

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

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Psalm 117 — The Beauty of Brevity

1.0 Introducing Psalm 117

- Psalm 117 is the shortest chapter in the Bible and the shortest psalm. It is also the central chapter of the 1189 chapters in the Protestant English Bible. Psalms of 3 verses include 131, 133, and 134.
- Psalm 117 is the fifth psalm in the “Egyptian Hallel” (Pss 113–118, see notes on Ps 113), traditionally recited at Passover.
 - ✓ Whereas Psalm 115 was national and Psalm 116 personal, this one is global.
- Jesus and His disciples sang this psalm following the Last Supper prior to going out to the Garden of Gethsemane. Read its words carefully in light of what this psalm signified to Jesus Himself at that time.
- Some Hebrew manuscripts attach this psalm to Psalm 116 and others to Psalm 118.

2.0 Reading Psalm 117 (NAU)

117:1 Praise the LORD, all nations;
Laud Him, all peoples!

117:2 For His lovingkindness is great toward us,
And the truth of the LORD is everlasting.

Praise the LORD!

3.0 Understanding Psalm 117

3.1 Outline

- I. Summons/Call to Praise (v. 1)
- II. Summary/Cause of Praise (v. 2a-b)
- III. Summons/Concluding Praise (v. 2c)



3.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “Praise the LORD”
 - This is the fuller expression (*Hallelu 'et-Yahweh*), as compared to the usual *Hallelu-Yah* (found at the end of this psalm).
 - The only other occurrences of this longer expression are Psalm 148:1 (2nd phrase), 7, and Jeremiah 20:13.
 - ✓ In Psalm 148:1 both expressions occur back-to-back: *Hallelu Yah, Hallelu 'et-Yahweh*.

- **v. 1** “all nations . . . all peoples”
 - Compare with the role of the nations in Psalm 115:2.
 - “The greatest incentive in missions around the world is that God might have more worshippers of his supreme majesty. . . . Worship is the ultimate goal of global outreach.” — Steven J. Lawson, *Psalms 76 – 150*, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2006), 224.
 - See Romans 15:11, where this psalm is cited by Paul to support the universal nature of the Gospel.

- **v. 1** “Laud Him”
 - This is a different word for praise which is used also in Psalms 63:3; 145:4; and 147:12 (first “praise”). It can be translated as “sing praise.”

- **v. 2** “His lovingkindness is great”
 - Psalm 117 is based upon one of the Old Testament writers’ favorite texts, Exodus 34:6.
 - Compare Psalm 103:11; Romans 5:20; 1 Timothy 1:14.
 - See Psalm 98, which also focuses on the salvation of God’s people as the reason for universal praise.



4.0 Singing Psalm 117

From All That Dwell Below the Skies

(Tunes: “Jesus Shall Reign Where’er the Sun” or “All Creatures of Our God and King”)

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| 1 From all that dwell below the skies,
Let the Creator’s praise arise;
Let the Redeemer’s Name be sung,
Through every land, by every tongue. | 2 Eternal are Thy mercies, Lord;
Eternal truth attends Thy Word.
Thy praise shall sound from shore to shore,
Till suns rise and set no more. |
| 3 Your lofty themes, ye mortals, bring,
In songs of praise divinely sing;
The great salvation loud proclaim,
And shout for joy the Savior’s Name. | 4 In every land begin the song;
To every land the strains belong;
In cheerful sounds all voices raise,
And fill the world with loudest praise. |
- Stanzas 1-2, Isaac Watts, *The Psalms of David*, 1719; stanza 3, anonymous; stanza 4, Robert Spence Paraphrase of Psalm 117

Praise the Lord! Ye Heavens, Adore Him

(Tune: "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken")

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| <p>1 Praise the Lord! ye heav'ns, adore Him;
Praise Him angels in the height;
Sun and moon, rejoice before Him;
Praise Him, all ye stars of light.
Praise the Lord! for He hath spoken;
World His mighty voice obeyed;
Laws which never shall be broken
For their guidance He hath made.</p> | <p>2 Praise the Lord! for He is glorious;
Never shall His promise fail;
God hath made His saints victorious;
Sin and death shall not prevail.
Praise the Lord of our salvation!
Hosts on high, His pow'r proclaim;
Heav'n and earth and all creation,
Laud and magnify His name.</p> |
| <p>3 Worship, honor, glory, blessing,
Lord, we offer unto Thee;
Young and old, Thy praise expressing,
In glad homage bend the knee.
All the saints in heav'n adore Thee;
We would bow before Thy throne:
As Thine angels serve before Thee,
So on earth Thy will be done.</p> | <p>— <i>Foundling Hospital Collection</i>, 1796;
Edward Osler, stanza 3;
based on Psalm 148
— Music: Franz Joseph Haydn</p> |

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

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|---|---|
| <p>1 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of
creation!
O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health
and salvation!
All ye who hear,
Now to His temple draw near;
Join me in glad adoration!</p> | <p>2 Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things so
wondrously reigneth,
Shelters thee under His wings, yes, so gently
sustaineth!
Hast thou not seen
How all thy longings have been
Granted in what He ordaineth?</p> |
| <p>3 Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work
and defend thee;
Surely His goodness and mercy here daily
attend thee.
Ponder anew
What the Almighty can do,
If with His love He befriend thee.</p> | <p>4 Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore thee;
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises
before Him.
Let the Amen
Sound from His people again:
Gladly for aye we adore Him.</p> |

— Words: Joachim Neander; translated by Catherine Winkworth
— Music: *Stralsund Gesangbuch*, 1665

5.0 Praying Psalm 117

- Father, help me be a witness through my praise for You. [v. 1]
- Lord, save people from all the nations. [v. 1]
- Thank You for Your steadfast faithfulness toward Your people. [v. 2]
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6.0 Applying Psalm 117

- God commands praise from all peoples.
- The Lord's faithful love prevails over all.