

## Our God Is An Awesome God

### Psalm 146

**Introduction:** One of the greatest musicals ever written is George Frederic Handel's (1685-1759) "Messiah." The most famous song of that oratorio is the "Hallelujah" chorus. The text of the song is drawn from Revelation 11:15; 19:6,16.

The song both begins and ends with the word "Hallelujah."

However, it would not have been surprising if Handel's inspiration had come from the closing psalms of the Hebrew hymn book. The final five songs all begin and end with the word "Hallelujah." It is translated "Praise the Lord" in English versions such as the *NKJV*, *NASV*, *ESV*, and *NIV*.

Psalm 146 is the first of this hallelujah quintet. It is appropriate that the psalter end in this way. Two other sections of psalms bunched hallel or hallelujah psalms.

Psalms 113-118 are called the Egyptian Hallel and Psalms 120-136 are called the Great Hallel (VanGemeren, *Psalms*, EBC, vol. 5, 992).

Now we come to the end of our journey through the psalms with the "double Hallelujah psalms," psalms that each begin and end with the word "hallelujah."

Those who have experienced the grace and goodness of God recognize that our God is an awesome God. Our world is filled with sin and sorrow to be sure, but we serve a Great God who made everything (v. 6), keeps His word (v. 6), does what is

right (v. 7) and helps those who are hurting (v. 7-9). For such a God we can say “Hallelujah!” For such a God we can say “Praise the Lord.”

What exactly does this unknown psalmist (146-150 are all anonymous) model for us in terms of our proper response to our great God? We will highlight four from its ten verses.

### **I. I will praise the Lord**

### **146:1-2**

The psalm begins literally “praise yah”, a single word in Hebrew. It is pronounced hallelujah. The psalmist vows to praise the Lord “all my life” and “as long as I live.”

Interestingly the Lord is mentioned eleven times in this psalm and God is mentioned four times. There are a total of fifteen references to God in ten verses. A joyful life will be a theocentric life, a God-centered/God focused/God intoxicated life. From the depths of our soul and with all that we are we should praise the Lord. And, what lives in our soul will find its way to our lips (v. 2). We must determine to praise the Lord with our singing “as long as we live.” Such praise and singing is not always easy, but it is absolutely necessary to our spiritual health and vitality. Genuine praise to our God will: engage the mind; stir the emotions; and move the will. It will be grounded in the Word of God and it will engulf

the whole person. All of me, “my soul,” will praise this great God as long as I live and for all of eternity.

## **II. I will trust the Lord**

**146:3-4**

The psalmist calls us to trust the Lord, but he does so by a negative example. His example highlights the finitude, impotency and transitory nature of human life. It intentionally is meant to humble us.

Kings and “nobles” (v. 3), presidents and governors, are powerful and influential. By the command of their voice and the power of their pen they can make decisions that influence thousands, millions, even billions. Still, they are mere mortal men. They are flesh and blood humans like you and me. Ultimately they “cannot save” us either in this life or the life to come. “Do not trust” in them.

Sadly, many put more hope in Capitol Hill than Calvary’s hill! They put more hope in a government than they do God! They trust in those who are not awesome rather than in the One who is.

Mere mortals cannot save us. They cannot even save themselves. Verse four tells us that when this leader’s “breath leaves him,” “he returns to the ground; on that day his plans die.” Here today, gone tomorrow and soon to be forgotten as a historical footnote; that is their destiny.

Death comes to us all. Presidents, princes, and the powerful are no different. Genesis 3:19 is a sober reminder to us all: “You will eat bread by the sweat of your brow until you return to the ground, since you were taken from it. For dust you are, and you will return to dust.” We are *adam* (man) and to the *adamah* (ground) we must return.

*First Maccabees 2:63*, an intertestamental Hebrew writing, says it well, “Today he may be high in honor, but tomorrow there will be no trace of him, because he will have returned to the dust and all his schemes come to nothing” (Quoted in Van Germeren, 993). If these men cannot save themselves, why would I trust them to save me? I will trust only in the Lord.

### III. I will hope in the Lord

**146:5-9**

These verses constitute the heart of the psalm. They inform us concerning the character and conduct of our God, who He is and what He does.

The student of the Bible may recognize a connection between vs. 5-9 and the Messianic text of Isaiah 61:1-3, as well as the words of Jesus in Luke 4:18-19 and 7:22-23 (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, TOTC 484).

In Psalm 146 we are charged to find our help, our place of hope, in the “God of Jacob, the Lord his God” (v. 5). The God of Jacob is a reminder that our God is a covenant-keeping God who helped the patriarchal

schemer in his times of need and even desperation (see Gen. 25-35). The title “God of Jacob” appears numerous times in Psalms (Ps. 20:1; 24:6; 46:7, 11). And the beatitude or blessing of verse 5 is the last of 25 in the Psalms which began with Psalm 1:1 (Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament Wisdom and Poetry*, 378).

There are twelve glorious affirmations in verses 5-9 that teach is why this God is the only God we should hope in. The psalmist builds a powerful case.

1) He helps His covenant people 146:5

The God of the fathers, “the God of Jacob,” is faithful to His people even when his people are unfaithful. He helps us and we rightly and wisely hope in Him.

2) He made everything 146:6

He is the “Maker of heaven and earth,” the Creator God of Genesis 1-2 as well as the covenant God of Genesis 12 and 2 Samuel 7. As the maker of everything, including “the sea and everything in them,” something the Hebrews feared and saw as dangerous and uncertain, He has omnipotent power to meet any and every need we may have.

3) He keeps His word 146:6

Our God “remains faithful forever.” Other translations read:

“He keeps His truth forever” (*NKJV*)

“Who keeps faith forever (*ESV; NASV*)

“Who remains faithful forever” (*NIV*)

“He always does what He says” (*The Message*).

You can trust Yahweh to keep His word.

4) He helps the oppressed 146:7

Our God is continually “executing justice for the exploited.” Those who would abuse the oppressed should recognize they make God their enemy. He will see that justice is done and carried out for those pushed down and held down by wicked oppressors. Some meet his justice in this life. All will face his justice at the Great White Throne (unbelievers) of Revelation 20:11-15 and The Judgment Seat of Christ (believers) of 2 Corinthians 5:10.

5) He feeds the hungry 146:7

Our Lord “gives food to the hungry.” Allen Ross notes, “[God] may intervene directly, but he often chooses to use his covenant people as the agents, especially in championing justice for those who are oppressed and for feeding the hungry” (*A Commentary on the Psalms*, vol., 3, 925). Through His body on earth, the Church, he

dispenses both physical bread and spiritual bread (the Bread of Life of John 6:35). Jesus speaks to this in Matthew 25:34-46.

6) He frees prisoners 146:7

Working for justice, our Lord sets free those wrongly imprisoned by evil and unjust rulers. Again, he often does it through His people.

William Wilberforce (1759-1833) who led the movement to abolish the slave trade in England comes to mind.

Of course the greatest liberation is that of the Lord Jesus who through his cross and resurrection sets us free from sin, Satan, death, hell and the grave. John 8:36 is a wonderful promise, “Therefore if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.”

7) He gives sight to the blind 146:8

“The Lord opens the eyes of the blind.” In the ministry of Jesus, he healed both physical and spiritual blindness (see John 9).

Jesus came as the “Light of the World.” Giving physical healing to some, He gives spiritual healing to all for, “Anyone who follows Me will never walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

8) He exalts the humble 146:8

“The Lord raises up those who are oppressed,” those who are “bowed down.” Those who are humbled and brought low in this life are raised to a new status as they place their hope in the Lord (cf. James 1:9-11).

Consider the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. Our God is the God of the great reversals. What counts for much in the world counts for little or nothing in the Kingdom of God. James 4:6 is very instructive: But [God] gives greater grace. Therefore He says: “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

9) He loves the righteous 146:8

The Lord loves “the righteous,” those who are made righteous in Christ and pursue righteousness in all that they do. They are not carnal pragmatist who believe the ends justifies the means. No, they know and understand as those who trust and hope in a righteous God that we promote righteous means as well as righteous ends.

10) He cares for the foreigners 146:9



God, “protects foreigners.” God cares for the stranger, the sojourner, the outsider, the minority, the immigrant. He has a unique and particular concern for them. Do you? Do I?

11) He sustains the fatherless and widows 146:9

Have you lost a father or mother? Are you an orphan in this world? God will sustain and uphold you. He will help you. Allow Him, ask Him, and He will become your parent, your perfect Father (John 1:12). Lose a spouse by death, desertion or even divorce? He knows. He cares. He will help you make it. He will give you the strength you need to move on.

12) He frustrates the way of the wicked 146:9

God ruins the way of the wicked (*ESV*), He “frustrates their ways,” their plans. They think they have it all figured out and in a heartbeat, it all falls apart. Proverbs 14:11-12 teaches us, “The house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright will stand. There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”

**IV. I will exalt the Lord**

**146:10**

The psalm ends as it begins, on the high note of “hallelujah” or “praise the Lord.” And yet a new thought is added, a word about Yahweh’s eternal

kingship and reign. “The Lord reigns forever.” Wiersbe notes, “This statement comes from the song of victory that Israel sang at the Exodus (Ex. 15:18). “The Lord reigns” is found in 93:1, 96:10; 97:1; and 99:1” (Wiersbe, 378).

Earthly rulers come and go. They are like an early morning fog burned off by the blazing heat of the sun. Regardless of their wisdom, power, personality and influence they eventually pass off the scene. They die. This is true of every king but one: Our King, the Lord who is King, our King Jesus.

Revelation 11:15 says it so beautifully, “The seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying, The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Messiah, and He will reign forever and ever!”

The Lord reigns from Zion “for all generations.” Zion is the earthly home of the King. Echoes of Psalm 2:6-8 can be heard in the corridors of heaven!

The Lord’s anointed King, His anointed Son, will sovereignly reign over all that He has purchased with His blood. His reign is total! His reign is forever!

What can we say to this? That’s easy. “Hallelujah!” “Praise the Lord!”

Truly, our God is an awesome God. The question we must all answer is

simply this, “Is He your awesome God through personal faith and repentance in His Son, King Jesus?”