

Psalm 46

Title: God Is Our Refuge

Author and Date: The Sons of Korah

Key Verses: Psalm 46:1, 7, 11

Type: Trust / Praise

Outline

- A. God's protection: a refuge in time of trouble (verses 1-3).
- B. God's presence: a refuge in time of rage (verses 4-7).
- C. God's preeminence: a refuge in time of war (verses 8-11).

Notes

Title: "For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the sons of Korah; set to Alamoth. A Song." See the notes on Psalm 42. The following psalms have something similar to this title: Psalm 42, 44-49, 84-85, and 87-88. "Alamoth" means "maidens" and it is thought that this psalm was sung by young women or soprano voices (1 Chron. 15:20).

Summary: Psalm 46 describes the trust and confidence that Israel has in God in time of trouble (verses 1-3), in time of rage (verses 4-7), and in time of war (verses 8-11). God is a refuge, a place of shelter and safety, and a help for his people in time of trouble. The occasion for this psalm may have been the time when Jerusalem was under attack by Sennacherib and the Assyrian army (2 K. 18-20), or the time when Moab and Ammon fought against Judah (2 Chron. 20:1ff). The wording of this psalm inspired Martin Luther to write the hymn "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" in 1529.

Verse 1: Like Psalm 44, the psalmist speaks on behalf of Israel using "our" (verses 7 and 11), "we" (verse 2), and "us" (verses 7 and 11).

Verses 2-3: The language of the earth, mountains, and waters being shaken (see also verse 6) is the language of chaos. It is used to describe a change in world events brought on by the hand of God (Psa. 18:7ff). The same Hebrew word is used for the waters that "roar" (verse 3) and for the nations that "rage" (verse 6).

Verse 3: For use of the term "Selah" here (see also verses 7 and 11), see the notes on Psalm 3.

Verses 4-5: The city of Jerusalem is described here (Psa. 43:3; 48:1-2; 87:1-3). "There is a river" is symbolic language used to describe the great blessings and gladness in Jerusalem provided by God's presence there (Psa. 65:9; Isa. 8:6; Ezek. 47:1-5; Joel 3:18; Zech. 14:8; Rev. 21:1-5; 22:1-5). Unlike the capitals of other great nations (Babylon,

Egypt, Rome), there is actually no river in Jerusalem. There are two springs there which supply the water, Gihon (2 Chron. 32:30) and En-rogel (2 Sam. 17:17).

Verse 5: “*And that* right early” (KJV) is literally, “at the dawn (face) of the morning”; or, “when morning dawns” (NASV). God acts quickly and promptly to help his people.

Verse 6: The language of the earth melting is the language of God’s judgment upon people (Amos 9:5; Mic. 1:4; Nah. 1:5).

Verse 7: “Jehovah” (Heb. *Yahweh* = eternal one) is not used often in Book II of the psalms. “Jehovah of hosts” is a reference to God who commands his heavenly army of angels (see the notes on Psa. 24:10). A “refuge” is literally, a “high tower” (see also verse 11).

Verse 10: “Be still” (Heb. *raphah*) means to “to let go”; “to cease” (Psa. 4:4; 37:8). The people are encouraged to cease their struggle; to let go and let God do his work. We would say, “Relax!” “To know” means to “admit”, “realize”, or “acknowledge” how great God is and be willing to exalt him to his rightful place in the world.

Questions

1. How does the psalmist describe God (verse 1)?
2. What does Israel not do in the midst of chaotic change (verse 2)?
3. What does the psalmist describe as being changed, shaken, and troubled (verses 2-3)?
4. What city does the psalmist speak of and how does he describe it (verse 4)?
5. What does God do for this city (verse 5)?
6. What do the nations do and what does God do against them (verse 6)?
7. How is God described (verse 7)?

8. What does the psalmist call upon the people to do (verse 8)?

9. What does God do in the earth (verse 9)?

10. What admonition does God give the people (verse 10)?

11. How is God described (verse 11)?

Applications for Today

1. God is our refuge, strength, and help in time of trouble (verses 1, 7, and 11). What trust and confidence does Paul express concerning God in Romans 8:31? What does the Hebrew writer express in Hebrews 6:18? What does John express in 1 John 4:4?

2. When God is our refuge, we are fearless, immovable, and victorious (verses 2, 5, 9). What does the psalmist say in Psalm 118:6? What does the Hebrew writer say in Hebrews 13:6?

3. We need to live faithfully so that one day we can be a citizen in the heavenly “city of God” (verse 4). What did Abraham look for (Heb. 11:10, 16)? How are the saints in heaven described (Rev. 3:12)?

4. God is “with us” (verse 7). What name is Jesus called and what does this name mean (Isa. 7:14; Mt. 1:23)?

5. We need to “be still” and “know” that God is great in all the earth. He is exalted above all (verse 10). What admonition does Habakkuk give (Hab. 2:20)? Who is exalted above the heavens (Psa. 57:5, 11; 108:5)? Who is exalted with a name above every name (Phil. 2:9)?