

The LORD of Creation

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- [0 : 0 0] Psalm 104. I'll read out loud. If you follow along with me, it's a lengthier psalm than usual. Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, you are very great.
- You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering yourself with light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a tent. He lays the beams of his chambers on the waters.
- He makes the clouds his chariot. He rides on the wings of the wind. He makes his messengers winds, his ministers a flaming fire. He set the earth on its foundation so that he should never be moved.
- You covered it with the deep as with a garment. The waters stood above the mountains. At your rebuke, they fled. At the sound of your thunder, they took to flight.
- The mountains rose. The valleys sank down to the place that you appointed for them. You set a boundary that they may not pass so that they might not again cover the earth. You make springs gush forth in the valleys.
- [1 : 0 5] They flow between the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field. The wild donkeys quench their thirst. Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell. They sing among the branches.
- From your lofty abode, you water the mountains. The earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work. You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and breath to strengthen man's heart.
- The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. In them the birds build their nests. The stork has her home in the fir trees. The high mountains are for the wild goats.
- The rocks are a refuge for the rock badgers. He made the moon to mark the seasons. The sun knows it's time for setting. You make darkness and it is night when all the beasts of the forest creep about.
- The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God. When the sun rises, they steal away and lie down in their dens. Man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening.
- [2 : 1 2] O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all. The earth is full of your creatures. Here is a sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great.
- There go the ships and Leviathan, which you formed to play in. These all look to you to give them their food and do season. When you give it to them, they gather it up. When you open your hand, they are filled with good things.
- When you hide your face, they are dismayed. When you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your spirit, they are created and you renew the face of the ground.

May the glory of the Lord endure forever. May the Lord rejoice in his works. Who looks on the earth and it trembles. Who touches the mountains and they smoke. I will sing to the Lord as long as I live.

I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the Lord. Let sinners be consumed from the earth and let the wicked be no more.

[3 : 18] Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord. Amen. So this psalm begins and ends with the exhortation to bless the Lord.

And really everything in between is kind of a reason why you should bless the Lord and praise the Lord. And it kind of follows, this is what you might call, I guess a commentary almost.

It follows the days of creation in Genesis 1. Actually, before I get into that, let me ask you guys this question. Have you guys ever seen Bob Ross? Yeah, of course.

Okay. So, are you joking? No, you're not joking? No, he's not. Oh, really? Pretty little trees. Pretty little trees. There's a fro. I've never seen a pole.

So, he was like a 20th century American painter. And he got famous because of his show, The Joy of Painting. He ran for like over a decade on PBS in the 1990s or something like that.

[4 : 15] Huh? He was actually a drill sergeant. He was actually a drill sergeant. Yeah. He was actually a drill sergeant. And he kind of, like, the reason why some of you know him is because he kind of became famous again in the 21st century after he died. Like, because after he died, he became this, like, internal sensation on YouTube and whatnot.

He was like a famous man. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. But, like, I actually remember watching him, like, growing up, like, on TV. And it was just, like, awe-inspiring, right?

Because, like, he's just talking to you casual. Like, he just, like, takes a brush and, like, puts on a little paint and then paints stuff. And it looks so simple. But with those simple strokes of the brush, like, he paints these magnificent landscapes.

And it's just like, you know you can't do the same thing. Even if you try to imitate him exactly, it just doesn't work. You know, he's just a masterful painter, right? And so that, even though he made it look easy, like, it was really quite awe-inspiring to watch someone create something like that from scratch, right?

And then, and now, like, imagine, I want to ask you a question. If watching a painter paint a landscape could be that amazing and inspiring, imagine what it would be like to, if you were on the scene when God was creating the universe, right?

[5 : 25] Like, he's creating the everything, literally, and now we get to watch it. Like, what kind of effect would that have on us? I mean, if he saw our inspiring, he would make us feel so small, so humbled, we'd be able to, we'd be really just be forever worshipping him, right?

I mean, that's, and that's really kind of the effect that Psalm 104 is going for. It's trying to teach us that seeing the Lord of creation and his sovereign power should humble us to worship him.

So that's kind of the painting of Psalm 104. And in verses 1 to 9, we see the Lord who creates. In verses 10 to 30, we see the Lord who sustains his creation.

And then in verses 31 to 35, we see the Lord who rejoices over his creation. And so we're going to see that part. And so if you look at verses 1 to 9, it's an account of how the Lord creates the habitats of earth.

And it follows the first three days of creation in Genesis 1. So in day one of creation, God separates the light from the darkness. And that's what we see in verses 1 to 2. It says, O Lord my God, you are very great.

[6 : 30] You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering yourself with light as with the garment, right? Stretching out the heavens like a tent. So that's day one of creation. 1 Timothy 6.16 says God dwells in unapproachable light.

And so he pictures the light as kind of God's dazzling clothes that he's wearing. Day of two of creation, God separates the waters below from the waters above, which is the clouds.

And then the expanse between the two waters he calls the clouds. He calls the heaven. And then in verses 3 to 4 of this psalm, we see God creating heaven as his home. It says, He lays the beams of his chambers on the waters, the water above.

That's the clouds. He makes the clouds his chariot. He rides on the wings of the wind. He makes his messengers winds, his ministers of flaming fire. So obviously it's using metaphorical language to describe God's dwelling place.

But it's really a spectacular picture, right? He's riding on the clouds, the winds and flaming fire, which I don't know what that's really a reference to, but those are his servants.

[7 : 33] They serve and they do his bidding. So I'm just trying to try to picture this as we go, because it's supposed to kind of put you in that state of awe. And day 3 of creation, God gathers the waters on the ground into one place and calls it sea.

And then lets dry land appear by gathering the waters and he calls it the earth. And so, and verses 5, 9 talk about then a very vivid kind of symmetrical poetry. So they're structured like chiastically.

I've mentioned this before, like a chiasm, right? Where it's two matching elements with one element in the middle that doesn't have a matching element. So it's like an X. And so they bring attention to what's in the middle.

So verses 5 to 6 speak of how the earth and even its mountains were once covered with water before God let the dry land appear. And then verses 8 to 9 match that.

And it talks about how God's set boundaries, limits for the water, so that he can't cover the earth. And that that brought forth mountains, mountains rose, and valleys sank. So he made those.

[8 : 34] And then what's in the middle is the most important point that Psalm is to try to make. And that's verse 7. How God brought this about. He says, At your rebuke they fled. At the sound of your thunder they took to flight.

So God rebukes the waters that cover the earth. It's like, I mean, that reminds you of something, right? Jesus rebuked in the seas, right? So that's, again, mentioned it. It's a reference to how Jesus is basically God, the Son of God.

And so God rebukes the water that covered the earth so that they fled, so that they flee to the boundaries that God set for it. And according to kind of the Canaanite, it's kind of engineers through mythology, Baal, their kind of creator God, almighty God, kind of fights with this god of chaos called sea, the water sea.

And it's an epic battle to the death. And Baal finally prevails. And from the carcass of the god of sea, he creates the world. Is that Rahab? Right, huh? Rahab?

The sea monster? Yeah. Yeah, so there's a lot of related ideas there. But Baal basically was the Canaanite god of the clouds. So here, the psalmist who's writing this is intentionally kind of almost, not parodying it, but they're really, it's a polemical argument.

[9 : 55] They're trying to say that, no, Baal is not the god who rides in the clouds. It's actually Yahweh, the Lord. So they're using his name, the Lord. Baal's not the one who created the world by prevailing over the sea god.

Actually, there is no sea god at all. It's just his creatures. It's just God's act of God's creation. And all he had to do was speak. And he rebuked the seas and they fled.

Unlike this cosmic contest between Baal and sea, right? So he's painting this picture of God's power. He's mighty. There's no equal, no one that can actually compete with him. And then we see in verses 5 to 9.

Oh, we actually just talked about that. And then in verses 10 and following, we see kind of his sustaining the inhabitants of earth. So days 4 to 6, we see in verses 10 to 30.

So first in 10 to 13, it says, You make springs gush forth in the valleys. They flow between the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field. The wild donkeys quench their thirst. Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell.

[11 : 03] They sing among the branches. From your lofty abode you water the mountains. The earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work. So it actually kind of overlaps with day 3 when God brings vegetations forth to feed the animals. So verses 14 to 18 talk about that.

He feeds the livestock with grass. He feeds men, right? By bringing forth food from the earth. So food to feed their stomach, right? The wine to gladden their heart.

Oil to make their face shine, right? The bread to strengthen the heart. And he feeds the birds in their nest. And the mountains he has set aside for the wild goats and the rocks for the rock badgers.

He creates the moon and the sun to mark the seasons. So that's day 4 of creation in Genesis. And he makes the darkness in his night when all the beasts of the forest creep about.

So this is actually really fascinating. So in verse 21, it talks about how even the young lions, right? They seem so self-sufficient, right? These beasts, the king of the jungle, so they say.

[12 : 02] Although they don't really live in the jungle, right? But so the lions, they don't need help, right? I mean, they could kill as they want and claim their food.

But it says that even they seek their food from God. God's the one that feeds even the lions. And so the lions actually, they rise at night.

And then they steal away and lie down in their dens when the sun rises. But that's when men, human beings, go out. They work during the day when there's light. So it's like there's this order of creation, right?

There's a time when animals work. And then there are times when human beings work. So that God created this in a way that all works together. And then he turns to the seas. Great and wide teams with creatures innumerable, which is really not hyperbole.

It really is innumerable creatures in the seas. And they're small and great. And he mentions the ships as kind of representing the humans who are fishing, looking for food. And then he mentions Leviathan, which is, there's a lot I can say about Leviathan.

[13 : 07] But I found this tidbit from a really interesting book. It's called An Instinct for Dragons by an anthropologist named David E. Jones.

And he really catalogs all the instances of kind of serpent-like dragons that are in different cultures. And he says they exist in like pretty much every culture, have this kind of mythical serpent, kind of like dragon-like creature in every culture.

I wonder why, right? Because Genesis 3 mentions a certain serpent that becomes the foal of humanity and brings him to sin, right? So I mean, I wonder why there's such a mythical creature. There's maybe such a thing that really happened.

And he cites a study that says that approximately 390 people in 1,000 are afraid of snakes, even in areas where there are no snakes to be found.

And all the earliest instances of dragons, they all have snake-like attributes. And he concludes that this is because in nearly all cultures, there's this innate fear of snakes in human beings.

[14 : 16] And that's fascinating to me. It's actually, if you look at, if I were to ask you, what's the deadliest animal in the world? What are some animals that come to mind?

Like animals that cause the most human fatalities. Mesthetos? Deer. Mosquitoes, that's true. Mosquitoes are correct. But mosquitoes are deadly because they carry diseases.

So not insects or animals, like dogs, for example, carry rabies, right? And then they can kill a lot of humans. But not animals that kill people because they have diseases, but animals themselves that kill the most people.

Deer. Sharks. Sharks is often mentioned. There's only about 10 deaths a year because of sharks. Even the jaws have really kind of over, they can't do it out of proportion. Sharkweed? Huh?

Yeah. Wolves, they say about 10 animals a year. Deer actually do. Huh? Deer do. Yeah, I'm sure they do, but they don't make the cut. So lion, they say about 100 deaths a year.

[15 : 16] Die. Hippopotamus. Hippopotamus. Hippopotamus. Hippopotamus, 500. Bears. Bears don't make the cut. But the crocodile, 1,000 a year. Oh, wow.

And actually, snake, 50,000 a year. So, yeah, so snake is still the deadliest animal if you don't count the ones that kill people by diseases that they carry.

So, I mean, there's a, so there's a, so there's a, it kind of explains our fear of snakes in a way, right? It's like a, and I think goes all the way back to creation and fall of humanity.

And so Leviathan is described like in Job 41, for example, like a real physical creature. But it's not clear if it's like a real, like, physical creature that people have seen or whether it's a mythical creature that they're describing in real physical terms, right?

So it's like a, but they can be described in physical ways and they take this kind of like metaphorical significance in some parts of scripture. So, for example, in Isaiah 27, 1, it talks about the end times.

[16 : 20] It says, in that day, the Lord, with his hard and great and strong sword, will punish Leviathan, the fleeing serpent. Leviathan, the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.

And, of course, in Revelation, it talks about how the Lord slays and defeats once and for all the serpent, the great, the dragon, the great serpent, right?

Which is who accuses the people of God. So I think it's kind of like a physical, kind of this, basically the most powerful creature you can think of.

And that takes on this kind of metaphorical significance as well because it's so powerful. And in here, here it's described, it's really focusing on the kind of the physical side of it, how big, how strong it is.

And look at the way God describes the Leviathan. It says, not only the lions get food from him, the people go out in ships to get food from God. And he says, here, there go the ships.

[17 : 20] And Leviathan, in verse 26, which you form to play in it. It's like God puts the Leviathan, lets him float onto the sea like a little pet, like a little goldfish. I mean, yeah.

What? It was the literature class. Yeah. And some of the translations said, I thought it said play. Yeah, yeah, that's actually an ultimate translation. Yeah. Yeah. It's like, isn't that just a crazy image, right?

It's like this, the most powerful creature you can imagine, this huge thing. God's like, oh, go frolic in the sea, like a goldfish, right? I mean, so that's how powerful God is. That's the picture. And it says, these all look to you, verse 27, to give their food in due season.

When you give it to them, they gather it up. When you open your hand, they are filled with good things. And look at this, 29 to 30, God's life-giving power. When you hide your face, they are dismayed.

When you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your spirit, they are created and renew the face of the ground. And so there's, in 28 to 30, there's this pattern of when God does this, this happens to them.

[18 : 25] When he does this, this happens to them. So every power of life is in the hands of the Lord. He has the hand to take it away, power to take it away, and the power to give life. And that's kind of, and look at how he, and then he concludes in verse 31 to 35 with, again, focusing on the glory of the Lord and why we should praise him.

May the glory of the Lord endure forever. May the Lord rejoice in his works. So this is really day seven of creation when God rests and exalts over, rejoices over his creation. So God's rejoicing over his creative works.

Who looks on the earth, he looks on the earth and it trembles. It's referenced in earthquake. Who touches the mountains and they smoke volcanoes. I will sing to the Lord as long as I live. I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.

May my meditation be pleading to him for I rejoice in the Lord. So picture this. This is a helpful application point that I was really struck by as I was preparing this message. So God looks at the earth and it trembles at the earth.

He touches a mountain and there's volcanoes erupt. He lets a little Levi think frolic in the sea like a little goldfish. Like, I mean, he creates the heavens. He's rising in the clouds.

[19 : 34] That's what he does. And imagine that we were there to watch him do this. And here we are, worrying about that exam. Worrying about that green card, right?

Worrying about that job application. Worrying about that little conflict we might have with another family member or church member. Worrying about what our future holds.

It's a little ridiculous, right? I mean, if you really see God as this psalm teaches us to see him. If you see him in all his glory and power and sovereignty, it's a little ridiculous that we tend to think that we are so in control of our lives.

We're not, right? God's so powerful. And that's the irony of it all. If you look at verse 35, all of these things, they come to the Lord for food and they follow, do his bidding.

In verse 35, let sinners be consumed from the earth and let the wicked be no more. But the one blot in all of creation that refuses to follow the Lord and to work in conjunction with the order of creation is humanity.

[20 : 49] There's sin. That's sinners. And so the psalmist is basically seeing this glorious picture of creation. He's saying, let the sinners be gone. Consume them because they're like your one blot.

Like in Bob Ross's painting, he spills paint and there's a blot on his landscape painting. That's humanity, right? It's like it seems there's sinfulness, there's sin. And so that kind of leaves us and points us to Christ, right?

Because there's a need for creation and humanity to be brought into conformity with God's will and to bless the Lord. And they should be blessing the Lord, but they're not blessing the Lord.

And so that points us to Christ and leads us to him because he's the one that gives life as this passage describes God is doing. He creates again. He gives bread.

And in John 6, Jesus says, Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

[21 : 48] For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. They said to him, Sir, give us this bread always. Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life.

Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. So this psalm pictures God as the one who gives life. He's the one who sustains his creation.

And Jesus comes as the fulfillment of that psalm, as the one who gives eternal life, a resurrection life, and brings sinful humanity into reconciling with him, into submission to him, and to follow him.

And he does that by dying on the cross for our sins and rising again for our victory and vindication. And so that's the psalm.

And hopefully that enlarges you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.