

## Psalm 97

We don't see the things described in Psalm 97 in place yet. God is in control of all evil and good; but he is allowing man and dark powers to still make their moves. This psalm is about when God is visibly controlling everything, and executing justice on the spot. The nations have been moving away from biblical standards. This psalm is describing people being thrilled to have God providing direction.

This psalm may be about the second coming and millennial kingdom of Jesus. He will be in charge; and his power will be much more obvious. He burns up his enemies with fire; and he will re-establish true justice. He won't hide his glory. His people will rejoice. The first time he came to earth he graciously let us do things our way. That era is coming to an end; because it is not sustainable. We need Jesus to take control away from us; and fix all of our problems. Hopefully we have seen enough of what man can do.

God placed man in a controlled environment in the Garden of Eden; and we broke away. Then he came to us as a humble shepherd; and we did away with him. We just can't seem to help ourselves. Now he is letting things get messed up to such a degree that we will want him to take control.

**Read Psalm 97:1-3:** Jesus will take the steering wheel away from man and from the devil. We drove the car off of the road and crashed. Now we are stumbling around in the weeds; without a moral compass. He will make some quick and decisive corrections. We have been going the wrong way since the beginning. All of nature will respond. There are all kinds of things that have been plagued in nature since Adam sinned.

Animals went from being grass eaters to meat eaters when mankind fell. Because of Adam, most animals live in a constant state of fear of predators. Because of Adam, animals are filled with parasites and disease. Because of Adam we have famines and wars and crime. Obviously, we would have probably done worse than Adam, if we were the first person on earth. Man has always gone downhill. He has not evolved into anything better.

*For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. (Romans 8:19-22)*

The earth is a witness to what we have done to each other on our planet. We really don't think about the earth itself as having a personality, or being capable of making reactions of approval or disapproval. God has made the earth to be a *recording device* and a *witness*.

*I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land (Deuteronomy 4:26)*

In reality, the earth has had to witness and absorb men's atrocities. The blood of our wars has soaked into our precious soil. The earth has recoiled in objection; and not provided its full cooperation with man. Crops are smaller, weeds are abundant. Pests flourish, disease spreads, and weather is challenging. It is true that God creates a fitting reaction for our actions; but he uses devices like the earth to make that happen.

*Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him....The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. (Genesis 4)*

The plant kingdom is affected by our decisions. Even the plant kingdom can actually respond to love and truth. There are many studies proving that speaking positively to plants helps them grow more; and it triggers increased photosynthesis and other plant processes. There was a popular movement in the 70's called TLC. People would find plants and trees that were doing very poorly. They would begin to try to convey goodwill, love, touch and pleasantly speaking to them. The sick plants had an amazing response. These plants often recovered. Conversely, harsh treatment was shown to damage the plants. Speaking abusively to plants and trees clearly has a harmful effect on the plant. So much so that I saw a video of a rescued plant that was hit with an electrical shock after being loved on and restored for a while. Then it was touched again with the same electrical probe (this time with no power)...and it actually recoiled!

The soil is not in league with men's aspirations. The earth is literally sick from men's sin. The animal kingdom, plant kingdom and even the earth are all affected by sin. The earth cannot escape from man. Creation is stuck with us; and there is nowhere to get away from the effects of man. God has also had to turn away; and put buffers in place.

Why is God often associated with a covering cloud? God knows all; but there needs to be some kind of filter to keep him from destroying us with our sin. God cannot dwell with sin. There has to be some protective barrier to save us from destruction and removal. We

are part of the problem until God transforms us. The cloud is like a confessional booth. We do not see his face.

*And the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever.” (Exodus 19:9)*

*Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, after that the children of Israel would journey; and in the place where the cloud settled, there the children of Israel would pitch their tents. At the command of the Lord the children of Israel would journey, and at the command of the Lord they would camp; as long as the cloud stayed above the tabernacle they remained encamped. Even when the cloud continued long, many days above the tabernacle, the children of Israel kept the charge of the Lord and did not journey. ... So it was, when the cloud remained only from evening until morning: when the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they would journey; whether by day or by night, whenever the cloud was taken up, they would journey. Whether it was two days, a month, or a year that the cloud remained above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would remain encamped and not journey; but when it was taken up, they would journey. (Numbers 9 various)*

Part of the reason for the cloud around God is that no person could see God's glory and live (in the flesh). The cloud is a visual separation between two different worlds. Inside this protective cloud are the accompanying cherubim angels around God. All of this is too much for us to see. In the millennium we will have resurrected bodies; where we can look at God. In the meantime; Jesus is the only aspect of God that men can see. Those believers who have not yet died will be able to see Jesus. I do not know if those who have not yet died in the millennium will see angels too. When God or his angels have been seen in a vision; it is a pretty overwhelming experience to men. They normally fall down as dead men; until they are revived.

*Then I looked, and behold, a whirlwind was coming out of the north, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself; and brightness was all around it and radiating out of its midst like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire. Also from within it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man. Each one had four faces, and each one had four wings. ... And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and*

*downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. (Ezekiel 1 various verses)*

God cannot tolerate sin. We focus on the obvious ungodly things that are made public. We don't see ourselves as co-contributors. How can we get our lives and our planet repaired if we are also the problem? God would almost need to destroy us to fix the planet. How can we burn up sin; if we are the ones spreading sin? We want God to step in and stop the utter nonsense. In reality; we are also contributors to the demise of our home land.

*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23)*

No matter how much God changes us; we are still wrapped in this sinful flesh. That is one reason that we have to eventually separate from our flesh. Our flesh cannot make it into heaven. Normally *death is defined as the separation of body and spirit*. Our life with God is all about our spirit life within us.

God is a consuming fire. Fire hurts and destroys things. That scares us. Fire kills our bodies; which is one reason that only our fireproof spirit can go to heaven. Fire is the ultimate cleanser. All of the sin and trash in our life will be destroyed and disinfected.

*Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the Lord your God has forbidden you. For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. (Deuteronomy 4:23-24)*

The idea is that God has a burn barrel for his trash. That scares the man who wants more freedom to live in sin. That encourages the man who is struggling to do what is right. It is like seeing a highway patrolman in your rearview mirror. It is welcomed by the man in an accident; but a thing of fear to him who is trying to get away from the law.

God is trying to keep us clean; while allowing us to remain as free moral agents. It is a tricky thing to destroy sin without destroying men. The Valley of Hinnom (Gehenna) is the dump by Jerusalem where the Jews would drag the carcasses of dead animals and burn all of their trash. It was full of fires and maggots. Gehenna is a metaphor for hell.

*Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:29-29)*

One day we will return to earth with the LORD; and we'll be fireproof.

*For I, 'says the Lord, 'will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst. ' " (Zechariah 2:5)*

God will stop the unbelieving barbarians who are motivated by satanic influence to destroy us. He will burn them like fire wood.

God revealed himself to Moses as a fire that did not harm *the thorny bush*. We are depicted as that prickly, unfruitful desert bush. God is a fire that does not burn his own people; but cleanses all of the trash and unbelief in this world.

Once we are saved and declared to be holy, we are drawn to the fire of God. There is something inside of us that wants to expel our filth.

*The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate. (Proverbs 8:13)*

God is a consuming fire that both makes us clean, and at the same time destroys imaginary and harmful ideas.

It is not just evil men who face losses. Believers need to get *pruned back* like a rose bush to rebuild their lives on a better platform.

*"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. (John 15)*

Elijah was known to call upon God to send fire from heaven to turn the people back to God; and remove the idols in the land.

*Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, "Is that you, O troubler of Israel?" And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and have followed the Baals. Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table." So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets*

*together on Mount Carmel. And Elijah came to all the people, and said, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people answered him not a word. ....Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come near to me.” So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. ...., that Elijah the prophet came near and said, “Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.” Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench.*

*(1 Kings 18 various verses)*

**Read Psalm 97:4-7:** The tribulation is associated with intimidation. It is well past the time for man to re-think his choices. There are consequences for unwholesome decisions. Man will inflict his will on his fellow man, without mercy or intervention. God wants man to let go of the idea of living without a mediator between men. The earth will become less accommodating and pleasant. God is going to stop fixing us and rescuing us. There will be major earthquakes and a wobble to the earth's rotation. There will be worldwide and regional disaster after disaster. The earth will be so sick of men's sin that it becomes sick itself. It is time to *smell the coffee* and associate our choices with our predicament and our world. God is trying to get men to throw away their idols; and their imagined and pretend solutions. God is trying to tell us that boys cannot become girls. God is trying to tell us that if you take the bible out of our laws that nobody can live in peace or to expect protection. This imaginary set of politically-correct ideals are nonsense.

The tribulation will be like the plagues that accompanied the exodus. The Egyptians worshiped the Nile and the sun and livestock and bugs and frogs, etc... All of the plagues were associated with idols/ things that died. The idea is that God wants men to throw away their cheap alternatives to trusting in him. Idols mask our indecision to honor God. Are we looking forward to the weekend and our favorite TV show? Do we consider anything beyond that? We are masking reality with different kinds of babysitters. The tribulation will be a time when men throw away their gold, because it won't be tradable for food or shelter or safety.

**Read Psalm 97:8-12:** The natural man accumulates ideas as to what a happy and peaceful life looks like. When you become born again that picture goes away; and gets replaced with another idea. It takes a long time to erase the old tapes in our mind. The sources of our doubts and fears normally have to do with the thought of losing things that we never

had control over. We really cannot be joyful until we see the truth about where our road ends.

The history of the earth and our own life histories point to a battle within each man. ‘Is God in charge, or am I?’ It seems obvious that God is in charge; until we get pressed. When I wrestle with doubts and fears instead of praying and following God I become stressed. God allows us to be put to shame when we concoct plans and expectations apart from him.

We cannot really be free and settled until we trust God to provide where he guides.

*Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” So He said, “I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.” Then Moses said to God, “Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?” And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ (Exodus 3:10-14)*

We gravitate towards a state of comfort. This can prevent us from being available to God’s call. We think that we might be happiest doing nothing; or keeping things the way that they are. We do not want more responsibility. God will not let us remain in hiding from life. He wants to expand our thinking and exposure. We cannot live and receive the fullness of joy until we are willing to trade in our old ways. He will allow our nest to spoil if we hold back in fear. In the end; the only place of comfort is in his will.