

Psalms 8:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

Analysis

O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! This verse perfectly mirrors verse 1, creating an inclusio—a literary bracket enclosing the psalm's contents. Having meditated on God's cosmic glory (verses 1-3) and human dignity (verses 4-8), David returns to his opening exclamation of wonder. The repetition isn't mere redundancy but rhetorical emphasis: contemplation of creation and humanity's place within it leads back to worship of the Creator.

The circular structure suggests perpetual worship—praise leads to contemplation, which produces deeper understanding, which generates more profound worship. This pattern reflects mature spirituality: moving from initial wonder through theological reflection back to renewed wonder. Like a spiral staircase, each cycle ascends to higher levels of understanding and worship.

The identical wording emphasizes the psalm's core message: God's name—His character, reputation, and revealed nature—is excellent (majestic, magnificent, glorious) throughout all the earth. After considering both macro (cosmic heavens) and micro (human dignity) levels, David's conclusion remains unchanged: God deserves worship. Whether examining galaxies or contemplating human consciousness, all roads lead to the Creator.

This verse's placement creates theological bookends. It declares that despite sin's entrance into creation (not explicitly mentioned but assumed), despite human rebellion and cosmic fallen state, God's glory still permeates everything. The heavens still declare His glory (Psalm 19:1), creation still reveals His attributes (Romans 1:20), and humans still bear His image (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9). Fallen

creation groans (Romans 8:22), but it still testifies.

For Christians, this closing praise anticipates eschatological fulfillment. Currently, creation groans and humans fall short of glory (Romans 3:23). Yet through Christ, all things will be restored. Revelation's vision shows creation healed, humans glorified, and God's name exalted throughout the new heavens and new earth. Psalm 8's worship previews that eternal reality.

Historical Context

The inclusio structure was common in Hebrew poetry and ancient Near Eastern literature, providing aesthetic unity and thematic emphasis. By bracketing the psalm with identical verses, David signals that everything between serves one purpose: magnifying God's excellent name. This literary technique appears throughout Scripture, including Psalm 118 ("His mercy endures forever") and the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3, 10—"theirs is the kingdom of heaven").

"The name of the LORD" carried profound significance in Israelite theology. God's name wasn't arbitrary label but self-revelation. When God revealed His name to Moses (Exodus 3:14—"I AM WHO I AM"), He disclosed His character: self-existent, eternal, faithful, covenant-keeping. To honor or praise God's name meant honoring Him fully, while profaning His name (Leviticus 24:16) warranted death penalty.

Ancient cultures believed knowing someone's name granted power over them. Pagan religions involved complex rituals to learn divine names and thus manipulate gods. Biblical religion inverts this: God graciously reveals His name, not making Himself vulnerable to manipulation but inviting relationship. We don't control God by knowing His name; we worship Him in humble gratitude for His self-revelation.

The New Testament identifies Jesus as the ultimate revelation of God's name. Jesus declared, "I have manifested Your name" (John 17:6) and prayed, "Father, glorify Your name" (John 12:28). Philippians 2:9-11 announces that God gave Jesus "the name above every name" that every tongue should confess Jesus Christ is Lord.

The "excellent name" David praises finds fullest expression in Jesus, whose name alone saves (Acts 4:12).

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does the circular structure of Psalm 8 (beginning and ending with identical praise) inform your personal worship practices?
2. What difference does it make that the psalm doesn't begin with meditation on creation but with worship, and returns to worship at the end?
3. In what ways can theological study and contemplation of God's works enhance worship rather than replace it with intellectual exercise?
4. How does recognizing God's 'excellent name in all the earth' shape your response to environmental issues and creation care?
5. What does it mean for Christians to worship 'in Jesus's name' (John 14:13-14), and how does this relate to Psalm 8's celebration of God's excellent name?

Interlinear Text

יְהוָה	אֲדֹנָיִינוּ	מָה	אֲדֹיָר	שֵׁמְךָ	בְּכָל	הָאָרֶץ:
O LORD	our Lord	H4100	how excellent	is thy name	H3605	in all the earth
H3068	H113		H117	H8034		H776

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 8:1 (References Lord): O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

Psalms 104:24 (References Lord): O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

Job 11:7 (Parallel theme): Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?

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