

Awesome in Judgment

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Bible Verse: Psalm 97
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On Sunday, we were looking at the fact that Paul is expressing his confidence about the future and he has a confidence in the future because he knows that there is something better than life itself and in Philippians 1:18, he said, "Yes, and I will rejoice for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." He says, "I am going to disembark from these present trials and I'm going to step into the salvation which my God has prepared for me before the foundation of the world. There is this coming time of deliverance and this purpose for which I was saved which is to enter into the glory of Christ." In 2 Timothy 1:12, you don't need to turn there but he said, "For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day." There is a coming day, a coming time, a coming judgment of God in which he will set everything right, the wicked will be punished and God will restore all things for his people and bring us safely into the glory of Christ, and it's not simply that we will be in the realm of that glory, we will be conformed to it, we will be like Christ because we will see him as he is and by his power to exert all things under his control, the purpose of God is to bring his people into conformity with the image of Christ where we will dwell with him forever and ever. And that changes everything. That's why we can sing even when our physical bodies betray us, that's why we can sing, "Be still my soul, the Lord is on my side." That's why we can sing in the midst of death whether it's our own approaching death or someone that we care about, in the midst of life's inevitable reversals, we have a hope that is outside the realm of time, that dwells outside the realm of this life and therefore because it is outside the realm of time – think about it with me – because it is outside the realm of earth, there is nothing that can happen inside the bounds of time or that can happen on this earth that can ever take it away from us. Our hope is fully and completely secure. It is sure, as 1 Peter says, it is reserved in heaven for us and it can never fade away and it will never be taken away from us.

1 Peter 1, why don't you turn there. I know I'm reviewing Sunday's message which is totally inappropriate but that's all right. 1 Peter 1:3. I say it's inappropriate just because I feel like I am quoting myself and that seems a little weird to me. 1 Peter 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and

will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." That word "salvation" being the same exact Greek word that Paul uses in Philippians to talk about deliverance. We have a deliverance that is coming. We have a salvation that has more yet to be given to us. we're just in the midst of the early stages of the down payment. It gets much much better for us. And what I want you to see, beloved, is just that these are truths that I'm not trying to embellish with a lot of, you know, pulpit presence or anything, these are the truths that we need to take in and meditate and let it shape everything about the way that we view life, everything that we view about what happens in the contours of life is defined by things which are outside of time and which are outside the bounds of the earth. There is more than what we see that defines what we are headed toward.

With those thoughts in mind, let's turn now to our text for tonight, Psalm 97, which gives us added perspective on these realities of what lies beyond the earth. Until we have embraced these things, and I would say it's impossible for us to have a right perspective on life at all, we have to grasp these things so that we see life in its proper context and when we see these things, then what happens in life takes on a whole different perspective for us. Psalm 97, expanding on the coming reign of our Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 97:1 says this,

1 The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; Let the many islands be glad. 2 Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. 3 Fire goes before Him And burns up His adversaries round about. 4 His lightnings lit up the world; The earth saw and trembled. 5 The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. 6 The heavens declare His righteousness, And all the peoples have seen His glory. 7 Let all those be ashamed who serve graven images, Who boast themselves of idols; Worship Him, all you gods. 8 Zion heard this and was glad, And the daughters of Judah have rejoiced Because of Your judgments, O LORD. 9 For You are the LORD Most High over all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods. 10 Hate evil, you who love the LORD, Who preserves the souls of His godly ones; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked [do you see the word there, he delivers them? We did not plan this.]. 11 Light is sown like seed for the righteous And gladness for the upright in heart. 12 Be glad in the LORD, you righteous ones, And give thanks to His holy name.

Now let's set a little bit of context for this Psalm in terms of where it occurs in the Psalter. Psalm 97 is occurring in a broader context of two things, in the immediate context of the Psalter it's occurring in a broader context of coming judgment as I'll show you in a moment, and as we've said many times, it's in the broader, even broader context Psalms 93 to 100 of what are called theocratic Psalms, the reign of God, and in Psalm 96 and in Psalm 98, as we will see, there is an emphasis on the reality of God's coming judgment, that there is a time still that was future to the writer of the Psalm that is still future to us today where God is going to step in and judge the earth.

Look at Psalm 96:13 immediately before our Psalm which we are considering here this evening. It says in Psalm 96:13, let's go back to verse 12 just to pick it up rather than start with the clause there,

12 Let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy 13 Before the LORD, for He is coming, For He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness And the peoples in His faithfulness.

So there is coming judgment it says at the end of verse 96, and then we go immediately into Psalm 97.

Now before we look at Psalm 97, let's look at the end of Psalm 98 and take a peek ahead to coming attractions where it says at the end of verse 8 in very similar language, there are a lot of parallels between Psalm 98 and Psalm 96, it says,

8 Let the rivers clap their hands, Let the mountains sing together for joy 9 Before the LORD, for He is coming to judge the earth; He will judge the world with righteousness And the peoples with equity.

So what I want you to see here is that Psalm 97 is surrounded on either end by these bookends of the reality of the coming judgment of God, and so we're to understand Psalm 97 in that context and to see it in that light. And the question, then, is that, well, let's put it this way, this is speaking about a supernatural intervention of God into the affairs of men. There is a coming supernatural intervention of the God of the Bible into world history. God is going to step into our realm from outside it and reorder things according to his pleasure and to execute judgment upon all of the earth. This is just a very profound concept that Scripture teaches us again and again that what is happening within the realm of time, what is happening within the sphere of our earthly lives is not all that there is to reality, in fact, reality is far greater than anything that we could see or begin to comprehend apart from the revelation of God. There is a coming judgment that will reorder things in a profound way and so Scripture declares this to us, calls us, as it were, to repentance in light of it, and also gives us assurances that it will be well for the people of God when that judgment comes, and for everyone else it will be a time of terrible tribulation.

I've often thought, I'm going off on a little bit of a tangent here, when you realize these things and if you read any history or if you like to read the biographies of great men in the course of history whether in the church or just even in the secular realm, I've often thought that even the best of biographies that are written by human writers don't even begin to touch on what the reality of what that man's life is in light of what we're talking about here because the only way that you can properly understand the life of anyone who lives is how God views that man. You can understand it in the realm a little bit of the perspective of history but ultimately it's God's judgment that matters and we do not know how a particular man's life is going to reverberate and be evaluated in the light of

eternity. So for biographers to write their histories, and I read a lot of them, I like it, don't get me wrong, but there should always be for a Christian in their mindset a recognition that the best biographies are incomplete because the final chapter is going to be written by God. And most secular biographies have no interest whatsoever, I mean whatsoever in the spiritual life of their subject, and so how could we possibly view this man rightly if we're excluding God and his judgment from the picture? So we just need to be aware of these things as we're reading secular history to realize that there is a whole other perspective that is being neglected and it is one perspective that ultimately matters. That's for free. That wasn't part of your admission price. I just added that on to what I wanted to say because I think about these things a lot.

Now getting back to the text, Psalm 97, the question is, then, how should men respond to the reality of God's coming judgment and we're going to get a comprehensive answer here from Psalm 97, and what we find in Psalm 97 is that this Psalm calls the people of God to be glad in light of that coming judgment. Psalm 97:1, look at it with me, and again we see this literary device of the bookends, the envelope technique, the inclusio, to use a more technical term. Psalm 97:1,

1 The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; Let the many islands be glad...
12 Be glad in the LORD, you righteous ones, And give thanks to His holy name.

Now what that means for us as the people of God as we gather here together, is that when we consider the reality of God's coming judgment, that there should be a fundamental disposition in our hearts of gladness toward that. We are glad because God is going to vindicate his holy name. We are glad because the glory of Christ will be on visible display and we will rejoice that our King is receiving the adulation that he deserves in response to that. That's going to make us glad. We're going to be content in that and we're going to delight in that and we're going to delight also in the fact that the wickedness of this churning world in which we live is going to be silenced, it is going to be stilled, that the Lord's hand is going to come against that which is opposed to his Son, which is opposed to his law, opposed to his reign, those of us whose affections and sympathies are aligned with the God of the Bible are going to be glad to see everything that we love vindicated, upheld, restored, seeing the rightful King taking his rightful place over the realm of his reign and that all of the satanic overtures and inspired philosophies of men that have opposed the reign of God are going to be put away, and that is going to be a wonderful great day for the people of God. So when we anticipate that, then we're glad and when Christ returns, we're going to be glad. It's going to be a great event for us and it is going to be the culminating point of world history where the second Adam reigns over the realm that the first Adam squandered. So we're going to be glad when Christ comes and there is a prophetic dimension to this Psalm as we will see.

Well, let's look at it, first of all, from the announcement of the King's reign. The announcement of the King's reign. We're going to look at this Psalm in three sections here tonight and the first section is simply the announcement of the King's reign. This Psalm opens with a call to all men everywhere to praise God. There is this universal

nature of the call that is tied to the fact that the reign of our God is itself universal. Because he's God over all, everyone that's under his reign should respond to him. So in verse 1 it says,

1 The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; Let the many islands be glad.

And with these statements of, "let the earth rejoice; Let the many islands be glad," it is making a comprehensive statement about the nature of the call. The whole earth should be glad at the fact that the Lord reigns because it means that the nature of God means that the nature of the ordered universe is stable, it is secure, and that there is an underlying righteousness that is over all even though we don't see it necessarily displayed during the course of our lifetime. And the call is to the earth to rejoice and the world should rejoice because the God who reigns is a God of truth and a God of love, and we saw that displayed most perfectly at the cross of Christ where the law of God was upheld, justice was upheld and yet mercy met at that moment as well when Christ bore our sins and delivered us from the wrath of God which we rightfully deserved. So recognizing that this Psalm has a prophetic element to it, here's the point: when Jesus Christ comes to establish his reign on the earth, when Christ returns and establishes his rule, people will rejoice. There will be joy over that event and the anticipation of righteousness dwelling, righteousness ruling, the anticipation of a worldwide reign like that is a cause for joy and the Gospel call today, the Gospel call is an anticipation of that ultimate worldwide reign. The resurrection of Christ has manifested his reign over death and now the Gospel in response to that resurrection goes out to all of the earth, it goes out to all of the nations.

Look at the Gospel of Luke if you will, Luke 24. We see that in the Old Testament there is a worldwide call that goes out and we see this repeated in the New Testament as well. Luke 24:47 says, "that repentance," Luke 24:47 says,

47 that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

And in Acts 1, if you'll turn there with me, Acts 1, Jesus tells the disciples just prior to his ascension, Acts 1:8,

8 you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

A worldwide call going out in response to the resurrection of Christ. And one more, we could look at others but one more in the book of Acts 17 in verse 30 when Paul is preaching to the men in Athens, he says in verse 30,

30 Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a

Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.

So our point here in this opening verse is that God asserts his authority over the entirety of the earth. Stated differently, the Bible asserts its authority over all men throughout all of the earth and calls all of them to submit to this reign of God, to rejoice in who he is, and to leave behind, as we'll see later in the Psalm, to leave behind their false gods, to leave behind their false religions, and joyfully come in submission to this God who is real, who is true, and who reigns.

Now I realize as you do just as well as I do, that this is totally contrary to the spirit of our age where absolute truth is denied, let alone one true God, and that the very concept of truth is denied and so how could any book, especially one from 2,000 years ago, how could any book dare to assert its authority over all men everywhere, let alone one that was written 2,000 years ago? But beloved, that is the astonishing comprehensive truth claim that comes to us repeatedly that is saturated in the Scripture. The Bible comes with complete indifference and disregard to the philosophies prevailing today, cuts through all of the noise of that nonsense and says there is one true God, he reigns, Christ is returning, bend your knee now while there's time. So there is this announcement of the King's reign that Psalm 97 proclaims.

Now it goes on in the second section here, the sections are not of equal length here. The second point here tonight is the Psalm describes the arrival of the King. Describes the arrival of the King and what we could say is this just by way of preface, I guess, is that what follows in these next four verses is the Psalm is describing the gravity of the arrival of the King; that this is a serious time; that this is a sober earthshaking time about which it is speaking and we can see this as we look at verses 2 through 5 now. Look at it with me, if you would. Psalm 97:2 says,

2 Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. 3 Fire goes before Him And burns up His adversaries round about. 4 His lightnings lit up the world; The earth saw and trembled. 5 The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

This section of the Psalm is describing a visible manifestation of the essence of God, technically called a theophany. God is manifesting himself in what is described here in verses 2 through 5. The concept of clouds and thick darkness are communicating his power and the original readers of this in Israel, the original Jews who would have been reading this at the time that it was written, would have recalled the giving of the law through Moses when he was on Mount Sinai. Let's take a look at that and remember this and remember something of the severity of the nature of God and what the effect that his holiness has on the natural elements and upon the nature of men who are in his presence.

Exodus 19. Exodus 19 is where we're going to now. You remember the story. I don't need to give you much context here, and in Exodus 19 and in verse 16 it says,

16 ... it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. 17 And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently. 19 When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder. 20 The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

Now let's step back, take a little breath here and just get a sense of what was just described here. God is descending upon the mountain and it is accompanied by these great quakings in the natural order: thunder and lightning, earthquakes, a very loud trumpet sound, to such an extent that all the people who were in the camp trembled at his majesty, trembled at this manifestation of the presence of God that is accompanied with smoke like the smoke of a furnace. So the Lord came down and there is this awe-inducing, fear-causing manifestation of the presence of God that is described as he descends, as it were, from heaven to be on the mountain and to meet with Moses.

In Deuteronomy 4:11, you don't need to turn there, it says,

1 You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the very heart of the heavens: darkness, cloud and thick gloom.

One commentator, Derek Kidner, said this about this aspect of Psalm 97 and I quote, "Clouds and thick darkness warn of God's unapproachable holiness and hiddenness to presumptuous man. Fire and lightnings reveal a holiness that is also devouring and irresistible. There is no escape."

So in the face of this manifestation of the presence of God, in the face of this thick darkness and the clouds and the rumblings and a multiplied exponentially greater experience of the worst severe thunderstorm that we've ever felt in this area, just take the booming of thunder and multiply it with the ground quaking under your feet, you get a sense of what the presence of God means and what the arrival of this King is like. He is coming and he means business, you could say. This is a matter far beyond the natural capacities of man to respond to. Elsewhere in Scripture, we know that the greatest commanders of the greatest armies will quake in their boots in response to this. All of their earthly power will be meaningless. They will know for the first time what their weakness really is in the presence of this great God.

Matthew 24:27 says those kinds of signs will accompany the return of Christ. Matthew 24:27 says,

27 For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Now those of you that like natural things, you go into the mountains and you see the grandeur of the mountains and just the way that they dwarf the landscape, the way that you get close and you just see how high and how broad and how majestic and how firm it all is. We look to the mountains naturally as enduring objects of strength that have preceded us and will be there after us. They don't move. Go back to Psalm 97 now to keep our eyes and minds focused in the text itself. In Psalm 97:5 it says, "The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth." For mountains to melt before him is just describing how powerful and how great he is; that everything that we associate with the greatest ability of the world will diminish into nothingness before the arrival of this great King. It is describing something far beyond the most awesome display of anything that we have ever seen. We have not seen the fulfillment of this since it was written. What Scripture is telling us is that this God who reigns, this God of Psalms 93 to 100, this Lord who reigns is so sovereign and so majestic that it is fully within his ability to intervene in world history and he will intervene in world history, he will accomplish his purpose and he will enforce his reign.

There is nothing effeminate about the way the Bible describes the God of the universe. James Montgomery Boice says about this, he says, "A manifestation of the true God is awe-inspiring to the point of bone-shattering fear and trembling on the part of the worshiper." That's a good way to describe it, bone-shattering fear in response to the arrival of this God who comes in clouds and unapproachable thick darkness, with righteousness and justice riding on his wings, so to speak.

The prophet Zephaniah, which we don't often turn to, you can turn there if you want to, Zephaniah between the books of Habakkuk and Haggai, I know that's a big help for some of you. Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai and Zechariah. When God comes in judgment, he will overwhelm his enemies and in Zephaniah 1:14 it describes this day in this manner, Zephaniah 1:14,

14 Near is the great day of the LORD, Near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of the LORD! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. 15 A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness [you see the parallel language to Psalm 97 there, don't you?] 16 A day of trumpet and battle cry Against the fortified cities And the high corner towers. 17 I will bring distress on men So that they will walk like the blind, Because they have sinned against the LORD; And their blood will be poured out like dust And their flesh like dung. 18 Neither their silver nor their gold Will be able to deliver them On the day of the LORD'S wrath; And all the earth will be devoured In the fire of His jealousy, For He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the earth.

Hebrews says it's a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. It is a measure of how blind and dead natural men are that they can hear words like this and just shrug it off like it so much, you know, a faulty weather forecast but the reality is for those of us whose minds have been opened by the Holy Spirit and we've been granted the gift of new life of the new birth and our minds are open to what the Scriptures say and we have the help of the Holy Spirit to understand what these things mean, we realize that Scripture is describing something of unspeakably great devastating consequence when it speaks about this coming day of the Lord and the judgment that will come upon the men of all the earth.

Go back to Psalm 97, if you would. Psalm 97:6,

6 The heavens declare His righteousness, And all the peoples have seen
His glory.

And I think this is a prophetic statement looking ahead to the return of Christ and everyone will see, every eye will see him, and as he comes and establishes his reign and as he comes in judgment, there is going to be this great manifestation of his glory that will provoke fear and consequences over all of the earth. That is what the arrival of the King will be like. So it's awesome, it's shattering, it is the end of world history as we presently know it as Christ comes and introduces his reign which is promised throughout all of Scripture. So this is what it's going to be like when the Lord comes to judge the earth. Psalm 97, Psalm 98 with Psalm 97 placed right in the middle of it to help us see what this is going to be like.

Well, what are men to do, then, in light of such truth? Well, that brings us to our third section tonight and we'll title this the answer to the King's glory. The answer meaning the response to the King's glory. What will the outcome of all of this be and what should men do with this truth is the question, what should men do with this truth? Well, one of the things that should be obvious is when the sovereign God intervenes in world history like this, is that his judgment will bring to shame every false religion that is on the face of the earth because they will be shown to be the empty vanities that they are when the real God steps in and overturns the natural order.

So in verse 7, you see that judgment shames false religion where it says,

7 Let all those be ashamed who serve graven images, Who boast
themselves of idols; Worship Him, all you gods.

Now the gods here could possibly refer to angels. I think it's more likely referring to, it's a contemptuous reference to false gods, not saying that there are those gods but a recognition that God's judgment is going to expose all of the false gods of the peoples, and that the response to those that have fallen before them should be one of repentance, and when Christ returns all who worshiped other gods are going to retreat, and the consequence of that future result, that future outcome when Christ returns, displays his

power in all of these signs, and that those who worship other gods, that's going to be the result for them. Well, the call then today in light of that future certainty, that coming reality in the future, is that everyone who is not following the Lord Jesus Christ today, everyone who has not yet bent the knee to him should repent now and put their faith in Christ before that day of judgment arises, should be ashamed of believing in false religion, ashamed of believing in false gods and repent of that and come to the true Christ. And what would motivate them? How should we understand that? Well, Scripture says repeatedly the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The reality of this judgment with the help of the Holy Spirit should provoke fear in the hearts of men who are alienated from God, who have not come to Christ, who have not been forgiven of their sins. The reality that they are in that dangerous position when Christ could come at any time should provoke in them a fear and an urgency that says, "I must come to Christ today. I must be reconciled to Him today so that I can flee the wrath that is to come," as John the Baptist warned the hearers in his day to do.

Beloved, think about it with me. Men tremble, men are afraid when the elements of nature overwhelm them. I don't know if you saw the recent severe earthquake that hit Southern California. There were videos of newscasters who were on air at the time and they were just frightened out of their wits because their studio was shaking under them. Well, and that was a relatively modest earthquake. If that is the response to a modest earthquake, beloved, what are they going to do when God overturns nature in the display of judgment? When that is multiplied exponentially as the elements respond to the arrival of the King and they display the power of God and his judgment, what are they going to do then? Those of you that are not in Christ, what are you going to do then? You are going to be utterly helpless. You are going to be frightened out of your wits and there's not going to be anything to do. It's going to be too late.

So what Scripture is doing is it's giving us a preview of coming attractions, so to speak. It is God in love, in grace is warning guilty people of what is to come to invite them to repentance and reconciliation with him while there is still time, and that is the only reasonable response that any unsaved person could make to this truth is to cry out for mercy and to ask God to have mercy on their souls so that they would be delivered from this wrath that is to come. That's the only thing that's reasonable, and a refusal to heed, a refusal to repent, a refusal to put their faith in Christ, is a morally culpable act of rebellion against this great call of coming judgment. It saddens me as I stand here. It burdens me to think of what lies ahead for those who are without Christ because that is their future lest they repent.

Now that's one answer to it. There's this warning of creating a fear that should provoke repentance in those who are not the people of God as they hear this, what about those of us that know Christ, we are forgiven, we have been born again, God has saved our souls, we are looking forward to a future deliverance when we disembark from this life and into the realm of glory that God has appointed for us? What does the day of judgment mean for us as the people of God? Well, this is where the theme of gladness comes in and you see it repeated again and emphasized in the middle of the Psalm in verse 8 when it says Zion, a term for Jerusalem,

8 Zion heard this and was glad, And the daughters of Judah have rejoiced
Because of Your judgments, O LORD.

Now stop with me for just a minute and try to get your mind around the sharp contrast that is embedded in this Psalm. This terrible coming judgment that causes the whole earth to tremble and mountains to melt like wax at the arrival of the King, there's that response, how can it be that there's any gladness in that? How could anybody rejoice in a day like that? Well, for the people of God, for us as Christians, what that day is going to be for us is a vindication of our faith in Christ. It is going to display that our King is the true King and that our faith in him was not misplaced. Again James Montgomery Boice says and I quote, he says, "The only complete fulfillment of this vision must be the eventual return of Jesus Christ and the reign of Jesus in his millennial kingdom at the end of this age. Only then will perfect justice come to this earth. The helpless will be defended, liars confounded, and the guilty judged. This will be grounds for great rejoicing by the righteous."

You know, when truth replaces the lies that we're used to living with and which govern and dominate the world these days as they always have since the fall of Adam, that's going to be a great day when those of us who love truth see truth finally prevailing instead of the lies of men, that's going to be a great great day. When those who have suffered innocently under the hands of oppressors are delivered and vindicated and protected and delivered, that's going to be one great day. When the blood of however many millions of abortions, 60 million, 70 million, 80 million, I kind of lose count, when the blood of all of those innocents is vindicated, it's going to be a day of rejoicing. When the martyrs through the ages find that those who tormented them are judged and their faith is vindicated as we see in the book of Revelation, it's going to be a time of rejoicing. Finally it's going to be made right and that for which we have hoped, that which we have longed for, that which we have groaned for, when it finally comes to pass and Christ is on display and Christ is ruling and righteousness prevails, we are going to be so glad for that day to arrive. When those who mocked Christ are silenced and all that is left are the voices of his praise, we're going to be so so glad.

And what will the rejoicing ultimately be? Look at verse 9, "the daughters of Judah have rejoiced Because of Your judgments," verse 9,

9 For You are the LORD Most High over all the earth; You are exalted far
above all gods.

Finally it's going to be on display. The King is going to be on the earth, false gods will be put away, and so what we find in Psalm 97 is this profound balance between the fear that judgment will wreak upon the ungodly, the unrepentant ungodly, and the gladness that it will bring for the people of God. There will be gladness and there will be fear in response to this and those of us who know Christ can anticipate the day of judgment without fear, with a sense of confidence, with a sense of gladness, that all of our hopes are finally going to be fulfilled and put on display.

So once again, we've gone forward into the Bible's description of the future, we've gone into that realm, anticipated it, and again and again Scripture brings us back to the present, it takes us forward to see these things and then it brings us back to help us know how to respond in the present. It's not simply a matter of future anticipation, this affects everything about the way that we live today, and faith, those who know Christ, those who believe these things, faith responds today in light of this coming judgment.

Verse 10 it says,

10 Hate evil, you who love the LORD, Who preserves the souls of His
godly ones; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

You see, beloved, when you hear this today as a Christian, when you hear the coming of the Lord that is still future to us, your response should be one of obedience to his divine revelation. God loves righteousness and he hates evil. Who is this God of judgment? He's a God among other things who loves righteousness and hates evil. Well, if we have aligned ourselves with him, if we have submitted to him, then our response is to love what he loves and to hate what he hates. God hates evil, therefore we do too. We not only hate it in the world, we hate it in our own lives and we hate it's residual effects in our own hearts. It's not enough for us to talk about these things as the unrighteousness out there, we want to be purged and cleansed from the unrighteousness that is within our own soul in response to this. And understand why, beloved, understand why that's our response to it. Why do we hate sin? Why do we hate that which is contrary to God's revelation? We hate it because it is contrary to the nature of our King. We love our King. We love Christ. We love his righteousness. We love his truth. We love his love. With love his holiness. And every sin, every act of evil, every evil deed, every evil thought is contrary to the nature of our King and therefore it is contrary to what we love ourselves because we love our King above all else. It's contrary to his nature and we recognize that God's judgment is coming against that evil, coming against sin, and so his nature and his judgment inform our heart and inform our affections to align our mind, align our thinking with the nature of God who is going to execute a judgment like this. With somewhat a manner of fear and trembling we say, "I don't want any part of that which is going to bring His judgment." With a sense of affection and love we say, "My Lord is lovely and He is righteous and I want everything to be conformed to Him, including within my own heart."

So we conform our attitude toward the nature of right and wrong, sin and righteousness in accordance with this coming judgment and when it's had that purging effect upon us, that sanctifying effect, then we're able to respond in an appropriate sense of joy and thanksgiving. Look at verse 11 with me,

11 Light is sown like seed for the righteous And gladness for the upright
in heart.

You see, there's that theme of gladness again. Verse 1, verse 8, verse 11, verse 12, read it with me,

12 Be glad in the LORD, you righteous ones, And give thanks to His holy name.

Beloved, joy and gratitude, gladness, thanksgiving are the way that we respond to the reality of the reality of God's coming judgment. We thank, look at the end of verse 12 with me, we thank his holy name. We look at the full panoply of the character of God and we honor it. We honor his righteousness. We honor his justice. We honor his holiness and bow before him. We remember the fact that he's been gracious to us in Christ in electing us, in calling us, in justifying us, in sanctifying us, one day glorifying us. And we look at the immeasurable infinitude of the greatness of his goodness toward us and we look at that coming judgment and we realize how greatly good and how goodly great he's been to us and all we can do is respond with a great sense of gratitude that such great benefits were vouchsafed to our hearts, to our souls, by the blessed Holy Spirit who brought Christ to us, led us to him and opened our eyes to the glory of Christ, the reality of his death and resurrection, and led us to commit ourselves to him.

So with joy and gratitude, we respond to this. To state it another way, the glory of God that you see in the revelation of his coming judgment provokes in us a sense of humble worship. All that we can do is bow before him, bow in reverence at his great holiness that his judgment will introduce, and the great holiness that motivates his judgment. That in itself is reason enough for worship but to think that our Judge intervened for us as our Savior, to think that our Judge is our loving and gracious King, these are thoughts too great for the human mind to put its arms around. The glory of God provokes humble worship. The goodness of God provokes joy and thanksgiving.

So the reality of God's coming judgment, the fact that he is awesome in judgment provokes this multifaceted response of worship to him that is dominated by gladness and joy and thanksgiving. For those of us that are in Christ, we're called to be glad in response to these things. Our King reigns. He is going to share that victory with us and our King who reigns, though it is hidden from the eyes of the world now, one day it will be visible and he will be glorified in the end and that will be a great day for us.

Father, we pray that this day would come and come quickly. As our Lord taught us to pray, Father, we pray, "Thy Kingdom come." We long for the coming of this day and we pray for its hastening, asking only that You would delay just long enough to gather in all of Your elect, gather in all of those for whom we pray for the salvation of their souls, Father, that Your delay would prove to be mercy for those under the sound of my voice who are not Christians as they hear this. Father, may Your Spirit bid them with an effectual, sovereign, powerful call to come to Christ to be saved and to be rescued from the devastation that it will have on those who reject You. Father, we would not wish that fate on any one man, let alone those closest to us. So while we long for the coming of the day and pray for its hastening, Father, we pray for an urgency on the part of Your Spirit to bring mercy to those who are still outside of Christ. We acknowledge, Father, that all

of these things are beyond our ability to fully understand and certainly the power of judgment and the power of glory belongs not to us but to You and to You alone. So we honor You in response to Your word. We thank You for the word written and the Word Incarnate and we give all of our affection and devotion and love to You without hesitation and without qualification as we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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