

Psalm 87

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Preacher: Donald Martin

[0 : 00] Thank you to the music group for leading us in worship.

We sang earlier the John Newton hymn, Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken. Why should this be so? Because it has been the focus of people's worship for God's people, to God himself, because God was abiding there.

That was in the old temple times. This psalm, like most of them, predate Christ by something like a thousand years.

And yet in it, in this psalm we have here, we see the Christ who was to come. It's not listed as a Messianic psalm, but it matters to the followers of Christ.

I remember hearing this psalm being preached from, and it thrilled my heart. And I hope it thrills and lifts up your heart today as we look through this very short time.

[1 : 13] The old preacher is preaching, and it's probably very different. In fact, it's very different to what I've got out of it. I touched mine that day, and to God be all the glory.

Jerusalem, or Zion as the psalms addresses it, is a city with many names. It's a city of David. It's a city of God. It's a city of great king, and many, many more.

About 70 different names is attributed to this capital of Israel, Jerusalem. And it's a land that, as some of you know, I love to visit.

I remember the very first time I went up, up to Jerusalem as you go. You go up to Jerusalem, from whatever side you come. And there was tears of awe and wonderment that I should be here in this city where my Savior walked.

Where my Savior gave his life for me and for you. It's an earthly city like no other city, over which many a war has been fought and won.

[2 : 20] And in this 87th Psalm, it leads us also into an eternal dimension. It takes us into the heavenly city that John in his day saw from Patmos.

You know the revelation at the end of the New Testament. And John Newton's hymn begins and ends, saying, Glorious things of thee are spoken, Zion, city of our God.

He whose word cannot be broken, formed thee from his own aborning. He ends by saying, Savior, of Zion's city, I through grace, a member am, let the world deride of pity.

I will glory in his name. The suggestion here is that it's more than just streets and houses that some of us know.

It's a spiritual city as well, of which we're part. And as a note of introduction to this psalm, we see that it's a psalm of or for the sons of Korah, a song.

[3 : 29] Now the Korahites were doorkeepers in the tabernacle. 1 Chronicles 9 and 19 says, The Korahites were in charge of the work of the service. Keepers of the threshold of the tent, as their fathers had been in charge of the camp of the Lord.

Keepers of the entrance. And Psalm 84 also attributed to the chorus. And we love to sing Psalm 84. Then we read in verse 10, A day in your court is better than a thousand elsewhere.

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wickedness. So the Korahites were doorkeepers in the house of the Lord.

Bouncers maybe? Not a bit of it. Far from that. Perhaps the role doesn't sound that important, but it is.

You see, the Korahites welcomed the worshipers coming in from all around the nations to the great feasts in Jerusalem. For they were going to meet him, the great king, in his dwelling place.

[4 : 40] Now today, if you're in door duty in this church or any other church, you're welcome to worship of people. It's of immense importance as to how the visitor will feel when he enters into the household of faith.

It's also important in our context today for people not only to be welcomed at the door, but as they come in and choose a seat to sit in. You don't want to leave a stranger alone.

It's good to come in and say hello to the stranger and help them through the worship, because they might come from a very different background to us. Stand and sing, stand and sit in different places. There's nothing like a worshipping fellowship of God's people. And sadly, I could take you to places that aren't welcoming.

Let's not ever chase visitors away for a lack of warmth and welcome. We know how precious it is to come together as God's people and worship him.

[5 : 52] We cannot allow the things of the world to intrude and rob us of the privilege of worshipping together in God's house, where we seek the joy of the Lord to enter again into our hearts.

Now, in the days of the psalmist, it is a great privilege for people to come into the presence of God and his temple. During the three great feasts of the Jews, Passover and Pentecost in the early part of the year in the spring, and tabernacles towards the autumn, the autumn feasts, today we have the privilege of being in God's presence, not just on special days, but at all times through Jesus Christ, who is seated at the right hand of God the Father and interceding for us.

Now, this city, the city of Jerusalem in David's day, was a fortified city. A people worked in the fields outside by day, and they came into the safety of the city by night, safe in the presence of the Lord. Jerusalem is known as a holy city to many people, but it can also be the very opposite, as many cities are. For areas in the city aren't safe because of crime and vandalism in these days.

Tel Aviv, 40, another major city in Israel today, some 40 miles away or less, is known as Sin City, the hedonistic capital of the Middle East.

[7 : 31] How sad is that in the land God loves? Today, 55% of people live in the world's cities, and yet, despite what cities may be or become, it was in the city, in a city, the city of Zion, that God chose for himself.

And it says there in verse 1, He has set his foundation on the holy mountain. That was where God chose to be the center for worship.

God had gone to great lengths to provide for his people through the prophets and the judges that had come in earlier days.

It's the center of his work of redemption through Christ. And pre-Christ days, it was through the sacrificial system.

And it was all a shadow of the heavenly Jerusalem. After the death and resurrection of our Savior Jesus in the city of Jerusalem, actually outside the city walls, where our dear Lord was sacrificed.

[8 : 44] In comparison to Mount Zion, where Moses received the old covenant, Hebrews says this in Hebrews 12, You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire, to darkness, gloom, and storm.

Verse 22, But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the city of the living God. There's a huge contrast between the old and the new covenants, and yet there's similarities as well.

Believers now come to this wonderful Mount Zion, which is closely associated with Jerusalem, which represents God's dwelling place, which welcomes people from all nations.

And we can think of the heavenly Jerusalem as that as well. Psalm 86 and 9 says, All nations you have made will come and worship before you. O Lord, they will bring glory to your name, for you are great and do marvellous deeds, for you alone are God.

And this psalm encourages people to be in their place at the public worship of Almighty God. As the psalmist was considering the city, looking at its walls, its palaces, and it is a place of worship, he breaks out in an abrupt manner almost, and begins by saying, He has set his foundation on this holy mountain.

[10 : 14] That was his first words in the psalm. God has established Zion as his dwelling place. Here is a place where he was to be worshipped. And the place which he loved more than any other place that the descendants of Jacob's dwelt in or worshipped in.

The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than the dwellings of Jacob. The ESP says he loves the city of Jerusalem more than any other city in Israel.

And there Jesus recognised and honoured that city with his own presence.

There he observed the feasts and the rituals of the Jews. There he died for our sins. There he was buried. There he rose again. There the church was born in the day of Pentecost.

And from there the apostles went forth to the gospel, to the four winds. And to there the Messiah has promised to return.

[11 : 18] And for these reasons he loves the city more than all the other cities in Israel. The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

But does the Lord still love that city? That's a question. A city that he has restored to his people, the Jews.

When he sees there today largely a people who do not care an iota for him, despite all he has done for them, despite his provision for them, does his heart not ache over what is happening in that nation today?

As you look at it, do you not think that Israel today and the nations of the world are ripe for God's intervention? I've been reading in Ezekiel lately, and it's worth your while reading through, well, Ezekiel 37, we know so well, the Valley of the Dry Bones, but it's well worth reading into 38 and 39, where we see there a prophecy of, a confederation of nations rising against Israel, Iran, Russia, Turkey.

But the Lord, who loves Jerusalem, says, in Ezekiel 38 and 7, I will make known my holy name among my people Israel.

[13 : 01] I will no longer let my holy name be profaned, and the nations will know that I am the Lord and the Holy One of Israel. the Lord himself will intervene.

And we wonder, as we look around the world today, is this day just around the corner from us?

When are we going to see God move in such a way, just as the prophet Baal had said, when they were confronted by Elijah the prophet and fell from heaven, and they said, when all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, the Lord, he is God, the Lord, he is God.

And they're going to say it again when God intervenes in the world. The foundation of the city is God himself. He made it, he created it, he chose it for himself.

Is there a wonder why this city is always in the news? Is there a day that passes we don't hear about this city, more than any other city in the world, when the forces of evil try and disprove the fact that there is a God, a God who loves and restores and protects his investment in it?

He loves the souls of men and women. One of my predecessors in the charge I recently retired from, when people challenged him as to the proof of God existence, he would say, look to Israel, look to the Jews, restoration, promises, fulfilled.

[14 : 58] Glorious things of thee are spoken Zion, city of our God. We don't need to go beyond our scriptural accounts to see it.

Tonight, as I said to the children, we'll be looking at one of the two miracles, or two recorded miracles, that Jesus performed in that city. And worship was, and is still being offered there.

Christ's atonement for sin took place for us there. God's presence is evident from what we see in this psalm. And this verse inspired Augustine's great work, the city of God.

And then we see the word, Silah. Now, we don't really know the exact meaning that evades us. It's thought to mean an interlude or a pause.

It's like saying, pause and consider what I've been saying. Pause and consider what you have heard.

[16 : 05] But then, consider the next verse, verse 4. It says, I will recall Rahab, which is Egypt, and Babylon, among those who acknowledge me, Philistia too, and Tyre, and Cush, and will say, this one is born of Zion.

So, first of all, we had the focus on Jerusalem, the city he loves. And in a sense, that doesn't change. But his constituent members are now different.

People from the surrounding nations who have been rivals, even enemies, of the people of Israel will come to know the Lord. You see, this is projecting things forward.

They will come into a true and a personal relationship with the living God. Rahab means Egypt, of course, also in Isaiah 59, to the south and west.

Babylon, Iraq today, in the north and east. Philistia and Tyre, to the north and west. Cush, or Ethiopia, to the south and east. Cush may not have been included as enemies, but as people from a distant land, and they're among those who acknowledge me.

[17 : 23] So, they're coming from all the ends of the earth, of all tribes, and tongues, and nations, to acknowledge God. I will record among those who acknowledge me, this one was born in Zion.

The words who know or acknowledge me, according to J.M. Boyce, is Yada, in the Hebrew. And as that deep rich meaning, and Boyce writes, it means, it means, it means, it means, it means, it means, more than merely, it means, that there is such a God as Jehovah, or even acknowledging him as one true God, it means coming to him in a saving relationship, bowing before him and seeking to know him better.

It's a deep relationship with God. Before we came to know the Lord as our Lord and as our Savior, many of us would acknowledge that there was a God, but he wasn't Lord.

We would acknowledge that Jesus came, but he wasn't our Lord. But I hope we can all now say, he's my Lord.

He's my Lord. I will record among those who acknowledge me, this one is born in Zion. Can this be said of you today?

[18 : 55] This one was born in Zion and heaven above. Surely this is looking forward to the coming of Christ, the Savior of the world.

For the promise is to those who are near and those who are afar off. Ephesians 2 and 16 says, He came and preached peace to you, who were afar off and peace to those who were near.

For through him, we both have access to the one spirit, to the Father. Gentiles, Gentiles, as most of not all of us are, are counted by God as a privileged people to be born there in Zion.

They could be regarded as citizens of Jerusalem and registered to be among God's people from the heavenly Jerusalem.

Can we say we were born in Zion? Well, yes, we can.

[20 : 07] For our rebirth is from heaven itself. And through accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior, we have been made citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.

I said, I love that city of Jerusalem, and I do in Israel today. But all that we see or read of there is just as a foreshadow of the glories that is yet to be for all who come to know him and follow Messiah Jesus.

Do you know him? This one, this one, this one, this one is born in Zion. These are the words of the Lord himself who is foreseeing, foretelling the widespread conversion of peoples, who from time immemorial had been hostile to him and to his kingdom, Egypt, Syria, and the surrounding nations, even Israel.

How many times did Israel back off from following God? Isaiah 19 and 24 says, In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, blessing in the midst of the earth, and the Lord of hosts as blessed, saying, Blessed be Israel, my people, and Assyria, the work of my hands, and Israel, my inheritance.

God has great plans for this world. Whatever we see, whatever the destitution of the world today, God has great plans for us. We cannot claim any credit as to where we've been born, but to be born to become a member of Zion is a great blessing.

[22 : 05] Indeed, of Zion, it will be said, this one and that one were born in her, and the most I am self will establish her. The identification with Zion, the city of God, is so wonderful and precious that it will be an honor to say, this one and that one is born in her.

You might be proud to be a citizen of Aberdeen if you're from Aberdeen here today, even if you were born out with its bounds. If the city of town of birth is seen as important, we enjoy identifying with that city.

I come from there and I come from here. But when we come to appreciate with high regard God as for Zion, the city of Jerusalem, we too can see the value God has placed on us as our citizens.

The city was founded by God himself. On the holy mountain stands, the city he founded.

And who of us doesn't want to be there? If you're a child of God here today, you're already a citizen of Zion. God clearly has a special regard to the land of Israel and his people and to Jerusalem in particular.

[23 : 38] There's no doubt about that. But we can also understand the spiritual context here that being Christ means members of the city, of the eternal city.

To the new members of that heavenly city, Paul wrote, but you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the city of the living God.

You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly to the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. As Paul's speaking about the old and new covenants, the Galatians says, Hagar is Mount Zion in Arabia.

She corresponds to the present Jerusalem. She is in slavery with her children, but the Jerusalem above is free. And she is her mother.

The invitation is going out to all tribes and tongues and nations. I've had the privilege, the wonderful privilege, of being able to travel to many nations.

[24 : 41] And in each one, I've met with citizens of the sign above. I remember being in Ho Chi Minh City or Saigon, as they prefer to call it, and going into a department store.

Just what you do and holiday, I suppose. And one of the franchisees was selling some lacquered pictures with English texts.

Bible texts. In English. And we discovered that this woman was a citizen of Zion.

We couldn't but help her, support her, and bought some of her pictures. Even though the practice of Christianity is legal in Vietnam today, tribal groups typically face the most violent persecution.

And yet, the church of Jesus Christ, Zion, continues to grow. The Lord will write in the register of the peoples, this one was born in Zion.

[25 : 57] Can it be said of you, this one? I've been born in Zion. And to conclude the psalm, in verse 7, it says, as they make music, they will sing, all my fountains are in you.

The ESV translates, singers and dancers alike say, all my springs are in you. And this speaks of celebration, this speaks of joy.

And Jews nowadays like nothing more than to celebrate, and especially those of the Messianic community, the followers of Jesus in Jerusalem today, they dance, and they fly their flags, that's their customs.

It's alien to us, I think. But that's their custom, delighted in being members of the heavenly sign.

Do you remember the day you came to know the Savior? Did you not feel like dancing? Did joy not overflow from your heart?

[27 : 13] Were you not like the springs of water here just about to burst forth, in fact, bursting forth, wanting to tell that Jesus has come into your life.

Every good and every perfect gift comes from above. All my springs are in you. Even our last breath today, our last heartbeat, is a gift from God.

The psalmist often expresses his love for Zion, his pleasure to be in it, and his desire for it to be his permanent home. And Psalm 23, which we love to sing, says, surely, goodness and unfailing love, goodness and mercy, will follow me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.

My prayer today is that we can all say this with conviction, that we are members of Zion above.

Amen. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[28 : 41] Father, today, we thank you again for the preparations that you have made for your people, your people of old, before the new covenant, and for us, the people of the new covenant, and the preparation that you have made for us in your Son, Christ Jesus, that we may be able to become members of the eternal kingdom.

we thank you from the depths of our being, and there is joy overflowing from our hearts that you have done great things for us to bring us to that place where we will be with you for all of eternity.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.