

Week 15 – In Conclusion

Psalm 146-150 – The Hallelujah Psalms

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- The last five psalms begin and end with the phrase, “Hallelujah” or “Praise the LORD!”
- These final songs omit the questions, doubts, and laments prevalent throughout the Psalms.
- They serve as a crescendo of praise for the Psalter.
- They assert a basic truth of the entirety of scripture, that God is worthy of our praise.

Psalm 146 – I will praise the LORD as long as I live

- The psalmist echoes the beginning of Psalm 103 and ending of Psalm 104 in declaring that he will praise the Lord as long as he lives (v 2).
- God’s faithfulness is highlighted through contrast – finite human leaders can offer only limited help and should not be trusted (v 3-4).
- God, on the other hand, is eternal (v 6).
 - o He is the one who made everything indicating he has always been.
 - o He is faithful forever indicating that he will always be.
- The Lord’s character is one of compassion and care (vv 6-9).
 - o God cares for the needy and oppressed (hungry, blind, oppressed, prisoners, widows, orphans, and foreigners).
 - o God frustrates those who would take advantage of such people (v 9b).

Psalm 147 – How good it is to sing praises to our God!

- Three times the Psalm commands God’s people to praise the Lord (vv 1, 7, 12).
- Singing praises is a good, pleasant, and fitting thing to do.
- Praising God is a fitting response to God’s care for his people.
 - o The Lord has brought his people back from exile (vv 2-3).
 - o God opposes the wicked but sustains the humble (v 6).
 - o Delights in those who fear him (vv 10-11).
 - o Blesses his people with peace and provision (vv 13-14).
 - o Guides his people with his word (vv 19-20).
- It is also a fitting response to God exercising dominion over creation.
 - o He numbers the stars in the heavens and calls them by name (v 4; see Isaiah 40:26).
 - o He brings the rain, makes the grass grow, and provides food for both tame and wild animals (vv 8-9).
 - o At his command, he both brings winter storms and spring thaws (vv 15-18; See Job 37:10; 38:29).

Psalm 148 – Let all of creation praise the Lord!

- The first stanza (vv 1-6) commands all the heavenly host to praise the Lord.
 - o Angels and heavenly host are called on to praise him (v 2).

A Song for Every Season: A Study on the Psalms

- Sun, moon, and stars, often worshipped by other religions, are called on to worship Israel's God (v 2-3)
 - These things were created and established by God. Their existence depends upon him. Therefore, he alone is to be praised.
- The second stanza (vv 7-14) commands the earth to praise the Lord.
 - Animals, plants, land, and water are all commanded to praise the Lord (vv 7-10).
 - All people from the most powerful rulers to the youngest and feeblest of peasants must also join in on the praise (vv 11-12).
 - They are to praise the Lord because his name alone is to be praised.
 - His people, the ones close to his heart, praise him for raising up a horn for them (v 14).
- St. Francis wrote his Canticle for the Sun based on this Psalm which provide the basis for the hymn "All Creatures of our God and King."

Psalm 149 – The double-edged sword of praise!

- The Psalm calls on Israel, "the assembly of his faithful people," to praise the Lord (v 1).
 - God is their "Maker" and "King" (v 2).
 - They are to praise God with dancing, instrumental music, and singing (v 3, 5).
 - God delights in his people and gives them victory (v 4).
- The Psalmist asks that their praise be a "double-edged sword" (v 6).
 - Their victory implies their enemies' defeat including the carting away of foreign leaders in chains (vv 7-8).
 - This is a reversal of what happened to Israel during the exile.
- The Psalmist is clear that this is the Lord's doing. What has happened is according to the sentence that God wrote (v 9).
- This Psalm was used as a battle hymn by both Protestants and Catholics during the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
- In the New Testament, God's word is the double-edged sword (see Ephesians 6:17).

Psalm 150 – Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!

- The first four books of the Psalter all end with a verse of doxology (see 41:13; 72:18-19; 89:52; 106:48). The fifth ends with an extended doxology.
- The Psalmist calls on God to be praised in both his sanctuary and his mighty heavens (v 1).
- God is to be praised for his acts of power and his surpassing greatness (v 2).
- People should praise him with a variety of instruments (vv 3-5).
- Instruments alone are not enough. Everything that breathes must join the praise (v 6).
- Genesis 7:22 declared that all breath is a gift from God, therefore, all who breathe should respond in praise.

Sources

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- May, James L., *Psalms*, Interpretation (Louisville KY: John Knox, 1994).