

Psalms 99:1 ¶ The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth *between* the cherubims; let the earth be moved.

The psalmist opens with a declaration that the LORD reigns; He rules over His whole creation. Many today (and throughout history) do not believe the LORD cares about what goes on throughout His creation. The fact is that He is very aware and in control. He chose to give man the freedom of choice that led to our rebellion and the curse of sin. Though He is allowing Satan to rule as “god of this world” for a time in accordance with His overall plan, it doesn’t change the truth that He is in control. Our problem with accepting that truth is because His ways are so far beyond our understanding.

Isaiah 55:8–9 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

Because God reigns, the people on planet earth should tremble in fear before Him. Sadly, multitudes choose not to believe that He is their God and Creator and brazenly blaspheme His name. The day is coming, however, when they will bow their knees before Him as their Judge.

Revelation 20:11–12 “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

Spurgeon: “Saints quiver with devout emotion, and sinners quiver with terror when the rule of Jehovah is fully perceived and felt.”

Scripture describes God’s throne as attended by the cherubim. In fact, God gave Moses the pattern for making the ark of the covenant that included a covering of the outstretched wings of the cherubim over the mercy seat (representative of His throne in heaven).

Exodus 25:20 “And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be.”

Isaiah 37:16 “O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth.”

**Psalms 99:2 The LORD is great in Zion; and he is high above all the people.
Psalms 99:3 Let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy.**

Mount Zion in Jerusalem is the place that God chose among His chosen people as the place to connect with His name. He reigns supreme over His people and all people on planet earth. The psalmist calls on the people of Israel to praise His mighty, awesome and holy name.

2 Chronicles 6:6 *“But I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there; and have chosen David to be over my people Israel.”*

Deuteronomy 14:2 *“For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.”*

Spurgeon: *“His power never exerts itself tyrannically; he is a sovereign, and he is absolute in his government, but his might delights in right, his force is used for just purposes only.”*

Commentators note that the fact that God is holy is stated three times in this psalm. This characteristic shows up in other scripture—a fitting tribute to a triune God.

Isaiah 6:3 *“And one cried unto another, and said, **Holy, holy, holy**, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.”*

Revelation 4:8 *“And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, **Holy, holy, holy**, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.”*

Psalms 99:4 The king’s strength also loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.

I liked the CJB translation of this verse: *“Mighty king who loves justice, you established fairness, justice and righteousness in Ya’akov.”*

Note that Jacob is a reference to Israel, the father of the 12 tribes of Israel.

Genesis 32:28 *“And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.”*

It is true that God established Israel as a nation and gave them a set of laws that would ensure fairness, justice and righteousness. The sad truth is that they rebelled against Him and refused to follow those laws. If they had, they would have experienced great blessing; instead, they had to endure His judgment.

Deuteronomy 30:16–18 *“In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it.”*

Psalms 99:5 Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy.

The psalmist is urging His people to exalt the LORD “our” God and worship at His footstool. I think this is a reference to bowing before Him in reverence and humility. He alone is holy—pure and free from the taint of sin.

Psalms 99:6 ¶ Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the LORD, and he answered them.

Psalms 99:7 He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance *that* he gave them.

Psalms 99:8 Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.

The psalmist notes that Moses, Aaron and Samuel were privileged to serve before God as priests; they served as God's representatives to the people and as intercessors for the people before God. He spoke to Moses and Aaron from the cloudy pillar by which He led them through the wilderness. Once they received His law, they did their best to keep it. As they presented the needs of the people to the LORD, He answered and readily forgave them when they repented, even though He had to punish them when they chose to rebel in sin and unbelief.

Spurgeon: "These each one stood in the gap when the wrath of God broke forth, because his holiness had been insulted; and acting as intercessors, they screened the nation from the great and terrible God, who otherwise would in a dreadful manner have executed judgment in Jacob....They made it their life's business to call upon him in prayer, and by so doing brought down innumerable blessings upon themselves and others."

Psalms 99:9 Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God *is* holy.

David closes the psalm with another word of exhortation for the people to exalt the LORD because He is holy—the only pure and perfect One. This time He calls for them to worship at His holy hill, a reference to Mount Zion, the home of the ark of the covenant and the future home of the temple—the place on planet earth where He chose to establish His name forever despite what people today may say.

2 Chronicles 33:4 "Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever."