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## Psalm 87

(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 87.

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### Topics.

- On the Holy Mount stands the city of God; the LORD loves Zion.
- Rahab, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, with Cush.
- It will be said of Zion, the Most High himself will establish her.
- The LORD records, "This one was born in Zion."

**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.

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### INTRODUCTION

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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.

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### BOOK THREE (PSALM 73-89)

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### PSALM 87:1-3:

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A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. A Song.

### On the Holy Mount stands the City of God; the LORD Loves Zion.

- **Psalm 87:1-3:** On the holy mount stands the city he founded; <sup>2</sup>the LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob. <sup>3</sup>Glorious things of you are spoken, O city of God. *Selah*

God's Holy Mountain Zion is the mountain God's Holy city Jerusalem is built upon. The following verses show that a time will come when God will set His Son and King on His Holy Mountain Zion His Holy Hill and make all nations his heritage and the ends of the earth his possession. Jerusalem will be beautiful and the joy amongst all nations of the earth and those who despised God's Son will bow down at his feet and greatly praise Jerusalem the City of God, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

- Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! His Holy Mountain (Psalm 48:1).
- As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my Holy Hill. <sup>7</sup>I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. <sup>8</sup>Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. (Ps. 2:6-8).
- I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his Holy Hill. (Psalm 3:4).
- There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. <sup>5</sup>God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. (Psalm 46:4-5).
- Beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King. (Psalm 48:2).

- Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! His Holy Mountain. (Psalm 48:1).
- The sons of those who afflicted you shall come bending low to you, and all who despised you shall bow down at your feet; they shall call you the City of the LORD, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. (Isaiah 60:14).

These are only a very small selection of hundreds of Scriptures that speak of Jerusalem, but they are enough to show that Jerusalem is a unique city in the eyes of God and has always had a unique purpose in God's Kingdom and His eternal plan of salvation for mankind. Figuratively the city of God at this present time can be seen as the global body of Christ the faithful church surrounded with mighty walls of God's truth, love, justice, mercy and grace protected by His omnipotence and adorned with Christ's righteousness. All those who have the Spirit of God dwelling in them by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can be seen as the spiritual Holy City of God.

**God is in the midst of her:** (Psalm 46:4-5) carries the idea that God's help is sure and near the Lord is always near to the distresses of the faithful. Since the Lord sojourns in the midst of the faithful we should always take heed not to offend or grieve him. Christ presence makes all thoughts of capturing and destroying God's Holy City Jerusalem forever absolute foolishness. The Lord's Spirit is in the faithful and in the city and therefore neither the believer or the city can be destroyed.

**The glory of Christ's return:** as soon as the first ray of light proclaims the coming day, the Lord's angel will go forth at the turning of the morning and God's right arm will be outstretched toward His people. Today the bands of evil surround the faithful church and threaten her with destruction, but threaten is all the power they have, the noise of their mocking, persecutions, false prophets and corrupt teachers will be silence in the grave. The darkest hour of the night is just before the turning of the morning; likewise, the darkest hour for our world will bring forth the dawn of a new and glorious age when the Lord appears in glory as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

**Jerusalem a unique city amongst the nations:** Jerusalem has always been a unique city in the eyes of God and has always had a unique purpose in God's eternal plan for mankind. Scripture states: God has put His name upon Jerusalem and that it is the Holy City of the great King and the living God. God Himself says He will create Jerusalem to be an eternal joy and a city of gladness in which the glory of the Lord of hosts will reign. God by His Spirit inspired His faithful prophets to declare that the throne of God will be in the midst of Jerusalem and the Lord will make it the centre of the world a royal city that kings of nations will bring their glory and worship into. God has not spoken this way of any other nation in the world. A wise person will keep their eyes upon Jerusalem, because what happens to this city will affect the entire world and eventually bring about an entire New and glorious Age.

**The LORD loves the gates of Zion more than the dwelling places of Jacob:** (v2) the dwelling places of Jacob refers to the ten tribes of Israel that broke away from the twelve united tribes leaving two (called the Southern Kingdom) in the land of Judah and at Jerusalem and ten in the land of Samaria (called the Northern Kingdom). God is saying that He loves Jerusalem and the land of Judah more than the ten tribes of Israel and the land they are dwelling in. This was because Jerusalem was God's chosen place of worship and sacrifice it was here the temple stood and the Levitical priesthood were established to serve the people before God. Jeroboam had built two golden calves spoken of in the following verses:

- Jehu did not turn aside from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin—that is, the golden calves that were in Bethel and in Dan. (2 Kings 10:29).
- You think to withstand the kingdom of the LORD in the hand of the sons of David, because you are a great multitude and have with you the golden calves that Jeroboam made you for gods. (2 Chron. 13:8).

Bethel and in Dan were at opposite ends of the land of Samaria. Jeroboam's original motivation for establishing these worship and sacrifice centres was so that the people from the ten tribes would have no need to go up to Jerusalem at the appointed feast times since they could go to one of these two centres. Jeroboam feared if those with him did the right thing and went to Jerusalem at the appointed times they may return to the land of Judah. These two worship centres were of course totally opposed to the will of God. This is the reason the LORD says, "He loves Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob (symbolising the ten tribes of Israel). Two golden calves Jeroboam made in the land of Samaria became a permanent stumbling block for the children of the, Northern Kingdom of Israel.

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## PSALM 87:4

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### **Rahab, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, with Cush.**

- **Psalm 87:4:** Among those who know me (the Psalmist) I mention Rahab and Babylon; behold, Philistia and Tyre, with Cush (Ethiopia in KJV) —"This one was born there," they say.

This verse could be paraphrased in the following manner, "Amongst those who know me on the holy mount of Zion and all the dwelling places of Jacob I will mention Rahab, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre and Cush (Ethiopia in KJV). The word "I" here: seems to apply to the Psalmist, and not to God, yet they can be seen as God's words, foretelling that He would cause these Gentile nations to become as are those born in Zion and be entitled to all its privileges as freely as true-born Israelites even though they had been strangers and foreigners they would become fellow-citizens with the faithful spoke of in the following verses:

- He (Jesus) came and preached peace to you who were far off (referring to the Gentiles) and peace to those who were near (the Jews). (Ephes. 2:17).
- The LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day and worship with sacrifice and offering, and they will make vows to the LORD and perform them. <sup>22</sup>And the LORD will strike Egypt, striking and healing, and they will return to the LORD, and he will listen to their pleas for mercy and heal them. <sup>23</sup>In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and Assyria will come into Egypt, and Egypt into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. <sup>24</sup>In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, <sup>25</sup>whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance." (Isaiah 19:21-23).

The word Rahab in this context does not refer the prostitute woman named Rahab, but to Egypt it comes from the Hebrew word (*rahab*) which carries the idea, of a boaster, a bully and of one who rages, is prideful and possess great strength. The following verses show that Rahab is used in the context of the plagues of Egypt, the Red Sea and bringing Egypt to ruin which show it is clearly a symbolic name for Egypt.

- By his power he stilled the sea; by his understanding he shattered Rahab. (Job 26:12). Referring to the Red Sea drowning the armies of Egypt.
- You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the sea monsters on the waters. (Psalm 74:13). Referring to the Red Sea drowning the armies of Egypt.
- You crushed Rahab like a carcass; you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm. (Psalm 89:10). Referring to the Red Sea drowning the armies of Egypt.
- Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, that pierced the dragon? (Isaiah 51:9).

**Philistia:** covers the western portion of Palestine, from which the whole country was afterward named.

**Babylon with Egypt and Philistia:** (4) the age-old enemies of Israel and most alienated from the faith of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Psalmist seems to understand that all the constant enemies of Israel who will be not only reconciled, but united to them which has been foretold by the symbolism of the wolf and the lamb in the following verses:

- The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. (Isaiah 11:6).

**Tyre:** had a great fleet of ships that traded with the nations; had an abundance of produce to trade with them; surrounding nations and those they traded with considered them as the crowning city; their merchantmen and traders were the honoured of the earth.

They were the most-wealthy and luxurious commercial city existing at the time its peak. It not only embraces people of highest rank and of the greatest riches, but also all its aligned nations and the surrounding nations influenced by its affluence and luxury. The king, the noble, the rich and the citizens of Tyre were celebrated among the nations for their great wealth, trade and riches. Being a nation of great trade and celebrated by the nations for their great power and success they were a proud and self-conceited nation. For all these reasons Tyre is a perfect symbol of the collective whole of all the Gentiles and a city that fitly represents the whole of all nations, especially the richest nations of the world. It is prophesied that their ships will bring the LORD'S people back to Israel. Clearly Tyre is a perfect symbol of the Gentile nations and especially the rich and powerful. It is used as the symbol of the Gentile nations not only because it embraces people of highest rank, and of the greatest riches, and those who were surrounded most by affluence and luxury who would come to honour the king, but also because its citizens were among those who did accept the Lord Jesus Christ the ultimate, perfect and final King of the world.

**Ethiopia:** comes from the Hebrew word (Kuwsh) which is most likely of foreign origin, it is also the name of a son of Ham and of his territory and of an Israelite. In the context of this verse the reference is most likely to the southern portion of Arabia. In the Psalms it is written:

- Nobles shall come from Egypt; Cush (Ethiopia in KJV) shall hasten to stretch out her hands to God. (Psalm 68:31).

**Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia:** (4) embraces the nations on every side of Israel. Philistia was on the west, Tyre on the north, and Ethiopia (Cush) or Arabia, on the south (spoken of the uttermost parts of the south (Matt. 12:42) so that those nearest to them and those more remote from them become citizens of the Zion and the Kingdom of God.

**Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia:** (4) are most likely mentioned here because they are among the best-known nations and cities of the world; as places where it would commonly be regarded as an honour to have been born. The meaning is, "I will refer to these as places well-known and distinguished; I will refer to the honour of having been born there; but as great as such an honour maybe, the honour of having been born in Zion is far above that. Human nature is such that it likes to identify with royalty and those in powerful positions of authority such as kings, queens, princes, famous movie stars or singers, and leaders of community groups or churches etc. If a commoner has had the change to dine with the queen they will boast of such a privilege for the rest of their lives, this is the idea behind those boasting they are natives of particular countries, but the greatest boast comes from being born in Zion God's Holy Mountain that His Holy City sits upon which signifies being born into the Kingdom of God through faith in God's Son the Lord Jesus Christ the

Saviour of the world. Now other birth will bring such honour no matter how glorious a worldly nation maybe or how famous or rich. Those that are born of God's Kingdom who faithfully following Christ will upon the day of the resurrection here their master say:

- His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master. (Matt. 25:21)

**This one was born there they say:** (v4) meaning they were biologically born in the nations previously mentioned, Egypt (Rahab), Babylon, Philistia, Tyre and Cush (Ethiopia) all nations alienated from God, but are now seen in Zion and enjoying all the blessings of God and so warmly accepted as a citizen of Zion by all who dwell in Zion that they are spoken of as being born in Zion meaning in God's Kingdom. This is an echo of God pouring out His Spirit upon all nations (Jews and Gentiles) spoken of in Acts chapter two who are born by adoption through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and become citizens of God with the faithful of Zion symbolising the global Kingdom of God that the following Scriptures speak of:

- Of Zion it shall be said, "This one and that one (from Gentile nations) were born in her," for the Most High himself will establish her. (Psalm 87:5).
- All (Jews and Gentiles) who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:12).
- Jesus said, "Do not marvel that I said to you, "You must be born again." (John 3:7).
- In Christ Jesus you are all (Jews and Gentiles) sons of God, through faith. (Gal. 3:26).
- You (Jews and Gentiles) have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God (1 Peter 1:23).

The expression, "This man was born there" carries the idea that Gentiles born in foreign countries, will be brought into the Kingdom of God, and be accounted genuine members of it.

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## PSALM 87:5

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### **It will be said of Zion, the Most High himself will Establish Her.**

- **Psalm 87:5:** And of Zion it shall be said, "This one and that one were born in her"; for the Most High himself will establish her.

Zion here symbolizes the faithful saved in the Kingdom of God and therefore the words, "The Most High himself will establish the one that was born of Zion means that those of the Gentile nations previously mentioned (symbolising all Gentile nations) will be admitted members of Zion, and receive all the privileges of Zion as true born Israelites and be raised and nourished under the care of Christ as King ruling from Jerusalem the mother of all the faithful. In this context Zion speaks of all the faithful of the Old and New Testament being saved into the universal Kingdom of God of which Jerusalem is the mother.

- Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. (Gal. 4:26).

Amongst all the different places and regions Israel camped, the LORD selected Jerusalem to set His name upon. It is called the Holy City of God. It sits on Mount Zion which is called the Holy foundation. When Christ returns in glory to gather the faithful to himself and establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth Mount Zion and Jerusalem will be so exalted that people will boast that they have been born there.

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## PSALM 87:6

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## The LORD Records, "This One was Born in Zion."

- **Psalm 87:6:** The LORD records as he registers the peoples, "This one was born there."  
*Selah*

God registers who was born in Zion literally refers to those who were born Jews and remained faithful to the covenant Israel made with God at Mount Zion, but the name Zion signifies God's global Kingdom made up of Jews and Gentiles in Christ which means the words, "This one was born there" embraces all (Jews and Gentiles) who are born into Christ. At the judgment when the LORD counts up those who belong to Him, He will say this man and this woman were born in My Holy City on My Holy Mountain Zion. In this context and by extension Jerusalem becomes a symbol of all those who are faithful to the LORD, belong to the Body of Christ, the global church and Christ's Kingdom, God calls them His adopted children born again in Christ and His treasured possession.

- **Psalm 87:7:** Singers and dancers alike say, "All my springs are in you."

During the Old Testament singers and dancers would go before Israel to celebrate a great victory over their enemies or a great time of joy and rejoicing, but it was only ever amongst their own people. He the picture is of the faithful of Israel celebrating and rejoicing amongst faithful believers of Gentile nations and saying all the springs of joy and love of God that we have known of Him are equally in you. The days when our nation was the chosen nation are no longer we are all made one in Christ by the same Holy Spirit and the same spirit of faith and can all celebrate and dance together as brothers and sisters in the same family and no longer as strangers and foreigners concerning Israel's Messiah the King and Saviour not just of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles alike. The ultimate fulfilment of this will be accomplished when Christ returns in glory and the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of Christ.

- In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and Assyria will come into Egypt, and Egypt into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. <sup>24</sup>In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, <sup>25</sup>whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance." (Isaiah 19:23-25).

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*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.*

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