

## The City at the Top of the Hill – Psalm 48:1-14

### I. Introduction:

- A. I have been using this particular Bible for decades. I may have had it even before I moved here in 1990.
1. As I've told you before it is a Thompson Chain edition of our old King James.
  2. I don't know anything about Mr. Thompson, but I would guess that he was a fundamental Protestant of some sort.
  3. One clue to that diagnosis are the few subjects in his chains which he doesn't stress as well as he should have. And then there are other little things as well.
  4. For example, he describes this **Psalm** saying: *"Ornaments and privileges of the church."*
  5. Protestants are particularly fond of equating Israel and the New Testament church.
  6. As I have said many times, including just last week, Israel and the church may run parallel to one another in their lessons, but they are not the same thing.
- B. This **Psalm** begins with words which Judy and I used to sing, fifty years ago, when we were just kids.
1. *"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised,*
    - a. *In the city of our God, In the mountain of His holiness.*
    2. *Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth,*
      - a. *Is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, The city of the great King.*
      - b. *Is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, The city of the great King."*
- C. Once again, I'd like to use this **Psalm** to praise the Lord, and to encourage the saints in Him.
1. Let's begin to look at the library of these words by examining its two bookends.
  2. *"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God..."*
  3. Then **verse 14** – *"Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof.*
    - a. *Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following.*
    - b. *For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death."*
  4. I'm not going to stake my life on this point.
  5. But doesn't the last verse suggest that we ought to tie together Zion and the King of Zion?
  6. In the same breath which describes the city of our God, the psalmist concludes by saying, *"this God is our God."*

### II. If nothing more, keep that in mind, as we consider the **LOCATION** of this city of God.

- A. It is at the top of the mountain of God's holiness.
1. In a range of beautiful mountains, this city is at the pinnacle of the highest of those peaks. *"Great is the Lord."*
  2. To help our understanding, the second most common way of translating the word "great" is "high."
  3. Jehovah is high and lifted up, and his train fills the temple of His holiness (**Isaiah 6:1**).
  4. *"Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:*
  5. *Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind" – Psalm 104.*
- B. Where is this city? It is described as sitting upon a great mountain; the mountain of God's holiness.
1. From our usual perspective there is nothing higher on planet earth than the mountains God has created.
    - a. I have been to the top of two or three 14,000 foot peaks. Each time it was thrilling.
    - b. Even to look off the top of tiny Mount Spokane is fun and exciting.
  2. But I have also flown over mountains 14,000, 15,000 and 20,000 feet high – Colorado, Alaska, Canada.
  3. And I have to admit that for me, from above, they are not as impressive as they are from the valley below – or when standing on their peaks.
  4. And that is the perspective we have of God and His city.
  5. We are earthly creatures; we are sinful, unholy creatures; and if we look toward God, it must be from below.

- C. But... it is amazing that there are so many professing Christians, who do not **look UP** to God.
1. I don't believe they are Christians at all if they do not.
  2. At Austin's recommendation, I am reading a book on the "*Word of Faith*" movement.
  3. One of most disgusting revelations it makes is how those people actually **look DOWN** on the Lord.
  4. Many, if not most, of the largest churches in the world teach that people can order God to do things by their words, by their thoughts and by their cultic and occultic faith.
  5. That is not the true and living God; who cannot be commanded to do anything, because He is God.
  6. The sovereign whom the Psalmist was praising governs over all things from the mountain of his holiness.

D. *"Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.*

1. *One generation shall praise thy works to another (to the next generation), & shall declare thy mighty acts.*
2. *I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works" – Psalm 145.*

### III. After speaking of its situation, our Psalm points to this city's **CONSTITUTION**.

- A. Its foundation and beauty rests in **holiness** – absolute and perfect perfection.
1. This is the abode of **Jehovah** – not that of the pleasure seeking gods of the Romans, Greeks and the current generation of pleasure-seeking Gnostics.
  2. *"Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like thee, **glorious in holiness, FEARFUL in praises, doing wonders?" – Exodus 15:11.***
  3. *"Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God is holy" – Psalm 99.*
  4. Essentially, **Revelation 21:27** is speaking of this same city where we read: *"there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."*
- B. Even though it is a hard lesson for even God's saints to learn, the holiness of God is His most beautiful feature
1. Sin is ugly, but righteousness is beautiful. It makes the most lustrous diamonds look like faded glass.
  2. Righteousness is glorious, so glorious that only regenerated and glorified eyes will be able to behold it.
  3. Even the angels around God's throne cover their eyes in the midst of the glory of that righteousness.
- C. When I remember to do so, I spend about ten minutes a day on Facebook first thing in the morning.
1. My primary purpose is to put quotes from our bulletin on our church page and also on my personal page.
  2. I post our history note on Sunday and usually on Monday I post the testimony I gave you the day before.
  3. I am trying to magnify our great God that way. And rarely do I much else on Facebook.
    - a. But sometimes, taking a quick scan through stuff that people have sent me, I have noticed that I get pictures from Canadian photographers.
    - b. Sometimes they display stunning shots of some of the great Rocky Mountains.
  4. Having seen some of those mountains in person I have to admit, they can take my breath away. Still do.
  5. Once in a while I will comment on line by saying something like: *"And yet, this doesn't compare with Heaven"* or I'll say, *"Isn't our Creator wonderful?"*
  6. If Mount Rundle, Mount Robson or Mount Logan are this beautiful in a Canadian sunset, how much more glorious is the city of our God in the mountain of his holiness?
- D. And by the way, Everest, Mount Hood and Mount Rainier are temporary peaks in the plans of God.
1. Each and every one of them might be tossed into the sea at the Lord's command.
  2. And those which are volcanos may disappear in a matter of hours, taking a lot of lives in the process.
  3. *"Heaven and earth shall pass away, **BUT** the words (and will) of God will not pass away."*
  4. And neither will this city of refuge.
  5. *"As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of Hosts, in the city of our God; **God will establish it FOR EVER. Selah" – verse 8.***
  6. The same divine power that temporarily holds the volcano at bay holds the soul of God's saint for ever.
  7. Go ahead and rest in the refuge God has established for you.

- E. And that brings up another aspect of this city – its palaces.
1. *“Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces...”*
  2. As you know, Jesus has said, *“Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.”*
    - a. *In my father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.*
    - b. *I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also.”*

- F. As true and appropriate as that quote from **John 14** may be, it’s not a perfect parallel to this **Psalm**, because the Psalmist isn’t talking about the future. His theme is today.
1. By faith, **today**, we can take refuge from the problems of our worldly lives in the palace of the King.
  2. This city on the peak is above all the storms which are raging in the valleys below.
  3. It is above the floods and avalanches; it is higher than buzzards fly; and the fat, lazy sinners not only have no right to enter, they have no desire to climb this high. This is where God’s eagles live.
  4. *“They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” – Isaiah 40:31.*
  5. *“They shall dwell in the house of the Lord FOREVER.”*

#### IV. Most of this Psalm magnifies God by pointing to the **PROTECTION** the Lord gives to its human residents.

- A. Those whom the Lord has made holy through His salvation – through justification – are eternally secure.
1. The Saviour has given to us eternal life, and no man or devil can pluck us out of this city of refuge.
  2. Furthermore we know that all things work together for good to them who have been made holy thru grace.
  3. Therefore *“God is known in her palaces for a REFUGE.”*
  4. The kings of the earth, and the princes of the power of the air, look at God’s city and are troubled and haste away. Fear and travail fall on them. The Lord breaketh their ships with an east wind.
  5. *“Let mount Zion rejoice... because of thy judgments (LORD).”*
  6. *“Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell (or count) the (protective) towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks.”*
- B. Looking toward the Lord, David said in **Psalm 59** – *“I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.”*
1. The word translated *“refuge”* in our Psalm is more often translated *“defence.”*
  2. In **Psalm 62** David sang, *“Truly my soul waiteth upon God; from him cometh my salvation.”*
    - a. *He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.”*
    - b. David was so moved by that thought he repeated it a few verses later.
    - c. *The LORD only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.”*
- C. This city of refuge is high and lifted up, impregnable and holy.

#### V. And what is the **DISPOSITION** of the people of the this city?

- A. This holy city is a place filled with praise and joy.
1. Zion is *“the joy of the whole earth” – verse 2.*
  2. It is within these walls of grace and salvation that sinners may enjoy peace **with** God & the peace **of** God.
  3. Down in the valley below this mountain, in the midst of raging thunderstorms and sandstorms, there is nothing but confusion and consternation.
  4. The Psalmist puts his words into the mouths of the residents of Zion.
    - a. *“We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.*
    - b. *According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth; thy right hand is full of righteousness.*
    - c. *Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughter of Judah be glad... For this God is our God for ever and ever.”*
- B. There is no better place to be than in the arms of the omnipotent Saviour.