

Great is the LORD, and Most Worthy of Praise

Psalm 48

The book of Psalms was designed to aid in the worship of God by supplying poetic examples of life's ups and downs. Each event or struggle represented in the psalms is punctuated with the triumph and peace that can only be found through heartfelt praise to God. Psalm 48 is a wonderful example of a collision between two contradictory world views. When we read this psalm, we need to be asking some questions. What was the writer's reality? What kind of situation did he find himself in? Where was he running to for help? Whatever his (or our) situation, God had created it and he intends to do something with it.

¹ *I lift up my eyes to the hills--
where does my help come from?*

² *My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.* Psalm 121.1-2

¹ *Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion,
which cannot be shaken but endures forever.*

² *As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
so the LORD surrounds his people
both now and forevermore.* Psalm 125.1-2

The city of Jerusalem and the hill that it sat upon were not very impressive. And yet, the psalmist saw something significant that shaped his world.

¹ *Great is the LORD, and most worthy of praise,
in the city of our God, his holy mountain.*

² *It is beautiful in its loftiness,
the joy of the whole earth.
Like the utmost heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion,
the city of the Great King.*

³ **God is in her citadels;**
he has shown himself to be her fortress.

⁴ *When the kings joined forces,
when they advanced together,*

⁵ *they saw her and were astounded;
they fled in terror.*

⁶ *Trembling seized them there,
pain like that of a woman in labor.*

⁷ *You destroyed them like ships of Tarshish
shattered by an east wind.*

⁸ **As we have heard,
so have we seen**
*in the city of the LORD Almighty,
in the city of our God:
God makes her secure forever.* Selah

⁹ *Within your temple, O God,
we meditate on your unfailing love.*

¹⁰ *Like your name, O God,
your praise reaches to the ends of the earth;
your right hand is filled with righteousness.*

¹¹ *Mount Zion rejoices,
the villages of Judah are glad
because of your judgments.*

¹² *Walk about Zion, go around her,
count her towers,*

¹³ *consider well her ramparts, view her citadels,
that you may tell of them to the next generation.*

¹⁴ **For this God is our God for ever and ever;
he will be our guide even to the end.** Psalm 48

Psalm 48 is a polemic against those who would mock Jerusalem. What was he thinking when he called it a mountain "beautiful in its loftiness"? What was he thinking when he called it "the joy of the whole earth?"

Mount Zaphon, (also known as Mount Hermon), was a divine mountain in the Canaanites mythology and world view. From the psalmist's perspective, we have the true God here in Jerusalem. It was a matter of local pride that was larger than inspiration. He can only say this because of the reality of the truth.

⁵ *This is what the LORD says:*

*"Cursed is the one who trusts in man,
who depends on flesh for his strength
and whose heart turns away from the LORD.*

⁶ *He will be like a bush in the wastelands;
he will not see prosperity when it comes.
He will dwell in the parched places of the desert,
in a salt land where no one lives."*

⁷ *"But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD,
whose confidence is in him.*

⁸ *He will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.
It does not fear when heat comes;
its leaves are always green.
It has no worries in a year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit."* Jeremiah 17.5-8