

Psalm 98:1-9

"God's jubilee ... and mega-jubilee!"

Psalm 98:1-9 NLT

*Sing a new song to the Lord,
for he has done wonderful deeds.*

*He has won a mighty victory
by his power and holiness.*

² *The Lord has announced his victory
and has revealed his righteousness to every nation!*

³ *He has remembered his promise to love and be faithful to Israel.
The whole earth has seen the salvation of our God.*

⁴ *Shout to the Lord, all the earth;
break out in praise and sing for joy!*

⁵ *Sing your praise to the Lord with the harp,
with the harp and melodious song,*

⁶ *with trumpets and the sound of the ram's horn.
Make a joyful symphony before the Lord, the King!*

⁷ *Let the sea and everything in it shout his praise!
Let the earth and all living things join in.*

⁸ *Let the rivers clap their hands in glee!
Let the hills sing out their songs of joy
⁹ before the Lord.*

*For the Lord is coming to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with justice,
and the nations with fairness.*

Who's in charge here? -- of our church service this morn ?

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who's in charge our state of NY? () US? () world? ()

what it look like if God was fully in charge in our world?!

if movers-&-shakers letting him guide them? if God was running the show thru people submitted to him?

what look like if this world was "God's kingdom" / realm God's will done?

the psalmist in our Sc rdg imagines that scenario.

begins talking about "mighty victory" God has won.

then imagines whole earth shouting & singing for joy before "the Lord, the King!"

last 2 vvs:

⁸ *Let the rivers clap their hands in glee!
Let the hills sing out their songs of joy
⁹ before the Lord.*

*For the Lord is coming to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with justice,
and the nations with fairness.*

why is earth jubilant at the Lord coming to "judge" earth??

we in our culture don't like the word "judge." --sounds "judgmental"/ arrogant. but when something is badly out of kilter, it's got to be fixed.

& in order to be fixed, someone has to make a decision that this is wrong, & it's got to be put right.

so msg that God coming to judge fills creations w rejoicing.

--he's coming to "sort things out" / "put things to rights" once for all.

J has us pray for that: "thy K come, will be done on earth as heaven."

God created world. went bad.

we Chrns have hope that he is not going to just let it go bad, kick it in trash basket. but going to come and set it to rights!

All through the Bible we see hints that God will one day set the whole world to rights:

that hope surfaces in the Psalmist's songs: **eg. Psalms 96, 98**

in our prayers: **eg. the Lord's Prayer**

in the B's teachings:

eg. Romans 8:18-23 whole creation groaning, waiting to be released from its frustration/ pain.

that creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay & corruption.

in prophecies:

looked last Sun at **eg. Isaiah 11**

greatest prophecy along these lines: the final scene as we leave bk of Rev . heaven has come to earth, God is dwelling among humanity.

Revelation 21-22

looked at this last Sun too. somehow for 50 yrs I always missed

indications the grand finale of history was heaven coming to earth.

21:24 - *The nations will walk by the light of glory of God among them.*

22:1-2 - *river of the water of life will flow from the throne of God and of the Lamb. & a tree of life will stand there. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.*

lots of unanswered qs .

but one thing clear: God is not just interested in indiv souls who submit to him, & escape to heaven.

if the prophecy uses that language of heaven coming to earth, it's clear God cares about this creation he made, about societies/nations.

that's last prophecy in B . look at the first one:
imm after the human race turned against God, as God judged their sin,
 he hinted at "righting" things:

Genesis 3:15

along w judging serpent who deceived Eve into sinning, talks about
 an "offspring" of the woman who would "crush" serpent's head.

(the serpent's power is in its head.
 & there indeed did come One whom we know as the son of his
 mother --more so than any other indiv! --who crushed serpent's
 head. But getting ahead of the story.)

God created world. went bad.
 we read in the B about what God is going to do --he's not going to sit back & let
 it be bad, --**All through the Bible we see hints that God will**
one day set the whole world to rights

let's look at what the B shows us God has already been doing.
And we see him acting to do so:

here's whirlwind tour of B that I found fascinating. hopefully you won't just
 feel the whirlwind but also the fascination!

first of all **God forms a people**

he calls the patriarch.

Genesis 12:1-3

Then the Lord told Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you. ² I will cause you to become the father of a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and I will make you a blessing to others. ³ I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you."

was God doing this solely for Abr's benefit??
 no. God wants "all the peoples on earth" (NIV) to be blessed thru Abr .

for the benefit of the whole earth

is it possible God is working w Abr to restore/redeem the nations, to
 complete the project that was thwarted by the Fall?

story of how Abr's desc became nation of Isr - marvelous:
 a Pharaoh invited them to Egypt. 70 persons.
 when that Pharaoh's dynasty ended, became slaves in E .

power encounter betw God of Abr Isaac & Jacob and gods of E , resulting
 in The Exodus thru Red Sea.
 40 yrs in wilderness betw E & Palestine.
 could have covered that ground in months. but those 40 yrs - essential
 to meld them together as a nation.
 & to be given new laws by God as at Mt Sinai. thru Moses.

God gives his people laws of amazing wisdom

sanitation regulations ahead of other cultures by couple millennia.

• sanitation mandated

all kinds of ritual washings.
 when "call of nature" - outside - took shovel (Dt 23:12-13).

dietary laws forbade unsafe foods. • **unsafe foods prohibited**

--like pork which can carry trichinosis (when not cooked well)

ritual laws concerning male-female emissions - made those bodily functions
 sacred. --a little more conducive to morality than our culture's casual
 familiarity w sexuality. • **sexuality made sacred**

• Sabbath provided

a 7-day wk w 7th day as one of rest during which people were not "human
 doings" but "human beings."
 societies have tried other wk lengths. always come back to 7.

most amazing: at heart of legislation given by God at Mt Sinai: laws that
actually eliminate poverty.

• long-term poverty eliminated

Isr is called to be a people in whom the forgiveness is a social reality.

every 7th yr was a Sabbath yr .

and on that yr , all debts among the people were to be cancelled, placing
 everyone on equal footing.

debts forgiven every 7 years

Deuteronomy 15:1-2 At the end of every seven years

you must cancel debts. [in case someone didn't "get" what that
 mns :] ² ***This is how it is to be done: Every creditor shall***

cancel the loan he has made to his fellow Israelite. [in case someone still didn't "get" it:] **He shall not require payment from his fellow Israelite or brother, because the Lord's time for canceling debts has been proclaimed.**

v4 - "there will be no poor among you" (ESV)

but poverty involves more than debts.

if one fell under hard times (no longer feed & clothe themselves), what then? would go to someone be their slave.

but, God said, could not be a slave more than 6 yrs. on 7th, master is to release the slave.

slaves freed on the 7th year

the law says **Deuteronomy 15:13-14 ...do not send him away empty-handed. ¹⁴ Supply him liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress. Give to him as the Lord your God has blessed you.**

but what if a family-in-hard-times sold some of their land?

& in agric society, when sell land, family now has limited mns of production / earnings potential.

every 7 "seven yrs" (49 yrs) is to be a yr of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8-17) when not only are debts remitted & slaves freed, but also land goes back to family that originally owned it.

land restored to families every 7 x 7 years (49)

Leviticus 25:8-9 Count off seven sabbaths of years--seven times seven years... ⁹ Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere ... and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan.

restoration of family holdings that were lost.

goes on : if you sell land, sell it on the basis of the number of years until the Jubilee.

¹⁶ *When the years are many, you are to increase the price, and when the years are few, you are to decrease the price, because what [you are really selling] is the number of crops.*

a society built on forgiveness!

--every 7 x 7 going to put our society to rights. --people who find themselves at the bottom of the pile will find get a fresh start.

rich not keep getting richer and poor poorer.

(often perceive OT laws as oppressive. not! created healthy society. bad press bec judged sin swiftly/severely. & focused on external rather than internal.)

why did God give these laws to Isr ? solely for their benefit?

or were they model for the world what God wants the whole world to be like?

again & again: God calls Isr to be "light to the nations," to show his glory to whole earth. Isa 40-55.

how did Isr do at keeping them??

she became great at external observance of most of the law.

but practiced the sabbath yr (every 7 yrs) only sporadically.

tho after their Babylonian Exile, appears did practice it. --are records of Roman gov exempting Judea from tribute during the 7th year.

why more diligent after Exile?

bec prophet Jer told them (as Babylon knocking on their gates), Babylon was going to conquer / exile for 70 yrs. (Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10-14) & when they came back, the Chronicler told them during those 70 yrs of Exile "The land enjoyed its sabbath rests" (2 Chron. 36:21).

but if OT Isr practiced the sabbath yr sporadically, appears practiced the Jubilee not at all. Jubilee legisl was practically never observed/enforced.

can understand why. the rich/ powers-that-be too much to lose.

but God isn't done yet. it's almost like what he's done-so-far is just preparing for/ setting-the-stage for the really big-thing he is going to do in "setting the world 'to rights'." **God inaugurates a "mega-jubilee"**

look at this most amazing prophecy:

Daniel 9:24. might want to turn to bk ("Isa, Jer, Ezek, Daniel").

half of the bk - excellent stories, some of best in B . if you want good rdg, pick it up.

half of the bk incredible visions. wild! and accurate! --unmistakably describes Greek & Roman empires.

--so accurate, skeptics say had to have been written later than at end of Daniel's life, after Medo-Persians captured Babylon (c. 530 BC).

but a couple things give those skeptics fits:

- linguistic evidence that places it in Daniel's time frame.
- when they date it as late as they can (2nd c BC), that's still way before the Roman empire took control of Palestine. & there are startling predictions of the Roman empire (2:33, 7:7,19).

verse that has attracted perhaps the most interest in bk of Daniel is 9:24.

Daniel was praying there in Babylon: "how long is the exile going to go on? how long will it take for God to restore the fortunes of his people? to make everything right again?"

while praying, angel comes to Daniel: Jeremiah tho't it was going to be 70 yrs, but actually going to be 70 x 7 yrs.

Daniel 9:24 ***"Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.***

Seventy 'sevens' - 70 "weeks of 7 yrs" or 490 yrs --kind of mega-jubilee.

ends w a list of things that are going to happen at end of these 490 yrs: "finish transgression, put an end to sin, atone for wickedness, bring in everlasting righteousness, seal up vision & prophecy, and anoint the most holy."

couldn't they be sum as God "setting the world to rights"?!)

it gets even stranger!

in next v says when 70 '7s' will start: "when the decree to restore & rebuild Jer comes."

when did the decree go out to restore & rebuild Jer ? well, there's a decree to do so by King Artaxerxes in Ezra 7:11, dated 458 BC.

all kinds of bib teachers try figure out this mega-jubilee Daniel referring to. some say one thing; some another. quite complicated -- Daniel goes on to break the 70 down into 7, 62 & 1. (-- you add 7, 62 & 1 = 70.)

I will just say this: among the Jews, 490 yrs later, expectations of the Messiah, one who would bring the rule of God on earth, were at a fever pitch.

Josephus, the Jewish historian of 1st c, says that in this time the Jewish people were especially stirred to revolt against Rome bec of a prophecy in their Scs which said that at that time a world ruler would arise from Judea, one who would put everything to rights.

when you count 490 yrs from after 458 BC, you land smack in the middle of J's earthly min.

w this OT background, you can understand what a good 1st c Jew would be thinking when they see J of Naz coming into Galilee & saying the time is fulfilled, that the K of God is at hand, get ready, it's all coming to pass. --their jaw would drop / eyes widen / pulse begin to race. "could it be?!" the dream of Isr is now going to be fulfilled.

one more "uncanny" thing. last we have time for.

listen to this:

the first event Lk records of J's min:

Luke 4:16-21

When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures. ¹⁷ The scroll containing the messages of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him, and he unrolled the scroll to the place where it says:

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has appointed me to preach Good News to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the downtrodden will be freed from their oppressors, ¹⁹ and that the time of the Lord's favor has come."

²⁰ *He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. Everyone in the synagogue stared at him intently. ²¹ Then he said, "This Scripture has come true today before your very eyes!"*

God inaugurates a "mega-jubilee" ... in the person of Jesus prophecy of Isa J read was Isa 61 --the background for Isa 61 is the year of Jubilee. was seen as a sort of mega-jubilee.

to the Jews at the Nazareth synagogue, 'the year of the Lord's favor' mnt the jubilee year of Leviticus 25.

this was how J announced his program: w jubilee language.

John Howard Yoder *Politics of J*, chapt 3, shows evidence from all thru the Gospels that J was indeed thinking of jubilee.

wherever people saw Jesus, they saw God putting the world to rights

showed love to outcasts. forgave the sinners.

- **modeled love and forgiveness**

how did he proclaim the Jubilee?

not command his disciples to reclaim their ancestral lands.

- **called his followers to forgive financial debts and to show radical mercy to the poor and needy**

- **healed people**

his healings & miracles were not tricks to show that he was really divine.

what J did again & again was to show that God was putting things to rights.

J is doing what Isa said would happen when God's k established: "then would the eyes of the blind be opened. ears of deaf unstopped..."

he blistered the Jewish teachers for way they distorted the law of Moses (food laws, Sabbath laws, etc.)

- **corrected distortions of the law of Moses**

--God had given that law bec wanted to "put world to rights."

they had turned it into bondage, focusing on pain-staking attention to minutia of the law.

J: no! God is not interested in that! God rather desires heart-felt obedience in order to love your neighbor as yourself.

said: "God desires mercy, not sacrifice." "the Sabbath is made for man, not man for the sabbath"

listen to this from Matthew 23 (vv23-26)

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices--mint, dill and cummin. [were to tithe income (in agric society = crops). they tithed everything --down to herbs from their garden!] But you have neglected the more important matters of the law--justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. ²⁴ You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

²⁵ *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶ Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.*

those protecting the status quo did not like J's msg .

so they got the Romans to kill him.

did that set God's mega-jubilee back??

no way! now we got to see God's ultimate way of setting the world to rights: resur .

- **was the first to receive a resurrected body**

hear this: resur not just say: "evil won't have last word."

also: God cares for the whole person -- body and soul

God doesn't say: it's the soul that matters, not the body."

says: both the sp-al and the phys are eternal.

J's resur body could eat, could be touched. as well as go thru locked doors.

was prob composed of atoms of J's earthly body -- thus tomb empty.

God not just going to set J's body to rights. J is "the first", mng are more to come.

1 Cor 15:23 - J "firstfruits." when J returns, all his people will be raised.

Rom 8 - renewal of creation is tied in w / timed w you & I being given resur bodies.

close w

Will we as God's people join him in putting the world to rights?

I grew up thinking of God as interested in sp-al aspects of our lives. the "Good News to the poor" in Lk 4 was "GN to poor-sinners."

& hallelujah God does have GN for sinners.

most of our ch life focuses on that.

but God is not just concerned about souls & helping us see truth.

concerned about creation, about bodies.

his ultimate goal is set the whole world to rights.

thus we had the laws of Moses caring about physical life & justice as well as sp-al.

thus we have Rom 8 / Rev 21-22. (& Matt 25:31-46 ...!)

it's more convenient and easy for us to have an understanding that says God just interested in sp-al .

then we don't have to be involved in world's phys needs.

I rejoice in shift seeing in Amer evang ch : concerned about racism. issues of poverty & justice. were not in 1960s. but now part of fabric of ch . ch doesn't see it as competing w evang . but hand-in-hand. I rejoice in our cong's support of MCC / our Scraps-R-Us grp .

would love to take time to celebr the ch thru history building hosps / caring for sick, working to stop slavery.

would love to tell story of Desmond Tutu. thru the late 1980s & early 90s, political commentators were saying: the blood bath in S Africa is beginning. big explosion. had not reckoned w one S African, reading his B and saying there is a different way. preaching peace & nonviolence. then chairing Truth & Reconciliation Commission, rebuilding their society on forgiveness.

sometimes Chrns says we can't do anything to work for restoration. will always be evil in world the people in power are too powerful, we can't make any diff.

N.T.Wright suggests this response: imagine someone saying, "I keep having a real problem w sin. --keep on failing & falling. am not good at resisting temptation. but the GN is that I know one day God will raise me from the dead, and make me completely holy. really looking fwd to that bec I don't like sin in my life. when God frees me, then I will praise him, serve him to my heart's content. but let's not bother about sin until then. I'm just going to wait and let him do it then."

you would hit them. "let's get some of God's fut at work in the present. precisely bec God is going to make you that way in the fut , get to work to be now as God wants you to be then. as you are going to be in fut , so you are to start to be in the present, in the power of the Sp ."

we must do the same on the cosmic scale.

if earth going to be renewed when Christ comes again, we need to take that vision of renewal in Rom 8, and say "okay, it will only fully happen when God makes the new heavens & the new earth. But let us resolve to pray & work by every mns to be planting signs of that k of heaven here & now.

sometimes all we can do is pray. but where we can bring restorative justice to the world, we will. where we can preserve fragile ecosystems, we will. where we can bind up the wounds of the world, we will. where we can put in place systems that will make it less & less possible for people to destroy others, we will.

Brian McLaren says idea that we can't do anything to work for restoration, reminds him of story of a boy whose mother tells him clean room. child: I've been going to school. paying attention. learned about something called 'entropy.' law of nature: everything goes from order to disorder, Mom. do you understand that by asking me to clean my room, asking me to go against laws of nature? my room is moving nicely from order to disorder. Mom, you know Who invented the laws of nature.

McLaren: my mom would have said, "I don't give a rip about laws of nature. I'm telling you the law of your mother: clean your room!" God: "I don't care if things are going to go from bad to worse until my Son comes again as King, & you all get resurrected bodies. I'm telling you about "law of Sp of life in C Jesus" / "law of resur .". I still want you to do what you can against entropy and evil."

Isr was called to be "Jubilee people" in God's project of putting the world to rights. "pilot project"

J was the jubilee in person. --the beginning of promised "mega-jubilee"! and we as J's followers are to forgive debts and share w the needy. are to be the light of the world, the salt of the earth, the city set upon the hill, a witness to the mercy and glory of God.

we are to be sign for all the world to see that God didn't create the world, only to destroy it when went bad. but that he is working w power & patience to set it to rights.