

Worship the Lord

Printed Text • Psalm 148:1-14

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: ACKNOWLEDGE that creation exists primarily to praise God, not to meet our physical needs; feel INSPIRED by the wonders of God’s creation; and CARE for nature in line with God’s desire for us.

In Focus

Bryce struggled with depression for years. He remembered his mom, Lottie, taking him to doctors and counselors as a child because his teachers commented that he always looked so sad. As an adult, he finally found a medication he thought worked well, but after a few years, the depression continued like a persistent dark cloud.

Bryce’s pastor, Pastor Bob, suggested he take a class chronicling the life of David and the book of Psalms to deal with his depression. He had no idea how it would help, but he agreed to try it. As he read over his final paper for the class, he couldn’t believe he’d been a Christian for over 30 years and missed this important truth. As he studied the life of David and the Psalms, Bryce saw David honestly running to God with every positive and negative event of his life. He praised God for His wisdom, guidance, and courage. Bryce realized he had been self-consumed, angry, and living out the wrong purpose in life.

Since the class began, Bryce got up each morning, read Scripture, prayed, and sang praises to the Lord. He often asked God to teach him how to be a true worshiper like David. His depression didn’t disappear overnight, but now he had hope and a way to deal with it beyond the medication.

One co-worker commented, “Bryce, I’ve been working with you for five years, and I believe this is the first time I’ve seen you really smile.”

Do you realize your life’s purpose is to worship God? What is God teaching you about how to become a true worshiper?

Keep in Mind

“Let them praise the name of the LORD; for he commanded, and they were created” (Psalm 148:5, KJV)

Words You Should Know

A. Praise (Psalm 148:1) halal (Heb.) — To make boast, celebrate, commend, to bow

B. Command (v. 5) tsavah (Heb.) — To lay charge upon, give charge to, or order

Say It Correctly

Stablisheth. STA-bli-shith

Exalteth. ek-ZAL-tith

KJV

Psalms 148:1 Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens: praise him in the heights.

2 Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts.

3 Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light.

4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.

5 Let them praise the name of the Lord: for he commanded, and they were created.

6 He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.

7 Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps:

8 Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word:

9 Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars:

10 Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl:

11 Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth:

12 Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children:

13 Let them praise the name of the Lord: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven.

14 He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the Lord.

NLT

Psalms 148:1 Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens! Praise him from the skies!

2 Praise him, all his angels! Praise him, all the armies of heaven!

3 Praise him, sun and moon! Praise him, all you twinkling stars!

4 Praise him, skies above! Praise him, vapors high above the clouds!

5 Let every created thing give praise to the Lord, for he issued his command, and they came into being.

6 He set them in place forever and ever. His decree will never be revoked.

7 Praise the Lord from the earth, you creatures of the ocean depths,

8 fire and hail, snow and clouds, wind and weather that obey him,

9 mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars,

10 wild animals and all livestock, small scurrying animals and birds,

11 kings of the earth and all people, rulers and judges of the earth,

12 young men and young women, old men and children.

13 Let them all praise the name of the Lord. For his name is very great; his glory towers over the earth and heaven!

14 He has made his people strong, honoring his faithful ones — the people of Israel who are close to him. Praise the Lord!

The People, Places, and Times

Psalms 148:1 The writer of this psalm is unknown, but he definitely had a passionate heart filled with praise for God. The call is for more praise and worship, not merely an individual's

expression, but a call to the entire universe. The occasion for this psalm is unknown. Some point to peacetime in King David's reign, when he had rest from all enemies and the kingdom of Israel was settled and prospering. Others point to the time during the Temple rebuilding after the Babylonian exile.

Horn. The horn was a symbol of power and strength in ancient times, and the horn of God's people refers to the strength of His people who praise Him.

Background

After Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar finished speaking to Job concerning his suffering, a young man named Elihu spoke. Elihu rebuked the three friends for being unable to give Job a reasonable answer for why he was suffering. However, Elihu was only able to give a partial answer to Job's question by saying that people cannot understand all that God allows but must trust Him. This was the best answer that a human could give, yet it was incomplete because Elihu did not have all of the facts.

Finally, the Lord spoke! Instead of answering Job's question directly, God asked Job a series of questions that no human could possibly answer. God showed that He is eternal, holy, and incomprehensible!

At-A-Glance

1. Heavenly Worship (Psalm 148:1-6)
2. Earthly Worship (vv. 7-10)
3. Specific Worship (vv. 11-12)
4. Everyone Worship (vv. 13-14)

In Depth

1. Heavenly Worship (Psalm 148:1-6)

The author placed the theme of the psalm at the very beginning: "Praise the Lord." The worshiping celebration starts with the heavens, the highest region of God's creation. One of the main groups in heaven is the angelic host. Their duty is to praise God continually and be available to do His bidding. Sun, moon, stars, and all heavenly elements also join in praise to the Father. God designed them to shine and give Him glory every night and day. The clouds carry within themselves an enormous amount of water. God makes sure only a certain amount is released for humanity's needs. This emphasizes His orderly creation.

Why universal praise to God? He spoke, and everything that exists in the world came into being at His command. The song is absolutely correct: "This is My Father's World." Moreover, He also sustains the world. Nothing will expire or run out; what He causes to rise up will stand forever.

2. Earthly Worship (vv. 7–10)

The author petitions the sea creatures to bring forth praise. This probably referred to extinct animals from the past, and everything present in the depths of the oceans. This likewise included the sea itself, pools, waves, tides, and any other water activity. The perfect harmony of these elements points to an intelligent, perfect Creator.

The next set of elements—fire, water, hail, snow, cloud, and wind—fulfill a specific purpose. It's difficult to understand natural disasters resulting in major destruction of property and loss of lives. Yet, God is in control, and at those times one must trust in His plans and sovereignty. Fruit trees produce food and cedars contribute to humanity's shelter. From within hills and mountains, mines and minerals help people survive. The provisions result in people praising God.

Both wild and tame animals and birds are supported by God; He supplies their food and drink. He also directs their course and activities, so every one of them moves in harmony, even the smallest insect and snake. He beckons them to join in with those who praise Him.

3. Specific Worship (vv. 11–12)

Kings, princes, judges, and all those in authority are asked to praise God, because He puts men and women in places of government, provides them with precious gifts, and cancels enemies' plots. God deserves acknowledgment from those in places of power.

The psalmist emphasizes the high-ranking officials and then points out ordinary men, women, and children. Youth are in their prime of life, are full of vigor and energy, and look forward to plenty of life ahead. The older generation are thankful for their full lives. Both groups offer praise and thanksgiving to God. Even from children who do not have an extensive history with God, He still calls for praise (Matthew 21:15).

4. Everyone Worship (vv. 13–14)

The psalmist concludes by calling everyone and everything from everywhere to come together and praise the Lord, because He is excellent and His glory is above the earth and heavens. He's perfect in all His dealings, good, and generous. However, if God provided nothing, just His name is worth a celebration of praise.

God specifically highlighted Israel at the end of this hymn. Some scholars believe the address to Israel is not the literal nation, but a spiritual Israel, which includes both Jew and Gentile, who looked to the coming Messiah (Romans 2:28– 29). God's children realize their punishment for sin should have been eternal damnation, but God sent Jesus as a payment. Condemnation no longer hangs over their heads. This fact alone produces a humble worship-filled heart.

Search the Scriptures

1. In what way does nature (sun and moon, fire and hail, etc.) praise the Lord (Psalm 148:1–14)?
2. The command to praise the Lord is for all people (v. 11). Is the command to praise the Lord truly for all people on earth or exclusively those who have a relationship with Him?

Discuss the Meaning

What would a harmonious world look like that praises God together? Is that what we are thinking about and what we truly desire when we have praise and worship in our church?

Liberating Lesson

People become Christians for various reasons. Some want to escape hell and go to heaven. Others want benefits, such as being wealthy or having good health. Still others are hurt people seeking help for personal problems. But as you grow and mature in Christ, understand you were created to be God's vessel of praise and ask Him how to become a daily worshiper. This should become a life priority.

Application for Activation

Fill the pockets of your heart with praise. In the course of the day, we have waiting time, downtime, and do-nothing time. Is it possible for us to fill those pockets of time with a praise, Scripture, or song this week?

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

Psalm 148:1-14

1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights. 2 Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts.

The psalmist gives the command to praise the Lord. In Hebrew, the phrase is "hallelujah," which means to celebrate or praise the Lord (Yah in Hebrew is a form of God's title "Lord"). This phrase is often repeated in Psalms 145-150, occurring more than ten times. Here we end with a crescendo of praise that encompasses the whole known world.

Next, the psalmist calls for praise from the inhabitants of heaven (Heb. shamayim, sha-MAH-yeem); they can praise God in the heights (Heb. marom, mah-ROME). These two terms designate

not just the sky or expanse above the earth, but where the ancient Israelites believed God resided with His angels (Heb. mal'ak, mall-AHK) or messengers. Many of these angels, such as the seraphim, existed solely to worship and praise God.

3 Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. 4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.

Now, the psalmist turns to the celestial bodies in the heavens, personifying the sun, moon, and stars and making them capable of praising God. These celestial bodies were often objects of worship in the ancient Near East. The psalmist reverses what many would see as objects of reverence and puts them in their rightful place—they are made to revere God. They are not literally inanimate objects verbally boasting about God, but signs and evidence of His greatness. By performing their allotted tasks, they point to the power and wisdom of their Creator.

The “heavens of heavens” may refer to the highest or most distant parts unknown to humanity. The expression is superlative—the best part of the heavens—perhaps indicating the part nearest to God. The psalmist here expands the scope of the praise due to God. Praise issues forth to Him from even the farthest reaches. The “waters that be above the heavens” (Genesis 1:7) alludes to the ancient idea of a canopy of water that existed in the sky over the earth. This canopy was thought to be a worldwide blanket of water vapor. Some believe this to be the cause of the worldwide flood in Genesis 7. Although this reference to the canopy or expanse of water is well after the flood, it is well fixed in the mind of the ancient writer as a part of God’s creation.

5 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created. 6 He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.

The reason for the heavens and their residents to praise God is His inherent power in creating the universe. The psalmist says that he commanded (Heb. tsavah, tsa-VAH), which means to charge someone to do something. God is sovereign over His creation. He speaks, and creation must obey. Furthermore, He creates ex nihilo or “out of nothing.” He commanded, and they were created (Heb. bara', bah-RAH). The word has the connotation of cutting out or carving out, meaning to be brought into existence. It is limited to the creative work of God alone, indicating the distinction and superiority of God’s work. Nothing would exist without the power of the sovereign God. This is the reason for them to praise Him.

To further add to God’s greatness, the psalmist tells how creation was just the beginning. The Lord also “stablished them for ever and ever.” The word “stablished” (Heb. 'amad, ah-MAHD) means to stand. The stars, sun, moon, and the entire heavens are standing in position and fulfilling the purpose God created them for at the dawn of time. God made a decree (Heb. choq, HOKE), or a law, which will never pass (Heb. 'avar, ah-VAR), or fade away.

7 Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps:

The psalmist began in the heights, but now he descends to the depths. Whereas before he started the call to praise with the angels, supernatural beings of beauty and perfection, in this verse he points to the great sea creatures or dragons (Heb. tannin, ta-NEEN). These creatures

were believed to dwell in the deeps (Heb. tehom, teh-HOME) or the ocean. These creatures were believed to oppose God and His people, and they were greatly feared. The psalmist says there is nothing to fear because even these creatures were created by God and are capable of praising Him.

Even the deeps or depths of the oceans and seas praise God. In ancient times, the sea was viewed as an unstable place. It was the great unknown, associated with chaos and darkness. As such, these places were to be avoided. The psalmist says that even these places are created by God and called to give Him praise.

8 Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word: 9 Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: 10 Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl:

Here the psalmist involves the whole span of creation. The Lord is sovereign over the elements; they fulfill (Heb. 'asah, ah-SAH) or accomplish His Word. The sense is that they thoroughly and entirely put into effect the commands that are given. Nothing is outside the range of God and His sovereignty. The mountains, hills, and trees are called to praise Him. The beasts and cattle are called to praise Him. Even the creeping things (Heb. remes, REH-mes) or animals that crawl, such as reptiles, are called to praise Him.

11 Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: 12 Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: 13 Let them praise the name of the Lord: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven.

Next, the psalmist includes humanity in the chorus of praise, including those of high position such as kings, princes, and judges. The greatness of these rulers is outmatched by the glory of the Lord. He is King over everyone. He also directs the call toward the young men and the maidens. Those who are in the prime of life are called to praise Him. Both male and female, elders and children—in other words, all in the community—are called to praise God.

This is because the Lord's name alone is excellent (Heb. sagav, sah-GAV), meaning to be high and unattainable. The sense is that the Lord's name is exalted above all other names, and His glory, or hod (Heb. HODE), is above the heavens. The word for glory can be translated as majesty and has the same sense of weight, referring to the quality of awe or reverence it inspires in others. Clearly, the psalmist believes the Lord has no equal.

14 He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the LORD.

The psalmist ends with an addendum to the reason for joining this chorus of praise. Not only is the Lord's name excellent and His glory above the heavens, but He also is praised for what He has done for His people. He "exalteth the horn of his people," which means He has honored His people for their strength. Although the word "horn" (Heb. qeren, KEH-ren) can simply refer to an animal horn, in poetry it carries with it the connotation of power and strength. The One who deserves all the glory and praise has lifted up His people.

This exalting of the horn also shows God's greatness and glory. This causes His saints (Heb. chasid, kha-SEED), or faithful and holy ones, to praise Him even more. This horn is the reason for the praise of the Children of Israel, a people who are near to Him. These people have experienced His majesty and power and have the most reason to praise the Lord.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Psalm 150

TUESDAY

Job 38:1-7

WEDNESDAY

Proverbs 8:22-31

THURSDAY

Luke 2:8-14

FRIDAY

Deuteronomy 24:17-22

SATURDAY

Psalm 145:13b-21

SUNDAY

Psalm 148