

Israel's Hymnal
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PSALM EIGHTY-SEVEN

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

[Pss 87:2] Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion More than all the dwellings of Jacob.

[Pss 87:3] Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah

[Pss 87:4] I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon as among them that know me: Behold, Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia: This one was born there.

[Pss 87:5] Yea, of Zion it shall be said, This one and that one was born in her; And the Most High himself will establish her.

[Pss 87:6] Jehovah will count, when he writeth up the peoples, This one was born there. Selah

[Pss 87:7] They that sing as well as they that dance (shall say), All my fountains are in thee.

- I. Jerusalem, the capital of the world (vs. 1).
- II. Jehovah's love for Jerusalem (vs. 2).
- III. The future glories of Jerusalem (vs. 3).
- IV. The converted world (vs. 4).
- V. The remnant of Israel (vss. 5,6).
- VI. Jerusalem established (vs. 5).
- VII. Ascription of universal praise to Almighty God (vs. 7).

Psalm 87, which contains only seven verses, is a marvelous prediction concerning God's plan of the ages as it pertains to Jerusalem. Volumes of history are wrapped up in this short psalm. In our study of it we must analyze it very carefully.

I. Jerusalem the capital city of the world

Jerusalem, not Rome, is the eternal city. As far back as the days of Abraham and Melchizedek God has chosen Jerusalem above all other cities of the world to be the metropolis of earth. According to Genesis chapter 14, Melchizedek was the king of Salem and priest of God Most High. Since he was king of Salem, evidently he had a kingdom in which were laws, statutes, and regulations. He was the God-appointed ruler to administer the affairs of this little kingdom of God as it existed in that day and time.

Abraham, who was born into a heathen home in the midst of an idolatrous environment, yearned for a walk of faith with God. The Lord saw into the depths of his heart and called him forth from Ur of the Chaldees and brought him in touch with this priest-king who ruled over this little kingdom of God of his day. According to Psalm 110 Melchizedek, his kingdom, and reign were types of the Lord Jesus Christ and His millennial kingdom.

In his final oration to his brethren Moses, according to Deuteronomy 12:1f, foretold that God would select a certain place in the land of Canaan where He would place His name, and that it was to this central shrine

that Israel should bring her offerings and sacrifices. The tabernacle was first set up at Gilgal near Jericho, but was soon moved to Shiloh in the central part of the hills of Ephraim. In the course of time it was brought down to Nob near Jerusalem. Finally, in the days of David Jerusalem became the center of Israelitish worship. It was this place that God selected from among all the cities of Israel to be the place where He would place His name forever. This thought is expressed in Psalm 132 as follows:

"For Jehovah hath chosen Zion;
He hath desired it for his habitation.
This is my resting-place forever:
Here will I dwell; for I have desired it" (vss. 13,14).

From the day that God selected Jerusalem to the present time, it has been the place where God has placed His name. Although the nation of Israel is in rejection because of sin and disobedience, God has never given up Jerusalem as the place for the abiding of His presence. The time will come when the remnant of the nation will return to the Lord and accept Him. Then He will reestablish His abode in this ancient city that He has chosen from among all the cities of Judah.

II. Jehovah's love for Jerusalem

"Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion
More than all the dwellings of Jacob"

There is always a good and substantial reason for every choice and decision which the Lord makes. From what we know of His character and His attitude toward all His creatures, one who knows the Scriptures reaches the conclusion that the Lord's choice of Zion was dictated by a most earnest desire to bring the greatest blessing to the largest number in the shortest length of time. In His dealings with humanity, He has to respect man's own individuality and freedom of choice as He attempts to bring the fullness of His blessings to all. In keeping with these general principles, the Almighty was led to select Jerusalem—because of its strategical and psychological importance—in reaching most effectually His Chosen People, and through them in bringing His blessing to the entire world. We may conclude, therefore, that, with impartiality but with a burning desire to bless all, He has loved and selected Jerusalem above all the dwellings of Jacob. At the present time we may not be able to see all that was involved in this choice; but, when that which is perfect is come, we shall clearly see and understand.

III. The future glories of Jerusalem

"Glorious things are spoken of thee,
O city of God."

Jerusalem is properly called the "city of God" because He has personally chosen it to be the place of His dwelling among men. After the Lord had chosen Jerusalem as His special place of rest--while the

tabernacle and later Temple were standing--the Shekinah of glory, His visible presence, resided there. Because of this fact Jerusalem was called the city of God. In the future, however, it will be the city of God because God himself, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, will reside there. As proof of this assertion, note Psalm 48:

"Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised,
In the city of our God, in his holy mountain.
Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth,
Is mount Zion, *on* the sides of the north,
The city of the great king" (vss. 1,2).

From these lines we see that Jehovah God is personally to dwell in Zion, in His holy mountain. When this prediction is fulfilled, Jerusalem will be the joy spot of the whole earth. At that time it will be the city of the great King, the Lord Jesus Christ, when He returns in glory and takes His great power and reigns from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. Then will be fulfilled the prophetic utterance which declares, "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of Jehovah, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the stubbornness of their evil heart" (Jer. 3:17).

There will be great topographical changes that will take place in Israel, and that will prepare it for the great millennial reign of our Lord. An examination of Ezekiel, chapters 47-48, shows that the greater portion of the country will be divided into equal sections. Seven of these will be north of the great mountain in the south-central part of the land and five of them south of it. Each of these will be allotted to one of twelve tribes. This great high mountain in the land of Israel is called by the Prophet Ezekiel the "holy oblation." This mountain will be 25,000 reeds wide and 25,000 reeds deep. According to conservative estimates five hundred reeds make one mile. The width therefore of this holy oblation will be 50 miles in its depth. It will be divided into three sections, the northern one of which will be fifty miles from east to west and twenty miles from north to south. In the central portion of this rectangular plot will be one square mile which will be the location of the millennial Temple. The priests, the sons of Zadoc, will occupy this northern strip of land. The next section of this territory will be fifty miles wide--from east to west--and twenty miles deep, from north to south. This will be given to the Levites. On the extreme southern portion of the hill will be the third division, which will also be fifty miles from east to west. This portion will be ten miles deep, from north to south. In the central part of this last section will be the city of Jerusalem, which will be nine miles broad and nine miles deep. Surrounding it on all sides will be the suburbs to the city, the width of which will be one-half of a mile. Thus from the extreme northern boundary of this cities-suburbs on the north to the extreme southern boundary to the south will be ten miles. The city of Jerusalem, then, with its suburbs will cover one hundred square miles. The land on either side of the royal city will be for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. There will flow forth from this great city a river which will divide, part flowing toward the east and part toward the west. This is the river, "the streams whereof make glad the city of God" (Ps. 46:4). The name of this city will be Jehovah-Shammah, which means "Jehovah is there."

Isaiah was given glorious visions of this marvelous city as it will be in the great Millennial Age. For instance, in Isaiah 33:17-22 is a very vivid, graphic description of Jerusalem of that time, when the king in all His beauty will be there. Another picture of the millennial Jerusalem is found in Isaiah 2:1-4. From this passage

we see that people will go up there like a constant stream from all quarters of the globe in order that they might worship Jehovah of hosts, the God of Jacob, who will be there in person. We see the same picture set forth by Zephaniah in 3:14-17. In the view of the repeated declarations that Jehovah will reign personally in the city of Jerusalem of that day and time, we come to the conclusion that these are predictions of the personal reign of Jesus Christ upon this earth during the Millennial Age. There is no wonder then, that the psalmist in the hymn which we are studying declared that glorious things are spoken of Jerusalem, the city of God.

IV. The converted world

"I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon as among them that know me:
Behold, Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia: This one was born there" (vs. 4).

Looking out upon the world as it will be at this future time, the psalmist mentioned several nations that will be converted to Jehovah. For instance, he named the following ones: Rahab (which is Egypt) and Babylon. Along with them are Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia. Egypt and Babylon were mighty world-powers and oppressors of Israel at various times. The Philistines, who dwelt in the plains west of the Judean hills, constantly fought against the Israelites and made life miserable for them. Tyre, which is on the seacoast north of Israel, was the mart of the world when she was at the zenith of her power. She dictated more or less the policies of international trade and commerce. Ethiopia, on the extreme southern limit of the psalmist's political horizon, is likewise mentioned as being among those nations that will be recognized as servants of God. From Psalm 45 we see a picture of the converted world rendering homage and worship to King Messiah. The Assyrians and the Egyptians are mentioned in Isaiah, chapter 19, as being blessed of the Lord at this future day, along with the children of Israel. At that time there will be a highway connecting Egypt with Assyria which of course will run through Israel and by Jerusalem. Many are the utterances of the prophets concerning all nations' returning to God and worshipping Him. For instance, in Psalm 22 we have this language:

"All the ends of the earth shall remember and return to Jehovah;
And all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.
For the kingdom is Jehovah's;
And he is the ruler over the nations" (vss. 27,28).

In keeping with this prophecy is the following verse in Psalm 86:

"All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord: And they shall glorify thy name" (vs. 9).

V. The remnant of Israel

"Yea, of Zion it shall be said, This one and that one was born in her; And the most High himself will establish her" (vs. 5).

Although, according to verse 4, the various nations will come, accept the true and living God, worship Him, and be recognized by Him, there will yet remain a clear line of distinction between Israel and the Gentile nations at that time. This is what might be expected, for according to Balaam's prophecy:

"Lo, it is a people that dwelleth alone,
And shall not be reckoned among the nations.
Who can count the dust of Jacob,
Or number the fourth part of Israel?
Let me die the death of the righteous,
And let my last end be like his!" (Num. 23:9,10).

Jehovah will count the people of Israel when He "writeth up the peoples." This is seen in Psalm 87:6. According to this statement God will write up all the peoples of earth, but He will write up the nation of Israel separately. This thought is in perfect accord with a statement found in Isaiah 4:3 which declares: "And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem ..." Ezekiel looked forward to the time when God will write up, not only the Israelites, but also the people of all nations. Having especially the false prophets in mind, Ezekiel declared, "... they shall not be in the counsel of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord Jehovah" (Ezek. 13:9). At this future time, anti-Semitism will be a thing of the past. The Jews no longer will be ashamed of their nationality. At that time "One shall say, I am Jehovah's; and another shall call *himself* by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto Jehovah, and surname *himself* by the name of Israel" (Isa. 44:5). From these quotations we will see that there will be a perfect register of all the saved of the remnant of Israel as well as those of other nations at that future time when the vision of Psalm 87 will be fulfilled.

VI. Jerusalem established by Jehovah himself

"And the Most High himself will establish her (Jerusalem)" (vs. 5). The establishing of Jerusalem together with the entire earth, mentioned in this passage is that which is foretold in Psalm 93:1c: "The world also is established, that it cannot be moved." Israel is an earthquake zone and has been shaken often by earthquakes. Amos dates his prophecy as having been communicated to him "two years before the earthquake" (Amos 1:1). That there will be great seismic disturbances in Israel is foretold by David in Psalm 60:2: "Thou hast made the land to tremble; thou hast rent it: Heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh."

In the very middle of the great Tribulation, Jerusalem will be shaken by a mighty earthquake, which will destroy one-tenth of the city and kill seven thousand persons (Rev. 11:13). According to Revelation 16:17-21 there will be at the end of the Tribulation the mightiest earthquake that has ever rocked this earth. At that time every city--including Jerusalem--will be leveled to the ground.

But when Psalm 87 is fulfilled, this old earth will be stabilized by the mighty power of our Lord at His second coming. Jerusalem at that time will be established and never will there be another earthquake that will shake it--so long as the sun, moon, and earth endure. Our Lord at that time will reign upon the earth for one thousand years.

But let us remember that, at the conclusion of His thousand years' reign, the heavens and earth which now are and which are those that will exist during the Millennial Age will pass away. Our Lord declared in the "sermon on the Mount" that heaven and earth shall pass away, but that His words shall not. He literally foretold the passing out of existence of the present material universe. John in Revelation 20:11, told us that this passing away of the heavens and earth occurs at the judgment seat of the great white throne. But during the millennial reign of Christ Jerusalem will be, as we have already seen, located on the southern extremity of that mountain in the heights of Israel. It will indeed be the city of the great King. Never will the least tremor disturb anyone. It will be the symbol of the strength and power of Almighty God.

But at the end of the Millennium--at the great white throne--the material universe, as just stated, will pass out of existence. Then, according to Revelation 21:1, God will create the eternal heavens and the eternal earth. When that is done the eternal Jerusalem will come down out of the eternal heavens and rest upon the eternal earth. We must not associate the predictions found in Revelation, chapters 21 and 22, with those which foretell the new heavens and the new earth given in such passages as Isaiah 65:17; 66:22-24; and II Peter, chapter 3. The new heavens and the new earth of these later passages are the millennial heavens and earth which God creates anew in order to make possible the great reign of our Lord. The new heavens and the new earth of Revelation, chapters 21 and 22, are the eternal order that is brought into existence at the conclusion of the Millennial Age.

VII. Ascription of universal praise to Almighty God

"They that sing as well as they that dance *shall say*,
All my fountains are in thee."

It is in God that man lives, moves, and has his continual being (Acts 17:28). According to our Psalmist God is the fountain of all things for man. We owe to Him our life, breath, and all things. Even today we can say, "For with thee is the fountain of life: In thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 36:9). But when the vision of Psalm 87 is fulfilled all men--both Jews and Gentiles--will exultantly exclaim that their fountain is indeed in Jehovah. All will rejoice in Him and render praise and homage to Almighty God.