

Psalm 104

"In Praise of Yahweh's Sovereignty over His Created Earth, Ultimately Purified"

"God's Rule in the Kingdom of Nature" ¹

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A1 YAHWEH'S MAJESTY AND MIGHT IN CREATION 104:1-5

B1 Yahweh's Majesty in Using Creation for His Own Benefit 104:1-4

C1 The Psalmist's Personal Call to Bless the Personal Greatness and Majesty
of Yahweh 104:1

D1 His personal call to himself to bless Yahweh! {1} Bless the
LORD, O my ² soul!

D2 His expression of the personal greatness and majesty of Yahweh

E1 His Greatness; O LORD my God, You ³ are very great;

E2 His Majesty: You are clothed with splendor and majesty,

C2 Yahweh's Majesty in Creating Light and the Heavens for His Garment and
Domicile 104:2

D1 Light: {2} Covering ⁴ Yourself with light as with a cloak,

D2 The Heavens: Stretching out heaven like a *tent* curtain.

¹ Subtitle - God's Rule in the Kingdom of Nature: The words of Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 5: Psalms by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch (K & D).

² 104:1 - my (soul), my (God): Twice in v. 1 the Psalmist uses the first personal pronoun *my*. He does not speak in the first person again until vv. 30-33.

³ 104:1 - You, You: Twice in v. 1 the Psalmist addresses Yahweh in the 2nd personal pronoun *You*. In v. 2 he uses no personal pronouns. In vv. 3-5 he uses the third person pronoun *his* seven times. Five of those instances refer to God (vv. 3-4) and two to the physical planet (v. 5).

In vv. 6-9 he reverts back to using the second personal pronoun *You* five times – in reference to God. Each of the nine uses of the third person in this section refers to the inanimate elements of the creation, such as waters and mountains. The subtle distinctions employed here help provide justification for the notion that there is a subject break between vv. 5 and 6. For discussion, see footnote below on "covered" (v. 6).

⁴ 104:2 - covering: vv. 2-4 consists of a series of eight participles in Hebrew, making them subordinate to and supportive of the claims of God's greatness in v. 1.

- C3 Yahweh's Majesty in His Personal Use of the Waters, Clouds, and Wind 104:3
 - D1 The waters for His home: {3} He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters;
 - D2 The clouds for His transportation: He makes the clouds His chariot;
 - D3 The wind for His footpath: He walks upon the wings of the wind;
- C4 Yahweh's Majesty in Displaying His Angels (Messengers) with Physical Phenomena 104:4
 - D1 {4} He makes the winds His messengers,⁵
 - D2 Flaming fire His ministers.

B2 Yahweh's Might in Creating the Earth 104:5

- C1 Its Foundations: {5} He established ⁶ the earth upon its foundations,
- C2 Its Durability: So that it will not totter forever and ever.

⁵ 104:4 - messengers, ministers: The Hebrew word order is as follows: "Making His messengers winds, His serving ones fire flaming." The Greek word order in Hebrews 1:7 supports the Hebrew word order. "Psalm 104:4 suggests that God arrays His angels (messengers) with physical phenomena, similar to ways He often manifested Himself" (Allen P. Ross, Psalms, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* [TBKC]).

⁶ 104:5 - established: There is an abrupt shift from three verses of participles (2-4) to a perfect and an imperfect in the Hebrew text (in v. 5). Having discussed God's personal majesty as He arrayed Himself and rode and walked, the Psalmist proceeds to focus on the primary venue of God's creation, terra firma.

A2 GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE EARTH IN THE FLOOD 104:6-9**B1 His Covering the Earth 104:6**

- C1 The Metaphorical Description: {6} You covered ⁷ it with the deep as with a garment;
- C2 The Depth of the Coverage: The waters were standing above the mountains.

B2 His Uncovering the Earth 104:7-9

- C1 The Dramatic Nature of His Uncovering the Earth 104:7
- D1 His rebuke: {7} At Your rebuke ⁸ they fled, At the sound of
- D2 His thunder: Your thunder they hurried away.

⁷ 104:6 - covered: Although some argue that all of vv. 1-9 speaks of God's creation of the planet and its surroundings, there are subtle distinctions. In vv. 1-4 the Psalmist addresses God's personal use of the planet, clothing Himself, building Himself a house or tent, riding, walking, and using the physical phenomena to clothe His messengers (angels). In v. 5 God's might is seen in His founding of the planet in such a way that it does not wobble in perpetuity! Vv.7-9 deal with God's separation of land from its aqueous environment. But v. 6 emphasizes His covering of the earth, not His uncovering it. The subtle distinctions of pronouns also underscore, in my opinion, that in vv. 6-9 God is directly and personally involved with the planet, specifically with reference to Noah's great Flood.

In Genesis 1 God is not said to have covered the planet with water. Rather, when He first made it, it was formless, void, dark, and His Spirit was moving over the surface, which consisted entirely of water (1:2). There was no need for God to cover the earth with water (as Allen P. Ross, *TBKC*, implies). Whatever land masses existed were either mixed up with the water or submerged when He made it. The emphasis is on uncovering, not covering the earth. In Ps 104:6 God actively covers the planet. He covers it so much that in v. 7 the mountains themselves were covered with water. This sounds more like the Flood than it does Creation, as even Ross admits.

Though the text here speaks of the Flood, in my judgment, it may actually illuminate the Creation event. It is not unthinkable that God used essentially the same process in both events, although in the case of Creation, the separation of land from water happened over a space of two days. In Creation, God separated the land masses from water in the second and third days of creation. In the case of Noah and his ark, God likely used the same processes as He did at creation. But because He had a precious human and animal cargo, God had to operate the processes at a much slower rate in order to avoid swamping the ark and drowning every human and animal aboard. Consequently the water prevailed upon the earth for 150 days (Gen. 7:24). The water subsided from the earth over the space of another 150 days (Gen. 8:3 ff.), and it took another seventy days to dry sufficiently for Noah to disembark (Gen. 8:13-14). So God used, I believe, the same processes, generally, in both Creation and the Flood, to separate the land from the water. He raised the mountains (and land masses) upward; he sank the ocean valleys and canyons downward. My impression is that the primary reference in vv. 6-9 is to the Flood, although the Flood model illustrates the Creation event.

⁸ 104:7 - Your rebuke ... thunder: Allen P. Ross, *TBKC*, acknowledges, "God's rebuking the waters suggests they were a chaotic force to be calmed and 'conquered.' Some of the wording in Psalm 104:7-9 sounds like the Flood account, but the psalmist was referring to Creation." What he fails to address is that in vv. 6-9 the Psalmist abruptly changes from referring to God as "He" to referring to Him as "You." This more personal address leaves room for God's more active entry into history in a specific event, namely the Flood, where He must, indeed, have rebuked the waters. Certainly the waters of the Flood were a chaotic force to be calmed and conquered. There is sufficient latitude, frankly, to say that both events, Creation and the Flood, were in view here. It is this writer's view that God used the same process in both instances, though in the case of Creation, the process lasted less than a day, while in the case of the Flood, the process lasted months. In this writer's view, the more prominent event in the mind of the Psalmist is the Flood. In his commentary on Genesis 1:1-2 [*TBKC*], Ross is unduly influenced by the Chaos Theory of Origins (http://www.wordexplain.com/glossaryc.html#Chaos_Theory), which, in this writer's view, is not supported by the facts.

- C2 The Process Used in Uncovering the Earth 104:8
- D1 Mountain-building; valley-sinking: {8} The mountains rose; the valleys sank down⁹
- D2 Divinely-established equilibrium: To the place which You established for them.

C3 The Irreversible Nature of the Process 104:9

- D1 The boundary: {9} You set a boundary that they may not pass over,
- D2 The promise: So that they will not return¹⁰ to cover the earth.

A3 GOD'S PROVISION OF LIFE-SUPPORT FOR HIS CREATURES UPON THE EARTH 104:10-13

B1 His Provision of Water 104:10-13

- C1 His Provision of Springs 104:10
- D1 {10} He sends forth springs in the valleys;
- D2 They flow between the mountains;
- C2 The Beneficiaries of the Springs 104:11-12
- D1 Every beast of the field: {11} They give drink to every beast of the field;
- D2 Wild donkeys: The wild donkeys quench their thirst.

⁹ 104:8 - mountains rose ... valleys sank: It is the present writer's view that the process spoken of here is that of God's sovereignly deepening the ocean canyons and valleys while raising up the mountains and adjacent land masses. Walter Brown has written a fascinating hypothesis of how this process played itself out in the Flood. He assumes the original land mass was all one large continent, "Pangea", that the original earth land mass rested on a huge subterranean hydro plate ("the fountains of the great deep"), and that the water was under great pressure. At the commencement of the Flood, the fountains of the great deep burst forth, knifing through the land mass beginning somewhere between present day North America and Europe. As the land mass eroded, the rock underneath, under enormous pressure, buckled upward, creating the Atlantic Ridge, now a two-mile high uplifted undersea mountain range. Both Afro-Eur-Asia on the east and the Americas on the west began to float away on their respective hydro-plates in opposite directions from the newly-created mountain ridge. The two land masses, now submerged by the release of the subterranean water below and by the forty-day torrent of rain from above, began floating westward and eastward under water until they ran against the newly-created Pacific Ocean Ridge and out of lubricant (water). The continents converged on the Pacific Rim, the leading edges driving downward into the mantle, creating the "Ring of Fire" with enormous earthquake-prone and volcano-prone regions surrounding the Pacific. The land masses, with nowhere else to go, were ultimately driven upward out of the ocean, with enormous mountain ranges forming perpendicular to the movement of the continents at their weakest points. This is the physical description of the Biblical description here of the process of God's sinking ocean valleys downward and raising the mountains and continental land masses upward. Brown has discussed his theory at length in a book, and also online: <http://www.creationscience.com/onlinebook/HydroplateOverview2.html>

¹⁰ 104:9 - return: If this passage is referring only to Creation, God's purpose here was aborted, for the waters did indeed return to cover the earth in the Flood. It is only after the Flood that God promised, signified by His bow in the clouds, that never again would He destroy the earth with water (Gen. 9:9-17). Ps. 104:6-9 fits the Flood better than Creation.

D3 Birds

E1 {12} Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell;

E2 They lift up *their* voices among the branches.

C3 His Provision of Rain 104:13

D1 {13} He waters the mountains from His upper chambers;

D2 The earth is satisfied with the fruit of His works.

B2 His Provision, for the Benefit of Beast and Man, of Food and Habitat 104:14-18

C1 His Provision of Vegetation 104:14-15

D1 Grass for cattle: {14} He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, 104:14a

D2 Vegetation for man: And vegetation for the labor of man, So that he may bring forth food from the earth, 104:14b-15

E1 Wine: {15} And wine which makes man's heart glad,

E2 Oil: So that he may make *his* face glisten with oil,

E3 Food: And food which sustains man's heart.

C2 His Provision of Trees 104:16-17

D1 Yahweh's sustenance of His trees with moisture 104:16

E1 {16} The trees of the LORD drink their fill,

E2 The cedars of Lebanon which He planted,

D2 His provision of habitat for birds 104:17

E1 Nesting birds:{17} Where the birds build their nests,

E2 Storks: *And* the stork, whose home is the fir trees.

C3 His Provision of Habitat 104:18

D1 For goats: {18} The high mountains are for the wild goats;

D2 For rock badgers: The cliffs are a refuge for the shephanim.¹¹

¹¹ 104:18 - shephanim: NASB does not translate the Hebrew. *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon (BDB)* translates rock badger; KJV and NIV, conies and coney respectively; Strong's dictionary, rock-rabbit.

B3 His Ordering of the Moon and Sun for the Benefit of His Creatures 104:19-23

C1 His Ordination of the Celestial Bodies 104:19

D1 The Moon: {19} He made the moon for the seasons;

D2 The Sun: The sun knows the place of its setting.

C2 His Appointment of Darkness and Light for the Benefit of His Creatures 104:20-23

D1 Darkness 104:20-21

E1 His appointment of darkness: {20} You appoint darkness and it becomes night,

E2 The activity of the forest beasts: In which all the beasts of the forest prowl about.

E3 The activity of lions 104:21

F1 {21} The young lions roar after their prey

F2 And seek their food from God.

D2 Daylight 104:22-23

E1 Sunrise: {22} When the sun rises they withdraw

E2 The retreat of the lions: And lie down in their dens.

E3 The activity of man 104:23

F1 {23} Man goes forth to his work

F2 And to his labor until evening.

B4 His Wise Provision of the Sea for the Benefit of His Creatures 104:24-26

C1 The Psalmist's Call for Praise to Yahweh for His Manifold Wisdom 104:24

D1 His many works: {24} O LORD, how many are Your works!

D2 His great wisdom: In wisdom You have made them all;

D3 The proliferation of His possessions on the earth: The earth is full of Your possessions.

- C2 The Example of His Wisdom: The Proliferation of His Creatures in the Sea 104:25-26
 - D1 The vastness of the sea: {25} There is the sea, great and broad,
 - D2 The quantity and diversity of creatures in the sea
 - E1 Quantity: In which are swarms without number,
 - E2 Diversity: Animals both small and great.
 - D3 The diverse usage of the sea 104:26
 - E1 Human ships: {26} There the ships move along,
 - E2 God's Leviathan: *And* Leviathan,¹² which You have formed to sport in it.

B5 The Dependence of God's Creatures upon His Providence 104:27-30

- C1 They Wait upon Him for Their Food 104:27
 - D1 {27} They all wait for You
 - D2 To give them their food in due season.
- C2 They Are Satisfied When God Open's His Hand 104:28
 - D1 {28} You give to them, they gather *it* up;
 - D2 You open Your hand, they are satisfied with good.
- C3 They Expire When God Hides His Face and Takes Away Their Spirit/Breath 104:29
 - D1 Their dismay: {29} You hide Your face, they are dismayed;
 - D2 Their demise: You take away their spirit,¹³ they expire
 - D3 Their decay: And return to their dust.

¹² 104:26 - Leviathan: According to Job 41, a scaled, fire-breathing, swimming reptile. In Ps 104:26 it is sea-going. In Isa. 27:1 it is called a serpent and a dragon. In the present writer's opinion Leviathan was some sort of dragon, now extinct. No mention is given in Scripture of its ability to fly. See an extensive footnote on Job 41:1.

¹³ 104:29 - spirit: (Heb. *ruwach*, 7307). KJV and NIV translate breath. The word means breath or wind but is often translated as spirit when applied to rational beings (usually with regard to man; almost always with regard to God). Here NASB translates *spirit* to preserve the wordplay between v. 29 and v. 30. God takes away their spirit/breath, and they expire. He sends forth His own Spirit/Breath, and they are created!

- C4 They Are Created When God Sends Forth His Own Spirit/Breath! 104:30
 - D1 Creation: {30} You send forth Your Spirit, they are created;¹⁴
 - D2 Renewal: And You renew the face of the ground.

A4 THE PSALMIST'S CALL TO PRAISE YAHWEH'S ENDURING GLORY ON A PURIFIED EARTH 104:31-35

B1 The Psalmist's Call for the Glory of Yahweh to Endure Forever 104:31-32

- C1 His Urging Yahweh to Enjoy the Enduring Glory of His Works Forever 104:31
 - D1 The call for His enduring glory: {31} Let the glory of the LORD endure forever;
 - D2 The call for His enjoyment of His works: Let the LORD be glad in His works;
- C2 Examples of Yahweh's Enduring Glory 104:32
 - D1 Earthquakes: {32} He looks at the earth, and it trembles;
 - D2 Volcanoes: He touches the mountains, and they smoke.

B2 The Psalmist's Personal Praise of Yahweh and Desire for an Earth Purged of Sinners 104:33-35a

- C1 His Vow of Lifelong Praise 104:33
 - D1 {33} I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;
 - D2 I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.
- C2 His Desire for Reciprocal Fellowship with Yahweh 104:34
 - D1 His desire that Yahweh may be pleased with his meditation: {34} Let my meditation be pleasing to Him;
 - D2 His assurance of his own personal joyfulness in Yahweh: As for me, I shall be glad in the LORD.

¹⁴ 104:30 - created: (Heb. *bara*, 1254) The same word is used in Gen. 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Whether used of God or man, *bara* means to create something new. Here, when God sends forth His Spirit, new animals are born. When He hides His face, the spirit of animals expires. (For a fuller treatment of *bara*, see Word Study on *bara* by James T. Bartsch: http://www.wordexplain.com/PDFdocs/bara_create.pdf.)

- C3 His Desire that God's Creation Be Purged of Evil ¹⁵ 104:35
- D1 By destroying sinners from the earth: {35} Let sinners be consumed from the earth
- D2 By obliterating the wicked: And let the wicked be no more.
- C4 His Personal Call to Himself to Bless Yahweh! Bless the LORD, O my soul.

**B3 The Psalmist's Call for the People to Praise Yahweh: Praise the LORD!
104:35b**

EXPANDED ANALYSIS OF PSALM 104

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¹⁵ 104:35 Title - creation ... purged of evil: If Yahweh's glory is to endure on the earth forever, praised by humans, all sinners must be removed from the globe. This prayer will be answered when the existing heavens and earth are destroyed by fire (2 Pet. 3:7-12), all the wicked of all ages are removed from the universe and deposited in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15), and God creates a new heavens and earth in which only righteousness exists (2 Pet. 3:13-14; Rev. 21:1 - 22:5)! See <http://wordexplain.com/glossaryd.html#Destruction> ; See also [http://www.wordexplain.com/glossaryn.html#New Heaven](http://www.wordexplain.com/glossaryn.html#New_Heaven).

Psalm 104

"In Praise of Yahweh's Sovereignty over His Created Earth, Ultimately Purified"

- A1 YAHWEH'S MAJESTY AND MIGHT IN CREATION 104:1-5**
 - B1 Yahweh's Majesty in Using Creation for His Own Benefit 104:1-4
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Condensed Outline of Psalm 104
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