

Have you ever lost your temper?

What happens when you lose your temper?

You become like an instrument that is out of tune.

Have you ever heard a beginning musician

who doesn't know how to tune the instrument properly?

It can be painful to listen!

In the same way, we also can become “out of tune” –

we lose pitch – we lose our timbre – our temper.

Psalm 148 is all about restoring the temper of all creation!!

You may have heard of the “music of the spheres” –

but what does that mean?

What is the “music” of the heavens?

Psalm 148 says “Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars!”

What does their praise sound like?

Probably to no one's surprise, astronomers are telling us that all sorts of heavenly bodies  
give off various frequencies!

There is *actually* a music of the spheres!!

But music refers to more than just “sound.”

In the sixth century the Christian philosopher, Boethius, describes three kinds of music:

musica mundana (the music of the spheres – the music of the universe)

musica humana (the internal music – or harmony – of the self)

and musica instrumentis (the music that we hear with our ears).

And there are connections between these musics –

for instance, if we are out of harmony with ourselves or others,

we talk about “losing our temper” –

which comes from the word “timbre” or pitch.

To lose your temper is to be “out of tune” with yourself or others – or God!

Many have noticed that the right sort of music can help adjust our attitude

(the evil spirit that afflicted King Saul left when David played the lyre!).

That shouldn't surprise us – because music is part of the physical world.

(Indeed, the mathematical properties of sound waves

led music to be included with mathematics, geometry, and astronomy

in the quadrivium – the four mathematical arts).

Psalm 148 calls all of creation to participate in the praise of the LORD.

We are in the final doxology of the Psalter –

    Psalms 146-150 –

        songs that give praise to the LORD in a final crescendo of praise.

Psalm 148 shows us how to think about the realms of creation.

    Verses 1-6 speak of the heavens and those who dwell there.

    Verses 7-14 speak of the earth (and the seas).

Part 1 of Psalm 148 deals only with the heavenly bodies and heavenly beings.

Part 2 deals only with earthly bodies and earthly beings.

If you think back to the creation narrative,

    verse 2 (the angels and the hosts) are probably in view from the first day of creation

        (“let there be light” may well include the formation of heavenly intelligences).

    but verse 3 plainly speaks of the fourth day of creation (sun, moon, and stars),

    and verse 4 plainly speaks of the second day of creation (the waters above the heavens).

Likewise, in the second part of the Psalm,

    verse 7 speaks of the great sea creatures (Day 5),

    verse 9 speaks of mountains and trees (Day 3),

    verses 10-12 speak of animals and man (Day 6).

It is important to note [as Goldingay does, p729]

    in contrast to Psalm 147,

        “it is the peoples of the earth who are bidden to praise.

    Only in the final verse does Israel come into purview,

        not as the agent of the praise but as the reason for it.

    In Psalm 147 the nations did not know Yhwh’s decrees and decisions;

        now they know them and give praise for them.”

In Psalm 147, Israel’s uniqueness is contrasted with the nations.

    Here in Psalm 148, Israel’s uniqueness is the reason for all people to Praise the LORD!

Psalm 147 narrowed the focus of salvation history onto Israel.

    Psalm 148 then shows us the cosmic result of that focus!

## **1. Praise the LORD from the Heavens (v1-6)**

### **a. The Heavens and Those Who Dwell There (v1-4)**

*Praise the LORD!*

*Praise the LORD from the heavens;*

*praise him in the heights!*

<sup>2</sup> Praise him, all his angels;  
praise him, all his hosts!  
<sup>3</sup> Praise him, sun and moon,  
praise him, all you shining stars!  
<sup>4</sup> Praise him, you highest heavens,  
and you waters above the heavens!

The first call to praise is addressed to the heavens –  
and those who dwell in the “heights”.

The angels and the hosts of heaven.

These are the heavenly beings.

We often just think of “angels” as a very vague group of heavenly beings.

In fact, scripture talks about all sorts of beings –

cherubim, seraphim, powers, principalities, spirits –

even using the term “gods” at times.

Scripture teaches that there are lots of different kinds of ‘angels.’

Some of them seem to have rebelled against God –  
and others remained faithful.

But all of these heavenly beings are called to *praise Yahweh*.

Likewise, the sun, moon, and stars are supposed to praise God.

How does the sun praise God?

Think of how Psalm 19 puts it:

“The heavens declare the glory of God,

and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.

There is no speech, nor are their words, whose voice is not heard.

Their voice goes out through all the earth,

and their words to the end of the world.

In them he has set a tent for the sun,

which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,

and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.”

The sun, moon, and stars proclaim the handiwork of God.

They praise God by fulfilling the purpose for which he made them!

Genesis 1 tells us that the sun, moon, and stars were given as lights –

but also as *signs*.

“Let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years...” (Gen 1:14)

The movement of the sun signals the change of seasons –  
as well as the passing of days and years.

Astrologers have long thought that they could interpret the signs of the heavens.

My objection to astrology is *not* that they think that there are signs in the stars.  
My objection is when they think that they have figured out  
the code to interpret the signs!

Heavenly bodies *do* have an effect on the earth!  
The moon influences the tides.  
Sunspots and solar radiation have all sorts of influence on the earth.

It won't surprise me at all if there is far more going on than we now understand!

But *above the stars* there are the highest heavens – and the waters above the heavens!

What is this referring to?

In Genesis 1, on the second day of creation,  
God separates the waters above from the waters beneath.  
To do this, he uses the *firmament* – the *raqia* (in Hebrew).

There are three statements about the firmament in Genesis 1.

First, the firmament was fashioned in the midst of the waters  
in order to separate the waters below from the waters above.  
And at the end of the second day,  
God names the firmament “Heaven.”

Then, on the fourth day, God says,  
“Let there be lights *in* the firmament of the heavens.”  
So the lights of heaven – the sun, moon, and stars –  
are placed *in* the firmament of the heavens  
(in fact in Genesis 1:14-18, God says *three times*  
that the lights are placed *in* the firmament of the heavens).

Then, on the fifth day, God says,  
“Let birds fly above the earth *across* [or, “on the face” of]  
the firmament of the heavens.”

So if you would understand the relationship of the heavenly bodies,  
the birds fly “on the face” of the firmament – “across – in front of”;  
the sun, moon, and stars, are “in” the firmament;  
and the waters are *above* the firmament.

In other words, the waters above are *above* the sun, moon, and stars.

I know that some folks think that the waters above the firmament refer to some ice shield  
that was used up after the Flood –  
but according to Psalm 148, the waters above the heavens *are still there*.

And the reason is pretty clear.  
When you look up at the sky on a sunny day,

you can see that big blue dome over your head.  
Why is the sky blue?  
(yes, in one sense it has to do with how the light from the sun  
gets scattered in the atmosphere –  
but that is *how* the sky looks blue – not *why*).  
*Why* is the sky blue?  
God made it that way – he made the light with these properties –  
so that the heavens above and the seas below –  
would reflect each other.  
He made it this way so that we would look up and see a cosmic ocean.

The waters above the heavens.

Is there, in fact, a vast cosmic sea beyond the edge of the universe?  
I don't know!  
But God teaches us in his word to see that big blue dome over our heads  
as the waters above the heavens.  
It's why the rainbow is so important in Genesis 9.  
God says that when he sees the rainbow in the clouds  
he will remember that he has promised never again to flood the whole earth.

And when we see the rainbow –  
we are reminded that the waters above the heavens  
will never again be used to destroy the earth!

So far the focus has been on *what* should praise the Lord.  
The heavens – and the inhabitants of the heavens!

#### **b. Why Do They Praise? Because He is the Creator and Sustainer (v5-6)**

<sup>5</sup> *Let them praise the name of the LORD!*  
*For he commanded and they were created.*  
<sup>6</sup> *And he established them forever and ever;*  
*he gave a decree, and it shall not pass away.<sup>[a]</sup>*

They are to praise God because he is their Creator.  
He commanded and they were created.

There are two words used in Genesis regarding *how* God made the world.  
The word “bara” – which is only used in three verses in Genesis 1:  
verse 1 – “in the beginning God *created* the heavens and the earth.”  
verse 21 – “God *created* the sea creatures, and every living creature...”  
and verse 27 – where *three times* it says that God *created* man in his own image,  
in the image of God he *created* him;  
male and female he *created* them.

*Bara* is used particularly for when God speaks something into existence.  
The other word – *asah* – is used for forming or making things.

If you think about it,  
    we are “makers” – we were made in the image of God to “make” things.  
But we are not creators.  
    Who speaks and it comes to pass?  
    We shape things – we can even shape things with words!

    But we cannot speak new things into existence!  
    We can use words to redefine things!  
        (Lord knows that we do that all the time!!)  
    But at the end of the day, the things that God has made are rather stubborn

We can even “remake” ourselves –  
    but we cannot speak ourselves into being something else.  
We can call him Caitlyn, if that’s what he wants –  
    but after all the words – and after all the surgeries –  
    Bruce Jenner is still the same man he was before.

We are *not* Creators.  
    When you look throughout the OT, the term “bara”  
        is never used for what humans do.  
    It is used for the original creation – when God made man (and all things).  
    And it is used for the new creation – the redemption of Israel (and of all humanity).

God alone is the Creator –  
    He is the Creator of heaven and earth.  
    He is the Creator of the new heavens and the new earth –  
        the redeemed humanity.  
    He is the one who *commanded and they were created*.

And likewise, he is the sustainer.  
    “He established them forever and ever; he gave a decree, and it shall not pass away.”

    In one sense, God *could* destroy the heavens and the earth –  
        but he has promised not to.  
    In Genesis 8:22, God said,  
        “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat,  
        summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.”

    He gave a decree – and it shall not pass away.

And God’s faithfulness in the Created Order is at the heart of our confidence

that he will also be faithful in redemption!

And that is where part 2 turns:

## **2. Praise the LORD from the Earth (v7-14)**

<sup>7</sup> *Praise the LORD from the earth,  
you great sea creatures and all deeps,*  
<sup>8</sup> *fire and hail, snow and mist,  
stormy wind fulfilling his word!*  
<sup>9</sup> *Mountains and all hills,  
fruit trees and all cedars!*  
<sup>10</sup> *Beasts and all livestock,  
creeping things and flying birds!*  
<sup>11</sup> *Kings of the earth and all peoples,  
princes and all rulers of the earth!*  
<sup>12</sup> *Young men and maidens together,  
old men and children!*

### **a. The Earth and Those Who Dwell There (v7-12)**

We start with the great sea creatures –

the *tannim* – the King James said, “ye dragons and all deeps.”

It’s the word used in Genesis 1:21, where God created the “sea monsters” – the *tannim*.

It’s the same word used in Exodus 7, when Moses’s staff turned into a sea monster.

In Isaiah 27 it is used for the promise that God will slay Leviathan – the sea monster.

(Lotan – or Leviathan – was a Canaanite sea monster) –

and it is used again in Isaiah 51 to speak of another mythical sea monster Rahab.

Pharaoh is described as a sea monster – a *tannin* lying in the Nile – in Ezekiel 29.

But here – as was the image in Genesis 1 – the *tannim* are not hostile to God!

Far from it – they may be sea monsters – they may be dragons –

but they are *God’s* sea monsters – they are *God’s* dragons –

and they praise the LORD as they frolic in the depths of the seas!

### **i. Waters and Winds**

Then verse 8 speaks of the fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy wind fulfilling his word...

In verse 4 we heard about the waters *above* the heavens –

now we hear about the waters *below* the heavens.

Both fire and water fulfill God’s word –

as they mingle together in various combinations to accomplish his purposes.

This begins to give you a hint as to where the Psalm is going.

The “forces of nature” (as we call them)

are in fact obedient to the Word of the LORD.

We need to be careful in our day *not* to give in to a purely “scientific” view of nature.

Don't get me wrong: science is awfully useful!  
The reason *why* we can study nature is because there *is* an order and pattern in nature.  
But that order and pattern is there *because nature obeys the voice of the LORD!*

## **ii. Mountains and Forests – Beasts and Birds**

I don't know if you noticed, but there is a rhetorical pattern – a literary pattern – in our text:  
a call for one thing to praise God and then *all* of another.

You see it three times in verses 1-3 –  
and then it happens in verses 7, 9 (twice), 10, and 11 (twice)  
(and again in verse 14).

The sea monsters – and *all* deeps.  
The mountains – and *all* hills.  
The fruit trees – and *all* cedars.  
Beasts – and *all* livestock...

The reason for this pattern starts becoming clearer in verses 11-12:

## **iii. Kings and All Peoples**

“Kings of the earth and *all* peoples,  
princes and *all* rulers of the earth!  
Young men and maidens together,  
old men and children!”

In the same way that Genesis 1 slowly worked through the six days of creation –  
before finally reaching the creation of man at the end of the sixth day –  
so also Psalm 148 moves slowly through the whole of creation,  
before finally reaching humanity in verses 11-12.

Verse 11 continues the pattern  
“kings of the earth – and *all* peoples;  
Princes – and *all* rulers of the earth.

Because this is the pattern of the created order – at least, as we now know it (under sin).  
The Kings and princes of the earth are called to praise God –  
just like the sea monsters – and all deeps;  
like the mountains – and all hills;  
like the fruit trees – and all cedars;  
like the beasts – and all livestock –  
so also, the kings of the earth and all peoples;  
princes and all rulers of the earth together.

And all of a sudden, the pattern reveals itself!



Remember that Pharaoh was called a sea monster?  
and all throughout the prophets, the “seas” – the “deep” – is a picture of the nations.

The mountains and hills are often used as a picture of the nations (or the rulers).  
Various prophets (Isaiah 2, Ezekiel 17, Zech 11) use the cedar as a symbol of power or royalty.  
Our studies in Revelation and Daniel should convince us of the image of the Beast!

All of this creational imagery has been setting us up for seeing a pattern –  
a pattern that is unfolded in history.

God’s purposes in creation are directed at all the nations!

But then the pattern breaks –  
because God does not want you thinking that his purposes are limited  
to the “important people.”

I wish that our translation helped us more!  
Given the consistency of the pattern in prior verses,  
it would be helpful if the translation showed the disjunction of verse 12:

The ESV says,  
“Young men and maidens together [that’s okay],  
old men and children.”

It should be “old men *with* children.”

The whole point of verse 12 is the *connection* between people.  
Male and female – old and young – a restored humanity!

There are echoes here of Joel 2 –  
when God will pour out his Spirit on all flesh –  
the promise of Pentecost!

And that trajectory is confirmed by the *reason* why they praise the LORD, in verses 13-14:

**b. Why Do They Praise? Because He Delivers His People Israel (v13-14)**

<sup>13</sup> *Let them praise the name of the LORD,  
for his name alone is exalted;  
his majesty is above earth and heaven.*

The Name of the LORD – the name of Yahweh – is exalted –  
his majesty is above earth and heaven.  
Heaven and earth (and all that fills them) were just called to praise the LORD –  
because his majesty – and his name – is exalted above earth and heaven.

Why?

*<sup>14</sup> He has raised up a horn for his people,  
praise for all his saints,  
for the people of Israel who are near to him.  
Praise the LORD!*

The “horn” in scripture refers to strength or power.

When God raises up a horn, the idea is the restoration of the House of David –  
the restoration of the Kingdom of God.

And with the restoration of the kingdom comes praise for all his saints.

we're back to the pattern:

he raised up a horn for his people – praise for *all* his saints!

But unlike all the doublets throughout the psalm –

here we have a triplet –

with a final twist:

“he has raised up a horn for his people – praise for all his saints –  
for the people of Israel who are near him.”

All nations will praise the LORD.

The rulers – along with the youths and maidens – the old with the young –

Why?

Because the LORD has brought Israel near to himself.

Last time in Psalm 147 we saw the uniqueness of Israel.

Here in Psalm 148 we see that unique salvation of Israel  
results in the praise of the nations.

Because only through the salvation of Israel does salvation come *to* the nations.

The uniqueness of Israel results in the coming of Jesus –

the one who is the Second Adam – the Seed of Abraham –

the firstborn son of God – the Son of David – the Suffering Servant –

the true Israel.

And because Jesus is the *one* who has drawn near to God in his ascension to his right hand,  
therefore he has *brought us near* – so that we might be seated with him in the heavenlies!