

May 27

Scriptures: Read Psalms 95, 96 & 97

Key Verse: “For the Lord is the great God, and the great King above all gods.” (Psalm 95:3)

Overview

Psalms 95 to 100 form a group of songs composed for liturgical and congregational use. They have a common theme. They are all theocratic psalms which speak of the sovereignty of the Most High God, who reigns as King. They have Messianic significance. They hint at the reign of Christ and they all begin with the call to praise the Lord, but each one is distinctive. Some of the older translations of the Bible ascribe their authorship to David, and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews alludes to the Davidic authorship of Psalm 95 (Heb. 4:7).

Psalm 95 is a beautiful expression of the people’s worship to God. Verses one through seven may have been sung by the common worshippers or the levitical choir in their procession to the Lord’s House. They magnify the Lord by proclaiming His greatness in being their rock of salvation, as well as recognizing Him as the only true God, who is not only the great King over the whole world but the omnipotent and omnipresent Creator of everything and thus worthy to be praised (Rev. 4:11; Heb. 13:15).

In verses six and seven, the joyful group has arrived at the place of worship, where they are struck with awe and reverence before the presence of the Lord. They invite others to show their respect by bowing down low and kneeling before their great God and Creator. Their actions and attitude signify their humility, total loyalty, and submission to Him.

In the midst of their worship, the Lord gives a warning to them that is a continuous challenge for all believers of every generation. They are to guard their hearts from turning hard as did their forefathers at Meribah (meaning “contention” or quarrel”), and at Massah (meaning “temptation”, “test”, or “trial”; Exodus 17:1 — 7) who had seen the mighty works of God and still doubted God’s ability to bring them into the Promised Land; so God caused that generation to not enter His “rest”, which represents the ultimate rest for all believers (Num. 14:21-23; Deut. 1:26-39; 12:9; Heb. 3:7-4:11).

Psalm 95 was a national hymn, but Psalm 96 is a missionary hymn with a universal vision. King David spoke these words at the time when the Ark of the Covenant had been brought to Jerusalem (1 Chron. 16:23 -33), which supports the Davidic authorship of the psalm. It invites people of every nation to be involved in singing praises, blessing the Lord, and daily “proclaiming the good news of His salvation” and His glory and wonders (marvelous deeds) to every heathen nation (96:2-3).

The God of Israel, who made heaven and earth, is to be praised and feared above all other gods, since they are false and merely man-made idols of stone or wood (96:5; cf. Ex. 18:11; Isa. 2:8, 18-20; 40:19-20; 44:9-17). God, however, is the great King, full of honour and majesty (cf. 93:1; 104:1). Strength and beauty are in His holy sanctuary, since His presence is there, as is symbolized by the Ark of the Covenant (96:6; cf. 78:61). All nationalities are exhorted to come

reverently into the Lord's House to give him worship and offerings "in the beauty of holiness:, which represents the pure heart of the one who is consecrated to the Lord.

This psalm closes with a Messianic prophecy that exhorts those who know the Lord to preach to all people the imminent return of the Messiah. He will reign over the earth with justice and judge all people righteously (96:10-13; 9:8; 22:27-28). The whole realm of creation will be influenced by His coming (96:11-12; Is. 55:23; 11:1-9).

Psalm 97 expands upon the last verse of the preceding psalm. After the coming of the mighty King judge and purge the world of evil (prophetically picturing the second coming of Jesus Christ), His reign is praised by all those who benefit, since they are a part of His kingdom. This includes the people of the Lord Jesus, who are the people of spiritual Zion; it also includes the whole earth and all creatures which are made glad (97:1, 8, 11). At His coming, the glorious brightness of His deity will be veiled by clouds that surround Him, as it was on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:16,18). Because He rules with righteousness and justice, He will come with an awesome display of power and sweep away His enemies and all evil with His fiery wrath, whether they be in Jerusalem or in any other part of the world (Is. 42:25; 2 Pet. 3:10 — 12). For them, however, it will not be a time of rejoicing, for they will be put to shame and will perish (Rev. 19:20). In light of this contrast, the conclusion is drawn by the psalmist that God's people, who are now being preserved by Him and have experienced His light (97:11), have an obligation: to love the Lord, hate evil, rejoice in Him, and give thanks.

Prayer

You, oh Lord, are the one and only God over all the universe, and we magnify Your name today. We know Your coming is very soon and long to see Your glory. May we live in this expectancy which compels us to be a witness to others.