

Psalm 87

Read Psalm 87:1-3: It is difficult to describe heavenly things to earthly people. We are so focused on what is in front of us. It is hard for us to envision heaven. It requires that we unplug from everything for a moment. This psalm speaks of an earthly place that is a small and limited representation of something better.

This psalm begins by comparing Jerusalem to all other cities on earth. It is a mystical and blessed place of God. Abram left his extended family, and walked across the known world to find this unique City of God.

Now the Lord had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you. 2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” 4 So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran (Genesis 12:1-4)

*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for **he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.** (Hebrews 11:8-10)*

Zion is the permanent capital of God’s kingdom on earth. Its name means: the *monumental guiding pillar*. Mount Zion is located in Jerusalem. It is said to be in the holy mountains. The idea is that we look up towards heaven; as we look to the mountain tops. This description is also an allusion to God’s holy mountain in heaven. The big picture here is that heaven is better than earth.

It was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; (Hebrews 9:23-24)

The first notable event in Jerusalem was Abram bringing his only son, Isaac to be offered as a sacrifice to God. Abraham is our earthly example of a faithful follower of God. That act of faith was memorialized by placing a temple in its spot.

The temple on Mount Zion is a small replica of God's throne in heaven; with Jesus as our high priest; who intercedes on our behalf. One day, God will bring heaven down to earth; when he makes a new heavens and earth. God has always wanted to dwell with men.

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.. (Revelation 21:1-3)

The new heaven on earth will be a 1500 mile cube. Will God prefer it because it is pretty, or large? No. It represents his intention for man. God has always wanted to dwell with men.

"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (Jeremiah 31:31-34

For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place: "This is My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation, And her saints shall shout aloud for joy. (Psalm 132:13-16)

Having God dwell with us is the ultimate fulfillment any person can achieve.

Ironically, Jerusalem became the opposite of God's intention for a time. The city of Jerusalem has not always lived up to its billing. It became a foul place of sin and idolatry, as men continued to live there.

And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. (Revelation 11:8)

All said, Jerusalem is a special memorial to Abraham's faith. It was also the place where King David served God with passion. It will become even more great; when heaven comes to earth during the millennium. In the meantime, it projects the opposite vibe, as ungrateful men recharacterize it for their own uses.

Read Psalm 87:4-7: Each nation is identified by rivers that originate there. Rivers have clear points of origin, and they frequently are used to define national boundaries. The sea is where all of the nations (rivers) and peoples mix. When the sea is used in prophecy, it speaks of the Gentile nations as a whole. The sea is depicted as an unstable and dangerous place. The winds (demonic forces) create large and dangerous waves. The sea is never still or restful. This perfectly depicts the Gentile nations of the world.

By contrast God created land to be stable. Israel is always depicted as solid land. The waves rise up and appear to be a threat...but they always break on the beach.

“Declare this in the house of Jacob And proclaim it in Judah, saying, ‘Hear this now, O foolish people, Without [e]understanding, Who have eyes and see not, And who have ears and hear not: Do you not fear Me?’ says the Lord. ‘Will you not tremble at My presence, Who have placed the sand as the bound of the sea, By a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass beyond it? And though its waves toss to and fro, Yet they cannot prevail; Though they roar, yet they cannot pass over it. But this people has a defiant and rebellious heart; They have revolted and departed. They do not say in their heart, “Let us now fear the Lord our God, Who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest.” (Jeremiah 5:20-24)

God created separate languages and boundaries for checks and balances and for our safety. Worldwide tyranny and control is very dangerous; and impossible to turn back from..

Lets compare the Jerusalem concept (God dwelling with men) to other notable places on earth. God has decided when and where we will be born. We ask about how it could be

fair for someone to be born into certain circumstances. He has set us in the perfect atmosphere for us to succeed. Some people have to be under pressure or a tight leash to look up.

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:3-4)

Over the centuries, different places have been considered to be the seat of power and influence. Various countries have taken turns at control. God gives men enough power to prove their intent. The nations reflect mens lusts for power. That is a recipe for death and chaos. Satan capitalizes on our weaknesses in his plans for insurrection against God. God provides national leaders according to the people in that land. All of these nations essentially are doing Satan's bidding. The imagery of these nations are representations of evil in our world. The first two major world powers were Egypt and Babylon.

One nation mentioned is referred to as **Rahab**. This is a nickname for Egypt. Rahab means *prideful rage*. Egypt was described as a scary sea monster. That was because it lived in the Nile; and it used the sea to carry on trade. It represents Satan as a dangerous creature who exists where all the nations can mingle together. In other words, it was a formidable power in the water. God would drag this sea monster out of the water; and let die in the desert.

You divided the sea by Your strength; You broke the heads of the sea serpents in the waters. You broke the heads of Leviathan in pieces, and gave him as food to the people inhabiting the wilderness. You broke open the fountain and the flood; You dried up mighty rivers. (Psalm 87:(13-15)

Babylon was also noted here as a big deal in its day. It was the home of idol worship. The Tower of Babel was located here. It was called the head of gold; and became the strongest grip one man had in this world. God used it as *the hammer against the nations* to break down other nations. It unknowingly was used to discipline and judge many disobedient nations.

And he cried [a]mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! (Revelation 18:2)

Next **Tyre** is mentioned. Tyre is off of the Coast of Lebanon. Back in its day, Tyre was a super wealthy off-shore trading center, located on an island. It became a symbol of Satan the skillful and very successful trader. He knows how to offer riches to trade for men's souls.

The word of the Lord came again to me, saying, 2 “Now, son of man, take up a lamentation for Tyre, 3 and say to Tyre, ‘You who [a]are situated at the entrance of the sea, merchant of the peoples on many coastlands, thus says the Lord God: “O Tyre, you have said, ‘I am perfect in beauty.’ 4 Your borders are in the midst of the seas. Your builders have perfected your beauty. (Ezekiel 27:1-4)

The word of the Lord came to me again, saying, 2 “Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Because your heart is lifted[a] up, And you say, ‘I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods, In the midst of the seas,’ Yet you are a man, and not a god, Though you set your heart as the heart of a god 3 (Behold, you are wiser than Daniel! There is no secret that can be hidden from you! 4 With your wisdom and your understanding You have gained riches for yourself, And gathered gold and silver into your treasuries; 5 By your great wisdom in trade you have increased your riches, And your heart is lifted up because of your riches),” 6 ‘Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Because you have set your heart as the heart of a god, 7 Behold, therefore, I will bring strangers against you, The most terrible of the nations; And they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom, And defile your splendor. 8 They shall throw you down into the Pit, And you shall die the death of the slain In the midst of the seas. (Ezekiel 28:1-8)

People who do not know God will sometimes say “How could a loving God allow that atrocity take place?” God has given man free will to express himself. God has provided direction to live in either blessings or curses. Mankind has chosen to go his own way; which is not the way of blessings. The nations are a reflection of mens decisions. In effect, it is like saying “How unfair it is for God to give us free will” In other words; man has refused to follow God’s prescription for peace; but he is mad at God for not providing peace. In the end; these quests for glory and power among the nations still accomplish God’s will.

Babylon became *the hammer to the nations*. God used it to judge Judah and all of the nations around it. After God used Babylon, he broke it.

Waste and utterly destroy them,” says the Lord, “And do according to all that I have commanded you. A sound of battle is in the land, And of great destruction. How the hammer of the whole earth has been cut apart and broken! (Jeremiah 50:21-23)

Assyria was the most cruel nation of all; which created crucifixion. Assyria became the rod of God’s anger; which deported the northern 10 tribes, because of their idolatry.

“Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger And the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation, And against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, To seize the spoil, to take the prey, And to tread them down like the mire of the streets. (Isaiah 10:5-6)

It seems on the surface that there are world powers that come and go; and that Israel is of no consequence. Upon closer inspection, it is evident that all of these powers intersect with Israel at some point. Israel is the clock and azimuth which points to the true north in the world. All nations are judged by their treatment of the Jews.

The prophet Daniel received numerous visions of the most notable nations throughout history. In some cases they were represented by beasts. This depiction was of: babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome.

*Daniel spoke, saying, “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. **The first was like a lion, and had eagle’s wings.** I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man’s heart was given to it. “And suddenly another beast, **a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth.** And they said thus to it: ‘Arise, devour much flesh!’ “After this I looked, and there was another, **like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads,** and dominion was given to it. “After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, **a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth;** it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns (Daniel 7)*

We can fear what is happening in the Ukraine or China; but we would be missing the whole point. God said specifically that he raised up and sent Babylon to address the rampant idolatry in Israel. God said expressly, that he raised up Medo-Persia to

disassemble Babylon and send the Jews back home. Greece then created a one-world language, to prepare the way for the gospel to disseminate throughout the world. The Romans built roads to every city, further preparing the way for the gospel. In the end; all that matters is how we deal with God. The good and bad actors on the world's stage are the effect, not the cause.