

Psalm 150:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.

Analysis

The final psalm opens with location and imperative: 'Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.' The opening 'Praise ye the LORD' (Halelu et-Adonai) directly parallels the opening of Psalm 146. This linguistic bookending emphasizes the unity of the Final Hallel. 'In his sanctuary' (be-mikdash-o) refers to the temple, the sacred space where God dwells and where worship is concentrated. The phrase 'praise him in the firmament of his power' (be-rakia uz-o) shifts from geographical location to cosmic scope. The 'firmament' (rakia) in Genesis 1 separates waters and marks the celestial vault. 'Power' (uz) indicates strength and dominion. This reading suggests praise should resound in both the earthly temple and the cosmic realms - no space is outside God's domain. Alternatively, some interpret 'firmament of his power' as a metaphorical reference to the expansive domain of God's strength. The verse establishes that praise belongs everywhere: in formal worship spaces (temple) and throughout creation (firmament). Both are expressions of human acknowledgment of divine dominion.

Historical Context

The temple reference is significant: Psalm 150 was probably composed or compiled during the Second Temple period when the reconstructed temple served as the center of Jewish worship. The connection between earthly sanctuary and cosmic dominion echoes themes throughout the Psalter: the temple is understood as the point where heaven and earth intersect, where God's presence is most

concentrated. The 'firmament of his power' language may reflect Babylonian influence: the Babylonian cosmology envisioned multiple levels of heavens and cosmic order. However, the psalm subversively claims that all these cosmic realms are under YHWH's dominion. The emphasis on the temple as the primary location of praise reflects post-exilic Judaism's concentration on the temple as the sole legitimate worship center (Deuteronomy 12:5). However, the expansion from temple to cosmic scope suggests that while the temple is the focal point, worship transcends it. This theological framework provided continuity after the temple's destruction in 70 AD: spiritual continuity could be maintained through prayer and praise even without the temple itself.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Why does the psalm specify the temple ('sanctuary') as the location for praise?
2. What does it mean to praise God 'in the firmament of his power,' and how does this expand the scope of worship?
3. In what ways does the verse assert that all locations - temple and cosmos - belong to God?
4. How does designating the temple as a primary location for praise relate to Christian understanding of worship locations?
5. In what ways does the transition from 'his sanctuary' to 'firmament of his power' represent a theological trajectory from particular to universal?

Interlinear Text

פָּלָל וָהּ בְּקָדְשׁוּ אֶל פָּלָל וָהּ בְּהָנָה

Praise

H1984

ye the LORD

H3050

Praise

H1984

God

H410

in his sanctuary

H6944

Praise

H1984

בְּרֹקֶן יְעָזָב

בְּעָזָב

him in the firmament of his power

H7549

H5797

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 149:1 (Resurrection): Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints.

Psalms 134:2 (Temple): Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD.

Psalms 29:9 (Temple): The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory.

Ezekiel 10:1 (Parallel theme): Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne.

Daniel 12:3 (Parallel theme): And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

Psalms 102:19 (Temple): For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth;