

TERM TWO PART TWO

# UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

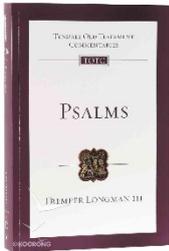
THE **PSALMS** ON SEASONS OF CHANGE

SMALL GROUP RESOURCE

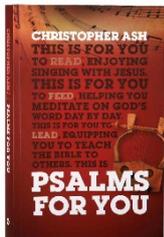
## SERIES SUMMARY

| PREACHING DATE | TITLE                      | PASSAGE   |
|----------------|----------------------------|-----------|
| 14/6/20        | Understanding power        | Psalm 2   |
| 21/6/20        | Understanding our place    | Psalm 8   |
| 28/6/20        | Understanding our path     | Psalm 23  |
| 5/7/20         | Understanding our planet   | Psalm 46  |
| 12/7/20        | Understanding our Provider | Psalm 139 |

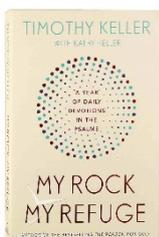
## RESOURCES



Longman III, T. *Psalms* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries)



Ash, C. *Psalms For You*



Keller, T. *My Rock, My Refuge: A year of daily devotions in the psalms*

# STUDY TWO

## UNDERSTANDING OUR PLACE | PSALM 8

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### OVERVIEW

**What is our place in the world created by the majestic Lord of Psalm 8?** While most seek an answer this question on their own terms, the author of this Psalm begins unapologetically with his presupposition in v 1. “Lord, our Lord” uses two distinct words to address the creator. The first ‘Lord’ is Yahweh, the covenant keeping God of Israel. The second Lord is a title, declaring that he is to be acknowledged as ruler of all. While creation gives *testimony* to the creator (Rom 1:18ff), it is humanity whose privilege and choice it is to *express praise* to the Lord.

Three steps enable us to understand our place in God’s world, and therefore understand the times that we live in.

#### Humility

**The majestic Lord humbles his opponents.** When God’s glory is displayed *in all the earth* (v 1) only the proud pursue their own glory *here on earth*. Yet in the light of God’s glory they will ultimately be humbled. You cannot find your true place in the world without God.

Defenceless dependent children (v 2) are recognised as those who have an authentic humility which recognises God’s majesty and praises him for it. Jesus quotes Psalm 8:2 in his own ministry affirming this principle of humble dependence before the chief priests and teachers of the law (Matt 21:16). The children recognise and praise Jesus for his miraculous work, while the church leaders deride the children for such praise. The innocent and genuine praise of the children rebukes those who would reject Jesus as the majestic son of man (v 4 of the Psalm literally reads ‘the son of man that you care for him’) and would instead prefer to exalt themselves. It takes a child-like (not childish) faith as the starting point for understanding who we are in the world of the majestic creator.

When we consider the question of who we are in the world, there is always great risk if the answer revolves around ourselves. Those who exalt themselves will be humbled, while those who humble themselves will be exalted (Matt 23:12).

#### Honour

**Almost by contrast, yet the product of humility, the majestic Lord gives humanity a place of honour in creation.** Honour follows humility. Despite our seemingly insignificant place in creation (v 4) God’s purpose for us is that we should be *crowned with glory and honour* (v 5), and have a position that is *a little lower than the angels* (v 4). This is the Genesis 1:26 purpose, where humanity is deemed to be the climax of the created order and created in God’s image. Mankind is the one through whom God’s plans and purposes would be achieved (cf. the rest of creation). God is dishonoured when we reduce ourselves to behave like animals, or exalt ourselves to be God. Rather, we are to be distinctive image-bearers who as stewards rule the world under God’s gracious and sovereign rule. The choice in the garden in Gen 3 symbolises our preference to replace his honour with that we would establish ourselves.

Jesus becomes the fulfilment of the honour given to the ‘sons of men’ in Hebrews 2:5-9. Though we have been given a place over creation in the Genesis mandate, when we consider the world it is clear this honour has been distorted and discoloured. Our image is a shadow of what God intended. It is marred by the way we treat him, the way we treat one another, and the way we treat the world. Our place in the world has been displaced, and a radical solution is required to restore it.

Jesus restores the honour God intends for humanity by making it possible to restore our relationship with him. However, Jesus' honour is not given to him through creation (an honour we have rejected), but through suffering (the work of the cross). His crowning with glory and honour comes through his death and resurrection (Heb 2:9). It is only as he humbled himself unto death that God honoured his obedience and exalted him to the place where he receives the name above all names (Phil 2:6-11). We truly begin to know our place in the world when realise the place Jesus should have in our lives: he has become the majestic Lord who is the Lamb upon the throne.

### **Authority**

**The majestic Lord gives humanity authority over creation.** As part of the glory and honour *among* creation in v 5 humanity is then given the blessing of *authority over creation* in v 6. This is the blessing of Genesis 1:28-30. We are the symbol of God's rule on earth.

Everything is put under our feet and subject to us (v 6). Human beings with authority can be blessing to others, or a risk to themselves. Our dominion is not be forceful or merciless, as if our authority is without accountability. Nor are we to worship the creation rather than the creator (Rom 1:25). Because of humanity's rebellion, we have an incessant ability to take the good of creation over which we rule, and use it against the creator's intentions. This is why we see a world groaning and out of step with its creators intentions. Ironically this is the way God wants us to see the world (Rom 8:21-22) so we might seek for deeper answers to our place within it.

When we recognise our human dominion is flawed, we are to look to the true human, Jesus (Heb 2:9). He is the man of Psalm 8, crowned with glory and honour. Through his death on our behalf he brings many to glory (Heb 2:10), restoring our place as God's children, and members of his heavenly family.

Psalm 8 teaches us that we cannot find our place in the world without God. Our humanity is a gift from him that has brought privilege and responsibility shaped and directed by his plans and purposes for us in Christ. In our fallen state only Jesus can restore us to be who God truly desires us to be: members of his family committed to living for his majestic glory (v 9).

The more we understand Jesus' place in God's plans the more we understand our place in God's plans. Time and time again we must be humbled, grasp how we have been honoured and then recognise our responsibility to give God the glory in the way that we live. The more we understand this the more we understand the world in which we live, and can truly live to make a difference for the Kingdom.

If you truly want to find yourself, you must first be found by Christ.





11. How has Jesus restored our humanity In Hebrew 2:9-11?

## **TAKE AWAY**

12. Do you think God restores our humanity individually or together? What might this teach us about your/our place in the world?

13. Can you think of ways in which you have worshipped the creation rather than the creator?

14. What has the Covid season taught you about your place in the world?