

PSALMS

Chapter 149

Sing to the LORD a New Song

Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the godly! 2 Let Israel be glad in his Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King! 3 Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre! 4 For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation. 5 Let the godly exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their beds. 6 Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands, 7 to execute vengeance on the nations and punishments on the peoples, 8 to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron, 9 to execute on them the judgment written! This is honor for all his godly ones. Praise the LORD!

Ps 149 Praise of God for the high honor bestowed on his people. It is no doubt postexilic. Israel's unique honor has two sides: She has been granted salvation (in fact and in promise), and she has been armed to execute God's sentence of judgment on the world powers that have launched their attacks against the kingdom of God—she is the earthly contingent of the armies of the King of heaven (see Jos 5:14; 2Sa 5:23–24; 2Ch 20:15–17, 22; Hab 3:3–15). This next-to-last psalm clearly marks the Psalter as the prayer book (liturgical book of prayer and praise) of OT Israel. (CSB)

Following an introductory verse, the two main themes are developed in two balanced stanzas of four verses each. References to God's "saints" enclose the song (see also v. 5). The common pair of synonyms, "honor" (v. 5) and "glory" (v. 9), effectively link the two stanzas (see 8:5; 21:5, "glory ... majesty"; 104:1, 31, "majesty ... glory"; 145:5, 12, "glorious splendor"; Isa 35:2, "glory ... splendor"). (CSB)

Fourth of five hallelujah psalms (see Ps 146 intro). Describes a festival procession to the Temple Mount, apparently in celebration of a victory. Date uncertain.

Format: Vv 1–4, praising the Lord for His care; vv 5–9, victory for the godly. (TLSB)

The 149th psalm is a psalm of thanks for the blessing that God is gracious and merciful to his people, that they know they have a gracious God, and that they rightly should rejoice. They have this blessing or grace – which is rightly called forgiveness of sins – that God will not avenge how evil and sinful they are. Therefore this psalm in reality belongs in the NT. It calls itself a new song to sing to the King of Zion, whom they should praise on their couches, that is, in the church where they come together. (Similarly, Isaiah called the churches and altars, in which Israel committed fornication – that is, idolatry – couches or beds.

Again,, it belongs to the NT to have a sharp sword in hand to punish the heathen, to throw kings in stock and dungeons, and take vengeance, as it is written. This is the vengeance that is spoken of in the Scriptures, that Abraham's seed should strike down idolatry in all the world through the Gospel, the spiritual sword, taking prisoner all the holiness of the kings and the wise and subject them to Christ, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10:5. (Reading the Psalms with Luther)

149:1 Melancthon: “There is no greater or better work of man than to have true knowledge of God, to pray to Him, and to proclaim Him” (*LTh* 1:49). “Our churches teach that one holy Church is to remain forever. The Church is the congregation of saints” (AC VII I). (TLSB)

149:2–5 Let Israel rejoice in their King, who has crowned them with the honor of salvation. (CSB)

The first section describes the exuberant, joyful praise which Israel poured out during their festivals. (PBC)

King. On Zion, God is the King. (TLSB)

149:3 *dancing.* Though there are no indications of dancing in temple worship, it was employed in festival processions. People would go up to Mount Zion dancing, as David did when he brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. (TLSB)

tambourine ... lyre! Musical instruments also used in festive processions. (TLSB)

149:4 *exalt in glory.* Endows with splendor (see Isa 55:5; 60:9; 61:3). (CSB)

humble. Those who acknowledge that they are without resources (see 147:6). (CSB)

149:5 *on their beds.* The salvation (v. 4) so tangible in the daytime evokes songs in the night (see 42:8; 63:6; 77:6). (CSB)

Not only in festive worship with others, but alone—as they are about to go to sleep—God’s people should rejoice in Him. (TLSB)

149:6–9 Let Israel praise their God, who has given them the glory of bearing the sword as his army in service. – After the joyful outburst in the first half of the psalm, the solemn warning of judgment in the second half of the psalm strikes a jarring note. But we should remember that God’s deeds of judgment are not the opposite of his compassion for his people, but a part of it. (CSB)

In Luther’s time, Thomas Münzer used these verses to ignite the Peasants’ War, urging the peasants to rise up and kill their masters to bring in God’s kingdom. A few generations later, Caspar Scloppius used the same text in the Thirty Years’ War to urge Roman Catholics to overthrow the Lutheran princes. But the Church must remember that “the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh” (2Co 10:4). The sword Christians wield is God’s Word (Eph 6:17; Heb 4:12). Lutherans traditionally have interpreted the two edges of God’s Word-sword as the Law and the Gospel. (TLSB)

149:7 *vengeance.*† God’s just retribution on those who have attacked his kingdom. Of this divine retribution the OT speaks often: 58:10; 79:10; 94:1; Nu 31:2; Dt 32:35, 41, 43; 2Ki 9:7; Isa 34:8; 35:4; 47:3; 59:17; 61:2; 63:4; Jer 46:10; 50:15, 28; 51:6, 11, 36; Eze 25:14, 17; Mic 5:15; Na 1:2. In the NT age, however, God’s people are armed with the “sword of the Spirit” for overcoming the powers arrayed against God’s kingdom (see 2Co 6:7; 10:4; Eph 6:12, 17; Heb 4:12); their participation in God’s retribution on the world awaits the final judgment (see 1Co 6:2–3). Thus “vengeance” is the reverse side of the “salvation” promised to believers. (CSB)

149:9 *judgment written.* God’s firmly determined judgment. (CSB)

God used the children of Israel to execute His judgment on the Canaanites (Nu 33:50–56). In the last days, the Church will play some role in judging the earth (1Co 6:2–3). Today, God’s Word takes captive even the mighty of this world. (TLSB)

honor. All Christians have the glory of being soldiers of the cross (2Tm 2:3). (TLSB)

Ps 149 Joyous praise of God is interrupted with invocations for God’s “vengeance” and “punishments” (v 7). And yet, despite God’s judgment, He “adorns the humble with salvation” (v 4). Salvation is a gift, a kind of clothing, and the pleasure the Lord takes in His people is not on account of their works. They rejoice in their King, who was bound and suffered the punishment due to the nations. We have fellowship with Him in the Church. • O Christ, our King, we praise You in the Church! When we worship and when we are alone, we adore You. Give us courage to engage in spiritual warfare—against the world, our flesh, and the devil—with the two-edged sword of Your Word, and grant us the victory. Amen. (TLSB)