

## SERMON NOTES

Psalm 8

“What is Man?”

Intro:

Our sun is one of 70 sextillion (21 zeroes) in the universe, and our earth is one of billions of planets in the universe. When we look at the heavens, how could human beings or any earthly creatures possibly have any special significance?

Show clip of “The Privileged Planet” (4:39 – 6:34)

Psalm 8:3-4 When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—  
the moon and the stars you have set in place—  
4what are mortals that you should think of us,  
mere humans that you should care for us?

What is man?

According to Darwinian evolution, Homo Sapiens have no special dignity or moral status above that of any other animal species

According to Darwin’s theory, modern monkeys and apes and modern humans are cousins – descended from some common, more primitive primate ancestor

If you just traced your ancestry back far enough – according to Darwinian evolution -- you would find not only Germans or Swedes or Spaniards, but also more distant cousins such as orangutans, tigers, cows, dolphins, whales, bats and hamsters

Richard Dawkins: “We are survival machines – robot vehicles blindly programmed to preserve the selfish molecules of DNA known as genes.”

George Gaylord Simpson: “Man is the result of a purposeless and natural process that did not have him in mind.”

There is No Supreme Being directing the process of evolution with some intended outcome in mind -- our existence is a fluke rather than a planned outcome - and there is no more significance to our existence than there is to the existence of tadpoles or bats // and our only destiny is to die and perish forever

Most people who believe in Darwinian evolution don’t like to think through the implications of being the product of impersonal and purposeless forces, but one rare Darwinist who has done so is Cornell University Professor William Provine:

There is no God

There is no life after death

There is no absolute foundation for right and wrong

There is no ultimate meaning for life

And people don’t really have free will

And consequently – human beings have no special dignity that would differentiate humans from any other animal species

In contrast to that depressing view, what does the Bible say about man?

## THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD

One's answer to the question "What is man?" will depend on one's answer to the question: "Is there a Creator God?"

If there is no Creator, than man can play god as the most intelligent and powerful being on planet earth – though ultimately his divinity is rather empty and hollow since his existence is a fluke, and all life is meaningless and purposeless, and once his mortal life perishes -- he is gone forever

But if there is a Creator God – then man is a creature – and there is the possibility of meaning and purpose in life – and life after death – but there is also the reality of transcendent standards of right and wrong and accountability to a divine Judge

Psalms 19:1 - 4 (NIV) 1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.

3 There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. 4 Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

Romans 1:19 - 20 (NIV) What may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

God's existence and the glory of His creative handiwork are not hidden or obscure – His eternal power and divine nature are PLAIN – being clearly seen from what God has made

Truth Project:

Why is there something instead of nothing?

Where did the universe come from?

Either the universe has always existed – or it had a beginning

Both the Bible and modern scientific evidence clearly point to the universe having a beginning – the leading scientific theory is the Big Bang theory

If the universe had a beginning – then either everything came from nothing or else everything came from a transcendent Creator who existed before the universe and brought the universe into being by his divine power

Think for a moment of the concept of absolute nothingness – no matter / no energy / no intelligence / no stars / no planets / no life / no chemicals or molecules or atoms / no light / no Supreme Being / no living beings of any kind -- how does absolutely nothing produce everything we see around us?

Why is there something rather than nothing? How can something come from nothing?

Why is there order and design rather than chaos? How can order and design come from randomness and chance?

Why is there life rather than deadness? How can life spring forth from non-life – living organisms from non-living things?

Why is there such beauty as well as order and design and functionality?

Why is there music? Why is there art? Why is there literature and philosophy and theology and

religion? And why only among humans?

Where did the concepts of good and evil come from? Where did the concept of everlasting life come from when all we can see is that all living things die and stay dead?

Why is there love? How does love come from time plus chance plus impersonal forces?

If all life on earth is the result of an unsupervised, impersonal, unpredictable, purposeless and natural process – then where did intelligence and design and order and beauty and music and good and evil and right and wrong and faith and hope and love come from?

Love and Beauty and Truth and Justice and Personality and Free Will and Meaning and Purpose and Design and Order and Music and Art and Mathematics and Language and Hope and Spirituality and Immortality and Life Itself all come from our Creator God who created us in His image

The question “What is man?” can be answered only in relation to our Creator

**MAN WAS CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD TO REFLECT THE LIKENESS OF GOD AND TO RULE OVER GOD’S CREATION**

Psalm 8:1, 3-8    1O LORD, our Lord,  
How majestic is Your name in all the earth,  
Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!  
3When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,  
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;  
4What is man that You take thought of him,  
And the son of man that You care for him?  
5Yet You have made him a little lower than God,  
And You crown him with glory and majesty!  
6You make him to rule over the works of Your hands;  
You have put all things under his feet,  
7All sheep and oxen,  
And also the beasts of the field,  
8The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea,  
Whatever passes through the paths of the seas.

Many people today get confused as to whether we are nothing more than animals or whether we are gods – or both

According to a biblical worldview, human beings are neither gods nor animals – we are special creatures uniquely created in the image of God

God is God, and we are not

But we are created in the image of God, and animals are not

We may share a similar skeletal structure with some animals – and we may share similar DNA with some primates – but human beings are unique among all God’s creatures in that we alone are created in the image of God

We do not share a common ancestry with apes – we are special creations of God

Humans are the end goal that God had in mind when He created the heavens and the earth and the sea creatures and land animals

Humans are the crowning glory of God's creative work

We have been created to relate to God in a way that no other animals are capable of

Indeed, God appointed us to rule over all other earthly creatures

What does it mean in verse 5: You have made man a little lower than God (or the heavenly beings)?

The Hebrew word is Elohim – which is the plural form of El – meaning “God”

Sometimes Elohim is used to refer to gods in the sense of false gods

Sometimes Elohim is used to refer to the one true Creator God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – otherwise known as Yahweh

And sometimes Elohim is used to refer to other heavenly beings such as angels

When this passage is quoted in Hebrews 2, it is translated in Greek as “angels”

In any case, the meaning is this: God has bestowed the highest possible honor on human beings above any other earthly creature by creating us only a little less than the most awesome beings of heaven – whether referring to angels or God Himself

God has crowned humanity with glory and honor by creating us in His image in order to reflect His likeness and rule over His creation

Psalm 8 refers back to Genesis 1:

Genesis 1:26 - 28 (NIV) 26Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

Evolutionists say that we are made in the image and likeness of apes

The Bible says that we are made in the image and likeness of God -- thus imparting to man special attributes and special dignity that distinguish man from all other creatures

This dignity belongs to every human being by virtue of being human

This dignity belongs to the unborn child in the womb // this dignity belongs to the Alzheimer's patient in the nursing home // this dignity belongs to those who are disabled // this dignity belongs to the poor and homeless as much as to the wealthy and successful // this dignity belongs to native Americans and Africans and Asians and Latinos as well as to Europeans and Caucasian Americans

The foundational truth that God has created all human beings in His image makes any kind of racial prejudice or contempt for the poor an offense against Almighty God

What is it that makes humans unique among all of God's creatures?

Our bodies are made of the same chemicals and material substances as the animals – from the dust of the earth -- the Bible says so

So it is not at all surprising that scientists would discover similarities in physical structures and DNA between humans and other animals

Yet with all of our structural and genetic similarities to chimpanzees, for example – how is it that chimpanzees cannot do scientific research or compose music or paint a landscape or write a poem or write a software program or learn multiple languages or do algebra or geometry?

How is it that in millions of years of evolving – no other species has ever come close to producing a Shakespeare or a Euclid or an Einstein or a Beethoven or a Michelangelo or an Aquinas or even a Michael Jackson?

Or even ordinary creatures like us who can enjoy such masterpieces even though we cannot create them?

And what is the explanation for the fact that all human cultures have religious beliefs and practices – while no other species – past or present – has ever engaged in any religious practices?

Did our branch of the tree experience a religion gene mutation?

How would a religion gene mutation or a math gene mutation or a science gene mutation have helped our hominid ancestors to gain a competitive advantage for survival and reproduction?

Were the earliest math geek hominids considered extra sexy – or did an aptitude for algebraic equations help them to hunt and gather food more efficiently?

Just as the heavens declare the glory of God, so does Human genius and creativity and artistry  
We reflect in human form many of the invisible attributes of the invisible Creator -- Intelligence // Creativity // Spirituality // Capacity to Love and be loved // Appreciation of Beauty // Rationality // Sociability // Linguistic ability // Inquisitive Mind // Capacity for compassion and empathy // Capacity for making moral choices // Desire to search for truth and meaning and purpose in life

Did you ever stop to think that something as simple as caring for a pet reflects your uniqueness as created in God's image?

I mean: did you ever see a dog walking a pet rabbit – or did you ever hear of a chimp taking care of a pet hamster or turtle or goldfish?

Our Creator has given to humans the responsibility of stewardship and care of His earth and creatures

The Environment is a Christian cause

Yes, some radical environmentalists have a pantheistic worldview and fail to differentiate between humans and animals and are pursuing a radical agenda that proceeds from a false worldview

But the proper Christian response to that is not a knee-jerk reaction to oppose all environmentalists or wash our hands of our God-given responsibility

We are called to a biblical worldview – not an anti-liberal worldview

The proper Christian response is to take the initiative to advance a concern for the environment that is based on a biblical worldview

Desecrating the earth is an offense against our Creator God

Cruelty to animals is an offense against our Creator God

Proverbs 12:10 (NIV) 10 A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel.

Exploiting the poor and vulnerable and powerless is an offense against our Creator God

Proverbs 14:31 (NIV) 31 He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.

Caring for children // caring for the elderly // caring for orphans and widows // caring for the earth and its rivers and lakes and oceans // caring for the needs of the poor and needy and homeless // caring for the sick and dying // caring for the needs of pets and livestock and animals – these are all godly activities that reflect the likeness of our Creator

You see, a biblical view of our humanity encompasses and gives meaning to all of life -- Not just our religious activities and beliefs – but sharing thoughts and feelings // learning // teaching // designing & making things // singing or listening to music // any scientific or mathematic or artistic activity // observing nature // trying a new recipe // showing love to your children  
All expressions of our humanity as created in God's image give glory to God our Creator and have meaning and purpose as part of His design and plan for us

## ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD

Just as God created the heavens and the earth to display His glory – so also God created us in His image to reflect His glory and likeness – to reflect His love and compassion and justice and righteousness and creativity and wisdom and beauty and artistry and joy and goodness and generosity

And indeed – one can see something of the glory of God in many expressions of human genius and creativity and kindness and compassion

But how does one explain the many acts of human cruelty and violence and immorality and brutality throughout history and in everyday life?

Or how does one explain a Michael Jackson?

His musical genius certainly testifies to man being uniquely created in the image of God

There is nothing resembling Michael Jackson's genius in the animal kingdom

Yet in many ways Michael Jackson was also a deeply flawed and troubled man who lived a rather pathetic life

How does one explain so much genius and so much anguish in one man?

In a very real sense, Michael Jackson is Exhibit A of the biblical view of man:

God made us a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned us with glory and honor – yet we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

God's image has been badly marred by human sin

Just as the Michael Jackson of age 20 was hardly recognizable in the Michael Jackson at the end of his life – so also the glorious man and woman God created in the Garden of Eden are hardly recognizable in all of us today who have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

One can still see something of the image and glory of God in mankind today – but that glorious image has been badly marred by sin – and human beings are badly malfunctioning today

We do not behave like creatures crowned with the glory and honor of being made just a little lower than the heavenly beings in order to reflect the likeness of God

## JESUS CHRIST IS THE SECOND ADAM WHO IS THE VISIBLE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD AND RULER OVER GOD'S CREATION

Hebrews 2:6 - 9 (NIV) 6But there is a place where someone has testified: "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? 7 You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor 8 and put everything under his feet." In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. 9But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Jesus is the eternal Son of God who is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His Being

Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God -- God in a human body

As the Son of God – Jesus is eternal – uncreated – yet for our salvation He was made for a time a little lower than the angels when he became human and was born at Bethlehem 2000 years ago He came to earth in human flesh in order to die for our sins in order to restore us to a right relationship with God

And then he arose from the dead and ascended into heaven and now reigns as Lord over all at the right hand of God in heaven -- crowned with glory and honor -- everything under his feet in subjection to His supreme authority

Yet here on earth we still live in a fallen world in which people continue to rebel against God and reject the Lordship of Christ and even oppose the spread of the Gospel

We will not see all the earth subjected to Jesus Christ's Lordship until He returns to earth to reign over all nations from the throne of David

But even now all evil powers are subject to His authority

Ephesians 1:19-22 19I pray that you will begin to understand the incredible greatness of his power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power 20that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. 21Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else in this world or in the world to come. 22And God has put all things under the authority of Christ, and he gave him this authority for the benefit of the church.

God created Adam in His image to reflect His likeness and to rule over His creation

Adam sinned and failed to fulfill that calling

Instead of all things being subject to Adam's authority as Adam lived connected to God under God's authority – Adam rebelled against God's authority and then himself became subject to the rule of sin, death and Satan

Jesus Christ came to earth not only to forgive our sins and restore us to a right relationship with God through His death on the Cross – but Jesus also rose from the dead and now reigns at the right hand of God in heaven

Because Jesus is risen from the dead – He is able to make us spiritually alive as His Own Spirit comes to live within us to give us a new life as new creations – born again to become like God in true righteousness and holiness – so that we can begin to fulfill our calling as image-bearers to reflect the likeness of God

And because Jesus reigns at the right hand of God as Head over every power and authority in the universe – He is able to give us His authority to fulfill our destiny to rule over God's creation

## JESUS CHRIST EMPOWERS US TO REFLECT HIS LIKENESS AND EXERCISE HIS AUTHORITY

God created Adam a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor – making him ruler over the works of His hands and putting everything under His feet

But Adam – and all the rest of the human race – sinned and we all fall short of the glory of God

So the eternal Son of God became flesh – the One who created the angels was made human – a little lower than the angels – in order to suffer and die for our sins

Jesus is now crowned with glory and honor at the right hand of God – and God has put everything under his feet

For the benefit of the church

Ephesians 1:22-23 22And God has put all things under the authority of Christ, and he gave him this authority for the benefit of the church. 23And the church is his body; it is filled by Christ, who fills everything everywhere with his presence.

The headship of Christ – the victory and the rule of Jesus Christ over all things – over all spiritual beings and powers – over all the forces of evil and darkness -- is God's gift to the church

Believers in Jesus Christ have been raised to new spiritual life in Christ and have been seated with Christ in the heavenlies – sharing in his victory and authority

Ephesians 2:6 6For he raised us from the dead along with Christ, and we are seated with him in the heavenly realms—all because we are one with Christ Jesus.

The victory the Lord Jesus Christ won for us on the Cross and in his resurrection and ascension has been given to us who believe

-and since we are seated with the Lord Jesus Christ in the heavenlies, therefore, all principalities and all demonic powers and all evil spirits are subject to us in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ

God has put all things under the authority of Christ, and he gave him this supreme authority for the benefit of the church.

For what purpose?

Do you suppose God makes available to churches the Power that raised Jesus from the dead and Christ's Authority over all spiritual powers just to keep the doors of the church open, to pay the bills, and to maintain services and programs for church members?

NO – God makes the resurrection power and headship authority of Christ available to churches so that they can carry out the ministry of Christ in the world in the midst of spiritual warfare – so that they can take the offensive in the spiritual battlegrounds of the world / so that they can be bold and aggressive in evangelism & community outreach & church-planting and missions / so that they can make a difference in the lives of the lost, the hurting, the oppressed and the hopeless / so that they can heal those who are under the power of the devil and cast out demons and deliver people from spiritual bondage and darkness / so that they can storm the gates of hell and do battle with the strongholds of evil in this fallen world  
-- We have been given the resurrection power and kingdom authority of Jesus Christ to set captives free from bondage to sin, death and Satan

By his death, resurrection and ascension – Jesus has reclaimed for us our calling to reflect God’s likeness in the world and our destiny to rule over the works of His hands

Jesus empowers us by His Spirit to reflect His likeness

II Corinthians 3:17-18 17Now, the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, he gives freedom. 18And all of us have had that veil removed so that we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more.

And Jesus reclaims for us our destiny to rule over the works of God’s hands

Revelation 5:9-10 “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”

(Conclusion)

Psalms 8:3-4 (NIV) 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?

Show video clip from “The Privileged Planet” (55:32 – 58:05)

Our God is an awesome God – and the earth is indeed just a tiny blue speck in an incomprehensibly vast universe

Nonetheless – we matter to God and our lives have great significance

God created the heavens and the earth to display His glory – and also as habitat for the crowning glory of His creative work – namely, you and me

The Creator of the universe cares about you and me

Even though all of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God – God loves us so much that He sent His Son to restore us to a right relationship with Him and to renew in us the image of God and reclaim for us our destiny to rule over the works of His hands

You matter to God

He made you in His image

He sent His Son to save you from the rule of sin, death and Satan  
He gave you His Spirit to enable you to reflect the glory of Christ's likeness  
He gave you Christ's authority to set captives free  
And His destiny for you as His child is to live forever with Him and to reign with Jesus on the earth