

Psalm 99
The Lord Reigns, Let The Nation Tremble

Like the previous psalms in this section (ps. 93-99), psalm 99 exalts the Lord as King (vv. 1,4) and extols his just judgment (v. 4).

But psalm 99 especially emphasizes the Lord's **holiness** (vv. 3,5,9), notably as it relates to his relationship with his people (vv. 6-8).

It addresses one of the fundamental questions arising from the Bible store:
How can a holy god be in a relationship with a sinful people?

The answer is in vs. 8: *Although God has been just in his judgment, he is also a forgiving God, which is why his people experience his grace (vv. 6-8).*

"A royal psalm, "***The LORD Reigns***" is the governing theme of the psalm, and the threefold use of "holy" (vv. 3,5,9) shows that holiness of the king is the focus of praise." (The Reformation Study Bible - ESV Note)

Psalm 99 has three sections, each concluding with a reference to the Lord's **holiness**: The Lord reigns over all people (vv. 1-3); as king, the Lord has established justice (vv. 4-5); and this holy king shows grace toward his people (vv. 6-9).

99:1 (NIV) The LORD reigns, let the nations tremble; he sits enthroned between the cherubim, letting the earth shake. **2.** Great is the LORD in Zion; he is exalted over all the nations. **3.** Let them Praise your great and awesome name" - he is **holy**. **4.** The king is mighty, he loves justice - you have established equity, in Jacob you have done what is just and right. **5.** Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his footstool; he is **holy**. **6.** Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel was among those who called on his name, they called on the LORD and he answered them . **7.** He spoke to them from the pillar of cloud; they kept his statues and the decrees he gave them. **8.** LORD our God you answered them; you were to Israel a forgiving God, though you punished their misdeeds. **9.** Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his **holy** mountain, for the LORD our God is **holy**.

V. 1 The LORD reigns... “let the nations tremble”

Trembling is a response to fear.

The fear of the Lord means more than simply respect or reverence.

Usually, “the fear of the Lord” means holding God in proper reverence and awe.

- It is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge (Prov. 1:7)
- It is a source of life for God’s people (Prov. 10:27)
- It is to be treasured (Prov. 15:16)
- It is something to delight in (Isa. 33:6)
- It is a source of rejoicing (Ps. 40:3)
- Humility is at its core (Prov. 22:4)

“Enthroned between the cherubim”:

Cherubim sat atop the ark of the covenant, which was considered to be the footstool to the Lord’s throne (v.5)

Cherubim - Angelic beings who guard the presence of the Lord.

- ❖ When the Lord expelled Adam and Eve from the garden, cherubim stood guard at the entrance (Gen. 3:24).
- ❖ Two golden Cherubim were hammered out of gold on the lid of the ark of the covenant, standing guard in the Most Holy Place (Exd. 25:17)
- ❖ When the glory of the lord departed the temple in (Ezk. 8-10) the cherubim lead the way (Ezk. 9:3)

V. 2 “great is the LORD in Zion”

In the Hebrew Bible, “the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem are both referred to as Zion”. (vocabulary.com)

Zion (Jerusalem) was considered the “capital” of God’s kingdom; it was the one place on earth most closely associated with God’s presence, and it was the capital of the Davidic kingdom (2Sam. 5:6-10).

V. 3 “ holy” (holiness) is the most dominant theme of this psalm.

“Let them praise your great and awesome name; he is **holy**”

Holiness is woven through the (Bible’s) storyline. (686, connectusfund.com)

- Only once in scripture is a characteristic of God mentioned three times, and that is of **holiness**.
- (Isa. 6:3b **Holy, holy, holy** is the LORD of host: the whole earth is full of his glory.

The **holy** God created holy people who became **unholy**.

He later selected Israel as his holy people, but they repeatedly failed to be holy. JESUS who embodied holiness, made his people **holy**, so Christians are **holy** and must strive to live in a holy manner, however imperfectly, until God consummates his plan to make his people **holy**.

What is Holiness?

“Holiness” is commonly defined as being separate or set apart.

God is holy in that he is separated from everything that is not God, and God’s people must be holy by being set apart from sin.

- **1 Thessalonians 5:22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.**

Jesus makes people holy

Jesus is both the Holy One and “the one who makes people holy” (Heb. 2:11).

He is “our righteousness, holiness and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30).

His perfect life and sacrificial death satisfied God’s **holy wrath** against sinners.”

We have been made **holy** through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all” (Heb. 10:10).

V. 4 “The king is mighty, he loves justice”

- The Lord’s reputation for justice is the model for the ideal human king
- The Lord is right and he has the power to establish what is right.

V.5 “ His footstool:

- This reference is to the ark of the covenant (1Chron 28:2), which is a poetic way of referring to the temple, and emphasizing God’s position as the exalted King.

V. 6 “They called on the LORD”

- Moses, Aaron, and Samuel; were in relationship with the Lord and called on Him in prayer
 - Although God is holy and to be feared (vv. 1-2), He has come down to us through Jesus Christ.
 - He seeks our fellowship and delights in hearing and answering His people’s prayers.
 - Moses, Aaron, and Samuel are listed as those who had a special relationship with God through their intercessory prayers.

V. 7 “Kept his statutes and decrees”

- Obedience is another way that these men lived in relationship with the Lord
- 1 Sam. 16:4 NIV Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, do you come in peace?

V. 8 “The Forgiving God”

- **Forgiveness** is one of God’s fundamental components of his character. (Ps. 103:3 “who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases.”)
- Our relationship with God is “dependent” upon his gracious forgiveness.
 - God can pardon and punish at the same time.
 - We must distinguish between being restored in our relationship with God and still experiencing the consequences of sins we have committed.
- God both punishes and forgives.

V.9 “Holy mountain”

- This is the third reference to the holy place of “sanctuary” where God dwells among his people.
 - V. 1 “enthroned”
 - V.5 “his footstool”
 - V.9 “holy mountain”
 - Ps. 2:6 “I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.”
 - Mount Zion was the earthly “capital” of God’s kingdom, and from there God would extend his kingdom over all the earth.
 - It was also the site of God’s house, the temple.

Reference:

FLSBible

Wikipedia

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Vocabulary.com

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The Restoration Study Bible

