

Psalms 148:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens:
praise him in the heights.

Analysis

This verse opens the psalm with a cosmic call to praise: 'Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights.' The initial 'Praise ye the LORD' (Halelu et YHWH) establishes the imperative, while 'from the heavens' (min hashamayim) begins to expand the scope of who should praise. 'In the heights' (be'mromim, literally 'in the high places') refers to the celestial realms. The verse calls heavenly beings - angels, stars, cosmic powers - to participate in praising God. This is not metaphorical but ontologically real in biblical cosmology: the heavens and their inhabitants exist to glorify God. The doubling of the command emphasizes its significance. By beginning with celestial praise, the psalm establishes that worship transcends earthly and temporal concerns - it is woven into the very fabric of creation. The 'heights' may refer to God's dwelling place, or to the cosmic realms in general. Either way, the verse asserts that all creation, beginning with the highest and most exalted, participates in universal praise.

Historical Context

Ancient cosmology envisioned heavens (shamayim) as inhabited by divine servants and celestial bodies. Isaiah 6:1-3 depicts the seraphim in the temple praising God ('Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory'). The psalms frequently call angels and heavenly hosts to praise (Psalms 29:1, 103:20). This reflects a theological cosmology where all creation, visible and invisible, participates in praising God. During the Babylonian exile (when Psalm 148 was likely composed or compiled), Babylonian astrology was prominent. The psalm

subversively claims that the heavenly bodies and celestial realms, which pagans believed controlled human fate, are actually creatures subject to God's praise. The emphasis on heavenly praise suggests confidence that transcendent reality supports God's governance, even when earthly circumstances suggest otherwise. In Jewish meditation, contemplating celestial praise provided spiritual assurance and cosmic perspective during periods of political powerlessness.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How should we understand the claim that celestial beings and heavenly realms praise God?
2. What does it mean for worship to transcend spatial and material limitations and extend to the 'heights'?
3. Why does the psalm begin with heavenly praise rather than earthly worship?
4. In what ways does calling the heavens to praise challenge anthropocentric (human-centered) views of worship?
5. How should awareness of cosmic praise affect our individual and corporate worship practices?

Interlinear Text

הַלְלֵהוּ	יְהוָה	אֶת	הַלְלֵהוּ	יְהוָה	מִן
Praise	ye the LORD		Praise	ye the LORD	
H1984	H3050		H1984	H3068	H4480
הַשָּׁמַיִם	הַלְלֵהוּ	בְּמִרוֹמָיִם:			
from the heavens	Praise	him in the heights			
H8064	H1984	H4791			

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 89:5 (Resurrection): And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.

Psalms 69:34 (Resurrection): Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas, and every thing that moveth therein.

Isaiah 49:13 (References Lord): Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

Psalms 146:1 (Resurrection): Praise ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul.

Matthew 21:9 (References Lord): And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.