

WHAT IS MAN?

INTRODUCTION

Psalms 8:4 “What is man, that you are mindful of him? And the son of man, that you visit him?”

The 8th Psalm is ideal to use as a framework for launching our study in the Plan of God. It has several aspects in particular, and a few that are peculiar, which provide crucial insights for our quest. The great course of history has not been charted by anonymous forces of society and culture, but has been scoured out by individual decisions made by great people—both good and evil. Alexander, the Caesars, Elizabeth, George Washington, Napoleon, Adolph Hitler, Winston Churchill, and many others were all individuals who were given the power to steer their nation one direction or another. And the paths they chose changed the world forever.

God has shown in the Bible that great individuals have always been the key to guiding his people through history, and by them—sometimes single-handedly—foundational aspects of God’s Kingdom were established. The Most High rules the nations by giving power to those whom he allows to take it; but he identifies himself as the God of individual men and women. “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” The Apostles continued the principle: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” is an often used phrase in the New Testament.

The scriptures instruct us through serial lessons of great people in crisis. Although impacting nations, the focus is on the individual; and our lessons are learned from that intimate perspective. We are to learn from their mistakes and to follow in their successes. As in the Bible, so has it been in the secular world: each person has the privilege to choose their heart’s desires, if not their paths; and they have the responsibility for their choices to God, and to those affected by them. The impact of those choices depends upon what purview the Lord may allow, but one evil man can do great harm to his nation, and even to the whole world, and that evil often lasts for many generations. Great leaders have been a blessing, but too often, a curse to the children of men.



Proverbs 16:4 the LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

Therefore, in studying the Plan of God, the most appropriate approach is to commence our inquiry through the portal of one key individual's mind and life. I believe David is the ideal choice. In the son of Jesse's story and through his words we will lay a solid foundation for understanding God's providential leading of mankind to fulfill the great eternal purpose—both of God's purpose, and of our own personal and national destinies.

Man was made to inquire

Our quest commences with the scene of a man, perhaps only just a boy, but like any other young person, looking up into the spectacle of the night sky, and being in awe of its majesty. But David was not of the common and profane mind which most people of his time possessed. He knew the LORD.

He had heard the word of God. He knew the writings of Moses. And more than that, he was sensitive to the Spirit of God; for he was not without direction in life—he loved the LORD.

So when he looked up, he knew the lights in the sky were created objects, and not deities. He did not believe they controlled his comings and goings in some fantastic astrological way; but he did have questions.

In the record of God's creation, Moses said the lights above were put there as signs to give light upon the earth: the sun to rule the day, and the moon to rule the night. Astrology claims they rule as in ordering and controlling we humans below. David knew that only God controls; the stars are not life's governors, but merely signposts, markers by which a man can discern his way. He was not diverted by popular pagan notions, but he perceived that God had purpose in directing man's way. So David had questions for the one he knew had made those things above, and beneath. He was not afraid to question God for an explanation, because he respected God's works, and leaped to the obvious conclusion that there must be a grand purpose for so grand a creation. I think David suspected that God wanted him to question what he was doing with man.



Psalms 27:4 One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.

At that time, there was only a shabby little tent in which the golden ark was placed. The greater house of God was outside, out under the dome of the heavens. David, in his heart, and with his mind saw the LORD, high and lifted up within and above its glorious chambers.

Questions are instructions

Here is a man presuming to ask what God was doing, and expecting the answer. David was not just being rhetorical. Certainly, that was part of it, but there are clues in the 8th Psalm itself that reveal God's chosen method of instructing man. God's strategy is that in the asking from a sincere heart, there is to be a quickly following answering.

“Answering”, and not just the answer, because there are more questions to be necessarily asked, and many more answers to be given. Between God and a single person, it is not so much to get an answer, as it is to open a dialogue. It is not so much to learn something specific, as it is to be taught—continuously schooled and educated—of the LORD: to be disciples and followers, rather than class attendees.

David's heart as well as his mind provided the means of dialogue: his intelligence and personality knew who to ask, what, and how to ask it. It is my experience, as well as many others, that there are moments of divine presence in which questions and answers seem to dissolve into instantaneous seeing and knowing. It is a rush of illumination that is beyond our natural abilities to comprehend—yet it is comprehensible and clear, for that brief instant. Usually the details do not remain as crystal clear as they temporarily appear, yet a definite elevation of perspective has occurred that never quite disappears.

Your heart longs for and seeks to return to that high and broad place, knowing that you will come again into that clearing at some unanticipated moment; but that next time, you intend to relish the moment even more, because it is so rare, and so precious.

The 8th Psalm is one of those moments.

A man questions God, and God candidly replies. A man, standing in for all other men and women who have the same questions in their hearts, inquires through the spirit of





God, and instantly by the same spirit—while mysteriously bypassing his mind—expresses in language that all mankind must hear: the exchange is what God's own heart is seeking. In that place, David is you, and David is me. God would have it be each and every one of us.

The substance being exchanged is spirit, and it is life: it is knowing the truth; it is walking in the light.

To know the truth is to know more than just the facts; than to have just an understanding of the mechanics of certain things; it is to know how to make things work, and why it is so. It is to know, not just the answers, but the questions that ought to be asked. It is to have the control of the things. It is to have dominion.

To know the truth is to know how to be free, and if we love the truth, the truth that we know will make us free. When we are free, we then are able to help others obtain their freedom. That is our mission, to help God make them free. It can only be accomplished in our lives when we begin to ask God big questions—but only from a sincere and hungry heart that believes he has the answer. We must listen when he speaks; listening for his words in every sound and every scene that envelopes us.

Exodus 25:22 And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.

Fire from the LORD's presence between the cherubim and above the Mercy Seat lighted the place of meeting; and the cloud of his glory hovered around the Ark of the Covenant. The staves by which the Levites bore up the Ark were not to be removed from its 4 golden rings until it reached its resting place. So also the wise in heart can hear and see God in whatever is before them, and wherever they go, because the Spirit of God surrounds them like the wind, and carries them through the world in a higher plane of insight and inspiration.

They know he is tutoring them in the paths of life; and they are ready scribes, making note and storing up precious wisdom.



Jeremiah 29:11 for I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. 12) Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. 13) And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

14) And I will be found of you, says the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, says the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

God's desired meeting place

God is waiting for us to come into that place where both the asking and the answering flow like a spring; like sheep grazing on the hillside, and then suddenly we find ourselves in a place that is the true house of God.

Buildings and congregations are ordained of God, and blessed for his purposes, but the individual revelation of his glory—God making his goodness pass by, if you will—is the real meeting place between God and his true worshipper. We cannot stay in that cleft of the rock for long, or we would not be fit for our remaining work upon the earth. So, he does not usually keep us in that divine state for more than a brief moment. But these are the times when God builds and shapes our character.

It is my deep belief that instances such as this—several have been recorded in the scriptures, which happened to prominent individuals throughout the Old and New Testaments—are available to all who seek God with an honest heart. It actually occurs more often than we recognize. Who has not experienced at least one such epiphany in his or her life? God is not far from any one of us. If we would only reach out to feel after him, we would find him. He has purposefully placed signals and directions as numerous as the stars above in every person's path, that when recognized will lead us to a rendezvous with God. Messengers that come in many forms and fashions point to the house of God, and the meeting place he has prepared for you or me alone.

David had several examples of this kind of event in his long life. He had humble beginnings, but he was possessed of a heart that sought after God. God was with him. And while David had grave failings, he also had the grace of God patiently abiding and



carrying him forward. Each of us can properly identify with David in many ways. In fact, our destiny—if we choose to pursue it—is actually greater than even David accomplished in his monumental life and legacy.

Luke 7:28 for I say unto you, among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

Unless Jesus had said it, how could we stretch our minds to believe in such a lofty calling that we, the humble and sometimes weary disciples of the Lord, have as a birthright?

Unto a perfect man

There are requirements, however, laid upon us in our partnership with God in his great work. Our task is to build upon what has been given to us. In 1675 Sir Isaac Newton's wrote in a letter to Robert Hooke, "If I have seen further it is only by standing on the shoulders of those who have come before, and reach as far as we can. So that others, which will come behind us, can then climb upon our advancements and reach farther and higher than we will have been able. While it may be an individual quest, our personal work is at the same time only a continuation of the mission given to the whole church as one corporate body. The fulfillment of God's initial declaration for mankind's position within the creation can only be accomplished by the "them" he called "man" in Genesis 1:26—by the unity of one perfect man, made one from out of two, which are Christ and his body.

Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:

Those who follow us will advance farther, and will draw closer to the goal, but they can never outreach our dreams and visions; because we all have the same love of the truth in our hearts, and are on the same quest to know it for ourselves. We all want to see the face of God: to fully understand the mystery of his will, and to grasp his purpose for all of us, and to experience the ultimate of what the world can become—of its full potential. I assert that every generation of people who have ever lived on the face of the earth have not failed to see the huge potential inherent in the world, even in far less developed civilizations and in much darker times.



From whatever beginnings we may individually arise, mankind has been stubbornly reaching towards the heavens since Nimrod and Babel, and I believe even before then. Eve, the mother of all living, was hungry to be wise, and to be like God, to know both good and evil. From the first woman Eve, to today's brightest minds who do not believe she was an actual person, all persons seem to have a desire for knowing. We now have tools and platforms from which to see deep into space, and have developed worldwide systems of instant communications, and yet the yearning to know the secrets of creation, and to comprehend the meaning of it all, has not diminished.

It was no different with David, who as a young lad, lying upon his back among the sheepfolds, surveyed the scope and details of the heavenly dome above him. We all, each in our own way, and each from our own perch, have peered into the mysterious and wonderful darkness that nevertheless holds brilliant lights, and pondered—what does it all mean?

Someday, all of mankind will see for themselves.

Isaiah 40:5 and the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

We choose where we stand

Because the gift is so rich, there must be an accounting for what God has shared. God has made the way of fulfillment available to all, but not all will avail themselves of it. Most will have chosen not to walk in the light of his glory; but all will see the brightness of that glory regardless.

Isaiah 66:15 for, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. 16) For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many. (Verse 17 is skipped.) 18) for I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory.

The Apostle Paul interprets this verse to apply to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. He also shows that the intention of God concerning individuals is to have them present,





standing before the Messiah, alongside the Apostles, at Christ's appearing and the earthly inauguration of his kingdom. Here is a long passage by Paul, but I implore you to read it through, and let the concept of Christ's coming sink down deep into your mind. We will refer to it often during our journey.

II Thessalonians 1:3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet (as it is fitting), because that your faith grows exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other abounds; 4) So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: 5) Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: 6) Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

7) And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8) In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9) Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; 10) When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

11) Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: 12) That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some day all of us, because we are a member of the race of mankind, will behold the answer of the ages. Sadly, some of us will not be prepared for that dread Day of the Lord to come; nonetheless, many will exalt in the joy and the splendor of that day. Our disposition then, at that time is in this time, our individual choice alone. To find out which end we might partake in—whether it will be joy or regret—each of us must seek God in our heart. Each elects their own destiny through their own faith in what guides them, and by the abilities which their master provides them. Through faith and by grace is how we each must choose the superintendent of our soul. If it be God that is our trust,



then by the grace of God through Jesus Christ; if we choose another god--or no god at all--those souls need to be aware that they trust in uncertain and unproven guides. Life is not a casual thing to be carelessly tossed aside; not when we can behold such evidence of its greatness and beauty by just looking around, or by looking up. For God has given man eyes not just to see, but to perceive.

Or by looking within, and asking the questions—of someone who seems to have answers—that lie in our hearts. We had better know of whom we are asking, because our hearts refuse to be silent.

It seems reasonable that we must seek the creator of the earth and of the heavens, because only the maker of mankind has the answers which we long to hear. We fit so well within the world, so very well, that this existence cannot be by accident. It seems apparent there must be purpose, for we, even in our weak and often tragic efforts to exercise some form of authority over this world demonstrate purpose—and we seek desperately to accomplish it.



We must, therefore ask our god—to me there is only one who is God—the appropriate that time to which there will be no answer. Questions such as: What did I do with my life? Why didn't I turn to God when I had the chance? Why didn't I seek to know the true and living God? Why did I waste my life on what wasn't reality?

There will be no question as to who God is on that day. There will be no question that he had a plan for each and every one of us. Our question will turn into: Why didn't I pursue it?

Location

So in our quest for knowing the mysteries of the ages, the real quest is for comprehending “What is man?” The answer explains who you and I are. Then we will know where we are going, and what we ought to be doing. What God is doing with and for humans as a race and for each and every person as an individual is the real story of history, and of the future.

But God also has questions. He has a place, by him, that he has prepared for us to share with him. And so, God asks each one of us, like Adam before us, “Where are you?”



Locating the man is the first step to getting him onto the path, heading to the place which God has already prepared for him.

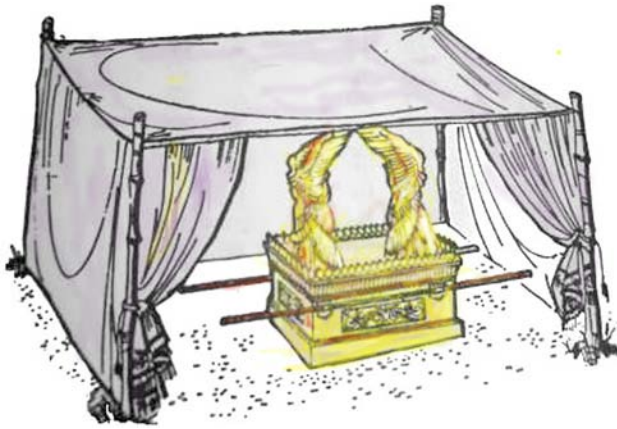
Recent technology has mainly been driven by great leaps in communications. That is what relationships are all about—dialogue. The ingenious system of global positioning satellites incorporates transceivers and transponders to automatically transmit a reply signal back to the satellite when they are stimulated by a specially tuned incoming signal. The location of the transponder is thus discovered to the system, but more importantly, the system pinpoints the position of the person holding the transponder in his hand. Now he knows where he is, and may, at least, find his way to where he wants to go.

So God, as well as ourselves, seeks answers; not because he can't locate us, but so that we can find out our own location in relation to him. Like a transponder, by answering him we will find ourselves; and we will get the answers which we all need and seek. That is what my life—and yours—is all about.

The LORD has given his ark—the place where he meets with us, which is no longer a gold covered wooden box, but is actually each person's heart—to lead the way. The Ark of the Covenant was modeled after the original artifact, which is the human heart. Our heart was designed long before gold was ever present in the earth's hills and streams to be God's meeting place with man. Wood and gold exquisitely crafted are nothing compared to curious and infinite workings within us. The Ark was only a one-way transmitter. From the beginning, God has desired a two-way conversation at least. I perceive he has a bigger vision than even that.

David's heart was precious to his God, and so in actuality he was a kind of ark for his time. The Son of David is now, for our time, the true Ark of the Covenant, the Mercy Seat and place of the LORD's presence.

For each person, the human heart functions as the ark, with Jesus Christ as Lord in our hearts being seated upon the mercy seat. The mysterious connections are with Jesus through the Spirit of God. We need to comprehend the specific and exalted position of Our Lord Jesus Christ—he is the exact place and container of God's person and glory—while at the same time understanding our sharing in his experience and calling. We are the glory of Christ!



We have got a lot to learn, so we need to get busy asking those questions.

So let us proceed in our quest, understanding where we are at, here and now.

Joshua 3:3 And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.

Joshua 3:4 Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore.

We have a better guide than a golden box; and we are on a journey still. The road for us will end in Jerusalem, as it did for Jesus; but the paths we will travel, and the things we will see cannot be anticipated, because we have not passed this way before. So the Ark of the LORD has stepped into the Jordan River before us, and he leads and shows us the way.

Let us rise up therefore, and follow after the Lord, because he knows the way which we take. We are from above, even though we have never been there before: yet, we have been there in the wisdom and Plan of God. In his providence we are going home to our place of rest—our Shiloh. We trust in his leading because we see that the Ark of the LORD has stopped the waters two thousand years before us, and so we are nearing the end of the journey. What a great perspective we have! We can see the whole work behind us, and the final days are just around the corner. No reason to run, we must be steady and strong: we've got an important task, to help make this work of the Church complete.

Since a day with the Lord is as a thousand years, it may mean that two days are almost past, and we will be in glory tomorrow.

Luke 13:31 The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. 32) And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. 33) Nevertheless I must walk to day, and tomorrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet



perishes out of Jerusalem.

34) O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which kills the prophets, and stones them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and ye would not! 35) Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

He had a path that he had to walk; so must we. That brings to my mind a question... Oh well, that will have to wait. I have to move on. We'll ask that question, and many others, later on down the road.