

# Virtual Prayer Meeting for Kelham Baptist Church

February 17, 2021

Song: “Creature Praise”

(You likely have not heard this children’s song, but it captures the spirit of Psalm 148. I have included three different versions.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xhy38DCfU8>

<https://youtu.be/ySyql4ptSs8>

<https://youtu.be/HbSmG5OSIdU>

Song: “All Creatures of Our God and King”

<https://youtu.be/VdfTekZcgGM>

**Psalm 148 is a “Hallelujah” psalm.** “Hallelujah,” as most know, is a Hebrew word that combines “praise” (*hallel*) with the name for the covenant God of Israel, “Jehovah,” abbreviated to “jah.” The confusion between “Jehovah” and “Yahweh” comes from the two paths the Divine name took into English.

(YHWH and JHVH, the usual representation of the Divine name, are the same Hebrew word, יהוה, *yodh, heh, vav, heh*. Latin scholars transliterated the *yodh* as a *J*, whereas Hebrew and subsequent German scholars used *Y*. The *vav* was transliterated as a *V* by Latin readers and *W* by Hebrew and German speakers.)

Traditionally, Jews did not pronounce the divine name, the Tetragrammaton—the four letters—out of reverence or respect for God (Even today some Jewish writers use “G-d” when referring to Deity.) In time, scholars believe the Jews could have forgotten the pronunciation.

J. Barton Payne explained in *The Theology of the Older Testament*: “in post-Old Testament days Yahweh ceased to be pronounced aloud in the synagogue reading and was replaced orally (but not in writing) by Adhonai. This exchange took place because of the superstitious reverence in which the scribes held the ineffable name of God. Next when medieval Jewish scholars, the Masoretes, began to write in vowels to accompany the Old Testament text, they added to the original consonants of Yahweh the

Masoretic vowel points of Adhonai, and the actual written result became the impossible Y h w h. In the American Standard Version it is rendered 'Jehovah'" (p. 147).

Usually, scribes would substitute "Adonai," ("Lord") when they came to the Name in the text while reading aloud. When we read LORD in all capital letters in the King James Version, it represents God's self-revealed name from Exodus 6:34: "I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by *the name of* God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them." Commentators usually tell us JHVH or YHWH refers to God as Self-existent.

Carl F. H. Henry noted, "The name Yahweh accumulates to itself all that the patriarchs had already known about God, the Hebrew verb 'to be' had originally to do with absolute existence, not relative relationships. In our view Yahweh is the revelation of the Eternal, the independent sovereign of all" (*God, Revelation and Authority*, Vol. 2, pps. 220-221). Henry pointed out that YHWH could be translated as "I am the One who is," "I am who I am," "I will be what I will be," "I cause to be what I cause to be," "I am present is what I am."

Yahweh or Jehovah is God's self-revealed name in relation to His promises to Israel. Often, "I AM" represents it best. We have multiple combination names of God using Yahweh, or Jehovah. Substitute "I AM" for "Jehovah" and you get quite a revelation of who God reveals Himself to be:

Jehovah-Jireh: The Lord will provide (Gen. 22:14)—I am your Provider

Jehovah-Sabbaoth: The Lord of hosts, God of the heavenly armies (1 Sam. 1:3)—I am your protection

Jehovah-Nissi: The Lord our banner (Exod.17:15)—I am your victory

Jehovah-tsidkenu: The Lord our righteousness (Jer. 23:6)—I am your righteousness

Jehovah-rapha: The Lord the healer (Exod. 15:26)—I am your healer

Jehovah-Elohim: The Lord the Creator (Gen. 2:4)—I am your Creator

Jehovah-shalom: the Lord our peace (Judges 6:24)—I am your peace

Jehovah-shamma: The Lord our indweller (Ezek. 48:35)—I am your indweller

**On a parallel note, compare the numerous self-identifications of Jesus in the Gospel of John. These were claims to Deity:**

"I am the bread of life" (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51)

"I am the light of the world" (8:12)

"I am the door of the sheep" (10:7, 9)

"I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25)

“I am the good shepherd” (10:11, 14)  
“I am the way, the truth, and the life” (14:6)  
“I am the true vine” (15:1, 5)

**Psalm 148 contains the word “praise” thirteen times in its fourteen verses.** “Praise ye the Lord” appears twice in verse 1, once in verse 7 (the English omits “ye” implied in the verb), and once in verse 14. The Greek equivalent to “Hallelujah” is “Alleluia” a word that appears only four times in the New Testament, all in the nineteenth chapter of Revelation (vss. 1, 3-4, 6) and all in a type of poetic choral praise to God. “Hallelujah,” being Hebrew, does not appear in the New Testament, though it does appear ten times in the Old Testament, all in the Psalms (105:45; 106:1, 48; 111:1; 112:1; 113:1; 146:1; 147:1; 148:1; 149:1; 150:1). The conclusion to Psalms notably has five psalms that *begin and end* with “Hallelujah.” What a fitting conclusion to David’s book of prayer and praise.

**The word “praise” (*hallel*) is so translated** 117 times in the King James. Fourteen times it is translated “glory” and ten times “boast.” The root means to “shine.” Shine attention on Jehovah; glory in Jehovah; boast in Jehovah. All would be appropriate renderings. This first command is addressed to those in “the heavens” (Ps. 148:1), and includes “the heights,” lofty places, God’s dwelling place. We might compare the angels’ declaration at the birth of Jesus: “Glory to God in the highest” (Luke 2:4). Those in the heavens include “all his angels” (Ps. 148:2), God’s heavenly messengers, and “all his hosts.” “Hosts” reflects the term we saw earlier, *Jehovah-Sabaoth*, Lord of the heavenly armies. The word can be translated “warriors.” It speaks of God’s divine power in acting. It brings to mind the story of Elisha and his servant surrounded by Syrian armies in Dothan (2 Kings 6:13-17). When God opened the eyes of Elisha’s servant in response to the prophet’s prayer, he saw, “Behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” *Who were these?* They were God’s heavenly armies, protecting His prophet. Jesus referred to these heavenly hosts when He told Peter to put down his sword because he could “pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels” (Matt. 26:53). A Roman legion at full strength would consist of six thousand soldiers; so Jesus could have been guarded by seventy-two thousand angels had He so requested. In Revelation 5:9-12 we see this same truth of God’s heavenly legions

reflected in the great Song to the Lamb: “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was **ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands**; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” Their number is “ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.” Gill observed, “that is, an innumerable company of them; ... The Jews speak of nine hundred and six thousand millions of ministering angels, that stand constantly before the Lord” (*Yalkut Simeoni*, par 2.). The command of Psalm 148 will be ultimately fulfilled before the great throne of the Lamb of God. Imagine every kindred, every tongue, every nationality and people group all gathered praising the Lamb, who alone is worthy.

**The call to praise then shifts to the physical creation:** “praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light.” The physical creation, the universe God spoke into existence, praises Him. Psalm 19 proclaims, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (vs. 1). Verses 2-6 include the sun and moon in that testimony to the existence and glory of God. The movements of the sun and the moon, regular, calculated, plotted, reflect the glory of God. The celestial bodies, the stars, long the source for direction for ancient and modern travelers in their prescribed paths, reflect the glory of God. (On another note: isn’t it amazing how much snow a bright sun can melt even when temperatures are below freezing? If the sun were to go dark, life would instantly cease.)

Scientists in our day have taken the vast distances of space and claimed the insignificance of man and the impossibility of God. (David knew the vastness of space and the relative insignificance of man and wrote of it in Psalm 8:3-4: “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?”) Some scientists have attempted to turn the Creation against the Creator, spinning evolutionary tales from their warped interpretation of supposed evidence, in reality the artifacts of God’s judgment in the Flood. One day the

true testimony will be restored. Paul explained, “The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead” (Rom. 1:20). He pointed out that men “hold the truth in unrighteousness,” literally “hold down,” or suppress, the truth *because of* unrighteousness. There is a Creator, and no amount of spin can hide that.

**The Creation knows the truth about God and confesses it openly** to those with open minds. Once upon a time, a man and woman were walking on a city street after dark. They encountered a man beneath a lamppost, bent over on the ground, obviously looking for something.

“What are you looking for?” the woman asked.

He said, “My keys. I dropped them.”

“Where did you drop them?” her partner responded.

“Over there by the curb in front of that restaurant.”

“Well, why are you looking here?” the woman said.

“Because it’s dark over there, and there’s light here,” the man responded.

Of course, the man would never find his keys there because that’s not where he dropped them. God will never be found when a person has materialistic preconceptions that eliminate anything beyond the natural. By definition science rules God out of consideration. God revealed Himself in Creation and in conscience—“manifest in them” (Rom. 1:19). Human beings know in their heart of hearts that God exists.

**“Heaven of heavens” (Ps. 148:4)** and “waters that be above the heavens” refer to the sphere in which God places the “sun and moon” (vs. 3) and “stars of light” as well as the incredibly complex atmosphere from which rain and weather come. The plea turns in verse 5 to all of those wonders: “Let them praise the name of the Lord: for he commanded, and they were created.” “Commanded” stresses the divine decree of Creation: “Let there be” (Gen. 1:3, 6, 14). Psalm 33:6 tells us, “By the word of the Lord

were the heaven made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.” Verse 9 says, “For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.”

**Consider the incredible power of our God who needs only *speak*.**

John 1:3 says, “All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being” (NASB).

Colossians 1:16 says, “For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created by Him and for Him.”

He is the Creator and the Goal of Creation. We should not be surprised at all to find this One healing by speaking a word (John 5:8: “Rise, take up thy bed, and walk”), quieting a storm by a statement (Mark 4:39: “Peace, be still”), re-creating by divine fiat (Rev. 21:5: “He that sat on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new”).

**“Created” (Ps. 148:5) is not the word translated “made”** in Genesis 1:7. The two words are used somewhat interchangeably in Genesis. Mortenson noted, “In the creation account (*Genesis 1:1-2:3*), both words are used in reference to *ex nihilo* creation events, and both are also used in reference to things God made from previously created material... The context ... is overwhelmingly in favor of interpreting both *bara* and *asah* in Genesis 1 as virtually instantaneous acts” (<https://answersingenesis.org/genesis/did-god-create-bara-or-make-asah-in-genesis-1/>).

Where did God purchase the blueprints for the solar system? Did He have access to schematics for human beings, elephants, porpoises, and finches? From what immense incomprehensible kind of mind did this incredible variety of life spring? Look at the systems involved in weather, hydrology, or planetary movements. Either God is brilliant beyond vastly our conception (the testimony of incredible irreducible complexity we see in Creation) or by some infinitesimally small chance all of this (I mean all of this!) came into being from something called the Big Bang.

We’ve all heard the story of the scientists who supposedly presented themselves before God and told Him they did not need Him any longer because they had created life from

elements found in the soil. God's response was, "Next time, get your own dirt." There have been all kinds of procedures in the last century in which various scientists have tried to create the simplest amino acids, precursors to life (*abiogenesis*). They have all started with existing materials. They have all failed. James Tour, Rice University professor of Chemistry, Computer Science, Materials Science and NanoEngineering, is an adherent of Intelligent Design. His conclusion is that "life should not exist anywhere in our universe. Life should not even exist on the surface of the earth." "Yet we are led to believe that 3.8 billion years ago the requisite compounds could be found in some cave, or undersea vent, and somehow or other they assembled themselves into the first cell"

(<https://www.jmtour.com/personal-topics/evolution-creation/>). For a brief survey of the incredible impossibilities, you might read his article "Animadversions of a Synthetic Chemist" (<https://inference-review.com/article/animadversions-of-a-synthetic-chemist>). Tour has numerous videos and lectures that stress the incredibly (impossibly) long odds of life *just happening*. Tour's reasoned and thorough critique of *abiogenesis* can be seen here: <https://evolutionnews.org/2021/02/new-abiogenesis-series-james-tour-strikes-back/>

**Psalm 148:6 stresses that God hath "established them** for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass." Bob Utley calls this a "hyperbolic statement of the permanency of this planet and its seasons" (<https://bible.org/seriespage/psalm-148>). This depends, I think, on a misidentification of "them." Better, I think, is Ellicott's interpretation, who saw this not as a statement about the permanence of the earth but of the principles God instituted: "This anticipates, but only in form, the modern scientific doctrine of the inviolability of natural order. It is the imperishable faithfulness of God that renders the law invariable." In other words, a Biblical worldview enabled the development of modern science, something Hooykas explicitly traced in *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science*. Regularity and predictability, the order instilled by God in the universe, made scientific study possible and fruitful. Keil and Delitzsch saw this same truth: "He hath given a law by which its distinctive character is stamped upon each of these heavenly beings, and a fixed bound is set to the nature and activity of each in its mutual relation to all, and not one transgresses (the individualizing singular) this law given to it."

**Psalm 148:7 shifts the focus from the heavens** and its inhabitants to the “earth,” and calls for “dragons” and “all deeps” to praise Jehovah. “Dragons” renders a word also translated “serpent” (three times), “whale” (three times), and “sea monster” (one time). Enormous sea creatures have left their legacy in archaeology. The *Tylosaurus* could reach more than fifty feet or more in length—picture a giant komodo dragon with flippers instead of arms and legs (Ross, “Sea Monsters,” <https://answersingenesis.org/aquatic-animals/sea-monsters/>). Driver, in “Sea Monsters . . . More than a Legend,” <https://answersingenesis.org/dinosaurs/dragon-legends/sea-monsters-more-than-a-legend/>), described several possible identifications, including Shepherd’s Beaked-whale (*Tasmacetus shepherdi*), known to still live in today’s oceans. The “deeps” refers to subterranean waters. We know today that the Challenger Deep in the Mariana Trench is the deepest known point in the oceans of the planet. It was measured at 36,070 feet, a depth so deep that if Mount Everest were submerged there, its peak would still be a mile below the surface. Exploration has revealed some incredibly diverse creatures in the depths (<https://earthnworld.com/deep-sea-creatures/>). All these are called to praise the Lord.

**Verse 8 points to “fire” and “hail” and “snow”** and “vapour,” along with “stormy wind” accomplishing God’s purposes. This verse is what drew my attention to Psalm 148 this week. In the midst of our uncharacteristic weather (-14 degrees at my house yesterday morning along with more snow on top of the previous six inches), my thoughts turned to this passage. God accomplishes His (unknown to us) purposes through weather. “Vapour” is likely fog. “Stormy wind” is tornados, something this Siberian Vortex has produced in the southeastern United States. We cannot fathom God’s purposes, but we are assured these weather events are “fulfilling his word,” doing God’s will, no matter how incomprehensible to us humans. We can trust God we know His love and His faithfulness. Chisholm’s iconic hymn, “Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” drawn from the Book of Lamentations, echoes some of this theme in the second stanza:

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,  
Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above;  
Join with all nature in manifold witness,  
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.



**The focus shifts to the surface of the earth in verses 9-10:** “mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl.” The psalmist has called all of creation to proclaim His praises—geography and topography, vegetation that provides food and building materials, animals, fish and insects, and birds. “Creeping things” is a word used of anything that creeps, slithers, or moves lightly and can be used of fish and insects. I have been feeding the birds in my back yard a little extra. It’s amazing to me to see how quickly they notice the seed and how they flock to consume the nutrients necessary for life. You would think they would freeze, but they have not. Most are finches. Two nights ago I watched flocks of larger birds, probably robins, flying northwest over my back yard. Within half an hour, the same birds (they looked the same—I don’t know that they were) were winging their way back southeast. I wondered aloud: “Was a farmer feeding cattle over there?” I commented to my wife, “I wonder where they spend the night.” I left that question for future research! In their own way, these birds praise God by their lives, however short they may be. Have you ever seen how birds socially distance on telephone wires? When a newcomer settles in, they shift left and right to provide room.

**Verses 11-12 shift the call to worship to us, all of humanity.** “Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: both young men, and maidens; old men, and children” are all called to praise the Lord (vs. 13). All classes, all ages, all genders—no one is exempted from the psalmists’ call to praise the Lord. Philippians declares, “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth” (2:10). Romans 14:11, quoting the Septuagint (LXX) translation of Isaiah 45:23 says, “*As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.*” Ultimately, all of creation will once more submit to God.

**The call to praise is expressed clearly** and its reason given in verse 13: “Let them praise the name of the Lord: for his name alone is excellent.” Jehovah alone is worthy to rule His Creation. “Excellent” translates a word that mean “high” or “exalted.” His is the name above every name. He alone is true, faithful, and holy. His “glory,” or splendor and majesty, is “above the earth and heaven.” Creation in all its dimensions shows the wisdom of God. In our fallen world, that is not always evident. Sin has marred the

created universe and man, created in the image of God. The ugly effects of Adam's sin has distorted the inherent beauty and order God created. Romans 8 explains, "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Because the creature itself groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (vss. 19-22). Where the King James uses "creature," we must understand "creation." The whole creation groans under the curse (Gen. 3:17-19). One day that curse will be lifted (Rev. 22:3: "There shall be no more curse").

**Psalm 148 ends with praise to God because** "he also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him" (vs. 14). It is praise rooted in God's choice of the nation of Israel, God's "saints," or set-apart ones. It is a plan of eternal salvation.

Think about a Jew reading this psalm at various points in Israel's history. At times, that hope would have seemed dim indeed. During the Captivity in Babylon, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego (Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, their Hebrew names in Daniel 1:6) believed God and had hope. In the First Century, Peter, Andrew, James, John, and seven others believed. Then there was Saul. He, too, believed. Through the centuries, even in Diaspora and persecution, Jewish people have come to believe God's Word. In our lifetimes, men like Charles Halff, founder of the Christian-Jew Hour, believed it. Moishe Rosen of Jews for Jesus believed it. In the Great Tribulation to come, many, many more will come to trust that hope. Praise Ye the Lord! "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4).  
Hallelujah!

Song: "One Day"

<https://youtu.be/1hTeEYpcy9Q>

## “One Day” in Korean

(I like to include songs from other nations and cultures sometimes because there is coming a day when all tongues shall praise our Lord and Savior.)

<https://youtu.be/RLzOX1VYc-A>