

Commentary on Psalm 46:1-7 & Psalm 46:8-11

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Series*) for **October 17, 2010**, is from **Psalm 46:1-7**. I do not know why those making this selection omitted **Psalm 46:8-11**, but I have included these verses below to present the entire Psalm and show the context of the selected verses. Five **Questions for Discussion** follow the *Bible Lesson Commentary*. The **International Bible Lessons** can be read at: <http://internationalbiblelessons.com/>; new *International Bible Lessons* are published each Saturday.

Psalms 46:1-7

Psalm 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

When we need a place to hide from oppression, we can go to God for divine protection. As we face those who afflict and persecute us, we can go to God in prayer and ask him for divine strength, power, and wisdom above and beyond our own and that of any human being or group of people. When trouble comes, God will help us immediately. We may suffer, but his sustaining presence will be with us in every situation.

2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;

No matter what happens around us or to us, we do not need to fear. We can choose to focus our hearts, thoughts, and prayers on God alone and his promises in the Bible to us. God is the Creator and Sustainer of all that is, and we human beings, created in God's image have value to God beyond our understanding. He will protect us here or guide us to our heavenly home, whatever is best for us.

3 though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. Selah

Many fear mongers today warn of changes taking place on earth that will destroy many people or the entire human race. The psalmist describes a tumult on land and under the sea that is beyond his sight and understanding. These dangers he does not need to understand if he trusts our faithful and sovereign God.

4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

Perhaps the psalmist has seen into the glories of heaven and the heavenly city as especially described later in the Book of Revelation. The stream that makes glad is in sharp contrast to the ocean waves generated by a major earthquake or

hurricane. The psalmist longs to rest by this quiet stream in the safe domain of our Holy and Almighty God.

5 God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns.

The psalmist may have been thinking of the holy city of Jerusalem under siege or in fear of foreign armies approaching to destroy it. The Bible makes clear that whenever Jerusalem fell to her enemies that it was punishment for the people's sins. Trusting in God, the psalmist knew that God would help those who trusted in and obeyed him.

6 The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.

The psalmist knew history, his own experience, and perhaps received prophetic visions of nations rising and falling as the result of catastrophes, disease, warfare, and God's judgment. Today, the nations are in an uproar, and many of their troubles have come from turning away from the true God and his laws.

7 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

In spite of all we see taking place in our world today, perhaps because of the faithlessness and rebellion against God of others, the Lord of hosts is present with his faithful followers. We can depend on him. When we reflect on the life and times of Jacob, later Israel, we can rest assured that in spite of our present troubles, God will bring us into a happy conclusion.

Psalms 46:8-11

Psalm 46:8 Come, behold the works of the Lord; see what desolations he has brought on the earth.

We seldom think of desolations on earth being the direct works of God (unless we think of insurance companies blaming many natural disasters on God, as acts of God), but when they are, God always brings good out of them – especially for those who love God and who are called according to his purpose. Sometimes these desolations are works of judgment or punishment to lead people to repent and turn back to God. Sometimes they are the result of living in a fallen world. However, some people, rather than repent in these situations, curse God and seek to hide from him.

9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.

On the other hand, God makes wars to cease by defeating the armies of his people. Before the Israelites turned to worship the idols of the Canaanites in the

promised land, God brought them peace and peace to their land by going before them to defeat their enemies. He did the same for King David.

10 “Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.”

The way for us to know God is to quietly read our Bibles, and pray, and listen for God to speak to our hearts and minds as his spirit applies the truth of his Word to our specific concerns and situations. We can see how God exalts himself among the nations through the eyes of faith, but unbelievers do not see this. We need to look for the ways God exalts himself – and exalt him in response.

11 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

The Lord rules over hosts or uncounted millions of angels and humans, and the sovereign Lord over all is with us. If the Lord over all is with us, think of the mighty Helper we have who has chosen to be with us just as he was with Jacob through his entire life.

Five Questions for Discussion

1. Think of some recent “natural disasters.” What role do you think God might have had in some of these, if any? Give a reason for your answer.
2. What do you think the response would be if television newscasters said that the natural disasters you thought of in Question 1 were the judgments of God on sinners? What would the response of your church be if your preacher or Sunday school teacher said that the natural disasters you thought of in Question 1 were the judgments of God on sinners?
3. Why should believers in God be able to find God is their refuge and strength if they find themselves in the midst of a natural disaster? How does the Bible give believers greater confidence in God in these situations?
4. Think of some ways that “fear mongers” try to motivate people to do what they want? What kinds of people do you think these “fear mongers” will have the most influence on? Give a reason for your answer? How might Psalm 46 help you deal with fears about our world and the future of our planet today?
5. Read verse 9. Do you think this verse should have been included in the Uniform Lesson Series? Why or why not? Think of some wars in our world today. Considering this verse, how might a believer pray today? Pray today for any situations that may be weighing on your heart and mind? Memorize verse 10.

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