

PSALM 46

God the Refuge of His People

INTRODUCTION.

- A. From Roy H. Enoch (7-13-94).
- B. To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the sons of Korah. A Song set to Alamoth.
- C. "A Song set to Alamoth" probably refers to the tune used for singing this song.
- D. Coffman quotes different scholars who agree that Psa. 46-48 are all praising God's deliverance of Jerusalem by destroying Sennacherib's army in 701BC.
 - "Psalms 46-48 form a group of three which we may assign with little doubt to the reign of Hezekiah, when Sennacherib's army was suddenly destroyed (2Kgs. 19:35). All three strike the same note of gratitude, confidence and praise, which is found in Isaiah's references to the same event (Isa. 29-31, 33,37)."
- F. This psalm is famous for the first line which was the theme of Martin Luther's great hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is our God."
- G. Coffman adopts the following organization for the psalm:
 - 1. God's ascendancy over nature (46:1-3).
 - 2. His ascendancy over the attackers of His city (46:4-7).
 - 3. His ascendancy over the whole warring world (46:8-11).

THE TEXT.

- 46:1** God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
- 2** Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change
And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea;
- 3** Though its waters roar *and* foam,
Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. Selah.
- 4** There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
The holy dwelling places of the Most High.
- 5** God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.
- 6** The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered;
He raised His voice, the earth melted.
- 7** The LORD of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah.
- 8** Come, behold the works of the LORD,
Who has wrought desolations in the earth.
- 9** He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth;
He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two;
He burns the chariots with fire.
- 10** "Cease *striving* and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."
- 11** The LORD of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah.

COMMENTS.

- A. God's Ascendancy Over Nature (46:1-3).
[v2,3] Verses 2,3 use the typical figurative description of upheavals in nature to describe all kinds of political commotion and turbulent conflict among nations. This may well describe the general effect of the Assyrian conquest over a century. It is also characteristic of the description given of the end of time with the destruction of the physical universe. The main point is that in spite of all of this upheaval, God is the refuge for the righteous.

B. God's Ascendancy Over the Attackers of His City (46:4-7).

[v4] "There is a river,..." Water is often used to represent blessings in a dry and arid land. This "river" refreshes the city of God. Isaiah 8:6-8 seems to give light on these verses.

The "waters of Shiloah that flow softly..." are the same as the Pool of Siloam in the NT. The waters are from the spring of Gihon, and pass through a tunnel which Hezekiah had dug through limestone rock into Jerusalem (see 2Chr. 32:30).

These waters flowed softly from the bottom of the Pool of Siloam and overflowed in a stream under the wall. It represented the blessings of God on the city as long as they followed His law. But when they rebelled against Him, he brought "the waters of the river, strong and mighty (the Euphrates)--the king of Assyria and all his glory; he will go up over all his channels and go over all his banks...." (Isa. 8:7).

This imagery was familiar to the Jews and may be part of the significance of the picture of the City of God, the New Jerusalem: Rev. 22:1,2.

[v5] "...God shall help her, just at the break of dawn." This is what Isaiah said in 37:36. If this not the event described, it is certainly a coincidence.

[v6] "The nations raged,...He uttered His voice, the earth melted." God is in control of the nations, though He often lets them choose their course and then holds them responsible.

[v7] The Lord of hosts is with us,...is our refuge" (Rom. 8:31). We are the strongest when we realize our weakness and depend on God.

C. God's Ascendancy over the Whole Warring World (46:8-11).

[v8] "Come, behold the works of the Lord..." This fits the context of the Lord's defeat of Sennacherib's army. It would take a long time for them to clean up the bodies, weapons, and military equipment.

[v10] "Be still and know that I am God..." It is not until we have exhausted our own resources and efforts, that we often depend on the Lord. Hezekiah had tried to hire the Egyptians to help him, and finally he had no other resource: He called on the lord.