



Psalm 148 - Praise for God's Universal Glory

Introduction

This hymn of praise calls on all of God's creatures to join in praising him: from the heavenly hosts, to the heavenly bodies, to the inhabitants of sea and land, to all mankind. The concluding note, regarding God's special people Israel, may refer to some particular event such as the return from exile, or it may be a more general reference to the protection God has given his people; in either case, God's favour for Israel is put into the larger context of his plan to bring light to all mankind through Israel.

Alexander Maclaren wrote that Psalm 148 continues "a line of thought which runs through Scripture from its first page to its last - namely, that, as man's sin subjected the creatures to 'vanity,' so his redemption shall be their glorifying." This call to all creation to praise Yahweh was not an empty wish. Scripture specifically reveals that it will eventually be fulfilled: <<*Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, singing with full voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing!' Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing, 'To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might for ever and ever!'*>> (Revelation 5:11-13). Adam Clarke commented, "O what a hymn of praise is here! It is a universal chorus! All created nature have a share, and all perform their respective parts."

Psalm 148:1-6 - Praise to the Lord from the Heavens.

The heavens and everything found in them – whether angels or light-bearers, i.e. the sun, moon, and the stars, or the waters above the heavens – should praise the Lord, who commanded them into being. By his decree they are established, standing firm and reliable.

- 1 Praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord from the heavens;
praise him in the heights!
- 2 Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his host!
- 3 Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars!
- 4 Praise him, you highest heavens,
and you waters above the heavens!

Psalm 148:1-4

Praise the Lord! Like each of the last five psalms in the Book of Psalms, Psalm 148 begins and ends with *hallelujah*, which is both an exclamation of praise to Yahweh and an encouragement to praise him.

Praise the Lord from the heavens. The psalmist considered that all heavenly beings and bodies should give praise to Yahweh. The God of Israel was not a local deity who only expected honour from Israel. He was and is God over all, and as such deserves such praise from the heights. Psalm 19 reveals that the heavens declare the glory of God by their very nature and being. Here the psalmist speaks to the heavens that they continue this praise.

Praise him, all his angels. The psalmist called upon all angelic beings to give God praise. This is the constant occupation of the cherubim surrounding God's throne: *<<And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside. Day and night without ceasing they sing, 'Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come'>>* (Revelation 4:8). The company of faithful angels is like a great army referred to as all his hosts: *<<Then Micaiah said, 'Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, with all the host of heaven standing beside him to the right and to the left of him'>>* (1 Kings 22:19). Other angelic beings fell because they would not properly honour God: *<<How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit on the mount of assembly on the heights of Zaphon; I will ascend to the tops of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the Pit>>* (Isaiah 14:12-15), *<<And the angels who did not keep their own position, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains in deepest darkness for the judgement of the great day>>* (Jude 6). Derek Kidner

commented, “Not only in Old Testament times but in the Christian era, men have been tempted to worship angels (Colossians 2:18), who are our fellow servants (Revelation 22:8f.), and to treat the stars as arbiters of destiny. The psalm sweeps away such folly.”

Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars! Heavenly bodies should also praise God, shining in their radiance to his honour and moving according to his plan: *<<And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.’ And it was so. God made the two great lights – the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night – and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good>>* (Genesis 1:14-18).

The idea of creation praising God is found in many places in the Scriptures, such as: *<<Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it. Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy>>* (Psalm 98:7-8), and: *<<For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands>>* (Isaiah 55:12). This is the only place where specifically it is said that the sun and moon and the stars should praise him. Alexander Maclaren commented, “In these starry depths obedience reigns; it is only on earth that a being lives who can and will break the merciful barriers of Jehovah’s law.” Clarke added, “The brightest and most luminous stars: probably the planets may be especially intended.”

Praise him, you highest heavens. In the mind of an ancient Hebrew, the blue sky, the night sky, and God’s dwelling place could all be thought of as an aspect of the heavens. The singer here looks to the ultimate of heaven, and all the heavens, to praise God, including the clouds with their waters and the moisture of the upper atmosphere: *<<So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so>>* (Genesis 1:7). Kidner noted, “The waters above the heavens are a poetic or popular term for the rain clouds.”

- 5 Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for he commanded and they were created.
- 6 He established them for ever and ever;
he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.

Psalm 148:5-6

Let them praise the name of the Lord. He calls on those mentioned above to praise the Lord and then goes on to give the reasons why they should.

For he commanded and they were created. All creatures or creations owe honour and praise to their creator. This is even truer for things created by the simple command of their creator: *<<Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar – the Lord of hosts is his name: If this fixed order were ever to cease from my presence, says the Lord, then also the offspring of Israel would cease to be a nation before me for ever>>* (Jeremiah 31:35-36). Such a mighty maker deserves praise. Spurgeon commented, “Evolution may be atheistic; but the doctrine of creation logically demands worship; and hence, as the tree is known by its fruit, it proves itself to be true. Those who were created by command are under command to adore their Creator.”

He established them for ever and ever. These heavenly things - angels, the sun, the moon, the stars, the sky itself - were not only made by God, but they also continue because of his word. Their continued establishment gives them reason to praise the God who is the cause of it.

He fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed. The psalmist instinctively knew, or was perhaps prompted by the Holy Spirit to declare something that many modern scientists cannot accept - that God has set limits on what mankind can do or know: *<<The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the revealed things belong to us and to our children for ever, to observe all the words of this law>>* (Deuteronomy 29:29). This frustrates their efforts to go beyond those boundaries. Spurgeon observed, “Therefore ought the Lord to be praised because he is Preserver as well as Creator, Ruler as well as Maker.”

Psalm 148:7-12 - Praise to the Lord from the Earth and Seas.

Next the psalm invites the creatures under the heavens to praise the Lord: the great sea creatures and all ocean deeps, along with weather storms: fire or lightning, hail, snow, mist, and high wind, then the features of the land: the mountains and the hills, which are well-known in Palestine, trees - taking fruit trees and all cedars as representatives, and then the animals: wild animals and all livestock, creeping things and flying birds. All these creatures should give their praise according to their nature, for this is what they were made for; likewise all of mankind, of all peoples and of all age groups, should praise him according to their nature, for this is the purpose they were created for.

⁷ Praise the Lord from the earth,
you sea monsters and all deeps,

8 fire and hail, snow and frost,
stormy wind fulfilling his command!
9 Mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars!
10 Wild animals and all cattle,
creeping things and flying birds!
11 Kings of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all rulers of the earth!
12 Young men and women alike,
old and young together!

Psalm 148:7-12

Praise the Lord from the earth. The first part of Psalm 148 called upon things in the heavens to give praise to Yahweh. Earth should also not fail to give its praise to God, and all the earth should join in this praise.

You sea monsters and all deeps. All things in the sea and all the phenomenon of weather: fire and hail, snow and frost and stormy wind, should praise God, fulfilling his word. Although weather patterns are well understood, they were created by God and serve his purpose on earth: *<<He sends out his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly. He gives snow like wool; he scatters frost like ashes. He hurls down hail like crumbs – who can stand before his cold? He sends out his word, and melts them; he makes his wind blow, and the waters flow>>* (Psalm 147:15-18)

Mountains and all hills. Everything on the land, both fixed and moving - including all the animals of the land - should give praise to the Lord. Spurgeon observed, “Those are worse than beasts who do not praise our God. More than brutish are those who are wilfully dumb concerning their Maker.” Maclaren added, “The lowest worm that crawls and the light-winged bird that soars, these all have voices to praise God.”

Kings of the earth and all peoples. Yahweh’s praise should extend to those who are made in his image. All humanity - kings, princes, rulers, men and women, old and young - all owe praise to the God who made them and sustains them. Maclaren observed, “The young man’s strong bass, the maiden’s clear alto, the old man’s quavering notes, the child’s fresh treble, should blend in the song.”

That all men and women will one day praise the Lord is certain: <<so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under

the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father>> (Philippians 2:10-11).

Psalm 148:13-14 - Let All Peoples Praise the Lord Who Has Exalted His People.

A recurring theme in the psalms is the fact that all mankind should praise the Lord, the one true God, whose name alone is exalted; and God has bestowed unimaginable privilege upon Israel in calling them to be near to him, in making promises to them, and in fashioning them to be a fit vehicle by which to bring knowledge of God to the rest of the world. Therefore the special deeds God has done to bring praise for all his saints will ultimately enable the entire world to answer the invitation of v.13: <<**Let them praise the name of the Lord**>>.

- ¹³ Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for his name alone is exalted;
his glory is above earth and heaven.
- ¹⁴ He has raised up a horn for his people,
praise for all his faithful,
for the people of Israel who are close to him.
Praise the Lord!

Psalm 148:13-14

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted. Yahweh deserves such praise from all things on earth because he alone is God. There is no other being that deserves the worship, honour, and praise that God deserves.

His glory is above earth and heaven. Yahweh deserves such praise from all things on earth because he is immeasurably greater and more glorious than anything on earth. People should reserve their praise for only that which is truly greater and more glorious, not for the lesser things, such as the idols made by human hands. Spurgeon remarked, “He is himself the crown of all things, the excellence of the creation. There is more glory in him personally than in all his works united. It is not possible for us to exceed and become extravagant in the Lord’s praise: his own natural glory is infinitely greater than any glory which we can render to him.”

He has raised up a horn for his people. Yahweh deserves such praise from all things on earth because he has rescued and established his people. Those who find their power, the horn of his people, established because of Yahweh owe him praise. For the expression, refer to the comment made on Psalm 75:4. Refer also to 1 Samuel 2:1 and 2:10, and Psalm 89:24, 92:10 and 112:9.

For the people of Israel who are close to him. Yahweh deserves such praise from all things on earth because he has drawn near to his people. He is with and for his people, which is a blessing and a benefit greater than any other. Spurgeon concluded, “His goodness to all his creatures does not prevent his having a special favour to his chosen nation: he is good to all, but he is God to his people.”

Praise the Lord! The composer of Psalm 148 has persuaded his readers throughout the ages to do what they and all creation should do – give to Yahweh the praise he due to him. *Hallelujah!*