

Psalms 48:0 ¶ A Song and Psalm for the sons of Korah.

The author of this psalm is not identified. It is a psalm that rejoices in God's provision and protection for the city of Jerusalem.

Psalms 48:1 ¶ Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness.

Psalms 48:2 Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

"Great" makes reference to both age and space in the Hebrew. The LORD is greatest in both ways in any comparison to His creation. He has always been and always will be. He measured the heavens with one hand.

Revelation 1:8 "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

Isaiah 40:12 "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?"

"span" = distance of spread between pinkie and thumb on hand

In context, the psalmist declares that the people of Israel should greatly praise the LORD in the city of God, Jerusalem, specifically on Mount Zion. It is the mountain of His holiness because He chose to associate His name and His presence with the temple that was built there and dedicated to worship of Him.

1 Kings 9:3 "And the Lord said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there forever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually."

The Hebrew for situation makes reference to elevation and is located on the northern part of a very high hill in the city.

Wikipedia: "The Temple Mount forms the northern portion of a very narrow spur of hill that slopes sharply downward from north to south. Rising above the Kidron Valley to the east and Tyropoeon Valley to the west, its peak reaches a height of 740 m (2,428 ft) above sea level."

Not only is it elevated physically, it is elevated to a position of honor because it has been set apart as God's city among all the other cities on planet earth. It is a joy to the whole earth because it is in her environs that Jesus sacrificed Himself to redeem man from sin—that includes any and every person that will accept His gift of salvation.

*Romans 10:9 & 13 "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved....For **whosoever** shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

The Great King is obviously a reference to its heavenly king, not its earthly one. God is known in the palaces of the king of Israel. To be known is to be recognized as a friend (from the Hebrew).

It was interesting to note that the NIV translation was quite different: *"It is beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth. Like the utmost heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion, the city of the Great King."*

I quote Constable as representing another opinion from commentators on this translation: "The lofty beauty of Jerusalem, situated on Mt. Zion, gave all people reason to rejoice. The writer compared its beauty to that of Mt. Zaphon far to the north of Jerusalem, specifically some 25 miles to the northeast of Ugarit." He then quotes Chisholm: "Zaphon, located north of Israel, was the sacred mountain of the Canaanites from which their high god El supposedly ruled. However, Zion was the real 'Zaphon,' for it was here that the Lord God of Israel, the 'Great King' of the universe, lived and ruled."

Psalms 48:3 God is known in her palaces for a refuge.

The leaders in Jerusalem and the people of Israel recognized God as their refuge, their source of defense and protection. He had proven it miraculously over and over again throughout their history.

Though this psalm is directed to the people of Israel, its truths are applicable to believers today. We look forward to the heavenly Jerusalem and living in the presence of God. The LORD is just as surely our refuge as He was for the people of Israel. God made specific promises of inheritance for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; but His character never changes. Those promises that are rooted in His character regarding provision for His people are for all people that belong to His family through faith.

Psalms 48:4 For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together.

Psalms 48:5 They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away.

Psalms 48:6 Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail.

Psalms 48:7 Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.

The psalmist seems to be making reference to a specific time of deliverance from a coalition of kings that may have prompted the writing of this psalm. When this coalition caught sight of the city, they were confounded with fear and hastily retreated. It seems that the LORD intervened with a powerful east wind to destroy the ships of Tarshish that were either part of or supplied provisions for the attacking coalition. The enemy were filled with a fear that caused physical pain comparable to the labor pains of a woman.

I'm wondering if maybe the LORD gave them a vision similar to what Elisha's servant saw when they were surrounded by the enemy.

2 Kings 6:15-17 "And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him,

Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

Psalms 48:8 ¶ As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever. Selah.

The psalmist had not only heard of God's miraculous provision for the people of Israel from his forefathers, he had witnessed it on behalf of Jerusalem. He was confident that Jerusalem would be established as God's city forever.

A witness is always more effective when supported by personal testimony of how you have witnessed God at work in your own life and the lives of others.

Selah – A pause, an opportunity to meditate

I liked Spurgeon's observation: "Here is a fit place to pause, viewing the past with admiration, and the future with confidence."

It should be noted that Jerusalem eventually did fall because God's people rebelled against Him as their LORD. That in no way changed God's covenant with David or His choice of Jerusalem as the place where He would establish His presence and His rule, the place where the nations of the world will come to honor Him. God is going to restore Jerusalem and make it a praise throughout the earth. One day, in the not so distant future I believe, the LORD Jesus is going to establish His throne and rule the world from the throne of David in Jerusalem. It will be a time when all Israel will be saved and acknowledging Him as their King and the King of kings.

Zechariah 8:2–3 "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury. Thus saith the Lord; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain."

Zechariah 8:22–23 "Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you."

Zechariah 14:9 "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one."

Luke 1:30–33 "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Psalms 48:9 We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.

Psalms 48:10 According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness.

Psalms 48:11 Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments.

The psalmist is stating that he has spent time at the temple meditating on God's lovingkindness, his mercy and favor toward Israel. His conclusion—God's name should be honored as He is praised throughout the whole earth. God's right hand, representing His strength and power, is one of righteousness and justice. His judgments on behalf of His people are cause for rejoicing throughout Judah.

Good quote from Spurgeon: "Neither saint nor sinner shall find the Lord to be an empty handed God; he will in both cases deal out righteousness to the full: to the one, through Jesus, he will be just to forgive, to the other just to condemn."

Psalms 48:12 Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof.

Psalms 48:13 Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following.

Psalms 48:14 For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.

The psalmist encourages one to walk around Zion and take note of its strong towers and defenses so that you can tell your children. This God is "our" God forever and will guide us until we die. He is providing a visual to the fact that God is our faithful refuge and strength throughout life.

The believer can claim the promise of verse 14 with confidence today. He has promised to be with us always and supply our every need.

Matthew 28:18–20 "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Matthew 6:31–33 "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Philippians 4:19 "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."