



Biblical Theology in a Time of Climate Emergency

Part II: The Cosmic Chorus

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Scholars and thinkers I quoted last week:

- Theodore Hiebert
- Richard Middleton
- Lynn White
- Sibley Towner
- Richard Bauckham
- John Haught
- R. Joseph Soloveitchik

Additional scholars and thinkers I will mention today:

- Ellen Davis
- Richard Clifford
- Nancy deClaissé-Walford
- Robert Alter
- Craig Broyles



Psalms 148

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| <p>¹ Hallelujah. Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise Him on high. ² Praise Him, all His angels, praise Him, all His hosts. ³ Praise Him, sun and moon, praise Him, all bright stars. ⁴ Praise Him, highest heavens, and you waters that are above the heavens. ⁵ Let them praise the name of the LORD, for it was He who commanded that they be created. ⁶ He made them endure forever, establishing an order that shall never change. ⁷ Praise the LORD, O you who are on earth, all sea monsters and ocean depths, ⁸ fire and hail, snow and smoke, storm wind that executes His command, ⁹ all mountains and hills, all fruit trees and cedars, ¹⁰ all wild and tamed beasts, creeping things and winged birds, ¹¹ all kings and peoples of the earth, all princes of the earth and its judges, ¹² youths and maidens alike, old and young together. ¹³ Let them praise the name of the LORD, for His name, His alone, is sublime; His splendor covers heaven and earth. ¹⁴ He has exalted the horn of His people for the glory of all His faithful ones, Israel, the people close to Him. Hallelujah.</p> | <p>¹ הַלְלוּ יְהוָה הַלְלוּ אֶת־יְהוָה מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם הַלְלוּהוּ בַּמְרוֹמִים: ² הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל־מַלְאָכָיו הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל־צַבָּאוֹ [צָבָאיו]: ³ הַלְלוּהוּ שֶׁמֶשׁ וְיָרֵחַ הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל־כּוֹכְבֵי אוֹר: ⁴ הַלְלוּהוּ שָׁמַי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מַעַל הַשָּׁמַיִם: ⁵ יְהַלְלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה כִּי הוּא צִוָּה וַיִּבְרָא: ⁶ וַיַּעֲמִידֵם לְעֵד לְעוֹלָם חֶק־נֶתַן וְלֹא יַעֲבוֹר: ⁷ הַלְלוּ אֶת־יְהוָה מִן־הָאָרֶץ תַּנִּינִים וְכָל־תַּהֲמוֹת: ⁸ אֵשׁ וּבָרָד שֶׁלֵּג וְקִיטוֹר רוּחַ סַעָרָה עֹשֶׂה דְבָרוֹ: ⁹ הַהָרִים וְכָל־גְּבְעוֹת עֵץ פְּרִי וְכָל־אֲרָצִים: ¹⁰ הַחַיָּה וְכָל־בְּהֵמָה רֶמֶשׂ וְצִפּוֹר כָּנָף: ¹¹ מַלְכֵי־אָרֶץ וְכָל־לְאֻמִּים שָׂרִים וְכָל־שֹׁפְטֵי אָרֶץ: ¹² בַּחֲוָרִים וּגְמִלֵּי־בְתוּלוֹת זָקֵנִים עִם־נְעָרִים: ¹³ יְהַלְלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה כִּי־נִשְׁגָּב שְׁמוֹ לְבָדוֹ הוֹדוֹ עַל־אָרֶץ וּשְׁמַיִם: ¹⁴ וַיִּרָם קֶרֶן לְעַמּוֹ תַּהֲלֶה לְכָל־חַסִּידָיו לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עִם־קִרְבּוֹ הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה:</p> |
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Supplemental Sources

1. Psalm 150:6

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| Let all that breathes praise the LORD. Hallelujah. | כל הנשמה תהלל יה הללו־יה: |
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2. Genesis 1:7

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| God made the expanse, and it separated the water which was below the expanse from the water which was above the expanse. And it was so. | וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָרָקִיעַ וַיַּבְדֵּל בֵּין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מִתַּחַת לָרָקִיעַ וּבֵין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מַעַל לָרָקִיעַ וַיְהִי־כֵן: |
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3. Psalm 74:13

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| it was You who drove back the sea with Your might, who smashed the heads of the monsters in the waters... | אַתָּה פִּזְרָתָּ בְּעֶזְךָ יָם שִׁבְרָתָּ רָאשֵׁי תַנִּינִים עַל־הַמַּיִם: |
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4. Isaiah 51:9-10

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| It was you that dried up the Sea, The waters of the great deep; That made the abysses of the Sea A road the redeemed might walk. | הֲלוֹא אַתָּה־הִיא הַמַּחְרֶבֶת יָם מִי תְהוֹם רָבָה הַשְׁמָה מַעַמְקֵי־יָם דֶּרֶךְ לַעֲבֹר גְּאוּלִּים: |
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5. Genesis 1:21

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| God created the great sea monsters, and all the living creatures of every kind that creep, which the waters brought forth in swarms, and all the winged birds of every kind. And God saw that this was good. | וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַתַּנִּינִים הַגְּדֹלִים וְאֵת כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה הַרֹמֶשֶׁת אֲשֶׁר שָׂרְצוּ הַמַּיִם לְמִינֵהֶם וְאֵת כָּל־עוֹף כָּנָף לְמִינֵהוּ וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב: |
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6. Terence Fretheim, “Nature’s Praise of God in the Psalms,” *Ex Auditu* 3 (1987), p. 16-30

“The listing together of the creatures suggests both individuality and complementarity in praising. Each entity has its own distinctiveness in its praising according to its intrinsic capacity and fitness, with varying degrees of complexity. But each is also part of the one world of God contributing to the whole. The model of the symphony orchestra comes to mind. Ecological considerations are immediately present, for if one member of the orchestra is incapacitated or missing altogether, the scope, complexity and intensity of the praise will be less than what it might be. Ecological sensitivity is for the sake of the praise of God and the witness it entails, indeed for God's own possibilities in the world (p. 23).

God is not only a God of history; God is also a God of nature. Or, to put it in other terms, God is as active in the history of nature as God is in the history of humankind; from God's perspective we have to do with one history and one world (p. 26).

Inarticulateness does not disqualify one from praise. At the human level one thinks of praise offered by those who dance or play musical instruments (p. 27).

Because nature is not fallen as human beings are, though human sin has disrupted the natural order, it witnesses to the reality of God in ways more constant than human beings do. The heavens do proclaim the glory of God. The praise called for in Psalm 148 is the revelation spoken of in Psalm 19 and elsewhere. The fact that we do not recognize this as often as we should roots the problem of recognition in human beings rather than in the natural order. The problem is in our seeing and hearing, and perhaps most of all in our alienation from the nonhuman... The nonhuman world may ... be thought of as models of praise. To put it in the words of a contemporary hymn: "Stars and sun obediently shine ... so we too should be voicing our love and rejoicing." The integration of the human and nonhuman in Psalm 148 may well carry some of this understanding. Human beings should be praising as nonhuman entities do (pp. 27-28).

From a negative perspective, what human beings do in their sinfulness affects adversely the possibilities for praise on the part of the natural entities. Human sinfulness can have an adverse effect on the ability of the natural orders truly to be themselves. To use a contemporary illustration, the heavens proclaim the glory of God with less clarity on a smoggy day in Los Angeles than on other days (p. 29).



The integration of heavenly, human, and nonhuman language in Psalm 148 may well recognize this interconnectedness of praise possibilities. That is, it is only as all creatures of God together join in the chorus of praise that the elements of the natural order or human beings witness to God as they ought. Hence, to call upon the elements of the natural order to praise God within a human worship context (Psalm 148 implies the call of a worship leader) contains an implicit call to human beings to relate to the natural orders in such a way that nature's praise might show forth with greater clarity. As we have seen, ecological activity is directly related to nature's praise possibilities. That is, by the way in which human beings relate to ecological matters they can enhance or inhibit nature's response to God's call (p. 29).

God is enthroned not simply on the praises of Israel; God is enthroned on the praises of all his creatures. The realization of the kingship of God in the universe is dependent upon this creationwide praise (p. 29).

