

A New Song!

Introduction

From time immemorial singing has been part of human experience. People sing when they are glad, to celebrate life's joys and blessings and they sing when they mourn, when spoken words fail, when music and poetry alone can express the depths of their emotions. People sing to stir their hearts and to encourage one another to great things, anthems resounding through the stands, words and music working together to lift the team and to spur them on to victory. And last, but by no means least, people sing in praise of God, in honour of the one who endowed us with so great a gift.

Given the place that music and singing have in our lives, it is no surprise to find that the Bible, and in particular the book of Psalms, is full of references to singing. Sometimes these are just statements of intent, such as when the psalmist says "I will sing of your love and justice; to you O LORD, I will sing praise" (Psalm 101:1). At other times however, the psalmist invites and urges, perhaps even commands us to sing, as is the case in Psalm 98, the psalm we are considering in this study.

On closer examination we note that Psalm 98 tells us nothing about who the author was or what circumstances gave rise to the psalm. What it does do however is to tell us a great deal about the LORD and about the marvellous things which He had done - deeds of might and power, deeds of salvation for His people Israel, deeds which revealed His righteousness and His faithfulness, deeds which revealed Him to be the Creator and King of His world. It was because of these great and marvellous deeds that His people Israel, who had once sang the song of Moses on the banks of the Sea of Reeds, were called to sing a new song to the LORD. And it was because of these past acts of salvation that they could know for sure that this same LORD would one day bring His saving purposes to fulfilment on the Day of the LORD when He would "judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity" (vs9).

Thus in the psalmist's day, the LORD's people were called to look back to the LORD's saving work and to His future coming and to sing a new song to the LORD. And the nations were called to join in the praise. As we read the psalm today, in the light of the greatest of all acts of salvation accomplished by God's power through the death and resurrection of Jesus and in the sure knowledge that He will return, can we do any less than to accept the call as ours and join in the song of praise?

Read Psalm 98:1-9

Investigate

1. In verse 1 the psalmist urges his readers to sing a *new* song to the LORD. Why were they to sing this new song to Him?
2. What marvellous things had the LORD done for His people? (see vss1-3)
3. What one word sums up the LORD's marvellous deeds for His people?
4. How did the LORD accomplish this salvation for His people? What does this imagery symbolise?
5. How does the psalm teach us that the LORD's saving work is in line with His covenant promises to His people?
6. What does the LORD's saving work reveal about His character?

