



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 98

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Introduction

- This Psalm, in the Hebrew, is simply titled *A Psalm*, and it is the only one given that simple title with no other explanation
- In the Septuagint is titled *A Psalm of David*
- There is no evidence that it was written by David on account of any victory obtained by him, but as a prophecy of the victories and salvation of the Messiah
- It is to be understood prophetically and spiritually of the advent of the Messiah and of the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ
- This Psalm begins and ends like Psalms 96, and much of its language is borrowed from Isaiah 40-66



Introduction

- Its subject is like Psalm 96, it speaks of praise to God for His work of salvation; first Israel, then all the earth, and finally all creation
- It is one of the enthronement Psalms, (93, 95-99)
- The enthronement Psalms celebrate God as King and affirm His Lordship over all of creation
- According to St. Athanasius this is A Psalm of exhortation and as it were of command
- This Psalm is one of the Nineth Hour Psalms of the Agpeya, the Prayer Book of the Hours



Introduction

Psalm Outline

- Sing Praise to God for His Redemption 98:1-3
- Let All the Earth Declare Him as King 98:4-6
- Let All Nature Rejoice at His Advent 98:7-9

Sing Praise to God for His Redemption 98:1-3



- The psalmist invites all men to praise God for His wonderful works
- The song must be *new*, because of the remarkable nature of the marvelous things which God has done
- Such a song had not been sung before; for this is a mystery which was hidden from ages and generations
- He has done marvelous things by taking human nature, in that He, being God, became man and took flesh of a virgin
- He has done marvelous things in the mystery of His Incarnation, Nativity, Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension

Sing Praise to God for His Redemption 98:1-3



- In addition, all the miracles He did in person during His earthly ministry and of by the hands of His servants since
- When of old He brought His people out of Egypt with a mighty hand, (Psalm 136:12), it was but one small nation that He saved, it was only a human enemy that He overthrew in the Red Sea
- But now the salvation He has done extends to all the nations of the earth, the enemy He cast out is the prince of this world
- As St. Augustine says, conquered the world, not by the sword but by the cross
- He has saved the world purely by His own power

Sing Praise to God for His Redemption 98:1-3



- He alone cast out the prince of this world and delivered mankind from his power
- He wrought the salvation of mankind by one instrument alone, His Right Hand, the Only-Begotten Son
- St. Augustine says, “What is the Lord’s holy Arm? Our Lord Jesus Christ. Hear Isaiah: ‘Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?’ His holy arm then, and His own right hand, is Himself. Our Lord Jesus Christ is therefore the arm of God, and the right hand of God.”
- *The Lord has made known His salvation*, It is the manifestation of the Only-Begotten Son, the Savior of Mankind

Sing Praise to God for His Redemption 98:1-3



- *He has revealed in the sight of the nations, The redemption of the world by the Messiah; which was prophesied to the Jews and was not known to the gentile*
- *That of Whom Simeon said, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, Luke 2:32*
- *All the marvelous things of verse 1 have been known in the sight of the nations*
- *He made known and revealed to the gentiles that mystery that was hidden from the world*

Sing Praise to God for His Redemption 98:1-3



- And the mystery is His own justice; the fulfillment of that promise that was formerly made to the fathers concerning the redemption of the human race
- St. Jerome says, “Observe that it is not said in the first clause that GOD showed, but that He made known His salvation. For He had shown it in mystery of old to the Patriarchs. Adam knew Him, and so did Abel, who offered Him a lamb; and Seth, who called on His Name; and Noah, who was His type, saving mankind in the Ark; and Abraham, who offered up his son. But the world had forgotten Him, and therefore the FATHER made Him known.”

Sing Praise to God for His Redemption 98:1-3



- He continues and says, “He did so with care that His Nativity should not pass unnoticed, for He made it known to the shepherds by the Angels, to the wise men by a star, to Zacharias and Elizabeth by Archangel Gabriel, to Simeon and Anna by the Holy Spirit. But to the Gentiles, who had no previous knowledge to be recalled, He openly showed His righteousness.”
- The psalmist gives a reason for God’s having *made known His salvation* and revealing His justice
- Because He promised such to the fathers; and though He delayed the fulfillment of His promise for some time, He *has remembered*

Sing Praise to God for His Redemption 98:1-3



- God cannot forget, but He is figuratively said to remember when He does a thing after a while, as if He had forgotten it
- *His mercy and His faithfulness to the house of Israel*, Because the promises of mercy were originally made only to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
- To them Jesus came in the flesh, and to them was the gospel first preached
- However, the *ends of the earth* were never to be forgotten
- From the very beginning of His covenant plan with Abraham, all the families of the earth were in view (Genesis 12:3)



Let All the Earth Declare Him as King 98:4-6

- Since the great news of God's marvelous things (v. 1) goes to the ends of the earth (v. 3), it is right for all the earth to praise God
- Because all now partake of the same privileges with the Jews, they ought to join with them in worshipping and praising God
- The giving thanks to God, and exulting and singing in spiritual joy, is a sign of faith
- Thus, when St. Philip preached in Samaria, and the people received the word of God, "there was great joy in that city;" (Acts 8:8)



Let All the Earth Declare Him as King 98:4-6

- This joy is now prophesied by the psalmist, as if he were inviting and exhorting the faithful to it, *Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth*
- All you faithful, all over the world, who have been brought from darkness to light and to the knowledge of the true God and Savior Jesus Christ, praise and thank with a loud voice
- The body is to unite with the soul in giving Him thanks, and to perform its part vigorously and with zeal (Psalm 5:3, 66:1, 81:1, 95:1-2, 100:1, etc.)
- Then the psalmist invited them to sing, exult, and play upon musical instruments



Let All the Earth Declare Him as King 98:4-6

- Four instruments are mentioned; they are *the harp, With the harp and the sound of a psalm, With trumpets and the sound of a horn*
- These were, literally, the instruments most in use among the Jews
- However, some commentators added a spiritual meaning to these instruments
- According to St. Augustine, the harp teaches that all our faculties, all parts of our conduct, should be vocal with melody to God; for a harp is imperfect, if even one chord be lacking, or if the strings be not tuned in harmony



Let All the Earth Declare Him as King 98:4-6

- He says, “Praise Him not with the voice only; take up works, that you may not only sing, but work also. He who sings and works, makes melody with psaltery and upon the harp.”
- The *harp* is repeated with *the sound of a psalm* because contemplation and prayer, in addition to active virtues, are essential to the full development of spiritual life and joy
- According to St. Augustine the long trumpet is beaten out and formed by repeated blows of the hammer, until it produces the sweet sounds required; thus, getting stronger, by patiently bearing all trials and tribulations



Let All the Earth Declare Him as King 98:4-6

- *a horn*, according to St. Augustine rises above the flesh
- He says, “Because it has surpassed the flesh. He who wishes to be a horn trumpet, let him overcome the flesh... Let him surpass the desires, let him conquer the lusts of the flesh.”
- Rise above the flesh; chastising the body, by fasting and watching, and by bringing it under subjection to the spirit
- *Shout joyfully before the Lord, the King*, The image is of the processional march with music and singing to greet the King as He returns from victory and coronation
- Be sure to play on all the instruments the moment the great King, who is Lord of all, shall have made His appearance



Let All the Earth Declare Him as King 98:4-6

- St. Augustine says, “Brethren, do not reproach brethren whom the mercy of God has not yet converted...That is not a trumpet which pleases the ears of God: the trumpet of boastfulness makes the war fruitless. Let the horn trumpet raise your courage against the devil; let not the fleshly trumpet raise your pride against your brother. “Make a joyful noise in the sight of the Lord the King.”

Let All Nature Rejoice at His Advent 98:7-9



- The musical instruments mentioned in the previous verses were not the only voices to give God the praise He deserves
- Now the *sea* itself is called to add its *roar* to the sound of praise
- The psalmist calls, not only on the whole earth, but on all its parts, separately, to praise and sing to God
- He calls the creation which had been groaning in pain, awaiting the Savior, (Romans 8:22) to magnify the hymn of triumph in honor of Almighty God
- According to St. Jerome, *the sea* denotes the Law, once bitter, now made sweet by the wood of the Cross

Let All Nature Rejoice at His Advent 98:7-9



- St. Augustine says, “Brethren, when the Apostles... were preaching the truth, the sea was stirred up, its waves arose, tempests increased, persecutions of the Church took place.”
- The *rivers* and *hills* are brought into the worship team with their *joyful* sounds
- St. Jerome, arguing against the literalism of Jewish interpretation, points to *clap their hands* as inapplicable in any strict sense to *the rivers*, and insists on the spiritual interpretation
- He says it means those Saints of various degrees of eminence who all alike flow from the Lord Jesus, the fountain of living waters

Let All Nature Rejoice at His Advent 98:7-9



- He says, “These clap their hands because they work for GOD, and are not content with talking about Him, since He is best served and praised with the hand, not with the voice.”
- And according to St. Augustine the hills means the elites and there are good *hills*, and wicked hills
- The good hills refer to the spiritual greatness, whereas the wicked hills refer to pride
- When the Lord comes to judge the earth, some of the elites rejoice; but there are others who become terrified
- The strong and deep praise described in this Psalm is not only for the *marvelous things* God has done

Let All Nature Rejoice at His Advent 98:7-9



- It is also for the work He is about to do
- His righteous rule and reign will be a welcome relief for all creation that has suffered under the sin and rebellion of mankind
- This Psalm ends precisely as 96 with the exception of the last word, equity, instead of truth
- It is a word of hope and of fear alike
- Of hope, because the oppressed will find an advocate in their Judge against all the power planed against them for it is written, *“But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth.”* (Isaiah 11:4)
- Of fear because, *“If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?”* (Psalm 130:3)

Let All Nature Rejoice at His Advent 98:7-9



- St. Augustine says, “But behold, He has not yet come: what need is there they should tremble? Let them mend their ways, and rejoice. It is in your power in what way you will to await the coming of Christ. For this reason He delays to come, that when He comes He may not condemn you. Lo, He has not yet come: He is in heaven, you on earth: He delays His coming, do not you delay wisdom. His coming is hard to the hard of heart, soft to the pious. See therefore even now what you are: if hard of heart, you can soften; if you are soft, even now rejoice that He will come. For you are a Christian. Yes, you say. I believe that you pray, and say, “Thy kingdom come.” You desire Him to come, of Whose coming you are afraid. Amend, that your prayer be not against yourself.”



Discussion

- Why do you think that many of the Psalms suggest it is important to "sing a new song"?
- What specific "wonderful things" does the psalmist celebrate?
- Why should we praise the Lord? And How should we praise Him?
- How does God's judgment as a reason for the Psalm relate to the reasons in verses 1-3?



Discussion

- What event in history was far more significant than Israel's deliverance at the Red Sea?
- How has God shown His righteousness to the heathen?
- Why should the Christian life be such a joyful life?
- The call to praise expands to include all of nature in the Psalm's closing verses. List the specific parts of creation that join in the celebration and describe how they offer praise.