

Psalm 87 – Bible Study Notes God’s Children Shall Rejoice in Him

Primary Focus: The glory of Zion.

Background Info: The author and time of writing are unknown.

Basic structure¹:

- I. The importance of Zion (vv. 1-3)
- II. The people of Zion (vv. 4-6)
- III. The joy of Zion (v. 7)

Verses 1-3 – The importance of Zion

Zion is the place God chose as his dwelling place.

God “loves” Zion because he chose it.

People speak “glorious things” about Zion because God dwells there.

Zion is the mountain on which the temple was built.

Many nations believed their gods dwelled on mountains.

Zion was God’s city because God chose Zion for himself.

From Zion God would meet, fellowship, and interact with his people.

To speak of Zion is to refer to God.

The ultimate glory of Zion is not the temple, but God.

Life Questions

How does God fellowship with his people today?
Where does the Holy Spirit reside today?

Verses 4-6 – The people of Zion

Verse 4 – places Zion on equal level with the mounts of other gods.

This does not demote God, but shows that his mountain his holy.

“Rahab” refers to Egypt.

It is a nickname for Egypt; literally translated “tumult.”

It may refer to a powerful demon behind Egypt.

The “born there” phrase points to the pride of one’s nation of birth.

Just as natives of Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, and Ethiopia are proud of their home countries, so shall those born in Zion be proud of their place of birth.

Verse 5 – “this one... that one” emphasizes two types of descendants:

Physical – physically born in the country of origin;

Spiritual – spiritually born in the country of origin.

¹ Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Psalms* (Garland, TX: by the author, 2006), 154-55, PDF
<http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/psalms.pdf>. Outline structure borrowed from Dr. Thomas Constable’s study notes commentary.

Those whom God “establishes” are those who are saved.
All saved people derive their spiritual birth from God.
Those who are saved can trace their spiritual birthplace to Zion.

Verse 6 – This points to the kingdom Christ will establish at his second coming.
Zion will be the capital of the new kingdom.
“count” and “register” – at the final judgment, all saved people will be recorded
as being born of God (born in Zion).

Life Questions

Who are the residents of Zion? Does physical heritage guarantee salvation? How can people live in Christ’s future kingdom?

Verse 7 – The joy of Zion

In the future, Zion will be a place of singing and joy.
The joy of Zion is found not in the city, but in God.
God is the source of all joy.
“All joy will come from Zion because God dwells in Zion.”²

Life Questions

Can Christians experience the joy of Zion today?
Describe what it is like to be joyous in God?

² Ibid., 156.