

PSALMS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Leader's Guide, Lesson Two

PSALM 8

The Son of Man Crowned with Glory

Lesson at a glance

Psalm 8 is a creation hymn about the dignity and dominion of human beings, framed at both ends by the majesty of God's name. David looks at a night sky, asks what a human being amounts to next to all that, and answers with Genesis 1: God crowned man with glory and honor and put the works of His hands under his feet. The lesson then follows the New Testament use of the psalm. Matthew 21:16 puts verse 2 in Jesus' mouth when children shout in the temple. Paul quotes verse 6 in 1 Corinthians 15:27 and Ephesians 1:22 to describe what God did when He raised and enthroned Jesus. And Hebrews 2:5 to 9 builds the argument that gives this lesson its spine: God really did subject everything to man, we plainly do not see that happening, but we do see Jesus, made lower than the angels for a little while and now crowned with glory and honor because He suffered death for everyone. The lesson is about what a human being was made for, what sin did to it, and where it has already been restored.

Goals for this session

First, that each person would understand what Psalm 8 meant in its own setting, including that "son of man" in verse 4 is simply a Hebrew way of saying "a human being," said twice.

Second, that the class would follow the argument of Hebrews 2:5 to 9 step by step and be able to repeat it in their own words, including the honest admission in verse 8.

Third, that the class would see the glory of humanity as something given in Genesis, damaged by sin, and restored in Christ rather than achieved by our own effort.

Fourth, that people in the room who are worn down by their bodies, their failures, or their circumstances would leave with their eyes on the one Man in whom the psalm has already come true.

Preparing to lead

Read Psalm 8 aloud every day this week. It is nine verses. Then read Genesis 1:26 to 2:15 and Genesis 3:17 to 19 alongside it, so that you can hear how much of Genesis is in the psalm and what the psalm does not mention.

Read Hebrews 1 and 2 together in one sitting, more than once, until you can feel the argument. The angels are the thread: chapter 1 says the Son is greater than the angels, and chapter 2 says that He was

made lower than the angels for a little while, and that the world to come was never subjected to them anyway. Mark the connecting words. If you cannot state the logic of 2:8 and 2:9 in two sentences without notes, read it again.

Read Matthew 21:1 to 17, Romans 8:18 to 25, and 1 Corinthians 15:20 to 28 before class. Then pray for the specific people in your group whose lives look least like Psalm 8 right now, the sick, the aging, the ones caring for someone who will not get better. This lesson is for them, and if you prepare it only as an exercise in Hebrews they will miss it.

Sensitive topics in this lesson

Shame and low self-worth. A psalm that asks "what is man" will find whoever in the room already believes the answer is "not much." Do not correct that feeling with a slogan. The psalm answers it with facts: God is mindful of him, God visits him, God crowned him. And Hebrews answers it with Jesus, who was not ashamed to call such people brothers (Hebrews 2:11). Let the text do the reassuring, and be careful that the lesson does not slide into a talk about self-esteem. The subject is not how we feel about ourselves; it is what God made us for and what He has done about it.

Bodies that do not feel crowned. Chronic illness, disability, dementia in a parent, aging, infertility, a body that has been through something. Verse 5 will sting for some in your class. The honest handling is the one Hebrews itself gives: at present we do not see everything in subjection. Do not paper over that. The dignity of a human being in Scripture rests on God's decision, not on capacity or usefulness, and that is exactly why this psalm is good news for the weakest person in the room.

Suffering that has not yet been put right. Question 6 and question 9 will surface real grievances. Some in your class have been waiting a long time. Hebrews 2:8 does not scold them for noticing; it says the same thing they have been saying. Let them hear that the New Testament itself concedes the point, and then walk them to verse 9 rather than around their pain.

Arguments about creation and science. Verse 3 can pull a class into a debate about the age of the universe or the origin of man that will eat the entire hour and teach nobody anything about Psalm 8. Decide in advance how you will handle it. A friendly "that is a real question, and it is a different lesson" said once, early, usually works.

Children, and how adults talk about them. Verse 2 and Matthew 21:16 put children's praise at the center of God's strategy. If there are young people in your class, be careful that no one talks about them as though they were not present or as though their faith were a lesser kind. If there are parents of small children who feel they contribute little, this is the hour to tell them otherwise.

Suggested 60- to 75-minute schedule

Five minutes: welcome.

Five minutes: open in prayer. Read Psalm 8 aloud in full before you pray, and read Hebrews 2:9 after the prayer without comment.

Five minutes: warm-up. Ask each person to name the most beautiful thing they have ever seen outdoors and where they were standing when they saw it.

Thirty-five to forty minutes: discussion. Choose six or seven questions in advance.

Five to ten minutes: "Your response" reflection.

Five minutes: closing prayer.

Discussion priorities

Make sure these are among the questions you discuss: 4 (Genesis 1 inside the psalm), 6 (what happened to the dominion), 7 (the children in the temple), 9 and 10 (the argument of Hebrews 2:8 and 2:9), and 12 (all things under His feet, now). If time runs short, protect 9 and 10. They are the lesson.

Notes on key questions

Question 4. Genesis 1:26 to 28 gives the image of God, the blessing, and the commission to fill the earth and have dominion over the fish, the birds, and every living thing. Then read Psalm 8:5 to 8 immediately after it and let the class hear the echo, including the same categories in nearly the same order. The point to make is that Psalm 8 is not a poet's flattering opinion of the human race. It is a song about a job God actually assigned. That matters when the class reaches Hebrews, because the Hebrew writer takes the assignment absolutely seriously.

Question 6. Genesis 3:17 to 19 puts the ground under a curse and sends the man back to the dust he came from. Romans 8:19 to 22 says the creation itself was subjected to futility and is groaning. The dominion was not revoked; it was damaged, and it now runs through thorns, sweat, and death. Expect concrete answers to the second part: a body that will not cooperate, a child who will not listen, weather, cancer, a job that consumes the person doing it. Take the answers seriously and write them down where the class can see them. You will need them in twenty minutes when you get to Hebrews 2:8.

Question 7. Matthew 21 gives the triumphal entry, the cleansing of the temple, and then the healing of the blind and the lame in the temple courts. The children start crying "Hosanna to the Son of David," and the chief priests and scribes are indignant, which means they understood exactly what the children were saying. Jesus quotes Psalm 8:2 in the wording of the Greek Old Testament, "you have prepared praise," where the Hebrew reads "you have established strength." Both are faithful renderings of a rich verse. Now ask the class the quiet question in part c. In Psalm 8:2, whose praise is it that God has established? It is God's own. Jesus receives it and defends it. He is claiming more in that sentence than in most of His sermons.

Question 9. The admission is in the last sentence of Hebrews 2:8: "At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him." Do not let the class skate past it. The writer has just insisted that God

left nothing outside man's control, and now he concedes that the evidence is against him. That honesty is what makes the paragraph trustworthy. Bible study that cannot admit what everyone in the room already knows is not worth much. Connect this back to the answers the class gave in question 6.

Question 10. Hebrews 2:9 is the turn: "But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone." Two things to draw out. First, the "for a little while" reading: the Greek phrase can mean either a small degree or a short time, and the writer takes it as time, which is why he can use it of the incarnation. Second, the reason for the crown. He was crowned because of the suffering of death. The class will instinctively want the crown to be the reward that replaced the cross; the verse says the cross is why the crown is there. A good two-sentence summary of verses 8 and 9 sounds like this: we do not see the psalm coming true in the human race, but we do see it come true in one Man, and He got there by dying for everyone else.

Question 11. Hebrews 2:10 to 18 is dense, so give it a list. He shared in flesh and blood in order to destroy through death the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil (2:14); to deliver those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery (2:15); to help the offspring of Abraham rather than angels (2:16); to become a merciful and faithful high priest and make propitiation for the sins of the people (2:17); and to be able to help those who are being tempted, because He has been tempted Himself (2:18). Verse 11 is worth reading aloud for its own sake: He is not ashamed to call them brothers.

Question 12. In 1 Corinthians 15:27 Paul quotes Psalm 8:6, "God has put all things in subjection under his feet," and then carefully excludes the Father, who did the subjecting. He bothers because he is about to say in verse 28 that the Son will be subjected to the Father, and he does not want anyone confused about who reigns over whom. Ephesians 1:20 to 23 locates all of this in the past tense: God raised Christ, seated Him at His right hand, put all things under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church. Keep the class from drifting into the idea that Christ's dominion is still waiting to begin. Psalm 8's dominion is being exercised right now by a Man, from heaven, for the benefit of His body.

Question 13. Romans 8:18 to 25 says the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God and will be set free from its bondage to corruption, and that we wait for the redemption of our bodies. Revelation 22:3 to 5 ends the Bible with servants who see His face and who "will reign forever and ever." Draw the line back to Psalm 8:6. The dominion given to man in Genesis, wrecked in Genesis 3, exercised now by Christ, is finally shared with those who belong to Him. Guard the discussion from turning into speculation about the details of the new creation. What Scripture promises is enough: raised bodies, a world set free, and God's face.

About the Study Skills in this lesson

Two Study Skills appear in Lesson Two. Noticing the Superscription trains the class to read the small print above verse 1, which is part of the Hebrew text and often the only historical information a psalm gives us. Psalm 8's heading yields a choirmaster, a musical direction nobody can now define, and David;

other headings yield whole episodes, and the class should learn to go read the story a heading points to. Tracing the Logical Connectors in an Argument is the more valuable of the two for this particular lesson, because Hebrews 2:5 to 18 simply cannot be understood without the words "now," "at present," "but," and "for it was fitting." Have the class circle those words in class if there is time. Once a person has seen an argument turn on a single "but," they read the letters differently for the rest of their life.

A suggested closing prayer

Pray your own prayer. A sample, if you would like one:

"O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth. Thank You that You are mindful of us, that You visit us, and that You gave dust an office and a crown. We confess that we have not kept what You gave us to keep, and that we do not yet see everything in subjection. But we see Jesus. Thank You that He came down lower than the angels for a little while, that He tasted death for everyone, and that He is crowned with glory and honor now. Comfort those in this room whose bodies and burdens make this psalm hard to sing, and let them hear that He is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. Set our eyes on Him this week. In His name we pray. Amen."

Looking ahead to Lesson Three

Next week is Psalm 16, and it is the resurrection lesson of the series. Peter builds the first gospel sermon ever preached on its last verses, and his argument turns on a fact anyone in the crowd could have checked before supper: the tomb of David was still in Jerusalem, with David still in it. Ask the class to read Psalm 16 several times, slowly, and then to read Acts 2:22 to 32 and Acts 13:32 to 37 with the psalm open beside them. Tell them to watch one word in particular, "corruption." Warn them also that the psalm mentions Sheol, and that the class will spend a little time being honest about how much the Old Testament tells us about the realm of the dead and how much it does not.