



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 46

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Introduction

- Psalms 46, 47, 48, are closely connected
- They form a series of praising Psalms celebrating Jerusalem's deliverance from foreign enemies
- The title of this psalm is *To the Chief Musician. To completion. A psalm of the sons of Korah. A song for Alamo*
- The word *alam* means (a secret) or (a hidden thing)
- In the Septuagint version is: "For the sake of secrets", (For the sake of hidden things)
- According to some scholars, "A song for Alamo" means (praise by the church, the virgin)



Introduction

- Some think it may denote a high-pitched stringed instrument as indicated by 1 Chronicles 15:20
- Others refer to the word 'alamoth' in Isaiah 7:4 which is derived from 'alama', a title given to St. Mary the mother of God who is a betrothed virgin
- This Psalm was composed by the descendants of Korah
- They were Levites, from the family of Kohath
- By David's time it seems they served in the musical aspect of the temple worship (2 Chronicles 20:19)



Introduction

- Some say they wrote it on their return from the Babylonian captivity, when they had once more got peaceably settled in Jerusalem
- Some think the occasion of this Psalm is the victories which David obtained over the Ammonites and Moabites, and other neighboring countries
- And others are of opinion that it was written on account of the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib being raised, in the times of Hezekiah



Introduction

- In Psalm 46 the leading idea is the Presence of God in the midst of His city and people, as the reason of their confidence
- Psalm 46 consists of three equal stanzas, each followed by a Selah
- The second and third end with a refrain (Psalm 46:7,11)
- The psalmist writes as the representative of those who have recently passed through some terrible crisis of anxiety, who have seen with their own eyes a manifestation of God's power on behalf of His people



Introduction

- And for some it seems rather to be a prophecy of the church in Gospel times and is applicable to any time of confusion and distress the nations of the world may be in through any kind of tribulation, when those that trust in the Lord have no reason in the least to be afraid
- St. Augustine comments on the word secret and says, “Secret is it then; but He Himself, who in the place of Calvary was crucified, ye know, hath rent the veil, that the secrets of the temple might be discovered. Furthermore, since the Cross of our Lord was a key, whereby things closed might be opened; let us trust that He will be with us, that these secrets may be revealed.”



Introduction

Psalm Outline

- The Confidence of Believers in God 46:1-3
- The Peaceful Provision of God 46:4-7
- The Lord is Exalted Among the Nations 46:8-11

The Confidence of Believers in God 46:1-3



- Many of the other Psalms begin with a description of the Psalmist's crisis
- In this Psalm, he begins with God's delivery
- He looked to God for help in difficult times and found it
- When troubles and sorrows get more intense, whether because of the visible or invisible enemies, we find in God a *refuge, strength, and help*
- God Himself was their *help* – not from a distance, but a *very present help*

The Confidence of Believers in God 46:1-3



- God has manifested Himself to be so in past time, and He has continued to be so in time to come, and will not fail to fulfill His promises
- St. John Chrysostom comments, “If you wish to see an invincible (unbeatable unshakable) power, insuperable (impossible undefeatable) refuge, unassailable (undisputable undeniable fort, impregnable (secure indestructible) tower, take refuge in God, enlist that great might.”
- Christ is the *refuge* for souls to escape unto for safety
- He is the spiritual strength for His people

The Confidence of Believers in God 46:1-3



- Jesus is the strength of His children's hearts, under the greatest trials, of their lives, amidst the greatest dangers
- Our boast ought to be in God, the only living and true God and not in our armies, or our fortresses and castles
- Church Fathers, as St. John Chrysostom explain it, of the Christian Church, delivered from persecution
- According to St. Basil the Great, many utter these words by their mouths, and not by their hearts; as proved by the fact that when they fall into a tribulation, they rush to seek human help, and not the divine help



The Confidence of Believers in God 46:1-3

- The psalmist used the logic of faith
- If God is a real *refuge*, *strength*, and *help* to His people, then there is no logical reason to *fear* – even in the biggest crisis *though the earth be removed*
- Those who, with a holy reverence, fear God, do not need to be afraid of any power on earth
- It is our duty to be thus fearless
- Even if the very foundation on which we stand, and on which are all our temporal blessings built; should *be removed* out of its place and no longer support, but sink under us

The Confidence of Believers in God 46:1-3



- Even if the strongest and firmest parts of the earth, *the mountains, be carried into the midst of the sea*
- Yet, while we keep close to God, and have Him for us, we have no reason to fear
- The psalmist considered the most frightening, humbling natural phenomenon imaginable
- He then made the plain clear opinion that God was greater than them all, and *fear* before these in some way is robbing and denying God of His honor

The Confidence of Believers in God 46:1-3



- *Though its waters roar*, They would not be afraid though everything should be in commotion and be as unsettled as the restless waves of the *sea*
- The noise of sea causes men's hearts to collapse and stop from fear, Luke 21:25-26
- The earth might be changed, the mountains removed, the sea roar and rush against the shore, but their minds would be calm
- All these figurative expressions denote the confusions and disorders that have been or will be in the world; amidst all which the people of God have no reason to fear
- *Selah*, The greatness of reflection in this Psalm is worthy of pause



The Peaceful Provision of God

46:4-7

- The psalmist pictured the abundant, constant provision of a *river* for Jerusalem
- In contrast to the agitated noisy sea threatening to consume the firm mountain, is the river, the streams which make the city of God glad
- The image is significant because Jerusalem does not in fact have such a river, only a few small streams
- Yet the prophets anticipated the day when a mighty river would flow from the temple itself (Ezekiel 47:12, Revelation 22:1)
- The future reality is already in the mind of the Psalmist



The Peaceful Provision of God

46:4-7

- In this imagery we may recognize the permanent and enduring fountain of God's grace
- According to the scholar Origen, "the River" is the Holy Spirit who carries to the believers (the trees planted on its banks) the evangelic and apostolic writings; as well as the help, presented to them by the heavenly hosts from God
- This pure river of water of life, which streaming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, continually refreshes and delights His Church, *"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb."* (Revelation 22:1), whether her dwelling place be the earthly or the heavenly Jerusalem



The Peaceful Provision of God

46:4-7

- Divine grace, like a well flowing, full, and never shortcoming river, produces and bears provisions and consolation to believers
- St. Augustine says, “What are these streams of the river? That overflowing of the Holy Spirit, of which the Lord said, ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, out of his bosom shall flow rivers of living water.’ These rivers then flowed out of the bosom of Paul, Peter, John, the other Apostles, the other faithful Evangelists. Since these rivers flowed from one river, many ‘streams of the river make glad the City of God.’”



The Peaceful Provision of God

46:4-7

- All the blessing and provision of *the city of God* comes because of God's presence
- While the world is being turned upside down, the Church is firm, safe, and stable since *God is in the midst of her*
- Because of His presence she is more firmly set than the earth which may be moved (verse 2)
- The city is so established because *God shall help her*
- *just at the break of dawn*, As soon as the first ray of light proclaims the new day, God's right hand is extended for His people



The Peaceful Provision of God

46:4-7

- By the bright rising of God, the darkness of adversity will be scattered
- As in Psalm 2, God pays no regard to, or considers the wrath of the nations
- As they did at Christ's first coming against Him, His Gospel, and people
- At His mere *voice* the earth melts away
- *He uttered His voice*, Shows the absolute power of God, or His power to control all the raging elements on land and sea by a word
- God spoke; He gave command; He expressed His will



The Peaceful Provision of God

46:4-7

- The refrain in verse 7 corresponds to Isaiah's stating Immanuel, 'God is with us' (Isaiah 7:14, 8:8, 10)
- This is the ground of assurance, our God is *the Lord of hosts*
- One who has countless angels at His command (2 Kings 6:16, 17; Psalm 68:17; Matthew 26:53)
- And He is *with us*, on our side, ready to help
- St. Augustine says, "The Lord of Hosts is with us. What Lord of Hosts is with us? 'If' (I say) 'God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all; how hath He not with Him also freely given us all things.'"



The Peaceful Provision of God

46:4-7

- Under whose command are all the hosts of heaven and earth
- God who is King of kings, and Lord of lords; who has all creatures in heaven and earth at His command, whom all the hosts of angels obey, *is with us*
- The God who appeared to Jacob in his distress, and saved him out of all his troubles, appeared also for us his descendants, and has totally proved to us that He has not forgotten His covenant
- He is the King of the multitude of all *hosts*
- He is also the God of the individual, with personal relationship to a *Jacob*

The Lord is Exalted Among the Nations 46:8-11



- The dominant idea in the first section of the Psalm was God as a refuge and help, here the emphasis shifts to a reflection on the glory of God
- *Come, behold the works of the LORD*, The invitation is addressed to all (Isaiah 33:13)
- But especially to the nations, who are invited (verse 10) to take warning from the scene
- They are not merely to “*Come and see the works of God*” (Psalm 66:5), but to *behold* them; to contemplate and observe them with discernment and understanding

The Lord is Exalted Among the Nations 46:8-11



- *Who has made desolations in the earth*, The idea may be that God's people are invited to look over the field of battle after God has completely routed His enemies, and their vehicles of war are scattered, broken, and burning
- Those people of the earth who were neighboring and hostile to the Israelites, 2 Samuel 8:1; 1 Chronicles 18:1
- In the days of the psalmist, there had occurred many memorable interventions of God against His people's enemies
- *Desolations*, May mean the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem, foretold by Moses, Deuteronomy 32:22; by Daniel, Daniel 9:26; and by our Lord Jesus Christ, Matthew 23:38

The Lord is Exalted Among the Nations 46:8-11



- Or the desolations that will be made in the antichrist time may be here intended, *“Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, ‘Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth.’”* (Revelation 16:1)
- *He makes wars cease*, Each great deliverance effected by God is followed naturally by a term of peace (Judges 3:11,30,5:31,8:28)
- God, when He pleases, puts an end to the wars of nations, and crowns them with peace

The Lord is Exalted Among the Nations 46:8-11



- He destroys all offensive weapons, so that none may *"not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain"* (Isaiah 11:9)
- It was usual to burn the arms of enemies taken in war
- This term may be intended to point to the final peace, when God shall put down all enemies under Christ's feet
- In a spiritual sense, our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of peace, casts the flame of His Holy Spirit into our heart, to burn the thorns of sin that defeat and overwhelm the soul; and destroy all the weapons of the devil; to grant us His exalted peace

The Lord is Exalted Among the Nations 46:8-11



- *Be still*, Stop fearing, acknowledge who your God is
- God speaks either to the Israelites telling them to wait upon Him silently without fear knowing that He is God who *be exalted among the nations*
- He is asking them to leave it to Him
- St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:9 that, “*For we are God’s fellow workers.*” So, in general God wants men to work with Him
- But there are occasions when men must stand distant, and all must be left to the Almighty who is in control of all things

The Lord is Exalted Among the Nations 46:8-11



- St. John Chrysostom comments on *I will be exalted among the nations* and say, “This in fact is the meaning, “Through the works I shall be proven to you to Be mighty and exalted””
- Or He speaks to rebuke the nations to stop from their vain attempts to destroy His people, and commanding them to come to know Him as the true God of all, who will manifest His absolute authority and sovereignty
- In spite of all their evil against His name He *will be exalted among* them, as well as among His own people; will make Himself glorious by His great and wonderful works

The Lord is Exalted Among the Nations 46:8-11



- He is asking the enemies to submit and the believers to sit down and wait in patience
- God is asking us to submit, to lay down our arms, stop relying on and trusting in human arm, surrender, and acknowledge that He is the One and only victorious God
- He is asking us to *Be still*, stop from sinning against God and reflect deeply on His goodness that we may not be brought into distress and desolation
- *know that I am God*, He is the fountain of power, wisdom, justice, goodness, and truth

The Lord is Exalted Among the Nations 46:8-11



- *I will be exalted in the earth*, His salvation will be proclaimed in every nation, among every people, and in every tongue
- Jesus is coming again, be patient, be calm, be watchful for Christ's return
- And this One who Is coming soon, Is even now with us
- Is not that what Jesus promised?
- He promised to be with us always, "*even to the end of the age.*" (Matthew 28:20)
- *The LORD of hosts is with us*, The Lord of hosts, the God of armies, is with us; we will not fear what man can do unto us

The Lord is Exalted Among the Nations 46:8-11



- So, *be still*, Recognize His sovereignty in your life and pray with these realities in mind
- The God of Jacob is our refuge - He who saved our fathers will save us, and will never abandon His people in distress
- *Selah*, This is a firm, lasting, well-founded truth
- God is the defender of His name, His people, and His Word
- He alone is our protector, the sovereign ruler, and the everlasting refuge
- God will protect those who believe in His name and trust in Him



Discussion

- Observe how God is described in verse 1 and then define what each of those three descriptions mean.
- In verse 2, the psalmist declares that we will not fear. On what basis does he make that claim?
- What is the city of God? Compare the description of the city of God in verses 4-5 with the description of the world in verses 2-3. What is different between the two?



Discussion

- To whom is “*Be still and know that I am God!*” directed? What does it mean?
- In what way is Jesus the fulfillment of this Psalm?
- In what situations might we be motivated to go to this Psalm?
- The Psalms have a way of mixing worldly turmoil while still remembering God’s sovereignty. Why is it so easy to focus on one or the other, but not usually both at the same time?