

STUDIES IN PSALMS

lowing the petition is a reason for answer based on a tribute of God. Find them and incorporate them into life and prayer.

3. This prayer is "full of the Lord"; He is mentioned 16 times. It is also full of the psalmist or David—he mentions himself 35 times. How shall we reconcile this thought?
4. "Unite my heart to fear thy name"—(vs. 116). What a tragic loss is a divided heart. The heart is: will, conscience, emotions and intellect.

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DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Glorious Destiny of Zion as the Metropolis of the Nations.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3, Jehovah's Preferential Love for Zion Declared.
Stanza II., vers. 4-6, The Glorious Things Spoken of Zion. A Chorus of Exultation.

(Lm.) Psalm—Song.

- 1 (2) His foundation, on the Holy Mountains 2 Jehovah loveth,—¹
the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.
- 3 Glorious things are spoken of thee O city of God!
- 4 "I will mention Rahab² and Babylon as of them who know³ me,
lo! Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia—"This one was born there!" "
- 5 And of Zion it shall be said—"One after another was born in her!"
and he himself will establish her as highest.⁴
- 6 Jehovah will record when enrolling peoples "This one was born there."

1. Or: (taking previous words as an abrupt heading) carry forward "Jehovah loveth" to next line.

2. That is "Egypt," as in 89:11, Isa. 30:7, 51:9.

3. Or: "acknowledge," as in 1:6 and elsewhere.

4. Cp. Deu. 26:19, 28:1.

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7 As well singing as dancing—"All my fountains are in thee!"

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) For dancings to responsive songs.

PARAPHRASE

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High on His holy mountain stands Jerusalem,¹ the city of God, the city He loves more than any other!

3 O City of God, what wondrous tales are told of you!

4 Nowadays when I mention among my friends the names of Egypt and Babylonia, Philistia and Tyre, or even distant Ethiopia, someone boasts that he was born in one or another of those countries.

5 But someday the highest honor will be to be a native of Jerusalem! For the God above all gods will personally bless this city.

6 When He registers her citizens He will place a checkmark beside the names of those who were born here!

7 And in the festivals they'll sing, "All my heart is in Jerusalem."

EXPOSITION

Two chief questions here present themselves: First, *what city* is this of which *glorious things* are said to be spoken? And, second, what is the *sum* of the glorious things affirmed of her?

I. The answer to the first question is easy, to the candid mind: The historical Jerusalem is the city meant,—whether regard be had to the name she bears, to the description given of her, to the countries with which she is here associated, or to the book in which the psalm is found. She is called *Zion*—one of the most familiar names of Jerusalem; she sits on *holy mountains*—a description of the hills of Palestine on which Jerusalem was built, and to no others; she is called *the city of God*, because Jehovah there took up his symbolical abode, and made her the seat of his Messianic King; she is brought into comparison with *the dwellings of Jacob*, as more loved than they,—*Jacob* being a favourite name borne by the nation of Israel; she is related here in the psalm to *Rahab* (Egypt), *Babylon*, *Philistia*, *Tyre*,

1. Literally, "Zion."

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and *Ethiopia*: nations known to have existed in the day of Jerusalem's ancient story and to have had dealings with the Hebrew nation. Add the fact, that this psalm is found in a collection of Israelitish songs, and the evidence is as complete as the most exacting could wish: That Jerusalem is the city engemmed in this psalm.—No objection can be raised against this conclusion, by merely alleging that the *glorious things* spoken of this *city of God* are *too glorious* ever to be made good of the earthly Jerusalem, unless we are quite sure that the *glorious things* are altogether beyond Jehovah's power and will to make her own. In fine, this psalm, if never yet fulfilled, itself implies that Jerusalem *has a future*;—and why should she not? Numerous concurrent prophecies plainly teach the same thing: implies that Jerusalem will be made *more glorious* in the future than in the past,—and why should she not? again, many prophecies point to the same conclusion.

II. What then is the *sum* of the *glorious things* spoken of Jerusalem?

1. Let us remember that we have here a word for Jehovah, the Living God, the God of all the earth: of whom we have lately read: "All nations which thou hast made will come in and bow down before thee O Lord, and give glory to thy name; for great art thou, and a doer of wonders, Thou art God alone." It may be, then, that here we have an intimation of some of the "wonders" which he purposes to do for and with the nations of the earth.

2. A hint is here given, at the outset of this psalm, to expect something *fundamental* in Jehovah's dealings with Israel and the earth: *His foundation on the holy mountains Jehovah loveth*. "Foundation"—of *what*? Not of his Church; for that has no earthly foundation, and is not an earthly structure—its home is in the heavens. But of his *Kingdom*—yes; seeing that "the kingdom of the world" is to become "the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15). The *foundation*—of his kingdom—*Jehovah loveth*; and that foundation is *Zion, the city of God*.

3. It is clear that pre-eminence of some kind is here reserved for *Zion*. Other places are mentioned as well as "Zion"; but there is a manifest intention to place "Zion" higher than the rest. *Egypt and Babylon* are described as *knowing* or even *acknowledging* Jehovah, and that is much. Nevertheless, it is not regarded as a special privilege to have been *born* in *Egypt, Baby-*

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lon, Philistia, Tyre or Ethiopia. It is quite the contrary with Zion. For, although Jehovah is represented as taking a census of the *peoples* in general, and thereby shewing an interest in them all, yet it is only when he comes to the names of certain individuals among the rest, that he exclaims—as if with the joy of a proprietor discovering his own property, or of a father detecting the names of his own children—*This one was born there*. That is, not “here” in Egypt (or, as the case may be); but *there*—in Zion. When, however, Zion herself is passed in review, the language is intentionally different: it is no longer “This one”; but, more sweepingly, (lit.) *Man and man=man after man=one after another—was born in her*. The multiplication of Zion’s children is the least that can be intended: their *indefinite* multiplication, as in a series ever running on, may very well be meant, as many critics suppose. In this concrete and dramatic way the preference of “Zion” to all other cities is plainly shewn.

4. But we are not left to inference in concluding this intention to be dominant: the second half of ver. 5 appears to have been expressly intended to put this beyond doubt. If, with most critics, we render that clause, *He himself, the Most High, will establish her*,—it is still obvious that this is said of no other city or nation. Even then—taking the clause at its minimum value—it seems expressly designed to guard against the fear of Zion’s supremacy being endangered by her very prosperity, by the very multiplication of her children: a natural fear, surely,—if such children are *adopted* children, that is, Gentile converts counted as citizens of Zion; in which case, it might be feared that, with so *many* adopted children scattered throughout the nations of the earth, Zion herself would be de-Zionised, and made nearly as much Gentile as any avowed Gentile city. No! says this clause: *the Most High himself* will guard against that danger—will see to it that she does not lose the pre-eminence he designs her to have: He will *establish her* in it. So much, *at the least*, this clause means. But it is now submitted with confidence that, rightly rendered, it says more: it says—*And he himself will set her up (or establish her) as highest*. This point could scarcely have been missed if it had been observed that the same word (*‘elyon*) is not only employed of the Messianic King in David’s line “Highest (*‘elyon*) of (or to) the kings of the earth” (89:27) but is actually twice used of Israel *as a nation* in Deu. 26:19, 28:1—“Jehovah (hath avowed) that he will set thee (*‘elyon*) on

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high, above all the nations of the earth." There can therefore be no reasonable doubt, especially if the order of the words here in the psalm is considered—that this clause should be rendered: *And he himself will establish her as highest*: namely, he will do that which the psalm as a whole attests to be his purpose; and so he will guard against the danger of Zion's being lowered by the very multiplication of her citizen-converts. Jehovah intends her to be *highest*; and will take care that his intention in this respect is not frustrated.

5. But the more clearly this leading point in the psalm is discriminated, the more urgent does it become to grasp with firmness and tenacity a position already taken in passing: namely, that this psalm fully and directly, in its length and breadth, relates, not to the Church of Jesus, but more broadly to the Kingdom of God. For, let it be well observed, there is neither Jew nor Gentile in the Church; and, in the Church, certainly no such pre-eminence can be assigned to the *literal Zion* as is here assigned to her. Let us make up our minds. Does membership in the Church of Christ constitute us citizens of the earthly Jerusalem? So few will dare to say "Yes" to this question, that they may safely be disregarded. Practically, all Christians, with one voice, admit and proclaim that *our* "new birth" makes us citizens, not of the earthly Jerusalem, but of the heavenly. To abide by that conclusion, is no doubt to cut ourselves logically free from this psalm, since, as we have seen, *IT* unmistakably refers to the earthly Jerusalem. To be firm here, is to lose nothing of value, forasmuch as we can still use the psalm *by analogy* as a suggestion of things in the heavens. But, while we shall lose nothing of value, we shall lose much that is an encumbrance, apt to lead us continually into contradicting our heavenly standing and privileges. On the other hand, our gain will be immense: the Church of Christ being safe in her own New Testament rights, as based upon her peculiar promises, we can look beyond the completion of the present Church into the Kingdom which is to follow; and see a large territory of blessing in those regions beyond; and humbly claim a general right to those blessings in the name of our Heavenly Lord, who owns earth as well as heaven; and is the Redeemer of Israel and Jerusalem's King-elect, as well as Head of his Ecclesia.

6. With the ground thus cleared of misconception, we can rejoice exceedingly in the prospect of blessings, in the coming Kingdom, which thus opens out before us. Jerusalem, restored—

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to her God, to her Messiah, to her Land—thus becomes the spiritual Metropolis of the peoples that are spared to enter into this latter-day comity of nations. Citizens of the honoured city Jerusalem will be found scattered through the nations. Jerusalem will be their spiritual home: frequently will these citizen converts go up to Jerusalem to worship: the mountain of the Lord's House—the Temple restored—will be lifted up above the hills, and all nations will flow unto it. The Messiah will reign there: his will—his law—his instructions for the guidance of the nations—will be made known there, and propagated from thence. To fill out the picture would require the transcription of the prophecies in Isaiah and elsewhere. See especially Isa. 2:2-4, 4:2-6, 19:21-24, 25:6-9, 54, 60, 66:7-22, Zeph. 3:14-20: with respect to which it should be observed—that they have only to be taken in their natural and obvious sense to suit them for being set in the frame-work which this psalm affords:—"their natural and obvious sense"—as opposed on the one hand to the purely allegorical and prematurely spiritualised interpretation, from which nothing comes out as it goes in, nothing really means what it appears to mean; and, on the other hand, as opposed to the *slavishly* literal, which, for example, insists that this enumeration of nations (in Ps. 87) must be pressed just as it stands, although it had of necessity to be fitted to the time when the psalm was composed, and be intelligible then, and that it may not be taken as indicating generally the larger and smaller nations by whom Zion is surrounded in the latter day. Holding thus to "the natural and obvious sense" of this psalm, and of the prophecies which properly go with it and explain it,—we can enter with appreciation into the concluding verse of the psalm.

7. Though other interpretations have been put upon ver. 7, the following appears to be its meaning. We are allowed to catch a glimpse of a procession of Zion's citizens—if of such as ordinarily dwell in foreign lands so much the better—drawing near to enter into her *gates*. They are full of joy: they *sing* and *play* and *dance* as they move along. And, looking to the city before them, they exclaim in their song, each speaking for himself: "All my fountains are in thee"—"all my sources of privilege, all my springs of delight *are in thee, O city of God.*" "Better than *the dwellings of Jacob*, better than our homes in *Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, Ethiopia*, where we commonly

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live and labour,—better far than all these, art thou, *O Zion*, object of Jehovah's especial love!"

Logically, we thus close the psalm: analogically we still, for a moment, linger over it. This earthly Jerusalem reminds us of the heavenly; and it is the heavenly that is "our mother" (Gal. 4:26). Just as the earthly Jerusalem is constituted the Metropolis of the earth, so the heavenly Jerusalem is constituted the Metropolis of earth and heaven, brought into a higher unity, including angels and men. We who are now being born from above, are enrolled in Heaven (Heb. 12:23); we are called to become the Bride of the Lamb: all the rights and possessions of our espoused Lord are to be made our own. He is the Son of God as well as the Son of David; and therefore *we* are to "inherit all things." The earthly enrolment lingers: the heavenly is proceeding. Earth, for the present, has refused her King; but Heaven has given him welcome (Acts 3:21); and now, for the present, the heavenly advance has taken the precedence of the earthly. Instead of looking forward into the future to discover *our* Mother-city, *we* look straight up into the skies, and there by faith we behold her, with open arms waiting to receive us. And, as we look up, we exclaim with ecstasy—*All my fountains*—God, Christ, the Spirit, angels, the heirship of the Universe—*all my fountains are in thee.*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is the reference to Jerusalem to be understood only as it means the physical city. Discuss.
2. There seems to be some strong objections to relating the name Jerusalem (as here used) to the church—why? Discuss.
3. Read Isa. 2:2-4; 4:2-6; 19:21-24; 25:6-9; Chapters 54; 60: 66:7-22; Zeph. 3:14-20 and discuss their meaning for us and the future.
4. Is there some "Commonwealth of nations" suggested in verses 4 through 7? Discuss.
5. Do you agree with Rotherham's interpretation? Discuss.