

# PSALM 47

## INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 47

### *To the chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah*

Thus psalm is thought by some to be written on occasion of the ark being brought from the house of Obededom to the city of David, to the place he had prepared for it; which was attended with singing and dancing, with shouting, and the sound of a trumpet, (<sup><1062></sup>2 Samuel 6:12-16); but it rather seems to be penned on account of the ascension of Christ to heaven, prophetically spoken of in this psalm; and of the spread of the Gospel, and the conquests it made in the Gentile world upon Christ's ascension; as the whole psalm shows: and even Aben Ezra and Kimchi apply it to the times of the Messiah; and so do some of their most ancient writers, who particularly interpret (<sup><4975></sup>Psalm 47:5) of him, as may be seen in the note upon it.

**Ver. 1.** *O clap your hands, all ye people*, Meaning the Gentiles more especially; (see <sup><1950></sup>Psalm 117:1) compared with (<sup><619></sup>Romans 15:9-11); who had reason to rejoice and be glad, since the ascended Lord and King here spoken of was given to be their Saviour, was the propitiation for their sins, and had given himself a ransom price for them; and now the Gospel was preached among them, by an order from him after his resurrection; and upon his ascension gifts were bestowed on his apostles, qualifying them for it; when many of them were converted by it, and were made partakers of the same grace and privileges with the Jews that believed in Christ, and were formed into Gospel churches. Wherefore they are called upon to declare their joy and gladness by "clapping their hands"; which is a gesture expressive of exultation and joy; (see <sup><1988></sup>Psalm 98:8 <sup><2512></sup>Isaiah 55:12) (Na 3:19). It was used at the unction and coronation of a king, (<sup><2112></sup>2 Kings 11:12); and so very proper to be used on occasion of the Messiah being made or declared Lord and Christ, as he was at his ascension, (<sup><4025></sup>Acts 2:36);

*shout unto God with the voice of triumph*; as when triumphs are made on account of victories obtained, which was now the case; Christ having

conquered sin, Satan, and the world, by his sufferings and death, and having spoiled principalities and powers, made a show of them, openly triumphing over them, when he ascended on high, and led captivity captive; and he having sent his apostles into the Gentile world with his Gospel, they were caused to triumph in him wherever they came. And now these external actions of clapping hands, and shouting with the voice, are expressive of inward spiritual joy; which those among the people who were conquered by the grace of God, and had a sight of their ascended Lord and Saviour, were filled with: and who are exhorted to express it in this manner, unto God: not to angels, nor to men, no, not to ministers, who brought the joyful tidings to them; but to God, either to God the Father, for all their temporal and spiritual blessings; especially for the unspeakable gift of his Son, to suffer and die for them: or to the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh; God that was gone up with a shout, (<sup><9475></sup>Psalm 47:5); and was now at the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honour; who, by the sufferings of death, had obtained eternal redemption for them.

**Ver. 2.** *For the Lord most high [is] terrible*, etc.] Christ is not only the Son of the Highest, but he himself is the most high God, God over all, blessed for ever. He is higher than the highest, than the angels in heaven, or any of the sons of men on earth. He is the high and lofty One, that dwells in the high and lofty place. And even this character agrees with him as the ascended Lord and King in his human nature; he is ascended on high, is set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. He is highly exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour; he is made higher than the heavens, and than the kings of the earth are; angels, authorities, and powers, are subject to him. And this is a reason exciting all the people to joy and gladness. And he is “terrible” to his enemies, being the Lion of the tribe of Judah; who will rule the nations with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces as a potter’s vessel: and so he will be when he shall come in the clouds of heaven, and descend from thence, in flaming fire, to take vengeance on those who have despised and rejected him; and at the same time will be glorious to and admired by them that believe in him. His appearance, which will be terrible to others, will be matter of joy to them. Though the word used may be rendered as it is in (<sup><9309></sup>Psalm 111:9); “reverend” or “to be feared”<sup>f630</sup>, as he is; (see <sup><2383></sup>Isaiah 8:13,14); both on account of his goodness, as the Redeemer and Saviour of his people, (<sup><2385></sup>Hosea 3:5); and of his greatness, being equal with God, and King of saints. As it follows;

*[he is] a great King over all the earth;* as he must needs be, since he is the great God and our Saviour; and is King of kings, and Lord of lords. He is now King of Zion, and head over all things to the church; and before long the kingdoms of this world will become his, and he will take to himself his great power and reign, and shall be King over all the earth openly and visibly; he shall be one, and his name One, (<sup>3849</sup>Zechariah 14:9 <sup>3014</sup>Malachi 1:14); which is another reason for joy and gladness among the people.

**Ver. 3.** *He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.*] As Joshua, his type, subdued the Canaanites; and as David, another type of subdued the Syrians, Moabites, and others: the Jews from these words expect, that, in the times of the Messiah they look for, the Gentiles in a literal sense will be subdued by him, and become subject to them; but these, and all other expressions of the like kind, are to be understood in a spiritual sense; such as (<sup>23423</sup>Isaiah 49:23 60:10,12,14); and which will have their accomplishment in the latter day, in the subjection of the Gentiles to the word and ordinances of the Gospel administered in his churches: though the passage here refers to the times following the ascension of Christ to heaven, when he went forth in the ministry of his apostles conquering and to conquer; and which he made use of to cause the people to fall under him, and to be willing to be saved by him; to submit to his righteousness, and to his ordinances, the sceptre of his kingdom; and which was causing them to triumph, and subduing the people under them, who through the Gospel preached by them became obedient by word and deed; and which was an occasion of joy even to the conquered ones.

**Ver. 4.** *He shall choose our inheritance for us,* etc.] Either a portion in this life; God knows what is best for his people, and therefore they should leave it with him, who can make a better choice for them than for themselves: an Heathen <sup>f631</sup> once gave this advice,

“give thyself wholly to the will and disposal of the celestial ones; for they who are used to give good things easily can also choose the fittest.”

Or the heavenly inheritance, so called in allusion to the land of Canaan, subdued and possessed by the Israelites, in which Christ is greatly concerned; his people are predestinated to the adoption of children, that is, to the inheritance they are adopted to by him, in whom they obtain it; through his death they receive the promise of eternal inheritance, he being the testator of that will of their heavenly Father which bequeaths it to them;

it is his righteousness which gives them a title to it, and through his grace they have a meetness for it, and he will at last introduce them into it; all which is a reason for joy and gladness in them. The Arabic version renders it, “he hath chosen us an inheritance for himself”; so the Lord’s people are, (<sup><463D></sup>Deuteronomy 32:9). Christ asked them of his father, and he gave them for his inheritance, he having chosen them as such, and greatly delighted he is with them, (<sup><490B></sup>Psalm 2:8 16:6);

*the excellency of Jacob whom he loved.* The saints, who are, in his esteem, the excellent in the earth, and who will be in the latter day an eternal excellency, (<sup><496B></sup>Psalm 16:3 <sup><2305></sup>Isaiah 60:15); even the whole church, consisting of Jews and Gentiles, the spiritual Jacob or Israel of God, whom Christ has loved with an everlasting love, and therefore has chosen them for his portion and peculiar treasure; as Jacob in person was loved when Esau was hated.

*Selah;* on this word, (see Gill on “<sup><498D></sup>Psalm 3:2”).

**Ver. 5.** *God is gone up with a shout,* etc.] That is, the Son of God, who is truly and properly God, equal to the Father, having the same perfections; God manifest in the flesh, the Word that was made flesh, and dwelt among men on earth; who in the next clause is called “Lord” or “Jehovah”, being the everlasting “I AM”, which is, and was, and is to come; he having done his work on earth he came about, went up from earth to heaven in human nature, really, locally, and visibly, in the sight of his apostles, attended by angels, and with their shouts and acclamations, which are here meant;

*the Lord with the sound of the trumpet;* which circumstance, though not related in the account of Christ’s ascension in the New Testament, yet inasmuch as the angels say he shall descend in like manner as he ascended, and that it is certain he will descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God; so that if his ascent was as his descent will be, it must be then with a shout, and the sound of a trumpet, (<sup><441D></sup>Acts 1:10 <sup><5046></sup>1 Thessalonians 4:16). This text is applied to the Messiah by the ancient Jewish writers <sup>f632</sup>.

**Ver. 6.** *Sing praises to God,* etc.] That is gone up with a shout, Christ Jesus, our ascended Lord and King, as the apostles did at the time of his ascension, (<sup><4262></sup>Luke 24:52,53);

*sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises:* who was then made Lord and Christ, declared King of saints, and crowned with glory and

honour; the repetition of the phrase sing praises denotes frequency, constancy, fervency, and great devotion in the performance of this service; and that the ascension of Christ, the occasion of it, is of the greatest moment and importance, and requires it to be performed in such a manner.

**Ver. 7.** *For God [is] the King of all the earth*, etc.] Or “the king of all the earth [is] God” <sup>f633</sup>; the same that is ascended into heaven, and is King of saints, even Christ Jesus; and so he will appear to be, especially in the latter day; (see Gill on “<sup><4942></sup>Psalm 47:2”);

*sing ye praises with understanding*; or, as Deuteronomy Dieu renders it, to him that understandeth, that is, to God the only wise, whose understanding is infinite; even to Christ, who, as God, knows all things; and, as man and Mediator, is of quick understanding, and has all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in him; so R. Obadiah, “sing of him who understands”; or, “sing ye praises, O everyone that understandeth” <sup>f634</sup>; that is, how to sing, as everyone does not; this is the sense of Aben Ezra and Kimchi; or “with understanding”, as we render it; with understanding of what is sung. The Apostle Paul seems to refer to this passage in (<sup><4945></sup>1 Corinthians 14:15). The Targum renders it, “with a good understanding”.

**Ver. 8.** *God reigneth over the Heathen*, etc.] He reigned over Israel under the former dispensation, and now he reigns over the Gentiles under the Gospel dispensation; as appears by the numerous instances of conversion among them in the first ages of Christianity; and by the many churches that were planted by the means of the apostles; and by the destruction of the Roman Pagan empire under the sixth seal, (<sup><4942></sup>Revelation 6:12-14 12:7-10); and which will still more appear by the destruction of Rome Papal, when all the Heathens shall perish out of the land; and by the fulness and forces of the Gentiles being brought into a submission to him; all which are reasons to sing praises to him;

*God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness*; or his holy throne, which is heaven; on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; on his Father’s throne; having done his work on earth he is received up into heaven, and is set down on a throne at the right hand of God, an honour which none of the angels have: he has ceased from his work and entered into his rest, and sits and sees of the travail of his soul; all which is matter of joy to his people, and a reason why they should sing praises; and the rather, since they are set down with him in heavenly places: or this may be understood of his sitting on the throne of judgment to judge the world in

righteousness at the last day, it following upon his reign over the Gentiles; though the other sense best agrees with his immediate ascension to heaven.

**Ver. 9.** *The princes of the people are gathered together*, etc.] Not against Christ, as at his first coming, but to him, and to his church and people; even the great men of the earth, the kings and princes of it, as they will in the latter day; (see <sup><3402></sup>Isaiah 49:23 60:3,10,11) (<sup><4024></sup>Revelation 21:24); or this may mean the saints in general, who are all of them the princes of people, and are set among princes, yea, are kings priests unto God; some render it, “the willing” or “voluntary ones of his people” <sup>f635</sup>; the same word is here used as in (<sup><3403></sup>Psalm 110:3); where it is rendered “willing”, and designs such who are made willing to be saved by Christ, submit to his righteousness, and be subject to his word and ordinances;

*[even] the people of the God of Abraham*; whom the God of Abraham has chosen for his people, taken into covenant, given to his Son, and who are redeemed by his blood, and effectually called by his grace; and who, though Gentiles, belong to the same covenant and the same covenant God as Abraham did, and have the blessing of Abraham upon them; and are indeed his spiritual seed, being Christ’s. The Targum is, “the people that believe in the God of Abraham”. The words may be rendered in connection with the former clause, “gathered together unto the people of the God of Abraham” <sup>f636</sup>; and so denote the association of the Gentiles converted with the believing Jews, as was at the first times of the Gospel, and will be at the latter day, (<sup><4121></sup>1 Corinthians 12:13 <sup><4028></sup>Galatians 3:28,29) (<sup><2404></sup>Isaiah 60:4);

*for the shields of the earth [belong] unto God*; that is, the rulers of the earth, as the word is rendered in (<sup><2048></sup>Hosea 4:18); who are as a shield and a protection to their subjects; these are set up and put down by the Lord at his pleasure; and their hearts are in his hands, and he can convert them when he pleases, and gather them to his Son, and into his churches; or, as Jarchi interprets it,

“he has power in his hands to protect as with a shield all that trust in him;”

safety is of the Lord; the protection of the world and of the church is from him who is King over all the earth;

*he is greatly exalted*; that is, Christ, who has all power in heaven and in earth; he is highly exalted at the right hand of God, angels, authorities, and powers, being subject to him.