

THROUGH NIGHT TO MORNING

by

A. C. Dixon, B.A., D.D.

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SERMON SEVENTEEN -

"PRAISE YE THE LORD"

"Praise ye the Lord" (Psalm 146:1).

THE word "*Hallelujah*," which is translated "**Praise ye the Lord**," occurs, as I have counted, twenty-four times in the Book of Psalms, and four times in the nineteenth chapter of Revelation, making twenty-eight times altogether in the Bible.

In the Psalms it is the Hallelujah of earth, and in Revelation it is the Hallelujah of Heaven. It is a word which cannot be translated by one word into any other language, and is, therefore, transferred. It is about the same in Greek, Latin, German, French, Italian, Dutch and English. It looks as if all nations were practising for the Hallelujah chorus of Heaven.

There are six Hallelujahs. Let us pass them in review.

I. THE HALLELUJAH OF NATURE

The first use of the word is at the close of Psalm . This Psalm is a fine poem on nature. It begins by calling on the soul to bless GOD, and then ascribes to GOD the greatness, honour and majesty which a study of nature suggests to a religious mind.

The light is GOD's garment. The Heaven is the canopy which He has spread, and the foundations of the ocean were laid by Him. He makes the clouds His chariot and rides upon the wings of the wind. The thunder is His voice. He makes the springs which water bird and beast. The grass for the cattle, the trees for the nesting birds, the hills for the wild goats and the rocks for the conies are the expressions of His love and wisdom.

He made the laws which govern the sun and moon. Even the darkness serves a benevolent purpose. In the midst of this beautiful scene man It goeth forth to his labour until the evening.

Then the Psalmist poet turns to the ocean, "**this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable**," with the ships on its surface and the monsters playing in its depths. GOD gives life and sustenance to all these.

The study of nature fills the Psalmist with praise to GOD.

He says, "**My meditation of Him shall be sweet. I will be glad in the Lord.**" There is no

conflict between the two books GOD has written for us, the Book of Nature and the Book of Revelation. GOD reveals Himself in both.

- The naturalist who does not see GOD in His works simply shuts his eyes and refuses to see.
- An agnostic is one who chooses blindness rather than sight.

Everything in earth and sea and sky proclaims a GOD. Over the door of the great museum of McGill University in Montreal Sir William Dawson wrote the twenty-fourth verse of this Psalm, "**O Lord, how manifold are thy works: In wisdom hast Thou made them all.**" Sir William was a scientist, but he did not allow scientific prejudice to blind the eyes of his soul.

II. THE HALLELUJAH OF PROVIDENCE

The 105th Psalm, which also closes with "**Praise ye the Lord,**" deals with the history of Israel, and the Psalmist sees the footprints of GOD in history as well as in nature.

- It was GOD Who covenanted with Abraham, "**made oath unto Isaac,**" and "**confirmed the same to Jacob.**"
- It was GOD Who protected His people when they "**were but few in number.**"
- It was GOD Who "**called for a famine upon the land**" when prosperity had caused them to forget His laws.
- It was GOD Who sent Joseph into Egypt, and then Moses as the deliverer of His people.
- It was GOD Who sent the darkness and turned their water into blood.
- It was GOD Who spread a cloud over them for a covering and gave them "**fire to give light in the night.**"
- It was GOD Who "opened the rock" and quenched their thirst.

The Psalmist closes this review of GOD's providential dealings with a "**Praise ye the Lord.**"

With some it is easier to see GOD in nature than in providence. Jacob could praise GOD for grass and trees and stars, but when Joseph was taken he said, "**All these things are against me.**"

On another occasion the Psalmist did not feel like praising and he refused to shout "Hallelujah" with his lips when his heart did not prompt it. "**Why art thou cast down, O my soul,**" he exclaims, "**and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in GOD; for I will yet praise Him.**"

I do not feel like praising now, but I will hope for the time to come when I will praise Him. Indeed I will praise GOD that I will yet praise Him.

There is no kind of experience in which a Christian has a right to refuse to praise GOD, for "all things work together for good to them that love God."

- Praise GOD in the dark, for He maketh the light to shine out of darkness.
- Praise GOD for sorrow, for JESUS said, "**Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.**"
- Praise GOD for clouds, for it is upon the clouds that GOD shows His rainbow of love.
- Praise GOD for the furnace, for it is in the fire that the Son of Man delights to walk with you,

and when you come out you will find that only your bonds have been burned.

He who obeys the command, "**Rejoice in the Lord,**" has a Hallelujah in his soul every minute of the day and night.

III. THE HALLELUJAH OF GRACE

The 106th Psalm begins and closes with "**Praise ye the Lord,**" and the key-note of its contents is in the first verse, "**Give thanks unto the Lord, for His mercy endureth for ever.**"

He prays, "**O visit me with Thy salvation,**" and he makes confession of sin: "**We have sinned with our fathers; we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.**" Then follows a recountal of GOD's merciful dealings with His people in spite of their sins. "**He remembered for them His covenant and repented according to the multitude of His mercies.**"

The saved sinner can sing this "**Praise ye the Lord**" of mercy more loudly and sweetly than any other. And GOD's mercy fills him with song because His justice has been satisfied in JESUS CHRIST. Mercy can now rejoice against judgment because judgment has been met and mercy made possible through the atoning sacrifice of CHRIST.

"Hallelujah for the cross" is the song of the redeemed. It comes to us from Heaven and will return with us to Heaven.

IV. THE HALLELUJAH OF PRAISE

The hallelujahs of nature, providence and grace continue to the end, but the works of GOD recede while GOD Himself is more clearly seen.

- After "**Praise ye the Lord**" in Psalm 111 come the words, "**I will praise the Lord with my whole heart.**"
- After "**Praise ye the Lord**" in Psalm 112: "**Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord.**"
- After "**Praise ye the Lord**" in Psalm 113: "**Praise, O ye servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord.**"

And as the Hallelujahs increase toward the end of the book GOD alone is the object of praise.

In Psalm 146, "**Praise ye the Lord, Praise the Lord, O my soul.**"

- In Psalm 147: "**Praise ye the Lord, for it is good to sing praises unto our God.**"
- In Psalm 148: "**Praise ye the Lord, Praise ye the Lord from the heavens.**"

And the Psalmist calls the roll of the Hallelujah choir consisting of angels, sun, moon and stars; the heavens, "**the dragons and all deeps,**" fire and hail, snow and vapours, strong wind, mountain and hills, trees, beasts and cattle, creeping things and flying fowl, men and maidens, old men and children. "**Let them praise the name of the Lord, for His name alone is excellent.**"

In Psalm 149: "**Praise ye the Lord: Sing unto the Lord a new song,**" as if thought and words

were failing him to express his praise to GOD. And the climax comes in the last verse of the last Psalm, **"Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord."**

GOD is greater and more worthy of praise than are His works in nature, providence and grace.

V. THE HALLELUJAH OF JUDGMENT

This appears in Revelation 19:1-2, **"Alleluia; Salvation and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God, for true and righteous are His judgments; for He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication . . . And again they said Allelujah. And her smoke rose up forever and ever."**

The Hallelujah of judgment seems to shock sentimental natures who cannot endure the thought that GOD could allow anyone to go to hell. And yet anyone with a spark of nobility of character must rejoice over the apprehension and punishment of certain criminals.

When the papers published the fact that a young man entered a large room in Buffalo, New York, and stood in line with those who were receiving the greetings of President McKinley, that he might murder the man who was ready to greet him with kindness, some theologians in New England, who had been preaching that there was no hell. were frank enough to confess that there ought to be a hell for at least one man for McKinley and his murderer ought not to be together in the same place.

For such men to escape hell unless they repent. would be cause for everlasting regret. The smoke of their torment satisfies the sense of justice which every righteous soul has. For them to escape punishment would make a discordant note in GOD's universe. The Hallelujah of judgment is the response of noble natures to the justice of the retribution which comes upon those who wreck the character and destroy the happiness of others.

VI. THE HALLELUJAH OF SOVEREIGNTY

"Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" (Revelation 19:6).

"Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne,
Yet the scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown
Standeth GOD within the shadow, keeping watch above His own."

GOD seems to be dethroned. but He is not. The fact that He does not strike monsters of iniquity in human shape dead is proof that He is merciful.

- When, therefore. I read in the press of the orgies of those who lie in wait for the innocent and seek their destruction. I say, "Hallelujah! GOD is merciful."
- And when I read that some monster has been overtaken by retribution, I say with equal emphasis - "Hallelujah, God is just."
- When I hear a blasphemer revile GOD and the Bible. I say, "Hallelujah, God is merciful or he would be smitten dumb"; and when I hear the same man - yet not the same, because he has been transformed by grace, praising GOD for redemption through the Blood of CHRIST, I say,

"Hallelujah! Hallelujah, for the Lord GOD Omnipotent reigneth."

~ end of chapter 17 ~
