

Praise the King

Sermon Text: Psalm 47

Study Texts: Psalm 97

Sermon Recap: The main idea of this week's sermon is: Rejoice in the Most High Who chooses our Heritage and reigns over the nations. Take time before your growth group to review the key points you noted from today's sermon.

Sermon Connection: Psalm 47 is a magnificent text of Scripture where God is affirmed as King over His people. And not only is God the King, He is King over all the earth, over all other kings. Psalm 97 is similar in its theme and is a part of a group of Psalms, Psalms 95-99, which celebrate Yahweh's Kingship over all. In Psalm 97, we find the Psalmist expressing Yahweh's kingship over all creation and over all evil. The Psalmist celebrates that God will subdue all evil and wickedness and all evildoers. But, as He does, the Psalmist also notes how God's defeat of evil includes God's preservation of His people, the righteous. And so just as Psalm 47 celebrates the Most High God Who chooses our Heritage and reigns over the nations, so too does Psalm 97.

Lesson Plan

Lesson Goal: to see that God's rule over all ensures the defeat of evil and the salvation of the righteous

Lesson Points: working through the Psalm verse by verse

The Context: This Psalm belongs to a group of Psalms (93-100) united by a common theme: Yahweh's rule over the earth. In these Psalms, we see that Yahweh is King over all and is to be trusted to deliver His people while also judging the sinful and wicked nations who have rejected Him.

Opening Question: Does the authority of government give you comfort that our country is safe and secure? Why or why not?

In a similar but greater way, does God's authority and rule over the world give you peace about life and anything that may come your way?

Transition Statement: We like to think we trust God all the time, but sometimes hardships and struggles call our beliefs into question. Psalm 97 helps us to remember that God is King over all and that He can be trusted to deal with evil.

Psalm 97

What does the phrase, "*The Lord reigns...*" mean, and how does this influence and shape the outlook/worldview of the Christian?

This Psalm opens with a declaration and affirmation of the reign of Yahweh. This means that the Lord is in power, that He is in control, and that He sits rightly enthroned over His people. But, the Psalm also affirms that Yahweh's control and reign extend around the earth, even to the coastlands; or, His reign extends to the very edges of everything. The point here is that God's reign indicates that He is the sovereign Lord over all; there is not one aspect of creation and existence that is not God's. This should, of course, profoundly affect the way in which we think about and interact with the world. It is as the Psalmist says in Psalm 24:1, "*The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein...*"

Verse 2 presents an image of God surrounded in thick darkness. How does this connect with the imagery Exodus 19-20? What is the imagery's purpose?

The imagery that is used here, "*Clouds and thick darkness are all around Him...*" is almost a direct quote from Exodus 19 where Israel has gathered around Sinai.¹ The imagery is used to describe the awesome nature of the judgment of God (Joel 2:2; Zeph. 1:15; Rev. 11:5). One writer notes, "The intensity, the brightness, of His coming is so great that it lights up the world."² The point is to show, using natural elements, the greatness of God's rule; how awesome, wonderful, yet frightening and entirely powerful. But, as we see in the second half of the verse, God is a God of righteousness and justice. For those who are under His grace, these things are gifts of mercy; for those who stand opposed to God, these things are threats of judgment.

In vv. 3-5, the Psalmist uses a series of images to show Yahweh's power and rule over the earth. What do these images communicate about God's power?

The Psalmist uses very dramatic language here writing, "*Fire goes before Him...*" "*His lightnings light up the world...*" "*The mountains melt...*" These are images that point to "The

¹ In theological study, this is called a *Theophany*, a visible manifestation of God.

² *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Psalms, 727.*

Day of the Lord,” meaning the final day of judgment where God will bring justice and righteousness to all the earth. With fire, He will consume His enemies; they will stand no chance against His might. The Psalmist notes that the earth will take frightful notice, and the God of justice conquers sin once and for all, bringing His just and righteous reign to the earth. The melting of the mountains speaks of His Lordship which extends even to the created realm. The mountains, those great, immovable monuments in nature, will melt like soft wax before this great King.

Take some time to meditate on these verses personally. How should these images affect our view of God and His view of sin?

Meditation on God’s power should bring us to humility, right recognition of His glory, repentance over sin, and worship.

What is the truth and reality we see in v. 6? How does this truth cause joy and hope in the people of God?

The revelation of God’s glory is overwhelming and wonderful. The created realm, the heavens and the earth, already proclaim His excellencies, His righteousness and glory (*Ps. 19:1; Rm. 1:18 ff*). The Psalmist here is saying that although the creation already proclaims God’s glory, there is coming a day when God Himself will establish His physical kingdom on earth and all the peoples will see. Knowing that day is coming, the Church is filled with hope that supersedes suffering and hardship. It does not wipe away the hurt and the struggle of sin, but it gives us the ability to see past it as we look not to the things that we see but to the coming day of the Lord’s salvation, which we cannot yet see (2 Cor. 4:17-18).

What does v. 7 teach about those people/nations who persist in idolatry? What is idolatry?

This verse makes this sober point: The nations must come to worship the true God, Yahweh. If they do not, they will face the punishment of God for idolatry. The grammar and language of the verse, “*worthless idols*,” lead us to see that in the day of judgment, worthless idols can do nothing to save from the wrath of Yahweh. Idolatry is the sin of placing something/anything in the place of Yahweh. That is, worshipping (through religious practice of lifestyle) something other than God, allowing something other than God to hold the primary place of commitment and love in your life.

How might idolatry be present in your own life? How does a right view of God’s hatred of idols help us to overcome idolatry?

If we are honest with ourselves, we all struggle with idolatry somewhere. Even as believers, we all struggle against this sin. It is important that we regularly take time to evaluate our own hearts to see if idolatry lurks. As we meditate on God’s hatred of idols, we too must come to hate them. We must come to hate the idols that live in our own hearts but also those that are in the world.

How do vv. 8-9 parallel the message of Psalm 47?

Psalm 47 is a celebration of this truth: The Most High God chooses our heritage and reigns over the nations. We see this fleshed out in Psalm 47 in a number of ways. The Psalmist notes such things as, "*He [the Lord] has subdued nations under us,...*" "*He chose our inheritance for us,...*" "*For God is the King of all the earth,...*" and "*God reigns over the nations...*" The picture here is not of a God Who attempts to save His people but of God Who saves His people without question. He is the Sovereign Who is over all. And not only does He save His people, He obtains for them His chosen heritage without fail. And in the same way, we see Ps. 97:8-9 communicating the same message. Zion (also translated Judah; the place of God's people) is made glad because God saves His people as the King over all the earth.

How does v. 10 parallel the message of vv. 1-2?

Verse 1 here builds on the confession of v. 9, "*For you, O Lord, are most high over all the earth...*" If such a confession is held as true, then it will work itself out in certain ways in our lives. As we realize through faith that God is the King, that He is righteous, that His demands are holy and good, we will come to hate evil just as He does. Therefore, v. 10 represents a wisdom statement of the people of God. As God hates evil, so will we.

What is the reward for the people of God seen in vv. 11-12?

According to the Psalmist, God's people will enjoy the benefits of the rule of God forever, which in the verse is *light* and *joy*. In the context, light represents the blessed state of redemption and victory for the people of God. There is coming a day when God will set all things right and wipe away all of our sin. The righteous and upright in heart will enjoy the new age of restoration with God. In addition, there will be deep-seated, eternal joy for the people of God (Ps. 16:11). We will be with God and He will be with us (Rev. 21:1-5). Finally, we rejoice. We rejoice in the present rule of God although sin remains and struggle is present. We rejoice because we know God has saved us from sin and holds us eternally secure, and because we look forward to the day when everything will be set right because "*the Lord is Most High over all the earth*" (v. 9).

The Big Picture - Rejoicing in God

It is important for the people of God to take time to set their minds on the truths of Scripture. Psalms 47 and 97 are gifts to the people of God with this message: Rejoice in the Most High Who chooses our heritage and reigns over the nations. We are a people because God has saved us from our sin and brought us into His people. Furthermore, as He is forming us into a people for His own possession (1 Pt. 2:9), He is also, and at all times, King over all. He will judge the nations, He will deal with all wickedness and idolatry. He will bring peace and righteousness. Therefore the people of God can trust Him and rejoice. The people of God can "*Rejoice in the Lord...and give thanks to His holy Name.*"

Application Questions

- How are you rejoicing in God?
- In what ways are you teaching your family that God has chosen our heritage for us?
- How are you leading your family to embrace the rule of God over all things?
- In what ways are you rejoicing in God that is different from how a non-believer lives?
How might you use this evangelistically?
- How is your growth group rejoicing in the rule of God over the nations? How might you all take this Psalm as motivation for community engagement and mission?