

# PSALM 96

## INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 96

This psalm was written by David, as appears from (~~1367~~1 Chronicles 16:7,23) to whom it is ascribed by the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and all the Oriental versions. This and part of Psalm 105 were first composed and sung at the bringing of the ark from the house of Obededom to the city of David; and here it is detached from that with a new introduction to it, and applied to the times and kingdom of the Messiah, and; with great propriety, since the ark was an eminent type of him. The inscription in the Syriac version is,

“a Psalm of David, a Prophecy of the coming of the Messiah, and of the calling of the Gentiles that believe in him:”

and very rightly, since express mention is made of them in it, and of the publication of the Gospel among them; and clear reference is had to Christ, who is the Jehovah all along spoken of Jarchi well observes, that wherever a “new song” is mentioned, it is to be understood of future time, or the times of the Messiah; and the end of the psalm shows it,

*he cometh to judge*, etc.

**Ver. 1.** *O sing unto the Lord a new song*, etc.] A famous excellent one, suited to Gospel times, on account of the new benefit and blessing of redemption and salvation lately obtained by the Messiah; which should be sung to him, who is the Lord or Jehovah here designed, by all the redeemed ones, (~~1368~~Revelation 5:9), (see Gill on “~~1369~~Psalm 33:3”), the Targum adds,

“sing, ye angels on high:”

*sing unto the Lord all the earth*: not the whole land of Israel only, as Aben Ezra interprets it; though here the Saviour first appeared, taught his doctrines, wrought his miracles, suffered, and died for the salvation of his people; here the angels first begun the new song; and here those that believed in him first expressed that spiritual joy which afterwards spread

through the whole world, and who are here called upon to sing; namely, all those that are redeemed from among men, throughout all the earth: believing Gentiles are here intended: the Targum is,

“sing before the Lord, all ye righteous of the earth.”

**Ver. 2.** *Sing unto the Lord*, etc.] Which is repeated to show the vehemency of the speaker, and the importance of the work exhorted to: this being the third time that the word Lord or Jehovah is mentioned, have led some to think of the trinity of Persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, the one only Jehovah, to whom the new song of salvation is to be sung, because of their joyful concern in it; the Father has contrived it, the Son has effected it, and the Spirit applies it:

*bless his name*: speak well of him, whose name is excellent and glorious, sweet and precious; even every name of his, Jesus, Immanuel, etc. proclaim him the ever blessed God, as he is, as comes before with the blessings of goodness, and made most blessed for ever; as Mediator, ascribe all spiritual blessings to him, and bless him for them, and give him the glory and honour of them:

*show forth his salvation from day today*; the salvation of his people he undertook, and has completed; publish that as a piece of good news, as glad tidings; so the word <sup>f1367</sup> used signifies; even evangelizing, or preaching the Gospel; for this is the Gospel, the sum and substance of it, salvation by Jesus Christ: this may be considered as directed to ministers of the Gospel, whose work it is, more peculiarly, to show forth the salvation of Christ; to point him out as a Saviour to sensible sinners; to declare that this salvation is done, is wrought out for sinners, is full and complete; is to be had freely, and to be had now; and this is to be done

*from day today*, one Lord's day after another, frequently and constantly, when opportunity serves.

**Ver. 3.** *Declare his glory among the Heathen*, etc.] What a glorious Person the Messiah is; the brightness of his Father's glory; having all the perfections of deity in him; how the glory of God appears in him, and in all that he has done; and especially in the work of redemption, in which the glory of divine wisdom, power, justice, truth, and faithfulness, love, grace, and mercy, is richly displayed; say what glory he is advanced unto, having done his work, being highly exalted, set at the right hand of God, and crowned with glory and honour; and what a fulness of grace there is in

him, for the supply of his people; and what a glory is on him, which they shall behold to all eternity:

*his wonders among all people*: what a wonderful person he is, God manifest in the flesh; what wonderful love he has shown in his incarnation, obedience, sufferings, and death; what amazing miracles he wrought, and what a wonderful work he performed; the work of our redemption, the wonder of men and angels; declare his wonderful resurrection from the dead, his ascension to heaven, sitting at the right hand of God, and intercession for his people; the wonderful effusion of his Spirit, and the conquests of his grace, and the enlargement of his kingdom in the world; as also what wonders will be wrought by him when he appears a second time; how the dead will be raised and all will be judged.

**Ver. 4.** *For the Lord is great*, etc.] In the perfections of his nature; in the works of his hands, of creation, providence, and redemption; and in the several offices he bears and executes:

*and greatly to be praised*; because of his greatness and glory; (see Gill on “~~480~~ Psalm 48:1”),

*he is to be feared above all gods*; the angels by whom he is worshipped; civil magistrates, among whom he presides, and judges; and all the fictitious deities of the Gentiles, who are not to be named with him, and to whom no fear, reverence, and worship, are due.

**Ver. 5.** *For all the gods of the nations are idols*, etc.] Or are “nothings”<sup>f1368</sup>, nonentities; such as have not, and never had, any being, at least many of them, but in the fancies of men; and all of them such as have no divinity in them;

*an idol is nothing in the world*, (~~480~~ 1 Corinthians 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 ~~3010~~ Hebrews 1:10 ~~2401~~ Jeremiah 10:11,12).

**Ver. 6.** *Honour and majesty are before him*, etc.] He being set down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, and having honour and majesty laid upon him; being arrayed in robes of majesty, crowned with glory and honour, sitting on the same throne of glory with his Father, and

having a sceptre of righteousness in his hand, and all the forms and ensigns 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; which is a much more noble sense than that of Kimchi's, who interprets them of the stars:

*strength and beauty are in his sanctuary*; the Targum is,

“the house of his sanctuary,”

the temple; the Gospel church, of which the temple or sanctuary was a figure: the strength of Christ is seen here, in the conversion of sinners by his Gospel, which is the rod of his strength, the power of God unto salvation, when it comes not in word only; and by which he also strengthens his people to the more vigorous exercise of grace and discharge of duty; here they go from strength to strength: the “beauty” of Christ is seen here; the King is held in the galleries of Gospel ordinances, and is beheld in his beauty; his people appear here in the beauties of holiness, and as a perfection of beauty, through the righteousness of Christ upon them; and as they observe the order of the Gospel, and do all things decently, and with a good decorum: or else, as Kimchi interprets it, heaven may be meant by the sanctuary, of which the holy place, made with hands, was a figure; here Christ reigns, girded with “strength”; here he rules as the Lord God omnipotent, having all power in heaven, and in earth, and doing according to his will in both; and from hence he shows himself strong on the behalf of his people; here. He, who is beauty itself, fairer than the children of men, dwells; here those beauteous forms of light and glory, the holy angels, are; and here the spirits of just men made perfect, who are without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, have their abode: in (~~1~~1 Chronicles 16:27), it is,

*strength and gladness are in his place*; among his people and worshippers there.

**Ver. 7.** *Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people*, etc.] Or families <sup>f1369</sup>: the Targum is,

“give unto the Lord a song, ye families of the people;”

by whom are meant not the tribes and families of the people of Israel, but the Gentiles, the nations of the world, who were to be blessed in the seed of Abraham, the family of Egypt, and others; (see ~~1~~Amos 3:2)

(~~3847~~ Zechariah 14:17,18), even such as were chosen of them, taken out from among them for a people to his name; who were redeemed out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation; and were taken, one of a city, and two of a family, and brought to Zion: give unto the Lord glory and strength; (see Gill on "~~4208~~ Psalm 29:1").

**Ver. 8.** *Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name*, etc.] Or "the glory of his name"<sup>f1370</sup>; whose name is glorious and excellent, because of his nature and perfections, because of the works done by him, and because of his benefits and blessings bestowed on his creatures; wherefore it is his due, and their duty, to give him glory; (see Gill on "~~4208~~ Psalm 29:2"), (see Gill on "~~4960~~ Psalm 66:2"), the word "Jehovah", or "Lord", being thrice mentioned in this and the preceding verse, in the ascription of glory, may lead our thoughts to the trinity of Persons, Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit, to whom glory is to be equally given:

*bring an offering, and come into his courts*; not ceremonial sacrifices, which are abolished under the Gospel dispensation, to which times this psalm belongs; but either the saints themselves, their bodies, as a holy, living, and acceptable sacrifice, and especially the sacrifices of a broken heart, with as much of their substance as is necessary for the relief of the poor, the support of the ministry, and the carrying on of the cause and interest of the Redeemer: the allusion is to the law that enjoined the Israelites not to appear empty before the Lord; but everyone to bring his gift according to his ability, (~~6166~~ Deuteronomy 16:16,17), or else their sacrifices of prayer and praise, which are the spiritual sacrifices of the Gospel dispensation, and are to be offered by the saints, as priests, to God through Christ; or rather the sacrifice of Christ himself, which is of a sweet smelling savour to God, makes way for access unto him, and acceptance with him; and which should be brought in the arms of faith, when they enter into the house of the Lord, and attend his word and ordinances; for, through this, their persons and services become acceptable to God, and the sins of their holy things are taken away.

**Ver. 9.** *O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness*, etc.] (See Gill on "~~4208~~ Psalm 29:2"), in this and the three preceding verses there is a manifest allusion to the form of addresses made to kings in the eastern nations; who being arrayed, and seated in a majestic manner, with all the marks of royal honour and dignity about them, whom their subjects approach with ascriptions of glory to them; bringing presents in their hands, and bowing

down to the ground before them, as the word <sup>f1371</sup> for “worship” signifies; expressing the utmost awe and reverence of them, as in the next clause:

*fear before him, all the earth*; or, as the Targum,

“all the inhabitants of the earth;”

it is the duty of all men to fear the Lord; but none can fear him aright without his grace, or an heart given them to fear him: this respects the latter day, when the Jews shall seek the Lord, and fear him and his goodness; when all nations shall fear and worship him; when, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, the name of the Lord shall be great and tremendous among the Gentiles; (see <sup><3075></sup>Hosea 3:5 <sup><6575></sup>Revelation 15:3,4 <sup><3011></sup>Malachi 1:11).

**Ver. 10.** *Say among the Heathen*, etc.] This is a direction to such as were converted to Christ among the Jews, or were first called out from among the Gentiles; or to the ministers of the word, the apostles and first preachers of the Gospel more especially, who were sent into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature, that a people from among them might be taken for the Lord:

*that the Lord reigneth*; whose Gospel should be received and obeyed, and his ordinances submitted to; who now reigns in heaven, at his Father’s right hand, and must reign till all enemies are put under his feet; he reigns in the hearts of his people by his Spirit and grace; will reign more gloriously in his churches in the latter day, and with his saints for a thousand years in the New Jerusalem church state; and, after that, to all eternity in heaven: this is one part of the Gospel, or good tidings to be published among the Gentiles, (<sup><2517></sup>Isaiah 52:7),

*the world also shall be established, that it shall not be moved*; not the natural material world; for that shall flee, and pass away, and be no more; it shall be burnt up, and all things in it; though that, and mankind on it, will be continued till all the elect of God are gathered in; Christ will uphold it, it being by his power that it shall not be moved till the work is effected: moreover, the church, in however fluctuating and unsettled a condition it may be now, sometimes in one place, and sometimes in another, yet ere long will be established on the top of the mountains, so that it shall not be moved; and the Gospel dispensation is what will remain unto the end of time, and the Gospel is an everlasting one; the ordinances of it will continue to the second coming of Christ; and he will be with his churches

to the end of the world; he is reigning King of Zion; has set up a government, of which, and the peace of it, there shall be no end: during the spiritual reign of Christ, the world will be in such stable tranquillity as to have no commotions in it, nor to be moved with wars, and rumours of wars; and when the Millennium shall take place, the new heavens and new earth shall never pass away:

*he shall judge the people righteously*: he reigns over his people in a righteous manner, with a sceptre of righteousness, according to the rules of righteousness, by righteous laws and ordinances; he justifies his people with his own righteousness; he forms the new man in them, which is created in righteousness, and sets up a kingdom within them, which consists of righteousness; and he protects and defends them, and keeps them in safety from all their enemies.

**Ver. 11.** *Let the heavens rejoice*, etc.] At the coming and kingdom of Christ; at what is said and done in the Gentile world; even the hosts of heaven, as the Targum, the angels that dwell there, and never left their habitation and first estate: these rejoiced at the incarnation of Christ, at the first setting up and appearance of his kingdom in the world; and as they rejoice at the conversion of a single sinner, much more must they be supposed to do at the conversion of multitudes in the Gentile world, and at the increase of the Redeemer's interest there: or heavenly men, such as are born from above, partakers of the heavenly calling; these rejoice when the kingdom of Christ is enlarged, and his cause flourishes: or the holy apostles and prophets of Christ, and ministers of the word, full of heavenly gifts and grace, are meant; who express their joy when sinners are converted, and made subject to Christ, at any time; and will be called upon to do it, when the fulness of the Gentiles is brought in, and Babylon is fallen, (~~(680)~~ Revelation 18:20),

*and let the earth be glad*; the righteous of the earth, as the Targum; the excellent of the earth, who are glad, and exult at the coming and kingdom of Christ, in every sense; in the salvation which he has wrought out; in the righteousness which he has brought in; at the sight of him, the glory of his person, and riches of his grace; in the enjoyment of his presence; at hearing his Gospel, and the comfortable truths of it; and when it is made useful to the souls of others; and in a view and hope of the glory of God, and of being partakers of it to all eternity:

*let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof*; the roaring of the waves is the voice of the sea, which sometimes speaks terror, and here expresses joy: its fulness is not literally the abundance of its waves, or the multitude of its fishes, as Kimchi; but the islands in it, the inhabitants of them; (see <sup><497E></sup>Psalm 97:1) and such as ours of Great Britain and Ireland, who have reason to rejoice and be glad at the bringing of the Gospel among us, the continuance of it with us, and the kingdom and, interest of Christ in the midst of us.

**Ver. 12.** *Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein*, etc.] Not the field of the world, but of the church, separated from others by distinguishing grace; the peculiar property of Christ, cultivated and manured 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, (<sup><238E></sup>Isaiah 35:1,2),

*then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice*; the sons of God, so called, (<sup><211B></sup>Song of Solomon 2:3), who, though like such, in their nature state, barren and unfruitful, yet, being ingrafted into Christ, become trees of righteousness; and so have reason to rejoice at their root in Christ, their stability by him, and fruitfulness through him: Jarchi interprets this of all the governors of the people; (see <sup><3572></sup>Ezekiel 17:24), all this, indeed, by a prosopopeia, 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 <sup><242></sup>Isaiah 44:23 49:13 55:12). Aben Ezra interprets all this of the heavens giving dew, the earth its increase, and the field its fruit; all which is rejoicing.

**Ver. 13.** *Before the Lord*, etc.] At the face of him, in his presence; meeting him as he comes, and rejoicing at his coming: this clause is to be joined to everyone in the two preceding verses:

*for he cometh, for he cometh*; which is repeated to show the certainty of Christ's coming, and the importance of it, and the just reason there was for the above joy and gladness on account of it; and it may be also, as Jerom and others have observed, to point out both the first and second coming of Christ, which are both matter of joy to the saints: his first coming, which was from heaven into this world, in a very mean and abject manner, to save the chief of sinners, to procure peace, pardon, righteousness, and eternal life for them, and therefore must be matter of joy: his second coming,



which will be also from heaven, but in an extremely glorious manner, without sin, or the likeness of it, unto the salvation of is people: it will be as follows,

*to judge the earth*; the inhabitants of it, small and great, high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, quick and dead, righteous and wicked; when all works, words, and thoughts, good and bad, will be brought to account; and every man will be judged, as those shall be, with or without the grace of God:

*he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth*; according to the rules of justice and equity; he will truly discern and rightly judge; his judgment will be according to his truth; he will approve himself to be the righteous Judge, and his judgment will appear to be a righteous judgment; for which he is abundantly qualified, as being the Lord God omniscient and omnipotent, holy, just, and true; (see <sup><H73></sup>Acts 17:31).