

“Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the CITY of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail. Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind. As we have heard, so have we seen in the CITY of the Lord of hosts, in the CITY of our God; God will establish it for ever. Selah. We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple. According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth; thy right hand is full of righteousness. Let Mount ZION rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments. Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.” Psa. 48:1-14.

Here the New Testament Church is referred to, prophetically, in terms of a CITY. Just as Heaven looks past the earthly city and fixes the gaze of the sorrowing pilgrim upon Heaven itself; to wit: *“For here have we no continuing CITY, but we seek one to come.”* Heb. 13:14. It can properly be said that the New Testament Church – in this era or dispensation – is the place where the Lord deigns greatly to receive praises, and is providentially located to be beautiful for situation and the joy of the whole earth; to wit:

“Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the CITY of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. ... As we have heard, so have we seen in the CITY of the Lord of hosts, in the CITY of our God; God will establish it for ever. Selah.” (Psa. 48:1,2,8)

Four times in these verses the dwelling place of the Lord is referred to as a CITY. Because a city is the only place of rest, peace, safety, and honor, among men in this world; and gives us accurate notions of eternal things as they are on earth and in Heaven. And what is spoken of the City of God in the Scripture is a ground of faith to saints, and a spring of consolation to them in every condition. Think of it, Beloved. Living alone in a wild beast-infested wilderness – outside the City of God – there is no safety, or peace, or rest, or creature comforts. Just as, outside the fading cities of earth, there is no police department, fire department, doctors, hospitals, convenience stores, etc. But we have all these things, in a spiritual sense, in the Gospel, when we come to Christ; to wit: REST in Christ (i.e., *“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find REST for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”* Matt. 11:28-30.); PEACE with God (i.e., *“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”* Jn. 14:27. *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have PEACE. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”* Jn. 16:33.); ORDER in the communion of faith; SAFETY in divine protection, and HONOR in our relation unto God in Christ.

John Owen: *“The greatest and most glorious city which is, or ever was in the world, is the city of this or that man who lived in it and made it famous by his presence and his great deeds. So spake the great Nebuchadnezzar of his city. ‘Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of*

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the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" Dan. 4:30. We know that the mighty empire of Babylon has joined the trash-heap of history. But, the Gospel church is the CITY of the living God; and it is ten thousand times more glorious to be a citizen thereof, than of the greatest city in the world. To be a citizen of the City of God, is to be free, to be honorable, to be safe, to have a certain habitation, and a blessed inheritance. God dwells in the church of believers. The Great King inhabiteth his own City. Herein is the especial residence of His Glory and Majesty. He built it, framed it for himself, and says concerning it, 'Here will I dwell, and this shall be my habitation for ever.' [Psalm 132:13-14] And it is no small privilege, to dwell with God in his own City. The name of this City is 'Jehovah-shammah, – The Lord is there,' Ezek. 48:35. [Which is the last portion, of the last verse, of the entire book of Ezekiel.] The privileges of this City of God are heavenly; it is 'the heavenly Jerusalem.' Hence it is that the world sees them not, knows them not, values them not. They are above them, and their glory is imperceptible unto them. All the powers of the world, in conjunction with those of Hell, cannot dispossess believers of their interest and habitation in this Heavenly City"

***"His foundation is in the holy mountains. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O City of God. Selah. ... And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her; and the highest himself shall establish her. The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there. Selah."* (Psa. 87:1-3,5,6)**

Citizenship in the City of Zion, the City of God, is attained by birth – the new birth – and is the most valuable possession attainable, itself being no less than salvation. As it is written; to wit: ***"For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned, like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."* Phil. 3:20,21.** Glorious things are indeed spoken of Zion, when the conversation is by and between Elect Angels and Men; to wit:

"Blessed inhabitants of Zion, washed in the Redeemer's blood; Jesus, whom their souls rely on, Makes them kings and priests to God; 'Tis his love his people raises Over self to reign as kings, And as priests, his solemn praises Each for a thank-offering brings. Savior, if of Zion's city, I, through grace, a member am, Let the world deride or pity, I will glory in thy name; Fading is the worldling's pleasure, All his boasted pomp and show, Solid joys and lasting treasures, None but Zion's children know."

Salvation, and all blessings come forth out of Zion; to wit:

***"Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad."* (Psa. 14:7)**

***"The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning; thou hast the dew of thy youth. ... The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries. He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall he lift up the head."* (Psa. 110:2-7)**

Now these things – and many, many more – were not spoken of, nor accomplished towards that mount Zion which was in Jerusalem absolutely, but only as it was typical of believers and their Gospel churches in this era and Gospel dispensation.

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The meaning is, that by the Gospel preaching of the apostles and others, believers are enabled to claim all the exceeding great and precious promises to Zion as their own. Indeed, this is the first privilege of believers under the Gospel. They are said to **“come unto mount Zion;”** that is, they have a vested interest in all the promises of God made unto Zion.

The things spoken to Zion in the Old Testament were never accomplished in the earthly Zion, except only in the typical sense. Spiritually, and in their reality, they belong only to believers abiding in New Testament churches in this New Testament era. All the blessed and glorious things spoken in the Scriptures concerning and unto Zion – ARE OURS (!) Think of it, Beloved. We were wandering with the rest of fallen mankind in a waste and howling wilderness, where we had neither rest nor refuge. Our Savior found us there, without hope and without God; to wit:

“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands. That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace.” (Eph. 2:11-14)

From a waste, howling wilderness fraught with dangers of every deadly kind, we have – through the loving-kindness of the King of the place – been brought to a glorious City, whose builder and maker is God, where there is order, defence, and safety; it has the name of a quiet habitation. This city whereof we are now the blessed and thankful citizens, is none other than the City of God. So it is called; and so it is. And, as it has the safety, beauty, and order of a city, so it is the only City which He takes peculiarly to be His own in this world. He framed it, He built it, it is His own.

No creature can lay any claim to it, or any part of it. AND THOSE WHO USURP UPON IT, SHALL ANSWER UNTO HIM FOR THEIR USURPATION. It is also His by right of inhabitation, (Note: some might say by right of adverse possession, since the Almighty has openly and boldly and in defiance of all others, inhabited and claimed that this City and only this City is His dwelling place among men for endless years – as is well-known throughout His universe of intelligent creatures.); I say, it is God’s City, because He dwells in it, and in it alone, by His gracious presence. And, Therein God places and disposes all His children into a spiritual society – HIS CHURCH.

So, the apostle Paul tells the Ephesians, that by grace they were delivered from being **“strangers and foreigners,”** and made **“fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” Eph. 2:19.** Zion is also called **“the CITY OF THE LIVING GOD,” Heb. 12:22.** This adds a wonderful facet to the description of the CHURCH as MOUNT ZION and the HEAVENLY JERUSALEM; to wit: the City of the Living God, simply means, THE CITY OF THE ONLY GOD, all other pretenders to the godhead being nothing but deaf, dumb, blind, and lifeless pagan idols. Every Arminian is an idolater, worshiping the creature (man – free moral agent – God loves everybody) more than the Creator – **Rom. 1:25.** Only in God’s holy City of Zion is Calvinism (Grace) preached in the Spirit. All – but ALL – others are the fornicating, idolatrous daughters of the great whore of Babylon, and are doomed; to wit:

“Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle; your carriages were heavy loaden; they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity.” – (Note: The idols – so far from carrying their worshipers along through life – must themselves be borne! How different it is with our dear Lord Jesus, who carries His loved ones FROM THE WOMB down to old age and hoar hairs.) – ***“Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, WHICH ARE CARRIED FROM THE WOMB.***

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And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.” – (Note: Over and over the Holy Ghost makes and drives home the point. Hence we conclude that it is something very important, and how the Lord Jesus stresses that we should be careful to seek His help in all matters, and that we should always remember to thank Him and praise Him in a timely manner.) – *“To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like? They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith, and HE MAKETH IT A GOD; THEY FALL DOWN, YEA, THEY WORSHIP. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove; yea, one shall cry unto him, YET CAN HE NOT ANSWER, NOR SAVE HIM OUT OF HIS TROUBLE. Remember this, and show yourselves men; bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors. Remember the former things of old; for I am God, AND THERE IS NONE ELSE; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure; Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country; YEA, I HAVE SPOKEN IT, I WILL ALSO BRING IT TO PASS; I HAVE PURPOSED IT, I WILL ALSO DO IT.”* Isa. 46:1-11.

And that, Beloved, is the kind of preaching heard in Zion, the City of God, the dwelling of God. This or that man was born there; and this preaching is heard there. As we have seen, even that we have heard. As we have heard, even that we have seen. **Psa. 48:8. PREDESTINATION?**

“Yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I WILL ALSO DO IT.” (Isa. 46:11)

“For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black; because I have spoken it, I have purposed it, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it.”
(Jer. 4:28)

“In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered to me of my Father; and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, AND HE TO WHOM THE SON WILL REVEAL HIM.” (Lk. 10:21,22)

These words are heard only by the Elect of God; and only in Zion, the City of the Living God, *“to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”* 1 Tim. 3:15. Remember, all those promises made of old to Zion, belong to us today. Thereon depends our final deliverance from all our oppressions.

Beloved. Be our outward condition never so mean, poor and destitute; though we be afflicted, persecuted, and despised; yet all the glorious things that are spoken of Zion are ours; and they are all accomplished in us in the sight of God; giving us joyous hymns in the night:

“I love thy kingdom, Lord, The house of thine abode; The church our blest Redeemer saved With his own precious blood. I love thy church, O God; Her walls before thee stand, Dear as the apple of thine eye, And graven on thy hand. For her my tears shall fall; For her my prayers ascend; To her my cares and toils be giv’n Till cares and toils shall end. Sure as thy truth shall last, To Zion shall be giv’n The brightest glories earth can yield, And brighter bliss in heav’n.”

I love you.

Amen.