

Psalm

Psalm 8:1–9

God Placed the Earth in the Hands of Man

Outline of Chapter 8:

Inscription

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- vv. 4–8 God places the earth under the control of mankind
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v. 1 Various Views of the Morphology of Psalm 8:1b

Introduction: Psalm 8 asks the question that any reasonable man should ask—if God is Who He says He is, the Creator of all things—then who is man, that God should be mindful of him? This psalm is quoted in the New Testament in several places, and, for that reason, is possibly the most well-known psalm that you have never read. Many people have spent a great deal of time in the New Testament, but have essentially ignored the Old. Because this psalm is quoted in the gospel of Matthew, by Paul and by the writer of Hebrews, most believers know a portion of it.

There is also a very well-known portion of this very well-known psalm which is incorrectly translated. For those who have studied the Bible and memorized a few verses, you may recall the verse: [You have made him \[man\] a little lower than the angels](#). It doesn't actually say that, in the Hebrew. In fact, it doesn't say anything like that. Man isn't a little lower than the angels. If God allowed the fallen angels, the demons, the opportunity to do with us whatever they wanted, a demon could flatten a man, if not an army of men, without breaking into a sweat. We aren't made a little lower than the angels—we are made a lot lower than the angels. The distance between us and the angels is like the distance between a cockroach and man. Now, most of this psalm is quoted in Heb. 2:6–8 from the Greek; and what it says in the Greek is different than what it says in the Hebrew. What most translators did was simply make their translation of the Old Testament portion agree with that *quoted* in the New. What we have is somewhat of a parallel, but different meaning. In Psalm 8, we don't have the Messiah, but mankind, that God placed in charge of the earth. Man will lose that dominion in Gen. 3, and God will give that dominion to His Son; this will be fulfilled in Heb. 2, and will be the correct interpretation of Heb. 2. However, that parallel passage here means something different. The fact that this short psalm is quoted in the New Testament and differently will allow for a great deal of discussion.

We will cover authorship and when we examine the inscription (which is a part of the Word of God).

The occasion of writing is implied in several verses. The inscription implies that it has to do with the city of Gath. David mentions those who are helpless in v. 2, and adversaries in the same verse (even though these are adversaries of God). He then contemplates the moon and the stars. David spent a lot of time on the run from King Saul, and some of that time was spent in the city of Gath. The words used here imply his own helplessness (although he does not so directly state), his enemies (although he is speaking of the enemies of God); he is looking up at the moon and the stars contemplating God's care of and compassion for man—all of these things appear to place him on the run from Saul, his adversary, feeling weak and vulnerable, but realizing that God was in control, as he sits underneath the starry heavens outside the city of Gath.

This psalm begins with a recognition of God's majestic excellence. [His name](#) (which is equivalent to His essence and being) [is majestic in all the earth](#). Then he speaks of God demonstrating His strength from the mouths of the helpless. David looks into the heavens, *perhaps on a bright, clear night when the vast host of the heavenly lights, stretching from horizon to horizon, erased from his musings small everyday affairs and engaged his mind with deeper thoughts*. He looks into this vastness of the nighttime sky and ponders first, God's greatness and majesty, and secondly, *the astonishing condescension of God to be mindful of puny man, to crown him with glory almost godlike and to grant him lordly power over his creatures.*¹ David recognizes that God has given dominion of the earth to man, placing the works of God's hands under the control of man. Then David returns to his refrain, proclaiming God's majestic name in all the earth.

As you study this psalm, bear in mind this quotation from Barnes: *The psalm is complete in itself, as applicable to man as he was originally created, and according to the purposes of his creation; though it is true that the original design will be carried out and completed only in the dominion which will be granted to the Messiah, who, as a man, has illustrated in the highest manner the original purpose of the creation of the race, and in whom alone the original design will be fully carried out.*²

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Slavishly literal:

Moderately literal:

[To the choirmaster upon the Gittith;
a psalm to David:](#)

Psalm
8 inscription

[To the choirmaster;
\(beside the Gittite\) a psalm of David:](#)

[To the head choirmaster \(a psalm of David\):](#)

This psalm is written to the Piel participle of nâtsach (נִצָּח) [pronounced *naw-TZAHKH*], a word which means *pre-eminent, enduring*. It refers to a person in a supervisory position (I Chron. 23:4 II Chron. 2:2, 18 34:13). Often, this position is related to music (I Chron. 15:21 Psalm 4:intro 5:intro 6:intro etc.). This is why we have such varied renderings as *overseer* (Young), *the music leader* (CEV), *choir director* (NASB, NLT), *choirmaster* (Owens), *leader* (NRSV, NEB, NAB) and *chief musician* (Rotherham) for the Piel participle of this verb. Strong's #5329 BDB #663.

Then we have the preposition 'al (אֶל) [pronounced *gahl*], which means *upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside*. Strong's #5920, #5921 BDB #752. The next substantive—Gittith—is rather obscure, occurring only in the inscriptions of Psalms 8, 81 and 84. Barnes suggests that this is a musical instrument common to the Gittites. The NJB suggests that this is a harp or a Philistine melody that it is based upon. *The Amplified Bible* suggests the music accompaniment should be a Philistine lute or a specific Hittite tune. This word is most similar to the proper noun Gittite, which leaves us with very little to go on. Strong's #1665 BDB #388. Both the NIV and the Septuagint suggest that this is a psalm of a *winepress*; or, in the alternative, a reference to the Philistine town of Gath (see II Sam. 15:18). This is because the only Hebrew words that are similar to is the word for *winepress* and the word *Gittite*, which is an inhabitant of Gath. Given that *winepress* really does not seem to have a single thing to do with this psalm, and given that David spent some time among the people of Gath, we would reasonably assume this is the key to understanding the use of this word here. Now, whether it is the choir leader who stood beside the Gittite or whether this is David camping out near the city of Gath, the text of the inscription is unclear. However, I would, given the history of David, assume that it was he who was perhaps out in a field, camped next to the city of Gath, when he penned these words. My second guess would be that this is related to a musical instrument commonly used by some of the inhabitants of Gath. As for this being related to a *winepress*; I don't see that as any sort of a viable explanation. Many other suggestions have been given as to the occasion of this psalm,

¹ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 786.

² *Barnes' Notes, Volume 4*, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 66.

all related to Gath, all without any real foundation apart from this particular word.³ Barnes suggests: *If we may judge from the psalm itself, it would seem probable that it was composed by night in the contemplation of the starry heavens—naturally suggesting, in view of the vastness and beauty of the celestial luminaries, the littleness of man. This also filled the mind of the psalmist with wonder that the God, who marshals all these hosts, should condescend to regard the condition and wants of a being so feeble and frail as man, and should have exalted him as he has done over his works.* The mention of the moon and stars, but not of the sun, would support the nocturnal inspiration of this psalm.⁴

For those unfamiliar with David, he was recognized as king by the prophet-judge Samuel while Saul was still king over Israel. Saul suffered from various mental illnesses, including delusional paranoiac-schizophrenia, which appears to have been brought on, in part, because of his great jealousy for David. Periodically, Saul would pursue David, seeking his life. At these times, David would escape to cities and areas in Israel which were under the control of the Philistines, e.g., Gath. There, David was often safer than he was around King Saul. David was often inspired to write these psalms while under the stars or in unusual situations. It is not unreasonable to assume that he wrote this particular psalm while on the run from Saul, taking refuge near the Philistine city of Gath. David, contemplating his own position, his own frailty in the face of Saul and his army, would be reasonably inspired to write these words, which appear to be inspired, in part, by the frailty of man and fragility of his life. His mention of the enemies of God (v. 2b) also implies that he is on the run from Saul, although he has chosen to recognize the bigger picture, speaking rather of the enemies of God.

When it reads a *psalm to [or, for] David*, authorship is implied. This is the common phrasing of the psalms.

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God's Greatness—an Introduction

Y^هowah, our Lord—
How majestic Your Name in all the land
which [name] You must place [with] Your
majesty beyond the two heavens.

Psalm
8:1

Y^הowah, our Lord,
how glorious [is] Your name in all the earth
Who has placed Your splendor beyond the
heavens
[or, You place Your splendor beyond the
heavens].

Jehovah, our Lord—
Your name is glorious in all the earth;
You have placed your majesty as high as the heavens.

God is addressed with His specific name, Y^הowah; and He is called by the more generic term, *lord*, which can mean *master, lord, ruler, owner*. It is the name applied to the owner of property and/or slaves and it is also applied to kings and other rulers. In applying this to God—the psalmist recognizes that He is the ruler over the universe and of earth. Strong's #113 BDB #10.

After the interrogative *how*, we have the masculine singular use of the adjective 'addîyr (אֲדִיר) [pronounced ahd-DEER], which means *glory, majestic, magnificence*. When applied to a great ship or to the waves of the sea, it can mean *large, great, mighty*. When used of a king, it can mean *mighty, powerful*. When referring to God, it means *magnificent, glorious, illustrious*. When used in the moral sense, it means *noble, excelling in good qualities*. Strong's #117 BDB #12. God's name is glorious in all the earth. McGee: *This is not a reference to the present hour in which we are living. God's name is not very excellent in the world today. Not long ago on the golf course I heard an old man, who was standing right on the threshold of eternity, use the name of the Lord in vain in a way*

³ Barnes gives a good run down of these theories in *Barnes' Notes, Volume 4*, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 65.

⁴ Quoted and paraphrased from *Barnes' Notes, Volume 4*, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 65–66.

that was absolutely uncalled for. Walking down the street, I heard a very nicely dressed, refined looking, gentle woman, who looked like a grandmother, swear. My, how she could swear! God's name is not very excellent today. The fact of the matter is that people today are not saying very much about God. I notice on the newscasts that God is never mentioned. He makes the news, too, but He is never brought into the picture. God is recognized in insurance policies that insure houses that are destroyed by fire or by an "act of God!" Do they think the Lord is running around destroying houses? That is the only publicity God gets today. It is all bad as far as He is concerned. He is being left out and left out purposely. His Word is not wanted in the schools. These broad-minded liberals, who believe that everybody should be heard, think pornography should be permitted because the liberties of people should not be curtailed. Well, friends, don't I have a share in that liberty? I would like to have prayer in schools for my grandchildren. How about you? I would like some public recognition of God. I would like to have prayer in public places. Have I no liberties any longer in this land of ours? No, God's name is not excellent today.⁵

Barnes: ...the manifestation of his perfect character was not confined to any one country, but was seen in all lands, and among all people. In every place, his true character was made known through his works; in every land there were evidences of his wisdom, his greatness, his goodness, his condescension.⁶ God's approach to His relationship to man was interesting. At the time of this psalm, God had functioned primarily through Israel for roughly the previous half millennium, dealing primarily with the Jew for the past millennium. Now, in my mind, I would have, as God, approached men no matter where they were found, in an ancient world when information was not almost simultaneously known world-wide, as it is now. However, that is human viewpoint. God chose to speak to a particular people in a particular geographical area. We must assume, based upon God's character, that all men had the chance to hear to Old Testament version of the gospel in order to be saved, as long as they had positive volition at God-consciousness.

So far, things are fairly simple; however, the next phrase is a problem, so let me give you a few translations first:

CEV	Our Lord and Ruler, your name is wonderful everywhere on earth! You let your glory be seen in the heavens above.
The Emphasized Bible	O Yahweh, our Lord! How majestic is thy Name in all the earth, Who hast set thy splendour upon the heavens.
NASB	O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Thy name in all the earth, Who hast displayed [or, set] Thy splendor above the heavens!
The Septuagint	O Lord, our Lord, how wonderful is Your name in all the earth! For your magnificence is exalted above the heavens.
Young's Lit. Translation	Jehovah, our Lord, How honourable Thy name in all the earth! Who settest thine honour on the heavens.

You will note that the subject of the second sentence is in question. In the NASB, it refers back to God. In the Septuagint, it refers back to His majesty. It is actually not a small thing, but an actual disagreement. What we have after the relative pronoun is the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative of nāthan (נָתַן) [pronounced naw-THAHN], which means *to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set*. In the imperative, it means *give up, set out*. Strong's #5414 BDB #678. Prior to this verb, we have the relative pronoun, whose reference is confused by the imperative here. It would make sense to have one of those, but not both. Owen suggests that this should be the 3rd person feminine singular, Qal perfect of nāthan. In the first case, the psalmist is telling God to place His majestic name in the heavens⁷ and in the latter interpretation, His majestic name is placed in the heavens (and the only feminine singular subject in the vicinity is the *earth*). The Hebrew reads as a 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative verb, but some do not like the psalmist to give orders to God, so they therefore reject that reading. However, that dog won't hunt. We find the use of the imperative with God in the 2nd person frequently enough for this not to be an anomaly. Psalm 57:5 reads: *Be exalted above the heavens, O God; Let Your glory be above the earth* (v. 11 reprises this refrain). What is really a problem is that this phrase is convoluted because we have a relative pronoun, a 2nd person imperative directed toward God, and what appears to be a direct object (*Your*

⁵ J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Volume 1*; Thru the Bible Books, ©1977, p. 55.

⁶ Barnes' Notes, Volume 4, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 67.

⁷ Note that we are essentially ignoring the relative pronoun in order to give this meaning to this phrase.

majesty). Literally, this gives us; ...which [name] You should place your majesty in the heavens. In other words, this makes sense as an imperative, if we drop the relative pronoun; or we can keep the relative pronoun and drop the imperative (which is how most translations deal with this verse); or we can keep the relative pronoun, but assume that this is a feminine singular, Qal perfect. If the latter is the case, then the relative pronoun refers to *the earth* (or, *the land*), which is the only feminine singular noun in this verse. Rotherham supports his translation (*The Emphasized Bible*) with the Aramaic and the Syriac codices. A third route would be to keep the relative pronoun, which refers back, perhaps to *His name*; keep the imperative, but throw out *Your majesty*. Now, the Syriac simply has the verb in the indicative, which solves pretty much all of our problems (although I am not clear on whether the gender or person).⁸

Various Views of the Morphology of Psalm 8:1b			
2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative (with a relative pronoun)	3 rd person feminine singular, Qal imperfect (with a relative pronoun)	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect (with the relative pronoun)	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative (sans relative pronoun)
...which [name] You must set Your majesty upon [or beyond] the heavens.	...which [earth] has placed Your majesty beyond the heavens.	...Who [God] has placed Your majesty beyond the heavens.	...You must place Your majesty beyond the heavens.
This is what is in the Hebrew text	Owen suggests this	This is how most translators deal with this verse; apparently in agreement with some codices	Another option, albeit less likely

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My point is that something must be changed in this verse so that it makes some sort of sense. This is not that much of a biggie, inasmuch as we are talking an extra letter, or one left off, or a difference of vowel points. The proclamation of Psalm 148:13 is an imperative and much less convoluted: [Let them praise the name of Y^{eh}owah, for His name alone is exalted above the earth and heaven.](#) Or, Psalm 108:5: [Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and Your glory above all the earth.](#)

What appears to be set in the heavens is masculine singular noun *hôwd* (הָוֹד) [pronounced *hode*], which means *splendor, majesty, vigour*. It appears to be a synonym for 'addîyr above. Strong's #1935 BDB #217. [Who is like You, O Y^{eh}owah? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders?](#) (Ex. 15:11). Jehovah is high above all nations; His glory is above the heavens (Psalm 113:4).

[From a mouth of young children and nursing infants, You establish strength to the intent that Your oppressors \[are caused\] to stop hostilities and \[personal\] vengeance.](#)

Psalm
8:2

[You have built an impregnable fortress out from the mouths of young children and infants, designed to cause Your enemies to cease their hostilities and acts of vengeance.](#)

[Out of the mouths of young children and nursing infants, You have founded a \[strong\] refuge, with the intent that Your enemies be caused to cease \[from\] hostilities and \[desires of\] vengeance.](#)

⁸ *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 515.

I think that we should view some other translations:

CEV	With praises from children and from tiny infants, you have built a fortress. It makes your enemies silent, and all who turn against you are left speechless.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Out of the mouth of children and sucklings hast thou laid a foundation of strength,—Because of thine adversaries, To make foe and avenger be still.
NASB	From the mouth of infants and nursing babes Thou hast established strength, Because of Thine adversaries, To make the enemy and the revengeful cease.
NJB	...even through the mouths of children, or of babes in arms, you make him a fortress, firm against your foes, to subdue the enemy and the rebel.
Owen	By the mouth of babes and infants (suckling ones), You have built a fortress because of your foes, to stop Your enemies and adversaries.
The Septuagint	Out of the mouth of babes and sucking have You perfected praise, because of Your enemies; that You might put down the enemy and avenger.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	From the mouths of infants and sucklings Thou hast founded strength, Because of Thine adversaries, To still an enemy and a self-avenger.

In taking some liberties, the first phrase is: *Out of the mouths of young children and nursing infants, You build a fortress.* Most translations incorrectly overemphasize the youth of the children here. *Young children* is the ‘ôlāl (עָלָל) [pronounced oh-LAWL or go-LAWL] and it means *a child* as opposed to an adult. In Jer. 6:11 9:21, it refers to a boy playing in the streets, and in Lam. 4:4, a boy who is begging for bread. It is also used of an unborn child in Job 3:16. Strong’s #5768 BDB #760. The second word employed is properly a *nursing infant*.

The verb is 2nd person masculine singular, Piel perfect of yâçar (רָאַצֵּר) [pronounced yaw-SAHR], which means *to establish, to found, to fix, to lay a foundation*. In the Piel, it means *to found, to lay a foundation stone, to appoint, to ordain*. Strong’s #3245 BDB #413. What God has established is the masculine singular noun ‘ôz (רָאֹז) [pronounced góhz], and it means *strength, might*. It can also mean *firmness, defense, refuge, protection*; and, with the idea that those whom He loves are joined to Him, it can mean *splendor, majesty, glory praise*. The Septuagint uses the word *praise* here and Jesus, when quoting this verse, does as well. Don’t over-think this. *Strength* is the correct rendering; however, one can insert the word *praise* and that principle is also true. Strong’s #5797 BDB #738. *Y^ehowah is my strength and my song; and He has also become my salvation* (Psalm 118:14).

This verse means that God, using the help of the helpless, has founded a position of strength—an unconquerable refuge, if you will. Now, can you imagine enlisting the aide of infants and those who are still breast-feeding in a building project? Or in a war? This is exactly what God has done. He has taken those who are comparatively infants and has employed them against His enemies, which are the forces of darkness whose powers are far beyond ours—whose powers makes us appear as babes. What this does *not* mean is that God has enlisted the help of actual nursing infants.

This is followed by compound preposition l^ema’an (לְמַעַן) [pronounced l^e-MAH-gahn], which means *for the sake of, on account of, to the intent of, to the intent that, to the purpose that, in order that*. The use of this preposition emphasizes the cause or purpose of the action. The substantive ma’an (מַעַן) [pronounced MAH-ahn] means *purpose, intent*. It is found in Scripture only with the prefixed lamed. Together, they mean *to the intent, to the purpose that, for the sake of, in order that, on account of*. Strong’s #4616 BDB #775. This is followed by the masculine plural, Qal active participle tsârar (צָרָר) [pronounced tsaw-RAHR], which means *to bind, to tie up, to be restricted, to be cramped*. The second meaning is *to show hostility toward, to vex, to oppress, to persecute*. As a masculine plural participle, it means *oppressors, enemies, persecutors*. Strong’s #6887 BDB #865. Psalm 143:12 reads: *And in Your grace, You have cut off my enemies, and You have destroyed all those who afflict my soul, for I am Your servant.* Specifically *who* these enemies are, is never established. However, for anyone who leads a real life in contact with people—they will have enemies. There are some who will develop a deep and abiding hatred for you and they will do whatever it takes to bring you down. There are others who are emotionally neutral toward you, but will still willingly play a part against you, if it gets them something that they want. Now, obviously, some people bring upon themselves the ire and acrimony of others—however, you do not have to actively cultivate the displeasure of others. Whenever you deal with people day-in and day-out, you will have

enemies. And if you are a growing believer, a person who actively pursues the Word of God, Satan's demonic army will see to it that your life will be filled with enemies—and don't be surprised when many of them are believers in Christ Jesus.

Recognize what is occurring here. God uses the helpless and those who cannot even take care of themselves to build a fortress so great that even their enemies will lose their desire to go against them. Barnes: *God...instead of putting forth his own power directly, had condescended to employ those who were weak and feeble like little children.*⁹

I Cor. 1:26–30 expresses the sentiment of this verse: *For consider your calling, brothers, that there were not many wise, according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to discredit the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to discredit that which is strong, and the base things of the world and the despised. God has chosen the things that are not, that he might nullify the things that are, so that no man should boast before God. But, by His doing, you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.*

Jesus quoted this verse. He had cleansed the Temple and the blind and the lame came to Him while in the Temple to be healed. Furthermore, young children would call out in the Temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David.” The scribes and High Priests observed this and *became indignant, and said to Him, “Do You hear what these are saying?”* And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies, You have prepared praise for Yourself?’” (Matt. 21:15b–16). Jesus was telling the chief priests and the scribes that it would be a good idea if they read this Scripture so that they would understand why the children were saying this.¹⁰

When a passage is quoted in the New Testament, we have to be careful how we approach it. What occurred in Matt. 21 was not a *fulfillment* of this verse, but it was an *application* of this verse. There are many times in the New Testament when the time is just right, and a verse which predicts this or that—primarily this or that about the Messiah—is fulfilled. It has one primary fulfillment; that occurs in the New Testament and that is that. In this verse, we have a principle, and that principle is that God has employed the weak to confound the strong. God fulfills that principle many times a day. When Jesus quotes this verse, He affirms His deity. The children are crying out, “Hosanna to the Son of David” and Jesus says that “‘Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies, You have prepared praise for Yourself.’”

Jesus also makes a possible allusion to this verse in Matt. 11:25. At that time, Jesus answered and said, “I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You hid these things from the wise and the intelligent and Your revealed them to babes.”

Most of the translations seem to fall apart at the end of this verse. What we do not have is three synonyms for *enemies*, but we have one word for *enemy* and the two participles which follow indicate the behavior which is caused to cease. This is followed by the *lamed* preposition and the *Hiphil* infinitive construct of *shā^bvath* (שָׁבֵת) [pronounced *shaw^b-VATH*] is the word for *to rest, to keep a day of rest, to celebrate the Sabbath day, to cease, to decease, to rest [because something has been completed]*. You will note how close this is to the word *Sabbath*. In the *Hiphil*, it means *to cause to rest, to cause a work to cease, to cause to cease, to remove, to take away*. Strong's #7673 BDB #991. This is followed by the *Qal* active participle of *'âya^bv* (אַיְבָּו) [pronounced *aw-YA^BV*] and it means *to be at enmity, to be hostile*. As a participle, it can be reasonably rendered *enemy*, but it is more literally, *the one being at enmity with you*. Here, as a participle, it refers to the behavior which will be caused to cease, namely *enmity, hostility*. Strong's #340 BDB #33. This is followed by the *Hithpael* participle of *nâqam* (נִקָּם) [pronounced *naw-KAHM*], which means *to avenge, to take vengeance*. In this verse, we are speaking of *acts of vengeance*. Strong's #5358 BDB #667. You may wonder the different between the *hostilities* and the *vengeance* of the enemies of David—it is simply this: (1) When one is hostile towards another, it has its origins in mental attitude sins of hatred, bitterness and jealousy. There is not the necessity for provocation or for justification. It's not unlike the bully in the school yard or a lawyer who sues individuals—they do so because they can and, as a

⁹ Barnes' Notes, Volume 4, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 69.

¹⁰ J. Vernon McGee, Psalms Volume 1; Thru the Bible Books, ©1977, p. 54.

result, they get something that they want, whether it be power, money or a feeling of accomplishment and victory. (2) Then there is vengeance: in this case, the enemy has justified his own actions in his own mind. Not only does he *want* to act with hostility but he has convinced himself that he is doing the *right* thing or the *moral* or the *ethical* thing. Terrorist organizations must convince themselves that what they are doing is somehow right and that the pain and suffering that they cause is somehow mitigated by whatever good they hope to accomplish. A lawyer in many cases must convince himself that he is simply a part of the system and that his purpose is to win, regardless of the consequences, and regardless of the pain, grief or suffering that he causes. David certainly had enemies—he had those who simply did not like him; he also had those who felt justified in their persecution of him.

Now, even though David speaks of these as enemies of God, they could just as easily be enemies of David. The same principles apply. Those who have chosen to be against us often are enemies of God as well. I am including believers in this group. When I was younger and more naive, I had no idea that the greatest and most vicious attacks often come from other believers. You haven't lived until you have had a Christian harass you at the workplace or sue you in the courthouse. And, invariably, they justify their personal acts of vengeance. God has chosen to meet and answer His enemies with the weak and the helpless; God will overthrow those who are antagonistic toward him and those who seek vengeance against Him by those who are not strong and would not, by human viewpoint, be able to stand up against the enemies herein cited.

The David asks himself—he's been thinking about how God confounds his powerful enemies with the weak and helpless—he asks himself, why on earth would God, the Creator of the Universe, even consider man at all? God's primary enemies are those fallen angels who are following the lead of Satan. God does battle with them with man, the strongest of whom is almost infinitely inferior to the weakest of angels. In fact, man is so insignificant, David ponders, given the vastness of the universe, who is man that God would even consider him?

**When I look at your heavens—
works of Your fingers—**

moon and stars which You have set up;

Psalm
8:3

**When I examine Your heavens—
the works of Your fingers—
the moon and stars which You have
established;**

**When I examine the heavens—the works of Your hands,
the moon and the stars which You have established there;**

We begin this verse with the conjunction *kîy* (כִּי) [pronounced *kee*], which means *when, that, for, because*. It has several meanings, depending upon the context. One set of meanings is related to time, and can mean *at that time, which, what time, when*. Strong's #3588 BDB #471. What the psalmist looks at is the dual of *shāmayîm* (שָׁמַיִם) [pronounced *shaw-MAH-yeem* (or, *yim*)], which means *heavens, skies*. Strong's #8074 BDB #1029. The psalmist is not merely looking toward the sky, or taking a quick glance into the sky, but he is examining the heavens while in deep thought. Barnes: *They are called his heavens because he made them—because he is the proprietor of them—perhaps because they are his abode.*¹¹ It's interesting that the heavens and all that is in them is referred to as the *finger-work* of God, whereas, elsewhere, we have the *arm of salvation* (e.g., Isa. 53:1). McGee likened God's finger-work to the crocheting of a woman. I once knew a woman who continually crocheted during various meetings. It required little work on her part to crochet, and helped to keep her mind focused (or, at least from becoming mind-numbingly bored). In any case, it is *finger-work*—relatively easy and mindless; and so is the universe as created by God. By contrast, what God did for us in our salvation required far greater effort and sacrifice than anything we can imagine.¹²

According to the Eastern Massorites, *work* is in the singular. According to the Western Massorites, the Aramaic, the Septuagint and the Vulgate, *works* is in the plural.¹³

¹¹ Barnes' Notes, Volume 4, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 70.

¹² Taken from J. Vernon McGee, Psalms Volume 1; Thru the Bible Books, ©1977, p. 58.

¹³ Joseph Bryant Rotherham's The Emphasized Bible; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 532.

The final verb is the 2nd person masculine singular, Polel perfect of kūwn (קָוָן) [pronounced *koon*], which means to erect (*to stand up perpendicular*), to set up, to found, to establish, to prepare, to be stabilized. The Polel is not acknowledged in Mansoor's book nor in Zodhiates; however, it is essentially the same as the Piel (intensive) stem with a different conjugation. It appears to be called the Pilel in Gesenius. Strong's #3559 BDB #465.

David, as a shepherd, and, apparently later, as heir apparent to the throne, spent a lot of time looking into the sky and contemplating God's majesty. **The heavens continually tell of the glory of God and their great expanse declares the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech and night to night reveals knowledge** (Psalm 19:1–2). Another psalmist wrote: **Great are the works of Y^ehowah, studied by all who delight in them** (Psalm 111:2). And: **Of old, You founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands** (Psalm 102:25). **Behold, to Y^ehowah, your God, belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth and all that is in it** (Deut. 10:14). **The heavens are Yours, the earth is also Yours; You have established the world and all it contains** (Psalm 89:11).

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God Places the Earth under the Control of Mankind

**What [is] [mortal] man that You remember
him
and a son of man that You visit him?**

Psalm
8:4

**What is fallen man that You call him to mind,
or the son of man that You have personal
contact with him?**

**What is fallen man that You would think about him?
Or the son of man, that You would have any personal contact with him?**

We begin this verse with an interrogative, which cries out for the verb *to be*. The interrogative, also found in vv. 1 and 9 and translated *how*, is followed by the masculine singular of 'énôwsh (עֲנוֹשׁ) [pronounced *en-OHSH*] and it means *mortal, mortal man, mankind*; this is a word found generally in poetry. Barnes alleges that this word does not mean so much as *mortal man* as *feeble man*; i.e., *man liable to disease and calamity, fallen man, depraved man*. It is often a word applied to the lower classes of men; i.e., *peons, hoi polloi, the great unwashed, rabble, wretched man, peasant*. Zodhiates mentions that depravity of man is in view when this word is used. This is very close to a verb which is rendered *weak, sick*. Strong's #582 BDB #60. What David asks God is why does He consider him? The verb is the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect (with a 3rd person masculine suffix) of zâkar (זָקַר) [pronounced *zaw-KAHR*] means which means *remember, recall, call to mind*. Strong's #2142 BDB #269.

The second verb used here is the same morphology applied to pâqad (פָּקַד) [pronounced *paw-KAHD*], which means, in the Qal, *to go to a person, to visit, to have personal contact with, to sort out, to visit a person, to commit, to charge to the care of, to fall upon, to attack*. The key to this verb is personal contact and the context determines whether this should be taken in a positive or a negative sense. Strong's #6485 BDB #823.

When David looked into the heavens, he realized that they went up some distance. The actual extent of the heavens was beyond his imagination. In fact, it is beyond our imagination. Their colossal size, their orbits and organization is also beyond our ability to even imagine. So David asks, what is man, given how great the heavens are, that God would take notice of him? Who is man, that God would even think about him? Barnes: *What claim has one so weak, and frail, and short-lived, to be remembered by thee? What is there in man that entitles him to so much notice? Why has God conferred on him so signal honour? Why has he placed him over the works of his hands? Why has he made so many arrangements for his comfort? What has he done so much to save him? He is so insignificant, his life is so much like a vapour, he so soon disappears, he is so sinful and polluted, that the question may well be asked, why such honour has been conferred on him, and why such a dominion over the world has been given him.*¹⁴

¹⁴ Barnes' Notes, Volume 4, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 70.

Interestingly enough, Job asked almost the exact same question, but his was more of a complaint than being motivated from a sense of wonder. “What is man that You magnify him, and that You are concerned about him; that You examine him every morning and You try him every moment? Will You not turned Your gaze away from me; nor let me alone until I swallow my spittle?” (Job 7:17–18).

The writer of Hebrews quotes this passage from the Greek in Heb. 2:6–8, which has a couple of significant changes. We will examine those as they come up.

**And so You have made him lacking little from
God
and honor and majesty You crown him.**

Psalm
8:5

**You have made him lacking little from God
and You have crowned him [with] honor and
majesty.**

**You have made man so that he lacks little from You
and You have crowned him with honor and glory.**

Because there is some misunderstanding of this verse, I believe we should see a variety of translations; also, I will give you the Old and New Testament versions (in the New Testament, this is Heb. 2:7a¹⁵):

CEV	You made us a little lower than you yourself [or, “the angels” or “the beings in heaven”], and you have crowned us with glory and honor.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	That thou shouldst make him little less than messengers of God, With glory and honour shouldst crown him? <i>Thou hast made him less, some little, than messengers, With glory and honour hast thou crowned him,—</i>
KJV	For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor.
Interlinear idiomatic	You made him lower for a little while than the angels.
Interlinear word-for-word	You made him lower for some short <i>time</i> than the angels.
JPS (Tanakh)	...that You have made him little less than divine [or, “the angels”], and adorned him with glory and majesty;
NASB	Yet Thou hast made him a little lower than God [or, the angels]; And dost crown him with glory and majesty! “THOU HAST MADE HIM FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS; THOU HAST CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR.”
NJB	Yet you have made him little less than a god, you have crowned him with glory and beauty.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And causest him to lack a little of Godhead, And with honour and majesty compassed him. Thou didst make him some little less than messengers, with glory and honour Thou didst crown him, and didst set him over the works of Thy hands.

After the wâw consecutive, we have the Piel imperfect of châçér (חָסַר) [pronounced *khaw-SEHR*], which means to *lack*, to *need*, to *be lacking*, to *decrease*. In the Piel, it means to *cause to want*, to *caused to be devoid of*. Now, I realize that almost everyone has memorized this portion of this psalm, so you are going to be resistant to any slight change of translation. Here’s another psalm that you memorized parts of: The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. You know what that last word is? Châçér. See also Gen. 8:3 Deut. 2:7 Neh. 9:21. Strong’s #2637 BDB #341. This is followed by the adverb m^e-’at (וְעַת) [pronounced *m^e-GAHT*], which means a *little*, *fewness*, *few*. Strong’s #4592 BDB #589. Then we have the preposition mîn, which can mean *from*, *out from*, *away from*,

¹⁵ The second portion of this verse is found in some New Testament manuscripts, but not all. It is simply a continuation of the psalm.

than. Strong's #4480 BDB #577. This is followed by the word for God.¹⁶ This gives us: **And You have made him lacking little from God.** You see that this verse means something entirely different than you thought. God created man in such a way that he would require little from God. He lacked very little. Man can subsist for his entire life without calling upon God for a thing. So David ponders these things—given the vastness of the universe, why does God give any thought to man? Then he follows it up that man is lacking in little from God, meaning that most men give less thought to God than He gives to them. Now I understand this—after teaching for years, I have noticed that in many cases, I sometimes agonize more over an *F* grade than does the student who receives it. I give more thought to him and the class than he gives himself. Man has the illusion of self-sufficiency. Man can choose to live a life—in his own mind—apart from God. Obviously, God sustains each and every one of us and provides for believers and unbelievers alike—however, God has made it so that an individual can lead an entire life devoid of God, if he so chooses.

Now, the Greek of this verse is something else. First of all, it is quoted directly from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Bible which was made somewhere between 300–200 B.C. It is important that you understand that the Greek translation of the Old Testament is not inspired by God. Whenever we have a difference between the Greek Septuagint and the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, we need to examine the situation carefully. There are many instances where the Greek is based upon an older and more accurate text than is our Hebrew Bible, and therefore to be followed. There are times when the translator gave a weak translation, for one of several reasons: (1) he put his spin on a verse, giving us his evaluation of the verse in his opinion; (2) he was uncertain of the meaning of the Hebrew word(s) and gave it his best shot; (3) he dealt with an inferior manuscript; or, (4) he simply gave a rather free translation of a passage. Therefore, we cannot simply assume that the Septuagint is always better or worse than our Hebrew text, and must be evaluated carefully. In general, the translation of the Law is fairly faithful to the original, while the rest of the Bible is translated unevenly. II Kings appears to lack Hebrew scholarship, and I Kings, although better, *undoubtedly is...marred by pious interpolation and paraphrases which reflect haste, ignorance, or carelessness, and sometimes all three.*¹⁷ ZPEB goes on: *In sort, the LXX, besides manifesting those faults of carelessness, weariness, and ignorance common enough in translations, shows also attempts to correct an existing text which may be well- or ill-founded, deliberate tampering with the story, and a quite unusual freedom in interpolation, improvisation, and modification.*¹⁸ Tradition has it that there were 70 Jewish elders who did the translation of the Old Testament, although some put this at 72, and, when dealing with that many different men, there are bound to be differences of opinion when it comes to the proper way to translate the Old Testament. I personally, as you have no doubt gathered, look for a very careful, word-by-word translation as a starting point. The translators of the modern CEV, although we are probably very close theologically-speaking, go for a much freer translation. Given that the Septuagint was the first translation of a book that we are aware of in ancient history, we did not have exactly a plethora of guidelines back then. Now, most translations let us know going in what their predispositions are with regards to the proper way to translate God's Word.

The verb is Aorist active indicative of elattoō (ἐλαττώω) [pronounced *el-at-TOH-oh*], which means *to make inferior, to make lower, to diminish, to lessen [in rank or influence]*. This word is only found in John 3:30 Heb. 2:7, 9. Strong's #1642. This is followed by the pronoun *him* and the adjective brachus (βραχύς) [pronounced *brahk-OOS*], which means *short, little*. Strong's #1024. Then we have the particle tís (τίς) [pronounced *tihç*], which has several uses. Here, it is used to heighten the rhetorical emphasis and can be rendered *only*. Strong's #5100. This gives us: **You have made Him lower, only little,...**

Then we have the preposition para (παρά) [pronounced *paw-RAW*], which can be used in a comparative sense to mean *more than, in comparison to, beyond*. Strong's #3844. This is followed by the Greek word for *angels* or *messengers*. This gives us: **You have made Him lower, only a little more than angels.**

¹⁶ It is *God* in the Hebrew. In the Greek and the Syriac, it is *angels*.

¹⁷ Quoted and paraphrased from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 5, p. 344.

¹⁸ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 5, p. 345. Now don't get the idea that the author of this article simply poo-poo's the Septuagint. On this same page, he also writes, *It is an uneven translation, but a monument both of literary and historical endeavor, a social as well as a religious contribution to human history.*

My point is that the Hebrew says one thing and the Greek says something else. Now the way that the writer of Hebrews introduces this quote is quite interesting, as he quotes a lot of Scripture. At the beginning of this book, the author begins speaking of God, and then introduces some Scripture quotes with, **For to which of the angels did He ever say...** (Heb. 1:5a). Psalm 22:22 is quoted, and context attributes the quotation to Christ Jesus (Heb. 2:9–12a). **Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says...** introduces an Old Testament quote from Psalm 95:7 (Heb. 3:7a). But what of our passage, quoted at length by the author of Hebrews—to whom does he attribute the Greek translation to? **But someone has testified somewhere, saying...** (Heb. 2:6a). On both sides of this quotation, we have Scripture attributed to God the Father, God the Son and to God the Holy Spirit; however, to this particular quotation, we have, **But someone somewhere testified, saying...** The first two chapters of Hebrews quote a dozen verses from the Psalms—but here, the origin of the verses is *someone, somewhere, said...* The book of Hebrews is filled with quotes from the Old Testament—open your Bible right now and wander through, and note how the quotations are introduced, and then note the introduction to this quotation. *Someone, somewhere, said?* Without making a big deal out of anything, the human author of Hebrews, either knowingly or unknowingly, tells us that these were not the words of the Holy Spirit—however, by placing them in the Book of Hebrews, he makes them the Word of God. The Holy Spirit inspired David to write: **You have made him [man] lacking little from God.** The translators of the Septuagint incorrectly translated this, **You have made Him lower, only a little more than angels.** The writer of Hebrews incorporates this incorrect translation into the book of Hebrews, making it a part of the Word of God. And, with only a couple of words, indicates that is what is occurring. Psalm 8, in this section, is concerned with *man*, also called *the son of man*. Hebrews takes the mistranslation of this passage and applies it to the Son of Man, Christ Jesus.

One of the things which sets the King James' Version apart from almost any other translation is its literary power. Setting aside, for a moment, the *thee's* and the *thou's*, along with the rest of its archaic language, there are times where the verbiage of the KJV totally kicks holy butt. Sometimes, it is so powerful and well-stated that, when a more correct translation is delivered to us, we want to reject it, as it just doesn't carry the literary vigor of the KJV. We have an analogous situation here. We would like to interpret this passage as we believe the author of Hebrews interprets it; however, he is just taking the popular, albeit incorrect translation, and making it a part of God's Word, because, even though it is incorrectly translated, what it says is correct. There are places in the KJV where a powerful statement is made, which is Biblically true, but mistranslated.¹⁹

Since we are spending a little time in the New Testament, it would be worth our while to note that the author of Hebrews did not quote all of this passage. He leaves out Psalm 8:6a (which reads: **You have caused him to have dominion over the works of Your hands...**), but quotes Psalm 8:6b (**You have placed all things under His feet**). The latter half of the verse is closer to the spin that the author of Hebrews puts on this quotation.

Now, let me cover one more minor item which is more of a footnote than anything, but something which may be eating away at you. In the Psalm 8, we have the word for *God* in v. 5; in Hebrews 2:7, and in the Septuagint, the word is *angels*—what's up with that? Rotherham explains this well: *This rendering has seemed the best way out of a difficulty. The Heb. Word is **elohim**, which is used with more latitude than is the English word "God," as may be seen by comparing Exo. xxi. 6, xxii. 8, 9, 28 with Ps. lxxxii. 1, 2, 6, 7 and Jno. x. 34–36; to which may be added Heb. ii. 3 "Judges" (whether human, as in Exo. xxii., or superhuman, as in Ps. lxxxii.) represent God. It is in this sense the phrase, "messengers of God," is here used.*²⁰ Maybe I didn't need to quote all of that. In any case, what is important is that we use the word *God* in English more restrictively than the Hebrews used the word *elohim*.

Now, I realize that no one has ever taken you by the hand and as carefully walked you through this portion of Hebrews. What I have just explained, you have not heard before because few pastors have ever taken the time to get this right. Furthermore, I want to include a personal note. I will take a passage in whatever direction the translation takes me. Like anyone else who first read this passage in Hebrews, my preference is that this be a Messianic psalm. However, in examining this verse, I could not make it agree entirely with Heb. 2 without deliberately violating the Hebrew of this passage. And, just like any other exegete, I don't give a rip whether this is the first time that this passage has been taught like this or whether every liberal and conservative scholar has given

¹⁹ Unfortunately, I am without a ready example here.

²⁰ Joseph Bryant Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 532.

this interpretation before me. My only interest is in correctly teaching this passage. However, I do like it when some great scholar of the past has taken a difficult passage and has given it the exact same explanation as I have. Barnes writes, in part: *The psalm, though one part of it is applied...to Christ (Heb. ii. 6,7), does not appear originally to have had any designed reference to the Messiah, though the apostle shows that its language had a complete fulfillment in him, and in him alone.*²¹ The NIV Study Bible comes to the same conclusion: *The author of Hebrews thus makes use of the eschatological implications of these nonprophetic words in his testimony to Christ.*²²

Now, the second line, which will not require near as much analysis as the first: in the second line, we have not a contrast, but a furtherance of the same theme, but it furthers the same theme different in the Psalms than it does in Hebrews. Not only did God made man so that he appears to lack little from God, he also did the 2nd person masculine singular, Piel imperfect (with a 3rd person masculine singular suffix) of 'âtar (עֲטָר) [pronounced *gaw-TAHR*], which means *to surround, to crown*. The similar meaning probably comes from the crown surrounding the head of the wearer. Strong's #5849 BDB #742. What God surrounds or crowns man with is the masculine singular noun kâ'bôwd (כָּבֹוד) [pronounced *kaw(b)-VODE*] and it refers to *glory, abundance, or honor*. Strong's #3519 BDB #458. We also have the masculine singular noun hâdâr (הָדָר) [pronounced *haw-DAWR*], which means *majesty, splendor*. Strong's #1926 BDB #214. God, in giving man dominion over the earth, has, in essence, crowned man with honor and majesty. This psalm looks at man and his descendants as the original rulers over the earth. God had crowned man and the son of man with dominance over the earth (we find this in the next verse as well—in fact, v. 5b is more suited to being with v. 6 than with v. 5a). God is the Creators and Ruler over all. At the time of the restoration of the earth, God gave dominion of the earth to man, placing all God's creation under man. Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." And God created man in His own image, in the image of God, He created him; male and female, He created them. And God blessed them. Therefore, God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Gen. 1:26–28). However, man—actually, Adam and the woman—gave up this responsibility when they disobeyed God and ate from the tree, transferring the rulership over the earth to Satan, whom they both obeyed. However, in this psalm, we are referring to the way things were created and what God did after making man—God put man in charge. I said, "You are gods; you are sons of the Most High." (Psalm 82:6).

In the book of Hebrews, the meaning is different. In the book of Hebrews, beginning with the quotation of v. 5, we begin speaking of the Son of Man, Christ Jesus. When quoting v. 4, the writer of Hebrews is still speaking of man—fallen man—and he asks, *What is man, that You remember him? Or the son of man, that you are concerned about him?* (Heb. 2:6 Psalm 8:4). Man rejected God's authority; man rejected his responsibility of rulership over the earth. So, *who is man, that You would remember him? Or his descendants, that you are even concerned about him?* In Heb. 2:7, we make the subtle shift to speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ. The author of Hebrews took the mistranslation and used it to speak of our Lord. *You have made Him, for a little while, lower than the angels. You have crowned Him with glory and honor. You have placed all things in subjection under his feet* (Heb. 2:7–8a Psalm 8:5, 6b). So that we know we are speaking of our Lord Jesus, the writer of Hebrews adds: *For in subjecting all things to Him, He left nothing that is not subject to Him. But now, we do not yet see all things subjected to Him. But we do see Him, Who has been made for a little while lower than the angels—Jesus—because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God, He might taste death for everyone* (Heb. 2:8b–9 Psalm 8:5). So, you see, the writer of Hebrews took a mistranslation and put a spin on it which was not found in the Old Testament. When we complete this passage, we will do a side-by-side translation, and a side-by-side commentary as well to summarize.

Scofield: *Thus this psalm speaks primarily of what God bestowed upon the human race as represented in Adam (Gen. 1:26, 28). [According to Hebrews] That which the first man lost, the second Man and "last Adam" more than regained.*²³

²¹ Barnes' Notes, Volume 4, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 66.

²² The NIV Study Bible; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 786.

²³ The New Scofield Reference Bible; Dr. C.I. Scofield; ©1967 New York·Oxford University Press; p. 604.

**You have caused him to rule works of Your hands;
all [things] You placed under his feet.**

Psalm
8:6

**You have caused him to have dominion over
the works of Your hands;
You have placed all things under his feet.**

**You have given man dominion over all that you have created;
You have placed all things under his control.**

It might be good to see this verse translated by others first:

KJV Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou has put all things under his feet:

NASB Thou dost make him to rule over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet.

Young's Lit. Translation Thou dost cause him to rule Over the works of Thy hands, All Thou hast placed under his feet.

We begin this verse with the 2nd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect, 3rd person masculine suffix of mâshal (מִשְׁלָח) [pronounced *maw-SHAHL*], which means, in the Hiphil, *to cause to rule, to cause to have dominion, to reign*. Strong's #4910 BDB #605. What God has caused man to rule over is the masculine plural construct of ma'ăseh (מְעֵשֶׂה) [pronounced *mah-ă-SEH*] and it means *deed, work, production, that which is done*. Strong's #4639 BDB #795. It is followed by *Your hands*. This is the portion which is not quoted in the New Testament. This applies strictly to mankind, which is how it should be interpreted here. Originally, God gave to man the rulership over earthly things. The works of God's hand included the earth and the universe: **You, Lord, in the beginning, You laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the work of your hands** (Heb. 1:10 Psalm 102:25).

Then we have *all [things] You placed under his feet*. Having something placed under one's feet is the language used for authority or dominion. When a city was defeated in war in the ancient world, the victorious generals would often place their feet over the necks of the leaders of those they subdued. This indicated complete and entire subjugation.²⁴ At creation, God placed the earth in the hands of man. He gave man dominion and power over the earth. **And God created man in His own image, in the image of God, He created him; male and female, He created them. And God blessed them and therefore said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill up the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”** (Gen. 1:27–28). *Placing these things under his feet* is simply a synonymous phrase which indicates the same thing. Psalm 8:6 refers back to original creation and restoration. Barnes: *This dominion was originally give to man at his creation, and it still remains (though not so absolute and entire as this), for nothing is in itself more remarkable than the dominion which man, by nature so feeble, exercises over the inferior creation. It is impossible to account for this in any other way than as it is accounted for in the Bible, by the supposition that it was originally conceded to man by his creator.*²⁵

McGee: *Man is a great failure. We don't like to hear that. We want to hear about success...Man was given dominion over the works of God's hands, but man lost that. Man does not control this universe today. Science thought it had things under control, but now we find that science has polluted this earth, and it looks as if our earth will become a big garbage can. Science is responsible for polluting this earth. If you have been worshiping science and want to get out of the garbage can, you need a God who can help you.*²⁶

The better Greek manuscripts leave Psalm 8:6a out of Heb. 2. The writer of Hebrews goes directly from v. 5 to v. 6b; it appears as though someone later added what they felt was missing. All things that God created on earth were placed under the control of the first Adam, who rejected his responsibility; now all things are placed under the control of the last Adam, Christ Jesus. Interestingly enough, although this verse properly applies to man, both the

²⁴ Barnes' Notes, Volume 4, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 71.

²⁵ Barnes' Notes, Volume 4, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 71–72.

²⁶ J. Vernon McGee, Psalms Volume 1; Thru the Bible Books, ©1977, pp. 58–59.

writer of Hebrews and Paul in I Corinthians apply it to Christ. **The last enemy that will be abolished is death, for He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him** (I Cor. 15:26–27 Psalm 2:6b). Paul, again, references this verse in Eph. 1:22: **And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church.**

**Sheep and cattle—all of them
and also animals of [the] field;**

Psalm
8:7

**All of the sheep and cattle
in addition to the animals in the field;**

God placed both domestic and wild animals under the dominion of man,

With this verse, we leave the portion of this psalm which was quoted in the New, and return to strictly the Old Testament. V. 7 simply continues the list of things under the control of man by divine design. Before *animals* we have the adverb *gam* (גָם) [pronounced *gahm*], which means *also, furthermore, in addition to, even, moreover*. Strong's #1571 BDB #168. Recall what I just quoted: **"Fill the earth and subdue it and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."** (Gen. 1:27b). Barnes: *Nothing is more manifest than the control which man exercises over flocks and herds—making them subservient to his use, and obedient to his will.*²⁷

At the fall, man did not lose complete authority over the animals; just much of it. When Noah and his sons emerged from the ark after the flood, **God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. And the fear of you and the terror of you will be on every animal of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and on all the fish of the sea, [because] into your hand they are given. Every moving thing that is alive will be food for you; I give all to you, just as I gave the green plant. Only, you will not eat the flesh with its life—that is, with its blood."** (Gen. 9:1–4). Animals, generally speaking, have a fairly limited diet. Mankind, on the other hand, is a carnivorous predator of pretty much every animal. Barnes: *It is to be remembered that no small number of what are now domestic animals were originally wild, and that they have been subdued and tamed by the power and skill of man. No animal has shown himself superior to this power and skill.*²⁸ Resistant? Certainly. Superior? Not at all.

**bird of heavens and fish of the sea,
passing through paths of seas.** Psalm **and bird of the heavens and fish of the sea
who pass through the paths of the seas.**

along with the birds of the sky and the fish of the sea, who pass through the paths of the seas.

David continues to name those things over which God gave man dominion. We have a poetic contrast of the language here—*bird* is in the singular, *heavens* is in the plural; then *fish* is in the plural, and *sea* is in the singular. Barnes: *This domination is the more remarkable because the birds of the air seem to be beyond the reach of man; and yet, equally with the beasts of the field, they are subject to his control. Man captures and destroys them; he prevents their multiplication...numerous as they are, and rapid as is their flight, and strong as many of them are, they have never succeeded in making man subject to them, or in disturbing the purposes of man...[man's control over the fish of the seas] is perhaps still more remarkable than the dominion over the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, for the fishes that swim in the ocean seem to be placed still farther from the control of man. Yet, so far as is necessary for his use and for safety, they are, in fact, put under the control of man, and he makes them minister to his profit. Not a little of that which contributes to the support, the comfort, and the luxury of man, comes from the ocean. From the mighty whale to the shellfish that furnished the Tyrian dye, or to that which furnishes the beautiful pearl, man has shown his power to make the dwellers in the deep subservient to his will.*²⁹

²⁷ Barnes' Notes, Volume 4, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 72.

²⁸ Barnes' Notes, Volume 4, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 72.

²⁹ Barnes' Notes, Volume 4, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 72.

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God's Greatness—a Reprisal

**Y^{eh}owah, our Lord—
how majestic Your name in all the land!** Psalm **Y^{eh}owah, our Lord,
how glorious [is] Your name in all the earth!**

Jehovah, our Lord—how glorious is Your name in all of the earth!

V. 9 is simply a repeat of v. 1a. Barnes: *Repeating the sentiment with which the psalm opens, as now fully illustrated, or as its propriety is now seen. The intermediate thoughts are simply an illustration of this; and now we see what occupied the attention of the psalmist when, in ver. 1, he gave utterance to what seems there to be a somewhat abrupt sentiment. We now, at the close of the psalm, see clearly its beauty and truthfulness.*³⁰

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³⁰ Barnes' Notes, Volume 4, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 72.