

An Expression of True Delight

Introduction

Imagine a clear night sky, where there is no light around except for the stars. For most of us, such a moment would evoke a sense of awe, wonder, and perhaps a feeling of insignificance in the grand scheme of the universe. But for Johannes Kepler, the renowned 17th-century astronomer and mathematician, these moments were not just about observing the heavens—they were opportunities for him to worship.

As Kepler studied the universe, he did not see it as something separate from God's glory. He saw the heavens as declaring the wisdom, power, and majesty of the Creator. He once wrote:

"The wisdom of the Lord is infinite as are also His glory and His power. Ye heavens, sing His praises; sun, moon, and planets, glorify Him in your ineffable language! Praise Him, celestial harmonies, and all ye who can comprehend them! And thou, my soul, praise thy Creator! It is by Him and in Him that all exist." Kepler saw in the stars, the planets, and the entire universe a celestial praise—a language too grand for human words, yet so clear in its expression of God's glory.

That is very close to the spirit of Psalm 148. The psalmist looks at the heavens above, the earth below, the creatures of the sea, the mountains, the trees, the animals, rulers, young and old — and he calls them all to one great purpose: Praise the LORD.

Psalm 148 is a part of the last 5 Psalms that are dedicated to give Praise to the Lord. In the Hebrew language all these 5 Psalms start and end with the word Hallelujah which is the Hebrew word for Praise the Lord. In English, "Praise the LORD" can sometimes sound like a familiar religious phrase. But in Hebrew, **Hallelujah** is rich and personal. It means, "Praise Yah," "Yah" is the shortened form of Yahweh, the covenant name of God. So this is not a vague call to admire some unknown deity. It is a call to praise the LORD — the covenant God who creates, sustains, rules, and draws His people near.

And notice, this is not only a personal expression of worship. It is also a call. The psalmist is not merely saying, "I praise the LORD." He is calling others to join him: "You praise the LORD. Come and join the praise of God."

Today the psalmist is taking us all on a journey that is unlike any other, we all have a task on hand to invite all of God's creation to join in one great choir of praise. We will be following the general creation order where we start from the vast and seemingly unending heavens that was created first and end with the image bearers of God on earth.

A Call to Praise from the Heavens Verses 1-6

Psalm 148:1-2 NKJV

Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights! [2] Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts!

Our first stop is God's heavenly abode, it is a wonderful majestic place where you will hear a beautiful song sung by the worshiping angels Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, a song that has its origin from the beginning of time and will continue into eternity future. You will also notice other angels there that serve God in various capacities and they are not just few but armies of angels who are

waiting on God's command. All these angels have witnessed God and His works first hand. They have seen His glory, His works, His power, and His faithfulness and while they are doing His bidding they are called to give praise to the Lord.

Psalm 148:3-4 NKJV

Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all you stars of light! [4] Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, And you waters above the heavens!

Next we get much closer to home to the nearest visible heavenly bodies, the sun, the moon and the stars. Unlike the angels, these are not personal beings who praise with voices. They praise by being what God created them to be. The sun, like a lamp eternally burning on the altar of the Lord. The moon reflecting this brightness continuing this unending adoration of praise day and night. The countless starry host hanging on nothing that light up the sky displaying the brilliance of the God who put them there. They are all called to give praise to the Lord

Finally as we approach earth, psalmist gathers up the highest heavens: "Praise Him, you heavens of heavens." It is as though no part of the heavens is to be left out. As we begin our descent to earth, we notice a vast sea of rainwater stored in the clouds which is also summoned to offer its thundering praise to Jehovah

Psalm 148:5-6 NKJV [5] Let them praise the name of the LORD, For He commanded and they were created. [6] He also established them forever and ever; He made a decree which shall not pass away.

While the reasons for Praise are innumerable, the Psalmist gives two very intellectually sound reasons. The first one being God's creation power.

Psalm 33:6-9 6 By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. 7 He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deep in storehouses. 8 Let all the earth fear the Lord; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. 9 For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

Can you imagine the immense power that God has, that something like the universe which is so vast that we are yet to figure out if there is an end to it, was literally created by God just by His word. This in itself is a reason enough to praise Him. The maker deserves to be honored by His works.

"Evolution may be atheistic; but the doctrine of creation logically demands worship; and hence, as the tree is known by its fruit, it proves itself to be true. Those who were created by command are under command to adore their Creator" — Charles Spurgeon

The second reason the Psalmist is pointing towards is God's power to sustain all things.

The creation also owes Praise to God for the way He is sustaining it through His decree. The Sun is 109 times bigger than the Earth, and yet it is perfectly placed at a distance that does not burn the earth but provides the warmth to sustain life. The Earth rotates at a constant speed around the Sun in perfect precision. And I can go on and on about the other planets in the solar system, but we get the point — all these heavenly bodies are running their course that God has decreed from the beginning of time, and

they will keep doing it till God says otherwise. And it is none other than Jesus Christ Himself who holds and sustains all things. We read in

Colossians 1:16-17 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

The writer of Hebrews also echoes this truth: "*upholding all things by the word of His power*" (Hebrews 1:3).

Let us now take a moment to reflect on God's power to sustain all His creation. If God has been sustaining the vastness of the universe — keeping the stars in their place, the sun rising every morning, and the planets orbiting in perfect harmony since the beginning of time — how much more can He sustain your life? When you face challenges that seem overwhelming or feel like everything is slipping out of control, do you remember the Creator who holds all things together? Do you trust in the Sustainer of the universe, knowing that He is in control and will do what is right, even in the midst of your struggles?

A Call to Praise from the Earth Verse 7-14

Psalm 148:7-10 NKJV Praise the LORD from the earth, You great sea creatures and all the depths; [8] Fire and hail, snow and clouds; Stormy wind, fulfilling His word; [9] Mountains and all hills; Fruitful trees and all cedars; [10] Beasts and all cattle; Creeping things and flying fowl;

Having now been joined by the entire heavenly armies and celestial bodies in this song of praise, we now journey with the Psalmist to a familiar place — the Earth.

We start by diving deep into the sea, calling the great sea creatures and all the depths.

The sea for the Israelites has often been a place of chaos and danger, a place so vast that so much of it remains unknown even for us today. We see in the book of Exodus, when Moses leads the Israelites as per God's command to the Red Sea, they realized that they were cornered. The only way to escape the Egyptians was by drowning in the Red Sea, and for this reason they responded saying, "*Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness?*" (Exodus 14:11). But God wanted to display to His people and His enemies that even this fearsome place, this place of chaos and danger, obeys the command of the Almighty.

This amazing display of power is also shown in the New Testament by Lord Jesus Christ. When the disciples were on a boat with Jesus and a storm builds up, starting to toss them to and fro, what does Jesus do? He rebukes the storm and the waves — and they obey. Mark then records one of the best statements ever:

Mark 4:41 (NKJV)

"And they feared exceedingly and said to one another, 'Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!'"

Their fear was no longer from the storm and the waves but they feared the one who has the control over something so powerful.

Our next stop is to invite all the natural phenomena that take place in the environment. Fire and hail, snow and storms — and by extension, even the earthquakes, hurricanes, and volcanoes. Even though they might seem uncertain and uncontrollable to us, they are not so for God. Even these are bound to God's wonderful decree. Notice what the Psalmist says: the stormy wind is *fulfilling His word*. Creation praises God not only by its beauty, but by its obedience.

Then we arrive at our next guest — nature and all the animals in it — and living in NZ, we are so close to this glorious creation of God.

My wife and I went for a trek a while ago to a place called Ryde Falls. It was a tiring walk, but the moment we reached the falls, it was like all our tiredness went away. We sat there for a few hours just admiring and enjoying the beauty of how a seemingly unending stream of water gushes down, and the sound of it crashing on the rocks was so powerful but yet so peaceful. It is one thing to look at this and say what an amazing waterfall, but it is another thing to look at it and say what an amazing God.

Aren't we all thankful for what we have in NZ? We have so much to look at in awe. We can see the mountains and the hills, there is no lack of fruitful trees and cedars. Lots of sheep — and I mean lots of sheep — and other cattle, beautiful birds that are native to us. And I agree, we do not have fearsome predators and many creeping things as such, but you don't really have to travel too far if you really wish to see them. Also, I hate to break it to you, but even the annoying sand flies — they are invited as well to praise the Lord.

Psalm 148:11-13 NKJV

Kings of the earth and all peoples; Princes and all judges of the earth; [12] Both young men and maidens; Old men and children. [13] Let them praise the name of the LORD, For His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven.

Finally, we arrive to the image bearers of God. Let me warn you they are the hardest of them all as many of them will reject this invite. All of creation on earth knows its purpose, from the highest mountains to the deepest depth of the ocean. All creation on earth knows its purpose except for Man. Man lost its purpose when they chose to rebel against the Almighty God. All our lives we look for a purpose many of us struggle but yet fail to find a purpose, some do find it but it gives them temporary satisfaction. You know why, cause our purpose is selfish, we look for our own glorification, we look for our own exaltation. We do not want to be image bearers of God but we want to be god. Rephrasing what **Spurgeon said** " **We are more beastly than the animals as we are the ones who chose to be willfully silent when it comes to praising God.**

Let me then ask you what is your true purpose? What is the chief end of man? I hope your answer is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. But are we doing that? come suffering, come joy are we expressing our delight in Him.

Even in our suffering? Yes even in our suffering we are called to Praise God, but you don't understand what I am going through, and Yes I don't but I know who does, the one who upholds the heavens and the earth through His word. He does, He knows, we are not dealing with an impersonal creator but a

creator who took on flesh and suffered much worse than most of us ever would, so that He can prepare a day for you and for me, where there will be no more pain or suffering.

Something we all need to reflect on when you know your true purpose in life is to glorify Him and enjoy him forever. How then should you approach your boring monotonous work? How should you approach your difficult marriage? How should you approach your singleness? How should you approach your suffering? You can add any of your situation to this How should you approach question. But do all your answers lead to delighting in the Lord? Or are you thinking of ways to complaint or make reasons on only if you had this or that you can Praise Him? Is He your ultimate joy that fills your heart that you want to express in your marriage, your singleness and your job?

Let us now enter the royal courts, where we find kings, princes and all judges, who rule over the people in some capacity and are stewards that God has assigned to judge and bring order. In the modern day this can be applied to world leaders who play a similar role. These people in higher authorities tend to be easily influenced by the amount of power they hold. They often don't like to submit or praise anyone else but themselves. They can end up thinking they have no one to answer to, that they are the final authority, many rulers in history have got corrupted to the extend that they think they are gods themselves. This invitation is a reminder that all that they have is cause of God and He is due His praise.

We continue with the Psalmist next by giving out invitation to all people. The young with their energy and strength, the old with their wisdom and experience, the maidens with their beauty and grace and children with their joyous praise. Even you who feel that they sound like a crow with a sore throat, yes even you are called to join in this song of praise.

Because the Lord is above all, He is unlike any of His creation. His power, glory and might surpasses everything in this universe. He alone is worthy.

“Finally, the psalmist turns to the church. Verse 14 says: ‘And He has exalted the horn of His people, the praise of all His saints—of the children of Israel, a people near to Him.’

We need to understand what the word horn means in this context. In the ancient world, an animal's horn was the symbol of its strength. When a wild beast was defeated, its head was bowed in the dust. But when it was victorious, its horn was lifted high. To ‘exalt the horn’ of a people meant to give them victory, strength, and dignity. So when the psalm says that God has exalted the horn of His people, it means that God Himself has lifted up the strength of His people. And not just the strength but he is also near to His people.

The psalmist celebrates this beautiful reality of a God who is close to us. But this nearness wasn't always something we enjoyed. In fact, humanity did everything it could to distance itself from the Creator.

When God created man in His image, they were perfect and without any sin, but when man chose to be disobedient and go against the creator's commands this put us in an eternal peril. A just God cannot overlook a crime. Either He could punish the image bearers He created for eternity or provide them with a saving grace by substituting Himself and taking on their punishment. He chose the later.

He chose a group of people that would represent Him to the world, for through them He would bless all the nations of the world. A promise was given of a Savior to come who would be that substitution and save them from their sins. Even in their constant failures He did not give up on His promises and faithfulness. Finally, we see the fulfillment of this strength to come, Who is this strength? Where does this victory come from? The Old Testament promised a day when God would raise up a Savior to fight for His people. And in Luke 1, when Jesus is about to be born, Zacharias breaks into song and says: 'Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David.' Jesus Christ is the Horn of Salvation.

The strength that was promised had arrived, the fullness of God now in human flesh, the creator became a part of His creation, He lived a perfect life that we could not live, so that He could be the perfect substitute in His death for us all. On the third day He rose again defeating death, so that anyone who believes in Him, will be given His perfect righteousness. The people of God through this Horn will find victory over death and sin. Because God has exalted the Horn of His people in Christ, He is where we find our refuge and the atonement for our sins.

When we look at the cross and the empty tomb, mankind has more reason to praise God than any other part of creation. We don't just have a Creator; we have a Redeemer. And in a world that is currently suffering through pain, sickness, broken relationships, and identity crises, we as Christians hold a hope that no one else does. We have a God who fights for His people!

Don't keep the invite to yourself. Invite others to experience our awesome God. To experience our God who is the strength of His people and to come and acknowledge together that He alone is worthy to be praised.

At the end we either praise Him now willingly and enjoy Him forever eternally or scripture talks about a time to come where every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is the Lord.

Conclusion:

Even though Kepler was successful at what he was doing he was unhappy for a long time as he wanted to be a theologian, that is until he recognized that God is praised by his work even in Astronomy.

Kepler went on to achieve many scientific feats that have played a founding role in the study of space and he attributed all this as a way to worship God

Kepler's story is a powerful reminder for us today: Praise is not confined to the songs we sing on Sunday morning. Praise extends to every square inch of your life—into your thoughts, your relationships, your Monday mornings, and your daily work. Kepler knew his true purpose was to glorify God through everything he did.

If you forget everything else I've said this morning, please take this one question with you. In every challenging situation, in every broken relationship, in your workplace, and in your trials, ask yourself:

What is my true purpose right here?

When you remember that your purpose is to reflect the praise of the God who raised up a Horn of Salvation for you, it changes everything. It changes how you respond, how you endure, and how you live. Let's be a people who fulfill our purpose, and glorify Him together. Let us pray.