

# Zion

ITS PLACE AND SIGNIFICANCE  
IN SCRIPTURE

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*In the case of Scriptures which are referred to but not quoted in full, it is strongly recommended that the references should be looked up in the Bible and carefully read.*

*Quotations of Scripture are generally taken from the "New Translation," by J. N. Darby.*

## *ZION : ITS PLACE AND SIGNIFICANCE IN SCRIPTURE*

**Z**ION has a remarkable place in Scripture. Every interested reader must have been struck with the beauty of the language in which it is described in the Psalms. "The Lord . . . chose . . . the Mount Zion which he loved," Psalm 78. 68. "The joy of the whole earth is mount Zion," Psalm 48. 2. "Out of Zion the perfection of beauty God hath shined forth," Psalm 50. 2. "Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion more than all the habitations of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God." "As well the singers as the dancers (or players) shall say, All my springs are in thee," Psalm 87. The attractiveness of the way in which Zion is presented, may well arouse an enquiry as to why it is spoken of in these remarkable terms—why it is an object of such deep interest both to God and to His people.

## *KING DAVID AND ZION AND THE ARK OF GOD*

Zion first comes into view in connection with King David in 2 Samuel 5., after all the tribes came to him at Hebron, and anointed him king over all Israel. He then moved to Jerusalem against the Jebusites and captured the stronghold of Zion which he made his dwelling, calling it the city of David. It appears that the Jebusites had continued to maintain this stronghold in their possession, neither Judah nor Benjamin having been able to dispossess them, Joshua 15. 63, and Judges 1. 21 ;

and with vain confidence in its strength they defied David to take it. The capture of Zion may thus be looked upon as the decisive victory leading up to the completion of the conquest which began by the taking of Jericho, the first stronghold met by Israel on entering the land of promise. David's throne having been established in this way in Jerusalem, he subdued the Philistines and the surrounding nations and brought them under his dominion, 2 Samuel 8. This prepared the way for the peaceful reign of Solomon, 1 Kings 4. 21-25.

Zion has also special importance in connection with the ark of God. After the sad corruption and unfaithfulness of the priesthood and the people of Israel in the days of Eli, when the ark was captured by the Philistines, it found a temporary resting place in the house of Abinadab at Kirjath-jearim, 1 Samuel 4. to 7. When David's kingdom was established in Zion, he brought up the ark and placed it in the tent which he had prepared for it in the city of David, 2 Samuel 6. On the day when it was finally brought up out of the house of Obed-Edom with joy, David's feelings found expression in a psalm of thanksgiving and praise to Jehovah whose mercy endureth for ever, 1 Chronicles 16. 7-36. In 2 Samuel 7. we find David's desire to build a permanent house for the ark, and Jehovah's word through the prophet Nathan, assuring him of the continuance of the divine favour and the establishment of his throne for ever, but telling him that it was his son who would build the house for God to dwell in. Then follows David's beautiful response in prayer as he went in and sat before Jehovah.

This outlines briefly the historical setting in which Zion is introduced in Scripture. To appreciate the divine thoughts connected with Zion it is necessary to have some understanding of the place David holds not only historically but typically in

connection with God's dealings with Israel. The repeated failures of the people under the various judges, when there was *no king* in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 21. 25), was followed by the grievous breakdown of the *priesthood* under Eli and his sons. Then Samuel was raised up as a *prophet* to maintain the link between God and His people. King Saul having been rejected by God, Samuel was divinely instructed to anoint David to be king, of whom God said, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my heart who shall do all my will," Acts 13. 22. The beautiful moral features seen in David, as presented in Scripture, often mark him out as rising to the height of a type of Christ personally as the King of God's choice, under whose rule His people are to be maintained in true relation to God in view of divine blessing.

The ark is also another remarkable type of Christ as the One who came to establish God's will. It was the centre of the tabernacle system, where God dwelt in the cloud of glory above the mercy-seat between the cherubim, Exodus 25. and Psalm 80. In it the tables of the testimony were enshrined; Christ could say to God, "Thy law is within my heart," Psalm 40. 8. He is the power, the wisdom and the glory of God, and every divine thought is secured in Him for God and for His people. It is the bringing together of these two types of Christ in connection with Zion which gives it its unique character of blessedness.

## *GOD'S CHOICE OF MOUNT ZION IN PSALM 78*

A key to the spiritual significance of Zion is found in Psalm 78, where the patient dealings of God with Israel are traced from the deliverance

out of Egypt, and the journey through the wilderness until they were given the land as an inheritance, and the tabernacle was set up at Shiloh. Generation after generation of the people continued to rebel against God ; they kept not His covenant and forgot His wonderful deliverances and His patient ways in discipline, until finally they provoked Him to anger, and He greatly abhorred Israel. Then, " he forsook the tabernacle at Shiloh, the tent where he had dwelt among men, and gave his strength into captivity and his glory (the ark) into the hand of the oppressor," verses 60, 61. Israel had presumptuously taken the ark into the military camp, but were utterly defeated by the Philistines. Eli the priest and judge, and his two sons, died, and as his daughter-in-law died in childbirth she called her son's name Ichabod, saying, " The glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken," 1 Samuel 4. 22.

This has deep significance in the antitype. The darkest day in Israel's history was when Christ was given up to death by His own people. He could say to their leaders, " this is your hour and the power of darkness," Luke 22. 53. That Christ, the power and glory of God, should enter into death's domain meant that the power of death was broken. It was not possible that He should be held by death, whether we consider the greatness of His Person, or the perfection of His devoted obedience as Man in accomplishing the will of God. He has annulled death and brought to light life and incorruptibility, 2 Timothy 1. 10. The enemy could not hold the ark and had to admit defeat by the God of Israel, notwithstanding their apparent victory. The ark did not go back to Shiloh. A new situation had arisen, and Psalm 78 reaches its climax in connecting the rejection of Shiloh and Ephraim, with God's choice of Judah and Mount Zion which He loved, and also with His choice of

David (meaning beloved) to be the shepherd of Israel.

There is established in Mount Zion the principle of the sovereignty of divine mercy, after everything had broken down in connection with the responsibility of Israel under the Mosaic covenant. By the death and resurrection of Christ a steadfast and abiding platform has been secured, God's holy mountain on which He can establish that which is for His pleasure, and where He can rest in the blessing of His people. The God of peace brought again from among the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep in the power (or virtue) of the blood of the eternal covenant, Hebrews 13. 20. In Christianity we have not come to Mount Sinai and the law of Moses, but to Mount Zion and to Jesus, Mediator of a new covenant, Hebrews 12. 22, 24.

## ZION AS PRESENTED IN THE PSALMS AND IN THE PROPHETS

Before proceeding to consider some of the Scriptures which speak of that which is established for God upon His holy mountain, it may be remarked that in the *Psalms* most of the references to Zion have relation to the divine thoughts in all their perfection and beauty as secured and established in Christ, which will come into display when He appears in glory in the world to come, but which subsist in Him now and are known to faith and realized spiritually.

There are also many references to Zion in the *Prophets*, but in these greater prominence is given to the actual condition of the people in their unfaithfulness, culminating in the despising and rejecting of their Messiah, in consequence of which Zion becomes a wilderness and Jerusalem a desolation,



Isaiah 64. The prophets also look on to a future day when the divine thoughts will be publicly established in regard to Israel as a subject of divine mercy, the day of Psalm 118. verses 24-26; then "the ransomed of Jehovah shall return, and come to Zion with singing, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads, they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away," Isaiah 35. 10; Romans 11. 25-36.

The divine promises could not be established in connection with a people according to the flesh under the old covenant. In the days of Jeremiah, as in the days of Eli, they were, notwithstanding their wickedness, presumptuously boasting in having the temple of Jehovah in their midst, but the prophet warns them that what God had done to His house at Shiloh, He would also do to His house at Jerusalem, Jeremiah 7. In even more solemn circumstances judgment was pronounced upon Jerusalem and the house by the Lord Jesus Himself, Matthew 23. 34-39; 24. 1-2.

David, as we have seen, was often a beautiful type of Christ, but when in power and prosperity he forgot God, and was allowed to fall into sin, learning thus by bitter experience the terrible possibilities of sinful flesh even in a true saint. This is recorded in Scripture for our serious consideration and warning, in order that, walking in self judgment and the fear of God, we may be preserved. He was forgiven and recovered through deep soul exercise, a subject of divine mercy, Psalm 51, and in his last words he had to say by the Spirit, that the ruler among men must be just ruling in the fear of God. Although his house was not so before God, yet his whole confidence and salvation was in God's faithfulness to His everlasting covenant, 2 Samuel 23.

In a later day we find Ethan the Ezrahite recounting God's past interventions in power for His people, and His glorious promises to David, Psalm 89. He

reminds God of His Holy One, the Mighty One upon whom He had laid help, of whom David was only a type, for everything seemed to have broken down in man's hands. The Psalmist calls upon God to intervene, but he evidently feels, as indicated in verse 48, that the judgment of death which lies upon men, as the wages of sin, must be dealt with for the fulfilment of the promises. The answer to these exercises is given by the prophet Isaiah, who, after calling attention in chapter 53 to Jehovah's righteous Servant who was cut off out of the land of the living, and whose soul was made an offering for sin, but in whose hand the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper, speaks in chapter 55 of the everlasting covenant which God will make with His people, the *sure mercies* of David. These have now been secured in Christ, raised from among the dead, as stated by the apostle Paul in his address at Antioch, Acts 13. 34.

Israel, having rejected Christ, has been set aside nationally for the time being, but none of the divine thoughts have lapsed. They are established in Christ on high, and are maintained here on earth at the present time by the Spirit in the church, that is, the assembly. As Christian believers, partakers of the heavenly calling, we are reminded that we "*have come to mount Zion,*" Hebrews 12. 22.

## THAT WHICH GOD HAS ESTABLISHED UPON MOUNT ZION

The glory of God having been secured by the death of Christ, and witnessed to in His resurrection, God now has a fixed and immutable basis, His holy mountain, upon which, on the principle of sovereign mercy, He has established that which is for His pleasure and for the blessing of His people. This

mercy is seen objectively in its perfection in Christ risen and glorified, consequent on the accomplishment of His work of redemption. As divine mercy is understood and appreciated, the believer is formed subjectively in accord with it, in relation to the wonderful system to which he has come and of which he forms part.

## THE KINGDOM

The first feature of the divine system to be established is that of the kingdom. Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of God's throne, Psalm 97. 2. "Jehovah is righteous and He loves righteousness," Psalm 11. 7. "A king shall reign in righteousness," "And the work of righteousness shall be peace," Isaiah 32. 11 and 17. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom," Psalm 45. 6. Without this there would be no stability or security for the maintenance of conditions for the pleasure of God or the blessing of men. It may be remarked that while righteousness is specially prominent in relation to the kingdom,\* holiness also is characteristic of the whole system established upon God's holy mountain. "God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness," Psalm 47. 8.

The connection of the kingdom with Zion is seen in Psalm 2, verse 6. "I have set (or anointed) *my king* upon my holy hill of Zion"; or "upon Zion the hill of my holiness." The following Scriptures also may be referred to: "Jehovah shall send the sceptre of thy might out of Zion: rule in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power," Psalm 110. 2-3. "Let the

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\* Some further remarks as to righteousness and holiness will be found on page 16.

sons of Zion be joyful in their king," Psalm 149. 2. "Jehovah of hosts shall reign on mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before his ancients in glory," Isaiah 24. 23. "Jehovah shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever," Micah 4. 7.

These Scriptures look forward primarily, in their dispensational setting, to the place which God's King will have in relation to Israel, as the centre of world-wide blessing in the future kingdom to be established on earth when Christ returns in glory. There are many Old Testament scriptures which describe the future glory of the earthly side of Christ's kingdom, in its righteousness, peace, salvation, prosperity, and blessing, as for example, Psalms 45, 72, 145; Isaiah 9, 11, 32, 35.

In Psalm 2 we see the rising up of the nations and peoples with their kings and rulers, in vain opposition against Jehovah and against His Christ or anointed One. Jehovah has said to Him, "Thou art my Son," and He is set upon Zion as God's King in view of the day when all nations shall be possessed by Him, and all resistance be broken by irresistible power. The first three verses of the Psalm have been fulfilled in the rejection of Christ, as stated in Acts 4. 25-28. He now sits at God's right hand until His enemies are made His footstool according to Psalm 110. He will then exercise His kingship in relation to the earthly Zion, as the centre of universal dominion in power and glory, righteousness will reign and all opposition will be put down in righteous judgment.

In the meantime Christians have come by faith to mount Zion in its spiritual significance, and to the divine and heavenly system based upon it. Righteousness has been established by the death of Christ, the One who loved righteousness and hated lawlessness, and it has been witnessed to by His resurrection. God has now set Him forth a mercy-seat through faith in His blood, for the showing

forth of His (God's) righteousness, that is His rights in mercy and favour towards men ; Romans 3. 21-26 ; 11. 32. Being justified freely by God's grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, believers have come under Christ's authority as Lord, and thus being subdued by the divine grace which reigns through righteousness, they enter into present salvation. The Lord Jesus has made God known in His righteousness, power and love, all being in our favour. He has in this way secured us for God's will, and we come into the present power of the kingdom known as administered by the Lord Jesus in the peculiar grace which characterizes His authority during the present period, when evil instead of being put down by force is being overcome by good.

As we come under the influence and instruction of Christ we are led by Him in the path of righteousness. The Lord Jesus when on earth could say, "Learn from me," Matthew 11. 29. He was here for the will of God, in entire submission to Him, and actively carrying out His will as delighting in it. The moral character of the divine kingdom was livingly expressed in Him, and its principles and power were seen in His teaching and miracles. In meditating prayerfully upon His words and actions, His mind and spirit, and learning from Him as our living Lord and Teacher, we take character from Him as He is now known in the present power of His kingdom as the reign of grace.

As exalted at God's right hand He is now the true Melchisedec, King of righteousness and King of peace ; One who is both King and Priest, who continues for ever and is able to save completely all who approach by Him to God, always living to make intercession for them. See Psalm 110 ; Hebrews 7 ; Romans 8. 34.

Corresponding with the present position and power of Christ as Lord at the right hand of God, the Holy Spirit is the power in the believer, to give

him the victory over every adverse element within and without. We can thus realize the present power of the kingdom in the Christian experience of "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit," Romans 14. 17.

The future public establishment of the kingdom in the world to come, when Christ appears in glory after the first resurrection, and the place which the saints of the church or assembly will have as reigning with Christ on the heavenly side of the kingdom, is referred to in a later section of this paper dealing with the City of God.

## GOD'S DWELLING PLACE

While in the kingdom we have the establishment of that which is fundamental in the way of righteousness, it is also a means to an end. It secures and maintains everything in true relation to God and to His will, in view of the further thought connected with Zion which we find in Psalm 132. 13-14. "For Jehovah hath chosen Zion ; he hath desired it for *his dwelling* : This is my rest for ever here will I dwell, for I have desired it." See Psalm 78. 68-69 ; Joel 3. 17 ; and Zechariah 8. 3, where God is complacent in Zion as suitable for His dwelling, and where He can build His sanctuary ; also Psalm 36. 8. "So the sons of men take refuge under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house."

In Psalm 132 we see the connection between the ark finding a resting place through the deep exercises of David, and Jehovah choosing Zion for His dwelling, His rest for ever, for as already remarked in referring to the typical significance of the ark, God dwelt above the mercy-seat between the cherubim.

Righteousness and salvation having been established as we have seen in relation to the kingdom, conditions are suitable for God dwelling with His people. In the case of Israel God dwelt in a material structure, both in the tabernacle set up by Moses, Exodus 40. 34-35, and in the house built by Solomon, 1 Kings 8. 10-13. This will also be so in the future, when Israel is restored to the land in the world to come, as seen in Ezekiel's vision of the return of the glory, and the description of the new temple.

During the present church period the house of God is not a material structure, but a spiritual one. The saints as holy brethren partakers of the heavenly calling, are themselves constituted God's house. It is built by Christ, and He is over it as Son, Hebrews 3. 1-6 ; and as great Priest, Hebrews 10. 21. Being Mediator of a better covenant than that of Moses, He has obtained a more excellent ministry than that of Aaron, for He is Minister of the sanctuary, or the holies, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord has pitched and not man, Hebrews 8.

The Scriptures emphasize holiness as being a specially characteristic feature of God's house: "Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, for ever," Psalm 93. 5. Holiness is the law of the house, Ezekiel 43. 12. Jehovah will dwell in Zion, His holy mountain, Joel 3. 17. See also 1 Corinthians 3. 17 ; Ephesians 2. 21. It is God's pleasure to dwell in the midst of His people, but this necessitates the holiness called for by His presence, for without holiness no one shall see the Lord, Hebrews 12. 14.

A few remarks may be made here in regard to the distinction between righteousness and holiness, both of which stand in contrast to sin. *Righteousness* is opposed to sin as lawlessness, seen in fallen man going his own way and doing his own will, regardless of God. In the believer it is the recognition and practice of what is right, doing the will of God ;

the fulfilment of obligation in every relationship. *Holiness* is opposed to sin as impurity and defilement. It is the quality that delights in purity and repels evil as abhorrent. Sanctification\* involves the thought of being set apart for God. It is the state which is characterized by holiness, and also the activity which produces it.

In the cross of Christ the righteous and the holy One, the whole question of sin in its terrible character, whether as lawlessness, defilement or enmity, for "the mind of the flesh is enmity against God," was dealt with judicially in view of redemption and reconciliation, Romans 8. 3-8; 2 Corinthians 5. 21; Hebrews 10. 10; Colossians 1. 21, 22. In the putting away of sin sacrificially God's righteousness and holiness were vindicated, and in the cross where we see His judgment against sin, there was the full declaration of His love. The whole situation has thus been met to the glory of God by the One who was God's resource, the expression of His wisdom, power and love. Believers are recovered to God in the full light of the death, resurrection and glory of Christ, consequent on which they have received the Holy Spirit. Nothing can be added to the perfection of Christ's work for us. The Holy Spirit operates in us to bring us into accord with it subjectively, both in regard to righteousness and holiness, as He occupies us with Christ in whom these qualities are seen objectively in their perfection.

Saints, meaning holy or sanctified ones, is the usual name in the New Testament epistles for believers, as those who have been set apart for God in Christ Jesus, on the ground of redemption and the reception of the Holy Spirit. They are looked

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\* In a few instances there is the thought of being set apart where evil is not in question, as in the case of God's day of rest in Genesis 2. 3; and the Son of God in John 10. 36; 17. 19.



upon in Ephesians 4. 22-24 as having put off the old man which corrupts itself according to the deceitful lusts, and being renewed in the spirit of their mind ; and as having put on the new man which according to God is created in true righteousness and holiness.

The great operative principle which is effective in bringing this to pass is love—the divine nature, seen in the wonderful way in which God has been made known to us by His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. By the Holy Spirit this love is made good in the saints by divine formation.

In the light of all this we can understand the pleasure of God in choosing Zion, where He can dwell according to His desire amidst the praises of His people, who are brought near to Him in holiness, in the full light in which He has been revealed.

Peter tells us that the house of God is composed of those who have been born again of incorruptible seed by the living and abiding word of God, and who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, 1 Peter 1. Having come to Christ, the Living Stone, chosen of God and precious ; the Stone He has laid in Zion ; they themselves as living stones are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, chapter 2. The building of this living and spiritual structure is a definite allusion to the apostle's confession, " Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and the Lord's reply to him, " Thou art Peter (a stone) and on this rock I will build my assembly," Matthew 16. Against this the enemy who has the power of death, cannot prevail, for the living stones partake of the resurrection life of the Son of God.

Paul tells us that believers, both Jew and Gentile, have been reconciled to God by the cross, and are now built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit, Ephesians 2 ; also that the house of God

is the church or assembly of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth, 1 Timothy 3. 15.

The epistle to the Hebrews looks upon believers as a people set apart for God, sanctified by the death of Christ, and all of one with the Sanctifier, who is not ashamed to call them brethren. We have title by the blood of Jesus to enter the holy of holies, by a new and living way which He has dedicated for us through the veil, that is His flesh given for us in death. Having a great Priest over the house of God, we are encouraged to approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

Giving Christ His true place of supremacy both as Son and as great Priest over the house of God, the saints are enabled to carry on the divine service intelligently in accordance with the mind of God. By the Spirit of God a living character of service is maintained in prayer and praise, thanksgiving and worship.

The truth in regard to God as revealed by the Son, and in regard to Christ, fulfilling the type of the ark as the power and the glory of God, is to be treasured and guarded with intelligent affection by the saints as having part in this spiritual house. There the divine interests upon earth are cherished and a living ministry maintained by the Spirit in freshness and power, furnishing spiritual light and food for the guidance and building up of the saints. The testimony of the grace of God in the gospel also goes out from His house towards men universally with a view to salvation and blessing.

## *THE CITY OF GOD*

Following upon the kingdom and the house of God, we may consider the City of God as established upon mount Zion, God's foundation. All that we have seen in connection with the enthronement of

God's King, and the establishment of God's dwelling-place in Zion, gives character to the city, and constitutes the glory and blessedness of her citizens. Each one born in Zion is taken account of by God when He inscribes the peoples. Glorious things are spoken of the City of God, Jehovah loves her gates ; " the Most High himself shall establish her " ; the singers and the players say, " All my springs are in thee," Psalm 87. " There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God, the sanctuary of the habitations of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved," Psalm 46. 4-6. Jehovah is greatly to be praised in Zion. Beautiful in elevation, she is the joy of the whole earth. God is known in her palaces as a high fortress. The saints are invited to walk about Zion and go round about her ; to count the towers thereof, mark well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, Psalm 48. The people will sing, " We have a strong city ; salvation doth he appoint for walls and bulwarks. . . . Thou wilt keep in perfect peace the mind stayed on thee, for he confideth in thee," Isaiah 26. 2-3. " Peace be within thy bulwarks, prosperity within thy palaces," Psalm 122. The city is thus secured from every adverse element without, and preserved for the enjoyment of peace and prosperity within. See also the glorious description in Isaiah 60 of " The city of Jehovah, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel." His dwelling is called by Jehovah " the house of my magnificence " and " the place of my sanctuary." The beauties and glories of Zion give character to the whole of the city of Jerusalem. " Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined forth," Psalm 50. 2.

This will have its fulfilment in the earthly Jerusalem and in Israel, when Christ returns in glory, and the ransomed of Jehovah shall return to Zion with singing and everlasting joy, Isaiah 35. The name of

the city as seen in Ezekiel's vision is Jehovah Shammah, "The Lord is there," Ezekiel 48. 35.

During the present period the earthly Jerusalem is in bondage with her children, born according to flesh under the covenant of law. They have stumbled at the stone in Zion, which the builders rejected, Romans 9. 33. Now the liberty and privileges of the city of God are to be enjoyed by Christians, who as born according to Spirit derive their being from Jerusalem above, the system of grace, which is free and which is our mother, Galatians 4, 22-31.

In recognition of Christ glorified on high, and in submission to Him as Lord, the One to whom all authority has been given, we come in the power of the Spirit into the present gain of the kingdom with all its security and stability; and in the recognition of the Holy Spirit as constituting the saints collectively, God's dwelling place, we come into the present blessing connected with the house of God, over which Christ has His place as Son and great Priest. The divine service can thus be carried on after a spiritual order for the pleasure of God by those who know Him. They are maintained in perennial freshness and joy by the living streams of the river supplied by the Spirit. As they value and treasure the truth of God and cherish the divine interests, the true citizens of Zion become a centre of influence and testimony, giving a true representation of God in His character and attitude towards men. As divine principles are thus maintained in the order and administration of the city, we understand how it can be said that "Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion," where the righteous enter into the city and where there is an administration of truth and justice. See Psalm 118. 19, 20; Isaiah 26. 1, 2; Amos 5. 15; Zechariah 8. 16.

Looked at individually, each of the saints is a citizen of Zion, and is taken account of by God as born there. Looking at the saints collectively they

constitute the city of Zion. The various features set forth in the different parts of the city, such as the walls, bulwarks, towers, palaces, and gates, represent moral and spiritual elements which are seen in Christ and learned from Him, and which are being formed subjectively in the saints, so that they may correspond collectively with the divine thought as to the city in its strength, beauty and glory.

The city of God is seen in its perfection and completeness as described symbolically in Revelation 21. 9 to 22. 5. In chapters 19 and 20 the marriage of the Lamb is followed by the appearing of Christ in glory with the heavenly saints, and the introduction of the millennial reign. The account of the course of events is carried on to the close of the 1000 years, and the final judgment of the great white throne, followed in chapter 21. 1-8 by the eternal state when all things are made new.

The last vision of the book of the Revelation, in chapter 21. 9, takes us back to the millennial kingdom, and John sees the church as the bride, the Lamb's wife, under the figure of "the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God." It is seen in its place of administration, in relation to Israel and the nations in the world to come, and it is the heavenly counterpart of the earthly city described in Isaiah 60. In the twelve foundations of the wall, with the names of the twelve apostles, in the twelve gates with twelve angels, and the names of the twelve tribes inscribed, and in the measurements; twelve times twelve and a thousand times twelve, emphasis is laid upon the number signifying the perfection of administration. It is all the outcome of divine workmanship, "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." It is built of pure gold like transparent glass, and adorned with every precious stone, and each gate one pearl. The river of the water of life flows out from the throne, and the tree of life is

beside the river, with its twelve fruits, and its leaves for the healing of the nations. The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it ; and His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face ; and they shall reign to the ages of ages.

While this description refers to the future glory of the heavenly city, the work of God has already commenced, and the saints, as we have seen, are now being divinely formed and educated in view of the final result. Having come to mount Zion, we have come also “ to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem . . . and to the assembly of the firstborn who are unregistered in heaven ” ; Hebrews 12. 22, 23.

It is well to notice that the thought of the dwelling of God is carried beyond the mediatorial kingdom into the eternal state when God will be all in all. In John’s vision of the *new* heavens and the *new* earth, in Revelation 21., verses 1–8, he saw the holy city, *new* Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband ; and he heard a loud voice out of heaven saying, “ Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God.” Here we see the assembly still in relation to Christ as His bride, and also in relation to God as His tabernacle, in which He will dwell with men, when the former things and distinctions of the time scene, such as seen in Israel, and the nations will have passed away, and He makes all things new.

## THE DIVINE BLESSING

The great end in view in connection with Zion is seen in Psalms 133 and 134. There the *blessing* of Jehovah is commanded, *life for evermore*. The establishment of the various features we have already

considered in relation to Zion, was necessary in order to bring to pass conditions under which Jehovah could command the divine blessing.

Psalm 133 looks at these conditions as having been secured, and attention is called to the good and pleasant sight of brethren dwelling together in unity. It is likened to the precious anointing oil, that is, the Spirit, on the head of the high priest which ran down to the hem of his garment, and also to the refreshing dew of Hermon descending from above on the mountains of Zion. Psalm 134 calls upon all the servants of Jehovah to lift up their hands in the sanctuary and to bless Jehovah. The blessing of Jehovah, the Maker of heaven and earth goes out from Zion.

In Revelation 14. 1-5 John sees in vision the Jewish remnant, in anticipation of the time of Christ's return to set up the millennial kingdom. They are seen as already upon mount Zion with the Lamb. They have been redeemed, the first-fruits of Israel to God and to the Lamb ; they are preserved blameless in purity and truth, and follow the Lamb where-soever He goes.

In the world to come all Israel redeemed and saved will enter into the enjoyment of the blessing on the millennial earth. The new covenant will have been made with both the house of Israel and the house of Judah, Jeremiah 31. 31. All of them will know God, and they will be owned as His people. Both houses will thus be brought into unity as brethren dwelling together. Sectional rivalry and jealousy will disappear ; Ephraim, that is, Israel, will not envy Judah, and Judah will not trouble Ephraim, Isaiah 11. 13 ; Ezekiel 37. 15-28. Zion the joy of the whole earth, will be the centre from which blessing will go out world-wide, Psalm 48. 2 ; 50. 1, 2. All the nations will go up to Zion to be taught Jehovah's ways, that they may walk in His paths and learn the way of peace, Isaiah 4. 1-4.

As noticed in dealing with the city of God, heaven and earth will then be brought into accord, and God's purpose for the administration of the fulness of times, will be fulfilled in the heading up of all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, Ephesians 1. 9, 10. The assembly as the heavenly Jerusalem will form the link between heaven and earth, and the nations will walk by its light; and the kings bring their glory to it, Revelation 21. The whole scene will be characterized by light and life. The earthly city, like the heavenly one, will have its river of water of life flowing out and making everything live, Ezekiel 47.

During the present period, that of "God's dispensation which is in faith," 1 Timothy 1. 4, all the divine thoughts of blessing connected with Zion, are treasured by those who form the assembly of God, who have been baptized by one Spirit into one body and have all been given to drink of one Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12. The basis for unity is seen in the kingdom, where believers are all subject to the authority of one Lord. Also as coming under the quickening power of the Spirit, and beholding the glory of the Lord as Mediator of the new covenant, we are all transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, all like the Lord and like one another, 2 Corinthians 3. The thought of unity is further emphasized in relation to the house of God. Jew and Gentile, having been reconciled by the cross, are formed in Christ into one new man. Being fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God, they are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit, Ephesians 2.

The Spirit of God by His work in the saints is the power to bring us now into accord with the divine thoughts established by Christ for the glory of God. Suitable conditions can thus be maintained in righteousness, holiness and love for the enjoyment of the divine blessing, God being known by His



people in the full truth of His nature and attributes as declared by the Son.

Of the New Testament writers it is John who lays special emphasis on the possession of eternal life by believers, to be enjoyed as present blessing. His gospel was written that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might have life in His name, chapter 20. 31.

Christ is there presented to faith, as Son of God and as Son of man. He has made the love of God known, and to bring into effect God's purpose of blessing, He gave His life that the sinful condition of men might be dealt with, and the testimony might go out world-wide so that every one believing on Him might have eternal life, chapter 3. He is the Giver of the living water, the Holy Spirit, which satisfies thirst for ever, becoming a fountain of water within the believer and springing up into eternal life, chapter 4. He Himself is the living bread which has come down out of heaven, the food that abides unto eternal life; and He gave His flesh and blood, that in the appropriation of Himself as having died we might have eternal life, chapter 6. When about to leave the world and go to the Father, He spoke to His own of the coming of the Spirit who would abide with them and be in them, and He said, Because I live ye also shall live, chapter 14. Having finished the work the Father gave Him to do, the Son has now been glorified, chapter 17, and from the glory He has given the Spirit to those who believe on Him. Such importance did the Lord attach to this, that He told His disciples it was profitable for them, that instead of Himself remaining with them, He should go to the Father and send the Spirit, chapter 16. The Son now glorifies the Father in giving eternal life to all that the Father has given Him, chapter 17. 2.

John's first epistle was written to those who believe on the name of the Son of God, that their

joy may be full, chapter 1. 4 ; and that they may know consciously that they have eternal life, chapter 5. 13. Such are the children of God, a continuation of the company who were with the Lord when here, " his own who were in the world." They have been born of God and have received the Spirit. As abiding in Christ and keeping His commandments they are characterized by righteousness and love, that which " is true in him and in you."

John bears witness in chapter 1 of the epistle, to that which was from the beginning, the manifestation of life seen in Christ come in flesh, the Eternal Life which was here with the Father. That we might live through the Son, necessitated the death of Christ, chapter 5 ; therefore He also came by water and blood, cleansing and expiation ; and now the Spirit and the water and the blood unite in witness to the love of God in giving to believers eternal life, and this life is in His Son. The believer has this divine testimony in himself by the Spirit, for the Spirit is the truth subjectively.

The Son of God having come has brought to us the knowledge of the true God, and we are in Him that is true, the true Man, God's Son Jesus Christ. Being the true God, the Son was able to make God known in the fulness of His love. As Man He fully appreciated and responded to the love of God in which He ever lives, and He is thus the perfect expression of eternal life.

It is in the mutuality of living affections formed by the Spirit under the influence of divine love, that saints can dwell together in unity as brethren. Conditions are thus maintained in which we may realize the possession and the enjoyment of eternal life. " We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren," chapter 3. 14.

The importance of true unity according to God, as necessary for the enjoyment of divine blessing and also for power in testimony, is seen in many

New Testament scriptures. It is prominent in the Lord's prayer for His own in John 17, see verses 11, 21-23. In the early chapters of the Acts it is found actually existing, not only in the company of 120 disciples who continued with one accord in prayer after the Lord's ascension, but also in a very remarkable way in the thousands of new converts after the Spirit was given.

The difficulties involved in the practical maintenance of this unity, soon became manifest after the early days of the history in the Acts ; and they are also seen in the exhortations and rebukes in the epistles. Reference may be made to the party spirit and strife amongst the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 1, and to the contentions amongst the Galatians under the influence of Judaizing teachers, chapter 5. 15, 26. Even in the case of such an assembly as that at Ephesus, there was need for exhortations to "all lowliness and meekness with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love ; using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace" : and "Let all bitterness and heat of passion, and wrath and clamour and injurious language be removed from you with all malice, and be to one another kind and compassionate, forgiving one another, so as God also in Christ has forgiven you," chapter 4. 2, 3, 31, 32. To the Philippians Paul writes, "Let nothing be in the spirit of strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind, each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves ; regarding not each his own qualities, but each those of others also," chapter 2. 3, 4.

These exhortations have great practical value, showing as they do the spirit in which alone the divine unity can be maintained. In giving heed to them there is preservation from fleshly activities tending to the break up of the unity. In the positive teaching of the epistles there is a ministry of Christ

which supplies that which is needed for the carrying out of the exhortations. Divine love is the power to produce unity according to God, as we come under its constraining influence; self in its varied subtle forms of self-consideration and self-exaltation, being thus displaced by the Spirit of Christ.

Eternal life is known and enjoyed as divine blessing, in the measure in which we know and respond to the love of God. The life thus enjoyed goes back to God in blessing, praise and worship, and it goes out to men in living testimony.

## CONCLUSION

In our consideration of the spiritual significance of Zion, and its application in the present period, we have been mainly occupied with the divine thoughts as set forth in the various scriptures referred to. The failure of the assembly on its responsible side, we should undoubtedly recognize, and feel deeply as forming part of it, but this should not be allowed to obscure or darken our vision of the truth on the divine side, for "the firm foundation of God stands," 2 Timothy 2. That which has been established for God in Christ remains intact in all its perfection, and the Holy Spirit is here as the Spirit of truth to guide us into all the truth, John 16. In subjection to Christ as Lord, and giving the Holy Spirit His place, every divine thought connected with Zion is open to us for present realization and enjoyment.

The maintenance of the necessary conditions of righteousness and holiness, both personally and in regard to our associations, involves a narrow path, as indicated in the apostle Paul's instructions in view of the last days in his second epistle to Timothy. Those walking together in this path, should, however, in mind and affection take in all the people of God,

who have title to the privileges and blessings of Zion ; although owing to the confusion and darkness prevalent in the professing church with its mixed associations, many of them have not the knowledge and enjoyment of what should be their present portion according to the mind of God.

In concluding, attention may be recalled to the fact that the wonderful thoughts of divine blessing connected with Zion as seen in the Psalms, primarily refer to Israel and the *earthly* Jerusalem. Whilst as we have seen, these scriptures have a very real present application to Christians, it is well to remember that the spiritual blessings which have been brought in by the coming of the Son of God and the Holy Spirit, as the portion of saints during the present church period, in their height and fulness, go even beyond that which is presented in the Old Testament, in the way of divine blessing for God's earthly people.

Having come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the assembly of the first-born ones who are enregistered in heaven, we have been brought into privileges and blessings of a *heavenly* character. Not only did God send His Son into the world that we might live through Him, and has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son, 1 John 4. 9 ; 5. 11 ; but He also sent forth His Son that we might receive sonship, and He has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts so that we may have the conscious knowledge of the relationship, Galatians 4. 4, 6. Christ has brought us into the liberty of sonship in association with Himself as the Firstborn amongst many brethren.

In the epistle to the Ephesians Paul sets forth the full height of Christian blessing according to God's eternal purpose. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us with *every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies* in Christ, all being for the

pleasure and glory of God, for He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love, and marked us out beforehand for sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He has freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved, Ephesians 1. 3-6. In the carrying out of the divine purpose, even when all, both Jews and Gentiles were dead in offences, God who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, has quickened us, made us to live, with the Christ, and has raised us up together, and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, chapter 2. 4-6. The apostle prays in chapter 3 to the Father that the saints being strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man, may be enabled to apprehend the full extent of the divine thoughts and purposes of blessing, and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge, that they may be filled to all the fulness of God.

This is in full accord with the Lord's teaching as to "the heavenly things," John 3. 12, which none could disclose but the One who came down from heaven. The Son has made God known as Father in the fulness of His love. His prayer to the Father for His own in chapter 17, closes with the wonderful words, "I have made known to them thy name, and will make it known; that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them." This anticipated the completion of the work which the Father gave Him to do, and the establishment of the new relationship in association with Himself on high, so that on the resurrection morning He could send Mary Magdalene to His disciples, saying to her, "Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God," John 20. 17.

Having gone to the Father He has sent down the Spirit of truth, of whom He said, that He shall guide you into all the truth. He shall glorify me for He shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you. All things that the Father has are mine, John 16.

This wonderful circle of divine and heavenly affections and relationships is thus opened up to saints of the assembly for present enjoyment in the knowledge of divine Persons.

"To Him (God) be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages. Amen," Ephesians 3. 21.

