

# Yahweh Malak Psalms

## 'The LORD Reigns' - Psalms 93-99

### STUDY FIVE - Psalm 99

Ray Bell ~ 24<sup>th</sup> September, 2015

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**The holiness of God** has been mentioned in some of the previous Yahweh Malak psalms, but here in **Psalm 99** it is the central theme. The 'heart beat' of this psalm is '*Holy is he*'. Yahweh, the LORD, who reigns over all the earth, *is holy!*

"There is a height and a depth in the Father beyond His utmost pity and His kindest love. He is Holy Father and Redeemer, and it is His holiness of fatherhood that is the source of our redemption and sonship. It is not their obstacle. "Thou, O Lord, art our Holy One, *therefore* we shall not die." He is father of pity to human weakness, still more father of grace to human sin, but chiefly father of holy joy to our Lord Jesus Christ. The New Testament name and idea of God is not simply "Our Father", but "the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." And Christ's own prayer was "Holy Father". (P.T. Forsyth - *God The Holy Father* - p3)

**The opening phrase of Psalm 99** (as with Psalms 93 & 97) clearly identifies this psalm as a 'Yahweh Malak' psalm, declaring loudly from the outset, 'The LORD reigns'. However, the response called for this time is not to rejoice (Ps 97), nor to sing a new song (Ps 96 or 98), nor to make a joyful noise to the LORD, or to kneel before the LORD, our Maker (Ps 95). The right and fitting response called for here, in Psalm 99, *is to tremble!*

**As the psalm continues**, we find it is not only Yahweh's *kingship* which should evoke such reverence and awe as to tremble before him, but the fact that he is *holy* - he is the Holy King. What does it mean to say the LORD our God is holy? One source states, "Holiness is the quintessential nature of God... the center of divine motivation. It affects everything God does. Moreover, the adjectives attached to holiness, such as *majestic*, *glorious* and *awesome*, inform us that the essence of beauty lies in holiness." (*IVP Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*)

**This psalm then**, tells of the Holy LORD who reigns as king over all the earth (vv1-3), and exercises his righteous dominion particularly in Jacob/Israel (vv4-5). But the highlight of the psalm, and of Holy Yahweh's reign, is that he inclines his ear to the cries of his people... *and he answers them* (vv6-9)!

**Verses 1-3** announce Yahweh's reign, depicting him seated enthroned upon the cherubim, in dominion over all the peoples, who are to revere him with reverent praise and exaltation. It is a good thing to tremble before the LORD, even as we approach the throne of grace with confidence! (*Hebrews 4:16; 12:28-29*)

The image of the LORD sitting enthroned upon the cherubim provides a connection with Psalm 96 (1 Chronicles 16) which David sang when the Ark of the Covenant finally returned to the LORD's people and was taken to Jerusalem. The Ark is placed in the Holy of Holies, where no one but the high priest was to enter, and he only once a year, and not without taking blood. But it is also the place of the mercy seat - where atonement is made! This is the place where holiness and justice meet; where judgment and mercy collide; where vengeance and

forgiveness embrace each other, and where holiness and love are perfectly expressed and fulfilled in glorious unison. It is here, the king sits and reigns. Holy is he!

**Verses 4-5: It from here, upon his throne,** that the LORD executes justice and righteousness amongst the nations, and particularly, in Jacob (Israel). Yahweh, the God of Israel, who is great in Zion, and exalted over all peoples, *is powerfully at work in Jacob, among his covenant people.* He not only *loves* justice– he has *established* equity and has *executed* justice and righteousness. This Holy King is *dynamic!*

In response, the people are called to 'exalt him... and worship at his footstool.' And again, this is accented with the refrain, '*Holy is he!*'

**"But,"** we might ask, "how can I, a sinner, come before this Holy King and worship him there of all places - at his footstool? Before his very presence?"

**Verses 6-9** provide the answer to this dilemma as they recall some of the great *intercessors* of Israel. Moses and Aaron fulfilled a number of prophetic and priestly tasks for the Exodus generation. Samuel too, in his day, led the people as the last judge of Israel before kings were appointed. However, the role and function singled out in this psalm, which ties these three men together, *is that they called upon the name of the LORD!* And they did this, not primarily for their own deliverance, but for the people of God. Furthermore, the psalmist declares in praise and joy, *the LORD answered them.* (Eg. Deuteronomy 9:9-29; 10:10-11; Exodus 24; Leviticus 8-9; 16; 1 Samuel 7:3-13).

Verse 8 explains how it was the LORD answered them:

*"O LORD our God, you answered them;  
you were a forgiving God to them,  
but an avenger of their wrongdoings."*

Here we see the holy justice and loving mercy of God at work together in all their fullness. Here, the King, who sits enthroned upon the cherubim– at the Mercy Seat, exercises both forgiveness and judgment in all his righteousness. For only here, can atonement be made. Only here, can God be 'appeased'. And ultimately, it is here, in Christ– who entered once for all into the holy places, through the greater and more perfect tent– the wrath of God, the holiness of God, and the righteousness of God are satisfied completely as he secured an eternal redemption for all who believe in, and call upon his name (Hebrews 9:11-12).

**Yahweh, the LORD, reigns. He is the Holy King who listens to, and answers, those who call upon his name.** In Christ Jesus, we have a righteous advocate, seated at the Holy Father King's right hand, who together with the Spirit, intercedes for us– calling upon the LORD on our behalf. And the LORD answers with grace and mercy in our time of need, yet without letting sin go by unpunished (Hebrews 4:16). At the cross, the blood of Christ is shed upon the 'mercy seat' on the holy mountain of Calvary. There, the holy and righteous LORD and King is declared to all the world that he is both *just*, and *the justifier* of those who have faith in Jesus.

***Yahweh Malak - The LORD Reigns!  
Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool.  
Holy is he!***