

SBC – April 16, 2023

Psalm 97:1-12 (NKJV)

“The Messiah’s Coming Reign”

Psalm 97 has no heading but early Jewish tradition (the LXX) attributed it to David. It is one of the Psalms that are often labeled as Royal Psalms. It clearly intersects with Messianic thought because verse 7 is quoted by Hebrews 1:6 in reference to Jesus.

Slide # 1

Outline of Psalm 97

Theme: Messiah’s Coming Reign

- v. 1 - Summons to Rejoice in God’s Reign
- vv. 2-6 - Coming Judgment of the Wicked
- vv. 7-9 – God Over All
- vv. 10-12 – Joy for the Righteous

To properly understand Psalm 97 we need to understand about what is called “The prophetic perfect tense”.

The prophetic perfect tense is **a literary technique used in the Bible that describes future events that are so certain to happen that they are referred to** as already fulfilled.

*There is no such thing as “tense” in biblical Hebrew. (Modern Hebrew, on the other hand, does have tenses.) Biblical Hebrew is not a “tense” language. Modern grammarians recognize that it is an “aspectual” language. This means that the same form of a verb can be translated as either past, present, or future depending on the context and various grammatical cues. – **Jews for Jesus***

The Jews saw prophecy given by God as so certain to be fulfilled that it was often spoken of as already fulfilled. Prophecy for them was not merely something that was future, but something already completed and fixed in the mind of God. Before God it was as good as done and so they spoke in those terms.

The “prophetic perfect” in the Hebrew should not be confused with the perfect tense of the Greek which indicates completed action with continuing results. Rather it is future action that is considered completed already. Most Hebrew prophecy is given in a prophetic perfect form.

This is the case with Psalm 97. We know that Psalm 97:7 is quoted in Hebrews 1:6 in reference to Christ in relation to His Second Coming. Therefore the whole surrounding context is ultimately future things related to the Second Coming and the setting up of Christ's kingdom. And it is so certain to come to pass that it is spoken of as already in place.

Psalm 97 (NKJV)

1 The LORD reigns; Let the earth rejoice; Let the multitude of isles be glad!

“The LORD reigns” is the KEY emphasis in this whole Psalm. This is the big idea!

This is ultimately a celebration of the Lord's reign at His Second Coming. The “Worship Him” in verse 7 as seen in Hebrews 1:6 is applied to Jesus.

And the “Him” to be worshipped in this context is shown to be the LORD (YHWH) as seen in the whole surrounding context.

“The LORD reigns” is a statement of fact but as the surrounding context makes clear it awaits the Second Coming for fulfillment.

Certainly, God's sovereign reign is always in place, but in view in this context is God's judgment that ushers in His reign which will take place in relation to the Second Coming.

The LORD's reign issues forth a summons for the earth to rejoice. The word “earth” (Heb. Eretz) is the word the Jews commonly use for the land of Israel.

For example, I have a book titled, “The Twentieth Century in Eretz Israel”.

The earth refers to the land/people of Israel (cf. 96:1), while the islands (lit. “costal regions”) is a common synonym for the nations around the Mediterranean Sea, which serve as representatives of all the Gentile nations (cf. Is 42:4). – ***The Moody Bible Commentary***

Verse 1 is a summons to the land of Israel and to the whole earth to rejoice in God's reign. Celebrate, celebrate the LORD reigns. When Christ comes to reign it will be a time of great rejoicing.

We could imagine an evil or dark deity whose reign would bring terror. We see such in a limited sense, where men and devils are given room to exercise their wicked will. – **David Guzik**

Satan is called “the god of this age” and it isn’t pretty. But when YHWH comes to reign His reign will bring universal JOY to the world! And the rest of the Psalm develops this theme and how it comes about.

2 Clouds and darkness surround Him; Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.

Clouds and darkness are indicative of the veiled awesomeness of God’s judgment. The Day of the Lord judgment that will usher in the reign of the Lord is described in these terms.

Slide # 2

Joel 2:2 (NKJV)

2 A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness, Like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, The like of whom has never been; Nor will there ever be any such after them, Even for many successive generations.

Zephaniah 1:15 (NKJV)

15 That day is a day of wrath, A day of trouble and distress, A day of devastation and desolation, **A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness,**

God rules by power but the foundation of His rule is righteousness and justice which is indicative of His character. So many today clamor for justice, but few really want God’s justice – most of the time it is a flesh oriented concept that is all about SELF – self vindication – self reparations – whatever the case may be.

But the LORD’s reign will be according to His holy standards and He shows no partiality (Acts 10:34).

Slide # 3

Genesis 18:25 (NKJV)

25 Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! **Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?**

And the answer YES He will. The basis of His rule is righteousness (what is right) and justice (correct judgment calls).

3 A fire goes before Him, And burns up His enemies round about.

2 Thessalonians 2:8 says Jesus will come “in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God”. Hebrews 12:29 says, “our God is a consuming fire.”

He comes in holy judgment destroying His enemies (cf. Rev. 8:5-7). Fire in the Bible is often associated with God’s judicial wrath.

4 His lightnings light the world; The earth sees and trembles.

This is awesome stuff! This is apparently the Lord’s public coming to rule the world. No one will be saying, “Is this the sign of His coming?” It will be gloriously obvious! (cf. Rev. 1:7; 6:12-13).

Slide # 4

Matthew 24:30 (NKJV)

30 Then the **sign of the Son of Man** will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven **with power and great glory**.

Out of the darkness of the Tribulation Period suddenly light like lightning will light up the entire world with the glory of the Lord. The earth will see it and is personified as trembling as the whole world will shake and quiver (cf. Zech. 14:4, 10).

Slide # 5

Isaiah 24:19–20 (NKJV)

19 **The earth is violently broken**, The earth is **split open**, The earth is **shaken exceedingly**.

20 The earth shall **reel to and fro** like a drunkard, And shall **totter** like a hut; Its transgression shall be heavy upon it, **And it will fall, and not rise again**.

5 The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the LORD, At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

Mountains in the Bible are a symbol of strength, but they are personified as melting away like wax in His hot presence. No power can stand against Him. He is the “Lord of the whole earth.”

Slide # 6

Micah 1:3–4 (NKJV)

3 For behold, the LORD is coming out of His place; He will come down
And tread on the high places of the earth.

4 The **mountains will melt under Him**, And the valleys will split Like
wax before the fire, Like waters poured down a steep place.

Note the parallelism of “LORD” (YHWH) and “Lord” (Adonia – meaning Master) in this verse affirms that indeed YHWH is the Lord (great King) Who rules over all the earth (cf. Josh. 3:11, 13).

6 The heavens declare His righteousness, And all the peoples see His glory.

When the Lord comes in power and glory it will be a clear manifestation that He was right in all His claims! None will be able to argue. All the peoples of the earth will see His glory.

Slide # 7

Isaiah 40:5 (NKJV)

5 **The glory of the LORD shall be revealed**, And **all flesh shall see**
it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

7 Let all be put to shame who serve carved images, Who boast of idols. Worship Him, all you gods.

When Jesus comes to rule all the false idolatrous gods of the world will be clearly exposed to be what they are – a total sham. And those who served them will be put to shame.

Notice that the One Who is to be worshiped is the LORD Who reigns; the One Who has fire going before Him that destroys His enemies; the One Whose brilliant light of glory illumines the world and before Whom the earth trembles and before Whose presence the mountains melt like wax.

This is significant because Hebrews 1:6 attributes this worship as being designated to Jesus! The whole point of Hebrews 1 is to emphasize that Jesus as God is greater than angels because in fact He is God Who is to be worshiped.

If this ultimately has Jesus in view (which it does); and in the surrounding context He is called LORD (YHWH) then it is clear that Jesus is in fact YHWH – the Lord-God Almighty Who comes to reign. And that is consistent with all further revelation given in the Bible (cf. Heb. 1:10-12 using Ps. 102:25-27).

It is interesting that Hebrews 1:6 quotes from the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) and in so doing says, “Let all the angels of God worship Him” instead of “Worship Him, all you gods.”

Slide # 8

Psalm 97:7 (NKJV)

7 Let all be put to shame who serve carved images, Who boast of idols. **Worship Him, all you gods.**

Hebrews 1:6 (NKJV)

6 But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: “**Let all the angels of God worship Him.**”

Now if the Holy Spirit wants to make this inspired application who are we to argue? The word “gods” in Psalm 97 is the Hebrew word “Elohim”. This word is a general word for God that basically means “Higher Power” or “Supreme Being”. Most often it is used in the superlative sense of God Himself. But sometimes it is used in a lesser sense of angels, rulers, judges or even false gods.

In the lesser sense these have a dignified role (or supposed role) of being in an exalted God-like position although they are not God. For example:

Slide # 9

Psalm 82:1–2 (NKJV)

1 God stands in the congregation of the mighty; **He judges among the gods.**

2 How long will you **judge** unjustly, And show partiality to the wicked?
Selah

The role of God is that of Judge. He is the ultimate Judge. But under God there are those who have a God-like role of “judge” (small “j”) on the earth. They are here called “gods” in the sense that they have a special dignified exalted God-like role, but in truth they are not GOD. Note at the end of the Psalm it makes this very clear.

Slide # 10

Psalm 82:6–7 (NKJV)

6 I said, “You are gods, And all of you are children of the Most High.

7 But you shall die like men, And fall like one of the princes.”

God is saying although I called you by this dignified title because of your honored role, before you get to thinking to high of yourself as “gods” – just remember you are really mere men who “shall die like men”.

The point is sometimes this term “Elohim” (higher power) is used in a secondary sense. And it is in this sense that under inspiration the writer of Hebrews applied it to angels in Hebrews 1:6. Although angels have an exalted position yet they are to worship the Son Who in fact is God over all.

But let’s come back to the Hebrew in Psalm 97:7. In the OT when one nation conquered another the gods of the conquering country were given credit for the victory and were considered to be the greater gods. God’s victory over the idolatrous nations of the world puts the worshipers of these false gods to shame. Indeed, He will be shown to be “Lord of the whole earth” (v. 5) and “most high above all the earth” (v. 9).

With biting irony the psalm calls on the gods [poetically speaking] that people foolishly worship to bow in worship before the Lord.

– ***NIV Study Bible***

The LORD Who comes to reign ALONE is to be worshiped as He is shown to be over all the gods – which in truth are no gods at all as we have noted in Psalm 96 (cf. Ps. 115:4-10).

8 Zion hears and is glad, And the daughters of Judah rejoice Because of Your judgments, O LORD.

When the LORD comes and destroys all His enemies; when He comes and puts away all idolatry; when He comes to reign supreme; Zion will then be glad and Judah will rejoice because of His judgments!

Zion is the poetic name for Jerusalem especially the sacred part of the old city related to the Temple Mount.

Slide # 11

Joel 3:16–17 (NKJV)

16 The LORD also will roar from Zion, And utter His voice from Jerusalem; The heavens and earth will shake; But the LORD will be a shelter for His people, And the strength of the children of Israel.

17 “So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, Dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, And no aliens shall ever pass through her again.”

What a day of rejoicing that will be in Zion!

9 For You, LORD, are most high above all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods.

The LORD ALONE will be exalted in that day! He will be properly recognized for Who He is as the “most high above all the earth” – “exalted far above all gods” (cf. Eph. 1:21).

Slide # 12

Isaiah 2:17–19 (NKJV)

17 The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, And the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; The LORD alone will be exalted in that day,

18 But the idols He shall utterly abolish.

19 They shall go into the holes of the rocks, And into the caves of the earth, From the terror of the LORD And the glory of His majesty, When He arises to shake the earth mightily.

Everyone and everything is going DOWN on that day, and the LORD alone will be exalted as “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev. 19:16).

The wicked are going down, but what about God’s people? What defines them? The answer to this is found in verses 10-12.

10 You who love the LORD, hate evil! He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked.

Those who love the LORD are those who know Him and they are exhorted to hate evil (cf. Rom. 8:28; 1 Cor. 8:3; 16:22; Eph. 6:24). There is to be no neutrality.

Sometimes Christians act like love is just tolerant of everything – and never takes a stand. Nothing could be further from the truth. To love God properly is to hate evil. The one demands the other (cf. Prov. 8:13; Amos 5:15; 2 Pet. 3:10-11).

To hate means to reject; to love means to choose. Since both are an expression of the will and not merely an emotion, the Bible commands both love and hatred. – ***Nelson Study Bible***

As Christians we are to be PARTIAL in a determined sort of way! We are to be biased towards the truth – meaning we side with the truth; biased toward loving God – in that we throw in with Him. If one is not partial towards God I wonder what side they are really on. I see these people who always want to play “Switzerland” – that is they always want to be neutral.

It may be that this command is one of the most often broken among God’s people. We find it easy to be too loving, or rather express a twisted love that pretends to both love the LORD and love or accept the things that He hates. – ***David Guzik***

Slide # 13

“My ground is the Bible. Yea, I am a Bible-bigot. I follow it in all things, both great and small.” – ***John Wesley***

Jesus tells us what He thinks of not taking a stand...

Slide # 14

Revelation 3:16 (NKJV)

16 So then, because you are **lukewarm**, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

Our love for the Lord is shown in our hatred of evil! Love for God aligns with God. A true love for God defines genuine believers.

Slide # 15**1 Corinthians 8:3 (NKJV)****3 But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.****1 Corinthians 16:22 (NKJV)****22 If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!**

A love for God demonstrated in a hatred of evil sets God's people apart. And it these saints (set apart ones) whose souls God preserves. Those who love the LORD are called saints and God promises them His preservation – which is another way of saying “eternal security”.

He may leave the bodies of his persecuted saints in the hand of the wicked, but not their souls, these are very dear to him, and he preserves them safe in his bosom. – **Charles Spurgeon**

11 Light is sown for the righteous, And gladness for the upright in heart.

Some translate this as “sown” and some as “dawns” such as in the Holman Christian Study Bible.

Slide # 16**Psalm 97:11 (HCSB)****11 Light dawns for the righteous, gladness for the upright in heart.**

The wicked live in darkness, but LIGHT defines the children of God.

Slide # 17**Psalm 36:9 (NKJV)****9 For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light.****John 12:36 (NKJV)****36 While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.**

Light relates to insight – to seeing God’s truth. The light has dawned on God’s children. 2 Cor. 4:6 says God has shone in our hearts “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” And this is our “happy place”. This brings “gladness for the upright in heart”.

God’s people are called “righteous” or “the upright in heart,” and these titles speak of a life devoted to God. – **Warren Wiersbe**

12 Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous, And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.

This Psalm ends with an exhortation to the saints to rejoice and give thanks! After commanding us to be filled with the Spirit Paul then immediately in Eph. 5:19-20 says, “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” – that expresses joy. And then he says, “giving thanks always for all things”.

The outflow of the Spirit-filled life is joy and thanksgiving. In 1 Thessalonians 5 Paul says, “Rejoice always” and “in everything give thanks” (1 Thess. 5:16, 18).

The secret of the Christians joy is found in the Lord Himself. What He gives us is just a bonus, but our real JOY is Him – all that we are in Him – all that we have in Him.

Note in verses 10-12 the designations that define God’s people.

Slide # 18

- v. 10 “who love the LORD”
- v. 10 “His saints”
- v. 11 “the righteous”
- v. 11 “the upright in heart”
- v. 12 “you righteous”

These are the ones the Lord preserves; who have the light; and can know the joy of the Lord.

Finally, he says, “give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.” We are to constantly recall that God is totally unique – totally set apart from all the false gods of this world.

He is the living God. He is the ONE TRUE God. He is a God of righteousness, justice, and the source of light and joy.

Indeed, we have much to be thankful for as God’s people.

The Psalm both begins and ends on a note of rejoicing.

We can celebrate the anticipated sure coming of the Lord to reign. And we can always be rejoicing in the Lord because of Who He is.

We celebrate the rule of God and we worship because of Who He is.

Indeed, let us ever be giving thanks at the remembrance of His holy name!