PSALM 8

✠ This psalm is written in the form of a Hymn. A hymn is a lyric poem which usually is divided into stanzas, and sometimes has a refrain. Because of their content, such psalms are often further identified as psalms of praise, psalms of thanksgiving, wisdom psalms, and psalms of doxology.

✣ See Psalms 18, 32, 46, 47, 88, 92, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 103, 112, 113, 114, 115, 117.

✠ This psalm is also identified as a Psalm of Praise. Psalms of praise generally focus on the nature of God, but not particularly on His specific acts. They focus on His attributes, and they encourage us to praise Him for His goodness, mercy, judgement and wisdom. There are often references to singing, rejoicing, or playing music. Praise is included in many other psalms than those specifically identified as "of Praise".

✣ See, for instance, Psalms 28, 32, 47, 83, 86, 88, 99, 100, 104, 105, 106, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 134, 135, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150. The numbers of this sort of psalm (and of other sorts) vary according to the perception of the various commentators.

✠ This psalm is also identified as a Psalm of Thanksgiving.

✣ According to the NAB, the thanksgiving psalms are, in essence, reports about Divine rescue. However, they also express gratitude to God for specific examples of His goodness and kindness and generosity (such as harvest), and they sometimes express gratitude in general for God's goodness.

✣ See Psalms 8, 20, 29, 33, 39, 64, 66, 74, 91, 102, 106, 114, 115, 117, 123, 135, 137.

✠ This psalm (verse 3) is used as the Communion Hymn of the Divine Liturgy on Lazarus Saturday. It is used (verses 2, 3) as the Prokeimenon of Matins on Palm Sunday. It is used (verse 3) as the Prokeimenon in the Moleben for Students beginning Instruction. It is used (verse 10) in the Sixth Hour of the Royal Hours on Great and Holy Friday as the Prokeimenon of the Prophecy.

✠ Saint Athanasius advises us that we sing this psalm when we contemplate the redemption of the human race, and the universal Grace of the Saviour.

✠ *The Orthodox Study Bible* notes that this psalm prepares prophetically for the Incarnate Lord.

✣ Father P Reardon informs us that the mystery of the Incarnation is the theme of this psalm. Christ is the reason for our singing out : "*O Lord, our Lord, how wonderful is Your Name*".

"*Entry to Jerusalem, Passion, Resurrection and Lordship of Christ*"

"*The greatness of God and His love for men*"

"*The greatness of man as God's plenipotentiary*"

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1 For the End. About the wine-presses. A psalm by David.

V 1 About the Inscription : in the Masoretic (Hebrew) text, the Inscription is : "To the Choirmaster :

according to (or "upon") the Gittith. A psalm of David".

✣ "Gittith" may be the title of the melody to which the psalm was to be sung ; or perhaps it was a musical instrument, or a musical term. The Hebrew word has in its root meaning "wine-press", which allows for the possibility that the psalm was sung at the grape-harvest (the Septuagint Greek uses "*about the wine-presses*").

✠ About "*for the End*" : see the note about "*for the End*" on Psalm 4:1.

✠ About "*the wine presses*" : Saint Athanasius advises us that we use this psalm, as well as Psalm 83, as a thanksgiving for the grape-harvest (and, perhaps, any harvest).

✣ Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) comments that the inscription of this psalm does not precisely cover the content of the psalm, whose meaning is deep. In a manner, he echoes the Saint Augustine when he further states that the wine-press is a prophetical symbol of the Church : as the threshed wheat is separated from chaff and as the wine is separated out from the cluster during the pressing, so the Church is selecting the good persons from those who are too much tied to the world.

[Κύριε ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν Domine, Dominus noster]

2 O LORD, our LORD,/ how wonderful is Your Name in all the earth,/
for Your magnificence has been lifted up above the Heavens.

V 2 This verse is repeated in verse 10 as a "refrain".

✠ Saint Athanasius advises us that, when we see the Grace of our Saviour extended everywhere, and we see very many being saved, if we wish to raise our voice to the Lord, then we ought to sing Psalm 8.

✠ About "*Lord*" : see the note about "*Lord*" on Psalm 1:2.

✠ About "*wonderful*" : see verse 10 ; see 2 Moses 15:11 (Matins Canticle 1) ; Tobit 12:22 ; see also Psalms 41:5 ; 54:6 ; 64:5 ; 67:36 ; 75:5 ; 92:4 ; 117:23 ; 118:129 ; 138:14 ; Isaiah 25:1 ; Daniel 3:43 (Matins Canticle 7). See also the notes on Psalms 4:4 ; 9:2 (noun).

✠ About "*Name*" : Saint John Chrysostom points out that this verse is a fulfilment of the last verse of the previous psalm. He also comments that by the Lord's Name, death is destroyed ; demons are bound ; Heaven is revealed ; the gates of Paradise are opened ; the Spirit is bestowed.

✣ See verse 10 ; see also the note about "*Name*" on Psalm 5:12.

✠ About "*magnificence...*" : Saint Augustine refers to the economy of salvation when he comments that the "*magnificence*" of our Lord Jesus Christ, the totality of Who He is, has been exalted far above the Heavens from the humility of the Incarnation. Some have seen this Ascension and comprehended it. Others, not having seen the Ascension, have nevertheless heard and believed.

✣ See Psalms 20:6 ; 28:4 ; 67:35 ; 70:8 ; 95:6 ; 103:1 ; 110:3 ; 144:5, 12. See also the note about "*magnifies*" on Psalm 17:51 .

✠ About "*lifted up*" : this translates the Greek word ἐπαίρω, *epairō*, "lift up"in this verse. Two other verbs are also translated as "lift up" : see the notes on Psalms 9:14 ; 112:7.

✣ See the note about "*lifted up*" on Psalm 36:35 ; see also 1 Kingdoms 2:8 (Matins Canticle 3) ; Psalms 17:49 ; 27:9 ; 46:10 ; 60:3 ; 72:18 ; 73:3 ; 74:6 ; 76:3 ; 92:3 ; 101:11 ; 105:26 ; 109:7 ; 112:7 ; 133:2 ; 140:2 ; Habakkuk 3:11 (Matins Canticle 4). See also the note about "*lifting ... up*" on Psalm 9:14.

✠ About "*the Heavens*" : see the note about "*the Heavens*" on Psalm 2:4.

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3 Out of the mouth of infants and sucklings have You perfected praise,/ because of Your enemies,/ to take down an enemy and an avenger ;

V 3 About "*mouth of infants ...*" : Saint John Chrysostom shares his understanding of these words as he says that we see here that King David prophecies that the Lord will display His irresistible force and strength when He will enable, during the Entry of our Saviour into Jerusalem, those who yet otherwise did not yet speak to proclaim clearly His Glory in their singing of hymns in the Temple. See Wisdom of Solomon 10:21 ; Matthew 21:15-16. Saint John stresses the importance of this particular event, because in all human history, this is the unique occurrence of little infants forming a choir under the Lord's inspiration and singing aloud together. Saint John further links this event with our Saviour's exhortation to us that we all become like children. See Matthew 11:25 ; 18:1-4.

✣ Saint Nikolaj (Velimirović) reflects that the praising of Christ by young children was particularly displeasing to the Jewish elders of that time. This event was, nevertheless, the fulfilment of the prophecy of King David in this psalm. King David, understanding that the miracle of this praise would be of the same magnitude as the creation of the starry firmament, therefore associated them in the succession of the words of these verses. In the same way that the Lord opened the mouths of the children, He likewise opened the mouths of the fishermen and multitudes of others after them. Saint Nikolaj further comments : "'Let the children come to me,' exclaims the Son of the Virgin, and only children come to Him ... Only children recognise Me, for I too am a child. As a child I am not My own, and as a child I do not seek glory for Myself. As a child I do not think anything on My own, I do not speak anything on My own, and I do not do anything on My own. Instead, like a child, I think what My Father taught Me, and I speak what I hear, and I do what I see. Children cease to be children, but I never cease being a child. I tell you that My kingdom is a kingdom of children".

✣ Our Saviour reminds us of the importance of the example of children. Because of their uncluttered minds and hearts, because of their simple trust, because of their pure love, they speak the truth openly as they perceive it. In such a spirit of pure, unpoisoned love, praise of the Lord can become perfect, as in the tale of the three simple men on an island in Russia, published by Leo Tolstoy.

✣ A "*suckling*" is a nursing baby. An infant is a young child. In some usages, an infant can be several years of age.

✠ About "*perfected*" : this word implies "to bring to completion", "to finish", "to make flawless", "to make faultless".

✣ See Psalms 10:3 ; 28:9 ; 39:7.

✠ About "*praise*" : see the note on Psalm 149:1 ; see Psalms 9:15 ; 21:4 ; 25:7 ; 32:1 ; 65:2 ; 105:2 ; 144:21.

See also the note about "*praising*" on Psalm 17:4.

✣ See also the related note on "*confess*" on Psalm 6:6.

✠ About "*enemies*" see the note about "*enemies*" on Psalm 5:9.

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4 for I shall see the Heavens, the works of Your fingers,/ and the moon and the stars, whose foundations You have, Yourself, laid.

V 4 About this verse : Saint Cyril of Jerusalem explains to us that God (who is illimitable, uncontainable and ineffable) is beyond all that exists, and all that exists was made by Him. He is beyond words greater and brighter than the sun, which is His creature. Nothing can equal Him in any way ; He knows all ; He does as He wills, and all that He does is perfect.

✣ Clement of Alexandria likewise says that God created all that exists. He strongly cautions us to be careful to worship only the Creator, and never to worship any creature.

✣ See 1 Moses 1:1 ; Acts 17:24.

✠ About "*Heavens*" : see the note on verse 2.

✠ About "*works*" (of God) : see verse 7 ; see 5 Moses 32:4 (Matins Canticle 2) ; Psalms 32:4 ; 43:2 ; 45:9 ; 63:10 ; 65:3, 5 ; 76:12, 13 ; 77:7 ; 85:8 ; 89:16 ; 91:5, 6 ; 94:9 ; 101:26 ; 102:22 ; 103:13, 24, 31 ; 104:1 ; 105:13 ; 106:22, 24 ; 110:2, 3, 7 ; 117:17 ; 137:8 ; 138:14 ; 142:5 ; 144:9, 10, 13, 17 ; Habakkuk 3:2 (Matins Canticle 4) ; Daniel 3:27 (Matins Canticle 7) ; Daniel 3:57 (Matins Canticle 8).

✣ See also the notes about "*works of Your hands*" (of God's Hands) on verse 7. See the note about "*works*" (human) on Psalm 9:17.

✠ About "*Your fingers*" : Saint John Chrysostom rhetorically asks why King David did not write "hands" instead of "*fingers*". His response is that we then see that creating visible things are a work requiring the least energy. The Lord creates with great facility, and in doing so, He reveals His limitless power.

✣ See 2 Moses 8:15 ; Luke 11:20.

✠ About "*moon*" : in this psalter, this word appears alone, and sometimes together with "sun" and "stars" in various combinations.

✣ See Psalm 71:5, 7 ; 80:4 ; 88:38 ; 103:19 ; 120:6 ; 135:9 ; 148:3 ; Habakkuk 3:11 (Matins Canticle 4) ; Daniel 3:62 (Matins Canticle 8).

✠ About *stars*" : see Psalms 135:9 ; 146:4 ; 148:3 ; Daniel 3:36 (Matins Canticle 7) ; Daniel 3:63 (Matins Canticle 8).

✠ About "*foundations ... laid*" : see Psalms 23:2 ; 47:9 ; 77:69: ; 101:16 ; 118:90, 152.

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5 What is Man, that You remember him ?/ or a son of Man, that You visit him ?

V 5 About this verse : Saint Basil of Cæsarea says that God made human beings in His image, and likeness. The image, we possess from creation ; the likeness, we acquire through our will. He further refines this understanding by writing that although we find the word "created" regarding the beginning of humans, we also find the word "fashioned", or "modelled", when we read about the specific formation of Man. Therefore, the human spirit is created, but the human body is fashioned. In like manner, the "likeness" is part of our potential, which is to be realised.

✣ Saint Gregory of Nazianzus (the Theologian) reflects on this question about the mystery concerning "*Man*" : "I am small and great, lowly and exalted, mortal and immortal, earthly and heavenly. I am connected with the world below, and likewise with God ; I am connected with the flesh, and likewise with the spirit. I must be buried with Christ, rise with Christ, be joint heir with Christ ...".

✣ Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) comments that "*Man*" means the prototype of the human species (some translate this as "Adam"), or man as a species, while the "son of man" (a term that can not be attributed to Adam, since he was not born from a human being) means the particular man. The verse is echoed in the book of Job (7:17-18) in a paraphrase.

✣ Father P Reardon explains that at the Incarnation, the Word did not simply become a man (although He was a man). Rather, He became Man (a human being). He did not simply become a human being (although He was a human being). He bore all humanity within Himself. He was the archetype of the human being.

✣ See Psalm 143:3 ; Wisdom of Sirach 18:7 ; Hebrews 2:6.

✠ About "*remember*" : see the note about "*remembered*" on Psalm 9:13.

✠ About "*visit*" : see Psalms 16:3 ; 26:4 ; 58:6 ; 64:10 ; 79:15 ; 88:33 ; Luke 1:68 (Matins Canticle 9, Part 2).

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6 You made him a little less than the angels,/ and with glory
and honour You crowned him.

V 6 About "*You made ... angels*" : Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) points out that the Hebrew text is : "*Yet You have made him but little lower than the angels*". He continues in his comment, noting that in Hebrews 2:5-8, the Apostle Paul cites the Septuagint text, where the temporal meaning of "little", "for a short time" (during the Incarnation of the Son of Man), is preferred to the space-quality version ("but little", "somewhat") of the Hebrew. The "but little lower" translation could be taken erroneously as a permanent condition.

✣ When Christians read Hebrews 2:7, the meaning of the phase in this psalm is clarified in that the "little" means "a little while".

✠ About "*angels*" : see 5 Moses 32:8 (Matins Canticle 2) ; 5 Moses 32:43 (Matins Canticle 2) ; Psalms 33:8 ; 34:5, 6 ; 77:25 ; 90:11 ; 96:7 ; 102:20 ; 103:4 ; 137:1 ; 148:2 ; Daniel 3:49 (Matins Canticle 7) ; Daniel 3:58 (Matins Canticle 8).

✣ See the note about "*angel of the Lord*" on Psalm 33:8. See the note about "*Lord of powers*" on Psalm

23:10. See the note about "*evil angels*" on Psalm 77:49.

✠ About "*glory*" : see the note about "*glory*" on Psalm 3:4.

✠ About "*honour*" : see Psalms 28:1 ; 44:10 ; 48:13, 21 ; 61:5 ; 95:7 ; 98:4 ; 138:17 (verb) ; Inscription to Matins Canticle 3 (verb).

✠ About "*crowned*" : see the note about "*crowned*" on Psalm 5:13.

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7 You appointed him over the works of Your hands ;/ You subjected all things beneath his feet :

V 7 About this verse : Saint Augustine reflects that angels are amongst the works of God's Hands. Therefore, since all things have been placed beneath His feet, the Only-begotten Son of God is above the angels, despite the fact that for a short time He was made lower than the angels. He strongly emphasises that, without exception, everything which has been created is beneath the Son of God.

- ✣ Father P Reardon comments that when God gave to Adam dominion over the earth and its fulness, this act was an prophecy of the universal subjection of all creation to Christ.
- ✣ The two parts of this verse are a poetic repetition for emphasis.
- ✣ See Psalms 91:5 ; 101:26 ; 110:7 ; 137:8 ; 142:5 ; Isaiah 5;12.

✠ About "*appointed*" : see the note about "*appointed*" on Psalm 2:6.

✠ About "*works of Your hands*" : see verse 4 ; see Psalms 91:5 ; 101:26 ; 110:7 ; 137:8 ; 142:5 ; Isaiah 5:12.

✠ About "*Your hands*" : see 2 Moses 15:17 (Matins Canticle 1) ; 5 Moses 32:39, 40, 41 (Matins Canticle 2) ; Psalms 9:33, 35 ; 16:13 ; 18:2 ; 20:9 ; 27:5 ; 30:6, 16 ; 31:4 ; 37:3 ; 38:11 ; 43:3 ; 54:21 ; 73:3, 11 ; 74:9 ; 77:42 ; 79:18 ; 80:15 ; 87:6 ; 88:14, 22 ; 91:5 ; 94:4, 5, 7 ; 101:26 ; 103:28 ; 105:26 ; 108:27 ; 118:73, 109, 173 ; 135:12 ; 137:7, 8 ; 138:10 ; 142:5 ; 143:7 ; 144:16 ; Habakkuk 3:4 (Matins Canticle 4).

✠ About "*subjected ... feet*" : see 1 Moses 1:26-28 ; 9:1-2, 7 ; Wisdom of Solomon 9:2-3 ; Wisdom of Sirach 17:3-4 ; Matthew 28:18 ; John 3:35 ; 1 Corinthians 15:27 ; Ephesians 1:22 ; Hebrews 2:7-8.

✠ About "*subjected*" : see Psalms 17:48 ; 36:7 ; 46:4 ; 59:10 ; 61:2, 6 ; 107:10 ; 143:2.

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8 sheep and all cattle and even the beasts of the field,

V 8

✠ About "*beasts*" ("τὰ κτήνη", "*ta ktēnē*"), although it is often used in a perjorative manner, this word simply refers to animals in general. The list includes a summary the of living creatures given by God to Man (*ἀνθρωπος*, anthropos) to care for.

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9 the birds of the sky, and the fishes of the sea,/ and the things moving through the paths of the seas.

V 9 About "s*ky*" : this refers to "the region of the atmosphere as seen from the earth", according to the dictionaries.

- The Greek word, οὐρανός, *ouranos*, translated here as "sky" is the same word which is translated elsewhere in the Psalter as "Heaven". See the note about "*the Heavens*" on Psalm 2:4.
- See Psalms 49:11 ; 78:2 ; 103:2 ; Daniel 3:80 (Matins Canticle 8).

✠ About "*paths*" : this may refer to the currents of the waters.

- See Psalms 16:5 ; 17:46 ; 22:3 ; 24:4 ; 26:11 ; 43:19 ; 76:20 ; 77:50 ; 118:35, 105 ; 138:3, 23 ; 139:6 ; 141:4 ; Proverbs 2:13 ; 3:6, 19 ; 4:10.

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10 O LORD, our LORD,/ how wonderful is Your Name in all the earth.

V 10 About this verse : see verse 2. This repetition of the first verse suggests a chiastic structure to the psalm.

✠ About "*wonderful*" : see the note on verse 2.

O Omnipotent Lord, we suppliants prevail upon Your admirable Name ;
that as You subjected all the creatures of the world to the benefit of Man,
You may make us worthy to fulfil our part of serving You worthily. — Roman

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