

“Tremble Before the Mighty King”
Psalm 97
(Preached at Trinity, February 19, 2012)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. The opening words of the psalm set the tone for the entire psalm – “The Lord reigns.”
 2. We actually see this great declaration four times in this group of psalms.
Psalm 93:1 KJV - "The LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty"
Psalm 96:10 KJV - "Say among the heathen *that* the LORD reigneth"
Psalm 97:1 KJV - "The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice"
Psalm 99:1 KJV - "The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble"
 3. In fact, Psalms 93-100 belong together with a common theme:
The kingly rule of God. Many presume that David is the author of these psalms and we have no cause to doubt, yet nothing to make this conclusion firm.
 4. We find **Psalm 97** sandwiched between **Psalm 96** & **Psalm 98**. Whereas **Psalms 96 & 98** portray the the glory and delight of the LORD’s reign, **Psalm 97** presents the darker side.
Psalm 97:2 KJV - "Clouds and darkness *are* round about him"
It is a picture of darkness, of terror – a frightening demonstration of judgment.
 5. “The Lord reigns” declares a present reality as well as a future certainty with the promise of the return of Christ, the terrible Day of the Lord, when Christ will come with power and authority and dominion and every knee shall bow before His sovereign reign.
 6. Once again, there is no consensus on how to outline this psalm. The variations range from 2 parts to 3, 4, and even five.
My outline tonight will contain four divisions:
 - I. The Sovereignty of God’s Reign – **Verse 1**
 - II. The Terror of God’s Reign – **Verses 2-6**
 - III. The Singleness of God’s Reign – **Verse 7-9**
 - IV. The Righteousness of God’s Reign – **Verses 10-12**
- I. The Sovereignty of God’s Reign – **Verse 1**
 - A. **Verse 1** makes the ultimate declaration – “God Reigns”
 1. “Reign” implies absolute authority and dominion – God rules
This is the only accurate worldview. God reigns. God’s rule is absolute
He is infinite in His dominion
 2. He is omnipresent – nothing happens that is outside His view
He is always present, always watchful
 3. He is omniscient – nothing happens that is beyond His knowledge
 - a. He knows all things because He has ordained all things. He is the first cause of all things.
 - b. If there is something that happens that He has not predetermined there might come some unpredictable circumstance that produces some unavoidable result.
 4. He is omnipotent – He is able to do all His holy will. Nothing shall be able to thwart His sovereign purpose.

5. His Kingdom is everlasting, His throne is absolute. No one can stand against His reign.
All hail the power of Jesus' Name! Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all.
Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all.
- B. This brings great confidence upon the whole earth
Psalm 97:1 KJV - "let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof."
1. There is great harmony upon the earth. The sun continues to shine. The earth continues its journey around the sun. The seasons continue on schedule. Night and day continue
 2. There is no chance of its premature end. The earth is being sovereignly maintained – let the earth rejoice
 3. Environmentalism is a good thing where it emphasizes our good stewardship and wise management over the earth that God has placed under our dominion. It is an evil thing when it presumes that the survival of the planet is due to our actions; when it turns the earth into a god.
 4. Most important, God is sovereign over the lives of men. The kings of the earth are only marching to God's orders.
 5. For the redeemed, our prayer is, "Oh God, take my heart and shape it. Keep me from sin."
- C. Let the earth rejoice and let all of God's people rejoice
1. It is a great comfort to us that God reigns
 2. It is a great comfort to know that God rules over all things—that nothing will ever happen that God has not ordained
 3. Our God reigns – this is the very heart of Gospel preaching and we must hold it boldly before men. Come and bow before our God!

II. The Terror of God's Reign – **Verses 2-6**

- A. In these verses we catch a glimpse of the terror of God's judgment
Psalm 97:2 KJV - "Clouds and darkness *are* round about him"
Psalm 97:3-4 KJV - "A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about. ⁴ His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled."
1. The "clouds and darkness" of **Verse 2** paint several vivid images before us:
 - a. They portray God's absolute holiness. He is veiled from the sight of sinful men. He is unapproachable. It draws our attention to Sinai as God hid Himself upon the Mount which no man could approach, save Moses who served as Israel's mediator.
 - b. Darkness also paints a picture of great fear and hopelessness. Hell is a place of "outer darkness."
Egypt was plagued with darkness that could be felt
 - c. The dark clouds represent a violent storm – the storm of Divine wrath to be poured out upon a Godless world

- d. The darkness points to the mysteries of God who remains cloaked in darkness revealing Himself to whom He will. Christ ever stands as our Prophet opening our eyes of understanding.

Romans 11:33 KJV - "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

2. The sight of God brings awe. When God sits upon His throne in judgment men will tremble in fear

Hebrews 10:31 KJV - " *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

3. **Verse 3** describes fire consuming His enemies

Hebrews 12:29 KJV - "For our God *is* a consuming fire."

4. **Verse 4** declares the whole earth trembling before the brightness of His glory

5. **Verse 5** – the whole earth melts like wax before His presence.

It calls to mind the words of Peter

2 Peter 3:10 KJV - "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

6. Notice **Verse 5** declares God to be the Lord over the whole earth.

His reign has no boundaries or limitations

Verse 6 - The heavens declare His righteousness – The whole earth beholds His glory

- B. Few actually tremble before God now

1. The nations rise up before Him

Psalms 2:2-3 KJV - "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, *saying*, ³ Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."

2. Even religious people look upon God with disdain. Few take Him seriously

3. Multitudes enter religion and then turn away

Hebrews 10:26-27 KJV - "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

4. Our only hope is to bow before His glory now

III. The Singleness of God's Reign – **Verse 7-9**

Psalms 97:7 KJV - "Confounded be all they that serve graven images"

Psalms 97:9 KJV - "thou art exalted far above all gods."

- A. The psalmist commands all gods to bow down

1. As we've seen in the past, there are no other gods but people create and bow down to many idols

Last words of **1 John**

1 John 5:21 KJV - "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

2. The command in **Verse 7** is, “Let everything bow down before the King of kings.
 3. The psalmist is declaring the solitary nature of God’s reign
Exodus 20:3 KJV - "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."
 4. Spurgeon exclaimed, “let Thor lay down his hammer at the foot of the Cross”
- B. When Christ returns He will demonstrate the foolishness of all the false god’s of this earth.
1. All false religions will be exposed
Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism
All of these are nothing more than organized idolatry
What will the end be for the religion of Islam and the multitudes of other false religions? They will all be brought to naught
Psalms 97:9 KJV - "For thou, LORD, *art* high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods."
 2. I had a man recently ask me if Mormons were going to heaven. He was surprised by my answer. He countered, “But they believe in Jesus.”
Their Jesus is nothing more than an idol of human creation that they’ve given the name, Jesus
 3. The god of materialism will also be demonstrated foolishness as all things are consumed
 4. The god of humanism will be proven a worthless worm
- C. Christianity is an exclusive religion
1. It is narrow
Matthew 7:14 ESV - "For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."
 2. Christianity declares all other religions to be delusions.
 3. Coming to Christ demands setting aside all other idols
- IV. The Righteousness of God’s Reign – **Verses 10-12**
- A. Everything about the King is Righteousness
1. **Verse 10**
 - a. Those that love the King hate evil. They hate evil because He hates evil. They love the things He loves and hate the things He hates. You know your salvation is genuine when you hate sin. All sin.
 - b. He preserves the souls of the saints (NASB – Godly ones)
LXT – “the pleasing ones”
 - c. **Verse 10** also sets forth the great contrast: The righteous versus the wicked - "he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked."
 2. The coming of Christ will display the great contrast between the wicked and the righteous. It will be a mixture of happiness and horror; of shouts of delight and shrieks of desperation.
 - a. The wicked will mourn as the fire of the wrath of God falls
Matthew 24:30 KJV - " And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

Revelation 6:15-17 KJV - "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; ¹⁶ And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: ¹⁷ For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

b. The righteous will rejoice

Verse 11 – In contrast to the terrifying darkness of **Verse 2** light is spread abroad upon the righteous and their hearts are filled with gladness.

Also **Verse 8** - "Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O LORD."

c. The light here can be seen as the knowledge of God sown forth in His illuminating grace – Divine light.

2 Peter 1:2-3 KJV - "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, ³ According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:"

d. This knowledge of God results in holiness and joy

B. The result of His coming for the righteous will be inexpressible joy

Psalms 97:12 KJV - "Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness."

This great joy is seen throughout the psalm – the word שמח (samach) is repeated three times

Psalms 97:1 KJV - "let the multitude of isles be glad"

Psalms 97:8 KJV - " Zion heard, and was glad

Psalms 97:12 KJV - "Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous"

Conclusion:

1. There are several convicting questions to ask yourself.
 - a. What place does this King have in your life? Is He your King?
 - b. If He returned today would you rejoice? If all of your plans ended today would you rejoice? If all of your earthly possessions and pursuits ended today would you rejoice?
What are your plans? Are they beneath the throne of Christ?
2. Are you fully praying, "Come quickly Lord Jesus?"
Revelation 22:20 KJV - "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."