



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 47

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Introduction

- The title is *To the Chief Musician. A psalm of the sons of Korah*
- And, according to the Septuagint version, *To completion, a psalm of the sons of Korah*
- Some believe that *the Chief Musician* is the LORD God Himself, and others suppose him to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph (1 Chronicles 6:33,16:5-7,25:6)
- Korah was a descendant of Levi (Exodus 6:16-24), and therefore the *sons of Korah* were Levites



Introduction

- Most assume that the specific *sons of Korah* addressed here and in the title were Levitical singers in the tabernacle/temple ceremonies and perhaps they were performers of the Psalm rather than the authors of it
- The occasion of the Psalm was probably the same as that of Psalms 46 and 48 the celebration of a recent victory, after which God, who had 'come down' to fight for His people (Isaiah 31:4), had 'ascended up' in triumph to heaven (Psalm 47:5)
- Some say it was on the occasion of carrying up the ark from the house of Obededom to Mount Zion



Introduction

- But there is no doubt it is a Messianic Psalm
- It is a prophecy about the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ and His sitting upon His throne of glory at the right hand of God celebrating His reign over the whole earth
- It is also a prophecy of the spread of the Gospel, and the defeats it made in the Gentile world upon Christ's ascension; as the whole Psalm shows
- According to the “Talmud”, this psalm, in the latter Jewish eras, was used in celebrating the new year and on the day of the Feast of Blowing the Trumpets, (Numbers 29:1)



Introduction

- In a spiritual sense, it appears to relate to the calling of the Gentiles to be made partakers of the blessings of the Gospel with the converted Jews
- It is one of the Psalms of the Third Hour prayer in the Book of Agpeya
- In the Coptic Church, the priest prays this Psalm at the end of the Divine Liturgy as he encircles the altar once clapping and kissing the altar praising and glorifying God



Introduction

Psalm Outline

- A Call to Praise God 47:1-2
- God's Special Care for His People 47:3-4
- A Repeated Command to Praise Him for His Sovereignty 47:5-7
- The Worship of the Princes of the Nations 47:8-9



A Call to Praise God 47:1-2

- The psalmist invites all nations to express the gladness of their heart by their language and their gesture
- *all you peoples, Jews and Gentiles, all nations*; for the Church, which is Christ's body, is spread over all the world
- They are urged to acknowledge and greet God, as a new king was saluted with clapping of hands (2 Kings 11:12) and shouting (1 Samuel 10:24)
- Clapping is a common way of expressing joy and it is usually an outward expression of inward joy

A Call to Praise God 47:1-2



- In Numbers 23:21 “*the shout of a King*” means the shout with which Israel celebrates the Presence of God in its midst as a victorious king
- From his invitation to clap hands, we are not to conclude that we are called upon to do so in the literal sense of the expression; but we are called upon to be as internally glad and joyful as those who give expression to their joy by clapping their hands and such gestures
- St. Augustine says, “What is ‘O clap’? Rejoice. But wherefore with the hands? Because with good works. Do not rejoice with the mouth while idle with the hands.”



A Call to Praise God 47:1-2

- He now in verse 2 gives a reason for having invited all nations to rejoice and exult
- This can be applied only to the kingdom of Christ, a high and awesome *“kingdom which cannot be shaken”* (Hebrew 12:28,29; Deuteronomy 4:24,9:3,10:17-21; Nehemiah 1:5; Zephaniah 2:11)
- *the LORD Most High*, He is exalted above all other beings
- He is not merely King of Israel, but King of all the earth
- He is to be feared, *“The Lord of hosts, Him you shall hallow; Let Him be your fear,”* (Isaiah 8:13); on account of His goodness, as the Redeemer and Savior of His people, *“They shall fear the Lord and His goodness.”* (Hosea 3:5)

God's Special Care for His People 47:3-4



- *He will subdue the peoples*, The word is in the future tense, it points to the Gentiles, who were to be called into God's church, and to receive the blessings of grace and to bring them to the knowledge and worship of God under subjection to the gospel
- St. Augustine comments, "Which subdued, and to whom? Who are they that speak? Haply Jews? Surely, if Apostles; surely, if Saints. For under these God hath subdued the people and the nations, that today are they honored among the nations, who by their own citizens earned to be slain: as their Lord was slain by His citizens, and is honored among the nations; was crucified by His own, is adored by aliens, but those by a price made His own."

God's Special Care for His People 47:3-4



- It is receiving the word of the apostle, to enter into the meek flock of Jesus Christ, when the Gentiles forsake their spirit of pride and haughtiness, and their oppression against the church, to bow, and to carry the cross of her Jesus Christ with joy and gladness
- According to some fathers, it means the submission of the demons and sins that have for long subdued the heathen nations, and their falling under feet of the cross
- For by the submission of the Gentiles in faith with the spirit of love and obedience, their evil is crushed under the feet of the church

God's Special Care for His People 47:3-4



- St. Cyril of Alexandria says, “We see the saints, through the voice of the Psalmist, raised up presenting praises of thanksgiving to Christ who crowns them, saying: ‘He subdues the peoples under us, and the nations under our feet’. The ultimate desire of the saints, is to see those they instruct become partakers of the grace given to them by Christ; according to the epistle sent by the apostle Paul to the Romans, saying: ‘For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established’ (Romans 1: 11)”
- *He will choose our inheritance for us*, The inheritance intended for us, designed to be ours, namely, God Himself, who is the portion of His people

God's Special Care for His People 47:3-4



- Or perhaps he means the portion in this life; God knows what is best for His people, and therefore they should leave it with Him, who can make a better choice for them than for themselves
- We ought to submit our will, our choice, our desire, wholly to Him
- Our heritage here and hereafter we ought to leave to Him, let Him do with us as He seems good and according to His will
- *The excellence of Jacob*, He may mean the person of Jacob, who, though never had the actual possession of Canaan, yet had the Lord, and His presence and blessing for his inheritance

God's Special Care for His People 47:3-4



- Or perhaps he means the people of Israel, who are frequently called Jacob; for these did actually enjoy both the promised inheritance of Canaan and the presence of God in His Temple
- Verse 4 according to the Septuagint version, reads as *“He will choose us as His inheritance”*
- If we rejoice because God has, by His cross, drawn the Gentiles to become members of His holy church, in submission to the apostles; the secret of our joy is truly the work of God, who planned the ordinance of our salvation, gave us Himself as our portion, and received us as His portion and inheritance

A Repeated Command to Praise Him for His Sovereignty 47:5-7



- In verse 1 the psalmist invited all nations to express the gladness of their heart by saying *“clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph.”*
- Then from verse 2 he started giving a reason for this invitation to rejoice
- Now he presents his fourth reason for joy and gladness
- After the Lord “chose His inheritance” selected His Apostles and Disciples, He ascended into heaven, and raised our nature united to His own, above all the heavens, above all the Angels, and above all created beings

A Repeated Command to Praise Him for His Sovereignty 47:5-7



- *has gone up*, He must therefore have previously come down
- The Son of God, who is truly God, equal to the Father, the Word that was made flesh, and dwelt among men on earth
- He is said to 'go up,' when He finished His work for us on the cross and proved it by the empty tomb
- He can only go *up with a shout* because He came down in humility to fight for His people and to save them
- St. John Chrysostom says, "He did not say, 'He has been taken up,' but *has gone up*, showing that He did not go up with anyone else to guide Him, but made His way by Himself."

A Repeated Command to Praise Him for His Sovereignty 47:5-7



- He also says that *with a shout* carries a spiritual meaning and refers to Jesus Christ's victory because the ascension of Jesus Christ before His Apostles occurred in silence
- He says, "He went up with victory, having conquered death, overthrown sin, subdued the demons, expelled error, changed everything for the better, leading our nature to its ancestral country – or rather to a much better one."
- *The trumpet* made the strongest and clearest sound
- It was the sound of victory
- There is nothing in the New Testament concerning the apostles hearing the sound of a trumpet

A Repeated Command to Praise Him for His Sovereignty 47:5-7



- Yet we observe that they saw Him as the victorious and conqueror King, who set forth to Heaven, but it was heaven that gave the sound of trumpets, proclaiming the conquest of her King
- On the day of His Second coming, the angels will sound the trumpets (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16)
- *Sing praises to God*, Before offering a fifth reason for praising God, he excites all to shout in repeated expressions of admiration at His having ascended so gloriously
- This is almost a command
- It is a fitting command in light of the glory of *the King of all the earth*

A Repeated Command to Praise Him for His Sovereignty 47:5-7



- *Sing praises*, This word is repeated four times in this short verse to show the genuineness, sincerity, and joy of the people
- They are the words of victory and celebration and show that the heart was full, or was overflowing with joy
- It also shows how the psalmist was fervently desirous that God must have His due praise and glory and how important and of great necessity it was to men to praise Him
- The repetition four times may also mean that the psalmist calls the church at the four corners of the world; East, West, North, and South, to be only preoccupied with singing praise to Him

A Repeated Command to Praise Him for His Sovereignty 47:5-7



- The ascension of Jesus Christ is of great importance, and requires to be performed in such a manner
- The psalmist said, first *Sing praises* for He is *our God*
- Second for He is *our King*
- Thirdly, *sing praises to Him*, because He is *the King of all the earth*
- Then he asked that the praise should be done *with understanding*
- He says to do so, not only repeatedly, but wisely, with attention, making no mistakes therein, for any duty made to a great King must be practiced in such manner

The Worship of the Princes of the Nations 47:8-9



- A fifth reason for singing and chanting to God, *with the voice of joy*, derived from Christ, after His ascension to heaven, having sent His Apostles to preach the Gospel, and to gather the Gentiles to His fold, *God reigns over the nations*
- He reigned over Israel under the former economy, and now He reigns over the Gentiles under the Gospel economy
- “The throne of God is the righteous for the sake of whose purity, God dwells in them.” (Father Onesimus, bishop of Jerusalem)
- When John had his heavenly experience as recorded in Revelation 4 and 5, he described everything in heaven in relation to this occupied throne

The Worship of the Princes of the Nations 47:8-9



- It is *His* throne; it belongs to Him and to none other
- Jesus, the Son of God, having done His work on earth He is received up into heaven, and is set down on a throne at the right hand of His Father
- St. John Chrysostom says, “What is the meaning of *sits on His holy throne*? Reign, rules. Holy was well put; in fact, He not only reigns, but reigns in a holy manner.”
- In the spirit of prophecy, the Psalmist sees the fulfilment of the hope expressed in Psalm 47:1
- The nations acknowledge God’s sovereignty and authority

The Worship of the Princes of the Nations 47:8-9



- *the nations*, Are not called *the people of God*
- This title is reserved for Israel, and only in the NT are the promises made to Israel extended to the Gentiles (Romans 9:25)
- The psalmist may have been explaining the sentence, *God reigns over the nations* as the preaching of the Apostles would bring the *princes of the people* to the true faith
- The apostles preaching would oblige them to abandon their idols, and turn to the God of Abraham, who is the only true God, that thus He may be their God, and they His people

The Worship of the Princes of the Nations 47:8-9



- The great men amongst the gentiles, who had been slaves of sin, and servants of their idols, are now, by their conversion, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven
- *The people of the God of Abraham, The covenant promise shall be fulfilled, "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, "*
- The people of the God of Abraham are the Gentiles who, receiving the Gospel, are made partakers of the faith of Abraham, and are his spiritual children

The Worship of the Princes of the Nations 47:8-9



- St. John Chrysostom says the psalmist said that *God of Abraham* to show Him to be the one God of New and Old Testaments
- *the shields of the earth belong to God*, All principalities and powers must be subject unto God for *He is greatly exalted*
- The rulers of the earth who are as a *shield* and a protection to their people
- The Lord at His pleasure will set these *The princes of the people* up and put them down; and their hearts are in His hands

The Worship of the Princes of the Nations 47:8-9



- When Jesus Christ came into the world, he broke down the wall of separation between Jews and non-Jews – enabling all who trust in Him as Lord and Savior to know assuredly that they are God's people
- The God of Abraham is our God, the One who shields and protects us from any and all evils that might try to separate us from his love and care; therefore, his people rejoice in God and highly exalt him



Discussion

- What kind of expectation does this Psalm hold out for the heathen nations?
- How do we sing praises?
- What is the difference in the Christian shouting praise to the Lord and the rest of the world?
- Why was sing praises said 4 times in verse 6?



Discussion

- The psalmist declared that God is King of all the earth and King over the nations. How does knowing this have an effect on the way you think about the problems of earth and the problems among nations around the world today?