

**International Sunday School Lesson  
Study Notes  
January 22, 2017**

**Lesson Text: Psalm 104:1-4, 24-30  
Lesson Title: Praise for the Creator's Wisdom**

**Introduction**

Psalm 104 has no title or reference to a specific occasion when it was written. Most scholars attribute authorship to David, calling Psalm 104, "A Psalm of David concerning the formation of the world." It reads like a paraphrase of the first chapter of Genesis. It magnifies the greatness of God in His creation and in His providence over creation. It also celebrates the way He provides for His creation, not only with man, but also with the animals.

There are several Psalms which focus on nature, but in contrast to the nature worshippers of our day, the psalmist does not worship nature, but the God who created nature. He stands in amazement at the complexity and intricacy of God's created order.

**Praise God for His Majesty in Creation (Psalm 104:1-4)**

Verse 1

"Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty."

Like Psalm 103, this psalm begins and ends with the psalmist's call to his "soul" to "Bless the LORD." To "Bless the LORD" means "to affectionately praise" God and give Him the worship He deserves. The "LORD" is Jehovah Himself. Often, when we think of the "LORD," we think of the things He has given us. The psalmist calls upon his "soul" to praise "the LORD" Himself. Praise and worship must begin with the person of God instead of His benefits.

The psalmist begins with the statement God is "very great." The remainder of the psalm will validate his statement. Perhaps we should spend more time declaring God's greatness rather than arguing His existence.

"Thou are clothed with honour and majesty" indicates the psalmist views God's creation as his "clothing" or garments. In the creation of the world God has clothed Himself with a majestic robe. You have never seen God, but you have seen His garments! They are called creation.

Verse 2-4

“Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain: Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind: Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire:”

The psalmist describes the majesty of God with action words, which emphasize the creative power of God: “coverest,” “stretchest out,” “layeth,” “maketh,” and “walketh.” “Light,” the first created element, is described as God’s robe. A “garment” that “covers” is both revealing and concealing. Nothing better expresses what God is like than “light” (1 John 1:5; 1 Timothy 6:16).

The psalmist compares the “heavens” to a tent “curtain” stretched out over the earth. When God commanded the “heavens” to be, they were spread out as easy as a man would erect a tent! “Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters” speaks of God’s secret dwelling place on “the waters.” The ancient Hebrews imagined the heavens as a mysterious reservoir of water above the firmament. The psalmist sees God building His private place of dwelling there on the waters above.

To the psalmist, storm “clouds” and “wind” were vehicles of God coming to man (Psalm 18:10; Isaiah 66:15). In the heavens above, God rides “clouds” as a king would ride in a chariot or a president would ride in a limousine. He uses the “wind” to power His movement above the earth. These powerful poetic expressions declare God is far above man or any who would dare claim to be His equal.

“Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire” suggests that God displays His “angels” or messengers with natural phenomena such as “flaming fire.” Down through history men have worshipped the elements of nature as deities or gods. The psalmist wants his readers to know all the elements of nature, His “angels” and “ministers” are under God’s sovereign control.

### **Praise God for His Diversity in Creation (Psalm 104:24-26)**

#### Verse 24

“O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.”

“O LORD, how manifold are thy works” speaks of the number and variety of the “works” of God. “Works” refer to God’s “actions, transactions, activity, and productivity.” No one can estimate the number of “works” God has done or is doing upon the earth. No one can comprehend the variety of all He created. No one can imagine the immensity of the life He sustains and maintains.

“In wisdom thou hast made them all” means God fashioned and formed everything He created. To suggest man evolved from a tadpole robs Creator God of His wisdom and diversity in His creative wisdom. Everything in the world shows the wisdom of God in its formation and adaptation to everything that exists.

“The earth is full of thy riches” is a reference to the things God created. All God created is regarded as His possessions; or, they belong to Him. “Full” means “they abound everywhere.” God made it all, owns it all, and God has the sovereign right to tell us how to use it all.

#### Verse 25

“So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts.”

The “great and wide sea” could possibly refer to the Mediterranean Sea. The abundant diversity of life in the sea is called “things creeping innumerable,” and “small and great beasts.” Perhaps the psalmist had stood on the shore or viewed the Sea from afar and was overwhelmed by God’s creative power. Maybe he had waded out and saw firsthand fish and the different forms of microscopic life in the water.

#### Verse 26

“There go the ships: there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein.”

The psalmist is describing an active sea from above and beneath. On the surface of the sea he views “the ships.” Anyone viewing the sea would be attracted by the presence of “the ships.” Whether on land or sea, the created world is active and alive.

The “leviathan” is a real sea creature, not a mythological creature, most likely a large whale of dinosaur proportion (Job 41:1; Psalm 74:14; Isaiah 27:1). God “made” or created this enormous sea creature “to play” in the water. “Play” means the “leviathan” is at home in the environment God placed him and he is free to move about in the vast expanse of the sea.

#### **Praise God for His Sufficiency in Creation (Psalm 104:27-30)**

Psalm 104:27-30 describes the continuous action by which God sustains birds, beasts, fish, and men. They are totally dependent upon God not only for sustenance but for life itself. God is pictured as the great provider of the universe, giving by His own measure the portion needed.

### Verse 27-28

“These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.”

“These wait all upon thee” means all the sea creatures receive their “meat” or food from the Lord “in due season” or at the exact moment needed. What God “gives them” they “gather.” When God “opens” His “hand, they are filled with good.”

God has created and designed all creatures of the sea with certain digestive organs, and God provides them the exact food they need. When God “opens” His “hand,” what He provides is “good.” His provision suits their needs.

Everything God does for them daily magnifies His providential care for His creation. All of this provision is a reminder if God cares for the creatures of the sea, how much more does he provide and care for His children (Matthew 6:26).

### Verse 29-30

“Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.”

“Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled” means if God withdraws His “face” or countenance from His creation, it is “troubled.” “Troubled” means “cast down, confounded.” If God “takes away the breath” of the life of any creature He has created, “they die.” As all living things have life from God, so they have death from God when He takes away life.

“Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created” speaks of the creative breath of Almighty God (Genesis 2:7). As life reproduces and replenishes, it is all connected with the creative breath of God.

“And thou renewest the face of the earth” means God alone sustains the renewal and refreshing of life upon the earth. The “earth” will always replenish and renew until God brings it to an end. Though a generation lives and dies, God will raise up another to take its place. This truth alone strikes a death blow to the theory of evolution, which sees all life as the result of chance. That kind of thinking was nonsense to the psalmist. All life comes from God and to Him be glory forever!

### **Conclusion**

It seems we have lost the ability to find a quiet place to sit down and think about the God who created all things. That was not the case for the author of Psalm 104. Creation for him was one grand inspiration; it caused him to break forth in praise and worship.

God's creation of us establishes in us an obligation to Him. God's greatness in creation cries out for our acknowledgement of His greatness.

*Illus. Henry Martyn (February 18, 1781-October 16, 1812), missionary to the peoples of India, Persia, and to the Muslims in Iran, told how he “sat in the orchard and thought with sweet comfort and peace of my God, in solitude my company, my friend and comforter.” Martyn also commented, “Hardly anyone these days goes to the orchard to think about God; too many of us are lost in the mad race to make a living, entertain ourselves, pay our bills, and keep well.”*

Amen.