

Week 7 – Psalm 47

Hymn of the Lord's Kingship

Psalm 47:1 – An Invitation to Praise

- The Psalm begins by inviting the nations to praise the Lord with clapping and shouts of joy.
- This Psalm recognizes God as Israel's king, but also that God is King over all creation. God exerts his kingship over the nations by
 - o foiling their evil plans (Psalm 33:10).
 - o judging and guiding them (Psalm 67:4).
 - o Claiming them as his inheritance (Psalms 82:8)
- Other Psalms speak of the nations worshipping the Lord.
 - o "All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him" (Psalm 22:27).
 - o "May his name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun. Then all nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed" (Psalm 72:17).
 - o "Ascribe to the LORD, all you families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength" (Psalm 96:7).

Psalm 47:2-4 – The Past: God has made a place for Israel

- The Psalmist acknowledges that Israel's God (LORD – Yahweh), is the "great King over all the earth" (v 2).
 - o He is the "Most High" God (see Psalm 7:17; 9:2; 83:18).
 - o This was a term used by other Canaanite religions for their gods, but the Psalmist claims the title for the LORD of Israel.
- God used his sovereignty to subdue the nations and give Israel the Promised Land (vv 3-4).
- The Psalmist calls Israel, "the pride of Jacob, whom he loved" (v 4).
 - o "Love" was often used in the ancient Near East to describe the favor a great king shows to a vassal state (Mays, 186).
 - o Israel's very existence was a sign for the Psalmist of God's universal reign.
- This song recalls God's mighty acts on Israel's behalf in the past.

Psalm 47:5-7 – The Present: Sing praises to our King.

- The Psalmist declares that God has ascended to his throne amid shouts of joy.
 - o Jewish tradition held that this Psalm was recited in the temple seven times before the trumpet blast inaugurated the new year.
 - o The psalm is sometimes connected to David bringing the ark back to Jerusalem in 2 Samuel 6:15.
 - o The early church used this psalm to celebrate the ascension of Jesus.
- The Psalm invites the people (and the nations) to sing praises to God "our King." (v 6).
- The song is a present call to worship the Lord.
 - o We worship God because he is worthy of our worship.

A Song for Every Season: A Study on the Psalms

- We also worship as a way of bearing witness to God's awesomeness (see verse 1).
- Again, the reason for the praise is God's universal sovereignty (v 7).

Psalm 47:8-9 – The Future: The nations join God's people

- In many of the Psalms, the psalmist asks God to defeat the nations on Israel's behalf (see Ps 9:19; 45:17; 59:5).
- In this Psalm, the Psalmist paints a picture of a future day when the nations have ceased to be Israel's enemies and have become a part of the assembled people of God.
- The vision is one in which God is seated on his throne (v 8) and the nobles or kings of the earth gather around the throne "as the people of the God of Abraham" (v 8).
- In this vision, "the people of God are constituted, not by ethnic or national identity, but by recognition of the rule of the LORD" (Mays, 187).
- This universal vision shows up in a few other OT passages (see Genesis 12:3; Isaiah 2:2-4, Micah 4:1-3).

Other Psalms of Enthronement

- Psalm 93 – This Psalm celebrates God's eternal reign over all creation.
- Psalm 96 – This Psalm invites all the earth to sing to the LORD a new song.
- Psalm 97 – This Psalm celebrates God as the righteous judge.
- Psalm 98 – This Psalm invites the earth to worship the LORD with jubilant song.
- Psalm 99 – This Psalm announces the reign of the LORD that makes the nations tremble.

Sources

- Davidson, Robert, *The Vitality of Worship* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1998).
- Goldingay, John, *Psalms*, Volume 2: Psalms 42-89, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2007).
- May, James L., *Psalms*, Interpretation (Louisville KY: John Knox, 1994).