

Psalms 46-50 Chapter Study

Psalm 46

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah.

The worship leaders.

A Song For Alamoth.

We're not sure what **Alamoth** was but the word is close to the word for a **young woman**.

So this may be a way of saying that this was to be sung by a **soprano**.

Psalms 46, 47 & 48 are part of what are called the **Songs of Zion** because they center on Jerusalem & the reign of God over the nations.

What's moving about this Psalm is to discover how many times it has been read & recited by the people of God throughout the generations as they've faced a great challenge.

During the First World War, a community in the Scottish highlands had several rounds of its young men conscripted to serve in the British army.

The day would come when the new troops would leave & march a short distance to a pier on the shore where they'd load into a transport for a trip across the sea to the mainland & the fighting.

The entire town would make the trip with them to the shore & just before the recruits boarded the ship, they'd all recite the words of Psalm 46 together.

- 1 God *is* our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.
- 2 Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
- 3 *Though* its waters roar *and* be troubled, *Though* the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah
- 4 *There is* a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, The holy *place* of the tabernacle of the Most High.

One of the greatest possessions an ancient nation could enjoy was a wide river with many streams feeding it.

Such a river was a prized possession because in an economy based on agriculture, a dependable water supply was **everything** – it was the basis of all prosperity.

Here the Psalmist speaks of the city of God as straddling a river & it's streams.

It's a picture of life, joy, abundance!

But what makes this city great isn't running water -

- 5 God *is* in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.

The night may be long & dark – but the dawn will come & with it God's salvation.

- 6 The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted.

- 7 The Lord of hosts *is* with us; The God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah

- 8 Come, behold the works of the Lord, Who has made desolations in the earth.

This has moved some Bible students to believe this Psalm was composed at the lifting of the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrians under Sennacherib.

A plague swept thru the Assyrian camp & in one night 186,000 died, leaving a vast pile of treasure & food lying about for the famine starved people of Jerusalem.

It's like the Psalmist is inviting God's people to walk thru the now deserted enemy camp & see with their own eyes how God has delivered them.

- 9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire.

The lifting of the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib brought an abrupt end to a long campaign of conquest the Assyrians had been waging.

But it was literally over in a matter of hours.

That's the kind of thing God does. So -

- 10 Be still, and know that I *am* God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!

[Preach]

- 11 The Lord of hosts *is* with us; The God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah

Psalm 47

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah.

1 Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph!
It's time to applaud God with loud shouts of acclamation.
What's happened to spur this?

2 For the Lord Most High *is* awesome; *He is* a great King over all the earth.

3 He will subdue the peoples under us, And the nations under our feet.

4 He will choose our inheritance for us, The excellence of Jacob whom He loves. Selah
How we can praise God that **He** chooses our inheritance **for us** – because we are such silly children!
We would pick an inheritance worth nothing!

While God, in His infinite wisdom & love chooses a future for us that's beyond our most extravagant dreams. [A Mona Lisa or Lego future]

1 Corinthians 2:9 – “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

5 God has gone up with a shout, The Lord with the sound of a trumpet.
This is an image drawn from war, from battle.

The way it often went was 2 sides would face off against each other & there'd be some taunting back & forth.

Then as fight drew near, each side would quiet & prepare themselves for the coming violence.

Then the trumpet would sound signaling attack, & with a mighty shout, they'd plunge into battle.

So the idea here is that God is a Warrior- as Exodus 15: 3 says straight away.

6 Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!

7 For God *is* the King of all the earth; Sing praises with understanding.

Understanding what? That God is King of ALL the Earth.

Is He? Indeed He is.

So what do we say of those who refuse to obey Him, who deny or neglect His rule?

They are rebels.

8 God reigns over the nations; God sits [as king] on His holy throne.

9 The princes of the people have gathered together, The people of the God of Abraham. For the shields (defenses) of the earth *belong* to God; He is greatly exalted.

This last verse echoes the last verse of the previous Psalm – “God is our refuge.”

Psalm 48

A Song. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah.

1 Great *is* the Lord, and greatly to be praised; In the city of our God, *In* His holy mountain.

2 Beautiful in elevation, The joy of the whole earth, *Is* Mount Zion *on* the sides of the north, The city of the great King.

What made Jerusalem great wasn't here location or vast amount of natural resources or inherent beauty.

To be blunt – none of that commends Jerusalem in the least!

It's not well situated.

Water is a problem; there isn't enough of it and what there is, is hard to get to.

Its only natural resource is a lot of rock.

The City of Jerusalem is great **for one reason** – God has chosen to **make** it great.

It's where He by grace decided to allow the temple to be built.

It's where He manifested His presence in the cloud of light called the **Shekinah** that hovered over the ark of the covenant.

It's the location He's chosen as the seat of the Messiah's throne who will rule the world in righteousness.

3 God *is* in her [Jerusalem's] palaces; He is known as her refuge.

4 For behold, the kings assembled, They passed by together.

5 They saw *it, and* so they marveled; They were troubled, they hastened away.
6 Fear took hold of them there, *And* pain, as of a woman in birth pangs,
7 *As when* You break the ships of Tarshish With an east wind.
8 As we have heard, So we have seen; In the city of the Lord of hosts, In the city of our God: God will establish it forever. Selah

This is another convincing proof that it was the lifting of the Assyrian siege that prompted these psalms of victory.

There were several vassal kings that accompanied Sennacherib on his campaign to conquer Egypt, Israel & Judah.

Those who didn't die in the plague retreated hastily home in great fear of Jerusalem's protecting deity.

9 We have thought, O God, on Your lovingkindness, In the midst of Your temple.

10 According to Your name, O God, So *is* Your praise to the ends of the earth; Your right hand is full of righteousness.

Which was radically different from the gods & idols the pagans worshipped.

Their gods **could** never & **were** never described as righteous!

They were petty, vain, selfish, power-hungry deities who lusted after their own kind of pleasure & gain.

Christian – we have such reason to rejoice – Consider how great, how awesome, how worthy our God is!

He is not the disinterested higher consciousness of Buddhism.

He's not the petty, vindictive gods of Hinduism.

He's not the altogether unknowable & hate-filled God of Islam.

Nor is He the blind chance of atheism.

He is the All-Wise, All-Powerful, All-Good, All-Loving Creator-Sustainer-Completer God.

11 Let Mount Zion rejoice, Let the daughters of Judah be glad, Because of Your judgments.

12 Walk about Zion, And go all around her. Count her towers;

13 Mark well her bulwarks; Consider her palaces; That you may tell *it* to the generation following.

14 For this *is* God, Our God forever and ever; He will be our guide *Even* to death.

The perpetual presence of Jerusalem is one more abiding proof of the faithfulness of God.

There have been no end of the attempts to wipe out Jerusalem.

The Roman Emperor Hadrian finally had enough of the rebellious Jews in the mid 2nd Century & made it illegal for any Jew to enter the city borders.

He scraped the temple mount clean of any vestige of the Jewish Temple, built a temple to Jupiter there, & renamed the City, Aelia Capitolina.

But this attempt to erase Jerusalem was short lived; as all attempts have been.

It failed – & Jerusalem still stands; a thriving, beautiful city that's a major **focus** of world attention.

Jerusalem stands because God has promises regarding Jerusalem, Israel & the Jews that have yet to be fulfilled.

Psalm 49

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah.

This song is what is known as a wisdom Psalm.

It's an observation on life & how things seem to work in the world.

The Palmist considered the prosperity of the wicked.

His conclusion is that those who live without regard for God are like the beasts of the field.

They go merrily through life thinking everything is fine, ignoring that a day of reckoning is coming.

How much better it is to live in fellowship with God & prepare for eternity.

1 Hear this, all peoples; Give ear, all inhabitants of the world,

2 Both low and high, Rich and poor together.

3 My mouth shall speak wisdom, And the meditation of my heart *shall give* understanding.

4 I will incline my ear to a proverb; I will disclose my dark saying on the harp.

5 Why should I fear in the days of evil, *When* the iniquity at my heels surrounds me?

6 Those who trust in their wealth And boast in the multitude of their riches,
7 None *of them* can by any means redeem *his* brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him—
8 For the redemption of their souls *is* costly, And it shall cease forever—
9 That he should continue to live eternally, *And* not see the Pit.

In other words – earthly riches cannot redeem the soul.

10 For he sees wise men die; Likewise the fool and the senseless person perish, And leave their wealth to others.

11 Their inner thought *is that* their houses *will last* forever, Their dwelling places to all generations; They call *their* lands after their own names.

12 Nevertheless man, *though* in honor, does not remain; He is like the beasts *that* perish.

Even those people honor as great die like everyone else.

13 This is the way of those who *are* foolish, And of their posterity who approve their sayings. Selah

14 Like sheep they are laid in the grave; Death shall feed on them; The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; And their beauty shall be consumed in the grave, far from their dwelling.

This is a poetic way of saying that while the wicked may seem to have the best in this life, only eternity tells the real tale.

Let's insert our own 'Selah' at this point to pause & take stock of how **often** the Bible calls us to the long, rather than the short view.

It's one of the repeated themes of the Psalms.

It's one of the main ideas in the book of Job.

In Hebrews 11:12 we read time & again about how faith lifts our eyes from just what's around us to our ultimate destiny.

Abraham remained a nomad instead of settling down in one place because he was looking for an eternal city.

Moses didn't allow the passing pleasures of Pharaoh's court to seduce him but cast in his lot with the oppressed people of God because they were destined for an eternal kingdom.

Then in the greatest example of all, the author of Hebrews speaks of Jesus – Who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross & all its shame, & has now taken His seat in glory.

Using Jesus as our example, the author says, "So, let **us also**, since we are surrounded by a great crowd of onlookers who've already finished **their** marathon, run with dogged endurance **OUR** race."

For He Who has begun a good work in us, will complete it!

Life isn't a sprint. It's a mighty marathon.

15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, For He shall receive me. Selah
Pause & let it sink in – And when it has, then

16 Do not be afraid when one becomes rich, When the glory of his house is increased;

17 For when he dies he shall carry nothing away; His glory shall not descend after him.

18 Though while he lives he blesses himself (For *men* will praise you when you do well for yourself), **[do they ever, to your face. Behind your back they're saying all sorts of nasty things.]**

19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers; They shall never see light.

20 A man *who is* in honor [from other silly men], yet does not understand, Is like the beasts *that* perish.

Psalm 50

A Psalm of Asaph.

One of the chief worship leaders & a major composer of the Psalms.

If David was **Matt Redman**, the Sons of Korah would be **David Crowder** & Asaph would be **Tim Hughes**.

This is a teaching psalm.

It describes man's duty to God & duty to other people.

In that sense it **mirrors** the 10 Commandments.

In this Psalm though, it seems Asaph recognizes that the worship people are giving God is cold & formal – a mere going through the motions.

And because things aren't right with God, they aren't right with one another.

1 The Mighty One, God the Lord, Has spoken and called the earth From the rising of the sun to its going down.

2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth.

3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; A fire shall devour before Him, And it shall be very tempestuous all around Him.

4 He shall call to the heavens from above, And to the earth, that He may judge His people:

In this introduction Asaph describes God preparing to summons the people to come & hear His view of things.

5 “Gather My saints together to Me, Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.”

6 Let the heavens declare His righteousness, For God Himself *is* Judge. Selah

7 “Hear, O My people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you; I *am* God, your God!

8 I will not rebuke you for your sacrifices Or your burnt offerings, *Which are* continually before Me.

God sees something wrong, but it's not a lack of offerings burning on the altar.

They've been careful to make sure they were bringing their sacrifices.

But God's not really impressed by the large numbers of animals they bring -

9 I will not take a bull from your house, *Nor* goats out of your folds.

10 For every beast of the forest *is* Mine, *And* the cattle on a thousand hills.

11 I know all the birds of the mountains, And the wild beasts of the field *are* Mine.

12 “If I were hungry, I would not tell you; For the world *is* Mine, and all its fullness.

13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls, Or drink the blood of goats?

Did they think that God NEEDED their offerings?

Did they somehow think He was hungry & waited to be fed by their sacrifices?

Hey – if God was hungry, He wouldn't have to wait on their offerings – he could go through the drive through at the local forest, or hill, or valley.

No – God wasn't looking for a BBQ – he wanted something far more precious -

14 Offer to God thanksgiving, And pay your vows to the Most High.

The vow here is the covenant vow of relationship, fellowship, communion.

God didn't want their offerings, He wanted them!

He wanted them to return to what the offerings were supposed to be – expression of themselves!

We can make the same mistake they did.

No, we don't bring a goat or cow to offer at an altar.

We bring our praise, our worship.

Did God want a goat or them? Them!

What was the goat they brought supposed to be? An expression of themselves.

Does God want your voice? Words flung out in abundance like a pile of roasting meat?

No. What are the words, the songs supposed to be?

An expression of our hearts, of all we are!

15 Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.”

God wants us to call on Him because His recuse reminds us of His faithfulness and results in praise.

16 But to the wicked God says: “What *right* have you to declare My statutes, Or take My covenant in your mouth,

17 Seeing you hate instruction And cast My words behind you?

18 When you saw a thief, you consented with him, And have been a partaker with adulterers.

19 You give your mouth to evil, And your tongue frames deceit.

20 You sit *and* speak against your brother; You slander your own mother's son.

21 These *things* you have done, and I kept silent; You thought that I was altogether like you; *But* I will rebuke you, And set *them* in order before your eyes.

22 “Now consider this, you who forget God, Lest I tear *you* in pieces, And *there be* none to deliver:

23 Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; And to him who orders *his* conduct *aright* I will show the salvation of God.”

It's the worst kind of hypocrisy when a man or woman goes to church & acts all pious, then goes out & treats others wickedly.

To truly worship God we must honor His image in others.

Without that honor, our worship is a fraud.