

## In the End Our God Wins

### Psalm 149

**Introduction:** 1) Adrian Rogers, a spiritual hero to me and many others, was pastor of the historic Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee and three-time president of the Southern Baptist Convention. He was often referred to as the “Prince of Preachers” and was famous for his witticisms which his friends called “Adrianisms.” One, particularly appropriate to Psalm 149 was, “What is the world coming to? It’s coming to Jesus! (*Adrianisms*, vol. 2 153). Adrian Rogers is right. The world is going somewhere with what R. C. Sproul called “an ultimate *telos* – a culmination of purpose, aim or goal” (“How Should Christians View World History,” 6-8-15)

2) Psalm 149 is an eschatological psalm that “celebrates a victory,” the victory of the Lord, “the King of Zion” (VanGemenen, *Psalms* EBC, 1005). Some locate its writing following the Babylonian exile during the time of Nehemiah as the Hebrew people return to the land of Israel. It may indeed originate there, but its gaze stares into the future. Allen Ross puts it well, “The hymn celebrated a recent saving victory, perhaps the deliverance from exile; but it replaces the normally expected existing cause for praise with a sign of things to come” (*Psalms*, vol. 3, 953).

3) Two movements will guide our study and instruct us on how to praise the Lord for what He is doing now, and also what He will do in the future. Our God has won victories for us in the past, He is winning victories for us in the present, and He will win a climatic victory for us in the future.

**I. Praise the Lord for what He is doing now      149:1-4**

This psalm begins and ends like its companions (Ps. 146-150) with a note of praise. “Hallelujah!” (ESV, “Praise the Lord”). This praise is given expression by “Singing to the Lord a new song” (cf. Ps. 96:1, 98:1). A new song is a song of salvation, a song of celebration and hope. Some see Psalm 149 emerging from a seed planted in Ps.148:14 which speaks of the power and salvation of the Lord on behalf of “His people,” “His godly ones” (ESV, “saints”). This song of praise is to be sung “in the assembly of the godly” the *Hasidim*. Michael Wilcox notes the word “means being loved by God with his covenant love (*hesed*) and so being devoted to him with a love of the same kind” (*The Message of Psalms 73-1500*, BST, 282). Our God loves us and we love Him in return. His love has been made known time and time again through His mighty acts of salvation.

The nature and character of our God is then given expression in three particular ways in verses 2-4. They help us understand all the more why we sing this new song of salvation and delight in our Lord.

1) Praise the Lord in song for He is our Creator 149:1-2

The gathered people of God worship the Lord and “celebrate” the fact that He is “its Maker.” The focus is on the nation of Israel and not the material creation of Genesis 1-2. The Lord brought “Israel” into existence and established her as a nation and His people. It was completely His doing and not theirs. It was an act of grace that is the cause of “celebration,” that makes their hearts “glad” (ESV).

2) Praise the Lord with dancing for He is our King 149:2-3

“Children of Zion” is similar in meaning to “Israel,” but perhaps with an emphasis on “the true worshipers of the Lord” (Ross, 955). The focus of their worship is clear and exclusive: “their King,” the Lord “their Maker.” The expression of their worship in song is to be complemented “with dancing and making music to the Lord with tambourine and lyre” (a harp-like instrument). VanGemeren notes, “The people of God regularly celebrated the Lord’s victory and blessing in dance (cf. Ex. 15:20; Jdg. 11:34; 2 Sam 6:14; Jer. 31:4, *Psalms*, 1006). The words of Charles Spurgeon are so very fitting at this point:

“let them repeat the triumph of the Red Sea, which was ever the typical glory of Israel. Miriam led the daughters of Israel in the dance when the Lord had triumphed gloriously; was it not most fit that she should? The sacred dance of devout joy is no example, nor even excuse, for frivolous dances, much less for lewd ones. Who could help dancing when Egypt was vanquished, and the tribes were free? Every mode of expressing delight was bound to be employed on so memorable an occasion. Dancing, singing, and playing on instruments were all called into requisition, and most fitly so. There are unusual seasons which call for unusual expressions of joy. When the Lord saves a soul its holy joy overflows, and it cannot find channels enough for its exceeding gratitude: if the man does not leap or play or sing, at any rate he praises God, and wishes for a thousand tongues with which to magnify his Savior. Who could wish it to be otherwise? Young converts are not to be restrained in their joy. Let them sing and dance while they can. How can they mourn now that their Bridegroom is with them? Let us give the utmost liberty to joy. Let us never attempt its suppression, but issue in the terms of this verse a double license for exultation” (*TOD*, vol. 3, 453).

3) Praise the Lord for His victory for He is our Savior 149:4

The people of God truly experience showers of blessing from the Lord.

The psalmist tells us “He takes pleasure in His people.” Our Lord continually delights in his people, adorning them, “the humble with salvation.” The word “adorn” has the meaning of glorify or beautify (cf. Isa. 55:7, 8; 60: 7, 9, 13; Ross, 956).

Those who trust in the Lord receive His salvation, His victory. Those who humble themselves before King Jesus in faith and repentance are blessed with victory over sin, Satan, death and hell. James Boice says it well, “We express delight in God because he first took delight in us and saved us from sin” (*Psalms*, vol. 3, 1280). That God would take pleasure in saving rebellious sinners who were His enemies is a remarkable evidence of His grace and kindness. The blind hymn writer Fanny Crosby is spot on, “A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord, a wonderful Savior to me...I sing in my rapture, “Oh glory to God, for such a Redeemer is mine”” (He Hideth My Soul”).

## **II. Praise the Lord for what He will do in the future 149:5-9**

When we think of prophetic books of the Bible, books that usually come to mind are Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Micah and Zechariah in the Old Testament. In the New Testament we think of Jesus’ Olivet Discourse (Matt 24-25), the Thessalonian Letters and Revelation. Psalms is usually not on our list, and yet

numerous psalms point to the eschaton and our Lord's final and climatic victory over evil; the drawing of the nations to his exalted Messiah King (see Ps. 2; 22; 24; 45; 83; 96-99;110). The last five verses of Psalm 149 are prophetic and eschatological in focus. They highlight three specific aspects of the Lord's final victory as he draws to a close the curtain on history.

1) The Lord will give His people peace 149:5

The Praise of God's people continues in verse 5: "Let the godly celebrate (ESV, "exult") in triumphal glory!" How and where should they celebrate? They should "shout for joy on the beds." This last phrase is uncertain as to its meaning. Are they lying down at night in restful peace? Are they maybe "reclining at a festal meal...especially if the theme of such a festival was the final victory of God" (Kidner, *Psalms 73-159*, TOTC, 489). Either is possible and both would be true. In God's final victory the Prince of Peace will reign (Isa. 9:6-7; Ps 110:4-7). The people of God will enjoy perfect and eternal Shalom. The victory celebration will be the climax of history. The rest enjoyed by the people of God under King Jesus will be forever!

Hallelujah!

2) The Lord will give His people justice 149:6-9

In his book *Christ in the Psalms*, Patrick Reardon writes, "exaltation of the saints in the victory of Christ, their evangelical struggle for the Gospel, and

the ultimate judgment of the world thereby are the themes of Psalm 149...combat and invocation, battle and blessing, are inseparable in the evangelical life” (p. 299). This is a superb summary of what we see in verses 5-9. The saints are resting peacefully on their beds praising the Lord in verse 5. But, they also are “exalting the Lord with a two-edged sword in their hands” in verse 6. The praise and exaltation of God in their mouths has the future and final victory of God in view. And yet, though they have swords in their hands, it must be the Lord who fulfills the judgment of verses 7-9. This is a prophetic anticipation of Revelation 19:11-16 where the saints follow Christ as He returns again in judgment. We are spectators, not participators, in His judgment on the nations. Christ and Christ alone:

- “will inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples” (v. 7)
- “bind their kings with chains and their dignitaries with iron shackles” (v. 8)
- “carry out the judgments decreed against them” (v. 9).

Justice is coming to the world, and all of it will be the Lord’s doing.

### 3) The Lord will give His people honor 149:9

Verse 4 teaches us the Lord takes pleasure in giving his people salvation.

Verse 9 affirms that the final victory “honors all His godly people.” Ross

says, “The final victory will be the most spectacular glory for the beloved people of God” (p. 958).

Our God truly is a God of salvation. He saved the nations of Israel repeatedly throughout Old Testament history. Today He is saving individuals from every tribe, tongue, people and nation. As history draws to a close, and the Antichrist and his evil empire appears to have won the day, our Lord will come again from heaven and destroy them all with the power of His word. His people will share in His glorious victory! What an honor this will be. To all of this there is only one appropriate word. “Hallelujah!”

“Praise the Lord!”

### **Conclusion**

Psalm 149 finds its climactic fulfillment in the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation. There the godly cry out in Revelation 6:10, “O Lord, holy and true, how long until You judge and avenge our blood from those who live on the earth? The answer comes in Revelation 19:11, “Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse! Its rider is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.” That rider on the white horse is Jesus! His coming is imminent. His victory is certain. On that day “the children of Zion [will] rejoice in their King” (v. 2). May that be for you a day of victory and not a day of vengeance, because in the end, our God wins.