

Praise God the Creator

Bible Background • [PSALM 104](#)
Printed Text • [PSALM 104:1-4, 24-30](#)
Devotional Reading • [PSALM 8](#)

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson we will: PONDER the diversity and complexity of God's creation; AFFIRM God's wisdom in ordering the world as He did; and HONOR God by working to preserve the world's magnificent natural diversity.

In Focus

In 2001, God opened an opportunity for Veronica to be a part of a mission team to Africa. Years later, when asked to share her testimony of the trip at church, she still reflected on that event as life-changing. "The moment I stepped off the plane," Veronica recalled, "it was like a bolt of electricity started with my feet and traveled up to my head. Everything I saw and experienced said, 'You're home.' The unique sounds, colors, activities were so different from America. The people carried an air of contentment even though their circumstances were far from satisfactory. The Christian services were in French or Bambara, but it didn't take long to feel the emotion and sincerity of the people."

Veronica closed her eyes and looked up at the ceiling. "One of my most memorable times is being out at night. Our host family had a wide back yard, and I'd go back there at night and lie down and look up at the stars. Unlike in the U.S., you could see so many stars, layer upon layer of brightness in the sky. Where we were in Mali had much less light pollution than here in the U.S., and you can really see the galaxy. I'd lay there in the dark looking up. I'd never seen anything like it. Instantly my heart filled with praise. I needed no Scripture reading or choir singing. The presence of those stars for me represented God as an amazing Creator. I'll never forget those times of thanking God for giving us such an awesome, awesome creation."

What aspect of creation will most often make you praise God?

Keep in Mind

"O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures" ([Psalm 104:24](#)).

KJV

Psalm 104:1 Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty.

2 Who covers thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:

3 Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind:

4 Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire:

24 O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

25 So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts.

26 There go the ships: there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein.

27 These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season.

28 That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.

29 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.

30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

NLT

Psalm 104:1 Let all that I am praise the LORD. O LORD my God, how great you are! You are robed with honor and majesty.

2 You are dressed in a robe of light. You stretch out the starry curtain of the heavens;

3 you lay out the rafters of your home in the rain clouds. You make the clouds your chariot; you ride upon the wings of the wind.

4 The winds are your messengers; flames of fire are your servants.

24 O LORD, what a variety of things you have made! In wisdom you have made them all. The earth is full of your creatures.

25 Here is the ocean, vast and wide, teeming with life of every kind, both large and small.

26 See the ships sailing along, and Leviathan which you made to play in the sea.

27 They all depend on you to give them food as they need it.

28 When you supply it, they gather it. You open your hand to feed them, and they are richly satisfied.

29 But if you turn away from them, they panic. When you take away their breath, they die and turn again to dust.

30 When you give them your breath, life is created, and you renew the face of the earth.

The People, Places, and Times

Psalmist. Some scholars attribute this psalm to David even though it doesn't list a specific title or author. Nothing in the psalm itself indicates its authorship. The psalmist might have written this hymn when David danced before the Ark of the Covenant with the priest as they carried it into the city of David ([2 Samuel 6:14–15](#)). This psalm also could have been written during the return from Babylonian exile and the re-dedication of the Temple ([Ezra 6:13–22](#)).

Heavens. The firmament is God's palace or residence. It displays the radiance of His power and glory. Every part of the world, however minute, exhibits some glimmer of beauty, so distinct and bright that no one can use ignorance as an excuse to deny God's existence (Psalm 19).

Leviathan. A sea monster referenced in the Old Testament ([Job 41](#)) or [41:1](#) depending on chapter divisions and verse numbering). The word is typically used to refer to any large sea creature, often great whales in literature. In modern Hebrew, it simply means "whale." In the Middle Ages, Leviathan was used to depict Satan, who attempted to destroy God's people and His creation; some scholars at the time associated it with the demon of envy. According to [Isaiah 27:1](#), Leviathan will be destroyed during the time of judgment.

Background

The first three chapters of Genesis outlined God creating the earth. Here the psalmist poetically highlights the same information. This psalm focuses on God's handiwork; it reviews the history of creation and magnifies the greatness of God.

This psalm about nature explicitly points to God as the intelligent creator. The psalmist uses vivid imagery to emotionally move the reader, recreating this colorful wonder before their very eyes. Nature stays within its boundaries and does what God created it to do.

At-A-Glance

1. Creation Shows God's Majesty ([Psalm 104:1–2](#))
2. God Creates Light and Heaven (vv. 2–4)
3. God Creates Creatures (vv. 24–27)
4. God Provides for All Animals (vv. 28–30)

In Depth

1. Creation Shows God's Majesty ([Psalm 104:1–2](#))

Initially, the author spoke of himself blessing the Lord. The psalmist does so to express gratitude and respect. The “soul” is the entire being of a person who truly worships God. The personal blessing exalted a God who has robed Himself with glory and grandeur, yet the author acknowledged God personally as “my God.” The garment of authority and nobility is expressive of the character of God. Even the elegant array of King Solomon does not compare. The first thing on God's creation agenda was light. Like a garment, God wrapped Himself in the very light He created. It's unapproachable to any earthly living soul ([1 Timothy 6:16](#)).

God's second act in creation was the expanse or the heavens. He stretched it out like a canopy or a tent over all the earth under His complete control ([Isaiah 40:22, 44:24](#)).

2. God Creates Light and Heaven (vv. 2–4)

The psalmist here imagines God as if building the world like a multi-story building and the waters above as ceiling rafters. He resides in the midst of it all.

Clouds serve as His chariot, which can be a vehicle to ride bringing judgment or grace to His creation ([Exodus 13:21; Isaiah 19:1](#)). The idea that God walks “on the wings of the wind” explains the swiftness in which He comes along. These are signs that God is present everywhere and can offer supernatural help.

3. God Creates Creatures (vv. 24–27)

It is impossible to know the number of creatures on earth. The number of living creatures and plants rises and falls daily in a cycle of endless activity. The world is filled with God's handiwork made by Him and for Him ([Colossians 1:16](#)).

In the first part of this psalm, the author highlights the heavens and the earth. Now the attention is on the sea. The seas are full of life—some of it small, some as large as even the leviathan. The whales play throughout the waters, yet despite all the activity, humankind is able to sail a ship. God keeps everything under control and working smoothly.

4. God Provides for All Animals (vv. 28–30)

In conclusion, the writer once again points to God as caretaker and provider for the animals, plants, insects, humans—all life. God's hand is filled with good for all. Nothing in this world brought itself into being or sustains itself; all have to wait on God. He breathes life into all things, and He cuts it off. He created out of dust, and when it's time, He sees to it that humankind and other living creatures will die and return to dust.

Repeatedly, God creates, preserves, and restores. It is His responsibility as Creator. As humans watching these phenomena in nature, we should have assurance that in God's hands, everyone is safe and secure. He is more than able to take care of the most difficult situation or circumstance in an individual's life.

Search the Scriptures

1. What does it mean to bless the Lord with all of your soul ([Psalm 104:1](#))?
2. How does the psalmist's description of God guide your daily life (vv. 3–4)?

Discuss the Meaning

In His wisdom, God provided humankind a wonderful universe in which to dwell. It communicates how God is powerful, majestic, creative, and totally in control of all things. What problems in our lives threaten the belief that God is in control?

Lesson in Our Society

We often take for granted what we are given. People help us out of the kindness of their hearts, family and friends support us, and many of us have homes, jobs, and access to heat and running water. But sometimes we dwell on the things we don't have, or spend too much time revisiting old slights or mistakes without appreciating all that has been provided for us.

It's easy to engage in one's usual routine without thanking God for His magnificent design. Ask God to help you daily recognize His benefits of His creation.

Make It Happen

As a church or Sunday School class, locate a community organization that supports neighborhood gardens or educates youth about the earth's ecology. This fosters an appreciation for the wonders of God's creation.

More Light on the Text

[Psalm 104:1–4, 24–30](#)

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty.

Starting and ending similar to Psalm 103 (a fact which underscores David's authorship), this psalm gives God the worship He is due. To "bless" (Heb. *barak*, **bah-ROCK**) means to wish good tidings or ascribe particular power (some versions render this word as "praise"). The word "great" in Hebrew is *gadal* (**gah-DOLL**), which means "to be or become great or strong" or "exalted" (see [Genesis 12:2](#); [Exodus 2:10](#)). The word "very" in Hebrew is *me'od* (**meh-ODE**), which means "especially" or "exceedingly" (see [Genesis 1:31](#); [Psalm 96:4](#)). Such added superlatives are appropriate within the context. Indeed, God is worthy of every superlative and expression of praise and blessing. We can't physically reach God, but by His visible glories we can see Him "darkly" ([1 Corinthians 13:12](#)); indeed, we, like Moses, couldn't survive the full brilliance of His person ([Exodus 34:29](#)). Thus, in part, because we could not bear His full

appearance, God clothes Himself with the “fabric of the world,” in the choice words of John Calvin. While earthly kings adorn themselves with royal finery of every kind, none can compare to God’s infinitely greater “robes” of exceeding honor and majestic excellence ([Psalm 93:1](#); [1 Timothy 6:16](#)).

2 Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment; who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:

In the previous verse, God clothed Himself with honor and majesty; in this verse His attire is light itself. If one of the garments in God’s wardrobe is “light” (Heb. *’or*, **OR**, meaning daylight or a bright morning sun), one can’t help but ask how bright His being is ([Habakkuk 3:4](#)).

“The heavens” (Heb. *shamayim*, **shah-MAH-yeem**) implies that either the visible arch in which the clouds move or the larger space where celestial bodies revolve is merely a curtain. The belief in the ancient Near East was that the sky was a dome or canopy that covered the earth like a disc. One can only wonder how grand God’s royal pavilion—His heavenly tabernacle—is. Other verses such as [Isaiah 40:12](#), [54:2](#), and [Job 37:18](#) refer to the heavens in a similar manner. [Isaiah 34:4](#) and [Revelation 6:14](#) refer to the sky (or heavens) being rolled up like a scroll.

3 Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot; who walketh upon the wings of the wind:

God’s construction materials are vastly different from ours ([Amos 9:6](#)); everything is supported by His awesome power. His “beams” (Heb. *qara’*, **kah-RAH**, meaning something built from wood or having wooden beams) in footings of water are infinitely more stable than our strongest steel and concrete. Our great King doesn’t require chariots or limousines to define His royalty; rather, He rides on the “clouds” (Heb. *’av*, **AHV**, meaning a thick cloud), and the “wind” (Heb. *ruakh*, **ROO-akh**, meaning spirit; also, breath or wind) is harnessed for His traveling needs. The sky itself obeys His every whim like a plane obeys its pilot. If the beams of His tabernacle are stabilized in the oceans, the clouds are His equally firm floorboards, and the wind provides His corridors.

4 Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire:

Both “spirit(s)” and “wind” (v. 3) are translated from the same Hebrew word (*ruakh*). If “angels” (Heb. *mal’ak*, **mal-AHK**, meaning messenger) are made into spirits, they are also made into wind (see also [Hebrews 1:7](#)). In some sense, God speaks words or breathes out life (wind), and angels (messengers) take His breath or words of life to deliver them ([Psalm 103:20](#)). We must remember the incredible power and importance of all God’s countless angels ([Matthew 25:31](#); [2 Thessalonians 1:7](#); [Hebrews 12:22](#); [Revelation 5:11](#)), especially guardian angels ([Psalm 91:11](#)), cherubim ([Genesis 3:24](#); [Exodus 25:20](#)), seraphim ([Isaiah 6:2, 6](#)), and the archangels ([1 Thessalonians 4:16](#); [Jude 9](#)).

24 O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

This second portion of our lesson, verses 24–30, focuses on the animals of creation and the sustaining produce of the earth. In verses prior to this portion (vv. 10-18), the psalm writer

elaborates on God’s intentional interconnectedness of creation. Water first finds its place and then becomes a resource for all creation. It sustains life and fruitfulness and produces food, seed, or supply for myriads of needs. Then everything is refreshed and replenished by rain. Everything God does—all His many “works” (cf. v. 13) are wonderful, magnificent, and excellent in every way; individually or collectively, they reveal His wisdom, power, creativity, and glory.

25 So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. 26 There go the ships: there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein.

From the perspective of ancient writers, both ships on the sea ([Proverbs 30:18–19](#)) and the great sea creatures ([Job 41:1](#); [Psalm 74:14](#); [Isaiah 27:1](#)) were marvels that particularly revealed to them God’s boundless creative ability. This verse uses a literary device called hendiadys, which is when a part is used to represent the whole (e.g., from homeless box to penthouse suite, representing all residences). So it is that ships on the great sea and beasts of all kinds in the sea represent all of creation.

27 These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. 28 That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. 29 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. 30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

God is the Source and Sustainer; He is the Maker and the Maintainer—everything comes from Him and everything depends on Him, including humankind. All of the living things expect that God will provide them with food when it’s necessary. “Wait” here means to expect or hope for something to happen (Heb *siber*, **see-BARE**). The picture is of God as nurturer—opening His very hand to feed.

In Hebrew, “breath” is *ru’ach* (**RU-akh**), and means wind, breath, mind, or spirit. It is the same word used in [Genesis 1:2](#): “The Spirit [*ruach*] of God moved upon the face of the waters.” It is also the same word in [Genesis 7:22](#), referring to all the creatures taken aboard the Ark: “All in whose nostrils was the breath [*ruach*] of life.” *Ruach* also is used for both man and animals in [Ecclesiastes 3:21](#). A quick look at the verbs in the last four verses (vv. 27–30) gives an overview of all that God does: He gives food to all, He opens His hand and fills creation with good things, He hides His face, He takes away breath/life [*ruach*], He sends His spirit [*ruach*], and He renews everything.

Interestingly, in [Genesis 2:7](#), when God “breathed into his [man’s] nostrils the breath of life,” the Hebrew uses *neshamah* (**nesh-a-MA**), but it is essentially an interchangeable synonym for *ruach*. In [Isaiah 42:5](#), “He that giveth breath [*neshamah*] unto the people ... and spirit [*ruach*] to them.” Also in [Job 34:14](#), both Hebrew words are used side by side to indicate either man’s life or death: “If he gather unto himself his spirit [*ruach*] and his breath [*neshamah*].” Both *neshamah* and *ruach* are used for the English “breath of life” in [Genesis 7:22](#). The essence of the passage is that God is both Giver and Sustainer of the very breath and spirit within all living things—He alone gives, sustains, and takes life away.

Say It Correctly

Innumerable. in-oom-er-ah-**BULL**.
Renewest. **REE**-noo-wist.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

God Sets Boundaries on the Earth
([Psalm 104:5–9](#))

TUESDAY

God Quenches the Thirsty Earth
([Psalm 104:10–18](#))

WEDNESDAY

God Establishes Times and Seasons
([Psalm 104:19–23](#))

THURSDAY

Joy and Wish for Perfect Harmony
([Psalm 104:31–35](#))

FRIDAY

God Gives Humanity Its Dignity
([Psalm 8](#))

SATURDAY

Do Not Worry, God Will Provide
([Matthew 6:25–34](#))

SUNDAY

The Lord Our Creator and Provider
([Psalm 104:1–4, 24–30](#))