

# PSALM 87

## INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 87

### *A Psalm or Song for the sons of Korah.*

Whether this psalm was composed by David, in a view of the temple to be built by his son Solomon; or whether by one that returned from the Babylonish captivity, who wrote it for the comfort of those that wept at the laying of the foundation of the second temple; it seems evident that the subject matter of it is the church of God in Gospel times, and especially in the latter day glory: the title in the Syriac version is, ``concerning the redemption of Jerusalem.”

**Ver. 1.** *His foundation is in the holy mountains.*] The Jewish writers connect these words with the title of the psalm, and make the sense to be this; “the foundation” or argument “of it”, the psalm, “is concerning the holy mountains” of Zion and Jerusalem; so Aben Ezra, Jarchi, and Kimchi; and the Targum joins them together thus,

“by the hands of the sons of Korah is said a song, which is founded by the mouth of the fathers that were of old:”

but the words are a part of the song or psalm, which begins in an abrupt manner, just as (<sup><200></sup>Song of Solomon 1:2) and may be rendered either “its foundation”, or “his foundation”, and refer either to the church, or to the Lord, and the sense is the same either way; for the church’s foundation is also the Lord’s foundation, a foundation of his laying; (see <sup><240></sup>Isaiah 14:32 28:16) and is laid “in the holy mountains”; alluding to the mountains of Zion and Moriah, where the temple stood, a type of the church; or to the mountains about Jerusalem, by which also the church is frequently signified; and by those, in a mystical and spiritual sense, may be meant the purposes and decrees of God, which are as mountains of brass, (<sup><300></sup>Zechariah 6:1), they are like the ancient mountains for the antiquity of them, and are high, and not to be reached and searched into, and are firm, solid, and immoveable; and are also holy, particularly the decree of election, that source of all true holiness, which has sanctification for its end and means; and is the foundation of the church, which supports and secures

it, and stands sure, (<sup>5109</sup>2 Timothy 2:19), also the covenant of grace, which is sure and immoveable, and in which are provisions for holiness, internal and external; and is the foundation and security of the church, and all believers; but especially Jesus Christ, the Rock of ages, is meant, the Holy One of Israel, the sure foundation laid in Zion: some interpret these holy mountains of the holy apostles, who were in an high and eminent station in the church, and were doctrinally foundations, as they ministerially laid Christ, as the only foundation; (see <sup>4021</sup>Ephesians 2:20 <sup>6214</sup>Revelation 21:14), it may be rendered, “among the holy mountains” <sup>f1228</sup>; and so may regard, as Cocceius explains it, the several kingdoms and provinces of the world in which the Gospel shall be preached; and the church shall be established and settled in the latter day even upon the tops of mountains, which shall become holy to the Lord, (<sup>2302B</sup>Isaiah 2:2).

**Ver. 2.** *The Lord loveth the gates of Zion*, etc.] Which the Targum interprets of the schools, as preferable to the synagogues: the Lord loves Zion herself; that is, the church, and therefore has chosen it for his habitation, took up his rest and residence in it, has founded it, and set Christ as King over it, and by whom he has redeemed it; and he loves her gates, the public ordinances; he loves them that come to Zion’s gates, and wait and worship there, and who enter in and become members thereof; and he loves what is done there, he being there publicly prayed unto, and publicly praised by a large number of his people; where his word is faithfully preached, and reverently attended to, and his ordinances truly administered, and the graces of his saints exercised on him: wherefore, because all this is done socially, and in a public manner, and so much for his own manifestative glory, he esteems these

*more than all the dwellings of Jacob*; the private habitations of his people; yet he has a regard to these, the bounds of which he fixed from eternity, and where he was delighting himself before they were in being; and he loves the persons that dwell in them, and what is done there in a right manner, as closet and family worship; but when these are put in competition with public worship, the latter is preferred unto them, because done by more, and more publicly; Zion and its gates, the church and its ordinances, are preferable to all the dwellings of Jacob put together.

**Ver. 3.** *Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.*] Which is to be understood not of the city of Jerusalem literally, which was a magnificent city, compact together, full of inhabitants, and spacious houses, the

metropolis of Judea, and seat of the kings of Judah; and what was most glorious of all that could be said of it, it was the city of God; and so Jarchi interprets it, the glory spoken of it is, that it is the city of God; here the temple was built, and many glorious things were in it; here God granted his presence, and his worship was kept up: and besides, there were other and more glorious things spoken of it, by way of prophecy; as, that the Messiah should come in person into it, as the owner of it, and give it a greater glory than the first temple had; here he was to preach his doctrines, and do his miracles, which he accordingly did; near this city he suffered, died, and was buried; rose again, ascended to heaven; and here he poured forth the gifts of the Holy Spirit in an extraordinary manner: but rather this is to be interpreted of the church of God, comparable to a city, and which is of God's building, and where he dwells; (see Gill on "~~4981~~ Psalm 48:1") of which glorious things are spoken for the present; as, that it is the city of the King of kings, the name of which is "Jehovah Shammah", the Lord is there; its foundation is Christ; its walls and bulwarks are salvation; its gates are praise; glorious ordinances are administered in it, and glorious truths are preached here; and so the words may be rendered, "glorious things are spoken in thee"<sup>f1229</sup>: and of it also glorious things are spoken, by way of prophecy, as, what shall be in the latter day; a great effusion of the Spirit upon it; the gracious presence of Christ in it in a more visible manner; a great increase of converts both among Jews and Gentiles, which shall flock into it; and the great spread of the Gospel, which shall be the means of it; the unity, harmony, and concord of professors of religion; the holiness of their lives and conversation; and the very great peace and prosperity which will everywhere abound; and especially glorious things are spoken of the New Jerusalem, the city of our God; of which (see ~~6200~~ Revelation 21:1).

*Selah.* (See Gill on "~~4982~~ Psalm 3:2").

**Ver. 4.** *I will make mention of Rahab*, etc.] Not of Rahab the harlot, as Jerom and others of the ancients<sup>f1230</sup> interpret it; for the letters of both words are not the same in Hebrew; though mention is made of her in the Gospel, and Gospel times, in the genealogy of Christ, and by two of the apostles, (~~4005~~ Matthew 1:5 ~~5813~~ Hebrews 11:31 ~~5025~~ James 2:25), but of Egypt; and so the Targum interprets it, which is so called, as it is in (~~3890~~ Psalm 89:10 ~~2809~~ Isaiah 51:9) either from the pride of its inhabitants, the word having in it the sense of pride and haughtiness, and these being naturally proud and haughty, as Philo<sup>f1231</sup> the Jew observes; or from some city of this name in it; or rather this respects that part of Egypt called

Delta, which was in the form of a pear; which “raab”, or “rib”, in the Egyptian language, signifies; in the midst of which was the city of Athribis of Ptolemy <sup>f1232</sup>, which has its name from hence, and signifies the heart of a pear; and still this part of the country is called Errifia, as Leo Africanus <sup>f1233</sup> relates, and is here put for the whole country: the passage respects the conversion of it, and are the words of God foretelling it, and of which mention is made in (<sup><23918></sup>Isaiah 19:18,19,25) and had its accomplishment, at least in part, on the day of Pentecost, (<sup><44210></sup>Acts 2:10) and will be further accomplished in the latter day, when the people that now inhabit that country shall be converted, which will be when the kingdoms of this world become Christ’s: and Babylon; the country of the Assyrians and Chaldeans, of which Babylon was the metropolis: mention is made of the conversion of these in (<sup><23924></sup>Isaiah 19:24,25) and which also was fulfilled, in part, on the day of Pentecost, (<sup><44110></sup>Acts 2:9) and in Babylon there was a church, in the times of the Apostle Peter, (<sup><40151></sup>1 Peter 5:13) these the Lord promises that he would make mention of:

*to them that know me*; says he, that so they might expect their conversion, and take notice of them, and receive them, when converted;

*or among them that know me* <sup>f1234</sup>; that is, I will make mention of them, as such that know me, and belong to that number; even such that love the Lord, believe in him, own and confess him, and yield obedience to him, and whom he takes into communion and fellowship with himself, and makes his friends, familiars, and acquaintance:

*behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia*; where also will be many converts, regenerate persons, and such as know the Lord; of which there has been a partial accomplishment already; of Philistia, (see <sup><4080></sup>Acts 8:40), for Azotus, or Ashdod, was a city of the Philistines; and of Tyre, (see <sup><4952></sup>Psalm 45:12 <sup><44018></sup>Acts 21:3,4) and of Ethiopia, and its conversion, mention is made in (<sup><4981></sup>Psalm 68:31), and the Ethiopian eunuch is one instance of it, (<sup><4087></sup>Acts 8:27) of all which there will be abundance of instances in the latter day; and thus, as the church is commended from her foundation, from the superlative love the Lord bears to her, and the glorious things spoken of her; so from the number of her converts in different nations, in which her glory in Gospel times would greatly lie; (see <sup><23918></sup>Isaiah 49:18-21 54:1-3 60:4-8),

*this man was born there*; not any particular man; any single individual, famous for piety, wisdom, wealth, or power; as if it suggested that now

and then such a person might be born in the above countries; whereas in Zion there were frequently many such persons born: nor is it to be understood of the Messiah, that should come out of Zion, as if that was the reason why multitudes from the above places should flock thither, because of the birth of this illustrious Person: the Targum understands it of a great personage, a king; and paraphrases it,

“a king is educated there;”

but it designs many persons in each of those countries that should be born again, of water, and of the Spirit, of the incorruptible seed of grace, by the ministry of the word; who, because they should be regenerated by means of the Gospel preached in Zion, therefore are said to be born there; and besides, being born again, they are admitted members of Zion, and to all the privileges of Zion, as true born Israelites; and are brought up there, are nourished with the sincere milk of the word, and nursed with the breasts of Gospel ordinances there administered; and so Zion, or Jerusalem, the Gospel church, is truly the mother of them all, (<sup>4005</sup>Galatians 4:26).

**Ver. 5.** *And of Zion it shall be said*, etc.] The same with the city of God, the church before commended:

*this and that man was born in her*; this and that great man, in opposition to a mean person, in the preceding verse: “or a man and man”<sup>f1235</sup>; men of all sorts, and of different nations, Jews and Gentiles, and great numbers of them:

*and the Highest himself shall establish her*; the church of God, though founded by him, and laid on a sure foundation, on the Rock of ages, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail, yet is sometimes fluctuating and unsettled;

*it is tossed with tempests*, the persecutions of men, the errors and heresies of false teachers, and the contentions and divisions of its own members; and is not always in one place, but is removed from one place to another, and is obliged to flee into the wilderness; but in the latter day it will be established and settled; it will be a tabernacle that shall not be taken down nor removed; but shall be established for ever, (<sup>4007</sup>Psalms 89:37), and this is the work of God, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, whatever instruments he may make use of, as ministers of the word, and kings of the earth; as it is his work, and his only, to establish particular believers, (<sup>4012</sup>2 Corinthians 1:21), so it is his to establish the church in

general: or it may be rendered, “he shall establish her on high” <sup>f1236</sup>, which will be the case when she is established upon the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills, (<sup>201D</sup>Isaiah 2:2).

**Ver. 6.** *The Lord shall count when he writeth up the people, &].* Not in the Lamb’s book of life; for that was written from eternity, (<sup>663B</sup>Revelation 13:8) but in the writing of the house of Israel, among the living in Jerusalem, and with his righteous ones; which is done at effectual calling, and when admitted members of Gospel churches, whereby they openly appear to be the children of God, and are taken into the list and catalogue of saints; (see <sup>263D</sup>Ezekiel 13:9 <sup>204B</sup>Isaiah 4:3 <sup>468B</sup>Psalms 69:28) or in the last day, when the Lord will take the number of his people,

*and cause them again to pass under the rod of him that telleth them;* and will make up his jewels, complete the number of them in conversion, and collect them all together; and his counting and writing them may denote his exact knowledge of them, and his care that he lose none; but this will only concern regenerate persons; the Lord will not count nor make any account of any others, as follows:

*that this man was born there;* and the man that is born in Zion, even every regenerate man, will be counted and numbered by him, and declared to be his, when he makes a general survey and muster of his saints another day.

*Selah.* (See Gill on “<sup>489D</sup>Psalms 3:2”).

**Ver. 7.** *As well the singers as the players on the instruments shall be there,* etc.] In Zion, in the church; signifying that there should be great spiritual joy there when the above things should be accomplished; great joy in the churches, because of the conversion of Jews and Gentiles; and great joy in the persons themselves, born again, and brought to Zion; in allusion to the vocal and instrumental music used in the temple service; (see <sup>235D</sup>Isaiah 35:10 <sup>644D</sup>Revelation 14:1-7 19:6-8)

*all my springs are in thee;* which are either the words of the psalmist, or rather of the souls born in Zion; who, in their spiritual songs, will thus express themselves concerning the church, in which are the word and ordinances, compared to fountains of living water, and are springs of spiritual peace and refreshment to converted persons; (see <sup>241B</sup>Joel 3:18 <sup>384B</sup>Zechariah 14:8 <sup>235D</sup>Isaiah 55:1), where also the Spirit and his graces are communicated by the ministry of the word and ordinances in the church, which are signified by wells and rivers of living water, (<sup>404B</sup>John 4:14

7:37,38) and particularly here stands Christ, the fountain of gardens, and well of living waters, for the supply and comfort of saints, and his blood a fountain opened for cleansing and purification, (<sup><2045></sup>Song of Solomon 4:15 <sup><3831></sup>Zechariah 13:1), yea, here flows the river of God's love, the streams whereof make glad the city of God; and which, like the waters in Ezekiel's vision, come from under the threshold of the sanctuary, (<sup><1941></sup>Psalm 46:4 <sup><3571></sup>Ezekiel 47:1-5) or the words may be considered as an address of the psalmist, or of the church, or of regenerate persons, unto Christ:

*all my springs or fountains are in thee*; the fulness of grace dwells in him, the springs of all joy, and peace, and comfort, are with him; the wells of salvation are in him, and both grace and glory are from him; he is the spring of all grace now, and the fountain of all happiness hereafter.

Gussetius <sup>f1237</sup> has a very peculiar version of the whole text, which he renders thus

“all my fountains will be singing in thee, or of thee, as those that dance at the sound of the pipe:”

taking the allusion to be to the playing of fountains in gardens, and to the delightful sound the waters make; but the accents will not admit of such a sense.