

Praise Him: Me and You

Psalm 146:1 Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul!

² I will praise the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

³ Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.

⁴ When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.

⁵ Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God,

⁶ who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever;

⁷ who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free;

⁸ the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous.

⁹ The LORD watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

¹⁰ The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 147:1 Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting.

² The LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel.

³ He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

⁴ He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names.

⁵ Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.

⁶ The LORD lifts up the humble; he casts the wicked to the ground.

⁷ Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre!

⁸ He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth; he makes grass grow on the hills.

⁹ He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry.

¹⁰ His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man,

¹¹ but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.

¹² **Praise** the LORD, O Jerusalem! **Praise** your God, O Zion!

¹³ For he strengthens the bars of your gates; he blesses your children within you.

¹⁴ He makes peace in your borders; he fills you with the finest of the wheat.

¹⁵ He sends out his command to the earth; **his word runs swiftly**.

¹⁶ He gives snow like wool; he scatters frost like ashes.

¹⁷ He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs; who can stand before his cold?

¹⁸ He sends out his word, and melts them; he makes his wind blow and the waters flow.

¹⁹ He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules to Israel.

²⁰ He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know his rules. **Praise** the LORD!

Psalms 146-147

Two Men, Two Dark, Watery Graves

TWO MEN IN TOTAL blackness yet separated by 3,000 years of history. The one goes up and falls down, into a cold icy void. The other? He is thrown from above, down into a cold watery abyss. How would they respond?

In 1985, two strong young British men deliberately set out to climb the extremely dangerous 21,000 ft. unclimbed face of **Siula Grande** in the Peruvian Andes. After a successful summit, on the way down, Joe Simpson broke his leg so badly that his lower leg went straight through his knee joint. An improbable rescue attempt by his partner Simon Yates found Simpson being lowered 300 ft. at a time in a raging blizzard by a rope. After several successful pitches of lowering, unbeknownst to Yates, he lowered his friend over a precipice where Simpson remained dangling 75 feet above the ground, straight above an enormous ice crevasse.

After so much time passed, unable to hold the weight without himself tumbling off the edge to certain death himself, and not knowing whether his buddy was dead because they could not hear each other in the howling wind, Simon cut the rope dropping Joe 150 feet, where he eventually came to rest on a very narrow ledge of snow and ice, 75 ft. *below* the top of the crevasse. With no chance of rescue, and no hope of climbing up and out, Simpson knew he was going to die. These are his own words about that moment of realization:

I was brought up as a devout Catholic. I'd long since stopped believing in God. I always wondered if things really hit the fan whether I would under pressure turn around and say a few "Hail-Mary's" and say, "Get me out of here." It never once occurred to me. It meant that I really don't believe. I really do think that when you die you die, that's it. There's no afterlife. There's nothing.

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Around the year 750 BC, a young Jewish prophet deliberately set out to flee from his God. He was angry. He set off for the farthest corner of the earth, in the opposite direction he was told to go—to the west, to Tarshish, the great sea-port of south-western Spain, as far away from Nineveh as one could imagine. While on route, a fierce storm began to rage and so frightened the men that they cast lots to see who was guilty for some crime that the gods would seek to destroy them all. The lot fell to Jonah who was cast off the boat into the murky cold depths below.

An improbable rescue came at the hands—or rather the mouth—of a giant fish, who swallowed the man alive! With

no chance of being rescued from above, and yet not yet drown or eaten, Jonah didn't know what was going to happen to him. These are his own words about his situation.

I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. Then I said, "I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple." The waters closed in over me to take my life ... When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple ... With the voice of thanksgiving I will sacrifice to you ... salvation belongs to the LORD. (Jonah 2:2-9)

Two men in total blackness, both in the dark, both in the water, both going to die. One, probably angry at God's seeming absence in his life, cements his atheism in concrete. The other, angry at God's presence and mercy, cries out to that same God and **gives him praise** in the midst of his horror. But it was only *after* these words that the fish vomited

Jonah out upon the dry land (**Jonah 2:10**). The man had no idea that he would actually survive the ordeal.

Psalms 146-150

We now enter the final section of the Psalter. 145 songs down, 5 to go. This last number of psalms makes for a meaningful ending to the book. **Why five?** There are at least two reasons. **First**, as we have seen, five is the number of books in the Psalter. Each of these books ends, with a one verse doxology:

Doxologies at the End of the Five Books of the Psalter	
41:14	Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and amen.
72:18-19	Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed be His glorious Name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and amen!
89:52	Blessed be the LORD forever! Amen and amen.
106:48	Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, "Amen." Praise the LORD.
145:21 ¹	My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and let all flesh bless his holy Name forever and ever.

¹ Here, we are ending the fifth book with Psalm 145 (as noted last time). When this is done, it creates an interest parallel of 39 books in Book I (minus Psalms 1-2 which are introductory) and 39 books in Book V. We find a similar pattern in books III and IV, both of which contain 17 psalms. See **Kilnam Cha**, *Psalms 146-150: The Final Hallelujah Psalms as a Fivefold Doxology to the Hebrew Psalter*, A Dissertation to the Graduate Faculty of Baylor University, 2006: 166-69, 182.

This is a beautiful way to end each shorter collection of books. But the five songs at the end is actually a way to **close off the entire Psalter**, while tipping the hat to each of the five books. In fact, three of the doxologies (41, 72, 106) specifically call **Israel** to bless the LORD, while two (89, 145) are more **universal** in scope. And this corresponds directly to the five songs, such that the positioning of each of the five corresponds to the particularity or universality of the five endings (see chart below). On other words, there is a relationship between the five endings and these five songs.

Table 13. Parallels between the Two Sets of the Fivefold Doxology²

41:14	Blessed is YHWH, God of Israel	Particularity	The God of Jacob ; your God, O Zion	Psalm 146
72:18-19	Blessed is YHWH, God of Israel	Particularity	The Builder of Israel ; your God, O Zion ; revealing His Word to Jacob ...	Psalm 147
89:53	Blessed is YHWH	Universality	Praise the Lord from the heavens [and] the earth	Psalm 148
106:48	Blessed is YHWH, God of Israel	Particularity	Let Israel rejoice in its Maker; Let the children of Zion be glad in their King	Psalm 149
145:21	All creatures shall bless His holy name	Universality	Let everything that has breath praise the Lord	Psalm 150

² This chart and explanation are found in **Cha**, 171-72.

Second, as we saw very early on in our study, the five books of the psalter may very well relate directly to the Torah—the five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy). The Rabbis make this connection explicit teaching, “**Moses gave Israel five books of the Torah, and David gave Israel five books of the Psalms.**”³ This fits with the second verse of Psalm 1, “**But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on the law he meditates day and night,**” which we were reminded last week is itself an introductory psalm to help us read the entire book. In other words, the Psalter really is in some ways about Torah.

This follows another pattern, which is that each of the five-main divisions of the OT (as Sarna has noted⁴) begins with reflections on *torah* as well.⁵ For example, **Joshua**, which begins the Former Prophets, opens with an invitation

³ In **Nahum Sarna**, *Songs of the Heart* (New York: Schocken Books, 1993), 28.

⁴ (Cha, 191).

⁵ “**Sarna ... [p.] 17. He points out that ‘the pentateuchal division’ of the Hebrew Psalter is ‘very strange’ when we consider the size of the Psalter. It is less than one half the size of the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch consists of 5,852 verses and the Psalter 2,461. When the differences between prose and poetry are taken into consideration, the pentateuchal division of the Hebrew Psalter is hardly accidental. Especially, when we consider a rabbinic statement in the Talmud, ‘Moses gave Israel five books of the Torah, and David gave Israel five books of the Psalms,’ it is likely that the editor(s) of the Hebrew Psalter purposefully created the pentateuchal division to relate the Psalter to the Pentateuch**” (Cha, 190, n. 46).

to Joshua to observe torah ([Josh 1:7-8](#)), [Isaiah](#) begins the Latter Prophets also opens with a reference to torah as Isaiah calls upon Israel to give ear to torah ([Isa 1:10](#)).⁶ And, of course, we just saw how the Psalter does this too.⁷ So five songs is a numerical way of teaching you sound, biblical, OT theology.

These five songs thus form a unit. So what do they have in common? They make up what scholars call [the Final Hallelujah Psalms](#) (distinguishing them from things like the Egyptian Hallelujah—Ps 113-118). A few things within these songs are important to see. First, each of the five both [begin and end](#)—in Hebrew—with the word “Hallelujah.” Their first and last words are each “praise the LORD.” This makes 10 Hallelujahs, another interesting number, perhaps suggestive of the heart of Torah—the Ten Commandments.

⁶ Cha, 191. For more on all this see [Cha](#), 189-91 and corresponding notes.

⁷ **Going Deeper.** The OT can be divided up in different ways according to Jewish thought. Sometimes it is all just “Torah.” Other times it is “the Law and the Prophets.” Other times, “the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms.” Sarna has in mind here the threefold division which is then subdivided further into five.

	Jewish	English
1	Torah	The Law (Ge, Ex, Lv, Nu, Dt)
2	Naviim	The Prophets (History or Former Prophets) (Jo, Jg, 1Sa, 2Sa, 1Kg, 2Kg)
3		The Prophets cont. (Major or Latter Prophets) (Is, Je, Ez)
4		The Prophets cont. (Minor Prophets) (Ho, Joe, Am, Ob, Jnh, Mic, Na, Hab, Zp, Hg, Zc, Mal)
5	Kethubim	The Writings (Ps, Pr, Jb, SS, Ru, La, Ec, Es, Da, Ezz-Ne, 1Ch, 2Ch)

Further, these 10 correspond to the 10 imperative (commands) of *hallel* that are found in Psalm 150, a short song of just 6 verses.⁸

Second, the idea of “praise” (in English) appears **forty-two times**:

$$146 = 5; 147 = 6; 148 = 13; 149 = 5; 150 = 13$$

In other words, between Hallelujah and praise, the psalter ends on a magnificent note. There is no more doubt, no more sorrow, no more sadness, no more pain, no more questioning. All that is done. Those questions have been answered. We saw how this concluded in the Davidic songs (138-143), and how the last two songs (144-145) presented us with this glorious King and his magnificent Kingdom.

This is important, because **the last verse of Psalm 145 is one of our doxologies**. That doxology includes **personal** (“**My mouth will speak of the praise of the LORD...**”) and **universal** (“**...and let all flesh bless his holy Name forever and ever**”) calls to praise the LORD. And this is exactly the way the five songs begin (“**Praise the LORD! Praise the**

⁸ **Snearly**, *Return of the King*, 175.

LORD, O my soul! I will praise the LORD...”; 146:1) and end (“Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!”; 150:6).⁹ In other words, you can look at the last five songs as a kind of expansion on the last verse of Psalm 145, the last proper verse of the main body of the Psalter.

Of these five, **Psalm 146-147** introduce these Hallelujah songs. They do so in a way that is similar to each another in three important ways. **First**, each contains a string of participles that explain in simple, clear language things that God does (146:6-9; 147:2-6; 8-9; 15-17).¹⁰ **Second**, they each use virtually the same language of God in these sections. For example, in the first, God “gives food to the hungry” (146:7). In the second, “He give to the beasts their food” (147:9). And **third**, the former song is praise given up by the psalmist, while the latter song is praise that is to be given up by all the people of God. “**Me and You**” as I have titled it in the Sermon. “Praise Him: Me and You.” Thus, I’ll be preaching these together today.

⁹ Gerald H. Wilson, “The Shape of the Book of Psalms,” *Interpretation* 46 (1992): 132-33 [129-42]. Cited in Cha, 42.

¹⁰ Snearly, 178.

Psalms 146: Praise the LORD--Me

There is an obligation that Psalm 146 gives in the first of the ten Hallelujahs. If this in any way at all reflects the Ten Commandments, it is a fitting correspondence with the First: “You shall have no other gods before me.” What is the chief way this occurs? By “me” praising the LORD alone. “Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul!” (Ps 146:1).

Who is the “me?” Like all five of these songs, the author is anonymous. The Holy Spirit omitted this intentionally. For no matter who its human author was, the anonymity of it all means that any single person must apply it to him or herself. Indeed, this is exactly what you are supposed to do. When you read “Praise the LORD, O my soul,” you are to think about yourself, not the psalmist.

2,000+ years after the song was written, some very godly men got together to create what they believed was the most important question a person could ever ask themselves. This question begins the Westminster Shorter Catechism. The question asks, “What is the chief end of man.” Which man? Like the song, it is anonymous. Any man. All men.

Their answer. “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.” Your answer? *My* chief end is to glorify God.

To glorify God is to praise God. It is to sing to him, “Hallelujah.” The word is actually a composite of *Hallel* (“to praise”) and *Yah* (a Name for God; think “Yahweh”). Hallelujah is not praise of any old god. It is praising the God of the Bible. Now, you may think that the only way you can do this is by actually saying the word and doing it in a song. But John Piper gives an interesting argument throughout his writings that the catechism is asking about *a single end*, yet it gives a *double answer*. To him, this means that to glorify God by enjoying him forever.

In other words, hallelujah is not confined merely to a praise song. It extends to your enjoyment of God in every aspect of your life, in all the things that you do. As the Apostle said it, “Give thanks in all things” (1Th 5:18). Thus, the psalmist sings, “I will praise the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being” (Ps 146:2). So, four times in the first two verses we are told to praise the LORD. Now that’s a fitting way to begin a final doxology of one of the great books ever put together.

Vs. 2 takes us into the second of three stages of the chiasm of Psalm 146. In fact, all of these last five songs are chiasmic (we will get to those in due time). Here is Psalm 146's:

- A. Praise the LORD (1)
- B. Praise the LORD my God (2)
- C. Man is no help, he returns to earth (3-4)
- C¹. God's help makes man happy, he made the earth (5-6)
- B¹. The things the LORD does (7-10a)
- A¹. Praise the LORD (10b)

While we could look at the parallel verses to vs. 2 in vv. 7-10 together, which teach us the things the LORD God does and therefore the reasons why we should praise him, let's follow the order of the verses.

The song takes us to a warning: “Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation” (3). Princes are rulers of nations. According to the *Urban Dictionary*, there is a brand-new mental condition that has been diagnosed. It is called TDS or Trump Derangement Syndrome. This takes place, the first entry says, when “a person has been driven effectively insane due to their dislike of Donald Trump, to the point at which they will abandon all

logic and reason.” Symptoms range from “hysterical outburst to a complete mental break.” And “TDS can also often result in the sufferer exhibiting violent, homicidal, or even genocidal desires.”

The rather humorous entry (this dictionary is like *Wikipedia* where anyone can add things to it) states that “If properly treated, suffers [should be sufferers] of TDS can make a full recovery. Many suffers have been known to grow out of TDS, yet many can only be treated by having their condition directly treated through the application of logical reasoning. It is also known that products containing soy can exasperate the condition.”¹¹

Do you remember watching the absolute breakdowns that people had the night he was elected, and the ongoing craziness that is the way people are affected by The Donald, such that it has caused a syndrome to come into our urban vocabulary? I would strongly argue that such reactions are caused by one thing: Putting your trust in princes—in this case, the prince you *didn't* want. It is the opposite of obedience to the psalm, of applying its message to yourself.

¹¹ Phoenix797, “Trump Derangement Syndrome,” *Urban Dictionary*, July 20, 2018, <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Trump%20Derangement%20Syndrome>

On the other end of it, you can *YouTube* “[This Man Worships Donald Trump As A God!](#)” and discover that in Konne, India a certain Hindu man sets up a literal shrine every day to Donald Trump and literally worships the man, even prays to him. Why not, right? With 300,000,000 gods, there’s always room for one more. Both examples reflect the default of many people, and the song strongly warns you: *Do not do it!* Stand up for your political beliefs; be proud of them. But if you are putting your trust, in any way, in a son of man, beware.

In him “[there is no salvation.](#)” This is an interesting phrase that we will [return to](#). Until then, the song gives us [another reason](#). Like all other men, [he will die](#). “[When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish](#)” (3). All the scheming, plotting, conniving—it all ends in ruin. Karl Marx? Dead. Adolph Hitler? Dead. Nero? Dead. Obama and Trump, Clinton and Bush? All soon to be dead. To trust in them is the definition of foolishness and insanity. No wonder we see deranged people walking our streets when their worship of men is so clearly on display!

Vv. 3-4 are **the first half of the center** of the song. The second comes in the next two verses, which contrast them. “**Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God**” (5). Princes cannot help, but the God of Jacob does! This is the contrast.

We are talking **personal help** in this song. You are to put your **hope** in the LORD your God; not in a president or a government policy. **Hope** is certainty about the future. Maybe not the immediate future, but the one that matters in the long run. **Help** is how God brings this hope to pass. **A little later, we will look at the chief way this happens,** through the “salvation” we said we would also return to. Until then, paralleling the reason you are not to trust in princes, there is a reason to trust in the LORD.

Vs. 3 Do not trust princes

Vs. 4 Stated Reason

Vs. 5 Trust in the LORD

Vs. 6 Stated Reason

This presents itself through **a string of participles** (words that in English we usually translate as -ing). Curiously, there are 10 of them.

- Making the heavens and earth (146:6a)
- Keeping faith forever (6b)
- Executing justice for the oppressed (7a)
- Giving food to the hungry (7b)
- Setting the prisoners free (7c)
- Opening the eyes of the blind (8a)
- Lifting up those who are bowed down (8b)
- Loving the righteous (8c)
- Watching over the sojourners (9a)
- Upholding the widow and the fatherless (9b)

Beloved, God made all things, heaven and earth. These hallelujah songs are filled with **language about creation**, because it is the starting point of the Bible and the starting point for any hope from God. Why? Because he is all powerful to do anything.

This God **keeps faith**, covenant, promises. He is not a man that he should lie. And even when we are faithless, God remains faithful. For he is unchanging, and it is impossible that God could go back on his word.

The **oppressed**, the **hungry**, the **prisoners**, the **blind**, the **sojourners**, and the **widow** and **fatherless** make up the ma-

jority of those God watches over here. Who are these people? They are the opposite of the people many often spend their time watching (the celebrities, the rich, the free, the beautiful, the native, those with families and jobs and parents and everything going for them and nothing wrong with them). God is said to help those who do not normally get our help.

He **sits in court** and renders judgments for those who can't protect themselves. He powerfully feeds those who have no ability to feed themselves. He goes into the jails and opens the doors of those who are chained to the walls. He touches those who cannot see and gives them sight. His own watchful eye is on those who have no home, no place to call their own. And his upholding hands are there for the widows and orphans who have no one to take care of them.

Right in the middle of this list of beleaguered and helpless is “the righteous.” **The LORD loves the righteous**. Who are they? They are those who know him to be their hope and their help. They are those who love their neighbor as themselves. They are those who obey his law and believe in his Name. *They are those who sing praise to the LORD.*

Contrasting the righteous of vs. 8 are the wicked of vs. 9. While he loves the righteous, “the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.” This language of “the way” takes us back to Psalms 1-2, thus returning us to the beginning. “How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners ... for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish ... Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way” (Ps 1:1, 6, 2:12).

What is remarkable is that we saw that in Psalm 1-2, “the man” who walks in “the way” is ultimately the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone will do what Psalm 1 says. He is the prophetic underpinning of the Introduction to the entire book. Yet, in Psalm 146, you can go right down that list of participles and very quickly recognize that at one point or another, **all of them are ascribed to Jesus Christ in the NT.**

Who made heaven and earth in Colossians 1? Jesus. Who makes an unbreakable covenant thereby keeping faith? Christ. Who feeds the hungry, reads the scroll of Isaiah about prisoners, makes blind men see? Jesus. In other words, the end of the book returns us to the beginning in another way, helping us clearly see—especially as we have the NT

to inform us of what happened—that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Psalms. They are all about him. This song is about him. And that is why we worship Jesus, for he is the God of the OT.

The questions you are to ask as you read this song are, when you read the psalmist singing that he will praise the LORD in all things and always, is this the desire of your heart? Sure, you will fall short. But is it your desire? Do you fight through the difficulties of life, rethinking your anger and negativity, perhaps even towards God, and praise him through anything? This has been a major lesson of the entire psalter, beginning in Book I. Have you learned that lesson and are you praising and enjoying your God?

Then, do you recognize the blessings and curses that are here in the midst? To take this psalm and praise God by faith is to be the righteous that the LORD loves. To not is to walk in the way of the wicked, and it will end in him bringing you to ruin. How do we know? The end vs. “The LORD will reign forever ... to all generations” (Ps 146:10a). He is King and his kingdom knows no end. And the King will do what is right.

Is he “your God” (10b)? If so, what is your reaction?

Psalms 147: Praise the LORD--You

If Psalm 146 is about “**me.**” Then Psalm 147 is about “**you.**” That is, this is a song that takes the focus off the individual and puts it on the community. It isn’t just one person who is to praise God; it is all of us together, Christ’s church. The “you” is implied: “**Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting**” (Ps 147:1).

The focus moves to the Holy Land and God’s people. “**The LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel.**” Technically, this begins the first of three series of participles:

- Building Jerusalem
- Gathering outcasts
- Healing the brokenhearted
- Binding up their wounds
- Determining the number of stars
- Giving to all of them their names
- Lifting up the humble
- Casting the wicked to the ground (2-6)
- Covering the heavens with clouds

- Preparing the for the earth rain
- Causing grass to spring up on mountains
- Giving to the beast its food (8-9)
- Sending out his command to the earth
- Giving now like wool
- Hurling down his crystals of ice like crumbs (15-17)

There are **fifteen of them** in this song. And they basically flesh out more of what we just heard, which is why Psalm 147 is a companion to 146. He is **creator**. He is **provider**. He **cares for the less fortunate**. The only one that is really substantially different from the previous list is that **he builds Jerusalem**. That focus on God's holy city helps his people praise him together. And we, church, are related to this, for we are the Jerusalem that is from above (**Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22; Rev 21:2** etc.) that is being built into a great and holy nation and temple (**1Co 14:5; Col 2:7; 1Pe 2:5**; etc.).

In this song, the participles are spread out over three different sections. When you look at the song structurally, it helps make sense of this:

- A. Praise the LORD (1)
- B. Healing for Israel (2-3)
 - C. God's control of the elements (4-9)
 - D. God takes no pleasure (10)
 - D¹. God takes pleasure (11)
 - C¹. God's control of Israel (12-14)
- B¹. The Word revealed to Israel (15-20)
- A¹. Praise the LORD (20)

Again, it begins and ends with “Praise the LORD.” They all do. Coming next is God’s healing to Jerusalem. It seems that it is especially those within *her midst* that God gathers, heals, and binds up. “The LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel. He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds” (147:2-3). It is easy to see how someone returning from Babylon could sing a song like this. But so also it is easy to see how someone being returned home from the territory of the devil when they come to faith in Christ and are put into his kingdom could sing the same thing. Indeed, there are so many that can sing this, that is why these praises belong to us all, the whole church

throughout the ages, from the martyrs under Nero and Diocletian to the Christian orphans orphaned at the hands of man Muslims and all in between.

From here, we move to six verses of **God's control, particularly of the elements**. In it, he **determines the number of the stars and gives them all their names (4)**. With what science has revealed to us about the number of stars, this line may well describe the infinitude of God's knowledge and power more than any other in the Scripture. A quick search reveals that there are 5,000 stars observable to the naked eye. But we have every reason to believe that the ancients knew there were more. How many more? Did they know that there are an estimated 100,000,000,000 (one hundred billion) in the Milky Way and an incalculable 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 (sextillion or billion-trillion) in the universe? Truly, **"Great is our Lord (Adonai), and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure"** (5). It's kind of like the Psalmist knew about these numbers! Indeed, the Holy Spirit inspired him.

In this song, **lifting the humble** and **casting the wicked to the ground** appears in **vs. 6**. This is followed by **singing to the LORD with thanksgiving** and making melody to our

God on the lyre (7). But it then returns again to his control of the **elements**. **Covering the heavens with clouds (8)**, he thereby brings **rain, even upon the grassy mountain sides (8b)**. **Giving beasts their food, even their young that cry (9)**, God is powerful and providential over all. More reasons to praise him!

In the center of this poem is **God's pleasure**. What pleases God? It being by telling us what doesn't pleasure him. **"His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man" (10)**. He doesn't care about brute power or human agility and swiftness, even though he made both horse and man. Now, just so you will not be confused, the point is not to say that God doesn't like these things (he made them out of his pleasure). Rather, it is **a comparison**.

Comparatively, he doesn't delight in them because **his true delight**, the thing he loves much, much more is when **people fear him and hope in his steadfast love (11)**. Do you realize what this means? It means that God cares about the important things, the eternal things, about you and your soul. This is why he gives you his word. He wants you to know what he cares about. Wars and races, sports and horses of battle, while these may thrill you more, God cares about

your salvation. And this is why he is said to care about those he cares about in these songs. For it is those who are too busy looking for food to care about the outcome of a game, who are lonely for a father to worry about a political alliance across the sea whom Jesus came to seek and to save. He cares about those who need a doctor, not those who are well; he cares about sinners, not those who have never sinned; he cares about those who have ruined their lives, who are in desperateneed, and who can't help themselves anymore.

God holds out his steadfast love to any that will fear not in man, but in his awesome power, trust not in princes but in his faithfulness to his own promises and covenant love. As we look at the structure, the beauty of this is fleshed out in God's control of the elements becoming [God's control of Israel](#)—his chosen people.

“Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion!” (12). “For he strengthens the bars of your gates; he blesses your children within you” (13). “He makes peace in your borders; he fills you with the finest of the wheat” (14). Does not God have a special love for his people, his church, his bride, different and more intense than his love for the world? Is this not a love that that causes him to do all that is

necessary to bring them to salvation, including effectually calling them when they are not seeking him? Are not his blessings proven in this church today?

I'm burdened that people have somehow come to believe that there must always be hostility and ruin and misery, lack of peace and unity even in Christ's church. **We have become cynical**, nearly faithless. Does not the last many years of our own local church demonstrate on the whole that this is not true? Are we not a blessed group of people, who have enjoyed these very benefits together and continue to enjoy them because God does exactly what he has promised?

And why or how has this, does this happen? In the song, God brings healing to Israel by **sending forth his powerful Word**. Listen and think of God in Christ. **"He sends out his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly"** (15). Word in the Greek is *Logos*. Do you hear the comparison between taking no pleasure in the legs of man and the Word running swiftly! He takes no pleasure, because his true pleasure is in the Word running the race! Eusebius said long ago,

**He that sends his word on earth, until his word runs swiftly."
He that sends is evidently distinct from him that is sent. You**

have then, here, both the Sender, the almighty God, and also the Word that was sent, who having many names is called by the holy oracles now Wisdom, now Word, now God, and also Lord. And as you know how in a very short time the word of his teaching has filled the whole world, I am sure you will wonder at the fulfillment of the prophecy, “Till his word runs swiftly (*PROOF OF THE GOSPEL* 6.10).

It is through the Word that “He gives snow like wool” and “scatters frost like ashes” (16). He destroys the cold and covers barren. It is through the word that he “hurls down crystals of ice like crums” and “who can stand before his cold?” (17). Indeed, “He sends out his Word, and melts them; he makes his wind blow and the waters flow” (18). He does this for the world, how much more for his people through torah? “He declares his word to Jacob, his statues and rules to Israel” (19). Calvin gets the point:

When the waters congeal, when the hail spreads through the air, and hoar frosts darken the sky, surely we have proof how effectual his word is. But if all these wonders produce no effect upon most men, at least the piercing cold which benumbs our bodies, should force us to recognize the power of

God. When the heat of the sun scorches us in summer, and again, upon the succession of winter, all things are bound up, such a change as this, which must have appeared incredible had we not been accustomed to it, cries out loudly that there is a being who reigns above.¹²

Luther is also worth hearing:

Here the psalmist gives an example of winter, in order to confirm his view. In a sense, winter is the exact opposite of summer; for in winter the land lies waste and desolate, and produces neither grain nor fruit, so that it seems as though nothing more would ever grow out of the earth. A man who had never experienced a winter might well despair and think that heaven and earth had become our enemies and wanted to kill us with hunger and frost ... Winter looks like death, anger, and everything bad, as compared with the summer, which looks like life, grace, and all good things ... The whole creation is powerless to make even a grain of wheat grow or any fruit ripen in winter, but God can change the winter, banish it, and bring the summer again, so that one forgets the winter. And He does this so easily that it costs

¹² John Calvin and James Anderson, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 5 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 301.

Him only one word. Shouldn't you, then, the more easily believe that He can help you out of your winter and all distress, easily and with a single word? ... how can the misfortune of an individual, a city, or a country compare with the winter, which is a misfortune to the whole human race and all the world? ...

Now consider: If God every year helps the entire world out of winter, its annual flood and death, should you not learn from this mighty example of God's power, performed annually before your very eyes, to trust and believe in Him in every need? Look how even the godless, who believe in nothing, are able to say in winter: "O yes, summer will come again," and are convinced that it will not be winter forever. Therefore you and everyone should learn to say in the midst of his winter: "Very well, let there be snow, frost, and freezing. No matter how bad things get, summer will come again. God will not let it snow and freeze forever."¹³

Vs. 18, one of these explicit verses about the "word." In the *Old Testament Quotations and Allusions to the New Testament*, the author sees an echo of this verse in Acts. "He sends

¹³ **Martin Luther**, *Luther's Works, Vol. 14: Selected Psalms III*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 14 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 125–127.

out his word” becomes, “The word which God sent to Israel: preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)” (Acts 10:36). Amen. This is exactly what we learn throughout the NT about the Word of God—for it is he who does these many things, especially taking his covenant people, washing them with his word, and making them be his beautiful, spotless bride.

This is the gospel in the OT. And thus the song ends, “He has not dealt thus with any other nations; they do not know his rules” (Ps 147:20). And so the song of “me” becomes the song of “you” and of us all. Beloved, we are each faced with daily temptations to go down the road of Joe Simpson so that just at the moment we thought we might cry out to the LORD, it never crosses our mind. No matter what your station in life or your circumstance, there are two roads before you. That of Joe Simpson or that of Jonah. What will you respond to Psalm 146? How will we as a church respond to 147?

May God’s people one and all sing hallelujah to the Lord of lords. May you know of his sovereign power, his gentle care, his love for the outcast, his faithfulness to his promises, his bringing of peace and his building the walls of his people

anew this day. May you know that this is the blessing we hear about in the Psalter. And may you know anew the glories of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, who goes before us, cares about us, died for us, and was raised that we might have life.

May all God's people Praise the LORD.

Literary Relationships in Psalms 146-150

Ps146:1-150:6

A(146:1-6)	"146:6 The maker of heaven and earth, the seas and all that is in them, Who keeps faith forever, (146:6)"	(שמיאורץ)
B(146:7-10)	146:7 secures justice for the oppressed, gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets prisoners free; (146:7)	
C(147:1)	147:1 how sweet to give fitting praise	(תהלה)
D(147:2-20)	"147:19 The LORD also proclaims his word to Jacob, decrees and laws to Israel. (147:19)"	(ומשפטיו)
E(148:1-4)	148:1 Praise the LORD from the heavens	(הללו)
A'(148:5-13)	"148:13 Let them all praise the LORD'S name, for his name alone is exalted, majestic above earth and heaven. (148:13)"	(ארץושמים)
B'(148:14)	148:14 The LORD has lifted high the horn of his people; to the glory of all the faithful, of Israel, the people near to their God. Hallelujah!(148:14)	
C'(149:1)	149:1 a hymn in the assembly of the faithful.	(תהלת)
D'(149:2-9)	149:9 To execute the judgments decreed for them-- such is the glory of all God's faithful. Hallelujah!(149:9)	(משפט)
E'(150:1-6)	150:6 Let everything that has breath give praise to the LORD	(הללו)

A: Heaven and earth. B: Salvation. C: Praise. D: Judgement. E: Hallelu.

Table 3. The Thematic Similarities in Psalms 146-150 ¹⁴		
Overall Theme: Praise YHWH, God of Israel and of the Universe, Who Is Faithful		
YHWH's mighty works in creation	YHWH's faithful works of caring for His creatures	YHWH's kingship and sovereign reign
The Maker of heaven and earth and everything in them (146:6)	He secures justice for the oppressed, gives food to the hungry. YHWH sets the prisoners free; YHWH gives sight to the blind; YHWH lifts up those who are bowed down; YHWH loves the righteous; YHWH watches over the sojourners. He comes to the aid of the orphan and widow, but frustrates the path of the wicked. (146:7-9)	YHWH will reign forever. Your God, O Zion, for all generations (146:10)
He counts the number of stars; He gives names to all of them. (147:4)	YHWH, the Builder of Jerusalem! He gathers the exiles of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted, and He binds their wounds ... provides Food for animals,	He counts the number of Stars; He gives names to all of them. Great is our God and full power; His understanding has no limit. (147:4-5)

¹⁴ Kilnam Cha, *Psalms 146-150: The Final Hallelujah Psalms as a Fivefold Doxology to the Hebrew Psalter*, A Dissertation to the Graduate Faculty of Baylor University, 2006: 142.

	young ravens what they cry for. He strengthens the bars of your gates and blesses your sons within you. He who grants peace to your borders satisfies you with the finest wheat. (147:2-3, 8-9, 13-14)	
He commanded, and they (heavenly hosts, the Sun, Moon, and stars) were created; He set them in place for ever and ever; He made a decree that will never change. (148:5-6)	He has raised up a horn for His people. (148:14a)	Praise YHWH from the heavens; praise Him on high. Praise Him all His angels, praise Him all his heavenly hosts. Praise Him, Sun and Moon, praise Him all bright stars. (148:1-3)
Its (Israel's) Maker (149:2)	He crowns the lowly with Salvation. (149:4b)	Let the children of Zion be glad in their King. (149:2b)
All that breathes (150:6)	His [unspecified] mighty acts (150:2)	God is in His sanctuary (150:1a)

Psa 146 Chiasm

- D. Praise the LORD (1)
- E. Praise God (2)
 - F. Man is no help, he returns to earth (3-4)
 - C¹. God's help makes man happy, he made the earth (5-6)
- B¹. The things the LORD does (7-10a)
- A¹. Praise the LORD (10b)

Ps 147 Chiasm

- E. Praise the LORD (1)
- F. Healing for Israel (2-3)
 - G. God's control of the elements (4-9)
 - H. God takes no pleasure (10)
 - D¹. God takes pleasure (11)
 - C¹. God's control of Israel (12-14)
- B¹. The Word revealed to Israel (15-20)
- A¹. Praise the LORD (20)

- A. Sing praises (zamar) (1)
- B. The LORD builds up (2-3)
 - C. He determines (micpar) the number of stars (4)
 - D. Great is our LORD, and of great power (5a)
 - C¹. His understanding is beyond measure (micpar) (5b)
 - B¹. The LORD lifts up the meeks, casts down the wicked (6)
- A¹. Sing praises (zamar) to the LORD (7)

Ps 148 Chiasm

- A. Praise the LORD (1)
- B. Praise the LORD from the heavens (2-4)
 - C. Let them praise the Name of the LORD (5a)
 - D. For he commanded, and they were created (5b)
 - E. He established them, he gave a decree (6)
- B¹. Praise the LORD from the earth and the depths (7-12)
 - C¹. Let them praise the Name of the LORD (13a)
 - D¹. For his Name alone is excellent, his glory is above earth and heaven (13b)
 - E¹. He raised up a horn for his people
- A¹. Praise the LORD (14)

Psalm 149 chiasm

- A. Praise the LORD (1a)
- B. Sing a new song, Praise in the assembly of the godly (1b)
 - C. Let Israel rejoice in its King (2-3)
 - D. For the LORD takes pleasure in his people, saving them (4)
 - E. Let the godly be joyful and sing to God (5-6a)
 - D¹. With two-edged swords in their hands, they execute vengeance on the peoples (6b-7)
 - C¹. Binding their kings with chains and executing judgment (8-9a)
- B¹. This is honor for all his godly ones (9b)
- A¹. Praise the LORD (9c)

Psalm 150 Inclusio

- A. What? Praise the LORD (1a)
- B. Where? In his sanctuary, in the mighty heavens (1b-c)
 - C. Why? For his mighty acts and excellent greatness (2)
 - D. How? With great instruments (3-5)
 - E. Who? Everything that has breath (6a)
- A¹. Praise the LORD (6b)