

Psalm 148 - The Song of Creation¹

Date: 28 December 2025

Texts: Psalm 148, Hebrews 2.10-18

“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth ... while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?” Job 38.4,7

In Tolkien’s *The Silmarillion* and CS Lewis’ *The Magician’s Nephew* - creation is sung into existence by God.

For Lewis, it is Aslan singing, and as Digory and Polly listen, suddenly innumerable other voices join in harmony and “the blackness overhead, all at once, was blazing with stars.”

For Tolkien, the One, Eru Iluvatar creates the Ainur, mighty angels.

Ilúvatar teaches them how to sing and eventually teaches them a “great theme” so they can “make in harmony together a Great Music” kindled by “Imperishable Flame.” As the Ainur sing Ilúvatar’s theme, writes Tolkien, “a sound arose of endless interchanging melodies woven into harmony that passed beyond hearing into the depths and into the heights, and the places of the dwelling of Ilúvatar were filled to overflowing, and the music went out into the Void, and it was not void.” The result: “Great beauty has been wakened into song.”

As creation has been sung into existence, so it continues to pulsate with the strains of this song.

There are many Psalms that echo this theme, where we are invited to join the song of creation in singing God’s praise.

Psalm 148 is one of those Psalms.

Psalm 148

1-6 - the heavenly creatures called to praise God

Praise the LORD from the heavens;
 praise him in the heights above.
 2 Praise him, all his angels;

¹ This sermon draws on Tyler Witman, ‘Tolkien Understood that Creation is a Song’, 23.11.2025 <https://www.crossway.org/articles/tolkien-understood-that-creation-is-a-song/> and CS Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, HarperCollins, 1958

praise him, all his heavenly hosts.
3 Praise him, sun and moon;
 praise him, all you shining stars.

Tolkien and Lewis's imaginations were saturated in the Scriptures. Both imagined stars as living beings, there at the dawn of the world. They drew on texts like Job 38.

Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth ... while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?

4 Praise him, you highest heavens
 and you waters above the skies.

The Psalm follows the cosmology and sequence of creation in Genesis 1, where God separates the waters above from the water below.

So all the heavenly beings are called to praise God.

7-12 - the creatures of earth called to praise God

7 - Praise the LORD from the earth,
 you great sea creatures and all ocean depths,

These "great sea creatures" are the *taninim*, the sea monsters, which elsewhere are named as Rahab or the Leviathan. In ancient near eastern mythology they represented the untamed waters of chaos that threatened to overwhelm the land and un-make life. For the Canaanites, the *taninim* had to be defeated by the storm god Baal. But here, following Genesis 1, the Psalmist has them simply as the greatest of earthly beings who are called to worship God. It's like in Psalm 104 where the Leviathan frolic in the ocean, they are Yahweh's pet fish.

So too in the following verse, the weapons of the storm god are simply other parts of creation called to sing Yahweh's praise.

lightning and hail, snow and clouds,
 stormy winds that do his bidding,

Then from the creatures of the sea and sky, the psalmist summons the land and its creatures to sing God's praise.

9 you mountains and all hills,
 fruit trees and all cedars,
 10 wild animals and all cattle,
 small creatures and flying birds,

Imagine wandering, driving or hiking Tasmania, and Kunanyi, Mt Hartz, Mt Field, all called to praise God.

All the apple trees of the Huon valley called to praise God
 The mountain ashes, the ancient huon and king billy pines, the fagus and the myrtle beech, all called to praise God.

Then the devils, the quoll, the pademelons, the wombats and echidnas all called to praise God.

The cattle, the sheep, the sugar glider, and the wedge tailed eagle, all called to praise God

Then at last, verse 11-12 humanity - nations, rulers, young and old, men and women, all called to praise God.

Why praise? - CS Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*

Why do the Psalms, God himself, say we should praise him?

Is he vain or needy?

We despise those who constantly need their ego stroked, and we despise those who “brown-nose”, who suck up to feed the ego of celebrities, billionaires and politicians.

Is that horrible and ludicrous picture what God and his worshippers are like?

Praise is admiration.

When we look at a piece of art, or hear a beautiful piece of music, if we say it deserves admiration, we mean that this is the correct, the right, response to it. To not admire it is to miss out on something wonderful.

It's like this with God.

He is that supreme Object which to admire is simply to be awake, to have entered the real world; not to appreciate God is to have lost the greatest experience, and in the end to have lost all.

When we think of someone who has never been in love, never known true friendship, never enjoyed a good book, never had the joy of watching the game they play in heaven, rugby (let's not mention the cricket!) - these are faint images of missing out on praising God.

Further, it is in the process of being worshipped that God communicates His presence to people. It of course is not the only way. But for many people at many times the 'fair beauty of the Lord' is revealed chiefly or only while they worship Him together.

The central act of our corporate worship, the Lord's supper, shows this clearly, even physically, that God gives himself, and we receive.

The miserable idea that God should in any sense need, or crave for our worship like a vain woman wanting compliments, or [a vain influencer constantly curating their social media presence and chasing followers] is implicitly answered by the words, "if I was hungry I would not tell you! (psalm 50.12).

All enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise.

The world rings with praise - lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favourite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favourite game - praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, motors, horses, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians or scholars.

And when we enjoy something, we can't help inviting others to praise it with us.

'Isn't she lovely? Wasn't it glorious? Don't you think it's magnificent?' It's like when you see a terrific film, or read a great book, you just can't help telling others about it. It's why I have to be measured in how often I have a Tolkien illustration in a sermon.

The Psalmists telling everyone to praise God are doing what all men do when they speak of what they care about.

Lewis suggests that we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed.

Lewis imagines that If praise is the consummation of our enjoyment, then the better we are able to praise, and the more worthy the object of our praise, the more intense the enjoyment. If that is the case then perfect praise of the most worthy object of praise will be

sheer bliss. That is to say, this is why heaven is described as that state where the angels and God's holy people continually praise God.

This doesn't mean heaven will be like being in church. Our services, both in their conduct and our power to participate, are merely attempts at worship; never fully successful, often 99.9% failures! We are not riders but pupils in the riding school; for most of us the falls and bruises, the aching muscles ... far outweigh those few moments in which we were, to our own astonishment, actually galloping without terror and without disaster.

This is what heaven is like - to be in perfect love with God - drunk with, drowned in, dissolved by, that delight which, far from remaining pent up inside us, flows out from us incessantly in effortless and perfect expression. To glorify God by enjoying him forever.

This side of glory, as we come together to praise God in church, it is like we are the orchestra tuning our instruments before the performance. Sometimes it's a lovely sound together, but it's only the warm up. But the discipline of weekly praise exists for our delight, to train us so we can and will delight fully in God. Sometimes it's a duty, but sometimes we are caught up in the strains of heaven. But through our corporate worship, we learn how to sing the song of creation, and we learn to live in the song of creation.

13 - his name alone is exalted; his splendour is above the earth and the heavens
 - it is right that we praise him, we find the consummation of our delight in God through praise.

We join in creation's praise, we find ourselves most in sync with the law of our being, we taste the delight and joy of God.

14 And he has raised up for his people a horn -

In Zechariah's song - "He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David" (Luke 1.69) - that is Jesus.

And from our Hebrews reading God himself come to us, fully sharing in our humanity

- To destroy the power of the devil who holds the power of death
- To free us from the fear of death
- And who is able to help us in whatever temptation or trial we face

He is also the one Hebrews names as the radiance of God's glory, the eternal Son, through whom all things were created.

The Psalm ends with God's faithful people who are close to his heart praising him. We see this in the book of Revelation, where the 4 living creatures and the 24 elders representing Israel and the Church sing a new song,

'You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
because you were slain,
and with your blood you purchased for God
persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,
and they will reign on the earth.'

11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. **12** In a loud voice they were saying:

'Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honour and glory and praise!'

13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying:

'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honour and glory and power,
for ever and ever!'²

This is the song of creation, sung into existence by the eternal Word of God. And the invitation of this Psalm is, will you join the song?

This is what you were made for. In praise you will find you come to know God and your heart is freed to soar as you fall before his throne of grace.

As we come to the close of this year, will you make 2026 a year of praise? Will you join all creation in praising our high and exalted Lord, who has come near? In your daily prayers. As you gaze at the mountain or the river.

Will you join with his faithful people and sing his praise, gathering week by week, and find you are close to his heart?

² Revelation 5.9-13