

This psalm focuses on the fact that the LORD is worthy of all glory and praise. The psalmist emphasizes the fact that the LORD is superior in every way to the false gods that the idolaters worship and that the LORD will bless those that put their trust in Him. The psalm ends with a reminder that we will be able to praise the LORD throughout eternity.

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1 Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, *and* for thy truth's sake.

**“Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory [honor; reverence]”** – The psalmist recognizes that men are unworthy of glory, even those of “us” who love and fear the LORD. He declares that the LORD alone deserves glory. The psalmist feels so strongly about our unworthiness of glory that he says “not unto us” twice, a Hebrew method for emphasizing an idea.

**“for thy mercy [goodness; kindness; faithfulness], and for thy truth's [sureness; reliability; firmness] sake”** – The psalmist gives the reason that the LORD alone is worthy of glory: His mercy and truth. The LORD’s goodness and kindness to men, being willing to forgive their sins, is a reason to glorify Him. Another reason to glorify the LORD is the fact that what He says is sure, reliable and unchanging. Men, in contrast, are not consistently merciful, but can hold grudges and often seek revenge. They also can change their opinions and often break their promises or contradict what they have previously said. The LORD, however, is merciful and unchanging.

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2 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where *is* now their God? 3 But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.

**“Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?”** – This question may stem from the heathen’s inability to see Israel’s God, since there were no idols in Israel’s temple. However, the question is more likely based on a challenge for Israel’s God to intervene and protect them from the armies of their enemies. This was essentially what Rab-shakeh, the Assyrian general, did when he threatened to conquer Jerusalem in behalf of his master, the king of Assyria (2 Chr. 32:15 “*Now therefore let not Hezekiah deceive you, nor persuade you on this manner, neither yet believe him: for no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people out of mine hand, and out of the hand of my fathers: how much less shall your God deliver you out of mine hand?*”). Rab-shakeh assumed that the God of Israel was no different than the gods of the other nations he had conquered.

**“But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased”** – The heathen may make such taunts because they cannot see Israel’s God or because they believe that He is incapable of defending His people, but the psalmist responds by declaring that Israel’s God is in the heavens, far above the earth, the sky and above the idols that men worship. The fact that He is in the heavens does not mean that the LORD is incapable of protecting His people on the earth. Rather, being in the heavens shows His superiority and sovereignty over the earth and thus, He is able to do “whatsoever He hath pleased.” The God of Israel is in control.

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4 Their idols *are* silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

The psalmist points out the inferiority of the gods of other nations. Their gods are manufactured, created by those who worship them. Isaiah wrote of such foolishness, using for an example a man who cut down a tree, used part of it to build a fire, another part to cook his food, and another part to make for himself an idol to worship: Isa. 44:19 “*And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?*”

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5 They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: 6 They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: 7 They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.

The psalmist points out the foolishness and uselessness of idols that are made by men, since they have mouths, eyes, ears, noses, hands, feet and other body parts and yet cannot use them to benefit anyone. These body parts are useless because the idol is not alive.

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8 They that make them are like unto them; *so is* every one that trusteth in them.

**“They that make them are like unto them”** – These idols are spiritually dead and useless. The men who create these idols think they are creating something with life that can help the worshipers, but instead they are as dead and useless as the idols they create.

**“so is every one that trusteth in them”** – Those who put their trust in these idols are also just as spiritually dead and useless as the idols they worship. They may think that they can benefit others or themselves by praying to these idols and yet the prayers of these worshipers are pointless and ineffective.

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9 O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: he *is* their help and their shield. 10 O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: he *is* their help and their shield

**“O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: he is their help and their shield”** – The psalmist calls on Israel to not be like the worshipers of idols and instead put their trust in the LORD, the only God Who can genuinely be their helper and protector.

**“O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield”** – The psalmist makes the same call to the “house of Aaron.” These are the priests (the descendants of Aaron) who are supposed to be trusting in the LORD for help and protection. This call suggests that some priests were unfaithful to the LORD and needed to be called back to trust in their God.

**“Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield”** – After appealing to Israel in general, then to the priests, the psalmist calls on any proselytes to Judaism to also trust in the LORD for help and protection. The psalmist seems to be attempting to cover all worshipers of the LORD.

12 The LORD hath been mindful of us: he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron.  
13 He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great.

**“The LORD hath been mindful [to remember] of us: he will bless us”** – The LORD does not forget those who put their trust in Him. The LORD remembers them, is aware of their situation and will eventually intervene to bless them. This blessing may not come until we get to heaven, but the LORD’s eternal blessings will far outweigh what we might suffer here on earth (2 Cor. 4:17-5:1 *“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”*).

**“he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great”** – The psalmist reiterates the groups that trusted in the LORD mentioned in vs. 9-11, declaring that the LORD will indeed bless each of these groups. Their trust is not misplaced because the LORD will respond to their trust with blessings. The LORD’s blessings aren’t just reserved to the “important” people, but the LORD will bless all who trust in Him, from the smallest to the greatest.

14 The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children. 15 Ye are blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth.

**“The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children”** – The psalmist promises “you” (those who trust in the LORD, whether they are of the house of Israel, the house of Aaron, or those outside of Israel who fear the LORD) that the LORD will “increase” (cause to prosper) not only you, but your descendants as well. This “increase” tended to be material blessings in the OT, but after Christ came the “increase” primarily comes in the form of spiritual blessings.

**“Ye are blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth”** – Trusting in the LORD places us in the position of being blessed by the LORD, “which made heaven and earth.” Since the LORD was able to make heaven and earth, He certainly is capable of blessing and prospering us. The psalmist wants us to see that our blessings come from a powerful and glorious God.

16 The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.

The LORD made heaven and earth (v. 15) and the psalmist describes how this Creator has blessed mankind.

**“The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD's”** – The psalmists emphasizes that not only “heaven” (the abode of God) belong to the LORD, but even the “heavens” (the place where the birds fly and the region where the sun, moon, and stars reside) belong to the LORD. He created them and He has complete dominion over them.

**“but the earth hath he given to the children of men”** – The LORD created the earth, but He has given it to mankind for a place to dwell. The LORD has not relinquished ownership of the earth but He has granted to mankind temporary stewardship over it. **Gen. 1:26, 28** *“<sup>26</sup>And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth... <sup>28</sup>And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”* **Gen. 2:15** *“And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.”*

17 The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence. 18 But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.

**“The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence”** – The psalmist may be speaking of the spiritually dead as well as the physically dead, based on the contrast stated in v. 18. The spiritually dead do not fear the LORD and therefore do not praise Him, especially after their physical death (going down into the silence of the grave).

**“But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore”** – “We” apparently refers to those who fear and trust in the LORD mentioned previously (v. 9-13) and the psalmist includes himself in this number. In contrast to the dead who do not praise the LORD, “we” will bless and praise Him forever. This statement implies that we have been given eternal life since we will not be able to praise the LORD if we are dead (v. 17).

**“Praise the LORD”** – Knowing that we will be able to praise the LORD forever, the psalmist wants the praise to begin immediately (“from this time forth”).