

Psalm 150 – Study Guide¹

*"God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.
Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!
For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm!" Psalm 45:5-7*

Psalm 150 is quite direct and clear. The charge is to praise The LORD, and it expresses this with enthusiastic diversity. The psalm appears to break down into four primary sections as will be addressed later, but as stated it fundamentally is quite direct and clear. Therefore, the aim of this Study Guide is to both unpack the details of the psalm and to foster a context of appreciation and action to the otherwise straightforward text. I liken this to the simplicity of telling an experienced driver to get in a car and drive verses handing the car keys to a person on a mission and taking a few moments to explain why this customized vehicle will be an optimal tool to arrive at their destination in the most efficient, safe, and enjoyable manner. In other words, I want the direct and clear charge to pack the punch that it was made to deliver – to be of a unique and enduring value in your worshiping The LORD.

Further, as intentional as Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 were in their roles of foundations for the whole of the Psalter so Psalm 150 is in its role of the Psalter's conclusion and capstone. This is articulated in a most insightful way by Walter Brueggemann, "[Psalm 150] states the outcome of such a life under Torah. Torah-keeping does arrive at obedience, yet obedience is not the goal of Torah-keeping. Finally, such a life arrives at *unencumbered praise*.... In this light the expectation of the Old Testament is not finally *obedience*, but *adoration*. The Psalter intends to lead and nurture people to such a freedom that finds its proper life in happy communion that knows no restraint of convention or propriety."²

Structure and Outlines

David Crowe

150:1	Opening Exhortation: Praise The LORD
150:1-2	Instructions in Praising God
150:1	Where to Praise God
150:2	Content in Praise to God
150:3-5	Magnificent Diversity in Expression of Praise to God
150:6	Closing Exhortation: Everyone, Praise The LORD

John MacArthur³

- I. Place of Praise (150:1)
- II. Points of Praise (150:2)
- III. Proper Means of Praise (150:3-5)
- IV. Practitioners of Praise (150:6)

ESV Study Bible⁴

150:1-2 Praise God in the Sanctuary.

150:3-6 Praise Him with Music and Dance.

¹ Prepared by David Crowe for Pray's Mill Baptist Church Adult Sunday School

ALL Scripture Quotations are from the ESV Bible unless the Scripture reference is in a quote from another author – their original translation was kept.

² The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Revised Edition: Psalms, Volume 5. Willem A. VanGemeren. Zondervan, 2008 (Hereafter: VanGemeren), Pg.1008

VanGemeren quoted and cited Brueggemann: Message of the Psalms, Pg. 167

³ The MacArthur Study Bible, NKJV. Word Bibles, 1997. (Hereafter: MacArthur), Pg. 872

⁴ English Standard Version Study Bible. Crossway Bibles, 2008. (Hereafter: ESV SB) Pgs. 1127-1128

Arnold Rhodes⁵

150:1	Where Is the Lord to Be Praised?
150:2	Why Is the Lord to Be Praised?
150:3-5	How Is the Lord to Be Praised?
150:6	By Whom Is the Lord to Be Praised?

Willem VanGemenen⁶

- A Praise the Lord in Heaven (v.1)
- B Praise the greatness of God (v.2)
- B' Praise the Lord with Great Intensity (v.3-5)
- A' Praise the Lord on Earth (v.6)

Steven Lawson⁷

150:1	Where to Praise God.
150:2	Why to Praise God.
150:3-6	How to Praise God.

Derek Kidner⁸

150:1	The 'where' of praise
150:2	The 'why' of praise
150:3-5	The 'how' of praise
150:6	The 'who' of praise

Structure

Psalms 150 is very direct and clear. However, there are some structural elements that are apparent in this brief psalm. In addition to the paralleled opening and closing of the psalm (150:1,6) there are instructive exhortations and broad diversity of application.

The first of the instructive exhortations include where to praise God: in his designated place of prescribed worship, the sanctuary (consisting of either the Tabernacle or Temple depending on the dating of the psalm) and even then, expanding to the magnificent breadth of the heavens or sky (beyond the temporal and special bounds of structures). The second of the instructive exhortations include things for which one should be praising God: his mighty deeds, which abundantly fill the pages of Scripture, and his excellent greatness, which is known both through his observed acts and expressed character and perfect holiness.

Psalms 150's broad diversity includes exhortations to praise God with beautiful skill and joy expressed through a breadth of instruments (no less than seven instruments and categories of instruments are listed) and even dancing (not some profane self-indulgence, but a physical expression of the inner man whose joy in God cannot be withheld).

In the concluding section of Psalm 150, the call to praise The LORD is extended to all, which serves as a fitting conclusion to a book centered on worshiping God. This conclusion also serves as the conclusion to Book Five of the Psalter and the Psalter as a whole's final doxology.

⁵ The Layman's Bible Commentary: Psalms, Volume 9. Arnold B. Rhodes. John Knox Press, 1966 (Hereafter: Rhodes), Pg. 191-192

⁶ VanGemenen, Pg. 1008

⁷ Holman Old Testament Commentary: Psalms 76-150, Volume 12. Steven J. Lawson. B&H Publishing Group, 2006 (Hereafter: Lawson), Pgs. 377-378

⁸ Derek Kidner; Kidner Classic Commentaries: Psalms 73-150. IVP Academic (Digital Copy), 2008. (Hereafter: Kidner), Pgs. 528-529

Doxological Conclusions within the Five Books in the Psalms

Each of the Psalter's five books conclude with a doxology and Psalm 150 as a whole serves as a last great doxology with 150:6 being its final crown.

Book I

Psalm 41:13 "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen."

Book II

Psalm 72:18-20 "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! The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended."

Book III

Psalm 89:52 "Blessed be the LORD forever! Amen and Amen."

Book IV

Psalm 106:48 "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, 'Amen!' Praise the LORD!

Book V

Psalm 150:6 "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!"

"Psalm 150 is the last of the psalms, and it is the obvious climax of the collection as well as of the final group of five praise songs. In Psalm 146 an individual Israelite praises God for his grace, power, and faithfulness to the needy. In Psalm 147 the inhabitants of Jerusalem are urged to praise God for their regathering, blessing, and security in the years following their exile. In Psalm 148 all creatures in heaven and on earth are told to praise God as their Creator and as the Redeemer of his people Israel. In Psalm 149 the saints are invited to praise God since they have been saved from their enemies and look forward to the blessings of the final judgment. In Psalm 150 every creature that has breath is exhorted to praise God everywhere and with every means available."⁹

Instruments and Singing

The following section makes substantial reference to King David and his impact and shaping of worship and praise to The LORD in Israel. However, it is not an attempt to make a case for Davidic authorship of Psalm 150 whose author is unknown/unrecorded. Rather, the intent is to demonstrate the magnificent details and elements present in worship and praise to The LORD as they find a concise but powerful summary in Psalm 150. These historical details and backdrop seek to serve that intended goal and by their very nature are going to have a strong Davidic presence in the process.

David's Example When Escorting The Arc of God

When the ark of God was being brought to the city of David there were very clear instructions by David that it be carried properly. In addition to these instructions (more vigilantly followed on the second attempt) David also gave assigned instructions for worship that included the singing and the playing of instruments in praise to God. This event was recorded in 1 Chronicles 15-16 and is very insightful to the intent and heart of Psalm 150. The following seeks to draw some of these principles and observations out to help establish a greater foundation of understanding in approaching our text.

⁹ An Expositional Commentary: Psalms, Volume 2. James Montgomery Boice. Baker Books, 1996 (Hereafter: Boice), Pg. 1286

Instructions and assignments by David for worship.

1 Chronicles 15:16	"...appoint their brothers as the singers who should play loudly on musical instruments, on harps and lyres and cymbals, to raise sounds of joy."
1 Chronicles 15:19	"The singers... were to sound bronze cymbals...."
1 Chronicles 15:20-21	"...to play harps... to lead with lyres...."
1 Chronicles 15:22	"Chenaniah, leader of the Levites in music, should direct the music, for he understood it."
1 Chronicles 15:24	"...the priests, should blow the trumpets before the ark of God."
1 Chronicles 15:27-28	"...the singers and Chenaniah the leader of the music of the singers. ...with shouting, to the sound of the horn, trumpets, and cymbals, and made loud music on harps and lyres."
1 Chronicles 15:29	"...King David dancing and celebrating...."
1 Chronicles 16:4	"...to invoke, to thank, and to praise the LORD, the God of Israel."
1 Chronicles 16:5-6	"Asaph was the chief, and second to him were ... who were to play harps and lyres; Asaph was to sound the cymbals, and ...to blow trumpets regularly before the ark of the covenant of God."
1 Chronicles 16:7	"Then on that day David first appointed that thanksgiving be sung to the LORD by Asaph and his brothers."
1 Chronicles 16:41	"...chosen and expressly named to give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever."
1 Chronicles 16:42	"...had trumpets and cymbals for the music and instruments for sacred song."

The song of thanksgiving David provided for worship.

1 Chronicles 16:8	"...make known his deeds among the peoples!"
1 Chronicles 16:9	"...tell of his wondrous works!"
1 Chronicles 16:12	"Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles and the judgments he uttered...."
1 Chronicles 16:15	"Remember his covenant forever...."
1 Chronicles 16:19-22	Recalling of The LORD's provisional care while Israel was in the wilderness.
1 Chronicles 16:23	"Sing to The LORD, all the earth! Tell of his salvation from day to day."
1 Chronicles 16:24	"Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!"
1 Chronicles 16:26	"...The LORD made the heavens."
1 Chronicles 16:27	"Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy are in his place."
1 Chronicles 16:34	"Oh give thanks to The LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!"
1 Chronicles 16:36	"Then all the people said, 'Amen!' and praised The LORD."

Principles and Observations from David's Instructions and Song

There was both singing and the use of diverse instruments.

The volume was significant with loud playing and shouting.

There was a music director who was so appointed because of his oversight of music and his understanding of it.

There was a music chief who oversaw worship through instruments and singing.

There was intentionality to the application of various instruments and their roles.

Named instruments: harps, lyres, (bronze) cymbals, trumpets, horn.

In his worshipful exuberance David was dancing and celebrating.

David provided a worship song to be sung to The LORD by Asaph and others.

The worship included singing that was accompanied by instruments.

Worship was an expression of thanksgiving.

Worship was a means of testifying to The LORD's deeds.

Worship was expressed through both singing and the playing of instruments.

Worship was an exercise in recollecting The LORD's acts and deeds.

Worship was informed by both theology and biblical history.

Worship was a public declaration to all peoples.

Worship delights in the magnificence of God.

Worship involves all the people of God.

Structured Worship and Liturgy

David had an unparalleled impact on Israel's worship, an expected overflow of a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 14:14). Among David's many impacts on the worship and liturgy of Israel he assigned the Levites to various roles within the scope of their responsibilities, and among these assignments 4,000 were assigned to worship, "4,000 shall offer praises to The LORD with the instruments that I have made for praise." 1 Chronicles 23:5

David further appears to not have only established a structure to Tabernacle/Temple worship with singing and diversity of instruments, but there was also the commitment to excellence through skillful training. "They were all under the direction of their father in the music in the house of the LORD with cymbals, harps, and lyres for the service of the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman were *under the order of the king*. The number of them along with their brothers, who were *trained in singing* to the LORD, all who were *skillful*, was 288. And they cast lots for their duties, small and great, *teacher and pupil* alike." 1 Chronicles 25:6-8

Among the demonstrations of praising God by David, who so intentionally established the structure of formal worship for the Tabernacle/Temple, we have the following, which expresses the relationship and theology that informed his praise: "Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name." 1 Chronicles 29:10-13

When Solomon completed the Temple and the ark of the covenant was being brought to the Holy Place within the Temple we again observe magnificent details about the worship that took place. It included designated singers and musicians who sang truth and sang in intentional unison with the musicians.

"And when the priests came out of the Holy Place (for all the priests who were present had consecrated themselves, without regard to their divisions, and all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, their sons and kinsmen, arrayed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, stood east of the altar with 120 priests who were trumpeters; and it was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to *make themselves heard in unison* in praise and thanksgiving to the LORD), and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to the LORD, 'For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever,' the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God." 2 Chronicles 5:11-14

This prescribed worship continued under Solomon, it was reinstituted under Hezekiah when he restored the Temple, and it was exercised again with Nehemiah when the wall was rebuilt and with Ezra when the Temple was being rebuilt.

"Then the king and all the people offered sacrifice before the LORD. King Solomon offered as a sacrifice 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. So the king and all the people dedicated the house of God. The priests stood at their posts; the Levites also, with the instruments for music to the LORD that King David had made for giving thanks to the LORD—for his steadfast love endures forever—whenever David offered praises by their ministry; opposite them the priests sounded trumpets, and all Israel stood." 2 Chronicles 7:4-6

"And he stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, harps, and lyres, according to the commandment of David and of Gad the king's seer and of Nathan the prophet, for the commandment was from the LORD through his prophets. The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. Then Hezekiah commanded that the burnt offering be offered on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song to the LORD began also, and the trumpets, accompanied by the instruments of David king of Israel. The whole assembly worshiped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded. All this continued until the burnt offering was finished. When the offering was finished, the king and all who were present with him bowed themselves and worshiped. And Hezekiah the king and the officials commanded the Levites to sing praises to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed down and worshiped." 2 Chronicles 29:25-30

"And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres. And the sons of the singers gathered together from the district surrounding Jerusalem and from the villages...." Nehemiah 12:27-28

"And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the directions of David king of Israel." Ezra 3:10

Psalms in Praise to God

There are numerous psalms praising God in a wide variety of contexts: deliverance from enemies, struggling amidst enemies, making petition, extoling God, making much of Jerusalem, satisfaction in trusting The LORD, confident faithfulness amidst struggle and petition, delighting in God's Temple, magnifying The LORD's glory, recounting the wondrous works of God, wrestling with enemies and justice, and in pure praise of God.

Psalm 18:3 "I call upon The LORD, who is worthy to be *praised*, and I am saved from my enemies."

Psalm 22:22-23 "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will *praise* you: You fear The LORD, *praise* him!"

Psalm 34:2 "My soul makes its *boast* in The LORD; let the humble hear and be glad."

Psalm 35:18 "I will thank you in the great congregation; in the mighty throng I will *praise* you."

Psalm 44:8 "In God we have *boasted* continually, and we will give thanks to your name forever."

Psalm 48:1 "Great is The LORD and greatly to be *praised* in the city of our God!"

Psalm 63:5 "My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will *praise* you with joyful lips...."

Psalm 69:30 "I will *praise* the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving."

Psalm 69:34 "Let heaven and earth *praise* him, the seas and everything that moves in them."

Psalm 84:4 "Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your *praise*!"

Psalm 96:4 "For great is The LORD, and greatly to be *praised*; he is to be feared above all gods."

Psalm 102:18 "Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may *praise* The LORD...."

Psalm 104:35 "Bless The LORD, O my soul! *Praise* The LORD!"

Psalm 105:3 "*Glory* in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek The LORD rejoice!"

Psalm 106:1 "*Praise* The LORD! Oh give thanks to The LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!"

Psalm 106:48	"Blessed be The LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, 'Amen!' <i>Praise</i> The LORD!"
Psalm 107:32	"Let them extol him in the congregation of the people, and <i>praise</i> him in the assembly of the elders."
Psalm 109:30	"With my mouth I will give great thanks to The LORD; I will <i>praise</i> him in the midst of the throng."
Psalm 113:3	"From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of The LORD is to be <i>praised</i> !"
Psalm 117:1	" <i>Praise</i> The LORD, all nations! Extol him, all peoples!"
Psalm 135:3	" <i>Praise</i> The LORD, for The LORD is good; sing to his name, for it is pleasant!"
Psalm 145:3	"Great is The LORD, and greatly to be <i>praised</i> , and his greatness is unsearchable."
Psalm 146:1-2	" <i>Praise</i> The LORD! <i>Praise</i> The LORD, O my soul! I will <i>praise</i> The LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being."
Psalm 149:3	"Let them <i>praise</i> his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre!"

150:1 Opening Exhortation: Praise The LORD

The psalmist immediately erupts with a call to "praise The LORD," which is what the Psalms have been doing in substantially varied ways throughout the Psalter as we observed in the samples in the previous section.

This exhortation to praise The LORD/God is stated thirteen times throughout the six verses of Psalm 150 and here serves as both a thesis and primer for the psalm. By its nature this opening charge could stand alone, but in the verses that follow the psalmist unpacks valuable elements and illustrations for executing this high calling as he answers: *where* to praise God, *why* to praise God, and *how* to praise God.

150:1	Praise The LORD
150:1	Praise God in...
150:1	Praise him in...
150:2	Praise him for...
150:2	Praise him according to...
150:3	Praise him with...
150:3	Praise him with...
150:4	Praise him with...
150:4	Praise him with...
150:5	Praise him with...
150:5	Praise him with...
150:6	Praise The LORD
150:6	Praise The LORD

Praise: to exorbitantly make much of someone or something.

150:1-2 Instructions in Praising God

This first section, 150:1-2, appears to emphasize The LORD's relationship to the praise most directly:

150:1, where to praise The LORD: in *his* sanctuary and in *his* mighty heavens.

150:2, why to praise The LORD: *his* mighty deeds and *his* excellent greatness.

150:1 Where to Praise God

The call to praise God is made more precise with the first prescription of worshiping God in his sanctuary, which would be the Tabernacle or Temple, and then the exhortation continues to a greater and more general breadth by the call to also praise God in his mighty heavens or the fullness of the sky.

A contextual matter that needs to be worked through at this time is what Psalm 150 is intending to communicate by these two identified locations for praising God, specifically what is their relationship and function. One must determine if the psalmist is communicating that the heavens here are a reference to God's greater sanctuary or the breadth of sky and beyond. More precisely, is the psalmist making a case for the lesser directing us to the greater, an earthly tabernacle compelling us to the greater heavenly tabernacle. This is where I *started* in a plain reading of the text, but my study and work in the text have brought me to a different *conclusion*.¹⁰ The term for "heavens" in Psalm 150:1 *is not* the word commonly translated for heaven(s), but for sky or expanse, which would include the sun, moon, and stars and not necessarily the celestial elements (though I would not discard them out of hand).

This is made a little clearer in other translations:

Psalm 150:1 New American Standard Bible "95

"Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His *mighty expanse*."

Psalm 150:1 King James Version

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

Psalm 150:1 NET Bible

"Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary! Praise him *in the sky*, which testifies to his strength!"

Now, while the intent of the passage is on the immediate Tabernacle/Temple and then expands to the skies and mighty expanse, there is a merit to looking to something greater. As New Covenant believers we are exhorted to such by the author of Hebrews (just do not lose site of the original text, context, and intent in the process).

"Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, 'See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.'" Hebrews 8:1-5

Now, in returning to the immediate context we still must recognize that while the Tabernacle and later the Temple were magnificent places of worship, they still could not contain the uncontainable God. What they did do was provide a sanctuary or holy place where man met with God in the most direct manner on this natural earth and were therefore a place of consecration, worship, prayer, and repentance. *A place where one was undone, made whole, and compelled by both affection and duty to praise The LORD.*

¹⁰ Many have differing conclusions on this point and differ within a small sphere of nuance and details. I have come to my conclusion not out of preference (I find my original one to be quite attractive at face value), but out of laboring in the text. If you choose conclude differently then let it be not because you read the conclusions of other very faithful, skilled, and brilliant men, but because you understand their conclusions having done as much work in the text as you are able to yourself.

"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built! Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O LORD my God, listening to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays before you this day, that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you have said, 'My name shall be there,' that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place." 1 Kings 8:27-29

Further, it was also a reflection of the heart of God that compelled David to desire to build The LORD a house in 2 Samuel 7, and this is most clearly seen in The LORD's directly expressed and firm expectation that his house, his Temple, be rebuilt after its destruction and the people returned to the land after their time in exile.

"Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD. Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD's message, 'I am with you, declares the LORD.' And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. And they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king." Haggai 1:12-15

James Boice concurs with my observations and states that the reference to the firmament or sky expresses the comprehensive breadth of the places that the psalmist is exhorting to praise God, everywhere!¹¹ This is a clear charge and one that is ripe for immediate application!

Derek Kidner understands this to be the sky, but he still brings the heavenly host in the call to praise here.¹² I think it would have been more persuasive if the celestial heavens were referenced or any clear reference to the angelic host. As it stands, neither element is plainly present or present, in my observation, by inference. However, I still find Kidner's conclusion quite fitting, "His glory fills the universe; his praise must do no less."¹³ I think this is a wonderful application of Psalm 19:1 "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork."¹⁴

150:2 Content in Praise to God

This section begins directing the attention to what one gives praise to God for, and the first element is the mighty deeds of God. The mighty deeds of God, the excellent, numerous, and abundant deeds of God.

"God is to be praised for his acts of power, referring to the major areas of divine works (i.e., creation, providence, salvation, and judgment). All his acts work together perfectly with precise unity of purpose and should be the cause for great praise."¹⁵

The LORD saved Israel that he might make known his mighty *power*! The recorded works of God and his dealings throughout Redemptive History are testimonies and sources for praise!

"Our fathers, when they were in Egypt, did not consider your wondrous works; they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love, but rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea. *Yet he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power.*" Psalm 106:7-8

Moses' final petition to The LORD to enter the promised land included an affirmation of God's greatness and his mighty acts/deeds, "O Lord GOD, you have only begun to show your servant your *greatness* and your mighty hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and *mighty acts* as yours?" Deuteronomy 3:24

¹¹ Boice, Pg. 1287

¹² Kidner, Pg. 528

¹³ Kidner, Pg. 528

¹⁴ Note that "heavens" here is the natural firmament or sky and this term is only used in the Psalms in Psalm 19 and Psalm 150.

¹⁵ Lawson, Pg. 377

The Mighty Deeds of Kings

There is an interesting way in which several of the kings are briefly referenced in the Scriptures with an affirming record of their *might*. How much more magnificent and praiseworthy is The King's *mighty deeds*! The record of his *mighty deeds* are forever secured in the Scriptures and testified to by his creation.

The Mighty Deeds of Kings: Record of the acts and might of the kings of men.

- 1 Kings 15:23 "Now the rest of all the acts of Asa, all his *might*, and all that he did, and the cities that he built, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?"
- 1 Kings 16:5 "Now the rest of the acts of Baasha and what he did, and his *might*, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?"
- 1 Kings 16:27 "Now the rest of the acts of Omri that he did, and the *might* that he showed, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?"
- 1 Kings 22:45 "Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his *might* that he showed, and how he warred, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?"
- 2 Kings 10:34 "Now the rest of the acts of Jehu and all that he did, and all his *might*, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?"
- 2 Kings 13:8 "Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz and all that he did, and his *might*, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?"
- 2 Kings 13:12 "Now the rest of the acts of Joash and all that he did, and the *might* with which he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?"
- 2 Kings 14:15 "Now the rest of the acts of Jehoash that he did, and his *might*, and how he fought with Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? "
- 2 Kings 20:20 "The rest of the deeds of Hezekiah and all his *might* and how he made the pool and the conduit and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?"

The Mighty Deeds of Kings: A sampling record of the acts and might of the King of Kings.

"Therefore David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly. And David said: 'Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the *power* and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and *might*, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.'" 1 Chronicles 29:10-13

Examples of praising God for his mighty deeds.

"TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there 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. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat. The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer." Psalm 19

"Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting. The LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure. The LORD lifts up the humble; he casts the wicked to the ground. Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre! He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth; he makes grass grow on the hills. He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry. His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man, but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love. Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion! For he strengthens the bars of your gates; he blesses your children within you. He makes peace in your borders; he fills you with the finest of the wheat. He sends out his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly. He gives snow like wool; he scatters frost like ashes. He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs; who can stand before his cold? He sends out his word, and melts them; he makes his wind blow and the waters flow. He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know his rules. Praise the LORD!" Psalm 147

The psalmist also exhorts all to praise God for his excellent greatness or the glories of his character and person, which are functionally inseparable from his deeds, themselves being a manifestation of his character.

Two superior examples of this are provided by The LORD in his telling Moses of his glory in Exodus 34 and in the praise that surrounds him at his throne in Isaiah 6.

"The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.'" Exodus 34:5-7

"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!' And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke." Isaiah 6:1-4

The two elements that are referenced communicate a call to praise God for his works in life, history, and redemption and to praise God for his perfections in character and person.¹⁶

"God is to be praised both for who he is and what he has done."¹⁷

150:3-5 Magnificent Diversity in Expression of Praise to God

This next section begins an intensive call to praise God with instruments: trumpet, lute, harp, tambourine, strings, pipe, cymbals; and the accompaniment of dance. This is a demonstration of how man is to praise The LORD, it is man's response to the aforementioned content of praise in 150:2.

In a Psalm that calls man to praise The LORD/God thirteen times here we observe praise "The LORD/God *with*" six times in this musical section of 150:3-5.

The trumpet here was the ram's horn and not the metal trumpet that was also used in various capacities in the Old Testament. This trumpet was frequently a tool in battle, likely because of its distinct sound carrying both great distances and over the challenge of competing noises. It was also used for the public declaration of the coronation of a new king in Israel.

¹⁶ Boice, Pg. 1288

¹⁷ Boice, Pg. 1288

Sidebar: The LORD Coming with Trumpet Sound!

While the context of Psalm 150 is man blowing the trumpet as an element of praising The LORD, we also see that The LORD made use of the trumpet in declaring his presence in his most magnificent engagement of Israel at Mount Sinai and will again at his awaited Parousia.

When The LORD came down to Mount Sinai - he effectively announced his presence with the blasting of trumpets (apparently supernaturally as there is no record of someone blowing trumpets for this occasion or that they received a special cue as to when which was an important element to the occasion). It is in like manner that the Lord declares his return in 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

"For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, 'Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death. No hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot; whether beast or man, he shall not live.' *When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain.*' So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people; and they washed their garments. And he said to the people, 'Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman.' On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and *a very loud trumpet blast*, so that all the people in the camp trembled. Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. And *as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder*, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder." Exodus 19:11-19

"For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with *the sound of the trumpet of God*. And the dead in Christ will rise first." 1 Thessalonians 4:16

Of a like image to The LORD announcing his magnificent presence on Mount Sinai is the priest continually blowing trumpets in the accompaniment of the ark of The LORD in the first engagement of the conquest of the promised land. It appears to be a clear image of declaration of The LORD's presence with his people. Joshua 6

This appears to be the pattern that David also assumes when escorting the ark of The LORD from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David.

"David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, as also were all the Levites who were carrying the ark, and the singers and Chenaniah the leader of the music of the singers. And David wore a linen ephod. So all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, to the sound of *the horn*, trumpets, and cymbals, and made loud music on harps and lyres." 1 Chronicles 15:27-28

The lute and harp are the stringed instruments that are specifically named, then there is a very general reference to the "strings" or "stringed instruments."

The lute is stated to be, "A harp-like stringed instrument which was plucked with the finger rather than a plectrum (pick) like the harp."¹⁸ This would explain why the lute is consistently referenced as a harp in various texts and translations. The same term is also frequently translated as a wineskin on account of this guitar like instrument appearing to have a bulbous body that is visually similar to a wineskin.

Solomon had some of the instruments such as lyres and harps/lutes crafted from a unique wood, almug wood, that does not have a known contemporary. These custom instruments were made for the singers. "And the king made of the almug wood supports for the house of the LORD and for the king's house, also lyres and harps for the singers. No such almug wood has come or been seen to this day." 1 Kings 10:12

¹⁸ MacArthur, Pg. 873

In addition to a more precise description of this lute/harp (ten strings) we see here the exhortation to play skillfully and shout loud! "Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright. Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre; make melody to him with the lute/harp of ten strings! Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts." Psalm 33:1-3

The lute and harp, frequent companions of praise to God.

Psalm 144:9 "I will sing a new song to you, O God; upon a ten-stringed lute/harp. I will play to you...."

Psalm 43:4 "Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the harp/lyre, O God, my God."

Psalm 71:22-23 "I will also praise you with the lute/harp for your faithfulness, O my God; I will sing praises to you with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel. My lips will shout for joy, when I sing praises to you; my soul also, which you have redeemed."

Psalm 92:1-3 "It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, to the music of the lute and the lute/harp, to the melody of the harp/lyre."

Psalm 98:4-6 "Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises! Sing praises to the LORD with the harp/lyre, with the harp/lyre and the sound of melody! With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD!"

Dancing! Whereas worship is the unbridled overflow of the heart through the mouth in praising the excellencies of God so it also is not uncommon for abundance of enthusiasm to erupt into dancing - the body reflecting the joy and enthusiastic delight of the heart. Further, tambourine and dancing appear to be celebratory companions and when The LORD is the object of celebration there is no lack of material to fuel this passion of praise. We see this with the rejoicing in supernatural victories, military triumphs, worshipful celebration, expressions of pure joy, and expressions of restored joy.

"For when the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea, the LORD brought back the waters of the sea upon them, but the people of Israel walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea. Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing. And Miriam sang to them: 'Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.'" Exodus 15:19-21

"As they were coming home, when David returned from striking down the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments." 1 Samuel 18:6

"And David danced before the LORD with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the horn." 2 Samuel 6:14-15

"You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!" Psalm 30:11-12

"Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the godly! Let Israel be glad in his Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King! Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre!"

Psalm 149:1-3

Under great judgment and with the destruction of Jerusalem we observe the loss of joy and with it dancing. However, judgment does not have the last word for the covenant people Israel.... Speaking to restoration after the aforementioned time of judgment, a magnificent restoration is coming that will include much rejoicing... and by extension, dancing.

"The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning." Lamentations 5:15

"Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin Israel! Again you shall adorn yourself with tambourines and shall go forth in the dance of the merry-makers." "Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy; I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow." Jeremiah 31:4,13

We see the breadth of instruments and application of music in worship continuing with the reference to the variety of strings beyond the lute and harp. Then there is also the inclusion of wind instruments with the praising of God with the pipe and finally a variety of cymbals too.

While the lute, harp, and stringed instruments are in a close family here we observe two types of cymbals proper.

Arnold Rhodes provides a helpful distinction between the two cymbals referenced, "The 'sounding cymbals' are noisy and heavy and are struck vertically; the 'loud clashing cymbals' are clearer and lighter and are struck horizontally."¹⁹ However, others such as Steven Lawson conclude, "...God is to be praised with the clash of cymbals, instruments usually made of either brass or silver. These were the small higher pitched kind, like our castanets. Resounding cymbals were also to be used, larger and louder, making a more crashing sound."²⁰

It is likely that both and other like conclusion have various measures of historical and archeological merit to them and details are always valuable and should matter to the careful student of the Scriptures. However, what must not be lost in the pursuit of accuracy is the intent of the message, which is a comprehensive sweep of instruments (wind, strings, and percussion) in submission to their highest application: praising God and providing a context for man to express a magnificent breadth and creativity in worship to the infinitely broad and perfectly creative God.

Arnold Rhodes also made an interesting proposal, that the psalm is folding each of the elements in one by one with increasing volume and intensity.²¹ This is certainly a possibility, but there is no overt indication of this. What is quite plain is that The LORD enjoys the diverse instruments, he enjoys their being played skillfully, and he enjoys their accompanying the voices of the redeemed.

Psalm 81, by Asaph, the choirmaster states: "Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob! Raise a song; sound the tambourine, the sweet lyre with the lute/harp. Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day." Psalm 81:1-3

"Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises! Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody! With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD!" Psalm 98:4-6

150:6 Closing Exhortation: Everyone, Praise The LORD

Breath is indicative of natural life on earth - all men and all living creatures of the land, sky, and water are beneficiaries of The LORD who spoke and fashioned his creation, and among the living he is also the one who supplies their very breath. The psalmist is now calling on all the living elements of creation that have the breath of life to worship God! This is staying true to the development of Psalm 150 as a whole, giving tremendous breadth in its exhortations spanning from the sanctuary and heavens, to the reasons: mighty deeds and excellent greatness, to the variety of instruments and dance, and now to all who are the beneficiaries of the breath of life filling their bodies because of a magnificent and praiseworthy God.

This is the first time "who" is addressed in the psalm. Where (150:1), Content (150:2), and Means (150:3-5) and now Who (150:6). Literally let everything that has breath: Hallelujah!

"Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness." Psalm 96:11-13

¹⁹ Rhodes, Pg. 192

²⁰ Lawson, Pg. 378

²¹ Rhodes, Pg. 191

"Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights! Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts! Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the LORD! For he commanded and they were created. And he established them forever and ever; he gave a decree, and it shall not pass away. Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all deeps, fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy wind fulfilling his word! Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars! Beasts and all livestock, creeping things and flying birds! Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth! Young men and maidens together, old men and children! Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his majesty is above earth and heaven. 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!" Psalm 148

This final verse also resolves a potential tension in Psalm 150. While there was a substantial variety of elements covered in praising The LORD, the psalmist never directly mentions praising God with singing or song. It could be argued that singing is the plainest and thereby most fundamentally understood element of praising God, particularly with its dominating presence in so many of the passages cited. However, it is a curious matter that a comprehensive psalm would neglect to include the obvious too.

Lawson helps resolve this possible tension by speaking to the fundamental element of breathing in singing.²² The very call for all who have breath to praise The LORD is by its very nature a summoning of the human instrument to join its lesser accompaniments referenced above.

So, this final section concludes Psalm 150 and the Psalter as a whole with an unambiguous exhortation to praise The LORD, everyone praise The LORD, fulfill your great calling and Hallelujah!

"If praise is the joyful recognition that we are not the center of the universe, and the grateful acknowledgment that Someone Else is and always will be, then Psalm 150 is praise at its best."²³

Conclusion

Hallelujah is the Hebrew transliteration of "Praise The LORD."

My mind and my conduct have been consistently and substantially affected by the various psalms that we have studied, but most comprehensively and dramatically I have been impacted by Psalm 1, 2, 110, 119, and now 150. I am truthfully surprised how much Psalm 150 has demanded of my thoughts on music in praising God. Perhaps I am only catching up with everyone else, but walking through the process of study and working through the magnitude of worship through the Old Testament has uniquely impacted me and I am in prayer about how I must respond. Not that I will rush to the choir loft or seek to personally master an instrument – there are still elements of gifting and skill to be considered with both singing and playing instruments (though some of you are perhaps excusing yourselves too quickly). But how will I pastor in view of these truths. Lord give me wisdom and help that my hallelujah and the hallelujah of those under my care would properly reflect the hallelujah due The LORD.

How do you... who draw breath and who are of the redeemed respond? Can your praise to The LORD be restrained? Can you rest in its whimpering or unskillful application? Or has your mind and heart been so enraptured with the excellencies of our great God that you find worship a joyful rupturing of affection, gratitude, fear, and joy? Would you plead... "LORD, inform and transform our hallelujah!" and then put feet to your prayers by executing your request even as it is more perfectly fulfilled?

"Let everything that has breath hallelujah! Hallelujah!" Psalm 150:6

²² Lawson, Pg. 378

²³ Awake O Harp: A Devotional Commentary on the Psalms. William Varner. Kress Biblical Resources, 2011. Pg. 385