

Psalm 47: Reigning King on the Earth

Introduction

1. This psalm is all about celebrating the Lord becoming King. It celebrates His rule with great excitement and joy. Some think it started as a song for their yearly festivals. Nevertheless, seeing God as the reigning King is a great inspiration to His faithful followers. What is important, beyond its poetical beauty, is that this psalm is a prophecy with a very important message that reaches far into the future.
2. The psalm can be divided into three sections: (i) the victory of the King (1-4); (ii) the royal procession (5-7); and (iii) the King's rule in the world (8-9).
3. The content of this Psalm is similar to 93; 95; 96; 97; 98 and 99 where the focus is on the universal exaltation of the our Creator and Redeemer God.

Victorious King (1-4)

- 47:1 Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples!
Shout to God with the voice of triumph!**
- 2 For the Lord Most High is awesome;
He is a great King over all the earth.**
- 3 He will subdue the peoples under us,
And the nations under our feet.**
- 4 He will choose our inheritance for us,
The excellence of Jacob whom He loves. Selah**

(v 1) This part of the psalm starts by calling on everyone in the world to pay attention—it's a message for peoples, nations, and all the earth. The main feeling is joy, because this King (God) is not a cruel ruler. (v 2) However, the first section also shows how awesome and powerful He is, (v 3) emphasizing His right to judge and to choose favorites. (v 4) This choosing might look like favoritism until the end of the psalm. For now, the people of Jacob (Israel) are proud and happy about their victories and their special privilege of knowing God's personal name (Yahweh/the Lord). When the text mentions "Jacob whom he loves," it raises the unanswerable question of Why? God's love is a mystery, and the Bible focuses less on why He loves and more on correcting our doubts and mistakes about that love.

Royal Procession King (5-7)

- 47:5 God has gone up with a shout,
The Lord with the sound of a trumpet.**
- 6 Sing praises to God, sing praises!
Sing praises to our King, sing praises!**
- 7 For God is the King of all the earth;
Sing praises with understanding.**

This part of the psalm (v 5) uses an image taken directly from 2 Samuel 6:15 when King David brought the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. Since the Hebrew words for **with a shout** and **with the sound of a trumpet** are identical in both passages, the psalm pictures God rising to take His earthly throne, possibly referring back to that single great event in David's time. (v 6) Repeated command to **sing praises** creates the feeling of a huge, lively crowd shouting their applause. (v 7) Finally, the word **understanding (maskil)** at the end, while sometimes meaning **with a psalm**, more accurately means **with understanding** or **with skill**, which is the sense the Apostle Paul likely drew upon when he spoke of singing **with the mind also** (I Cor 14:15).

Royal rule over the world (8-9)

- 47:8 God reigns over the nations;
God sits on His holy throne.**
- 9 The princes of the people have gathered together,
The people of the God of Abraham.
For the shields of the earth belong to God;
He is greatly exalted.**

The final verse of the psalm completely shifts the focus, showing that God's plan is much bigger than just His own people. Until this point, God was presented as a great King over His subjects, but now the vision reveals that all the countless princes and peoples of the world will become one unified group. This unity is implied by calling them **the people of the God of Abraham**, signifying they are brought into the covenant promised to Abraham, which is exactly what the New Testament describes as the inclusion of the Gentiles. Characteristically, the psalm connects this grand future not just to worldwide peace, but to the supreme glory of God, stating that **he is highly exalted**, which is the ultimate goal to which everything is leading.

Application

1. We should be encouraged by the worship of the Psalmist at the prospect of the reign of Christ on this earth.
2. If the Lord is going to rule the whole world, we should break all the man-made barriers and embrace one another.
3. If the Lord is the King, then we must accept his sovereignty over all including my life.

Clarke: Messiah's Millennial Monarchy

I. Exhortation to Praise (1-2).

1. The Rejoicing (1). Universal Summons.
2. The Reason (2). Universal Sovereignty.

II. Exhibition of Power (3-4).

In the Restoration of Israel. Selah.

III. Exaltation of God (5).

IV. Exhortation to Praise (6-8).

1. The Rejoicing (6). Universal Summons.
2. The Reason (7a). Universal Sovereignty.
3. The Rejoicing (7b). Universal Summons.
4. The Reason (8). Universal Sovereignty.

V. Expression of Allegiance (9abc).

By the Representatives of Gentiles.

VI. Exaltation of God (9d)."