

## June 4

**Scriptures:** Read Psalms 113, 114 & 115

**Key Verse:** “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name give glory, because of Your mercy, and because of Your truth. (Psalm 115:1)

### Overview

Psalms 113-118 are known as the “Hallel Psalms” (Hebrew for “praise”) because the repeated exclamation of “Hallelujah”, translated as “praise the Lord”, is the theme of these psalms. This collection was used in the worship services on the occasions of the Hebrew feasts to express their joy and gratitude to God.

Psalm 113 begins with the invitation for the Lord’s servants of every generation, from the east to the west at all times from dawn to dusk, to praise the Lord forevermore (113:2-3; Mal. 1:11). In praising His “name” (113:1-3; 115:1), we recognize the manifestations of His person and His revealed nature (Isa. 42:8; 30:27). We also are to praise Him for His incomparableness which the psalmist pictures in two ways: His transcendence and His condescension, are not set in contrast, but are complimentary. He truly “dwells on high” yet even the heavens cannot contain Him, and His ways are incomprehensible to the human mind (1 Kings 8:27; Job 26:11-14. His eminence is evident when He humbles Himself as a caring Father who sees the needs of mankind. Truly the earth is full of mercy, and at the same time the heavens are full of His glory (113:4).

The psalmist gives illustrations of God’s condescension in raising up the poor and needy from the lowest depths of despair (from mourning, represented by the “ash heap”). He wipes away the tears of His children and makes them to rejoice (Rev. 21:4, Isa. 25:8; 35:10). These examples are taken from Hannah’s song of praise to God for healing her barrenness (113:7-8; 1 Samuel 2:8; Luke 1:52). The psalmist uses this as yet another example of God’s loving compassion (113:9). God not only intervenes to help with their conditions, but He also lifts them up and seats them with the princes of the righteous (113:8; Eph. 2:6). The greatest example of God’s condescension, however, is His coming in the form of a humble man, as our Saviour Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:5-11).

With beautiful poetic imagery and in perfect Hebrew poetry, the psalmist of Psalm 114 describes the mighty presence of God in leading the children of Israel out of Egypt. This is the greatest event in Israel’s history. It pictures the miraculous events which led to His claim on Israel as His inheritance. He named Jerusalem as the place where He chose to have His sanctuary (78:54; Ex. 15:17). He parted the Red Sea at the beginning of their journey (Ex. 14:21). He dried up the Jordan River, which marked the end of their wilderness wanderings (114:3; Josh. 3:16). The hills shook and Mount Sinai trembled at the power and majesty of His presence (29:5-6; 68:8; 97:5; Ex. 19:18; Jud. 5:4; Heb. 12:18, 26). His power was also made manifest in the miracle of water pouring forth from the rock (78:15-16; Ex. 17:6; Num. 10:11). This psalm is purposely placed in the midst of the Hallel Psalms because the deliverance of God is something for which we must continually thank and praise Him.

In Psalm 115, the psalmist expresses the superior glory of God, and to Him alone belongs all the glory. As the psalmist stressed, the nation of Israel deserves no praise (115:1) neither do the man-made idols of the heathen. This is the main emphasis of this psalm. The heathen mock God's people by asking, "Where is your God?" Possibly the question was asked because they saw the children of Israel in distress and trouble without help from their God (cf. 42:3, 10; Joel 2:17; Isa. 36:18-20; 37:15-20). The psalmist affirms that to those who trust and fear Him, He is indeed a real help (115:9-11). However, help comes in God's own timing. Another reason they asked this question was that, because their gods were always visible, they could not fathom the God of Israel who was unseen because He is Spirit (John 1:18; 4:24).

The psalmist mocks the idols and the heathen who make and worship them. Both are vain, useless, and futile. The idol worshipper is stupid, irrational, and unreasonable (115:8; Rom. 1:23-25). How could someone make an idol himself, and then worship it? (135:15-18; Isa. 40:18-20, 25; 44:6, 9-10; Jer. 10:1-6; Habakkuk 2:18-19). In contrast, God is truly sovereign, wise and loving. Unlike the idol, He is a true helper and a protector of His people. He is alive and active. He interacts and communicates with His people. He is the God of miracles who brings deliverance and blessing to those who fear Him. Interestingly, the three categories of Old Testament people who received blessings from God (Israel, priests, and Gentile God-fearers, 115:9-13) are now one. They are those whose faith is in the Lord Jesus Whom they love and serve. They are the true Israel (Gal. 3:26 -29; Rom. 9:6-8), the holy priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9), and those who fear God from every nation.

## **Prayer**

How wonderful it is to be called Your children, Father God! We wonder at the works of Your great power and, at the same time, stand amazed at Your loving concern and tenderness toward us. We join your servant David to give thanks to Thee, O Lord, among the peoples!