

PSALM 46

ISRAEL'S REFUGE DURING (THE) TRIBULATION

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INTRODUCTION: Psalm 46 was the inspiration for Martin Luther's most famous hymn, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*. Although Luther cast his hymn from the perspective of the Church under assault by the Devil, Psalm 46 is written from the perspective of the believing Jewish remnant during the time of the Tribulation (i.e., Daniel's 70th Week). It may have been composed in the days of King Hezekiah when attack by the Assyrian army on Jerusalem was imminent (Isa36-37), at which time Judah was miraculously delivered by divine intervention (Isa37:36-37). The message of the psalm is that the omnipotent and omnipresent God will be present with His people (Israel) during their time of greatest peril; He is their refuge and strength (v1), so they need not fear (v2).

The inscription indicates this Psalm was to be sung by the "Alamoth" (i.e., sopranos; from the Hebrew *almah*, meaning 'virgin').

GOD'S PRESENCE IN (THE) TRIBULATION

[1] God is the "refuge" and "strength" of His people. He is a "present help" because, being omnipresent, His presence is always with them. For Israel in the O.T., this was a national promise; since God dwelt between the cherubim above the ark of the covenant (Cp., 1Chr13:6; 2Chr7:1-3), He was always present with the nation of Israel (note that prior to God's judgment of Judah by the Babylonians, He removed His presence from the Temple; Ezek10-11). For the Church, this is a personal promise; God permanently indwells every believer during this age (cf. Jn14:17; 1Cor6:19; 1Jn3:24).

Judah was certainly in "trouble" when the Assyrian army threatened Jerusalem during the days of King Hezekiah, but Israel's time of ultimate peril will be during "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer30:7; Dan12:1) which is the 7-year Tribulation (Daniel's yet unfulfilled 70th Week; Dan9:27) that immediately precedes the Second Advent.

[2] Because God is all-powerful and everywhere-present, there is no reason for His people to "fear" regardless of their circumstances. Though the natural disturbances are expressed in vv2-3 using poetic language, these are allusions to literal events that will take place during the Tribulation (e.g., Rev 6:12-14; 8:8-9; 11:13; 16:18-21).

GOD'S PRESENCE IN THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

[4] Following the Tribulation, which will devastate the whole earth, God will be present in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ and will restore the earth in general, and "the city of God" (i.e., Jerusalem) in particular. The "holy place" (i.e., the Temple) in which the presence of God will dwell will be reestablished

(Rev21:3). This is a reference to the Millennial Temple, which is described in detail in Ezekiel 40-48. This Temple will include "a river" that issues forth from under its threshold and is divided into a multitude of "streams" which cleanse and heal all the earth (Ezek47:1-12; Rev22:1).

- [5] Here, "her" refers back to the "city of God" (i.e., Jerusalem, the capital of the nation of Israel) in v4. It is the presence of God in Jerusalem that ensures "she shall not be moved".
- [6] The Gentile "nations" of the world always have, and always will, "rage" against God, His Messiah, and His people (Israel). This was true in the days of King Hezekiah (Isa37:29), and it will be true during the coming Tribulation (Ps2:1-3). How foolish to rebel against the God who can cause the earth to melt with a mere utterance of His voice (cf. 2Thess2:8; 2Pet3:10-12; Rev19:15).
- [7] The "LORD" (i.e., the God whose personal name is *Yahweh*) commands the "host" of heaven, an army of innumerable angelic warriors, a single one of which delivered Jerusalem from the army of Assyria in the days of King Hezekiah by destroying 185,000 soldiers on one night (Isa37:36). The "LORD", while being the one true God over all of creation, is uniquely "the God of Jacob", the sure "refuge" of Israel.
- [8] This is an allusion to the judgments of God which "desolat[e]" the "earth" during the Tribulation (cf. Rev6-19).
- [9] "He maketh wars to cease" when the Lord returns and sets up His Millennial Kingdom on earth. At that time the instruments of war (e.g., "bow", "spear", "chariot") will either be destroyed or transformed and used for peaceful purposes (Cp., Isa2:4).
- [10] God's command to His people is to "be still, and know that I am God". This was His command to Israel through Moses when the army of Egypt was about to overtake them (Exod14:13). Rather than charging Israel to fight, God declared, "The LORD shall fight for you" (Exod14:14). Similarly, God revealed to King Hezekiah through the prophet Isaiah that, "I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake" (Isa37:35). In the coming Tribulation, it will be the Lord Jesus Christ who returns and single-handedly destroys the enemies of Israel (cf. Isa63:1-6; Rev19:11-16).

In saving His people from the assembled armies of the whole earth (Zech12:1-9), "[God] will be exalted among the nations . . . [and] in the earth".

- [11] The refrain of v7 is repeated for emphasis. The thought impressed upon Israel in this psalm is also impressed upon the Church, which is promised persecution throughout the Church Age (Jn15:18-20; 16:33; Rom8:35-39; 2Tim3:12); namely, "**If God be for us, who can be against us?**" (Rom8:31).