

Session 15 The Forerunner Message in Psalms 147 and 149

I. INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 147

- A. Psalm 147 celebrates God’s greatness and His sovereign reign over His people and all of creation. His greatness is emphasized in context to being the sustainer, redeemer and protector of His people.
- B. This psalm is commonly interpreted in context to the dedication of the city wall (Neh. 12:27-43), when the bars of the city gates were strengthened (147:13; cf. Neh. 7:1-3).

C. Outline of Psalm 147

- 147:1-6** Our great God is our redeemer
- 147:7-9** Our great God is our provider
- 147:10-11** Our God takes pleasure in humility
- 147:12-14** Our great God is our protector
- 147:15-20** The great power of God’s word

II. OUR GREAT GOD IS OUR REDEEMER (PS. 147:1-6)

- A. When God’s people praise Him with a right spirit and focus, they find it pleasant and beautiful. When our focus is on our problems and what we lack, then our praise is more challenging, but when it is focused on Him and what He has done, then praise is delightful to the Lord and to the believer.

¹For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful. (Ps. 147:1)

- 1. ***It is good:*** Praise realigns our heart to what is true about God and His promises.
- 2. ***It is pleasant and beautiful:*** Singing praise is pleasant or refreshing to our heart and to others around us, tenderizing our hearts with love and causing the spirit of heaviness to lift.

- B. Psalm 147:2-6 provides reasons for which Israel was to praise the Lord. He regathered their outcasts, brought them back to the land, and enabled them to rebuild after the Babylonian captivity. The Lord will do this again in a dramatic and supernatural way in context to the return of Jesus.

²The LORD builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. ³He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. ⁴He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all. ⁵Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite. ⁶The LORD lifts up the humble; He casts the wicked down to the ground. (Ps. 147:2-6)

- 1. ***The LORD builds up Jerusalem:*** The city will be rebuilt when Jesus returns (Zech. 1:16; 2:5).
⁵“I...will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.” (Zech. 2:5)
- 2. ***He gathers together the outcasts of Israel:*** The exiles returned gradually—some with Zerubbabel (BC 538), some with Ezra (BC 457), and others with Nehemiah (BC 445).
- 3. ***He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds:*** The Lord is the builder of cities and healer of hearts. In other words, He restores broken hearts and broken walls (Isa. 61:1, 4).

4. ***He counts and names the stars:*** The Lord numbers and sustains the stars—that is something that humans cannot do. Astronomers tell us there are over 100 billion stars in our galaxy and over 100 million galaxies in the known universe. He names them, indicating His precise knowledge of each star’s character, constitution, nature, and where they are going. This shift from the deep sighs of wounded hearts in 147:3 to the vast number of stars in 147:4 highlights His power, preciseness, and wisdom which reflect how He cares for His people.
5. ***Great is our Lord:*** God’s greatness is seen in His mighty strength, infinite understanding, and compassion for the outcast and brokenhearted. He is both omnipotent and omniscient. The Lord’s greatness as the sovereign King of the universe is magnified by seeing how much He cares about His people and creation as evidenced by His active involvement in the details of individual lives—lifting up the humble and caring for the brokenhearted and wounded.
⁵Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite. ⁶The LORD lifts up the humble; He casts the wicked down to the ground. (Ps. 147:5-6)
 - a. He controls all the heavenly bodies and all human beings. Nothing escapes God’s knowledge. He knows the number, location, and name of every outcast referred to in 147:2 as surely as the number, location, and name of every star referred to in 147:4.
 - b. God perfectly understands all of our fears, hurts, hopes, and dreams. He understands us better than we understand ourselves. He tenderly heals sick bodies and hearts; He is so gracious to sinful people who humble themselves. His power and understanding are used to help and transform humans. For these reasons, it is good to praise Him.
6. ***The LORD lifts up the humble:*** He reverses the sinful order of this world. The humble are often cast down, but He lifts them up. The wicked are often lifted up, yet He cast them down.

III. OUR GREAT GOD IS OUR PROVIDER (PS. 147:7-9)

- A. The psalmist gave a second call to praise/sing to God because of what He does in nature (147:7-9). He highlights preparation for rain in the clouds and its results of abundant grass (149:8), food for the beasts and birds (149:9), and choice wheat (149:14). The God who rules the stars, controls the wind and rain, and feeds land animals and birds in the sky will surely nourish the sons of God.
⁷Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving...⁸who covers the heavens with clouds, who prepares rain... who makes grass to grow on the mountains. ⁹He gives to the beast its food, and to the young ravens that cry. (Ps. 147:7-9)
- B. ***Who covers the heavens with clouds:*** Clouds are not caused by accident, but produced by God Himself in order to provide rain with an eye on the fields that produce food for the beasts and birds and that enhance life for humans. Vast amounts of water are drawn up into the sky from the oceans and seas. Powerful winds carry the clouds to the places where they provide water for farms, forests, and prairies. The Lord’s remarkable “global water system” including evaporation and precipitation is rarely noticed by most. Some take for granted how much our life depends upon rain. The Lord’s care in this is on such a vast scale that it awakens wonder and worship to those pay attention to it.
- C. ***Who makes grass to grow on the mountains:*** Vegetation growing on the mountains without man’s help provides food for the beasts and birds to eat. It can be rare for grass to grow on mountain tops.

IV. OUR GOD TAKES PLEASURE IN HUMILITY (PS. 147:10-11)

- A. The Lord does not delight in the situations where people trust in military might and human strength more than in Him and His power and promises (147:10-11) that are reinforced in 147:12-20. After seeing in 147:2-9 what the Lord does to provide for people, the psalmist now gives insight into how the Lord views the people for whom He exerts His power and understanding to bless, seen in 147:5.

¹⁰*He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man.*

¹¹*The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy.*

(Ps. 147:10-11)

- B. *The strength of horses and the legs of man*: These symbolize military might and marching armies.
- C. *The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him*: The fear of God includes loving Him and trusting in His leadership and mercy. Natural or physical powers and achievements do not impress the Lord, but spiritual choices and qualities do, along with having confidence in His mercy and goodness.

V. OUR GREAT GOD IS OUR PROTECTOR (PS. 147:12-14)

- A. The psalmist directed his third call to praise God to those living in Jerusalem (Zion); he followed it by giving four reasons to praise related to God protecting and blessing them (147:12-14). These verses can be applied to the days of Nehemiah, but they also anticipate Jesus' millennial reign.

¹²*Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem...* ¹³*He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you. ¹⁴*He makes peace in your borders and fills you with the finest wheat.*
*(Ps. 147:12-14)**

- B. *O Jerusalem*: When end-time Jerusalem is being attacked by the nations (Zech. 14:1-5), they must look to the Lord as their protector and provider. The focus here is on the Lord as Israel's protector—it reveals His loving character that never changes—He is the protector of all of His people.
- C. *He has strengthened the bars of your gates*: The strength of gates in the ancient world depended upon their bars. The psalm begins with His saving work for Israel (147:2-3), and here it emphasizes that He will provide protection for them (147:13-14a) and supply them with food (147:14b).
- D. *Blessed your children*: His blessing of external security and internal happiness for their children.

VI. THE GREAT POWER OF GOD'S WORD (PS. 147:15-20)

- A. The power of God's word over nature and to release grace (147:15-20): God's command or word is emphasized three times (147:15, 18, 19). God controls the weather (147:8-9, 16-18)—by speaking His Word over it—snow, frost, hail, clouds, rain, heat, wind, and seas—in winter and summer.

¹⁵*He sends out His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly. ¹⁶*He gives snow like wool; ...¹⁸*He sends out His word and melts them; He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow.***

¹⁹*He declares His word to Jacob...* ²⁰*He has not dealt thus with any nation... (Ps. 147:15-20)*

- B. Israel was distinct from all other nations, being uniquely blessed and entrusted with God's words (Rom. 9:4-5)

VII. INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 149

- A. Psalm 149 summarizes important truths and benefits for those in covenant relationship with Him. Most consider this an eschatological psalm. We sing and praise Him for the mercies that we have already received yet with understanding that His full vengeance will one day be released openly.
- B. Psalm 149 is often viewed as a companion to Psalm 2, a royal psalm declaring the sovereignty of God over the kings of the earth and warning them of judgment (2:10-12). In this psalm, God’s saints (149:1, 5, 9) will participate in the Lord’s vengeance. As the setting is the “book of Revelation” judgments, Christ’s second coming is clearly anticipated in this psalm. Some refer to it as “The Song of the Sword.”
- C. Outline of Psalm 149
 - 149:1 The saints are called to sing a new song
 - 149:2-3 Israel is called to rejoice in their Maker and King
 - 149:4-5 God takes pleasure in and beautifies the humble
 - 149:6-9 The honor of participating in God’s vengeance

VIII. THE SAINTS ARE CALLED TO SING A NEW SONG (PS. 149:1)

- A. The saints are to sing a “new song” in context to promise of eschatological victory seen in 149:6-9.
¹Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song and His praise in the assembly of saints. (Ps. 149:1)
- B. *Sing to the LORD a new song:* The “new song” is more than a new composition with new lyrics that had never been sung before. This “new song” suggests a new situation, which is Jesus’ return to rule His millennial kingdom—this is the underlying theme of this entire song beginning in 149:2.

IX. ISRAEL IS CALLED TO REJOICE IN THEIR MAKER AND KING (PS. 149:2-3)

- A. Israel is exhorted to rejoice and enjoy God as their Maker and King (149:2-3). All the saints in this age are to also engage in enjoying God. “All Israel” will engage in this in context to Jesus’ return.
²Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. ³Let them praise His name with the dance; let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp. (Ps. 149:2-3)
- B. *Let Israel rejoice in their Maker and King:* The Lord is “the Maker” of Israel, that is, their national calling, identity, and prophetic destiny. God established them as a nation under Moses.
 - 1. The *Moses story* is clearly being alluded to and is the context to interpret this psalm.
 - 2. Enjoying God and rejoicing in Him and His leadership is the way to walk in victory over the temptation to be overcome with fear and offense.
- C. *Dance, the timbrel and harp:* David played the harp and danced before God (1 Sam. 16:23; 2 Sam. 6:5) as Miriam danced and played the timbrel (Ex. 15:20), as did Jephthah’s daughter (Judg. 11:34).

X. GOD TAKES PLEASURE IN AND BEAUTIFIES THE HUMBLE (PS. 149:4-5)

- A. The reason for rejoicing and the way to enjoy God is related to seeing that He takes pleasure in and beautifies His people (149:4). These truths are foundational to equipping God’s people to love God.

⁴*For the LORD takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation.*

⁵*Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud on their beds. (Ps. 149:4-5)*

- B. *The LORD takes pleasure in His people:* We were all created with longing for the assurance of being enjoyed by God—that He takes pleasure and delights in His relationship with His people. One of the most powerful strongholds of the mind is related to the fear of rejection and the trauma of shame. We are transformed most in context to experiencing the revelation of God’s affections. God enjoys young believers even in the midst of spiritual immaturity! (Lk. 15:4-5, 8-10, 20).

⁴*You shall no longer be termed Forsaken...you shall be called Hephzibah...the LORD delights in you...⁵*as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. (Isa 62:4-5)**

- C. *He will beautify the humble with salvation:* We were all created with longing to possess beauty and to feel beautiful. Our culture has an obsession with physical appearance and seeks to answer this legitimate longing in a wrong way. The good news is that beauty is something God imparts through redemption. His beauty is transferable to human beings through Jesus! Moses prayed that Lord would release the beauty of God upon the redeemed (Ps. 90:17).

¹*“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor...³to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning... (Isa. 61:1-3)*

¹⁷*Let the beauty of the LORD be upon us and establish the work of our hands... (Ps. 90:17)*

- D. *Let them sing on their beds:* This refers to individuals’ private interaction with God at night. Singing on our bed can include the grace of Jesus being our “first and last” thoughts of each day on our bed. We can sing on our bed if confined by sickness, or having a restless night, or even in prison like Paul and Silas (Acts 16:25) who sang to God at midnight, possibly “on their beds,” as it were.

XI. THE HONOR OF PARTICIPATING IN GOD’S VENGEANCE (PS. 149:6-9)

- A. Psalm 149:6 is the turning point in this psalm when rejoicing is combined with vengeance.

⁶*Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand,
⁷*to execute vengeance on the nations, and punishments on the peoples; ⁸*to bind their kings
with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; ⁹*to execute on them the written judgment—
this honor have all His saints. Praise the LORD! (Ps. 149:6-9)****

- B. The idea of vengeance is disturbing for many. This vengeance is to restore justice where legal processes have failed. Vengeance belongs to the Lord and is not private revenge nor the prerogative of the saints (Deut. 32:35-36; Jer. 46:10; cf. Ps. 94:1; 99:8).

⁷*Shall God not avenge [bring justice] His own elect who cry out day and night...⁸*However,
when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith [agreement] on the earth? (Lk. 18:7-8)**

¹⁰*They cried...saying, “How long...until You judge and avenge our blood...?” (Rev. 6:10)*

- C. ***A two-edged sword in their hand:*** The Lord will empower Israel’s military in the end times—in the 43rd month (Ps. 149:6-9; Isa. 11:14; 41:15; Obad. 18; Mic. 4:13; 5:8-9; Zech. 9:13, 15; 10:3-5; 12:6-8; 14:14). The Israeli army will be strengthened by God to resist the armies of the Antichrist in context to Jesus’ return to Jerusalem. This will be the greatest military reversal in history.
- ²“...all the surrounding peoples [nations], when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem...”
⁸***The LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem...the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the LORD...***⁹“***I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.***” (Zech. 12:2, 8-9)
- D. ***Vengeance on the nations:*** Overcomers will participate in this with Jesus during the Millennium.
- ²⁶“***And he who overcomes...until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—***
²⁷***He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’—as I also have received from My Father***” [cf. Ps. 2:9]... (Rev. 2:26-27)
- E. David addressed the Father, confirming that Jesus was reigning at His right hand in His priestly ministry, then prophesied what Jesus will do when He returns to reign on the earth (Ps. 110:5-7).
- ⁵***The Lord [Jesus]...shall execute kings in the day of His wrath...He shall fill the places with dead bodies; He shall execute the heads of many countries.*** (Ps. 110:5-6)
- F. Jesus will execute the kings serving the Antichrist (Ps. 68:21; Rev. 19:17-21)
- ¹⁹***I saw the beast [the Antichrist], the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him...***²⁰***Then the beast [the Antichrist] was captured, and with him the false prophet...***²¹***The rest were killed with the sword...from the mouth of Him...*** (Rev. 19:19-21)
- G. David prayed that God would manifest His power to destroy His enemies (Ps. 68:1-2, 12, 21-23). He gave assurance that God will destroy His enemies (Ps. 68:1-2). His description of it is gruesome (Ps. 68:21-23). In 68:1 and 12, He allows some to flee so that they will be gathered later. He allows the process in which they are hunted and regathered. His people will crush their head with their feet.
- ¹***Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered; let those also who hate Him flee before Him...***
¹²***“Kings of armies flee...”***²¹***God will wound the head of His enemies...***²²***The Lord said, “I will bring back from Bashan, I will bring them back from the depths of the sea, ²³that your foot may crush them in blood, and the tongues of dogs may have their portion...”*** (Ps. 68:1, 12, 21-23)
- H. Some will be required to serve Israel and pay tribute to them, at least in the early days of the Millennium and/or be indentured servants because they sold Israelis as slaves (Joel 3).
- ²***I will gather all nations... to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of...Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations...***
³***They have...given a boy as payment for a harlot and sold a girl for wine...*** (Joel 3:1-3)
- ¹⁴***...The labor of Egypt and merchandise of Cush and of the Sabeans, men of stature...they shall be yours; they shall walk behind you, they shall come over in chains; and they shall bow down to you. They will make supplication to you, saying, ‘Surely God is in you... there is no other God’...***¹⁷***Israel shall be saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation...*** (Isa. 45:14, 17)