

International Sunday School Lesson
Study Notes
January 29, 2017

Lesson Text: Psalm 148:1-14
Lesson Title: All Creation Praises the Lord

Introduction

Psalm 148 has been called “The Praise-Song of Creation.” The word “praise” appears thirteen times in fourteen verses and is without question the theme of the psalm. It is a joyful psalm in which all of God’s creation is invited to praise Him. Since all of creation was cursed with man’s fall in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15-24), the day will come when *“the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God”* (Romans 8:21). Thus, the psalm can best be interpreted as prophetic in nature.

The author and occasion of this psalm is unknown. The psalm consists of a call to all parts of the universe to praise the Lord. It is divided into two sections. First, verses 1-6 is a call to the heavens, all that is above the earth to praise the Lord. Second, verses 7-14 is a call to all who dwell upon the earth to unite in that praise.

Psalm 148 is exciting and victorious. It is full of poetic beauty and disciplined emotions. Commenting on the psalm, Matthew Henry writes, “The psalmist is highly satisfied that God is praised, is very desirous that he may be more praised, and therefore does all he can to engage all about him in this pleasant work, yea, and all who shall come after him, whose hearts must be very dead and cold if they be not raised and enlarged, in praising God, by the lofty flights of divine poetry which we find in this psalm.” (*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible.*)

A Call for Celestial Praise (Psalm 148:1-6)

Verse 1

“Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights.”

“Praise ye the LORD” is a command repeated twelve times in the psalm. The word “Praise” translates the Hebrew *halelu-yah*, our English word hallelujah. It occurs over 23 times in the Psalms (Psalms 104:35; 105:45; 106:1, 48; 112:1; 113:1, 9; 115:18; 116:19; 117:2; 135:1, 3, 21; 146:1, 10; 147:1, 20; 148:1, 14; 149:1, 9; 150:1, 6). The psalmist is calling for more than just a verbal shout of

hallelujah. “Praise ye the LORD” is a call for a biblical understanding of who God is, as revealed in His Word.

“Praise ye the LORD from the heavens” magnifies the truth we do not worship a god manufactured by man here upon the earth. We worship the one true and living God who reigns “from the heavens.” “Heavens” means “lofty, the sky, heights.” The psalmist is calling upon God’s creation in the heavens above to “praise” Him.

Verse 2

“Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts.”

Beginning in this verse, the psalmist presents his heavenly roster who should “praise the LORD.” The “angels” of heaven and “all his hosts” are called on to praise the Lord (Psalm 103:20). While “angels” and their “hosts” or “mass quantity of angels” are used for various purposes by God in Scripture, one of their main functions is to “praise the LORD.” How many “angels” are in a “host?” No one knows for sure but Daniel mentions “...*thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him*” (Daniel 7:10).

We might wonder how the psalmist, who was in no way equal to the angels of heaven in regard to praise, exhort the angels to praise the Lord. Could it be he does so in order that he might join them in their heavenly chorus? This will be the case when we join the angels in praise in heaven. “*And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing*” (Revelation 5:11-12).

Verse 3

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

The psalmist calls upon the “sun and moon” to praise the Lord. The “sun” and “moon” are the two most obvious and glorious objects in the heavens, visible to the eyes of people. The “sun” praises the Lord by day and the “moon” praises the Lord by night. God never leaves Himself without a testimony of praise.

Some in the ancient world believed the “stars” were deities and their alignment or movement determined human destiny upon the earth. The psalmist presents the “stars” as one of many sections in the heavenly choir being called upon to “praise the Lord.”

“Stars” remind us of the beauty of God’s creation. They are like little satellites communicating to us the creative genius of the Lord. There are individual stars, each shining in a splendor all its own. Some “stars” are in collective clusters allowing man to see patterns or designs we name, such as a bear or a dipper. Other “stars” shine individually and alone, like little fires God has stoked to give “light.” These “lights” give praise to the Lord.

Verse 4

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

The “heavens of heavens” is summoned to “praise the Lord.” “Heavens of heavens” in the psalmist’s mind is one heaven rising above another (2 Chronicles 2:6; Psalm 68:33; 1 Kings 8:27). The “waters that be above the heavens” refers to Genesis 1:7, *“And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.”* These “waters” most likely refer to the “clouds.” Clouds hang gracefully in the heavens filled with water which will in God’s timing rain upon the earth.

Verse 5

“Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created.”

“Them” refers to all of God’s creation in the heavens the psalmist has just mentioned. The “name of the LORD” refers to God Himself. The psalmist calls “them” to “praise the name of the LORD.” God’s creation in the heavens “praise the name of the LORD” by functioning as God designed them. When the sun shines, God is praised. When the moon shines, God is praised. When the stars shine and the clouds slowly move above our heads, God is praised!

“For he commanded, and they were created” means everything in this world, specifically the heavens above, was spoken into existence by the word of God. God is the Creator of all things, out of nothing He made all, and He owns all things and all people (Psalm 24:1). We may think of ourselves as owners in relation to our possessions. That is, we worked for something or paid a price to obtain something. But in relation to God, we own nothing, absolutely nothing, and He has every right to dispose of our so-called possessions exactly as He pleases. If God had not “commanded,” there would be nothing!

Verse 6

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

Creation by God alone means everything that exists has a purpose, a reason for being. “He hath also stablished them for ever and ever” means God set all creation in its place for every age. The sun, moon, stars, angels and all the celestial creation is not free to move around on their own or make different plans depending upon how they feel or think. They are “stablished.” God appointed them and commanded them to do what He created them to do.

God’s “decree shall not pass.” He gave His orders to every part of His creation and those orders will “not pass” or change (Isaiah 46:10).

A Call for Terrestrial Praise (Psalm 148:7-14)

Verse 7-13

“Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word: Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl: Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven.”

The words “Praise the LORD from the earth” is a counterpart to verse 1, “Praise ye the LORD from the heavens.” As the first six verses issue a call to the heavens to praise the Lord, the remaining verses issue the same call to the inhabitants of the earth. “Earth” must join with the “heavens” in praise to the Lord. No section of the heavens or the earth will be excused from magnifying His holy name.

The “dragons” is most likely a reference to some form of great fish in the sea, or a land or water creature (Psalm 74:13). The “deeps” is a reference to the extreme depths of the ocean. The psalmist is calling upon everything in the depths of the ocean to praise the Lord.

The combination of “fire and hail” in this context most likely refers to lightning or some other electrical phenomena on the earth. These elements often accompany storms giving flashes of light upon God’s creation. “Snow, and vapour” speaks of a mist which often accompanies snow storms. The “stormy wind” fulfills God’s Word. Taken together, the psalmist is telling us the “dragons, deeps, fire, hail, snow, vapour, and the stormy winds” all give voice to their Creator’s praise.

“Mountains and all hills” also praise the Lord. The “mountains” may be viewed as tall men in the choir, with their heads high above the surrounding creation on earth, lifting their voice in praise to the Creator. The “fruitful trees” are trees

of color and variety. The “cedars” were the most prominent of all trees, and represent all the different species of trees joining in praise to the Lord.

Wild “beasts” that roam the fields and “all cattle” that graze upon the land are called to praise the Lord. “Creeping things” is an all-inclusive term which places all God’s earthly creation that roams the earth under one name. The “flying fowl” is of course the birds of the air who rest in nests and trees upon the earth.

“Kings, princes, and judges of the earth” represent those in authority. It is good for a nation to have leaders who praise and worship the Lord. All men, upper or lower class, should praise the Lord. No rank or position in life excuses us from praising the Lord!

"Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven" stresses the inclusiveness of everyone in praising the Lord. Men and women, young and old should praise the Lord. “Children” and young people should invest their energy and enthusiasm in the praise of Jehovah God. Why? Because the Lord’s “name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven.” Praise to a deity or just any god is worthless. Our praise must be to the “name of the LORD.” Anything less falls short of biblical praise!

Verse 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.”

As great as God is and as much as He deserves praise from His creation in the heavens and on earth, He never forgets Israel, His chosen people. The thought behind the words, “He also exalteth the horn of his people,” is power and prosperity (1 Samuel 2:1). God’s greatness enables Him to “exalt his people.” God is good to all people, but He is “God” to His chosen people!

“The praise of all his saints” means because God has “exalted the horn” or power of His chosen people, they will enjoy a better future than they had in the past (Isaiah 43:20; Psalm 135:4).

“Even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him” is God’s call to His chosen people, the “children of Israel,” a people most dear unto Him to praise His name. Although all of creation will be represented in the heavenly and earthly chorus of praise, Israel, the apple of God’s eye, will be featured in that praise-song of creation. For this and all others blessings of God, the psalmist concludes the psalm as he began, “Praise ye the LORD.”

Conclusion

How could anyone minimize the importance of praise and worship after reading and meditating this psalm? Prophetically, God will be praised by the host of angels in heaven, the sun, moon, and the stars, and by everything upon the earth. But until that glorious day arrives, all who know Jehovah God through the salvation of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, should praise Him for all His mighty works.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:3-6).

"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Hebrews 13:15).

"And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great" (Revelation 19:5).

Amen.