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PSALM 149: 1 Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints.

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All the congregation are invited to praise God for his mercies, Psa 149:1-3. Their great privileges, Psa 149:4, Psa 149:5. Their victories, Psa 149:6-9.

This seems to be an epinikion, or song of triumph, after some glorious victory; probably in the time of the Maccabees. It has been also understood as predicting the success of the Gospel in the nations of the earth. According to the Syriac, it concerns the new temple, by which the Christian Church is meant. It has no title in the Hebrew, nor in any of the Versions, and no author's name.

Verse 1

Sing unto the Lord a new song - That is, as we have often had occasion to remark, an excellent song, the best we can possibly pronounce. So the word  $\psi\tau\eta\lambda$  chadash is often understood; and so the word novus, "new," was often used among the Latin writers: -

Pollio amat nostram, quamvis sit rustica, musam.

Pollio et ipse facit.

Nova Carmina Virg. Ecl. iii., ver. 84.

Pollio loves my lines, although rude:

Pollio himself makes excellent odes.

Tamely and inexpressively translated by Dryden: - "Pollio my rural verse vouchsafes to read.

My Pollio writes himself."

O what a falling off is here!

Servius, in his comment on nova, says, magna, Miranda. Nova means great, admirable.

So on novum nectar, Ecl. v., ver. 71, he says, id est, magna dulcedo; "nectar of Excellent flavor."

Congregation of saints - The Israelites, who were, by profession and by injunction, a holy people.

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PSALM 149: 2 Let Israel rejoice in him who made them. Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

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Verse 2

In him that made him - Let them remember in their exultations to give all glory to the Lord; for he is the Author of their being and their blessings. And let them know that he is their King also; that they should submit to his authority, and be guided and regulated in their hearts and conduct by his laws.

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PSALM 149: 3 Let them praise his name in the dance! Let them sing praises to him with tambourine and harp!

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Verse 3

Let them praise his name in the dance - במחול bemachol, with the pipe, or some kind of wind music, classed here with תוף toph, the tabor or drum, and כנור kinnor, the harp." מחול machol," says Parkhurst, "some fistular wind-instrument of music, with holes, as a flute, pipe, or fife, from חל chal, to make a hole or opening." I know no place in the Bible where מחול machol and מחלת machalath mean dance of any kind; they constantly signify some kind of pipe.

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PSALM 149: 4 For the LORD takes pleasure in his people. He crowns the humble with salvation.

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Verse 4

The Lord taketh pleasure in his people - The pleasure or good will of God is in his people: he loves them ardently, and will load them with his benefits, while they are humble and thankful; for,

He will beautify - יפאר yephaer, he will make fair, the meek, ענוים anavim, the lowly, the humble with salvation, בישועה bishuah; which St. Jerome thus translates, Et exaltabit mansuetos in Jesu, "And he will exalt the meek in Jesus." Whether this rendering be correct or not, there is no other way by which the humble soul can be exalted, but by Jesus, as the redeeming Savior.

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PSALM 149: 5 Let the saints rejoice in honour. Let them sing for joy on their beds.

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Verse 5

Let the saints be joyful in glory - Let them be gloriously joyful: seeing themselves so honored and so successful, let them be joyful. God has put glory or honor upon them; let them give him the thanks due to his name.

Sing aloud upon their beds - While they are reclining on their couches. At their festal banquets, let them shout the praises of the Lord. In imitation of this we often have at our public entertainments the following words sung, taken from the Vulgate of Psa 115:1 : Non Nobis Domine Non Nobis; sed Nomini Tuo da Gloriam! super Misericordia Tua et Veritate Tua. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake." Let them mingle their feasting with Divine songs. This reclining on couches, while they take their food, is still practiced in Asiatic countries.

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PSALM 149: 6 May the high praises of God be in their mouths, and a two-edged sword in their hand;

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Verse 6

Let the high praises of God - Let them sing songs the most sublime, with the loudest noise consistent with harmony.

And a two-edged sword in their hand - Perhaps there is an allusion here to the manner in which the Jews were obliged to labor in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem: "Every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon," Neh 4:17.

The two-edged sword, in Hebrew, is פיפיות *pipiyoth*, "mouth mouths."

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PSALM 149: 7 To execute vengeance on the nations, and punishments on the peoples;

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#### Verse 7

To execute vengeance upon the heathen - This may refer simply to their purpose of defending themselves to the uttermost, should their enemies attack them while building their wall: and they had every reason to believe that God would be with them; and that, if their enemies did attack them, they should be able to inflict the severest punishment upon them.

Punishments upon the people - The unfaithful and treacherous Jews; for we find that some, even of their nobles, had joined with Sanballat and Tobiah; (see Neh 6:17-19): and it appears also that many of them had formed alliances with those heathens, which were contrary to the law; see Neh 13:15-29.

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PSALM 149: 8 To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;

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#### Verse 8

To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron - That is, if these kings, governors of provinces, and chiefs among the people, had attacked them, God would have enabled them to defeat them, take their generals prisoners, and lead them in triumph to Jerusalem. It is certain also that in the times of the Maccabees the Jews had many signal victories over the Samaritans, Philistines, and Moabites; and over Antiochus, king of Syria. See the Books of the Maccabees. To these the psalmist may here refer in a hyperbolic way, not unusual in poetry and in songs of triumph.

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PSALM 149: 9 to execute on them the written judgement. All his saints have this honour. Praise the LORD!

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#### Verse 9

To execute upon them the judgment written - In Deu 7:1, etc., God promises his people complete victory over all their enemies, and over the heathen. God repeatedly promises such victories to his faithful people; and this is, properly speaking, the judgment written, i.e., foretold.

This honor have all his saints - They shall all be supported, defended, and saved by the Lord. Israel had this honor, and such victories over their enemies, while they continued faithful to their God. When they relapsed into iniquity, their enemies prevailed against them; they were defeated, their city taken, their temple burnt to the ground, more than a million of themselves slaughtered, and the rest led into captivity; and, scattered through the world, they continue without king, or temple, or true worship, to the present day. "But do not these last verses contain a promise that all the nations of the earth shall be brought under the dominion of the Church of Christ; that all heathen and ungodly kings shall be put down, and pious men put in their places?" I do not think so. I believe God never intended that his Church should have the civil government of the world. His Church like its Founder and Head, will never be a ruler and divider among men. The men who under pretense of superior sanctity, affect this, are not of God; the truth of God is not in them; they are puffed up with pride, and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Wo unto the inhabitants of the earth, when the Church takes the civil government of the world into its hand! Were it possible that God should trust religious people with civil government, anarchy would soon ensue; for every professed believer in Christ would consider himself on a par with any other and every other believer, the right to rule and the necessity to obey would be immediately lost, and every man would do what was right in his own eyes; for, where the grace of God makes all equal, who can presume to say, I have Divine authority to govern my fellow? The Church of Rome has claimed this right; and the pope, in consequence, became a secular prince; but the nations of the world have seen the vanity and iniquity of the claim, and refused allegiance. Those whom it did govern, with force and with cruelty did it rule them; and the odious yoke is now universally cast off. Certain enthusiasts and hypocrites, not of that Church, have also attempted to set up a fifth monarchy, a civil government by the Saints! and diabolic saints they were. To such pretenders God gives neither countenance nor support. The secular and spiritual government God will ever keep distinct; and the Church shall have no power but that of doing good; and this only in proportion to its holiness, heavenly-mindedness, and piety to God. That the verses above may be understood in a spiritual sense, as applicable to the influence of the word of God preached, may be seen in the following analysis.