

Psalm 149:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints.

Analysis

This verse opens the penultimate psalm of the Psalter with a call to new praise: 'Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of the saints.' The command 'Sing unto the LORD a new song' (shiroh la-Adonai shir hadash) is not about novel composition but about renewed, fresh worship. In biblical terminology, a 'new song' represents praise offered in response to recent or renewed experience of God's salvation. 'His praise in the congregation of the saints' specifies the context: corporate worship among God's faithful people. This is not private devotion but communal liturgical action. The 'congregation of the saints' (kehilat chasidim) represents the assembled faithful. The verse establishes that praise is appropriately corporate: God's greatness is honored through assembled community worship. The emphasis on 'new' suggests vitality and life rather than rote repetition. Yet it is offered 'in the congregation,' grounding worship in tradition and community. This balance between renewal and tradition, private heart and corporate body, individual experience and communal witness reflects mature spirituality.

Historical Context

The phrase 'new song' appears throughout the Psalter, often accompanying historical deliverance or future hope (Psalms 40:3, 96:1, 98:1). In post-exilic contexts, the 'new song' may refer to praise for return from exile or renewal of covenant community. The 'congregation of the saints' reflects the organized worship structure of the Second Temple period, when synagogues became centers

of communal prayer and praise. The inclusion of Psalm 149 in the Final Hallel suggests its liturgical significance for periodic (perhaps festival) worship rather than daily recitation. Later Jewish tradition assigned specific psalms to specific days (Psalm 92 for Sabbath, Psalm 93 for festival openings, etc.), making Psalm 149's positioning suggest eschatological or festival significance. The emphasis on newness combined with corporate tradition may reflect the post-exilic community's experience: they were a renewed people (returned from exile), worshipping in a restored (though modest) temple, with fresh appreciation for traditional covenant. Early Christians hearing 'new song' may have understood it in light of 'new covenant' and 'new creation' themes.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to sing a 'new song' to God, and how is newness achieved while maintaining tradition?
2. Why is the congregation of the saints the appropriate context for praising God?
3. How does corporate praise in the 'congregation' differ from individual or private worship?
4. What does the call for a 'new song' suggest about the dynamic, living nature of worship?
5. In what ways should contemporary worship balance the vitality of newness with the grounding of traditional faith?

Interlinear Text

תָּהֲלַת וְ
פָּלָל בְּהָרָן שִׁיר שִׁיר
Praise ye the LORD Sing unto the LORD song a new and his praise
H1984 H3050 H7891 H3068 H7892 H2319 H8416

בְּקָרְבָּן מַסְתִּים:
in the congregation of saints
H6951 H2623

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 33:3 (Sin): Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.

Revelation 5:9 (Parallel theme): And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

Hebrews 2:12 (Resurrection): Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

Psalms 98:1 (Holy): O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.

Isaiah 42:10 (Resurrection): Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof.

Psalms 22:22 (Resurrection): I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

Psalms 68:26 (References Lord): Bless ye God in the congregations, even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel.

Psalms 22:25 (Resurrection): My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

Psalms 144:9 (Resurrection): I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.

Psalms 148:1 (Resurrection): Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights.

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