
A Song. A Psalm by the sons of Korah.

PSALM 48: 1 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, in the city of our God, in his holy mountain.

The ornaments and the privileges of the Church, Psa 48:1-8. The duty of God's people, Psa 48:9-14.

The title: A Song and Psalm for the sons of Korah. To which the Vulgate, Septuagint, Aethiopia, and Arabic add, for the second day of the week; for which I believe it would be difficult to find a meaning. It is evidently of the same complexion with the two preceding, and refers to the Jews returned from captivity; and perhaps was sung at the dedication of the second temple, in order to return thanks to the Lord for the restoration of their political state, and the reestablishment of their worship.

Verse 1

Great is the Lord - This verse should be joined to the last verse of the preceding Psalm, as it is a continuation of the same subject; and indeed in some of Kennicott's MSS. it is written as a part of the foregoing. That concluded with He is greatly exalted; this begins with Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; i.e., He should be praised according to his greatness; no common praise is suited to the nature and dignity of the Supreme God.

In the city of our God - That is, in the temple; or in Jerusalem, where the temple was situated.

The mountain of his holiness - Mount Moriah, on which the temple was built. The ancient city of Jerusalem, which David took from the Jebusites, was on the south of Mount Zion, on which the temple was built, though it might be said to be more properly on Mount Moriah, which is one of the hills of which Mount Zion is composed. The temple therefore was to the north of the city, as the psalmist here states, Psa 48:2 : "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King." But some think that it is the city that is said to be on the north, and Reland contends that the temple was on the south of the city.

PSALM 48: 2 Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the north sides, the city of the great King.

Verse 2

The joy of the whole earth - Commentators have been greatly puzzled to show in what sense Zion, or the temple, could be said to be the joy of the whole earth. If we take the earth here for the habitable globe, there is no sense in which it ever was the joy of the whole earth; but If we take כל הארץ col haarets, as signifying the whole of this land, (and it has no other meaning), the assertion is plain and easy to be understood, for the temple was considered the ornament and glory of the whole land of Judea.

PSALM 48: 3 God has shown himself in her citadels as a refuge.

Verse 3

God is known in her palaces for a refuge - All those who worship there in spirit and truth, find God for their refuge. But the words may be understood: God is known for the defense of her palaces; and with this view of the subject agree the three following verses.

PSALM 48: 4 For, behold, the kings assembled themselves, they passed by together.

Verse 4

For, lo, the kings were assembled - Many of the neighboring potentates, at different times, envied the prosperity of the Jewish nation, and coveted the riches of the temple; but they had no power against it till the cup of Jewish transgression was full. In vain did they assemble - confederate, and invade the land. Saw it - reconnoitered the place; marvelled at its excellence and strength, for they were troubled - struck with fear; hasted away for fear of destruction, for fear took hold on them as pains seize on a woman in travail. Those who came to destroy were glad to make their own escape.

PSALM 48: 5 They saw it, then they were amazed. They were dismayed. They hurried away.

PSALM 48: 6 Trembling took hold of them there, pain, as of a woman in travail.

PSALM 48: 7 With the east wind, you break the ships of Tarshish.

Verse 7

Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish - Calmet thinks this may refer to the discomfiture of Cambyses, who came to destroy the land of Judea. "This is apparently," says he, "the same tempest which struck dismay into the land-forces of Cambyses, and wrecked his fleet which was on the coasts of the Mediterranean sea, opposite to his army near the port of Acco, or the Ptolemais; for Cambyses had his quarters at Ecbatana, at the foot of Mount Carmel; and his army was encamped in the valley of Jezreel." Ships of Tarshish he conjectures to have been large stout vessels, capable of making the voyage of Tarsus, in Cilicia.

PSALM 48: 8 As we have heard, so we have seen, in the city of the LORD of Armies, in the city of our God. God will establish it forever. Selah.

Verse 8

As we have heard, so have we seen - Our fathers have declared what mighty works thou didst in their time; and we have seen the same. God has often interposed and afforded us a most miraculous defense. So it was when they were invaded by the Assyrians, Syrians, Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians and the Greeks under Alexander.

The city of the Lord of hosts - His hosts defended the city, and it was known to be the City of the great King.

God will establish it for ever - This must refer to the true temple, the Christian Church, of which the Jewish Church was a type. The type perished, but the antitype remained, and will remain till time shall be no more.

Selah - So be it; and so it will be for evermore.

PSALM 48: 9 We have thought about your loving kindness, God, in the midst of your temple.

Verse 9

We have thought of thy loving-kindness - We went to thy temple to worship thee; we meditated on thy goodness; we waited for a display of it; and the panic that in the first instance struck us, was transferred to our enemies; and fear took hold upon them, they marvelled, were troubled, and hasted away.

PSALM 48: 10 As is your name, God, so is your praise to the ends of the earth. Your right hand is full of righteousness.

Verse 10

According to thy name - As far as thou art known, so far art thou praised; and where thou art known, thou wilt have praise to the end of the earth. And why? "Thy right hand is full of righteousness." Thou art continually dispensing thy blessings to the children of men.

PSALM 48: 11 Let Mount Zion be glad! Let the daughters of Judah rejoice, Because of your judgements.

Verse 11

Let Mount Zion rejoice - The temple is restored in majesty, which was threatened with total destruction; it is again repaired.

Let the daughters of Judah be glad - That thou hast turned her captivity, and poured out thy judgments upon her oppressors.

PSALM 48: 12 Walk about Zion, and go around her. Number its towers.

Verse 12

Walk about Zion - Consider the beauty and magnificence of the temple, count the towers by which it is fortified.

PSALM 48: 13 Mark well her bulwarks. Consider her palaces, that you may tell it to the next generation.

Verse 13

Mark ye well her bulwarks - See the redoubts by which she is defended.

Consider her palaces - See her courts, chambers, altars, etc., etc.; make an exact register of the whole, that ye may have to tell to your children how Jerusalem was built in troublesome times; how God restored you; and how he put it into the hearts of the heathen to assist to build, beautify, and adorn the temple of our God.

PSALM 48: 14 For this God is our God forever and ever. He will be our guide even to death.

Verse 14

For this God - Who did all these wonderful things: -

Is our God - He is our portion, and he has taken us for his people.

He will be our guide - Through all the snares and difficulties of life: -

Even unto death - He will never leave us; and we, by his grace, will never abandon him. He is just such a God as we need; infinite in mercy, goodness, and truth. He is our Father, and we are the sons and daughters of God Almighty. Even unto and in death, he will be our portion.