

Intro:

The Psalm is terse, leaves a lot of words to be understood, which causes a bit of trouble for the commentators.

Nevertheless, it is a very brilliant prophetic Psalm, looking well into the future – certainly nothing of it was fully realized in ancient Israel. We don't know the date at which this was written.

Notes:

What word starts the Psalm and what does it mean? (1)

The word 'his foundation' or 'his establishment'. It means that this location is God's base for his dealings with men.

From a verb root 'to set, to place'

Related noun means foundation or base of something (like the base of an altar)

This form used only here – foundation of a city (His city)

What location does God consider his establishment? (2)

Zion, the city of God – Jerusalem

What distinguishes Zion from all other locations in Israel? (1-2)

God's choice and God's presence

What is the reason for God's choice of Zion and what is the effect of that choice? (1-2)

The reason for his choice? God loves Zion – see Dt 7.6-8 for God's reasons for his love of Israel

God's choice

God's covenant

The effect of his choice? He makes the hills of Jerusalem holy

Who is doing the speaking in v. 3?

God – this is in the form of an oracle – Glorious things are being spoken about you, O City of God.

When God speaks, he is making an official declaration, an announcement – 'I will make mention'. What word gives us the content of that announcement? (4)

The declaration: 'This one was born there'

Of whom is the declaration made? (4)

Rahab = Egypt

Rahab and Babylon = superpowers of the day

Philistia = the enemy Israel could never fully drive out

Tyre = the northern Phoenicians (Lebanon)

Ethiopia = the distant nations

What is the key to this declaration? Why is it made? (4)

A key to the declaration, 'those who know me' – God is saying that I am declaring the citizenship of these nations in Zion, because they know me.

How sure are we of this declaration and why? (4-6)

The declaration is repeated three times with increasing emphasis

Verse 4 – question is 'where?'

Verse 5 – question is answered: in Zion

Verse 6 – authority is given – this is an official announcement by the LORD – Jehovah

Consider the placing of the word 'Selah' – what do they call us to do in these two sections? (3, 6)

First, to contemplate God's relationship with Zion and to anticipate what God will say about her. (3)

Second, to contemplate God's grace extended to nations who are enemies of Israel to this day. (6)

What is the significance of the phrase, 'Of Zion it shall be said...' (5)

Conveys idea of motherhood (possible textual issue) or source

Paul seems to reference the idea when he calls Jerusalem from above 'our mother' (Gal 4.26)

What is the message of v. 7?

Verse 7 responds in praise to God's 'glorious things' in vv. 4-6: those included in the register sing because Zion is their fountain of life.

*“Who can faint while such a river
Ever flows their thirst to assuage
Grace which, like the Lord the Giver,
Never fails from age to age.”*

[2nd half of v. 2, *Glorious things of thee are spoken*, John Newton]