

Psalm 47:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King,
sing praises.

Analysis

Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.

This verse issues a fourfold repetition of the command to 'sing praises,' emphasizing the urgency, importance, and perpetual nature of worship. The parallel between 'God' and 'our King' affirms that Yahweh—not mere human monarchs—is the true King worthy of continual praise.

"Sing praises" (זָמַר/zammeru) repeats four times in one verse—extraordinary repetition creating rhythmic emphasis. Zamar means to make music, sing praise, play instruments in worship. The intensive repetition suggests continuous, perpetual praise—worship that never ceases because God's worthiness never diminishes. Revelation 4:8-11 pictures heavenly beings who 'rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty' in continuous worship.

The fourfold repetition may structure the command: sing praises

1. to God
2. [sing praises—general]
3. to our King
4. [sing praises—general].

Alternatively, it may simply intensify the imperative through repetition. Either way, the effect is emphatic: this is what God's people do—we sing praises continuously, enthusiastically, wholeheartedly.

"To God" (לְאֱלֹהִים/le'Elohim) identifies the object of praise: God Himself, not human heroes or created things. Worship directs praise, honor, and adoration to God alone. The prohibition of idolatry (Exodus 20:3-5) demands exclusive worship of Yahweh—no creature may receive the glory due to the Creator (Romans 1:25).

"Unto our King" (לְמַלְכֵנוּ/lemalkenu) parallels 'to God,' equating God with 'our King.' The possessive pronoun 'our' indicates covenant relationship—He is not a distant, impersonal deity but our King, our God, bound to us in covenant love. Israel's confession 'The LORD is our God' (Deuteronomy 6:4) expressed this intimate relationship. Christians confess 'our Lord Jesus Christ,' acknowledging personal relationship with the King who loved us and gave Himself for us.

The alternation between 'God' (Elohim—emphasizing power and deity) and 'our King' (malkenu—emphasizing sovereignty and relationship) reveals worship's dual focus: awe at His transcendent majesty and intimacy in covenant relationship. He is the infinite God worthy of reverence and our King who graciously relates to His people personally.

Historical Context

Music held central place in Israel's worship. David organized Levitical musicians (1 Chronicles 25:1-7), establishing singers, cymbal players, harpists, and lyre players for temple worship. The superscription of this psalm ('To the chief Musician') indicates its liturgical use. Israel sang God's praises in congregational worship, not merely as performance but as participatory expression of covenant relationship.

The Book of Psalms served as Israel's hymnbook. These songs shaped Israel's theology, affections, and communal identity. They were sung at festivals, during pilgrimages to Jerusalem, in temple worship, and in private devotion. Psalm 47's exuberant celebration of God's kingship would have been sung at festivals, particularly those celebrating God's reign and covenant faithfulness.

Jesus and His disciples sang psalms. After the Last Supper, 'when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives' (Matthew 26:30)—likely the Hallel

Psalms (113-118) traditionally sung at Passover. Early Christians continued this practice, singing 'psalms and hymns and spiritual songs' (Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16). The psalms formed the core of Christian worship for centuries.

Throughout church history, believers have sung God's praises during persecution, suffering, and trials. Paul and Silas sang hymns in prison at midnight (Acts 16:25). Martyrs sang psalms as they faced lions, fire, or execution. Prisoners in concentration camps, gulags, and dungeons sang praise to God. Singing expresses faith, strengthens courage, and witnesses to God's sustaining grace.

The emphasis on continuous praise anticipates heaven, where worship never ceases. Revelation 5:9-14 describes new songs sung to the Lamb, worship from every creature, perpetual praise of Him who sits on the throne and the Lamb. Earthly worship prepares us for and participates in heaven's eternal worship.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. Why does the psalmist repeat 'sing praises' four times in one verse, and how does this repetition emphasize worship's importance?
2. What does it mean that believers are called to 'sing praises' continuously, not just during formal worship services?
3. How does music and singing enhance worship beyond merely speaking words of praise?
4. In what ways do psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs shape our theology, affections, and relationship with God?

Interlinear Text

זָמָרָה אֱלֹהִים זָמָרָה זָמָרָה זָמָרָה לְמֶלֶךְ נָהָרָה זָמָרָה
Sing praises to God Sing praises Sing praises unto our King Sing praises
H2167 H430 H2167 H2167 H4428 H2167

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 25:34 (Kingdom): Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Psalms 68:4 (Resurrection): Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him.

Isaiah 33:22 (Kingdom): For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.

Psalms 89:18 (Kingdom): For the LORD is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our king.

Psalms 145:1 (Kingdom): I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever.

1 Chronicles 29:20 (Kingdom): And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the LORD your God. And all the congregation blessed the LORD God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the LORD, and the king.

1 Chronicles 16:9 (Sin): Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works.

Matthew 27:37 (Kingdom): And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.