

## *PSALMS 97 and 98*

It appears from verses 1-6 that Israel has recently experienced an event that has set forth the truth of Yahweh's sovereignty in sharper outline. This might well be the return from the Babylonian captivity. The Psalmist declares that all those who indulged in idolatry are to be ashamed, for Yahweh Most High has been exalted far above all gods. In the final verses, he exhorts and encourages the people to holiness and gladness.

### Psalm 97

- 1 YAHWEH reigns, let the earth rejoice; let the many islands be glad.
- 2 Clouds and thick darkness surround Him;  
righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.
- 3 Fire goes before Him and burns up His adversaries round about.
- 4 His lightnings lit up the world; the earth saw and trembled.
- 5 The mountains melted like wax at the presence of YAHWEH,  
at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.
- 6 The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the peoples have seen His glory.
  
- 7 Let all those be ashamed who serve graven images, who boast themselves of idols;  
worship Him, all you gods.
- 8 Zion heard *this* and was glad,  
and the daughters of Judah have rejoiced because of Your judgments, O YAHWEH.
- 9 For You are YAHWEH Most High over all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods.
  
- 10 Hate evil, you who love YAHWEH, who preserves the souls of His godly ones;  
He delivers them from the hand of the wicked.
- 11 Light is sown *like seed* for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart.
- 12 Be glad in YAHWEH, you righteous ones, and give thanks to His holy name.

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A number of statements from this psalm are quoted from Isaiah chapters 40 through 66, where the constant theme is the deliverance from the Babylonian captivity. The specific occasion for praise is given in the last verse: Yahweh's work of judgment. The particular judgment that took place in the release from the Babylonian captivity may be seen as twofold: that is, the judgment that humbled Babylon and the judgment that lifted Israel out of the dust. But the Psalmist sees in this one significant act of judgment a prelude and guaranty of future judgment in which Yahweh will act righteously; and, ultimately, the final judgment is in view. This psalm is simply entitled "A Psalm." The apostle Paul, if we rightly understand him, ascribes Psalm 95 to David (Heb. 4:7). And if we believe that the

same writer wrote the whole group (Pss. 95-99), then the son of Jesse wrote this one also.

Psalm 98  
**A Psalm.**

- 1 O sing to YAHWEH a new song, for He has done wonderful things,  
His right hand and His holy arm have gained the victory for Him.
- 2 YAHWEH has made known His salvation;  
He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.
- 3 He has remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel;  
all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.
  
- 4 Shout joyfully to YAHWEH, all the earth; break forth and sing for joy and sing praises.
- 5 Sing praises to YAHWEH with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody.
- 6 With trumpets and the sound of the horn shout joyfully before the King, YAHWEH.
  
- 7 Let the sea roar and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it.
- 8 Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy
- 9 before YAHWEH, for He is coming to judge the earth;  
He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with equity.

PRAYER

*Gracious God, we praise you for your mighty works of old. You have watched over your chosen people, the nation of Israel, with tender care, and you have gathered in from the Gentiles a people for your name. Come quickly, Lord Jesus, to receive your kingdom, when we shall all worship you together in spirit and truth, and serve you throughout eternity. Amen.*