

Psalm 47

Title: God the King Over All the Earth

Author and Date: The Sons of Korah

Key Verses: Psalm 47:2, 7

Type: Praise

Outline

- A. God comes down in victory (verses 1-4).
- B. God goes up in exaltation (verses 5-9).

Notes

Title: “For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.” See the notes on Psalm 42. The following psalms have something similar to this title: Psalm 42, 44-49, 84-85, and 87-88.

Summary: Psalm 47 is a praise to God from beginning to end. It expands the thought of the previous psalm: “I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth” (46:10). Each verse of Psalm 47 mentions God in one way or the other. In both parts of the psalm (before and after the *Selah*), the people are called upon to praise God (verses 1 and 6) followed by the reasons for the praise (verses 2-4, and 7-9). The theme of this psalm is the reign of God as King over all the earth (verses 2 and 7). This psalm is one of six psalms that celebrate God’s universal reign (Psa. 47, 93, 96-99). The occasion for this psalm may have been the praise given to God at the time of Jehoshaphat’s victory over Moab and Ammon (2 Chron. 20:1-30).

Verse 1: The clapping of hands and shouting praise to God is authorized for Israel at this time, but we find no authority for these actions among New Testament Christians. The clapping of hands and shouting is found at the coronation of men as kings (1 Sam. 10:24; 2 Sam. 15:10; 2 K. 9:13; 11:12), so the psalmist calls upon all people to do this for God the King.

Verse 2: References to the Lord as “Most High” (*Elyon*) are very numerous in the psalms. It means that the Lord is above all. The Lord is “terrible” meaning that he is “awesome” (NIV) or “awe inspiring” (HCSB) and he is to be revered, respected, and “feared” (NASV, ESV).

Verses 3-4: The references to “us” and “our” in these verses are references to Israel. “The glory of Jacob” (verse 4) is Israel (Isa. 17:4; Amos 6:8; 8:7; Nah. 2:2). God helped Israel to conquer the land of Canaan and possess it for their inheritance (see the comments on Psa. 44:2-3). For the meaning of “*Selah*”, see the notes on Psalm 3.

Verse 5: “God is gone up” is a reference to God returning to heaven after his victory over the nations (verse 3). The NET Bible reads: “God has ascended his throne amid loud shouts”. Compare with Psalm 7:7 and 68:18. The “trumpet” is the shofar or “ram’s horn” (NET Bible).

Verse 6: “Sing praises” is mentioned four times in one verse!

Verse 7: “With understanding” translates the Hebrew word *maschil*. This is the same word found in the titles of some of the psalms (Psa. 32, 44, 45, etc.). A *maschil* psalm is meant to teach, instruct, and give understanding.

Verse 9: “The people of the God of Abraham” are all the people, Jew and Gentile, who obey God like Abraham did (Gen. 12:1-3; 17:5; Rom. 4:11-12; 9:25). The “shields of the earth” refer to the “kings” (NIV), “leaders” (HCSB), or “rulers” (NET Bible) of the earth (note how “shield” is parallel to “king” in Psa. 89:18). The “shields” (kings) belong to God because he is King over all the earth.

Questions

1. What does the psalmist call upon the people to do (verse 1)?
2. How does the psalmist describe the Lord (verse 2)?
3. What does God do for Israel (verses 3-4)?
4. How does God go up (verse 5)?
5. What does the psalmist call upon the people to do four times (verse 6)?
6. How are the people to sing praises (verse 7)?
7. Who does God reign over and where does God sit (verse 8)?

8. Who are gathered together and what belongs to God (verse 9)?

Applications for Today

1. God is King over all the earth (verses 2 and 7) and reigns over all the nations (verse 8). Who is King of kings (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14)? What do the heavenly beings say about God and Christ in Revelation 11:15.
2. God is worthy of our praise (verse 6). What is one thing that Christians are to think on (Phil. 4:8)? What sacrifice are Christians to offer (Heb. 13:15)? What are Christians to sing (Jas. 5:13)? What are we to give to God (Rev. 19:5)?
3. God is greatly exalted (verse 9). Who does Paul say is exalted (Phil. 2:9)?