

JEAN FENWICK

Psalm 148

If you mention the psalms to anyone they will probably consider straight away, Psalm 23. Until recent times it was a regular part of a funeral gathering. Myself though, my thoughts go straight away to Psalm 148. This is constantly brought to mind as I sit in church, especially when the sun is shining through the first south nave window. Here we have Walter Crane's interpretation of the psalm.

The psalter or book of psalms contains 150 songs or poems. The last five poems bring together a conclusion of praise to the God of Israel. Each begin and end in hallelujah. This is a command telling the people to Praise Yah which is an abbreviation of the divine name Yahweh. Psalm 148 falls at the centre of this five-poem conclusion. It is summoning that all should praise the God of Israel because he has raised up a horn for his people. (v.14)

Read two versions of Psalm 148. You will notice the differing vocabulary but all referring to similar interpretations. The psalmist calls for all the creatures in two different realms to praise the Lord or Yahweh. We find the realm of the sky in the earlier verses followed by the realms of the earth. All the language echoes back to Genesis and the story of the creation. In the window we find all the creatures that inhabit the skies, angel messengers, the sun, moon, and stars. First, we're told why the skies should praise Yahweh. Creation obeys God's established laws that don't change. Creation follows the orders of their maker. All of God's creatures of the skies should join in the chorus, for God created and sustains them all by his command.

The psalmist then turns to the land—everything below the skies is called to praise Yahweh. Beginning with the sea monsters of the deep and progressing through to trees and animals, kings, and children, all the inhabitants of the land are called to worship their Creator.

All are called to praise the Lord or Yahweh. All are praised with the sound of the horn.

We have to bear in mind the book of Psalms tells the story of the Hebrew Bible. It's the story of God's promise to raise up a king who will bring victory to Israel and rescue the world. And if we've been reading carefully up to this

point, there is little question that the psalmist in Psalm 148 is referring to the promised king.

The horn is a symbol of the messianic king and his victory over evil—a fitting conclusion to the book.

This line is usually translated “praise the LORD,” but in Hebrew, it’s “*hallelu-Yah*,” meaning praise Yah (short for Yahweh). Today, it is common for people to use hallelujah as a way to praise God. But in Hebrew, hallelujah is not something you say to God; rather, it’s what you say to other people when you invite them to praise God. It is a call to praise the Lord. It’s about the call, not the content of the praise.

As followers of Jesus today join in the song. With all of creation—the skies, the land, and everything in between—we sing praises to God for he has lifted up for us, a horn of salvation. See hymn 558 in Mission Praise.

Praise Him on the trumpet, the psaltery and harp

Praise Him on the timbrel and the dance

Praise him with stringed instruments too

Praise Him on the loud cymbals

Hallelujah, praise the Lord

And we look with great anticipation for that future day when all of creation, above and below, will praise God in the new heavens and the new earth.

It has recently brought to our notice the figure in the second light; kneeling with hands clasped. The local historian who brought it to our notice considered it to be the symbolic slave portrait used during the slave emancipation discussions of the early 1800s.

I have been in contact with a Walter Crane expert, and he thought that was not necessarily Crane’s thought at this time but with have no proof of the artist’s decision on his work.

Words of Psalm 148 to be seen in the Walter Crane window:

Praise the Lord

Praise ye the Lord of Heavens

Praise ye Him and Angels Let them Praise the Name of the Lord

For he commands they were created

Snow and Vapour, stormy winds

Fulfilling the Word

Kings of the Earth

And All People and All Judges of the Earth.

Praise Up Him, Sun and Moon

Praise Him All Ye Stars

Praise Him Ye Heavens of Heavens

And Mountains and Hills, Fruitful Trees and all Cedars

Praise Him the sound of the Trumpets

Both Young, Men and Maidens, Old Men and Children.





