

# The City of God

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 04 March 2020

Preacher: Shawn Woo

[ 0 : 00 ] Psalm 122, a song of ascents of David.

I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord. Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem, built as a city that is bound firmly together, to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, as was decreed for Israel.

To give thanks to the name of the Lord. There thrones for judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

May they be secure who love you. Peace be within your walls and security within your towers. For my brothers and companions' sake, I will say, peace be within you.

For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good. Last week I was driving back from New York, as you guys know, and I was reminded of just how much I loved that last stretch on Mass Pike coming in toward Boston on I-90 East.

[ 1 : 27 ] You guys know that, I don't know if you've driven that lake, but you're driving past, you see that Star Market overpass around Newtonville.

As you're going under that, you know you're approaching Boston, and then soon you can expect to see the beautiful, towering skyline of Boston. And then it feels so welcoming and hospitable compared to the interminable wilderness that is the highway from New York to Boston.

And that sense of coming home after a long pilgrim journey is kind of like what's in view here in Psalm 122. It's written from the point of view of a pilgrim who's arriving to worship in Jerusalem. It says of David in the superscription, which could mean that David wrote it, or it could mean that it is written maybe in the style or in reflecting on the life of David.

If it was written by David, then perhaps he penned it during or shortly after the move of the capital of God's people to Jerusalem.

[ 2 : 36 ] And then, or maybe as he was preparing for the construction of the temple in 1 Samuel 7. And the psalm is divided into three sections.

In verses 1 to 2, we see the introduction to the psalm. It's where the pilgrim is kind of approaching Jerusalem, or he's just within Jerusalem, approaching the temple. So he speaks of the gates of Jerusalem.

And then in verses 3 to 5, he is beholding Jerusalem, and he speaks of the city of Jerusalem. And then finally, in verses 6 to 9, he speaks of praying for Jerusalem, for the peace of Jerusalem.

So the gates of Jerusalem, the city of Jerusalem, the peace of Jerusalem. So let's look at verses 1 to 2 first. The main point of the whole thing is that we should seek the peace of the city of God from which God rules.

And it says in verses 1 to 2, So the pilgrims within the gates of Jerusalem and his heart dwelling up with joy and gratification, he had been anticipating this stay ever since some people had suggested to him, Hey, let us go to the house of the Lord.

[ 3 : 49 ] And because that's where the dwelling place of God is. And he longed to be in the presence of God, to worship God. That's where the ark of God rested. Even before the construction of the temple, there was the tabernacle holding the ark there.

And I know a pastor who, I think he says this every Sunday. He's like, Sunday is my favorite day of the week.

And it's like, do we have that kind of anticipation for a gathering as the people of God? Just like this pilgrim does. And I was reading a book this week that told this story about Martin Lloyd-Jones that I just loved.

And Martin Lloyd-Jones was a pastor. Who knows about Martin Lloyd-Jones? Martin Lloyd-Jones was really a spiritual giant. And he's the one that wrote the book *Spiritual Depression*, which is

probably one of his most popular books.

And he was a pastor at Westminster Chapel during World War II. And so Westminster Chapel is a stone's throw from Buckingham Palace. So he's living in the capital.

[ 4 : 58 ] And it's the era of Hitler and Churchill, right, and FDR. It's these larger than life figures. And here is this pastor in Westminster Chapel.

And when the war began, they never stopped meeting, even though they knew of the Germans' reputation of bombing densely populated areas. And they continued to worship.

And one day, as they were worshipping on a Sunday morning, a bomb fell like a few yards from the church, shaking the building. And the plaster fell from the ceiling. And one of the parishioners that were there later recalled that she thought that she was in heaven because all these brothers just were covered in white.

But Martin Lloyd-Jones was praying at the time. They called it the long prayer, which is the pastoral prayer that he did every Sunday. And he didn't stop praying. He kept on praying.

And then he finished praying and then paused briefly to tell people, you could take cover under the gallery if you'd like. And then after people were taking cover, he resumed the service, finished preaching, finished their service, and went on.

[ 6 : 14 ] And so it's like a—and it's just such a powerful and defiant statement of the people of God.

This is the embassy of the kingdom of God. And no matter how the kingdoms of earth are shaking, we will not fail to meet. We will not fail to worship. And that's the kind of—it's the hope that they had.

And that's the hope and identity of a pilgrim. This is what we belong to. This is who we are.

It's—even when the world, as we know it, is falling apart, we have an unflinching, unwavering hope.

So that's kind of this—what we see here of this pilgrim's joy in being within the gates of Jerusalem to gather with the worshipers at the gates of Jerusalem. And then we see the city of Jerusalem.

He beholds and marvels at it in verses 3 to 5. In the covenant that God made with Abraham, he made three promises. He made—he promised that he would give him a people, descendants, a people, a nation.

[ 7 : 14 ] And he promised that he would give Abraham a place, a promised land. And then thirdly, he promised that he would dwell with them, his presence. So a people, a place, and a presence. That's kind of the covenant that God makes with his people.

And we see all three of that here in verses 3 to 5. So first, we see a place, Jerusalem, built as a city that is bound firmly together.

This is the place that God's people call home, the dwelling place of God, where they worship God. It's described like an impregnable fortress, like it's bound firmly together, dwelling place of God on high.

And the elevation of God's city, it represents the exaltation of God above all gods because God's name rests on it. And then in verse 4, we see a people to which the tribes go up, it says, right?

The tribes of the Lord as was decreed for Israel. And the word tribe recalls, of course, the sons of Jacob, sons of Israel. And in Jeremiah 10, 16 and 51, 19, God calls Israel the tribe of his inheritance.

[ 8 : 23 ] I mean, we use this word sometimes too, right, to refer to like, you know, theological tribes or political tribes or social tribes that people belong to.

Well, the people of God are God's tribe. He says, this is my tribe, the tribe of my inheritance, his chosen people. And they are, and Jerusalem is a city wherein the tribes of the Lord gather.

And then they go to give thanks to the name of the Lord that refers to the presence of God among them, to rule among them. And verse 5 speaks of this ruling presence. Their thrones for judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David.

And Davidic kings rule in God's stead as his representatives to execute justice that God wants to see on earth. So we see Jerusalem is the place that God has set for his presence to dwell, wherein his people are to live and worship.

And so after beholding the city of Jerusalem, the psalmist exhorts us in verses 6 to 9 to seek and pray for the peace of Jerusalem. There's an extended kind of wordplay slash, you know, alliteration in this last section that the translation can't quite capture.

[ 9 : 33 ] Because the word Jerusalem in verse 6, the word peace in verses 6, 7, and 8, word pray in verse 6, and word be secure in verse 6, all sound very similar in the Hebrew.

It's all kind of, it all sounds like the Hebrew word for peace, which is shalom. Shalom, you know, Jerusalem, shalet. It's like, it's like all like, that sounds like that. So the effect is quite emphatic. It's saying that as the people of God, we are to pray for the peace of Jerusalem so that the city might live up to its name. Jerusalem means city of peace, right?

And unfortunately, the peace of Jerusalem didn't last forever, as we know. People fell into idolatry and were consequently exiled from the city of God.

And even more significantly, when Jesus was entering Jerusalem in Luke 19, verses 41 to 44, instead of being glad like this pilgrim and rejoicing like this pilgrim, he wept over it, says in verse 41. [10:31] And this is what he said as he was weeping over Jerusalem. He wept because the people of the Lord rejected the Lord.

Because the city of peace didn't recognize the one who came to bring peace, the prince of peace. And because they failed to recognize Jesus as the messianic king. And so as a result, Jerusalem was dashed to pieces.

And, but Jesus came in order to make that peace possible again, to that reconciliation with God possible again. And so he died on the cross for the sins of his people.

And Romans 5, 1-2 says that, Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him, we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

And so it's by believing in Jesus that we receive the peace that he paid for on the cross by paying the penalty for our sins.

[11:58] And that's how we appropriate the peace that's spoken of and that we are called to seek and pray for. And after that, Jesus basically becomes, he's the new temple.

So he replaces the temple of a God that's destroyed. And all those who are in Christ become the temple of God and become the new Jerusalem.

And that's the glorious vision we see in Revelation 21. When DeForest says, Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

And I 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 the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people. And God himself will be with them as their God.

[12:59] He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. That's the ultimate fulfillment of the promise of a place of people and the presence of God among them.

And the new Jerusalem is not a place anymore. The new Jerusalem is called the bride. The new Jerusalem is the church. We are the church.

We are the new Jerusalem. And so God dwells with us and dwells within us. And that should actually, I think, make us even more eager than this pilgrim is to go to Jerusalem and to be with the people of God, to gather with the dwelling place of God, to worship together and to seek the peace of God's people with God and with one another.

And then to extend that peace to others. That's what we do in passing of the peace, right? We see peace with God, and then extend that peace to others. And that's the, yeah.

So hopefully we live out that identity as a pilgrim and as the city of God here on earth, the embassy of God on earth. Thank you.