

Israel's Hymnal
Biblical Research Monthly
March, 1946
Dr. David L. Cooper

PSALM FORTY-SEVEN

[Pss 47:1] Oh clap your hands, all ye peoples; Shout unto God with the voice of triumph.
[Pss 47:2] For Jehovah Most High is terrible; He is a great King over all the earth.
[Pss 47:3] He subdueth peoples under us, And nations under our feet.
[Pss 47:4] He chooseth our inheritance for us, The glory of Jacob whom he loved. Selah
[Pss 47:5] God is gone up with a shout, Jehovah with the sound of a trumpet.
[Pss 47:6] Sing praises to God, sing praises: Sing praises unto our King, sing praises.
[Pss 47:7] For God is the King of all the earth: Sing ye praises with understanding.
[Pss 47:8] God reigneth over the nations: God sitteth upon his holy throne.
[Pss 47:9] The princes of the peoples are gathered together [To be] the people of the God of Abraham:
For the shields of the earth belong unto God; He is greatly exalted.

JEHOVAH THE KING OF THE EARTH

- I. The nations called upon to shout because Jehovah is King of the earth (vss. 1-4)
- II. Exhortation to praise Jehovah because of His governing the world (vss. 5-9)

The psalmist is carried forward in vision and sees the time when Jehovah will be King over all the earth. This thought is the dominant one throughout the entire psalm. But let us take up each section separately.

I. The nations called upon to shout because Jehovah is King of the earth

"Oh clap your hands, all ye peoples;
Shout unto God with the voice of triumph.
For Jehovah Most High is terrible;
He is a great King over all the earth.
He subdueth peoples under us,
And nations under our feet.
He chooseth our inheritance for us,
The glory of Jacob whom he loved" (vss. 1-4) {Selah}

In verse 1 the inspired writer calls upon the nations of the world to clap their hands and to shout unto God with the voice of triumph. "Why such an outburst of joy and jubilation?" one may ask. Evidently it is because the prophet sees a vision of the time when right triumphs over wrong. This will be the rule and order of the day, because all people are urged to clap their hands in glee and to shout unto God and to

praise Him with the voice of triumph, that is, there is to be echoed in their voices the note of jubilation and of final triumph over wickedness in every shape and form. In other words, the psalmist has a vision of a warless world and of an era when righteousness and justice prevail over sin and wickedness.

But specifically the world is urged to burst forth in praise because Jehovah Most High is terrible; He is a great King over all the nations. What is the significance of the statement that Jehovah is terrible? The Lord gave His statement of His character as is found in Exodus 34:6,7: "And Jehovah past by before him, and proclaimed, Jehovah, Jehovah a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth; keeping lovingkindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation." Here is the fullest declaration of the dominant traits of God's character. Do we detect in this utterance anything that would carry consternation and terror to the hearts of men. Yes. He is a God who will visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children to the third and fourth generation. At the same time He punishes each individual for his sins. To the disobedient God will be terrible. When we view this passage in the light of related ones, we know that immediately prior to God's coming and taking over the governments of the world, the judgments of the Tribulation fall upon the earth. These are set forth in Revelation, chapters 6, 8, 9, and 16. A casual reading of these chapters shows something about how terrible the Lord is to those who are obstinate and who refuse to accept His truth, but who prefer to walk in their own ungodliness. To them He is a terrible God, but to those who accept Him and choose life rather than death, He is a merciful God, showing mercy unto thousands, unto all who accept Him.

According to verse 2 this great terrible Jehovah will be King over all the earth. The preposition "over" is not to be thought of as indicating locality--as sometimes it has been mistakenly interpreted. For instance, this passage is used as authority to prove that there will be created up in the air and suspended over the city of Jerusalem a celestial city in which Christ and the saints will reign, while David and restored Israel will govern in Jerusalem during the Kingdom Age. Throughout the historical portion of the record of the kings of Israel, we read of certain kings who reigned over Israel or over Judea. It normally meant reign in the sense of exercising authority over the nation. That is the normal, literal meaning of the idiom whenever it occurs. This significance should be attached to it unless there are clear indications of a departure from this literal, usual meaning. But there is nothing in this passage which points to such a different meaning. We do well therefore to accept it at its common ordinary significance.

Moreover, when we study this passage in the light of many others, we learn that Jehovah is coming in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ to reign over the nations of the earth. The seat of His government will be in Jerusalem. Jerusalem of course will not be what it is sometimes today called--old, filthy, dirty, squalid Jerusalem. But it will be cleansed, purified, and re-created the joy of the whole earth. (See Zeph. 3:14-17; Isa. 2:1-4.)

According to Psalm 47:3, Jehovah in this future reign will subdue peoples under Israel and the nations under her feet. At the present time Israel is hated by the Gentile nations. Every type of indignity and atrocity has been committed against the Chosen People. They are now, as Moses stated in Deuteronomy 28:13, the tail of the nations; but at this future time she will be the head of all the peoples. Such is the significance of this statement of our verse.

According to verse 4 God chooses Israel's inheritance for her, which will be "the glory of Jacob whom he loved." The expression, "the glory of Jacob," has different significations in various passages. For instance, in Amos 6:8, the excellency of Jacob refers to the palaces and the city of Samaria, which God hated. In Amos 8:7 the excellency of Jacob is Jehovah himself. An examination of each of these contexts demands such interpretation for the expression under consideration. In Psalm 47, however, the same word appears in the original that occurs in these passages of Amos. Even though it is translated "glory," it has the same signification. When we realize that this is a case of Hebrew parallelism, we see that the "inheritance" of the first statement of the verse is "the glory of Jacob" is that which he inherits; namely, the land, which God vouchsafed to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. An examination of the land promise that was made to Abraham, renewed to Isaac, and reaffirmed to Jacob shows that the Lord not only promised the land of Palestine to Abraham and his seed, but also all of the land from the River of Egypt to the Great River--the Euphrates. Even in Israel's balmy days, she possessed only a very small portion of that which was involved in the Land of Promise. They simply tented, as it were, in the land. They were harassed by their enemies. Finally, at the time of the Babylonian conquest, the flower of the nation was deported into exile for seventy years. At the time of the Roman domination the nation was subdued and was scattered to the four corners of the earth, where the people have been ever since.

When the time comes here foreseen by the prophet, God will restore Israel to her own land and will give her the heritage vouchsafed to the great progenitors of the Jewish people. Palestine at that time will be the beauty spot of the whole world.

II. Exhortation to praise Jehovah because of His governing the world

"God is gone up with a shout,
 Jehovah with the sound of a trumpet.
 Sing praises to God, sing praises:
 For God is the King of all the earth:
 Sing ye praises with understanding.
 God reigneth over the nations:
 God sitteth upon his holy throne.
 The princes of the peoples are gathered together
To be the people of the God of Abraham;
 For the shields of the earth belong unto God:
 He is greatly exalted (vss. 5-9).

In issuing a call to sing praises unto Jehovah, the psalmist in vision sees the time when "God is gone up with a shout, Jehovah with the sound of a trumpet." To what place does God go up, and Jehovah with the sound of a trumpet? From this passage we cannot get the information. When, however, we study the last nine chapters of the Book of Ezekiel, especially chapters 47 and 48, we see that in the south central portion of Palestine the land will be elevated very greatly, whereas the rest of the land will be leveled down and will look like a vast valley, like the Garden of Eden. This mountain of the heights of Israel will be a very high elevation, fifty miles broad and fifty miles long. (25,000 reeds, as is given in the prophecy, are equal to 50 miles.) Since there is thus to be this high eminence in the land of Israel in the Kingdom Age, since the city of Jerusalem will be located on the southern extremity of this mountain, and since Jehovah

Himself in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Hebrew Messiah, will reign there in person, we are logical in believing that this verse refers to our Lord's going up in the strength of His might to that mountain of Jehovah's house, to His taking the reins of the government of the world and to His exercising justice and judgment throughout the whole earth. His going up to Jerusalem at that time will be such a momentous and epoch-making event that it will be appropriate for all to sing praises to the Lord Jesus Christ and to God the Father, because of the introduction of this great Kingdom Era.

According to verse 6 the people are urged to praise God, to sing His praises, yes, to sing praises unto God, "our King." What is the significance of "our King"? Since the Book of Psalms is Israel's songbook, which she used in her services, the pronoun "our" evidently refers to the Jewish people--no one else. The Messiah is peculiarly the King of Israel. According to the prophecy of Isaiah (9:6) the Messiah is a Son born unto Israel, a child given unto the nation, upon whose shoulder the government shall rest. He will be recognized as the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Thus in a very special sense Messiah is Israel's King. At the same time He becomes King over all the earth. The message of the truth will be given to all nations, who at that time will see the folly of worshipping other gods and who turn and accept the true and living God. These converted peoples of the world will come and apply to be annexed to His Kingdom and thus all nations will voluntarily come under the benign reign of Israel's Messiah.

In verse 7 the people are told why they should sing praises unto the Lord: "For God is the King of all the earth: Sing ye praises with understanding." Here again we see the statement that Jehovah, the Messiah, is to be King of all the earth; that is He is to reign over all nations. They will become His willing, loving subjects.

The people are urged to render their praises to God with understanding. Language is, as we are often told, the vehicle of thought. If people do not understand what we say or sing, they cannot be benefited by our message. The one who is doing the speaking must likewise understand the significance of the words he employs. In singing hymns to God we use words to express certain definite sentiments. These people who appear in the prophecy are urged to praise God with understanding; that is, they are to understand the significance of any poem, hymn, or psalm they sing in worship and praise to God. God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. To utter words set to some tune is not necessarily worship. A person can repeat the words and at the same time have his heart and mind on something that is foreign to the message which he is giving forth in song. Such worship as that is simply lip service. They who worship God must worship, knowing what they are saying and meaning from the depths of their heart the sentiments expressed in the song. The Apostle Paul declared that he would rather speak or sing five words with the understanding than five thousand or ten thousand without the understanding; that is, without the proper understanding himself and the understanding of people in whose presence he rendered the worship.

According to verse 8 of our psalm God reigneth over the nations, in the sense of exercising control over them. In the second statement of the verse we learn that He sits upon His holy throne. Where will His throne be? According to Jeremiah 3:17 it will be in Jerusalem. This position is confirmed by Ezekiel 43:7. As stated above, Jerusalem will be cleansed, purified, and re-created the joy of the whole earth. There Jehovah, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, will reign over the nations.

The hymn concludes with a prophecy that "the princes of the peoples" will be gathered together to be the people of the God of Abraham. There were princes of each of the tribes of Israel. They were leaders of the nation. There are and have been princes or leaders of various Gentile nations, who have gone in

their own ways in the past. But when this prophecy is fulfilled, these leaders of the nations, who survive to the time here foreseen will see the folly of their ways and will come, bowing in humble submission to the God of Israel. Thus they will become a people of the God of Jacob. They will become new creatures in Christ Jesus and will serve the God of Abraham.

Why will they come and bow in humble submission to Him? This question is answered by the words, "For the shields of the earth belong unto God: He is greatly exalted." The people of the world, especially their leaders, will see and recognize the fact that the God of Israel is the God in whom they live, move, and have their being and that He is the one who controls all and who holds the shields or the protecting power of the whole earth. Moreover, they will see that He is exalted in glory, power and majesty. They therefore will come with loving, filial obedience in absolute trust, accepting Him with all their hearts.

Thus Psalm 47 closes with a vision of a converted world. No one but the omnipotent Son of God can establish such a regime.