

"Sing Praises to God"

Psalm 47

This psalm is considered a Royal Psalm, along with Psalm 93, 97, and 99, because it celebrates God's universal sovereignty and rule over His creation.

It's also considered a Messianic Psalm, with its focus on the Second Coming of Christ to establish His rule during the Millennial Reign. We will note this as we study the text.

The superscript (title) of the psalm is a familiar one so nothing new needs to be said regarding it.

I will say that there is a connection to be made between Psalms 46, 47, and 48. These psalms form a trilogy of psalms that highlight God's sovereignty, His protection of His people, and His eternal reign. They are interconnected in both theme and structure, each building upon the truth of God's absolute authority and His presence with His people.

- Psalm 46 speaks to God's presence and protection in times of trouble. It encourages believers to trust in God's power and provision even in the most turbulent of times, assuring us that God is a constant help and our secure fortress.
- Psalm 47 shifts focus to God as the sovereign King over all nations. The psalm calls for a universal response of praise to God's reign, declaring His triumph and sovereign rule
- Psalm 48 focuses on God's presence in Zion, the city of Jerusalem, as a symbol of His eternal reign.

Together, these psalms provide a comprehensive view of God's sovereign authority over the nations, His immediate care for His people, and His eternal plan for the future

glory of Jerusalem. This trilogy calls us to respond with trust and praise, knowing that God is both our present refuge and our future hope.

This psalm is one of worship – recognizing God for who He is.

I. WORSHIP BECAUSE OF HIS GREATNESS – VS. 1-4

A. Greatness seen in His triumph – vs. 1

1. "O clap your hands" – clapping in the Psalms is often an expression of joy and celebration, and as used here, it is a command as part of the worship to God. It symbolizes the praise of God's greatness and sovereignty.
2. "All ye people" – some have this as only the Israelites doing the clapping (the worshipping), primarily because the psalm was written for corporate worship in the Temple. However, consider the context of the psalm, and the words used (כָּל-הָעַמִּים), it refers to all the inhabitants of the world.
3. "Shout unto God with the voice of triumph" – the form of the verb for "shout" (the hiphil stem) is causative – it implies not just shouting but causing the shouting to happen with greater intensity or volume. The form used intensifies the action of shouting – it is a command to loudly proclaim or celebrate God's victory.
4. There is a prophetic view in this verse that points forward in time to the return of Christ, the Messiah, to establish His throne in Jerusalem.

This is ultimately fulfilled when Christ returns to establish His eternal reign. At that time, all nations will recognize His sovereignty, and there will be a universal worship of God as King.

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Matthew 24:30-31

³⁰ And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Revelation 19:11-16 is the triumphal return of Christ, where He establishes His kingdom and rules over all the earth. This is a clear eschatological fulfillment of the "voice of triumph" in Psalm 47:1.

Revelation 19:11, 13

¹¹ And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war...¹³ And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

Revelation 11:15 points directly to the universal reign of Christ after His return, which aligns with the universal worship of Psalm 47.

¹⁵ And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

B. Greatness seen in His “terribleness” – vs. 2-4

1. “For the LORD most high” – God’s greatness is the foundation of the worship. His sovereign kingship over all the earth demands our awe and reverence.
2. “Is terrible” – we’ve seen this word for “terrible” (יָרָא) translated this way before, and it is seen this way several more times in the book of Psalms.

As used here, it carries a sense of awe-inspiring majesty and fear. It's not just that God is great in power but that His greatness is so overwhelming that it commands reverence.

3. Verses 3 and 4 are verses that point to the dual fulfillment of prophecy (a historical event and a future event) that is so common in the Old Testament. The historical account seems to point to the conquering of the Promised Land by Israel under Joshua’s command. The future is the return of Christ.
 - a) The word for “subdue” (דָּבַר) is a very common word in the Hebrew and is almost exclusively used in its many varied form for something spoken. There’s only two times in the Old Testament that it is translated in any other way and that is here and in Psalm 18:47.

- b) Its use here suggests that the "subduing" of the nations is not through military action alone but through the declaration of God's sovereign will. This declaration would have historical significance in the context of Israel's conquest under Joshua, but it also looks forward to God's future declaration of His rule, especially in the Second Coming. The use of this word for "subdue" instead of the normal one used (כָּבַשׁ) highlights the authoritative speech of God that brings the nations under His rule, making the connection to Psalm 47:3 more about God's sovereign decree than about a physical conquest per se.

II. WORSHIP BECAUSE OF HIS GLORY – vs. 5-7

A. The glory in His position – vs. 5

"God is gone up..." – He's on His throne.

1. The word for "is gone up" (עָלָה) in this verse is the same as for the word "is exalted" in verse 9.
2. God is not just a King in theoretical or distant sense. He is actively reigning and ascending to His throne. This could be a historical reference to events like the ark being brought to Jerusalem, but it also carries eschatological significance, pointing to Christ's ascension, His position at the right hand of the Father, and His ultimate return.

Acts 1:9

⁹ And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

B. The glory in His praise – vs. 6-7

1. These two verses use the Hebrew word (זמר) translated "sing" five times in these two verses alone. As used in this intense repetition, it creates a crescendo effect.
2. The word, in its basic form means "to make music" or "to sing," but it's not generic singing. The word specifically refers to instrumental accompaniment and skilled musical performance. Some scholars connect it to playing on a stringed instrument which gives us insight into its original semantic range.
 - a) Think of this word "sing" (זמר) as the difference between casual humming and a professional musical performance. When the psalmist uses this word, he's calling for sophisticated, intentional, skillful musical worship – not just spontaneous vocal expression.
 - b) The culmination in verse 7 with "sing ye praises with understanding" (זמרו משכיל) is very unique. The word for "understanding" (משכיל) comes from a word (שכל) which means "to be wise" or "to have insight." So the final call isn't just for music, but for wise music or skillful music or contemplative music.
 - c) This progression is theologically significant: the response to God's enthronement begins with intensive musical celebration but culminates in thoughtful, wise, skillful worship. The music isn't just emotional expression but involves the mind, skill, and careful reflection.
3. From a worship perspective, this passage suggests several important principles:
 - a) Excellence in worship – The intensive forms and

the culminating "understanding" (משכיל) suggest that worship should involve our best efforts, our highest skills, our most thoughtful preparation.

- b) Community participation – The plural imperatives indicate that this isn't solo performance but corporate musical worship.
 - c) Instrumental integration – The connection to instrumental music in the root for "sing praises" (זמר) suggests that worship should engage multiple forms of artistic expression.
 - d) Theological reflection – The progression to "understanding" (משכיל) indicates that even elaborate musical celebration should be thoughtful and instructionally valuable.
4. This verse also presents God as King, which is a title that finds its ultimate fulfillment in Christ. Here's how the connection is made:

- a) Messianic Kingship: The "King" in this verse is a direct reference to Christ as the King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16). Christ is the fulfillment of God's kingship, reigning not just over Israel, but over all the earth, as Psalm 47 declares.

Revelation 19:16

¹⁶ And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

- b) Jesus as the King: Just as Psalm 47 calls the nations to worship the King (God), Jesus' kingship is proclaimed in the Gospels (Matthew 2:2) and fully realized at His Second Coming (Revelation 11:15, 19:16), when He will establish

His kingdom and reign over all nations.

Matthew 2:2

² Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

- c) As believers today, we can apply Psalm 47:6 by recognizing that Christ is the ultimate King, worthy of our worship. The "singing of praises" in the psalm is a foretaste of the universal worship that will occur when Christ returns to set up His kingdom.

III. WORSHIP BECAUSE OF HIS GOVERNMENT – VS. 8-9

A. Government based on holiness – vs. 8

"God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness"

1. The root word for "holiness" here (שִׁקְּטָה) is not merely about moral purity, though that's certainly included. Rather, שִׁקְּטָה fundamentally expresses the concept of "separation" or "set-apartness" – that which is completely other, transcendent, beyond the ordinary realm of human experience.
2. When applied to the throne of God, as it is here, it isn't just morally pure, but is the seat of authority that operates by entirely different principles than human kingdoms.
3. The psalm has been calling all nations to acknowledge the sovereignty of God, and in this verse, it states that that sovereignty is in "the throne of his holiness" – a seat of power that transcends all earthly categories of

authority.

4. When we read "the throne of his holiness" (אֲדֹמָה יְהוָה), we're not just learning that God owns a throne and that throne happens to be holy. We're learning that holiness is the fundamental characteristic that defines this throne's very nature and authority.
5. Earthly thrones derive their authority from military power, wealth, political alliances, or hereditary claims. But God's throne derives its authority from holiness itself – from the transcendent otherness that separates divine authority from all human power structures.
6. This construct relationship suggests that you can't separate God's sovereignty from his holiness. His rule isn't holy because he happens to be a moral ruler; rather, his holiness is the very foundation and nature of his rule.
7. "The throne of his holiness" doesn't just tell us where God sits; it characterizes the entire quality of his reign. This is rule that operates according to principles of holiness – separation, transcendence, moral perfection, and divine otherness.
8. This phrase prepares for the psalm's final verse, which speaks of the nobles of the nations gathering with Abraham's people. The throne of holiness becomes the center around which all earthly authorities must ultimately orient themselves.

B. Government based in heaven – vs. 9

"He is greatly exalted" – in heaven.

1. The exaltation of God can be seen as the public acknowledgment that God's rule originates and is established in heaven.
2. The heavenly exaltation emphasizes that His authority is not subject to earthly limits.

Matthew 6:10

¹⁰ Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

3. From the Messianic perspective, Christ's reign is anchored in heaven. After His ascension into heaven (Acts 1:9), Jesus is exalted at the right hand of God, which signifies His sovereign authority over all creation.
4. "The princes of the people are gathered together" – the nations will eventually recognize and acknowledge God's rule. Christ's reign in heaven is the basis for His eventual earthly reign. God's exaltation in heaven is not just a present reality, but also an eschatological truth that will be fulfilled when His authority is visibly displayed on earth (Revelation 11:15).
5. "Even the people of the God of Abraham"

The word "even" is in italics, indicating it was supplied by the translators to give clarity to the text. They were trying to capture the remarkable, climactic nature of this vision. The verse describes something that would have been almost unthinkable in the ancient world: foreign nobles not just submitting to Israel's

God but actually joining with Abraham's people in worship.

6. "For the shields of the earth belong unto God"

- a) Here, "shields" metaphorically point to the earthly power and authority of rulers and nations, which is ultimately subject to God.
- b) The phrase emphasizes that no ruler or nation can stand apart from God's will. Their power – symbolized by shields – belongs to God. It's a reminder that God controls the destiny of all nations, and they exist under His authority.
- c) This verse is a powerful declaration of God's sovereignty over all nations.
- d) The earth belongs to the Lord, and all who live in it are His.

Psalm 24:1

¹ The earth *is* the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

- e) God is the one who raises up and removes kings, showing His absolute control over earthly powers.

Daniel 2:21

²¹ And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:

- f) All authority comes from God, meaning that even those in positions of power are ultimately accountable to Him.

Romans 13:1

¹ Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

- g) This points to the ultimate reign of God, fulfilled in Christ when all nations and rulers will acknowledge His sovereign rule.

At Christ's return, He will establish His kingdom over all the earth, and every ruler will bow to His authority, as described in Revelation 11:15.

Conclusion: The last line of verse 9 serves as not only a conclusion to the sovereignty of God but also as a fitting final statement for the psalm: "He is greatly exalted."

The final exclamation emphasizes that, despite the earthly challenges and the chaos in the world, God is greatly exalted – His rule is unchallenged and eternal. This ties together the themes of the psalm, from the triumphant call to worship in the first verses to the acknowledgment of God's supreme authority in the closing statement.

Looking forward with the Messianic view in mind, the phrase here could point to the ultimate day when all earthly kings and rulers will bow before God's eternal reign, as described in Philippians 2:10-11.

This psalm is a call for us today to reflect on God's sovereignty and exalt Him in our lives. In the midst of the psalm's celebration of God's rule, this line challenges believers to ask themselves: How can I exalt God more in my life today?