

PSALMS

Chapter 147

He Heals the Brokenhearted

Praise the LORD!

For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting. 2 The LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel. 3 He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. 4 He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. 5 Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure. 6 The LORD lifts up the humble; he casts the wicked to the ground. 7 Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre! 8 He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth; he makes grass grow on the hills. 9 He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry. 10 His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man, 11 but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love. 12 Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion! 13 For he strengthens the bars of your gates; he blesses your children within you. 14 He makes peace in your borders; he fills you with the finest of the wheat. 15 He sends out his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly. 16 He gives snow like wool; he scatters frost like ashes. 17 He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs; who can stand before his cold? 18 He sends out his word, and melts them; he makes his wind blow and the waters flow. 19 He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules to Israel. 20 He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know his rules. Praise the LORD!

Ps 147 Praise of God, the Creator, for his special mercies to Israel—possibly composed for the Levitical choirs on the joyous occasion of the dedication of the rebuilt walls of Jerusalem (see Ne 12:27–43). The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) divides the work into two separate psalms (vv. 1–11, 12–20), but it is actually a three-part song (vv. 1–6, 7–11, 12–20), bound together by the frame (vv. 2–3, 19–20), in which the Lord’s unique favors to Israel are celebrated. See introduction to Ps 146. (CSB)

Second of five hallelujah psalms (see Ps 146 intro). Jerusalem had been destroyed and God’s people sent into exile in Babylon. But, as recorded in Ezr and Ne, God brought His people back to the land He had promised them. Jerusalem and its walls were rebuilt, and the temple reestablished. This psalm was perhaps composed to celebrate this restoration. LXX notations associate this psalm with the postexilic prophets Haggai and Zechariah. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–6, praise the Lord for His great works; vv 7–11, sing the wonders of His creation; vv 12–20, praise the Lord for His love for His people. (TLSB)

The 147th psalm is a psalm of thanks for various kindnesses and mighty works of God – first, toward Israel and Jerusalem, then to all who thirst. He gives rain and water to all creatures and does not let the least little bird go hungry, even the most useless raven. How much more then shall he care for us, especially those who trust in his goodness and not in human strength or horses? But above all to Jerusalem, where his Word and his dwelling are, he gives peace, grain, and all they need. For Jerusalem and Israel have the advantage that they have God’s Word and worship before all nations; therefore, he has done more miracles from them. He will also be much

more recognized there in the daily wonders such as rain, snow, ice, than by the faithless do not have God's Word or do not heed it. These people cannot see any work or wonder of God, though they enjoy them daily with their five senses, root in them, and devour them like swine. They did not know God because they do not hear or pay attention to his Word. (Reading the Psalms with Luther)

147:1 When our hearts are right, there is no employment so pleasant as praising God. That men so generally neglect this excellence service is a proof of their exceeding wickedness. (CB)

147:2 *builds up ... gathers.* Refers to the postexilic restoration of Jerusalem and Israel. (CSB)

outcasts. God's people have been exiles, but now He has restored Jerusalem and brought them back (cf Ezr 1–3). (TLSB)

147:3 *brokenhearted.* Such as the exiles (see Ps 137; cf. Ps 126) and those who struggled in the face of great opposition to rebuild Jerusalem's walls (Ne 2:17–20; 4:1–23). (CSB)

God heals His people's pain, both physical and emotional. (TLSB)

147:4–6 He whose power and understanding are such that he fixes the number of (or counts) the stars and names them is able to sustain his humble ones and bring the wicked down (see 20:8; 146:9; see also Isa 40:26–29). (CSB)

The greatness of God's power is shown by his knowledge and control of the stars, but his power which is most practical for us lies closer at hand. An outstanding example is his management of the waters of the earth. (PBC)

147:6 *humble.* Those who acknowledge that they are without resources (see 149:4). (CSB)

ground. Probably the grave. (CSB)

their names. God alone knows the stars' true nature. Naming something involves knowledge and assertion of authority over it, the right of lordship. (TLSB)

Isaiah 40:26 *"Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing.*

147:7–11 The God who governs the rain and thus provides food for beast and bird is not pleased by man's reliance on his own capabilities or those of the animals he has domesticated (or the technologies he has developed); he is pleased when people serve him and trust his loving care. (CSB)

147:7 *sing* – It is not the common word for singing. If it is related to the verb "to answer," then it would indicate antiphonal singing; but it may be separate word altogether. The call now is for praise to be given to God with musical instruments. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

lyre! When Jerusalem was rededicated, musicians of the Levites played David's musical instruments (Ne 12:36). (TLSB)

147:10 *strength of horses...legs of man* – A horse was a powerful animal in war; but in God’s estimation it was a vain thing (Ps. 33:17). Powerful horses and men are part of the God’s wonderful creation; but they were trusted as the means of conquest. Not so with God. What pleases the Lord is faith, not self-sufficiency. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

147:12–18 The Lord of all creation, Zion’s God, secures his people’s defenses and prosperity, their peace and abundant provision. The verses mention clouds and rain (v. 8); snow, frost and hail (vv. 16–17); icy winds and warm breezes (vv. 17–18)—the whole range of weather. (CSB)

147:13 *bars*. Newly built gates of Jerusalem, which could be closed and bolted for the security of the city. (TLSB)

147:15-18 Ice and snow and frost are quite infrequent in the Holy Land and are, therefore, thought of as evidences of the unusual which God is able to perform for the good of His people and as the destructive force against His enemies. (Leupold)

147:15 *his command ... his word*. Personified as messengers commissioned to carry out a divine order. (CSB)

St. Bernard of Clairvaux: “His Word ... which burdened and weighed down the hands of Moses himself, when lightened by Grace, and placed upon the wheels of the Gospel, ran swiftly over the whole earth” (SLSB, pp 63–64). Luther: “Everything that God wills happens quickly, instantly.... ‘His Word,’ not ‘our technique,’ makes and accomplishes all things” (AE 14:124, 125). (TLSB)

God’s word by which he commands nature and his word by which he communicates with human beings are set side by side in the last portions of the psalm. Although nature gives abundant testimony to the Lord’s goodness, we need the revelation of his word to reach a full and clear understanding of God’s goodness in providing for us. (PBC)

147:18 God’s creative Word controls nature. (TLSB)

147:19–20 God’s most unique gift to Israel: his other word, his redemptive word, by which he makes known his program of salvation and His Holy Will. (CSB)

147:20 God chose the nation of Israel and revealed to them His Word. Cf Rm 9:4–5. Luth: “Let it happen that others are rich and we poor, they powerful and we weak, they happy and we sad, they admired and we despised, they alive and we dead, they everything and we nothing—what of it?... You have God’s Word; they don’t!” (AE 14:134). (TLSB)

Ps 147 God has built Jerusalem and brought the exiles home. His Word that governs nature has been given to the children of Israel in Scripture. The Lord has forgiven those whom He had punished, gathered them from exile, and restored the Holy City. We need not depend on our strength, but we can “hope in His steadfast love” (v 11). The same Word that called the universe into existence and still governs its every detail is manifest in the Holy Scriptures and proclaimed in the Church for our salvation. • O Lord, You have made the crystals of ice, and You have made the stars. And yet, You show Your love for us. You have forgiven our sins and gathered us to Yourself. Above all of Your other blessings, You have given us Your Word. And that Word became flesh and dwelt among us. In His name we come before You. Amen. (TLSB)