

PSALM 97

The Lord's Power and Dominion.

INTRODUCTION.

- A. From Roy H. Enoch (2-14-96).
- B. "The Power and Dominion of God"
- C. Clyde M. Miller, in the *Living Word Commentary*, introduces this psalm with the statement: "To the responsive rejoicing emphasized in Psalms 96-98, Psalms 97 adds the dimension of terror awaiting the wicked in the day of judgment (vv. 3-5, 7)."
- D. David Thurman in the *Gospel Minutes* of March 24, 1995, in the feature article, showed many answers to the question of worship by focusing on Psalms 97.
- E. When we think of God's nature: All powerful, all knowing, everywhere present, just and holy, keeping His promises to bless and to punish, we should stand in awe and reverence before Him in worship.
- F. We will use Coffman's divisions for this psalm:
 - I. The Reign of Jehovah in Nature (97:1,2).
 - II. God Strikes Fear Into the Hearts of the Wicked (97:3-6).
 - III. The Destruction of Idol-worshippers (97:7).
 - IV. The Blessedness of the Righteous (97:8-12).

THE TEXT.

- 97:1** The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice;
Let the many islands be glad.
- 2** Clouds and thick darkness surround Him;
Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.
- 3** Fire goes before Him
And burns up His adversaries round about.
- 4** His lightnings lit up the world;
The earth saw and trembled.
- 5** The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the LORD,
At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.
- 6** The heavens declare His righteousness,
And all the peoples have seen His glory.
- 7** Let all those be ashamed who serve graven images,
Who boast themselves of idols;
Worship Him, all you gods.
- 8** Zion heard *this* and was glad,
And the daughters of Judah have rejoiced
Because of Your judgments, O LORD.
- 9** For You are the LORD Most High over all the earth;
You are exalted far above all gods.
- 10** Hate evil, you who love the LORD,
Who preserves the souls of His godly ones;
He delivers them from the hand of the wicked.
- 11** Light is sown *like seed* for the righteous
And gladness for the upright in heart.
- 12** Be glad in the LORD, you righteous ones,
And give thanks to His holy name.

COMMENTS.

- A. The Reign of Jehovah in Nature (97:1,2).
[v1] "The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice... isles be glad!" I doubt that this is referring to the physical planet. It seems more appropriate to think that this refers to those nations who live on the earth and can understand His greatness.

[v2] “Clouds and darkness... righteousness and justice...” This description reminds us of smoking and quaking Mt. Sinai when God delivered the Law. It seems that these descriptions and the fire of the next verse are very common terms to refer to the nature of God. The Scriptures seem to describe His wrath as much as His love.

B. God Strikes Fear into the Hearts of the Wicked (97:3-6).

[v3-5] The easiest way for us to see and comprehend the power of God is in His work in nature. He is often described in the powers of nature as the storm at sea, the wind, earthquake, volcanoes and other powerful forces. Coffman says that in July of 1991, when he was writing this volume of his commentaries, a mighty volcano forced the evacuation of an American Army Base in the Philippines. God certainly does cause “the mountains to melt like wax,” (97:5).

[v6] “The heavens declare His righteousness...” The earth shows His power and the inspired revelations of heaven show that He is fair and righteous in how He deals with man - more than fair, but forgiving and full of love and grace.

C. The Destruction of the Idol Worshippers (97:7).

[v7] “...Worship Him, all you gods.” This does not mean that “gods” which are identified here as “carved images,” and “idols,” could offer Him worship, but that they are inferior and He is supreme over them.

D. The Blessedness of the Righteous (97:8-12).

[v8] “Zion hears and is glad...the daughters of Judah...” Zion was Jerusalem and the center of God’s worship for Israel. Judah and the “Jews” were the righteous remnant of God’s people. We do not know when this was written, and the significance of “Judah” at that time. But the reason for their rejoicing was “because of Your judgments, O Lord.”

[v9] The Lord was “most high above all the earth... above all gods.” Again, this seems to refer to the nations of the earth and their worship.

[v10] “You who hate the Lord, hate evil!” Many want to love God and also love the world. This is a problem that is often addressed. See Mt. 6:24; 1Jo. 2:15-17. “He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked.” This does not mean that a child of God cannot leave God and be lost. It shows that if we stay with God, we will do what is right. If we do as we please, we will leave Him.

[v11,12] “Light is sown for the righteous... gladness... rejoice in the Lord... give thanks...” The righteous have many rewards and blessings. They have a great obligation to trust the Lord, do what He says, and to be thankful and praise Him to others that He may be glorified, and that they may also share His blessings.