

Prayer List

Cyndie, Nichole & Lauren
Sheila
Ophelia
Josh
Daniel
Olene

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 9:50 a.m.
Assembly 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Pinole Tidings

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Praise Jehovah! - Psalm 135.1-6

By Wayne S. Walker

The Hebrew word for Psalm is "mizmor." However, in the Hebrew Bible, the name for the book of Psalms isn't "Mizmorim" (or whatever the plural of "mizmor" is) but "Tehellim" which simply means "praises." Now, not all of the Psalms are specifically intended to praise God. Some are expressions of repentance, many are cries for God's protection, and others are even calls for God's judgment upon His enemies. However, the book of Psalms has in general been called the Hebrews' hymnbook, and the last 5 Psalms, along with several others, all begin with the words "Praise the Lord!"

This is true of Ps. 135. "Praise the LORD! Praise the name of the LORD; Praise Him, O you servants of the LORD! You who stand in the house of the LORD, In the courts of the house of our God, Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; Sing praises to His name, for it is pleasant. For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His special treasure. For I know that the LORD is great, And our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the LORD pleases He does, In heaven and in earth, In the seas and in all deep places (verses 1-6).

Notice that the word "LORD" is in all capital letters. The ancient Hebrew language did not have written vowels, so the name which God chose for Himself and revealed in the Old Testament is represented in writing by four consonants, usually transliterated into English as YHWH. Because of a fear of accidentally taking the Lord's name in vain, the Jews became very superstitious about using it and refused to pronounce it, substituting the Hebrew word for "Lord" which is "adonai" in its place. Thus, over a period of time, the actual pronunciation of God's name was lost.

Later, when a system of vowel points was added to the Hebrew language by the medieval scribes, they used the vowels of the word "adonai" to fill out the name for God. The traditional way that this has been represented in English is Jehovah. We sing songs such as "Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah" and "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah." In fact, the American Standard Version reads, "Praise ye Jehovah." Many modern scholars think that in Hebrew the name was probably pronounced Yahweh. However, most English translations follow the Jewish practice and substitute the word "Lord" for the name of God, but put it in all capitals to show its origin. These six verses give us three reasons why we should praise Jehovah.

God

First, we should praise Jehovah because He is God (vs. 1-2). What does it mean to be "God"? We have a couple of English words which express the quality of being God.

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This Week's Question:

What judge, an illegitimate son, was thrown out of the house by his brothers?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Gideon - Judges 8:30

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One is "deity" which comes from the Latin word "deus" meaning god, and "divinity" which comes from the same Latin root through the French. Both of these words are defined as the state of being God. But again, what does that mean? I guess that the best way to express the idea is to say that being God means having absolute infinity or unlimitedness. We generally identify God as being omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, or unlimited in power, knowledge, and presence (Ps. 139:1-14).

There is something else that being God means. The name which God chose to call Himself, I AM WHO I AM, suggests the idea of one whose existence is self-sustained and eternal (Exo. 3:13-14). This terminology is linguistically the basis for the name which we know as Jehovah or Yahweh (Exo. 6:2-3). Many authorities suggest that the nearest translation of this name is "the eternal one" (Deut. 33:27, Ps. 90:2, Isa. 57:15). Because of who and what He is, God is absolutely eternal, without beginning or end. Unlike the nature of God, all of us who live in this earthly life have a beginning point, birth, and an ending point, death, at least from a physical viewpoint. Because we are beings bound by time, it is difficult for us to grasp this aspect of God's nature, but it is taught in the Scriptures

One other concept inherent in the idea of being God is master or ruler. The Hebrew term "adonai," usually translated "Lord" suggests this idea. "Come and see the works of God; He is awesome in His doing toward the sons of men. He turned the sea into dry land; They went through the river on foot. He rules by His power forever; His eyes observe the nations; Do not let the rebellious exalt themselves" (Ps. 66:5-7). Again, simply because of who and what He is, God is the ruler or master who's in control of the entire universe, and thus is worthy of our praise.

Good

Second, we should praise Jehovah because He is good (vs. 3-4). The specific reason that the Psalmist gave for knowing the goodness of God was His treatment of Israel. He said that He chose Jacob for Himself. We remember that God made promises to Abraham about His descendents (Gen. 15:13-16, 18). And he kept those promises (Josh. 21:43-45). The inspired writer of the Hebrew letter uses this fact to argue that God is good (Heb. 6:13-18). Because our God is one who has always kept His promises, such as those He made to Israel, we can trust that He will always continue to do good for His people.

We also know that God is good because of His provisions for mankind on earth. Paul said that He did good in that He gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons filling our hearts with food and gladness (Acts 14:17). In fact, every good gift and every perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights (Jas. 1:18). God is so good to have provided for all our material needs in this life. "God is great, God is good, Now we thank Him for our food."

Furthermore, we know that God is good because of His offer of redemption in Christ. Yes, God provided for our physical needs, but our spiritual needs are even greater, and God provided for them too. He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ, including redemption through His blood (Eph. 1:3, 7). All responsible human beings have sinned, stand condemned in God's sight, and deserve punishment in hell. Yet, God wants all people to be saved and is not willing that anyone should perish. Therefore, He sent His Son to die on the cross to pay the price for our sins by the shedding of His blood that salvation from sin and the hope of eternal life might be made available to all who would obey Him. So there can be no doubt to the honest observer that our God is good and therefore should be praised.

Great

Third, we should praise Jehovah because He is great, (vs. 5-6). According to the Psalmist, God's greatness is seen in His place above all gods. All other beings or things called "gods" are in actuality mere figments of men's imagination or dumb idols made by men's hands, but the God revealed in the Bible, and who in fact revealed the Bible, is a

being who is intelligent and active, in contrast to the idols who are dumb and motionless (Isa. 46:5-10). The Bible is full of incontrovertible examples of where God foresaw the future and prophesied what would happen, something neither man or nor non-existent pagan deity ever did. That in itself shows the greatness of God.

However, for all mankind, God's greatness is seen additionally in creation. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth....Then God said, 'Let there be light;' and there was light" (Gen. 1:1-3). We have visited many caves through the years, and when the lights are turned out they are dark--very dark! Imagine someone in a dark cave without any electricity or other source of light who says, "Let there be light"--and there is light. We cannot do that, but God did. Man can "create" items out of already existing materials, but God created everything out of nothing, "so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible" (Heb. 11:3). Such great power surely demonstrates the greatness of God

Then, for those of us who live this side of the cross, God's greatness is seen in His providential guidance of history. We remember the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, as interpreted by Daniel, in which the Babylonian king was the head of gold, which would be followed by a second, inferior, kingdom, then a third, and finally a fourth during which God would set up His kingdom (Dan. 2:36-44). Later visions of Daniel identify the second and third kingdoms as Persia and Greece (Dan. chapter 8). The New Testament identifies the fourth kingdom as that of Rome (Lk. 3:1). The existence and activities of all these kingdoms contributed to the circumstances of which Paul said that in the foulness of the times God sent forth His Son to redeem us (Gal. 4:4-5). Thus, God used the events of history, even the activities of His enemies, to bring about the conditions that enabled Him to fulfill His plan for the redemption of mankind. Only a God as great as the one revealed in the Bible could work through history to accomplish His will, and hence we need to praise Him for it.

Conclusion

There's a song in the Hymns for Worship Supplement, #99, that is based upon the first six verses of Psalm 135 and summarizes the reasons for praising Jehovah that are outlined in this passage.

"Praise ye the Lord, Jehovah is His name.
Ye who are servants sing unto His fame.
Stand in His house where He can be adored.
Forever in His courts, Praise ye the Lord!
Praise ye the Lord, for He is full of grace.
Yes, praise is pleasant here and every place.
He chose a people for Him by His word.
Ye who His treasure are, Praise ye the Lord!
We know the Lord is holy and is great.
He dwells above all gods in heaven's gate.
He does whate'er His wondrous plans afford.
In heaven and earth and sea, Praise ye the Lord!"

We should praise God in our prayers. We should praise God by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. "Hallelujah! I am rejoicing, Singing His praises, Jesus is mine" (Henry J. Zelly). However, we also can and should praise God by our lives. Those who are Christians should think, speak, and act so as to do everything to the glory and praise of God. And even those who are outside of Christ, when they make a decision to come to the Lord in obedience to His will so as to seek salvation from sin, are in essence giving praise to God. "Sing on, O blissful music, With every note you raise, My heart is filled with rapture, My soul is lost in praise" (Fanny J. Crosby). From Expository Files 15.3; March 2008