

LESSON 13

PSALMS 47—50

PSALM 47:

OUR GOD: THE KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS

Rejoicing over recent victories, this psalm gives glory to almighty God and pictures Him as the King of the earth. It is a hymn of praise and thanksgiving inspired by the kindness and grace of God.

The psalm is a hymn of praise for the sovereignty and power of God. We cannot be certain about who wrote it, when it was written, or what event inspired its composition. A good guess is that it was written as a sequel to the previous psalm shortly after God delivered Jerusalem from Sennacherib's attack. If so, as one of the most popular of all the psalms, every line of it may be an extension of the rejoicing in the last verse of the previous psalm. If it is extolling God for the same deliverance mentioned in Psalm 46, it does so in a more general way than Psalm 46. No clear allusions to the attack of Sennacherib are found in it.

Two golden themes run throughout the psalm: the kingship of God over all the earth and the victories He has brought to His people. Having enjoyed success in battle by the hand of the Lord, Israel used this hymn to praise God for what He had done for them and for His sovereignty over all the nations.

1. What could possibly be the background of this psalm?
2. Is God pictured as the only King over the Israelites?
3. Is there a possible prophecy in verse 8?

PSALM 48: GOD AND THE CITY OF GOD

This song is a hymn of praise to God for what He has done for the city of God, Jerusalem. Psalm 47 praises the God of Zion, but this Psalm exalts the Zion of God. It is the third in a trilogy of psalms (46—48) that gives glory and thanks to God for some great deliverance He has given them.

Perhaps all three psalms were written to commemorate the salvation of Jerusalem from the planned attack of Sennacherib in 701 B.C. However, absolute certainty may not be possible regarding the background of the psalm.

The glory of Zion, God's city, stands at the center of the psalm. Since God's dwelling place through the ark of the covenant was in the temple in Jerusalem, the city received the magnificence radiating from His presence. The grandeur and power of God were shining on, in, and through the city. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, his face shone; he had to cover his face with a veil because of its brilliant glow (Ex. 34:29–35). When one has been in the presence of God, he imbibes His glory.

This psalm was written to illustrate what God meant to His city and what the city meant to His nation. Furthermore, what God did for Jerusalem typifies what God does for all those who belong to Him.

4. What is the main theme of this psalm?
5. How is Zion described?
6. What is "Mount Zion in the far north"?
7. When the kings saw Zion, what did they do?
8. At the temple, what was especially thought upon?
9. How long will the Lord guide His people?
10. What happens when one is in God's presence?

PSALM 49: GOD OR GOLD

This psalm's unique composition addresses the often discussed theme of man and money. Its major emphasis is on encouraging the godly to make God their supreme object of devotion. It is a song of wisdom literature.

Life's inequities may never be fully understood during our earthly pilgrimage; but death gives equality to everyone, bringing the rich and the poor, the potentates and the paupers, down to the same level. When we understand that riches do not go with us beyond death, our tendency to trust in riches is rebuked, and our attitude toward them is brought into the proper focus.

The instructions given in this psalm help to clarify the nature of money, what it actually does for us, and the importance of a balanced understanding of it. Seeing material treasures for what they are helps us to put them in their rightful place and not allow them to interfere with the worship and service of God.

The psalm can be divided into three parts: a brief introduction stressing what the writer proposes to do (vv. 1–4), an affirmation concerning the tragedy of relying upon wealth (vv. 5–12), and the future of those who trust in wealth (vv. 13–20).

11. What is the theme of this psalm?
12. To whom is it written?
13. What can money not buy?
14. How are all people like the beasts of the field?
15. Why is it wrong to trust in money?

PSALM 50: TRUE RELIGION BEFORE GOD

Clearly, this psalm was used as a judgment-like song to call the nation of Israel to repentance. The time of its writing and the author are difficult to determine.

As his central theme, the writer discusses pure religion before God. In the fervency and rebuke of a fiery spokesman of God, he denounces the sinfulness of the nation and points to the way that must be pursued if a person or nation is to be pleasing to God.

A larger part of the psalm is cast in the form of God speaking to His people. As Judge, God brings His people before His searching eyes and announces His displeasure with them.

Its scene is not that of the final, eternal judgment of all people; it is a dramatic portrayal of God's calling His chosen people into account for the way they were keeping their covenant with Him. The covenant concept especially surfaces in verse 5. However, the psalm is not just a depiction of judgment. The announcement of condemnation provides the framework in which important instructions are given on how God's covenant is to be kept.

The body of the psalm is made up of two judgment-speeches delivered by the Lord. The psalm easily divides into three parts: an introduction to the covenant-lawsuit setting (vv. 1–6); verdict one—a rebuke for worshiping without sincerity (vv. 7–15); and verdict two—a severe reproof of those who claim to be in the covenant but live notoriously (vv. 16–23).

16. Who is being judged in this psalm?

17. Is this the eternal judgment?

18. What was wrong with their worship?

19. What kind of lives were they living?

20. What does God say He will do to those who do not listen to His words of judgment?