

# Psalm 98: The Lord is coming to judge



Psalm 98 (97) (Mode 3. 3....12 / 4.....271)

This is the sixth in a series of psalms (Psalms 93-99) celebrating the reign of God, perhaps composed to celebrate the restoration of Judah after the Babylonian Exile. God is returning to his city for all the world to see, to inaugurate his universal reign. It is the only one of the seven psalms to have a title, which reads simply: 'A Psalm'.

Sing a new song to the Lord.  
Celebrate the Lord's wonderful deeds.  
God's right hand and holy arm  
have achieved victory.

'I hereby make a covenant. Before all your people I will perform marvels, such as have not been performed in all the earth or in any nation; and all the people among whom you live shall see the work of the Lord; for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you'(Exodus 34:10).

You, Lord, make salvation known,  
revealing justice to the nations

‘How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion: “Your God reigns”. Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the Lord to Zion. Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God’(Isaiah 52:7-10).

remembering your merciful and faithful love  
to the house of Israel.

‘I will remember in their favour the covenant with  
their ancestors whom I brought out of the land of  
Egypt in the sight of the nations, to be their God: I  
am the Lord’(Leviticus 26:45).

The ends of the earth  
have seen the victory of our God.

The Lord came to the help of Israel and achieved  
victory by his own power, and, because of his faithful  
love for Israel, has revealed to all the world his justice.

Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth!

Break forth into joyous songs of praise!

Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre,  
with the sound of instruments.

With trumpets and the sound of the horn  
shout with joy before the Lord, our king.

‘I will sing of loyalty and of justice;  
to you, Lord, I will sing’(Psalm 101:1).

‘I will sing and make melody. Awake, my soul!  
Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn.’

(Psalm 108:1-2)

‘The priest Zadok took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, “Long live King Solomon!” And all the people went up following him, playing on pipes and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth quaked at their noise’(1Kings 1:39-40).

‘It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre’(Psalm 92:1-3).

‘Praise the Lord! How good it is to sing praises to our God; for he is gracious, and a song of praise is fitting’(Psalm 147:1).

‘Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament! Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness! Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!’(Psalm 150).

Let the sea roar, and all that fills it,  
the world and those who live in it.

Rivers clap your hands!

Hills ring out your joy!

For the Lord our God is coming,  
coming to judge the earth,  
to rule the world justly,  
to govern the peoples with equity.

‘Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the end of the earth! Let the sea roar and all that fills it, the coast lands and their inhabitants. Let the desert and its towns lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits; let the inhabitants of Sela sing for joy, let them shout from the tops of the mountains. Let them give glory to the Lord, and declare his praise in the coast lands’(Isaiah 42:10-12).

God's victory reveals God's justice and is in view of establishing justice on earth.

'The God of Israel has spoken, the Rock of Israel has said to me: One who rules over people justly, ruling in the fear of God, is like the light of morning, like the sun rising on a cloudless morning, gleaming from the rain on the grassy land'(2Samuel 23:3-4).

‘For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her vindication shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a burning torch’(Isaiah 62:1).

‘The Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to daughter Zion, “See, your salvation comes”’(Isaiah 62:11).

‘It is I, announcing vindication, mighty to save’(Isaiah 63:1).

For the Lord our God is coming,  
coming to judge the earth,  
to rule the world justly,  
to govern the peoples with equity.

Christians long for the coming of Christ. He came to save us in the Incarnation. He is coming to judge and reward.

See Revelation 1:4; 22:7,12,17,20; John 1:27,30.

Saint Bernard writes (Sermon 5 on Advent):

‘We know a threefold coming of the Lord ... In the first coming, he came in the weakness of human nature, in this intermediate coming he comes in the power of the Spirit, and in the final coming he will come in the majesty of glory. Therefore this intermediate coming is, as it were, a way of connecting the first coming to the final coming. In the first coming Christ was our redeemer, in the final coming he will reveal himself as our life, in this present coming he is our rest and our consolation.’

We reflect on the reign of Christ who said: ‘I have overcome the world’(John 16:33).

We think of Jesus’ resurrection and the fruits of Christ’s victory for the blessed: ‘And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb: “Great and amazing are your deeds, Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, King of the nations!”’(Revelation 15:3).

‘I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, and they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the one hundred forty-four thousand who have been redeemed from the earth’(Revelation 14:2-3).

‘The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope.’

(Isaiah 11:10; quoted in Romans 15:12)