

Zion, the Mother of Us All

Jesus in the Psalms

Psalm 87

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I. Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus

- “He cannot have God as his Father who does not have the church as his _____.” Cyprian (3rd cent.)
- “For outside of the Christian church there is no truth, no Christ, no salvation.” Martin Luther
- “The visible church... is the ... the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.” The Westminster Confession of Faith, 25:2

It is the visible church that is vested with Jesus’ authority on earth. Consequently, outside intentional fellowship with a local congregation there is no _____ possibility of salvation.

II. The Heavenly Jerusalem (cf. Rev 21:9-14; Gal 4:21-31)

⁹Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” ¹⁰And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, ¹¹having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. ¹²Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: ¹³three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. ¹⁴Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (Rev 21:9-14)

United to her husband, the Lord Jesus Christ, the _____ is Mt. Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the continuation and fulfillment of the earthly Jerusalem. Paul wrote to those who were tempted to maintain the centrality of earthly Jerusalem for God’s purposes on earth:

²¹Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? ²²For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. ²³But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, ²⁴which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar—²⁵for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children—²⁶but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. ²⁷For it is written: “Rejoice, O barren, You who do not bear! Break forth and shout, You who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children Than she who has a husband.” ²⁸Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. ²⁹But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. ³⁰Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” ³¹So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free. (Gal 4:21ff)

The Jerusalem above, whose gates are named for the twelve tribes of Israel, the foundations of whose walls are named for the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and whose cornerstone is Christ Himself (cf. Eph 2:20), is the Church of God of which we are members. This Church, the heavenly Jerusalem, is the _____ of us all (26); we are her children, *children of the free woman* (31). To despise her, to neglect her, to ignore her is to despise the Christ who loves and treasures her. And it is of this city, Mt. Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the mother of us all, that Psalm 87 teaches us to sing.

III. The Mother of Us All (cf. Pss 45, 46, 48, 84)

Psalm 87 - A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. A Song.

¹His foundation *is* in the holy mountains. ²The LORD loves the gates of Zion More than all the dwellings of Jacob. ³Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God! Selah

⁴"I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to those who know Me; Behold, O Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia: 'This *one* was born there.' " ⁵And of Zion it will be said, "This *one* and that *one* were born in her; And the Most High Himself shall establish her."

⁶The LORD will record, When He registers the peoples: "This *one* was born there." Selah

⁷Both the singers and the players on instruments *say*, "All my springs *are* in you."

A. God's Beloved City (1-3)

As much as God loves individual Christians and delights in our growth; as much as God loves Christian families and delights in well-ordered homes; it is His bride, the _____, the collection of individual Christians and Christian families, that He loves most. I am not individually the bride of Christ; nor is my family the bride of Christ; the _____ is the bride of Christ and it is for this Church that Christ died.

B. Children of Zion (4-6)

And it is this vision of Mt. Zion as a multi-ethnic community of those born again by the power of God's Spirit that Psalm 87 sings. God numbers those who were formerly Zion's enemies as natural born citizens of the city (4) in addition to those born in her (5). How does God do this? By the gift of new birth. All must be born again, "*not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*" (Jn 1:12). Thus, the heavenly Jerusalem, the Church, is the _____ of us all.

C. Alma Mater (7)

So if God so *loves Mt. Zion* and makes her *the mother of us all*, then what ought to be our attitude toward her? Ought we not to rejoice in her and view her as the source of all our good? Every son should delight in his mother and bring her joy. "*Her children arise and call her blessed, her husband also and he praises her*" (Pr 31:28). "*A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son brings grief to his mother*" (Pr 10:1). So we celebrate the Church which has given us life and nourished us at her bosom. John Calvin, the French Swiss Reformer, writes in his *Intitutes*:

...let us learn even from the simple title 'mother' how useful, indeed how necessary, it is that we should know [the visible church]. For there is no other way to enter into life unless this mother conceive us in her womb, give us birth, nourish us at her breast, and lastly, unless she keep us under her care and guidance until, putting off mortal flesh, we become like the angels. Our weakness does not allow us to be dismissed from her school until we have been pupils all our lives. Furthermore, away from her bosom one cannot hope for any forgiveness of sins or any salvation...it is always disastrous to leave the church.

IV. Churchmen

The sons of Korah challenge our indifference to the well-being of the Church.

If I forget you, O Jerusalem, Let my right hand forget its skill! If I do not remember you, Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth— If I do not exalt Jerusalem Above my chief joy. (Ps 137:5-6)

It was this passion for the Church that characterized our Christ; and it should characterize us as well.

V. Conclusion