

Psalm 136

“The Great Hallel”

Psalm 136 echoes the primary theme of the entire book of Psalms: The LORD is the King who provides refuge and pursues people to know Him. And it echoes it 26 times: “The merciful lovingkindness of the Lord has no end.” Or “For His mercy endures forever.”

Four times, we are explicitly commanded to **give thanks**, and most of the rest of the 22 verses expect that this command is understood. Thanksgiving is a response to God’s goodness and his merciful loving-kindness. “O give thanks to the Lord, for his mercy endures forever.”

Psalm 136:1–26. This approach to worship is often omitted from modern Pentecost/charismatic services due to it being liturgical, yet it is a biblically acceptable expression. Probably, the **leaders** recited the first part of each first, recounting God’s act in creation and Israel’s history, and the **congregation** responded with his mercy indoors forever.

This song's repetitious style is similar to that of its early African American slave songs, which were rooted in traditional African performing practices known as “call and response.” Likewise, this poetic structure becomes a paradigm for “**the refrain or course**” found in European hymns.

We find **4 names of God**: LORD (v. 1), God of gods (v. 2), Lord of lords (v. 3), and God of heaven (v. 26)—the only time this name of God appears.

We are told **26 times** that “the merciful lovingkindness of the LORD has no end.”

In short, God creates, He governs, and He redeems.

I

The call to praise **Vs 1 - 3**

Give Thanksgiving to the **God** of **gods**. **Vs 1-3**

Forever h5769. **עֹלָם** ‘ôlâm; or **עֹלָם** ‘olam; from 5956; properly, concealed, i.e. the vanishing point; generally, time out of mind (past or future), i.e. (practically)

eternity; frequentatively, adverbial (especially with prepositional prefix) always: — alway(-s), ancient (time), any more, continuance, eternal, (for, (n-))ever(-lasting, -more, of old), lasting, long (time), (of) old (time), perpetual, at any time, (beginning of the) world (+ without end). Compare 5331, 5703.

AV (439) - ever 272, everlasting 63, old 22, perpetual 22, evermore 15, never 13, time 6, ancient 5, world 4, always 3, alway 2, long 2, more 2, never + h0408 2, misc 6;

long duration, antiquity, futurity, forever, ever, everlasting, evermore, perpetual, old, ancient, world ancient time, long time (of past)(of future)forever, always continuous existence, perpetual everlasting, indefinite or unending future, eternity

Eternity refers to the infinite and everlasting expanse. God has created. It is both an unending expanse of space: universe: and time (eternity) and indicates the limitless dimensions in which sovereignty is displayed.

The word sometimes refers to the remotely distant past Psalm 93:2 and sometimes to the remotely distant future Jeremiah 25:2 God is called everlasting God, Genesis 21:33, and Isaiah 40:28. As God is eternal, so is his mercy that is unto the forever.

Psalm 136:1 endures: the literal meaning is “it calls forever is his mercy“ mercy is translated, loving kindness, unfailing, love, steadfast, covenant, love, and is similar to the New Testament word grace“.

Psalm 136: 2 Gods: That is those false idols that men ignorantly call “gods” Psalm 135: 15–18. The Salas is not advocating with God as supreme over many lesser gods. Deuteronomy 10:17.

II

The cause to praise **Vs 4 - 25**

Oh give thanks to the *creator*. **Vs 4-9**

Power is essential to most work, and it must be exercised rightly. Psalm 136 lays out the proper use of power by showing four examples of how God uses power.

The first example comes in verses 4-9. It shows God’s use of power to create the world, “who by his understanding made the heavens...who spread out the earth upon the waters” ([Ps. 136:5-6](#)). This takes us back to Genesis 1—to the God of creation, giving our world all that we need to flourish. But note the order in which

God works, first creating systems (land, water, night, day, sun and moon) that were necessary for the survival of his later creations (plants, land animals, swimming and flying creatures). God did not create animals until there was dry land and vegetation to sustain them. When it is in our power to create tasks or systems, we use power properly when we create environments in which we and those around us not only survive but thrive. For more on God's provision in creation, see "[Provision \(Genesis 1:29-30; 2:8-14\)](#)" in *Genesis 1-11*

III

Oh give thanks to the rescuer. **Vs 10-16**

The second example comes in [Psalm 136:10-15](#) when God delivers his people from slavery in Egypt.

IV

Oh give thanks to the Victor. **Vs 17-22**

The fourth example comes at the end of the psalm. "It is he [God] who remembered us in our low estate...and rescued us from our foes...who gives food to all flesh" ([Ps. 136:23-25](#)). God lovingly recognizes our weaknesses and supplies our needs. When we use power to do work that benefits others, we are using power as God would use it.

V

The culmination of praise **Vs 26**

Oh, thanks to the God of Heaven.
Vs 26

Finally, for the proper use of power, every verse of Psalm 136 reminds us to give thanks to God, "whose steadfast love endures forever."

No limits of time: God existed before creation, is unbounded by the present, and will be the very center of eternity.

No limits to His reach: The Lord has pursued Jews, Gentiles, Kings, and the poor.

No limits of geography: He made the heavens and the earth. He controls the lands and seas.

No limits on God's activity: He creates, He redeems, and He restores.

O give thanks to the Lord for his mercy endures forever!

Bishop La Fayette Scales
Rhema Christian Center
Tuesday/Wednesday Bible Study
Tuesday & Wednesday, April 23 & 24, 2024
6:30 pm / 12 noon