8.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

> authorities. He will not only redeem his people from their sin, but he will reign and rule as King of kings and Lord of lords forever and forever over all kingdoms and peoples. This is the aspect that the creation and acrostic Psalms contribute to the redemptive-historical theme found in these Psalms.[68]

Therefore, this Psalm is drawing attention to the relationship between the Heavenly Redeemer, stressed in Psalms 3–9, the Lordly King of Psalm 2, and the Creator of Psalm 8. These relationships cannot be neglected. In fact, there seems to be a causal relationship between these doctrines, evinced not only in Psalm 8 as seen above, but throughout the entire Old Testament since the Primeval History of Genesis. Since יהוה is the Creator, he is intimately concerned with the well-being of his creation, and he is seeking to redeem them. In doing so יהוה is fulfilling the ANE model of a benevolent monarch.[69]

The Psalter and Old Testament

With the completion of the Psalter it is likely that one is standing at the close of the OT canon. Certain Psalms are clearly exilic to post-exilic. This brings about an important aspect of the Psalter's composition which has not been neglected by modern Psalms scholars; there was no Davidic monarch, and there was no sovereign state of Israel at the time of final redaction.[70] The messianic references, the Kingship Psalms, and those Psalms boasting of Israel's prominence in the earth were not accurate depictions of the current reality for the original audience of the final redaction. As such, these Psalms would have been sung as an expression of hope in God's promises that, as of the time of reception,

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[68] Ibid.

[69]Marc Van De Mieroop suggests that the ideology of kingship at the time in view was that, "The king was a shepherd and a farmer. He had to take care of his people, providing them with fields for their sustenance and making these fields fertile through irrigation projects. The people expected such a level of concern from him." (*A History of the Ancient Near East, ca. 3000-323 B.C*, 2nd ed., Blackwell History of the Ancient World [Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2007], 120–21).

[70] Rolf A. Jacobson and Karl A. Jacobson suggests that "the book of Psalms was not collected into its final form until many years later, perhaps as late as 100 CE" (*Invitation to the Psalms: A Reader's Guide for Discovery and Engagement* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013], 67–68). W. H. Bellinger Jr. notes that "many scholars began to date the Psalms late in the history of ancient Israel's religion (after 587 BCE)" (*Psalms: A Guide to Studying the Psalter*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012], 16–17).

were left unfulfilled and awaiting future realization.[71] Since Daniel was written during the exile, and there is evidence of the Jews of the second temple period taking the phrase "Son of Man" as a Christological title, then it could be argued that this would have been understood here in Psalm 8 by the time of final redaction.

In second-temple Judaism, the theological expectation of this "Son of Man" was that he would be the one who would restore the fate of Israel, and he be worthy of receiving worship in the heavenly council of יהוה. This one who was somehow "like" a son of man (denoted by the כ clause of Daniel 7:13) received worship. This was an abstract idea for the intensely monotheistic people of Israel.[72] The nation of Israel was still subdued by the foreign rulers of the earth. This was expressed in Daniel's vision as the four beasts rising out of the sea.[73] The image of God found in this one "like a son of man" was to take the *Imago Dei* to a new significance; and it was understood as such by the post-exilic community.[74] The Son of Man was to be the divine image bearer *par excellence*. The Son of Man would be the one who would have all things delivered to his dominion as Israel received the pride of place among the nations. The Son of Man

[71] Bellinger, *Psalms*, 70.

[72] John J. Collins et. al. explains that the apparition of the "'one like a human being' is separated from the beasts in the text by the description of the Ancient of Days, which is generally accepted as a mythic-realistic symbol for God. The Ancient One is assumed to exist outside the dream, and there is no more appropriate or familiar language by which he might be described. Accordingly, we are subsequently given no identification of the Ancient of Days by the angel. It is highly significant that the 'one like a human being' is not interpreted either. He is associated with 'the holy ones of the Most High' insofar as they too are said to receive the kingdom, but there is no one-to-one equation, such as we have with the beasts and the kings. If an argument is to be drawn from the nature of the symbolism, then, it should favor the view that the 'one like a human being' is a symbol of the same order as the Ancient of Days—a mythic-realistic depiction of a being who was believed to exist outside the vision" (*Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993], 305).

[73]Collins et. al. note that the sea "had a long history as a symbol of chaos in the Hebrew Bible and before that as a personified deity in Canaanite myth. The biblical tradition, … used the sea and its monsters as symbols for the enemies of Israel" (*Daniel*, 294–95).

[74] Collins et. al. summarize that "the traditional interpretations of the 'one like a human being' in the first millennium overwhelmingly favor the understanding of this figure as an individual, not as a collective symbol. The most usual identification was the messiah, but in the earliest adaptations of the vision (the *Similitudes*, 4 Ezra, the Gospels) the figure in question had a distinctly supernatural character." (*Daniel*, 308)

would bring all nations to a state of worship before God in Jerusalem, long prophesied by the pre-exilic prophets. The only question left unanswered, for some 400 years, is about the identity of this Son of Man figure. This conundrum would be resolved in the pages of the New Testament, and it is to those pages that this theological analysis now turns.

The Use of the OT in the NT

In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus enters Jerusalem during Passion week and is hailed by the Israelites with worship with "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"[75] When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee" (Matt 21:9-11).[76] Immediately after Jesus's entrance to the city Matthew records Jesus entering the temple and cleansing it of the moneychangers for corrupting the house of prayer, by turning it into a den of robbers. The crowd continues their worship saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" (Matt 21:15). Upon the actions of the crowds and Jesus, the chief priest and scribes took umbrage and attempted to chastise Jesus saying to him "'Do you hear what these are saying?' And Jesus said to them, 'Yes; have you never read, "Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise?"'" (Matt. 21:16).

This text shows a few things that are pertinent to the exegesis of Psalm 8. The first is that the crowds seem to be recognizing Jesus as the Messiah, with expectations of Israel's ascension in the geopolitical arena. The crowd expected all things to be placed under the feet of the Messiah, and by extension, Israel.[77] With this expectation, they are moved to praise יהוה as seen by the use of κυρίου,

[75] Matt 21:1–11; Mark 11:1–11; Luke 19:28–38; John12:12–19

[76] Unless otherwise noted all Scripture quotations from the New Testament are from the English Standard Version.

[77] Lawrence H. Schiffman suggests that in the Psalms of Solomon, "The Roman domination of Jerusalem in the author's time encouraged his longing for a Davidic king. This king is expected to rule over Israel, crush its enemies, and cleanse Jerusalem of the Gentiles (17:23-27). Righteousness will reign, and the land will again be returned to the tribal inheritances (17:28-31). The Gentiles will serve the Davidic king and come up to Jerusalem to see the glory of the Lord. This righteous king will bless his people with wisdom and be blessed by God. He is described as 'anointed of the Lord.' This Messiah, despite God's providential benevolence on his behalf, is seen as a worldly ruler, a real king of Israel." ("The Concept of the Messiah in Second Temple and Rabbinic Literature," *Review and Expositor, A Baptist Theological Journal* 84.2 [1987]: 238).

the common substitution for יהוה, in Hellenistic Judaism.[78] Jesus comes into Jerusalem, intentionally fulfilling the Messianic prophecy of Zech 9:9, and is recognized by the crowd the Messiah. This is seen with their appropriate move to worship. Jesus immediately begins functioning as the Messiah through his cultic reforms. It was common in OT literature for the King to oversee the cultic practices. David ordained the priesthood as seen in the above exegesis, and was followed by David's successors, most successfully Solomon (the institution of Temple Worship in 2 Chron 7), Hezekiah (2 Kings 18), and Josiah (2 Chron. 34). When Jesus received the acclaim of "Son of David" he is recognized as King. When Jesus cleansed the temple, he is functions as a priest, and the people hail him as a prophet in v. 11.

The invocation of the name of יהוה in v. 9 is found in the proper employment through the verbal expression of praise by the people of Israel. Their recognition of Jesus's role as the Messiah of the Lord leads Jesus to take on his messianic function in an attempt to restore the people's ability to pray (the second proper employment of the divine name as seen above). When the priests and scribes cluttered the temple with money-changers, they were preventing prayer. As a result of this, they were hindering the strength of יהוה from being activated by the people. The priests and scribes confront Jesus and then Jesus quotes the Psalm 8. In this quotation Jesus is chastising them. This is clear because it was from these infants and the mouths of babes that God was ordaining his strength. The commoners, the poor, and the afflicted, who were being taken advantage of by the teachers of Israel were the ones who were activating the strength of יהוה. The priests and scribes, those who were tasked with the didactic function of teaching the words of יהוה as a means of activating God's strength, had instead been found to be preventing that activation. With thick irony Jesus rebukes the religious leaders with Psalm 8. In doing so Jesus shows God's care for the helpless and dependent people which is activated through their verbal acts of praise and worship. The people who thought that they could activate God's power through sacrifice and teaching had instead devolved into the exact type of magical incantation which God refused to suffer (through the third commandment of Moses). God was not to be manipulated through the invocation of his name in the cult, or even through dry and lifeless teachings. Instead, the activation of God's strength was to come through the humble prayers, praises, and testimony of his weak, dependent, and beggarly people who recognized the work of God in their midst.

[78] TDOT, s.v. "Κύριος, Κυρία, Κυριακός, Κυριότης, Κυριεύω, Κατακυριεύω"

The Greek text of Jesus's quotation in Matthew's account is important to note. Καταρτίσω is in the middle voice, which has a reflexive element, "you prepared praise for yourself."[79] Jesus is validating that יהוה has prepared this praise for himself. This act of praise, performed by the crowds, finds its ultimate source in God. God has chosen to establish his strength in his people, and through the means of verbal worship. The lifeless cult of the second temple was days away from being undone to perform the words Jesus spoke to the woman at the well in John 4. The day was coming in which the mountain one worshipped on would be of no effect. God's people would worship him in spirit and in truth through their verbal actions, employing the name of יהוה appropriately to the ends of the earth.

Contemporary Theological Application

A contemporary theological application for Old Testament passages is a debated topic among theologians with some finding the Old Testament to be applied more rigidly through principalization (Walter C. Kaiser Jr.),[80] and others finding the necessity of biblical theology to inform the process (John Bright).[81] This analysis moves forward seeking to apply the principles found in biblical theology. In this case, the application happens to be faithful to Kaiser's theory of principalization. Psalm 8 displayed three reasons for praising the Creator, and it is fitting that a theological application of Psalm 8 should find a contemporary way to praise God for the same reason. These three reasons are: the power of the divine name (now revealed in Jesus Christ), the role of Jesus as the Creator and Sustainer, and the idea of the *Imago Dei* being finally revealed in the person Jesus Christ.

There is Power in the Name of Jesus

Psalm 8 shows a deep respect for the name of יהוה by which its proper employment was a way to access divine strength for the good of the community. The Gospels show two important theological truths about the name of יהוה: First, they show that Jesus was comfortable taking on the divine name to describe

[79] BDAG, s.v. "καταρτίζω"

[80] Gary T. Meadors and Walter C. Kaiser, eds., *Four Views on Moving beyond the Bible to Theology*, Counterpoints Bible & Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

[81] John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1967).

himself (most clearly evinced in the "I am" statements of John, but also shown through Jesus's use of divine prerogatives). Second, the Gospels show that the name of Jesus has now been infused with power for the Christian audience. Just as the Jews were commanded to pray, worship, and teach the name of יהוה, so now the Christians are commanded to pray in the name of Jesus, to worship the name of Jesus, and to teach the name of Jesus.

There is a power associated with the employment of the name of Jesus as seen throughout the Scriptures. There is also a healthy respect shown for the name of Jesus (as seen in Acts with Sceva's sons). Perhaps the greatest power about the name of Jesus is the fact that there is no other name given under heaven and earth by which man may be saved. The name of Jesus has power to save people from the "enemy" whether Sin, Satan, or even the God of the earth whom mankind, as sons of the devil, is at war with. If this was the only strength to be found in the name of Jesus, then it would be sufficient for mankind to worship, pray, and teach for all time. However, Jesus, as the incarnation of יהוה, is a benevolent Lord. Jesus has given humanity access to further blessings through the proper use of his name in prayer, worship, and witness. Therefore, the Christian should pray in the name of Jesus, worship the name of Jesus, and tell others about Jesus. By doing this, the Christian is able to access the strength of יהוה which is found in Christ alone.

Jesus is the Creator and the Sustainer

The second contemporary application of Psalm 8's theological content is found in the idea that God is still the Creator and Sustainer of life, and he is worthy of worship. However, the New Testament clarifies the process by which God has wrought this great creative work. John 1:1–3 informs the reader that, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." Furthermore, the book of Colossians tells the reader that, "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" (Col 1:15-18). As such, the Creator of the universe has been identified as Christ, who was with the Father, and he is at work sustaining creation by holding them together. For Christ to be the Sustainer of life, he, like the depiction of יהוה in Psalm 8, is intimately involved with his created beings. In fact, Hebrews 7:25 states that Jesus "lives to make intercession"

for his people. This Lord, Jesus Christ, is the Creator and Sustainer. The Christian should turn to Jesus in prayer and worship, casting all of their cares upon him, because He cares for them (1 Pe. 5:7). It is through these means that the Christian can continue to access the strength that comes from the employment of the divine name, now revealed as Jesus Christ.

Christians are Ambassadors of Christ Being Conformed to his Image

The final contemporary application of Psalm 8 through a biblical theological analysis is worthy of more treatment that is within the scope of this study. To put succinctly, man was made in the image of God, yet that image was tainted through the effects of sin. As noted above in Col 1:15 Jesus Christ was the perfect image bearer of God through the incarnation. It is now through his presence and indwelling Spirit, working conjointly with his word, that Christians are being conformed to the image of Christ. Rom 8:29 shows that this is the goal of the Christian faith and Christ's mission, "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." C. S. Lewis perhaps said it best when he said, "Every Christian is to become a little Christ. The whole purpose of becoming a Christian is simply nothing else."[82] As such, the Christian is to praise God for the ability to participate in the divine nature offered through Christ's indwelling presence, and the Christian is to submit to God's sanctifying process through study, prayer, corporate worship, and admonition. This is to be done with the goal of imaging Christ to a lost and dying world in a way that glorifies God.

Conclusion

This exegesis and theological analysis displayed one important concept: God is worthy of worship because he is the Creator. God has displayed his glory in creation through the power of the divine name. The divine name is to be utilized appropriately, whether through praise, prayer, or witness. The name, which now is given the divine prerogative of effecting strength through the words of his people, is the name of Jesus Christ. The second reason for praising the Creator is because of the visible external display of his transcendence and the emotion felt, and the didactically taught truth of his immanence. While those of former times used to wonder where salvation would come from, there was one who ascended to heaven and brought truth and salvation down to man. In this he cared for our every need, unwilling to quench a smoking flax or break a bruised reed, and his name is Jesus

[82] C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Rev. (San Francisco: Harper One, 2001), 170.

Christ. As such, for the Christian community, the transcendent and immanent Lord is now defined as Jesus Christ. The last reason for praise witnessed in Psalm 8 is through the distinct relationship יהוה has with mankind. This relationship was broken through the effects of sin, but atonement has been made. Christians have been made one, in a limited sense, through the indwelling presence of Jesus Christ whose image they are being conformed to for the glory of God. These three reasons for praising the Creator are maintained throughout the entire canon of Scripture, and they have been expanded to show that Jesus has taken part in all three of those aspects. Therefore, the concluding call to praise found in Psalm 8 could be appropriately expanded for the Christian audience so that they can boldly say “Oh Jesus, our Lord, how magnificent is your name in all the earth!”

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