

Heavenly Citizens

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Date: 12 September 2018

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[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, we have gathered for our first midweek service here and we pray for your blessing on this time and on this prayer meeting.

And we do pray that this will be something that becomes more and more just an integral and a vibrant part of our church's life together and that more and more people would come not just out of a sense of a, merely out of a sense of duty or obligation, but because they believe in the power of prayer, because they feel a desperate need for you, because they love you and want your love for them and want to cry out to their Heavenly Father.

We do pray that you would grant us that faith as we hear from your word and as we pray in response to you.

So meet with us tonight in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. So we're in Psalm 87. If you guys need a Bible, this could be so.

It's a very short psalm. A very short sermon.

[1 : 38] It's a psalm of the sons of Korah. A song. I'll read it out loud. On the holy mount stands the city he founded.

The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob. Glorious things of you are spoken, O city of God. Selah.

Among those who know me, I mention Rahab and Babylon. Behold, Philistia and Tyre with Cush. This one was born there, they say. And of Zion it shall be said.

This one and that one were born in her. For the Most High himself will establish her. The Lord records as he registered the peoples.

This one was born there. Selah. Singers and dancers alike say, All my springs are in you. I don't know if you guys could relate to this somewhat.

[2 : 47] Maybe some of you can. But when my family immigrated to the U.S. Basically. I remember for like the first year feeling very keenly.

Just sharply. Like I don't belong. Everything looked so different. Everything was bigger.

Trees were bigger. Cars were bigger. People were bigger. Even apples were bigger. I just felt like I don't belong here. And I can't speak to these people.

And right around my teenage years, I wanted desperately to belong. I wanted to fit in with my peers. I wanted to be a part of this culture. And I still remember very vividly.

It wasn't too long ago. I wish I remember the year. But a few years ago when I became a citizen of the U.S., it was actually the largest gathering in U.S. history of all the people that were becoming U.S. citizens.

[4 : 00] It was at Fenway Park. It was a huge U.S. flag. And I became a naturalized citizen. And obviously the way people treat you could just not change at all.

But at least from the perspective of the government, I'm officially accepted and enrolled as a member of this country. And that's kind of the main idea behind this psalm.

And it's a really special psalm in that this idea is brought forth so powerfully. Because in the beginning in verse 1, it talks about, On the holy mount stands the city he founded.

So the city he founded on the holy mount is this God. It's a city that God himself founded. Not a city built by men, but a city built by God himself. And it's a reference to Jerusalem.

The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob. Of course, he loves all of Israel, but he loves Zion, which Jerusalem in particular, gates of Zion representing the whole city, in the sense that he chose it as a place to reveal himself.

[5 : 16] That's where the temple was. That's where he chose to meet with his people. And so glorious things are said about this city of God, Jerusalem. And then verses 4 to 5, really interesting

thing happens.

Among those who know me, now it's God speaking. And verses 4 to 6 really is kind of the center and the core of the psalm. The main point of the psalm really.

And it says, Among those who know me, I mention Rahab and Babylon. So God is saying that I will count among those who know me, knowing, referring to that covenant relationship, right?

Like in Amos 3.2, when God talks about among all the nations, I've only chosen to know you, Israel. So knowing God and being part of his covenant relationship, he says, I will mention Rahab and Babylon.

Rahab is another way to refer to Egypt. And Babylon, right? The nations of Mesopotamia. The two major kind of empires that were surrounding Israel.

[6 : 18] And then next it says, Behold, Philistia and Tyre. They're kind of the surrounding nations that were slightly weaker around Egypt and Babylon. And then with Cush.

Cush is more kind of a reference to kind of the far country, right? So this is really a reference to all the surrounding nations in the known world, really, in the world of the Israelites.

So God is saying, among those who know me, I mention Rahab and Babylon, Behold, Philistia and Tyre with Cush. This one was born there, they say. That's remarkable, right? Because of course, these nations were not born in Jerusalem.

But God is decreeing that he's legitimizing them and saying, This one was born there. I will count them and I will treat them as if they were part of my city.

As if they were citizens of my city. As if they were part of my nation. And then of Zion, it shall be said in verse 5, This one and that one were born in her. Not just the Jews, not just Israel, but this one.

[7 : 18] And that one, they were born in her, in Zion. For the Most High himself will establish her. And the Lord records as he registers the peoples, This one was born there, Selah.

It's such a powerful sentiment as I think about it. Because we're all, I mean, none of us are Jewish, right? Yeah. So in essence, we're all Gentiles, right? We're part of these excluded nations.

Yet, even from the beginning, even in the Old Testament days, God's plan, ultimate plan, was to use Israel to bring forth the Messiah through whom all nations will be grafted in.

That was his salvation plan from the beginning. And this reveals a glimpse of that here in Psalm 87, that there will be a day when Jerusalem will be the mother city, not just of Israel, but of all the nations.

And God will say of us, say of people who didn't formerly belong, Yes, he belongs. She belongs here. She was born here. They were born in her, Jerusalem.

[8 : 23] And then singers and dancers are like to say, All my springs are in you. Meaning the source of life. All our source of life is here in this city, in this Jerusalem. And that, of course, points to a profound spiritual idea.

If you could turn with me to Hebrews 12. It's not a quotation of this psalm, but I think this psalm is certainly behind it in substance.

In Hebrews 12, verses 22 to 24. Hebrews 12, verses 22 to 24. He's speaking of a kingdom that God's establishing.

It's salvation that's come upon those who believe in Jesus Christ. And he describes it this way. The author of Hebrews, verses 22 to 24, chapter 12. And to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant. And to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. So here, it's speaking of Jerusalem as a heavenly city.

[9 : 50] And that earthly city of Jerusalem, which God prophesied would be this center of worship among all the nations, was really pointing to and is fulfilled by this heavenly city of Jerusalem.

And this heavenly city that God built himself, right? Remember in Psalm 87, the beginning, it's a city he founded. It's not a man founded. It's a city founded by man. And it's the gathering of all those who love him.

And it will be people from all nations. And it says those who are enrolled in heaven, those who belong to the assembly of the firstborn, which is reference to Christ, who is the firstborn from the dead, right?

Firstborn of salvation. He is the one. And so those who belong to Jesus, who belong to the assembly, will be enrolled, registered, recorded as a citizen of this heavenly city.

And so all of us, because of Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and who sprinkled blood, because of his sprinkled blood that cleanses us from our sin, is now citizens of the city.

[10 : 52] And think about that from the perspective of an alien, right? An alien who doesn't have any rights, right? And, I mean, we're waiting on her sister, right?

Jenny's word. Did she hear back yet? No. Okay. So about whether or not she's going to get the citizenship or not, right? The green card. I mean, the green card. Yeah. Before the citizenship, right? And it's nerve-wracking, right?

Because it could mean that she gets deported. It could mean that, you know, their entire life will change based on this. And then you could feel like, you know, and that was our fate, right?

We had no way of getting into this amazing city of worshipping God and becoming a citizen. And that Jesus made a way for us so that we who did not belong, who were excluded, could belong in the city.

And we called citizens because he was excluded for our sake on the cross and died for our sins. Let's sing a song in response to that.