

## Session 6

November 22, 2020

### COMMITTED TO WORSHIP

#### Psalm 99:1-9

Jesus told the woman at the well, “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). That explains *how* we are to worship. The focal passage this week helps us to understand *why* we are to worship. The psalmist offers three good reasons:

**We worship Him because of His power (vv. 1-3).** The construction of these verses suggests a great contrast between the heavenly realm and the earthly. The Lord *reigns*, and He is *enthroned*. As a result, the people *tremble* and the *earth quakes* (v. 1). Two truths stand out. First, there is distance (and difference) between the two realms. The Lord is *above* and the people are *below*. To belong to Him does not mean to be equal with Him. Second, there is legitimate fear expressed. The word for *peoples* normally refers to the lost nations. Certainly, all people should revere the Lord. But in this case the lost especially! The word *tremble* adds to the idea. It means “to shudder,” “be agitated,” or be “moved to anger.” Those who do not know the Lord are often angry at Him. How ironic that sinful mankind shakes his fist in the face of the Almighty! But because the remainder of the psalm speaks so much of God’s people, the warning also applies to those of Israel who disobey Him or rebel against Him. Verse 2 continues all of the same themes. *Zion* (v. 2) refers generally to Israel, more specifically to the holy city Jerusalem, and even more specifically to the temple. The Lord is great in Israel, and exalted above all people, everywhere. He alone is worthy of *awe* because He alone is *holy* (v. 3). For reflection: *Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Why do you think so many people are angry at God, rather than fear Him?*

**We worship Him because of His position (vv. 4-5).** The Lord who reigns over the earth (and the people) in *might*, is the same God who rules over the people with *authority*. Verse 5 commands us to worship Him in humility. Why? Because He is a King who *loves justice*, *establishes fairness*, and *administers righteousness* (v. 4). The construction of the first phrase is interesting. Its literal meaning is, “His strength loves justice.” Or put another way, “His strength favors justice.” In other words, His strength is on the side of justice. Once again, Israel is mentioned (v. 4), as Jacob is the source of the name Israel (see Gen. 32:28). As well, the Lord’s position is emphasized by the contrast made between Him and man. We are to *exalt* the Lord our God, while we *bow* our own knee before His throne. Some commentators place this entire scene in God’s temple, with Christ seated between the cherubim of the ark of the covenant (v. 1) and the footstool (v. 5) referring to the ark itself. In any case, He is worthy of worship because He is a *mighty King*, and He is *holy*. For reflection: *What are the differences between justice, fairness, and righteousness? Why do you think God loves justice?*

**We worship Him because of His compassion (vv. 6-9).** The Lord’s power is frightening, and His authority is humbling. Thankfully, both His power and His authority are tempered by His compassion. The examples the psalmist chose to illustrate this are notable. Moses was a prophet and Aaron was a priest. They are both mentioned because of their intercession for God people. Samuel was the last of the judges, but he too was a prophet of God. What is their significance? They all “called to the Lord...and He answered them.” Notice the action and reaction: they

called, God answered (v. 6); God spoke, they obeyed (v. 7); they sinned, God forgave (v. 8). For His compassion and salvation, He is to be exalted (v. 9). He is worthy of worship because He *forgives*, and—for the third time—because He is *holy*. For reflection: *an intercessor is one who stands between God and man. What does it mean then, when the Bible calls God's people "a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9)?*