

Our God Is An Awesome God Psalm 29

Psalm 29 is a magnificent hymn that James Boice calls “pure praise and pure poetry” (p. 254). Indeed it is a psalm that praises the God of creation who is truly the sovereign Lord over all things.

- The name Lord (Yahweh/Jehovah) occurs 18 times.
- The phrase “the voice of the Lord” occurs 7 times.
- The psalm utilizes the words of ancient Canaanite poetry, possibly as a polemic against the worship of Baal who was believed to be “lord of the storms.”
- The poem clearly divides into 3 sections (1-2, 3-9, 10-11) with a movement from heaven to earth, as well as from West to East and then North to South.
- As a whole this psalm celebrates the God who is King, the God who is omnipotent, the God who is the Lord above the storm.

I. Worship the Lord for His Glory. 29:1-2

The psalm begins with a 2 verse prologue of praise built around the verbs “give” (or “ascribe”) and “worship.”

1) Acknowledge His power. 29:1

“Mighty ones” is *beni elim*, literally “sons of gods.” It is a poetic expression denoting the angels in heaven. Those who sang at the dawn of creation (Job 38:7).

2) Honor His name. 29:2

The name of Jehovah occurs 18 times in Psalm 29 and is a constant theme in the Psalms. It speaks of His nature and character, who He is and all that He is as God. (Psalm 8:1; Psalm 9:10; Prov. 18:10).

3) Praise His holiness. 29:2

If “ascribe” speaks more to the mind, “worship” (meaning “to bow down”) speaks to the heart and will. The former understanding leads to the latter response.

II. Worship the Lord for His Sovereignty. 29:3-9

- In Genesis 1 God speaks Creation into existence.
- In John 1:1 we are informed that the Word, the *Logos*, is a person, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is through Him, the Word, that God created all things (John 1:3) and it is through Him that God sustains all things (Col. 1:17).
- Here in verses 3-9 the voice of that Word echoes forth in sovereign and awesome majesty.

1) He is sovereign over the waters. 29:3-4

- David begins by reflecting on how God’s voice is heard in the claps of thunder. God is over all the waters, the waters that are below and above.
- Note the beautiful Hebrew parallelism in verse 3-4 in an ab/ab structure, with the 2nd line reinforcing and intensifying the first.

2) He is sovereign over the mountains. 29:5-7

- The storm building in the Mediterranean has moved east to the northern region of Israel, to the mountains of Lebanon and Sirion, the ancient Sidonian name for Mt. Hermon.
- These great mountains with their magnificent cedars are twigs and small

animals for entertainment in the presence of the Lord.

- The pagan Canaanites were nature worshipers who believed the mountains were where the God's lived. Jehovah has no respect for these puny gods and impotent deities. He shakes their house with thunder and banishes their darkness with "flames of fire" (*ESV, HCSB*), with "flashes of lightning" (*NIV*).
- God is not in nature, He is over nature.

3) **He is sovereign over the wilderness.** 29:8-9

Here images of the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness would be called up.

The first part of verse 9 presents an interpretive challenge. The *NKJV, HCSB, ESV* and *NASV* have, "The voice of the Lord makes the deer give birth," lit. "makes the deer calve." In contrast the *NIV* has "The voice of the Lord twists the oaks," the translation being influenced no doubt by the next line which reads, "and strips the forest bare." This storm knocks down everything in its path so awesome is the God who sends and controls it. In the face of such a display of sovereign power what can we say? What can we do? The last part of verse 9 provides the answer: "We gather together in the place of worship ("His temple") and we shout with the angels in verses 1-2, "Glory."

III. **Worship the Lord For His Majesty** 29:10-11

If ever there as an event that put on full display the majestic power of God over nature and in judgment it is the flood. The flood, like the storm, shouts a clear and incontestable message: Jehovah is King.

1) **Our Lord is the King is His position** 29:10

Verse 10 literally reads, "Jehovah on the flood sits and sits Jehovah King forever." A number of translations provide the word "enthroned" (e.g. *NKJV, NIV, ESV, HCSB*) to capture the idea of His sitting as King. The word "flood" appears only here and in the flood narratives, of Gen. 6-11.

2) **Our Lord is the King by His promise** 29:11

The God who has the strength to bring the flood of Genesis is a God who can give me strength for the day, for each and every moment. The phrase His people is crucial. Through Christ I can do all things (Phil. 4:13). Through Christ, the Word, the very voice of God, the Lord will give us strength.

3) **Our Lord is the King with His peace** 29:11

- "Give strength" finds a companion in bless with peace (shalom). Peace, shalom, wellness of life in all its aspects is the experience of God's people.
- There is a quietness and rest for the people of God even in the storm. Why?
 - Romans 5:1; Philippians 4:7.
- Franz Delitzsch says, "This closing word with peace is like a rainbow arch over the psalm." This is no surprise.
 - The God of glory is a God of grace.
 - The God of majesty is a God of mercy.
 - The God of power is a God of peace.
 - Our God is an awesome God.

Conclusion: "I Sing the Mighty Power of God," a fitting commentary and complement to Psalm 29.