

## **Let Everything That Has Breath Praise The Lord**

### **Psalm 150**

#### **Introduction**

For many Christians, Psalms is the richest and the most comforting portion of the Old Testament, if not the whole of God's Word. Therefore it is appropriate that it concludes on a "Hallelujah" note, with a psalm (150) completely dedicated to the praise of our good, great and gracious God. Indeed the psalmists exclaims with great exuberation in v. 6, "Let everything that breathes praise the Lord.

Hallelujah!"

Psalm 150 is the grand finale of the book of Psalms. It functions like a final and climactic doxology. If Psalm 1 is an appropriate introduction, then Psalm 150 is an equally appropriate conclusion. The first 4 books of the Psalter end with doxologies and words of praise (see 41:13; 72:18-19; 89:52; 106:48). Allen Ross notes, "Book V ends with this elaborate doxology, because it brings to a conclusion the entire collections of psalms (*A Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. 3, 962).

Psalm 150 is brief (only 6 verses) but exhilarating from start to finish. It encourages us eschatologically because it informs us how God's redemptive story will end. It will end on a note of praise to our Lord. In this psalm we will see that worship is a universal privilege, that praise is always and only for our God, that

praise is the result of who God is and what He has done, and that worship should be an exciting and soul-moving experience (See Sam Storms, “Praise Him! Praise Him! (Pss.148-150), Enjoying God Ministries, 7-23-07).

Praising God should change us. It should transform us. We should leave corporate worship different from how we came. Our minds should be better informed, our hearts made more tender and thankful towards God, and our wills more determined to live for the glory of this most excellent great God (v.2). Psalm 150 helps us think well theologically. It helps us to know: 1) Where we should praise the Lord, 2) Why we should praise the Lord, 3) How we should praise the Lord and 4) Who should praise the Lord.

### **I. Where Should We Praise The Lord?      150:1**

The psalm begins and concludes in the same way as Psalms 146-149, with the word “Hallelujah”, meaning “praise to *Ya*.” This is a shortened form of the covenant and personal name of Israel’s God, *Yahweh*. The word “praise” occurs 13 times in the psalm. Over and over and over we are encouraged to praise the Lord with whom we have a personal and intimate relationship. He is our covenant God and we are His covenant people.

Following quickly on this verbal command are instructions specifying “where” the Lord, the excellently great God (v. 2), should be praised.

First, we should praise Him “in His sanctuary” “his holy place.” The earthly tabernacle or temple in Jerusalem is in view. Second, we praise Him “in His mighty heavens,” His mighty firmament (*NASV*, “mighty expanse”). All of the vast universe and creation of God is in view. Derek Kidner writes, “So the call is to God’s worshippers on earth, meeting at His chosen place, but also to His heavenly host...to mingle their praises with ours. Earth and heaven can be utterly at one in this. His glory fills the universe, His praise must do no less” (*Psalms 73-150*, TOTC, 491). The voices of earth and heaven join in perfect harmony in praise of the Lord. From below and from above God is to be praised. By humans and by angels, the Lord is to be praised. Gathered today on earth in the place set aside for worship, or throughout the expanse of the universe, our most excellent God is to be praised!

His greatness and glory fill the universe and so must His praise. There is no place where praise is not welcomed and rightly voiced. Church buildings are fine but not necessary. Church buildings can be a good thing but they are never an essential thing.

We can praise God anywhere, anyplace and anytime. In a simple building like a small church, in a magnificent European Cathedral, under a tree with South Americans along the Amazon, in prison like Paul and Silas, in

a hiding place like the catacombs as did our first brothers and sisters in Christ or in a house church in China or Afghanistan; anyplace/anytime is where and when it is right to praise the Lord.

## II. Why Should We Praise The Lord?                    150:2

Scripture does not call us to blind or uninformed worship. Faith does not call us to look, spiritually speaking by analogy, for a black cat in a dark room who is not there. No, the Bible calls us to embrace an informed faith, a reasoned faith. We do not check our brains at the door as we enter the room of faith and worship. On the contrary, we come in faith to a living God who has done “powerful acts” and is abundant or excellent in His greatness. We engage our minds to grasp something of the powerful God who has done powerful things.

“Powerful acts” (*ESV*, “mighty deeds”, *NIV*, “acts of power”) speak of what God has done. They look to His 1) great acts of salvation, 2) His mighty work of Creation, and 3) His sovereign reign over all that He has made. Warren Wiersbe notes that in the Old Testament one cannot help but think of the “exodus from Egypt, the conquest of the Promised Land, the expansion of the Davidic Kingdom, the deliverance of the Jews from Babylon, and the restoring of the nation” (*The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament Wisdom and Poetry*, 385). In the New

Testament one cannot help but think of the miracles of Jesus, His cross and the empty tomb, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the explosive growth of the Church.

“Abundant Greatness” (*ESV*, “Excellent greatness”, *NIV*, “surpassing greatness”) speaks of who He is. To praise God we must know God. He is not the God of deism, pantheism, polytheism or finite theism. He is not the God we create in our own minds that we are comfortable with, that we wish Him to be. No, He is the God who has revealed himself as He truly is in His Word.

We must know, acknowledge and praise the God who is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. His holiness, love, mercy, grace, righteousness, justice, and faithfulness must continually be before our mind’s eye. We need 20/20 spiritual vision when it comes to our God. We see what He has done with one eye and who He is with the other.

### **III. How Should We Praise The Lord?            150:3-6**

The simple answer to this question is with everything that we are and with everything that we have. The psalmist, however, has some particular things in mind that are instructive for God’s people as they come together for worship. They can help us put to rest some aspects of

the unfortunate “worship wars” that have actually been raging for centuries.

The worship of the Lord is properly accompanied with a variety of musical instruments. Several are listed in verses 3-5, though the list is most certainly selective and not exhaustive. Wind instruments, string instruments and percussion instruments are welcomed in a symphony of praise to the excellently great God. Anything that rightly honors God should be welcomed. The list of praise instruments noted in the text are: “trumpet blast,” the shofar or ram’s horn. 2) The “harp,” (ESV, “lute”) and 3) the “lyre” (ESV, “harp”). These are string instruments and are very similar if not identical. 4) “Tambourine and dance.” We find this instrument in Exodus 15:20-21 and the Song of Moses which celebrates the Exodus. There the Bible says, “Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women followed after her with tambourines and dancing. And Miriam sang to them: “Sing to the LORD, For He is highly exalted; He has thrown the horse and its rider into the sea!” 5) “Flute.” Ross says this is a shepherd’s flute or pipe (*Psalms*, 967). 6) “Strings.” Probably a general term that includes all string instruments. 7) “Resounding cymbals.” Perhaps small percussion instruments that had a clear sound. 8) “Clashing cymbals.” Larger, loud

cymbals with a deeper and louder sound. (Ross, 967). To the instruments of praise are added the voices of praise in v. 6. Note that all are a part of this choir! “Let everything that breathes praise the LORD.” C. S. Lewis wisely reminds us, “let choirs sing well or not at all!” (*The World’s Last Night and Other Essays*, 80-81). Ultimately, how we praise the Lord is a matter of the heart. Nevertheless, our God of “excellent greatness” always deserves the very best that we can give Him.

#### **IV. Who Should Praise The Lord?      150:6**

This final question receives an easy and expected answer in verse six: “everything!” Everything/everyone should praise the Lord. This is a fitting answer, not only for Psalm 150, but the entire Psalter. If you can breathe, you should “praise the Lord.” This theme finds ample support in both the Old and New Testament (Ps. 148:7-14; Rev. 5:13)

Charles Spurgeon challenges us well, “Join all ye living things in the eternal song. Be ye least or greatest, withhold not your praises. What a day will it be when all things in all places unite to glorify the one and only living and true God” (*TOD*, vol 3, 464). To all of this only one word seems appropriate: “Hallelujah!” “Praise the Lord.”

**Conclusion:**

The words of the hymn were first published in 1709 They are actually the last verse of a longer hymn entitled, “Awake, My Soul, and with the Sun.” Its author was an Anglican Bishop named Thomas Ken (1637-1711). Orphaned in childhood and raised by his older sister Ann, He would serve as chaplain to Charles II. The hymn he penned is sung around the world every Lord’s Day. We know it as “The Doxology,” and what a fitting commentary it provides on Psalm 150.

“Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise him, all creatures here below;

Praise him above, ye heavenly hosts;

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”

Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!