

The Book of PSALMS

Psalms 87 – 88

“Zion, the City of God – Affliction, Great Question”

Psalm 87 – “Zion, The City of God”

> **Written by the sons of Korah** – Who were the descendants of Levi through Kohath, the gatekeepers and musicians in the temple at Jerusalem (1 Chr. 6:22; 9:17–32; 26:1; see all Pss. 42–49; 84, 85; 87, 88).

(v1-3) Elmer Towns writes about Zion, “The LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are said of you, O city of God.” Occurring over 150 times in the Bible, the word “Zion” essentially means “fortification.” In the Bible, Zion is both the city of David and the city of God. As the Bible progresses, the word “Zion” transitions from referring primarily to a physical city to having a more spiritual meaning. The first mention of the word “Zion” in the Bible is 2 Samuel 5:7: “Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion, the City of David.” “Zion,” therefore, was originally the name of the ancient Jebusite fortress in the city of Jerusalem. “Zion” came to stand not only for the fortress but also for city in which the fortress stood. After David captured “the stronghold of Zion,” Zion was then called “the City of David” (1 Kings 8:1; 1 Chronicles 11:5; 2 Chronicles 5:2). When Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem, “Zion” expanded in meaning to include the temple and the area surrounding it (Psalms 2:6; 48:2, 11-12; 132:13). “Zion” was eventually used as a name for the city of Jerusalem, the land of Judah, and the people of Israel as a whole (Isaiah 40:9; Jeremiah 31:12; Zechariah 9:13). The most important use of the word “Zion” is in a theological sense. “Zion” is used figuratively of Israel as the people of God (Isaiah 60:14). The spiritual meaning of “Zion” is continued in the New Testament, where it is given the Christian meaning of God's spiritual kingdom, the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 14:1). Peter refers to Christ as the Cornerstone of Zion: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame” (1 Peter 2:6).

> A great “gate” story - Acts 3:1-10

(v4) **Rahab and Babylon.** Rahab was a monster of ancient pagan mythology and symbolized Egypt in the OT (cf. Ps. 89:10; Is. 30:7; 51:9). Two of the superpowers of the ancient world, fierce enemies of Israel, will one day worship the Lord in Zion (cf. Is. 19:19–25). **Philistia ... Tyre ... Ethiopia.** Three more Gentile nations, ancient enemies of Israel, whose descendants will worship the Lord in Jerusalem (cf. Is. 14:28–32; 18:1–7). This multinational worship is pictured as a great joy to the Lord Himself. **This one was born there.** 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).

(v5-6) **Observe the New Testament registry** – Christ was born in Bethlehem as the prophets foretold (Micah 2:5-6), and He was the firstborn from the dead in Zion:

- **Romans 8:29-30** - *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

- **Colossians 1:18** - *And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.*

- **Revelation 1:4-6** - *Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

- **Hebrews 12:22-24** - *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 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, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.*

(v7) **“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 (cf. Joel 3:18; Ezek. 47:1–12).

> Drink from the springs of Jesus, *“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.* (John 7:37-39)

Psalm 88 – “Affliction”

> The psalmist has been ill or injured since the days of his youth (v. 15) and bemoans God’s failure to hear his prayer for good health. He assumes that God is angry with him, but like Job, he knows of no cause for that anger. But though he does not understand God’s ways, the psalmist does turn to God, thus indicating an underlying trust.

(1-7) Heavy affliction!

(v8-10) Great question! – “*Shall the dead arise and praise you?*”

> **C.I. Scofield - Resurrection, Summary:**

(1) The resurrection of the dead was believed by the patriarchs Gen 22:5; Heb 11:19; Job 19:25-27 and revealed through the prophets Isa 26:19; Dan 12:2,13; Hos 13:14 and miracles of the dead restored to life are recorded in the O.T. 2 Kings 4:32-35; 13:21.

(2) Jesus Christ restored life to the dead Matt 9:25; Luke 7:12-15; John 11:43,44 and predicted His own resurrection John 10:18; Luke 24:1-8.

(3) A resurrection of bodies followed the resurrection of Christ Matt 27:52,53 and the apostles raised the dead Acts 9:36-41; 20:9,10.

(4) Two resurrections are yet future, which are inclusive of *all that are in the graves* John 5:28. These are distinguished as *of life* 1 Cor 15:22,23; 1 Thess 4:14-17; Rev 20:4 and *of judgment* John 5:28,29; Rev 20:11-13. They are separated by a period of one thousand years Rev 20:5. The *first resurrection*, that *unto life*, will occur at the second coming of Christ 1 Cor 15:23 the saints of the O.T. and church ages meeting Him in the air 1 Thess 4:16,17 while the martyrs of the tribulation, who also have part in the resurrection Rev 20:4 are raised at the end of the great tribulation.

(5) The mortal body will be related to the resurrection body as grain sown is related to the harvest 1 Cor 15:37,38 **that body will be incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual** 1 Cor 15:42-44,49.

(6) The bodies of living believers will, at the same time, be instantaneously changed 1 Cor 15:50-53; Phil 3:20,21. This *change* of the living, and resurrection of the dead in Christ, is called the *redemption of the body* Rom 8:23; Eph 1:13,14.

(7) After the thousand years the *resurrection unto judgment* John 5:29 occurs. The resurrection-body of the wicked dead is not described. They are judged according to their works, and cast into the lake of fire. Rev 20:7-15. (from Scofield Bible Notes)

(v11-18) More questions about life after death; we need to take note in regards to the *after death experience* of God’s “*lovingkindness, faithfulness, wonders, & righteousness.*” **Could this be a prophetic view (in a symbolic sense) of the life of Lazarus at the gate of the rich man in Luke ch. 16:19-31.**

Paul writes about our glory after death in 2 Corinthians 5:1-8 - *For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.*

> **Observe Paul’s personal experience in 2 Corinthians 12.**

(Reference: Philippians 3:20-21- *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*)