

THEN SINGS MY SOUL | *Capturing the spirit of worship from the Psalms for Today*

Lesson 3 | The Praises We Sing

In our previous Psalms study, we grouped the Psalms in our workbook into our own groupings. The basic form or structures of lament and praise are the basis of most every psalm, even though the laments most often move to praise.

In this study, we want to view the praises that we sing today. While the laments we sing move to praise as well, we want to focus on the praises we sing which are simply “Hallelujahs.” The Psalms are so called because “Hallelujah” which means “Praise Yah”, or, often translated, “Praise the LORD,” occurs at the beginning of these Psalm types (106,111-113,135,146-150), sometimes at the end (104:35; 106:48, et.al.) and sometimes at the beginning and the end (106, 113, 135, and 146 through 150). Even in Scripture Songs of Praise, they often follow that formula which the Greek form of the word (alleluia) is used (Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, 6).

In our Psalm study, we called these Hallelujah Psalms by type because they include the praises for God that are either **descriptive** (praising God through descriptions of the majesty of creation, the magnificence of His attributes or the power of God’s mighty acts in history) or **declarative** (psalms that focus on God’s work of deliverance or provision called also, thanksgiving psalms) (Wilson, Jeff, *Studies in the Psalms*, Dan Petty, ed., 50).

So, we will look again at the songs that we sing that are most like the *descriptive praise* psalms. Recall the example of Psalm 98 that calls the worshipper to praise God for being Savior (2), King (6) and Judge (9). Note the intent to describe God and why He is worthy of praise.

So here are great examples of Descriptive Praise Songs we sing.

O Worship the King | Born in India and raised in England, Robert Grant (1779-1838) was in the legal profession of his day and served in Parliament. In his 50s, he said that as he studied Psalm 104, he compared the greatness of the King of kings to the majesty of British royalty. And as verse 31 noted, may the Lord’s glory forever endure. So, he penned the words of this poem to magnify the greatness of the true King who is “Our maker, defender, redeemer, and friend.” Of course, the most familiar musical know is the one we have, music that was styled to the earlier music of Johann M. Haydn (1737-1806). Note how the verse (1,2) move from a call to worship to the praise to God Himself (3,4). Many of the praise Psalms were exhortations to worship something noble of God – in this song, it is both a call to worship and a statement of worship that describes in both what is worthy of His praise.

What do you see in the song that qualifies to you as “descriptive?”

How Great Thou Art | Stuart Hine was inspired in this hymn by the poem, “O Store Gud,” a nine-stanza piece written by the Swedish preacher Carl Boberg. While visiting a country estate in Sweden, Boberg was mesmerized by the midafternoon thunderstorms in which he was caught. He saw lightning flashes and heard booming thunder. But soon afterward, the clearing skies uncovered the blue tapestry against which the Sun began to shine. He says that he fell to his knees and worshipped God—then soon after penned “O Store Gud,” which means “O Great God.” He turned to Psalm 8 for inspiration, hoping the words of his poem could capture just how glorious God was to him in that moment.

1. O worship the King, all glorious above,
O gratefully sing His power and His love;
Our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days,
Pavilioned in splendor, and girded with praise.
2. O tell of His might, O sing of His grace,
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space,
His chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form,
And dark is His path on the wings of the storm.
3. The earth, with its store of wonders untold,
Almighty, your power has founded of old;
established it fast, by a changeless decree,
and round it has cast, like a mantle, the sea.
4. Your bountiful care, what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light;
it streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
and sweetly distils in the dew and the rain.
5. We children of dust are feeble and frail -
in you do we trust, for you never fail;
your mercies, how tender, how firm to the end!
our maker, defender, redeemer, and friend.
6. O measureless Might, unchangeable Love,
whom angels delight to worship above!
Your ransomed creation, with glory ablaze,
in true adoration shall sing to your praise!

THEN SINGS MY SOUL | *Capturing the spirit of worship from the Psalms for Today*

Although originally written in Boberg's native Swedish, Hine first heard "O Store Gud" translated in Russian.

1. O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds Thy Hands have made
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder
Thy power throughout the universe displayed
2. When through the woods, and forest glades I
wander,
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees.
When I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur
And see the brook, and feel the gentle breeze
3. And when I think of God, His Son not sparing
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in
That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin
4. When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And lead me home, what joy shall fill my heart
Then I shall bow with humble adoration
And then proclaim, my God, how great Thou art

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art

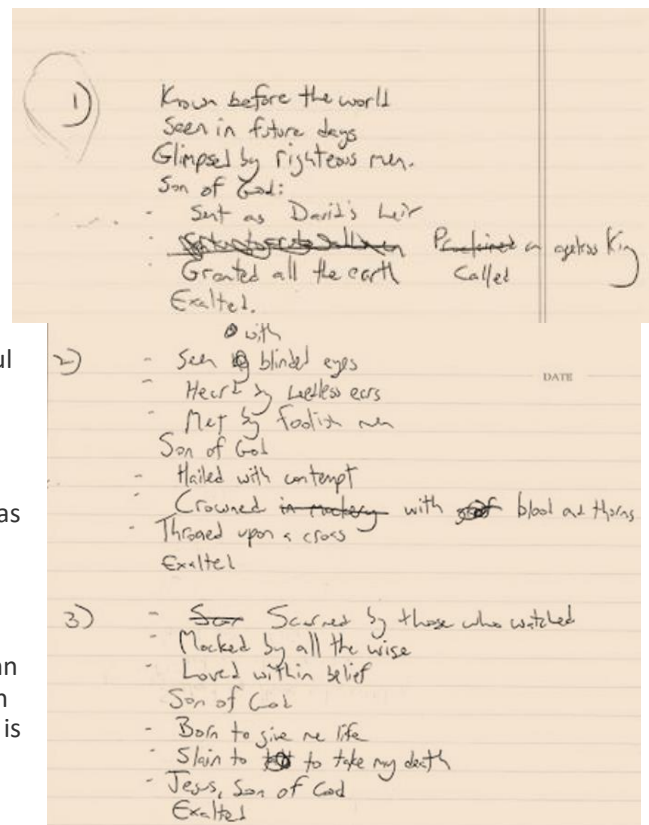
When Hine was in the Carpathian Mountains in Russia, the first verse came to him while he was stuck in a village schoolmaster's home – also during a storm. The second verse came to him as he was walking in a mountain ranges of Romania and Bukovina, When he heard birds singing in the trees, he wrote the second. The fourth verse was written after World War II inspired by the stories Hine heard of the many European refugees who had made their way to Britain for safety – their home. As such, he compared their sentiment to the Christian's sentiment of returning to our heavenly home.

British missionaries began to spread the song to former British colonies in Africa and India. It also found its way to the United States, where it was officially copyrighted, published, and recorded. Within five years of its appearance in a single magazine, "How Great Thou Art" was one of the most popular hymns in the world. All because a missionary saw God's glory in a thunderstorm.

Exalted | In April 1999, Matt Bassford had no idea how to write hymns. He had something he wanted to say. And when hearing a sermon from Craig Roberts entitled "The

Glory and the Shame", a study of the contrast between Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem and His crucifixion less than a week later, he became fascinated with the rich irony of the Biblical account. He said to himself, "I should write a hymn about that."

After months of trying to set pen to paper, in frustration, he saw a way to structure his thoughts around parallels, like the Hebrew poets did, rather than using rhyme. Once I made that mental switch, the rest was easy and what was first drafted as "Exalted" in about half an hour is substantially what is sung today. As most of our hymns do, "Exalted" has three verses, each intended to be sung to the same tune. That same tune, then, must match the emotional feel of all three verses. This allows the composer to craft a joyful tune that matches the joyful mood of "Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah!" or a rich, sorrowful tune that matches the sorrow of "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross". In Matt's own words, "this has one grand verse about the glories of Christ the King, one ironic verse about the vicious way He was received by His people, and one half-and-half verse about the different ways He is received today." And Charli Couchman came to the rescue to write music that beautifully exalts the contrasts and keeps the Exalted One at the center of the song. When the hymn is sung, its chords swell and come to life, infusing both the glory and the suffering of Christ with grandeur. It is quite an achievement (almost in his own words from



<https://hisexcellentword.blogspot.com/2014/04/writing-exalted.html>).