



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 67

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# Introduction

- The title is *To the Chief Musician. On Stringed Instruments. A Psalm. A Song*
- 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, and 25:6)
- This Psalm was meant to be sung joined with musicians playing with their harps, *Stringed Instruments*
- A Psalm is a song, but all songs are not Psalms: this is both *A Psalm. A Song*



# Introduction

- No author's name is given, but some believe it is David's
- In term of the occasion some think it is supposed to have been written at the return from the Babylonian captivity
- And some think it is a prophecy about the conversion of the Gentiles to the Christianity and the preaching of the apostles
- This Psalm is a song meant for public worship
- Perhaps was intended for use in the Temple worship, like the last two Psalms, at the Passover, at the Feast of Pentecost (Harvest), or Feast of Tabernacles



# Introduction

- This Psalm talks about God's way, God's salvation, and how God's praise is extended through all the earth
- It is a call to the people to praise God
- This Psalm is one of the Prime and Sixth hours prayers of the Book of the Agpeya
- In the Coptic Church, the priest concludes the prayer of the "Offering of Morning and Evening Incense" by the first verse of this Psalm



# Introduction

## The Psalm Outline:

- The Psalmist Prays for the Rise of God's Kingdom 67:1-2
- A Call to Serve God the Righteous Judge 67:3-5
- A Promise of Prosperity to the Faithful 67:6-7

# The Psalmist Prays for the Rise of God's Kingdom 67:1-2



- The Psalm begins with words taken from the priestly blessing by which Aaron and his sons were commanded by God to bless the people (Numbers 6:24)
- The psalmist knew his need for mercy, therefore, the first cry is for mercy
- The beginning of all blessings to mankind is the mercy of God
- There is no higher blessing than His favor; there is none that comes from Him which should not be regarded as mercy
- This sets our heart in the right frame of mind: sinners who need the mercy of God

# The Psalmist Prays for the Rise of God's Kingdom 67:1-2



- One may need more mercy than another, but we all need mercy
- The psalmist seeks from God to shine upon His people; not as a Judge, for then, no one will be justified before Him; but as a Giver of mercy and blessing
- St. Jerome says, “I wish He does not Judge us, but be merciful on us. I wish we do not look at Him, sorrowful because of our sins, but joyful in our virtues. I wish we do not experience Him as a Judge but know Him as a merciful Father. I wish He shines upon us with His image (His Son); For the light of the Father is the light of the Son.”

# The Psalmist Prays for the Rise of God's Kingdom 67:1-2



- According to St. Cyril, God's Face is His Only-Begotten Son
- *Selah*, Most people think it speaks of a reflective pause, a pause to meditate on the words just spoken
- It may also be a musical pause of some kind
- Here it may mean following upon and emphasizing this echo of the priestly benediction
- The psalmist's attention in verse 2, shifts from Israel to earth
- The blessings which God bestows upon Israel will show the nations what a God He is, and make them desire to serve Him
- He asked for this blessing for the sake of God's glory



# The Psalmist Prays for the Rise of God's Kingdom 67:1-2



- According to St. Augustine, the way is Christ Himself, who says, *"I am the way;"*
- He continues, "Lest you may go astray, He adds: "and the Truth". Who would go astray with the Truth? It is only He who forsakes the Truth! The Truth is Christ; The Way is Christ; Go along that way."
- And not only the way, but the light through which it is to be known *"The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined."* (Isaiah 9:2)
- *Your salvation among all nations*, explains the first part of the verse, that the Savior may be known among all nations

# A Call to Serve God the Righteous Judge 67:3-5



- As a result of the two-fold knowledge in the previous verse, the psalmist wishes peoples to praise God
- He longs to see the Gentiles forsaking their idols and serve and praise the living God
- It is a prayer that all people might so understand the character and ways of God and might know His *salvation*, and then know how to praise Him
- He asks God to bring the nations to Himself
- When we pray like this, we pray according to the heart of God, Who desires that none perish but all come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9)

# A Call to Serve God the Righteous Judge 67:3-5



- There is a prophecy about Christ in this verse
- The psalmist wished that Christ should come upon earth; first, for the glory of God, then, for the benefit of mankind; and in this verse, therefore, he prays that all manner of people should praise, thank, and glorify Him for so great and so universal a favor
- He prays that all worship of false gods should cease, and the one true God alone be acknowledged by all
- Why should the nations be so happy? Because God is coming to *judge the people righteously, and govern the nations on earth*

# A Call to Serve God the Righteous Judge 67:3-5



- Let the benefit of mankind be acknowledged; and, therefore, *let the nations be glad and sing for joy*
- For God's divine mercy to them
- There could be no greater blessing to the nations than attracting them into God's kingdom; nor, consequently, any event more worthy to be celebrated with joyful praise, with songs of joy and thanksgiving
- He presents to them a comparison between governing righteously versus wickedly and immorally

# A Call to Serve God the Righteous Judge 67:3-5



- The Gentiles had lived miserably under the unrighteous and oppressive government of the devil, and under their idolatrous and pagan rulers
- *Selah*, This is worthy of reflection
- Verse 5 is identical to verse 3 and is used as a refrain
- The repetition shows that this was the principal thought in the mind of the psalmist
- It expresses an earnest intense desire, that all nations should acknowledge God as the true God and praise Him for His mercies

# A Promise of Prosperity to the Faithful 67:6-7



- Verse 6 is a clear reference to the abundant harvest
- The psalmist attributes this directly to God who has blessed Israel
- The thankful people declare that God is blessing them, and express their faith that He will continue to bless them
- When the earth knows God's way, God's salvation, and God's praise, then she will *yield her increase*
- The fruit will come forth; the appointed purpose for the earth will be fulfilled

# A Promise of Prosperity to the Faithful 67:6-7



- This also tells us that the earth will never *yield her increase*, find its fruitfulness and fulfillment, *until* she knows God's way, God's salvation, and God's praise
- Origen applied this verse to the Virgin Mary and the Eucharist, that is, to Christ who came from the flower of the Virgin and becomes fruit that can be eaten
- *our own God*, We never love God right till we know Him to be ours
- *God shall bless us*, It is repeated twice in a row to emphasize the confident expectation

# A Promise of Prosperity to the Faithful 67:6-7



- We are blessed; we use that blessing to pray for and reach a hurting world, and as that associates us with the heart of God, we are blessed even more, so we use that blessing for all the earth...and it just goes on and on
- St. Augustine identifies the fruit that sprouted on earth with the newness that is produced in the human being thanks to the coming of Christ, a newness of conversion, a fruit of praise to God
- If the psalmist had not yet been strong enough, here he makes the point even clearer
- God's heart and plan is for *all the ends of the earth*



# A Promise of Prosperity to the Faithful 67:6-7



- St. Augustine describes “the earth as full of thorns”. But he says, “there came the hand of One rooting them up, there came a calling by His majesty and mercy, the earth began to confess; now the earth gives her fruit’. Certainly, would she give her fruit ‘unless first she were rained on’, ‘unless first the mercy of God had come from above?’ Now we see a mature fruit in the Church thanks to the preaching of the Apostles: Then ‘by his sending rain through the clouds, by the sending of the Apostles and by their preaching the truth, ‘the earth has given her fruit’ more abundantly, and that harvest has now filled the whole world”

# A Promise of Prosperity to the Faithful 67:6-7



- The earth shall be full of the knowledge and fear of the Lord
- God will open His hands, and fill His people with all manner of blessings, spiritual ones especially; and, on the other hand, all men, in *all the ends of the earth*, will fear the true God with a holy fear, and will pay Him the tribute of obedience and praise
- The name of God, three times repeated here, while it shows the strong affections of the psalmist, would also seem to foreshadow the mystery of the Holy Trinity, which was so clearly preached by Christ and His Apostles



# Discussion

- In what way is the psalmist building upon the Aaronic Blessing?
- What would it mean for God's face to shine down on us?!
- What connection is there between the idea of God blessing us and His name being made "known on earth"?
- Why should people "be glad and sing for joy" according to verse 4?

# Discussion



- In what way does the certainty of God’s judgement cause us to “sing for joy”?
- What is similar about the end (v 7) of the Psalm and the beginning (v 1)?
- In what ways should we have the assurance that God will “bless us”? What does this assurance cause us to do?
- What does it mean that we would desire the nations to fear God? (67:7)