

PM Psalm 99 Our God is Holy

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- [0 : 00] And the people of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month. And the people stayed in Kadesh.
- And Miriam died there and was buried there. Now there was no water for the congregation. And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.
- And the people quarreled with Moses and said, Would that we had perished when our brothers perished before the Lord. Why have you brought the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness?
- That we should die here, both we and our cattle. And why have you made us come up out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place? It is no place for grain or figs or vines or pomegranates.
- And there is no water to drink. Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the entrance of the tent of meeting.
- [1 : 06] And fell on their faces. And the glory of the Lord appeared to them. And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Take the staff and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, And tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water.
- So you shall bring water out of the rock for them, And give drink to the congregation and their cattle. And Moses took the staff from before the Lord as he commanded him.
- Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock. And he said to them, Hear now, you rebels.
- Shall we bring water for you out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice. And water came out abundantly.
- And the congregation drank and their livestock. And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, Because you did not believe in me to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, Therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.
- [2 : 24] These are the waters of Meribah, Where the people of Israel quarreled with the Lord, And through them he showed himself holy.
- Amen. And may God bless to us that reading from his word, And to his name be the praise. We shall now sing this time in Psalm 100 on page 362.
- Psalm 100 on page 362. All people that on earth do dwell, Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice, Hymns serve with mirth, His praise forth tell, Come ye before him, And rejoice.
- Psalm 100 to God's praise, All people that on earth do dwell. Psalm 99 The Lord reigns, Let the peoples tremble.
- He sits enthroned upon the cherubim, Let the earth quake. The Lord is great in Zion, He is exalted over all the peoples.
- [3 : 59] Let them praise your great and awesome name. Holy is he. The king in his might loves justice.

You have established equity. You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.
Exalt the Lord our God.

Worship at his footstool. Holy is he. Moses and Aaron were among his priests.

Samuel also was among those who called upon his name. They called to the Lord, And he answered them. In the pillar of the cloud he spoke to them.

They kept his testimonies and the statute that he gave them. O Lord our God, O Lord our God, You answered them. You were a forgiving God to them, But an avenger of their wrongdoings.

[5 : 05] Exalt the Lord our God, And worship at his holy mountain, For the Lord our God is holy.

Amen. And may God bless to us that further reading from his word. And to his... Please turn back with me to the second passage we read together.

The book of Psalms, Psalm 99. I'd like to look at this psalm with you under the title, Our God is holy.

Our God is holy. Anyone who is used to singing the psalms in public worship, Will be familiar with Psalms 92 to 100.

They are full of praise to God, And they lend themselves to being used at the beginning of a service of worship. Think of Psalm 95 which we sang, At the beginning of our service.

[6 : 13] O come, Let us sing to the Lord. Come let us everyone, A joyful noise, Make to the rock of our salvation. Or Psalm 96.

Give ye the glory to the Lord, That to his name is due. Come ye into his courts, And bring an offering with you. Or Psalm 98.

O sing a new song to the Lord, For wonders he hath done, His right hand and his holy arm, Him victory hath won.

I suspect that Psalm 99 is less often sung, But it too contains repeated calls to worship.

Three times in the psalm, In verses 3, 5 and 9, We are reminded that the Lord is holy, And we are urged to worship him.

[7 : 22] Verse 3, Let the peoples praise your great and awesome name, Holy is he.

Verse 5, Exalt the Lord our God, Worship at his fruit stew, Holy is he. And finally in verse 9, Exalt the Lord our God, And worship at his holy mountain, For the Lord our God, Is holy.

Holy. The recurring refrain focuses, On the fact that the Lord is holy. What do we mean when we say, That the Lord is holy?

Holy. In the Bible, The word holy is applied, For example, To the seventh day Sabbath, To the temple, And to priests and others, Engaged in God's worship.

In such context, The word holy, Means that these things, These people, Are set apart. They are set apart for God. They are dedicated to him, And to his service.

[8 : 43] They no longer serve a common, Or ordinary purpose. But holiness in the Bible, Is applied in the highest sense, To God.

He is holy, Set apart. He transcends his creation. He is incomparably great. In the song which they sang, After crossing the Red Sea, And escaping from the Egyptians, Moses and the Israelites say, Who is like you, O Lord, Among the gods?

Who is like you? Majestic in holiness, Awesome in glorious deeds, Doing wonders. The Lord is majestic in holiness.

He is utterly other. In the words of Isaiah, Chapter 40, Verse 25, To whom then, Will you compare me, That I should be like him, Says the Holy One.

And of course, A key element, Of God's otherness, Is his moral excellence. He is utterly separate, From all moral imperfections.

[10 : 02] Moses says, Of God in Deuteronomy, Chapter 32, The rock, That is God, His work is perfect, For all his ways, Are justice.

A God of faithfulness, And without iniquity, Just, And upright, Is he. Holiness, In effect, Embraces, Every aspect of God.

This is what, The late Professor, R.A. Finlayson, Of the Free Church College, Writes, Holiness, May be said, To be the distinctive, Overall, Attribute of God.

The outshining, Of all that God is. It is his holiness, That particularly, Sets him apart, From all his creation, And that renders him, Unapproachable, In all his perfections.

It is his intellectual, And moral splendor, The ethical purity, In virtue of which, He delights in good, And hates evil.

[11 : 20] Or as an old minister of mine, Used to say, And he put it much more simply, Holiness, Holiness, Holiness, Denotes the Godness, Of God.

Holiness, Denotes the Godness, Of God. The recurring, Refrain in this psalm, Divides it, Conveniently, Into three sections.

Each of these sections, Highlights a different aspect, Of God's holiness. Let's look at each of them in turn. First, In verses 1 to 3, The Lord reigns.

Secondly, In verses 4 and 5, The Lord loves justice. And thirdly, In verses 6 to 9, The Lord is gracious.

The Lord reigns. The Lord loves justice. The Lord is gracious. First of all then, In verses 1 to 3, The psalmist highlights, That the Lord reigns.

[12 : 33] The Lord reigns. Let the peoples tremble. He sits enthroned upon the cherubim. Let the earth quake. The Lord is great in Zion.

He is exalted over all the peoples. Let them praise your great and awesome name. Holy is he.

Whenever you see the word Lord in block capitals, In our English Bibles, It stands for the Hebrew name, Yahweh or Jehovah.

The name by which God revealed himself to Moses, At the burning bush. Where he commissioned him, To lead his people, The Israelites, Out of slavery in Egypt.

The Lord is God's covenant name. It means, I am who I am, Or I will be who I will be.

[13 : 36] Among other things, It assures God's covenant people, That he is unchanging in his love for them, And his commitment to them. It is this covenant keeping God, Who the psalmist says is king.

But it is not just the people of Israel, Who are urged to recognize this, But the peoples, The Gentile nations, Let the peoples tremble.

In Old Testament times, God was very much, The Lord was very much, The God of Israel. And in this psalm, We have repeated references, To the temple in Jerusalem.

Verse 2, Describes the Lord as great, In Zion. Zion is another name for Jerusalem, Where the temple was a symbol, Of God's presence, Among his people.

The injunction in verse 9, To worship at his holy mountain, Is a reference to temple worship, As is the injunction in verse 5, Worship at his footstool.

[14 : 59] There is a verse in Psalm 132, Which confirms that, We read there, Let us go to his dwelling place, Let us worship, At his footstool.

Clearly God's footstool, Is where he dwells, Among his people. But despite the repeated references, To the temple, And to his worship, This psalm has a message, For all people.

The God who is presented here, Is no mere tribal deity, He is the universal king, The exalted king, Before whom the whole earth, Should quake.

Gentile peoples, As well as the people of Israel, Should tremble, In his presence. All people should acknowledge, That he is king, And praise his great, And awesome name.

Even when God's revelation of himself, Was largely restricted, To the people of Israel, Interested Gentiles, Could and did associate themselves, With his covenant people.

[16 : 17] Think of Rahab, The Canaanite woman, Who offered shelter, To the Israelite spies, When they came out, When they came to spy out, The promised land.

Think too, Of the Moabitess Ruth, Who accompanied her mother-in-law, Naomi, When she returned to Canaan, And insisted on remaining with her.

Remember her words, To Naomi, Your people, Shall be my people, And your God, My God.

In the prophets, As well as in the Psalms, There are clear indications, That one day, God's covenant people, Will embrace, All peoples.

It's as if, The curtain is drawn back, And we see something, Of the future. But it was only with Jesus, Death, Resurrection, And ascension, And the coming of the Holy Spirit, That Jesus' disciples, Were commissioned, To go out, Into the whole world, To go out from Jerusalem, To the very ends of the earth, And preach the gospel, To every creature.

[17 : 44] How privileged we are, To live this side of Pentecost, And have ready access, To the gospel. For none of us, Can worship the Lord acceptably, Except in and through, The Lord Jesus Christ.

Only through faith in him, Can we have our sins forgiven, And have peace with God.

And let's not think, That the language of this psalm, Is outmoded, When it speaks in terms of, Trembling, And quaking before God.

The writer to the Hebrews, Reminds those, Who are tempted to turn their backs, On the gospel, That it is a fearful thing, To fall into the hands, Of the living God.

Even as Christians, We should approach God, With reverence, And godly fear, Rightly recognizing, His greatness, And his holiness.

[18 : 50] In the book of Acts, We read how, The church in Judea, Galilee, And Samaria, Walked, Not only in the comfort, Of the Holy Spirit, But also, In the fear, Of the Lord.

They enjoyed, The fellowship of the Holy Spirit, But they also feared God, And trembled, At his word. The Lord reigns, Do we come before him, With reverence.

That is the first aspect, Of God's holiness, Which the psalm brings, To our attention. Secondly, In verses 4 and 5, The psalmist reminds us, That the Lord, Loves justice.

The king, In his might, Loves justice. You have established, Equity, You have executed, Justice and righteousness, In Jacob. Exalt the Lord, Our God, Worship at his footstool, Holy, Is he.

God is mighty, He is powerful, But his might, His power, Is allied with justice, And equity, And righteousness.

[20 : 16] In our world, People who are powerful, Tend not to be like that. Far from it, They throw their weight around, And bend the rules, To suit themselves, But God, The great king, Is committed, To right standards, In him, Absolute might, Is combined, With absolute right, He loves justice, He is perfect, Righteous, And just in himself, And in how he acts, His unwavering commitment, To what is right, Is an essential aspect, Is an essential aspect, Of his holiness, As the embodiment, Of justice, He has established, Equity, He sets the standard, Of justice, He determines, What is right, And in verse 4, The psalm goes on,

You have executed, Justice and righteousness, In Jacob, The psalmist, The psalmist here, Homes in, On the Lord's relationship, With his covenant people, He probably has in mind, How the Lord gave his, Law, To the Israelites, Shortly after the Exodus, Shortly after they escaped, From slavery in Egypt, He entered into a formal covenant, With them at Mount Sinai, And gave them his law, Central to which was, What we know, As the Ten Commandments, The Lord wanted, His redeemed people, To know how to live, He wanted them to live, In accordance, With his standards, And the moral law, Is still the standard, By which, We will be judged, The Ten Commandments,

Are still relevant, In that connection, God's command, To Israel, Was that they were to be holy, As he was holy, The God of justice, Demanded, That his people, Practice justice, Too, In saying that, God has executed, Justice and righteousness, In Jacob, The psalmist, May also be making the point, That God has consistently, Treated his people, Israel, Justly, And righteously, There were times, When they lived, In obedience to him, There were also times, When they rebelled, And flouted his standards, And as a result, They were subjected, To his discipline, We noted that this morning, How in the book of Judges,

There is a recurring cycle, Of sin, Judgment, Repentance, And deliverance, The most, Traumatic, Example, Of God's discipline, As regards Israel, Was the fall of Jerusalem, At the hands of the Babylonians, In 587 BC, Jerusalem fell, And many, Judeans, Were deported, From the land, The Lord, Had given them, I am sure, The boys and girls, Here know, That when they are naughty, Their parents, Discipline them, Perhaps, They send them, To the room, Or make them, Sit on the naughty step, Or say, They can't have something, They really like, They do that, Even though, They love them, In fact, It is because,

They love them, That they discipline them, Parents love their children, Too much, To let them, Get away with, Bad behaviour, They know, How important it is, For boys and girls, To know, The difference, Between right, And wrong, And I suspect, The psalmist, May be making, A similar point here, He is acknowledging, That at all times, When things were going well, And when things were going, Not so well, The Lord, The Lord had the interest, Of his people at heart, And was acting, Justly, Towards them, Do we exalt the Lord, Because he loves, Justice, We should be thankful, That life is not random, Our world, Is under the control, Of a God, Who is just, And never acts, Out of character,

[25 : 22] One day, Evil will be eliminated, The judge, Of all the earth, Will do right, We should be thankful, That in the Bible, The Lord has given us, Guidelines for living, That reflect his character, And are designed, For our good, They are our maker's, Instructions, He knows, What is best, We should also be thankful, That the Lord deals, Justly with us, In his providence, That's not to say, That there, May not be times, When, We cannot begin, To understand, Why he allows, Certain things, To come, Into our lives, We may find, His discipline, Difficult, But, He is just, His promise,

Is that if we are his people, He is at work, In all things, For our good, The king, In his might, Loves justice, This psalm, Encourages us, To praise God, For this aspect, Of his holiness, The Lord reigns, The Lord loves justice, Thirdly, And finally, In verses 6 to 9, The Lord is gracious, In this final section, The psalmist explores, More of the wonder, Of what it means, To be God's people, Two things in particular, Stand out, The first is, How God graciously, Interacts, With his people, Look at verses 6 to 8, Moses and Aaron, Were among his priests, Samuel also,

Was among those, Who called upon his name, They called to the Lord, And he answered them, In the pillar of the cloud, He spoke to them, They kept his testimonies, And the statute, That he gave them, The psalmist gives, Moses and Aaron, And Samuel, The prophet Samuel, As examples of men, Who interacted, With the Lord, They called on the Lord, And he answered them, They were all, Great leaders, But by describing, Them as being, Among the priests, And among those, Who prayed, The psalmist, May be making the point, That they were not, In a class apart, Ordinary believers, Could enjoy, Fellowship, With God too, These men, Interacted with God, They had a real, Relationship with him, They prayed to him,

And he in turn, Revealed his will, To them, In, An incident, Which, Is not the one, We read about, In the book of numbers, But, Which, Has cleared parallels, With that incident, Early on, In their journey, Through the wilderness, The people of Israel, Grumbled against, Moses and Aaron, Because there was no water, For them to drink, They said, Why did you bring us up, Out of Egypt, To kill us, And our children, And our livestock, With thirst, And in the face, Of their complaint, What did Moses do?

He cried out, To the Lord, What shall I do, With these people? He asked, They are almost ready, To stone me, And the Lord heard, And answered, He told Moses, To take the staff, With which he had struck, The waters of the Nile, And use it, To strike the rock, At Horeb, And water would flow, Out of it, The Moses, Called on God, And God answered, We are probably, All familiar, With the story, Of how the Lord, Called Samuel, To be a prophet, He was a young lad, Serving in the temple, Under the old priest, In the tabernacle, Under the old priest, Eli, One night, As he was about, To go to sleep, He thought he heard, Eli calling him, That happened twice, And the second time,

[30 : 12] Eli realized, That it was the Lord, Who was calling, The young man, And he advised him, That if he heard his name, Being called again, He was to say, Speak Lord, For your servant, Is listening, It did happen, A third time, And on this occasion, Samuel did, As Eli told him, And he was given, A message, From the Lord, Samuel called on God, And he answered, God graciously, Interacted, With believers, Like Moses, Aaron and Samuel, And he is still, A prayer hearing, And prayer answering God, He still communicates, With those, Who call on his name, These days, When he communicates, Principally through his word, His means of communication, May be less dramatic, Than in Old Testament times,

But what a privilege it is, That our transcendent God, The God who reigns, Is prepared to interact, With people like us, Not only does God, Graciously interact with his people, He is forgiving, That's another aspect, Of his graciousness, Verse 7 indicates, That how, On the whole, Moses, Aaron and Samuel, Lived lives of obedience, To God, They kept his testimonies, And the statute, That he gave them, But that wasn't, Always the case, Look at verse 8, Oh Lord our God, You answered them, You were a forgiving God, To them, But an avenger, Of their wrongdoings,

The Bible commentator, Derry Kidner, Suggests, That it may be, Moses and Aaron, In particular, Whom the psalmist, Has in mind, Kidner refers, To the incident, We read about, In Numbers chapter 20, The other incident, We spoke about, Was early on, In, The Israelites, Wanderings, In the wilderness, This incident, In Numbers chapter 20, Takes place, Towards the close, Of the Israelites, Wanderings, Again, The people of Israel, Complained to Moses, And Aaron, About the lack of water, And on this occasion, Moses didn't handle, The situation well, He became angry, He failed to follow, The Lord's instructions,

To the letter, And in the words, Of Psalm 106, He spoke rashly, With his lips, As a result, He wasn't allowed, To lead the people, Into the promised land, Kidner highlights, The distinction, That is drawn here, Between, The healing of relationships, And the punishment, Of actions, The healing of relationships, You were a forgiving God, To them, But, You were an avenger, Of their wrongdoings, The punishment, Of actions, Moses, Was forgiven, But on that occasion, He had to live, With the consequences, Of his actions, There may be a healthy warning,

For us here, We should never, Despair, Of forgiveness, But we shouldn't, Treat sin lightly, And trade on forgiveness, Either, It's not because, He's indifferent to sin, That God forgives sinners, But because, He is, By nature, Gracious, And unlike, The writer of this psalm, Psalm 99, We, Know the full cost, Of that forgiveness, It was secured, Through the death, Of the Lord Jesus Christ, Nothing less, Than that would do, God gave, His own son, To die, In our place, And bear the punishment, Which our sins deserved, He bore our sins, In his own body,

[35 : 19] On the tree, Because he took our sin, Upon himself, Whoever puts their trust, In him, Is assured, That they shall not perish, But have everlasting life, What good news, What good news it is, That we have a God, Who is forgiving, A God who brings us, Into real and meaningful fellowship, With himself, His grace, His grace is an essential aspect, Of who he is, It is an essential aspect, Of his holiness, Or godness, Great God of wonders, All thy ways, Display the attributes divine, But countless acts,

Of pardoning grace, Beyond thine other wonders, Shine, Who is a pardoning God, Like thee, Or who has grace, So rich, And free, Three times, This psalm reminds us, That the Lord is holy, He reigns, He loves justice, He is gracious, May we in turn, Heed the injunction of the psalmist, And exalt the Lord our God, For he is holy, Shall we pray?