

**Psalms 97:1 ¶ The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.**

The psalmist opens with the bold declaration that the LORD, the self-existent eternal God, reigns supreme. This is a reason for the earth (and all that is in it) to rejoice and be glad.

The Hebrew for “isles” is a reference to habitable places—dry land, coast, island, country—all the Gentile lands.

Frankly, if I didn’t believe this truth, there would not be much motivation for living. It is comforting to know that in His time, the LORD will put an end to sin and evil and usher in eternal righteousness.

**Psalms 97:2 Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.**

The LORD is surrounded by a covering that currently hides His presence from us. He rules from a foundation of righteous judgment.

Sadly, there is not one government on earth today that can make that claim.

Maybe these words from the psalmist were inspired by the record of when God came down to meet with the leaders of Israel in the wilderness.

*Exodus 19:16–18 “And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.”*

**Psalms 97:3 A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about.**

**Psalms 97:4 His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled.**

**Psalms 97:5 The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.**

I think the psalmist is making the point that the LORD destroys His enemies. The lightning is a powerful display of God’s power that provokes fear in men.

I believe verse 5 references the prophecy recorded by the Apostle John concerning the times that immediately precede the return of Jesus as King of kings.

*Revelation 16:17 & 20 “And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done....And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.”*

I liked Spurgeon’s application to the effects of the gospel: “Even now where the gospel is preached in faith, and in the power of the Spirit, it burns its own way, irresistibly

destroying falsehood, superstition, unbelief, sin, indifference, and hardness of heart. In it the Lord reigneth, and because of it let the earth rejoice.”

**Psalms 97:6 The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory.**

This verse makes me think of the opening verses in Psalm 19.

*Psalms 19:1–3 “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.”*

Continually, from sunset to sunset, the heavens declare the power, majesty and knowledge of God. The word for *knowledge* includes more than just knowing facts; it includes the power to instruct, to make known, and to give understanding. Whereas we humans communicate through the language of words, the Almighty can reveal Himself to us by the wonder, majesty and amazing design of His creation. He doesn’t just use Hebrew or English or French or \_\_\_\_\_; the declaration of His creation is understood universally.

**Psalms 97:7 Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all ye gods.**

“Confounded” references disappointment and shame. All those that worship idols of false gods will be disappointed and brought to shame before Almighty God.

In reference to the beliefs of the day that each nation was ruled by its god(s), the psalmist calls for these gods to worship the LORD God.

**Psalms 97:8 ¶ Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O LORD.**

**Psalms 97:9 For thou, LORD, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.**

The psalmist is basically saying that the people of Israel rejoiced at God’s righteous judgment. They know that He is the Supreme God. This truth has been a theme of preceding psalms.

All other “gods” are a result of the deception of Satan and the spiritual forces of evil and/or of man’s own creation.

*Isaiah 43:10–11 “Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.”*

*Isaiah 44:6 “Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.”*

*Isaiah 45:5 “I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me....”*

*Isaiah 46:9 "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me...."*

**Psalms 97:10 Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.**

The psalmist exhorts those that love the LORD to hate evil. I think Spurgeon was correct when he said: "We cannot love God without hating that which he hates."

It's important to note that we are to hate evil—not the evil doer. Though it's hard to separate the act from the person, we should pray for all sinners. The repentance of King Manasseh is a prime example of the truth that no man is beyond the reach of God, and scripture is clear in declaring that God is not willing that any should perish.

*2 Chronicles 33:11–13 "Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God....And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city. And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel."*

*2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."*

The psalmist takes comfort in the truth that God preserves the souls of His saints. He knew that man has a future beyond this life and that the lives of God's saints are under His care.

It is also true that God rescues His saints from the power of the wicked. Though we do not understand the ways of God, we can trust in the truth of His word. The psalmist doesn't reference the timing of God's deliverance; he addresses the surety of God's deliverance. We are so caught up in the now that we often lose sight of the fact that God is focused on our eternal future. Every saint of God will enjoy the blessings of living in the presence of God for eternity, safely out of reach of any wickedness.

**Psalms 97:11 Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Psalms 97:12 Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.**

I think the psalmist is saying that the righteous are illuminated with the understanding of these truths and it causes them to rejoice. He encourages them to always rejoice in the LORD and thank Him as they praise Him for who He is.