

The City of God
Psalm 48

June 12, 2005

SERMON NOTES

- A. The Jerusalem Appeal – what things make Jerusalem and the Holy Land attractive to believers?

- B. A More Appealing City
 - 1. because
 - a. 2 Peter 3:12–13; the current Jerusalem and Holy Land

 - b. Revelation 21:1–2; there is coming

 - 2. this city
 - a. Philippians 3:20–21; of it we are already

 - b. Hebrews 11:9–10; toward it

 - c. Hebrews 12:22–24; believers have

 - d. Hebrews 13:14; is not temporary, but

- C. Citizenship in this City
 - 1. Psalm 48:9; becoming a citizen is a result of
 - a. John 1:12; by our

 - b. John 3:3, 5; through the

 - c. Ephesians 2:8–9; by God’s

 - 2. Psalm 48:3; the badge of citizenship is the
 - a. 1 Corinthians 3:16; because He

 - b. Ephesians 4:20; so we must take great care

 - 3. Psalm 48:14; the prospect of citizenship
 - a. we can rely upon His

 - b. Hebrews 13:5; for He will

 - c. 1 Corinthians 2:9; our prospect is that we look forward to

- D. Application: these truths tell me that I should

A. The Attraction of Jerusalem and the Holy Land

1. at a pastor's day, a few weeks ago
 - a. in the time we spend before time of prayer and our speaker
 - b. when we stand or sit in little groups
 - c. the subject came up of trips to the holy land
 - (A) someone was just about to lead a trip there
 - (B) others had just recently returned
 - (C) soon a number of the little groups joined as one
 - (D) with questions as
 - (1) did you see?
 - (2) are you going there?
 - (3) did you know?
 - (E) with a great deal of interest being shown by all those present – even those of us who probably will never go
2. I can certainly see why there was this response
 - a. it is one thing to read about a place, quite another to have actually been there
 - b. and this is especially true of the lands of the Bible
 - (A) for, having seen the land, the cities, the town
 - (B) there comes a new life into the pages of Scripture
 - c. Daniel S. Twohig wrote a poem on this matter: —^{2}.

I walked today where Jesus walked,
In days of long ago;
I wandered down each path He knew.
With rev'rent step and slow.
Those little lanes, they have not changed
A sweet peace fills the air.

I walked today where Jesus walked,
And felt His presence there.

My pathway led through Bethlehem,
Ah! Mem'ries ever sweet;
The little hills of Galilee,
That knew those childish fee;
The Mount of Olives: hallowed scenes
That Jesus knew before;
I saw the mighty Jordan roll
As in the days of yore.

I knelt today where Jesus knelt,
Where all alone He prayed;
The Garden of Gethsemane
My heart felt unafraid!
I picked my heavy burden up
And with Him by my side,
I climbed the Hill of Calvary,
I climbed the Hill of Calvary,
I climbed the Hill of Calvary,
Where on the Cross He died!

I walked today where Jesus walked
And felt Him close to me!

3. you can see then, can't you, how attractive is
 - a. this land of Palestine
 - b. this city of Jerusalem
 - c. to those who love the Lord

- d. to those who find nourishment in His word
- e. because of all its history and meaning to us

- 4. a few moments ago, we read through Psalm 48
 - a. so, maybe in a small way you can identify with
 - b. the sons of Korah
 - c. that family of the Levites who led in temple worship
 - d. who wrote this Psalm or for whom it was written as part of their leading in that worship
 - e. in their jubilation and rejoicing about Jerusalem
 - f. and especially about the corner of it known as Zion, or the city of David, where the temple stood
 - g. where daily they would worship the Lord
 - h. which is called "the city of our God"

B. There is a More Attractive City of God

- 1. now, regardless of how appealing, how attractive
 - a. is this earthly land of Palestine
 - b. the physical city of Jerusalem and its environs
 - c. for the child of God there exists something better
 - d. and God intended something better for him or her
 - e. this is apparent because no matter what part Jerusalem and the land of Palestine may play in God's unfolding of history in the future; whatever part they will play in the fulfilment of prophecy,
 - f. that part, that role, that involvement is only temporary
 - g. because, as 2 Peter 3:12–13(NAS) tells us, we are "looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."
 - h. so that the current land and city will disappear when, as we read in Revelation 21:1–2 (NAS): "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." – differing markedly from Jerusalem that now is

2. so children of God of all ages
 - a. have looked beyond this physical land of Palestine
 - (A) beyond this human city of Jerusalem
 - (B) to an eternal, heavenly city of God
 - (C) and have, accordingly, steered their lives
 - (D) not as citizens of some city or country in this world
 - (E) here we are only pilgrims on a journey to our true land
 - (F) because we are even now citizens of the city of God
 - (G) as Paul describes in Philippians 3:20–21 (NAS): “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”
 - b. this theme of the believer’s true home being heavenly is found in the book of Hebrews in a number of instances
 - (A) first, we are told about Abraham the following words:
 - (1) Hebrew 11:9–10 (NAS): “By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”
 - (2) Abraham called by God, set out to follow Him
 - (3) not looking for a city made by men, not Jerusalem which had been built by the Jebusites
 - (4) not to the conditional covenant to him and to his heirs according to the flesh found in Genesis 15
 - (5) but to receive the unconditional promise found in Genesis 12 which was to be realized in Jesus Christ
 - (B) second, then, it is those who are in Jesus Christ, who are accounted the spiritual children of Abraham, those who have the faith of faithful Abraham
 - (1) as are described in Hebrews 12:22–24a (NAS): “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all,

and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, ...”

- (2) now note that for the believer, this is something which has already happened: “you have come”
 - (3) you are now citizens of “the city of the living God”
 - (4) you are now part of “the heavenly Jerusalem”
 - (5) not because your name has been listed in the roll of members of some local church – as important as that may be – but because you “are enrolled in heaven” – your real home!
 - (6) you have joined the throng of witnesses of whom a brief synopsis is given in Hebrews 11, “to the spirits of righteous men made perfect”
- (C) third, as a result of this fact
- (1) of the place of our true citizenship
 - (2) we are reminded in Hebrews 13: 14 (NAS):
 - (3) “For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.”
 - (4) as a result, one hymn-writer has put it ^{–{3}}.

This world is not my own,
I'm only passing through;
My treasures are laid up
Somewhere beyond the blue;
The angels beckon me
From heaven's open door,
And I can't feel at home
In this world any more!

- (5) or another, Stuart Hamblen, has written ^{–{4}}.

My heart can sing when I pause to remember
A heartache here is but a stepping stone
Along a trail that's winding always upward–
This troubled world is not my final home.

3. Finally, on this same theme, Augustine, bishop of Hippo, wrote "The City of God"
 - a. this contrasted the "City of Earth" which was represented by Rome, with all its power and grandeur
 - b. with the "City of God" consisting of, and only of, those who are truly God's children
 - c. and showing that Rome, the former, despite its outward appearance, has no real substance, but even from the days of its greatest nobility was filled with corruption
 - d. while the latter, the church, the true body of Jesus Christ, though outwardly weak, poor, and despised, is the real, eternal city
4. If then, this is the case, if being a citizen of the City of God, a member of this eternal city, is the only thing that really matters in the life of a Christian, how then should we live?

C. Being a Good Citizen of This City

1. Becoming a citizen
 - a. I want to go back to some verses from Psalm 48; first, verse 9 (NAS): "We have thought on Thy lovingkindness, O God, In the midst of Thy temple."
 - b. that word "lovingkindness" – in the Hebrew, hesedh – wraps up in one word what takes several words to say in English: love, mercy, kindness, grace
 - c. which is the first point: you cannot get citizenship in this heavenly city by works, or achievements, or friendship, or by attending church, or belonging to a certain nationality or race, or any of those things
 - d. this citizenship comes by being a child of God, it is a matter of birth – not of our human, natural birth – but that birth that comes from above:
 - (A) John 1:12 (NAS): "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,"
 - (B) John 3:3 (NAS): "Jesus answered and said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'"
 - (C) John 3:5 (NAS) "Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'"
 - (D) this citizenship comes from the new birth that results from our accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as our own personal Saviour
 - e. and, as already mentioned, this new birth does not result from our own merit; we don't earn it; it is

freely given by the grace of God: Ephesians 2:8–9 (NAS): “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”

f. verse 9: “We have thought on Thy lovingkindness, O God, In the midst of Thy temple.”

2. The Badge of Citizenship

a. verse 3 (NAS): “God, in her palaces, Has made Himself known as a stronghold.”

b. one of the things that marked Jerusalem, and especially the temple in its midst, was that God had chosen to dwell there and to put His name upon that city as His own

c. this is what marks us as citizens of heaven, not an external badge, not some card in our wallet nor a passport we carry in our pocket, but rather that God has chosen to dwell within us, that we are to be His temple, His dwelling-place

d. 1 Corinthians 3:16 (NAS): “Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

e. but God is not there just as a passport to heaven, but he is there, being made “known as a stronghold” – a place

(A) where He can work in our lives to His own glory

(B) where His power can flow through us as a witness to God’s saving grace to our family, our friends, and those we encounter on a daily basis

f. so, what kind of temple are we providing for His residence?

(A) is it dusty, damaged, and dingy as that temple in Jerusalem had become in Josiah’s day?

(B) is God’s word active in it, being read daily, or does it lie forgotten amongst the rubble?

(C) a house of prayer, or a storehouse for our own desires?

g. no wonder Paul’s admonition to us, Ephesians 4:30 (NAS): “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

3. The Prospect of Citizenship

a. verse 14 (NAS): “For such is God, Our God forever and ever; He will guide us until death.”

b. at the risk of repeating what has already been said

c. we have a tremendous prospect in being citizens of this heavenly city, this city of God

- d. we join the great list of heroes of the faith of Hebrews 11
 - (A) starting with Abel, who worshipped God through his offering an acceptable sacrifice; one based on faith
 - (B) travelling through such names as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and so on
 - (C) all of whom, obeying God, without knowing, or being told of their final destination, followed God's guidance
- e. this then is our prospect, is that the Lord our God is our God eternally, forever and forever
- f. that as long as we are in this world, in this life
 - (A) while we still "see through a glass darkly"
 - (B) while His glory and His face are still hidden
 - (C) He will be with us and guide us daily
 - (D) Hebrews 13:5b (AV): "...for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."
- g. until we are one day ushered into His very presence
 - (A) "when we shall know {Him} even as we are known"
 - (B) when we realize the promise "However, as it is written: 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him'—" (1 Corinthians 2:9 NIV)

D. How do you plan to spend this week? ... the rest of your life? ... as mere inhabitants of this troubled world? ... or as citizens of the City of God? Come we that love the Lord and let our joys be known ... we're marching to Zion, city of our God!

1. © 2005 by Garth Hutchinson, Faith Fellowship Baptist Church of Aurora (Ontario): may be distributed or quoted freely, only let this be done to the glory “of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

Various English versions of the Holy Bible are used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in [square brackets]. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
NAS	New American Standard version © 1975 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Further sermons and illustrations may be found at the web-site, www.holwick.com. Materials in this sermon from Rev. David Holwick’s database are identified by “Kerux” followed by a sermon or illustration number.

2. A poem by Daniel S. Twohig, © 1937 by G. Schirmer Inc.
3. © (date unknown) by Albert E. Brumley (1905-1977)
4. “Until Then” by Stuart Hamblen (1908–) © 1958 by Hamblen Music Co.