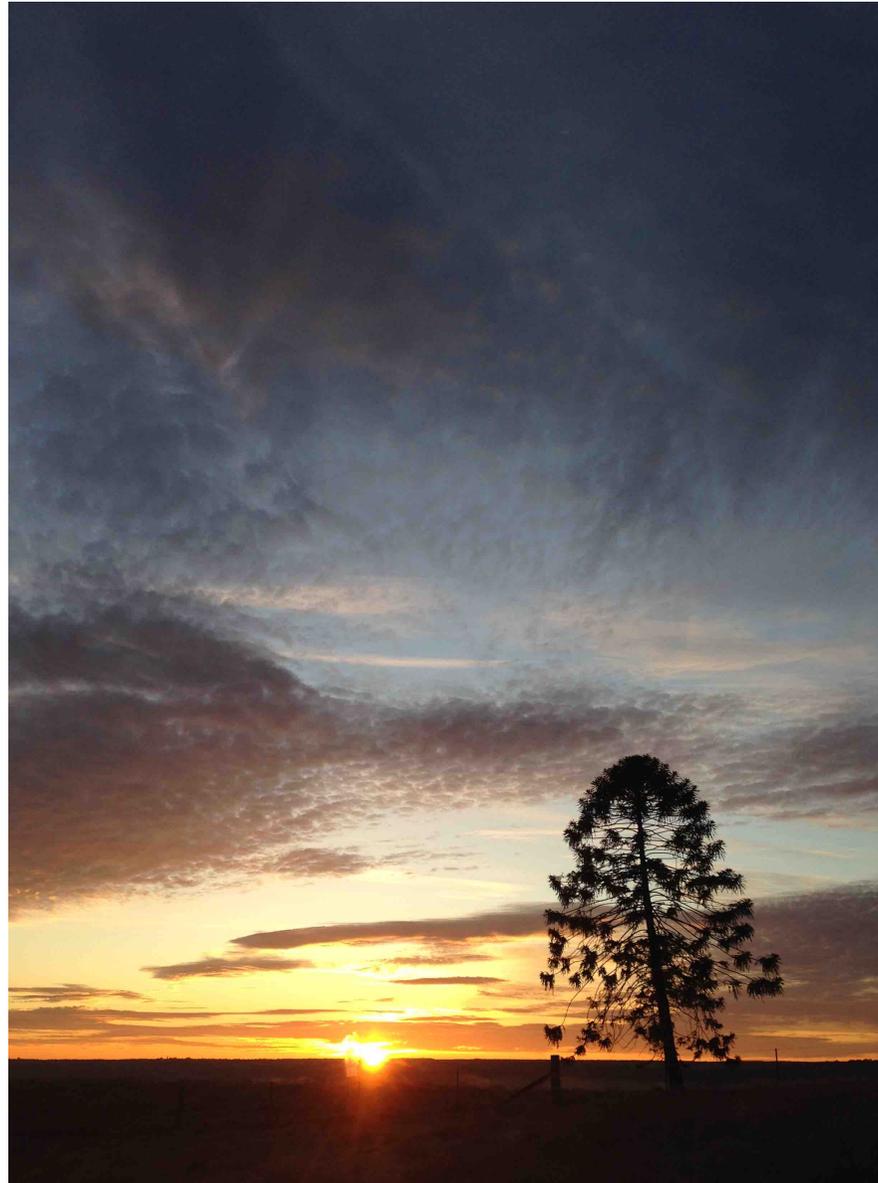


Psalm 97: Light dawns for the righteous



Psalm 97 (96) (Mode 5. 5..6..1 / 1...6 / 6...5)

This is the fifth of a series of psalms celebrating God's kingship (93-99). It celebrates God's justice which vindicates those who are loyal to the covenant. All other gods and all those who do evil cower before the manifestation of God the judge.

The Lord is king!

Let the earth rejoice.

Let all the coastlands be glad.

‘Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the end of the earth! Let the sea roar and all that fills it, the coast lands and their inhabitants ... Let them glory to the Lord, and declare his praise in the coast lands’(Isaiah 42:10,12).

‘Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the end of the earth! Let the sea roar and all that fills it, the coast lands and their inhabitants ... Let them give glory to the Lord, and declare his praise in the coast lands’(Isaiah 42:10,12).

‘I will bring near my deliverance swiftly, my salvation has gone out and my arms will rule the peoples; the coastlands wait for me, and for my arm they hope’(Isaiah 51:5).

As Christians we think of Jesus: ‘a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel’(Luke 2:32).

Cloud and darkness
are God's raiment,
God's throne, justice and right.

‘On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a blast of a trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled’(Exodus 19:16).

‘You approached and stood at the foot of the mountain while the mountain was blazing up to the very heavens, shrouded in dark clouds’(Deuteronomy 4:11).

‘He bowed the heavens, and came down; thick darkness was under his feet. He rode on a cherub, and flew; he came swiftly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his covering around him, his canopy thick clouds dark with water. Out of the brightness before him there broke through his clouds hailstones and coals of fire’(Psalm 18:9-12).

‘Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you. Happy are the people who know the festal shout, who walk, Lord, in the light of your countenance’(Psalm 89:14-15).

John of the Cross writes:

‘When God sends the illuminating ray of his secret wisdom out from himself to a soul that is not yet transformed, it causes thick darkness in the understanding’(Dark Night II, 5).

Fire consumes all resistance.
Lightning lights up the world.
The earth sees and trembles.

Mountains melt like wax
before the Lord
of all the earth.

Micah 4:13; Zechariah 4:14 [= Revelation 11:4]; Zechariah 6:5.

‘You will be visited by the Lord of hosts with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire’(Isaiah 29:6).

‘The tongue of the Lord is like a devouring fire.’
(Isaiah 30:27)

‘A stream of fire issued and flowed out from
his presence’(Daniel 7:10)

‘Your lightning lit up the world; the earth
trembled and shook’(Psalm 77:18; see Psalm 18).

‘In the middle of the living creatures there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches moving to and fro among the living creatures; the fire was bright, and lightning issued from the fire’(Ezekiel 1:13).

‘Then the mountains will melt under him and the valleys will burst open, like wax near the fire, like waters poured down a steep place’(Micah 1:4).

‘The God of gods, the Lord, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth. Our God comes and does not keep silence, before him is a devouring fire, and a mighty tempest all around him’(Psalm 50:1-3).

‘Our God is a consuming fire’(Hebrews 12:29).

The heavens proclaim
the justice of God.

All the peoples behold God's glory.

‘They shall see the glory of the Lord,
the majesty of our God’(Isaiah 35:2).

‘Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together’(Isaiah 40:5).

Worshippers of images are put to shame,
those who make their boast in worthless idols.

You gods bow down before the Lord! Hebrews 1:6

‘They shall be turned back and utterly put to shame –
those who trust in carved images, who say to cast
images: You are our gods’(Isaiah 42:17).

‘Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the
Lord glory and strength’(Psalm 29:1).

Micah 1:3-4, 6-7

‘The Lord is coming out of his place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. Then the mountains will melt under him and the valleys will burst open, like wax near the fire, like waters poured down a steep place ... I will pour down her [Samaria’s] stones into the valley, and uncover her foundations. All her images shall be beaten to pieces’.

Isaiah 44:12-20

‘The iron smith fashions it and works it over the coals, shaping it with hammers, and forging it ... He makes it in human form, with human beauty, to be set up in a shrine ... The carpenter makes a god and worships it, makes it a carved image and bows down before it. Half of it he burns in the fire; over this half he roasts meat, eats it and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, ‘Ah, I am warm, I can feel the fire!’ The rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, bows down to it and worships it; he prays to it and says, ‘Save me, for you are my god!’

Isaiah 44:12-20

They do not know, nor do they comprehend; for their eyes are shut, so that they cannot see, and their minds as well, so that they cannot understand. No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say: “Shall I fall down before a block of wood?” He feeds on ashes; a deluded mind has led him astray, and he cannot save himself or say, “Is not this thing in my right hand a fraud?””

Zion hears and is glad,
the towns of Judah rejoice
because of your judgments, O God.

For you indeed are the Lord,
most high over all the earth;
exalted far above any god.

‘Let Mount Zion be glad, let the towns of Judah rejoice because of your judgments’(Psalm 48:11).

‘For the Lord, the Most High, is awesome, a great king over all the earth’(Psalm 47:2).

‘Let them know that you alone, whose name is the Lord, are the Most High over all the earth’(Psalm 83:18).

The Lord loves those who hate evil.
God guards the lives of the faithful,
and rescues them from the power of the wicked.
Light [זָרַחַ not עָרַחַ = 'sown'] dawns for the righteous,
and joy for the upright of heart.
Rejoice in the Lord! Praise God's holy name.

‘Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate’(Amos 5:15).

‘When these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near’(Luke 21:28).

‘The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shone’(Isaiah 9:2; quoted in Matthew 4:16).