

Much of the Old Testament is occupied with events yet future involving God's people, Israel, and His final resolution of their long history of failure and restoration. The Psalms are no exception. These Psalms present the human perceptions of the redeemed souls on earth living through these extraordinary future times and events.

Psalms 97 has no title heading. It is the last of three relating to the coming of the King to put down all enemies and all evil and to reign over the earth forever. It is fire and lightning, clouds and darkness, righteousness and judgement. (This reminds the reader of Mount Sinai where the Jehovah gave the Law to Moses. Thirty-four centuries since of multiple interventions and unparalleled patience on the part of Jehovah have passed.) Then Jehovah, in the person of Jesus, will return once again. The earth is His, purchased with His blood, so He will then finally claim what is His. He won't be shy about it. He won't be meek and lowly then. The very hills will crumble before His immense overwhelming destructive power. The inhabitants of the earth will see and tremble at His presence. He is Lord of the whole earth – the heavens will declare His righteousness. The long awaited Kingdom of Heaven will then come, Luke 21:24-28. People on earth will see the glory of the King. Those who have been relying upon graven images will be confounded. This reminds us of the image of the Beast the False Prophet will erect in Jerusalem, see Daniel 9:36-45; Revelation 13:14-15; 19:20. This man will also brazenly present himself to be worshiped, 2Thessalonians 2:4-12.

The term "gods,"* in vv 7 and 9, refers to spirit beings (demons, 1Corinthians 10:19-21) behind idols and also to human rulers of the peoples of the earth. All creatures are commanded to worship Jehovah. Zion and Judah, all of His own people, His saints including specifically the daughters of Judah, now safe from pagan invaders, Zechariah 14:2, will rejoice because of the powerful judgements that fall upon their enemies. King David's palace was on Zion, Judah the chosen tribe from whom the Messiah was to come. They then will realize He is high above all the earth and exalted far above any earthly, human, angelic or demonic powers. They that love Jehovah, they that hate evil will be secure, both preserved and delivered from their enemies. They will be richly blessed. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." What pictures these words impart to our hearts. Judah will greatly rejoice and give thanks at the remembrance of Jehovah's holiness. We too rejoice now with them in anticipation of their blessing and their glorifying the Lord they crucified. Though their eternal destiny is earthly and ours heavenly, in spirit we join them even nowadays in worship. For we remember Him as a congregation on the Lord's Day, and personally as well.

Psalms 98 has a brief title, simply "A Psalm." Why? Perhaps to distinguish it from the preceding Psalms which

are occupied more or less with the early judgmental phase of the Lord's return to set up His Kingdom. The setting of this Psalm is immediately after He has come and routed the wicked out of His Temple and His city, Jerusalem. This accomplished there is peace and security. It is a time of rejoicing and singing. A new song, a song of victorious rejoicing in Jerusalem and throughout the land of Israel. A time of cheering for the victorious King. A time of celebration and acclamation. A time appropriate to bring out musical instruments, long silent in the absence of the King, to accompany the joyful shouts and cheers. The material voices merge with the human voices, both the tender sound of plucked strings and the boisterous sound of brass wind instruments, trumpets and horns. It is a time of unified utter exhilaration. The whole earth is called upon to join the celebration. The seas (Gentiles) and the creatures living in them, the land (Israel) and the creatures living on it, the rivers (refreshing blessings) and hills (local governments) together joining to exalt the Man now ruling all creation. He will release all Creation from the bondage of fear and suffering imposed upon it by the first man's sin

Romans 8:19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,

21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

The song also looks outward from Israel for the establishment and commencement of the Lord's reign over the whole earth. He will govern it in righteousness judging all people with equity, rich or poor, small or great, black or white, educated or ignorant. No false witnesses, no bribes or partiality, no unjust punishments, no injustice. A perfect justice system is a joy to the upright and a terror to all who might want to indulge in criminal acts. Righteousness will reign, sin and crime will be restrained for it will be detected and punished promptly and justly. Peace and Safety on Earth! Rejoicing indeed! But the Lord must come to establish it. That is not our job today. We expose sin, Ephesians 5:1-17, and point sinners to Christ for salvation and eternal life with Him in heaven. We will reign with Him when He returns to rule, but not now. Now we are ambassadors for Christ, 2Corinthians 5:20.

By Ron Canner, May 7, 2008

* The Hebrew translated "gods" here in verses 7 and 9 is "elohim," the plural, for angelic beings, human rulers and for the Triune God. Which is meant translators decide by context. See Hebrews 1:6 for the inspired interpretation of this verse.