

PSALMS

Chapter 113

Who Is like the LORD Our God?

Praise the LORD! Praise, O servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD! 2 Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and forevermore! 3 From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the LORD is to be praised! 4 The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens! 5 Who is like the LORD our God, who is seated on high, 6 who looks far down on the heavens and the earth? 7 He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap, 8 to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people. 9 He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. Praise the LORD!

Ps 113 A hymn to the Lord celebrating his high majesty and his mercies to the lowly (see 138:6). It was probably composed originally for the temple liturgy. This psalm begins the “Egyptian Hallel” (Ps 113–118), which came to be used in Jewish liturgy at the great religious festivals (Passover, Weeks, Tabernacles, Dedication, New Moon; see Lev 23; Nu 10:10; Jn 10:22; see also chart on “OT Feasts and Other Sacred Days”). At Passover, Ps 113 and 114 were sung before the meal and Ps 115–118 after the meal. (See introduction to Ps 111.) (CSB)

Begins the Hallel. It is a general call to praise, echoing Hannah’s song of praise and anticipating Mary’s Magnificat (1Sm 2:1–10; Lk 1:46–55). (TLSB)

Format: V 1, call to praise; vv 2–3, praise continuously; vv 4–9, no one compares to the Lord. (TLSB)

Three precisely balanced stanzas (each having three verses) give the psalm a pleasing symmetry. With seven (the number of completeness) verbs the author celebrates God’s praise in stanzas two and three (“is exalted,” “sits . . . on high,” “stoops down,” “raises,” “lifts,” “seats,” “settles”)—and note the fourfold praise in the first stanza. At the center (v. 5; see note on 6:6) a rhetorical question focuses and heightens the hymnic theme. (CSB)

113:1b–3 The fourfold call to praise. (CSB)

113:1 *name of the LORD*. See vv. 2–3. Triple repetition was a common liturgical convention. (CSB)

Triple repetition of the divine name was a common feature in the call to worship, just as believers today worship in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (TLSB)

113:2 *time forth and forevermore*. The praise of those who truly praise the Lord cannot rest content until it fills all time—and space (v. 3). (CSB)

113:3 *rising of the sun to its setting* – Those who worship the Lord do so at all times and places. Morning and evening were also the times of sacrifice and prayer. (TLSB)

113:4–6 The Lord is enthroned on high, exalted over all creation. (CSB)

The uniqueness of God is that He is exalted to the highest heaven, yet He cares for those in the lowest places. (TLSB)

This part provides the basis for our praise. (PBC)

113:4 *over all the nations.* And implicitly over all their gods (see 95:3; 96:4–5; 97:9; see also 47:2, 7–8). (CSB)

above the heavens. Above even the most exalted aspect of the creation (see v. 6). – Although he is lofty in power and majesty, he uses that power to help his people. (CSB)

113:5 *our God.* What grace, that he has covenanted to be “our” God (see Ge 17:7; Ex 19:5–6; 20:2)! (CSB)

113:7–9 The Lord exalts the lowly—the God of highest majesty does not ally himself with the high and mighty of the earth but stands with and raises up the poor and needy (see 1Sa 2:3–8; Lk 1:46–55). (CSB)

This is adapted from the song of Hannah. (PBC)

113:7–8 Repeated almost verbatim from 1Sa 2:8. (Song of Hannah) (CSB)

113:7 *poor ... needy.* The Lord has always made provision for the poor (Lv 19:10; 1Sm 2:8; Pr 19:17; Is 25:4; Lk 4:18). (TLSB)

dust ... ash heap. Symbolic of a humble status (see Ge 18:27; 1Ki 16:2), but here probably also of extreme distress and need (see Job 30:19; 42:6; Isa 47:1; Jer 25:34). (CSB)

113:9 *barren woman.* In that ancient society barrenness was for a woman the greatest disgrace and the deepest tragedy (see Ge 30:1; 1Sa 1:6–7, 10); in her old age she would be as desolate as Naomi because she would have no one to sustain her (see Ru 1:11–13; see also 2Ki 4:14). (CSB)

Israelite women who did not have children had no social network to care for them. (TLSB)

home. Family circle. (CSB)

joyous mother. Because of God’s gracious provision, as in the case of Sarah (see Ge 21:2), Rebekah (see Ge 25:21), Rachel (see Ge 30:23), Hannah (see 1Sa 1:20), the Shunammite (see 2Ki 4:17) and others. (CSB)

The song of Mary in Luke 1 echoes the theme of Hannah’s song. (PBC)

Praise the LORD. Probably once stood at the beginning of Ps 114, which now lacks a Hallelujah. (CSB)

Ps 113 Sometimes it might seem to us that the good things of this world are overwhelmed by the bad. But the Lord is not overwhelmed. He is exalted on high, and He reaches down low with His salvation. • We praise You, O Lord, because You come down to save us in Christ. Hallelujah! Amen. (TLSB)