

## PSALM 150

THEME: The grand finale of the Hallelujah chorus, with choir and orchestra

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

Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.

Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.

Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.

Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.

Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD [Psa. 150:1-6].

### WHAT IS WORSHIP?

First of all we will consider the object of worship. This will require that we answer, in a general sort of way, the question: What is worship? To do this we shall deal with one statement found in Psalm 150:1: "Praise ye the LORD." In this first aspect the emphasis is on "Praise ye the *Lord*." He is the object of worship.

The psalms put the emphasis upon two things: the fact that He is the *Creator*, and the fact that He is the *Redeemer*. God made this earth on which we live, as well as the universe. This lovely sunshine that you are enjoying is His. He is the Creator. There is not a thing at your fingertips today that He did not make. He is worthy of our worship because He is the Creator. He is also worthy of our worship because He is the Redeemer. He is the *only* Creator, and He is the *only* Redeemer. You see, God

works in a field where He has no competition at all. He has a monopoly on the field of creation and on the field of redemption. Because of this, He claims from all of His creatures their worship, their adoration, and their praise.

And the Scriptures say that God is a jealous God. I can't find where He asks me to apologize for Him for this. He has created us for Himself. He has redeemed us for Himself. On the human level marriage is used to illustrate the believer's relationship to Christ. A husband, if he loves his wife, does not share her with other men. He is jealous of her. Her love is to be for him alone. So believers, called in Scripture the bride of Christ, are created solely for Him. He alone is to have our adoration; He alone is to have our praise. You will recall that John, on the Isle of Patmos, felt constrained to fall down and worship the angel who had been so helpful in bringing all of the visions before him, but the angel rebuked him and said, "See thou do it not; worship God." He does not want even His angels worshiped; He does not want Mary worshiped; He wants none worshiped but Himself. He alone is *worthy* of worship. And Scriptures say there is coming a day when everything that has breath will praise the Lord. He has created everything that it might praise Him.

#### WHO IS TO WORSHIP?

God is the *object* of worship, but this question follows: Who can worship?

The psalmist said: "Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD" (Psalm 150:6). The emphasis now is upon *ye*. He is saying to mankind, "Praise ye the Lord." God apparently created man for the purposes of fellowship with Himself and that man might praise Him. There is no other reason for man's existence. What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

God created the universe that it might glorify Him. It was not brought into existence for you and me. In the ages past—how far back we do not know—Job said: "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7). They were praising God. And the psalmist said: "For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens" (Psalm



96:5). He made the heavens that they might be a musical instrument to sing forth His praises throughout the eternal ages of the future. Although man was created for that high purpose, he got out of harmony, he got out of tune with God. He got out of fellowship with God. Perhaps Shakespeare expressed it when he gave to one of his characters in *The Merchant of Venice* these lines:

There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st  
But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims;  
Such harmony is in immortal souls;  
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

Today you and I are living in a created universe that is actually singing praises to God. But man is out of tune. Man is in discord. God's great purpose is to bring man back into the harmony of heaven.

Let us move on now into the realm of music, about which I know nothing, but have made careful inquiry. I am reliably informed that on every good pipe organ there are four principal stops. There is the main stop known as Diapason; then there is the Flute stop; another which is known as the String stop; and then that which is known as Vox Humana (the human voice). I am told that the Vox Humana stop is very seldom in tune. If you put it in tune while the auditorium is cold, it would be out of tune when the auditorium is heated. And if you put it in tune when the auditorium is heated, it would be out of tune when the auditorium got cold. My beloved, it is hard to keep *vox humana* in tune.

This great universe of God's is a mighty instrument. One day Jesus Christ went to the console of God's great organ, His creation, and He pulled out the stop known as Diapason. When He did this, the solar and stellar spaces broke into mighty song. Then He reached over and pulled out the Flute stop, and these little feathered friends, called birds, began to sing. Then when He reached out and pulled the String stop, light went humming across God's universe, and the angels lifted their voices in praise. Then He reached over and pulled out the vox Humana—but it was out of tune. The great Organist was not only a musician, He knew how to repair the organ, so He left the console of the organ

yonder in heaven, and He came down to this earth. Through redemption, the giving of His own life, He was able to bring man back into harmony with God's tremendous creation. And, my beloved, today the redeemed are the ones to lift their voices in praise. Only the redeemed are in tune. The psalmist sings: "O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy" (Psalms 107:1, 2). And, brother, if the redeemed don't say so, no one will! Oh, to be in tune with heaven! Today sin has intruded into this world, and has taken man out of God's choir; but individuals can come back in—and many have—through Jesus Christ, the son of David (David, the sweet singer of Israel). The Lord Jesus Christ has brought man back into a redemptive and right relationship with his Creator and Redeemer so that man can lift his voice in praise to Him.

#### WHY WORSHIP?

Now we want to answer the question: Why worship?

At this point we move our emphasis over from "Praise ye the Lord" to "*Praise ye the Lord.*" We move the accent over to the verb, to that which is active. "*Praise ye the Lord.*"

Very few people actually worship God. There really is no such thing as public worship. It was the great Chrysostom who put it like this: "The angels glorify; men scrutinize; Angels raise their voices in praise; men in disputation; They conceal their faces with their wings; but man with a presumptuous gaze would look into thine unspeakable glory." Oh, today, how many actually go to the church to worship? Somebody, in a very facetious manner, said that some people go to church to eye the clothes, and others to close their eyes. I wonder how many go to church for the purpose of worshiping God. Worship is divine intoxication. If you don't believe that, there is a fine illustration of it in the book of Acts. On the Day of Pentecost Simon Peter got up and preached a sermon. We talk a great deal about that sermon, but actually it was an explanation to the people that these Spirit-filled men were not drunk. Drunkenness was not the explanation. How many would get the impression that *we* are intoxicated with God today? We need an ecclesiastical ecstasy. We need a theological thrill in this day in which we live.



There are three words that we must associate with worship, and these three words denote an experience of the human heart and the human soul as it comes into God's presence to worship.

The first of these words is *prostration*. In the Orient people are accustomed to get down on their faces; in the West we talk a great deal about having a dignified service. Now don't misunderstand me. I am not contending for a posture of the body. Victor Hugo once said that the soul is on its knees many times, regardless of the position of the body. I am not trying to insist on a posture of the body, but we do need to have our *souls* prostrated before God. The two prominent Bible words are the Hebrew *hishtahaweh*, meaning "to bow the neck," and the Greek *proskuneo*, meaning "to bow the knee" to God. And today we need to bow before God in heaven. The book of the Revelation does not tell us much about heaven, but one thing we are sure about: Every time we read of someone in heaven they are either getting down on their faces to worship God, or getting up off their faces from worshipping God. And, friend, if you don't like to worship God, you wouldn't like heaven because that is the thing with which they are occupied. Most of the time they are worshipping God, prostrating themselves down before Him. Beloved, we need that today.

When my spiritual life gets frayed and fuzzy at the edges and begins to tear at the seams, I like to get alone, get down on my face before Him, and pour out my heart to Him. Friend, when was the last time you got down on your face before God? When was the last time that you prostrated yourself before Him? Oh, it would do us *good*. It would take us out of the deep-freeze. It would deliver us from the shell in which we live. It would create within our hearts a different attitude if we would learn to prostrate our souls before God.

The second word that goes with worship is the word *adoration*. It is a term of endearment. There is passion in that word. "O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness . . ." (Psalm 96:9). Worship is a love affair; it is making love to God. Michal, the first wife of David, resented his devotion to God. When King David brought the ark into Jerusalem, the record tells us: "So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. And as the ark

of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart" (II Samuel 6:15, 16). She despised him. Sure she did. She discovered that David loved God more than he loved her, and that he was making love to God. Worship without love is like a flame without heat; it is like a rainbow without color; it is like a flower without perfume. Worship should have a spontaneity. It should not be synthetic. It should have an expectancy, a tenderness, and an eagerness in it. My friend, some types of worship compare to going downtown, sitting in a department store window, and holding the hand of a manikin in there. It has no more life in it, it has no more vitality in it than that! Oh, to have a heart that goes out to God in adoration and in love to Him!

A young fellow wrote a love letter to his girl. He waxed very eloquent and said: "I would climb the highest mountain for you. I would swim the widest river for you. I would crawl across burning sands of the desert for you." Then he put a P.S. at the end: "If it doesn't rain Wednesday night I will be over to see you." A whole lot of so-called worship is like that today. It will not take very much to keep us away from God.

In a marriage ceremony there is something I occasionally use. I think how sacred it is. The two being joined in marriage say, "With my body I thee worship."

The hero swam the Hellespont every evening to be with the one he loved. One evening he did not come. She knew something had happened, and the next day she found his lifeless body washed ashore. Oh, my friend, to have a heart that goes out to God in adoration. Gregory Nazianzen said, "I love God because I know Him; I adore Him because I cannot understand Him; I bow before Him in awe and in worship and adoration." Oh, have you found that adoration in your worship?

Then, last of all, there is *exaltation* in worship. And I do not mean the exaltation of God—we put God in His rightful place when we worship Him. When you and I are down on our faces before Him, we are taking the place that the creature should take before the Creator. I am not speaking here of the exaltation of God, rather I am speaking now of the exaltation of man.



Humanism with its deadening philosophy has been leading man back to the jungle for about half a century, and we are not very far from the jungle. It is degrading to become a lackey, a menial. And think of the millions of people who got their tongues black by licking the boots of Hitler! Humanism did that. They turned their backs on God. And when man turns his back on God he will worship a man. No atheist, no agnostic, has ever turned his back on God who did not get his tongue black by licking somebody's boots. There is nothing that will exalt man, there is nothing that will give dignity to man, like worshiping God.

Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick wrote a sermon, way back in the 1920's, entitled "The Peril of Worshiping Jesus." In this message he said that men have tried two ways to get rid of Jesus: one by crucifying Him, the other by worshiping Him. The liberal doesn't like you to worship Jesus. My friend, *I* worship Him. He is my Lord; He is my God. I do not find it humiliating to fall down before Him. There is nothing as exalting and as thrilling as to get down on your face before Jesus Christ. In Acts, chapter 9, the record tells us that Paul fell into the dust of the Damascus Road, and the Lord Jesus dealt with him there. Then notice that He told him to arise—stand up on his feet. Only the Christian faith has ever lifted a man out of the dust and put him on his feet. In the first chapter of Revelation we read that John, on the Isle of Patmos, saw the glorified Christ. John says, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not . . ." The creature now can come to the Creator. Man, who has been lost in sin, who has gone down and down, can come up and up and worship Christ.

During the seventeenth century Muretus, a great scholar of that day, was going through Lombardy when he suddenly took ill, and was picked up on the street. They took him to the hospital, and, thinking he was a bum, the doctors said something like this, "Let's try an experiment on this worthless creature." They were speaking in Latin, and had no notion their patient could understand them. But Muretus answered them in Latin, "Will you call one worthless for whom Jesus Christ did not disdain to die?" My friend, it is only Jesus Christ and the worship of Him that has lifted man up.

Man is yet to be restored to his rightful place some day, and brought back into harmony with heaven.

The great Psalm 150 begins with the Son of God pulling out the stop Diapason: "Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power."

Then the Flute stop is pulled out: "Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp."

Then the String stop is pulled out: "Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs."

Then listen, my beloved: "Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD." In the beginning God breathed life into man—soul and spirit—but man departed from God. Now there is coming a day when everything that has life, everything that has breath, shall praise the Lord. Even now in this day in which you and I are living we can lift our hearts and lives to Him in adoration and praise.

In my first pastorate, one of my officers thought he was doing me a favor by inviting me to the performance of a symphony orchestra. Now, I know nothing about music, and I do not understand it, but to be nice I went along. I sat there, and I learned something. Before the concert began, one hundred fifty or so musicians came out on the platform. Each one picked up his little instrument and began tuning it. I have never heard such bedlam in my life! Every musician was making his own particular little squeak, regardless of anyone else. Such a medley of noise—it sounded like a boiler factory. Then they all disappeared, and in a few moments they came back out, and the lights went off in the auditorium. It got very quiet. Then the spotlight was focused on the wings, and out stepped the conductor. He came to the podium, turned and bowed. There was great applause. Then it grew quiet again. He lifted the baton—you could have heard a pin drop—then he gave the down beat. My friend, you have never heard such music! Everything was in tune; everything was in harmony.

About me in this world I hear nothing but bedlam. Every man is playing his own little tune. But one of these days out from the wings will step the Conductor, the Lord Jesus Christ. And when He lifts His baton, out yonder at the end of God's universe those galactic systems will burst forth into song. Every bird, every angel, and then man, will join the heavenly chorus.



*"Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals. Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD."*

In the meantime, while we are waiting for His return, you and I can bow before Him, and bring our little souls into the harmony of heaven.