

# Humans Rule

Favorite Psalms Part 37  
Psalm 8:5-8 8/13/2017

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Summary: Man is obviously very important as seen by the extremes of his good and evil. This is because God exalted man in 4 ways: 1) He made man a little lower than heavenly beings, 2) crowned man with glory and honor, 3) made man ruler over the work of his hands, and 4) put everything under man's feet. Therefore we should subdue the world, honor humans, and keep the creation under our feet where it belongs.

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**Psalm 8: For the director of music. According to gittith. A psalm of David. 1 O Yahweh our Adonai, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. 2 From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. 3 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, 4 what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? 5 You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. 6 You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: 7 all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, 8 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. 9 O Yahweh our Adonai, how majestic is your name in all the earth!**

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## Introduction

### What is Man?

In v.4 we see the question, "What is man?" There are a lot of people who think they have the answer to that question. Biologists will talk to you about the human genetic code. Psychologists and sociologists will talk about behavioral tendencies. Philosophers will delve into their speculations. But none of them explain the mystery of what man is. Blaisé Pascal put it well: "What sort of freak then is man! What a novelty! What a monster, what a chaos, what a contradiction, what a prodigy! Judge of all things, feeble earth-worm, repository of truth, sinkhole of doubt and error, glory and refuse of the universe. Who will unravel this tangle?<sup>1</sup>"

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<sup>1</sup> Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, 85.

Who can possibly understand the extreme greatness and nobility of mankind, right alongside the unimaginable depravity and evil of mankind? It was man who invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz, and it is man who does things like diving on a hand grenade so his comrades can go rescue those being put in those ovens. You hear about the unthinkable things that Isis soldiers or sex traffickers do to people. Then you think about the great heroes of history who do things that bring tears to our eyes when we see him depicted in movie. Same race - humans. You think of the incredible love a mother has for her child. There's nothing in the world like it. Then you hear about a mother who drowns her own children so that her abusive boyfriend won't leave her. Same race. We call the Isis fighters animals, but really what they are doing is far worse than anything any animal ever did. And we see a war hero sacrificing his life to save others and call him an angel, but no angel has ever given his life for his friend. The truth is, we are neither animal nor angels. Angels are spirits without bodies and animals are bodies without spirits. But man is something else. We are worse than animals, and better than angels.

Something about mankind is so important that when we are good, it brings sunshine into life; and when we go bad, it's a kind of bad that just seems to just rattle the very creation. Both our good and our evil seem to be important in ways we can't even understand. In fact, that's the conclusion Pascal draws. He says all that about man and then concludes: "Man transcends man." There is something about us that is way over our own heads. Why do our actions matter so much?

None of the definitions of humanity from biologists, psychologists, sociologists, or philosophers can answer that. But David gives us the answer here in Psalm 8. What all the scientists in the world can't do in millions of books and studies, God does in 9 verses. Our nobility and our evil are of great significance because mankind is so important in God's created order. And the reason we are so important is because of how God has exalted man. He makes 4 statements about that in vv.5-6.

## The Exaltation of Man

Verse 5

- 1) **You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings**
- 2) **crowned him with glory and honor.**

Verse 6

- 3) **You made him ruler over the works of your hands**
- 4) **you put everything under his feet**

### 1) Made a Little Lower than the Heavenly Beings

The first one tells us what we are as human beings. Where we fit in the universe. God made mankind **a little lower than the heavenly beings.**<sup>2</sup> Evolutionists think we are animals. The founder of PETA, said "A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy." She couldn't see any difference between a rat and a human being. They talk about how there is only a 2% difference between the genetic codes of humans and chimps.

If the human genetic code is 98% identical to the chimps, then obviously there is more to us than genes, because any moron should be able to see that there is a huge difference between chimps and humans. Just watch the chimps for a while. They pick bugs off each other's backs. That's their life's work.

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<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew says **You made him a little lower than Elohim**, and most of the time in the OT, Elohim means God. But that word can also refer to human authorities (Ex.21:6-9) or to supernatural beings (1 Sam.28:13, Zech.12:8, Ps.97:7, 138:1, 86:8, 82:1, 2 Chr.2:5, and others). The Greek translation of the OT took this to refer to angels. I agree with that interpretation. It would be somewhat odd, to say "You, God, made him a little lower than God." Since he's speaking to God, you would expect, "You made him a little lower than yourself" if that were the meaning. And when the writer of Hebrews quotes this passage, he quotes the Greek version and makes a point about angels (Heb.2:6-8). The writer of Hebrews is making the point of how Jesus is superior to the angels. So if the proper rendering were "You made him a little lower than God," that would seem to make the point better than "you made him a little lower than the angels." So the fact that he quotes the Greek translation seems to indicate that the Greek translation got it right.

Why do you suppose chimps never seem to produce any documentaries on the genetic makeup of other species? Maybe it's because they can't even say the word "genetic." Your favorite paintings, poems, songs, books, movies, businesses, buildings, cars, symphonies – what a coincidence that all of them came from human beings. They say pigs are some of the most intelligent animals – why haven't the pigs put a pig on the moon yet. And why are they routinely eaten for breakfast by humans?

If you're wondering how significant man is in the universe, the very fact that you're wondering that should be a clue. We ask the question, "What is man?" No dog sits around thinking, "What is dog?" No comet feels small when it compares itself to a Galaxy.

Obviously there is something different about man. When you see how much our virtue matters, and how much our evil matters, and how we're so different from animals and everything else; anyone with a brain should be able to see - something's up with human beings.

And it's not just that we are the highest of the animals. When David ranks mankind, he doesn't say, "You made him a little higher than the animals." We're not a little higher than the animals; we are a little lower than the supernatural, **heavenly beings**.<sup>3</sup> We learn what we are by looking upward not downward. Unbelievers look downward at the animals to define humanity. They define humans in relationship to animals, and as a result of that downward look, they become more and more like animals. God wants us to look upward to define the human race, and as we do, we move more and more in that direction.

But we are lower than the beings in heaven, because we are on earth. We have physical limitations – like death.

**Luke 20:35 But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, 36 and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels.**

Angels and heavenly beings can't die, but for now, we are subject to death, which makes us slightly lower than them. And even that is temporary.

**1 Corinthians 6:3 Do you not know that we will judge angels?**

After the resurrection, we will be above the angels.

## Image

Where does David get all this? Genesis 1.

**Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness**

Human beings are little statues of God. We resemble God in ways that nothing else does. And we can have a relationship with the Creator unlike any other being.

## Morality

That's why our actions have moral implications. Even people who believe we are animals will say it is immoral for us to be cruel to animals, but they don't think it's immoral for animals to be cruel to us or each other. They will say, "Oh, that's just nature taking its course when animals do it." But if man is just another animal, then everything man does is part of nature. So asphalt and guns and computers and SUV's and nuclear bombs would be just as natural as apples and oranges and grass and trees.

Even the people who think that we are just evolved animals end up being inconsistent because they know, deep down, there's something different about man. We are not part of nature; we are above it.

## One Human Race

And that also has implications about the unity of the human race. Our culture has gotten in the habit of using the word "race" to refer strictly to skin color. Take a survey, and under race there will be "white, black, Hispanic, Asian..." It used to be there was one human race. But now, if there are tensions between

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<sup>3</sup> Literally, the "mighty ones."

black and whites, they call it racial tension, as if your skin color makes you a whole different race. That's such nonsense.

Think about that - if you have someone born and raised in Alabama, and a KGB agent from Moscow, and someone from Australia, and a white person born and raised in South Africa, and an Eastern European - even though they have completely different cultures, languages, different physical traits, if they all have white skin, they all have light skin, they are all of the same race - "white." Then if you have someone from Algeria, and someone from Jamaica and a farm boy born and raised in Kansas - if they all have black skin, they are all considered the same race. Same thing with Latinos. Same thing with all Asians, which is really a huge category. People who are as different as can be - physically, socially, linguistically, geographically, culturally - yet they are grouped together as a race. Then you have two best friends - grew up next door to each other, went to high school together, work at the same company, same job, same language, same culture, same mannerisms, both their parents and grandparents lived in that same town - and yet, if one has light skin and the other has dark skin, they are somehow thought to be from different races. Nothing about a person means anything except skin color. It's such nonsense.

That's an artifact of evolutionism. The evolutionist believes that all differences are a result of evolutionary change. The differences between apes and humans - evolutionary mutations. And so they see a difference like black or white skin and they think it's in that same category. And so if you have black skin and I have white skin - you're a little bit different animal. You're descended from a different race.

That is such hogwash. There is only one human race. Everyone who is descended from Adam has a common ancestry and is part of the same race. And skin color is one of the least important factors in defining who you are. So if people ask me my race on a survey, my answer is, "human."

Now, when I say there is only one human race, that's not 100% true. There is actually another human race, so there is a total of 2. And I'll explain what I mean next time, but for now just know that race has nothing whatsoever to do with skin color. All human beings are in the category of bearing the image of God, and that category is vastly different from and above every other category of created things.

## 2) Crowned with Glory and Honor

The second thing David says is **you crowned [man] with glory and honor**. Now that sounds a little bit over the top, doesn't it? Those are terms normally used to describe God. This is some very extreme language to describe the exaltation of mankind. But the point is that mankind reflects the glory of God in ways that the rest of creation doesn't. The heavens declare the glory of God, but not like human beings.

The word **crowned** introduces the royal concept of man as king. And that's even more explicit in the next statement.

## 3) Made Ruler

### 6 You made him ruler over the works of your hands

Again, right out of Genesis. Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and *let them rule* God made us to be kings of his creation. The whole Bible is about the kingdom of God, and man plays a role in ruling that kingdom.

### Delegation

Now remember - everything in this psalm is about the majesty of God. He shows his majesty in 2 ways: by using the weakest instruments to defeat his enemies, and by using the weakest of instruments to rule his creation.

One of the most difficult aspects of leadership is delegation. It takes a great deal of skill to delegate important tasks, and find that balance between micromanagement, and leaving so much freedom that you fail to provide the leadership to keep the organization going in the right direction. It takes a special kind of person to be good at that - someone who can empower others to really flourish and still provide just enough guidance.

It's easier if you are delegating a task to someone who is highly competent. The less competent the person is, the more impressive your leadership is if you can make it work. God delegated the task of ruling the universe to these tiny little microbes called mankind. How majestic is his name!

## **The Cultural “Mandate”**

So we are to rule. Genesis 1:26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule...28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule Theologians have referred to this as the “cultural mandate.” Right after God creates man to rule, God tells man to be fruitful, fill the earth, and subdue it. For what purpose? For God’s purposes. He’s the king, and we are viceroys, ruling on earth in God’s behalf.

So as the earth fills up with people and animals, there is a need for organization and management. So if two cars are approaching each other, both drivers keep to their right. If there is a line somewhere, you get in back and wait your turn. If you have neighbors, you can’t make too much noise at night. There is a large amount of organization required for society to function, and mankind is in charge of creating and maintaining that. Subduing and cultivating the earth includes all the aspects of human culture - government, art, novels, cell, phones, , the, internet, satellites, hospitals, vaccines, bulldozers, cranes, factories, industry, running, water and sewage systems and water treatment plants and oil rigs and pipelines nuclear submarines. God made us creative and gave us abilities to utilize the resources in the earth and to bring its possibilities to fruition.

So, are manmade things natural? No, they are supra-natural - above nature. God is super-natural (transcending nature); man is supra-natural (above nature). So grain is natural, bread is supra-natural. No other creature in the world makes bread – only man. Bread is an amazing example of what can be made of natural things by a supra-natural being. And the cultural mandate is to take natural resources, and put them to use to mimic God and create things.

## **Environmentalism**

So here’s a question: should we be environmentalists? It depends on how you define it. There are three kinds of people when it comes to the environment: those who ruin it, those who rule it, and those who are ruled by it. Most people who call themselves environmentalists want man to be ruled by the creation, rather than subduing it. They place man under the creation in importance. Kangaroo rats and grey horned owls are more important than a farmer’s livelihood. Don’t cut down any trees, leave the oil in the ground, avoid any disturbance of animal’s habitat. You want to ask those people, how do you get from save the whales to abort the babies? Only by placing man under the creation in importance.

When God put man in the garden, he didn't say, “Careful - don't step on the native grass.” He said, “subdue it.” Man's job is not to stay out of the way of natural processes. Our task is to tend and cultivate the earth. The right kind of environmentalist is one who neither ruins the environment nor is ruled by it, but he rules over it. If he has a garden, he doesn’t let native grass grow. A true environmentalist goes in there, rips out all the native grasses by the roots, gets rid of the rocks, which are also native, tills up the soil, plants non-native seeds, and tends that garden so that it becomes beautiful and fruitful and useful to feed humans. A true environmentalist finds the oil God put in the ground and gathers it up and puts it to work for humans to be productive. And he’s careful about transporting it so he doesn’t make a mess. People who are ruled by the environment will ban DDT and allow mosquitos to spread disease so that millions of little children die horrible deaths of malaria. True environmentalists spray the DDT and kill the mosquitos so the human children can live.

The thinking of unbelievers becomes so twisted, they observe the creation and decide that mankind belongs under the creation, but above God. I won’t submit myself to God’s will, but I will place myself under the created order. So it’s creation, then me, then God. But if we observe the glory of the creation without the corrupted perspective of sin, the obvious conclusion is, “Wow, this place is glorious. Whoever created it must be ultra-glorious!” So we place God at the highest level, then we see that man is in his image, so man comes next, then the creation.

And if we have the right perspective, we'll see ourselves as closer to God than the creation. We are in-between heaven and the creation, but we are defined by our closeness to heaven, not our closeness to earth. We are God's vice-regents to do his work. And that has profound implications for your work, whatever it is. Listen to how God is described in 2 Cor.9:10. 2 Corinthians 9:10 he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food God is the one who supplies bread. Tell me – where can you go to find naturally occurring bread? Isn't it true that every slice of bread you've ever put in your mouth was made by some human baker? With the exception of mana during the exodus and Jesus feeding the multitudes, the only way bread comes into existence is by a human being making it. And God calls himself the supplier of bread.

So Martin Luther said the person who bakes that bread in the mask that God wears when he provides for us. Our society tends to divide work into categories related to how much education it requires or how much salary it brings. So people who flip burgers or push brooms are seen as lesser than doctors and scientists. That's not a biblical worldview. People who push brooms – think about that. Do you realize that if no one cleaned your house at all, you would die? If there were no cleaning, no sanitation, it would get so bad you wouldn't be able to live there. Your house would have to be bulldozed. God provides you with a nice place to live, and the mask he wears when he does that providing is the homemaker who cleans your house. God provided all that food in there, and one of the masks he wore when he provided it was the truck driver who transported it from where it was made to where we could get it. Human participation in God's management of his world is an awesome thing.

God made the world to be remade by culture makers. Culture is when you take raw materials and create something greater. So agriculture is when you do some work so that instead of what just naturally comes up out of the ground – a field of weeds, it's a big crop of food. Horticulture – same thing, except with a garden instead of a farm. Culture is when you take raw materials, and manipulate them and change them and work them to create something greater. And we do that, not only with the ground, but with paint and canvases, and musical sounds, and words and sentences, and wealth, and everything in the whole world. That's what humans do, and that's what humans are supposed to do.

#### **4) Everything Under His Feet**

**6 ... you put everything under his feet: 7 all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, 8 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.**

That's also straight out of the creation account in Gn.1 (and it's repeated in Gn.9 after the flood). God's design is for the creation to be under our feet. And that's also royal terminology, by the way. Those who were subject to a king were said to be under his feet. The entire animal kingdom is under the royal, kingly rule of mankind. David lists the various kinds of animals, starting with those closest to us, and moving outward.

**6 ... you put everything under his feet: 7 all flocks and herds ...**

That's domesticated animals.

**7 ... and the beasts of the field**

That's wild animals.

**8 the birds of the air**

Now we're moving up of the ground into the sky.

**8 ... and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.**

That's the most inaccessible, unexplored part of our world – the depths of the oceans. All of it is under our dominion.

**James 3:7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man**

We've tamed and trained lions, tigers, falcons – even dolphins and whales. The world is under man's feet.

# Applications

Ok, so what about the double trick question – “Where is Jesus in Psalm 8?” I tried my absolute hardest to make it work so I could get to that tonight, but I just couldn’t squeeze it all in. The answer to that double trick question is so profound and important, I really think the Lord would have us spend a whole session just on that. So let’s plan on tackling that next time. For now, let’s spend the rest of our time tonight just thinking through the practical applications of Psalm 8 for our lives. What are the implications for how we should live? I have 5 in my list, 2 that I’ll save for next week, and 3 I’d like to share with you tonight.

## 1. Subdue This World

If God created mankind to show his majesty by ruling over the earth, then we should rule over the earth.<sup>4</sup> We should fill the earth and subdue it. How do we do that? First, realize that every moment that you do what the animals can’t do, you contribute to man’s dominion over the earth, and you are fulfilling your humanity. Have you ever mowed your lawn and, when you were done, stood back for a second and just enjoyed the sense of accomplishment? It’s a little different for all of us. What is it for you? What kind of task makes you want to sit back and look at it and just enjoy the sense of accomplishment? Painting a room in your house, renovating, redecorating, cleaning and organizing your basement. Or maybe just an honest day’s work.

When you have that sense of accomplishment – maybe you don’t throw up your arms and shout, “I’m the king of the world!” – but you could. Because that’s why you have that sense of accomplishment. It’s not really a sense of accomplishment; it’s a sense of reigning over the created order and subduing it and cultivating it. It’s a sense of doing what you were designed by God to do. That’s why it feels good.

## Work for God’s Purposes

But it can go bad, can’t it? You don’t want to ever be like Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4.

**Daniel 4:29 ... as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, 30 he said, “Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?” 31 The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, “This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. 32 You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle.**

We definitely want to steer clear of that kind of thing. But we also want to steer clear of what Adam and Eve did in the Garden when they failed to act like rulers of the creation. God told them to rule over all the animals, and what did they do. One of the animals, as serpent, told them to eat of the forbidden tree. And what did they do? Did they put that serpent under their feet? No, they obeyed the serpent, and placed themselves under the creation instead of ruling the creation. They put themselves under the creation’s feet, rather than putting the creation under their feet. And that plunged mankind into the fall.

So, Adam and Eve were punished because they weren’t kingly enough, and Nebuchadnezzar was punished because he was too kingly. So what’s the balance? How do we avoid both errors?

Remember we are vice-regents. We rule for God, which means we assert our authority and subdue this world and put it under our feet, but we do all that in order to accomplish God’s purposes, not our own. And we do it to bring God glory, not glory for ourselves. Nebuchadnezzar did an impressive job putting the creation under his feet, but he was way off the mark because he did it for his own glory, totally ignoring God’s purposes. When a vice regent starts thinking he is the sovereign king, it’s time for him to go.

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<sup>4</sup> We will see next week that the creation won’t be fully under our feet and we won’t be fully crowned with glory and honor until after the resurrection. However, the fact that that is our destiny has implications for this life. For example, right now we are lower than the angels, but in the future, according to 1 Cor.6, we will judge the angels. And the whole point in 1 Cor.6 about judging angels is to say that since we are destined to judge angels, that means the church is capable of resolving disputes in our midst without having to use secular lawcourts here and now in this life. So even in a fallen, rebellious world, we are to do all we can to subdue it and cultivate it and reign over it.

## **1 Corinthians 10:31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.**

So try this – when you do something that gives you a sense of accomplishment, in your mind, spread out your arms and say, “I’m the king of the world ... for God.” And think through how that thing you accomplished is done as part of God’s sovereign management of this world, and is for his glory.

## **2. Honor People**

If our identity as human beings belongs to the heavenly category – a little lower than the heavenly beings, calling to mind the fact that we bear the image of God, that gives dignity to people. And it has implications on how you should treat people – all people. In Genesis 9 God commanded that murderers get the death penalty because of the image of God. You strike a blow at the image of God; you forfeit your life. Messing with someone in the image of God is serious.

The fact that we believe mankind is in God’s image should impact even the way we talk to one another.

### **James 3 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. ... this should not be.**

Don’t curse God’s likeness. Human beings are in the image of God – they are like little statues of God walking around. Don’t dishonor them.

Think about that in connection with the people who have hurt you. And think about it any time you are people watching. Have you ever known someone who is obsessed with angels? They post stories on Facebook about some mysterious situation and say, “I think it was an *angel!*” I want to post a comment and say, “I can top that. You saw an angel? The other day I was in a situation, and a *human being* showed up! I’m not talking about animals, I’m not talking about angels – I’m talking a genuine, honest-to-goodness *human being.*” That’s the attitude we would have if we really believed Psalm 8, and it would show in the way we treat one another and speak to one another. Remember that the next time you want to yell at your kids or someone on the highway.

## **3. Don’t Make Anything an Idol**

Don’t make the same mistake Adam and Eve made by placing yourself under the creation. There are things in this creation that you are supposed to be ruling over that will try to rule over you. Like food, or fun, or alcohol, or pills, or money. When we allow those things to come between us and God, we are placing ourselves under the creation. Now, instead of being a little lower than the heavenly beings, we are a little lower than the creation. No created thing should come between us and God.

When those things start to rule us, so that our lives are controlled by them, we usually just think of it as a behavior problem. I need to change my behavior and stop being so addicted to this thing. But it’s more than that. It’s also a perspective problem. Remind yourself: *God made me to rule and to put the created order under my feet. I let these things rule me because it seems like they will make me happy. But I’ll have the best happiness when I take my rightful place above those things, not under them. I’ll be happiest when I’m a true man (or woman).* So ask yourself, is there anything in the creation that has ascended up above you so that it is now between you and God? And you are no longer ruling over that thing for God’s purposes, but are being ruled by it because of selfish purposes?

Which of those three do you want to give the most attention to in your life right now?