



Too high? Too low? Or just right?

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Remember Goldilocks and the three bears . . . the childhood lesson in discovering some things are Just Right? Porridge can be too hot, too cold, or Just Right. A bed can be too hard, too soft, or Just Right.

The same is true of views of humanity. Some are too low. Others too high. Only one is Just Right.

For instance, in Acts 12, King Herod was struck dead by the angel of the Lord for accepting praises due God. During what turned out to be his last public oration, people were overcome with awe and cried out, "He's a god, not a man!" and his body was eaten by worms. Saying a man is god – or that all men are gods – is too much.

In Job 25, Bildad went to the opposite extreme. Arguing with Job, he said people are nothing more than maggots and worms, and that God isn't even satisfied with the brightness of the moon or the purity of the stars. The implication was that God wants nothing more to do with what He created, especially sinful people.

That's wrong too. It's as much a problem to *understate* mankind's place in the world as it is to *overstate* it.

So what is man?

David answered this question in Psalm 8, and hit just the right note of humility and dignity. He even brought the moon and stars into his musings, as had Bildad:

*When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?*

For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands;

*Thou hast put all things under his feet:
All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;
the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea,
and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.*

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

Man is a little lower than angels (or God, depending on the translation), yet crowned with glory and honor; he has dominion over animals, but all praise is reserved for God. David wasn't overly impressed or disgusted with himself. He was properly amazed that the Maker of heaven and earth thought about him and cared for him.

What does this mean for us?

Our beliefs about the identity and role of human beings show up in the way we treat them. Herod's exalted view led him to mislead people. Bildad's minimization caused a suffering friend more pain. Consider:

1. If people are worms or maggots they can be squashed without pangs of conscience. Their suffering means nothing.
2. If God cares nothing for people, we needn't either.
3. A low view of man reduces God to Lord of the Flies (which, incidentally develop from maggots), but that's a name for Satan. (Beelzebub means "lord of flies or dung.")
4. The Enemy would like nothing better than to replace God and squash His image-bearers.

5. Man is not God, but neither is he a "high form of animal life." Man holds a special place *in* and *over* creation. He has a unique identity, having been made in God's likeness (Genesis 1:26-27).

6. Man sinned, and the rest of creation became subject to the curse as a result. A scorpion does not sin when it stings someone, but it reflects the fallenness of our world.

7. Mankind has not devolved to the level of a worm or maggot because of sin. Fallen men still reflect the image of God.

8. There's no salvation for worms (or fallen angels), but there is a Redeemer for sinful men (Job 19:25, Romans 8:3). As Psalm 8 says, God's Son visited us – becoming a man, not a worm or maggot (Philippians 2:5-8).

Bildad tried to squash Job's hope, but if there was no hope for Job, then neither would there be any for Bildad. Satan wanted to use Bildad to triumph over Job – over mankind in general – and deny him a Savior.

Job's faith in God didn't allow him to accept that message, but caused him to resist it (Job 27:5). Faith also causes us to resist our culture's heresy.

Even though we're considered a higher form of life than worms or maggots, that's too low to fit the Bible's depiction. The Gospel both condemns and ennobles mankind – not too low or too high, but Just Right.

God loves us, gave His Son to die in our place, and offers us eternal life. In response, we gladly honor His Name, obey His Word, and reflect His character – including in the way we value all human lives.