

Bible Passages

- Psalm 104
- Psalm 74

Background

Psalm 104 is a hymn to the Creator. Obviously influenced by Gen. 1, the preexilic author has adapted that account to his different purpose and has subordinated its sequence somewhat to his own design. Whereas Gen. 1 recounts creation as God's first work at the beginning, the poet views the creation displayed before his eyes and sings the glory of its Maker and Sustainer. Surprisingly, he only hints at the angelic world (v. 4) and mentions man only in passing (vv. 14, 23); his theme is the visible creation around him, which he views as the radiant and stately robe with which the invisible Creator has clothed himself to display his glory.*

Background

Psalm 74 is a prayer for God to come to the aid of his people and defend his cause in the face of the mocking of the enemies – the Lord's relation to his people is like that of a king to his nation. The psalm dates from the time of the exile when Israel had been destroyed as a nation, the promised land devastated and the temple reduced to ruins.*

* Taken from the NIV Study Bible

Singing Creation

How Creation Praises God in the Psalms

Introduction

The collection of psalms is the hymn book of the people of God in the Old Testament. The psalms express many aspects of faith and life including a sense of awe, wonder and understanding of God's creation and the human place within it.

Warming Up

Start by considering some well-known hymns that mention creation – what do they tell us about the created order?

Continuing Creation

Read Psalm 104. This Psalm interweaves the creation story from Genesis 1 with the contemporary surroundings of the people of Israel. In doing so the psalm gives a dynamic quality to creation as bearing witness to God's continuing activity rather than a one-off act.

Share Your Thoughts

- Thinking of parts of creation that you have visited, have you ever sensed that God's creating activity continues?

The story of God's creation is told in many different ways in the Bible. While some accounts have a more historical feel, this psalm is written as a song to sing and affirm God's continuing creative activity. It is a song that the people of God together with the rest of creation including the sun and moon, storks and lions sing in praise of God. This approach can be a challenge to the human-centred attitude which people can have of creation.

For Discussion

- If we sense that the rest of creation is singing in praise to God, how does that alter our view of and relationship towards creation?

Creation and Salvation

Look up Psalm 74. It may be helpful to read this Psalm aloud in three sections, pausing in between. Before reading the psalm introduce the verses as follows:

- **Verses 1-11** – A lament of a national catastrophe
- **Verses 12-17** – Remembering the saving acts of God in the past
- **Verses 18-23** – Restating the continuing activity of God before the people in worship

This psalm seems to allude to the destruction of the Temple of Solomon by the Babylonians. It may help to relate to the psalm if you recall a national catastrophe, and how, after the event, it could be perceived that people sought out God who had helped in the past, and placed their hope in God to guide them into the future.

For Discussion

- Look again at verses 12-17. What is the particular saving activity that is remembered by the people of Israel that gives them confidence that God will see them through the current crisis?

It is interesting to note that this psalm records God's purpose of bringing about salvation through creation itself. In the Christian Church we particularly identify God's gift of redemption through Christ.

- What new value does creation take on because it speaks of God's saving love?
- How does this influence our attitude towards creation?
- How does this influence our Church life?

Challenge

Return to one or two of those hymns that were considered in the warming up section. Do you have any more to add about their understanding of creation following the Bible study?

If you were to introduce one of these hymns in church on Sunday, what would you say about it to the congregation? Close by singing some favourite creation hymns.

