

PSALM 48

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 48

A Song [and] Psalm for the sons of Korah

This psalm is entitled a “song psalm”, a psalm to be sung vocally; or “a song and psalm” to be sung both vocally and instrumentally; and is one of the spiritual songs the apostle speaks of, (~~4159~~Ephesians 5:19); It was occasioned, as some think, by David’s spoiling the Philistines, (~~4157~~2 Samuel 5:17-21); or, as others, by the deliverance of the people from the Moabites and Ammonites in the times of Jehoshaphat, (~~4107~~2 Chronicles 20:27,28); or, as others, by the deliverance of the inhabitants of Jerusalem from Sennacherib in the times of Hezekiah, (~~4234~~2 Kings 19:34,35); though as Kimchi, a celebrated Jewish commentator, owns, it belongs to the times of the Messiah, as the other preceding psalms; and treats of his greatness, and of the praise and glory due to him, and gives large encomiums of his church.

Ver. 1. *Great [is] the Lord*, etc.] The same that in the foregoing psalm is said to be gone, up to heaven with a shout, to sit on the throne of his holiness, to reign over the Heathen, and to be King over all the earth; who is great, and the Son of the Highest; the great God and our Saviour; great in his person as God-man, God manifest in the flesh, his Father’s fellow and equal; and in the perfections of his nature, being of great power, and of great wisdom, and of great faithfulness, and of strict holiness and justice, and of wonderful grace and goodness; great in his works of creation and providence; in his miraculous operations when on earth, and in the work of man’s redemption and salvation; great is he in all his offices, a great Prophet risen in Israel, a great High Priest over thee house of God, a Saviour, and a great one, and the great Shepherd of the sheep;

and greatly to be praised in the city of our God; the city of Jerusalem, the city of solemnities, where was the worship of God, and where the tribes went up to worship, and God was present with his people; and where the great Lord of all showed himself to be great; here Christ the great Saviour appeared, even in the temple, when a child, where Simeon and Anna saw

him, and spoke great things of him; where he at twelve years of age disputed with the doctors, and showed his great wisdom; here when grown up he wrought many of his great miracles, and taught his doctrines; here he entered in great triumph, attended with the shouts, acclamations, and hosannas of the people; here he ate his last passover with his disciples; and in a garden near it was he taken and brought before the sanhedrim, assembled at the high priest's palace at Jerusalem; and then tried and condemned at the bar of Pilate; when being led a little way out of the city he was crucified on Mount Calvary; and on another mount, the mount of Olives, about a mile from it, he ascended to heaven; and here in this city he poured forth the Spirit in an extraordinary manner on his disciples at the day of Pentecost, as an evidence of his ascension; and from hence his Gospel went forth into all the world; and therefore was greatly to be praised here, as he was by his disciples, church, and people, (^{<416>}Acts 2:46,47). Jerusalem is a figure of the Gospel church, which is often compared to a city, (^{<230>}Isaiah 26:1 62:12); of which saints are citizens and fellow citizens of each other; this is a city built on Christ the foundation; is full of inhabitants, when together and considered by themselves; is governed by wholesome laws, enacted by Christ its King, who has appointed officers under him to explain and enforce them, and see that they are put in execution; and has many privileges and immunities belonging to it; and this is the city of God, of his building and of his defending, and where he dwells; it is, as in (^{<391>}Psalm 48:2); "the city of the great King", the King Messiah, and where he displays his greatness; here he appears great and glorious, shows his power and his glory; is seen in the galleries and through the lattices of ordinances, in his beauty and splendour; here he grants his gracious presence, and bestows his favours and blessings; and is therefore greatly to be praised here, as he is by all his people on the above accounts, Even

[in] the mountain of his holiness; as Mount Zion is called on account of the temple built upon it, and the worship of God in it; and a fit emblem it was of the church of Christ, which, as that is, is chosen and, loved of God, and is his habitation, is impregnable and immovable, and consists of persons sanctified by God the Father, in the Son, and through the Spirit.

Ver. 2. *Beautiful for situation*, etc.] This, and what follows, are said of the city of God, the city of Jerusalem, which was delightfully situated on an eminence, in a wholesome air; the brook Kidron gliding by it, the water of Siloah running through it or at least through some parts of it; fields and

gardens adjoining to it, and mountains all around it: and so the church of Christ is built upon him, the Rock; the river of divine love runs by it, the streams whereof make it glad; the green pastures of the word and ordinances are in it; and salvation is as walls and bulwarks about it; and so healthful is it, that the inhabitants have no reason to say they are sick, since the people that dwell therein have their iniquities forgiven, (²³³⁴Isaiah 33:24);

the joy of the whole earth: that is, the city of Jerusalem, (²³¹⁵Lamentations 2:15); especially it was so when Christ, whose birth near it was matter of great joy to all people; when he who is the desire of all nations was in it; and when the Gospel went out from it unto the whole earth, and caused joy wherever it came in power, and with the Holy Ghost: and the church of Christ, particularly in the latter day, will be an eternal excellency, and a joy of many generations, (²³¹⁵Isaiah 60:15); and even now the whole world has reason to rejoice and be glad, because of the church of Christ in it, who are the light of the world and the salt of the earth, and on whose account the world continues, and the men of it enjoy the blessings they do;

[is] Mount Zion; or “by Mount Zion”: Jerusalem was near it, and beautifully situated by it;

[on] the sides of the north; Jerusalem was north of Zion, as Zion was south of Jerusalem; likewise the temple was on the north part of Mount Zion, (²³⁴³Isaiah 14:13); the altar and altar gate were on the north side at the temple, and there were the tables on which the sacrifices were slain, (²³⁸⁵Ezekiel 8:5 40:35-40); and on the north side of the altar was the creature to be offered killed, (²³¹¹Leviticus 1:11); and perhaps some reference is here had to the church of Christ in the latter day, which for many years past has been chiefly in our northern part of the world: hence the Protestant doctrine is by the Papists called the Northern Heresy; and it will be “tidings out of the north” that shall trouble the man of sin, or some agent of his, to come forth with fury, and plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas, in the glorious holy mountain, (²⁷¹⁴Daniel 11:44,45);

the city of the great King; of Christ the King of kings; (see Gill on ²⁴⁷²Psalms 47:2”); and (see Gill on ²⁴⁸³Psalms 48:1”).

Ver. 3. *God is known in her palaces for a refuge.*] As there were palaces in Jerusalem; (see ²⁴⁸³Psalms 48:13 122:7); so there are in the church of Christ; every place in it is a palace fit for a king; and everyone that has

truly a name and a place there are kings and priests unto God: and here God is a “refuge” both for saints and sinners to fly unto; (see Gill on “^{<1941>}Psalm 46:1”); and is “known” to be so; the ministers of the Gospel being here appointed to direct and encourage souls to flee to Christ for refuge, who is the hope set before them in the everlasting Gospel, preached by them to lay hold upon; and all that do flee to him know, by experience, that he is a refuge for them; and as all the people of God do in every time of distress, and when all refuge fails them elsewhere.

Ver. 4. *For, lo, the kings were assembled*, etc.] As the princes of the Philistines to seek for David, when in the strong hold of Zion, (^{<1057>}2 Samuel 5:17); as the Ethiopians in the time of Asa, (^{<1440>}2 Chronicles 14:9); and the Moabites and Ammonites in the times of Jehoshaphat, (^{<1401>}2 Chronicles 20:1); and the kings of Syria and Israel in the times of Ahaz, (^{<2301>}Isaiah 7:1); and Sennacherib with his princes, who, in his esteem, were kings, in the times of Hezekiah, (^{<1287>}2 Kings 18:17); which are instances of the kings, of the nations’ gathering together against Zion, the city of Jerusalem, and people of the Jews, who were typical of the church of Christ; and that without success, and to their own confusion and destruction; though this seems to refer to the latter day of the Gospel dispensation, when all the kings of the earth, Pagan, Papal, and Mahometan, will be gathered together at the instigation of Satan, to the battle of the great day of the Lord God Almighty, in a place called Armageddon, where they will be defeated by Christ the King of kings, (^{<663>}Revelation 16:13,14,16 19:19-21). Jarchi and Kimchi interpret the passage of Gog and Magog gathering together to fight against Jerusalem, with which compare (^{<618>}Revelation 20:8,9);

they passed by together; either to the battle, as Jarchi explains it; or they passed by Jerusalem, the city of our God, the church, without entering into it, or doing it any harm.

Ver. 5. *They saw [it]*, etc.] Either the city or the power of God, as Aben Ezra; or, as Jarchi, God himself going forth to fight against the nations. This refers to the power Christ will take to himself, and show forth, by reigning in his church, and protecting it, which will not only be visible to the saints, but to the nations of the world; and to the brightness of Christ’s coming in his spiritual reign, with the lustre of which antichrist will be destroyed, (^{<617>}Revelation 11:17,18 ^{<518>}2 Thessalonians 2:8); and to the glorious state of the church, signified by the rising of the witnesses, and

their standing on their feet, and ascending to heaven, which will be seen by their enemies, (^{<6611>}Revelation 11:11,12); and to the destruction of Rome, the smoke of whose burning, the kings of the earth, that have committed fornication with her, will see and lament, (^{<6608>}Revelation 18:8-10);

[and] so their marvelled: at the glory of the church, the security of it, the power of Christ in it and over it, and at the destruction of mystical Babylon; (see ^{<2324>}Isaiah 52:14,15 13:8 ^{<2544>}Jeremiah 51:41);

they were troubled: as Herod and all Jerusalem were, upon hearing of the birth of Christ, (^{<4003>}Matthew 2:3); so these kings will be, upon seeing the coming and power of Christ in the latter day, the invincibility of his church, and their own immediate and utter ruin: this will be the time or the howling of the shepherds, both civil and ecclesiastical, when all hands will be faint, and every man's heart will melt, (^{<3802>}Zechariah 11:2) (^{<2336>}Isaiah 13:6,7);

[and] hasted away: fled for fear of the great King at the head of his armies, in the defence of his church and people: and as the kings of the earth also at the destruction of Rome will flee and stand afar off, for fear of her torment, (^{<6810>}Revelation 18:10).

Ver. 6. *Fear took hold upon them there,* etc.] That is, either when they came up to the city, and passed by it, and saw what they did; or, as Kimchi observes, in the place where they thought to have made a great slaughter; that is, in Armageddon, (^{<6616>}Revelation 16:16); so upon the slaughter of the seven thousand names of men, or men of name and renown, such as the kings here assembled, the remnant will be frightened, (^{<6613>}Revelation 11:13);

[and] pain, as of a woman in travail; this figure is made use of elsewhere, when the destruction of Babylon and the coming of Christ are spoken of; (see ^{<2338>}Isaiah 13:8 ^{<5100>}1 Thessalonians 5:2,3).

Ver. 7. *Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with east wind.*] This is either another simile, expressing the greatness of the dread and fear that shall now seize the kings of the earth; which will be, as Kimchi observes, as if they were smitten with a strong east wind, which breaks the ships of Tarshish; and to the same purpose is the note of Aben Ezra; who says, the psalmist compares the pain that shall take hold upon them to an east wind in the sea, which breaks the ships; for by Tarshish is meant, not Tartessus in Spain, nor Tarsus in Cilicia, or the port to which the Prophet Jonah went

and took shipping; but the sea in general: or else this phrase denotes the manner in which the antichristian kings, and antichristian states, will be destroyed; just as ships upon the ocean are dashed to pieces with a strong east wind: or it may design the loss of all their riches and substance brought to them in ships; hence the lamentations of merchants, and sailors, and ship masters, (~~cf~~ Revelation 18:15-19).

Ver. 8. *As we have heard, so have we seen*, etc.] These are the words of the people of God making their observations on the above things; and so Aben Ezra and Kimchi understand them of the people of Israel; and the former, referring them to the war of Gog and Magog, paraphrases them thus:

“the Israelites shall say in that day, as we have heard the prophets, who prophesied of the fall of Gog and Magog, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts.”

The words may be understood, either of facts which have been reported and heard to have been done in time past, to which others will correspond, and will be seen to do to in the latter day; as, for instance, as it has been heard that God inflicted plagues upon Egypt; so it will be seen that he will pour out the vials of his wrath upon the great city, which is spiritually called Egypt and Sodom: as it has been heard that God brought his people Israel out of Egypt with a mighty hand; so it will be seen that he will deliver his people from the captivity and tyranny of the man of sin, and will call them out from Babylon a little before the destruction of it: as it has been heard that Pharaoh and his host were drowned in the Red sea; so it will be seen that Babylon shall be thrown down like a mill stone cast into the sea, and be found no more: as it has been heard that, literal Babylon is destroyed; so it will be seen that mystical Babylon will be destroyed also: and as it has been heard that the kings of the nations, at several times, have gathered themselves together against Jerusalem, without effect; so it will be seen that the kings of the earth will assemble together against the church of Christ; but, as soon as they shall come up to her, and look upon her, they shall be astonished and flee with the utmost consternation, fear, and dread, and be utterly ruined: or else the sense is, as it has been heard, from the promises and prophecies delivered out from time to time, that God will grant his presence to his church and people, and will be the protection of them, and will destroy all his and their enemies; so it has been

seen that these have been fulfilled, more or less, in all ages; in the latter day their accomplishment will be full and manifest, even

in the city of the Lord of hosts; of the hosts of heaven and earth, of all armies above and below; and therefore the church must be safe under his protection;

in the city of our God: the covenant God of his people; wherefore, as the former title declares his power, this shows his love and affection, and both together secure the happiness of the saints: wherefore it follows,

God will establish it for ever. Not only particular believers, of which the church consists, are established on the foundation, Christ; but the church itself is built on him, the Rock against which the gates of hell cannot prevail; yet as they are not always in a settled and constant condition, so neither is that, being sometimes tossed with the tempests of afflictions and persecutions, and sometimes in one place, and sometimes in another; but in the latter day it will be established on the top of the mountains; and which is a desirable thing by all the saints, and what they should, as many do, earnestly pray for; and which God will do in his own time; and then it shall be established for ever, and be a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of its stakes shall be removed, nor any of its cords broken, (~~238B~~ Isaiah 2:2 62:7 ~~387B~~ Psalm 87:5) (~~238B~~ Isaiah 33:20).

Selah; on this word, (see Gill on "~~398B~~ Psalm 3:2").

Ver. 9. *We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God*, etc.] Jarchi interprets it, "we have waited for thy lovingkindness"; to see thy salvation; and some, as Ben Melech observes, explain it of hope and expectation; as if the sense was, "we have hoped for thy lovingkindness"; so the Syriac version renders it, and the word used has the signification of tarrying, (~~944B~~ 1 Samuel 14:9). God has his set time to favour his Zion, and till that time comes it is right in them to be hoping, expecting, and waiting for it. The Chaldee paraphrase is, "we have esteemed thy goodness"; it being very excellent, exceeding valuable, and better than life itself; but other Jewish writers, as Menachem, Aben Ezra, Kimchi, and Ben Melech, render it as we do, "we have thought", etc. The lovingkindness of God towards his people in Christ is a very delightful and profitable subject to dwell in meditation upon, to consider the objects, instances, cause, and nature of it; and serves greatly to encourage faith and hope, to draw out love to God, and engage to a ready and cheerful obedience to his will; and this is

sometimes done in public, as well as in private conversation, and in the closet; as follows;

in the midst of thy temple; the church of Christ, which is of his building, where he dwells, and grants his presence, and is often called the temple of God in the New Testament, in allusion to Solomon's temple; (see ^{<418>}1 Corinthians 3:16,17 ^{<416>}2 Corinthians 6:16 ^{<417>}Ephesians 2:21); here the word of God is preached, his ordinances administered, and his presence granted; which are instances of his lovingkindness, and lead his people to think of it; and particularly when the faithful ministers of the Gospel make mention of it, and the ordinance of the supper is administering, which is intended to bring to remembrance the love of God and Christ: moreover, in the latter day, to which this psalm belongs, the temple of God will be opened, (^{<419>}Revelation 11:19 15:5); that is, the true worship of God will be restored, and pure and undefiled religion freely exercised; the Gospel will be clearly and fully preached; and the ordinances administered as they were first delivered, which will lead the saints to think of the lovingkindness of God unto them; and particularly when they shall see the angels with the seven vials the executioners of God's wrath on the antichristian states, go forth from the temple to pour them out upon them, (^{<416>}Revelation 15:6 16:1).

Ver. 10. *According to thy name, O God, so [is] thy praise unto the ends of the earth*, etc.] That is, as he himself is in the perfections of his nature, which are displayed in the works of his hands, throughout the whole creation; so is or ought his praise to be: or rather, as in the latter day his name will be great in all the earth, (^{<3011>}Malachi 1:11); so will his praise be; and as his name will be One, (^{<3849>}Zechariah 14:9); he will be one Lord, there will be one faith and one baptism; his worship, word, and ordinances, will be uniformly observed and attended to; so will be his praise: all the saints will unite together in giving glory to him: he, and he alone, shall be exalted. Moreover, his Gospel is his name, (^{<4195>}Acts 9:15); and that in the latter day will be preached to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, (^{<4146>}Revelation 14:6); and multitudes, both of Jews and Gentiles, will be converted, and from the uttermost parts of the earth will be heard songs of praise and glory unto him, (^{<2345>}Isaiah 24:15,16);

thy right hand is full of righteousness: of all spiritual blessings for his people; and particularly of the righteousness of Christ, which God accepts of, imputes unto, and liberally bestows upon them: and it is also full of

punitive justice, which he inflicts on his and their enemies; his right hand teaches him terrible things, and these terrible things he does in righteousness; all his works are in righteousness, which the right hand, being the instrument of action, is a token of. Moreover, Christ is the right hand of God; he is the man of his right hand, and as dear to him as his right hand; he is the right hand of his righteousness, by which he upholds his people; and this right hand of his is full of righteousness; he does nothing else but righteousness; he is the author and donor of it to his people, and will execute righteousness upon his enemies; in righteousness he will make war with them, (^{<6691>}Revelation 19:11); and which is greatly the sense of this passage, as appears by (^{<4981>}Psalm 48:11).

Ver. 11. *Let Mount Zion rejoice*, etc.] The church in general; (see ^{<4981>}Psalm 48:1,2 ^{<5822>}Hebrews 12:22 ^{<640>}Revelation 14:1);

let the daughters of Judah be glad; particular churches; and so the Targum renders it, “the congregations of the house of Judah”; or particular believers; such as are called the daughters of Jerusalem, and the daughters of Zion, (^{<2380>}Song of Solomon 3:10,11); these are exhorted to joy and gladness, at the loving kindness of God, at the spread of his name and glory to the ends of the earth, and at his righteousness his right hand is full of; and as it follows,

because of thy judgments; executed on the antichristian kings, (^{<4981>}Psalm 48:4-7); and on all the antichristian states, and on the whore of Babylon, and those who have committed fornication with her; (see ^{<6601>}Revelation 19:1,2).

Ver. 12. *Walk about Zion, and go round about her*, etc.] These words are either an address to the enemies of the church, sarcastically delivered; calling upon them to come, and surround, and besiege Zion, and see what the issue and consequence of it will be, even the same as that of the kings, (^{<4981>}Psalm 48:4-6); or to the builders of Zion, as Jarchi observes, to come and take a survey of it, and see what repairs were necessary; or rather to the saints, to the daughters of Judah before mentioned, to take a view of the strength and defence of the church, for their own comfort and encouragement, and to report the same to others for theirs also; for by walking around it may be observed the foundation, the rock and eminence on which it is built, Christ Jesus; the wall of it, the Lord himself, a wall of fire; the entrance into it, Christ the gate of righteousness; the fortress and strong hold of it the same; and the guards about it, the watch men on its

walls, the ministers of the Gospel, and an innumerable company of angels, that in a circle surround both ministers and people; (see ~~6671~~ Revelation 7:11);

tell the towers thereof; (see ~~4403~~ 2 Chronicles 26:9 ~~2338~~ Isaiah 33:18); the Lord himself is the tower of his people, high and strong, which secures and defends them from all their enemies, (~~1980~~ Psalm 18:2 62:3 ~~1880~~ Proverbs 18:10); the ministers of the Gospel, who are immovable, and are set for the defence of it, (~~2467~~ Jeremiah 6:27); the Scriptures of truth, which are like a tower built for an armoury, out of which the saints are furnished and provided with proper armour, whereby they are able to engage with false teachers, and to overcome the evil one, (~~2004~~ Song of Solomon 4:4); and the ordinances of the Gospel, the church's two breasts, said to be as towers, (~~2180~~ Song of Solomon 8:10); some render the words, "tell in the towers" ^{f637}; publish on the house tops, declare in the high places of the city, in the most public manner, the great things of the Gospel, which relate to the glory of Christ and his church.

Ver. 13. *Mark ye well her bulwarks*, etc.] Such as the free favour of God in Christ; which is not only as a shield, but as a bulwark to the church; his everlasting love, electing grace, the covenant of grace, with its blessings and promises, all which are more immovable than rocks and mountains; and especially the power of God, which surrounds his church, as the mountains did Jerusalem; and by which they are kept and preserved as in a garrison, (~~8330~~ Psalm 125:2 ~~6005~~ 1 Peter 1:5). Also salvation by Christ; his righteousness, sacrifice, and satisfaction, which God has appointed for walls and bulwarks, and which make the city, the church, a strong and impregnable one, (~~2301~~ Isaiah 26:1). Likewise the Spirit of God, and his operations and influences, which are a standard against the enemy's flood of opposition and persecution; and who being in his church and people, is greater than he that is in the world, (~~2399~~ Isaiah 59:19) (~~6044~~ 1 John 4:4). Some render the words, set "your hearts on her strength", as the Vulgate Latin version; that is, on Christ, who is the strength of the poor and needy in their distress; the strength of their hearts, of their lives, and of their salvation, and the security of the church. Others readier them, "set your hearts on her armies"; as the Targum is; her volunteers, her soldiers, who endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ, fight the Lord's battles, and are more than conquerors through him; and a lovely sight it is to behold them, with Christ at the head of them; (see ~~6694~~ Revelation 19:14);

consider her palaces; for Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit, have their dwelling places in Zion; and here, besides apostles, prophets, evangelists, and ordinary ministers of the word, who are rulers and officers set in the first place, every saint is a prince and a king; and has a place and a name here, better than that of sons and daughters of the greatest potentate on earth; every dwelling place in Mount Zion is a palace.

that ye may tell [it] to the generation following: that is, the beauty and glory, strength and safety of the church; and even all that is spoken of her in this psalm, as well as what follows: this is the end proposed by taking a circuit round Zion, and making the above observations on it.

Ver. 14. *For this God [is] our God for ever and ever*, etc.] Who is spoken of throughout the whole psalm as greatly to be praised, as well as is known in Zion, as the stability, security, and protection of her. This is said as pointing unto him as if visible, as Christ is God manifest in the flesh, now in Gospel times, to which this psalm belongs; as distinguishing him from all others, from the gods of the Gentiles, rejected by the people of God; as claiming an interest in him as their covenant God; as exulting in the view of such relation to him; as suggesting how happy they were on this account; and especially since this relation will always continue, being founded in an everlasting covenant, and arising from the unchangeable love of God;

he will be our guide, [even] unto death; the Lord orders the steps of the righteous, holds them by the right hand, and guides them with his counsel and in judgment: Christ, the great Shepherd of the flock, feeds them, as the antitype of David, according to the integrity of his heart, and guides them by the skilfulness of his hands; he guides their feet in the ways of peace, life, and salvation, by himself; he leads them into green pastures, beside the still waters, and unto fountains of living waters: the Spirit of the Lord leads them to the fulness of Christ; guides them into all truth, as it is in him; directs them into his and his Father's love, and leads them on to the land of uprightness. And this guide is an everlasting one; "even unto death", or "in death", or "above death"^{f638}; so as not to be hurt of the second death. He guides not only to the brink of Jordan's river, but through the deep waters of it, and never leaves till he has landed them safe on the shores of eternity: and some, as Aben Ezra, render the word as if it was *tym l w* [, "for ever"; and others, as Abendana observes, render it "secretly"; the Lord sometimes leading his people in ways dark and hidden to them: and others give the sense of it, "as in the days of youth"; that is, God is the guide of his people

in old age as in youth; he is always their guide, and ever will be: to which sense incline R. Moses in Aben Ezra, others in Kimchi and Abendana, and as also Jarchi and the Chaldee paraphrase; but Kimchi and Ben Melech render it as we do, “unto death”, or “unto our death”.