

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

The Gentiles are invited to celebrate the praises of God as the Sovereign of the world, Psalm 47:1, Psalm 47:2. The Jews exalt in his kindness to them, Psalm 47:3, Psalm 47:4. All then join to celebrate his Majesty, as reigning over the heathen, and gathering the dispersed Jews and Gentiles together into one Church, Psalm 47:5-9.

The title, "A Psalm for the sons of Korah," has nothing remarkable in it. The Psalm was probably written about the same time with the preceding, and relates to the happy state of the Jews when returned to their own land. They renewed their praises and promises of obedience, and celebrate him for the deliverance they had received. See the introduction to Psalm 46:1-11 (note). 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.

Verse 1

O clap your hands, all ye people - Let both Jews and Gentiles magnify the Lord: the Jews, for being delivered from the Babylonish captivity; the Gentiles, for being called to enter into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Verse 2

For the Lord most high is terrible - He has insufferable majesty, and is a great King - the mightiest of all emperors, for he is Sovereign over the whole earth.

Verse 3

He shall subdue the people under us - He shall do again for us what he had done for our forefathers - give us dominion over our enemies, and establish us in our own land. I would rather read this in the past tense, relative to what God did for their fathers in destroying the Canaanites, and giving them the promised land for their possession, and taking the people for his own inheritance. This is also applied to the conversion of the Gentiles who, on the rejection of the Jews, have become his inheritance; and whom he has chosen to inherit all those spiritual blessings typified by the sacrifices and other significant rites and ceremonies of the Jewish Church.

Verse 5

God is gone up with a shout - Primarily, this may refer to the rejoicing and sounding of trumpets, when the ark was lifted up to be carried on the shoulders of the Levites. But it is generally understood as a prophetic declaration of the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ; and the shout may refer to the exultation of the evangelists and apostles in preaching Christ crucified, buried, risen from the dead, and ascended to heaven, ever to appear in the presence of God for us. This was the triumph of the apostles; and the conversion of multitudes of souls by this preaching was the triumph of the cross of Christ.

Verse 6

Sing praises - זמְרָה (zammeru): this word is four times repeated in this short verse, and shows at once the earnestness and happiness of the people. They are the words of exultation and triumph. Feel your obligation to God; express it in thanksgiving: be thankful, be eternally thankful, to God your King.

Verse 7

For God is the King of all the earth - He is not your King only, but the King of the universe. He has no limited power, no confined dominion.

Sing ye praises with understanding - זמְרָה בַּמִּשְׁכָּל (zammeru maskil), sing an instructive song. Let sense and sound go together. Let your hearts and heads go with your voices. Understand what you sing; and feel what you understand; and let the song be what will give instruction in righteousness to them that hear it. Sing wisely - Anglo-Saxon. Multitudes sing foolishly.

Verse 8

God reigneth over the heathen - Though this is literally true in God's universal dominion, yet more is here meant. God reigns over the heathen when, by the preaching of the Gospel, they are brought into the Church of Christ.

God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness - He is a holy God; he proclaims holiness. His laws are holy, he requires holiness, and his genuine people are all holy. The throne of his holiness is the heaven of heavens; also

the temple at Jerusalem; and, lastly, the hearts of the faithful.

Verse 9

The princes of the people are gathered together - נְדִיבֵי אַמִּי (nedibey ammim). The voluntary people - the princely, noble, or free-willed people; those who gladly receive the word of life; those who, like the Bereans, were of a noble or liberal disposition; and, when they heard the Gospel, searched the Scriptures to see whether these things were so. It is a similar word which is used Psalm 100:3; and I believe both texts speak of the same people - the Gentiles who gladly come unto his light, and present themselves a free-will offering to the Lord.

The people or the God of Abraham - Who were Abraham's people? Not the Jews; the covenant was made with him while yet in uncircumcision. Properly speaking, the Gentiles are those whom he represented; for the covenant was made with him while yet a Gentile; and in his seed all the nations - the Gentiles, of the earth were to 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 God of Abraham has Abraham's spiritual posterity, the believing Gentiles, for his own people.

The shields of the earth belong unto God - The Septuagint translate this ἰσχυροὶ τῆς γῆς, the strong ones of the earth. The Vulgate reads, Quoniam dii fortes terrae vehementer elevati sunt; "Because the strong gods of the earth are exceedingly exalted." These are supposed to mean kings and rulers of provinces which were present at the dedication of the temple; (for some suppose the Psalm to have been composed for this solemnity); and that they are said here to be greatly exalted, because they exercised a very high degree of power over their respective districts. The words refer to something by which the inhabitants of the earth are defended; God's providence, guardian angels, etc., etc.

He is greatly exalted - Great as secular rulers are, God is greater, and is above all; King of kings and Lord of lords; and the hearts of kings and governors are in his hand; and he turns them whithersoever he pleases.