

# Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

Bereans Sunday School  
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## Psalm 47 — Praise the King of All the Earth

### 1.0 Introducing Psalm 47

- In Psalm 46:10 God declares, “I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” Psalm 47:1 calls upon all peoples to “Shout to God with the voice of joy.”
- Many commentators believe that the association with Psalm 46, the reference to God having completed a great deliverance (v. 5), and the divine title “great king over all the earth” (v. 2) all indicate the occasion of God’s defeat of Sennacherib’s armies.
- Psalms 47, 93, and 96-99 are often classified as enthronement psalms.
  - ◆ “The so-called *enthronement psalms* are joined by the common theme of the praise of the Lord’s kingship.” — Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, Publisher, 1983), 347.
- “Very probably this Psalm, like the 24th, was sung in choral antiphonies, one company of Levites beginning with the words ‘O clap your hands,’ &c. (ver. 1, 2), and another answering ‘He subdueth,’ &c. (ver. 3, 4). Then, again, the first company would take up the words, ‘God is gone up,’ &c. and would sing ver. 5, 6. The antichoir would respond in ver. 7 and 8; and finally both would unite in ver. 9, 10.” — J. J. Stewart Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966 reprint of 1878 ed.), 1:386.

### Reading Psalm 47 (NAU)

**47:1** A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

O clap your hands, all peoples;

**Shout to God**

**with the voice of joy.**

- 47:2 For the LORD Most High is to be feared,  
A great King over all the earth.
- 47:3 He subdues peoples under us  
And nations under our feet.
- 47:4 He chooses our inheritance for us,  
The glory of Jacob whom He loves. Selah.
- 47:5 God has ascended with a shout,  
The LORD, with the sound of a trumpet.
- 47:6 Sing praises to God, sing praises;  
Sing praises to our King, sing praises.
- 47:7 For God is the King of all the earth;  
Sing praises with a skillful psalm.
- 47:8 God reigns over the nations,  
God sits on His holy throne.
- 47:9 The princes of the people have assembled themselves  
as the people of the God of Abraham,  
For the shields of the earth belong to God;  
He is highly exalted.

## 2.0 Understanding Psalm 47

### 2.1 Outline

- I. The Glory of Jacob (vv. 1-4)
  - II. The People of the God of Abraham (vv. 5-9)
- or**
- I. Praise God for Israel's Safety (vv. 1-4)
  - II. Praise God for the Peoples' Salvation (vv. 5-9)



### 2.2 Notes

- v. 2 “A great King over all the earth”
  - “Great king” was a title that Sennacherib used of himself in 2 Kings 18:19, 28 and Isaiah 36:4, 13.
  - In Ezra 5:11 the returning exiles spoke of Solomon with this title.
- v. 4 “The glory of Jacob whom He loves”
  - “The glory of Jacob” = the glorious land that God gave to Jacob. Note parallelism with “inheritance” in the preceding line.
  - “Jacob whom He loves” reminds us of Malachi 1:2-3.
    - This is a declaration of God’s free grace and election. Jacob did not earn this love.
    - See Deuteronomy 7:6-8.
- v. 4 “Selah.”
  - This significant word not only divides the psalm, but it causes the reader to pause after the declaration of God’s love for Israel.

- v. 5 “God has ascended with a shout”
  - Jewish and Christian commentators alike understand this to mean that God had descended to perform some great deed of deliverance and “has returned to His heavenly abode.”—A. Cohen, *The Psalms*, Soncino Books of the Bible (London: Soncino Press, 1968), 147.
  - Compare Numbers 10:35-36.
- vv. 6, 7 “Sing praises”
  - The “translation of *zmr* as ‘sing praises’ ignores the fact that the term has more to do with playing an instrument than producing vocal music.” — Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 728 n. 16.
- v. 7 “a skillful psalm”
  - This is the word *maskil* which we first examined in Psalm 32 (see notes on 32:1).
  - Compare 1 Corinthians 14:15, “I will sing with the mind.”
  - What might this concept contribute to a proper theology of worship music?
- v. 9 “as the people of the God of Abraham”
  - “[T]hey will no longer be outsiders but within the covenant: this is implied in their being called *the people of the God of Abraham*. It is the abundant fulfilment of the promise of Genesis 12:3; it anticipates what Paul expounds of the inclusion of the Gentiles as Abraham’s sons (Rom. 4:11; Gal. 3:7-9).” — Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), 178.
- v. 9 “the shields of the earth”
  - “Shields” is used to represent the leaders who protect their people. Note parallel to “princes” in the preceding line.
  - Cp. “scepter” or “crown” in metonymy for royalty.
  - See Psalm 84:9, 11; 89:18.

### 3.0 Singing Psalm 47

#### *Christ ascending and reigning.*

(Tune: “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee”  
Or, “O God Our Help in Ages Past”)

O for a shout of sacred joy  
To God the sovereign King!  
Let every land their tongues employ,  
And hymns of triumph sing.



Jesus our God ascends on high,  
His heav'nly guards around  
Attend him rising through the sky,  
With trumpets' joyful sound.

While angels shout and praise their King,  
Let mortals learn their strains;  
Let all the earth his honors sing;  
O'er all the earth he reigns.

Rehearse his praise with awe profound,  
Let knowledge lead the song,  
Nor mock him with a solemn sound  
Upon a thoughtless tongue.

In Isr'el stood his ancient throne,  
He loved that chosen race;  
But now he calls the world his own,  
And heathens taste his grace.

The British islands are the Lord's,  
There Abraham's God is known;  
While powers and princes, shields and swords,  
Submit before his throne.

— Isaac Watts

#### **4.0 Praying Psalm 47**

- Lord, I praise you. [v. 1]
- We praise You for Your deeds on behalf of Your people, Israel. [vv. 3, 4]
- We praise You for being King over all the earth and its peoples. [vv. 2, 7, 8]
- Be highly exalted, O God! [v. 9]
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#### **5.0 Applying Psalm 47**

- God is worthy of great and sustained praise.
- The Lord is King of all the world's peoples.
- God will fulfill His promise of blessing to all peoples through Abraham.