

Psalms 99 *God Reigns and He is Holy*

There are three sections to this psalm, each one ending with “He is Holy.” One of the writers pointed to the similarity with the declarations of His Holiness that we often see in the visions that men had of God in heaven with the “creatures” declaring “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts.”

1-3

1 The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved.

There is no more profound thought that man ever grapples with than the thought that **God is indeed ruling and reigning over all things**, including all men, from His throne in heaven.

This is the very essence of the theology of Grace, as Nebuchadnezzar said.

Dan 4:34-35

34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:

35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? KJV

This thought is really the beginning of all true worship. It is the kernel that lies at the center of every true thought directed toward Him or considered about Him.

He makes of the same clay one vessel to honor and one vessel to dishonor. All of the clay is His and He does with it as He wills. If one cannot embrace the complete and total rulership of God, he really can never worship God rightly. He worships in falsehood and confusion and dishonors God by not ascribing to Him the complete rulership of all things.

Men should tremble, all of them, at this idea because there is not a single one of them that is good in and of himself. They have all sinned and come short of His glory. Therefore, unless He has mercy upon them they will fall under His judgment with no possible avenue of escape.

Since human beings are fallible and subject to grave error, easily deceived and misled, frequently confused and ignorant of important things, every one of them, including the ones who believe that they are His children, should fear and tremble at this rulership of God.

“O Lord, please do not let me be deceived. Help me to believe correctly. Keep me from confusion and deliver me from ignorance. Reveal to me what I must know in order to be saved.” This should be the prayer, always, of every person who has the desire to be right with God.

He sits in the midst of the cherubim. In the temple, in the Holy of Holies, sat the ark of the covenant. On top of the ark was a lid, covered with gold. On the two ends of the lid and facing one another, were two cherubs with their wings stretched toward one another, almost touching. In the space created between them and just above the surface of the ark lid, is the spot where the Glory of God would appear to the High Priest as he sprinkled the blood of the goat that was killed as a picture of the Atonement of Christ.

When the prophets saw visions of the throne of God in heaven, He was seated on His throne and surrounding Him were 4 very strange creatures, also called “cherubim.” These are the ones who cry “Holy, Holy, Holy” to the Lord.

“**He sits.**” God is at rest and at peace, not at all disturbed or perplexed, not pacing to and fro, calm and at rest in Himself, knowing that He reigns and not concerned at all that something outside of His rule might, somehow, challenge or overthrow His authority.

2 The LORD is great in Zion; and he is high above all the people.

“Zion” is the special name of Jerusalem on earth, Jerusalem in heaven, and especially of the people who worship God properly, acknowledging fully in their souls that He does indeed reign and who have submitted from their inmost being to His rule.

It is the characteristic of every rational creature who is apart from God and who does not acknowledge His deity to exalt himself in his own mind above God and sit in judgment upon his life and the universe as if he were God himself or even superior to God.

Isa 14:12-14

12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. KJV

Rom 1:21-23

21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. KJV

It is the mark of rebellion against Him to deny that He is the Ruler of the Universe and far above man in every way.

3 Let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy.

The word “terrible” literally means “it strikes terror.” Many of our day disbelieve the notion that men should stand in terror before God. But once one lays hold of the vision of stepping out before Him, seated on His throne, and giving account of every detail of his life, with the Lake of Fire being one of the options if one’s faith is counted as bogus, he never again doubts that God is “terrible.”

The very fact that God is holy and His name is holy is the foundation of the terror. He will not abide eternally except with those who are holy. The only holiness acceptable to Him and available to men is that holiness of the Lord Jesus Christ which is given to those who “hear him” and repent of their sins with saving faith.

4-5

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

The Hebrew here is a little confusing and some great scholars have debated how this should be read. I think the RSV maybe has the best handle on it.

Ps 99:4

4 Mighty King, lover of justice,
thou hast established equity;
thou hast executed justice
and righteousness in Jacob. RSV

God loves justice. It is one of His attributes that He is Just. And He is the one who has established the principles of justice on earth by teaching men what justice is.

He insists upon justice and righteousness from His people and has taught them what it is and what it looks like.

As the writer will note later, His people are subject to His just dealings with them.

5 Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy.

Our worship, both public and private, as well as the lives we lead, are to exalt Him, show His greatness, glory and wonder. We ourselves are to continually worship as if at His footstool, because we see, embrace, imitate, and stand in awe of His holiness.

6-9

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.

In remembering the saints of old who communed with God, the writer encourages us to have hope, to trust in faith, that our calls to Him will not go unanswered, provided they come from that place in the soul that he has just described, the complete embracing of the Holy Rulership of God.

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

He spoke of them and they faithfully kept the instructions, guidance, and laws that He gave them. Now, while this is a remarkable thing, we must remember this.

Heb 1:1-2

1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,
2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; KJV

Heb 1:1-3

1 In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets;
2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. RSV

We have a speaking from God vastly superior to any that has gone before, a word from Him in His Word, the One Who became flesh and dwelt among us. If we have a greater and more profound word, then, certainly, we have a greater and more profound duty.

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

Here we have three truths to keep in mind concerning the great saints that have gone before us. God answered them when they prayed, forgave them when they sinned, and disciplined them for their rebellions against Him.

We should expect no less, but should remember that God is a God of mercy who forgives sin and answers prayer even sometimes as He disciplines His people.

9 Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God is holy. KJV

Therefore, He is to be exalted and worshiped because He is completely, perfectly, and eternally holy. He alone is worthy of our worship.