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Psalm 48

(2019)

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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Psalm 48.

Topics.

- Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King.
- Within Jerusalem's citadels God has made himself known as a fortress.
- By the east wind you shattered the ships of Tarshish.
- The city of the LORD the city of God, which God will establish forever.
- Your name, O God and your praise reaches to the ends of the earth.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION

Psalms are songs and prayers offered to God by the nation Israel, they cover the range of human emotion, expressing praise, faith, victory, sorrow, despair, depression, frustration and the troubled heart of a mourner. They contrast the righteous with the wicked, and include the wisdom and the treasure of God's word. Psalms were written at the beginning of the 15th century BC and probably collected in their final form in the 3rd century.

BOOK TWO (PSALM 42-72)

PSALM 48:1-2

A Song. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah.

Mount Zion, in the Far North, the City of the Great King.

- **Psalm 48:1-2:** Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! His holy mountain, ²beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King.

Mount Zion: is the LORD'S Holy Mountain on which Jerusalem the Holy City of God sits. There is no other city on earth that God has said: -

- I have heard your prayer (Solomon) and your plea, which you have made before me. I have consecrated this house that you have built, by putting my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time. (1 Kings 9:3).
- Manasseh built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem will I put my name." (2 Kings 21:4).
- I (the LORD) have chosen and consecrated this house that my name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time. (2 Chron. 7:16).

Jerusalem in the history of God's revelation to man is the most important site on earth. It was the royal city; the capital of the only Kingdom God has (thus far) established among men; here the temple was erected; here alone during the Kingdom age sacrifices were legitimately offered; it was the city of the prophets as well as the kings of David's line; here occurred the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, David's greater Son and His eternal plan of redemption was accomplished. It was in this

city that the Holy Spirit descended upon and assembled group at Pentecost giving birth to the Christian church and here the first great church council was held. Rightly did the chronicler refer to Jerusalem as the city which Jehovah had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put His name there (1 Kings 14:21). Jerusalem felt God's presence. She was assured of His love and as never another city on earth has been of the LORD'S travail for her worthiness of the destiny to which God had called her.

The name of the city of Jerusalem: originally Jerusalem was called U-ru-sa-lim, meaning city of Salem, generally taken to mean, "the city of peace." The very name of the city means peace; we are told that in this place, God Himself will give peace (Hag. 2:9). The children of God are exhorted to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6). Isaiah at the end of his great series of prophecies returns to the theme, "Thus saith Jehovah, behold, I will extend peace to her like a river" (Isaiah 66:12). This word Salem is the basis of the Arabic greeting Salem and the Jewish greeting "Shalom," both meaning "peace be with you"

Jerusalem a pleasant surprise: Jerusalem being 19 miles N from Hebron, and 30 miles S of Samaria, was centrally located to serve as the capital of the Kingdom of Israel. Many travellers have testified to the fact that Jerusalem from whatever direction it is approached, can be seen only when one has arrived in its immediate vicinity; a peculiarity which always brought a moment of pleasant surprise to travellers of by gone days.

PSALM 48:3-6

Within Jerusalem God has made Himself Known as a Fortress.

- **Psalm 48:3-6:** Within her citadels God has made himself known as a fortress (her palaces for refuge in KJV). ⁴For behold, the kings assembled; they came on together. ⁵As soon as they saw it, they were astounded; they were in panic; they took to flight. ⁶Trembling took hold of them there, anguish as of a woman in labor.

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Refuge/fortress: comes from the Hebrew word (*misgab*) and literally means a cliff (or other lofty or inaccessible place). Figuratively it carries the idea of an elevated and strong place of refuge and safety (i.e., a defence such as a high fort or tower).

Palace: comes from the Hebrew word (*'armown*) and literally means to be elevated as a citadel, castle or palace on a high hill.

God has made himself known as a fortress: (v3) when the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem did what was right before God He acted as a fortress and refuge to them not only in the Temple; in the Kings and princes palace; in the streets and in their houses, but also in their land. The palace of King David and the Temple of the King of heaven were in God's city Jerusalem. Under the shadow of God's wing His people are more-safe and secure than the inhabitants of other cities despite their great rivers and impregnable fortifications when their dependence is not in their own strength or in the arm of flesh, but in God who resides in the midst of the city.

There is no doubt if God was not watching over Jerusalem that has faced many mighty enemies throughout its generations and been brought to ruin it would not be, existing today if Gods hand was not upon it and upon His people. This same principal can be applied to the faithful believer and collectively to the faithful global church. The founder of their faith is their fortress, their refuge and their protector and defender who stands before God's throne in the heavenly Jerusalem interceding as their perfect and eternal High Priest for them and saving them by his blood, his righteousness and his grace. There is in the global body of Christ a spiritual palace fit for a king and every man and women that has the name of Christ engraved upon their heart and mind is before Christ a king and

priest to his heavenly Father. It is to this place of refuge fit for kings and priests that the voice of God and of Christ and of the faithful church call, "Come," and welcome with love even the lowliest child of Adam when they enter into it. No one on earth can render God the honour due to Him except the citizens of the spiritual Jerusalem also called the body of Christ; a new creation; a new nation; a new man in Christ; the Kingdom of Christ and the faithful church. Happy is the kingdom, the city, the family and the heart in which God is great and in which Christ is all, in this unseen palace, God is known.

PSALM 48:7

By the east wind you shattered the ships of Tarshish.

- **Psalm 48:7:** By the east wind you shattered the ships of Tarshish.

It is natural at first glance to connect these verses to the disaster which happened to the fleet of Jehoshaphat spoken of in the following verses:

- Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold, but they did not go, for the ships were wrecked at Ezion-geber. ⁴⁹Then Ahaziah the son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "Let my servants go with your servants in the ships," but Jehoshaphat was not willing." (1 Kings 22:48-49).
- He joined him in building ships to go to Tarshish, and they built the ships in Ezion-geber. ³⁷Then Eliezer the son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because you have joined with Ahaziah, the LORD will destroy what you have made." And the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish. (2 Chronicles 20:36-37).

Certainly, this event may have supplied the background in the Psalmist mind to highlight the might of God and the panic and weakness of the kings' land armies that came against Jerusalem and fled in terror when they saw it (v4-5). But nowhere in Scripture is it recorded that ships come near Jerusalem since it was a great distance from the sea. The ships of Tarshish are used by the writer as an illustration and allusion to the might and power of God. The following verses show that the east wind is often used in God's hand as God's weapon of chastisement and judgment.

- The east wind lifts him up and he is gone; it sweeps him out of his place. (Job 27:21).
- Measure by measure, by exile you contended with them; he removed them with his fierce breath in the day of the east wind. (Isaiah 27:8).
- Like the east wind I will scatter them before the enemy. I will show them my back, not my face, in the day of their calamity. (Jer. 18:17).
- The ships of Tarshish traveled for you with your merchandise. So you were filled and heavily laden in the heart of the seas. ²⁶Your rowers have brought you out into the high seas. The east wind has wrecked you in the heart of the seas. (Ezek. 27:25-26).

The expression, "the ships of Tarshish" was a common term for large merchantmen of global trade and symbols of a powerful empire so the words, "By the east wind you shattered the ships of Tarshish (v7) may be rendered in the following way, "You did break and scatter the kings armies that came against Jerusalem (v5) as you broke and scattered the ships of Tarshish on the sea with the blast of the east wind." The allusion to these ships of Tarshish are most likely used here to illustrate the power of God and the ease with which he destroys that which man has made. The ships were mighty and strong they were made to sail distant seas and encounter the greatest of waves and storms, yet they were scattered and broken to pieces with the ease of a breath of wind from the LORD. Likewise, it is with the same ease God overthrows the most-mighty of armies, and scatters them. The ships of Tarshish were also engaged in distant and lucrative trade of the most valuable kind amongst many nations which

means that the allusion also embraces God's control and power over the riches and material wealth of their enemies. When John in the book of Revelation on the Isle of Patmos saw the final collapse of the world's financial and trading system in his vision, he wrote the following:

- Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! ¹⁵The merchants who gained wealth from the great and mighty city, Babylon will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud, ¹⁶"Alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls! ¹⁷For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste." And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off ¹⁸and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, "What city was like the great city?" ¹⁹And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out, "Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! For in a single hour she has been laid waste. (Revelation 18:15-19).

Based on these verses the ships of Tarshish can also be seen as symbolising the final antichristian kings, and antichristian states whose global empires will be brought to ruin in the same way as the ships of Tarshish were dashed to pieces on the ocean by a breath of the LORD. This Psalm reminds Israel never to fear because of the weakness of their own strength before their enemies, but always remember the ease (a breath of wind) with which God had broken the mighty ships of Tarshish and to remember that the strength of their city, and their real defence was not in walls of stone and weapons made by human hands or the natural strength of their elevated position, but their faith and trust in God. The principle not to trust in the strength of their city and their own weapons, but in God by extension teach the faithful in Christ not to trust in their own self-righteousness or strictly adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days or keeping religious customs and traditions, but to trust in Christ's righteousness and God's grace.

PSALM 48:8

4

The City of God, will be Establish Forever.

- **Psalm 48:8:** As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God, which God will establish forever. *Selah*

Jesus said, Jerusalem is the city of the great King (Matt. 5:34-35) and Zechariah prophesied that Jerusalem's King will come on a donkey and unite Judah and Israel and speak peace to the nations (Gentiles) and his rule will be to the ends of the earth (Zech. 9:9-10), but prior to the latter half of this verse a time will come when the inhabitants of Jerusalem are surrounded by their enemies and look to the Lord for their strength. The Lord will protect them and destroy all nations that come against Jerusalem, then the inhabitants Jerusalem will look on him whom they have pierced and mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn and Jerusalem will again be inhabited in its place. The inhabitants of Jerusalem will become victorious over all people in the Middle East (Zech. 12:5-11). Jesus will end all forms of war and speak peace to the nations (Zech. 9:9-10) and his rule will be to the ends of the earth (Zech. 9:9-10). Then the kings of the nations will bring their glory into the glorious and majestic New City of Jerusalem (Rev. 21:24) (Rev. 21:10) and it will be established forever.

PSALM 48:9-14

Your Name, O God and Praise Reaches to the Ends of the Earth.

- **Psalm 48:9-14:** We have thought on your steadfast love, O God, in the midst of your temple. ¹⁰As your name, O God, so your praise reaches to the ends of the earth. Your right hand is filled with righteousness. ¹¹Let Mount Zion be glad! Let the daughters of

Judah rejoice because of your judgments! ¹²Walk about Zion, go around her, number her towers, ¹³consider well her ramparts, go through her citadels, that you may tell the next generation ¹⁴that this is God, our God forever and ever. He will guide us forever.

The words, "Your right hand is filled with righteousness" (v10) carries the following two ideas:

1. God's nature and character is righteousness, the pillars of His throne are holiness, love, justice, mercy, longsuffering, joy and peace. These seven pillars embrace honesty, moral virtue, integrity truthfulness, fairness for all and kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22).
2. Jesus is seated at God's right hand and therefore can be seen as God's right hand as such God's righteousness embraces all that Christ is and all that he taught concerning behaviour and our speech.

Our God forever and ever, He will guide us forever (v14) God guides us by His Spirit, His word and His love and by Jesus teaching and his lifestyle and the teachings of his apostles. Jesus summed all of God's laws throughout the Old and New Testament concerning mankind's behaviour up in the following five words, "Love your neighbour as yourself," meaning do not deliberately do harm to other humans. No sane person deliberately does things to inflict pain on themselves, loving others as you love yourself is not about feeling some warm and fuzzy emotion towards others, it is about not hurting others as you would not hurt yourself.

James the brother of Jesus said:

- If you really fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself," you are doing well. (James 2:8).

James calls Jesus command, "Love your neighbour as yourself," the royal law and says if we are keeping this one law we are doing well. The thing God hates the most is when we deliberately do harm to another person, physically, verbally, financially sexually, emotionally or spiritually and the thing God loves the most is when we do-good to others. It is interesting to notice that the major crime that God points out in Noah's time and one of the main reasons for the flood was because of all the violence in the land.

- Micah wrote: "What the LORD requires of mankind is to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with their God" (Micah 6:5-10).
- Isaiah says: "The LORD loves justice, hates robbery and wrong doing" (Isaiah 61:8).
- Jeremiah said: "Those who know God practise steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, because it is in these things that God delights" (Jer. 9:24).

The great prophets Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah clearly show the law is about doing-good to others and protecting them from harm and hurt. The spirit under-pinning the Ten Commandments, is love because each law protects another human from harm.

Paul in his letter to the Romans wrote:

- Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:10).

Paul shines a brilliant spotlight on the truth that the spirit underpinning the law is love, because the spirit of the law is to protect the innocent from all types of harm and hurt, whoever keeps the law will do no wrong to a neighbour (neighbour embraces all mankind not just those in God's Kingdom). Those who belong to Christ aim to keep the law not to get saved, but because it honours God and brings a good testimony to the name of Jesus and the Christian faith and because it is the right and loving thing to do. The faithful in Christ's global Kingdom not only understand

that righteousness that leads to eternal life is a free gift of God that comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and cannot be earned by self-effort, but also know that from the love of God dwelling within their heart and displayed on the bloodstained cross of Calvary they are called to live a lifestyle that honours the King and Saviour they worship and follow and called to treat others with decency, respect and honest justice.

JESUS FAMOUS SERMON ON THE MOUNT

The constant theme throughout Jesus famous Sermon on the Mount is doing what is right before God by seeking the way of peace in all situations. Jesus calls Christians to treat people fairly and with respect, dignity, decency grace compassion, kindness, mercy and to be quick to forgive. This means living a life that honours God and the Lord Jesus Christ is about doing right to those in the church and those outside of it. This is the reason the message Jesus spoke on the mountain is referred to as, "The Famous Sermon" because the principals if followed not only by Christians, but all humanity are the only way to peace (Matt 5). Based on the commandment, love your neighbour as yourself and the law it could be said that a wicked and evil person is one who deliberately and consciously denies the existence of God and deliberately does harm to other humans. For further information on Jesus Famous Sermon see: "Matthew 5" in, Commentary NT (ON WEBSITE MENU).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
