

# Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

Bereans Adult Bible Fellowship  
Placerita Baptist Church  
2009

by  
William D. Barrick, Th.D.  
Professor of OT, The Master's Seminary



## Psalm 149 — The Final Hallel's Sword

### 1.0 Introducing Psalm 149

- The Psalter's "Final Hallel" consists of five psalms (Pss 146–150) that each begin and end with "Hallelujah" (= "Praise the LORD").
- Essentially, Psalm 149 comprises the final psalm of the Psalter, since Psalm 150 serves as the closing doxology to both Book 5 and the entire Psalter.
- This psalm appears to elaborate on Psalm 145:20,  
The LORD keeps all who love Him,  
But all the wicked He will destroy.
- Psalm 148:14b-c contains seven Hebrew words, six of which occur in Psalm 149 and only one in the rest of Psalm 148. Thus, the final lines of Psalm 148 provide the seed for Psalm 149.
- Psalm 149 "has all the marks of victory, including the time-honoured way of celebrating it with *dancing* and the *timbrel* (cf. Ex. 15:20; Judg. 11:34; I Sa. 18:6). The scale of it is world-wide (7ff.), and we are evidently singing of no less an event than God's advent, as in Psalms 93, 96–99"—Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), 489.

### 2.0 Reading Psalm 149 (NAU)

#### 149:1 Praise the LORD!

Sing to the LORD a new song,  
*And* His **praise** in the congregation of the godly ones.

149:2 Let Israel be glad in his Maker;  
Let the sons of Zion rejoice in their King.

149:3 Let them **praise** His name with dancing;  
Let them sing praises to Him with timbrel and lyre.

- 149:4** For the LORD takes pleasure in His people;  
He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation.
- 149:5** Let the godly ones exult in glory;  
Let them sing for joy on their beds.
- 149:6** Let the high praises of God *be* in their mouth,  
And a two-edged sword in their hand,
- 149:7** To execute vengeance on the nations  
And punishment on the peoples,
- 149:8** To bind their kings with chains  
And their nobles with fetters of iron,
- 149:9** To execute on them the judgment written;  
This is an honor for all His godly ones.

**Praise the LORD!**

### 3.0 Understanding Psalm 149

#### 3.1 Outline

- I. Praise from the Covenant Family (vv. 1–4)
- II. Praise for the Covenant Fulfillment (vv. 5–9)



#### 3.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “a new song”
  - The Psalter closes with a call to sing a new song—praises to God will never end, even if the Book of Psalms is finished.
  - See Psalms 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; Isaiah 42:10; Revelation 5:9; 14:3.
- **v. 1** “the congregation of the godly ones”
  - This phrase occurs only here in the Old Testament.
  - “Godly ones” appears three times in this psalm (vv. 1, 5, 9) as a key word at key junctures of the text. It indicates that the psalmist summons believers to praise.
  - The Hebrew term emphasizes these individuals’ loyalty.
- **v. 2** “be glad . . . rejoice”
  - The vocabulary of joy resonates throughout this psalm:
    - ✓ Verse 2a: “be glad”—be happy.
    - ✓ Verse 2b: “rejoice”—circle in joy (a circle dance of celebration).
    - ✓ Verse 5a: “exult”—jubilant joy expressed in shouting and singing.
    - ✓ Verse 5b: “sing for joy”—ringing shouts of joy.
- **v. 2** “the sons of Zion”
  - These individuals are most likely the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
  - However, the psalmist might indicate those who have faith—those counted as citizens of Zion according to Psalm 87.

- Joel 2:23 and Lamentations 4:2 demonstrate the use of “sons of Zion” as a term of endearment for suffering saints.
- **v. 3 “with dancing”**
  - In ancient Israel religious fervor and celebration often found expression in dancing. Such dancing consists of circle dances—men with men and women with women.
  - David’s dancing as he led the Ark of the Covenant into the city of Jerusalem provides one example (2 Sam 6:12–23).
  - In the Old Testament, dancing appears to have taken place outside the Temple, not in it. This might indicate that Psalm 149 refers to praise in the world, rather than in the Temple.
- **v. 3 “timbrel and lyre”**
  - At times of celebration ancient peoples played these instruments and danced.
  - See Genesis 31:27; Job 21:11–12; Psalm 81:2.
- **v. 4 “the afflicted ones”**
  - Most English versions translate the word as “the humble” (NKJV, ESV, NIV, HCSB, RSV, NRSV, JPS, NLT). KJV and ASV read “the meek,” while NJPS reads “the lowly.”
  - Since the parallel (“His people”) does not indicate any affliction or poverty, “the humble” offers the better translation.
- **v. 5 “sing for joy on their beds”**
  - Such a location indicates that the psalmist summons those outside the Temple to praise God where they are in the privacy of their homes.
  - The bed was a place of meditation (Pss 4:4; 63:6).
  - An intriguing association with lying down and repentance in 1 Kings 21:27 provides a potentially significant possibility for Psalm 149.
- **v. 6 “high praises”**
  - This word referring to exaltation occurs only here and in Psalm 66:17 (ESV, “high praise was on my tongue”).
- **v. 6 “a two-edged sword in their hand”**
  - Yet again, the psalm deals with praise offered in the world, not in the Temple.
  - “Strictly speaking, the last stanza of Psalm 149 is not so much a victory song as it is an anticipation and prayer for victory.”—James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 3:1282.
- **v. 7 “To execute vengeance . . . punishment”**
  - Unfortunately many Christians misunderstand the biblical teaching concerning vengeance either ignoring the concept altogether or using it to an extreme.



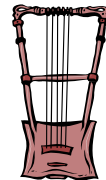
- ✓ “Study of the use of this root reveals that there are comparatively few cases where man is considered a proper source of vengeance. Often man is a secondary cause while God is the source (Ezk 25:14). . . . Most of the uses of *nāqam* involve God as the source of vengeance. The classical passage is Deut 32:35, 41, ‘Vengeance is mine . . . I will recompense them who hate me.’ God cannot be true to his character of holiness and justice if he allows sin and rebellion to go unpunished. . . . The OT people are reminded that it is only God who can champion his own cause without error (Deut 32:35). This verse is echoed by Paul in Rom 12:19 as he warns against a vindictive spirit on the part of God’s people. It is also used by the author of Hebrews to warn of the horror of coming under the avenging wrath of God (10:28–31).”—Elmer B. Smick, “נָקַם (*nāqam*),” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols., ed. by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 2:598–99.

- vv. 7–8 International Scene
  - The Psalter’s second (Ps 2) and next to last (Ps 149) psalms speak of nations and kings ripe for divine judgment.
- v. 9 “the judgment written”
  - Some believe that this includes sanctions against the Canaanites as recorded in the Mosaic Law (Torah).
  - Other scholars identify the writing with the Lord’s own book in which He records all that has happened and will happen (cp. Pss 56:8; 69:28).
  - The best view takes “the judgment written” as a reference to prior prophecies of judgments against various nations (e.g., Jer 46–51; Amos 1:3–2:3; Obad 15–21).

#### 4.0 Singing Psalm 149

##### “Praise Him with a Brand New Song”

(Tune: “Come Christians, Join to Sing”)



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>1</b> Praise him with a brand new song;<br/>Praise Him all ye righteous ones,<br/>Sons of Abraham to sing<br/>Praises all to Zion’s King.<br/>Timbrel lyre our praise enhance<br/>Worship through our Holy dance.<br/>People praise in one accord<br/>For the pleasure of the Lord.</p> | <p><b>2</b> Afflicted ones of Israel’s race,<br/>Beautiful objects of grace<br/>All will one day see His face.<br/>Sing for joy and give Him praise,<br/>All His children Israel’s sons;<br/>Exalt in glory, righteous ones;<br/>Sling the sword till victory won,<br/>Vengeance on the evil one.</p> |
| <p><b>3</b> Bind the Evil kings with chains;<br/>Fetter nobles, sons of Cain;<br/>Evil nations will be slain<br/>by Holy Children of the King.<br/>What an honor ’tis to be<br/>Set apart and holy.<br/>Praise the Lord His majesty.<br/>Praise Him for eternity.</p>                         |   |

— Words: A. J. Hurley (2009)

## **5.0 Praying Psalm 149**

- Thank You, Lord, for showing Yourself faithful again this week. [v. 1]
- What a joy, Father, to know You are in control! [v. 2]
- Lord, with amazement I praise You for delighting in me. [v. 4]
- Father, fulfill Your prophetic word to judge the unrighteous. [v. 9]



## **6.0 Applying Psalm 149**

- Godly believers committed to the Lord are the frontline of praise.
- Biblical praise involves celebratory joy.
- High praise relates to the Lord's fulfillment of His prophetic word.