

Psalm 87

A Psalm [or] Song for the sons of Korah.

Psalm 87: This Song of Zion speaks prophetically of the time when Zion really will be the center of the universal kingdom of the Messiah. Zion is God's elect city (verses 1-3), a place where even the Gentiles are gathered (verses 4-6), and the source of new life in God's kingdom (verse 7).

Verses 1-7: This psalm describes the Lord's love for Jerusalem and exalts this city as the religious center of the world in the coming messianic kingdom (compare Psalm 48). Though the nations of the world (even including some of Israel's former enemies), will worship the Lord then, Israel will still be the favored nation (compare Isa. 2:2-4; 19:23-25; 45:22-25; 56:6-8; Zech. 8:20-23; 14:16-19).

- I. The Lord's Love for Zion (87:1-3).
- II. The Lord's Favor of Israel (87:4-6).
- III. The Musicians' Exultation over Jerusalem (87:7).

Title "Sons of Korah" (see note on Psalm 84: Title).

Verses 1-3: Christ himself is the Foundation of the church, which God has laid. Holiness is the strength and firmness of the church. Let us not be ashamed of the church of Christ in its lowest condition, nor of those that belong to it, since such glorious things are spoken of it. Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, even Jesus Christ. The glorious things spoken of Zion by the Spirit, were all typical of Christ, and his work and offices. Of the gospel church, its privileges and members; of heaven, its glory and perfect happiness.

Psalm 87:1 "His foundation [is] in the holy mountains."

"His foundation ... holy mountains": "His foundation:" means "His founded city", namely Jerusalem, located in the hill country of Judea.

I believe this is also the holy mountain of Zion in Jerusalem, spoken of here. Zion of course, symbolizes the church. This could be speaking of the foundations in the church, as well as the foundation of holy mount Zion. The foundation of the church is on the Rock that cannot be moved (the Lord Jesus Christ). This mount in Jerusalem has been important to many different servants of God. This mountain was the dwelling place of King David. Whether calling these mountains Moriah or Zion, the mountains are holy.

Psalm 87:2 "The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."

"Gates of Zion": Zion is a poetic description of Jerusalem, seemingly used by the Old Testament writers when special spiritual and religious significance was being attached to the city. Though God certainly loved other cities in Israel, He did not choose any of them to be His worship center

(compare Psalms 122, 125, 132, 133). The gates represent the access of the potential worshiper into the city where he could come into a special worshiping relationship with God.

“More than all . . . dwellings of Jacob”: The other cities in Israel were not chosen by God to be the place of His special dwelling.

Jacob was the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. In the sense it is used here, Zion is the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is a walled city with gates. This has been God's holy city, since He first promised it to Abraham and his descendants. The temple was built here in Jerusalem. Jerusalem, Zion, and the church really are all intended here. In the sense that Zion is the church here, it would indicate that God loves the church. We do know that the Candlestick (Jesus the Light), is in all churches who profess Him as the Christ. So many now is having church at home, but I think this is saying, God likes for us to worship in His house. Not forsaking the gathering together to worship Him in unity of the Spirit. Jesus is the door or the gate, that we should enter into the holy city.

Psalm 87:3 "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah."

“O city of God”: Jerusalem was God’s city because there, God met His people in praise and offerings.

There have already been many glorious things that have taken place in the physical city. This could be looking forward to that glorious new Jerusalem (Zion), that comes down from God out of heaven as well. To look at the physical side of this city, we know that it was the place chosen where Solomon built the magnificent temple of God. It was so famous, that people came from far countries to see the magnificence of Jerusalem and its temple. It really was the birth place of Christianity. The church of Jesus Christ was born when He suffered and died on Calvary for all of us. This city has so much Bible history surrounding it that even today, tourists from all over the world come to see it. With God, this city is the center of the earth. All roads measure from Jerusalem. This is the eternal city. I can truthfully say, there is something very special about this city. Once you have seen it, you will never forget.

Verses 4-7: The church of Christ is more glorious and excellent than the nations of the earth. In the records of heaven, the lowest of those who are born again stand registered. When God renders to every man according to his works, he shall observe who enjoyed the privileges of his sanctuary. To them much was given, and of them much will be required. Let those that dwell in Zion, mark this, and live up to their profession. Zion's songs shall be sung with joy and triumph. The springs of the joy of a carnal world are in wealth and pleasure; but of a gracious soul, in the word of God and prayer. All grace and consolation are derived from Christ, through his ordinances, to the souls of believers.

Psalm 87:4 "I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this [man] was born there."

“Rahab and Babylon”: Rahab was a monster of ancient pagan mythology and symbolized Egypt in the Old Testament (compare Psalm 89:10; Isa. 30:7; 51:9). Two of the superpowers of the

ancient world, fierce enemies of Israel, will one day worship the Lord in Zion (compare Isa. 19:19-25).

“Philistia ... Tyre ... Ethiopia”: Three more Gentile nations, ancient enemies of Israel, whose descendants will worship the Lord in Jerusalem (compare Isa. 14:28-32; 18:1-7). This multinational worship is pictured as a great joy to the Lord Himself.

“This man was born there”: To be born in Jerusalem will be noted as a special honor in the messianic kingdom (compare 5-6; also Zech. 8:20-23).

This Rahab is not Rahab the harlot woman, but Rahab, the harlot country. Perhaps it is speaking of Egypt. I believe the mention of Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia are showing the countries who were opposed to the religion of the Jews. They worshipped all types of false gods, because they did not know the true God. This is saying, that there will come a time when the scales will be removed from their eyes, and they will know and worship the true God. These had been heathen nations, but now they will accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and will worship with all people in Jerusalem, the holy city. This is possibly, some great evangelistic move that causes this.

Psalm 87:5 "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her."

The same with the city of God, the church before commended.

"This and that man was born in her": This and that great man, in opposition to a mean person, in the preceding verse. "Or a man and man". Men of all sorts, and of different nations, Jews and Gentiles, and great numbers of them.

"And the Highest himself shall establish her": The church of God, though founded by him, and laid on a sure foundation. On the Rock of ages, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail, yet is sometimes fluctuating and unsettled. It is tossed with tempests, the persecutions of men, the errors and heresies of false teachers, and the contentions and divisions of its own members. And is not always in one place, but is removed from one place to another. And is obliged to flee into the wilderness. But in the latter day it will be established and settled. It will be a tabernacle that shall not be taken down nor removed; but shall be established for ever (Psalm 89:37). And this is the work of God, the Most High God. The possessor of heaven and earth, whatever instruments he may make use of, as ministers of the word, and kings of the earth. As it is his work, and his only, to establish particular believers (2 Cor. 1:21). So it is his to establish the church in general. Or it may be rendered, "he shall establish her on high", which will be the case when she is established upon the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills (Isa. 2:2).

Perhaps this is speaking of the new birth in the Lord Jesus Christ. This Zion could certainly be the church. The church is established on the Rock that cannot be moved (Jesus Christ the Righteous). God himself establishes the church, no man can destroy her.

Psalm 87:6 "The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people, [that] this [man] was born there. Selah."

Not in the Lamb's book of life; for that was written from eternity (Rev. 13:8). But in the writing of the house of Israel, among the living in Jerusalem, and with his righteous ones. Which is done at effectual calling, and when admitted members of Gospel churches, whereby they openly appear to be the children of God, and are taken into the list and catalogue of saints (see Ezek. 13:9). Or in the last day, when the Lord will take the number of his people. "And cause them again to pass under the rod of him that telleth them": And will make up his jewels, complete the number of them in conversion, and collect them all together. And his counting and writing them may denote his exact knowledge of them, and his care that he loses none. But this will only concern regenerate persons. The Lord will not count nor make any account of any others, as follows.

"That this man was born there": And the man that is born in Zion, even every regenerate man, will be counted and numbered by him. And declared to be his, when he makes a general survey and muster of his saints another day.

To have your name written in the Lamb's book of life, you must be born in the church. Every Christian who ever lived, is counted as a citizen of that holy city of God. We can prove our right to the inheritance.

Galatians 3:29 "And if ye [be] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Psalm 87:7 "As well the singers as the players on instruments [shall be there]: all my springs [are] in thee."

"All my springs are in thee": "Springs" is a metaphor for the source of joyful blessings. Eternal salvation, including the death and resurrection of Christ, is rooted in Jerusalem. The prophets also tell of a literal fountain flowing from the temple in Jerusalem which will water the surrounding land (compare Joel 3:18; Ezek. 47:1-12).

This is describing a beautiful procession of singing and playing beautiful music as we march into Zion, that holy city. The springs mentioned, could be the springs of living water which will bring great peace and joy. Just to be allowed to enter into the city, will be joy beyond compare.

Psalm 87 Questions

1. In 87:1, what mountain is spoken of as holy mountains?
2. What does Zion symbolize?
3. Where was the dwelling place of king David?
4. Who was Jacob?
5. Describe Jerusalem.

6. Which churches have the Light of Jesus in them?
7. Jesus is the _____, or _____ into the holy city.
8. What could verse 3 be looking forward to?
9. Where was the birthplace of Christianity?
10. Who is Rahab in verse 4?
11. Who were some of the countries mentioned, who were opposed to the Jews?
12. What is verse 5 speaking of, about people being born in Zion?
13. What must happen for you to have your name written in the Lamb's book of life?
14. What is verse 7 describing?