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**SHIP**



**ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS**





# WHY?

## Psalm 147

WEEK  
ONE

As we come to look at, think about, and get in touch with Psalm 147, we will find it reminds us why we worship God - because He is GOOD. It encourages the entire community of faith to gather to worship God and find healing in His presence. The psalm is clear that any type of protection, pleasure, strength, or healing all comes from God's faithfulness. The psalm ends by celebrating the close relationship God has with His people as He revealed Himself personally to them and no one else.

In order to get the full impact of this psalm, we need to understand some background. Israel had been judged and scattered into exile. Their temple, the symbolic seat of God's presence, had been destroyed. Their land, the visual symbol of God's covenant faithfulness, had been invaded and occupied. Most of their prophets were prophesying false hopes. The true prophets were in captivity with their voices silenced. After a long siege of hopelessness that had gone on for many decades, this psalm opens with an explosion of praise celebrating the amazing providence of God.

We find praise is once again on the lips of Israel. They praise God for both His creational and covenantal blessings. The Lord "builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the exiles of Israel" (v. 2). He "heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (v. 3). The sovereign Lord, who determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name, is now tenderly calling Israel. The long wait is over, "Great is our Lord and mighty in power" (v. 5). This is, in seed form, the great message of the incarnation of Christ. Because of sin, we were all in spiritual exile, far from our spiritual home. All the symbols of God's presence were vanquished. Now, the greatest symbol of God's faithfulness has come in Jesus Christ. Through the gospel, He is tenderly calling us each by name. We are the gathered people of God from the ends of the earth.

At first glance, this psalm seems like a "planter's mix" of assorted verses. It's almost as if someone went through the book of Psalms collecting wonderful verses and just tossed them together in Psalm 147, without rhyme or reason. But the chapter theme is quickly detected by noticing the first and last words of the psalm—"Hallelujah" (or Praise the Lord). Looking even closer, we notice there are three separate exhortations (or urgings) to praise God in Psalm 147—in verses 1, 7, and 12. As it turns out, this is a hymn of three stanzas. The psalmist presents three cycles of praise, three reasons to praise God.

### **1. Praise God for RECOVERY (Psalm 147:1-6)**

*Praise the Lord.*

*How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him! 2 The Lord builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the exiles of Israel. 3 He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. 4 He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name. 5 Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit. 6 The Lord sustains the humble but casts the wicked to the ground.*

- What do you hear God saying to you in these verses concerning recovery?
- What feelings/emotions do these verses evoke?

- Do you think we look to God first when it comes to seeking recovery?
- What are some obstacles that keep us from looking to God first?
- What steps do you need to take to look to God for your recovery?
- What needs to happen for us to be able to praise God for the promise of recovery in our lives?
- How might you help someone who is struggling to begin to find the hope of recovery that God offers?

## **2. Praise God for RESOURCES (Psalm 147:7-11)**

*Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; make music to our God on the harp. 8 He covers the sky with clouds; he supplies the earth with rain and makes grass grow on the hills. 9 He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call. 10 His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of a man; 11 the Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.*

In these verses, we are reminded God not only helps us recover from the problems we face, but likewise provides the resources we need in our daily lives. Jesus taught about this in the Sermon on the Mount when He said in Matthew 6:25-34: *“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 28 “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (NIV)*

- Do you think we praise God for the resources He provides us?
- Do you tend to trust God to provide for your needs or do you tend to rely on your own provisions and resources?
- What, for you, is the difference between wants and needs?
- What do you hear God saying to you concerning His caring for your needs and providing the necessary resources?
- What steps do you need to take to begin to rely on God to meet your needs?
- How open are you to allowing God to use you to be the resource(s) necessary to meet someone else’s needs?

### **3. Praise God for REVELATION (Psalm 147:12-20)**

*Extol the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion, 13 for he strengthens the bars of your gates and blesses your people within you. 14 He grants peace to your borders and satisfies you with the finest of wheat. 15 He sends his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly. 16 He spreads the snow like wool and scatters the frost like ashes. 17 He hurls down his hail like pebbles. Who can withstand his icy blast? 18 He sends his word and melts them; he stirs up his breezes, and the waters flow. 19 He has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel. 20 He has done this for no other nation; they do not know his laws. Praise the Lord.*

This final stanza is all about praising God for the accessibility of His Word. God protects and blesses the country—the community—not just individuals (v. 12-18). No one else has the Word of God except the people of God, so no one on earth is as blessed as we are. God personally reaches out and invites you to praise Him (v. 19-20).

- Do you think we look to God to reveal Himself to us?
- What are some ways God has revealed Himself to you in His Word?
- What are some ways God has revealed Himself to you through creation, through situations, through worship, through others?
- How might we help others become aware of God?
- How might we express our praise to God for His revelation of Himself to us?

**The call is for us to remember why  
we are called to worship God.**

# WHERE?

## Psalm 148:1-14

WEEK  
TWO

Psalm 148 calls for the praise of God both in heaven and on earth. It calls for the praise of God EVERYWHERE!

This psalm is a beautiful poetic song of the entire created order bringing praise to God. In line after line, the psalmist brings creation forward rank by rank. The heavens declare His praise. The heavenly host declares His glory. The sun and moon offer worship. The shining stars adore Him. The clouds proclaim His majesty. The great creatures of the sea offer Him adoration. The ocean joins in, as does the lightning, hail, and snow. The wind sings to Him. The mountains and hills bow down. The fruit trees and cedars pay Him homage. All animals and cattle, along with small creatures and flying birds, give Him praise. The kings of the earth, all rulers, all princes, young men and maidens, old men and children join in the mighty chorus! Everything in all creation praises the Lord!

What a wonderful joy it is to be part of this great act of worship. The whole psalm begins and ends with that great single word of praise, "Hallelujah!" How can we not enter into this worship? All of our worship is anticipating that even greater chorus the Apostle John sees in Revelation 7:9-10: "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb...And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'" Hallelujah!

### 1. God is WORSHIPPED in HEAVEN (1-6)

*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.*

*Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. 5 Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created. 6 He set them in place for ever and ever; he gave a decree that will never pass away.*

We can only imagine the psalmist has spent some time under the stars on a moonless night observing the vastness of the universe and worshiping the God who hung the stars in place. He must have been taken by the thought of the heavens shouting their praise to God with every twinkling or shooting star. The psalmist also gives us a glimpse of heaven as a populated place—angels and hosts—as well as the saints of the faith: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—Moses and Samuel—David and Hezekiah—Elijah and Jeremiah—all the faithful who now rest from their labor and join with all the company of heaven giving praise to God who is above all and in all.

In Psalm 19:1-4, King David shares a similar thought about God worshiped in heaven as he proclaims:

*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.  
2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.  
3 There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.*



*4 Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. (NIV)*

- Share a time or moment when you have seen the glory of God in the heavens – perhaps a sunrise or sunset, perhaps on a star-filled night, etc.
- What do you hear God saying in these verses about all of heaven worshiping Him and how does that affect your feelings about worship?
- Do you take the time to even consider the heavens declaring the glory of God? What might change if we did?

## 2. God is WORSHIPPED on EARTH (7-14)

*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 maidens, 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 He has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his saints, of Israel, the people close to his heart. Praise the Lord.*

Once again, the psalmist must have had his breath taken away by the splendor of creation here on earth. He has seen the seasons come in their due course. He has had his breath taken away by the progression of every aspect of the earth's creation—mountains and hills—fruit trees and cedars—wild animals and livestock—creepy crawlers and flying birds—and then he gets to the crowning touch of all creation—us. All the rest of creation worships and gives praise in its presence, but we worship because we are created in the image of God and made for worship.

- Share a time or moment when you have seen the glory of God in His creation.
- What do you hear God saying in these verses about all of creation worshiping Him and how does that affect your feelings about worship?
- Do you tend to limit the places where you worship God? Like at church, during your devotional time, etc..
- Do you take the time to even consider all of creation is declaring the glory of God? What might change if you did?
- How might we help point others to see God's glory both in the heavens and here on earth?

God is a jealous God who is worthy of praise. He alone is God—and when we come to recognize this and worship Him to the exclusion of all of our other shiny, man-made gods, it leads to blessing. The last verse of the psalm is a prophetic promise that was fulfilled in Jesus.

**The call is for us to remember to declare God's glory and to worship Him no matter where we are!**

# WHAT?

## Psalm 149:1-9

WEEK  
THREE

Psalm 149 calls us to worship God by WALKING JUSTLY. It then brings in the focus from all the heavens and earth to speak directly to the faithful saints. The faithful saints are called to praise God as they are now part of a new kingdom established by a new king—which in turn produces a new song. But that's not all the faithful saints are to do. The faithful saints are also the ones to carry out justice throughout the world. Proudful kings and nobles who will not humble themselves will be humbled as the faithful saints carry out the praise and justice of God throughout the world.

This psalm has two movements—the first is a call to humble ourselves in WORSHIP (to get our hearts right), and the second is a call to JUSTICE (to make our world right).

### 1. GET YOUR HEARTS RIGHT—HUMBLE YOURSELF (Psalm 149:1-4)

*Praise the Lord. Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints. 2 Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the people of Zion be glad in their King. 3 Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with tambourine and harp. 4 For the Lord takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation.*

God calls on all saints to live and sing a new song—because God has raised up a new king (for us, it would be Jesus)—and this should be a source of hope and praise. The psalmist calls them to worship God with all they are and all they have, and he reminds them humility in our hearts brings pleasure to God and results in our salvation. The psalmist is reminding us to walk humbly with our God under the leadership of our King and salvation will be ours.

In Philippians 2:5-8, the Apostle Paul speaks to us about the humility of Christ and how we take our example from Him:

*“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!”*

- What does it mean to you to walk humbly with God?
- What are some things in our lives that deter us from doing so?
- When it comes to your worship of God, do you come taking a posture of humility? Do you see or feel the need to get your heart right? Why are these important?
- What do you hear God saying to you about humility?
- What changes need to be made in your life to take a posture of humility?



## **2. MAKE THE WORLD RIGHT—ACT JUSTLY (Psalm 149:5-9)**

*Let the saints rejoice in this honor and sing for joy on their beds. 6 May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands, 7 to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, 8 to bind their kings with fetters, their nobles with shackles of iron, 9 to carry out the sentence written against them. This is the glory of all his saints. Praise the Lord.*

It's not enough for us to worship God in the safety of the sanctuary, God expects—even compels us—to be His agents in the world to usher in justice. He says we have praises in our throats and a double-edged sword in our hands (the Bible in Paul's writing)—and gives us the responsibility to do what God requires of us as we find in Micah 6:6-8: "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." God will use the saints to humble the proud and execute justice in this world.

- While worship and praise of God are of the utmost importance, so is the need to be about bringing justice in our world. Do you understand this?
- What tends to get in the way?
- What are some ways you as an individual could begin to do works of justice?
- What are some ways as a small group you could begin to do works of justice?
- What do you hear God saying to you about acting justly?
- What changes need to be made in your life in order to bring about justice in our world?

**The call is for us to remember the what of worship.**

# HOW?

## Psalm 150:1-6

WEEK  
FOUR

Psalm 150 calls us to worship with ALL WE HAVE and ALL WE ARE. It concludes the entire book of Psalms by inviting any and all to praise God (12 times in 6 verses). In the midst of all of this praise, a liturgy—or work of the people—can be seen when looking at all of these psalms together. We're invited as individuals in Psalm 146, as a community in Psalm 147, as creation in Psalm 148, and as the faithful saints in Psalm 149 to praise the Lord in the sanctuary and in the heavens for His acts of power and greatness. We're free to use any instrument we have, even if all we have is our breath, to praise the Lord. This is true liturgy...the work of the people.

Psalm 150 is a fitting conclusion to the book of Psalms. It's a veritable explosion of praise and worship. Psalm 1 began the journey by setting forth the two ways—the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. The book of Psalms closes without any mention of the wicked or those who have rejected the Lord. Everything is engulfed in praise and adoration!

As we read, think about, and get in touch with this great psalm of praise, we find it points out some things concerning our praise and worship of God.

### 1. WHO and WHERE? (Psalm 150:1)

*Praise the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.*

While we might not want to admit it, too often it can become easy for us to fall into the trap of centering our worship on things or people. In our times of gathering for worship, we can forget about God being the focal point of all we are about as we get caught up in our wants and needs. The psalmist is reminding us to always remember we are called to worship God who is truly worthy to be praised.

- How easy is it think it is for us to forget who it is we are called to worship?
- What do you hear God saying to you?
- What helps you to make God the focal point of your worship?

We can also at times get caught in the trap of believing true worship happens only in the church sanctuary or religious settings. Again, the psalmist reminds us we not only praise and worship God in His sanctuary, but in the mighty heavens - in all creation.

- Do you too often fall into the trap of limiting where and when you worship God?
- What do you hear God saying to you concerning your worship of Him?
- What are some of your favorite places to worship God?
- What changes might need to take place concerning your idea of where God is to be worshiped?



## **2. WHY? (Psalm 150:2)**

*Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.*

The call is for us to praise God "...for His acts of power." We are to praise Him for what He has done—not the least as Creator. We are to praise Him "...for His surpassing greatness"—not just for what He has done, but also for who He is. We are called to understand that His very nature is worthy of praise.

- Do you give much thought to why we worship and praise God or do you tend to fall into a rote kind of worship (where we just kind of put our time in)?
- What do you hear God saying to you concerning your worship of Him?
- What changes might need to be made as you consider your praise and worship of God?
- How might we help one another to remember the "why" of worship?

## **3. HOW? (Psalm 150:3-6)**

*Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre,  
4 praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute,  
5 praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals.  
6 Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.*

In these verses, a variety of instruments are used for praising God. (We can't be sure exactly how the instruments relate to ones we know today.) Note the different types of instruments: some suitable for loud proclamation, others more suitable for quieter reflection. We need to remember that all praise—whether quiet or loud—is equally important and there is a time and place for both. So God calls us to praise Him with our voices, or senses, or bodies, our minds—that is, our WHOLE BEING.

- What are some of your favorite ways of worshiping and praising God?
- How do you deal with those times when you don't feel like worshiping God?
- How open are you to different expressions or styles of worship, especially if they might reach those who are seeking, but not necessarily be your taste or preference?
- What do you hear God saying to you about how to worship Him?

**The call is for us to remember the how of worship -  
with all that we are and all that we have.**