

Psalm 97 • The Return of the King

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Psalm 97 begins by saying,

"The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!"
(ESV)

Now I'm going to stop you right there for just a moment because as we get into Psalm 97, this is talking about the coming of the Lord. This is really a prophetic insight into His second coming.

And I want to remind you how the coming of the Lord is going to take place because the Lord first is going to come for the church. And we call that, the Rapture, based on a single word that the apostle Paul used in 1 Thessalonians where he said that, we will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thessalonians 4:17) And those words, caught up, is actually where we get our word, rapture.

And when people say, well, rapture isn't in the Bible. Well, it absolutely is. And the idea is that the church is going to be caught up first to meet the Lord in the air. And then the Tribulation period is going to come after the church is taken out of the way. Because the Tribulation period is all about the wrath of God. The wrath of God being poured out upon the earth.

And after the Tribulation period is over, the Lord then returns to the earth with the saints, with the church, His bride. And He returns to actually, physically, set foot upon the earth. We know exactly where Jesus is going to touch down and He's going to fight at that time for Israel. Put away her enemies and establish His rule upon the earth for a period of 1,000 years, in a time period that we refer to as the, Millennial Kingdom.

This particular Psalm is talking about the rule of the Lord during the Millennial Kingdom. In fact, many of these Psalms that in this area, right here of Psalms, speak prophetically of that time.

You'll notice that it begins by saying, *"The LORD reigns;"* And it's talking about Him reigning upon the earth. Jesus is going to literally, reign over the earth. And the Lord is going to give us an opportunity for that.

People will ask sometimes, why the Millennial reign? Why 1,000 years? Because we know that after the 1,000 year reign of Christ, the Bible says, that God is going to destroy the current earth and the current heavens. He's going to create a new heaven and a new earth and then we enter into that time of eternity.

And people will ask sometimes, why not just get right to it? Why the 1,000 year period of the rule of Jesus on this earth? And we're not told in the Scriptures, exactly why that is going to come about that way. But I agree with some who have suggested that the Lord wants to show us what life on this earth can be like when it is ruled and reigned in righteousness.

Because you and I live in a world that is ruled and reigned by unrighteousness. We have the kingdom of man that is established on earth within the kingdom of Satan, who literally is the prince of this world at this time. And we live in a world that is constantly corrupt, constantly full of darkness, constantly full of difficulty, corruption, and all kinds of things. And it's just life for us.

And yet Jesus is going to come and He's going to show us what life on this earth could be like during that 1,000 year period. And it's going to be an incredible time. And that's why it says, *"let the earth rejoice;"* there in verse one. Because the Lord reigns. Let the earth... Everything that we want is going to come to pass, in terms of the kind of a world that we wanted it to be.

You'll notice at the end of verse 1, it says, *"let the many coastlands be glad!"* And the term coastlands or islands or the..., I think the New King James has *"isles"* is a reference to the Gentile nations. Whenever you see that in the Scripture about the islands or the coastlands it's referring to the Gentile nations.

Look how the Lord returns.

Verse 2,

"Clouds and thick darkness are all around him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.

3 Fire goes before him and burns up his adversaries all around." Speaking of how He's going to fight for Israel when all of her enemies come against her to destroy her at the end of the Tribulation period.

And it says,

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

Isn't that interesting? The whole earth is going to see the coming of the Lord and the working of God's power to destroy the enemies of the Lord at that time. It's all going to be seen by everybody.

And it says in verse 5 that,

"The mountains melt like wax before the LORD,"

And this is an interesting reference. And you got to wonder just how figurative it is. Because there are many passages in the Bible that talk about the mountains are going to be made low or laid low. The valleys are going to be lifted up and the mountains laid low. And you wonder just how figurative that is. Or, if there's some relevant sort of a comment related to the geography of the world being changed somehow.

But it says,

"before the LORD of all the earth. (And)

6 The heavens proclaim his righteousness, (And again, we see this reference, it says,) and all peoples see his glory."

Everybody on the earth is going to be witness to the coming of the Lord.

And it says in verse 7 that,

"All worshipers of images are put to shame, who make their boast in worthless idols; worship him, all you gods!"

Notice it says that, those who worship images are put to shame, or, who boast in worthless idols. Now we know what idolatry looked like in biblical times. But here we are living in this day and age - and don't comfort yourself by thinking that if you don't have an image in your home, that you bow down to, that you're not involved in idolatry. Because idolatry comes in all shapes and forms. And an idol is anything in our life that is really our "master passion."

You and I were created to worship. And I know that there are a lot of people that don't want to worship God. But you know what? You're going to end up worshipping something. Bottom line, you can't get around it. You are created to worship.

Some people even worship themselves. Themselves, they think that they're worthy of their, being their master passion. Some people worship other people. Some people worship goals in life, like wealth. Some people worship sensual pleasure. And we worship really, again, whatever is our master passion, wherever all of your discretionary money goes. Or, all your discretionary time is spent.

And I'm not talking about hobbies either. Hear me on that. Everybody needs a hobby. And just because somebody has a hobby, I mean, there's nothing wrong with that. You need to relax and that sort of thing. We're not talking about that. We're talking about the things that fill your heart and demand all of your time and attention. It's what motivates you when everything else fails. And that is an idol.

And you'll notice here, that it talks here about how all the worshipers of images are going to be put to shame when the Lord returns. So the question is, when the only one who is worthy of your worship arrives on the scene, will you be ashamed? That's the question we all have to ask ourselves. These are the penetrating questions that we have to ask.

He goes on in verse 8. He says,

"Zion hears (and, of course, Zion refers to the Jewish people, Zion hears) and is glad, and the daughters of Judah rejoice, (Why?) because of your judgments, O LORD."

Jesus is going to bring judgment at that time. And we're not just talking about a great judgment. We're talking about, He's going to rule the earth. He's going to lay down rules like governments lay down rules. But it's going to be so cool and so righteous and so right that people are going to rejoice. They're going to go, isn't that a great!

We see laws being made by governments and that sort of thing. And we all, we roll our eyes and we're like, I cannot believe that dumb law they just made up! Or whatever. Now we got to do this and now we got to do...

Even here Calvary Chapel. When we started a school this fall, we were blown away by how many regulations suddenly we had to comply with the state. And it was like, oh my! We had to have a pest management coordinator. And if we ever see ants in our facility, we have to count them. And if there's over so many ants, we have to fill out all kinds of paperwork. And post messages, and say,

we've got ants! And you literally, you got to put signs out on the property whenever set an ant trap.

This is just part of what the rules and regulations of the world demand, when suddenly, your church becomes a school. And we were just blown away by some of those things. And again, you hear about them, you go that's dumb!

But there's coming a time when the regulations, the rules, and the judgments that are passed down from Zion are going to make people glad. And they're just going to go, isn't that smart? Isn't that just the best thing right there?!

And he says in verse 9,

"For you, O LORD, are most high over all the earth; (and) you are exalted far above all gods."

So the Jews were going to be especially glad when the Lord returns and renders His judgments.

Now verse 10 is very important. I want to call your attention to it.

He says,

"O you who love the LORD, hate evil! He preserves the lives of his saints; he delivers them from the hand of the wicked."

I want you to think about this verse for a minute. Because this is a very important verse. Because what the psalmist is doing here in this verse is, he's giving you and I, the key requirement to keeping our lives holy and safe from evil and darkness.

Again, we live in a world where we are surrounded by darkness every day. Corruption and evil is all around us. And people ask all the time, Pastor, how... what can I do? What can I do to stay on the right path. I just don't want to get sucked down the wrong road. Because there's so many temptations and so much... Aww, and the world is constantly laying things out that are so tempting.

The internet is very tempting. Because there's a lot of garbage on there. And it's very, very tempting. And there are so many... There's temptations to do and to be so much that is of the world. And I know that Christians are wondering, how can I do this? How can I stay connected to the Lord?

Well, it's very simple right here in verse 10. He says, love God and hate evil. I want you to think about what it means. Because our hatred of evil, our hatred of evil things, is going to determine if we're, I guess, how much of those things we're willing to let into our lives. Do you hear what I'm saying? Our hatred of something is going to determine how much of that thing we're willing to let into our lives.

Honestly, I think one of the reasons we fall to sin - and I'm talking about myself too - is because we don't hate evil enough. We don't hate the sin that draws us enough. We don't hate it enough! And what we need to have in the body of Christ, is a relationship with the Lord, that is more important to us than our sin, more valuable to us than our sin. The reason that I have stepped willingly, in the past, into sinful behavior is because, that sin was more important to me than my walk with God. Simple as that!

You can come up with all the excuses about how you were raised and whatever. But you know what? The bottom line, when you boil it all down, I didn't hate sin enough to say no. And I didn't love God enough to say no. Bottom line. And I'm not saying that to condemn anybody. Because it's just as true of me, as it is anyone else.

Honestly, I think some of us have to confess that we don't love God more than our sin quite yet. Pastor, why do I keep falling in this area of my life? Well, I think you love sin a little bit more than you love God right now.

We're told in the Scripture, there are these seasons of sin. And it's enjoyable during certain seasons, particularly the spring and summer seasons. Sin is a kick. And don't let anybody tell you otherwise. But then you eventually get into fall. And something happens like is happening tonight. A cold wind starts blowing. And it shakes you to your core. And that's just a precursor to the winter time of your sin.

And usually when we get into the fall and definitely into the winter, we've come to the place where we're really beginning to understand the gravity of what we've been doing. And the sinful behavior we've been engaging in. And now we're all too ready to get rid of it. Man, if I just would have loved God more than that sin to start with.... You know what I mean?

And again, I don't mean to condemn anybody. It's like, well, Pastor, you're telling me I don't love God? I'm not saying you don't love God. I'm just saying sometimes we choose to love sin more. That's as simple as that.

And so he goes on, verse 11, he says,

"Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart."

And that's really just another way of saying that, godly people, during that time when Jesus returns and establishes His rule on the earth, the godly people are going to enjoy the benefits of that righteous rule. And it's going to be light and joy.

Light, usually refers to illumination. Because when you turn the light on you can see well and you can understand well. And it's going to be full of light. Because when the Lord returns and when He establishes His rule, we're going to see really well. And that's a very cool thing about it. But then he talks about joy. And that's just simply the outgrowth of God's righteous rule.

Can you imagine, can you imagine, what this earth is going to be like when Jesus is on the throne and establishing righteousness upon the earth? I mean, it's really hard to imagine. Because we've become so accustomed to thinking that the way things are, they probably always will be. This is life for you and I.

But the Bible gives us prophetic snapshots of what the world is going to be like under the rule of Jesus. And it's going to be so incredibly different. Don't just think of it being politically different, but spiritually different, emotionally different, relationally different.

Let me put a passage on the screen from Isaiah chapter 11. Check this out. It says,

Isaiah 11:4-9 (ESV)

...with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a child, a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the whole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

...with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips (meaning his words) he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. (Look at these results) The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a child, a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion (get this) shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child (meaning a child that is still nursing age) shall play over the whole of the cobra, and the weaned child (that kid that is past the time of breast feeding) shall put his hand in the adder's den. (And, it says,) They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD (that's that light that we were talking about in the psalm) as the waters cover the sea.

This is one of those prophetic snapshots in Isaiah, of what the world is going to be like during that time when Jesus rules and reigns upon the earth. And it's going to be made new. It's going to be just an incredible time of - unprecedented time - of peace. Even peace among animals where there used to be predator and prey. And they will no longer be predator and prey.

It just blows me away. Blows me away to think about living in a world like that. A little kid putting his hand down the hole of a snake, but no problem. It's not going to be any harm, sort of a thing. Just blows me away.

Alright, then the Psalm ends with one final exhortation. In verse 12, it says,

"Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name."