Psalm 113 - Praise to the LORD Who Lifts the Lowly

The book of Psalms contains three collections titled Hallel, with *Psalms 113 to 118* known as the Egyptian Hallel, mainly because of their connection with Passover celebrations, commemorating Israel's deliverance from Egypt. The psalms of the Egyptian Hallel were sung as part of the Passover ceremony, with *Psalms 113-114* sung *before* the meal and *Psalms 115-118 after* the meal.

"This group is necessarily of special interest to us because in all probability, these psalms were sung by our Lord and His disciples on that dark night in which He was betrayed." (G. Campbell Morgan)

"To these reference is made by the evangelists, Matthew 26:30, and Mark 14:26, there called the hymn which Jesus and his disciples sung at the passover." (Adam Clarke)

A. Calling God's servants to continually praise Him.

1. (vs 1) A call to praise the LORD.
Praise the LORD! Praise, O servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD!

a. Praise the LORD: This is the third consecutive psalm to begin with the exclamation, Hallelujah! As in Psalms 111-112, it is both a personal statement of praise and an encouragement for others to do the same.

b. Praise, O servants of the LORD: God's servants have special reason to praise Him. They have the honor of sharing in His great work, and they are promised eternal reward for doing so. Everyone has reason for praise; servants of the LORD have many more reasons.

c. Praise the name of the LORD: This means honoring and exalting Yahweh Himself and His character, which are represented by His name.

i. "There is a point in specifying the Lord's servants and his name, since worship to be acceptable must be more than flattery and more than guess-work. It is the loving homage of the committed to the Revealed." (Kidner)

ii. "In the case of God 'the name of the Lord' is all important, for it has to do with the revelation of who God is. In other words, it is not just any God we are to worship. We are to praise the one true 'Lord,' who has revealed himself in creation, on Sinai, and more recently in the person of his only Son, Jesus of Nazareth." (Boice)

2. (vs 2-3) The lasting nature of God's praise.

Blessed be the name of the LORD From this time forth and forevermore!
From the rising of the sun to its going down the LORD's name is to be praised.

a. From this time forth and forevermore: In Psalm 113:1 we were encouraged to praise the name of Yahweh. In this next verse we are encouraged to do it forevermore. The unchanging God never becomes unworthy of our praise. For the child of God with open eyes, time only reveals more reasons to praise Him.

i. Blessed be the name of the LORD: "Praise him with utmost intention and extension of spirit and of speech. God is therefore called, by an appellative proper, The Blessed One." (Trapp)

b. From the rising of the sun to its going down: Using the Hebrew pattern of repetition, the psalmist emphasized the idea that God is worthy of continual praise.

B. Reasons to praise God continually.

1. (vs 4-6) The greatness of God's glory.

The LORD is high above all nations, His glory above the heavens.

Who is like the LORD our God, Who dwells on high, Who humbles Himself to behold the things that are in the heavens and in the earth?

a. His glory above the heavens: Yahweh is not only greater than all the heathen nations, but His glory extends above the heavens. The covenant God of little Israel is greater than everything in creation.

> **i.** "Though the Gentiles knew him not, yet was Jehovah their ruler: their false gods were no gods, and their kings were puppets in his hands." (Spurgeon)

b. Who is like the LORD our God: His exaltation above everything on earth or heaven shows that Yahweh is incomparable. Nothing exists that is greater than He who dwells on high.

c. Who humbles Himself to behold: When we understand the greatness of God, His interest and care for creation (especially mankind) is remarkable. Here the psalmist shared the idea of David in Psalm 8:4: What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? Psalm 144:3 has a similar sense of amazement.

> **i.** "God's loftiness can never be adequately measured, unless His condescension is taken into account; and His condescension never sufficiently wondered at, unless His loftiness is felt." (Maclaren)
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> **ii.** "What amazes the psalmist is that God is exalted so high that he has to stoop low to see not only the earth but also the heavens, and yet at the same time he cares for the lowly." (Boice)
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> **iii.** "Heathen philosophers could not believe that the great God was observant of the small events of human history; they pictured him as abiding in serene indifference to all the wants and woes of his creatures." (Spurgeon)
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> **iv.** "If it be such condescension for God to behold things in heaven and earth, what an amazing condescension was it for the Son of God to come from heaven to earth and take our nature upon him, that he might seek and save them that were lost! Here indeed he humbled himself." (Henry, cited in Spurgeon)

2. (vs 7-9) God's care for the lowly.

He raises the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the ash heap, that He may seat him with princes - with the princes of His people. He grants the barren woman a home, like a joyful mother of children. Praise the LORD!

a. He raises the poor out of the dust: When God in heaven beholds the things on earth (Psalm 113:6), He sees the poor down in the dust and the needy in the ash heap – and He raises them up.

> **i.** "When no hand but his can help he interposes, and the work is done. It is worthwhile to be cast down to be so divinely raised from the dust." (Spurgeon)

ii. When Jesus sang these words on the night of His betrayal and arrest, it must have occurred to Him that in a sense He was the one who would be lifted from the dust of the grave to the highest place.

b. That He may seat him with princes: God lifts the poor and needy from the depths up to the heights. In light of the new covenant, we can make the connection with God's work in the life of the believer as described in Ephesians 2:5-6: …even when we were dead in trespasses, [He] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

i. While these words look forward to Ephesians 2:5-6, they also look back. “Consciously, however, these verses look back to the song of Hannah, which they quote almost exactly (cf. 7, 8a with 1 Sam. 2:8). Hence the sudden reference to the childless woman who becomes a mother (9), for this was Hannah’s theme.” (Kidner)

c. He grants the barren woman a home: The psalmist illustrated one way the work of lifting the poor and needy to a high and honored place might work. The picture is of a woman barren of children becoming a joyful mother.

i. “The afflicted man will receive recognition and the oppressed woman will receive honor in being a woman. In the ancient Near East, and especially in Israel, motherhood was a crowning achievement of any woman. A barren woman was a social outcast; she was a disappointment to her husband, to other women, and especially to herself.” (VanGemeren)

ii. “Sarah, Rachel, the wife of Manoah, Hannah, Elizabeth, and others were all instances of the miraculous power of God in literally fulfilling the statement of the Psalmist.” (Spurgeon)

iii. “This psalm ends by saying that the great exalted God of the Bible is not only concerned about needy people in general but also with the individual. He cares about you. He cares for you and me personally.” (Boice)

iv. It is significant to remember that Jesus sang these words on the night He was betrayed and arrested, the night before His crucifixion. “As he approached the ultimate depths in this stooping, He sang the song which offers praise to God for this condescending grace.” (Morgan)

d. Praise the LORD: The caring, loving God who comes from the highest heaven to help the humble of the earth is worthy of praise – Hallelujah!

i. “The music concludes upon its key-note. The Psalm is a circle, ending where it began, praising the Lord from its first syllable to its last. May our life-psalm partake of the same character, and never know a break or a conclusion. In an endless circle let us bless the Lord, whose mercies never cease.” (Spurgeon)

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