

Jesus in the Psalms

The Advent of the Lord of Sinai

Psalm 97

November 30th, 2025

I. Introduction

Historically speaking, the season of Advent is not only a preparation for Christmas, which was Christ's _____ coming. Advent is also, and more supremely so, a season in preparation for His _____ coming. The word Advent does double duty in this way. Advent is in Latin, *adventus*, which means 'arrival', or 'coming'. Christ has two bodily *Advents*. The first we celebrate on Christmas, and another is yet to come.

Our psalm this morning serves as a very appropriate beginning to this season because it reminds us that the Lord Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary; who suffered under Pontius Pilate; who was crucified, died and was buried; who descended into Hades; who ascended into Heaven; who sits even now at the right hand of God the Father Almighty – this Jesus, and not another, will come again to judge both the living and the dead. Our passage this morning reminds us of this – and it calls us to order. It stirs us up to attention. Christ *has* come – and Christ will come again. We must take it to heart now. We must keep watch now.

II. Text – Psalm 97

*1 The LORD reigns;
Let the earth rejoice;
Let the multitude of isles be glad! . . .*

The Advent of the Lord (vv. 1-6)

This psalm is ripe with biblical imagery from Israel's past, especially that found in Exodus. The psalmist sings of Christ's coming, and His advent will mirror an earlier coming: His arrival on _____. What we find here, resonates with all those who remember what happened on that Mountain (Exo. 19:16-18). The Lord reigns, and His future coming is like this one in Israel's past, but on a global scale.

This imagery drawn from Sinai is likewise found all throughout the New Testament when Christ's coming is spoken of. See 2 Thes. 1:7-10; 2 Pet. 3:7, 10, 12; Rev. 1:7; 20:11-15. Psalm 97 speaks of the Lord's second advent, utilizing the imagery of Sinai; and then the Apostles, likewise led along by the same Spirit, take up this same imagery and speak even more explicitly of the Lord's return – the Lord who is our Lord Jesus Christ.

Terror & Joy (vv. 7-12)

Beholding the Lord's advent, there are two responses: that of terror and that of joy, of shame and of gladness. We see the same thing in the New Testament. The Lord will in flaming fire take vengeance on those who do not know God, on those who disobey the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction, Paul writes, on that day when He comes to be glorified in His saints and admired among all those who have believed. The Lord's coming will be glorious. He will be unveiled in His true majesty. And it shall be sheer gladness for His saints, and utter shame for those who hate Him. These are the only two responses possible. No one can hide. Nobody can ignore Him. The whole earth shall behold His glory – and it will either be sheer terror or everlasting life, hell or heaven.

III. The Just Judge of All the Earth

Sinai was significant for Israel, not just because of the sheer terror of it, of beholding their God hidden in flames and darkness and deafening trumpet sound. It was not just the Lord's presence that terrified them, but the Lord's presence declaring His _____ to them. Sinai was the giving of the Law – the Law that they were expected to keep, which they could not keep. It was after hearing the commandments of the Lord thundering from the Mountain that the Israelites begged for the Lord to no longer speak directly to them, but that instead Moses would mediate His Word. They could not stand before the Lord for He was and is the just Judge. They needed somebody to come between them. They needed Moses, and, ultimately they needed Christ.

It is this aspect of Sinai that we should hear loud and clear as it echoes the prophetic return of Jesus Christ. So, why does the Holy Spirit clothe the Lord's reign and return with images of Sinai? He does this because the same God who revealed His character in the Law at Sinai – this Jesus, and no other, will come again, revealing Himself in terrible majesty in order to enforce these standards, in order to judge the earth by His holy Law. The Lord revealed Himself to Israel at Sinai as Judge and Lawgiver, terrible in Majesty: and He shall reveal Himself to all the earth, every eye will behold Him. He will reveal Himself to all the earth as Judge and Lawgiver when He returns flanked by the holy angels, clothed in the glory of His Father. Sinai was terrifying. How much more Christ's return.

Christ is the just Judge over all the earth, and He will judge this world in righteousness (Acts 17:30–31). At His first advent, He came as a child, as a son, given for our _____; He came as a Lamb, meek and mild, who goes to the shearers in silence. He came to turn us away from sin and death and judgment, to find life and righteousness and peace in Him (Acts 13:39). Christ's first advent was one of salvation for the enslaved, of deliverance from Egypt. But His second advent is Sinai. It is judgment. It is law. It is perfect justice, and if you stand apart from Him, you will not stand. It will be a time of either gladness and great rejoicing, or else shame and terror for those who disregard the Word of God and the peace of His Gospel.

IV. Is Psalm 97 Your Song?

The song is not recounting something that happened in the past. It's not speaking in the future tense of things that will happen. But when we sing this song, the future breaks in on us *now*. When we sing this psalm, we sing of Christ's return as a *present* reality, something that is breaking in on us now.

Those who _____ be among those who rejoice when Christ is revealed from heaven are those who see Christ's return _____ with the eyes of faith. Those who even now not only see this with faith, but who see this and rejoice. If we have any hope of rejoicing then, when we see these things with our very eyes, we must rejoice now by faith.

This psalm teaches us to see His return now, not as something we can push off, or safely ignore while living for ourselves. God forbid. But by faith, we sing this song, and we see that future as something crashing down on us and this world now. And seeing this, we live in such a way that it is a constant joy for us.

V. Come & Welcome to Jesus Christ