

Psalm 29:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength.

Analysis

Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength.

Psalm 29 opens with thunderous call to worship directed to "the mighty"—a phrase of interpretative significance. This psalm celebrates God's voice in the storm, moving from heavenly worship (v.1-2) through cosmic display (v.3-9) to God's eternal reign (v.10-11).

"Give unto the LORD" (בְּרוּ לְיהוָה/havu laYahweh) uses the imperative form of yahav (to give, ascribe, render). The repetition—"give unto the LORD" appears three times in verses 1-2—creates liturgical rhythm suggesting corporate worship. This isn't giving God something He lacks but ascribing recognition, declaring what is rightfully His. We don't make God glorious; we acknowledge His glory.

"O ye mighty" (בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים/benei elim) literally means "sons of gods" or "sons of the mighty ones." Interpretation varies:

1. Angelic beings (heavenly council of divine beings serving God)
2. Human rulers/nobles (powerful earthly leaders), or
3. Pagan deities (challenged to acknowledge Yahweh's supremacy).

The angelic interpretation fits best contextually—Psalm 89:6-7 uses similar language for heavenly council, Job 1:6 mentions "sons of God" (angels), and Psalm 103:20 calls angels "mighty ones." The psalm summons celestial beings to worship before describing God's powerful voice in creation.

"Give unto the LORD glory" (הָבָד לְיְהוָה קָבֹד) calls for recognition of divine glory. Kavod means weight, heaviness, glory, honor, significance. God's glory encompasses His essential nature, revealed character, manifest presence. Isaiah's vision shows seraphim crying "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3). Glory isn't earned but intrinsic to God's being; worship acknowledges this reality.

"And strength" (רָאֵשׁ/va'oz) adds might and power. Oz means strength, power, might. This doublet—glory and strength—encompasses God's essential attributes (glory) and expressed power (strength). Revelation 4:11 echoes this: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power." The psalm's subsequent verses demonstrate this strength through God's voice commanding creation.

The call to worship establishes the psalm's theme: God's powerful voice revealing His glory. The sevenfold repetition of "the voice of the LORD" (v.3-9) demonstrates His sovereign power over creation, leading to concluding affirmation of His eternal kingship (v.10-11).

Historical Context

Psalm 29, attributed to David, may have originated in response to a violent thunderstorm. Ancient peoples attributed thunder to deities—Baal in Canaanite religion, Zeus/Jupiter in Greco-Roman mythology. This psalm asserts Yahweh's supremacy over natural phenomena, declaring the storm reveals His voice, not competing deities¹.

If "sons of the mighty" refers to heavenly beings, this reflects ancient Near Eastern concepts of divine council—assembly of celestial beings serving the supreme deity. Canaanite texts describe El presiding over council of gods. Biblical texts demythologize this: there's one God (Yahweh), and heavenly beings are His created servants, not independent deities. Deuteronomy 32:8 (LXX) mentions "angels of God"; Job 1-2 shows Satan among "sons of God" reporting to Yahweh; 1 Kings 22:19 depicts prophetic vision of heavenly council. These texts present Yahweh as supreme King over all heavenly powers.

The geographical references in verses 5-6 (Lebanon, Sirion/Hermon) indicate storm moving from north to south—typical pattern in Palestinian meteorology. Winter storms brought rain from Mediterranean, moving across Lebanon's mountains (famous cedar forests) past Mount Hermon (called Sirion by Sidonians, Deuteronomy 3:9), through wilderness of Kadesh, affecting even southern regions. David may have composed this after witnessing such a storm's awesome power.

For Israel surrounded by Baal-worshiping Canaanites who attributed fertility, rain, and storms to Baal, this psalm polemically asserts: Yahweh controls weather, not Baal. The storm's voice is God's voice. Baal was called "rider of the clouds"; this psalm declares Yahweh "sitteth upon the flood" (v.10). Elijah's confrontation on Carmel (1 Kings 18) demonstrated the same truth—Yahweh, not Baal, controls rain and fire.

Early church applied this psalm christologically. Jesus demonstrated power over storms (Mark 4:39), revealing divine authority. Pentecost's "sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind" (Acts 2:2) echoed God's powerful voice. Revelation depicts Christ's voice "as the sound of many waters" (Revelation 1:15), connecting Jesus with Yahweh's thunderous voice in Psalm 29.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. Who are 'the mighty ones' being called to worship, and how does understanding them as angelic beings affect our interpretation of the psalm?
2. What does it mean to 'give glory' to God when He already possesses all glory, and how is worship more about recognition than addition?
3. How does this psalm challenge ancient beliefs that attributed storms to various deities, and what relevance does this have for modern false attributions of power?

4. In what ways does Jesus demonstrate the divine power over creation described in this psalm, and how does this confirm His deity?
5. Why is corporate worship ('give unto the LORD') emphasized repeatedly, and what role does communal ascription of glory play in properly honoring God?

Interlinear Text

Give	unto the LORD	O ye mighty	H410
H3051	H3068	H1121	

יְלִדְתָּךְ
and strength
H5797

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 60:12 (Parallel theme): For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.

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