

I'M NOT DEAD YET!

Psalms 115 – part of “hallel psalms,” sung by the Hebrew pilgrims on their way up the mountain to Jerusalem for the feast days (Psalms 113-118)

Psalms 115 1 Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake. 2 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God? 3 But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. 4 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. 5 They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: 6 They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: 7 They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. 8 They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them. 9 O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. 10 O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. 11 Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. 12 The LORD hath been mindful of us: he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron. 13 He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great. 14 The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children. 15 Ye are blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth. 16 The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men. 17 The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence. 18 But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.

God, don't just move for OUR sake, move for the sake of your NAME!

Move for the sake of your MERCY (you forgive us for our failings) and your TRUTH (you promised it to us!). Your failures do not negate the promises of God, because they are not based on you anyway!

We serve a BIG and awesome God!

THE BLUE MARBLE is a famous photograph of the earth taken on December 7, 1972 by the crew of the Apollo 17 spacecraft (the last manned lunar mission) at a distance of about 18,000 miles, shortly after they had left earth's gravitational pull to begin their journey to the moon.

The VOYAGER 1 spacecraft, launched on September 5, 1977 is the farthest human-made object from earth. In the vacuum of space with no resistance, it can travel at a speed of 10.69 miles per second, or 38,484 miles per hour. Voyager has been travelling for 30 years this month, and is right now over 9.6 billion miles from earth. Light from earth (which travels at 186,000 miles per second) takes 1.4 seconds to reach the moon, 8.5 minutes to reach the sun, but over 13.8 hours to reach Voyager at its current position.

On February 14, 1990 NASA commanded Voyager 1, having completed its primary mission, to turn around as it left our solar system and take a photograph. One image it returned was later named the PALE BLUE DOT. The picture is taken at a distance of approximately 4 billion miles, and shows the planet earth suspended in a sunbeam. It took hours for the spacecraft just to transmit the picture, and NASA states that our entire planet is “only 0.12 pixel in size.” Al Gore's 2006 documentary film “An Inconvenient Truth” featured the PALE BLUE DOT photo at the end.

It was the brilliant American astronomer Carl Sagan (he died last December) who pushed NASA to have Voyager 1 take this photograph. And in his 1994 book by the same title (“Pale Blue Dot”), he writes these words ...

From this distant vantage point the earth might not seem of any particular interest. But for us it's different. Consider again that dot. That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every “superstar,” every “supreme leader,” every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there – on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam.

The Earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena. Think of the rivers of blood spilled by all those generals and emperors so that, in glory and triumph, they could become the momentary masters of a fraction of a dot. Think of the endless cruelties visited by the inhabitants of one corner of this pixel on the scarcely distinguishable inhabitants of some other corner, how frequent their misunderstandings, how eager they are to kill one another, how fervent their hatreds.

Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the Universe, are challenged by this point of pale light. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves.

The Psalmist would agree with every word in this excerpt except for the last statement, because he knows that “**OUR GOD IS IN THE HEAVENS: HE HATH DONE WHATSOEVER HE HATH PLEASD**” (v. 3). And in another place, he writes ...

Psalms 121:2 My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple ...

1 Kings 8:27 But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, **the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee**; how much less this house that I have builded?

Jesus' words to His disciples ...

John 14:17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, **and shall be in you.**

Next, the Psalmist begins to speak about IDOLS (v. 4-8). Idols are dead things that take the place of God in our lives. In Bible times, there were three primary idols: (1) Baal, the god of sex, (2) Mammon, the god of money, and (3) Molech, the god of violence. And these three idols are still controlling humanity today.

BUT YOU WERE NOT CREATED TO SERVE DEAD THINGS! YOU WERE CREATED TO SERVE A LIVING GOD!

The Psalmist begins to say "how blessed we are" to serve God (v. 9-15) – there are so many benefits that we just have to praise Him!

Psalm 115:16 The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth hath he given (ASSIGNED) to the children of men.

God has invested His authority on earth in the CHURCH. That is the purpose of serving Him – to do His will here on earth. **THY KINGDOM COME! THY WILL BE DONE! RIGHT HERE! RIGHT NOW!**

Psalm 115:17 The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.

With a dramatic comparison, the Psalmist compares people who won't praise God to the DEAD. They are serving idols, so their lives are already dead – that's why they don't worship God. About the only accurate thing you can say about some church members at their funeral is "they're dead" – because they were always dead!

When the Bible speaks about our INNER ATTITUDE OF CONFIDENCE toward God, it uses phrases like "be still and know that I am God" or "in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." But when it speaks about our OUTER RESPONSE OF WORSHIP toward God, it sounds like pandemonium has broken out in the house of the Lord!

HALAL - to make a show, to boast, to be clamorously foolish, to rave

BARAK - to kneel in adoration

QARA - to call out, to preach, to proclaim, to cry unto

TOWDAH - a choir of worshippers with upraised hands

SHABACH – to address in a loud tone, triumph, glory

YADAH - to worship with extended hands

RUWM - to exalt, to extol, to lift up, to set on high

GIYL - to spin around under the influence of violent emotion

Notice that all of these Biblical forms of worship demand a response through the MOUTH or through MOTION. There is no room for quiet, reserved worship that happens only "in the heart" – that is not Biblical worship!

Ecclesiastes 9:4 For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for **a living dog is better than a dead lion.**

Matthew 8:22 But Jesus said unto him, **Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.**

Matthew 22:32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? **God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.**

Psalm 150:6 **Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD.** Praise ye the LORD.

Psalm 115:17-18 The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence. **But we will bless the LORD** from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.

We are often noisy on the inside (i.e. criticism) and quiet on the outside (i.e. worship). **WE NEED TO REVERSE THAT!** Some of our dear friends have headed off to Heaven (some of them used to be quite noisy!), and they can't help us worship God anymore here on earth. **BUT I'M NOT DEAD YET!**

The devil tries to put enough trials and temptations in your way that you will shut down and shut up! He will beat you down and beat you up. And when he finishes (like he did with Job) he walks away thinking, "That is the end of that!" **The devil may think I'm dead, BUT I'M NOT DEAD YET!**

Job 19:25 For I know that my redeemer liveth ... (!)

Lepers in 2 Kings 7:3 – "why sit we here until we die?" We may be lepers, but we're not dead yet! Let's take a step of faith in a BIG and awesome God!

Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.