

January 29

Lesson 9

PRAISE GOD

WITH ALL CREATION

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 150

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Psalm 148

PSALM 148

¹ Praise the LORD.
 Praise the LORD from the heavens;
 praise him in the heights above.

² Praise him, all his angels;
 praise him, all his heavenly hosts.

³ Praise him, sun and moon;
 praise him, all you shining stars.

⁴ Praise him, you highest heavens
 and you waters above the skies.

⁵ Let them praise the name of the LORD,
 for at his command they were created,

⁶ and he established them for ever and ever—
 he issued a decree that will never pass
 away.

⁷ Praise the LORD from the earth,
 you great sea creatures and all ocean
 depths,

⁸ lightning and hail, snow and clouds,
 stormy winds that do his bidding,

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

¹⁰ wild animals and all cattle,
 small creatures and flying birds,

¹¹ kings of the earth and all nations,
 you princes and all rulers on earth,

¹² young men and women,
 old men and children.

¹³ Let them praise the name of the LORD,
 for his name alone is exalted;
 his splendor is above the earth and the heavens.

¹⁴ And he has raised up for his people a horn,
 the praise of all his faithful servants,
 of Israel, the people close to his heart.
 Praise the LORD.



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KEY VERSE

Let them praise the name of the LORD, for at his command they were created.—Psalm 148:5

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Identify the basis for praising God as Creator as set forth in [Psalm 148:13, 14](#).
2. Explain the significance of creation's praise of its Creator.
3. Write a brief ecological manifesto and note how it differs from a secular one.

LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction

- A. Compliments That Complement
- B. Lesson Background

I. Praise from the Heavens ([Psalm 148:1-6](#))

- A. Sources ([vv. 1-4](#))
- B. Reasons ([vv. 5, 6](#))

II. Praise from the Earth ([Psalm 148:7-12](#))

- A. Nonhuman Elements ([vv. 7-10](#))
 - Ultimate Climate Change*
- B. Human Spectrum ([vv. 11, 12](#))
 - Nones and Dones*

III. Praise from God's Chosen ([Psalm 148:13, 14](#))

- A. Excellence of Name ([v. 13](#))
- B. People of Israel ([v. 14](#))

Conclusion

- A. The Amazing Creator
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

Introduction

A. Compliments That Complement

How can we ensure that a compliment is well received? We do so (or at least have more of a chance of doing so) by offering the type of compliment the receiver appreciates most.

Social observers tell us that women and men are not the same in this regard. Women generally like compliments about *who they are*—words that affirm their personality, etc. Therefore, a compliment such as “You are so easy to talk to” is usually appreciated.

Men, on the other hand, prefer to be complimented for *what they do*—words that affirm their skills and accomplishments. A compliment such as “You are so handy” can be counted on to stroke the male ego.

The psalms offer both kinds of praise to God, but he is not praised because of any ego need on his part. Praise of God is mainly for our benefit, since lifting our praise to him reminds us that we are not God. Our praise also reminds us of our dependence on him, that we are not self-sufficient. For these reasons and others, [Psalm 148](#) invites us to join the rest of creation in praising God.

B. Lesson Background

The Lesson Background for [lesson 6](#) introduced the psalms as a whole to be a collection of five books. When examining these five, one notices the predominance of lament in Books I and II. David wrote about three-quarters of their 72 psalms, and he had much to reflect on regarding the conduct of his life.

Moving beyond the problem of exile in Book III, we begin to notice more expressions of praise in Books IV and V. No matter what the problem, God is king ([Psalms 96-99](#), in Book IV), and he will one day make all things right ([Psalm 145](#), in Book V). These facts called for praise on the part of the psalmists.

[Psalm 148](#), today's text, is one of the five chapters known collectively as “the praise conclusion” to the book of Psalms as a whole. Each of the five (that is, [Psalms 146-150](#)) begins and ends with the phrase “Praise the Lord,” translated from the Hebrew word *hallelujah*. The five chapters

of [Psalms 146-150](#) offer different emphases in regard to praise that should be offered.

I. Praise from the Heavens

([PSALM 148:1-6](#))

A. Sources (vv. 1-4)

**¹ Praise the LORD.
Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise him in the heights above.**

In a doubled expression, the psalmist makes clear who is to be praised: it is *the Lord*. He is the one who revealed himself to Moses as Yahweh, the great “I am” ([Exodus 3:13-16](#)).

Thinking back to discussions of parallelism in previous lessons, we see that feature here as well: the praise that is to come *from the heavens* will be occurring *in the heights* as well. The nouns *heavens* and *heights* in this context both refer to God’s dwelling place (see also [Psalm 102:19](#)). Thus, the psalm establishes the very presence of God as the appropriate place where praise is to begin.

On the Hebrew word *hallelujah* that stands behind the opening phrases, see the Lesson Background. This word is found also in [Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, 6](#). There it is transliterated (not translated) twice in moving from Hebrew to Greek to English.

**² Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his heavenly hosts.**

The first heavenly entities that are commanded to praise the Lord are the supernatural beings known as *angels*. We may wonder if the word *angels* stands parallel with the word *hosts*, since the latter can refer to stars (example: [2 Kings 17:16](#)) as well to angels (example: [Psalm 103:20, 21](#)).

Since (1) parallelism seems intended, given its use in this psalm’s opening verse and (2) a distinct word for stars occurs within its own parallel in [verse 3](#) (next), then (3) we conclude that the words *angels* and *hosts* are parallel here in [verse 2](#) in expressing the same idea. Both words refer to the heavenly servants who are “ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation” ([Hebrews 1:13, 14](#)).

**³ Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars.**

[Genesis 1:14-19](#) describes God’s intent for *sun and moon* as he established on the fourth day of creation: they are “signs to mark sacred times, and days and years,” “to give light on the earth,” “to govern the day,” and “to govern the night” (see also [Jeremiah 31:35](#)).

[Genesis 1:16](#) further says, “He also made the stars,” but does not state a specific function for them. But the fact that God knows all their names indicates their importance to him ([Psalm 147:4](#); [Isaiah 40:26](#)).

As the revelation of Scripture progresses, we see developed the idea that the heavenly bodies serve as witnesses to the Creator (compare [Psalm 19:1-6](#); etc.), and that is what we see in the verse before us. The fact that they continue functioning daily without fail speaks to the faithfulness of the Creator (compare [Psalm 89:36, 37](#); [Jeremiah 33:20, 21](#)). That’s praise!

Sadly, we see the opposite in ancient and modern cultures where the heavenly bodies are themselves deemed worthy of receiving worship rather than obligated to give it. The Israelites were strictly forbidden from worshipping elements of creation ([Deuteronomy 5:8, 9](#)), with sun, moon, and stars receiving specific mention ([4:15-19](#); [17:2-5](#)). Israel’s history is one of failure in this regard (see [2 Kings 17:16](#); [21:3](#); [Jeremiah 8:2](#); [Ezekiel 8:16](#); compare [Jeremiah 7:18](#); [44:16-26](#); [Zephaniah 1:4, 5](#); [Acts 7:42](#)).

**⁴ Praise him, you highest heavens
and you waters above the skies.**

HOW TO SAY IT

Deuteronomy Due-ter-ahn-uh-me.
Ezekiel Ee-zeek-ee-ul or Ee-zeek-yul.
hallelujah ha-leh-*loo*-yuh (a as in map).
Isaiah Eye-zay-uh.
Jeremiah Jair-uh-my-uh.
Yahweh (*Hebrew*) Yah-weh.
Zephaniah Zef-uh-nye-uh.

Ancient cultures are aware that that which is above the earth has a vertical aspect (compare [Romans 10:6](#); [Ephesians 4:8-10](#)). Thus they speculate about the various levels regarding the dwelling places of their gods and deceased loved ones. The superlative *highest heavens*

indicates the psalmist's desire for praise of God to emanate from the highest possible location! This exhortation therefore parallels that of [Psalm 148:1](#), above.

What Do You Think?

How can appreciation of the various senses of the word heavens ([2 Corinthians 12:2](#)) deepen our reverence for God?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

Concerning the abode of God

Concerning the solar system, galaxy, etc.

Concerning the earth's atmosphere

The psalmist's concept of *waters above the skies* seems to come from [Genesis 1:6-8](#). There "a vault" is positioned in such a way as to divide "the water under vault from the water above it." If the latter refers to the rain that God sends upon the earth as called for (see [Genesis 7:11](#); [Deuteronomy 28:12](#); [Isaiah 55:10](#); [Jeremiah 14:22](#)), then we have another location that is spatially "above" humanity that must praise the Lord.

B. Reasons (vv. 5, 6)

5. Let them praise the name of the LORD, for at his command they were created,

The small word *for* reveals the first of two reasons to *praise the name of the Lord*: it is because that which is to offer the praise has been *created* by the one who is to receive the praise.

In contrast with complicated pagan myths of creation, the presentation of the biblical account of creation in [Genesis 1](#) is marvelously straightforward: God merely spoke the word and the universe came into being (compare [Psalm 33:9](#), [lesson 5](#)). The simple phrase "God said," used numerous times in [Genesis 1](#), indicates that the speaking was complete, perfect, and effective.

6. and he established them for ever and ever— he issued a decree that will never pass away.

The psalmist now offers the second reason to praise the Creator. This reason speaks to the enduring nature of the cosmos. We see parallelism once again, with *established them for ever and ever* as saying about the same thing as *issued a decree that will never pass away*. Since those last three words sound a bit strange to modern ears, we can note that other occurrences of the underlying Hebrew refer to something that is not violated or transgressed (examples: [Numbers 20:17-20](#); [Job 14:5](#)).

What we see here is the utter sovereignty of God. What God has put into motion by fiat in speaking commands will continue to be sustained by him the same way. When someone asks why, a common response is that it simply was and is God's will. That's true enough, of course, but not as helpful as it could be. Better is to view God's will manifested in three ways.

First is God's *purposive will*, referring to actions he takes by his own decision and initiative; these are things he causes. The second is God's *prescriptive will*, referring to things that he desires to happen, but grants human freedom to do otherwise. An example is to say that God's will is for everyone to be saved, even though not all shall be. The third is God's *permissive will*, referring to things he does not want to happen, but grants human freedom otherwise. The premier example here is, of course, sin.

To create and sustain are actions of God's purposive will. His purpose in creation is that humans may glorify him and enjoy his goodness. The praise called for in this psalm comes under the umbrella of God's prescriptive will. A thunderous chorus of praise for the Creator should be offered in the heavenly realm. The same should come from the earth, but it is our choice to offer it or not.

II. Praise from the Earth

([PSALM 148:7-12](#))

A. Nonhuman Elements (vv. 7-10)

7. Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths,

The "them" of the previous verse refers only to entities in and of the heavens mentioned to that point in this psalm. The author is not about to stop there!

The praise to come "from the heavens" ([v. 1](#)) moved from high to low in a spatial sense. The psalmist now starts from the opposite direction as he begins to urge praise *from the earth*, starting with the depths of the sea.

The *great sea creatures* are those who live in the *ocean depths*. These images in the verse before us seem to refer to "the deep" of [Genesis 1:2](#) and to its residents of "great creatures" as recorded in [Genesis 1:20, 21](#). Indeed, the word translated *great sea creatures* in the verse before us is the same word translated "monster" in [Job 7:12](#) and [Ezekiel 32:2](#). Another translation is "snake" in [Exodus 7:9, 10, 12](#). The same word is found

in [Isaiah 27:1](#), translated “gliding serpent,” where parallelism may indicate its identity as that of Leviathan (see discussion in [lesson 8](#)). The very existence of such creatures and their abode testifies to their Creator!

**8. lightning and hail, snow and clouds,
stormy winds that do his bidding,**

Meteorological phenomena is next (compare [Psalm 147:16-18](#)). *Lightning and hail* go together, both in experience and Scripture ([Exodus 9:24](#); [Psalm 105:32](#); [Isaiah 30:30](#)).

Snow is not common in Israel except at higher elevations. The Hebrew behind *clouds* is rendered “smoke” in [Genesis 19:28](#) and [Psalm 119:83](#), but in this context it may refer to a thick fog or mist. The latter seems to be better for understanding its relationship with snow. The *stormy winds* will *do his bidding*, as the others do, in their function as a general force of nature. But God also reserves his right to use such forces to intervene personally at times; [Job 38:22-30](#) is particularly insightful in this regard.

What Do You Think?

What are some ways to counsel a person who blames “the randomness of the world” for his or her own problems?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

If the person accepts the authority of the Bible

If the person does not accept the authority of the Bible



Visual for Lesson 9. Use this visual to launch a discussion on the various forms that praise can take. Jot responses on the board.

ULTIMATE CLIMATE CHANGE

Debates about climate change (“global warming”) just don’t seem to get resolved! Discussions go on for years as one side blames humans for climate changes, while the other either denies human culpability or denies that change is even occurring. The talk itself can cause the climate in a room to become quite “heated” at times!

Regardless of which side is right, Christians know that the ultimate change in climate will happen when “the elements” are “destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it ... be laid bare” (2 Peter 3:10). Now *that’s* global warming!

God granted humans dominion over the earth he created (Genesis 1:28), so we should sense a responsibility to not defile it. Honorable, sincere people may disagree on the extent to which our actions affect our planet’s physical environment, if at all, but the effects of our actions and inactions on the world’s spiritual environment should never be in doubt. Some are headed to a place where the “warming” never ceases (Revelation 20:15). We must warn them now!—C. R. B.

**9. you mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars,**

Given the parallelism seen so far, one might expect “mountains and valleys” instead of the text’s *mountains and all hills*. But in order to have mountains and hills, there must be valleys and lowlands presupposed.

A literary device known as *merism* is seen in the phrasing *fruit trees and all cedars*. Merism involves two extremes that indicate inclusion of everything in between. The two extremes here are those of cultivated and uncultivated trees. This indicates that the psalmist intends the reader to think not only of the specific trees mentioned, but also of all other trees. The natural beauty of majestic mountains, rolling hills, and trees of every kind serves to praise their Creator by being what they are.

What Do You Think?

What is your reaction to the claim “The more you learn about creation, the more you learn about the Creator”?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- Why you agree with it
- Why you disagree with it
- Why you are uncertain about it

**10. wild animals and all cattle,
small creatures and flying birds,**

Signifying untamed and domesticated animals respectively, the phrases *wild animals* and *all cattle* form another merism. The same goes for *small creatures* and *flying birds*. These praise their Creator by performing all kinds of activities that add beauty, wonder, and variety to the land and sky.

B. Human Spectrum (vv. 11, 12)

**11. kings of the earth and all nations,
you princes and all rulers on earth,**

In calling out praise “from the earth” (v. 7), the psalmist has moved from the deep oceans to forces of the atmosphere, to the land itself with its foliage, to all animal forms of land and sky, to those created in the image of God himself: human beings. Thus the psalm as a whole is coming full circle, from rational heavenly beings praising the Creator to rational earthly beings doing the same.

From those in highest positions to those in lowest, both average citizen and those in authority over them must recognize the complete sovereignty of their Creator (see Psalm 2:1, 2, 10-12).

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

Again we see merism, as extremes of age indicate that all humanity is in view. Mention of both sexes cements the all-inclusiveness the psalmist intends.

What Do You Think?

What are some appropriate ways for God’s image-bearers to witness to that fact in various settings?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

In a secular work environment
 While participating in sporting events
 While watching sporting events
 While in the company of other Christians
 Other

NONES AND DONES

Western culture was once nominally Christian, but that is no longer the case. The majorities in Western countries who had at least a passing acquaintance with the church and the Christian faith are now the minority.

These days we are hearing about the *Nones*, the one-in-five Americans who have no religious affiliation of any kind. The figure is one-in-three among those under 30. If that weren't sad enough, the latest grouping of the irreligious to emerge in survey is the *Dones*. These are people who were church members at one time, but have decided they want no more of organized religion. The emergence of the *Nones* and *Dones* has some observers predicting the death of the church as we know it.

Without doubt, Western culture as a whole is not praising God in numbers as great as in times past. Even so, God's creation continues to do so. How can the heavens not declare the glory of God? How can the skies not proclaim the work of his hands? ([Psalm 19:1](#)). The call of the Bible to us all—whether young, old, or anywhere in between—is to recognize God as God, thereby praising him with lips and lives. How can the church get this message to the world while it is not too late to do so?—C. R. B.

III. Praise from God's Chosen

([PSALM 148:13, 14](#))

A. Excellence of Name ([v. 13](#))

**¹³ Let them praise the name of the LORD,
 for his name alone is exalted;
 his splendor is above the earth and the heavens.**

The phrase *let them praise the name of the Lord* as used in [verse 5a](#) summarizes the call for praise “from the heavens” ([vv. 1-6](#)). Now the phrase is repeated to summarize the call for praise “from the earth” ([vv. 7-12](#)).

All the praise in this psalm has been directed toward the Lord, *for his name alone is exalted*. When people try to make a name for themselves, they fail (see [Genesis 11:1-9](#)). When God makes a name for a person, it sticks (see [1 Chronicles 17:8](#)). In both cases, the deciding factor is God, given the enduring excellence of his own name.

What Do You Think?

If an average Christian accepted the challenge to exhibit praise as a lifestyle, what should others see in him or her? Why?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

In attitudes and behaviors adopted
 In attitudes and behaviors abandoned
 In attitudes and behaviors unchanged

B. People of Israel ([v. 14](#))

**¹⁴ And he has raised up for his people a horn,
 the praise of all his faithful servants,
 of Israel, the people close to his heart.
 Praise the LORD.**

Horn refers to power (see [1 Samuel 2:1, 10](#); [Psalms 18:2](#); [75:10](#); [112:9](#); [132:17](#); etc.). It is used here to indicate God's bestowal of dignity and strength to his people having returned from exile. The Creator of the universe is also the God of *Israel, the people close to his heart*.

What a powerful twist with which to end this psalm! When we ponder God's great creation, we naturally think of his transcendence, his “out there-ness.” But after 13 verses of viewing God in such a way, the psalmist concludes by focusing on God's immanence, his “right here-ness”!

Conclusion

A. The Amazing Creator

How unbelievers can study the cosmos and not see the Creator behind it is amazing. The sad tendency instead is to rejoice and celebrate human achievement in unlocking the mysteries of the universe. That is otherwise known as human arrogance, or pride—a form of idolatry. The price of arrogance can be quite high, as at least one ancient king found out the hard way ([Daniel 4](#)).

[Psalm 148](#) teaches a better way: there is a Creator of the universe, and he is worthy of praise by *all*, a word occurring 10 times in the psalm's 14 verses. The Creator has revealed himself in both creation (general revelation) and Scripture (special revelation). Jesus Christ is God's ultimate revealing of himself ([John 1:1-14](#); [14:9](#); [Hebrews 1:1-4](#)).

How sad when the only part of creation that does not acknowledge its Creator is the part created in the image of God! How startling to resist Jesus, the one who “chose us in him before the creation of the world” ([Ephesians 1:4](#)), the one by whom “all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible” ([Colossians 1:16](#))!

Before we begin an evangelistic task of [Matthew 28:19, 20](#), we do well to ponder what unbelievers see in us. Do they see lives lived “to the glory and praise of God” ([Philippians 1:11](#))? Or do they see lives lived in praise of self? Only a people near to God can convince a fallen world that it needs to repent as it returns to its Creator, Jesus Christ. Our task to praise is also our witness.

B. Prayer

O God, Creator of Heaven and earth, we praise your name above all names. We worship not the sun but the Son, in whom all things were created and by whom we are new creations. May we by your strength live our very lives in praise of these facts. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

All creation praises its Creator.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

Into the Lesson

Begin class with a game of Compliment Tag. Start by having the group stand in a circle, facing each other. This works best for a group of 10 or fewer, so you may choose to have multiple groups. Either you or someone you designate should start by “tagging” a member of the group and by saying something you admire about him or her. That person continues the game by complimenting another person in the group.

Alternative. Distribute copies of the “It’s Complimentary” activity from the reproducible page, which can be downloaded. Have students work on it individually.

After either activity, lead into Bible study saying, “There is just something about a compliment. Having someone else note something positive about us can really make our day. It also builds the relationship between the one giving the compliment and the one receiving it. While God does not need our praise, we benefit by offering it.”

Into the Word

Divide the class into three groups as follows. Give each group a section of the Bible text, and have them try to answer these questions: (1) What do their assigned verses describe as praising the Lord? (2) How might the things mentioned praise the Lord? (3) Why might they praise the Lord?

Suggested responses are in italics, but do not distribute these.

Group 1—All the Heavens ([Psalm 148:1-6](#)).

(1) Angels, hosts, celestial bodies, highest of heavens, waters above the heavens. (2) By doing God’s work. (3) Because God made them.

Group 2—All the Earth ([Psalm 148:7-12](#)).

(1) Oceans and deep sea creatures, weather, landscapes, plant life, all animals, rulers, all people. (2) By doing what God made them to do. (3) Because God made them.

Group 3—All the People ([Psalm 148:13, 14](#)).

(1) Israel and all God’s people. (2) Living as he made us to, caring for creation, worshipping him and praying, giving, etc. (3) Because he made and saved us, because our praise will bring the world closer to him.

Allow several minutes for group discussion; then ask groups to share their findings. Refer to the commentary to correct misconceptions and fill in any gaps.

Alternative. Distribute copies of the “Worthy of Praise” activity from the reproducible page. Have students work individually or in pairs.

Close either activity by saying, “God’s creation praises him simply by doing exactly what he created it to do, and in [verse 14](#) the psalmist writes that God has given his people, referred to as Israel, a special horn, meaning power or strength. The psalmist is telling us that through our praise—living as God intended—the world will come to know God.”

Into Life

To conclude the class, review these two popular acronyms for structuring personal prayer:

Adoration

Confession

Thanksgiving

Supplication

Praise

Repent

Ask

Yield

Review this briefly, noting that adoring and praising God come first in each one.

End with a prayer time focusing totally on praising God. Allow class members to pray, offering only a single word at a time. That word should be an attribute of God that is worthy of praise.