



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 104

Metropolitan Youssef



Introduction

- This Psalm has no title in the Hebrew version
- But it is attributed to David by the Septuagint translation
- The occasion on which the Psalm was composed is unknown
- Some suggested that it was written at the time of the return from the Babylonian exile, and that it was intended to be used at the re-dedication of the temple
- But it has no special applicability to such a service
- This Psalm seems as a continuation of Psalm 103 with different focus
- Psalm 103 praises God for His redemptive work; His mercy exhibited in His recent deliverance of Israel



Introduction

- And Psalm 104 praises Him for His creative work; it is a contemplation of His power, wisdom, and goodness manifested in the creation
- God not only created the universe, but dwells in it and sustains it
- The world depends absolutely upon His will for the continuance of its existence
- It is He who *“gives to all life, breath, and all things”* (Acts 17:25)
- Both Psalms begin and end with the same call to praise God, *Bless the LORD, O my soul*



Introduction

- Some have considered it a sort of illustration of the history of the creation, as given in the book of Genesis
- In the first 23 verses, the psalmist includes many elements from the Genesis creation story
- Like light (v. 2; - Genesis 1:3); the heavens (v. 3; - Genesis 1:1); wind (vv. 3-4; - Genesis 1:2); the deep (v. 6; - Genesis 1:1); water covering mountains and then receding (vv. 6-9; - Genesis 1:9-10); vegetation (vv. 14-16; - Genesis 1:11-13); birds (v. 17; - Genesis 1:20-22); animals (vv. 18-22; - Genesis 1:24-25); the sun and moon (vv. 19-22; - Genesis 1:14-18); and man (v. 23; - Genesis 1:26-27)



Introduction

- While the book of Genesis tells us what God created, the psalmist concentrates on the way, and the cause of creation
- He talks about the intimate relationship between the Creator and the world and concentrates more upon the Creator than the creation; and proclaims God, the compassionate, more than God the Mighty One
- So, the main subject of the Psalm is the order of the world and the sovereignty of the God who created and maintains it
- It is considered as a song dedicated to God, namely, the Word of God, the Creator, the Care-taker of creation, and their Savior



Introduction

- The whole Psalm is in honor of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Who is Creator, Ruler, and Redeemer of the world
- Christ is the divine Person addressed and described throughout the Psalm, as appears from the quotation of Psalm 104:5 and the application of it to Him in Hebrews 1:7
- The Jewish people used to sing this Psalm on the morning of 'Yom Kippur', the Great day of atonement in which the High Priest is allowed to go through the veil and enter into the Holy of Holies, only once a year
- This Psalm teaches us confession and prayer



Introduction

Psalm Outline

- God the Creator of Heaven and Earth 104:1-9
- His Divine Care 104:10-23
- The Wonder of the Sea God Created 104:24-26
- God's Sovereign Power Over all the Creatures 104:27-30
- Blessing the God of all Creation 104:31-32
- A Determination to Praise God 104:33-35

God the Creator of Heaven and Earth 104:1-9



- *Bless the Lord, O my soul*, Repeated three times in Psalm 103, it is a call to worship God in spirit and in truth, and to do so from one's inmost being
- The psalmist worshipped God as his own *my God*, and as the *great One* who is *clothed with honor and majesty*
- Was God at any time not great, that He should become great through men's praises?
- Or what can be added unto Him, Who is the incomprehensible fulness of all might?
- It is not God's eternal and absolute greatness which the psalmist celebrates, but the revelation of His greatness

God the Creator of Heaven and Earth 104:1-9



- The works of God, which are the subject of this Psalm, show the *honor and majesty* of God
- The beautiful description of creation explains why the psalmist believes God is great
- As in His own nature and perfections, so also in the glory of His works
- God is seen in His works, and these proclaim Him infinitely wise and good, and all that is great
- He is surrounded and adorned, *with honor and majesty*
- When did God lack *honor and majesty*, He who bestows all beautiful things upon His creatures?

God the Creator of Heaven and Earth 104:1-9



- Never; but till He created the world, He was unknown, but then, by making beautiful things, whereby He could be known and praised
- And He became yet better known, yet more truly magnified, by His Incarnation
- *cover Yourself with light*, Light, the first created element, (Genesis 1:3) is as it were God's robe
- The psalmist does not think of the formation of light as of a single past act, but as a continued glorious operation of Divine power

God the Creator of Heaven and Earth 104:1-9



- Light is expressive of the nature of God Himself,, “*God is light and in Him is no darkness at all*”(1 John 1:5); “*Dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see.*” (1 Timothy 6:16)
- *with light*, He may well be said to be covered, or hid, from the eyes of mortal men
- We may understand this idea of *light as a garment* through the appearance of Jesus at His transfiguration: “*His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light*” (Matthew 17:2)

God the Creator of Heaven and Earth 104:1-9



- *Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain*, Some see an allusion to the curtains of the Tabernacle (Exodus 26, 27)
- The psalmist may well have had in his mind the curtain of the Holy of Holies
- Heaven is represented as a tent stretched out, with curtains drawn around it, to hide the unapproachable light in which the Lord dwells, Isaiah 40:22
- And some believe Christ our Lord is revealed in these words
- Christ dwells invisible to us at present; He ascended into heaven, and from there will descend at the last day; and in the time being is within the curtains of heaven, unseen by us

God the Creator of Heaven and Earth 104:1-9



- The Creator is described as laying *the beams of His upper chambers in the waters*
- God builds for Himself an *upper chamber*, as a dwelling place, in "*the waters which were above the firmament*" (Genesis 1:7), as a man builds himself an upper chamber with beams and joints
- The *chambers*, built above, the first story of a house for the purpose of privacy and seclusion, represent God's involvement with and separation from His world, Amos 9:6
- And church fathers remind us how an *upper chamber* was the scene of the institution of the Holy Eucharist, as also of the descent of the Holy Spirit in tongues of fire

God the Creator of Heaven and Earth 104:1-9



- God does not share the limitations of the creation; He makes *the clouds His chariot* and He *walks on the wings of the wind*
- In such a *clouds His chariot* as this the Lord came to battle against the Egyptians
- In such a *clouds His chariot*, He descended to give the Law on Sinai
- And when He ascended, forty days after His resurrection in the presence of the Apostles, "*a cloud received Him out of their sight.*" (Acts 1:9)
- *Who walks on the wings of the wind*, as fast as the wind

God the Creator of Heaven and Earth 104:1-9



- It is expressive of His haste in coming to help and assist His people in time of need
- It may very well be applied both to the first and second coming of Christ, *who came leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills*, (Song of Solomon 2:8), when He first came
- And when He comes a second time, will be *as a young stag upon the mountains*, (Song of Solomon 2:17)
- Some commentators also think it is the speed and pace with which the preaching of the Gospel was communicated to the world from its starting-point at Jerusalem

God the Creator of Heaven and Earth 104:1-9



- St. Augustine says, “The upper parts of what? Of Heaven. What is Heaven? Figuratively only we said, the Divine Scripture. What are the upper parts of the Divine Scripture? The commandment of love, which there is none more exalted. But wherefore is love compared to waters? Because ‘the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us...’Who walks above the wings of the winds;’ that is, above the virtues of souls. What is the virtue of a soul? Love itself. But how does He walk above it? Because the love of God toward us is greater than ours toward God.”

God the Creator of Heaven and Earth 104:1-9



- God also rules over the angels, equipping and commissioning them as it pleases Him
- Angels are spirits yet created ones
- According to St. Gregory the Theologian, angels are spirits without bodies
- They are different from the spirits of men, and are immaterial, and so they do not die
- These are made by Christ, by Whom all things are made, Colossians 1:16 and so He must be greater than they; for which purpose the passage is quoted in Hebrews 1:7

God the Creator of Heaven and Earth 104:1-9



- Some understand it, *Who makes His angels spirits* as the winds to which they may be compared for their invisibility because they cannot be seen, no more than the wind
- *His ministers a flame of fire*, Angels are ministers to God, stand before Him and wait for His orders, and execute them
- God gives His angelic messengers the speed of the winds, and the mighty force of burning flame
- In Ezekiel's vision they, *“ran back and forth, in appearance like a flash of lighting.”* (Ezekiel 1:14)

God the Creator of Heaven and Earth 104:1-9



- This may be also applied to the apostles who were sent to remove the clouds of heathen darkness, and to kindle and enlighten souls with the Gospel, that fire which their Master came to send on the earth
- St. Augustine comments on *His ministers a flame of fire*, and says, "For unless the minister that preaches be on fire, he enflames not him to whom he preaches."
- And St. Basil the great says, "The powers of the heavens, or *His angels*, are not holy by nature; otherwise there would in this respect be no difference between them and the Holy Spirit."

God the Creator of Heaven and Earth 104:1-9



- The psalmist in verse 5–9 talks about the formation of the earth, and the separation of land and water: the work of the third day, Genesis 1:9-10 and Job 38:8-11
- The Psalmist understood that *God* was the Creator of all things, and that it was He who *laid the foundations of the earth*
- It did not happen by chance or random events; but there is a Creator behind all things
- Though God has “*hangs the earth on nothing.*” (Job 26:27), yet it is as immovable, fixed, and steady as if it had been laid upon the firmest and most certain foundations

God the Creator of Heaven and Earth 104:1-9



- According to some Fathers, it refers to the creation of the Church, or of every holy soul, steadfast and unshaken in faith, because of the firmness of the base on which it stands, for *“No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 3:11)
- Verse 6 speaks of the separation of the waters at creation (Genesis 1:9-10)
- A watery covering was spread at first over the whole earth, and wrapped it like a garment
- But some believe it refer to the Flood that came upon earth in the days of Noah (Genesis 7:19-20)

God the Creator of Heaven and Earth 104:1-9



- According to St. Jerome, this verse refers to the wisdom of God, indescribable and beyond our ability or intellect
- As our eyes cannot fathom the deep ocean; we cannot meditate in God's majesty and wisdom
- *The waters stood above the mountains*, Some say that this does not refer to the Flood, but to the appearance of the earth at the time of the creation, before the gathering of the waters into seas and oceans, Genesis 1:9
- At that stage in the work, there was a huge mass of waters which lay upon the earth and covered it

God the Creator of Heaven and Earth 104:1-9



- When the waters had covered the earth long enough, God made them recede (Genesis 8:3), and the psalmist described it as God's *rebuke* of the waters
- It required only a few words from God (Genesis 1:9) for the whole surface of the earth to be changed
- The waters *fled*; they immediately went to the place which God had appointed to them
- *rebuke*, suggests as if there was something irregular and disorderly, and to be corrected; as if these waters were not in their proper place

God the Creator of Heaven and Earth 104:1-9



- The water shifted their place - removed from some parts of the earth's surface, and *gathered themselves together* into others, allowing the dry land to appear
- God's *voice* is described as *thunder*
- *they hastened away*, The water ran off with great speed; just as a servant receiving an order from his master
- If God allows for His church to go through afflictions, so mighty to cover the high mountains; Yet, *at the voice of Your thunder*, the waters of this great flood of persecution would retreat and *hasten away*

God the Creator of Heaven and Earth 104:1-9



- Verse 8 can be taken as a parenthesis, describing the result of this Divine command
- Mountains and valleys appear (Genesis 1:9) as the waters retire to the place appointed for them
- When the water went off the earth at the divine orders, navigated their course up the mountains, and then went down by the valleys to the place appointed for them
- According to St. Augustine, the talk here concerns the waves of persecution, that may rise up to cover the mountains – the apostles and the ministers, then eventually fall down, to rise again

God the Creator of Heaven and Earth 104:1-9



- And it may describe the state of God's people in this world, in their journey to their appointed place
- Sometimes they have mountains of difficulties to go over, and which seem impossible, and yet they overcome them
- Sometimes they have their hearts above and are upon the mount of heaven through contemplation
- And at other times they are down in the valleys, in a low estate and condition
- *set a boundary*, The waters are forbidden to pass over the limits set them; they may not, and therefore they do not, *turn to cover the earth*

God the Creator of Heaven and Earth 104:1-9



- So the Lord has set a bound to the proud waters of afflictions, and says, *“This far you may come, but no farther”* (Job 38:11)
- Watching the mighty waves of the sea, it would seem to man that nothing could stand before their violence
- But God has set a boundary, over which they may not pass
- If God allows for the afflictions and persecutions to stir up and to become mighty waves like high mountains; which may seem unstoppable; we should not fear them; for *God has set a boundary that they may not pass over*



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- In the first 9 verses the psalmist gave glory to God as the powerful protector of this earth
- Now in this passage he comes to acknowledge God as the earth's benevolent benefactor, who cares and provides for all the creatures
- The reference here is to the earth as covered with vegetation, to the third day of the week of creation Genesis 1:9-13, which, in Genesis, is connected with the gathering of the waters into seas
- God directs the waters from the lakes and seas - in such a way that they form springs in the valleys



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- *They flow among the hills*, The streams of water flow along in the natural valleys which have been made for them
- God Himself is a spring or fountain of living water, and His love is a river, "*whose streams shall make glad the city of God.*" (Psalm 46:4)
- God distributes waters across the land, sending *springs into the valleys* to *give drink to every beast of the field*
- God's mercy is "*over all His works*" (Psalm 145:9)
- He cares for the whole animal creation (Exodus 20:10, 23:19; Deuteronomy 25:4; Psalm 104:27, 145:15-16; Jonah 4:11, etc.)



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- The psalmist considered how the water, plants, and animals of the earth each find their place in God's plan and order
- The *wild donkeys* drink their water, the *birds* have a home so they may *sing among the branches*
- He saw a good, harmonious world in nature and knew God was responsible for it
- If God cares to provide water for the beasts of the wilderness, how much more would He care to provide the water of the Holy Spirit for mankind?



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- According to St. Augustine, the “*beast of the field*” are a symbol of the Gentiles, whom God did not forsake, but provided them with the Word of salvation
- The *birds*’ voice is heard *among the branches* of the trees which grow on the edge of the streams and by the fountains
- Having their dwelling among the branches of trees, birds, feeling protected by their Creator, express their gratitude by singing
- If even the irrational creation, like birds and beasts, that have no dwelling places, give thanks and praise to their Creator, How much more it is befitting of us, men, to praise and glorify Him?!



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- As the hills are the source of the rivers which irrigate the earth, so they are in turn watered themselves from God's *chambers*
- The *chambers*, of the clouds, which pour down rain impartially on all those surfaces which are not already moistened by fountains, streams, and lakes, so that the whole *earth*, not merely a few isolated area, is *satisfied*
- All the needs of the earth seem to be met and *satisfied*
- Nothing has been left undone, in the valleys or on the hills, on the dry land or in the waters, that was needful to be done to carry out the purpose for which it has been called into being



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- The spiritual meaning is explained by St. Augustine of the direct and immediate teaching of the Apostles by Christ Himself
- As for example in the vision of the sheet full of unclean beasts shown to St. Peter, and the conversion of St. Paul on his road to Damascus, so that the outpouring of Gospel teaching flowed down upon the plains below through the water-courses of these great hills, and watered the whole earth with the knowledge of the Lord, producing a great harvest of converted sinners



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- The psalmist speaks of the results of God's careful arrangements and continued his thoughts on nature, seeing how God provides *grass* for animals and *vegetation for the service of man*
- The earth has been made to produce the endless varieties of food required for the creatures that have been placed on it
- Some interpretation of verse 13, is that it means the spirit of liberality which the rain of Gospel grace causes to spring up in the hearts of the hearers of the Word, so as to remind them to provide abundantly and cheerfully for the temporal needs of their teachers



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- St. Chrysostom observes, “It is true, I see, and acknowledge, the fact is certain, the earth does bring forth grass for cattle and green herb for the service of men. But I see other cattle of the Lord, which are meant when it is said, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain, and the laborer is worthy of his wages.’ Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or He says it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written.”
- How then does the earth bring forth grass for the cattle?
- Because the Lord has intended that they who preach the Gospel shall live of the Gospel



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- The food suitable to man consists of wine which gladdens his heart (Judges 9:13); of *Oil to make his face shine*, or to give him a cheerful face
- And of *bread which strengthens man's heart*, which is the main sustenance of the entire body
- It was the glory of the promised land to produce in abundance these three essentials (Deuteronomy 8:8,11:14; 2 Kings 18:32)
- By means of rain watering the earth, vines are caused to grow out of it; which produce wine that has such a benefit in it, as to cheer the heart of man



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- Of this nature are the love of God and Christ; the blessings of grace, and the Eucharist
- According to the scholar origin, the wine here, refers to the grace of teaching, that brings gladness to the heart of man
- And in the same way the *Oil to make his face shine*, the grace of the Spirit is often compared in Scripture
- Who is the wine that makes glad the heart of man and makes his face shine, but the Lord Christ who says: *"I am the true vine"* (John 15: 1)
- He is the true food and the true drink



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- Whoever enjoys His body and blood, would be filled with divine strength, with gladness; and the light of the Sun of Righteousness would shine on him
- He is the Bread which came down from Heaven and yet was brought *out of the earth*, once in the Nativity, and again in the Resurrection, to be the spiritual food of man, the holy Sacrament of His love where He is indeed the, *wine that makes glad the heart of man, And bread which strengthens man's heart*
- *Oil* which God bestows upon us also the blessed Unction of His Holy Spirit



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- According to St. Ephraim the Syrian, *the bread* that sustains the heart of man is keeping the commandments; While *the wine* that makes his heart glad, is seeking the forgiveness; And *the oil* is the repentance that purifies the soul and prepared it to have communion in the body and blood of the Lord
- St. Jerome says, “Although the material wine does not make glad the heart of man, but may even bring forth foolishness to it; as it is written, ‘It is not for kings to drink wine’ (Proverbs 31:4); ‘It is good neither to eat meat nor to drink wine, by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak’ (Romans 14:21); Yet, the kind of wine, told here refers to the ‘spiritual wine’, that makes man spiritually drunk.”



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- From *the grass*, from *the vegetation*, from *the vine*, and from *bread*, as adapted to sustain the living beings upon the earth, the psalmist passes to the more distinguished and grand productions of the vegetable world - to those which display more manifestly the power of God
- The cedar of Lebanon (1 Kings 4:33) was the grandest and best tree known to the Hebrew
- Such trees the psalmist feels must have been planted by the Divine hand because man could grow herbs, but not cedars
- And as a proof of the plentiful provision made by the Creator, the psalmist states that even these great trees have enough



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- Even *the cedars of Lebanon*, an open forest, though they are high and bulky, and require a great deal of *sap* to feed them, have enough from the earth
- They are trees *which He has planted*, and which therefore He will protect and provide for
- They drink in sufficiently God's rain, so that they grow up and flourish amazingly
- We may apply this to the trees of righteousness, which are planted by the Lord, these *are full of sap*, for what God plants He will water, and "*those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.*" (Psalm 92:13)



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- In verse 12, the birds are introduced as *sing among the branches* of trees and shrubs by the water-courses and here in verse 17, they are introduced as having their home in the grand exalted cedars in places which God had made for them
- The cedar tree may refer to the righteous, who embraces the poor in spirit and the weak (the birds)
- They are supported and are fed from their superfluous spiritual riches
- The *stork* here is used to represent the larger class of birds



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- From the great grand trees which are the home of birds it is a natural transition to the majestic grand mountains which are the home of animals
- Even the high mountains are designed by God for the good of His creatures
- They provide a refuge for *the wild goats*, when the hunter pursue him; and, if they cannot give him food, give him safety
- The idea is that nature is full of life and even the most inaccessible places, *the high hills* and *cliffs* have their inhabitants



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- The psalmist turned his attention to the *moon* and the *sun*
- The Book of Genesis talks about the creation of the sun and the moon in the fourth day, Genesis 1:14
- And here the psalmist emphasizes that by their creation, God has set the seasons of the year and the day and the night, for the benefit of man
- The Jewish festivals depended greatly on the moon, the Passover being celebrated at the time of the full moon of the first month (Exodus 12:6)
- The sun is no mere mechanical clock, but a conscious servant of God



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- The sun knows the exact time of setting, and never varies, but always obeys the divine command
- St. John Chrysostom understands by the *moon* here, drawing its light from the unseen sun, meaning the Synagogue, *appointed* only for *seasons* of the Law and Prophets, but not knowing the mystery of the Passion, for only the Sun of Righteousness Himself knew of His coming Crucifixion
- Only the sun is said to *know*, for the moon depends on the sun, and has no independent light of his own, and therefore must draw his knowledge from the sun, as the Church derives all her wisdom from Christ



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- They operate according to God's plan, providing *darkness* so that *all the beasts of the forest creep about*
- The reference here is to the quiet and noiseless manner in which the animals come forth at night in search of their prey
- Or seem to *creep about* of their hiding-places - the places where they hide themselves in the day-time
- These are not the only creatures that choose the night and darkness; all wicked men do the same; *"For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."* (John 3:20)



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- This is a continuation of the description in the previous verse
- At night the beasts which had been hidden in the daytime crawl forth and seek their food
- The *roar* is so terrible as to overwhelm and quite the animal which he pursues; so that it falls down and becomes an easy prey
- And the young lions are mentioned, because their appetite is extreme, and their voice loudest and strongest
- *seek their food from God* They are dependent on God for their food and sought it at His hand



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- It is a beautiful idea that even the animal creation act as if they called on God, and sought the supply of their needs at His hands
- *Lions*, also is a symbol of Satan, “*who goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*” (1 Peter 5:8)
- Satan *seek their meat from God*, because as we read in the story of Job 1:12, he can tempt no man unless God grant him permission
- Just as God provided for the night, He also provided for the day, when *lions* and other nightly animals *lie down in their dens*



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- When the lions sleep, *man goes out to his work until the evening*
- All operate according to God's wise plan for creation
- Spiritually speaking, once the *Sun of Righteousness* rises in the life of His believers, the demons gather together and hide in their dens, and lose their authority on the true believer
- So, wicked men do not care for the light of the day, nor do false teachers choose to come to the light of the word, Tertullian calls them owls and bats
- Satan himself chooses to set upon people when they are in darkness



His Divine Care 104:10-23

- Before the Resurrection, the evil spirits had greater power in the world than now
- But now their power is restricted, and they are compelled to *lie down in their dens*
- *Man goes out to his work*, Here is the result of sunrise, teaching us the contrast between man and beast
- For the wild beasts hide in the daytime, to avoid capture, but roam about at night for prey, while man, gifted with reason, rests in the night and toils in the day
- Everyone on whom Christ shines is prompted to toil for Him, and that till the evening of life

The Wonder of the Sea God Created 104:24-26



- The psalmist continues in amazement as he looks at nature and creation
- He sees it all as the wise *works* of a great God who has right of ownership over all of it *Your possessions*
- *how manifold*, The reference is to the number and the variety of the works of God, and to the wisdom displayed in them all
- The psalmist does not assume to answer his own question, for he confesses God's works to be greater than his own power of expression
- No one can estimate the number of creatures God has made on the earth; no one can comprehend the richness of the variety

The Wonder of the Sea God Created 104:24-26



- As the Lord is the Creator, He is the owner and possessor of heaven and earth, and all that is in them
- And whatever of the riches and good things of the earth men may have, they are only stewards, the Lord is the rightful owner and their possessor, Genesis 14:19
- The Holy Trinity can be seen in that verse
- *Your works*, teaches of the Father, the Source of all things
- *In Wisdom*, tells us of the Son, “*Christ the power of God and the Wisdom of God.*” (1 Corinthians 1:24)
- *Your possessions*, is spoken of the Holy Spirit, Who fills the world with many gifts

The Wonder of the Sea God Created 104:24-26



- *This great and wide sea*, It seems to stretch out in all directions
- *In which are innumerable teeming things*, Refer to the variety of inhabitants of the deep
- Spiritually, the *great and wide sea* is the life of the present world, full of *innumerable teeming things*, temptations and dangers, both small and great, through which man must pass before he can reach the peaceful shores
- The vast waters contain *innumerable teeming things*, including great and mysterious things such as *Leviathan* which is also described in Job 41:1

The Wonder of the Sea God Created 104:24-26



- *Leviathan*, This may mean large sea animal
- In Job 41 *leviathan* means the crocodile
- *There the ships sail about*, From place to place, from one end of the world to the other, for the sake of merchandise
- This is one of the four things that were too wonderful for Solomon, "*the way of a ship in the midst of the sea*" (Proverbs 30:19)
- The original of ships was doubtless Noah's ark designed by God Himself
- *the ships*, Seem to be a symbol of the church and people of God passing through the sea of this world

The Wonder of the Sea God Created 104:24-26



- And also, may be considered the preachers which carry Christ into the hearts of men
- And some fathers comment that the way to heaven must be over the waters of Baptism
- *To play there*, As his natural element to move about therein
- This creature is generally viewed as a figure of Satan
- He is the king over all the children of pride, Job 41:34 as he is the prince of the power of the air, and god of this world
- He has been playing his tricks from the beginning, not only deceiving our first parents, but all the nations of the world

God's Sovereign Power Over all the Creatures 104:27-30



- The psalmist once again turns to the contemplation of God's continual providence and care for His creation
- He is active and relentless ruler, all living things live by His abundance
- The psalmist considered all kinds of created things from the land, sea, and air and recognized that they *all* depended upon God, who provided for them *in due season*
- They have no other ground of expectation or hope but in God
- God has a timing for all things

God's Sovereign Power Over all the Creatures 104:27-30



- *all wait for You*, This may instruct us to wait on the Lord, as for our daily bread, so for our spiritual food, and in prayer, where and from whom we may hope and expect to have it
- God feeds the animals but does not from heaven pour food into their mouths
- He provides, but they must *gather in*
- What God places before them they collect
- They have no resources of their own
- This is a wonderful way for God's people to think of His provision
- God provides, but we must gather in

God's Sovereign Power Over all the Creatures 104:27-30



- The reference in the language may be to the gathering of manna in the wilderness, when it was provided by God, and people had only to collect it for their use
- God, in whose hand all things are, and from which all things come, opens His hand of providence, and liberally and bountifully gives
- All His creatures are filled with His good things to their satisfaction; and thus the spiritual food which He gives His people, they gather it by the hand of faith, as the Israelites gathered the manna in the wilderness every morning

God's Sovereign Power Over all the Creatures 104:27-30



- St. Augustine says, “What is it, O Lord, that You open Your hand? Christ is Your hand. ‘To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?’ To whom it is revealed, unto him it is opened: for revelation is opening. ‘When You open Your hand, they shall all be filled with good.’ When You reveal Your Christ, ‘they shall all be filled with good.’ But they have not good from themselves; this is oftentimes proved unto them.”
- The ‘*hiding*’ of God’s face is usually the symbol of His wrath; but here it denotes rather the withdrawal of His providential care
- *hide Your face*, Instantly they feel the loss; they are *troubled*, cast down, and defeated (Psalm 30:7)

God's Sovereign Power Over all the Creatures 104:27-30



- Not only is the food which sustains life dependent on the constant providence of God, but even the very breath of life is His, to be sent forth or withdrawn at His will
- And as He is the giver of life, so He also takes it away
- And as the withdrawal of His Spirit from any man means spiritual death, *“The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him.”* (1 Samuel 16:14)
- So, a man thus punished *return to their dust*, and becomes the target of the creeping serpent

God's Sovereign Power Over all the Creatures 104:27-30



- God turns away His face sometimes lest men attribute good by which they are filled to their own merit or holiness
- And to teach them that His open hand is its efficient cause, so that they are *troubled*, till they pray to see once more the light of His *face*
- According to St. Augustine, “the Lord in His mercy, after He has troubled sinners, takes away from them the spirit of pride and rebellion, so that they die to their sins, and make their confession to God in the dust of humility and repentance.”

God's Sovereign Power Over all the Creatures 104:27-30



- Verse 30 in the literal sense, explains how God *return* one generation *to their dust*
- And then He calls a new generation into being, and thus refills the earth with creatures of every species
- Creation continues, for God is continually sending forth His spirit, and renewing *the face of the earth* with new life
- The world is as full of creatures as if none died, for the place of those that die is filled up
- And it may point to the continual work of the Holy Spirit in the Church for the transformation of sinners, and their renewal by the new birth of Baptism and the new cleansing of repentance

Blessing the God of all Creation

104:31-32



- The psalmist begins with the praise of God's glory and ends with prayer for its everlasting endurance
- As he considered the power and wisdom of God in all creation, it made him long for His *glory to endure forever*, and the language means a strong conviction that it would be so
- His mind was filled with wonder at the beauty and variety of the works of God on the earth, in the air, and in the waters; and he exclaims, with a heart full of admiration, that the glory of a Being who had made all these things could never cease, but must *endure forever*

Blessing the God of all Creation

104:31-32



- God's works may pass away, but not His glory
- *May the Lord rejoice in His works*, Being well pleased with them, as He was with the works of creation
- The psalmist may still follow Genesis in representing God as looking on His finished work with pleasure
- *it tremble*, He has only to *look* upon His works, and they stand in awe and tremble
- The trembling earth and smoking hills may be a reference to God's manifested presence at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19)

Blessing the God of all Creation

104:31-32



- These are reminders of the overwhelming power and might of God
- A displeased look will make the hearts of His own children *tremble*, as St. Peter's did, when the Lord looked upon him, and he remembered His word
- St. Augustine says, "May He look on you, and make you tremble: for the trembling of humility is better than the confidence of pride."
- Some commentators see here a prophecy of the earthquake which shall precede the Judgment Day, and the smoke of the everlasting fire

A Determination to Praise God

104:33-35



- The effect of the psalmist's meditations on the wonderful works of God stirred in his mind a desire to praise God forever
- He is so filled with a sense of His greatness and glory that he would praise him all his life
- The God of all creation is worthy of our life-long praise
- Actually, an entire lifetime of praise would be insufficient to honor God properly
- *I will sing*, indicates our due service of praise and worship during all this mortal life

A Determination to Praise God

104:33-35



- *I will praise* implies action, as the word signifies and tells us of the service of good works, never to cease in this life
- *May my meditation be sweet to Him*, Knowing the greatness and goodness of God as revealed in creation, the Psalmist wanted his thoughts to be pleasing to God
- *be sweet*, Some commentators relate it to confession
- For though confession is bitter to man, who offers it, yet it is sweet to God Who receives it
- However, in confession all is washed away and the peace returns and the soul becomes joyful

A Determination to Praise God

104:33-35



- Therefore, the psalmist added here: *I will be glad in the LORD*
- When all pleasure in worldly delights has passed forever from the soul
- God rejoices when men offer sincere confession and to hear their prayers, as we read in Proverbs 8:31, “*My delight was with the sons of men.*”
- There is also a note of determination
- He chose to be *glad in the Lord*, making a rational choice in light of God’s revelation of Himself through creation

A Determination to Praise God

104:33-35



- The psalmist ends with a prayer for the restoration of the harmony of creation by the removal of *“all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness.”* (Matthew 13:41),
- According to St. Jerome, the psalmist did not say, *May sinners be eternally consumed*, but said: *May sinners be consumed from the earth*
- The psalmist does not seek their eternal perdition, but seeks their return from evil, wishing that the wicked will be no more on earth
- *And the wicked be no more*, Repetition for emphasis

A Determination to Praise God

104:33-35



- He prays that this disharmony of the *wicked* may be corrected by their repentance and *sinner be consumed* with the fire of the Holy Spirit
- He prays that they may have no earthliness left remaining in them, but that all their ungodliness may come to end
- The psalmist saw this, and was filled with joy, *Bless the Lord*
- Then, too, all mankind may well be called upon to join in the praise, and to sing, as saints and angels sing in heaven, "*Alleluia!*" (Revelation 19:1,3,4,6)



Discussion

- What are the similarities between Psalms 103 and 104?
- What did the psalmist see as the purpose of creation?
- What does this Psalm reveal about the psalmist's view of God?
- In verses 27–30, what does Psalm stress in terms of the relationship between the Creator and creation? How does that relationship inform the psalmist's meditation and how humanity delights in the Lord?



Discussion

- What did the psalmist learn from observing the sea?
- In what ways does the earth and all life depend on God?
- How is God involved in the events of the earth?
- Why is it significant that the Psalm mentions sinners and the wicked in God's world? How are they different than the people of God who delight in God?