

Psalm 48 • Mount Zion — the city of the great King

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Psalm 48. This is all about the city of the great King. Let's read it.

"Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! His holy mountain, ² beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King." (Once again, some of you might have some songs going through your mind, probably in King James English.)

³ Within her citadels God has made himself known as a fortress.

⁴ For behold, the kings assembled; they came on together.

⁵ As soon as they saw it, they were astounded; they were in panic; they took to flight.

⁶ Trembling took hold of them there, anguish as of a woman in labor.

⁷ By the east wind you shattered the ships of Tarshish.

⁸ As we have heard, so we have seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God, which God will establish forever.

⁹ We have thought on (the steadfast love, or your, excuse me,) your steadfast love, O God, in the midst of your temple.

¹⁰ As your name, O God, so your praise reaches to the ends of the earth. Your right hand is filled with righteousness.

¹¹ Let Mount Zion be glad! Let the daughters of Judah rejoice because of your judgments!

¹² Walk about Zion, go around her, number her towers, ¹³ consider well her ramparts, go through her citadels, that you may tell the next generation ¹⁴ that this is God, our God forever and ever. He will guide us forever." (ESV)

Ah! Interesting Psalm about the city of God and the Temple of God. Now, it's always interesting to me that so much of the news that you and I hear... Can I tell you something? I talk a lot about the news. I actually stopped watching the news a few years ago. It was bothering me. I got to... I used to watch a lot of news and I, it was depressing me. And so, I made a decision a few years ago, I was just going to stop. And man, I'll tell you, my countenance lifted. If you take the same amount of time you spend watching the news and you spend in the Word of God, it's going to make a difference. I'll just...just saying.

But when I was watching the news, and I'm sure it's still the case, there's all this talk about Israel. And within the context, which is just this tiny little speck of a nation. And then within the context of Israel, all this talk about Jerusalem. Which isn't this enormous city, it's just a city.

Now, if I wasn't a Christian, and I was watching the news, I would cock my head and wonder, whenever Israel or Jerusalem came up in the news. And I would think to myself, what the heck? Why all this talk about Israel? Jerusalem? Who gives a rip! Right? It's like, who cares?

Now, as a Christian, I get it. There's no mystery involved to all the focus on Israel and on Jerusalem. Because no other city in the world is the subject of more prophetic attention than is Jerusalem. No city in the world is spoken of more than the city of Jerusalem in the Word of God. Make no mistake about it. What makes Jerusalem special, though, is God.

And that's what this Psalm talks about because of the fact that God inhabited Jerusalem, it made Jerusalem special. Alright? But we know that special habitation took place in the past. The temple's now gone. But, are we to forget about Jerusalem? The temple's gone. It's not going on there anymore. The Ark of the Covenant, we don't even know what happened to that. Regardless of what Raiders of the Lost Ark tried to tell us. It hasn't been found. We have no idea if it got destroyed...hidden. We have no, we don't know.

But that was where the presence of God said that He would be there. The very presence, the Shekinah Glory of God over the Ark of the Covenant, and there in the temple and so forth. It's not there anymore. So what should our position on Jerusalem be as Christians?

Well, you and I know that the One who inhabited Jerusalem in the past has promised that He will rule and reign there in the future, as well. That's why Christians still focus on Jerusalem. And I believe even though they don't know it, it's one of the reasons why the world also does that as well. In fact, Jerusalem

is the only city in the world that God has promised to be reborn. Did you know that? God promised that Jerusalem and Jerusalem alone would be reborn.

Let me show you Revelation chapter 21.

Revelation 21:2-3 (ESV)

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.'

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell (there) with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.'

Crazy, isn't it. So, for you and I understanding Biblical prophecy as we do, it's, a little wonder that this Psalm is completely devoted to this special place. Because the Psalms do speak prophetically of the long-term as well.

And beginning in verse 4, by the way, if you look with me again in your Bible, we seem to see a foreshadowing of prophecy regarding a time when Jerusalem will be attacked by a conglomeration of nations. Where it says in verse 4, "*For behold, the kings assembled;...*" Now we know that's going to happen at the very end of the Tribulation Period.

We've been talking about this on Sunday morning. And "*as soon as it says they saw it, (the very presence of God in the city) they were astounded; they were in panic (and) they took to flight.*" So it is an interesting foreshadowing of this prophecy of this time at the end of the Tribulation.

And after the Tribulation Period, you know what comes next on God's prophetic calendar. Then we move into the Millennial Kingdom. It's a 1,000 year period of unprecedented peace, righteousness, and justice on the earth. What role is Jerusalem going to have in the Millennial Kingdom? Well, it's going to be the focus of the whole world.

Let me show you Zechariah chapter 2. This is a wonderful prophecy. It says,

Zechariah 2:10-12 (ESV)

Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst, declares the LORD. And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. And the LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem.

Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and (look at this, look at this, and) I will dwell in your midst, declares the LORD. And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and (in fact it says, and they) shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. And the LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, (and look at this) and will again choose Jerusalem.

Jerusalem will again be chosen by the Lord during the Millennial Kingdom. And then we're told repeatedly over and over in Biblical prophecy, particularly in the Old Testament, that Jerusalem will be the center of world activity. And the nations of the world will stream to Jerusalem. Why? Because the LORD himself will be on the throne there.

Look what Isaiah chapter 2 says. This is a great prophecy too.

Isaiah 2:3 (ESV)

...and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

And on that passage goes. But it says that out of Jerusalem, the law of the LORD shall go. That's what's going to be happening during the Millennial Kingdom.

This Psalm ends in verse 12. Look with me there, please, by saying, "Walk about Zion, go around her, number her towers." And then we're told, just to think about the city, the ramparts, the citadels, and so forth, so that we might tell the next generation.

Now, the challenging part about you and I reading a passage like this is, that we don't really think in terms of a city like the Jews in the Old Testament did. I

mean, we know Jerusalem as a city, is going to be exalted at the end of the Tribulation Period and through the time of the Millennium, we know that. But right now, what is Jerusalem to us?

Well, it's a historic city. It's amazing. People flock there all the time to go and visit it. But it's not the center of Christianity. There is no central center of Christianity on the earth. In city wise I mean. We don't flock to New York to hear the Word of the Lord. We don't go to New Zealand, or England, or Germany. There's no central geographical focus like there was in the Old Testament. People went to Jerusalem to worship the Lord, the Jews.

In the Millennial Kingdom, people are going to stream to Jerusalem to hear the word of the Lord, and to literally see Jesus on the throne. And I believe David will be ruling in a subset kind of a way, as well during that time. And that's all to come.

But for right now, we don't think in terms of buildings and cities and geographical locations. It's not part of our experience to focus on cities built by men. Because we're told, as believers, this isn't our home. Ours is a spiritual kingdom. In this world, we are aliens. We are strangers. But we understand that there's a spiritual significance to all these references.

We've already talked about the fact that God is going to cause Jerusalem to be reborn. We saw that passage where John literally saw the new Jerusalem descending from heaven. (Revelation 21:1-2) That's our hope is that all things will be made new. Things will be reborn.

And that's the faith that Abraham had. See, even though you and I may not be biologically Jews, we are spiritual sons and daughters of Abraham. And like Abraham, this world, he owned nothing. He wandered in this world as a pilgrim, as a wayfarer. That's our life. See, Abraham is that picture of how you and I live in this world.

Let me show you one of the most amazing passages from Hebrews chapter 11. It says,

Hebrews 11:8-10 (NIV)

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place, he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, (And that's Israel, the land of Israel. Canaan, as it was called that time.) obeyed and went, even though he (didn't even) know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like (a what?) a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, (That speaks of the, how temporal life is. Right?) as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the (very) same promise. (Look at this last statement.) For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

That's what I love about Abraham. His eye wasn't on this world. His eye was on the next world, the world that was to come. And that's why Abraham is our father. That we are spiritual sons and daughters of Abraham in the sense that by faith, we're looking past the temporal to the eternal.

We're not looking to a man-made city. We're looking for the city whose foundations, and, with foundations whose architect and builder is God. The eternal city made by the hands of the eternal God. And that's where our hope lies.