

Psalms: The Songs of the People of God
Psalm 87: The City of God, A City of Hope
Sunday, July 28, 2019

Introduction

Psalm 87 is among the psalms often called Psalms of Zion: Psalms that describe the importance and the glory of Jerusalem, the city of God. And while the psalms of Zion encourage us to look back and remember the historic city of Jerusalem – the city where God dwelt among His people – there’s often more to these psalms than a song of praise for a formerly significant city.

As we come to Psalm 87 our first inclination may be to look back, but really the goal of the psalm is to encourage us to look forward. The psalmist is not only reminding us of a city that was, but of a city that is to come. It’s a reminder that God established Jerusalem and there is a sense in which His plan for this city is not yet complete. The psalmist is encouraging us to look forward to a future city where God will once again dwell with His people.

The City of God (87:1-3)

- **A city founded by God (vs. 1)** As the psalm begins we are reminded of the historic city of Jerusalem. A city founded by God as the place where He would dwell among His people. This city was established by God’s plan and served as the center of life and faith for His people.
- **The location of the city (vs. 1a)** The city was located on “the holy mount.” But God didn’t choose this place because it was holy; it was holy because God chose it.
- **A city loved by God (vs. 2)** It’s clear in this psalm and throughout the Scriptures that God has a special love for Jerusalem. This city has been set a part as a special place with a special purpose. Zion is not just another city among many. It’s the city that God established for Himself and for His people. He chose it and set His love on it (Psalm 132:13-14; Deuteronomy 7:6-8).
- **A city with a glorious reputation (vs. 3)** This city is a special place, and it’s not a secret. Throughout the Scriptures we read about the glory of Jerusalem (Psalm 46:4-5; Psalm 48:1-3; 12-14).

- **A city with a glorious future** – As the psalm continues it points us toward God’s future plans for Jerusalem. The Scriptures teach that one-day Jesus will reign as the great king of all the earth from His throne in Jerusalem (Psalm 110:1-2; Isaiah 2:1-3). We are to look forward to Christ’s future reign in the earthly Jerusalem (Millennium) as well as His eternal reign in the New Jerusalem.
- **Longing for that city** – Throughout the New Testament we are told that the people of God are and should be looking toward the city of God that is to come. As those who are in Christ we are already in some sense citizens of this city and we look forward to the time when we enter that city and live together in the presence of God (Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 11:10; 13:14; 12:22).

The People of the City of God (87:4-6)

- As we look back at the city of Jerusalem in the Old Testament the citizens of that city were the people of the nation of Israel; God’s chosen people living in His holy city. But in verses 4-6 of the psalm we see that the psalmist is pointing toward a new era – a time when people from all nations will be identified as “born in Zion.”
- What the psalmist is foretelling and the New Testament makes clear is that God’s plan of salvation extends beyond the nation of Israel. God’s plan is to save people from every tribe, tongue and nation. People from all nations will be identified as those who have Zion as their spiritual birthplace (Isaiah 2:2-3; Zechariah 2:10-11).
- **The far off have been brought near in Christ** (Ephesians 2:12-13, 19, 1 Peter 2:9-10)
- **The Book of Registry (vs. 6)** Throughout the Scriptures there are references to God’s list of those who will be saved. Sometimes called the Book of Life, here the picture is of a census. The Lord records those who He registers as being born in Zion (Luke 10:20; Hebrews 12:22-24).

The Joy of the City of God (87:7)

- As the psalm concludes it ends with singing and dancing. As the people of God think about God’s city and their citizenship in the city they are filled with joy and satisfaction. The imagery of spring is a picture of life and refreshment. The hope of life in this city (in the presence of God) gives life and peace and joy.