

Sermonnotes: Sunday, October 28, 2007

Notes to better help you understand Sunday's sermon text

Text: Psalm 67

Title: *The Ways God Blesses*

One helpful way to consider this psalm is to imagine the psalmist at the end of Sabbath worship one Friday evening. It's not just any time of year, but is the time of the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles - Israel's 'Thanksgiving Holiday'. The service has just ended with the priest reciting the words of the great Aaronic Blessing: ²⁴ *The LORD bless thee, and keep thee;* ²⁵ *The LORD make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee;* ²⁶ *The LORD lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.*

And now the psalmist begins to think. How is it that God has been gracious unto us? How is it that God blesses us? What does it mean that his face shines upon us? And are these good things for us alone or for the whole world he has created and loves?

Now, verses 3 & 4 become a short meditation on God being gracious; verses 5 & 6 on God blessing us; and verses 7&8 on what happens when God shines his face upon us – as opposed to hiding his face from us.

As he ponders these great acts of God toward us the psalmist sees God's grace (or favor) demonstrated in God showing us what we could never know on our own – his *ways* and his *salvation*. God's blessing comes in the *just administration* of his kingly rule and his *guiding* us through life as the good shepherd he is. And he shines his face upon us by showing us that *to fear him* – *to stand in utter and complete awe* – is the beginning of both wisdom and understanding - the exact opposite of where we stand when because of our disobedience and neglect, he hides his face.

This psalm is not normally considered to be among the clearly 'messianic' psalms, yet there are messianic overtones, especially in its extension of God's blessing beyond just the '*am Yahweh*', the 'people of God' to the '*goyim*', 'the non-Hebrew peoples' of the whole earth (in vss 2 and 7).

The recurring 'Let the peoples give thanks' indicates exactly what our right reaction will be when we understand God's grace, God's blessing, and God's presence among us.