

Israel's Hymnal
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PSALM NINETY-NINE

[Pss 99:1] Jehovah reigneth; let the peoples tremble: He sitteth (above) the cherubim; let the earth be moved.

[Pss 99:2] Jehovah is great in Zion; And he is high above all the peoples.

[Pss 99:3] Let them praise thy great and terrible name: Holy is he.

[Pss 99:4] The king's strength also loveth justice; Thou dost establish equity; Thou executest justice and righteousness in Jacob.

[Pss 99:5] Exalt ye Jehovah our God, And worship at his footstool: Holy is he.

[Pss 99:6] Moses and Aaron among his priests, And Samuel among them that call upon his name; They called upon Jehovah, and he answered them.

[Pss 99:7] He spake unto them in the pillar of cloud: They kept his testimonies, And the statute that he gave them.

[Pss 99:8] Thou answeredst them, O Jehovah our God: Thou wast a God that forgavest them, Though thou tookest vengeance of their doings.

[Pss 99:9] Exalt ye Jehovah our God, And worship at his holy hill; For Jehovah our God is holy.

THE UNIVERSAL REIGN OF JEHOVAH

I have frequently called attention to the importance of the understanding of Israel's Great Confession (Deut. 6:4) [שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד]. I am constrained again to emphasize this great truth. Literally translated, Deuteronomy 6:4 reads as follows: "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our Gods is Jehovah a Unity." When we study this Great Confession of Israel in the light of related passages, we know that there are three divine persons subsisting in the one divine essence. Though they are three personalities, yet they are a unity. Sometimes the word *Jehovah* refers to Jehovah the Father; at other times it indicates Jehovah the Son; still in other instances it refers to the Holy Spirit; and in still other instances it refers to the Holy Trinity, the Supreme Being. The context of each occurrence of this term must be consulted in order to understand its significance in a given case.

Again I feel constrained to call attention to the fact that the Psalms are the poetic version of the messages of the prophets. This statement being true, one must know the teaching of the prophets in order to comprehend the messages of the poets of Israel in the Book of Psalms. We must also know the history of Israel--especially its crises--in order to comprehend many of the psalms.

I. The reign of Jehovah the Father and Jehovah the Son (vss. 1-5)

Psalm 99 begins with these words:

"Jehovah reigneth; let the peoples tremble: He sitteth *above* the cherubim; let the earth be moved."

In this passage we see Jehovah the Father seated upon the throne in glory. The special locality where He thus sits enthroned is in a position north from this earth, which place is known as "the heavens of the heavens." A very vivid description of the throne of God with the Almighty seated upon it is to be found in I Kings 22:18-23. We again see the throne room of the Almighty, as He sits encircled by the mighty hosts of the heavenly beings, in that matchless prediction, Psalm 89, which explains God's plan and purpose concerning the Davidic dynasty. The throne room is seen especially in verses 3-18. Once more we catch a glimpse of God's throne in that graphic description Ezekiel, chapter one. Here we see the Almighty enthroned above the cherubims of glory. Again the throne of God and His kingdom appear in Psalm 103:19-22. In this passage we see that the kingdom over which God reigns supremely embraces the entire universe, and that there is an innumerable host of angels who carry out the will of the Almighty.

According to Psalm 99:1 Jehovah the Father reigns. Although He pervades all places of the universe, He sits enthroned above the cherubim in glory. In connection with these statements we see the exhortation, "Let the peoples tremble," and, "Let the earth be moved." These thoughts show us that the psalmist was looking at the throne of God at a time when the peoples of earth will tremble and when the earth will be moved. In other words, the psalmist was carried forward in prophetic vision and saw the time immediately before the judgments of the great Tribulation Period fall upon the earth from the Lord Jehovah in heaven.

There was a time when Satan* the anointed cherub, attempted to exalt himself to a position equal with God or above the Almighty and dethrone Him. This fact is set forth in Isaiah 14:12-14. A fuller account is found in Ezekiel, chapter 28. In the conflict which followed, Satan was hurled, figuratively speaking, from the parapets of heaven and was cast down to the earth. Thus he and those angels who followed him in his revolt against God fell from their high estate. Ever since they have been inveterate enemies of God.

Once again will Satan rally his shattered forces for a final assault against God --His authority and power. From various passages of Scripture we know that the devil will bring forth the Antichrist and endue him with his power. This future emperor, together with the armies of the world, will gather at Jerusalem to fight the King of kings and the Lord of lords when He appears with the armies of heaven upon this earth (Rev. 19:19). In this final titanic struggle Satan will exert all his great power in an effort to win a single victory. But we know that his efforts will fail and that he will be completely crushed and conquered by the strong Son of God. But in this last conflict the earth will be greatly moved out of its place and the bulk of the population of the world will be destroyed from the face of the globe. When we recall these things, we can understand why the psalmist here spoke as he did in this verse.

 * For a detailed study of "Satan, the Kingdom of Darkness, and Sin," the reader is referred to chapter ix of my volume, [What Men Must Believe](#). Chap. iv of this same volume deals with "The Triune Nature of the God of the Universe."

As we have just seen, verse 1 gives us a picture of Jehovah the Father reigning in heaven at the time of the great Tribulation and the final conflict of the ages. But in verse 2 we see a graphic picture of the reign of Jehovah the Son upon the earth during the great Millennial Age. That our Lord is scheduled to reign in Zion is set forth in Psalm 2. Since we are to take the Scriptures at their literal meaning unless something in the context or in a related passage shows otherwise, we must interpret Zion to mean literal Jerusalem. Read Psalm 2:6-9. Once more in that most wonderful prophecy of Isaiah 2:1-4 and Micah 4:1-8, we see another vision of the reign of Jehovah the Son in Mount Zion during Millennial Age. In these passages we see Jerusalem as the capital of the world and Jehovah the Son reigning there in glory. From year to year the people will go there in vast numbers to worship the God of Jacob and to be taught of Him. Another unique presentation of Jehovah the Son reigning in Mount Zion is to be found in Isaiah 33:17-22. (The reader should by all means turn to this passage and study it in this connection.) Once again the reader should turn to Zephaniah 3:14-17 and read the marvelous description of our Lord's reign in Zion.

There are many such passages which set forth the fact that our Lord will return to this earth and reign literally in the city of Jerusalem. Of course it will not be the old dirty, filthy Jerusalem that it is today, but Jerusalem purged, cleansed, and created anew.

Let us not think that the Jerusalem in which our Lord will reign will be any other than the Jerusalem in Palestine; for those predictions which foretell His reign upon earth always make it plain that He will be enthroned as the King of this earth in Jerusalem, and that all the nations will go up there to be taught of Him.

According to verse 2 Jehovah as He reigns in Mount Zion will be "high above all the peoples." When one studies the marvelous descriptions of Israel during the Millennial Age, the allotment of land to the various tribes of Israel, the sacred oblation--the holy mountain of Jehovah--which will be in the central part of the land, the millennial Jerusalem, and finally, the Temple of Jehovah which will be the house of prayer for all nations; one will be able to understand, in a measure at least, the statement that Jehovah the Son, during the Millennial Age as He reigns in Zion, will be high above all the peoples of the earth. From Ezekiel, chapters 47 and 48, we learn that the mountain of Jehovah the sacred oblation, will be a high mountain, 25,000 reeds broad and 25,000 reeds long--50 miles by 50 miles. The city of Jerusalem will be in the section on the southern extremity of this mountain, whereas the great millennial Temple will be in the northern section. The people will go there in great streams to be taught of the God of Jacob. Jerusalem will be the joy spot of the whole earth. It will be literally high above all nations. But in the sense of this passage, Jehovah, the Lord Jesus Christ will be high above all the nations in every particular--in authority, power, excellency, glory, etc.

According to verse 3 the nations are urged to praise the great and terrible name of Jehovah the Son--along with that of the Father and the Spirit. Praise of Jehovah is proper and comely. It is the natural expression of the redeemed soul. There will be rendered continual praise and adoration to the Holy Trinity throughout the great Millennial Age by the vast hordes of people of the earth.

Verse 3 concludes with the simple statement, "holy is he (Jehovah the Son)." The dominant characteristic of the triune God is that He is holy--not simply passively, but also aggressively. While there are other immanent characteristics of the Almighty, His holiness seems to be the dominant one. Because He is holy, He calls upon His people likewise to be holy.

According to verse 4:

"The king's strength also loveth justice;
Thou dost establish equity;
Thou executest justice and righteousness in Jacob."

The King here is none other than Messiah. The statement the King's strength loveth justice is just another way of saying that the king, with all of His strength and power and might, loves justice and equity. The last two lines of this verse show the psalmist addressing King Messiah, stating "Thou dost establish equity; Thou executest justice and righteousness in Jacob." The King of the first line is the same one who is addressed in the second and third lines. This verse speaks of the righteous reign of King Messiah as He executes justice, not only in Israel, but also in the whole world--as we learn from other passages.

In verse 5 the psalmist addresses the people of the world in these words:

"Exalt ye Jehovah our God, And worship at his footstool: Holy is he."

God revealed Himself to Moses at Mount Sinai. He became known as the God of Israel and spoke of Himself thus throughout the prophets. In the psalmist's saying, "Our God," he was simply echoing the thought of Jehovah's being the God of Israel. He calls, not only upon the Jews, but also on all people to exalt and to adore the God of Israel. Furthermore they are urged to come to Jerusalem and to worship Him "at his footstool."

II. Walking with God by faith (vss. 6-9)

Moses, Aaron, and Samuel are picked out from among the great noblemen of God who walked by faith with the Lord. They were in personal touch and communion with God and had power with Him; for, declared our psalmist,

"Moses and Aaron among his priests,
And Samuel among them that call upon his name;
They called upon Jehovah, and he answered them" (vs. 6).

Notwithstanding the fact that Moses on one occasion sinned by smiting the rock whereas he should have spoken to it, and Aaron, yielding to the pressure of the moment, authorized the making of the golden calf at Sinai, they, together with Samuel, walked with God and brought their difficulties and problems to Him, and He answered their prayers. They indeed had power with God. In this connection let us not draw the conclusion that these men had a monopoly upon the grace of God and the answering of prayer. Anyone who will walk with God by faith as did Enoch (and many of the servants of God, both in the past and at the present time, do in the scriptural sense of the term), may have power with God and obtain answers to prayer.

In the psalmist's teaching of these men and of their being heard by the Lord, he was careful to call our attention to the following fact:

"He spake unto them in the pillar of cloud:
They kept his testimonies, And the statute that he gave them." (vs. 7).

This verse emphasizes the fact that the men who walked with God by faith were very careful to observe His testimonies and to keep His statutes. Men cannot claim to walk with God, to have power with Him, and to expect answers to prayer if they refuse to keep, or if they ignore, His commandments and statutes. This situation reminds one of the language of the Apostle John: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him ..." (1 John 2:4). One who walks with God by faith and loves Him will instinctively and naturally love to do those things that please the heart of God and to walk in such a manner as to have His smile of approval at all times.

In verse 8 occurs this great statement:

"Thou answeredst them, O Jehovah our God:
Thou wast a God that forgavest them,
Though thou tookest vengeance of their doings." (vs. 8).

Notwithstanding the failures of these three great men of God, the Lord answered their prayers. They were not perfect, but they loved God and trusted Him. Because of these facts the Lord heard and answered their prayers. Nevertheless, He dealt with them according to the merits of their case. The Lord forgave them--of course when they repented of their sins and turned from them--but He had to punish them for their failures. Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. Every son whom the Lord receives He chastens--whenever he needs it. David was forgiven his great sins when he under deep conviction repented of and confessed them, nevertheless the Lord punished him most severely for his wickedness. He deals with His people upon the same principle today.

In the final verse of this psalm the author calls upon the people of earth to worship Jehovah the God of Israel:

"Exalt ye Jehovah our God, And worship at his holy hill;
For Jehovah our God is holy." (vs. 9).

They of course are to worship Him in His holy mountain, Jerusalem. Finally the psalm closes with the reiterated statement that the God of Israel is a holy God. The implication of this statement is that He expects holiness in the lives and conduct of those who worship Him.

May each of us who know God in Christ worship in the spirit of holiness at all times.