

PREGO PLUS: BACKGROUND NOTES

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR C

Psalm 96 (97) vv. 5–9

Psalms 47 (48) and 93–99 (94–100) form a group known as the Enthronement Psalms; their main theme is to celebrate God as King. The Lord reigns, he is King.

Psalm 96 (97) is also a psalm of praise, and as such follows the typical pattern: an invitation to praise (*'Sing psalms to the Lord'*), followed by a good reason to do so (*'for he comes'*).

The directions given to the musicians indicate clearly that the setting of this psalm is the Temple.

The language of the psalm is similar to that of

Second Isaiah (chapters 40 to 55): see for example Isaiah 44: 23.

God is King over the whole earth, people and nature; hence the invitation to rivers and hills to join in praising him. It is interesting to note that even in creation, wet places (rivers) and dry land (hills) are examples of the whole of nature taking part in this action of praise.

Today Christians see Jesus in the reference to this coming of the Lord, and the Church uses this psalm during its Christmas liturgies. In Christ, we have the one who came not just for Israel, but *'to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad'* (John 11: 52) and rule with *'justice and fairness.'*

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Gospel Luke 21: 5–19

The destruction of Jerusalem foretold

The Temple in Jerusalem

Jesus is preaching in the Temple; something he did daily. The Temple itself, built at Herod's instigation, probably to appease the Jews, was an architectural marvel; it was under construction for most of the disciples' lives and was a symbol of national pride for the Jews. No expense was spared in using the best stones and the best decorations. The Early Church met there, and its destruction by the Romans – which Jesus here foretells forty years before the event actually happened – would be a crucial event in the life of the people.

The end of the world

There was general concern that the end of the world was imminent. Luke mentions the end of times in three preceding episodes: on Jesus's journey to Jerusalem (Luke 12: 35–53, 17: 20–37) and on entering the town (19: 41–44).

Probable date and signs

The Jews had waited for Judgement Day for centuries. The prophets of the Old Testament had announced it: God will save his people and crush Israel's persecutors.

The disciples' cry will be very familiar to all those who suffer: 'When will it be? How much longer do we have to endure this?'

But Luke clearly indicates that the end of time is still distant.

In this part of the discourse, Luke's account of the end of times focuses more on people's reactions than on apocalyptic events. He understands human nature. At times of cataclysmic events, panic sets in and is often followed by hatred, even within the family.

Christians will have to endure persecution just as Jesus did. They will be accused by religious and civil authorities.

Anxiety and reassurance

Jesus gives his followers encouragement: be yourself; continue telling the Good News. Don't worry about what to say; persevere and the Holy Spirit will give you the right words (as would later happen when Peter appeared before the Sanhedrin, in Acts 4:8–13). God's sovereignty through the presence of the Holy Spirit will eventually triumph over evil throughout the universe.



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