

Israel's Hymnal
 Biblical Research Monthly
 January, 1947
 Dr. David L. Cooper

PSALM ONE HUNDRED FORTY-NINE

[Pss 149:1] Praise ye Jehovah. Sing unto Jehovah a new song, And his praise in the assembly of the saints.

[Pss 149:2] Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

[Pss 149:3] Let them praise his name in the dance: Let them sing praises unto him with timbrel and harp.

[Pss 149:4] For Jehovah taketh pleasure in his people: He will beautify the meek with salvation.

[Pss 149:5] Let the saints exult in glory: Let them sing for joy upon their beds.

[Pss 149:6] (Let) the high praises of God (be) in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand;

[Pss 149:7] To execute vengeance upon the nations, And punishments upon the peoples;

[Pss 149:8] To bind their kings with chains, And their nobles with fetters of iron;

[Pss 149:9] To execute upon them the judgment written: This honor have all his saints. Praise ye Jehovah.

ISRAEL IN THE END OF THE TRIBULATION LOOKING CONFIDENTLY TOWARD THE FUTURE

I. A new hope (vs. 1)

II. Israel exhorted to rejoice in Jehovah, her Creator and King (vs. 2)

III. Israel exhorted to praise Messiah's name (vss. 3, 4)

IV. The saints exhorted to praise God in private (vs. 5)

V. The saints exhorted into battle against their enemies with praise (vss. 6-9)

This psalm, like the three preceding and the one following it, begins with "Praise ye Jehovah." In each of these hymns the writer gave the occasion why he urged people to praise Jehovah. An examination of the psalm shows that there loomed before his vision a new hope and a new joy which will follow Israel's period of distress and trouble in the Tribulation. That the prophet saw the time when Israel is about to be delivered from all her troubles is evident from the fact that they are exhorted to rejoice in their King and that with sword in hand they are to execute vengeance upon the nations, who, according to parallel passages, come against them.

The psalmist, then, viewing Israel's darkest hour of history, which will come immediately before the dawning of the great and perfect day of glory, exhorted the nation to brace itself for the final struggle and to wait upon God to bring the desired deliverance.

I. A new hope

"Praise ye Jehovah.

Sing unto Jehovah a new song, And his praise in the assembly of the saints (149:1).

In this verse we see the exhortation to the people of Israel to sing to Jehovah a new song. It will be a song that they have never known, a new composition, or the contents will be something new in their experience. The latter seems to be the probable meaning. When the time here foreseen arrives, the faithful remnant of Israel will have spiritual insight into the situation which confronts them and will see their way out by the personal intervention of King Messiah.

Although the prophets have foretold the glorious deliverance which Messiah will bring and although this same theme is mentioned in many psalms, to the remnant of Israel its message will be new. They therefore will sing it with a glow and an enthusiasm, with the joy of a new discovery.

In the second line of this verse those addressed are urged to praise God in the assembly of the saints. From other scriptures we know that the Temple will be rebuilt and will stand during the Tribulation Period—at least through the greater part of it. This will be a place of meeting for the nation. The faithful remnant is here addressed, because the apostates have nothing in common with this portion of the race that is looking to God for deliverance.

We know from various passages of scripture that, in the middle of the Tribulation, the Temple at Jerusalem will be taken over by the Antichrist, and the faithful remnant will flee from Palestine. After that time lawful assembly to worship God will be under a ban. It is quite likely therefore that the psalmist here foresaw the faithful portion of the nation in the beginning of the Tribulation, when their worship will be conducted at the reconstructed Temple.

II. Israel exhorted to rejoice in Jehovah, her Creator and King

"Let Israel rejoice in him that made him;

Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King" (vs. 2).

In the first statement Israel is exhorted to rejoice in "him that made" her. This statement doubtless refers to the fact that God created the Jewish race. He did this by performing a biological miracle on the bodies of Abraham and Sarah when they were past the age of parenthood. By this miracle of creation the birth of Isaac was made possible. Israel, in different portions of the Scriptures, is reminded of the fact that God in this special manner created or made the nation.

But which of the persons of the Holy Trinity did perform this act of creation? The second line of verse 2, which is parallel to the first statement and which explains it, gives us the desired information. From it we see that it is Zion's ruler, for king in the second line is parallel to "him that made him" in the first. But who is Zion's King? According to the second psalm the one whom Jehovah the Father addressed as "my son" is Zion's King, who will be established in Jerusalem and who will reign over the entire earth. Thus it is clear

from these facts that verse 2 is a reference to the second person of the Trinity the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Thus far Israel, on account of her not seeing the facts as they are, has never rejoiced in Him. Of course a few, who have seen the truth regarding Him do rejoice in Him. But that nation as a group has not seen the truth on this point, but the time will come when the faithful remnant will see the facts as they are and recognize who is Zion's rightful King. When they come to perceive this great and grand truth, they will rejoice in Him.

III. Israel exhorted to praise Messiah's name

"Let them praise his name in the dance:

Let them sing praises unto him with timbrel and harp.

For Jehovah taketh pleasure in his people:

He will beautify the meek with salvation" (vss. 3,4).

In the first statement of verse 3 is the exhortation that Israel should praise the name of her King in the dance. It is clear from the context that the one referred to here is Zion's King, her Messiah. Then Israel is to praise His name in the dance. In ancient Israel there was a religious exercise in which the worshipers engaged called "the dance." King David danced before the Lord with the intense fervor of a true, sincere worshiper of God. When the time here foreseen arrives, with the same ecstasy and enthusiasm the remnant will rejoice in anticipation of the coming of King Messiah and will worship Him in dance. From the second line of verse 3 we see that they are urged to sing praises unto Him in connection with the timbrel and harp. Originally instruments of music were not used very extensively in the worship of Jehovah. The more primitive ones were however used, such as the timbrel. David invented instruments of music. He was a real musician and delighted in the very highest type of religious music and song. That the instruments of music were authorized by the Lord is set forth in the following statement: "And he [Hezekiah] set the Levites in the house of Jehovah with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet; for the commandment was of Jehovah by his prophets" (II Chron. 29:25). In this verse we see that Hezekiah formed a full orchestra to worship God when he cleansed the Temple and instituted his reforms. He therefore set Levites in the house of Jehovah with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, "according to the commandment of David ... for the commandment was of Jehovah by his prophets." This passage should settle the question once and for all in regard to the use of instrumental music in connection with the Old Testament worship and its having been inaugurated by the express command of God.

Israel in the future is exhorted to worship God in the same manner. Of course it is understood that those participating in the worship will be sincere and honest. Without sincerity no worship is acceptable. Worship that is performed in a perfunctory, mechanical manner is abominable in the sight of God. Only those can worship God who worship in spirit and truth.

At the time here foreseen when Israel will thus worship God, He will be taking pleasure in His people. We know that the time here foreseen has never arrived, because He is not taking pleasure in His chosen people as a race. The Lord chose the best land in the entire world and gave it to Abraham and his seed forever. Moses, in his final orations, especially in Deuteronomy 4:25ff, warned Israel to be careful and to

be true to God, when she entered into the land. Moreover, he said that, when she did settle down and become prosperous, she would forget God and would turn to idols. Whenever that time came, warned Moses, God would disperse her from the land and would scatter her among the nations. The fact that she has been dispersed among the nations of the world for the last nineteen hundred years is absolute proof, for one who believes the Scriptures, that Israel at the present time is not well pleasing to Him. He is not taking pleasure in her now. About this proposition there can be no question. Otherwise, she would be in her own land. But the prophet sees the time when God is taking pleasure in His people. As we shall presently see, the time here foreseen is not when she is actually restored to her land, but is on the eve of being restored. We may therefore come to the conclusion that at this future time there will be a turning on the part of the nation to God in a new, vital, and living way. When the Lord sees the nation thus coming back to Him, He will begin to take pleasure in her and for all practical purposes the psalmist says that He is taking pleasure in His people.

In the second part of verse 4, we are told that He "will beautify the meek with salvation." Here we see only the meek of the race promised salvation. God resists the proud always, but gives grace to the humble and the meek. Who are the meek? This word is rather difficult to define. But we arrive at the scriptural idea of a meek man by looking at Moses, who was called meek. Moses had plenty of initiative, energy, and aggressiveness. He was an administrator, a statesman, a natural born leader. With these ideas we do not associate the thought of meekness. Yet Moses was meek. A close study of his life shows that, although he was aggressive and pushed forward in a statesman like manner—at the same time when people rose up and did an injustice to him or attempted to do him some personal injury—he did not fight back. In other words, he was non-resistant. He took the insults and injuries that were dealt out to him, not in the spirit of retaliation, but in gentleness, realizing that those who thus came to him did not realize the full force of what they were doing.

From various passages of scripture we know the character of the faithful remnant in Israel at the end time. They will be like Moses. They will have faith. They will have courage. They will have stamina. They will stand for their convictions. But to stand for the truth of God and for that which they understand to be right and His will will bring about great persecution against them, even from among their own brethren. (See Isa. 66:5,6.) They will also be persecuted by the world ruler and his subordinates. In the midst of their distress they will look to God, who alone can give the deliverance. But they will not fight back. Nevertheless, they will go forward boldly, trusting God for deliverance.

This type of person will the Messiah "beautify ... with salvation." The Lord knows how to deliver His people out of all dangers. He is working all things together for the good of all who love Him and who want to do His will. The salvation here referred to is doubtless deliverance from the persecutors who will rise up against them and also will be their salvation in the spiritual sense of the term. They will accept the Messiah, and the Holy Spirit will regenerate their hearts, making them new creations. Thus a new life will be imparted to them by the work of regeneration, the new birth. At last, at the second appearance of Messiah, when He returns in glory and power, they will be delivered, finally and completely.

IV. The saints exhorted to praise God in private

"Let the saints exult in glory: Let them sing for joy upon their beds" (vs. 5).

The first statement is that the saints are to "exult in glory." What is a saint? The Old Testament meaning of this word is one who has made a covenant with God by virtue of a sacrifice:

"Gather my saints together unto me, Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (Ps. 50:5).

The saints here are those of the Hebrew race who make a covenant with God by means of sacrifice, the sacrifice of King Messiah. They do this by accepting Him in faith. According to 149:5 they are to exult in glory. The glory of God will not yet at that time be manifest upon the earth; but it will be shortly after that, at the appearing of Messiah. In view of these facts, then, we may see that they are exhorted to exult in anticipation of this glory. In doing this, they will exult in the glory that is in their own souls, placed there by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.

In the second line they are urged to sing for joy upon their beds. This refers to private devotions. As we have seen in verse one, they are urged to meet in assembly and praise God and Messiah. Here the psalmist sees them at night as they lie upon their beds, during their wakeful hours, praising God for the salvation which He will accomplish for them at the proper time.

Those who are really regenerated and saved will engage in private devotions. They enter into their closets, shut the door, and worship God, praying to Him. They will meet with people of like minds and praise God. Malachi doubtless had such groups in mind in making this statement: "Then they that feared Jehovah spake one with another; and Jehovah hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared Jehovah, and thought upon his name" (Mal. 3:16). Public worship is excellent and necessary, but private devotions constitute the thermometer of one's spiritual condition.

V. The saints exhorted to enter into the battle against their enemies with praise

"Let the high praise of God *be* in their mouth,
And a two-edged sword in their hand;
To execute vengeance upon the nations,
And punishments upon the peoples;
To bind their kings with chains,
And their nobles with fetters of iron;
To execute upon them the judgment written:
This honor have all his saints.
Praise ye Jehovah." (vss. 6-9).

The saints here are the same as those mentioned in verse 5, the remnant of Israel, which is living up to all the light that it has.

As the Tribulation nears its close, there will be a decided movement on the part of the Antichrist and his lieutenants to exterminate the Jewish nation from the face of the globe. The first thing on Hitler's program was ruthlessly to exterminate the Jews, sparing not a one. The Antichrist will have the same program.

In the final conflict when the armies of the world will be gathered together against Jerusalem to battle, the faithful remnant is exhorted to enter the conflict in the same manner as did Jehoshaphat when the children of Ammon and the children of Moab came against him. He first called for an assembly of the people at the house of Jehovah and engaged in worship, he leading the prayer (II Chron. 20:5-13). Then the host of Israel, with the priests leading and praising God, went out to meet the enemy. God gave a signal victory. A like situation will develop in the final struggle at Jerusalem in the day of Jehovah (Zech. 14:1f). The Hebrews who will thus enter the conflict in this spirit will be sustained and strengthened supernaturally and will win victories most remarkable and unheard of (Zech. 12:1-9). In this fight the odds will all be against Israel; but, being empowered by supernatural strength she will fight as never men upon the face of the globe have fought. In the critical moment her Messiah will appear and His feet in that day will stand upon the Mount of Olives. He will give the final knockout blow. The conflict will suddenly be brought to a conclusion and Israel will triumph.

Our prayer is that the truth of God concerning these future things might become known to the people of Israel, and that He might use you and me, dear friend, to do what we can for His ancient people in every way so that this time of deliverance may speedily come.