

END OF PSALM 109

## You are Psalms

Some people think you never get discouraged, but the fact is, when you do, you know where to run. Your prayers are open and honest because you realize that God already knows your heart, He's just waiting to hear you spill it. And when you do, what starts out as heavy ends up becoming a song of praise. You may struggle... and often you do... but each time, you grow in your understanding of God's faithfulness. You're just a song waiting to happen.

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## PSALMS (SONGS OF PRAISE)

TRUST  
IN THE  
LORD *and do good;  
dwell in the land and  
enjoy safe pasture.*  
PSALM 36: 3

PSALM NUMBER: 109

**Christ's exaltation, and everlasting priesthood.**

1. The Lord said to my Lord: Sit thou at my right hand: until I make thy enemies thy footstool.
2. The Lord will send forth the scepter of thy power out of Sion: rule thou in the midst of thy enemies.
3. With thee is the principality in the day of thy strength; in the brightness of the saints: from the womb before the day star I begot thee.
4. The Lord hath sworn, and he will not repent: Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech.
5. The Lord at thy right hand hath broken kings in the day of his wrath.
6. He shall judge among nations; he shall fill ruins: he shall crush the heads in the land of many.
7. He shall drink of the torrent in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

*The Psalms are songs of praise and cover a period of about 1000 years, from the time of Moses (ca. 1400 B.C.) to the Israelites' return from exile (ca. 450 B.C.). They deal with selected events of that period and provide us with the thoughts and feelings of those who went through the experiences recorded. After being made a Cardinal by Pope Clement VIII, Saint Robert Bellarmine, prepared for posterity his very own commentary on each of the Psalms. Enclosed are his interpretations on each of the Psalms.*

## **PSALM NUMBER: 109**

### **EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM**

1. "The Lord said to my Lord: sit thou at my right hand: until I make thy enemies thy footstool." David, in spirit, saw the Messiah ascending into heaven after his death and Resurrection, and tells us the language the Father made use of when he invited him to sit beside him and reign along with him. He makes use of the past tense, "the Lord said," instead of the future; because, in the spirit of prophecy, he looks upon the matter as a thing of the past. "The Lord said," God the Father said, "to my Lord," to Christ, for it cannot apply to Abraham or Ezechias, as some of the Jews will have it, neither of whom sat on the right hand of the Father, nor were they begot from the womb before the day star, nor were they priests according to the order of Melchisedech; and, furthermore, when this passage was quoted by Christ when arguing with the Jews, they did not attempt to question its reference to the Messiah. "Sit thou at my right hand." Sitting denotes peace and supreme power, which Christ was to enjoy; and sitting "at my right hand" denotes equality, and an equal share in that supreme power enjoyed by God the Father. Christ, as far as his divine nature was concerned, had that equality at all times, but he only got it as regards his human nature after his humiliation unto death, even to the death of the cross, as St. Paul says, "wherefore God also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and in hell, and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father." Sitting on the right hand of God, then, is the same as being in the glory and the majesty of God, and that glory consists in having a name above every name, at which every knee shall bend; for, as the same apostle has it, "he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet;" when the apostle proves that the expression "sit thou at my right hand" means nothing more or less than share my sovereign power. The same apostle, Hebrews 1, has, "for to which of the angels hath he said at any time, sit on my right hand? And they not all ministering spirits sent to minister?" Thus proving the difference between Christ and the Angels, from the fact of the latter being merely ministers and servants, and, therefore, not allowed to sit, but obliged to stand, in readiness for the execution of their Lord's commands; while Christ, as Lord and King, sits with his Father above all creatures. Finally, St. Peter, Acts 2, says, "being exalted, therefore, by the right hand of God, he hath poured forth this which you see and here; for David did not ascend into heaven, but he himself said: the Lord said to my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool. Therefore, let all the house of Israel know most assuredly that God hath made him Lord and Christ, this same Jesus whom you

torrent in undergoing the calamities consequent on his mortality; nay, even he descended into the very depth of the torrent through his passion, the waters of which, instead of contributing to his ease and refreshment, only increased his pains and sufferings, as he complains in Psalm 68. "The waters are come in even unto my soul, I stick fast in the mire of the deep, and there is no sure standing. I am come into the depth of the sea, and a tempest hath overwhelmed me." In consideration, then, of such humiliation, freely undertaken for the glory of the Father and the salvation of mankind, he afterwards "lifted up his head," ascended into heaven, and, sitting at the right hand of the Father, was made Judge of the living and the dead.

5. “The Lord at thy right hand hath broken kings in the day of his wrath.” Having asserted that the Son was called a priest forever by the Father, the Prophet now addresses the Father, and says that Christ will be really a priest forever; for though many kings of the earth will conspire against him in order to upset his religion and his priesthood, he, however, seated at the right hand of his Father, will break his adversaries down, and, in spite of them all, will perpetuate his priesthood and his sacrifice. “The Lord at thy right hand;” Christ, as you spoke to him sitting there, when you said, “sit thou at my right hand.” “Hath broken kings in the day of his wrath;” when he shall be angry with his enemies, the kings of the earth, for persecuting his Church, he will break them, and, as far as I can foresee, has already broken them; for in the spirit of prophecy, I already see Herod stricken by the Angel. Nero, in his misery, laying violent hands on himself; Domitian, Maximinus and Decius put to death; Valerian taken captive by the barbarians; Diocletian and Maximinus throwing up the reins of government in despair; Julian, Valens, and Honorius, and nearly all the kings hostile to Christ meeting a miserable end here, and well merited punishment in hell afterwards for all eternity.

6. “He shall judge among nations; he shall fill ruins: he shall crush their heads in the land of many.” Having told us how Christ would deal for the present with his enemies, the kings and princes of the earth, he tells us now, in addition, how he will deal, on the day of judgment, with all his enemies, “he shall judge among the nations;” he who, while here below, beat down the impetuosity of princes, and preserved his Church in time of persecution, will afterwards, at the end of the world, judge all nations; and having condemned all the wicked amongst them, “he shall fill ruins,” will utterly exterminate, ruin, and destroy the whole body of the wicked; and thus “he shall crush the heads in the land of many.” He will humble and confound all the proud, that now, with heads erect, make against him, for he will then trample on their pride, when he shall make their weakness known to the whole world, and thus render them both contemptible and confused; and such is the meaning of crushing their heads; and he adds, “in the land of many,” because the truly humble and pious in this world are very few indeed, when compared to the proud and the haughty who are nearly innumerable

7. “He shall drink of the torrent in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.” He now assigns a reason for Christ being endowed with such power as to be able to break kings, to judge nations, to fill ruins, and to crush heads, and says, “he shall drink of the torrent in the way, therefore shall he lift up the head;” and if he said with the apostle, “he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name.” The torrent means the course of human affairs; for, as a torrent flows with great noise and force, full of mud and confusion, as soon after subsides without leaving even a trace of itself, so it is with the affairs of this mortal life – they all pass away, having, generally speaking, been much troubled and confused. Great battles and revolutions, such as those in the time of Caesar and Alexander, and others, have been heard of, but they and their posterity have passed away without leaving a trace of their power. The Son of God, through his Incarnation, came down this torrent, and “in the way,” that is, during his mortal transitory life, drank the muddy water of this

have crucified.” St. Peter clearly says here that “sitting at the right hand of God” means his having ascended into heaven, and ruling and governing in all places as God only can rule and govern. “Until I make thy enemies thy footstool.” The kingdom of Christ, then, is never to have an end, nor is there any danger of its being subverted by its enemies, God having determined to bring them all under subjection by degrees, that Christ may then reign peaceably forever after. The word, then, “until,” does not imply that Christ’s reign was only to hold until his enemies should be subjected; but it means that his kingdom would be always extended more and more until as much as one single enemy not bowing the knee to him would not remain; as if he said, in other words: come on ruling with me, and cease not extending our kingdom so long as one solitary enemy shall remain unconquered. That extension of Christ’s kingdom is daily going on through the conversion of some to faith and obedience, who willingly put themselves under Christ’s feet, that he may rest in them as he would on a footstool, and who, after finishing their exile, set out for their country, where they felicitously rest in God: others have either been perverted, or have got hardened in their perversity and are, in the end, hurried away by death to judgment, and, on being condemned, are consigned to hell, where they are, for all eternity, trampled under the feet of Christ. The extension of Christ’s kingdom will be completed on the last day, when every knee shall be of those that are in heaven, on earth, and in hell, to Christ. But why is the assertion “until I make” attributed to the Father? Does not the Son, too, “make thy enemies thy footstool?” Everything done by the Father is also done by the Son, as he himself asserts, but the Father is made to act here, in order, as it were, to reward the obedience of the Son, as the apostle says, “wherefore, God also hath exalted him.” With that, everything implying power is usually attributed to the Father, though the Son has the same power, because the Father shares it with him, though the Son cannot share it with the Father, he having had it from the Father by generation. The Son also, as man, enjoys it but by virtue of the Hypostatic Union. The part the Son takes in subduing the common enemy will be treated of in the next verse.

2. “The Lord will send forth the scepter of thy power out of Sion: rule thou in the midst of thy enemies.” David having, in spirit, heard the Father saying to the Son, “sit thou at my right hand,” now addresses the Son, and, in this same spirit of prophecy, shows how the propagation of Christ’s kingdom on earth was to be commenced. “The Lord will send forth the scepter of thy power out of Sion;” that is, God the Father, in order to put your enemies under your feet, will begin to extend the scepter of your royal power out of the city of Jerusalem, and to extend it from Mount Sion, and propagate it to the remotest corners of the earth. This corresponds with the language of our Lord after his Resurrection. “And thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead on the third day, and that penance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” And in the first chapter of the Acts, “and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth.” The scepter of his power was sent out of Sion, as if they grew on that mountain; for it was in Jerusalem

that the spiritual kingdom of Christ commenced, as there were the first believers, and there the faith began to be propagated by the apostles. "Rule thou in the midst of thy enemies." All success, triumph, and happiness to you on the way; extend your kingdom to all nations; carry the banner of your cross in the midst of Jews and pagans; plant it where they are thickest and strongest; "rule everywhere in the midst of them;" and in spite of them, and in opposition to them, set up your kingdom. That was very soon accomplished; for within a few years, in spite of both Jews and pagans, many Christian churches were established, for the apostle writes to the Colossians, chapter 1, "the truth of the Gospel is in the whole world, and bringeth forth fruit and growth;" and St. Ireneus, who lived in this century after the apostles, writes, "the Church has been planted through the entire world, even to the ends of the earth;" and he specifies the Churches of Germany, Spain, Libya, Egypt, France, the East, and the churches he calls those in the middle of the world, meaning Greece and Italy. The Psalm most appropriately adds, "in the midst of thy enemies;" because, however prosperous and triumphant the Church may be, she will always be surrounded by enemies – by pagans, Jews, heretics, and that Christians – as long as she sojourns here below. But at the end of the world, when the good shall come to be separated from the bad, the kingdom of Christ will be no longer in the midst of her enemies, but will rise above, and be exalted over all the enemies.

3. "With thee is the principality in the day of thy strength; in the brightness of the saints: from the womb before the day star I begot thee." Having said, "rule thou in the midst of thy enemies," which meant at the time that Christ's kingdom in this world was besieged by his enemies, he now tells us how matters will be on the last day, when all his enemies shall have been subdued, and made his footstool. "With thee is the principality in the day of thy strength;" your power or principality will then be evident to all, and it will be seen that yours is the kingdom. "In the day of thy strength;" on the last day, when your strength will move the heavens, darken the sun, shake the earth, raise the dead, and summon all to your tribunal. "In the brightness of thy saints;" when you shall be surrounded by your saints, who will shine like the sun. "From the womb, before the day star, I begot thee;" you will have such a principality with you, because I, your Almighty Father, "begot you," not as I did all other created things, from nothing, but, "from the womb," from my own womb, as my true, natural, and consubstantial Son, and that "before the day star," before I created the stars, before any creature, before all ages. "From the womb." The holy fathers very properly use this expression as a proof of the divinity of Christ; for, if he were a creature, he could not be said to be born of the womb, for no one can say that a house, or a seat, or anything manufactured, is born of the womb; nor does God anywhere say that the heavens or the earth were born of the womb. By the womb is meant the secret and intimate essence of the Deity; and, though the womb is to be found in women only, still it is applied to the Father, to show more clearly the consubstantiality of the Son with him, so also show that God needed not the cooperation of woman to bring forth and produce. Himself begot and gave birth. As Isaias says, "shall not I, that made others to bring forth children, myself bring forth, saith the Lord." – "Before the day star." Here we have a proof of the eternity of Christ; for he was born before the day star, and, consequently, before all created things; but he named the day star, for he himself, as the Son of God, is the increate

light. For he is the true light, that enlighteneth every man an angel.

4. "The Lord hath sworn, and he will not repent: thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech." He now passes from the regal to the sacerdotal dignity, and shows that Christ is a priest forever, not by reason of his succeeding to Aaron, but as a priest immediately appointed by God, and of whom Melchisedech was a type. "The Lord hath sworn," hath confirmed his promise by an oath, "and he will not repent;" firmly resolved upon it, a resolution he will never alter; and that is, that though the priesthood of Aaron was to be changed, that of Christ's never would. God is said to be sorry, a thing he cannot be subject to, when he acts as men do who are sorry for anything; thus, God says in Genesis, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, from man even to the fowls of the air, for it repenteth me that I have made them." And, again, in 1 Kings 15, the Lord says, "it repenteth me that I have made Saul king." – "Thou art a priest forever." These are the words of the Father to the Son, and not of David, as St. Paul reasserts in Hebrew 5. Now Christ is said to be a priest forever, because the effect of the one sacrifice in which he offered his body on the cross holds forever, as the apostle, in Hebrew 10 has it, "for by one oblation he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified;" as also, because he, living forever, daily, through the hands of the priest of his Church, who succeed each other, offers a sacrifice to which the apostle alludes, when he says, "and the others indeed were made many priests, because, by reason of death, they were not suffered to continue; but this, for that he continueth forever, hath an everlasting priesthood." – "According to the order of Melchisedech;" that is, the rite, law, or custom of Melchisedech, whose order is distinguished from that of Aaron, and from which it differs in many respects. In the first place, Melchisedech succeeded no priest, nor had he a successor; and, thus, the apostle says of him, "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days, nor end-of-life." While in the priesthood of Aaron one succeeded another, the son supplied the father's place. Secondly, Melchisedech was both King and priest. Aaron was simply a priest. Thirdly, Melchisedech's offering consisted of bread and wine, that of Aaron was of sheep and oxen. Fourthly, Melchisedech was the priest of mankind. Aaron's priesthood was confined to the Jews. Fifthly, Melchisedech required neither tent, tabernacle, nor temple for sacrifice. Aaron did; and hence, to the present day, the Jews have no sacrifice, because they have no temple. Christ, then, is a priest according to the order of Melchisedech, by reason of his having succeeded no priest, and by reason of his having had no priest to succeed him in the great dignity of his everlasting priesthood; and he in fact, as to his human nature has really no father, and as to his divine nature has no mother. The same Christ is both King and Priest, and he offered bread and wine at his Last Supper, that is, his body under the appearance of bread, and his blood under the appearance of wine; and he is the priest, not only of the Jews, but of the Gentiles; nor is his priestly office confined to one temple or one tabernacle, but, as Malachy predicted, "from the rising of the sun, even to the going down, in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation."