

END OF PSALM 98

You are Psalms

Some people think you never get discouraged, but the fact is, when you do, you know where to run. Your prayers are open and honest because you realize that God already knows your heart, He's just waiting to hear you spill it. And when you do, what starts out as heavy ends up becoming a song of praise. You may struggle... and often you do... but each time, you grow in your understanding of God's faithfulness. You're just a song waiting to happen.

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PSALMS (SONGS OF PRAISE)

TRUST
IN THE
LORD *and do good;
dwell in the land and
enjoy safe pasture.*
PSALM 36: 3

PSALM NUMBER: 98

The reign of the Lord in Sion; that is, of Christ in His Church.

1. The Lord hath reigned, let the people be angry: he that sitteth on the Cherubim, let the earth be moved.
2. The Lord is great in Sion, and high above all people.
3. Let them give praise to thy great name: for it is terrible and holy:
4. And the king's honor loveth judgment. Thou hast prepared directions: thou hast done judgment and justice in Jacob.
5. Exalt ye the Lord our God, and adore his footstool, for it is holy.
6. Moses and Aaron among his priests: and Samuel among them that call upon his name. They called upon the Lord, and he heard them:
7. He spoke to them in the pillar of the cloud. They kept his testimonies and the commandment which he gave them.
8. Thou didst hear them, O Lord our God: thou wast a merciful God to them, and taking vengeance on all their inventions.
9. Exalt ye the Lord our God, and adore at his holy mountain: for the Lord our God is holy.

The Psalms are songs of praise and cover a period of about 1000 years, from the time of Moses (ca. 1400 B.C.) to the Israelites' return from exile (ca. 450 B.C.). They deal with selected events of that period and provide us with the thoughts and feelings of those who went through the experiences recorded. After being made a Cardinal by Pope Clement VIII, Saint Robert Bellarmine, prepared for posterity his very own commentary on each of the Psalms. Enclosed are his interpretations on each of the Psalms.

PSALM NUMBER: 98

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. “The Lord hath reigned, let the people be angry: he that sitteth on the Cherubim, let the earth be moved.” According to the first interpretation, we are given to understanding this first verse, that the kingdom of God was established in Jerusalem in David’s time, notwithstanding the indignation and annoyance of its idolatrous enemies. “The Lord hath reigned.” The Lord, after having expelled the idolatrous Jebusans and Chanaanians, established his kingdom in Jerusalem. Though David was king, he felt he had his power from God, and him his kingdom. “Let the people be angry,” in spite of the pagans and idolaters. “He that sitteth on the Cherubim,” the same Lord that sits on the Cherubim, hath reigned, no matter how the earth, that is, the idolaters therein, may be troubled at it. God literally sits on the Cherubim, because he chose the proprietary for his seat, which was supported by two gilded Cherubim, under which was the Ark which formed the footstool of the Lord. In a spiritual sense, God is said to sit on the Cherubim, because he presides over all the choirs of Angels, or because Cherubim signify fullness of knowledge, in which God excels all created beings. We, too, may become Cherubim, and have God presiding over us, if we can obtain that fullness of knowledge that God requires, the knowledge of his will, the knowledge of his law, and, since “love is the fulfilling of his law,” we will become a Cherubim; and have God sitting on us, when we shall have that love, as it is written, “the soul of the just man is the seat of wisdom.” – “Let the earth be moved” is only a repetition of “let the people be angry;” for the Holy Spirit wished to show that they who fed anger towards God are no more than earth, and cannot harm God, who sits in heaven on the Cherubim; nor need we fear, if we, too, become Cherubim, and have God sitting on us. Referring the verse to Christ, the meaning would be that his kingdom was declared after his Resurrection and Ascension, for then it began to be preached through the world, and at once the people got angry, and the earth was moved, at their fighting against their Lord for their idols, but, in spite of all their opposition, Christ our Lord reigned, and the idols were destroyed. And though it would appear that the anger of the idolaters had the victory over the bodies of the saints, it was only an apparent victory; for the bodies of the saints will be newly formed by him who conquered death in his own person, and they will live; but the idols, once demolished, will never be put together again.

2. “The Lord is great in Sion, and high above all people.” In the first exposition, a reason is assigned here for the inutility of the anger of those people against God, who established his kingdom in Sion, and the reason is, because he is “great,” “and high above all people;” that is, he excels all in greatness, power, and wisdom, so as to be excelled by no one. According to the second interpretation, it means that Christ, who reigns supreme in the Church, militant as well as triumphant, represented by Sion and Jerusalem, is great and high above all people, so that nobody can resist him.

3. “Let them give praise to thy great name: for it is terrible and hopefully.” The Prophet now exhorts the people, instead of being angry with God, to turn to him, and celebrate his name with praise; for his name “is terrible and holy.” His name is said to be terrible and holy, because it is the name of the most powerful and just Judge or King, terrible by reason of his power, just by reason of his Holiness.

4. “And the king’s honor loveth judgment. Thou hast prepared directions: thou hast done judgment and justice in Jacob.” A reason assigned for God’s or Christ’s name being terrible and holy. The name of the Lord, who is a most just King, is terrible and holy, because his dignity, his Holiness, his authority requires that he should love justice, and that all his judgments should proceed from a pure love of justice, and not from anger, from fear, or from any pressure from without. Thou hast prepared direction; thou has done judgments and justice in Jacob.” To prove that what he said regarding the king’s love for justice was true, he addresses Christ or God, saying: it must be true that you do love justice, for you have “prepared directions;” wholesome and salutary laws calculated to direct the people and to reform their manners; and, with that, you have shown your love for justice; for, “thou has done judgment and justice in Jacob,” by punishing sin, and rewarding virtue; many examples of which are to be found in the Old and New Testament. For, though God suffers the pious to be afflicted, and the wicked to prosper in this world, he, however, ultimately delivers and crowns the former, and condemns and torments the latter, certainly in the other world, and not infrequently in this.

5. “Exalt ye the Lord our God, and adore his footstool, for it is holy.” From what has been said the Prophet infers that God ought to be adored, and exhorts all to do it diligently. According to the first interpretation, he exhorts them to adore God not only as God, but also in the Ark of the Covenant, which was his footstool, for we read in 1 Par. 28, “in which the Ark of the Lord, and the footstool of our God might rest;” and no wonder that it should be called the footstool of the Lord, for the proprietary that were supported by the Cherubim was God’s seat, and the Ark being under that was naturally called his footstool. He, therefore, says, “exalt ye the Lord our God,” by praising and magnifying his Majesty with heart and voice. “And adore his footstool,” by bowing and prostrating yourselves before the Ark of the Covenant, which is his footstool; “for it is holy,” by reason of its relation to God, to whom it is dedicated, and in honor of whom it is adored. Hence, we justly infer that sacred things, such as the images of Christ and of his saints, their relics and altars, sacred vessels, and the like, are, by reason of their relation to God, worthy of a certain degree of reverence and adoration. According to the second interpretation, the Prophet

exhorts all to adore the human nature of Christ, that was the footstool of the divinity in a much more intimate and noble manner than was the wooden Ark. The latter contained the word of God on tables of stone; but the Word itself was contained in the other. The one merely contained the tables of the law, as a vessel would hold its content; while the other was hypostatically united to its contents, the Word; so that John truly expressed it when he said, “the Word was made flesh.” And we are to adore Christ not only as man, but also under the sacramental species, as has been justly proved by the fathers from this same passage.

6. “Moses and Aaron among his Priests: and Samuel among them that call upon his name. They called upon the Lord, and he heard them.” The Prophet now proposes a model for our imitation in three celebrated characters, who “exalted” God, and “adored his footstool,” and “invoked his name,” and were, in consequence, heard by him, and got the power of working many miracles to him. He names three of the principal persons who were so remarkable among the Jews. Moses, who was the leader, and at the same time a high priest; Aaron, who was high priest only; and Samuel, who was a civil ruler only; for though Samuel is sometimes called a priest by the holy fathers; he in reality was not a priest, he was only a Levite. In the first place, he was not of the family of Aaron, to whom the priesthood was confined. Secondly, when Samuel ministered, he was dressed in a linen ephod, the peculiar dress of the Levites. Thirdly, his father, Elcana, was only a Levite, and not a priest. Fourthly, David himself evidently distinguishes him from Moses and Aaron, whom he classes among the priests, while he designates Samuel as merely among those that called upon the name of the Lord. “They called upon the name of the Lord.” He proves that they were friends of God, for they prayed to him for themselves and for their people, and he heard them as being faithful friends. The Scriptures bear testimony to that, as far as Moses and Aaron are concerned most clearly; as also to Samuel, to whom he addressed himself in the night, and heard Samuel in reply.

7. “He spoke to them in the pillar of the cloud. They kept his testimonies, and the commandment which he gave them.” Though he did not speak to Samuel in the pillar of the cloud, he spoke to Moses and Aaron; and thus, the expression applies to the majority of those named. “They kept his testimonies.” The reason why they were so promptly heard, for as the Lord himself says, “if anyone loves me he will keep my word;” and, therefore, he that wishes God to hear his prayers, must hear God in his commandments. “They kept his testimonies;” all this commandments which regarded all men, “and the commandment which he gave them;” they not only observed the precepts that bind men in general, but the peculiar obligation of governing and directing and teaching the people committed to them; for princes and rulers are not exempt from the commandments, but they should rather be remarkable for their observance of them, to show a good example to those they govern.

8. “Thou didst hear them, O Lord our God; thou wast a merciful God to them, and taking vengeance on all of their inventions.” When Moses and Aaron invoked you, you heard them in your mercy, and took vengeance on their enemies, and on all of their wicked inventions.

9. “Exalt ye the Lord our God, and adore at his holy mountain: for the Lord our God is holy.” The Prophet concludes by a repetition of the fifth verse, it being the essence of the Psalm, and containing the whole object of it. There is a slight difference however, for, in the fifth verse, “adore his footstool,” is here, “adore at his holy mountain;” and “for it is holy,” is here, “for the Lord our God is holy.” According to interpretation number one, the meaning is: David exhorts the Jews to adore the Lord on Mount Sion where the tabernacle was, and the temple was to be. According to interpretation number two, he exhorts Christians to adore God in the Catholic Church, the holy mountain, the spiritual Sion, and to avoid the conventicles of heretics and schismatics, because the Lord our God is holy, and, in consequence, hates the mountains polluted by the filth of false religions; and, as he is himself holy, so he wishes to be adored in his holy mountain, the assembly of the faithful.