

# (How to Understand the KJV Bible) 31 Psalm 147

by Keith Simons

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*Psalm 147 is a psalm of praise and thanksgiving that highlights God's greatness, power, and care for His people.*

**Duration:** 29:03

**Scripture:** Psalm 147:1

**Topics:** "KJV Bible", "God's Restoration", "Praise and Worship"

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## Description

Keith Simons teaches on Psalm 147, emphasizing God's faithfulness in restoring Israel after exile and His intimate care for His people. The psalm begins with a call to praise God for His goodness and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, highlighting His power to heal the brokenhearted and gather the outcasts. Simons explains that God's understanding is infinite, and He delights in the meek, providing for all creation, including the animals. The psalm concludes with a reminder of God's unique relationship with Israel, encouraging all nations to praise Him for His kindness and mercy. Ultimately, it is a celebration of God's sovereignty and love for His people.

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## Transcript

Welcome. Israel's people had been exiles in a foreign country, but God brought them back to their own land. Today we're looking at Psalm 147.

My name is Keith Symons, I'm a Bible teacher from England, and in these talks I explain how to understand the King James Bible by looking at a psalm verse by verse and word by word. So Psalm 147, we don't know who wrote it and when, there is no ancient title on this psalm. It could be a prophecy relating to the time when Ezra and Nehemiah rebuilt Jerusalem after the exile to Babylon.

It seems to go further than that. It seems to be a prophecy of the last days as Messiah is coming to Israel and brings back the Jewish people to their own land. But whatever the period it relates to, it is a wonderful psalm of praise to God, and that's where it begins in verse one.

Praise ye the Lord, for it is good to sing praises unto our God, for it is pleasant and praise is comely. So it begins by calling on the people all round about to praise God, to give honour to God, to say how wonderful he is, to give thanks to him, and then it gives a series of reasons why it's good to sing praises. It's pleasant and praise is comely.

In other words, it's the right and proper thing to do, but it's also a good thing to do. It's a pleasant thing to do. We should rejoice before our God.

We should be glad when God has done such wonderful things, and it pleases us that we should come before our God, our wonderful God, and give him praise. Because, verse two, the Lord doth build up Jerusalem. Jerusalem had been broken down by its enemies, its walls had been in ruins, its houses had been destroyed, but God brought Israel's people back to their land, and God made it possible for Jerusalem to be built up again as a strong city, and that's the reason for praise in this psalm.

But it's not just praise because Jerusalem stands again as a city, it's also praise because God has brought the people back there. He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. The outcasts means those who were cast out or those who were forced out of Israel.

Maybe they were exiles forced to live in a foreign country, maybe they were even prisoners, but God brought them back. He gathered them together and he led them back so that they could live again in the city and in the country where their ancestors had lived before them. God had taken his scattered people, scattered across the world, and he brought them back together to be a nation once more.

The people thought that there was no hope for them and other nations laughed at them. They said, those people, they have no homeland, but God made it possible for them to come back and to be in their home again. Verse 3, He healeth the broken in heart.

Broken in heart describes someone in a state of despair, utter despair, but God heals them. God makes them well again. Their hearts may be broken, but he repairs their heart.

He bindeth up their wounds. Binding up is what you do to an injured person when you put bandages on and you support their injuries in order to bring health and healing back to them. And so it's saying God is a great doctor of his people Israel.

God takes them and although they are so broken and so wounded, he restores them to health and he knows them all. He knows them intimately. Verse 4, He telleth the number of the stars.

He calleth them all by their names. This is the God who created the stars in the sky, that innumerable number of stars. When we look in the night sky, if you're in a city, you look out and you see a handful of stars.

But if you're in the countryside away from the city lights, you just see a number of stars which seems to be without number and the more and more you stare, the more stars seem to appear in the distance. Well, God's the creator of all those stars. He knows the number of them, even though you can't count them and I can't count them.

He also knows the character of each of those stars. To call them all by their names does not just mean to give a name to each one. It means to give the right name, the name that describes perfectly the character of each star.

To us, the stars just look identical. They look the same colour and they're just little spots in the sky. But God knows them intimately.

God sees them all. God understands their nature and their form. And so God can call them all by their names.

And if He does that for the stars, then how much more for Israel's people? Sometimes in the Bible, God compares Israel's people to the stars. He brought Abraham out of his tent at night and said to him, count the number of the stars. If you can, that's how many your offspring will be.

And so with Israel's people, they were scattered, scattered in distant countries. But God knew every one of them. That's why God is a great doctor in verse three, can heal them all and look after them all.

He knows each of his people. He calls them all by their names and he brings them back to their own country. So we continue in praise in verse five.

Great is our Lord and of great power. His understanding is infinite. God is great.

He's not just great in his power, although he's shown that great power by bringing Israel's people back to their land. He's also shown it in his understanding, his wisdom, his knowledge. He knows beyond anything we can imagine.

It's infinite. There is no limit to God's wisdom, his knowledge, his understanding. And so it was that God saw Israel's people in their weakest state, in their most needy state, and he cared for them.

Verse six, the Lord lift up, the meek. He casteth the wicked down to the ground. That is, God lifts up the meek.

The meek means the humble, the weak, the poor. God takes them and he gives them positions of honour. God takes these people who are in such a desperate state when they look to him and he provides for them and supports them and gives them honour and respect.

Whereas the wicked, the proud wicked, who seem so powerful and seem to have such authority over God's weak people, God destroys their power. Casteth means throws. God throws the wicked down to the ground.

He defeats them utterly in order to raise up his people, in order to bring Israel's people back to their land. He destroys the power of their evil enemies. And so God's people, verse seven, sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving means what it sounds like, giving thanks. Sing to the Lord and give thanks to him. Thank him for all that he's done for you.

Thank him for his goodness, for his power, for his wisdom, for his understanding. And don't just declare it as words, sing it to make it beautiful. And don't just make it words, why not actions as well? Because you can sing praise upon the harp unto our God.

You can make music with your hands, on your harp, a musical instrument with strings, as you sing. And so therefore, in voice and actions together, you're giving thanks to God. God the great provider.

God who looks after us. God who has provided us with our food. God who, in verse eight, covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.

Oh, once Israel seemed a deserted place, its land seemed a barren land like a desert, but God has filled the skies with clouds and he's prepared the rain that fell down upon the good land, the land of Israel, and caused the grass to grow again to provide for the animals and for the people to have their food. Verse nine, he giveth to the beast his food and to the young ravens which cry. The beast could mean the cultivated animal, the cow and the ox and the sheep, or it could mean a wild animal.

And I suppose both are suggested here by that grass growing on the mountains in verse eight. Yes, that food goes to those beasts, those animals, whether they're wild animals or farm animals. But God's providing for every creature.

He even provides to the young ravens which cry. Ravens are large black birds and apparently their parents leave the birds when they're still quite young and the birds are still crying out for their parents to feed them. But God provides for them and that's how the ravens continue to live.

In the Hebrew, there seems to be a contrast here. The word beast means or carries a suggestion in its root for an animal that can't speak. And we've got the ravens making this loud noise.

And whether they call out with great cries to God or whether they silently wait for God's provision, God is a provider to them all. Verse 10. He, that's God, delighteth not in the strength of the horse.

He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. This is a reference to war now. It's a reference to how people would ride into war on the back of a horse and horses were powerful animals and still are, of course.

But in a war without vehicles, these were the things that moved fastest. And if you were on the back of a horse, you could make a powerful attack and you could escape away quickly from your enemy. And so a soldier, an important soldier who had a horse, would delight in his horse's strength.

He would be proud to have such a strong horse to take him into battle. And someone who couldn't afford a horse, well then he would think about his legs, wouldn't he? He would be proud of the strength of his legs. He would be proud to be able to stand firm in the fiercest of battles or to move quickly away from danger if that were necessary.

But God is not depending on the strength of a horse or the legs of a man. God is not depending on physical strength to win battles, to defeat his enemies. God doesn't only use powerful people or strong armies.

No, God cares about, verse 6, the meek, the humble, the weak. And so when the Lord takes his people into battle, verse 11, the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy. To fear God means to respect God.

So God's pleasure is in those who respect him. God cares about those who respect him. God wins the battle on behalf of those who show respect to God.

God wins the battle for those that hope in his mercy, who place their trust in God's kindness. They're not trusting their strength to fight or the strength of their animals. They're putting their trust in God's kindness and they are looking to God's kindness to defend them in battle and to bring them deliverance and bring them freedom.

And of course, that is a testimony of Israel's people in this situation, that they feared or respected God. They trusted in his kindness. And verse 6, the Lord lifteth up the meek.

God has given them the victory over their enemies. I pause for a moment because we're now into the second half of the psalm. And verse 12 begins with the declaration to the city of Jerusalem.

Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem. Praise thy God, O Zion. Zion's another name for Jerusalem.

It especially refers to the hill on which the temple, the house of God, was built. So it's saying to Jerusalem, to the city, that the city itself should join in the shouts of the people to praise God or the songs of the people to give honour to God. Why should a city rejoice? Why should the buildings and the walls rejoice? Well, because, verse 13, for he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates.

Jerusalem's walls were once broken down, but now they're strong and the gates, the entrances to the city, are strong gates with bars that run across them to lock them firmly. Jerusalem, in other words, is a strong city once again. So the city itself should be glad about all that God has done for it.

He hath blessed thy children within thee. So that's God has blessed or shown kindness to the children of Jerusalem inside Jerusalem. The children of Jerusalem is, it's a way the Hebrew expresses itself.

It means the people who belong to Jerusalem, the people who live in Jerusalem, the inhabitants of Jerusalem. It's not referring only to the children, although the children have the special benefit of the fact that they're going to be living there for a long time. But it's saying God has blessed the people, the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

God's shown great kindness to them. Look at the kindness he's shown. Verse 14, he maketh peace in thy borders.

So God gives peace to the borders of Israel. And of course it's the borders which are usually attacked by the enemies. So for there to be peace there means that the whole country is at peace.

And for the country to be at peace, it means that people can get on with their trade and their agriculture and they can be successful, which is another meaning of the word peace in the Hebrew Bible. God's brought success to Jerusalem and to Israel and to Israel's people. And he, God, filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.

There were two grains that were commonly eaten in ancient Israel. There was barley, which was the first grain to ripen, was a bit rougher than the wheat, a bit poorer quality. And then the wheat, which was the better quality crop, which would come later.

The finest of the wheat, the fat of the wheat, it's the best wheat. And it's saying the best food is there for Jerusalem's people and for Israel's people. They're eating good food now in their own land because of God's kindness to them.

Verse 15, he, that's God again, sendeth forth his commandment upon earth. His word runneth very swiftly. So God makes his command and it's like when a king makes a law in the ancient world.

He would declare his law and then that law had to go forward. His word runneth very swiftly. So scribes would copy down copies of the law that the king had made, and they would ride on the fastest horses to every part of the kingdom to declare, this is the king's law.

This is the king's command. And God makes his declaration. And of course, his command runs quickly.

And that declaration might be a declaration of judgment against the evil deeds of the people, or that God is rescuing his people from their enemies. Verse 16, though, starts by sounding like the judgment of God against the people who are not obeying him. Verse 16, he giveth snow like wool, he scattereth the whole frost like ashes.

So if you're in a hot country, you need to know that sometimes in colder countries like here in England, in winter, snow falls from the sky. Little white flakes of water in place of rain, and they cover the earth with several inches. This happens in Israel too, even though Israel is a warm country.

And you've got this blanket, like a blanket of the whitest wool covering the surface of the ground. And as it gets cold, sometimes this frost, the whole frost, is a type of frost, and it forms on the ground. And every blade of grass, every leaf is covered with this white layer, as if it were a layer of ashes over the entire surface of the ground.

Now, the snow doesn't damage the plants, but the whole frost, the frost does. And we're getting colder now. Verse 17, he casteth forth his ice like morsels.

Morsels means little bits of food, clumps of bread. It's like scattering the bread on the earth, but it's not bread, it's ice and it's cold. Who can stand before his cold? People in ancient times didn't have many clothes.

They soon felt the cold when it got to winter like this. Who couldn't stand? Who can remain strong when it's so cold? When God judges his people, when God acts against his people's sins, then that judgment can be severe and feel very severe to them. But when God shows his mercy, when they turn back to God and God forgives them, how wonderful, because then God sends forward his command to set the earth free and to set the people free from the suffering which they had.

All God's people were in exile in a foreign country, but God brought them back. God showed them his kindness and how suddenly, when he made his declaration, did the situation turn round. We thought of how cold it can be in Israel, but in verse 18, God sendeth out his word and melteth them.

He causeth his wind to blow and the waters flow. God melts a water that has frozen to ice. The wind blows from another direction and suddenly that cold is gone and spring begins and it's warm once again.

And the damage and the suffering that was caused by the winter is but a memory. And so for Israel's people, returning from exile, returning from the foreign lands, God's turned around the situation, turned it round completely and now where once there was only pain and suffering, there is now blessing and goodness and God's kindness. Oh isn't it wonderful, a wonderful reason for Israel's people, for God's people to give God thanks.

You see, God has distinguished his people from the other nations. He's separated them from the other nations to show his kindness to them. Verse 19, he, God, showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel.

Jacob, here is just another name for Israel, just as Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, was also called Israel and from his family the whole nation of Israel came. God showed his word to Israel's people, his statutes, in other words his laws and his judgments, his right decisions to Israel's people. God separated them from

the other people.

He showed them great kindness, he provided for them. Other nations, nations, only Israel served the true God and the other nations didn't. Verse 20, he hath not dealt so with any nation, in other words any other nation, and as for his judgments they have not known them.

Those foreign nations were far away from knowing the right decisions of God, the laws of God. Those were God's gifts to his people, Israel. They were not God's gifts so that Israel could keep them for itself, they were God's gifts so that Israel could teach the whole world about God and when they were obeying God, well people in other nations heard about how God had blessed them and God was showing his kindness to them and when they were not obeying God, even God's judgments against them showed that the importance of people turning to God and respecting God.

But the final, the final phrase of the psalm is praise ye the Lord. Hallelujah in the Hebrew. Israel's people should praise God and all the nations too should praise God.

All the nations need to know about this wonderful God. When God made his promises to Abraham it was so that Israel's people would have their own land but so that through blessing Israel's people, people in every nation could be blessed. God wants to be a blessing to the people in every nation and he can be when they turn to him.

In a moment I'm going to read you the whole psalm but first my email address. It's 333kjb at gmail.com that's 333kjb at gmail.com and now here's the whole of psalm 147. Praise ye the Lord, for it is good to sing praises unto our God, for it is pleasant and praises comely.

The Lord doth build up Jerusalem, he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. He healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds. He telleth the number of the stars.

He calleth them all by their names. Great is our Lord and of great power, his understanding is infinite. The Lord lifteth up the meek, he casteth the wicked down to the ground.

Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving, sing praise upon the harp and to our God, who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. He giveth to the beast his food and to the young ravens which cry. He delighteth not in the strength of the horse.

He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy. Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem, praise thy God, O Zion, for he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates.

He hath blessed thy children within thee. He maketh peace in thy borders and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat. He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth, his word runneth very swiftly.

He giveth snow like wool, he scattereth the whole frost like ashes, he casteth forth his eyes like morsels, who can stand before his cold? He sendeth out his word and melteth them, he causeth his wind to blow and the waters flow. He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation, and as for his judgments, they have not known them.

Praise ye the Lord.

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