

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

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



Psalm 98 — Let Earth Receive Her King

1.0 Introducing Psalm 98

- In 1719 Isaac Watts published “Joy to the World” from the text of Psalm 98. His carol speaks far more about Christ’s return as King than it does about His coming as a baby in Bethlehem.
- Psalm 98 continues the divine kingship (theocratic) psalms (Psalms 93–100).
- See notes on Psalm 96 for a chart comparing Psalms 96–99. Note the similarities between Psalm 96 and 98.
 - ✓ While verses 1 and 9 are nearly identical to the beginning and end of Psalm 96, verses 2-8 have ties to Isaiah 40–55, especially 52:7-10.
- Rabbinic tradition refers to Psalm 98 as “the orphan psalm,” because it alone has only “A Psalm” as the heading.

2.0 Reading Psalm 98 (NAU)

98:1 A Psalm.

O sing to the LORD a new song,
For He has done wonderful things,
His right hand and His holy arm have gained the victory for Him.

98:2 The LORD has made known His salvation;
He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.

98:3 He has remembered His lovingkindness
and His faithfulness to the house of Israel;
All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

98:4 **Shout joyfully** to the LORD, all the earth;
Break forth and sing for joy and sing praises.

98:5 Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre,
With the lyre and the sound of melody.

- 98:6** With trumpets and the sound of the horn
Shout joyfully before the King, the LORD.
- 98:7** Let **the sea** roar and all it contains,
The world and those who dwell in it.
- 98:8** Let **the rivers** clap their hands,
Let **the mountains** sing together for joy
- 98:9** Before the LORD, for He is coming to judge the earth;
He will judge the world with righteousness
And the peoples with equity.

3.0 Understanding Psalm 98

3.1 Outline

- I. Joy to the World!: A Song of Salvation (vv. 1-3)
- II. Joy to the World!: Shouts of Coronation (vv. 4-6)
- III. Joy to the World!: Sounds of Celebration (vv. 7-9)



3.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “wonderful things”
 - This is a key Old Testament term for “miracle.”
 - ✓ It first occurs in Exodus 3:20.
 - ✓ See Psalms 9:1; 40:5; 72:18; 78:4, 11, 32; **96:3**; 139:14.
- **v. 1** “His right hand and His holy arm”
 - God personally delivered Israel from their slavery and captivity.
 - ✓ For deliverance from the Egyptians, see Exodus 15:6, 12, 16.
 - ✓ See Psalms 20:6; 44:3; Isaiah 52:10.
- **v. 1** “have gained the victory”
 - This verb is from the same root word as the two occurrences of “salvation” in verses 2 and 3.
 - The triple occurrence presents a theme that characterizes verses 1-3.
- **v. 3** “All the ends of the earth”
 - In Psalm 96 the global references to the nations depict them as participants in worship, while references in Psalm 98 depict them as silent witnesses.
 - Psalm 98 contains no comparison to heathen nations or idolatry.
- **v. 4** “Shout joyfully”
 - This verb opens the second stanza of the psalm and concludes it in verse 6. The repetition marks off the division of the psalm into its three stanzas by bracketing the middle stanza.
 - “Shout joyfully” can refer to celebratory shouts at a king’s coronation, a joyful festival, or even as war cries.

- **v. 4** “Break forth and sing for joy and sing praises”
 - A triplet, or three near synonyms, serves to fill out the concept expressed in the preceding line of this verse.
 - ✓ Compare Isaiah 52:9.
 - “Sing praises” (verses 4, 5) and “melody” (verse 5) are derived from the same root word as “Psalm” (heading). The threefold occurrence characterizes the second stanza the way that “salvation” sets the theme of the first stanza.
- **v. 4** “Break forth”
 - This verb refers to an exuberant outburst that someone cannot repress.
 - ✓ Isaiah favors this expression (Isaiah 14:7; 44:23; 55:12).
- **vv. 4-5** “sing praises . . . with the lyre”
 - The repetitions of these phrases link these two verses and enable a leap-frog effect by which the psalmist carries the reader forward in his description of celebratory praise.
 - “The psalms we sing now are a rehearsal”—Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), 353.
 - The list of musical instruments is not exhaustive, just suggestive.
- **v. 6** “trumpets . . . horn”
 - Biblical “trumpets” (cf. 2 Chronicles 5:12-13) were made of metal.
 - The “horn” is the *shofar*, made from a ram’s horn.
 - ✓ *Shofars* were sounded at the coronation of kings (1 Kings 1:39; 2 Kings 9:13; 11:12-14).
- **v. 8** “Let the rivers clap their hands”
 - In this final stanza (verses 7-9) we have the song of the sea and the hallelujah of the hills.
 - Compare 2 Kings 11:12.
- **v. 9** Closing
 - Three parallel poetic lines close the psalm with climactic force.

4.0 Singing Psalm 98



Unto God Our Saviour

(Tune: “My Jesus I Love Thee” or “Take Time to Be Holy”)

Unto God our Savior sing a joyful song;
Wondrous are His doings, for His arm is strong.
He has wrought salvation, He has made it known,
And before the nations is His justice known.
Joyful, all ye people, sing before the Lord;
Shout and sing His praises now in glad accord;
With the harp and trumpet joyful praises bring;

Come, rejoice before Him, God, the Lord, your King.

Waves of mighty ocean, earth with fullness stored,
Floods and fields and mountains, sing before the Lord;
For He comes with justice, evil to redress,
And to judge the nations in His righteousness.

— Author unknown

O Worship the King

O worship the King, all glorious above
And gratefully sing His wonderful love;
Our Shield and Defender the Ancient of Days,
Pavilioned in splendor and girded with praise.

O tell of His might, and sing of His grace,
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space.
His chariots of wrath the deep thunder clouds form,
And dark is His path on the wings of the storm.

Thy beautiful care what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light,
It streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
And sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.

Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,
In Thee do we trust, nor find Thee to fail.
Thy mercies how tender, how firm to the end!
Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend!

— Words: Robert Grant (1833)

— Music: Johann M. Haydn; Arranged by William Gardiner (1815)

5.0 Praying Psalm 98



- Lord, I praise You for Your wonderful works. [v. 1]
- Thank You for allowing me to see Your faithfulness to Israel. [v. 3]
- Thank You, also, for wonderful music with which to praise You. [vv. 4-6]
- Come quickly, Lord Jesus. [v. 9; Revelation 22:20]
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6.0 Applying Psalm 98

- We praise the LORD for who He is and for what He has done.
- With exuberant voices and musical instruments we offer Him our praise.
- All creation waits expectantly to welcome their Creator and King.