

God's Rule over the Nations

Psalms 47:1-9

SS Lesson for 10/24/2010

Devotional Scripture: Ps 97:1-12

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Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The outline of the lesson came from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator. This week's lesson exalts that **God Rules over Nations**. The **study's aim** is to show that God is on the throne and that all the nations of the earth are under His control. The **study's application** is to praise God that we have nothing to fear, for our God is absolutely in charge of all the nations of the world.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Appropriate Applause

Classical music lovers know that there are unwritten rules when it comes to live performances. One of these has to do with the proper times to applaud. The tradition is that applause is appropriate only at the end of a piece of music, not between the piece's sections. For example, a Beethoven symphony may have four movements. The audience is expected to be silent when the orchestra pauses after the first, second, and third movements, and to clap only at the end of the fourth movement. Often, however, there will be appreciative but uninitiated audience patrons who begin to clap after the first movement. This quickly dies, however, when they realize they are not being joined by the bulk of the audience. According to the traditions of symphony halls, this applause is inappropriate even if well intended. Churches too may have unwritten rules when it comes to applause. For example, there may be various reactions to a musical presentation in a worship service. Some in attendance may applaud enthusiastically, not realizing that the tradition of that particular congregation is to view applause as out of kilter with the purpose of worship. The heart of this matter, of course, is understanding the purpose of hand clapping. In today's entertainment culture, clapping is most commonly used as a response to outstanding performance. When we clap in this sense, we are physically saying, "You are really a great singer, and we want to let you know that we recognize it." But there are other purposes for clapping too. Sometimes we clap in appreciation. For example, a beloved speaker may receive a long ovation when being introduced. This is saying, "We appreciate you." Since ancient times, people have combined these two purposes (recognition of greatness and heartfelt appreciation) to use clapping as a form of worship. Clapping is associated with exuberant joy, and this may be channeled into praise for God. We must remember that all humans are participants in a worship service. The only "audience" is God, for he alone is worthy of praise (see Revelation 4:11). Applause in praise of God is both appropriate and exciting. Our applause need not die an embarrassed death like the clapping between the movements of a Beethoven symphony.

Lesson Background

Psalm 47 lends itself to public worship and praise. Its enduring qualities are shown by its current place in the celebration of Rosh Hashanah (New Year's Day) in some Jewish congregations today. By tradition, Psalm 47 is recited seven times before the blowing of the shofar (ram's horn) to mark the beginning of the New Year and its celebration. Psalm 47 is the fifth in a series of seven psalms associated with "the Sons of Korah." Descendants of Korah seem to have been important pioneers in the liturgical worship of the temple in Jerusalem (see 1 Chronicles 9:19; 2 Chronicles 20:19). As we noted in the Background of Lesson 5, the psalms traditionally are divided into five "books." Seven psalms of the sons of Korah begin Book II, which consists of Psalms 42–72. Originally, Psalms 42 and 43 were one unit, so the seven are 42/43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, and 49 (Psalms 84–88 comprise another collection of Korah psalms). The superscription of Psalm 47 calls it A psalm. By contrast, some other Korah psalms are identified as maskil. We are not sure what a maskil is. One theory is that this title is given to song-poems of a personal, contemplative nature, while the designation A psalm is attached to works written as expressions of praise to God for use in public worship. We note, however, that Psalm 88 features both designations. Psalm 47, for its part, combines words of praise to the Lord with active participation from the congregation. We do not know the precise historical context of Psalm 47, but it has allusions to the history of Israel. For example, the reference to "trumpets" in

verse 5 reminds us of the miraculous victory of Joshua over the walled city of Jericho (Joshua 6). The psalm, then, combines praise of God with a patriotic celebration of the victories of the nation of Israel.

From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

Isaiah 11:3-5 says that God's Spirit "shall make him (Messiah) of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." We do not see much true justice in the world today because there is no way for human judges to know the facts without doubt. It is common for witnesses to promise to tell nothing but the truth but then to lie under examination. Lying, in fact, has become so commonplace in today's world that it is no longer considered wrong. What a difference there will be when Jesus Christ is ruling on earth in Jerusalem! As Isaiah explained, He will not be bound by what witnesses say or by physical evidences. Since Jesus is God, He is omniscient, just like His Father, meaning He already knows all things without being told. The idea of a sovereign God seems foreign to many. Yet if we look closely at history, we see that in spite of the bad things that happen around us, there is evidence that God is in control of all the earth. Our lesson this week reminds us that He is in charge. He rules over all the nations of the earth. God is not threatened by the catastrophic events of history because He is in charge of them and on top of everything. Nothing happens without His control. When we watch the news every day, it is easy to feel overwhelmed. Nuclear threats, terrorism, global economic instability, it is easy to feel threatened and to be afraid. But when we read Psalm 47, we are told that God is truly in charge of the nations of the world. So we have the assurance that we will be all right despite all the threats we encounter from other nations. Through this psalm, God gave Israel the assurance that He was always going to be their God.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Praise God who Subdues Nations (Ps 47:1-3)

- 1 Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph!
- 2 For the Lord Most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth.
- 3 He will subdue the peoples under us, And the nations under our feet.

Subdues nations through triumph (1)

Triumph because God can take a few men and defeat thousands (Judg 7:1-8)

7 Early in the morning, Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) and all his men camped at the spring of Harod. The camp of Midian was north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh. 2 The Lord said to Gideon, "You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands. In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her, 3 announce now to the people, 'Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.'" So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained. 4 But the Lord said to Gideon, "There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will sift them for you there. If I say, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go; but if I say, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go." 5 So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the Lord told him, "Separate those who lap the water with their tongues like a dog from those who kneel down to drink." 6 Three hundred men lapped with their hands to their mouths. All the rest got down on their knees to drink. 7 The Lord said to Gideon, "With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the other men go, each to his own place." 8 So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites

to their tents but kept the three hundred, who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others. Now the camp of Midian lay below him in the valley.

Triumph because God can enable the smallest and simplest enough to defeat (1 Sam 17:41-50)

41 Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. 42 He looked David over and saw that he was only a boy, ruddy and handsome, and he despised him. 43 He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 44 "Come here," he said, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!" 45 David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46 This day the Lord will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. 47 All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands." 48 As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. 49 Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground. 50 So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.

Triumph because all we need to do is stand firm and watch God fight the battle (Ex 14:13-25)

13 Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. 14 The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still." 15 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. 16 Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. 17 I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. 18 The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen." 19 Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, 20 coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long. 21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, 22 and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. 23 The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. 24 During the last watch of the night the Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. 25 He made the wheels of their chariots come off so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, "Let's get away from the Israelites! The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt."

Triumph because God protects with more than what the enemy has (2 Kings 6:15-17)

15 When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked. 16 "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." 17 And Elisha prayed, "O Lord, open his eyes so he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Triumph because God is greater than all (1 John 4:4)

4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

Triumph because God defeats nations to show that we should not fear them (Josh 10:8-10)

8 The Lord said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you." 9 After an all-night march from Gilgal, Joshua took them by surprise. 10 The Lord threw them into confusion before Israel, who defeated them in a great victory at Gibeon. Israel pursued them along the road going up to Beth Horon and cut them down all the way to Azekah and Makkedah.

Triumph because the victory rests with God (Prov 21:31)

31 The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord.

Subdues nations because God is awesome (2)

God is awesome because His power is great (Deut 7:21)

21 Do not be terrified by them, for the Lord your God, who is among you, is a great and awesome God.

God is awesome because His works are awesome (Ps 66:3)

3 Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you.

God is awesome because His creations are awesome (Psalm 145:4-6)

4 One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. 5 They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works. 6 They will tell of the power of your awesome works, and I will proclaim your great deeds.

God is awesome because He performs great wonders (Deut 10:20-21)

20 Fear the Lord your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. 21 He is your praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes.

God is awesome because His kingdom is mighty (Deut 10:17)

17 For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.

Subdues nations because He subdues people (3)

Subdues people because someday every knee will bow before God (Phil 2:10-11)

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Subdues people because God controls death (Ps 22:29)

29 All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him — those who cannot keep themselves alive.

Subdues people because no one can resist God (Dan 4:35)

35 All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"

Subdues people because God is far above all people and their dominions (Eph 1:19-22)

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

Subdues people because God's will is supreme over man's desires (James 4:13-15)

13 Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."

Praise God who Provides the Victory over Nations (Ps 47:4-6)

4 He will choose our inheritance for us, The excellence of Jacob whom He loves. Selah

5 God has gone up with a shout, The Lord with the sound of a trumpet.

6 Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!

Victory as an inheritance (4)

An inheritance of God's kingdom (Luke 12:32)

32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

An inheritance because of being an heir (Rom 8:17)

17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

An inheritance of the crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8)

8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

An inheritance for those who are poor in the eyes of the world (James 2:5)

5 Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?

An inheritance that can never perish (1 Pet 1:3-4)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you,

An inheritance that Jesus is currently preparing (John 14:2-3)

2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Victory that should result in praising God (5-6)

Praising God for His bearing man's burdens (Ps 68:19)

19 Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens.

Praising God for His love and faithfulness (Ps 138:2)

2 I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word.

Praising God for His mighty power (Ps 147:5)

5 Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.

Praising God because He always leads into triumph (2 Cor 2:14)

14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.

Praising God for His acts of power and greatness (Ps 150:2)

2 Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.

Praising God for His victorious rescue (Ps 81:7)

7 In your distress you called and I rescued you, I answered you out of a thundercloud; I tested you at the waters of Meribah.

Praising God for His victorious deliverance (Ps 118:5)

5 In my anguish I cried to the Lord, and he answered by setting me free.

Praise God who Reigns over Nations (Ps 47:7-9)

7 For God is the King of all the earth; Sing praises with understanding.

8 God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne.

9 The princes of the people have gathered together, The people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; He is greatly exalted.

Reigns because God is King (7)

God is King of glory (Ps 24:10)

10 Who is he, this King of glory? The Lord Almighty — he is the King of glory.

God is King of salvation (Ps 74:12)

12 But you, O God, are my king from of old; you bring salvation upon the earth.

God is King of all gods (Ps 95:3)

3 For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods.

God is King of the nations (Jer 10:7)

7 Who should not revere you, O King of the nations? This is your due. Among all the wise men of the nations and in all their kingdoms, there is no one like you.

God is the eternal King (Jer 10:10)

10 But the Lord is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath.

God is King of all people (Ps 100:3)

3 Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

God is the King (Ps 145:1)

145 I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever.

Reigns from His throne (8)

God's throne was established for judgment (Ps 9:7)

7 The Lord reigns forever; he has established his throne for judgment.

God's throne is eternal (Ps 45:6)

6 Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.

God's throne is a heavenly throne (Ps 11:4)

4 The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord is on his heavenly throne. He observes the sons of men; his eyes examine them.

God's throne has as its foundation righteousness and justice (Ps 89:14)

14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.

God's throne and kingdom rules over all (Ps 103:19)

19 The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.

Reign of protection (9)

Protection from physical danger, spoken impacts and famine (Job 5:20-22)

20 In famine he will ransom you from death, and in battle from the stroke of the sword. 21 You will be protected from the lash of the tongue, and need not fear when destruction comes. 22 You will laugh at destruction and famine, and need not fear the beasts of the earth.

Protection that only God can provide (Ps 18:2)

2 The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Protection in the form of refuge in God (Ps 46:1-3)

46 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

Protection from calamity (Prov 14:32)

32 When calamity comes, the wicked are brought down, but even in death the righteous have a refuge.

Protection in the form of deliverance (2 Cor 1:10)

10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,

Protection that touches lives (I King 19:7)

7 The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you."

Protection that reacts to worship (Acts 16:24-26)

24 Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.
25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Americans are familiar with the arguments about a "wall" of separation between church and state. But there was no such wall in ancient Israel. Likewise, there was no freedom of religion as we know it. Israel was not a pluralistic society that welcomed spiritual diversity; it was not multi-faith in its ideal. The head of state, the king, had controlling influence over the religious affairs of the nation. The central focus of Jerusalem was the temple, and it was financed by the national treasury. Temple employees were like our modern civil servants. The high priests had final say in temple matters, although kings seemed to interfere repeatedly (examples: 2 Kings 21:1, 4, 5; 2 Chronicles 26:16). Such a configuration is far removed from the situation in most modern democratic nations. In such countries, the government has a hands-off attitude when it comes to religion in order to ensure individual freedom. Further, people who are antagonistic toward religion use the court systems and bureaucracies to place limits on religious activity. The result is that sacred elements in public ceremonies have nearly disappeared. For example, to whom do we pray in the pluralistic environment of such ceremonies? Do we pray to the God of Israel? to Jesus? to Allah? to Vishnu? to Gaia? Even the attempt to allow personal prayer by schoolchildren via a moment of silence has been attacked in the courts and sometimes ruled as illegal. To ponder these things helps us gain perspective on the teaching and practice of Psalm 47. The history of Israel itself proves how difficult it is to turn back the clock when religious decline begins. As the kings of Israel and Judah became unfaithful, their nations followed. Reforms under righteous kings like Hezekiah didn't last. Hezekiah's reign was followed by the 55-year rule of Manasseh, the most evil of all the kings of Judah (2 Kings 21:11, 12). For us the days are gone when a political leader like Abraham Lincoln can refer to "this nation, under God" without a storm of protest. There is no longer a correlation between religious preference and national identity. Psalm 47, then, no longer has a place in the worship of a nation. It is unlikely we will ever see a pageant of worship in which presidents, prime ministers, senators, generals, and governors join with the citizens to clap their hands and shout to God with a voice of triumph. Some may still blame God for national disasters, but do we ever praise him for national success? The doctrines and purpose of Psalm 47 remain unchanged though. It still has a place in the worship of God's people, the church. Here we can sing and praise to our utmost. We can be told repeatedly to "sing praises" and agree by our joyous obedience. And we know that the final picture of the psalm still rings true. Our God is more than the God of ancient Israel whom Christians have adopted. He is, rather, the God over all nations and all princes and all peoples. This is true whether the leaders and citizens of any given nation choose to acknowledge it or not. He is the only God, the true God. May we sing his praises!

Concluding Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

Singing is not something everyone enjoys. But God does. In fact, God enjoys singing so much that He wants His people to sing to Him. That is the message of this week's text. The desire of the psalmist is not just to sing to God but to "sing praises" to Him. That phrase is repeated four times in verse 6 and again in verse 7. The word "praise" in Hebrew is not the common one used in the book of Psalms. The common word is part of the word "Hallelujah." But the word in the golden text means to praise through music, either with the voice or with a musical instrument. While many Christians can play a musical instrument, many cannot. But

we all can sing. Our voice is a musical instrument. Many do not sing well, but that should not keep us from praising Him. Seven times in the Old Testament (all in Psalms) we are commanded to "make a joyful noise" to the Lord. That does not depend on how good a person sounds. God delights in all praise that comes from a grateful heart. Psalm 47:7 tells us why we are to sing praises: "for God is the King of all the earth." We in America do not truly understand the idea of royalty. Few around the world do, for true royalty hardly exists anymore. But the idea here is to focus on God as being royal. The psalmist wants us to know that God is the supreme Ruler. He and He alone is in charge. Again, in America we do not really relate to this. We live in a democratic republic, where there is a balance of governmental powers. But God needs no other to balance Him and His rule. He is righteous. He is completely good. He is holy (vs. 8). He is a benevolent Leader. We can absolutely trust Him in all that He does. The psalmist encourages us to sing praises "with understanding." The word translated "understanding" can refer to skill or to being circumspect. When we sing our praises to God, we are to sing psalms that are skillful. The whole book of Psalms would certainly qualify as skillful psalms. Some Christians pray using the psalms as a means of praising God. That certainly fulfills the desire of the psalmist in the text. In America today, many would say that there is little or nothing to praise God for. But that is not true. Regardless of the economy, regardless of the moral decline all around us, and regardless of the problems in our churches, we can still praise God for all He has done, for He does all things well (cf. Mark 7:37). Even when life seems bad, God will work it all out for His glory. That is all we need to know. Our children and other young people are watching us. Will they see us praise God? Do they see us sing praises to God in church? We need to cling to God in these uncertain times. We see things as they happen, but God knows the end from the beginning. There is nothing that takes Him by surprise. He is Lord of all, and He will do what is right (cf. Gen. 18:25). He is worthy of our praise; let us sing praise to Him today!

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. God's awe-inspiring nature demands praise from all people (Ps. 47:1-2)
2. God's work on behalf of Israel is proof that He is compassionate and faithful (vs. 3-4)
3. One of our primary responsibilities is to acknowledge God's works with praise (vs. 5-6)
4. Nothing is beyond God's rule and control; He is worthy of our praise and commitment (vss. 7-8)
5. It is comforting to know that all the powers of the earth are under God's control, whether they realize it or not (vs. 9)

Heart of the Lesson from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

Your walk of faith in God as Ruler of the world is not to be a joyless drudgery. You have abundant cause to celebrate His authority and power. It is more than appropriate to praise Him with great joy and confidence.

God deserves praise (Ps. 47:1-2)

God has triumphed over all opposition to His lordship to the point of inspiring awe. You may be quite used to seeing athletic games where a runner or swimmer triumphs over the field by a thousandth of a second. Great political contests are sometimes settled by a single vote. But when God triumphs, it is with unquestioned, infinite superiority. You can then offer back to Him praises with cries of joy. When you are praising God, acknowledge His complete and overwhelming triumph. Because of His triumph, He is King over all the earth.

God loves His people (Ps. 47:3-4)

God's triumph also includes future events. He has plans for people and nations. It is never appropriate to wring your hands over unwelcome events. If there is something we can and should do, such as humanitarian relief, it is right for Christians to be involved in it. However, understand that God is ultimately in control. You may not understand why He is doing something or allowing something to be done, but He has triumphed and can do whatever He wills for His purposes. He is not obligated to reveal His purposes to anyone.

God is sovereign (Ps. 47:5-7)

Even though the world seems to be out of control and the nations seem to be in upheaval just now, you can praise God as King over all the earth. God has used the nations of the world to accomplish His will over all of recorded history. Your understanding of this can be enhanced by a look at the history of the nation of Israel. He used the surrounding nations to bless or to chastise Israel. He aligned nations, languages, and cultures at the time of the birth of Christianity. This optimized the recording and spread of the New Testament. You can praise Him with understanding, not with "blind faith" or the commandments and ceremonies invented by men.

God is holy (Ps. 47:8)

You have often heard that God is holy. This is to say that He is totally and wholly separate from sin or evil of any kind. The religions of the world are man-made. The deities they advance are not the holy God of the Bible. They are corrupted projections of human sins and practices. The Greek gods, for example, were tempted by each other or by mankind and fell into sin. They were subject to losing their godhood and being exiled from their heaven. In stark contrast, God is perfectly and infinitely holy. He never changes and will always be holy. You can praise Him knowing that in His holiness He always keeps His word and His promises.

God is exalted (Ps. 47:9)

This is the starting point for our view of the world and world events. Our struggle, then, is not about who is in charge; we know God is. We may not understand His purposes in what He allows of human suffering, but we can praise Him that He owns the nations and is in control. One day in heaven, along with the believing princes and rulers of this world, we will praise Him. God will be greatly exalted, as He rightly is. We will be clapping our hands, shouting, and singing because of the glory of His triumph and the awesomeness of His holiness.