

# The Eternal City Of God

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[ 0 : 00 ] It brings a lot to us that we get financial support, and we really, really appreciate your prayer support as well. And you can ask Kayla for her blog after church, so you guys can all read it. All right. So, Psalm 87. He has set his foundation on the holy mountain.

The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are said of you, O city of our God. I will record Rahab and Babylon among those who acknowledge me, Philistia 2 and Tyre, along with Cush.

And will say, This one was born in Zion. Indeed of Zion it will be said, This one and that one were born in her, and the Most High himself will establish her. The Lord will write in the register of the peoples, This one was born in Zion.

As they make music, they will sing, All of my fountains are in you. Thanks, Lucy. Just on that note in terms of their trips overseas, there's a little flyer at the back called Summer Service, which just indicates all the different people are serving in different ways, how you can pray for them.

There's also a box at the back. If you weren't able to give last week, and you would like to be able to give, in particular for those who are travelling overseas, then you can do that as well this morning.

[ 1 : 22 ] Well, Psalm 87, not sure what page it is on the red-covered Bible. 5.8.6.

5.9.6, sorry. And we're going to look at Psalm 87 together. Before we do, we're going to pray and just ask for God's help. So let's do that now.

Father, thank you for the Bible. Thank you for your word. That's been written down for us. And we ask for the help of your Holy Spirit to speak to us afresh through it, that what was written hundreds of years ago would be real and alive to us today.

Help us to understand it and help us to work it out in our own lives and to see what it is that you have called us to.

The great city of God. Amen. Well, if you've never been, I'm sure we've all seen pictures of some of the great cities of the world.

[ 2 : 45 ] Think of a city like New York or Tokyo with their towering skyscrapers of businesses and banks. It's a statement of wealth and success.

Or somewhere like Cape Town and Rio with their awesome panoramic views, golden beaches and sunsets. It's an image of health and happiness.

Each year, hundreds of thousands of people migrate to the great cities of the world in search of a good life, a better life. In fact, by 2050, seven out of every ten people on the planet will be living in a city.

They offer everything that we all dream for. Safety and security, peace, prosperity, joy and justice, beauty and harmony.

These are all things that we want and the city says, we've got it for you. However, reality paints a different picture. Read your newspaper, turn on the news.

[ 3 : 56 ] Our cities are places of fear and violence. A place where evil rules, where injustice and greed reign.

On my recent trip to Mongolia, I stayed in the capital of Ulaanbaatar. That capital has a population of 1.5 million.

It's one of the fastest growing economies in the world due to all the mining that's taking place in the country. But almost half the population of that capital live in dire conditions.

Temperatures reach to minus 40 in winter, plus 30 in the summer. And yet half that population live without running water, electricity, sewage or drainage.

But yet still the people come running to the city in search of a better and a good life. Cities have always been a magnet for the economically pressed and the politically oppressed.

[ 5 : 03 ] Whether it's New York or Cork City, people always come looking for something better. Well, in Psalm 87, we're introduced to the city that we all dream about, the city we all long for.

It's the ultimate city. It's an eternal city where its residents are loved and cared for. It's a city of everlasting joy.

No sadness, no pain. A place where her people are welcomed and are filled and forever satisfied. So let's have a look at this city. First, we're introduced to the God of the city. The city's builder and founder.

Look at verse 1. He, that's God, has set his foundation on the holy mountain. This is no ordinary city. This is a city that's been planned way back in eternity past and was founded and built and established by God.

[ 6 : 12 ] So it has a sense of permanence. It always has been and it always will be. Just like the very mountains it is built upon.

We get the same idea if you just hold your finger in Psalm 87 and go back to Psalm 48. This is another psalm that talks about the city.

We read it earlier this morning. Psalm 48. Let's just read verses 1 to 3. Talking again about the city. Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise in the city of our God, his holy mountain. It is beautiful in its loftiness, in its greatness.

It's the joy of the whole earth. Like the utmost heights of Zaphon, that great big mountain range, is found Mount Zion, which is the city of the great king.

[ 7 : 15 ] God is in her citadels, in the great towers, and he has shown himself to be her fortress. Now read verse 8. As we have heard, so we have seen, in the city of the Lord Almighty, in the city of our God, God makes her secure forever.

I'm sure you've all seen or perhaps read Tolkien's Lord of the Rings. Well, picture the image of some of those great cities, Minas Tirith, the heavily fortified capital of Gandor, which is built into the mountain face.

It's a place of rest and refuge from the evil forces of Sauron. Well, that's the imagery that we have here in Psalm 48 and Psalm 87.

It's like Minas Tirith, this enormous city built into the landscape of the mountains to endure forever and ever, a place of safety and security.

But what makes this city, back to Psalm 87, what makes this city so unique? It's not so much its design or its architecture, but who lives there?

[ 8 : 39 ] Verse 3, Psalm 87, glorious things are said of you, O city of God. This city is God's city, it's the city that he has chosen to dwell in.

This is God's home, if you like. He's chosen to reside here. So it's not surprising that God loves this city. Verse 2, it tells us that the Lord loves the gates of Zion.

Zion is another word for God's city. God loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of his people. and he loves the city because this is where people like you and I get to meet God.

Look at verse 2 again, it says, the Lord loves the gates of Zion. The gates, like any gates, implies this is the way in, this is an entrance into the city because through the gates people get in and God loves the gates because it means people can come into the city.

People can come to God. So this is God's city. It's a place that he has founded or that he has built from eternity past and this is where he now dwells.

[ 10 : 03 ] And it's the city that God loves because he gathers people into the city to find rest and refuge, safety and security.

But we're also introduced to the people of the city, the residents or the inhabitants. Verse 4, look at what it says in verse 4.

He says, I will record Rahab. Rahab was another name for the, for Egypt. He says, I will record Rahab and Babylon among those who acknowledge me.

Philistia 2 and Tyre along with Cush and will say, this one, that country, that place was born in Zion. You see, the people that are in this city are very diverse. They're not all from the same place. They all come from different nations. They speak different languages.

[ 11 : 04 ] They have different cultures. But they're all there in the one city. But there's a surprise here. There's a big shock here. They come from places we would think would be excluded.

Look at some of these names. They're not necessarily familiar to us, but let's explain. Rahab or Egypt and Babylon were the great enemies of God and his people.

You remember the stories of Egypt. They were the people that enslaved God's people, treated them brutally and harshly. Babylon, they invaded God's people and took them off into captivity. Then there's Philistia, home of the Philistines, and Tyre. They were always attacking and threatening God's people. Always at war with them.

And then we've got mention of this place, Cush. Well, this is a far-off, unknown, distant land, a way out there, a Ballygo backwards place. Nobody ever went on holidays to Cush.

[12:12] But surprisingly, all these people from all these different nations are all present in the city of God.

And amazingly, they are all considered citizens. Look at the end of verse four. God says, of this one I will say they were born in Zion.

Well, how could they be born there if they're not from there? Well, some of you know that I was born in London. A real cockney I am. Not really, but that's where I was born.

Lived there for the first six weeks of my life. life. And then my parents moved to Ireland. So I've been here 99.99% of my life.

I've studied here. I've worked here. I've paid my taxes here. I help out in the community. I love being here. But you know what? Because I wasn't born here, I'm not actually a citizen.

[13:14] I'm not legally Irish. I hold a British passport. Shh. But I support Ireland. You see, to be Irish, to be a citizen, I must be born here.

That's the only way for me to qualify. And look at the nations and the people that are mentioned here in verse 4. None of them qualify. None of them have the right papers or the legal documents. They're all outsiders. They should all be kept outside. But look at verse 5. In deed of Zion, of God's city, it will be said, this one and that one, the enemy, the outsider, the excluded one, they will all be born in her and the Most High himself will establish her.

They will be treated as if they were born in the city. And that's what it is like for me living here. I am treated as if I was born here.

In fact, God declares, he says, you were born here. Because God's city is a welcoming city. God longs that his city would be filled with people from all kinds of nations, even people like you and me.

[14:41] And let's be clear, the residents, the inhabitants of this city. They don't get into the city because of their race or their particular religion.

They are not there because they're superior. They're not there because they're good moral people and they've lived a good life and they've never done this and they've never done that. No, they are there simply because God has opened his gates to them.

Look at verse 6. The Lord will write in the register of the peoples, this one was born in Zion.

It's like there's a kind of a roll call. He's got a list and he's writing their names down there and say, you were born here. We don't get into the city because of our ability.

We don't get into the city because of our gifting or our particular background or because of what our parents believed or anybody else believes, we get into the city because God writes our name in his book on the registry.

[15:49] So here's the people of the city, diverse, shocking, surprising. Outsiders are welcomed in and now treated as residents to share in and enjoy all that God has to give them from the city.

So there are the people. We're also shown the life of the city, what it's actually like to live there.

Verse 7. As they make music, they will sing, all my fountains are in you.

This is a city that's full of joy, true joy and fulfillment. The music and the singing, well, you might be very musical, you might play an instrument or you mightn't sing, but it's all imagery.

And the singing and the playing of instruments are all signs of this new, vibrant and eternal life that God has to give. Look at the end of verse 7, he says, all my fountains are in you.

The city is a source of life. You know what a fountain is like, it's bubbling up, it's overflowing, it's abundant, it's full, it's fresh.

[17:11] Well, this is again imagery, it's saying this is what God's city is like, it's overflowing with life in all its fullness. It's life the way God intended it to be, without pain or suffering, without tragedy, without crime, without things going wrong.

The city is the fountain of true life. life. This is where salvation is found. Whatever we believe right now, whatever our background is, this is the kind of city we dream of and long for.

A place where people from all kinds of backgrounds are all together, and there's no fighting, there's no war. Everybody's filled and everybody's satisfied.

A place of beauty and harmony, joy and justice. Nobody's left out. There's peace, there's prosperity and abundance, safety and security.

This is the perfect city. It's the ultimate city. It's what films are written about, and books are written about. We all want this kind of city.

[ 18 : 29 ] Which is all great to read and to think about it. But I want us to think through very briefly three important questions.

First, it would be a good thing to know where the city is. How am I going to get there? Do I need to jump on a plane or drive in my car? I want to get to the city.

How am I going to get there? Where is it? Well, let me say this. It is something future and it is something present. It's something future and something present.

We're going to jump forward to the book of Hebrews because this whole theme of the city, it's introduced here in Psalm 87, but it's picked up the whole way through the Bible and we're just going to pick up on some of the themes of this city.

Hebrews chapter 11 and if somebody's got a page number, that'll be helpful for me and I can shout it out. 1-2-0-9.

[ 19 : 37 ] Page 1-2-0-9. Hebrews chapter 11. So it's something future and something present.

Hebrews chapter 11 and we're going to start at verse 8. Abraham, well he must be one of the oldest guys that we know about way, way, way back long time ago.

By faith we're told verse 8 that Abraham when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went even though he didn't know where he was going.

Would you go where you didn't know where you were going? Abraham did. Verse 10. He was looking forward to the city with foundations whose architect and builder is God.

He was looking for the city we've just read about in Psalm 87. Where does he find it? How does he get to it? Look at verse 16. It wasn't any physical place on earth.

[ 20 : 48 ] Verse 16. Instead they were longing for a better country, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God for he has prepared a city for them.

You see we won't find the city we've just read about here on earth. It's not found in Cork City. It's not found in New York. We may love the cities but we won't find it here.

Because it's a heavenly city. This is what Abraham and all God's people throughout time long for and wait for. Here in the heavenly city, heaven itself, we will experience life as God intended it to be in all its beauty and all its perfection.

We read about it later don't we where we see that God dwells with his people in the city. There's no tears, no sadness, there's no funerals, nobody gets sick.

It's a life without sin or evil, the absence of all suffering and pain. That's the eternal city we long for. So it is something future but I also want us to see that it is something present.

[ 22 : 12 ] Jump forward to Hebrews chapter 12 verse 22. Hebrews chapter 12 verse 22.

And again look at the words that he uses here to describe the city. Hebrews 12 verse 22. He says but you have come to Mount Zion, another word for God's city, to the heavenly Jerusalem, that eternal city, the city of the living God.

You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in the joyful assembly. Where's that? Look at verse 23. To the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven.

You see he's moved from thinking about the eternal city to talking about the church. We're waiting for the eternal city but in the meantime we've come to the church.

The church isn't a building we're meeting here yes but it's not a church. The people are the church. God's family. And the church, the people here, is a taste of the eternal city to come.

[ 23 : 38 ] Every local church, church, and I want us to get this, every little church is like a mini city. We're the residents of the city.

We're to reflect God's eternal city, a reflection of all that God has promised. Because in the church what do we find? People. People from all kinds of nations and cultures and languages and backgrounds and they've all been welcomed.

and it should be a place of rest and refuge, a place where we receive grace and peace, where we experience joy in the support of one another.

We receive all the things that we long for, forgiveness. And when things mess up we have people who are there to help us. So the church is a taste of the city we all long for.

It's like a mini city. And we're the residents of the city, awaiting our future home. So where is the city?

[ 24 : 46 ] It's something to look forward to, but it's something we can begin to enjoy now through the life of God's people. That's the first question.

The second question is this. Okay, we know where it is, but how do we get into the city? How can I be part of it? Well, look at the rest of Hebrews chapter 12 verse 23 again.

Hebrews 12 verse 23. We've come to the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all people, to the spirits of the righteous men or righteous people made perfect.

So those are those who are in heaven. verse 24, to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant. Do you see again how he moves through it?

To come to the city, he says, is the same as coming to Jesus. If we want to get into the city, if we want to enjoy and experience this city, we must come, verse 24, to Jesus, the mediator.

[ 26 : 02 ] He's the entrance, he's the gate, he's the way into the city. How is Jesus the way in? How is he a gate? Well, look at Hebrews chapter 13 verse 12.

Try and keep this logic going. How are we getting into the city? We go through Jesus. He's the gate, he's the entrance. How is that so? Chapter 13 verse 12.

Look what we read about Jesus here. Chapter 13 verse 12. So Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his blood.

That's through his death. Let us then go to him outside the camp or outside the city, bearing the disgrace he bore. For here on this earth we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

You see, Jesus took on himself all of our disgrace, all of our sin, all of our guilt, and all of our shame. If this is me here, and this is Jesus here, and all my mess, and all my failures, and there's lots of them, just talk to my family, they'll tell you what they all are.

[ 27 : 31 ] Jesus has taken all of that disgrace, all of that sin and guilt, and he's taken it on himself. And he was put outside the city.

He went outside the city and suffered and died for us in our place. He was abandoned, he was pushed out, he was the one excluded from the city, because he took our sin, he couldn't get in, so that we might be, look at verse 12, the end of verse 12, made holy through his blood, made right before God through his death, so that we could be welcomed into the city, and never be thrown out of the city.

Jesus was pushed out so that we might be welcomed in. That's how we get into the city. It's through Jesus.

And the final question, we know where it is, it's something future, but it's also something present, we know how we get in, we go through Jesus, but who?

Who can get in? Who's welcomed? Well, think back to what we looked at in the psalm. God welcomes all people. He's opened his gates wide to his enemies.

[ 28 : 59 ] That means to sinful rebels like you and me. Psalm 87 verse 4 says, I will record Rahab and Babylon, the enemy, the outsider, the ones who should never get in, the people who should be excluded.

I'm going to make it possible for them to come in. those who acknowledge me, I will record. I'm going to write their names down and make sure that they're going to be there.

You know, to acknowledge God is not just giving some intellectual nod and say, yep, I know God exists and that's fine. No, it means to trust him with your whole life.

It means to say, he is the king of the city and I'll live to serve him and I'll live under him. It means that without him, we will never get into the city.

It all comes down to grace. Not because of anything we have done. Not because of anything that I could ever do that will get me into the city.

[ 30 : 09 ] It's all because of what God has done for me. It's because of his kindness and his mercy. This is a city where God brings undeserving outsiders in and he blesses them.

And let me just leave us with this final thought. We've got three questions. Where the city is, how we get into the city and who can come.

If God has welcomed you and me and you have trusted in Jesus and you know you're going to that city and you're welcomed into that city, then we should bring that same welcome to other people

and say to them also, you too are welcomed into the city.

That's the message that you guys and everybody else who's going to be involved in Kinsale. That's what you're saying to the people of Kinsale. You are welcome into the city of God.

God's and here's how you can be part of it. We can never exclude anybody. That's not our job. Our job is to give the invite and to welcome so that they may enjoy all that God has to give.

[ 31 : 29 ] So that is the eternal city. It's the city we all dream of and all long for. But it's a reality through Jesus Christ.

let's pray. Father we thank you for this wonderful picture and image of the great city.

Thank you that it is everything that we ever dream of. Thank you that it's all possible through Jesus.

Thank you that you've welcomed us.

and please help us if we are not there yet that we would trust you and know that we can be part of it.

We ask this in Jesus name. Amen. Well we're going to sing our God God