

## Kingdom Come, Kingdom Coming

Psalm 47:1-9

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October 19, 2003

Now, we pick up this evening in the study of the second book of Psalms to Psalm 47. Before we read it together, let's once again come before God in prayer and ask for the help and illumination of the Spirit to make these words known and clearer to us. Let's pray.

*We come, O Lord, again into Your presence. "We dare not trust the sweetest frame, but holy lean on Jesus' name." "On Christ the solid rock we stand; all other ground is sinking sand." We come now to hear You speak to us in the words of Scripture, for all Scripture has been given by inspiration of God, every jot and every tittle of it. We pray, Holy Spirit, that you would illuminate these words to our minds and to our hearts, and that in our affections and in our wills we might have cause to return in thanksgiving and praise to You. Hear us, Lord, for Jesus' sake. Amen.*

Now, hear with me the word of God.

*For the choir director. A Psalm of the sons of Korah. O clap your hands, all peoples; Shout to God with the voice of joy. For the LORD Most High is to be feared, A great King over all the earth. He subdues peoples under us And nations under our feet. He chooses our inheritance for us, The glory of Jacob whom He loves. Selah. God has ascended with a shout, The LORD, with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises; Sing praises to our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth; Sing praises with a skillful psalm. God reigns over the nations, God sits on His holy throne. The princes of the people have assembled themselves as the people of the God of Abraham, For the shields of the earth belong to God; He is highly exalted.*

Amen. And may God bless to us the reading of His holy and inerrant word.

There is a coffee table book; one of you lent it to me six months, a year ago. I forget which one of you it was now; I did give it back. It's called, *The Powers of Ten*. I think it was a movie, but I didn't see the movie. It starts with a picture of a couple, and they're having a picnic in some park in Chicago. And then the

camera lens moves a factor of ten away; so, you see Chicago. And then it moves another factor of ten, and what you see is the United States. And back another factor of ten, and you see the Earth, the globe. And then it moves back a little further, and you're looking at the sun and its solar system, and it's becoming just like an ordinary star. Then you're looking at the Milky Way. And astrologers are disagreed amongst each other as to whether the Milky Way contains 100 or 400-billion stars. That's a significant disparity, you understand.

In 1919 when Edwin Hubble—he grew up in Wheaton on the outskirts of Chicago—became one of the most famous astronomers of the twentieth century, there was thought, actually, to be only one galaxy, and everything else was just puffs of gas.

Can you see in this Psalm that something like that is happening? *The powers of Ten*. It begins with a picture of some worshippers in Jerusalem—maybe they're in the temple, maybe they're in the streets of Jerusalem. It appears to be the coronation of a king, so these hand clapping worshippers may have actually been out in the streets somewhere. And then it moves back and you see Israel—this tiny, little, insignificant little land no greater than the size of Vermont. And eventually it moves back and back and back, and God is the King of all the Earth.

This is an extraordinary Psalm. It's a Psalm that's dedicated to "Maestro Choral Wymond of Jerusalem," the director of the choir. By the end of the Psalm, it's not the choir, or the choir director, or the people in Jerusalem clapping their hands, or the coronation, perhaps, of King David, or whoever lies behind the original penmanship of the Psalm; at the end of the Psalm, it's all about God and His greatness and His glory.

Scholars actually believe—whatever these scholars might be—they actually believe that this Psalm was written, sung, composed at the time when the Ark of the Covenant was carried into the temple. Verse five seems to give an indication that someone, a king, has ascended onto a throne, perhaps. And it sounds a bit like a coronation anthem. Something like Hubert Parry might compose. I get a little kick—if I can use that expression—out of the fact that the choir often sings that wonderful piece that was actually from Psalm 122. And they often sing it here on Sunday mornings, written by Hubert Parry; written, of course, for the coronation of King Edward VII in 1902. I'm not sure the choir realizes it every time they're singing it. But it's something like that. It's a great occasion. This is no ordinary day; this is an extraordinary day. And something deeply significant is actually happening in Jerusalem: triumph. maybe triumph in war and in battle; a new king has been enthroned; the Ark of the Covenant has been brought into the temple, perhaps. But God is being glorified and being praised.

So, let me see if we can make some sense of this Psalm, written almost 3,000 years ago perhaps. Why are we studying? Why are we here tonight studying together a piece of poetry written almost 3,000 years ago? Because it has

something deeply significant to say to us about God, and about who He is, and about what God has done, and about what God is going to do. I want to see four things.

## **I. The eschatological dimension.**

I want us to see, in the first place, that there is an eschatological dimension to this Psalm. I've committed the unpardonable now in using a word like that; so let me explain what I mean. What I mean by saying that there's an "eschatological dimension" to the Psalm is that there's something about this Psalm that goes beyond itself. Whatever it might have been saying in the context of the ninth century, say, it actually has something far greater, far bigger than that in mind. It's actually one of these Psalms that's looking forward into the future centuries and centuries and centuries. And you go flying past the destruction of the first temple and the rebuilding of the second temple, and flying past the coming of Jesus and His incarnation and life and death and resurrection and ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the emergence of the church and the acts of the apostles. And on and on and on it goes, and it comes right up to our door, but it doesn't stop. It goes past our door and on and on and on into the future.

This Psalm is about the rule and reign of God. God is. This is a Psalm of faith. It doesn't waste time in trying to prove the existence of God; it proclaims the God who is there in all of His power and greatness and glory. Kingdoms may come, and kingdoms may go.

Since this Psalm was written, many kingdoms have come and gone: the Assyrian kingdom, the Babylonian kingdom, the Neo-Persian kingdom, the Greek empire, the Roman empire. It was in the year A.D. 250; the Romans were celebrating 1,000 years of their existence. And even as they celebrated that 1,000 years of their existence, everything was falling apart: and there was an overthrow of one emperor after another, military plots and dictatorships and barbarian invasions and disease and plague and economic stagnation and civil unrest and so on.

Before World War I, the British Empire made the boast that "the sun never set on its flag." There are some English folk down here. And the London Jack of Britannia ruled the waves. If you bought a map of the world it would be painted largely in red; and it is gone and vanished. When Hitler and the Nazis came to power in Germany, they boastfully established and proclaimed their 1,000-year Reich. Where are all those mighty empires today? They're gone, every one of them. During our lifetime, we've witnessed the extraordinary dismantling of the empire of the Soviet Union, with all of its boasts and claims. And it's gone: it's a thing of the past.

And what's true of political power is also true of economic power, financial power. In 1923 at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago, Illinois, nine of the most

powerful tycoons in the world gathered for a meeting. These nine, if they combined all of their resources and their assets, controlled more money than the US Treasury. They were rich and powerful men with vast financial empires. In that group were folk like:

(1) Charles Schwab, President of the world's largest independent steel company; (2) Samuel Insull, President of the world's largest utility company; (3) Howard Hopson, President of the largest gas firm; (4) Arthur Cutten, the greatest wheat speculator; (5) Richard Whitney, President of the New York Stock Exchange; (6) Albert Fall, member of the President's Cabinet; (7) Leon Frazier, President of the Bank of International Settlements; (8) Jessie Livermore, the greatest speculator in the Stock Market; and (9) Ivar Kreuger, head of the company who had close to a world-wide monopoly on the production of matches.

Man's kingdoms—whether they be political, military, or economic— are just temporary blips on the face of history. That's all they are.

Twenty-five years later:

(1) Charles Schwab had died in bankruptcy, having lived on borrowed money for five years before his death. (2) Samuel Insull had died virtually penniless after spending some time as a fugitive from justice. (3) Howard Hopson was insane. (4) Arthur Cutten the great wheat speculator, went bankrupt and died overseas, broke. (5) Richard Whitney had spent time in Sing-Sing. (6) Albert Fall was released from prison so he could die at home. (7) Leon Fraizer, (8) Jessie Livermore, and (9) Ivar Kreuger, the Swedish match-maker king, each died by suicide.

Kingdoms come and kingdoms go, but the Kingdom of God lasts forever.

Here when you come to the pages of the New Testament—actually when you come from the last two verses of Malachi and you transpose yourself, that 400 year gap, to the first pages of the New Testament—there's a theme that runs from Malachi to Matthew, and it's the theme of the Kingdom of God. When John the Baptist appeared on the stage of history, he came preaching that “the Kingdom of God is at hand.” The first words out of the mouth of Jesus were “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.” It has come. It is here. They understood what John the Baptist was saying. They understood what Jesus was saying, at least in part, because it was part of the expectation of the Old Testament. It was part of Judaism that there was a Kingdom, and this Kingdom belonged to God, and this Kingdom was growing, and this Kingdom was coming. And it was fed by Psalms like this one, Psalm 47. God rules and God reigns. And don't we pray in the Lord's Prayer, “Thy Kingdom come”? There's something about this Psalm that opens up vistas that are beyond itself.

## II. The Christological dimension

Secondly, I want us to see that this Psalm has a Christological dimension to it. God took His own powers of ten in reverse: the great God of heaven became a man, smaller and smaller and smaller, and was found in the dimensions of a man. Verse 9 seems to be the climax of the Psalm: “The princes of the people have assembled themselves as the people of the God of Abraham.” The Psalm looks back, first of all, to Abraham, and it's talking about a people of God that have been gathered who are the people of the God of Abraham. God gave a promise to Abraham, you remember, beginning in Genesis 12 and repeated in part in Genesis 15, and repeated again in Genesis 17: a promise that had about it a covenantal structure, a promise that God said would never be repealed, a promise that from out of Abraham and the loins of Abraham would grow a people that would be greater than the stars in the night sky—whether its 100- or 400-billion stars in our galaxy—greater than that. David is clutching to that promise here in this Psalm, the promise to Abraham.

You know, the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12 is one of the most powerful and one of the most fundamental things in all of the Scriptures. It's almost as if the whole of Scripture from then on is as it were in outflowing of that promise to Abraham.

I was singing a Psalm yesterday morning—it seems a long time ago now, but it was yesterday, and it was in Canada, in Ontario. And I was singing a Psalm, and it was from the Heritage Reformed Church's Psalter, and it was Psalm 105. But it was the rendition, the translation that got me. It was a Dutch translation in English, you understand, but it was a translation I wasn't familiar with. These were the words: “Jehovah's truth will stand forever; His covenant bonds He will not sever; the word of grace which He commands to thousand generations stands. The covenant made in days of old with Abraham, He doth uphold.” Those are powerful words. Those are wonderful words! God has made a covenant, and He will not break it. And He will not break it.

Do you remember how Paul interprets the covenant that this Psalm refers to, the covenant with Abraham? Do you remember how Paul interprets it in Galatians? He makes that extraordinary exegetical point in Galatians that the covenant was made not with many, but with One, that is Jesus Christ. You may not remember Paul saying that, but he says that in Galatians. What he's saying—we won't go down that rabbit trail and go off into Galatians because we might never come back. So, take it from me for now and hunt it for yourselves afterwards that in Galatians 3, Paul is saying about the covenant with Abraham that at the heart of it is Jesus Christ. At the heart of that covenant promise to Abraham is the coming of Jesus Christ. God is a King and a Ruler, and that Ruler, my friend, is Jesus Christ, because He's the only King there is. We're living on the other side of Bethlehem, you and I.

There's something about this Psalm that goes beyond itself. It's talking about God ruling and reigning, and it's talking about Him, in the context of some victory or other that's been won. But you and I both know as we read this Psalm that it says something beyond itself. And we are living on the other side of the Incarnation and on the other side of Calvary and on the other side of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And there's more in this Psalm than meets the eye. The God who rules and reigns and "of His Kingdom there shall be no end" is Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Savior, because to Jesus has been given all authority.

Do you remember the Great Commission in Matthew 28? Do you remember the preface to the Great Commission in Matthew 28? "All authority in heaven and in earth is given unto Me, therefore go into all the world." Therefore, go to all the nations because all authority in heaven and in Earth is given to Me. This Psalm is like one of those chocolate oranges—you may not know them, you *will* know them—those chocolate oranges that you can sometimes buy, and when you tap the orange it falls apart. And when you tap this Psalm, out of this Psalm comes a King and a Ruler, and He's sovereign and He's Jesus! He's Jesus to whom has been given all authority in heaven and in earth.

What is this Psalm talking about? It's talking about God subduing His enemies, choosing His people, gathering together a people for them to be called "the people of the God of Abraham." And the powers of Satan have been subdued under the feet of Jesus Christ. Listen. "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and tongue confess"—what? – "That He is Lord of all." That's it isn't it? That's it exactly. That's what the Psalm is talking about.

Oh, I don't know whether the original singers of this Psalm knew what they were singing— sometimes I think they knew more than we think they knew, and sometimes probably they didn't know a whole lot—but as they sang this Psalm they were singing of a Sovereign One, a Lord, a King Who was coming and Who was going to rule and destroy all of His enemies. Do you see Him? Do you see Him?

### **III. The missiological dimension.**

There's an eschatological dimension. There's a Christological dimension. There's, thirdly, a missiological dimension. I'm talking now about missions. There's a missiological dimension to this Psalm. Let's try and unfold some of the details of the Psalm, beginning in verse 3: He subdues peoples under us and

nations under our feet. Look at verse 8: "God reigns over the nations." Look at verse 9: and now the nations are assembled before Him, "The princes of the people have assembled themselves as the people of the God of Abraham, for the shields of the earth belong to God." That's a great vision, isn't it? That the nations of the world are bowing in their allegiance and in their subservience to the great God of heaven and Earth.

Now, don't misinterpret this Psalm—it's so easy to do—and apply it in some kind of quasi-political American sense that America's empire will rule the waves. Do you know how Isaac Watts rendered this Psalm? I love Isaac Watts, his hymns, and I particularly love his renditions of the Psalms, and they've been sung now for almost two hundred years. But do you know how he rendered the last part of this Psalm? "The British Islands are the Lord's; There Abraham's God is known; while powers and princes, shields, and swords submit before His throne." How appalling! No, that's not the vision. That's not the vision. What we have here is not a picture of political domination of the nations of the world; what we have here is a picture of men and women from every nation of the world coming to faith in Jesus Christ and bowing their knees in homage and worship of Him.

Do you know what we have here is the fulfillment of those words of Jesus? "When I am lifted up, I will draw all men to Myself," Jesus says. Do you want to catch a glimpse of what Psalm 47 is actually about? Go to Jerusalem. Go to the Day of Pentecost. Go to the time when the Spirit of God descends in the form of flaming tongues like as of fire, "and Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia and Judea and Cappadocia and Pontius and Asia and Phrygia and Pamphylia and Egypt and the parts of Libya that belong to Cyrene and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs"—do you see it? It's just a little glimpse. It's just a little digital photograph. It's a shot, still photograph, a little captured image of what Psalm 47 is about. It's about the nations of the world coming together in Christ and being blessed by God and being filled by His Spirit. That's it. The nations of the world streaming into the Kingdom of God.

My friends, if we don't see this; if we have some who think that Christianity belongs to us here, and us alone, and Jackson and Mississippi, we fail to see the greatness of the purposes of God, the vastness of His purpose, because God has in His plan and in His purpose a desire and a longing and a decree and a determination to gather a people to Himself from Mexico and Brazil and Argentina and Canada and Zambia and Libya and Egypt, and Sweden and Norway and Finland and Luxembourg and France—yes, France!—and Britain and Ireland and Korea—what a mighty work God is doing in Korea. What an extraordinary sight it is to go to Seoul, Korea and see these vast, vast Presbyterian churches filled with people singing the praises of God, rising early at three, four in the morning for two-hour prayer meetings—yes!—in their thousands and tens of thousands. And Japan, yes, and China—and China too—and all those "-stans": Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and

Kyrgyzstan. And don't forget Asia, the Australians and the New Zealanders and even the little islands of the sea. And God has His people there too. Do you see the greatness of this vision? That's why you don't have an option about missions. You don't have an option about missions because it's part of the plan and purpose of God, because you and I are caught up—we're just a microcosm; that's all we are we're just a dot in the vastness of what God is going to do. Because God is going to trample the nations under His feet, and He's going to call out a people, and they're going to be called “the people of the God of Abraham.” Do you see it?

There's an eschatological dimension, and there's a Christological dimension, and there's a missiological dimension, and since I'm using big words, let me use one more.

#### **IV. The doxological dimension**

There's a doxological dimension to this Psalm: clapping and shouting and singing...and singing, my friends...yes, singing. That's the response of the people of God to the unfolding of His purposes and of His decree. When you catch a glimpse of what God is going to do, the work that He has begun and has not yet finished, you'll want to worship; you'll want to worship. This is, first of all, a picture of a coronation, I think. And the people are shouting in the streets, “Long live the king!” Temple worship and synagogue worship and early church worship didn't introduce hand clapping as a part of public worship, so let's bypass that red herring.

One thing is very clear: that the only appropriate response to what God is doing in our midst is praise. It's praise! You see—oh, let me borrow a phrase and you'll recognize it immediately—“worship is the ultimate thing.” It's not missions. Yes, I'm quoting John Piper. ‘Worship is the ultimate thing.’ Missions exists because worship doesn't. And the whole of God's purposes in the missiological dimension of this Psalm is in order that praise and glory might be ascribed to Him. You see, if it wasn't for the fact that God is ultimate, this would be a terribly self-centered and self-serving thing, wouldn't it? Yes, we can say that. But, God is the ultimate, and God made us and redeemed us and perseveres with us because He wants a people to worship Him.

You may be asking tonight, “What in the world has all of this to do with me?” You may be asking that. You've come to church and your life is filled with trials: your family is in disarray; your life is in disarray; your job is in disarray; your health is in disarray; a thousand things are fleeting through your mind even as I talk. What in the world has this 47th Psalm to do with me? God wants you to praise Him, my friend.

Do you know sometimes the reason we don't praise Him as we ought is because



we don't see the big picture? We're so turned in on ourselves. And this Psalm is saying, "It's the powers of ten." It's saying, "I want you to see the big picture here. I want you to see that what's going on in your life is not the ultimate thing. No, what's going on in your life is *part* of the purposes of God and *part* of the plan of God, and "He will never leave you nor forsake you," and "He works all things together for the good of those that love Him." And He's your shepherd, and He's your friend, and He will care for you, and He'll protect you, and He'll feed you, and He'll give you all that you need to bring you home to glory...but you're not the ultimate thing, because He is the ultimate thing. The ultimate thing is God Himself, because that's how the Psalm ends: "He is highly exalted." And the Psalm is saying, "I want you to catch a bigger vision. I want you to catch a greater picture of God in all of His glory. I want your mind expanded; I want your heart expanded; I want your affections to be expanded."

In the year 95 A.D.—at least according to Irenaeus. And Irenaeus was a friend of Polycarp, and Polycarp was a friend of the Apostle John, and so Irenaeus should know. According to Irenaeus, the Apostle John was on an island called Patmos, banished there. It's about ten miles long and about six miles wide, and it's a volcanic island. In other words, there's nothing on it except rock. It was about 35 miles off the coast from Asia and from Ephesus. And that's where John was for a while, when Emperor Domitian was going through his issues with himself, until he was killed.

And do you know what John was doing on the Island of Patmos? Writing the book of Revelation. What's the book of Revelation about? Let's jump from Psalm 47 to the end of the Bible, because the Psalm alludes to Genesis 12, but let's go to Revelation, the end of the Bible. What is the book of Revelation about? It's a picture of Jesus Christ ruling and reigning and sitting upon His throne and casting down His enemies and casting Satan into a flaming fire of sulfur and gathering His people to a New Jerusalem in all of its beauty and splendor, where the people of God—and there are angels and archangels and cherubim and seraphim, and they're proclaiming the glory of God and of Christ.

John saw the big picture, you see. He could've sat on that island and said, "Woe is me." But instead he took a pen, and he wrote the most magnificent book in all of the Bible and the greatest display of the kingship and rule of Christ that has ever been written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And when you see the big picture, my friend...when you see the big picture, then you'll catch it. Because God wants from you what this Psalm is talking about: your worship and your praise and your songs from your heart and with your lips and with your affections. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

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