

## LET ALL CREATION PRAISE HIM

### Hallelujah Psalms Series, Part #4

Psalm 148

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We've been going through these final Psalms—the “Hallelujah Psalms”—which all open and close with a command: “*Allelu*,” which means “give praise,” and then “*Yah*,” which is the name of our God, *Yahweh*, Jehovah, the Lord. This is the Old Testament name for God: He is the I Am. He is a God of covenant, seeking relationship with His people and drawing a people to Himself. He has entered into a covenant with us, and He is God of all gods.

These Psalms are calling us to praise Him. This word “*hallelujah*” is translated in most English versions as “Praise the Lord.” We are commanded to praise Him. This command doesn't only come to us as His people, however. Let's read together all the things God is commanding to praise Him in Psalm 148:

*Praise the Lord!*  
*Praise the Lord from the heavens;*  
*praise him in the heights!*  
<sup>2</sup> *Praise him, all his angels;*  
*praise him, all his hosts!*  
<sup>3</sup> *Praise him, sun and moon,*  
*praise him, all you shining stars!*  
<sup>4</sup> *Praise him, you highest heavens,*  
*and you waters above the heavens!*  
<sup>5</sup> *Let them praise the name of the Lord!*  
*For he commanded and they were created.*  
<sup>6</sup> *And he established them forever and ever;*  
*he gave a decree, and it shall not pass away.*  
<sup>7</sup> *Praise the Lord from the earth,*  
*you great sea creatures and all deeps,*  
<sup>8</sup> *fire and hail, snow and mist,*  
*stormy wind fulfilling his word!*  
<sup>9</sup> *Mountains and all hills,*  
*fruit trees and all cedars!*  
<sup>10</sup> *Beasts and all livestock,*  
*creeping things and flying birds!*  
<sup>11</sup> *Kings of the earth and all peoples,*

*princes and all rulers of the earth!*  
<sup>12</sup> *Young men and maidens together,  
old men and children!*  
<sup>13</sup> *Let them praise the name of the Lord,  
for his name alone is exalted;  
his majesty is above earth and heaven.*  
<sup>14</sup> *He has raised up a horn for his people,  
praise for all his saints,  
for the people of Israel who are near to him.*  
*Praise the Lord!*

This is just beautiful poetry that doesn't do a whole lot of explaining, but commands all of creation to praise our great God. So I don't want to over-analyze it or over-explain it. Rather, I want us to meditate on the greatness of our God on display in all creation. We will think about all God is calling to praise Him, then why He is calling them, and finally we'll meditate on how they are to praise Him.

### **By What Is God Praised?**

Let's look first at all that God is calling to praise Him. In verse one the psalmist describes where praise is to take place. He begins in the heavens, the heights, and he lists some things that are in the heavens, including the angels and all His hosts.

In the Old Testament, there are three different categories of heavens, which you may have seen before. Sometimes when the Bible talks about heaven, it's talking about where God dwells and where the angels are. We know of course that God is omnipresent—He's everywhere—but this is a realm where God dwells. Second, the Bible sometimes uses the word "heavens" to talk about space—the universe—including the stars. Finally, sometimes the "heavens" refers to the sky, the atmosphere around earth.

The psalmist works his way down through each of these categories of heaven. He starts with the angels, "Let all of God's angels praise Him." This is a command for the angels to praise Yahweh. Next, he moves down to space, where the sun and the moon and the stars are to praise God.

We should stop and marvel sometimes at these things God has created in space. Our sun is 93 million miles away—but just think how much impact it has on us. Without it, of course, there is no life. But even when it sets every evening, we notice the air turns cooler. That sun is not only warming us, it is necessary for life itself. We know that plants need the sun to live, but

we as humans also can feel the difference in the energy the summer sun gives us. Maybe you don't feel that when there is more daylight, but I do.

Consider our moon. Each night it comes up at different times and with different phases, yet it is constant as well. Or think about the earth's rotation. Again, constant. Someone has even figured out when to add the extra "leap" seconds to keep our clocks right because the universe is more constant than we can be.

God designed our universe with so many, many stars—some like our sun, many much larger. Our family is camping tonight, and hopefully we'll get away from the light pollution of the city and be able to see more of the universe. All of this screams of the glory of God. Psalm 19 says, "*The Heavens declare the glory of God.*" The skies are shouting God's greatness and beauty, His creativity and power.

But here the psalmist is commanding the sun, moon and stars to praise Him. Then coming a little further down from the angels' realm, to the sun, moon and shining stars, and then down our atmosphere—the waters above the heavens, the clouds around us. He says the atmosphere praises God as well.

Then in verse seven he comes to the earth. After focusing on the heavens in the first half of the psalm, now he comes to the earth and those things that live on it. He says, "*Praise the Lord from the earth,*" and he starts at the depths of the earth. He started at the highest heaven, this time he works up from the lowest parts of the earth.

"*Praise the Lord from the earth you great sea creatures and all deeps,*" that is, the deepest parts of the ocean. Some translations even call them the sea monsters. But these great creatures belong to God, and they are commanded to praise Him. There are parts of the ocean that we have never yet seen, just as there are parts of space we have no knowledge, yet even these unknown places give God praise

Then the psalmist comes up to the earth's surface, describing the powers of nature: "*fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy wind fulfilling his word!*" While at times these forces can seem to us to be chaotic or out of control—think of forest fires, hail and storms—God is still sovereign over these and they all give Him praise.

Think about it. These are things we stare at. Tonight as we're camping, I'll stare at the fire. I don't know why; there's just something beautiful about a fire that we could pass off as simply the mechanics of fire. But we should not overlook the creativity of God and the way the flames give praise to Him through their beauty.

I love summer, but with the first snow of the year, as the flakes come down, I just stop and stare. I know some of you stare at snow with worry and dismay, but if you forget for the moment

the shoveling that will come and just look at its beauty, it's amazing. Our amazement is part of the way the snow brings God praise. Then there's the hail. Maybe because it's rare, but every time it hails, people pick it up, or take pictures next to coins, trying to show how big the hail is. There's something marvelous about hail that comes from the sky.

Stormy winds? I grew up in Kansas City, where we often heard tornado sirens. I've never seen a tornado, but when the sirens sounded, I never went to my basement—I went to the window, because I wanted to see a tornado. Maybe the false alarms lured me into a sense of security. But for me, there's something amazing about seeing God's power on display in the winds.

It's all of these things that are commanded to praise the Lord in verses seven and eight. Then in verse nine, he mentions the *"mountains and all hills."* Again, the movement is upward toward higher places. If you've been to the Rockies, you remember the first time you saw them. For me, we would drive through Kansas and Colorado—normally through the night—and about dawn we would approach the mountains. I still remember how I felt the first time I saw them. It was jaw-dropping to see what God has made, the variety of His creation on display.

Then moving off the land itself, the psalmist speaks of *"fruit trees and all cedars; beasts and all livestock."* He's now talking about the plant life and the animals. He mentions the *"creeping things and flying birds."* All of God's animals are giving Him praise—and in this psalm it's commanded that they do this.

Then finally the psalmist reaches God's people. Coming down from the heavens, up from the depths of the earth, he ends with God's greatest creation: humanity. He speaks of *"Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth! Young men and maidens together, old men and children!"* He's careful to include all people. Not just the rulers or the leadership, but both the richest and the poorest, men and women, old people and little children. Let all God's people praise the Lord.

So the answer to this first question—by what is God praised?—is this: by everything He has made when He spoke the word and it all came into being. He now speaks a command to all His creation, that they are to give Him praise.

## **Why Is God Praised?**

I want to look now at the question: why is God praised? What are the reasons? This psalm doesn't list many, but there are a couple. At the end of the verses on the heavens he gives a reason, and at the end of the verses on the earth he gives another reason. With regard to the heavens, he says, *"Let them praise the name of the Lord! For he commanded and they were*

*created. And he established them forever and ever; he gave a decree, and it shall not pass away” (148:5-6).*

He spoke, He commanded, and these things in the heavens were created. By their very existence they have reason to praise Him. So the first reason to praise our God is because He is Creator. It also says He “established them,” which means He is their Sustainer. The laws and the order we see in the universe show that God has established it, and He is sustaining His creation. As Creator, not only did He speak everything we see into existence, but as Sustainer He also causes it all to continue in an ordered manner.

Moving to verse 13, we see at the end of the section on the earth another reason to praise God. The psalmist says, *“Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his majesty is above earth and heaven.”* So not only is He Creator and Sustainer, He is also majestic. His majesty is above earth and heaven, and His name alone is exalted and hallowed.

Then finally we see that He is Redeemer. Even more specific than all humanity, verse 14 speaks of God’s people. God is Creator, Sustainer, and majestic Redeemer of His people. *“He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his saints, for the people of Israel who are near to him. Praise the Lord.”*

We don’t speak today about “lifting up a horn” or “raising up a horn,” but this was a symbol of a king’s power, his victory. Some translations talk about how God has made His people victorious. But many have looked at this psalm and seen the foreshadowing of the coming Messiah as the final King Who would lift up a horn for His people, Who would be raised up as victorious. He would be the One Who would make the rest of this verse possible—that God would draw a people near to Himself, that God has been and still is redeeming a people for Himself.

This gives us the greatest cause for praise. As we look at God as Creator, as we see His majesty in creation, we realize that creation is able to praise Him for these things. But we as His people have something even greater to praise Him for: He has drawn us near to Himself through Jesus Christ. He has lifted up a saving hope, a victorious hope for His people. He has drawn us near, and our hearts should overflow in praise.

## **How Is God Praised?**

Finally, I want to meditate for a few moments on how God is praised. Last night I went through the Psalms briefly and did a search on the word “praise.” I wasn’t studying in depth, but I looked at all the times in the Psalms that this word occurs. There are three different Hebrew words that all mean praise, including the one we have looked at today, the word *“Hallelu.”*

Often there is no description from the psalmist as to how this praise is done—it is simply commanded, or the writer is saying, “I praise the Lord.” Yet many times it mentions singing, which is a common way the Bible describes praising the Lord. Sometimes we might think that this is the only way praise is expressed, and I’d like to broaden our view of praise by thinking a little further.

As you go through the Psalms, you will find that praise is often simply spoken. We are to tell others of His glory. Sometimes it’s through song—but using instruments instead of voices. Next week, Dan Huff will show us in Psalms 149 and 150 that we are to praise Him with instruments such as the lyre, stringed instruments and tambourines. When we play instruments, God is praised. Those psalms also mention praise through dance, which means praise can also be done through the physical expression of our bodies.

But in my study I also found one psalm—Psalm 119:7—that says, “*I will praise you with an upright heart.*” As I looked at the context of these words, I realized it could mean that our singing or playing of instruments or dancing or telling should be done with a right heart. But I think it’s actually saying that having an upright heart is itself a way of praising God. Romans 12:1 tells us that based on the mercies of God we are to “*present [our] bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is [our] spiritual worship,*” or our reasonable worship. In this way, our very lives themselves can be lives of praise.

Returning to Psalm 148, let’s think about this for a moment. There are things here that are commanded to praise our God that don’t sing. They don’t dance. They don’t play instruments. They don’t speak. How do the sun, moon, stars and clouds praise God? How do they declare His glory? I think one way is that as we, His people, see these things we see how great our God is. But I don’t think that’s all.

I heard a sermon by my friend, a man named Matt Hoskinson, and I also read an article about another sermon, and both of them pointed out the fact that there are things which exist in our universe that no human has ever seen. There is much that goes beyond what we can see. These things therefore don’t exist to declare God’s glory to humans—but yet they are still giving God praise. In other words, their very existence—being what God created them to be—is a form of praise to God. When the sun does what God made it to do, it gives Him praise. God sees that and it is beautiful to Him.

I did some research on animals that have been recently discovered—species that are continually being found. Certainly when this psalm was written, there were many, many things in God’s creation that we can see now, but the psalmist never would have known about. We can

now see the smallest cells through microscopes and far away star through telescopes, all giving God praise, because they're being what God created them to be.

But as we think of the mountains, hills, trees and beasts praising God through being what God made them to be, this applies to us as well. A life of praise is living as God intended us as humans to live. Of course our worship is going to include speaking of His greatness, singing of His greatness and praising Him through prayer and meditation on His greatness. We should be thanking Him for what He does and marveling at Who He is.

But also it's living a life with an upright heart and living out our callings, for these are forms of praise as well. When we love our neighbors, it's a way of praising God. When we are creative, it reflects the creativity of our God. When we're diligent and honest in our work, it brings glory to God. In fact, everything we do can be an offering of praise.

Yet at the same time, our world is fallen and broken. All of creation has felt God's curse. So even as all things praise God, there is a sense in which this praise is only partial. Even though humanity is broken, we were still created in God's image. And there was and is one human, the God-Man Jesus, Who lived on this earth as the true human, showing what humanity was created to be. He became that for us, and died to rescue us from our brokenness. He rose victorious, raised up as a horn for His people. This should cause us to praise our God with everything that is in us.

Let's go to Him in prayer. Would you silently and intentionally call to mind praise to our God? Praise Him as Creator, as Sustainer. Praise Him for His majesty, that He alone is exalted. His power is on display. This psalm ends with the greatest reason we have to praise Him: praise Him because He is our Redeemer.

God, we give You glory. We adore You. We worship and praise You. We commend You. We see that You are great and greatly to be praised. God, cause us to be a people and a church known for praising You with our lips and praising You with our lives. Help us not to divert that praise toward Your creation, toward ourselves or anything else that has been created. Help us to see that all of creation is pointing toward You. You alone deserve our worship and our praise.

We thank You and praise You for redeeming us, for calling us to be Your people, for drawing us near to You. We know that we don't deserve that. Help us this week to live our lives wholly for You, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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