

Psalm 99

Psalm 99: The final psalm of the divine kingdom is composed of three stanzas, each followed by a call to worship (verses 3, 5, 9). The first stanza describes the King's greatness (verses 1-2); the second, His justice (verse 4); and the third, His forgiveness (verses 6-8).

Verses 1-9: The theme of this psalm is summed up in its last phrase: "for the LORD our God is holy" (verse 9). The psalmist encourages praise to the king for His holiness (verses 3, 5, 9), which is the utter separateness of God's being from all other creatures and things, as well as His moral separateness from sin. The psalmist also exults in the truth that such a holy God has had an intimate saving relationship with Israel throughout her history (verses 6-9).

- I. Exaltation of the King's Holiness (99:1-5).
- II. Examples of the King's Holiness (99:6-9).

Verses 1-5: God governs the world by his providence, governs the church by his grace, and both by his Son. The inhabitants of the earth have cause to tremble, but the Redeemer still waits to be gracious. Let all who hear, take warning, and seek his mercy. The more we humble ourselves before God, the more we exalt him; and let us be thus reverent, for he is holy.

Psalm 99:1 "The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth [between] the cherubims; let the earth be moved."

The King Messiah, he is made and declared Lord and Christ; he has reigned, does reign, and ever will (see Psalm 93:1).

"Let the people tremble": With awe of his majesty, and reverence of his word and ordinances. Rejoicing before him with trembling, as his own people and subjects do (Psalm 2:11). And so it agrees with (Psalm 97:1), or it may be understood of the people that are enemies to Christ, who would not have him to reign, though he shall whether they will or not. And who will sooner or later tremble for fear of him, and his righteous judgment. Jarchi refers this to the war of Gog and Magog. The Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and Arabic versions, render it, "let the people be angry"; or it may be rendered, "they are angry"; or "therefore they are angry". Because he reigns; so the people, both Jews and Gentiles, were angry and raged, when his kingdom was first visibly set up among them (Psalm 2:1). And so, the nations will when he takes to himself his great power, and reigns (Rev. 11:18).

"He sitteth between the cherubim": "Upon" or "above", as the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and all the Oriental versions. Alluding to the seat of the Shekinah, or divine Majesty, in the holy of holies. And respects either the exalted glory of Christ among the angels, and above them at the right hand of God, where they are subject to him, stand about him, ready to do his will. Or rather his presence with his ministers of the word, who are the instruments of spreading his Gospel, and enlarging his kingdom and interest in the world (see notes on Psalm 80:1; compare Psalm 18:6-19; Ezek. 10:1).

"Let the earth be moved": Not that itself out of its place, but the inhabitants of it. And these either with a sense of sin and duty, and become subject to Christ their King. Or with wrath and indignation at him, or through fear of him, as before. Kimchi says, at the fall of Gog and Magog; it may be particularly understood of the land of Judea, and of the commotion in it. Especially in Jerusalem, when the tidings were brought of the birth of the King Messiah (Matt. 2:1). Or of the shaking and moving both of the civil and ecclesiastical state of the nation, and of the ruin of it (see Heb. 12:26).

The subject of this Psalm is the holiness of the reign of the Lord. The people have always trembled at the presence of the Lord. We know the fear that gripped their hearts, when God spoke to them from the mountain, when He spoke the 10 commandments. They asked Moses to speak to God for them, because of their great fear of God. Saints tremble in thanksgiving to God. The worldly are struck with sheer terror at what they are facing in the judgement. In the tabernacle in the wilderness, the presence of God was over the mercy seat, between the cherubims. There is a very similar situation in heaven. The cherubims cry Holy, Holy, Holy before the Lord day and night. All of God's creation is moved by His Holy Presence.

Psalm 99:2 "The LORD [is] great in Zion; and he [is] high above all the people."

Where the temple stood, and into which Christ came as the proprietor of it, and gave it a greater glory by his presence than the first temple had. Here he preached his doctrines and wrought many of his miracles. Here he poured forth the Spirit on his apostles; and from here went forth his Gospel into all the world: or in Zion, that is, in his church, and among his people. Here he grants his gracious presence, and bestows the blessings of his goodness; and shows himself to be great and glorious in his person, offices, and operations (see Psalm 98:1).

"And he is high above all people": As God, he is the Creator of them all. In whom they live, move, and have their being, and so must be above them all. As Mediator, he is the Savior of his own people, and exalted to be so unto them. As King, he is higher than the kings of the earth, and therefore must be above all the rest of the inhabitants of it. He is higher than the heavens, and the angels there, and therefore he must be higher than the earth, and they that dwell in it. He is highly exalted above every name that is named in this world, or in that to come.

The temple was the favorite place of the Jewish people to go and commune with the Holy God. Now the place that most Christians go to commune with Holy God, is the church. Among those who believe, there is no greater. He is our all in all. He is not only our Savior and Lord, but He is our leader as well. The greatest thoughts we could have of Him are not really high enough. He should be High and lifted up.

Psalm 99:3 "Let them praise thy great and terrible name; [for] it [is] holy."

All people, especially the Lord's people. Those that dwell in Zion, where his name is great, in high esteem, venerable, and valued. As his name Jesus, or Savior, is amiable and lovely to his saints. And his name, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, is terrible to his enemies.

"For it is holy": His name is holy, as well as reverend and great. His nature is holy, both divine and human. Holy in all his ways and works; and is holiness to his people, and therefore worthy of praise. Holiness is the ground and foundation of his praise from the seraphim (Isa. 6:3).

All should praise Him, from the least to the greatest. He is the Maker of us all. He is the quickening Spirit, which brought us everlasting life.

Acts 4:12 "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

The believers know it to be great, above all other names. We must also rejoice in the terribleness of that name to those who reject Him. We have said all through these lessons, that there are blessings abundant for those who love Him and keep His commandments. There are also, punishments beyond our comprehension for those who rebel against the love of God. Those who utterly refuse Him will be judged guilty of sin, and be thrown into the lake of fire.

Psalm 99:4 "The king's strength also loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob."

"King's strength also loveth judgment": "Strength of the King" may be a kind of epithet for God; or (combining this phrase with verse 3), the psalmist may be saying that a holy name is the strength of a just king.

"Equity": That is, fairness (compare Isa. 11:1-5).

We may slip by the judges on this earth, but the righteous Judge, we cannot lie to. He knows even our thoughts. He really wants to save us all. That is why He has waited so long to bring judgement to the earth. He wants to save us, but He will not force His will upon us. If we insist on refusing to follow Him, then we will be judged by the law and found guilty of sin. The same One who came as Savior, is the righteous Judge of all the earth.

Psalm 99:5 "Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; [for] he [is] holy."

"His footstool": In general, this is a metaphor for the temple in Jerusalem (compare Isa. 60:13; Lam. 2:1); but more specifically, for the Ark of the Covenant (1 Chron. 28:2). Footstools were included with the thrones of the kings of Israel (2 Chron. 9:18).

Every king in ancient times had a "footstool" as a symbol of His position of authority. God's footstool is the earth (Isa. 66:1); Matt. 5:35) and more specifically Zion, known as Israel (132:7; Isa. 60:13). He is the King above all kings, and all the earth is under His authority.

He will not force anyone to worship Him. Those of us who have chosen to worship Him, should lift Him up to the very highest. We should fall at His feet in humble adoration of Him. He is our very Life. God's holiness is the standard of holiness. There is no other who deserves the cry Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty.

Verses 6-9: The happiness of Israel is made out by referring to the most useful governors of that people. They in everything made God's word and law their rule, knowing that they could not else expect that their prayers should be answered. They all wonderfully prevailed with God in prayer; miracles were wrought at their request. They pleaded for the people, and obtained answers of

peace. Our Prophet and High Priest, of infinitely greater dignity than Moses, Aaron, or Samuel, has received and declared to us the will of the Father. Let us not only exalt the Lord with our lips, but give him the throne in our heart; and while we worship him upon his mercy-seat, let us never forget that he is holy.

Psalm 99:6 "Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the LORD, and he answered them."

“Moses ... Aaron ... Samuel”: Using three of the nation’s famous heroes for examples, the psalmist demonstrates that a holy God has had an enduring, intimate and saving relationship with Israel.

It was said of Moses, that he was the humblest man living. Moses acted as God's connection with the Israelites. Moses led this rebellious house out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Aaron was the first High Priest of these people. God spoke to the people through the High Priest. Samuel was a great judge of the people. All three of these men of God came into the very presence of God and represented the people to God. Their pleas to God were for the people. God spoke to the people through these men. These men begged the God of all this earth to stay His hand of judgement over and over, and God answered their prayer.

Psalm 99:7 "He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance [that] he gave them."

“Cloudy pillar”: This was a medium of divine direction (compare Exodus 13:21-22; 33:9-10; Num. 12:5; Deut. 31:15).

“Testimonies ... ordinance”: Terms in Psalms for God’s Word (see psalm 119).

They were in the presence of God, but never really saw His face. The cloud was to protect them from the awesomeness of God. No one could actually see the face of God and live. The Israelites, as we said, were a rebellious house and did not obey God, but these 3 men of God kept God's law. Over and over, it is said of Moses that he did everything according to what he was shown.

Psalm 99:8 "Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions."

The reference here is to God as "our" God. That is, the language used by those who now worship him is designed to give encouragement in approaching his throne. The God that "we" worship is the same that "they" worshipped. And as he answered them, we may feel assured that he will answer us.

"Thou wast a God that forgavest them": They were not perfect; they were sinners. They often offended thee, and yet thou didst answer them, and show them mercy.

"Though thou tookest vengeance": Though thou didst manifest thy displeasure at their misconduct; though thou in thy judgments didst show that thou wast displeased with them.

Nevertheless, thou didst answer them. Sinners as they were, and often as thou didst show thy displeasure at their conduct, yet thou didst hear their prayers and bless them.

"Of their inventions": The Hebrew word denotes work, deed, doing, conduct. It means here what they did, their sins. There is no allusion to any special art or "cunning" in what they did, as if they had "invented" or found out some new form of sin.

The inventions above just mean their sins. They imagined them in their heart, and then they carried them out. God forgave the people over and over. They murmured and God forgave. Sometimes just before He forgave them, they felt His punishment. He always came back and forgave them, after the prayers of Moses.

Psalm 99:9 "Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God [is] holy."

"His holy hill": This is the hill in Jerusalem where the temple was (compare Psalm 15:1; 24:3), and where it will be located in the future messianic kingdom (compare Isa. 24:23).

The refrain of this psalm, "for it is holy" (99:3), is expanded and given warmth here: "the LORD our God is holy". His majesty is undiminished, but the word *our* reveals intimacy. As undeserving as humanity is, God is not ashamed to be called "ours".

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised. Worship Father, Son and Holy Ghost. LORD above is Jehovah. His holy hill in the physical, is in Jerusalem. His holy hill in the spiritual, is wherever His followers are. The tabernacle of God is with men. Not only is it with men, but within as well. Possibly what is intended by his holy hill for the believers, is the house of worship where we go to fellowship with God. Never stop worshipping Him, for He is HOLY.

Psalm 99 Questions

1. The Lord reigneth, let the people _____.
2. He sitteth between the _____.
3. What is the subject of the 99th Psalm?
4. When were the Israelites gripped with fear in the wilderness?
5. Who did they ask to represent them before God?
6. The Lord is great in _____.
7. Where is the place most Christians commune with God?
8. What is He, besides our Savior and Lord?

9. Let them praise thy great and terrible _____.
10. What will happen to those who utterly refuse Him?
11. Why has He waited so long to judge the world?
12. We are to worship at His _____.
13. Why should we worship Him?
14. What 3 men of God represented their people to God?
15. Their pleas to God were for the _____.
16. Did God answer their prayers?
17. He spoke unto them in the _____ _____.
18. What was the cloud for?
19. Who kept God's law?
20. What does the word inventions, in verse 8, mean?
21. Sometimes, just before He forgave them, what did He do?
22. Worship _____, _____, and _____ _____.
23. Where is His holy hill for the believers?