Text: Psalm 48
Title: God's Greatness in Zion
Truth: The greatness of God reflected in His holy city calls us to worship.
Date/Location: Lord's Table October 5, 2025 at FBC

Introduction

Psalm 48 uses the word Zion (v. 2, 11, 12). Zion is a trigger word today because some people immediately jump in their minds from it to *Zionism*. That label seems to mean two things. First, *Zionism* a movement that seeks to establish and maintain a homeland for the Jewish people under their control. This is a negative to some who believe the movement is imperial or colonial in that it displaced or continues to displace native peoples from the land of Palestine. Second, it is sometimes used to refer to the idea that Jewish people are trying to take over the world economies and government. This is known as the international Jewish conspiracy, which got it start from a literary forgery known as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* which was published in Russia in 1903. A more recent variation of this is called the Zionist Occupied Government conspiracy.

In the Psalm, *Zion* does not mean any of that. It is another historical name for Jerusalem, the city where God dwelt with the ancient Jews in their temple. The word is first used in the Bible in 2 Samuel 5:7 when David conquered the City of David, also known as Zion, and took it from the Jebusites. This was a portion of the city of Jerusalem where Jewish worship was focused for centuries of history. So, let us set aside any difficult thoughts about the name, and hear what God has to say through the Sons of Korah.

These men were descendants of Korah who was a descendant of Kohath, who was himself the middle son of Levi. These descendants of Korah wrote Psalms 42, 44-49, 84-85, 87-88.

I. The Message

A. To the authors, whose work centered in Jerusalem, Zion did not just represent a city's territory or its beautiful buildings or its inhabitants. Rather, *Zion represented God* because God's residence was there in the temple, and so His glory shone there and His

power was manifest from there. The big deal therefore is not a city; it is the God of the city. The city's beauty, and its burden to the nations, and its eternal longevity, and its joy all represent God—God's beauty, and God's power against the nations, and God's eternality and the joy we get from God and His faithfulness to sustain the city. (And, although not mentioned in the Psalm, His promise to rebuild it in the future.)

B. We see this God-centeredness of the Psalm when read the following snippets: Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; God is in her palaces; God will establish it forever; we have thought, O God, on Your lovingkindness; Your name, O God; Your praise; Your right hand; Your judgments; "For this is God, Our God forever and ever."

C. Our message in this service is simply to worship our God because of his greatness and lovingkindness.

II. God's Glory Calls Believers to Praise Him (1-3)

A. The psalm is a song that starts out "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised." From what you already know about God, this is true. As we gather around the Lord's Table, we know this is true in even more ways than the ancient Israelite could know. God has been great toward us.

B. The beauty of the ancient city of Jerusalem reminded the sons of Korah that it was God who gave them the city, who helped them to build it, who resided there in His temple. It was His city, His holy mountain, set aside for Him, it was beautiful in that it was raised up above the surrounding countryside, it was the city of the great King. God was her refuge, protector, and he resided in her palaces.

III. God's Power Repulses the Unbelieving Nations (4-8)

A. The subject matter shifts quite a bit in verses 4-7. The psalm speaks of the kings of nations coming against the city and its people. When they recognize God in her, they flee away. Of course, sometimes in history this did not happen. But other times it indeed has been true that they feared God and were troubled like a

woman in childbirth or sailors on the high seas when God sends a terrible wind.

B. I have included verses 8 because although the nations wish to extinguish the lamp of God in Jerusalem, the city of God is eternal. God will establish it forever, no thanks to the world's powers.

C. We know Zion will exist in a glorified and grander state in the millennial kingdom and in eternity. However, there are bumps in the road both in the present and in the future Tribulation.

D. Like Jerusalem and the entire nation of Israel are a heavy stone to the world today, and like how many people in the world have a blinding rage against Israel, so it is against believers. We are a fragrance of life to those who are being saved, but a stench of death to those who reject God. The nations oppose Jerusalem, and Christ's church, but thanks to God that eventually they will be troubled and hasten away with fear and trembling before the God of the universe.

IV. God's Love Calls for Worldwide Praise and Rejoicing (9-11)

A. When God's people reflect on his lovingkindness at the place of worship, they conclude that God's name is worthy of praise in every corner of the globe. God's work in the one city of Jerusalem is not meant to stay there alone; it is meant to spread throughout the whole earth and bring praise—and joy, and righteousness, etc. everywhere. The world is ignorant that destroying Jerusalem actually is to *their own hurt*.

B. The sons of Korah call the people to be glad and rejoice because of God's judgments. These judgments are the decisions He makes in righteousness.

C. I call on us to remember and think about God's lovingkindness here in the midst of our church. It demands our praise in every part of our world, in every part of our lives.

V. God's Faithfulness Urges Us to Tell the Next Generation (12-14)

A. One way to imagine verses 12-13 is that worshippers arrive at Jerusalem and walk about the city to take in its beauty and magnificence. Or, those who live in the vicinity will walk about to just take in the scene. They will make an accounting of all the significant aspects of the city—towers, bulwarks, and palaces. These defenses represent that God is a defense to them, a refuge in time of trouble, a protector from the enemy.

They make this accounting in order to tell the next generation, because they are not always able to see this great city. Only several times a year, if that, are they able to travel to it.

B. The constancy and faithfulness of God to maintain this city with all of her towers and bulwarks helped the people to trust in Him. And to proclaim that they will trust God all the way to the end of their lives. God will guide us even to death. What an expression of faith!

C. The sons of Korah were brought to praise by something significant in their lives—their holy city. We do not have that, but we have other things that we can testify to about God's greatness.

Conclusion

You can imagine when the city was eventually destroyed what this did to the feelings of the people of Israel. They caused the destruction, of course, by abandoning their God, pushing Him out of their society, worshipping idols, looking to the nations for help, etc. This triggered the curse-clauses of the Mosaic Covenant.

The true people of God were devastated. Psalm 137:1-5 give a little window into their mindset.

You could not be a faithful Jewish person and despise the city of God. Nor can you be a Christian and despise His church. Your attitude toward it reflects your attitude toward God, because like God was in Zion and His glory was manifested there, so God is in His church, and His glory is manifested there too.

MAP