

The Lord Reigns, Let the Earth Rejoice

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[0 : 00] Here we go. Tonight we're on Psalm 97. And I thought I was going home first, so my Bible is at home.

So it's just... I know. I have the Bible on the phone, it just feels different. So you just have to bear with me if I feel a little uncomfortable. No, I'm just kidding. It's fine. Psalm 97.

The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice. Let the many coastlands be glad. Clouds and thick darkness are all around him. Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of his throne.

Fire goes before him and burns up his adversaries all around. His lightnings light up the world. The earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the Lord of all the earth.

The heavens proclaim his righteousness and all the peoples see his glory. All worshipers of images are put to shame who make their boast in worthless idols.

[1 : 10] Worship him, all you gods. Zion hears and is glad. And the daughters of Judah rejoice because of your judgments, O Lord. For you, O Lord, are most high over all the earth.

You are exalted far above all gods. O you who love the Lord, hate evil. He preserves the lives of his saints. He delivers them from the hand of the wicked. Light is sown for the righteous and joy for the upright in heart.

So rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name. So the title in this psalm is The Lord Reigns.

A psalm, a hymn celebrating God's rule and reign over the universe, over his creation, and over this world. Described in terms of a king ruling over a kingdom.

But it's not describing just any king, but the king above all kings. So we have a king who rules with righteousness and justice.

[2 : 15] A king stronger than all his adversaries. Not a king who rules over a nation, but a king who rules over all nations. Not a king who is elected by any people, but created all people.

And not a king who is given control, but a king who has been, always been, in control. So as we look at verse 1, it says, The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice.

Let the many coastlands be glad. The coastlands here is, in other words, another way of saying it would be, all the lands that ships can reach. So it could be reworded, all the nations, all the known nations be glad.

And verse 2, clouds and thick darkness are all around him. There's some imagery or some pictures here of connected back to Exodus.

So we're reminded of Exodus 19, where we see God coming down on Mount Sinai. Verses 16 through 18 of Exodus says, On the morning of the third day, there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled.

[3 : 32] Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because God had descended on it in fire.

And the smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. So we get a picture of God's unapproachable majesty as he comes down and settles on the mountain. And then the second half of verse 2 follows that up by saying, Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. So when we first think of the clouds and the thick darkness and this unapproachable majesty, it's easy to kind of get a disconnected, kind of distant feeling towards God.

But then the second half of that verse brings it back. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. That's not a picture of a distant, unsympathetic king, but one who cares about what is good and right.

If he's righteous and justice, then that's what he stands for. He stands for perfect justice, and he rules with righteousness. Verse 3 says, Fire goes before him and burns up his adversaries.

[4 : 55] Again, looking back to the first couple books of the Bible, we can think of areas where God judged with fire. So you have Sodom and Gomorrah where he rained down fire on them.

You have him using fire in part of the ten plagues when Moses was coming against Pharaoh. And we also have connections back to end times in Revelation.

Revelation 8-7 says, So what's really cool about Psalm 97 is, As you go through it, there's a lot of connections back to earlier in history, and there's connections to the end.

But as you'll see in a few minutes, it like is grounded in Jesus Christ and his salvation for us, his death on the cross for us.

And we'll get into that in a couple of minutes. Continue on with verses 4 and 5. It says, His lightnings light up the world. The earth sees and trembles.

[6 : 18] The mountains melt like wax before the Lord of all the earth. Now we know that God, because he created the mountains, he has the power to melt them if he wanted to.

But I think here the psalmist is probably more referring to nations rather than mountains. If you were to picture looking at a globe, and you see nations are built up, kind of like a mountain, if you're looking at a globe in that sense.

And we know that God brings down nations, and he lifts nations up. Micah 1, 2, and 3 says this, as we hear the word of the Lord given to Micah concerning the judgment on Judah and Israel.

It says, Here, you peoples, all of you, pay attention, O earth, and all that is in it, and let the Lord God be a witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.

For behold, the Lord is coming out of his place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth, and the mountains will melt under him, and the valleys will split open like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place.

[7 : 30] All this for the transgression of Jacob, and for the sins of the house of Israel. And, you know, that sounds similar to some of the chapters we just went through with in Jeremiah, where there's just constant judgment that's being given to the people of Israel as they continue to live in sin and rebel against God.

So we see this picture of God's power and his judgment. But like I mentioned before, there's a lot more going on in this psalm than just that. If this is a psalm of celebration, which looking at some of these verses, this is very much a psalm of celebration, then it's got to be more than just power and judgment.

Not that there's anything wrong with that, but it's hard to feel celebration when you're talking about judgment and you're talking about God's power. So if we take a closer look at verse 1, the Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice.

The psalm is celebrating the reign of the Lord and praising who he is. The Lord reigns.

Just saying the Lord reigns is like the centerpiece of the gospel that we preach. Jesus has come.

[8 : 53] He's risen. He reigns. That's the cornerstone of the gospel. Jesus is the cornerstone of the church. He's risen and all the power that's in heaven and on earth has been given to him.

So that's the celebration that we start to realize as we look at even just verse 1 starting out. And then as we move to verse 6, it says the heavens proclaim his righteousness and all the people see his glory.

So we see his reign and we also see his righteousness. The Lord reigns with and never moves from a foundation of pure righteousness and complete holiness.

And it's from that foundation, that throne that he judges. So while we don't understand what God is doing, we can rest in the fact that he's never going to do us wrong because of his righteousness.

If he does, then he wouldn't be righteous. Charles Spurgeon says, absolute power is safe in the hands of him who cannot err or act unrighteously.

[10 : 03] I couldn't help but think of some of the Avenger movies where superheroes have all this power, but even with that, they're not perfect. And they fight for who's doing the right thing.

They fight for who should have kind of governance over these special powers. So they fight amongst themselves. It isn't a problem when we're talking about God because he doesn't err.

He doesn't act unrighteously. And so for that, we can glory and we can proclaim the greatness in that righteousness. Verse 7 says, All worshipers of images are put to shame who make their boast in worthless idols.

Worship him, all you gods. Just accenting the fact that putting our trust in idols or anything that are made with human hands is an empty act.

So if you think of the progression of a person before and after they're saved, they worship things of this world. They worship idols and then God opens their eyes to the one true God and they see that shame in what they used to worship.

[11:20] So while God doesn't look at them in shame, it's easy to see where it talks about they're put to shame because they think about what they used to worship, about what they used to live for and go after and now they go after the one true God.

Verse 8 says, Zion hears and is glad and the daughters of Judah rejoice because of your judgments, O Lord. This verse could be referring to a specific occasion that has taken place with the people of Israel and judgment that has been put out against their enemy.

That could be why this psalm was written. I'm not sure. but we also know that there will be a time in the end where there will be a remnant of God's first, if you will, his first chosen people, the Israelites or the Jews when he will open their eyes and he will save them.

So we have Zion hearing because their eyes have been opened and now they'll be glad and they'll rejoice because they're reminded of their deliverance that they were promised and the judgment against those who were against them that they were promised and that we get to see.

So we get to see a picture of that that they could be going through here in psalm and also in the future when God opens their eyes to the gospel. verse 9 says, For you, O Lord, are most high over all the earth.

[13:00] You are exalted far above all gods. This was used in part of Paul's introduction to the Christians in Ephesus when he says this in Ephesians chapter 1.

And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us? Speaking of God, obviously. According to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him on the right hand in the heavenly places.

Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion above every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come. So we see this high above every name this high above all the earth exalted above all gods little g and that's part of this introduction this encouragement that Paul has given to the Corinthians even in the New Testament.

If idols and gods are worthless and God so they're like down here as much as we want to put worth and price to them if things that man makes is down here at the bottom worthlessness and God is most high over all the earth then what does it profit us to spend our energy on those things versus the creator over us they're not even like close to each other so thinking back to verse one where it says the Lord reigns Jesus being alive and us being saved we're going to keep that in mind as we read these last three verses because I think it just helps bring it more to life and give us more depth as to what it is that we're rejoicing over and why this is a celebratory song verse 10 says oh you who love the Lord hate evil the reason why we're told to hate evil is because

Jesus died for us to cover our sins and so if we love him we have to hate evil it's what he died for he preserves the lives of his saints he delivers them from the hand of the wicked Jesus was victorious over death it was for us his saints that sin has no power and he has ripped us from the hands of Satan verse 11 says light is sown for the righteous and joy for the upright in heart so the phrase light is sown is I think is a little easier understood if we say light is dawning or in other words made visible as God's guidance for those who are righteous so if you think of it as God opening our eyes to his leading to what he has for us that's the light or the the

[16:12] I don't want to guidance is the best word he's opening our eyes to what he has for us that's that's what is dawning for us and likewise the joy dawns or is made visible for those who are upright and heart those who follow after God he's he fills with instruction and guidance and with joy and the verse 12 rejoice in the Lord oh you righteous and give thanks to his holy name so we see returning back to verse 1 where verse 1 says the Lord reigns and let the earth rejoice here it says rejoice in the Lord oh you righteous and in verse 1 when it says the earth is to rejoice it isn't it isn't those who don't know God that are rejoicing it's his saints that are rejoicing so we're called to rejoice in him and give thanks to his name because we are the ones who have been forgiven we've been rescued delivered guided blessed we're your joyful servants and we get to worship a holy

righteous and glorious

God who is above all in in in that vein in that thought of just praising God for who he is so it would be good just to take a couple minutes where we just we pray whatever comes to our mind we praise God for who he is and I want to encourage you if there's times of silence allow that to be times where we let the Holy Spirit speak to us often we don't know what to say and the Holy Spirit can give us words so not that silence needs to be where somebody would pray because it's quiet but a time where we're silent before the Lord and if there's something that we're to praise or ask for then that will be laid on our heart if we don't know what that is already so let's take a few minutes just to praise to