

Psalm 135

Introduction: Mosaics are normally beautiful works of art. This psalm is a literary mosaic made up of fragments from the Law, the Prophets, and other psalms (in other words, the complete TaNaK).

The NET Bible reminds us that, “The psalmist urges God's people to praise him because he is the incomparable God and ruler of the world who has accomplished great things for Israel.” God is the sovereign creator and Lord of history.

- 1) The tabernacle/temple workers are commanded to praise Yahweh—135:1-4
 - a) Cf. Ps. 113:1; 134:1-2
 - b) What are they to do?—135:1-2
 - i) ¹ *Praise Yahweh!* (Hallelu-jah!) (a phrase found 23x in Ps. 104-150)
 - ii) *Praise the name of Yahweh!*
 - iii) *Give praise,*
 - c) Who is to praise Yahweh?
 - i) *O servants of Yahweh, ² who are standing in the house of Yahweh, in the courts of the house of our God.*
 - d) Why are they to do so?
 - i) Because of God’s goodness—135:3 (cf. 133:1 “good ... pleasant”)
 - (1) ³ *Praise Yahweh* (Hallelu-jah!), *because Yahweh is good;*
 - (a) No created tongue, in time or in eternity, will ever be able to tell how good He is. All we can do is state the fact and adore.
(MacDonald)
 - (2) *sing to His name, for it* (Yahweh’s name/character) *is pleasant.*
 - ii) Because of God’s grace (evidence of His goodness)—135:4
 - (1) ⁴ *For Yahweh has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel as His own possession.*
 - (2) The sovereign election of God leaves the wondering soul asking the perpetual questions, “Why me?” It is this that makes us worshippers.
(MacDonald)
 - (3) Cf. Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6
- 2) Why does the psalmist say that is God to be praised?—135:5-18
 - a) Because of God’s greatness—135:5-12
 - i) His **supremacy**—135:5 ⁵ *For I know* (personal knowledge) *that Yahweh is great and that our Master is superior to all gods.*
 - (1) Cf. Ex. 18:11
 - ii) His **freedom**—135:6 ⁶ *Whatever Yahweh pleases, He does,*
 - (1) Where? *in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all the depths.*
 - (2) Cf. Job 42:2; Ps. 115:3; Is. 46:10-11; Dan. 4:35; Eph. 1:10-11
 - (3) God acts voluntarily, not by necessity. (McCune)
 - (4) God did not form his decree because he knew the future; rather, he knows the future because he has decreed the future.

- iii) His **sovereignty** over creation—135:7 ⁷ *He is the One Who causes the clouds to ascend from the ends of the earth; Who makes lightnings for the rain, Who brings forth the wind out of His storehouses.*
 - (1) Cf. Jer. 10:13
 - (2) The people of God in any age must never lose sight of the fact that the LORD is the creator, and as the creator he has absolute power over all nature. Without the doctrine of creation, there is no need for redemption or resurrection, and no reason to praise the LORD. But because the LORD is the creator and the redeemer, he is to be praised forever. (Ross)
- iv) His **sovereignty** in history—135:8-12 (God dealt with Israel's enemies)
 - (1) His Exodus—135:8-9 (against the Super-Power of their day)
 - (a) Plague # 10—⁸ *He is the One Who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, both people and animals.*
 - (b) Plagues # 1-9—⁹ *He is the One Who sent signs and wonders into the your midst, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh and all his servants.*
 - (c) Ps. 136:10
 - (2) His conquest—135:10-12 ¹⁰ *He is the One Who struck down many nations and slaughtered mighty kings, ¹¹ Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan; ¹² and gave their land as an inheritance, an inheritance (legal rights) to His people Israel.*
 - (a) Cf. Num. 21:21-ff; Ps. 136:18-22
 - (b) These are both clear manifestations of the goodness and grace of God for which He is to be praised. (Ross)
- b) Because of God's reputation, justice, and compassion—135:13-14
 - i) Addressing God directly—135:13 ¹³ *O Yahweh, Your name is forever; Your reputation, O Yahweh, is throughout all generations.*
 - (1) Cf. Ex. 3:15
 - ii) Why? ¹⁴ *For ...*
 - (1) *Yahweh judges* (on behalf of) *His people*
 - (2) *and has compassion on His servants.*
 - (3) Cf. Deut. 32:36
 - (4) God's compassion for his people motivates him to vindicate them by delivering them from their enemies, now and finally at the end of the age. (Ross)
- c) Because of God's supremacy over idols—135:15-18
 - i) Cf. Ps. 115:4-8
 - ii) Their inability is described—135:15-17
 - (1) Made from created matter—¹⁵ *The images of the nations are silver and gold, the work of man's hands.*
 - (2) Speechless—¹⁶ *They have **mouths**, but they do not speak;*
 - (3) Sightless—*they have **eyes**, but they do not see;*
 - (4) Deaf—¹⁷ *they have **ears**, but they do not hear;*

- (5) Lifeless—*nor is there any breath in their mouths.*
- iii) Their influence is dangerous—135:18
- (1) Dangerous to their makers—¹⁸ *Those making them will be like them,*
- (2) Dangerous to their followers—*so is everyone trusting in them.*
- (3) Because the idols are lifeless, they cannot help their worshipers in times of crisis. Consequently the worshipers *end up* as dead as the gods in which they trust. (NET)
- iv) The faithful could see the contrast immediately: the LORD is the only true God; he speaks and reveals his will, he watches over his people, he hears their cries and prayers and does mighty works on their behalf. He is the living God. (Ross)
- 3) People are again commanded to praise Yahweh—135:19-21 (cf. Ps. 134)
- a) Commands to Israelites—135:19-20
- i) ¹⁹ *O house of Israel, bless Yahweh!*
- ii) *O house of Aaron, bless Yahweh!*
- iii) ²⁰ *O house of Levi, bless Yahweh!*
- iv) *You who are fearing Yahweh, bless Yahweh!*
- b) Final statement—135:21
- i) ²¹ *Blessed be Yahweh from Zion, Who is dwelling in Jerusalem.*
- ii) Praise Yahweh! (Hallelu-jah!)
- 4) Things for us to remember
- a) When the people of God remember his mighty works, the redemption of Israel from Egypt, the protection of them on the way to the Promised Land, and the granting to them an inheritance, they will find much to say about God in praise.
- b) Now, though, in the new covenant the household of faith must praise God for the great redemption in Christ, for the provisions and protection God gives his people along the way, and for the inheritance that he has given to his people—all due to the goodness and grace of the Lord. (Ross)