

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

Bereans Adult Bible Fellowship
Placerita Baptist Church
2009



by

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Psalm 135 — Hallelujah! What a Great Lord!

1.0 Introducing Psalm 135

- Some commentators believe that Psalm 135 begins the Great Hallel (Pss 135–136) in which praise is central. The Great Hallel resumes the hymns of praise found in Psalms 113–118 (the Egyptian Hallel) that Psalm 119 and the fifteen Psalms of Ascents interrupt.
- Within this psalm are a number of connections back to Psalm 134 (e.g., in vv. 2 and 19–21, including a reference to Zion).
- The psalmist cites a number of different passages from the rest of the Old Testament, including some from all three major sections of the Old Testament (Law, Prophets, and Writings).

2.0 Reading Psalm 135 (NAU)

- 135:1** Praise the LORD!
Praise the name of the LORD;
Praise *Him*, O servants of the LORD,
- 135:2** You who stand in the house of the LORD,
In the courts of the house of our God!
- 135:3** Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good;
Sing praises to His name, for it is lovely.
- 135:4** For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself,
Israel for His own possession.
- 135:5** For I know that the LORD is great
And that our Lord is above all gods.
- 135:6** Whatever the LORD pleases, He does,
In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.
- 135:7** He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth;
Who makes lightnings for the rain,
Who brings forth the wind from His treasuries.

- 135:8** He smote the firstborn of Egypt,
Both of man and beast.
- 135:9** He sent signs and wonders into your midst, O Egypt,
Upon Pharaoh and all his servants.
- 135:10** He smote many nations
And slew mighty kings,
- 135:11** Sihon, king of the Amorites,
And Og, king of Bashan,
And all the kingdoms of Canaan;
- 135:12** And He gave their land as a heritage,
A heritage to Israel His people.
- 135:13** Your name, O LORD, is everlasting,
Your remembrance, O LORD, throughout all generations.
- 135:14** For the LORD will judge His people
And will have compassion on His servants.
- 135:15** The idols of the nations are *but* silver and gold,
The work of man's hands.
- 135:16** They have mouths, but they do not speak;
They have eyes, but they do not see;
- 135:17** They have ears, but they do not hear,
Nor is there any breath at all in their mouths.
- 135:18** Those who make them will be like them,
Yes, everyone who trusts in them.
- 135:19** O house of Israel, bless the LORD;
O house of Aaron, bless the LORD;
- 135:20** O house of Levi, bless the LORD;
You who revere the LORD, bless the LORD.
- 135:21** Blessed be the LORD from Zion,
Who dwells in Jerusalem.
Praise the LORD!

3.0 Understanding Psalm 135

3.1 Outline

- I. Invitation to Praise the LORD (vv. 1–4)
- II. Involvement of the LORD's Greatness in Creation (vv. 5–7)
- III. Inventory of the LORD's Greatness in History (vv. 8–14)
- IV. Invalidation of Idols (vv. 15–18)
- V. Invitation to Praise the LORD (vv. 19–21)



The chiasm for this outline relies on the inclusios set up by **I** and **V** together with **II** and **IV**. Due to its topical and subjective nature, we should not take **III** as having special emphasis.

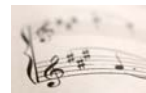
3.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “Praise the LORD!”
 - Literally, “Hallelujah!” (also, v. 3 and end of v. 21).
 - As this psalm begins, so it closes (v. 21). The inclusio envelops the psalm, setting its limits, identifying it with other praise psalms (cf. Pss 104:35; 105:45; 106:48; 111:1; 112:1; 113:1, 9; 115:18; 116:19; 117:2; 146–150), and establishing its theme of worshipful praise.
- **v. 1** “O servants of the LORD” — See Psalms 113:1; 134:1.
 - Those summoned to praise are His servants (cf. v. 14; 69:36; 102:28).
 - *Does the New Testament refer to believers as “servants”?*
 - ✓ See 1 Corinthians 3:5; 4:1; 2 Corinthians 3:6; 6:4
- **v. 2** “who stand in the house of the LORD” — See Psalm 134:1.
 - The description does not identify only the priests. The text refers to all who are gathered in the sanctuary’s courtyard (cf. Pss 92:13; 116:19) to publicly worship the Lord.
- **v. 3** “Praise the LORD”
 - Everywhere else “Praise Yah” comes as the opening or closing phrase of a psalm.
 - The psalmist identifies the Lord’s goodness as the first reason to praise Him (cf. Pss 34:8; 52:9; 54:6; 69:16; 73:1; 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1, 29; 136:1; 145:9; 147:1).
 - *What good has God given to you this past week?*
- **v. 4** “His own possession” — See Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 7:6.
 - The second reason to praise the Lord involves His election of Israel (cf. Deut 4:32–40).
 - Compare 1 Peter 2:9; and Titus 2:14.
- **v. 5** “I know”
 - Emphatic personal confession: “I myself know.”
- **v. 5** “the LORD is great”
 - Now the third reason for praising the Lord appears — He is great, greater than the idol gods of the nations.
 - *In what ways are you thoroughly convinced of the greatness of God?*
- **v. 5** “our Lord” — See Jethro’s confession in Exodus 18:11.
 - This title occurs only here, 8:1, 9, and 147:5 in Psalms. Note that they all deal with the majesty and greatness of God.
- **vv. 6–7** Praise the Creator — See Psalms 115:3; 136:5–9.
 - God’s people praise Him because He is the great Creator.
- **v. 7** See Jeremiah 10:13 and 51:16.



- **vv. 8–12** Praise the Conqueror— See Psalm 136:10–22.
 - The Almighty God is both Creator and Conqueror. Both roles illustrate His greatness.
 - Both roles display the Lord’s deeds that He expects His people to remember, record, and recount.
 - *What are you doing to preserve what God has done for you?*
- **v. 8** See Exodus 12:29.
- **v. 9** See Deuteronomy 6:22; 34:11; Psalm 105:27.
- **v. 11** See Numbers 21:21–35; Deuteronomy 3:1–17.
 - This verse’s tricolon (3 poetic lines — cp. vv. 1, 7, 21) is the center of the psalm.
 - Thus, tricolons draw attention to the calls to praise at the start and conclusion of the psalm as well as to the closing of the two descriptions of the Lord as Creator and Conqueror.
- **v. 13** “name . . . remembrance” — See Exodus 3:15; Psalm 102:12.
 - The Scripture consistently associates the Lord’s reputation with His name. In addition, that reputation forms a remembrance of His character and His deeds.
- **v. 14** “will judge . . . will have compassion” — See Deuteronomy 32:36.
 - The Lord vindicates His people and comforts them.
- **vv. 15–18** See notes on Psalms 115:4–8; 118:1–4.
 - Here the idols are set in contrast to the LORD who is both Creator and Conqueror. The nations make their idols, but the LORD has made His people as well as all things in heaven and earth.
- **vv. 19–20** Concluding Call to Praise
 - The psalmist issues a fourfold call summoning four groups to “bless the LORD.” This is the way that Psalm 134 closed also.
 - Psalm 115:9–15 issues a threefold call to trust the LORD and a fourfold declaration that He will bless them. Psalm 135 adds a reference to “the house of Levi.”
 - “You who revere [literally, “fear”] the LORD” includes all believers.
- **v. 21** “from Zion” — An echo of Psalm 134:3.

4.0 Singing Psalm 135



“O Praise the Lord, Praise Ye His Name”

(Tune: “Amazing Grace” or “Blessed Be the Name” or “Alas, and Did My Savior Bleed?”)

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| <p>1 O praise the Lord, praise ye his Name,
praise him with one accord;
O praise him still, all ye that be
the servants of the Lord.</p> | <p>2 For this I know and am right sure
the Lord is very great;
He is indeed above all gods,
most easy to entreat.</p> |
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3 For whatsoever pleased him,
all that full well he wrought
In heav'n, in earth, and in the sea,
which he hath made of naught.

5 He smote the first born of each thing
in Egypt that took rest;
He smote then many nations, and
likewise the mightiest.

7 Thy name, O Lord, shall still endure,
and thy memorial
With honor shall continued be
to generations all.

9 Mouths have they, but they do not speak;
eyes, but they do not see;
Ears have they, but hear not; and in
their mouths no breathing be.

11 And blessed be the Lord our God
from Zion's holy hill,
Who dwelleth at Jerusalem.
The Lord O praise ye still.

4 Thy Name shall still endure, and thy
memorial likewise,
Throughout all generations that
are now, or shall arise.

6 And for a wealthy heritage
their pleasant land he gave,
An heritage which Israel,
his chosen folk, should have.

8 The idols of the nations
of silver are and gold,
And by the hands of men is made
their fashion and mould.

10 O all ye house of Israel,
see that ye praise the Lord;
And those of Aaron and Levi,
praise him with one accord.

— Words: *The Scottish Psalter*

5.0 Praying Psalm 135

- How I praise You, O Lord! [v. 1]
- O God, You are the Creator of all things. [vv. 6–7]
- Father, preserve my remembrance of all Your mighty deeds. [v. 13]
- Lord, teach me how to trust You and only You in all things. [v. 18]



6.0 Applying Psalm 135

- Our primary act of biblical worship is to praise the Lord (vv. 1–3, 19–21).
- The Lord is worthy of our praise because He is good (v. 3), gracious (v. 4), and great (v. 5).
- We ought to praise the Lord's revelation in creation (vv. 5–7), His redemption in history (vv. 8–12), and His remembrance among His people (vv. 13–14).

. . . the whole Psalm is a compound of many choice extracts, and yet it has the continuity and freshness of an original poem. The Holy Spirit occasionally repeats himself; not because he has any lack of thoughts or words, but because it is expedient for us that we hear the same things in the same form. Yet, when our great Teacher uses repetition, it is usually with instructive variations, which deserve our careful attention.

— C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 3 vols. (reprint; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.), 3/2:182