

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Psalms: God's Nurture Of The Inner Man In The Life Of Faith XCVII: Encouragement To Live Uprightly In View Of God's Coming Reign (Psalm 97:1-12)

I. Introduction

- A. Sometimes we believers in Christ simply need to be encouraged to live righteously, to be aware how worthwhile it is for us to live uprightly amid a world that is often widely and extremely sinful.
- B. Psalm 97:1-12, an instructional psalm, provides such an encouragement, and we view it for our edification:

II. Encouragement To Live Uprightly In View Of God's Coming Reign, Psalm 97:1-12.

- A. There are no introductory remarks in the Hebrew text (Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 1059), so the numbering systems of the Hebrew text and of English Bible are the same, and we stay with the English Bible numbering system.
- B. Accordingly, we translate Psalm 97:1-12 (as follows):
 - 1. "Jahweh reigns; let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice!" (Psalm 97:1)
 - 2. "Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne," 2.
 - 3. "Fire goes before Him and consumes His foes on every side," Psalm 97:3.
 - 4. "His lightning lights up the world; the earth sees and trembles," Psalm 97:4.
 - 5. "The mountains melt like wax before Jahweh, before the Adonai of the whole earth," Psalm 97:5.
 - 6. "The heavens proclaim His righteousness, and all the peoples see His glory," Psalm 97:6.
 - 7. "All who worship images are put to shame, those who boast in idols -- worship Him, all you gods!" (v. 7)
 - 8. "Zion hears and rejoices and the villages of Judah are glad because of Your judgments, O Jahweh," v. 8.
 - 9. "For You (emph. pron.), O Jahweh, are the Most High over all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods," Psalm 97:9.
 - 10. "Let those who love Jahweh hate evil, for He keeps watch over the life principle of His godly ones and snatches them away (*nasal*, Ibid., p. 1060; B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 664-665; Hiphil stem = causative) from the hand [vulnerability to the destructive power] of the wicked," Psalm 97:10.
 - 11. "Light is shed upon the righteous and joy on the upright in heart," Psalm 97:11.
 - 12. "Rejoice in Jahweh, O you righteous ones, and praise His holy name," Psalm 97:12.
- C. We note important observations about this psalm (as follows):
 - 1. In verses 2-9, the psalmist described a vision he received of the Lord regarding God's magnificent coming to the earth to reign in glory in the future Messianic Kingdom, Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 864.
 - 2. Thus, verse 1 is a call for the earth to be glad and even the distant shores of the nations to rejoice, for He will come (a) with clouds and thick darkness, picturing great judgment on a sinful world because righteousness and justice are the very foundation of His throne, v. 2; Ibid. (b) The fire of judgment will go before Him to consume all of His wicked foes on every side (v. 3) as (c) His lightning illumines the world, causing the earth to tremble and the mountains figuratively to melt like wax before Jahweh, the Master (Adonai) of the whole earth, v. 4-5. (d) The heavens will also proclaim His righteousness and all the peoples will see His glory (v. 6), (e) shaming idolaters (v. 7) and causing believers to rejoice over God's verdicts of judgment (v. 8) due to His great sovereignty over all the earth and over all false gods (v. 9).
 - 3. The psalmist then called on the godly in his era who loved Jahweh to hate evil, not only for His coming sovereign reign of the earth, but because He also keeps watch over the life principle of His people in this life and He snatches them away from the hand of humanly overwhelmingly powerful, wicked foes, v. 10.
 - 4. The righteous thus experience God's insight and "spiritual prosperity" (light, Ibid.) with joy, so they should rejoice in Jahweh and praise His holy name, namely, His name that is separate from evil, v. 11-12.

Lesson: *Though the upright regularly face affliction from seemingly humanly overpowering, wicked foes (v. 10c), God snatches them away from such enemies as they trust the Lord, for He keeps watch over them (v. 10b) as the omnipotent, omniscient God, and He will demonstrate His greatness and justice at His coming to rule the earth, v. 2-9. For these reasons, the godly who love the Lord should be encouraged to hate evil (v. 10a), for in the end, they will be blessed while the ungodly who sin against the Lord will be catastrophically devastated in God's judgment.*

Application: *Down through the ages, the upright generally experience oppression by seemingly overwhelmingly powerful, evil foes, but they must be encouraged to keep obeying the Lord in faith that He will not only deliver them in this current life, but that He will thoroughly punish the wicked and reward the upright in His Kingdom!*