

Psalm 48ⁱⁱⁱ

¹Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised; *
in the city of our God is his holy hill.

²Beautiful and lofty, the joy of all the earth, is the hill of Zion, *
the very center of the world and the city of the great King.

³God is in her citadels; *
he is known to be her sure refuge.

⁴Behold, the kings of the earth assembled *
and marched forward together.

⁵They looked and were astounded; *
they retreated and fled in terror.

⁶Trembling seized them there; *
they writhed like a woman in childbirth, like ships of the sea when the east
wind shatters them.

⁷As we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the
city of our God; *
God has established her forever.

⁸We have waited in silence on your loving-kindness, O God, *
in the midst of your temple.

⁹Your praise, like your Name, O God, reaches to the world's end; *
your right hand is full of justice.

¹⁰Let Mount Zion be glad and the cities of Judah rejoice, *
because of your judgments.

¹¹Make the circuit of Zion; walk round about her; *
count the number of her towers.

¹²Consider well her bulwarks; examine her strongholds; *
that you may tell those who come after.

¹³This God is our God forever and ever; *
he shall be our guide for evermore.

iii About Psalm 48

This psalm is a hymn in praise of Zion, the holy hill in Jerusalem on which the temple was built. The temple was the only place on earth where God physically dwelt. Thus it was the most sacred place in the world. But it was not only a sacred place but an unconquerable stronghold whose very sight caused enemies to cower. This rather idealized belief was shattered when the Babylonians overran the stronghold and destroyed the temple in 587 BCE.