

Psalms 104:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty.

Analysis

Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. This psalm opens with David's summons to his own soul to worship, echoing Psalms 103 and 146. "Bless the LORD" (barkhi nafshi et-Yahweh, בָּרְכִּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת־יְהָוָה uses the intensive imperative—commanding wholehearted engagement in worship. Nafshi (נַפְשִׁי, "my soul") represents the entire inner person—mind, will, emotions, and spirit.

"O LORD my God" (Yahweh Elohai, יְהָוָה אֱלֹהֵי) combines God's covenant name (Yahweh) with the personal possessive ("my God"), emphasizing both intimate relationship and sovereign authority. The psalmist worships not a distant deity but the God who has bound Himself in covenant love to His people.

"Thou art very great" (gadalta m'od, תְּגַלֵּת מּוֹד) declares God's transcendent majesty. Gadal (תְּגַלֵּת) means to be great, grow, or be magnified. M'od (מוֹד) intensifies to "exceedingly, abundantly, greatly." God's greatness exceeds all created magnitude—He is infinitely superior to everything He has made.

"Clothed with honour and majesty" (hod v'hadar lavashta, הָדָד וְהָדָר לְבָשָׂת) uses royal imagery. Hod (הָדָד) denotes splendor, glory, or dignity; hadar (הָדָר) means majesty, magnificence, or beauty. God is portrayed as a king robed in resplendent garments. Creation itself serves as the visible manifestation of God's invisible attributes (Romans 1:20).

Historical Context

Psalm 104 is a creation hymn celebrating God's wisdom, power, and provision as revealed in nature. While structurally and thematically similar to Psalm 148 and Genesis 1, it likely draws from ancient Near Eastern creation poetry while radically reinterpreting it in light of Yahweh's unique character.

Some scholars note parallels between Psalm 104 and the Egyptian 'Hymn to Aten' by Pharaoh Akhenaten (14th century BC), which praises the sun god's provision and power. However, crucial differences distinguish them: Psalm 104 worships the transcendent Creator rather than a created object (the sun), emphasizes God's moral governance alongside natural providence, and situates creation within covenant relationship.

The psalm's literary structure follows a cosmic geography: light and heavens (vv. 1-4), earth's foundations (vv. 5-9), water sources and vegetation (vv. 10-18), celestial bodies (vv. 19-23), sea creatures (vv. 24-26), God's universal provision (vv. 27-30), God's glory and human response (vv. 31-35). This parallels Genesis 1's seven-day structure while expanding poetically on creation's ongoing operation.

For Israel, this psalm celebrated Yahweh as the true Creator against competing claims of Baal (Canaanite storm god), Marduk (Babylonian creator deity), and Ra (Egyptian sun god). Nature reveals not impersonal forces or capricious deities but the wise, faithful, covenant-keeping LORD.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to command one's own soul to worship, and why might this internal summons be necessary?

2. How does creation reveal God's 'honour and majesty,' and what prevents people from recognizing these divine attributes in nature?
3. In what ways should recognizing God's greatness affect our response to environmental challenges, scientific discoveries, or cosmic exploration?

Interlinear Text

בָּרוּךְ	בָּרוּךְ	אַתָּה	נַפְשִׁ	הָיָה	יְהָוָה	אָלֹהִ	אַתָּה	לְתַ	גָּדוֹלָה	תִּ	מְאֹד
Bless	O my soul	H853	O LORD	O LORD	my God	great				thou art very	
H1288	H5315		H3068	H3068	H430	H1431				H3966	

בְּרָאָתָה	רָמָתָה	לְבָשָׂתָה
with honour	and majesty	thou art clothed
H1935	H1926	H3847

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 103:22 (Blessing): Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.

Psalms 145:3 (References Lord): Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.

Isaiah 59:17 (Parallel theme): For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke.

Psalms 96:6 (Parallel theme): Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

Psalms 104:35 (Blessing): Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.

Psalms 93:1 (References Lord): The LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself: the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved.

Daniel 9:4 (References God): And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;

Jeremiah 23:24 (References Lord): Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.

Psalms 7:1 (References God): O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me:

Habakkuk 1:12 (References God): Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.

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