

Psalm 48 - Praising Mount Zion
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Psalm 48 at first glance seems very straightforward. It could be seen as though it is a vacation brochure: it is describing the place that the authors see as the greatest place on earth – Mount Zion. He says that it is a beautiful city at which all marvel. Then he speaks of its power. He says that it is a frightening city none could besiege. He points out that God established His temple there, and that because of this Zion is blessed. But when we look deeper, we see that the author is discussing a rather important event in the Old Testament: when God established His name.

In the Law of Moses a prophecy exists about God establishing His name in a location. The Israelites were to move the tabernacle around (it remained in Shiloh a long time). But God promised that in Canaan God would find a particular location, and there He would establish His name as the place that all Israel would come to worship Him. "***But you shall seek the LORD at the place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come***" (Deuteronomy 12:5, also Deut. 14:23, 16:2, 16:6, etc.). This occurred sometime in the reign of David, perhaps when David spoke to the prophet Nathan about building a Temple for God.

Zion was already a special place. The word is used as a synonym both for the mountain and the city located there. When we walk through the Bible we find that it had an important history. First, this was Melchizedek's city of peace found in Genesis 14:18-20. That city of Salem (Psalm 76:2) was the location where Abraham met the Priest of God Melchizedek, whom we later find out was a foreshadow of Jesus and His priesthood (Hebrews 7:1-2). The word "Salem" means peace; thus this was a City of Peace. Soon after this God called Abraham to sacrifice his son. That location mentioned in Genesis 22:2 was Mount Moriah, which we are told in 2 Chronicles 3:1 is the same as the site of the Temple. In other words, Mount Moriah is the same as Mount Zion. Centuries later this location became David's stronghold, when we are told in 2 Samuel 5:7 David took from the Jebusites the stronghold of Zion. The very word Zion likely means a stronghold. Soon after it was made by David the "City of David", a great plague came on Israel, and David built on top of the mountain an altar of propitiation. In 2 Samuel 24:18 we are told of the threshing floor that David purchased for propitiation. That threshing floor became the foundation of the Temple of God (1 Chronicles 22:1-10, 2 Chronicles 3:1). This is the story of Mount Zion, and the city of Zion.

This special place had many names; Mount Zion, Mount Moriah, Jerusalem, Salem, Zion, City of David, Ariel (Isa. 29:1). This special place had many associations: Peace, Sacrifice, Atonement and Propitiation, Worship, and Strength and Power. Zion is the symbol of God's strength; God's authority synonymous with a mountain.

Today, we still sing songs about Zion. However, our songs are not about that physical mountain located in the Middle East today. That place is of no importance to the Kingdom of Christ (Galatians 4:23-26). We are speaking of the spiritual parallel of that location. "***But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels***" Hebrews 12:22. "***Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads***" Revelation 14:1.

Celebration of Mount Zion today is about the kingdom of Heaven. It is about the power of Jesus in peace, atonement, and strength. It is about a kingdom that cannot be overthrown, and will last until the end of time. This is the deeper meaning of Psalm 48, and our thoughts on Zion as well.