

24 Reasons Why

Psalm 147 October 1, 2023

Entrepreneur shares one good reason to start a business. *House Digest* has a good reason for keeping only one kind of seed in your bird feeder. *The Law Office Of Joel R. Spivak* offers one good reason to file for bankruptcy during the holidays, and Simba tells Scar to give him one good reason he shouldn't tear him apart.

Psalm 147 is all about reasons we should praise God. In each of its three stanzas, we are told to worship God, then given the reasons why. Not just *one* reason, but *two dozen* springing from God's power and His goodness and His activity and His tender love for the people of earth.

We don't know who wrote this Psalm or the historical setting, but it references the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of Israel. It may be from Nehemiah's time, when God's people endured a great deal of hardship and uncertainty, but they were also able to see the Lord move on their behalf and draw them back into closeness and communion with Him.

Psalm 147:1 - ¹ Hallelujah! How good it is to sing to our God, for praise is pleasant and lovely.

Praising God is not *just* about singing but it *is* about singing. In worship, we bring together our voices, our hearts, our spirits, our minds, our hope, and our faith to proclaim what is true about God. We mobilize melody for the glory of God - adorning the air with honor and awe. To praise means to be deeply thankful, to magnify and exalt Him, to express joy, to shout and brag and boast about Who God is.¹ It *can* be done in the quiet of our hearts, but Psalms calls us to more - to actually make music together with our voices and with instruments and even our posture.

It's a *good* thing to do - pleasant and lovely. One translation says: "It is good to hymn to our God... it is sweet to adorn with praise."² Not only is God *worthy* of praise, but worship is good for us, too. In worship, we fulfill our priestly duties.³ God is *looking* for worshippers.⁴ It is a good thing, a pleasant thing, a lovely thing. Matthew Henry called praising God, "work that is its own wages."⁵

Psalm 147:2 - ² The Lord rebuilds Jerusalem; he gathers Israel's exiled people.

Jerusalem was a special city to the Lord, Israel His special people. So we ask: *Why* was Jerusalem destroyed? *Why* was Israel exiled? It was because the people turned away from God. They *refused* to listen to Him for hundreds of years. After many warnings, after *generations* of long-suffering mercy, judgment came and the people were taken to Babylon. Their defiant unfaithfulness brought that disaster. And yet, God was still faithful. God still loved *them* and He would *not* abandon His

¹ *Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament*

² Robert Alter *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation With Commentary*

³ Arno Gaebelein *The Psalms: An Exposition*

⁴ John 4:23

⁵ Matthew Henry *Concise Commentary On The Bible*

promises to them. So, 70 years later, He provided for Israel to be regathered and the city of Zion to be rebuilt.

You may not know Adrian Smith, but you probably know his work. He's the architect behind some of the most famous buildings in the world, like the Burj Khalifa in Dubai. It is currently the world's tallest building,⁶ featured prominently in *Mission: Impossible - Ghost Protocol*. The Burj Khalifa won't be the tallest building for much longer. That title will go to Adrian Smith's newest megatall skyscraper, the Jeddah Tower in Saudi Arabia, which will stand 3,281 feet tall, with 165 floors.

God is a builder. Psalm 147 pictures Him building Jerusalem. What does He build today? Well, He's building a *New Jerusalem*, which His people will inhabit for all eternity. You can learn about its design and structure in Revelation 21. But God is *also* building His Church. If you're a Christian, the New Testament explains that *you* are a living stone in His construction - carefully selected, shaped, and installed among other living stones for the best harmony and growth of the Body of Christ.

God still builds using exiles. The outcasts⁷ - those driven away by an unloving world, God receives with open arms and tender care. Look at verse 3.

Psalm 147:3 - ³He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds.

A lot of shocking footage came out of the tragic fires on Maui this summer. The worst I saw was an injured or dying woman lying by the side of the road while cars drove past. In the video, a man in a car was filming while his fellow passengers said "*Just go - we can't do nothing for her.*"⁸

There's no footage of another woman's experience. Flames were closing in on Lani Williams and her mother. Their only hope was to climb a seawall and wade out into the waves. But the wall was too high. Time was running out. Then a stranger appeared out of the smoke and carried the ladies over the seawall to safety.⁹ He told them, "Trust me...put your weight on me...I promise I got you."

God *loves* you. He sees your hurts. He knows your wounds. Others may pass by, but *He* leans down to bear your burdens with His own strength. He has come to save and to rescue the broken.

One day, Jesus entered a synagogue in His home town. He opened the scroll of Isaiah and read Isaiah 61:1. "*The Spirit of the Lord God is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to the prisoners.*" Then He said, "Today as you listen, this Scripture has been fulfilled."

Jesus is the Great Physician. He is the Healer, sent from heaven to bind up our wounds and heal our broken hearts. He offers you salvation, liberty, spiritual healing.

⁶ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adrian_Smith_\(architect\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adrian_Smith_(architect))

⁷ J.J. Stewart Perowne *Commentary On The Psalms*

⁸ <https://notthebee.com/article/on-the-maui-residents-who-drove-right-past-this-woman-in-their-attempts-to-flee-fire>

⁹ <https://6abc.com/maui-fire-hawaii-wildfires-benny-reinicke-rescue/13662905/>

Psalm 147:4 - ⁴He counts the number of the stars; he gives names to all of them.

Scientists say there are 100 billion stars in a typical galaxy and that there are 2 trillion or so galaxies.¹⁰ One million earths could fit inside of our sun and *five* billion of our suns could fit inside the largest known star.¹¹

We are awestruck at the power of God. With a word He created these 200 billion trillion stars. He names each one and holds their atoms together. At the same time, this verse shows how great God's care is for *you*. The *stars* were not made in His image - *you* were. The stars are not the special object of His attention - *you* are. In fact, the Bible uses the stars, all 200 billion trillion of them, as a reference for the work the Lord wants to do in *your* life and a marker of His love for you.¹²

You were handcrafted by God in your mother's womb. You are known and loved by Him. He has a special name for you. He's numbered the hairs on your head and saves your tears in His bottle. He created the universe, vast as it is, so you might be His friend, a child in His family.

Psalm 147:5 - ⁵Our Lord is great, vast in power; his understanding is infinite.

We marvel at the skill of great athletes. I'm sure some of you have strong opinions about who the greatest to ever play your sport of choice is. We can't help but *praise* their excellence. The Lord holds the cosmos together. His strength, His wisdom, His goodness cannot be measured. It's marvelous!

Psalm 147:6 - ⁶The Lord helps the oppressed but brings the wicked to the ground.

"God helps those who help themselves" is a phrase made famous by Benjamin Franklin. The saying can be traced back as far as Sophocles in 409 B.C.¹³ But *Poor Richard* and the Greeks were wrong. The truth is, God helps those who *cannot* help themselves.¹⁴

The term used for 'help' can mean "bind," or "surround with ropes."¹⁵ How does *that* help? In Hosea, the Lord tell us He binds us with ropes of love, easing our burdens, taking us by the hand. The Lord's ropes are never meant to imprison, but to relieve and sustain - to hold us together.

But, not everyone receives this help. Psalms is very clear that there are two paths leading to two destinations: The Lord's way, leading to life and the way of the wicked, leading to destruction.

As we look at the world, it's easy to feel like evil people are always high above, ahead of the rest of us. But God will bring them down. He will sink their ship. The day is coming when the wrath of God

¹⁰ <https://theconversation.com/how-many-stars-are-there-in-space-165370>

¹¹ <https://www.space.com/41290-biggest-star.html>

¹² See Genesis 15:5, Psalm 136:9

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_helps_those_who_help_themselves

¹⁴ Tremper Longman *Psalms: An Introduction And Commentary*

¹⁵ *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)*

will consume the wicked. Those who are *not* walking with God should look to the Lord for rescue from their inevitable destruction. He *will* save them if they will humble themselves.

Psalm 147:7 - ⁷ Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; play the lyre to our God,

The “lyre” was a *kinnor*, which was a small harp, usually 10 strings, played with a pick.¹⁶ You can get a “Levite-made, Temple quality” kinnor, handcrafted in Jerusalem, carved from Israeli olivewood, inlaid with the jewels of the 12 tribes of Israel. It’ll only set you back \$9,700 (plus \$320 shipping).¹⁷

The Psalms last mentioned lyres in chapter 137 when the exiles “hung up their lyres in the poplar trees.” Instead of worship in the Temple there was weeping in Babylon. But the Lord brings beauty from ashes. He gave His people chance to sing to Him again, to worship with their lyres.

There are Christians who say that it is *wrong* to use instruments in church worship. The argument is that we have no specific examples or prescriptions in the New Testament to use instruments, therefore it’s unbiblical to use them. Ephesians 5:19 is cited as proof: “speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music with your heart to the Lord.”

Here’s a quote from a Church of Christ pastor: “*It is clear that there is no authority from God for the church to worship with a mechanical instrument of music.*”¹⁸

This isn’t an essential issue to us, but I will say: The Psalms are quoted *dozens* of times in the New Testament and, in Ephesians and Colossians, we are commanded to use the Psalms in the exercise of our Christian faith and in our church life. The Psalms were set to *music*, using instruments from every section of the orchestra. Not everyone plays a mechanical instrument, but we all *have* an instrument - our voice - and those who *do* play an instrument can do so to the glory of God.

Psalm 147:8-9 - ⁸ who covers the sky with clouds, prepares rain for the earth, and causes grass to grow on the hills. ⁹ He provides the animals with their food, and the young ravens what they cry for.

The Lord is a tender God. His care is thorough and comprehensive. One commentator points out how humans wouldn’t cultivate up on the hills, so the Lord takes it on Himself to make food for animals there.¹⁹ Of course, ravens don’t eat grass, so the Lord has to address their needs in a different way.²⁰ But the Lord has it covered. He cares even for young ravens.

But you sons of Adam and daughters of Eve, “you are worth more than *many* sparrows.”²¹

¹⁶ Flavius Josephus *Antiquities Of The Jews*

¹⁷ <https://www.harrariharps.com/kinnor-david>

¹⁸ <https://www.northwestcofc.org/why-does-the-church-of-christ-not-use-mechanical-instruments-of-music-in-worship.html>

¹⁹ Herbert Lockyer *Psalms: A Devotional Commentary*

²⁰ John Goldingay *Psalms Volume 3: Psalms 90-150*

²¹ Matthew 10:31

Psalm 147:10 - ¹⁰ He is not impressed by the strength of a horse; he does not value the power of a warrior.

We are impressed with horses. We still measure a car's engine by horsepower. Man is infatuated with strength and physique. But God is not interested in those things. What *is* He interested in?

Psalm 147:11 - ¹¹ The Lord values those who fear him, those who put their hope in his faithful love.

Fearing God is explained in the second line of this verse. It means to put our hope in His faithful love. Deuteronomy 10 says: "*fear the Lord your God by walking in all his ways, to love him, and to worship the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul.*"²²

We're invited to put our hope in God's *hesed*. That's a special term for God's love in the Old Testament. It speaks of His merciful, compassionate, covenant love that is *freely given*.²³ God *values* the people who accept this covenant love.

People value strange things. I found a list of odd collections. Graham Baker takes the cake with the *Guinness World Record* for largest collection of belly button lint. After 30 years, he has 22 grams.²⁴

God values *you*. He values people who accept His *hesed* love and love Him in return.

Psalm 147:12 - ¹² Exalt the Lord, Jerusalem; praise your God, Zion!

Verse 12 turns personal: Exalt *your* God, Zion. You're here, listening to this song. Is this God, so great, so good, so loving - is He *your* God? Do you *know* Him? Have you pledged yourself to Him? Have you become a citizen in His Kingdom? To be a citizen of Zion meant you were part of God's covenant. As Christians, we, too, are members of a covenant - the *new* covenant brought by the blood of Jesus. We are His and He is ours.

Psalm 147:13-14 - ¹³ For he strengthens the bars of your city gates and blesses your children within you. ¹⁴ He endows your territory with prosperity; he satisfies you with the finest wheat.

God's activity causes us not just to survive, but to *thrive*.²⁵ We see pictured here civic life, family life, personal need, communal protection. Agriculture and economy and generations.

The rescued exiles would *still* face difficulties and enemies. They would still have needs and hardships. The Lord promised to look after them and to endow them with *shalom*. That's the word that comes to us as "prosperity" there in verse 14. Your version may say "makes peace."

²² Deuteronomy 10:31

²³ *Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament*

²⁴ <https://www.colleconline.com/en/blog/268/the-36-most-unusual-collections>

²⁵ Estes

God does *not* promise New Testament Christians that they will always be healthy and wealthy in a life of ease. But He does promise *shalom* from the Prince of Peace. Scholars call *shalom* “one of the most important theological words in the Old Testament,” and define it as “completeness, wholeness, harmony, fulfillment.”²⁶ That is what God wants to grow in your life. Strength and peace and satisfaction rooted in Christ Jesus, Who cares for you day by day.

Psalm 147:15 - ¹⁵ He sends his command throughout the earth; his word runs swiftly.

The Word of God is powerful. It can penetrate to the deepest part of a human heart or the furthest corner of space. It is a light for our feet and works healings among the broken. The swiftness gives us the impression of a God Who is *eager* to accomplish His gracious purposes on the earth.²⁷ And now we Christians are enlisted to be a part of the spread of the Word of God throughout the earth.

Psalm 147:16-18 - ¹⁶ He spreads snow like wool; he scatters frost like ashes; ¹⁷ he throws his hailstones like crumbs. Who can withstand his cold? ¹⁸ He sends his word and melts them; he unleashes his winds, and the water flows.

I read that some ancients referred to snow as “wooly water.”²⁸ We see here a God Who is continually active in the affairs of the world. He didn’t “set it and forget it.”

Though His power is astounding, notice how He uses it at the end of verse 18: Water flows. His desire is to sustain. God wants to take your life and make it like a tree planted by rivers of water. He said to the woman at the well, “If you knew Who I was, you’d ask and I would give you living water.”

Psalm 147:19-20 - ¹⁹ He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and judgments to Israel. ²⁰ He has not done this for every nation; they do not know his judgments. Hallelujah!

This great and active God has a special relationship with certain people. It was *Israel* He set apart to be His special possession among the nations. And now, we Christians have been grafted into the work. God revealed His Word and His judgments to His people. In the Bible, God’s “judgments” include all the functions of government. It means His justice, His manners and customs, His ordinances.²⁹ We are not only *recipients* of this revelation, we are also *custodians* of it.³⁰ We are sent to spread the word, to herald what has been revealed.

The other nations of the world, the unbelievers around us, *do not know these truths*. Rather than *resent* them for it, we should *reveal* to them what has been revealed to us: The living Word of God - the truth of Who God is and what He does.

²⁶ *Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament*

²⁷ Roger Ellsworth *Opening Up Psalms*

²⁸ Lockyer

²⁹ *Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament*

³⁰ Lockyer

Why did God call out the family of Abraham as a special group? So they could be a *blessing* to all the nations of the world.³¹ And now we are included in that opportunity to be light in the dark, heralds of good news in a world full of suffering and hate.

There are a lot of good reasons to praise the Lord. Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote, "*How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.*" Our God is great and worthy of praise. This song which fills our mind with snow and seasons and satisfaction and stars and salvation only *begins* to count the reasons why we can praise our God.

But one good reason is reason enough, and we have dozens. Thousands! Day after day we can learn more of God's graciousness, kindness, power, and love as we walk with Him and filled full with His everlasting life. And day after day we have more reason and more opportunity to praise the Lord.

³¹ Estes