

Psalm 98:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

This opening verse calls for a new song in celebration of God's marvellous works. 'O sing unto the LORD a new song' echoes the opening of Psalm 96 but adds crucial context. 'For he hath done marvellous things' provides the reason for the new song: God's recent or ongoing merciful acts demand fresh, responsive praise. 'Marvellous things' (Hebrew 'pele' - wonders) refers to extraordinary divine acts that demonstrate His power and character. 'His right hand, and his holy arm' shifts from God's abstract power to specific demonstrations of saving might. The 'right hand' and 'arm' are anthropomorphic images suggesting God's direct, powerful intervention. 'Right hand' is associated with victory and redemption throughout the Psalms (Psalm 48:10, 63:8); 'holy arm' emphasizes the sacred character of God's power. The progression from calling for a new song to affirming God's marvellous deeds shows that authentic worship responds to experienced mercy. The verse establishes that our praise should be renewed precisely because God's mercies are new and continuous. The focus on God's arm - His active intervention - indicates that worship acknowledges not merely abstract theology but concrete, experienced salvation.

Historical Context

Psalm 98, like Psalms 96 and 97, belongs to the group of 'Enthronement Psalms' likely composed in the post-exilic period. The affirmation of God's marvellous works in a context of exile and restoration suggests recent experience of God's

deliverance. The return from Babylonian exile, though partial and incomplete, demonstrated God's faithfulness to His promises despite apparent abandonment. The call for a 'new song' reflects the post-exilic community's sense that God had freshly demonstrated His power through restoration and return. The language of God's 'right hand' and 'holy arm' echoes the exodus narrative (Exodus 15:12-13), the foundational narrative of salvation that had been rehearsed throughout Israel's history. In the new context of restoration, such language affirmed that God remained the saving God, capable of delivering His people. The emphasis on both 'marvellous things' and God's 'holiness' reflects the renewed emphasis on covenant faithfulness and God's sacred character that characterized post-exilic Judaism.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. Why does the experience of God's marvellous works call for a 'new song' rather than merely repeating familiar worship?
2. How does focusing on God's 'right hand' and 'holy arm' connect abstract theology to concrete experience of salvation?
3. What are the 'marvellous things' God has done that deserve celebration in our own spiritual journey?
4. In what ways does recognizing God's past acts empower hope for future salvation?
5. How should the expectation that God continues to do marvellous things shape our worship and witness?

Interlinear Text

עֲשֵׂה הַנְּפָלָא וְתִּשְׁרֵר	לְיְהִי הַנְּפָלָא וְתִּשְׁרֵר					
O sing unto the LORD	unto the LORD	song	a new	marvellous things	for he hath done	
H7891	H3068	H7892	H2319	H3588	H6381	H6213
hath gotten him the victory			his right hand	arm	and his holy	
H3467		H0	H3225	H2220	H6944	
hath gotten him the victory		his right hand	arm	and his holy		
hath gotten him the victory		his right hand	arm	and his holy		

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 15:6 (References Lord): Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.

Isaiah 52:10 (Holy): The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Psalms 96:1 (Sin): O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth.

Revelation 14:3 (Parallel theme): And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

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

Psalms 96:3 (Parallel theme): Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.

Colossians 2:15 (Parallel theme): And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

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;

Revelation 3:21 (Parallel theme): To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Isaiah 63:5 (Parallel theme): And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me.

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