

Psalm 104: A Second Creation Account

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Importance of Creation

God is almighty and, at the same time, loving. As such, he is the creator of all there is and, at the same time, the author of our salvation. In a world like ours, where the Christian teaching on creation has been broadly replaced by the teaching of a purposeless process of evolution as the explanation for our origins, the belief in God as the author of creation involves great importance. This is so because the original creation reveals the character of the Creator as all-powerful, loving, purposeful, wise, orderly, generous, lover of beauty and, above all, as loving and caring of his creatures—the work of his hands. That is why creation is one of our fundamental beliefs. And it is also the reason why we have been called to proclaim it loud to the entire world (Rev. 14:7).

Acceptance and worship of God as creator, and redeemer, will be conducive to the salvation of the believer assuring him/her a place in the final restoration of all things which has been promised by the Creator himself.

Introductory Remarks on Ps. 104

The greatest evidence we have been given by God that he is the creator of the universe including the world in which we live is the trustworthy testimony of his written Word. In this context, Ps. 104 provides us with a beautiful, poetically written account of God's works during creation week. Besides the record in Genesis, this literary master piece inspired by the Author of both—creation and Scriptures—provides us with additional, confirming witness to his greatness, love and goodness, foundational to the admiration and worship that we, as his special creatures, owe him.

Ps 104 expresses the writer's spontaneous delight in the works of God's creation. "In the language and manner of the poet, not of the scientist, the psalm

discusses the works of creation, always discerning in creation her Creator.”

In spite of the fact that many biblical scholars, looking at this psalm from a critical perspective have claimed as they do with so many other Scriptures, that this is not an original production; that the author borrowed his material from an Egyptian hymn honoring the sun disk Aten as the supreme creator, there is no reason for any student of the Bible to surrender his/her conviction that Ps 104 is an original production, written under the Holy Spirit’s inspiration. On the other hand, someone has said that it would be worth studying Hebrew for ten years if as a result of that study the student could read this psalm in its original language.

Preamble

Verse 1: “Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honor and majesty.”

The psalm begins with its author blessing the Lord in his most inner being, and giving the reason for it: The Lord is very great; He is clothed with splendor, honor and majesty. Since what follows is a description of God's works of creation, mentioned in the same order we find in Genesis 1, we can say that Ps 104:1 serves as a preamble to this "second creation account." What follows is a poetic, yet clear, summarized depiction of the works of God's hands during creation week.

As we move through Ps 104, those verses or group of verses will be highlighted which describe God's activities on each one of the days of creation. We will skip verses in between, which offer explanations and details regarding the preceding ones.

The Days of Creation

The report of the events that took place on the days of creation week begins with the second verse.

Verse 2 a: "He wraps himself in light, as with a garment." This is a reference to what took place on the **first day** of creation week with the introduction

of light in this world and the resulting separation between what God called “day” and what he called “night.”

Verse 2 b: “He stretches out the heavens like a tent.” An allusion to what God did first on the **second day**, that is, the creation of the expansion of the heavens which makes separation between the waters above it and the waters below it. Which is why **verse 3** says that “[he] lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters. He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind.” It is in the expanse of the firmament where the clouds, the Lord’s “chariot,” are suspended and move about, and where the winds freely fly to and fro as if they had wings. The writer poetically states that God rides on those wings; which in turn explains why the verse says that God lays there—between the waters—the beams of his upper chambers: Because it is in the wide expanse of the skies where his manifestations from his heavenly dwelling place are more visible to the sight of his creatures.

Let's move to **verses 8-10** because **v. 8** takes over where the separation of waters on the second day left us. This verse describes the action of the waters below the expansion of the heavens: "They flowed over the mountains, they went down into the valleys, to the place you assigned for them;" that place is the sea. And so, we see here the author's rehearsal of events taking place during the **third day** of creation week: the gathering of the waters at God's command, into the seas.

V. 9, first part, then makes clear reference to the limits of the seas: "You set a boundary they cannot cross." The second part says: "That they may not return to cover the earth," the implication being that the earth is now dry. Therefore, we see here a reference to the creation of the dry land, which also took place on the **third day**.

After picturing in the following verses what daily happens in and around the seas, we find in **v. 13**, what God accomplishes over the dry land: "He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; [and] the earth is satisfied by the fruit of his work."

Verse 14 closes the loop on the chain of events that took place on the third day: That is, the creation of vegetation for the benefit of both, men and beasts. We read: “He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth.”

After describing what man and animals do with the diverse elements that God has so far created on earth, the account takes us to the next round of events.

Verse 19: “He appointed the moon for seasons: The sun knows its going down.” We are here beholding the description of the events of the **fourth day**: The creation of the two great lights of heaven. The moon is probably mentioned first as its domain is the evening, which is the first part of each one of the creation days. The stars, whose creation took place before the creation week of Gen 1, are not mentioned here perhaps for that same reason.

Verse 25: “There is the great sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number—

living things both large and small.” Here we have an allusion to the creation of fish and sea creatures which took place on the **fifth day**.

Verses 28-30 take us to the **sixth day** as they describe how land creatures, created on that day, depend on God for their daily food and their very existence. **v. 28** says: “When you give it [food] to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.”

In **verses 29 and 30**, we read: “When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. When you send your Spirit they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.”

In **v. 33** we can discern a poetic reference to the creation of man as illustrated in the life of the poet, the psalmist himself, who describes his being in connection with the Creator God and, as a result, the Lord is deserving of his singing and praise. He declares: “I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to the Lord as long as I live.” Or, “while I

have my being.” And so it was too that humankind, whose creation also occurred on the **sixth day**, had their being and came to exist.

And then, at the end of all the creative actions of God and of all of his creatures’ activities, there comes the time of pause and meditation. To it we arrive at **v. 34**: “May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the Lord,” which, therefore, could be perceived as an allusion to what is proper on the **seventh day** even more so than on any of the other week days. Of course, this may also be a reference to daily meditation; but even then it would include Sabbath meditation too. Thus, we can see expressed here what should take place on every seventh day of each week: meditation on the Creator, in his works and in his Word, by which power God made everything come to life (cf. Ps 33:9). And, as a result of it all we as his children should, especially on the Sabbath, engage in rejoicing and celebration.

Conclusion

The psalm closes in **verse 35** with the

exclamation, “Praise the Lord,” which is very important noticing here because this is the first appearance in the Psalms of its original Hebrew words, halelu-Yah: “Praise the Lord.” So far, “Bless the Lord” had been used. But from here on, this expression becomes a part of the language of prayer and praise. And, this being the case, it is highly significant that halelu-Yah is first recorded in the Psalms as a celebration of creation.

And so I conclude with this invitation to you as reader: Let us join the psalmist, and everything that lives, in praising our creator God with our lives and our proclamation.

¹ Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC), 863.

² Ibid., 864-865.

³ Ibid., 863.

⁴ Bible reference are cited from the New International Version unless otherwise indicated.

⁵ New King James Version (NKJV).

⁶ NKJV, emphasis supplied.

⁷ SDABC, 864.