

PSALMS

Chapter 135

Your Name, O LORD, Endures Forever

Praise the LORD! Praise the name of the LORD, give praise, O servants of the LORD, 2 who stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God! 3 Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; sing to his name, for it is pleasant! 4 For the LORD has chosen Jacob for himself, Israel as his own possession. 5 For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. 6 Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps. 7 He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth, who makes lightnings for the rain and brings forth the wind from his storehouses. 8 He it was who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and of beast; 9 who in your midst, O Egypt, sent signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants; 10 who struck down many nations and killed 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 a heritage, a heritage to his people Israel. 13 Your name, O LORD, endures forever, your renown, O LORD, throughout all ages. 14 For the LORD will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants. 15 The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of human hands. 16 They have mouths, but do not speak; they have eyes, but do not see; 17 they have ears, but do not hear, nor is there any breath in their mouths. 18 Those who make them become like them, so do all who trust in them. 19 O house of Israel, bless the LORD! O house of Aaron, bless the LORD! 20 O house of Levi, bless the LORD! You who fear the LORD, bless the LORD! 21 Blessed be the LORD from Zion, he who dwells in Jerusalem! Praise the LORD!

Ps 135 A call to praise the Lord—the one true God: Lord of all creation, Lord over all the nations, Israel’s Redeemer. No doubt postexilic, it echoes many lines found elsewhere in the OT. It was clearly composed for the temple liturgy. For its place in the Great Hallel see note on Ps 120 title. Framed with “Hallelujahs” (as are also Ps 146–150), its first and last stanzas are also calls to praise. Recital of God’s saving acts for Israel in Egypt and Canaan (vv. 8–12) makes up the middle of seven stanzas, while the remaining four constitute two pairs related to each other by theme and language (vv. 3–4, 13–14; vv. 5–7, 15–18). (CSB)

Evidently sung as a celebration in the temple by the whole worshiping community.

Format: Vv 1–4, opening praise; vv 5–7, God’s greatness in creation; vv 8–12, the exodus and conquest; vv 13–14, the Lord’s renown; vv 15–18, worthless idols; vv 19–21, Israel blesses the Lord. (TLSB)

The 135th psalm is a psalm of thanks. It call the priests to give thanks, preach, and praise God for the wonders that he showed to the people of Egypt and Canaan, so that they never forget God and seek idols or other gods. This happens when one does not occupy oneself with – and diligently hold to – preaching and the praise of God, as it says in the next psalm. But where his Word is silenced and he does not judge or teach, there truly shall be great anger and no grace. Therefore think, you servants in the house of the Lord, and preach diligently of God and his works. (Reading the Psalms with Luther)

Psalm 135 could be called a “composite psalm” or “review psalm” since it picks up themes from several other psalms. Every one of its verses has a parallel somewhere else in Scripture. It is also a connecting psalm. Its opening line echoes Psalm 134 and its emphasis on creation and the exodus points ahead to Psalm 136. (PBC)

135:1–2 Initial call to praise, addressed to priests and Levites (see 134:1–2). (CSB)

The introduction indicates that this psalm was associated with temple worship. The priests and Levites are invited to praise God for his goodness to Israel. (PBC)

135:1 *servants*. Refers to priests and Levites standing at their posts and to the whole worshipping community present in the temple courts. (TLSB)

135:3–4 A central reason for Israel to praise the Lord (see vv. 13–14). (CSB)

135:3 *for it is pleasant!* May refer to God’s name or to the pleasure of singing His praises. (TLSB)

May refer to God’s name or to the pleasure of singing His praises. (TLSB)

135:4 *Jacob*. A synonym for Israel (see Ge 32:28). (CSB)

The patriarch, his descendants, and, by extension, those who share his faith (Heb 11). (TLSB)

his own possession. The equivalent phrases used of Christians. (CSB)

God’s people belong to Him. (TLSB)

135:5–7 The Lord is great as well as good (v. 3); he is the absolute Lord in all creation (cf. the word about idols in vv. 15–18; see Jer 10:11–16). (CSB)

This section concerning the Lord’s superiority over imaginary gods of the nations reviews a portion of Psalm 115. Idols are do-nothings who can bring no blessing to those who serve them. The Lord, on the other hand, is active both in nature and in history. As creator and preserver he governs the world for the good of his people. (PBC)

125:5 *I know* – The use of the pronoun with the verb makes the psalm’s confession of faith emphatic. What he knows is that the Lord is greater than all gods. These are words that Jethro used in Exodus 18:11 when he met Moses and Israel after the great deliverance from Egypt. It is the kind of confession of faith that any believer could make, especially the Israelites as they remembered the events at Passover. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

135:6 Vivid statement of God’s omnipotence, which makes Him incomparably greater than everything. His power is limitless, contingent only upon His will. (TLSB)

whatever the Lord pleases. The idols can do nothing (vv. 16–17); they are themselves “done” (made) by their worshipers (v. 18). (CSB)

heavens ... earth ... seas. The three great domains of the visible creation, as the ancients viewed it. (CSB)

135:7 *He makes the clouds.* The Lord, not Baal or any other god, brings the life-giving rains (see Ps 29). (CSB)

The power of the storm is His creation. (TLSB)

wind. See 104:4; 148:8. The idols do not even have any “wind” (breath) in their mouths (v. 17). (CSB)

storehouses. Like a householder storing up his olive oil and grain. (CSB)

The metaphor refers to the potentialities of God’s power, the source of all the impulses of nature. (TLSB)

135:8–12 The Lord’s triumph over Egypt and over the kings whose lands became Israel’s inheritance, a concise recollection of Ex 7–14; Nu 21:21–35; Joshua. (CSB)

God’s greatness lies not only in His acts of creation but also in His acts of redemption, as He intervenes in history to deliver His people and fulfill His promises. Cf Ex 7–15; Nu 21:21–35; Dt 4:38. (TLSB)

135:14 *vindicate.* Uphold against all attacks by the world powers both Israel’s cause and her claim that the Lord is the only true God. (CSB)

God’s judgment will be in their favor, due to His grace and mercy. (TLSB)

have compassion on. See Ex 34:6–7. (CSB)

his servants. His covenant people. (CSB)

135:15–18 The powerlessness of the false gods and of those who trust in them. (CSB)

The true God is contrasted with the false gods manufactured by human beings. Those who worship idols come to share their lack of sense and reason. (TLSB)

135:19–21 Concluding call to praise, addressed to all who are assembled at the temple (see 115:9–11; 118:2–4). (CSB)

Each group in the temple—the congregation, the priests, the worship assistants—is urged to unite in the praise of God. (TLSB)

This conclusion connects Psalm 135 with both the Passover Hallel and the songs of ascents. Both of these groups emphasize the blessing of the promised land for Israel. The people and their leaders find their greatest joy in the presence of the Lord in his temple. (PBC)

135:21 *dwells in Jerusalem* – God is truly present in the temple. (TLSB)

Ps 135 God’s almighty power is evident in His creation and in His acts of redemption. The true God is contrasted with the man-made deities of false religions. When we know God only through His creation—the lightning and the storm—He can be terrifying. And in His dealings with human beings, He punishes sin, as He did with Pharaoh, the Canaanite kings, and worshipers of false gods. Yet God has compassion on His people, those whom He has chosen and claims as His own.

The true God was incarnate in Jesus Christ as true man, one with us. In Baptism, He makes us His possession. • O Lord, we praise You for redeeming us and all Your people throughout history. May pastors, teachers, musicians, choirs, and the whole congregation bless You for Your presence in Your Church. Amen. (TLSB)