

June 18

Scriptures: Read Psalms 148, 149 & 150

Key Verse: “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.” (Psalm 150:6)

Overview

Psalm 148 calls for the universal praise to the Lord by all created things, both heavenly and earthly, and both living and inanimate. The main reason for His receiving praise is because He is the Creator and the Sustainer. Notice that the crown of God’s creation, mankind, is mentioned last for emphasis. Regardless of class, age, or sex, no one is exempt from praising God (148:11-12). Praising God is the main purpose of our being. When people do not praise the Lord and live in obedience to Him, they cannot truly have fulfilled lives. If they think they do, they will discover at the time of the judgment that they were very wrong.

Narrowing it down even further, the psalmist then calls upon God’s people to praise Him. They especially have reason to praise God. Only those who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ can praise God by His Name. They know that His name is Jesus, which is exalted above every other name (148:13; Phil. 2:9-11). A result that comes from praising that name is that God will strengthen and honour those believers and they will be a people who are near to Him, but He also draws nearer to us that we might have a closer fellowship, relationship, and bond.

Psalm 149 gives us yet another dimension of praise. It is the joyful celebration for not only what God has done for us, but for Who God is. We are to rejoice in Him as our Maker and King. For the ancient Israelite, a joyful celebration was accompanied by dancing, singing, and the playing of musical instruments. When the celebration was in honour of the Lord, He would be glorified through this. He would take pleasure in receiving their sincere and joyful praises.

The occasion for this psalm was most likely a military victory for Israel. They received the Lord’s help and deliverance and such an important event called for the singing of a “new song”; Thus this psalm was possibly composed for the time when the soldiers returned victoriously from battle. For the believer in Jesus, the new song is the song of salvation and freedom that He puts within our hearts since He has won the victory over sin and death.

Although Israel had won a war, there were still other wars to be waged. They were under the threat of several hostile nations, who were not only their enemies but they were also considered the enemies of God. The sacred Scriptures gave them the authority to destroy them as divine judgment in punishment for their wickedness (149:6-9; Deut. 7:1-2). These verses, however, have been misunderstood in the past by nominal Christians who have used them in support of an actual military assault on the heathen, a holy war. In light of the New Testament, such an interpretation is unacceptable and it ignores the words of the Apostle Paul, “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down [spiritual] strongholds” (2 Cor. 10:4). It is no coincidence that the writer to the Hebrews refers to the double-edged sword as being the Word of God (Heb. 4:12). When believers today praise God it should be accompanied by the sword of the Spirit, not the sword of steel (149:6b; Eph. 6:17). We fight against

principalities and powers of darkness over which we will prevail and be victorious by the power of God's Spirit.

What a grand finale is Psalm 150! Within the six short verses we read the word "praise" (Hebrew halel) thirteen times! We learn that since God is holy He is to be praised in a holy place — His sanctuary or Temple and in the heavenlies (150:1). We, who make up the Church of Jesus Christ, have been made holy, and our bodies have been made the temple of God so we can be assured that the praises we offer unto Him are acceptable and pleasing (1 Cor. 3:16).

We also learn why we should praise Him. Indeed, we should praise Him for His mighty acts, but primarily we should praise Him for "His excellent greatness" Jesus Christ personified God's greatness, for He was and is the greatest revelation of God to mankind and we today must praise God for Jesus (2 Peter 1:17). How are we to praise God? With every form of praise, including musical instruments of all kinds, but most importantly we are to praise Him from our own mouths as long as we breathe. He who breathed life into us is worthy of our praise all the days that He has given us upon the earth. Even in eternity, when we have new and resurrected bodies in the life everlasting, we will live to praise Him.

Prayer

Lord God, we live only to praise You and lift up Your name before all people. All our other earthly tasks seem so insignificant compared to being in Your holy presence. Thank You for the access to Your presence You have provided through Jesus. Help us to express to others this treasured access and win them for You.