

SBC – Nov. 16, 2025
Psalm 87:1-7 (NKJV)
“The City of God”

Psalm 87 (NKJV)
A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. A Song.

The sons of Korah trace their ancestry back to their rebel father, Korah, in the book of Numbers (chp. 16).

They were Levites who were gatekeepers at the temple, and they also became famous as musicians (cf. 1 Chron. 6:22; 9:17-32; 26:1; 2 Chron. 20:19). So they were very close to the temple worship center of God in Jerusalem.

They are tied to 11 of the Psalms in the book of Psalms (Ps. 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 84, 85, 87, 88).

This Psalm was intended to be sung as a song, as seen in the heading. It is a celebration of Jerusalem and why it is such a special place.

Slide # 1

Psalm 87

“The City of God”

- vv. 1-3 God’s Love for Zion
- vv. 4-6 The Citizens of Zion
- v. 7 Celebration over Zion’s Blessings

1 His foundation is in the holy mountains.

The sense of “foundation” is what God founded. What God “founded” to do in redemptive history is founded in the holy mountain called Zion, otherwise known as Jerusalem. Note verse 5 where it says, “the Most High Himself shall establish her.”

God uniquely chose this special place above all others to be the worship center of the world (cf. Ps. 2:6; 99:9; Isa.14:32; 56:7).

Slide # 2

Deuteronomy 12:5 (NKJV)

5 “But you shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go.

Jerusalem is special simply because God founded it. He established it. His choice and His presence make it the most special place in the world.

As the foundation of God Jerusalem is foundational to all that God is doing in redemptive history! Note the following....

- There Melchezidek, king and priest of God Most High, reigned and served.
- There Abraham was willing to offer Isaac on the mount of the Lord where His perfect sacrifice would be provided.
- There David, Israel’s greatest earthly king, reigned and made it the kingdom’s capital.
- There the tabernacle of God found its fulfillment and permanence in the great temple David designed and Solomon built.
- There the institutions of sacrifice, worship, and priestly service were established for centuries.
- There Jesus recognized and honored the city and observed the feasts and temple rituals.
- There Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose from the dead.
- There the church was born in a day at Pentecost.
- There the apostles served and sent out the Gospel.
- There God will establish the physical, geographic center of His ultimate kingdom upon earth. (David Guzik)

Indeed, God’s foundation is in the holy (set apart) mountains of Jerusalem!

2 The LORD loves the gates of Zion More than all the dwellings of Jacob.

The whole earth is the Lord’s and all its fullness (Ps. 24:1). The whole of the land of Israel is uniquely God’s possession (cf. Joel 3:2). But of all the territory in the world and all the territory in Israel, God loves Zion more than all the other dwellings in Jacob, which is to say Israel.

The word Zion literally means "fortification". The first mention of Zion in the Bible is found in 2 Sam. 5:7 when David captured an ancient Jebusite fortress which was thereafter called "the city of David".

Zion is essentially synonymous with Jerusalem and is called "the city of David" as well as "the city of God". Zion, in effect, is OLD Jerusalem in the historical sense of the word. It refers to the south-eastern hill of Jerusalem. This is where David built his royal palace and later where Solomon built the temple (cf. 1 Kings 8:1; 2 Kings 1; Kings 19:21; 1 Kings 19:31; 1 Chronicles 11:5; Ps. 2:6; 48:2, 11-12; 132:13). Zion signifies the epicenter of God's rule and presence on earth.

So, Zion at core refers to the temple mount, but is also used in reference to the entire city of Jerusalem (cf. Isa. 40:9); to the land of Judah (cf. Jer. 31:12); or even to the entire nation of Israel as a whole (cf. Zech. 9:13). Context determines the exact nuance in view; but most generally Zion refers to Jerusalem, and specifically to the Temple Mount. Zion is the was worship center of God on earth in the OT and will be again in the kingdom!

Slide # 3

Psalm 99:9 (NKJV)

9 Exalt the LORD our God, And worship at His holy hill; For the LORD our God is holy.

The word Zion is found 154 times in the Old Testament and 7 times in the New Testament. In the Old Testament Zion represented the special dwelling place of God (cf. Ps. 9:11). In the millennial kingdom Mount Zion will represent the special dwelling place of God from where the Messiah will reign (cf. Isa. 24:23).

Slide # 4

Isaiah 24:23 (NKJV)

23 Then the moon will be disgraced And the sun ashamed; For the LORD of hosts will reign **On Mount Zion and in Jerusalem** And before His elders, gloriously.

Zechariah 2:12 (NKJV)

12 And the LORD will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and **will again choose Jerusalem.**

In eternity, the saints will be forever identified with Mount Zion and the eternal city of the living God (cf. Heb. 12:22-24).

Positionally, we as God's people already identify with Mount Zion and this eternal city. Our citizenship is already in heaven (cf. Phil. 3:20).

Spiritually, positionally, prophetically, we have already come to Mount Zion, but physically, we are not there yet. Hebrews 12:22 says we “have come to Mount Zion”, but then Hebrews 13:14 says we still seek for the continuing city to come. Both are true. Positionally, we are there, but the full experiential reality awaits the future.

This ETERNAL CITY, identified with Mount Zion, will be the eternal home of the saints where they will intimately abide forever with God. This is the city that Abraham waited for "which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). This is where God most intimately dwells. It is uniquely God's city. In Hebrews 12:22 it is called “the heavenly Jerusalem” but the book of Revelation calls it the “New Jerusalem” (cf. Rev. 3:12, 21:2). It is destined to be the abode of the redeemed for all eternity.

God has set His eternal affection on Mount Zion. This is the place of His special dwelling with His people for all eternity in the context of a New heaven and a new earth.

Note the emphasis on “gates”, the LORD (YHWH) loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings in Jacob. Gates denote places of entrance. Pictured here is people coming through the gates to worship. That is a beautiful reality and something the Lord loves. I think this is what makes the Lord uniquely love the gates of Zion (cf. Isa. 60:11-12; Zech. 1:14).

3 Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God! Selah

How true this is...

Slide # 5

Jeremiah 3:17 (NKJV)

17 “At that time Jerusalem shall be called **The Throne of the LORD**, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts.

Consider the following...

- Jerusalem was the glorious place of the temple and worship.
- God's glorious presence was evident in Jerusalem.
- Christ's glorious atonement for sin was made in relation to Jerusalem.
- The glorious Holy Spirit was sent to Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost.

- Christ will gloriously return to reign from Jerusalem.
- Jerusalem is called the city of the great King (Ps. 48:2).
- Jerusalem is said to be the apple of God's eye (Zech. 2:8).
- Jerusalem will be called the "City of Truth" (Zech. 8:3).
- God says He will put His name in Jerusalem forever (2 Chron. 33:4).

In the kingdom Jerusalem will be the truth center and the worship center of the world.

Slide # 6

Isaiah 2:2–3 (NKJV)

2 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And **all nations shall flow to it.**

3 Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For **out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.**

We could go on and on. Jerusalem is by far the most prominent city in the Bible, being mentioned 800 times. It is God's favorite place in all the world. There happened the greatest events in all the world (death and resurrection of Christ). It has the greatest destiny in all the world!

Indeed, glorious things are spoken of you "O city of God!"

Selah! Stop and reflect on this!

4 "I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to those who know Me; Behold, O Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia: 'This one was born there.' "

The NASB translates this as...

Slide # 7

Psalm 87:4 (NASB)

4 "I shall mention Rahab and Babylon **among those who know Me;** Behold, Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia: 'This one was born there.'"

God is speaking in reference to how it will be at a future time in reference to Jerusalem.

Rahab is a poetic designation for Egypt (cf. Ps. 89:9-10; Isa. 30:7; 51:9-10). These countries are representative of those in the past who were hostile enemies of God's people Israel or who had no regard for the God of Israel identified with Zion.

But things in the future day will be different.

Slide # 8

Isaiah 19:23–25 (NKJV)

23 In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians.

24 In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria—a blessing in the midst of the land,

25 whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, “**Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance.**”

As such this here in Psalm 87:4 is really a prophetic statement related to the coming time of the kingdom.

Many Gentiles will be saved in that context, and they too will have a great appreciation for the city of God – Jerusalem!

Slide # 9

Zechariah 8:22–23 (NKJV)

22 Yes, **many peoples and strong nations Shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem,** And to pray before the LORD.’

23 “Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.” ’ ”

Everyone in that day will want to be identified with Jerusalem. It will be a badge of honor to be born there. I wonder if pregnant Gentile women will specifically make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem just to be able to say their child was born in Jerusalem. It will be a big deal and will be reflective of their faith!

5 And of Zion it will be said, “This one and that one were born in her; And the Most High Himself shall establish her.”

Zion will be recognized the world over as the most special place in the world. Identification with Zion as the City of God will be considered a most precious and wonderful reality! Those born there will be seen as uniquely blessed. Thus God will establish Zion as the greatest place in all the world.

When we visited Jerusalem, we had a Jewish guide named Yosie. He was born in Jerusalem, and I pointed out this text in Psalm 87 to him, which he was already very aware of. He knew about these verses but could not really appreciate their deeper significance.

Commentators are very quick to spiritualize the text here and say that people all over the world who claim a spiritual birth in some sense are able to relate their spiritual birth back to Jerusalem. I am hesitant to spiritualize this text because the text itself here is not clear in that direction.

But having said that, there is NT precedent for ultimately making a spiritual application to Jerusalem for us as believers.

Slide # 10

Galatians 4:26 (NKJV)

26 but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.

Paul here is speaking symbolically, as he clearly indicates in the context.

All true believers have a relationship with the mother city of “New Jerusalem”. We are all citizens of this fair city. It is the city of GRACE. It is where the trophies of God’s grace will live forever in unhindered freedom from sin and all that would interfere with perfect harmony and intimacy with God.

Slide # 11

Hebrews 12:22–24 (NKJV)

22 But you have come to **Mount Zion and to the city of the living God**, the **heavenly Jerusalem**, to an innumerable company of angels,

23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,

24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

All this to say, there is perhaps a measure of spiritual application as warranted by further revelation in the NT, but I tend to think the emphasis in Psalm 87 relates to earthly Jerusalem in the millennial kingdom. So yes, we might make some application, but I am hesitant to over spiritualize this text.

6 The LORD will record, When He registers the peoples: “This one was born there.” Selah

Evidently, there will be record-keeping in the kingdom! God keeps the books on everyone!

In the millennial kingdom the LORD (YHWH) Himself will have a special registry of those born in Jerusalem. It will be a great honor! Again, this all serves to highlight how special Jerusalem will be in the kingdom.

To be born in Jerusalem will be noted as a special honor in the messianic kingdom (cf. vv. 5-6; also Zech. 8:20-23).

– *John MacArthur*

7 Both the singers and the players on instruments say, “All my springs are in you.”

And Jerusalem will be a place of worshipful JOY – worshipful CELEBRATION!

“Players on instruments” could be interpreted as “dancers”.

Slide # 12

Psalm 87:7 (ESV)

7 Singers and **dancers** alike say, “All my springs are in you.”

Again, singing and dancing denote joyful celebration. And what are they celebrating? Well, the text goes on to say they say, “All my springs are in you.”

This ties back to how the Psalm started where it says in verse 1 that God’s foundation is in the holy mountains. Jerusalem/Zion is foundational to all the blessings these folks in the kingdom will enjoy.

“**Springs**” is a metaphor for that which is the source of joyful blessings! Zion (in terms of a place) is the source of blessings and refreshment!

Of course, it is God behind it all, but He has chosen to make Zion the foundation, the source of every good and perfect gift (cf. Ja. 1:17).

Slide # 13

Isaiah 12:3 (NKJV)

3 Therefore with joy you will draw water From the wells of salvation.

"If all my springs are in God, then *let all my streams flow to God*. All the rivers run into the sea, because they all came from the sea. It was from the sea that the sun drew up the clouds which fed the thousand rills which fall into the rivers, and so the rivers run back to the sea. Let us do the same. What we have had from God must go to God."

- Charles Spurgeon

As a side note, it is interesting to note that in the kingdom, a literal fountain flowing from the temple in Jerusalem will water the whole surrounding area and make even the Dead Sea alive with fresh water (cf. Joel 3:18; Ezek. 47:1-12; Ps. 46:6; Rev. 22:1-3).

When in Israel, we visited Jerusalem. Before arriving, I had picked out certain Psalms that focus on Jerusalem in particular to read and contemplate for my devotional time while there. I picked out Psalm 48, 84, 87, 114, 122, 125, and 137.

There is only ONE city in all the Bible that we are specifically told to pray for, and that is the city of JERUSALEM. Today, Jerusalem is important to three world religions - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Jerusalem means "**City of Peace**" but the one thing that has consistently been missing from Jerusalem for the last 3000 years is PEACE. It's with this backdrop that we as believers are instructed to pray...

Slide # 14

Psalms 122:6 (NKJV)

6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you.

Isaiah 62:7 (NKJV)

7 And give Him no rest till He establishes And till He makes **Jerusalem a praise in the earth**.

Jerusalem is close to the heart of God and He instructs us to pray for her peace!

Those prayers will be answered when the Messiah comes and delivers Israel. Then all the glorious things spoken of Jerusalem, the city of God, will be fulfilled. Then the whole world will finally recognize and appreciate how special Jerusalem really is.

And then in worship we will bless God by saying of Zion, "All my springs are in you."

In the world all roads lead ultimately to Babylon, the city of man which in the end will be completely destroyed by God.

But for the child of God, all roads ultimately lead to Jerusalem the city of God, the city of the great King.

Psalms 46:4 says, "***There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God.***" Indeed, this city is a SPECIAL place of worshipful, joyful celebration and refreshment!

God loves it and we as His people do to and will all the more so once we get there!

Even so come Lord Jesus!