

# Series: Great Questions – week 4

CDOBC – beginning on 10/18/09

Title: “What is Man?”

*Psalm 8 ~ November 8, 2009*

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**OBJECTIVE:** To help us know the value, importance and God-ordained role of humanity.

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## **Announcements**

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- November concerts at CDOBC – see insert
- Hymn Sing Renewal – 11/15 – 3 p.m.
- RHOF 11/22
- ACSTO scholarship info
- Christmas Decoration Registry - Target and WalMart - wedding category – Sheryl Beyer
- Operation Christmas Child

## Opening Prayer

What is man?

Humanism / Radical Environmentalism / Evolution theory – all of these things – and more – have specific views, beliefs and theories about how humanity fits into the rest of the world. They have beliefs that speak to the value, importance, and role of human beings in relation to the rest of the world. Each of them teaches a certain ethic in the areas of race relations, environmental concerns, government, family, civic responsibility, and social concern, justice and action.

However, these are not the only philosophies and religions that have something to say on this topic. God has much to say on these issues – and the Bible is where we must look to discover what He has said.

The question before us this morning is a question that David – the Psalmist – asked God: “What is man that you are mindful of Him?”

Job also asked the same question:

**Job 7:17**

“What is man that you make so much of him, that you give him so much attention...”

**Job 15:14**

"What is man, that he could be pure, or one born of woman, that he could be righteous?"

**Psalm 144:3**

"O LORD, what is man that you care for him, the son of man that you think of him?"

Over the centuries, many have proposed their answer to this question. One perspective is given by the 17<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Blaise Pascal:

*"What a chimera (fantasy) then is man! What a novelty, what a monster, what a chaos, what a subject of contradiction, what a prodigy! Judge of all things, stupid worm of the earth; depository of truth, a sink of uncertainty and error, glory and refuse of the universe."* (*Pensees*, 131, by Blaise Pascal, 1623-1662)

Not a very positive perspective...others took the opposite view of Pascal – and saw nothing but greatness in mankind.

**Illus.** "Years ago (around 1906), on the campus of Harvard University, Emerson hall was in the process of being constructed. The architect's plan included an inscription that was to be chiseled in marble over the main entrance. After much thought the professors in the department of philosophy decided that the engraving should read, *"Man is the measure of all things."* But such a man-centered worldview did not meet with the approval of the university president. When the professors returned from summer vacation, they found the building complete, but cut into the stone was an entirely different philosophy: "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" (Ps. 8:4)." *Holman Old Testament Commentary*, General Editor Max Anders, Author Steven J. Lawson, p. 52

Others still didn't look upon mankind in general in such high regard, but they saw themselves in the highest regard:

**Illus.** "King Louis XIV – ascended to the throne of France at 4 years of age. He was king for the next 72 years! Many historians claim that he was drunk with his own power – and that he called himself, "The Great Monarch" and he declared, "I am the state". As great as he was, and after many battles where he conquered his enemies, he could not conquer death. He had planned his funeral.

It was to be a great and spectacular event – after all, what else would be fitting for the “Great Monarch”? The cathedral was packed – his solid gold, jewel laden coffin was front and center – with a lone candle burning next to his coffin that symbolized the greatness and uniqueness of his life. When it was time for the service to begin, the Bishop stood to address the gathered mourners – but before he spoke, he walked over to the candle and extinguished the flame. Everyone was in shock. Then, the Bishop spoke four words, “Only God is great!” Holman Old Testament Commentary, General Editor Max Anders, Author Steven J. Lawson, p. 49

But what does Scripture tell us about humanity? What does God tell us of where man fits into the created world? What is humanity's place among the other created things? What is the value, importance and role of humanity?

Psalm 8 is a great starting point for us today – it's a great way to begin understanding how we should view the human race – which affects how we view God – and how we view one another. These things also apply to many events that are hot-button issues in our culture and world today.

**Read Psalm 8** (There are some aspects of this Psalm we won't touch on this morning because our focus is on the value and importance of humanity – whereas the central focus of this Psalm is on the greatness and majesty of God.)

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.

PS 8:2 From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. (2 Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger.) ESV – Jesus quoted this verse in Matt. 21

PS 8:3 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

PS 8:4 what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

PS 8:5 You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.

PS 8:6 You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet:

PS 8:7 all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field,  
PS 8:8 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.  
PS 8:9 O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
(Psalm 8 is quoted in Hebrews 2:6-8)

From this Psalm – and a few other passages, God answers the question of man’s significance – and He also helps us realize our role and responsibility as it relates to others and our planet.

**We are valuable because of God’s majesty.** vs. 1, 9

The context – the bookends of Psalm 8 is the majesty of God! However, the shocking thing, is that in view of the majesty of God, God is still mindful of humanity!

“O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth” – the name of God – Yahweh – His personal name we saw last week in Exodus 3:14 – His name is majestic in all the earth!

You might be saying, “*But Steve, I thought this sermon was about the value / importance of man?*” It is. But - to find our value – we must always start with the glory and majesty of God – for without a proper understanding of Almighty God, we cannot ever begin to realize the greatness and uniqueness of humanity because we derive our value – and any greatness we may possess from God Himself and His image within us! God has designed us – He has designed His creation in such a way that His majesty is seen in the wonder of man.

**We are the feeble rulers of the world** vs. 3-8

We are feeble in three ways. **First**, we are feeble in comparison to the created universe. As David writes these words, he is probably gazing at the splendor of the night sky – at the incredible display of the planets and the stars – the glow of the milky way unimpeded by pollution or city lights.

“The Heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands.” he writes in Psalm 19. The immenseness, the expanse and size of God’s creation dwarf us. In the entire universe – in the thousands of galaxies that God created – why would He center in on little ‘ol us? This is the primary thought in vs. 3-4, “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?” So, we’re feeble in comparison to the immense nature of the universe.

**Second**, we are feeble in our abilities compared to God and nature. Known only to His wisdom alone, God – who is fully capable of ruling His creation in absolute perfection, has chosen to delegate that honor and duty to us. This goes without saying – but we are much less qualified than God for this duty. We are also feeble in a physical sense – compared to much of nature. Our strength, speed, agility, etc. is paltry compared to most of the animal kingdom, yet we have dominion over the animal kingdom. **Thirdly**, we are feeble when it comes to holiness and righteousness. The phrase “son of man” in vs. 4 is not a reference to Christ, but a reference to fallen humanity. It literally reads, *“son of Adam”* – bringing to mind the link we have to our ancestor – and his sin. We are just like him – guilty through and through – and the Psalmists’ amazement is that God, in His majesty and holiness had taken notice of us – feeble, fallen humanity.

Genesis 1 tells the same truth:

**Genesis 1:27-30**

GE 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

GE 1:28 God 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."

GE 1:29 Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.<sup>30</sup> And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground--everything that has the breath of life in it--I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

We may be feeble – but God has chosen to place us in a position of honor and glory – a position of superiority over the rest of creation – and we are to rule it, subdue it, and be good stewards of it.

### **We are the star of God's creation.** vs. 5

"You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor."

Nothing that even comes close to this is said of the rest of God's creation. We are truly the 'jewel' – the star of His creation. It's important with that statement that we explain *why* we are the star of His creation, for without a proper explanation, we may become prideful. We are the star of all creation first and foremost because we are made in the image of God. God created all other things by His "fingers" – but He created man with the dust of the earth. He then inspired man – breathed life into us – He made us in His image.

Secondly, Adam was named by God – and the animal world was named by Adam.

Thirdly, we alone are given dominion and authority to rule over the earth. As this verse tells us, we were made just a little lower than the heavenly beings (some translations will say "a little lower than God) – the Hebrew is difficult here, but the point is that we were created at a higher level than all other living things! Then there's a bonus! God will crown us with glory and honor – through His grace and love displayed in Christ Jesus.

What is man that You are mindful of Him? What is the value and significance of man – of humanity!

We are unique in all of God's creation – we are given authority and dominion over all of God's creation.

We are made in the image of God – each one of us.

All of these things have significant application to our life today – in 2009 and beyond.

## **Application**

Racism / bigotry violate the inherent divinity of man.

You cannot worship or glorify God if you consider or treat His supreme creation with contempt. There is absolutely no justification for racist thoughts, ideas, policies, or actions.

Sanctity of life is a result of God's majesty.

Because God – in His majesty and glory – is mindful of man – even to the point of dying on the cross for our sins – and since He created each of us in His image – and since we are His image-bearers from conception to the grave, the result of God's view and care of humanity should result in us having a morality – and ethic – that understands the sanctity of life.

Abortion holds the creation and gift of God in contempt. Abortion is murder – it kills a living human being.

Pregnancy cannot be treated as a disease – if you wish to glorify God.

Starving an aging human does not glorify the majesty of God.

Dismembering an unborn human in no way glorifies the majesty of God.

Gassing Jewish people – ethnic cleansing is the antithesis of glorifying God.

Lynching a black human – assaulting or killing a gay person – is sin – a direct assault on God’s Law – and it’s an assault on the majesty and glory of God in those human beings.

You cannot treat interracial marriage or racial mingling as a poison – and glorify the majesty of God.

The reason Bible believing Christians should be against abortion is that no level of inconvenience can ever justify treating His supreme creation with murderous contempt. No amount of inconvenience can ever justify destroying the image of God in an innocent human life.

God commands us to *subdue* and *steward* the earth.

Christian environmentalism – man is not the same as plants / animals – but superior to them. We are to subdue the earth – and be good steward of it.

**Genesis 2:15**

“The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”

**Psalms 24:1**

“The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it...”

We are obligated to *love* and *serve* others.

Regardless of social, economic, political, cultural status. Regardless of race, age, morality, religious practice – we are called to act justly and in fairness toward others.

**Job 31:13-15**

“If I have denied justice to my menservants and maidservants when they had a grievance against me, what will I do when God confronts me? What will I answer when called to account? Did not he who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same one form us both within our mothers?”

Why should we act justly and in fairness toward others? Because each human being – regardless of their standing before Christ – is the treasure of God’s creation. Their life is sacred even if their actions are not. Their life is to be respected and honored – because they – like us – are created in the image of God. Today is “Orphan Sunday”. Caring for widows and orphans is religion that God is truly pleased with – it’s pure, unpolluted religion.

**Testimony:** Aaron and Meghan Davidson – becoming foster parents.

Close in prayer