



Brown Community Group Discussion Guide

March 20, 2022 | Psalm 48

I. Starter Thoughts and Context:

What part do you think God plays in your overall protection, security and safety? Do you view God as actively participating and guiding you each and every day as your fortress? Does this take place only on the big things in life or dangerous threatening situations?

Have you seen your enemies literally destroyed before your eyes in protection of yourself? How secure do you think you would be without God?

Does Gods literal security, protection and safety only applied to spiritual applications or does this apply to all physical aspects of life as well?

What has been your reaction of praise in the past or possibly lack of praise for God's guidance?

II. Discussion of Scripture:

Psalm 48

1 Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise, in the city of our God, his holy mountain. 2 Beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth, like the heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion, the city of the Great King. 3 God is in her citadels; he has shown himself to be her fortress.

Context: Psalm 48 is a hymn of celebration on the beneficial effect of the Presence of God upon Jerusalem, his chosen place of residence. The concept of Jerusalem's inviolability of never being infringed or broken, focuses longingly and lovingly on Jerusalem. It is speculated that this was sung in processional worship around the city.

The poem begins with a forceful statement that encapsulates all that is about to follow. Yahweh is great! He is to be praised exceedingly in "the city of our God". Praising the beauty and benefits of the city were a part of their praise to God. The praise list progresses from the Hill of Zion, where God was believed to be specifically present to the city itself.

God was again emphasized in the last verse, so that there would be no confusion of whom they were praising and worshipping.

Discussion Questions:

1. Let's list out the many ways that Zion or God is described in verses 1-3?
2. What role can you tell that Jerusalem plays in the faith of the Old Testament Jew?
3. In verse 3, how had God demonstrated to his people to be their fortress? How can they make this statement? By his very presence in the temple, protection, both? Discuss?
4. What is the corollary to God's people of today? Is it the same or different? How?

Psalm 48

4 When the kings joined forces, when they advanced together, 5 they saw her and were astounded; they fled in terror. 6 Trembling seized them there, pain like that of a woman in labor. 7 You destroyed them like ships of Tarshish shattered by an east wind. 8 As we have heard, so we have seen in the city of the Lord Almighty, in the city of our God: God makes her secure forever.

Context: While many attempts have been made to discover a historical reference for the frustrated assault depicted in these verses, the most often mentioned is the Assyrians under Sennacherib in 701 BC. While no situation matches perfectly, it may be best to reference the verses as a device of the poet to depict Jerusalem inviolability because of God's presence as opposed to a specific historical reference.

The kings had an agreed alliance, time and gathering with a deadly intent. They were obviously very formidable. Verse 5 is truly astounding with the strong warrior armies of the day only looking upon Jerusalem and being in mortal fear for their lives. What an astonishing sight that must have been and so convincing and powerful from afar. There was no question how strong and powerful God and His city were. They were not about to challenge it.

Discussion Questions:

5. In verses 4-7, describe and list the impacts on the enemies of Israel when they saw Jerusalem?
6. Again in verse 8, what is the genesis of the key element of protection for them in Jerusalem?
7. How can we take heart and understanding from verse 8 for our lives today?

Psalm 48

9 Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love. 10 Like your name, O God, your praise reaches to the ends of the earth; your right hand is filled with righteousness. 11 Mount Zion rejoices, the villages of Judah are glad because of your judgments.

12 Walk about Zion, go around her, count her towers, 13 consider well her ramparts, view her citadels, that you may tell of them to the next generation. 14 For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.

Context: They are proclaiming and considering the incomparability of God's unchanging love within his Temple. Reflecting upon His name to the ends of the earth, God's holiness and righteousness are clear and evident.

The worshippers are counseled to consider their blessings which they are a part of and to prepare themselves for further appreciation. Their very presence and existence are testimony to the Presence of God.

The Psalm concludes with a devotion to Jerusalem, like so much of religious Israel, had its origin in appreciation and reaction to the real presence of God. Only an understanding of this fact can make comprehensible the role which Jerusalem came to play in the faith of the Old Testament for the Jews. And similarly, the devastating effect which the destruction of the Temple had upon the faith at a later time. Further spiritual insight would demonstrate the needed correction to Israel's theology of "Presence" by the foundation for God's powerful act of the incarnation of Christ.

Discussion Questions:

8. What was God's peoples responses to the security and protection provided?
9. What characteristics of God are mentioned for us to observe and praise? Do you have one of these that you most often find yourself praising Him?
10. What instructions should we take directly from verse 12-14 for us as believers?

III. Responding in Prayer

- Praise God for how He is our refuge. Praise God for how He is a refuge for all believers all over the world. Pray we see Him as such and that our brothers and sisters do too especially in Ukraine.
- Thank God for being a righteous judge and ask for Him to strike terror and fear and trembling upon the enemies of this world and the principalities of darkness. Pray believers will remember He is our fortress and when we put on the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18) we will be strong and mighty in His power as the Scripture says.
- Ask God to give you courage and boldness to tell your stories this week about His miracles in your own life. Ask for Him to give you opportunities to "live sent" sharing your testimony and the Gospel of Christ with others.