

Session 2

December 10

## THE MAJESTY OF GOD'S NAME

Psalm 138:1-8

The word majesty is defined as “impressive stateliness, dignity, or beauty.” It is very often associated with royalty (as in calling a king, “his majesty”). But in the Bible, the word means more than something impressive. It indicates greatness beyond everything else; astounding dignity; unmatched authority. It was with this in mind, that David cried out in Psalm 8:1, “O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!” In this week’s lesson, we will look at another psalm of David that helps explain why the shepherd king had such admiration for the Lord. Three key themes are highlighted.

**Because of His perfections (vv. 1-3).** Here, the psalmist uses a classic poetic construction that begins with what David will do (his responses) because of what God has already done (the reasons). David’s response to the Lord is introduced by the words, “I will.” In verse 1, he will praise the Lord, and he will do so in three different ways. First, he will praise with entirety, as indicated by “with all my heart.” Second, he will praise with priority. The “gods” mentioned is the generic form of the word and should therefore be taken in a general way. Whether referring to pagan idols, or angels, or earthly kings, David will praise the one true God above all other “great ones.” Third, he will praise with humility (v. 2), bowing before Him in submission, and toward Him in reverence. This praising is done for a variety of specific reasons. First, He is praised “for His unfailing love and faithfulness” (v. 2). Some translations say, “lovingkindness and truth,” but the Holman captures it well, as both words have the connotation of stability and endurance. The last phrase in verse 2 is awkward to translate, but the general idea is that God’s name and His undeniable truth have been exalted above all else. This is the second reason that David praises Him. Finally, he praises Him because even in all of His greatness, God responded to David’s humble pleas. For reflection: I used the word “perfections” as a topic for this section. What do you think I mean by that?

**Because of His glory (vv. 4-5).** Here, David invokes the great kings of earth to recognize and submit to the one true Lord. This is both a plea and a prophecy. Based on the evidence of God’s work in the life of David (back in v. 3), the psalmist invites the earth’s rulers to delight in his God. But it is also prophetic, stating not only a present invitation, but a future certainty. Indeed, all the kings of the earth will submit to Him on bended knee (see 1 Cor. 15:24; Phil. 2:10-11; Rev 1:5 et al.). The end of verse 5 explains why this is needful. In comparison to the glory that earthly kings may receive, the glory of the LORD is greater. For reflection: Read Ps. 47 and note the many references to the king. How does Ps 47 inform our discussion?

**Because of His compassion (vv. 6-8).** The third reason for David’s admiration of God’s majesty is His compassion toward humanity. Two comparisons are introduced by the word “though.” Though He is exalted (v. 6), He still has regard for the lowly, and though David lives in a world of danger and trouble (v. 7), God protects him. David is not bragging in the final verses that he is somehow “special” and worthy of God’s protection. Rather, there is the condition of continued submission inferred in verse 8. The word “vindicate” is actually the word for “complete.” David

was both keenly aware that God was at work in his life, and he was humbled by it. Notice too, that while it was the Lord's enduring love that would preserve him, it was the Lord's sovereign plan that would ensure it. This is no doubt the same sentiment that moved Paul to encourage the church in Phillipi when he wrote, "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6). For reflection: In the last few lessons, we mentioned God's transcendence and His immanence. Can you see both of those attributes in this psalm?