

Psalm 93

The LORD Reigns

The focus of the Psalm is on the LORD's sovereignty: his authority over creation, especially over the affairs of men. The Psalm stretches the canvas of time as wide as possible, beginning in eternity past and pointing to eternity future.

1. The LORD reigns over the world of men, vv. 1-2

The Psalm uses lots of doubles and triples to underline its message, e.g. the LORD isn't just robed – he is robed in majesty; he has put on strength like a warrior's belt. This is the poet's staircase. Each step is a "more than that" statement. It gives the Psalm colour and variety and excitement.

E.g. the LORD reigns – he is just like a king. But "more than that" he is no petty king who rules a little Canaanite city state – this King is robed in majesty. But "more than that" this King is like a great emperor who is robed and girded with a warrior's belt ready to assert his dominion.

Did God become King by dint of conquest? No. God didn't have to impose his rule by force of arms on unwilling subjects. There has never been a time when or a place where God did not rule. There have never been any rivals. God has always been King: "Your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting."

Especially, the LORD reigns over the world inhabited by men. The word translated "the world" in verse 1 refers to "the world inhabited by men". This is confirmed by the title of the Greek version of the Psalm: "For the day before the Sabbath, when the earth became inhabited."

The world of men is not inherently stable. It is stable because "Your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting." God is the foundation and the fountain of all created being. The Son of God "upholds all things by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:3).

This means that every good endeavour is meaningful and worthwhile:

- God's establish throne stabilizes the rhythms family life, agriculture, animal husbandry, and technology.
- God's throne is the foundation of truth. Morality is stable, language is meaningful, science is possible because the LORD reigns.
- The lives of individual people, and the history of nations have significance. We are not the evolutionary by-product of chance, and we are not helpless pawns of chaos, because the LORD reigns over the world of men.

2. The LORD reigns despite mankind's rebellion, vv. 3-4

"The floods" = "the rivers". The ancients thought that in the act of creation God had subdued primeval watery forces of chaos and shut them up in the seas. They imagined these forces flowing still as rivers in the depths of the seas, and that they threatened to flow out again and overwhelm the land.

The Bible does not endorse this mythology – it only uses the well-known image of the "floods-rivers" as a metaphor for the nations, especially Egypt (the Nile), and Assyria and Chaldea (the Tigris and the Euphrates). This is a picture of the way the great nations north and south of Israel lifted themselves up in noisy, arrogant, aggressive rebellion against the LORD.

The LORD is not threatened: "Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the LORD on high is mighty." He reigns over the world of men despite their tumultuous rebellion. Scripture gives many examples of this confidence, especially with respect to the Fall and the Crucifixion (Acts 2:23).

It was in this confidence that the Lord Jesus went to the Cross. In John's gospel he speaks of his crucifixion as though it were his enthronement. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). Jesus' exaltation – his return to the glory he had with his Father before the world began – was accomplished by his being "lifted up" on the Cross. This is the central mystery and wonder of the Gospel. We see God's superlative might in the weakness and the shame of the crucifixion of the Son of Man.

Yet this is how Jesus draws all men to himself, how he has established his Mediatorial reign, how he has become head over all things, how he has healed the fractured fabric of creation, how he has subdued rebels to himself.

3. The LORD will reign for ever, v. 5

The mood of the Psalm changes. We are transported from the clamour of the world in rebellion against God, to the composure of the Most Holy Place. We are shown a throne. The One seated on the throne holds a scroll – the decrees of God, his plan for the history of the world. It is by these decrees that God rules.

But the Psalmist lived many centuries before the incarnation. He could not see how the decrees of God were to be worked out in human history. But the apostle John was shown this in a vision (Revelation 5-22).

In Revelation 5 he saw a Lion and a Lamb – two title, but one Person. The Lion was the great Davidic King, girded with strength as with a belt, come fresh from conquest over his enemies. But the Lamb bore the marks of having been slaughtered. The Lamb went to the One seated on the throne and took the scroll from him. And when he did so, those who served the One enthroned sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals..." The trustworthy decrees of God – his plan for the history of the world – is in the hands of the crucified, risen Christ.

Revelation concludes with the final subjugation of every enemy. Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire (ch. 20). And then God comes – he makes all things new – the throne room of God is open to all God's people – and God and the Lamb reign for ever and ever (ch. 21-22).

The LORD's reign through creation (vv. 1-2) – which is exercised in his reign through providence (vv. 3-4) – will finally be complete by his reign through redemption (v. 5).