

Psalm 96 - NKJV
Sing unto the Lord a New Song

Introduction:

Psalm 96 may hold the key to understanding why worship has continuously evolved throughout history, and new songs have ever been written and sung to the Lord. The psalmist declared, “O sing unto the LORD a new song: Sing unto the LORD, all the earth. Sing unto the LORD, bless his name” (Psalm 96:1–2, KJV).

Many other psalms unite in the refrain: “Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him” (Psalm 98:1). David intoned, “I will sing a new song to you, my God; on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to you” (Psalm 144:9). song: to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy,” insists Psalm 33:3. Again and again, God’s people are encouraged to “Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of his faithful people” (Psalm 149:1).

In each of these passages, new means “original,” “fresh,” “one of a kind,” and “never seen before,” or, in this case, “never heard before.” God is a creative God. He’s always doing something new—like saving, intervening, answering prayers, and working miracles. Through the prophet Isaiah, God said, “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland” (Isaiah 43:18–19). Right before this, the Lord declared, “Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the end of the earth” (Isaiah 42:9–10, ESV).

When we are born into the family of God, He makes us new creatures in Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul explained, “The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). To the Corinthians, Paul said, “For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago” (Ephesians 2:10).

One thing our inventive God loves is for His newly created people to express innovative, spontaneous, and unrehearsed praise and thanks to Him. Singing unto the Lord a new song is the natural reaction of an individual who is newly saved and transformed by the Lord: “He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD” (Psalm 40:3, ESV).

The “new song” we sing does not have to be a newly composed worship number. The new song is merely a fresh response of praise and thanks—one that matches the freshness of God’s goodness and mercy, which are “new every morning” (Lamentations 3:23). A new song springs forth unrehearsed from the heart of a worshiper who has been struck anew with wonder at the greatness of God and the salvation He has provided. When we see the mighty hand of God working in a way we’ve never observed before, we can’t help but burst forth with a song we’ve never sung before.

A new song has been heard from people of every generation—sung by a choir of born-again believers who have tasted and seen the goodness and salvation of the Lord. From days of old and for all eternity, followers from every tribe, language, people, and nation sing unto the Lord a new song (Revelation 5:9). Throughout the earth and before the throne of God in heaven, we can hear the redeemed singing a new song to the Lord (Revelation 14:3).

Psalm 96

This psalm first speaks to the people of God, then to all the nations of the earth, and finally to creation itself.

There is no author attributed in the Hebrew text, but Psalm 96 contains the middle verses of the psalm David sang for the entrance of the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 16:23-33), suggesting that David was the author.

The psalmist gives four (4) commands to God’s people and backs up each command with a reason for their obedience. Each command requires an action from us.

- (1) Sing! The News is Good! (Verses 1-3)
- (2) Praise! Our God is Great! (Verses 4-6)
- (3) Worship! The Lord is Worthy! (Verses 7-9)
- (4) Rejoice! The King is Coming! (Verses 10-13)

1. Sing! The News is Good! (Verses 1-3)

Verse 1: Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth.

Sing to the LORD a new song: God loves to receive the rejoicing and praise of His people expressed in song, especially the new song. A new song can come from seasoned saints as they gain fresh awareness of God’s love and grace.

“A new song, always new; keep up the freshness of your praise. Do not drivel down into dull routine.... We have new mercies to celebrate, therefore we must have new songs.” (Spurgeon)

Sing to the LORD, all the earth: Praise is due to Yahweh from all the earth. He isn’t a local deity, meant for only Israel. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the psalmist saw a day when all the earth would sing a new song to the LORD, described in its fulfillment in Revelation 5:9.

Revelation 5:9 New Living Translation

“And they sang a new song with these words: “You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals and open it. For you were slaughtered, and your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation”.

Verse 2: Sing to the LORD, bless His name; Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.

Proclaim the good news of His salvation: These songs to the Lord were not only celebrations; they were also proclamations. They proclaimed His salvation and declared His glory and His wonders to the entire world, to the nations.

From day to day means we should never stop proclaiming the good news of His salvation. “Every man should praise God every day – on each returning morning, and on every evening – for the assurance that there is a way of salvation provided for him, and that he may be happy forever.” (Barnes, cited in Spurgeon)

Verse 3: Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples.

Declare His glory: God's greatness will one day be declared in all nations, and the gospel will be known "among all people". This is a reiteration of the promise made to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), and a call to world missions (Matt. 28:18-20).

We are instructed to go into all the world and preach the gospel (good news), to every creature. One of the very best ways of sharing this with other people, is to get a Bible into their hands, and show them how to study the Word. Bible studies are a very good way of spreading the gospel, Triumphant Tuesday Bible Study. The Bible speaks for itself. The miracle of creation, and all the later miracles as well, are in God's Word.

Summary of Verses 1-3: Three (3) times we are commanded to sing to the Lord (verses 1 and 2). Psalm 33:3 states, "Sing a new song of praise to him; play skillfully on the harp and sing with joy". A new experience of God's Blessings, a new truth discovered in the Word, a new beginning after a crisis, a new open door for service==all of these can make an old song new or give us a new song from the Lord.

The call to worship is not extended to Israel alone but also to the Gentile nations. One day when Jesus reigns on the earth, all nations will come to Jerusalem to worship Him. This will be a time when the glory of God will be revealed to all peoples.

In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, "show forth" (verse 2, "proclaim") is the word used in the New Testament for "preaching the good news" and gives us the English word "evangelize". The good news of the victory of Jesus Christ gives us something to sing about, for He is the only Savior and will save all who trust Him. **Sing! The News is Good!**

2. Praise! Our God is Great! (Verses 4-6)

Verse 4: For the Lord is great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.

For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised: The psalmist would not give God empty or unthinking praise. He first spoke regarding the greatness of God and noted that His greatness made Him greatly to be praised.

For the LORD is great: “He is, in every possible sense, ‘great;’ great in dignity, in power, in mercy; and therefore ‘greatly to be praised’ by every creature.” (Horne)

He is to be feared above all gods: Yahweh deserves worship from the entire earth because He isn’t like the gods and idols of the pagans. He is the Creator who made the heavens. God is not just God of a handful of people, but of all mankind. Over and over and over in the Bible God discredited the false gods around Him and showed that He is the One true God. We find even now, there are false doctrines on every hand. We are to try the spirits, and see whether they be of God, or not.

1 John 4:1-3 states, “My dear friends, don’t believe everything you hear. Carefully weigh and examine what people tell you. Not everyone who talks about God comes from God. There are a lot of lying preachers loose in the world.

Verses 2-3, “Here’s how you test for the genuine Spirit of God. Everyone who confesses openly his faith in Jesus Christ—the Son of God, who came as an actual flesh-and-blood person—comes from God and belongs to God. And everyone who refuses to confess faith in Jesus has nothing in common with God. This is the spirit of antichrist that you heard was coming. Well, here it is, sooner than we thought!” (The Message Bible)

Verse 5: For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the Lord made the heavens.

For all the gods of the peoples are idols: Or are “nothings”, nonentities, such as have not, and never had, any being. At least many of them are but in the fancies of men; and all of them such as have no divinity in them. An idol is nothing in the world (1 Cor. 8:4).

“But the Lord made the heavens”: And all the hosts of them, the sun, moon, and stars; these are the curious workmanship of His fingers, and which declare his glory, and show Him to be truly and properly God, who is to be feared and worshipped (see Heb. 1:10).

John 1:1-3 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” “The same was in the beginning with God.” “All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.

When gods are not capitalized, it is speaking of false gods. People of the day that the Bible was written, carved gods out of wood and stone, and they were really nothing. Elijah proved to the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18), and God proved to the Pharaoh that these false gods had no power at all. The LORD (Jehovah) made the heavens.

The Story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal:

The account of Elijah and the prophets of Baal is recorded in 1 Kings 18. After Israel had gone more than three years without rain as a judgment for their idolatry, the prophet Elijah confronts the evil king Ahab and challenges him to a spiritual showdown. The king was to have all Israel gather at Mt. Carmel, along with the 450 prophets of the false god Baal and the 400 prophets of the false goddess Asherah (verse 19).

On Mt. Carmel, Elijah said to the people of Israel, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him” (1 Kings 18:21). The people remained noncommittal at that point. Elijah then challenged the prophets of Baal to prepare a bull as an offering for their god—Elijah would do the same—with this catch: they could light no fire on their altar. The God who answered with fire from the sky would be considered the true God (verses 22–25). The people agreed that this was a good plan, and the prophets of Baal went first. The pagan prophets cried out and danced around their altar from morning till noon with no answer from Baal. Elijah began to mock them, saying, “Shout louder! . . . Surely, he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened” (1 Kings 18:27).

So, the prophets of Baal “shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice” (1 Kings 18:28–29). Despite hours of effort, nothing happened. There was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.

Elijah then called the people to him as he prepared the altar of the Lord. He used twelve stones and dug a trench around the altar. He then placed wood on the altar and laid the cut pieces of the bull on it. Elijah then had the people douse the altar with twelve large jars of water. The water soaked the sacrifice and the wood and filled the trench (1 Kings 18:30–35).

Once the sacrifice was ready, Elijah prayed, “Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again” (1 Kings 18:36–37). Then God did what Baal could never do: the fire of the LORD fell from heaven and consumed the burnt offering *and* the wood *and* the stones *and* the dust, “and also licked up the water in the trench” (verse 38). The people of Israel bowed down and declared the Lord as God (verse 39).

Verse 6: Honor and majesty are before Him; Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.

Honor and majesty are before Him: He is being set down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, and having honor and majesty laid upon Him. Being arrayed in robes of majesty, crowned with glory and honor, sitting on the same throne of glory with his Father, and having a scepter (septer) of righteousness in His hand, and all the forms of royalty and majesty about Him. Rays of light and glory darting from Him; as well as those glorious and bright forms before Him. The holy angels continually praising Him.

Strength and beauty: “In him are combined all that is mighty and lovely, powerful, and resplendent. We have seen rugged strength devoid of beauty, we have also seen elegance without strength; the union of the two is greatly to be admired.” (Spurgeon)

1 Corinthians 2:9 “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

Think of the beauty of a place where even the streets are paved with gold! The gate is one giant pearl. The walls have precious stones. The majesty of it all is the throne of God. This is the Holy of Holies that the tabernacle in the wilderness was a miniature of. Jesus opened the way for you and me to this magnificent throne of God. All majesty and power are His. He is the supreme ruler of the universe. All must bow to Him.

Summary of verses 4-6: The gods of the nations were “no-gods”, for the word translated “idols” in verse 5 means “things that are nothing, things that are weak and worthless”. Strong’s **H457 Idol** good for *nothing*, by analogy *vain* or *vanity*; specifically, an *idol*: - idol, no value, thing of nought.

An idol is nothing in the world (1 Corinthians 8:4). God created the heavens and the earth. The presence of this glory brought divine splendor, majesty, and strength to the people. Both in His sanctuary in heaven and His sanctuary on earth, God was enthroned in glory and power. How we ought to praise Him! **Praise! Our God is Great!**

3. Worship! The Lord is Worthy! (Verses 7-9)

Verse 7: Give to the Lord, O families of the peoples, Give to the Lord glory and strength.

O families of the peoples: God promised Abraham, in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed (Genesis 12:3), and that promise would be fulfilled in Abraham’s greatest descendant, Jesus the Messiah. The same word for families found in Genesis 12:3 is used in Psalm 96:7: Give to the LORD, O families of the peoples, give to the LORD glory and strength.

Give unto the Lord glory and strength: This verse is for all of mankind, kindreds of the people. Everything we are belongs to Him. We are His creation. He is our Creator. What can we give Him, but ourselves? We can praise and worship Him with the voice that He placed within us. We should never cease praising and glorifying His name.

Verse 8: Give to the Lord the glory due His name; Bring an offering and come into His courts.

Give to the LORD the glory due His name: The theme is repeated – God is worthy of praise from the entire earth, from all families of the peoples. In this context, give means to recognize and to declare the glory and strength that belong to God in all His being.

When we give unto the LORD these things, we do not give or attribute things to Him that He did not have before. We recognize things as they really are because God is full of glory and strength.

Bring an offering and come into His courts: Sacrifice is appropriate for the worshipper. True worship is often revealed by sacrifice in some way. The offering that we can give Him is the sacrifice of our praise.

Hebrews 13:15 “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of [our] lips giving thanks to his name.”

(Verses 7 and 8) Give to the LORD...Give to the LORD.... Give to the LORD: We come into God’s presence to receive, but also to give unto Him. We give Him our time, our attention, our worship, our surrender, our service, our resources, and much more. The triple repetition of this phrase in verses 7 and 8 impresses the urgency of the call and is a subtle reference to the Triune nature of God.

Verse 9: *Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth.*

In the beauty of holiness: The psalmist called the world to worship God in recognition of His holiness, and to see that there is a beauty connected to His holiness.

“Beauty of holiness”: “worship the Lord because of the splendor of His holiness” (compare Psalm 29:2). God does not regard material things of this earth as beauty. Beauty to Him, is in the life of holiness that we are attempting to live. Moral and spiritual beauty from within is what moves Him. Praise God! When He looks at us, He sees the garment of righteousness that His precious Son has clothed us in. This garment, white as snow, has been made white by washing it in His blood.

Summary of verses 7-9: The invitation went out to all nations to come to God’s sanctuary, bring a sacrifice, and worship Him. Just as the Jewish priests had to dress in the garments required by the Lord (Exodus 28), God’s people must worship with “clean hands and a pure heart” (Psalm 24:4) and experience cleansing from the Lord before they worship Him (Hebrews 10:19-25).

The only beauty that God accepts is “the beauty of holiness”, the righteousness of Christ imputed to us by faith (Romans 4) and the righteousness we live as we obey Him in the power of the Spirit (Romans 8:1-4). We approach God only through Christ’s righteousness, but we please God when we are obedient children.

Worship! The Lord is Worthy!

4. Rejoice! The King is Coming! (Verses 10-13)

Verse 10: Say among the nations, “The Lord reigns; The world also is firmly established, it shall not be moved; He shall judge the peoples righteously.”

Say among the nations: The theme of speaking to the entire earth continues, calling the people of the world to worship and honor God as they should.

The LORD reigns: This is a fundamental and powerful message for God’s people to proclaim to the world. Whether others recognize His reign or not, the LORD nevertheless reigns, and that reign will one day be openly and obviously imposed upon the whole world. The reign of the Lord Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords will bring perfect peace to the earth. He is the righteous Judge that each of us will stand before.

The world also is firmly established: God’s people are also meant to tell the world that His work as Maker of the earth is good and lasting. He didn’t make the world in a careless way; it is firmly established, so that it shall not be moved. Instead of the continuance of international chaos in human history, the world will be settled and efficiently managed by the Messiah in the millennial kingdom (see Micah 4:1-5).

He shall judge the peoples righteously: The world also needs to hear that God is a righteous judge before whom the whole world must give account. When the world hears and believes this, they will rightly prepare themselves for that judgment to come. Not only will the Lord establish international peace and stability in the future messianic kingdom, but He will also rule the world with impeccable justice.

Verse 11: Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; Let the sea roar, and all its fullness;

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad: The thought introduced in the previous line is used as reason for all creation to be glad. The fact that God is a righteous judge who will call things into account is good for creation – good for the heavens, the earth, the sea, the field, and all the trees.

“Let the sea roar”: In praise to God. It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to call on inanimate things to praise God (compare Psalm 148:7-9). The same thing is common in all poetry.

“And all its fullness”: Its abundance. That which fills it. All that it contains. That is, Let all that dwell in the seas praise God. His reign is an occasion for universal gladness. All in the inanimate world; all among the irrational tribes of being, all in the air, in the waters, or on the earth, have occasion for praise. And would render praise if they could appreciate the wisdom and goodness demonstrated in their creation. Though unconscious, the lower creatures seem to celebrate his praise; but man, only can give an intelligent utterance to thanksgiving.

Verse 12: Let the field be joyful, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the woods will rejoice

Let the field be joyful, and all that is in it: Not the field of the world, but of the church, separated from others by distinguishing grace. The peculiar property of Christ, cultivated and enriched by His Spirit and grace, and abounding with the fruits and flowers thereof. Of a wilderness becoming a fruitful field, and for that reason should rejoice, even with joy and singing (Isa. 35:1).

“Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice”: All this, indeed, as represented as speaking, may be understood of inanimate creatures; the heavens, earth, and sea, fields, woods, and trees, rejoicing, if they could, and in their way, at such great and wonderful appearances in the Gentile world (see Isa. 44:23).

Isaiah 44:23 The Message

“High heavens, sing! God has done it. Deep earth, shout! And you mountains, sing! A forest choir of oaks and pines and cedars! God has redeemed Jacob. God’s glory is on display in Israel.

Verse 13: before the Lord. For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with His truth.

For He is coming to judge the earth: The psalm ends with the joyful confidence that God will judge and set things right. The goodness of this is apparent to those who love God, love His ways, and hurt over the injustices of the present age.

Summary of Verses 10-13:

“The Lord reigns” (verse 10) can also be translated, “The Lord has become King” (Revelation 11:17), referring to the day Jesus will sit on David’s throne and rule over the nations.

Only then will there be true justice on the earth. Today creation is in bondage to corruption and futility because of Adam's sin, but when the children of God are fully redeemed at Christ's return, creation will also be set free (Romans 8:18-23). No wonder the psalmist described the joy of heaven and earth, the seas, and the dry land, and even the trees of the earth as they welcome their Creator, and then there will be justice on the earth. **Rejoice the King is coming!**

Psalm 96 The Message

1-2 Sing to God a brand-new song! Earth and everyone in it, sing! Sing to God—worship God!

2-3 Shout the news of his victory from sea to sea, Take the news of his glory to the lost, News of his wonders to one and all!

4-5 For God is great, and worth a thousand Hallelujahs. His furious beauty puts the other gods to shame; Pagan gods are mere tatters and rags.

5-6 God made the heavens—Royal splendor radiates from him, A powerful beauty sets him apart.

7 Bravo, God, Bravo! Everyone join in the great shout: Encore! In awe before the beauty, in awe before the might.

8-9 Bring gifts and celebrate, Bow before the beauty of God, Then to your knees—everyone worship!

10 Get out the message—God Rules! He put the world on a firm foundation; He treats everyone fair and square.

11 Let's hear it from Sky, With Earth joining in, And a huge round of applause from Sea.

12 Let Wilderness turn cartwheels, Animals, come dance, Put every tree of the forest in the choir—

13 An extravaganza before God as he comes, As he comes to set everything right on earth, Set everything right, treat everyone fair.

Resources:

Gotquestions.org/sing-to-the-Lord-a-new-song

The Leadership Bible, NIV

Warren Wiersbe, Psalm 96

Bible-Study.org/Psalm 96

David Guzik, Psalm 96

Biblegateway.com

Gotquestions.org/Elijah-prophets-Baal