

Any earthly king or “monarch” (lit., one who rules alone) always falls short. They need help, can be deposed, brief reigns. Kings worthy of their title must be righteous and yet even the better ones always fail on this point.

The glory of kings is to secure the kingdom, rule in righteousness, and conquer all enemies for the ultimate prosperity of the people. But there is only one who can really accomplish all this in the ultimate sense: Jehovah. Psalm 97 presents Israel’s God as King (ultimately only one) in four ways: by 1) announcement, 2) appearance, 3) aftermath, 4) application.

*Behold Jehovah, the King of all glory, all power, and all worthiness!*

- I. Announcement (1) of the King. “The LORD reigneth” or “is king” (alt.). Like a royal blast of trumpets. “Earth, isles” fig. for all peoples (Jews and Gentiles). Fitting that everyone should celebrate Him. Only one God, Jehovah, for the whole world. He purposes a worldwide kingdom.

King analogy for God connotes His authority, greatness, our trembling, His dependability, our comfort in His faithful reign. Adjust your view! Dangers of “God as your buddy” or “God as absent” (not reigning).

- II. Appearance (2-6) with effects upon creation. An epiphany (revelation), without any direct description of Him. Moses: “Show me Thy glory.” Jehovah: “Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live” (Exod 33.18, 20; cf. Jn 1.18a; Rom 1.20; 1 Tim 1.17). Language here highly poetic and figurative. It may portray an actual event or be just a literary device to communicate His glory—absolutely true either way. Phenomena of thick, dark clouds symbolizing “righteousness and judgment” as the “habitation [or, foundation] of His throne” (2), a consuming fire deadly to His enemies (3; Deut 4.24), brilliant bolts of lightning exposing and frightening the whole world (4), and “hills” (lit. mountains) melting “like wax” (vivid picture of inferiority, weakness) “at [His] presence” who is “Lord of the whole earth” (5). Not only the earth, but “the heavens declare His righteousness, and all the people see His glory” (6), in these disturbing phenomena. Remember God’s arrival upon Sinai (Exod 19.11, 16-18).

Who still thinks of God like this? Sinners should be in dread on account of punishment. Christians serve him “acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God [still] is a consuming fire” (Heb 12.28, 29). Nothing about gospel grace weakens the propriety of trembling awe!

- III. Aftermath (7-9) with effects upon men and gods. Three groups: 1) The idolaters of the nations. Either they shall be or should be “confounded” [or, ashamed] who stupidly “serve” [worship] “graven [or, carved] images” (statues as idols counted as gods or representing them). They “boast” (are proud of, have confidence) in that of which they should be ashamed, and which cannot save them at all (7ab). 2) The “gods” they worship (7c). Not objectively real as “gods,” but addressed for the

purpose of mockery (1 Cor 8.4b-6a). Recall Dagon and the Ark of the Covenant (God’s throne; 1 Sam 5.1-4). Destiny of all competitors with God (Isa 42.8)! 3) God’s people (fig., “Zion, daughters of Judah”) do and shall respond with joy because of our God’s “judgments” (8) and His uniqueness as God Most High, infinitely above all the “gods” (9).

We embrace these words to sing/speak them 1) for glorifying God, 2) for helping ourselves/one another, 3) for calling/warning wicked idolaters to repent and join us in true worship. Re: 2), God acts dramatically/miraculously in history as an exception to the rule (e.g., the Exodus, understood as a triumph over Egypt’s false gods, Exod 12.12), so we need to be reminded He is King. Ancients believed national superiority proved “god-superiority” (henotheism), so when Israel was oppressed, it was considered a dishonor to Jehovah. But this is to walk by sight rather than by faith (2 Cor 5.7), a colossal error! Behold the religion of pragmatism: worshipping “the queen of heaven” (Jer 44.17, 18). But the Lord reigns eternally even when we suffer, even using bad people to discipline us (Isa 10.5). Trials are a test of our faith in Him.

Psa 97 has announced the great King, described His appearing, and showed the effect it has on creation, on idolaters and their idols, and on the righteous. Now in closing it exhorts us. This praise of Jehovah our King is meant to strengthen us spiritually in two specific ways:

#### IV. Application (10-12) to you righteous people

1. You love the LORD, now hate evil (10a). We are distinguished from idolaters as those who love Jehovah. Not only our moral obligation (Deut 6.5), but our real, habitual, imperfect, experience. Only lovers of God are in His kingdom. Now, “see that ye hate the thing which is evil” (alt.)—perhaps esp. idolatry, though not limited to that. This is a call to holiness in heart and conduct. Lots of evil things are very popular. Resist seduction by them! If you truly hate evil things in your heart, you will abstain from evil things in your life.
2. You are blessed by the LORD, now worship Him with joy and thanks (10b-12). Consider what the LORD does for you. He preserves your soul (10b). He delivers you from spiritual enemies (10c). As a sower scatters seed, so the LORD gives much light and joy to His people (11). How can we do anything less than deliberately to “rejoice” in Him and to “give thanks” for Him, praising Him (12)?

Now realize that the NT identifies our Lord Jesus Christ as the great King of this psalm. In Acts 10.36, Peter preached that Jesus Christ is “Lord of all” (cf. Psa 97.5, “Lord of the whole earth”). All the angels are commanded to worship Him (Heb 1.6; cf. Psa 97.7c LXX, “worship him, all his angels”). The NT calls Jesus Christ our Savior/Deliverer many times (Psa 97.10). NT believers “rejoice in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3.3; Psa 97.12). Of Christ about to be crucified, one said, “Behold your King!” (Jn 19.14). When Christ returns on the Last Day, He will come “in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matt 24.30; cf. Psa 97.2). This Jesus is the glorious King of Psa 97! Ω