

# A Drone's Eye View of God's Favourite Place

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] well tonight I want to follow the a similar theme to what we touched on this morning remember this morning we talked about that great statement where Jesus promises I will build my church on this rock and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it and we saw that that was a promise that is still being fulfilled to this day Jesus continues to build his church even in the most adverse and difficult circumstances and what a privilege it is to be part of that great gathering of God's people that one day will come to light in heaven itself we believe that because God has promised I want to go back into the Old Testament this evening and to reflect for a few moments on a passage that talks about exactly the same thing and it uses a particular picture and the picture I'm going to describe is this if I was going to give a title to tonight's message it would be this and a drone's eye view of God's favorite place a drone's eye view of God's favorite place drones have become common people have I know people who have them and who use them and they're on the market anyone can buy them apparently there are rules and regulations but the most marvelous feature of modern life where you can send a mini helicopter so far into the sky and if you attach a camera to it that little helicopter that little drone can take pictures at angles that would have been impossible before now that's what we have in this psalm it's looking down on a particular city and right away at the very beginning God tells us that God loves this city more than any other place in the world this is God's favorite place now right away that might surprise you you might think well surely the whole world is God's favorite place after all the Bible says that God created the world the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof that's true God does it tells us that he so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son so that whosoever should believe in him should not perish there is a sense in which God loves the whole world and yet this psalm tells us that there is one particular place that God loves more than any other place and it describes this place for us it tells us three things about it I just want to briefly mention these three things this evening this place is called Zion z-i-o-n or if you want to give it its modern title or its other name

Jerusalem it's not the Jerusalem that we think about when we watch the news and the politics and the turmoil and the tensions that are in the Middle East that's not what is meant by when God talks about Jerusalem Jerusalem as it represents the kingdom of God the church of God the people of God so there are three things in this psalm that help us to understand how God thinks of Zion first of all there is the glory of Zion that's the first thing we have the glory of Zion and then secondly we have the gathering in Zion a gathering in Zion and then the psalm rounds up on the most joyful amazing note when it talks about the gladness of Zion you'll forgive me for the three G's but it helps us to remember it and it does encapsulate the message of the psalm the glory of Zion the gathering in Zion and the gladness of the people of Zion let me read the first part of the psalm he has set his foundation on the holy mountain the Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob glorious things are said of you oh city of God in other words when God looks at this place Zion this evening if you can imagine the drone is hovering above this city and we're not quite sure what city it is but we know that the camera is trying to focus in on the city and we hear this announcement that this is the place that God loves God wants us to look at this place he wants us to stare at it he wants us to understand it and he wants us to understand why he loves this place more than any other what's so special about this place well he tells us the Lord loves the gates of Zion now this actually ties in with what we were talking about this morning because remember what Jesus said to his disciples I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it I didn't get time I was so excited at being back in Bon Accord that I ran over my time this morning I meant to get to the gates of Hades and I didn't have time so let's let's just spend a couple of moments talking about the significance of the gates in the Bible gates of a city now we think of gates of a city like a garden gate or whatever it's an entrance to something but in the Bible the

gates of a city were much more than the entrance to a city they were the place where social life and economic life revolved you remember the book of Ruth when her marriage to Boaz was finally sorted out where did that take place it took place at the gates of the city when something important was going to happen it was it happened at the gate of the city in other words the gate represents what the city is it represents the life of the city it represents the character of the city so when Jesus says the gates of Hades will not prevail against my church what are you saying that Hades with all its power with all its darkness with all its gloom will not prevail against my church that's a promise now Hades is another word for death so what

Jesus is talking about he's talking about the inevitability of death he's talking about how death represents all that that is awful about the consequence of sin you remember in the Old Testament what God said to the first man and the first woman as he gave them instruction about the tree of knowledge of good and evil and he's told them not to eat of that tree and he said this that in the day that you eat thereof you will surely die and it was when they tragically disobeyed God that death invaded the world and humanity death and all its misery and its tragedy its pain and its sorrow as many of you know in your own experience death as an inevitable human experience it's going to come to all of us we all know that it's going to come to us and it's one way once you die there is no coming back that's the most awful thing about death and you know if you've lost a loved one that that is the most awful element in losing a loved one you know you're never going to see them again and when you stand at the grave of a loved one as their mortal remains are lowered into the grave it's almost as if the grave speaks to you and says to you

[ 8 : 50 ] I've done it again I've won I've got the victory the gates are shut and the keys are thrown away you can almost imagine that can't you the finality of death that's its character but Jesus says not so Jesus has overturned death and its finality he has put death into reverse he has come to restore life where there was death he has to come to bring life new life an abundant life an everlasting life life that extends beyond the grave and beyond death and impossible as that promise sounds he proved it by himself rising from the dead and so when he says the gates of

Hades will not prevail against the church what he means is that as people who belong to the church go out and preach Jesus they're preaching life everlasting life and that life is offered to you this evening right now Jesus offers his life his new life a new beginning a life that will never end now I can't understand how anybody doesn't want that kind of life the life that God wants you to have that's what faith is all about it's where God gives you that life that you can't give yourself the life that overcomes death and a life which one day will witness the coming of the Lord Jesus once again the resurrection of the dead and everlasting joy now here in the psalm he's talking about the gates of Zion and actually he's virtually saying exactly the same thing as Jesus said that when it comes to the gates of the kingdom of God versus the gates of death we know who has the victory the victory has been won by the

Lord Jesus Christ the Lord loves the gates of Zion the gates of his kingdom more than all the dwellings of Jacob he also goes on to talk about the glorious things which are said of Zion glorious things are said of you oh city of God what does he mean by that well if you go back over the history of Jerusalem as it was in the Bible it was first of all captured for Israel by David way back when David became king and from that moment onwards it became the capital of Israel became the place where his palace was or rather Solomon's palace became a place where the temple was built the temple of course was a single most important most sacred building in Jerusalem it was a place where God literally descended to dwell among his people

Israel but he didn't just stop there despite all the turmoil in the years and the centuries that followed Jerusalem was re-established as the place where Jesus walked its streets and taught and it was the place in which Jesus as the son of God was put to death for our sin as the ultimate sacrifice it was the place where he was buried and it was the place where he rose from the dead there is nothing more glorious than Jesus death and resurrection because his death was the payment for our sin and his resurrection was the ultimate triumph over death over the grave and over the guilt of our sin that's the message of the gospel and that is why

Jerusalem as it represents this great message is the greatest place in the world what God is talking about is everything that this place represents how he goes on to talk about the gathering and it's almost like the drone come back to my original picture this is a drone hovering over Jerusalem and it's focusing in it's zooming in now on the contents what's going on there and you can see what's happening in the streets and what God's particular interest in in this psalm is the people you can

see the people you can see the faces you can see the men and the women old and young but there's something really surprising about them because it very quickly becomes obvious that they're not actually from Israel they're from other parts of the world now I don't know how you can tell that [ 14 : 45 ] I don't know how you can tell that somebody came from Babylon and somebody came from Tyre or Cush maybe there was a different complexion maybe a different language or whatever but these are people who are not native Jews they are from other backgrounds other cultures other languages some of those cultures were actually enemies of Israel and now they are all in the one place what's more there the psalm tells us that they haven't just come visiting but they've actually been born there these are people from all over the world here is God and he's foretelling something absolutely marvelous that his kingdom will one day now it wasn't like this in those days in the time that the psalm was written but that his kingdom will one day comprise not just ethnic

Jews but ethnic Arabs ethnic Africans Indians people from the far east people from Europe people from all over the world of all kinds of tribes and nations cultures and languages and all of them say if you were to ask them where were you born they would say I was born in Jerusalem and the reason why is because when God looks at his believing people he looks at them not in terms of their ethnic identity their original ethnic identity but the fact that they were born again reborn that's the only way of belonging to God's kingdom to be born again Jesus himself says it in John chapter 3 he says unless you are born again you cannot see the kingdom of

God in other words to belong to God's kingdom requires a miracle requires something quite extraordinary and that's what God does in the lives of people who come to faith in Jesus and here it is this wonderful picture as the camera zooms in on Jerusalem and the people who are there because that's who God is interested in he's not interested in the geography of the place he's interested in the people who belong there and he's saying this people from Philistia they were enemies Tyre Cush that's Ethiopia by the way Rahab is Egypt these were all countries that were round about and they weren't always friendly with Israel but now these people have come to faith in God through Jesus God you see this is a prophecy God looking into the future and he's seeing what his kingdom is going to look like one day and he's absolutely thrilled with what he sees but there's one more thing that tells us one more detail that I want to point out to you and it says this

I will record and then it says in verse six the Lord will write in the register of the peoples you see it's not just that these people all come as a group from different countries but each one of them is individually recorded their names are written down God knows exactly who they are you don't get lost in the crowd as far as God is concerned he knows exactly who you are and it is God that gives you the significance of belonging to his kingdom to his people and right now I am speaking as an individual to individuals I can't see you I can only see a camera but I know that individual people are watching this right now now

I don't know who you are but I want to ask this how much attention do you give your relationship to God because that's what this is all about have you asked God to change your life in such a way as you have never imagined before have you asked God to open up your heart so that he can do what only he can do and what he offers and wants to do in your life which is to change it which is to bring you into his kingdom as a brand new person so that you will belong to his kingdom and to all the privileges and the joys that that involves so this is a truly cosmopolitan city people from all kinds of backgrounds and tribes and nations and as

[ 20 : 17 ] God looks out over the world today at the beginning of August 2020 he sees just this he sees millions of people and it's like they're all in one city they're all together they're all gathered and they're all praising him because their lives have been changed let me just ask you are you one of them if not then the invitation is freely given to you God invites you to come to know Jesus but you can't do it by yourself don't rely don't don't say I'm going to be a better person from now on that's not going to work only he can do an extraordinary work in your life to bring you to know him and to change your life ask him to do that because

Jesus says ask and you will receive so that's the gathering very quickly then the the gladness do you notice that this psalm it just fits the caricature of the doer Christian doesn't it I mean these people are miserable aren't they they're all going about with long faces and they are so unhappy is that the picture you get it's the opposite no one can read this psalm and not be struck by the sheer joy this psalm it just it just exudes joy and gladness let me read it to you the Lord will write in the register of the peoples this one was born in Zion as they make music they will sing all my fountains are in you this is a joyful psalm it's a victorious psalm it's a prophecy that looks forward one day to

the establishment of

God's kingdom on earth that is comprised of all kinds of people people from India people from the Middle East people from Muslim countries from Hindu countries people from atheist backgrounds people from from agnostic backgrounds people from animist backgrounds spiritist backgrounds you name it and people are there because God has taken them and turned them around he's transformed them he's done something absolutely marvelous and has that led to misery quite the opposite on the contrary they now know a joy that they've never known before in the first place because their sin and their guilt has been washed away that's the one thing that Jesus can do for you that no one else can he can wash your sin and your guilt away and

I believe that there's somebody watching this tonight and you are aware of the mess that your life is in and I'm asking you tonight to turn to God because he can sort that out he can change your life and bring you into his city and you know that all the promises that you once believed about how happy your life would be if you did this and if you played around with that and you probably spent years trying to find happiness and it hasn't happened but God can change that he can give you a peace a contentment where you finally realised once and for all why you are here you finally realised that there is this gaping hole in your life that can only be filled by Jesus then come to him come to him where you are and put your trust in him and discover how powerful he is and how permanently he can change your whole being they are making music they are singing we sing because we rejoice in the

Lord as part of our worship to sing this morning one of the most obvious things about our worship was that there was no singing in fact it bordered on the ridiculous didn't it those of us who were there we stood up in fact and the words came on the screen the music was there we could hear other people singing on the tape and yet we couldn't sing and all of us said this is not right there's something missing but it won't be missing in heaven and we hope that it won't be missing for too long as we continue hopefully to rise out of the current pandemic one of the things we really long for is to be able to sing again because our singing is albeit an imperfect reflection of what heaven will one day be like where we will sing in an unrestricted way in a perfect kingdom having been brought into the perfection of the eternal life that

[ 26 : 30 ] God has promised to every one of us in his kingdom we can know something of that joy here in this world God promises that he doesn't promise us he doesn't promise us that we will have an easy life in fact he tells us the opposite there will be all kinds of complexities and obstacles and opposition and some people tonight are suffering because they are Christians and yet there is a joy that God gives us that can never be taken away no matter what the circumstances so there you have it a picture of God's king picture of God's city the place that God loves we've hovered over it and we have zoomed in and we have seen something of the people who are there and I hope that you are one of them if not come and join us come and join the company of those who were once lost but are now found those who were once dead but are now alive those who were once blind but we now see because

God has so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life I hope you know that life for yourself come and join this great company of people because we serve a wonderful glorious God our father in heaven at the close of this day we ask that your word will reach into our hearts we ask that your holy spirit will apply it to us and we pray that we will come to discover if we haven't discovered before that we will come to discover that this is absolute truth Lord God confront us we pray with who we are and we pray that your kingdom will be full that your kingdom will come and that your will will be done in earth as it is in heaven our father hear us then we pray receive our worship and work within as we pray in

Jesus name Amen Amen