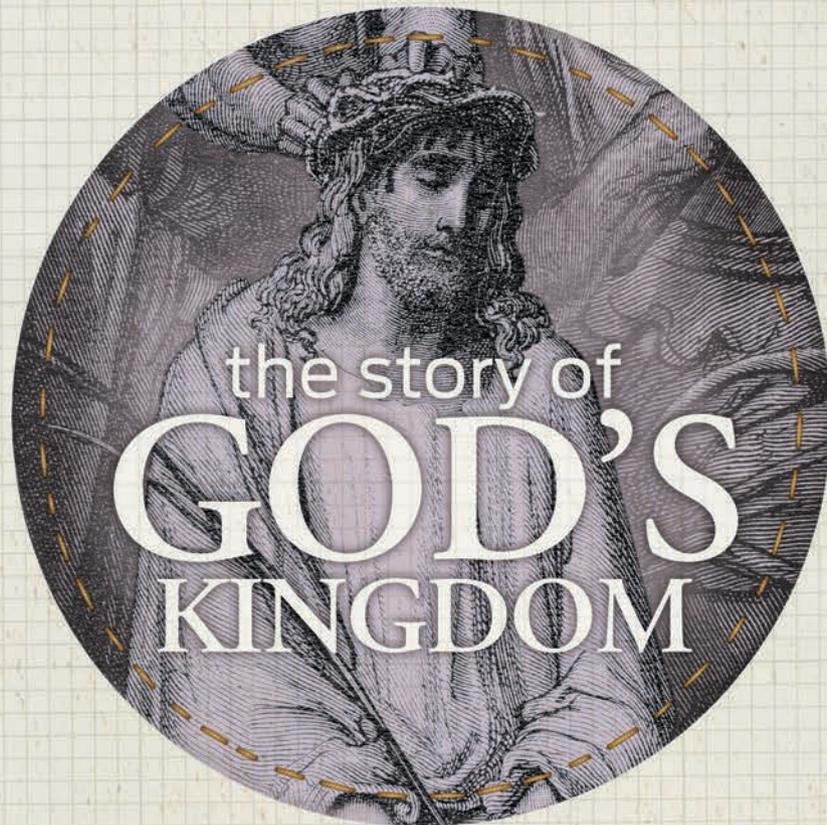


THE  
**GOSPEL**  
PROJECT<sup>®</sup>  
FOR ADULTS



FALL 2014: *Leader Guide HCSB*

**Ed Stetzer** General Editor

**Trevin Wax** Managing Editor

LifeWay | Adults

## Ed Stetzer

General Editor—*The Gospel Project*  
PRESIDENT, LIFEWAY RESEARCH



Jesus taught His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount to pray like this: “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven...” (Matt. 6:9-10, KJV). Sounds innocuous enough, but is it really? To the ears of any self-conscious authority on this planet, Jesus’ model prayer would be the sound of sedition—“Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done.” Furthermore, to any honest heart, this prayer should challenge the core of our being, for who wholeheartedly asks to be ruled?

What is the nature of this kingdom that we ask to come? That’s the focus of this study of *The Gospel Project*—“The Story of God’s Kingdom.” Tracing the theme of God’s kingdom through the Scriptures, we will see as clearly as possible what it is we are asking for, or better yet, *who* we are asking for. Because when you get a kingdom, you are going to get a king. And if you want God’s kingdom, then you must expect the coming of God’s King.

Jesus said God’s kingdom—His kingdom—is not of this world...yet, but there will come a day, and it has already started, when all wrongs will be set right and all injustices will meet with justice. We as Jesus’ followers live now as kingdom citizens in a world not our own, proclaiming His coming and calling others to His side, but we pray for the day—“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”

## Trevin Wax

Managing Editor—*The Gospel Project*  
AUTHOR OF MULTIPLE BOOKS, INCLUDING *Gospel-Centered Teaching*, *Counterfeit Gospels*, AND  
*Clear Winter Nights: A Young Man’s Journey into Truth, Doubt, and What Comes After*



The story of Scripture is a story of war—a cosmic battle between a good King who loves His broken creation and the Evil One whose kingdom is marked by rebellion and suffering. Miss the drama between these two kingdoms—the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness—and you miss a major part of the tension of the Bible.

But wait, there’s more. This battle of kingdoms isn’t just the story of our world; it’s your story, and mine. There is a battle for our souls. What kind of people will we be? Whose kingdom will we belong to? We will worship; we will bow down; it’s in our nature as human beings to live under someone or something’s authority. The question is who gets our loyalty? Will we bow the knee before the King of kings, or will we pursue our own kingdoms and live as if we are in charge?

In this issue of *The Gospel Project*, we take a journey through the story line of Scripture once again, this time looking at the theme of God’s kingdom. I pray this study reveals the hidden idols of your heart, magnifies the greatness of King Jesus, and transforms you into a herald of the returning King. May God make us a people who live under the lordship of Christ and speak of His excellency to those around us who have not yet bent the knee. The King has a mission, and we are His messengers.

# EDITORS

*The Gospel Project*®  
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**Eric Geiger**  
Vice President, Church Resources

**Ed Stetzer**  
General Editor

**Trevin Wax**  
Managing Editor

**Daniel Davis**  
Content Editor

**Josh Hayes**  
Content and Production Editor

**Philip Nation**  
Director, Adult Ministry Publishing

**Faith Whatley**  
Director, Adult Ministry

**Send questions/comments to:**  
Managing Editor,  
*The Gospel Project: Adult Leader Guide*,  
One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0102;  
or make comments on the Web at  
[www.lifeway.com](http://www.lifeway.com).

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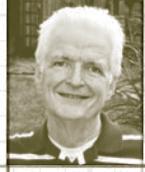
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to one address, e-mail [orderentry@lifeway.com](mailto:orderentry@lifeway.com), fax  
(615) 251-5933, or write to the above address.

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## About the Writers



**Unit 1: Kendell Easley** is a professor of biblical studies at Union University, in Memphis, Tennessee, and is the director of the Master of Christian Studies and Doctor of Ministry programs for Union's Stephen Olford Center. He has written ongoing curriculum for more than 20 years. Kendell is married to Nancy, and they have one married young adult son.



**Unit 2: Halim Suh** and his wife, Angela, have three kids and live in Austin, Texas, where he is pastor of teaching and theology at The Austin Stone Community Church. He is the author (with Matt Carter) of two Threads studies: *Creation Unraveled* and *Creation Restored*. Halim has a Master of Divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.



**Unit 3: Jason C. Dukes** is married to Jen, and they have six children. He helped start *WestpointChurch.org* and *ReproducingChurches.com* and now pastors First Baptist Church, Booneville, Mississippi. He's the author of *Live Sent* and *Beyond My Church*, and he periodically blogs at *SENTkids.com*.

# WRITERS

Suggested for  
the week of

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**Unit 1: The King and His Kingdom**

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September 28	<b>43</b>	<b><i>Session 4</i></b>	The Rebellion on Earth: Rejection of God's Good Rule Throws All of Creation into Turmoil

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November 30	<b>151</b>	<b><i>Session 13</i></b>	Kingdom Perfection: Jesus Will Return as Conquering King to Make Everything Right

### Tips from Trevin on how to best use this Leader Guide

Welcome to *The Gospel Project*! Think about the awesome responsibility we have every week—to guide people through Bible study so they have an encounter with the living Christ. I hope *The Gospel Project* will provide you with the tools and resources you need as you prayerfully seek to apply the truth of the gospel to the people God has placed in your group. Here are some things to remember as you use this Leader Guide:

**Pray.** Pray for your group. Don't lead in your own strength.

**Adapt.** You know the style of your group. If more discussion-oriented, then encourage participants to read the lesson ahead of time. Use the "For Further Discussion" questions in the Teaching Plan to facilitate discussion that stays grounded in the lesson. If you take a more master-teacher approach, then spend time mastering the Expanded Lesson Content. Select the questions that make the most strategic sense for moving the lesson along.

**Cut.** If it seems to you that the lessons for *The Gospel Project* provide too much material for one session, you're right. We chose to deliver more than you need and to include the bulk of the lesson in the Personal Study Guide so you don't feel pressed to get all the content delivered in the session time itself. Refer your group members to the Personal Study Guide.

**Personalize.** Take the truths in *The Gospel Project* and enhance them. Add personal stories. Ask penetrating questions that go to the heart of the people you know and love.

**Encourage preparation.** Challenge your group to read through the lesson each week on their own to prepare for the group gathering.

### **Resource yourself (encourage your group to take advantage of these resources too).**

Make use of the additional resources suggested at the end of each lesson.

- Read a suggested chapter or section in a book.
- Learn from the "Tip of the Week" to grow as a teacher and a group in spiritual maturity.

Visit [gospelproject.com/blog](http://gospelproject.com/blog) for the following:

- Read online articles and blog posts related to the overall study theme.
- Listen to a brief video as I point out the highlights to focus on for the upcoming lesson.

Visit [gospelproject.com/additionalresources](http://gospelproject.com/additionalresources) to easily access these resources:

- Read online articles and blog posts related to the lesson content.
- Listen to helpful podcasts from pastors and church leaders.
- Download suggestions for interactive teaching helps to aid in your teaching.
- Download parental resources for talking with children and students about their *Gospel Project* experiences and joining the family together in discipleship.

**Overflow.** Remember...*The Gospel Project* is not just a curriculum. WE are the project. The gospel is working on us. Don't prepare simply for the content you're going to deliver. Let the truths of God's Word soak in as you study. A great leader is not a dispenser of information but an overflowing river of gospel passion. Let God work on your heart first, and then pray that He will change the hearts of the people He has entrusted to your care.

# The King of All

*God, the King of Heaven and Earth, Is Worthy to Be Praised*

## Summary and Goal

Before the world existed, God was always there—Father, Son, and Spirit united in love and glory forever. In love, God created everything in heaven and on earth for His glory. As Creator, He is worthy to receive praise from everything in heaven and on earth. The mission of God's people today is driven by a vision of His power and love, both of which He displayed in the creation of the universe.

### ***Steps to Prepare***

- 1. Read the main passages for this lesson, recording your insights and questions:**
  - Job 38:5-7
  - Psalm 148
- 2. Study the Expanded Lesson Content (pp. 10-17).**
  - Determine what elements of this lesson are most applicable to your particular group.
  - Consider ways to personalize the lesson content for you and your class.
- 3. Review the Teaching Plan (pp. 8-9).**
  - Refine the lesson plan based on your group's particular needs.
  - Adjust the plan if necessary.
- 4. Pray for the Lord's guidance as you lead your group through this material.**

### ***Lesson Outline***

- 1. God is to be praised in the highest heavens (Ps. 148:1-6).**
- 2. God is to be praised by everything on earth (Ps. 148:7-14).**
- 3. God was praised by angels as He created the world (Job 38:5-7).**

# The King of All

## Session 1

### ? For Further Discussion

Discuss a time when you received praise because of an achievement? Was it in sports or music or academic success? How did the praise make you feel? Embarrassed, awkward, joyful? Why?

### ? For Further Discussion

What are some circumstances that cause people to wonder about the reason for their existence? What are some goals people pursue in life?

### ? For Further Discussion

Are the people you know more inclined to worship nature or ignore it altogether? How does the Christian understanding of creation guard against both of those mistakes?

Begin with the illustration of the Oscars or awards given for great achievement. Something in all of us longs to give praise where praise is due (leader p. 10; personal study guide [PSG] p. 8).

- ? Think of a time you praised someone else who really deserved it. What had they accomplished? What emotions did you feel as you praised that person?

Connect our desire to worship to the purpose for our existence—praising God the King. Explain the purpose of this volume (tracing the story of the kingdom through the Scriptures), and summarize this lesson (leader pp. 10-11; PSG pp. 8-9).

### **1. God is to be praised in the highest heavens.**

Before you read Psalm 148:1-6, put the passage in the context of why God created the world. He desired admiration and praise, for only when we praise Him do we find our fullest joy (leader p. 11). As you read these verses, encourage your group to notice how the place of praise shifts from verse to verse (leader p. 12; PSG p. 9).

Explain the ancient view of the heavens in three dimensions: God's dwelling place, our outer universe, and the skies above us (leader pp. 12-13; PSG p. 10).

- ? In what ways do the sun, moon, and stars bring praise to God?

Highlight the power of God's word in creating the heavens (leader p. 13).

- ? How does the creation of entities in the three heavens show God's power? In your experience, what elements in each of the three heavens especially display the majesty of their Creator?

### **2. God is to be praised by everything on earth.**

Transition to the next part of the passage, Psalm 148:7-14, encouraging your group to look for echoes of the Genesis 1 creation account as you read (leader p. 13; PSG p. 11).\*

\* Consider dividing your members into three groups. Ask each group to read the passage for themselves and to take one day of creation (Day 3, Day 5, Day 6) and find the connections. The groups can record their conclusions in the *Personal Study Guide* and report to the whole group (PSG p. 11).

Walk through verses 7-10, showing how all living things are called to give praise to God (leader p. 14).

- ? What elements of God's majesty do you see displayed in the earthly part of creation? How does observing these elements help us in witnessing to others about God's greatness and love?

Highlight the truth of verses 11-12, that all kinds of people are called to praise God. Then point out the reasons the psalmist gave for praising God. Those of us who have received salvation have even more reasons to praise Him (leader pp. 14-15; PSG p. 12).

- ? What is the connection between our worship and our witness? How can observing the universe's praise encourage us to praise God?

### 3. God was praised by angels as He created the world.

Use the example from *The Magician's Nephew* to make the point that the earth's creation took place in front of a heavenly audience (leader p. 15). Then introduce Job 38:5-7, explain the context, and read these verses that show angels were present at the creation (leader pp. 15-16; PSG pp. 13-14).

- ? What images come to mind when you think of angels? How do these images correspond to the biblical teaching about angels?

Highlight the scriptural understanding of angelic beings by working through the truths presented in the lesson (leader pp. 16-17; PSG pp. 14-15).

- ? What are some ways our culture misrepresents angels? What role do angels play in the mission of God?

### Conclusion

Lift up God as King, worthy of all praise. Reiterate our salvation in Christ and connect this to our mission (leader p. 17; PSG p. 15).

- ? What difference would it make in your life if you acted fully on your belief in the truth that God is the King of heaven and earth, worthy of all your praise?

Apply the truths of this lesson with "*His Mission, Your Mission*" (PSG p. 16). See sidebar for direction.

### ? For Further Discussion

What are some ways we may fail to give God praise for His creation?

### ? For Further Discussion

The word *angel* can also be translated "messenger." What does the delivery of messages have to do with angelic beings? Why do you think God tasks us (instead of angels) with taking the gospel to the nations?

### ? For Further Discussion

What actions can we engage in to shine a light on God's greatness?

### His Mission, Your Mission

Lead your group through "Live on Mission" (PSG p. 16).

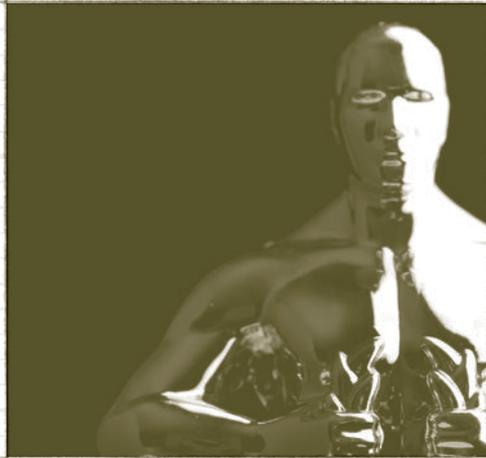
.....  
*Optional:* Read the quote by Millard J. Erickson (leader p. 17; PSG p. 16), and ask the following questions:

- How should we speak of angels in comparison to Jesus? (Jesus is the King whom angels praise and serve, Heb. 1.)
- What can we learn from angels in how we praise and serve God?

## Expanded Lesson Content

# The King of All

## Session 1



### Opening Illustration and Introduction

“And the Oscar goes to...” The audience, filled with Hollywood’s royalty decked out in its finest attire, holds its collective breath. The speaker pauses dramatically. The winner pretends to be surprised, struts to the podium, and thanks everyone involved in this remarkable outcome.

This scene plays out many times a year with other awards shows, and next year, the cycle repeats. Last year’s praiseworthy actor begins to fade as new kings and queens of Hollywood are crowned.

Something in all of us longs to give praise where praise is due. (We love to receive praise as well.) The trouble is praise for human success is so fleeting. Even the most celebrated films eventually make their way to the bargain bin in a supermarket. It’s the same with sports. Rarely do you find someone who remembers the winner of the past few World Series or World Cup events, much less the winning teams of 20 years ago.



Think of a time you praised someone else who really deserved it. What had they accomplished? What emotions did you feel as you praised that person?

What should we learn from this desire to praise? What does this tendency toward worship tell us? Perhaps it’s a clue to reminds us that Someone does deserve praise, not for temporary success that fades but for goodness and beauty and truth that is everlasting. What if that Someone wants us to know Him? What if He invites us to join with others in offering praise forever? What if it’s true that the one reason—the main reason—we are alive is to offer praise?

### Voices from Church History

“You are matchless, O Lord. So our praise of You must rise above our humanity...You awaken in us a delight at praising You. You made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it finds its place of rest in You.”<sup>1</sup>

—Augustine (354-430)

In this volume, we will trace the story of God’s kingdom through the Scriptures. This is the story of a Creator worthy of praise, of an enemy bent on destroying the world, of sinful humans redirecting their praise in all the wrong places, of a King stepping into the chaos to restore His fallen world, and of a people redeemed and set free to live with and for the King forever.

### Lesson Summary

In this session, we will look to Genesis, but we will ground our study in the Psalms. We will see that before the world existed, God was always there—Father, Son, and Spirit united in love and glory forever. In love, God created everything in heaven and on earth for His glory. As Creator, He is worthy to receive praise from everything in heaven and on earth. The mission of God’s people today is driven by a vision of His power and love, both of which He displayed in the creation of the universe.

## 1. God is to be praised in the highest heavens (Ps. 148:1-6).

Many people imagine that God—alone before the creation of the universe—was lonely. This cannot be true, however. God has always been, and He has always lived in the perfect community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This family, existing beyond limits of time and space, had no needs at all—no dysfunction, no lonesomeness. Everything was perfect.

Then, “in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). Theologians and philosophers have speculated on why He would do such a thing. Thoughtful people have often asked, *Why am I here?*

In an attempt to discover an answer, go back to the awards show we mentioned earlier. Why do we engage in elaborate efforts to applaud great work? Why do we insist on displaying awesome paintings in museums rather than hiding them in closets? Why do we develop special medals and awards for persons who have excelled at doing good?

Quite simply, the answer is that the beautiful (and the good and the great and the true) deserves widespread recognition, just as a generous donor might be honored for her work in establishing a health clinic for the poor in her neighborhood. Greatness deserves recognition. Because God is truly the greatest, He deserves the greatest praise.

It was a good thing for God’s greatness and goodness and love to be admired and praised, and that’s why He created the world. (Who else could plan the celebration?) While some may think it was selfish of God to desire praise, we know that such a desire is not a bad thing for God anymore than it is selfish for a wonderful musician to look forward to and even enjoy applause as he shares his art. One goal of a performer is that his listeners will experience pleasure, and in this he is pleased. As we praise God, we are filled with joy, and He is pleased.

### Scriptures of Praise

- Psalm 19:1: “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky proclaims the work of His hands.”
- Isaiah 6:1-3: “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, and His robe filled the temple. Seraphim were standing above Him; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another: Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Hosts; His glory fills the whole earth.”
- Isaiah 43:6b-7: “Bring My sons from far away, and My daughters from the ends of the earth—everyone called by My name and created for My glory. I have formed him; indeed, I have made him.”
- Revelation 4:6,8: “Four living creatures covered with eyes in front and in back were in the middle and around the throne... Each of the four living creatures had six wings; they were covered with eyes around and inside. Day and night they never stop, saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, the Almighty, who was, who is, and who is coming.”
- Revelation 5:11-12: “Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels around the throne, and also of the living creatures and of the elders. Their number was countless thousands, plus thousands of thousands. They said with a loud voice: The Lamb who was slaughtered is worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

## Further Commentary

The word *hallelujah* is a compound Hebrew word from *hallelu* (an imperative verb form meaning “praise”) and *yah* (a shortened form of “Yahweh,” the covenant name of God revealed in the Old Testament, traditionally translated “the LORD”). Thus, properly translated, *hallelujah* means “praise Yahweh!”<sup>2</sup>

Interestingly, the English tradition of not translating *hallelujah* has precedent in the New Testament, where the spelling “*alleluia*” appeared in the Greek original (see Rev. 19:1,3,4,6). Because *hallelujah* is still usually left untranslated, wherever Christians gather around the world for praise, we all understand each other with our “hallelujahs.”

## Voices from Church History

“Be praised, my Lord, through all Your creatures, especially through my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day; and You give light through him. And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor! Of You, Most High, he bears the likeness.”<sup>3</sup>

—Francis of Assisi (circa 1181-1226)

For this study, we will use the lens of Psalm 148 to give us a picture of God the King as the One worthy to be praised. Consider the first part of this gorgeous hymn penned by an unknown Israelite poet:

<sup>1</sup> *Hallelujah!*

*Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise Him in the heights.*

<sup>2</sup> *Praise Him, all His angels; praise Him, all His hosts.*

<sup>3</sup> *Praise Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all you shining stars.*

<sup>4</sup> *Praise Him, highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens.*

<sup>5</sup> *Let them praise the name of Yahweh, for He commanded, and they were created.*

<sup>6</sup> *He set them in position forever and ever; He gave an order that will never pass away.*

This psalm follows the pattern of the Genesis 1 account of creation by showing first “the heavens” and then moving to “the earth.” In the first six verses, the writer draws us upward to the heavens as they are urged to declare their praise. As the passage begins, we see a reference to “the heavens” and “the heights”—that part of the creation ordinarily beyond human grasp.

In ancient days, people identified three “heavens.” The first (atmospheric) heaven is the sky of birds and clouds and wind and rain. The second (planetary) is the sky of sun and moon and planets and stars. The third (supernatural) is the dwelling place of God and angels (see 2 Cor. 12:2-4).

### Third Heaven (God’s Dwelling)

This psalm gives attention to all three heavens, beginning with the highest heaven and moving downward. Verse 2 recalls that the “angels” (heavenly messengers) and the “hosts” (heavenly armies) of the Lord were designed to praise their Maker. As they fulfilled their God-ordained responsibilities—communicating messages and engaging in spiritual warfare—they brought Him praise.

### Second Heaven (Space)

Next, the writer moves to the second heaven, that of the “sun and moon” and “shining stars” (v. 3). In the Genesis account of creation, these were made on the fourth day (Gen. 1:16-19). No less than the angels, the sun, moon, and stars were created to extol the One who made them.

Sadly, human beings have often mistaken these creations for deities. Sun worship and moon worship or honoring the planets as gods mocks the Lord of heaven who made them. In our fallen state, we humans all too often turn our penchant for praise into idolatry.



In what ways do the sun, moon, and stars bring praise to God?

### First Heaven (Sky)

Every line of Psalm 148:1-4 begins with the Hebrew “*hallelu*” (“praise”). In verse 4 the “waters” in the heavens are called on to praise Him. Clouds and rain and hail and snow call forth God’s praises. (From a meteorological perspective, we understand that such atmospheric waters are “above the heavens” in the sense that they farther “up” than we can reach out and touch.)

### Heaven Created by God’s Word

After challenging the inhabitants of the first, second, and third heavens to praise God, the writer reminded them of their beginning: “He commanded, and they were created” (v. 5). This verse wonderfully recalls the way Genesis 1 repeats the refrain “God said, ‘Let there be...’ and there was...”

The word of God has always been powerful. When He created, He determined also to sustain His creation. He set the heavens in order in a way that He preserves them, putting them in their position forever. What we often have called “the laws of nature” are actually God’s word continuing to have force in every aspect of time and space.



How does the creation of entities in the three heavens show God’s power? In your experience, what elements in each of the three heavens especially display the majesty of their Creator?

## 2. God is to be praised by everything on earth (Ps. 148:7-14).

The second half of Psalm 148 opens with a call for the earthly portion of God’s creation to praise Him. Notice that the imperative verb “praise” extends throughout the rest of the psalm to include all earthly beings, whether animate or inanimate. Observe also a correlation between these verses and the days of creation in Genesis 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Praise the LORD from the earth, all sea monsters and ocean depths,*

<sup>8</sup> *lightning and hail, snow and cloud,  
powerful wind that executes His command,*

<sup>9</sup> *mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars,*

<sup>10</sup> *wild animals and all cattle, creatures that crawl and flying birds,*

<sup>11</sup> *kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all judges of the earth,*

<sup>12</sup> *young men as well as young women, old and young together.*

<sup>13</sup> *Let them praise the name of Yahweh, for His name alone is exalted.*

*His majesty covers heaven and earth.*

<sup>14</sup> *He has raised up a horn for His people,  
resulting in praise to all His godly ones,  
to the Israelites, the people close to Him.  
Hallelujah!*

### Voices from the Church

“Creation draws us to look at something beyond ourselves and marvel at it. All of creation has been given to us so that we behold the awesome God who has made it all and made it all good.”<sup>4</sup>

—Matt Chandler

### Further Commentary

“The psalmist contrasted the three levels of heaven (vv. 5-6) with three levels of the earth. Even sea monsters are called on to praise God (69:34).”

“The elements of nature perform at God’s command (103:20; 104:4).”

“The psalmist hinted at the creation account in these verses, using peculiar expressions typical of Genesis 1.”

“The list of people represents descending social status. All people are united in worship (Rom. 10:12; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). Prophets, priests, and other temple personnel were not mentioned, perhaps because they were the ones who were calling all others to praise God.”<sup>5</sup>

—Kevin Warstler and Sherri Klouda, *HCSB Study Bible*

## Voices from Church History

“Oh, but surely, everything that comes from the hand of such a Master-artist as God has something in it of himself!...There are lovely spots on this fair globe which ought to make even a blasphemer devout. There are things that God has made which overwhelm with a sense of his Omnipotence: how can men see them, and doubt the existence of the Deity?”<sup>6</sup>

—Charles Spurgeon  
(1834-1892)

## Further Commentary

“The kingship of God is eternal (Ps. 29:10). His kingdom is above time, just as He is. While the kingdom of God is eternal, it also passes through different periods of time in which its operation may vary. From before the time of the creation and until Adam’s fall into sin, God’s reign was complete. This era would have been the first period of God’s kingdom and reign.”<sup>7</sup>

—Van McClain  
*Biblical Illustrator*

On the fifth day of creation, God filled the seas with living creatures (Gen. 1:20-23). There were sea monsters and creatures in the “ocean depths,” hidden from human eyes, whose purpose even in the abyss was to praise their Maker (Ps. 148:7). On that same day, He made the birds and winged creatures that would share the atmosphere with lightning, hail, snow, cloud, and winds—all of them just as visible to the ancients as to us.

What the psalmist knew (and we modern people easily forget) is that God designed weather phenomena to accomplish His purposes; therefore, even the weather gives Him glory. As each element does its thing, it “executes His command.” Weather is not random or impersonal after all.

Vegetation was made on the third day of creation (Gen. 1:11-13). The “mountains and all hills” also appeared that day (Ps. 148:9). We have to wonder what caused the psalmist to think of “fruit trees and all cedars” as especially worthy of praising God. Perhaps they represent the thousands of different kinds of plants.

In verse 10, the psalmist noted groups within the animal kingdom created to praise God. He mentioned three categories, corresponding to broad divisions in the animal world: wildlife, domestic animals, and reptiles (see the sixth day of creation in Gen. 1:24-25).

The psalmist concluded the animals by mentioning “flying birds,” which belong to the fifth day of creation. Perhaps they came last because birds singing can so easily be understood as voices lifted in praise to the Maker.



What elements of God’s majesty do you see displayed in the earthly part of creation? How does observing these elements help us in witnessing to others about God’s greatness and love?

Verses 11-12 describe a kaleidoscope of human diversity—humans made in the image of God—all of whom are called to praise Him. It includes those with power (“kings,” “princes,” and “judges”). It includes ordinary individuals (“all peoples”). It includes all age groups. It includes male and female. All are exhorted to praise Yahweh.

As we have seen, the psalmist first urged the heavens to praise God. That passage ended with an explanation of how and why the heavens were to praise Him (vv. 5-6). So it is with the second part of the psalm. After exhorting earth in all its facets to offer hallelujahs, all these are given an explanation—multiple explanations, in fact—of why they should praise Him (vv. 13-14). Watch how the psalmist moved beyond the mere fact of creation to the reasons for worship:

- Earth is to praise “the name of Yahweh” because God has the most exalted name and reputation in the universe. Among other things, “name” stands for character and reputation.

- Earth is to praise Him because of “His majesty” in all the earth. The grandeur of earth, and therefore its Creator, can be seen in every crevice in the world. Like a blanket, His creative splendor covers everything.
- Earth is to praise Him because He has “raised up a horn” for His people. The horn, a biblical symbol of strength and power, probably stands for salvation, both from sin and from enemies.

Don’t miss this. The people especially called to praise God are those who have received His wonderful salvation! “His people,” “all His godly ones,” the people “close to Him” understand His love and power the best. Therefore, they are exhorted to praise. No wonder the psalmist concluded with a final “Hallelujah!” We who have received His salvation have as an integral part of our mission to display the glory of God’s love and power.



What is the connection between our worship and our witness? How can observing the universe’s praise encourage us to praise God?

### 3. God was praised by angels as He created the world (Job 38:5-7).

In his series of children’s fiction books called *The Chronicles of Narnia*, C. S. Lewis imagined what another world was like. He accounted for its creation by telling what some English children, including the boy Digory, saw at the beginning of Narnia. *The Magician’s Nephew* describes the heavens bursting into song as Aslan (the lion-like Christ figure) sings them into existence: “The voice [of Aslan] was suddenly joined by other voices; more voices than you could possibly count. They were in harmony with it, but far higher up the scale: cold, tingling, silvery voices...The new stars and the new voices began at exactly the same time. If you had seen and heard it as Digory did, you would have felt quite certain...that it was the First Voice, the deep one, which had made them appear and made them sing.”<sup>8</sup>

Lewis was on the mark. At the beginning of creation, God first lavished creative energy on His heavenly home and its inhabitants. This is what we have called earlier in this study “the third heaven.”

Why create the angelic beings before He created other intelligent life? At least part of the answer is that in this way God made it possible for an adoring audience to observe the rest of His creative acts and to praise Him for them. We can find evidence for this in an astonishing passage in Job 38:

<sup>5</sup> *Who fixed its dimensions? Certainly you know!*

*Who stretched a measuring line across it?*

<sup>6</sup> *What supports its foundations?*

*Or who laid its cornerstone*

<sup>7</sup> *while the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*



#### Further Commentary

“Sons of God” refers to a category of beings in a special relationship with God, but different groups are so identified in Scripture. In Job, “the sons of God” are angels. In Genesis 6:4, notoriously difficult to understand, “sons of God” has been understood either as angels or as godly men. The ancient people of Israel were collectively referred to as God’s “son” (Ex. 4:22-23; Hos. 11:1). As God’s adopted children, believers in Jesus are “sons of God” (Matt. 5:9; Gal. 3:26). Jesus is uniquely the Son of God, who has always existed in the Trinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:1; Rom. 1:3). All sons of God, including Jesus (the Son of God), are continually to extol the greatness of God the Father.<sup>9</sup>

## Further Commentary

The Book of Job is about a man whom God allowed to be tested by Satan. He loses everything. Job 3–37 contains the dialogue between Job and his companions as they pondered what was going on in Job’s misfortune and why the innocent suffer. Job raised his questions to God. God gave the final word and eventually restored all that Job had lost.

## Voices from the Church

“Just as millions of angels participated in the dazzling show when the morning stars sang together at creation, so will the innumerable hosts of heaven help bring to pass God’s prophetic declarations throughout time and into eternity.”<sup>10</sup>

—Billy Graham

These verses come near the beginning of God’s response to Job, a man who had greatly suffered and who had called out to God for answers. God began with a series of rhetorical questions designed to bring Job (and us, the readers) to an awareness of God the King—the Sovereign Lord who is the greatest, always right and beautiful and good. The answers are obvious once the questions are asked.

God’s laying out of the earth did not occur in a vacuum. The observers were “the morning stars” and “the sons of God.” Because these phrases occur in parallel lines of poetry, both likely refer to angelic beings. (In Job 1:6; 2:1, “sons of God” are intelligent heavenly beings in God’s presence. Job 3:9 is the only other passage in the Bible to mention “morning stars” [plural]. People call the planets Venus and Mars “morning stars” because they shine brightly just before dawn.)

God’s heavenly court was watching Him as He created the earth with its kaleidoscope of staggering beauty. Their response? They “sang together” and “shouted for joy.” They praised the One who had created them because this fulfilled God’s purpose in calling them forth.



What images come to mind when you think of angels? How do these images correspond to the biblical teaching about angels?

Scripture provides significant information about angels:

- Angels are personal spirit beings created by God. *Personal* means they have intellect, emotions, and will; they can have a relationship with God. *Spirit beings* means their primary mode of existence is not bodily (as we understand it). They are ordinarily invisible to human beings (2 Kings 6:17).
- Angels have both wisdom and strength. They do not know everything and are not all-powerful. As God’s messengers, they carry out His commands (Ps. 91:11).
- The number of angels is fixed but huge. Angels (a general term) exist in many different orders, such as the cherubim and winged seraphim (Gen. 3:24; Isa. 6:2; Rev. 5:11).
- The “host of heaven” or “heavenly host” refers to angels who are God’s warriors. One of His names is “the LORD of hosts,” or “Yahweh Sabaoth” (1 Sam. 17:45; Luke 2:13; Jas. 5:4).
- Angels are presented as male (and when they are visible to humans, they look like human men). They are incapable of sexual intimacy or reproduction as humans are (Matt. 22:30).
- Some angels are assigned by God as “ministering spirits” to serve God’s people (Heb. 1:14).
- Like the rest of God’s creation, angels exist to bring glory and praise to God. Revelation 5–6 portrays angels as worshiping both God on His throne and the Lamb of God.

Think about the holy angels who shouted the angelic version of “hallelujah” as they watched God the King create the universe, the world, and everything in them. They have praised Him eternally since: “Day and night they never stop, saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, the Almighty, who was, who is, and who is coming” (Rev. 4:8).

-  What are some ways our culture misrepresents angels?  
What role do angels play in the mission of God?

## Conclusion

“And the greatest is...” No question about it, God the King of heaven and earth is the greatest. He is the most beautiful, the most righteous, the most everything good and pure. He created the heavens in all their complexity, visible and invisible, so that they would praise Him. This began with the angels, who praised Him as He created and filled the earth. But He also created the earth, including humanity, so that His praise will resound eternally.

Because Jesus’ followers have been made alive to this reality, we are driven by the vision of God’s power and love on display in the creation of the universe. What a privilege it is to praise the One who made us for His glory. Our mission is to spread the fame of His name.

-  What difference would it make in your life if you acted fully on your belief in the truth that God is the King of heaven and earth, worthy of all your praise?

## Hymn of Response

*“You are God: we praise you; You are the Lord: we acclaim you;  
You are the eternal Father: All creation worships you.  
To you all angels, all the powers of heaven,  
Cherubim and Seraphim, sing in endless praise:  
Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
The glorious company of apostles praise you.  
The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.  
The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.  
Throughout the world the holy Church acclaims you;  
Father, of majesty unbounded,  
your true and only Son, worthy of all worship,  
and the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide.  
You, Christ, are the king of glory, the eternal Son of the Father.  
When you became man to set us free you did not shun the Virgin’s womb.  
You overcame the sting of death  
and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.  
You are seated at God’s right hand in glory.  
We believe that you will come and be our judge.  
Come then, Lord, and help your people, bought with the price of your  
own blood, and bring us with your saints to glory everlasting.”<sup>11</sup>  
—“You Are God” from *The Book of Common Prayer**

## Voices from the Church

“The angels’ praise and service of God give us an example of how we are to conduct ourselves now and what our activity will be in the life beyond in God’s presence.”<sup>12</sup>

—Millard J. Erickson

## Additional Resources

# The King of All

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## Study Material

- For a poetic look at the creation of the world, see chapter 1 from *The Singer* by Calvin Miller
- "The Agents of God: Angels"—Chapter 6 by Peter R. Shemm Jr. from *A Theology for the Church* edited by Daniel L. Akin
- "The Canticle of the Sun"—Poem by Francis of Assisi; find a link to this poem at [gospelproject.com/additionalresources](http://gospelproject.com/additionalresources)
- "What Do Angels Look Like?"—Article by Billy Graham; find a link to this article at [gospelproject.com/additionalresources](http://gospelproject.com/additionalresources)
- "God Rejoicing in the New Creation"—Sermon by Charles Spurgeon; find a link to this sermon at [gospelproject.com/additionalresources](http://gospelproject.com/additionalresources)
- Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles, including "God as 'King' in Ancient Israel," can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at [www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator](http://www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator). Look for Bundles: The Gospel Project.

## Sermon Podcast

Daniel Montgomery: "A Call to Worship"

Find a link to this at [gospelproject.com/additionalresources](http://gospelproject.com/additionalresources)

## Tip of the Week

### His Mission, Your Mission

*The Gospel Project* aims not to fill our heads with theological truth but to fuel our hearts with passion to join God on His mission to bring people to Himself. To this end, each session in the Personal Study Guide now concludes with "His Mission, Your Mission" to help you, the teacher, lead your group to respond as missionaries. Specifically, "Live on Mission" provides mission-oriented questions and directions related to each point in the lesson. These will help your group apply the truths they have learned in ways appropriate for your context. Telling the story of the Bible is impossible without leading to mission, as the gospel reveals the heart of our missionary God and His desire to save people of every tribe, tongue, and nation.