

## Psalm 48:1-14

There has been no shortage in history of those who have thought themselves great or to whom greatness has been attributed. Whatever legitimate or illegitimate claims to greatness in this world, men may make for themselves or others, the Bible declares that there is one who unequivocally is great and is to be declared so.

**Psalm 48:1** Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised.

**Psalm 48 is the third in a series of psalms dedicated to God's holy city and associates God's glory with the splendor of his city.**

“In this psalm Zion itself seems to become more than a mere earthly capital and the struggle described becomes more than local. It concerns the whole earth and the whole span of time ... The "outlines of 'the Jerusalem above', with its great walls and foundations which are 'forever', are already coming into view.”

### Summary

**Psalm 48 glorifies God as the psalmist gives praise to Zion's holy city, providing a picture of how the church is to display God's glory and be a cause of the Lord's praise.**

#### 1. Glorious Mountain City vv. 1-2

The psalm begins and ends with how God is praised because of his city (**Psalm 48:1; 12-14**).

**In the opening stanza of this psalm, God is praised for the beauty of his mountain-top capital (Ps. 48:1-2).** The focus on the idea of Jerusalem being lifted up is more theological than just topographical **Micah 4:1**.

The predominant idea is the saving preeminence of God's city, the church, to which peoples from all over the earth come to know God. Jerusalem is the city from which salvation comes to the whole earth, and, therefore, for this reason its joy is a universal phenomenon.

God's presence alone made Jerusalem the world's greatest city, and when God's presence was removed, the city fell into disgrace and defeat.

#### 2. Mighty Citadel vv. 3-8

Next, the psalmist praises Jerusalem for her strength and might. The presence of God makes Zion a fortress (**Ps. 48:3**).

God's people are not immune from suffering trials and some of them may be severe. God has not promised His people that they will not face such trials and struggles. What God has promised is that He will reveal Himself as a mighty fortress and strong refuge to all who flee to him at such times.

Notice the distress with which God afflicts His enemies (**Ps. 48:4-5**).

The psalmist uses two pictures to illustrate the effectiveness of God's assault on His enemies (**Psalm 48:6-7**). First, the anguish of a woman in labor, who is unable to avoid or delay childbirth. Secondly, the ships of Tarnish, the mightiest ships of the day, scattered by the blowing of a sudden, strong east wind.

Both of these images show God as reducing the enemies of His enemies and those of His people by a sudden onslaught of divine power.

The same God is the mighty fortress of his church today.

This teaches us that it is vitally important for believers to know about God's past mighty acts of salvation, especially God's victory over sin and death in the completed work of His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

In addition, as Christians we ourselves are to experience God's power at work in answer to our prayers and in support of our gospel witness.

The psalmist concludes his praise for God's might by saying that God "will establish [his city] forever" (**Ps. 48:8**). In time, God judged physical Jerusalem for her idolatry and allowed it to be destroyed by her enemies. The church, however, is established forever through God's covenant promises (**Matt. 16:18**).

### 3. City Tour vv. 9-14

The psalmist proceeds to outline a number of other attributes that are revealed in Jerusalem for God's praise. Prominent is the declaration in **Psalm 48:10** As your name, O God, so your praise reaches to the ends of the earth.

The name of God involves all that God is, including his great saving works.

In particular, God is to be praised for the way that Jerusalem bore testimony to his love (**Ps. 48:9**).

Psalm 48 also celebrates God's righteousness and his justice (**Ps. 48:10-11**). In these and many other ways, the glories of God were displayed in his holy city, Jerusalem.

The psalmist invites us to tour the city so as to learn how to praise God and pass on the faith to following generations (**Psalm 48:12-14**).

Christians should do the same by coming to know the great truths revealed in the Bible, and then proclaim them to the next generation.