

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

Bereans Sunday School
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Psalm 48 — Zion, City of the Great King

1.0 Introducing Psalm 48

- Psalm 48 is another of the “Psalms of Zion” (46, 48, 76, 84, 87, and 122).
- Like Psalms 46 and 47, Psalm 48 commemorates a great deliverance from an enemy (48:4-7). See Psalm 46 notes for the possible historical setting.
- As in Psalm 47:2, 48:2 speaks of God as a “great King.”

Reading Psalm 48 (NAU)

- 48:1** A Song; a Psalm of the sons of Korah.
Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised,
In the city of our God, His holy mountain.
- 48:2** Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth,
Is Mount Zion *in* the far **north**,
The city of the great King.
- 48:3** God, in her palaces,
Has made Himself known as a stronghold.
- 48:4** For, lo, the kings assembled themselves,
They passed by together.
- 48:5** They saw *it*, then they were amazed;
They were terrified, they fled in alarm.
- 48:6** Panic seized them there,
Anguish, as of a woman in childbirth.
- 48:7** With the **east** wind
You break the ships of Tarshish.

- 48:8** 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 her forever. Selah.
- 48:9** We have thought on Your lovingkindness, O God,
In the midst of Your temple.
- 48:10** As is Your name, O God,
So is Your praise to the ends of the earth;
Your **right hand** is full of righteousness.
- 48:11** Let Mount Zion be glad,
Let the daughters of Judah rejoice
Because of Your judgments.
- 48:12** Walk about Zion and go around her;
Count her towers;
- 48:13** Consider her ramparts;
Go through her palaces,
That you may tell *it* to the **next** generation.
- 48:14** For such is God,
Our God forever and ever;
He will guide us until death.
- For the choir director.

2.0 Understanding Psalm 48

2.1 Outline

- I. The Lord's Presence in Zion (vv. 1-3)
- II. The Lord's Protection of Zion (vv. 4-7)
- III. The Lord's Promise to Zion (v. 8)
- IV. The Lord's Praise from Zion (vv. 9-11)
- V. The Lord's Promotion by Zion (vv. 12-14)




2.2 Notes

- **vv. 1, 14** Focus on God
 - God Himself is the focus of attention in vv. 1 and 14. “Our God” forms an inclusio that brackets the entire psalm.
 - Psalm 48, which seems to sing the praises of Zion, is really a praise to Zion’s God. Zion is great and beautiful because of Him.
- **vv. 2, 7, 10, 13** North-East-South-West
 - “Right hand” (*yamin*, cf. Yemen) is also used for “south” (Psalm 89:12).
 - “After” or “following” is sometimes used for “west” (Isaiah 9:12).
 - These cardinal compass points may be used to outline the psalm: **North** (vv. 1-3), **East** (vv. 4-7), **South** (vv. 9-11), **West** (vv. 12-14), and v. 8 is the center.—Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Psalms 1–72*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 173.

- v. 2 “Beautiful in elevation”
 - “From the north, west, and east, and even from the immediate south, the way to Zion is uphill, which is why the psalms always speak of going ‘up’ to Jerusalem.”—James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1996), 2:403.
 - “Just as Gihon was not much of a river (46:4), Zion was not much of a mountain, compared with the heights of the north; but it was God’s mountain, and that made it *beautiful in its loftiness*.”—Wilcock, *The Message of Psalms 1–72*, 174.

 - v. 2 “Mount Zion in the far north”
 - The Temple was built on Mt. Moriah (2 Chronicles 3:1) north of the citadel of Zion, the city of David (2 Samuel 5:7).
 - Compare Isaiah 14:13.
 - NIV: “like the utmost heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion.”
 - Zaphon can be translated “north” or transliterated as the proper name of a mountain the Canaanites believed was the dwelling place of El. In other words, Mt. Zion is the dwelling place of God.

 - v. 5 *Veni, vidi, vici*.
 - Note the verbs and the quick pace of the poem: “They saw ... they were amazed ... They were terrified ... they fled.”

 - v. 7 “the ships of Tarshish”
 - Large, seagoing ships.
 - See 1 Kings 10:22.
 - Compare 1 Kings 22:48 (see 2 Chronicles 20:37).
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- vv. 8, 9 “As we have heard, so have we seen”
 - God’s miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem from their enemies provided a powerful illustration of what Israel had heard from past generations.
 - After seeing, the people meditate on the God’s unfailing love.

 - v. 11 “the daughters of Judah”
 - This phrase is an idiom referring to the towns and villages of Judah.

 - v. 13 “tell it to the next generation”
 - *What is the legacy you are leaving for your children and grandchildren?*
 - Are you including an account of your spiritual journey and the evidences of God’s faithfulness to you?

 - v. 14 “He will guide us until death”
 - “God leads us even to the point of death. The NIV’s ‘even to the end’ seems to water that down unnecessarily.”—Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 744.

3.0 Singing Psalm 48

Lead Me Gently Home, Father

Lead me gently home, Father,
Lead me gently home,
When life's toils are ended
And parting days have come;
Sin no more shall tempt me,
Ne'er from Thee I'll roam,
If Thou'lt only lead me, Father,
Lead me gently home.

*Lead me gently home, Father,
Lead me gently home
Lest I fall upon the wayside,
Lead me gently home.*

Lead me gently home, Father,
Lead me gently home,
In life's darkest hours, Father,
When life's troubles come;
Keep my feet from wand'ring,
Lest from Thee I roam,
Lest I fall upon the wayside,
Lead me gently home.

Refrain

— Will L. Thompson (1879)

Zion's King Shall Reign Victorious

(**Tune:** "Glorious Things of Thee
Are Spoken")

Zion's King shall reign victorious,
All the earth shall own His sway;
He will make His kingdom glorious,
He will reign through endless day.

*Mighty King, Thine arm revealing,
Now Thy glorious cause maintain,
Bring the nations help and healing,
Make them subject to Thy reign.*

Nations now from God estrangèd,
Then shall see a glorious light,
Night to day shall then be changèd,
Heaven shall triumph in the sight.

Refrain

Then shall Israel, long dispersèd,
Mourning seek the Lord their God,
Look on Him Whom once they piercèd,
Own and kiss the chastening rod.

Refrain

— Words: Thomas Kelly (1806)
Music: Franz J. Haydn (1797)

4.0 Praying Psalm 48

- Be exalted and be great, O Lord God. [v. 1]
- May the kings of the earth be amazed at Your works, O God. [vv. 4, 5]
- Focus my thoughts on Your lovingkindness and steadfast loyalty. [v. 9]
- Father, guide me till the day I go to be with You. [v. 14]
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5.0 Applying Psalm 48

- Any place is great and beautiful when God's presence is there.
- We need to meditate on God's faithful love and leave a spiritual legacy for our children.
- God is our Guide even unto death.