

“Do you shout ‘Hallelujah’ to Psalm 148?”

Psalm 148 NIV

“Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD from the heavens, praise him in the heights above. (2) Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts. (3) Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars. (4) Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. (5) Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created. (6) He set them in place for ever and ever; he gave a decree that will never pass away.

“(7) Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, (8) lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, (9) you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, (10) wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds, (11) kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth, (12) young men and maidens, old men and children.”

“(13) Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens. (14) He has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his saints, of Israel, the people close to his heart. Praise the LORD.”

Do you wonder how this sermon title fits Psalm 148?

The word “Hallelujah” does not appear in the NIV translation of this psalm.

In the original Hebrew text, however, Hallelujah is the first and also the last word.¹

When you hear the term “Hallelujah!” what image comes to your mind?

My first memory of “Hallelujah” wasn’t created at church.

The churches my parents attended sang several hymns every Sunday; I don’t recall hearing “Hallelujah” in any songs then.

My first memory came from an entry a friend Ron, wrote in my high school annual.

¹ This also true of Psalms 117, 135, 146-150

Ron was chaplain of a fraternity to which I belonged.

**“Hallelujah, brother,” Ron wrote,
“may your soul be saved.”**

Whether my friend wished the same for other Sigma Delta Phi members at Milwaukie (OR) Union High School is beside the point.

On this occasion, referring to my soul’s future, do you get the impression Ron was praising God?

In the 1950s, folks heard many reports of faith healers shouting “Hallelujah!”

If you surveyed current usage of “Hallelujah” you’d likely conclude that many folks use the term as Ron did.

What does hallelujah mean?

My old Webster’s New International Dictionary (Second edition) defined it:



“An exclamation used chiefly in songs of praise or thanksgiving.”

**The 2016 edition of Merriam-Webster:
“Used to express praise, joy or thanks,”
meaning “Praise (ye) the Lord (Yah-Jah)”**

This 2016 definition agrees with most Bible concordances and dictionaries:

- **Hallel is the Hebrew word for praise.**
- **Yah or Jah is a shortened version of Yahweh or Jehovah, personal name of God in the Old Testament.**

Hallelujah means: “Praise the Lord.”

As you know, we give praise for numerous reasons; the ancients were no different.

The King James Version translates about ten different Hebrew words as praise.

- **Some of those terms refer to singing.**
- **Others refer to extending or stretching out the hand.**
- **Some folks praise out of fear.**
- **In some praise, they gave thanks.**
- **In other praise, they blessed people—**

“Well bless your heart!”

- Being profoundly impressed or awed by something led to another type of praise.

In 1977, our son Rob was a lineman on the Hollywood High School JV. football team.

One fall afternoon, Rob’s team played Verdugo Hills, CA in Verdugo Hills.

Norma and I took an old friend, whom all our kids loved and who was an avid sports fan.

Norma, Gardiner, and I were the only spectators for either team in the stands.

Fisticuffs broke out often during the contest, which, as I recall, Hollywood won.

At game’s-end, the referees left for the locker rooms; the players and coaches gathered to shake hands.

Fighting suddenly broke out becoming an all-out-war involving virtually every player.

Some players removed their helmets and used them as weapons.

Though the coaches tried to separate the players, they were badly outnumbered.

Norma ran to help the coaches.

I escorted our elderly friend back to the stands asking him to wait there and then returned to the field to help.

For several minutes, we were pulling players off and away from one another.

When we thought things stopped in one part of the field, it erupted elsewhere.



The pink socks reveal that this prep photo is from a later era.

Norma at 110 lbs. quickly learned how she could best separate 180 lb. fighting players.

Those burly guys became almost weightless when she pulled them by their hair.

After several exhausting minutes (for coaches and us), the Verdugo Hills players headed to their lockers and the Hollywood players got on their bus.

Rob told us that on the bus ride back to Hollywood, the team praised Norma:

“Three cheers to Mrs. Blair for helping us!”

“She was awesome.” “She knew how to handle those cheaters.

“Well what about Reverend Blair?” as some referred to me, **“Where was he?”**

“Reverend Blair,” someone said, **“was at the sidelines on his knees making the sign of the cross. Three more cheers for Mrs. Blair!”**

Other than the inaccurate report of my prayer activities, I tell this incident without embellishment.

This story helps me explain variations of praise: gratitude, awe, blessing, maybe a little fear (of Mrs. Blair in this case).

Had Norma been on the bus, players would have extended their hands in respect to her.

We owe God praise for these reasons and additional ones too numerous to count.

Psalm 148’s praise comes from two sectors:

Above: the heavens praise God in verses 1-6.

“Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD from the heavens, praise him in the heights above. Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his

heavenly hosts. Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars. Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created. He set them in place for ever and ever; he gave a decree that will never pass away.”

Angels and other living beings praise God.

Through their continued existence and function, inanimate objects glorify God.

On Christmas evening, some friends of our daughter and son-in-law visited us.

This couple’s four sons range from six years to three and a half.

Norma and I brought out a few games we thought the boys would enjoy, but nearly every gadget needed new batteries.

God’s creation has been in existence scientists think for 5-6 billion years. No batteries needed-“he commanded and they were created,” and just keep going.

For his awesome creation, God deserves respect, extending of our hands, fear, blessing, gratitude, trust, and obedience.

Psalm 148’s second section speaks of earth:

(7) Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, (8) lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, (9) you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, (10) wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds, (11) kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth, (12) young men and maidens, old men and children.

(13) Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens.

(14) He has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his saints, of Israel, the people close to his heart. Praise the LORD.

In the 1980s, a former band leader attended worship one Sunday at the Hollywood church and asked if we could talk.

This bandleader’s orchestra played the music for many 50s and 60s movies.

He scored music for over one hundred films.

His recordings often attained top status. His mother worshiped faithfully, yet, to my knowledge, this bandleader never did.

As far as I knew, he lived respectably, but he never took time to honor His Creator.

When we met that week, he explained changes in the music industry that made musicians such as he obsolete.

A popular new musician worshiped with us at the time in Hollywood; would I put in a good word to the entertainer for him?

We, who consider ourselves so relevant and important, grow obsolete and wither.

Once-adored actors and ball players now peddle walk-in showers, second mortgages, and nice-smelling horse lineament.

In contrast our eternal God and His Creation deserve our honor, appreciation, respect, and awe.



As I age, three truths increasingly impress me and lead me to praise God and thank Him.

1. First, God’s dependability.

Think how reliably God’s Creation works.

We tire, forget, miscalculate, and sometimes turn the pillow over and go back to sleep.

God’s cosmos works with total reliability.

Vibrations in the atoms of certain elements occur at such a constant rate so that we can precisely know the time.

Thus atomic clocks are “regulated by the natural vibrations” of cesium atoms.



When we don’t show, it’s rarely the clock’s fault.

In contrast, God and His Creation are entirely trustworthy.

God’s moral laws are also dependable.

When it’s useful for them, public figures love to quote the Bible.

But you almost never hear them quote one of the Bible’s most vital principles.

God gave it to Adam and Eve and, according to Jesus, never revoked it:²

“A man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.”

Even some ministers avoid this Scripture: **Marriage is a serious covenant between a man and a woman, who become “one flesh.”**

I counseled a troubled 14 year-old girl, who was pregnant by a boy she didn’t even like.

When I asked her about her relationship with her mother, she responded: **“Which mother? My birth-mother? My step-mother, or my foster mother?”**

As more contemporaries choose not to live by God’s moral laws, societies pay an increasingly dreadful price.

The results of a survey we took at St Anne’s Home in LA need re-emphasis.

Responses to one query we asked those pregnant teen (12-18 years) girls surprised us. The question: “With whom would you like a better relationship right now?”

² Genesis 2: 24 NIV; See Matthew 19:3-9, I Corinthians 6:16, & Ephesians 5:31, and also Malachi 2:13-16

I thought the answers would be boyfriend, mother, and father in that order.

Of the dozen or more girls who took the survey, the clear majority answer: **“father!”** **Our society suffers a definite shortage of strong, loving, caring fathers as well as wives who respect and honor their husband’s family leadership.³**

World desperately needs God and his morality.

2. The second truth relates to love.

If the Cosmos came about randomly and accidentally, why is love so necessary?

Love supports and promotes life.

No question: bacteria, germs, and viruses cause illness.

But from what I have observed, we’re far more susceptible to illness when we don’t feel loved and appreciated, and at times feel guilty.



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³ See Colossians 3:18-21; Titus 3:3-5; 1 Peter 3:1-5



“God is love and in him is no darkness.”

- We praise because only he is reliable.
- We praise God because He is love.

3. We praise God because He is close to us.

Note the last verses of Psalm 148:

“(13) Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens. (14) He has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his saints, of Israel, the people close to his heart. Praise the LORD.”

The word “horn” symbolizes “power.”

Jesus is the “horn” God has raised for those close to his heart.

How powerful is Jesus?

He is so powerful he came back from the dead:

“Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”⁴

By his mighty power Jesus will bring back from the dead all who believe, obey and trust him in this life.

Jesus was and is “God with us.”

How do we find Him and know Him?

The Bible reveals him.

Read from it faithfully each day.

Give your life totally to Christ.

Make it your goal to please him each day.

Ask him to help you.

You will see him act.

**You’ll feel his Spirit’s presence.
You’ll find purpose you never felt before.**

Hallelujah!

Praise the Lord for his mighty power wonderfully demonstrated in Christ!

Hallelujah!

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⁴ Philippians 3:20, 21 NIV