

# PSALM 99

## INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 99

This psalm, with the foregoing from (~~9901~~Psalm 90:1) is ascribed to Moses by Jarchi and others; but cannot be his, since mention is made of Samuel in it, who lived many years after him. The Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, more rightly attribute it to David; the inscription of the Syriac version, after saying it is David's, subjoins,

“concerning the destruction of the Midianites, whom Moses and the people of Israel led captive;”

of which there is not the least mention in it; but it more truly adds,

“and a prophecy concerning the glory of the kingdom of the Messiah;”

as it undoubtedly is.

**Ver. 1.** *The Lord reigneth*, etc.] The King Messiah, he is made and declared Lord and Christ; he has reigned, does reign, and ever will; (see ~~9901~~Psalm 93:1 96:10 97:1),

*let the people tremble*: with awe of his majesty, and reverence of his word and ordinances; rejoicing before him with trembling, as his own people and subjects do, (~~9901~~Psalm 2:11), and so it agrees with (~~9901~~Psalm 97:1), or it may be understood of the people that are enemies to Christ, who would not have him to reign, though he shall whether they will or not; and who will sooner or later tremble for fear of him, and his righteous judgment. Jarchi refers this to the war of Gog and Magog. The Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and Arabic versions, render it, “let the people be angry”; or it may be rendered, “they are angry”; or “therefore they are angry”; because he reigns; so the people, both Jews and Gentiles, were angry and raged, when his kingdom was first visibly set up among them, (~~9901~~Psalm 2:1,2), and so the nations will when he takes to himself his great power, and reigns, (~~6118~~Revelation 11:18),

*he sitteth [between] the cherubim*; “upon” or “above”, as the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and all the Oriental versions; alluding to the seat of the Shechinah, or divine Majesty, in the holy of holies; and respects either the exalted glory of Christ among the angels, and above them at the right hand of God, where they are subject to him, stand about him, ready to do his will; or rather his presence with his ministers of the word, who are the instruments of spreading his Gospel, and enlarging his kingdom and interest in the world; (see Gill on “~~490E~~Psalm 80:1”)

*let the earth be moved*: not that itself out of its place, but the inhabitants of it; and these either with a sense of sin and duty, and become subject to Christ their King; or with wrath and indignation at him, or through fear of him, as before; Kimchi says, at the fall of Gog and Magog; it may be particularly understood of the land of Judea, and of the commotion in it, especially in Jerusalem, when the tidings were brought of the birth of the King Messiah, (~~410E~~Matthew 2:1,2), or of the shaking and moving both of the civil and ecclesiastical state of the nation, and of the ruin of it; (see ~~812E~~Hebrews 12:26,27 ~~512E~~1 Thessalonians 2:16).

**Ver. 2.** *The Lord is great in Zion*, etc.] Where the temple stood, and into which Christ came as the proprietor of it, and gave it a greater glory by his presence than the first temple had; here he preached his doctrines, wrought many of his miracles; here he poured forth the Spirit on his apostles; and from hence went forth his Gospel into all the world: or in Zion, that is, in his church, and among his people; here he grants his gracious presence, and bestows the blessings of his goodness; and shows himself to be great and glorious in his person, offices, and operations; (see ~~490E~~Psalm 98:1),

*and he is high above all people*; as God, he is the Creator of them all; in whom they live, move, and have their being, and so must be above them all; as Mediator, he is the Saviour of his own people, and exalted to be so unto them; as King, he is higher than the kings of the earth, and therefore must be above all the rest of the inhabitants of it; he is higher than the heavens, and the angels there, and therefore he must be higher than the earth, and they that dwell in it; he is highly exalted above every name that is named in this world, or in that to come.

**Ver. 3.** *Let them praise thy great and terrible name*, etc.] All people, especially the Lord’s people; those that dwell in Zion, where his name is great, in high esteem, venerable, and valued; as his name Jesus, or Saviour,

is amiable and lovely to his saints; and his name, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, is terrible to his enemies:

*for it is holy*; his name is holy, as well as reverend and great; his nature is holy, both divine and human; holy in all his ways and works; and is holiness to his people, and therefore worthy of praise; holiness is the ground and foundation of his praise from the seraphim, (~~208B~~ Isaiah 6:3).

**Ver. 4.** *The King's strength also loveth judgment*, etc.] Or he who is a strong and mighty King, as Christ is; which appears by saving his people, and preserving them to his kingdom and glory, and by destroying all his and their enemies; but, though he is so potent and victorious a Prince, yet no tyrannical one, he loves and does what is just and righteous; he loved the righteous law of God, and obeyed it in the whole course of his life; he wrought out a perfect righteousness for his people, and encourages and loves righteousness in them; he will judge the world in righteousness hereafter; and is now on his throne, and in his kingdom, ordering it with judgment and justice; all the administrations of his kingly office are just and true, and herein he delights:

*thou dost establish equity*, or “equities”<sup>f1383</sup>; uprightneses, righteousnesses; a perfect and a complete righteousness:

*this he has prepared*<sup>f1384</sup>, as the word signifies, by his obedience, sufferings, and death, and has established as an everlasting one; moreover, equity, righteousness, and justice, are the settled rules and laws of his government; (see ~~209E~~ Isaiah 9:7 11:4,5),

*thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob*; among the true Israel and people of God, as David his type did, (~~1085~~ 2 Samuel 8:15), thereby keeping them in due order, in the observance of his righteous judgments and statutes, and defending them from their enemies.

**Ver. 5.** *Exalt ye the Lord our God*, etc.] Christ, who is Lord of all, and Immanuel, God with us, God in our nature, our Lord and our God; exalt him in his person, as God over all, blessed for ever; in his offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, by hearkening to his word, by trusting in his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice, and by submitting to his ordinances, and obeying his commands; exalt him in heart, thought, and affection, thinking highly of him, and affectionately loving him; exalt and extol him in words, speak of his love and loveliness, and of the great things he has

done; exalt him in private and in public, in the family and in the house of God; make mention of him everywhere, that his name be exalted:

*and worship at his footstool*; worship him who is the object of the adoration of angels, and ought to be of men; worship him privately and publicly, internally and externally, in spirit and in truth; at his footstool, on earth, he being on his throne in heaven; (see <sup><230></sup>Isaiah 65:1) or else the ark is meant, which is so called, (<sup><130></sup>1 Chronicles 28:2), and this being a type of the human nature of Christ, that may be meant here; and which, though not the object of worship, nor is it said, worship his footstool, but at it; yet, in worshipping Christ, respect is to be had unto him, as in our nature, in which he has done such great things for us: the Targum is,

“worship in or at the house of his sanctuary;”

so Kimchi interprets it of the sanctuary, which agrees with (<sup><390></sup>Psalm 99:9),

*for he is holy*: essentially holy, glorious in holiness as a divine Person, and therefore to be worshipped: or “it is holy”; the footstool, the ark, the human nature of Christ, in which the Godhead dwells bodily.

**Ver. 6.** *Moses and Aaron among his priests*, etc.] The priests of the Lord, called and appointed by him, that ministered to him in that office, were the priests of Christ, types of him, and ceased when he came: these were the chief among them, or of them, as Kimchi observes: Moses officiated as a priest before Aaron was called and separated to that service; yea, it was he that consecrated and installed him in it, and that by offering sacrifice among other things, (<sup><120></sup>Exodus 29:1 24:7,8) (<sup><400></sup>Numbers 7:1), and that Aaron was the chief of them there can be no question, seeing he was the first from whom a race of priests sprung, and who gave name to that order of priesthood which continued until the Messiah’s coming:

*and Samuel among them that call upon his name*; these, according to Kimchi, describe the prophets, among whom Samuel was the chief; (see <sup><400></sup>Acts 3:24) calling on the name of the Lord includes the whole worship of God, and is often used particularly of prayer; the object of which is God, and him only; and who is to be called upon at all times, and especially in a time of trouble, and always in faith, and with sincerity and truth; and an honour it is to be among such persons: now these three men, who were eminent for religion and piety, and particularly prayer, (see <sup><410></sup>Jeremiah 15:1) are mentioned to animate and encourage the saints, by their example,

to the worship and service of the Lord, before exhorted to: they called upon the Lord; the Lord Christ, who is the object of invocation, was so in the Old Testament dispensation, and should be so in the New; (see <sup><4175></sup>Acts 7:59 22:16 <sup><4002></sup>1 Corinthians 1:2). Moses called upon him, (<sup><2321></sup>Exodus 32:11,32); so did Aaron, (<sup><4162></sup>Numbers 16:22), and also Samuel, (<sup><4008></sup>1 Samuel 7:8,9 12:18,19),

*and he answered them*; as he does all his people, sooner or later, in one way or another; which is no small encouragement to pray unto him.

**Ver. 7.** *He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar*, etc.] In the pillar of the clouds of glory, as the Targum; in which the Lord went before the children of Israel in the wilderness, to lead them, and protect them from heat in the day, (<sup><1321></sup>Exodus 13:21,22), that is, he spake in this to Moses and Aaron; for it ceased when they came to the land of Canaan; instances of which see in (<sup><1919></sup>Exodus 19:9 <sup><4115></sup>Numbers 12:5), some have thought that the Lord might speak to Samuel also out of a cloud, when he called upon him, and it thundered, since clouds and thunder go together, (<sup><4128></sup>1 Samuel 12:18), the cloudy pillar was a type of Christ; and it is by him the Lord has spoken all his mind and will, when he was clothed with a cloud, or became obscure in the form of a servant; and it is through him, the Mediator, that men have access to God, and answers of prayer from him:

*they kept his testimonies*; the law, and the precepts of it, which were testifications of the mind and will of God; these Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, kept, though not perfectly, yet sincerely, from a principle of love, and with a view to the glory of God:

*and the ordinance that he gave them*; the ordinance of the passover, with the several rituals of the ceremonial law, which was an ordinance of God until the Messiah came; and we, under the Gospel dispensation, ought to keep the ordinances of Christ in faith and love, as they have been delivered to us; and such only can expect to be heard and answered by the Lord; and this is the reason of the mention of these things; (see <sup><4168></sup>Psalms 66:18 <sup><2189></sup>Proverbs 28:9).

**Ver. 8.** *Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God*, etc.] This is repeated to show the certainty of it, and to encourage the people of God, in all ages, to pray unto him:

*thou wast a God that forgavest them*; even Moses, Aaron, and Samuel; for, though they were great and good men, they did not live without sin, and

stood in need of pardoning grace and mercy, which they had; or rather the people for whom they prayed: so the Targum,

“O God, thou wast forgiving thy people for them;”

that is, through their prayers; (see <sup><0449></sup>Numbers 14:19,20 <sup><0938></sup>Psalms 78:38),

*though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions*; their sins, which are the inventions of men, (<sup><2072></sup>Ecclesiastes 7:29). Kimchi and others interpret this of the inventions, designs, and practices of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, against Moses and Aaron, (<sup><0462></sup>Numbers 16:32,35) but though God took vengeance on them, it does not appear that he forgave their iniquities; wherefore it is best to understand this either of the sins of Moses and Aaron themselves, which, though pardoned, God took vengeance of, and showed his displeasure at, by not suffering them to go into the land of Canaan, (<sup><0400></sup>Numbers 20:10-12 27:12,13), or else of the sins of the Israelites, who murmured upon the report of the spies; and though they were pardoned at the intercession of Moses, yet so far vengeance was taken upon them, that none of them were suffered to enter the land of Canaan; but their carcasses fell in the wilderness, (<sup><0449></sup>Numbers 14:19-23), and thus, though God forgives the iniquities of his people, for the sake of his Son, yet he takes vengeance of them on him, their surety; on whom they have been laid and borne, and who has not been spared in the least; but has bore the whole wrath and vengeance of God due to sin; and besides, though he pardons his people, yet he chastises them for their sins, and shows his fatherly displeasure at them.

**Ver. 9.** *Exalt the Lord our God*, etc.] Having given the above instances of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, serving and worshipping the Lord, the psalmist repeats the exhortation in (<sup><0905></sup>Psalms 99:5), which he enforces by their example; (see Gill on “<sup><0905></sup>Psalms 99:5”):

*and worship at his holy hill*; the holy hill of Zion, the church; attend the public worship and service of it: the Targum is,

“worship at the mountain of the house of his sanctuary; the temple, a type of the church of Christ:”

for the Lord our God is holy; his nature is holy, and he is glorious in the perfection of his holiness, and therefore to be praised and exalted; and his name is holy, and so reverend, and therefore to be worshipped; see in (<sup><0903></sup>Psalms 99:3,5)