

Why are you here?

Psalm 117 - **G. Campbell Morgan** said, “This is the shortest song in the whole collection, but there is none greater or grander in its expression of praise.”

Psalm 117 *Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol him, all peoples! ² For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!*

Part of the **Egyptian Hallel** – which comes from the Hebrew word translated praise – put that together with the entire command to praise the Lord and we get a transliterated word that is understood across nearly every language – **Hallelujah!**

It's unknown how many languages today use some form of hallelujah in worship, but here are a few examples:

- Alhamdulillah اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ (Arabic)
- Hāilìyùà 哈利路亚 (Chinese)
- Alléluia (French)
- Aleluya (Quechua)
- Haleluya (Indonesian)

The Egyptian Hallel, **Psalms 113-118**. The emphasis of **Psalm 114** is the celebration of **the Exodus from Egypt**. These six Psalms were sung as the children of Israel would gather annually to celebrate **Passover**. They would sing **Psalms 113 and 114** at the beginning of the meal. **Psalms 115-118** were sung at the end of the meal.

Again, why are you here?

I. The Universal Invitation to Worship v.1

Verse 1 begins with the WHAT of this passage – this is a command to...

v.1 – Praise

Brief history of **EMU International**

Illustration of my recent trip to Uruguay with Kevin Oberlin. A breathtaking view of the stars in the Southern Hemisphere. Like that cloud of stars that was shouting glory to its Creator, we are commanded to turn the spotlight on God.

*O Lord my God, When I in awesome wonder, Consider all the worlds Thy Hands have made;
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, Thy power throughout the universe displayed.
Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee, How great Thou art, How great Thou art.
Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee, How great Thou art, How great Thou art!*

What is the object of our praise?

the LORD –the LORD Jehovah – The name comes from the Hebrew word for “**I am.**”

v.1 continues with **the WHO of this passage?** Who is being addressed?

all nations – not just Israel.

Extol him

Richard Baxter stated, “Conceive of this duty of praising God according to its superlative excellencies as being the highest service that the tongue of men or angels can perform. To bless or praise or magnify God is not to make Him greater or better or happier than He is, but to declare and extol His greatness, goodness, and felicity.”

* **We praise what we love** – illustrations – family, places, meals, etc.

all peoples – interestingly that word *people* is plural – *peoples* (it is translated this way over 230 times in the ESV).

This is speaking of the peoples as in people groups. Just as the word group represents a plurality but also can be made plural when we are talking about groups.

A people group has been defined as the largest group through which the gospel can flow without encountering significant barriers of understanding (language) and acceptance (for example the caste system). In the Bible, the Greek word “ethne” often times gets translated as “nations” but really means ethnic groups or people groups.

If you visit the **Joshua Project** online and view their Global Summary on the home page, you will discover:

- Global Population: 7.93 billion
- People Groups: 17,443
- Unreached Groups: 7,425
- % Unreached Groups: 42.6%
- People in Unreached: 3.37 billion
- % People in Unreached: 42.5%

The largest concentration of unreached people groups is found in what is known as **the 10-40 Window**. This is the rectangular area of North Africa, the Middle East and Asia located approximately between 10 degrees north and 40 degrees north latitude. It is sometimes referred to as "The Resistant Belt" as it is an area of high religious persecution and the area that is most hostile to evangelistic efforts.

Remember the word THUMB, and you will know how to better pray for the 10-40 Window. It is representative of Tribal, Hindu, Unreligious, Muslim, and Buddhist. For doing what we are doing here today, we would be arrested and maybe even killed.

As we consider the Unreached, let's look a little closer at one particular nation, **India**.

- Population of India: 1,410,738,000
- Population in Unreached: 1,342,039,000 (95.1%)
- Number of People Groups: 2,373
- People Groups Unreached: 2,135 (90.0%) – Each one of these red pins represents an unreached people group

It is God's desire that people will be saved from all of these groups. *Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol him, all peoples!*

There is a Universal Invitation to Worship

II. The Undeniable Reason for Worship

The question is, "**What fuels our praise?**"

Illustration of **Paul Tripp** taking his son to the National Art Gallery in Washington, D.C.

"What fuels our praise?"

We begin with a **look back**, where we witness God's plan for mankind all the way back to His design for Adam and Eve. God is longing for the **glory** of a divine relationship with the highest of His creation, but sin has separated us from His **glory**. *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* The rest of the Bible is **the story of God's design to redeem a people for Himself.**

Here we see **the WHY of this passage** - Why is He worthy of such worship? Why is He worthy of our praise? Why do we cry out Hallelujah?

A. The Exceeding Grace of God

v.2 For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!

For great is his steadfast love toward us – hesed –

*Here is love, vast as the ocean,
Lovingkindness as the flood,
When the Prince of Life, our Ransom,
Shed for us His precious blood.
Who His love will not remember?
Who can cease to sing His praise?
He can never be forgotten,
Throughout Heav'n's eternal days.*

great –

- Next we look **forward** and we see...

B. The Enduring Faithfulness of God

And the faithfulness –

of the LORD endures forever. –

Praise the LORD (same as v.1). Hallelujah! –

III. Our Missionary Responsibility Implied in this Psalm

John Piper, “Missions is a cross-cultural movement aimed at helping people stop making much of themselves and start making much of their Creator. Missions is a cross-cultural effort to transform people’s hearts so that God is felt to be more praiseworthy than sport stars or military might or artistic achievements or anything else that God has made. Missions is a cross-cultural endeavor to help people experience God as their Treasure above all earthly treasures forever. It is a life and death struggle to give people eternal life, which consists in knowing and enjoying God forever.”

A. God Desires Worship Without Borders

1. This is the Universal Appeal that we see all throughout the Psalms

- *Psalm 22:27 All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you.*
- *Psalm 33:8 Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!*
- *Psalm 47:1 Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!*
- *Psalm 66:1 Shout for joy to God, all the earth;*
- *Psalm 66:4 All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name.”*
Selah
- *Psalm 67:3-5 Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! 4 Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Selah 5 Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!*
- *Psalm 67:7 God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!*
- *Psalm 82:8 Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!*
- *Psalm 96:7-10 Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength! Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts!*
- *9 Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth! 10 Say among the nations, “The Lord reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.”*
- *Psalm 98:4 Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!*
- *Psalm 100:1 Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!*

2. The New Testament reinforces God's global design for the nations

God's plan was never for Israel to have exclusive rights and hold onto their blessings while looking down their condescending noses at all of the other nations.

The salvation of the Gentiles was not Plan B when Plan A did not work out. It was God's strategy from the beginning. Even before the foundations of the world.

In **Romans chapter 15**, Paul quotes from **Psalm 117** and other Old Testament passages to demonstrate the inclusion of Gentiles in God's redemptive plan in sending Jesus, the Messiah, not just to Jews, but for all people.

Romans 15:9-13

v.9 and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name." (2 Samuel 22:50)

v.10 And again it is said, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." (Deuteronomy 32:43)

v.11 And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him." (Psalm 117:1)

v.12 And again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope." (Isaiah 11:10)

v.13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

B. God Alone is Worthy of Our Worship

All nations must look to Christ alone for salvation – no matter how sincere they may be, they are lost without Christ.

Therefore, they must turn from their idols,

- **Ashtoreth** - At the heart of this pagan religion was the worship of fertility
- **Baal** – the supreme deity of the Canaanites, known as a sun god or storm god. Rites involved cult prostitution and even human sacrifice.
- **Chemosh** – the national god of the Moabites, also worshiped by the Ammonites.
- **Dagon** - the god of the Philistines. He was the god of the sea and agriculture represented by the body of a fish with a human head. Samson met his death in the temple of Dagon. of the Philistines)
- **Marduk** – the god of the Babylonians associated with fertility and vegetation. He had 50 different names.
- **Milcom** – the god of the Ammonites, associated with divination and the seeking of knowledge through occultic means.
- **Molech** – another abominable god of the Ammonites, known for human sacrifices.

These are all pagan gods listed in the Old Testament. These are pagan and demonic at worst and superstition at best. They are no gods, simply myths.

Listen to the way, I began my newsletter article following my trip to India.

The man behind the counter at the medicine shop, what the Indians call a pharmacy, looked at me and smiled as I handed him my credit card. He excitedly exclaimed, "In our culture, you are a god."

I asked him to repeat what he said. Yes, I had heard him correctly. He had said I am a god. I looked at him and laughed under my breath, “No, I am not a god.”

He said, “Yes.”

I replied, “I am no god!”

In India, the major religion is Hinduism. Nearly 1 billion people in India identify as Hindu. That is 80% of the population. There are thirty-three major gods in Hinduism. Some would say there are three-hundred-thirty-million gods. There is a strong belief in one consciousness that manifests itself in infinite ways. Therefore, even a worm is a god. I am not a god, but I am a worm, as Isaac Watts declared, “Would He devote that sacred head for such a worm as I?”

¹ Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol him, all peoples!

1 Timothy 2:5-6 *For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.*

C. We Must Declare His Glory Among the Nations

Psalm 96:3-5 *Declare his glory among the nations, (Shine the spotlight) his marvelous works among all the peoples! 4 For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. 5 For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens.*

Missions is declaring His glory, shining the light of Jesus upon the nations to praise Him, to extol Him, and then giving the evidence of His greatness, and His amazing grace, His amazing love, His amazing mercy.

In his classic book on missions, “Let the Nations Be Glad,” Piper sums it up well. “Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't.”

Why are you here? Why are you on this planet? You were created for the glory of God. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord.

And lest we think that this is some kind of fool's errand – that the task is too difficult – It is too costly, let's fast forward to the end of the book in **Revelation 7:9-12** *After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” 11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”*

* **Why are you here?** We were created for His glory. We were created to praise Him. **Hallelujah!**