

## Partners in God's Victory: Psalm 149 and Psalm 2

In his short chapter, "The End," Dietrich Bonhoeffer observes that our hope as Christians is directed to Jesus' return and the resurrection of the dead. Bonhoeffer also observes that "life in fellowship with the God of revelation, the final victory of God in the world, and the setting up of the messianic kingdom are objects of prayer in the psalms." The Psalter reminds us to pray for, find comfort in, and praise God for his rescue plan for all his creation and our part in it. Here's how Bonhoeffer describes psalms like **Psalms 2 and 149** in "The End":

The psalms of the final victory of God and of his Messiah (2, 96, 97, 98, 110, 148-150) lead us in praise, thanksgiving, and petition to the end of all things, when all the world will give God the honor, when the redeemed people of God will reign with him eternally, when the powers of evil will fall and God alone will rule.

(Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Psalms: The Prayerbook of the Bible*, p. 62)

### 1. **Psalm 149:1-3** is a *summons to praise*.

Who is being summoned (1b and 2b), and what is God asking them to do (1a, 2a, and 3)? How would you describe the mood?

What stands out to you about this definition of a "new song"?

A new song is a hymn of victory sung after God has made all things new by his defeat of the forces of evil. (Temper Longman III, *Psalms*, p. 475)

Check out "new song" in the Psalms (33:3, 40:3, 96:1, 98:1, 144:9), as well as in Isaiah (42:10) and the book of Revelation (5:9, 14:3). What is the context for the "new song"?

2. In praise psalms, the *summons to praise* is supported with a reason, a *basis*. How would you describe the *basis for praise* in **Psalm 149**? (Notice *for*/Hebrew *ki* in **149:4ff.**) See a similar verse in 147:11.

"He adorns the humble with salvation." What does that mean to you? Look in the Kellers' *Songs of Jesus*, p. 364 for more thoughts about why God's people praise him and how God calls us to action.

3. **Psalm 149** takes a surprising turn in **verse 6**. It issues a *call to action* on the basis of praise. The action is powered by and grows out of the act of praise. What kind of action is urged in verses 6-9?

Perhaps we are to envision a scenario similar to that in the opening stanza of **Psalm 2**, which pictures the nations conspiring against the Lord and his anointed king. (Longman, *Psalms*, p. 475)

4. How do you think the actions God is calling for in **149:6-9** relate to his purpose for “Kings of the earth and all peoples...,” as described in 148:11-13?

Do you think of the actions of **149:6-9** as literal, metaphorical, or both?

Consider Ephesian 6:10-20, as well as I Cor. 6:2-3, Jude 14-15, Rev. 19:14.

How might God be preparing you for missional action against evil?

5. In his devotional reading on **Psalm 149**, Patrick Henry Reardon summarizes:

The exaltation of the saints in the victory of Christ, their evangelical struggle for the Gospel, and the ultimate judgment of the world thereby are the themes of **Psalm 149**...To pray this psalm properly we must be numbered among those warriors that it thus portrays... *He then quotes Psalm 149:5-6.* (Reardon, *Christ in the Psalms*, p. 299)

What are your current thoughts about being “numbered among those warriors”?

6. In conclusion, here are some of N.T. Wright’s thoughts about political theology after connecting *the ultimate victory of God* in **Psalm 149** and **Psalm 2**:

Our attempts at political theology lurch to and fro between the political equivalents of pantheism (assuming that things must be left to go under their own steam by the automatic operation of due process) and dualism (assuming that things are so bad that the only solution is to opt out and retreat into a private sphere or to revolt and change the system entirely.)

The Psalms offer a different vision: a people of praise who, out of their celebration of God’s goodness in creation and out of their eager anticipation of his coming in judgment at last, speak his word and his truth to those in power, reminding them that they are answerable to the God who will one day hold them accountable.

(N.T. Wright, *The Case for the Psalms*, p. 151)

Of course, we must immerse ourselves in God’s words and truth before we can “speak his word and truth to those in power.”

But we don’t have to be doing that perfectly before we increase constructive words and actions to impact the systems of power in our communities, our nation, and the world.

“Blessed are all who take refuge in Him.” Psalm 2:12 We need a place of refuge if we are going to resist and defy evil.