

MOUNT ZION: YAHWEH'S PRESENCE, RULE, AND ESCHATOLOGICAL HOPE

by

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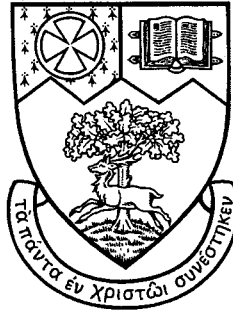
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ABSTRACT

MOUNT ZION: YAHWEH'S PRESENCE, RULE, AND ESCHATOLOGICAL HOPE

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Mount Zion has long been a focal point for followers of Yahweh, and central to the cultic practices of the Israelites in the Old Testament. A diachronic examination of the spatial significance of Mount Zion in scripture is undertaken along with its contribution to Zion theology. In the Psalter, Mount Zion is a present reality representing the presence of Yahweh and his established kingdom. Isaiah affirms the inviolability of Mount Zion, concluding that Zion will again be the center from which Yahweh will rule. Scripture depicts Mount Zion as the iconic example of Yahweh's desired place to gather the nations, rule and execute his justice and peace that subsequently spills to the whole earth. In Hebrews, the earthly Mount Zion is seen as an archetype of the heavenly reality. Hebrews reminds its audience of the eternal heavenly city of the living God. In this way, the Mount Zion portrayed in the NT points us to our eschatological hope that recalls the images in the Psalter, Isaiah, and other OT passages. The purpose of this work is to bring a better understanding of the biblical references to "Mount Zion" in relation to its geographical location and the implications for the way we think about Zion in the church today.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible Commentary Series
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992
ANE	Ancient Near East
ATR	<i>Anglican Theology Review</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
ESV	English Standard Version
GKC	Gesenius-Kautsch-Crowley
HTS	<i>Hervormde Teologiese Studies</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
MT	Masoretic Text
NAC	New American Commentary
NIB	New Interpreter's Bible
NICOT	New International Commentary of the Old Testament
NIDOTTE	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> . Edited by W. A. VanGemeren. 5 vols. Grand Rapids: 1997.
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NIVAC	New International Version Application Commentary
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
SJT	<i>Southwestern Journal of Theology</i>
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by G. J. Boterweck and H. Ringgren. Translated by J. T. Willis, G. W. Bromiley, and D. E. Green. 8 vols. Grand Rapids. 1974.
TWOT	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr. 2 vols. Chicago, 1980
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WEBC	Westminster Biblical Commentary

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Today when Mount Zion is discussed or even sung of in the church, there are various images that come to mind. Depending on the context in which it is used, one might think of the city of Jerusalem in Israel, the eternal city of Yahweh that is to come (with or without any sense of an earthly geographical place), or some other sort of eschatological hope or imagery. The Jewish and Christian scriptural traditions are rich with language that speaks of the hope that Christians are called to, and the coming kingdom of Yahweh. His coming rule is depicted in the imagery of Jerusalem or Mount Zion, which comes to be known as the city of Yahweh. The word Zion does not always carry with it an eschatological meaning. As it unfolds in the scriptures, there is a continued shift and growing tension between the present fulfillment and understanding of Mount Zion imagery and a future hope. Its meaning develops as the biblical narrative progresses. Although, Zion theology has long been a fascinating topic of study among scholars,¹ its implications for church practice have not been readily apparent. The purpose of this paper is to bring a better understanding of the biblical references to “Mount Zion” in relation to its geographical location, spatial reality, and the implications for the way we think about Zion in the church today.

¹ Dow, *Images of Zion*, 19–20.

1. Interpretive method

The interpretive method used in research plays a large role in determining the questions that are asked of the text. Research in this field has often been done using a historical-critical method, concerned with the historical context of the ancient world and how we interpret Mount Zion within this framework. Clifford's book *The Cosmic Mountain* still serves as a standard source for this discussion, focusing on the role of Canaanite cultic concepts of the cosmic mountain and how these traditions appear and are used in the OT's description of Zion.² Kraus also views the Zion tradition as stemming from ideas current in the Canaanite cultic practices.³ This approach has important insights for understanding how the mountains of the gods were viewed in the ancient world. However, it is critical not to lean too heavily upon the Canaanite worldview as the single influence of the Zion tradition. This thesis will not ignore the impact of the surrounding Canaanite practices. Understanding the religious and cultural beliefs of the nations that surround Israel provides important context for understanding the environment from which Zion theology emerges. However, when this work discusses the religious dynamics of the nations surrounding Israel, its focus is to identify how cultural parallels serve to highlight and distinguish Israel from the neighbouring cultic practices. To argue that the Zion tradition is forged by merging with the typical Canaanite images, requires that earlier passages illustrating Yahweh's relationship with Zion be later insertions.⁴ This work does not comment on these source critical arguments, but in acknowledging the integrity of the final form of scripture, it recognizes that the final redactors of the text

² Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain*.

³ Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, 78–84.

⁴ Dow, *Images of Zion*, 25.

believed it important to include these references as they communicated Zion theology to the Israelites.

Some scholars address Zion theology thematically, focusing on specific referents of its meaning. Hoppe, in *The Holy City: Jerusalem in the Theology of the Old Testament*, discusses the development of the Jerusalem tradition according to genre.⁵ In the prophetic books he sees what he defines as the central message of this tradition, that the just social order is its key emphasis. He pushes for an application that brings Christians to the person of Jesus, the source of justice for the modern church.⁶ Levenson, in *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible*, addresses where the Mount Sinai and Mount Zion traditions merge and diverge.⁷ These studies have provided important insight, however specifically in the case of Hoppe, I believe the narrow application passes over some of the additional components of Zion theology that are to be understood today.

In contrast, Dow approaches the topic of Zion theology in her book *Images of Zion* with what is called the canonical approach.⁸ In her attempt to discover what Zion themes the book of Revelation draws on, she addresses passages concerned with Zion/Jerusalem in the OT and NT. Dow, in her book *Images of Zion*, seems to apply Childs' methodology. Childs argues that to understand NT theology one must understand that, "the New Testament was not a linear continuation of the Old Testament, nor does the Old Testament lean toward the New. Rather, the direction of the tradition's growth

⁵ Hoppe, *The Holy City*, 58.

⁶ Hoppe, *The Holy City*, 58, 167.

⁷ Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 187.

⁸ Dow, *Images of Zion*, 19.

was often reversed. The evangelists read from the new backward to the Old.”⁹ For Childs, the unity of the Old and New comes together in theology. Dow takes an in depth look at the OT, non-canonical second temple literature, and NT developments in light of the messiah to identify where they converge theologically.¹⁰ While Dow’s work focuses on Zion theology in regards to eschatology culminating in the book of Revelation, the emphasis of this work is to understand the implications of Zion theology for the collective church through Hebrews.

Although approaching a biblical theology of Zion that considers all of scripture is an immense project, it is an important one. This work does not have the time and space to address the development of Zion theology in the depth and detail Dow has, but it will attempt to give an overview in an effort to guard against becoming too narrowly focused in its later discussions on specific passages.

This thesis will approach Zion theology with the presupposition that “*All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness*” (2 Tim 3:16).¹¹ The scriptures speak of a message that, although conveyed through human beings, is divine in its origin. Therefore, the conclusions drawn from the research in this thesis will be rooted in the understanding that the scriptures speak of the plans and purposes of Yahweh.

⁹ Childs. *Biblical Theology*, 720–21.

¹⁰ Dow, *Images of Zion*,

¹¹ All scripture quotations will be drawn from the ESV or from a personal translation. All personal translations will be identified in the text.

Further, many scholars have taken a literary diachronic hermeneutic while presenting their research on Zion.¹² This method acknowledges the way themes can develop and evolve in the reader's understanding as one continues to read the text. However, even within a diachronic study, clarification is needed. In relation to the theology of Zion, the Psalter and Isaiah play a key factor in forming what is understood as Zion theology today. The psalms have traditionally been interpreted using a historical-critical method, producing important insight into individual psalms.¹³ Yet, it is nearly impossible to approach the psalms or Isaiah with a chronological method, as dating their chapters cannot always be done. Therefore, a diachronic study needs to be understood in combination with a valuing of the final form of the scriptures addressed.¹⁴ This work recognizes that there is a progression of thought in scripture in relation to Mount Zion, and attempts to address the texts according to this development. To address any topic in scripture diachronically, the approach cannot concern itself too closely with canonical order. The canon does have chronological progression, but that progression does not follow a strict order. The Jewish canon places Isaiah prior to the psalms, and this work will address the psalms prior to Isaiah. According to the theological progression outlined below, this work argues that Zion theology is important in the psalms and predates the eschatological concepts found and developed in Isaiah.

In the chapter discussing the Psalter, Ps 2 is discussed at the end. Psalm 2 is often linked with Ps 1, making it a part of the introduction to the Psalter. Where Ps 1 identifies

¹² The most noteworthy diachronic studies are addressed by dictionary articles, meaning they are short and brief overviews. Levenson, ("Zion Traditions," 1098–1103) and Otto ("ציון ציון," 334–365) are noteworthy studies in this area.

¹³ McCann, "The Book of the Psalms," 642.

¹⁴ Childs "Reflections," 385. Here Childs argues that taking the canonical form of the Psalter seriously allows the readers to benefit from the intentional organization given to the psalms by the redactors. The final form does not refer to the ordering of the canon, but recognizes the text addressed as found in the MT.

the Psalter as a book of instruction, Ps 2 speaks of the way the collection makes explicit the reality of Yahweh's reign.¹⁵ Discussing Ps 2 at the end of the chapter on the psalms allows for a reflective conclusion on the psalter after there is a baseline established for how the Psalter has spoken of Zion.

With the chapter on Isaiah, this same approach will apply. This section will address the chapters according to the developing themes of Zion theology that they introduce. Given that the theological progression of Zion and Jerusalem is a developing theme within the book, it will deal with the key chapters in the order they are found within Isaiah. The historical value of the passages addressed will be discussed as needed, with a primary emphasis on how the theology of Mount Zion develops through the book as a whole. The final chapter will draw on the concepts discovered and how they inform our current understanding of Zion in the NT. Hebrews is chosen because the book focuses on the temple as the means of Yahweh's eschatological redemption and points us toward Zion. Thus, this final chapter will identify how the Zion theology that is developed in the OT converges with the Zion tradition found in Heb 12.

2. Theological Significance

In discussing the theology of Mount Zion, the passages that address and contribute to the development of this theme are too vast to address in their entirety. Levenson divides the Zion traditions into four distinct referents. First, Zion is understood as the hill in the land of Canaan that is captured from the Jebusites. Levenson reads 2 Sam. 5:7, 9 as a passage that reassigns the hill with the name "the city of David" from its

¹⁵ McCann, "The Book of the Psalms," 688.

previously known name “the stronghold of Zion.”¹⁶ Otto speaks of how this passage, along with the other first appearances, identifies the reality that Zion does not carry with it the idea of a holy mountain that it carries later in scripture.¹⁷ These passages likely refer simply to the South East ridge that is now known as Jerusalem.¹⁸

The second meaning Levenson identifies Zion to carry is a designation of the temple mountain. This second meaning leads to the third use of the word. By metonymy, Zion comes to include reference to Jerusalem as a whole, rather than the section of the city where the temple is built. This use of the word leads to a fourth association. Zion, in some contexts comes to refer to the people of Israel, in addition to its uses to refer to the temple mount and their city. “Once the name of a ridge in the pre-Davidic Jerusalem, it had now become a designation for the people of Israel themselves, though without having shed its spatial reference.”¹⁹ It is in the geographical location of Zion that these last three referents: the temple mount, Jerusalem, and the whole house of Israel, are intrinsically linked. As a result, they can be used individually or all at once under the simple term ‘Zion.’ With these related but very different ways of using the term ‘Zion,’ further insight is needed in the choice of passages used to examine the diachronic development of Zion theology.

With the referent of Zion as the temple mount, Roberts outlines the Zion tradition using two primary features. First, Zion speaks of Yahweh as the great King. Zion is the mountain from which Yahweh rules over Israel, and all nations. Second, Zion is the place elected by Yahweh to be his dwelling place. Zion is Yahweh’s city, and he builds his

¹⁶ Levenson, “Zion Traditions,” 1098.

¹⁷ Otto, “צִיּוֹן Siyon,” 346.

¹⁸ Levenson, “Zion Traditions,” 1098.

¹⁹ Levenson, “Zion Traditions,” 1099.

sanctuary upon it.²⁰ This second category is subdivided into three further categories. The reality that Yahweh has chosen Zion as his dwelling place has implications for the spatial significance of the mountain. Its topography lends the theological significance to be compared and contrasted with the Canaanite holy mountains.²¹

Yahweh's choice of Zion also has implications for its security: namely, protection from Zion's enemies, and security for its inhabitants. Security is not for all who simply dwell on Yahweh's mountain. Rather, scripture speaks as though only those who are regarded as righteous in the eyes of Yahweh are permitted to live in his presence. It is the inhabitants that fit Yahweh's righteous standards who have the privilege of rejoicing in the security of Yahweh's holy mountain.²²

Levenson, with the same referent as Roberts, categorizes Zion theology into three important concepts. Levenson draws on Roberts for his categories, but provides a simpler, more succinct approach to trace through the scriptures. First, scripture speaks of Yahweh's rule from Zion. Secondly, he highlights the election of Zion and David, and thirdly, he highlights how Zion theology points the reader to a vision of peace.²³ Each of these categories plays an important role in developing a holistic scriptural view of Zion theology. These categories are further enhanced by adding a fourth category: the concept of Davidic rule from Zion. This fourth category has some overlap with the first and second, but incorporates how passages like Ps 2 speak of Yahweh's election of Mount Zion and how the Davidic line builds on the concept of Yahweh's rule from Zion.

Chapter one will present an overview of the development of 'Zion' through scripture,

²⁰ Roberts, "Zion in the Theology," 94.

²¹ Roberts, "Zion in the Theology," 100.

²² Roberts, "Zion in the Theology," 104.

²³ Levenson, "Zion Traditions," 1099–1101.

addressing each of these four categories. Yet, the bulk of this work will focus on Zion theology in passages that refer to Mount Zion as the mountain on which the temple resides.

Following the first chapter addressing the comprehensive view of Mount Zion in scripture, this work will examine specific uses in the psalms, passages in Isaiah, and Hebrews using the categories previously indicated. The second chapter will look specifically at three psalms and their contribution to Mount Zion theology. Psalm 48 will be discussed in detail to provide an understanding of how Mount Zion points to the enthronement of Yahweh and his rule from the temple mount. In discussion of Yahweh's election of David and Mount Zion, Ps 132 will be examined. Psalm 2, as stated above, will highlight the concept of the Davidic Rule from Zion.

Chapter 3 will focus the discussion on Isaiah. Here, Isa 2 will be highlighted as a natural progression from the discussion of Ps 2. Isaiah 2 and 11 use Zion to point towards Yahweh's coming promise of peace. Isaiah 11 incorporates the concept of the Davidic rule in its poetry. Isaiah 54, although it does not use the word "Zion", draws on Zion themes to point toward the vision of peace that is to emanate from the temple mount. Finally, Isa 65 and 66 are discussed as a return to the theme of the divine rule from Zion introduced in ch. 2, an expansion of the vision of peace found in ch. 11, and how these chapters strengthen the Zion theology in Isaiah as its concluding section.

The theme of Mount Zion is developed with an examination of historical contexts and the diachronic development of the word Zion, in the passages chosen. It will conclude by highlighting the importance of understanding Zion in light of the whole body of scripture. The final chapter of this work will address how the reference to 'Mount

Zion' in Heb 12 can inform an understanding of church practice in the NT, in light of the research that is presented. This NT reference focuses primarily on Heb 12 due to the centrality of the mountain imagery in this passage. The passage specifically addresses the application of Mount Zion within the context of a congregation struggling to reconcile their loss/pending loss of access to worship at the earthly Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER 2

AN OVERVIEW OF ZION IN THE BIBLE

Introduction

Mount Zion has long been a focal point for followers of Yahweh, and central to the cultic practices of the Israelites in the OT. This has not always been the case. Long before Zion was recognized as the dwelling place of Yahweh, mountains played a significant role in the cultic practices of the Israelites. One can see through scripture how this was true of the Israelites prior to the establishment of Jerusalem as the ‘capital’ of the whole of Israel.

In Genesis, Abraham willingly journeys to the land of Moriah to sacrifice his son Isaac on the mountain of Yahweh’s choosing (Gen 22:1–3). The “mountain of God” mentioned in Gen 22:14, where Abraham offers his sacrifice, is linked to Zion in Isa 2:3 and in 2 Chr 3:1 Mount Moriah is linked with the site of the temple.²⁴ Before the sacrifice is made, Yahweh provides a ram to substitute for Isaac. Abraham names the place, “*The Lord will provide, as it is said to this day, ‘On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided’*” (Gen 22:14). The mountain of Abraham’s sacrifice is later identified as the temple mount in 2 Chr 3:1, serving as the only place in scripture that identifies Mount Moriah with the temple mount.²⁵

Moses’ first significant encounter with Yahweh occurs on a mountain in Exod 3:1:

²⁴ Dow, *Images of Zion*, 46–47.

²⁵ Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, 27.

Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to ~~the~~ the Mountain of God. And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed.

Beginning at Mount Sinai in Exod 19, the Israelites have significant experiences at mountains that mark them as a people. As the Israelites are encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai, Moses ascends the mountain to hear from Yahweh, and is instructed by the Lord (Exod 19:3–6; 20–25). It is on the mountain that Moses is given the “ten words” and a covenant is made between Yahweh and his people (Exod 24:12,13). Mount Gerizim at ~~Shechem~~ Shechem marks the place where Israel renews the covenant they make with Yahweh at Mount Sinai, after they have taken much of the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua (Deut 11:29; 27:12; Josh 24).

In 2 Sam 5:7 Zion appears for the first time. “*Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion, the city of David.*” This first appearance of Zion refers specifically to the geographical mountain that the Jebusites occupy. Zion appears another 152 times in the MT, over half of those in the Psalter (37 times) and Isaiah (47 times).²⁶ It should be noted that when Zion first appears it does not carry with it the great theological connotations that it will later have. This chapter will take a diachronic look at how the word Zion develops its meaning throughout the scripture, with special attention given to its referral as the ‘mountain of God’, how it speaks of Zion as a place from which Yahweh exercises his rule over Israel and the world, and how his presence there enables him to dwell among his people.

²⁶ Otto, “צִיּוֹן Siyon,” 343.

From the first time Zion appears in 2 Samuel to the end of Chronicles,²⁷ it is used a total of 6 times. Four of these references are to its geographic location and mark it as the ‘city of David’ (2 Sam 5:7; 1 Kgs 8:1; 1 Chr 11:5; 2 Chr 5:2). From the inclusion of the phrase ‘city of David,’ it appears that the author includes a description of Zion that sets a framework, or understanding for the reader. Until this point, Zion has not carried any great theological significance among the people of Israel or within the biblical text. ‘City of David’ is thus used to bring clarity to the importance of this mountain. It describes Mount Zion as belonging to David, giving a base line for the reason why it will later come to represent Israel’s God rather than the mountain god of any surrounding nations. Willis suggests that David conquers Mount Zion solely with his own troops and names the mountain city after himself, trumpeting that the city belongs to neither the northern kingdom of Israel, nor to the southern kingdom of Judah.²⁸ David is a servant of Yahweh, who conquers and establishes himself by the hand of the Lord, and therefore the mount belongs to Yahweh (2 Sam 5:9–10).

1. Yahweh’s Election of Zion

The significance of Zion unfolds as David continues to rule. The promises/covenants that Yahweh makes with him highlight the importance of David’s mountain city. The mountain becomes the focal point for the Israelites and their worship of Yahweh. Although the word Zion takes on a variety of nuances as scripture builds on this initial use, its referral to the Jerusalem mount is frequent and contains considerable

²⁷ Specifically in the case of Chronicles, the Zion references do not carry the theological referent that is developed in the psalms and prophetic literature. Its Zion references are discussed according to the final form and the Zion theology this final form communicates, irrespective of their ordering.

²⁸ Willis, “David and Zion,” 137–38.

theological significance. Scripture is clear that this mountain is not of human choosing, but is chosen by Yahweh.²⁹

But you shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there. There you shall go... then to the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell there, there you shall bring all that I command you. (Deut 12:5, 11)

If your people go out to battle against their enemy, by whatever way you shall send them, and they pray to the LORD toward the city that you have chosen and the house that I have built for your name, then hear in heaven their prayer. (Solomon praying to Yahweh, 1 Kgs 8:44)

And the carved image of Asherah that he had made he set in the house of which the LORD said to David and to Solomon his son, "In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever." (2 Kgs 21:7)

Cry out again, Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem. (Zech 1:17)

From these references one can see Yahweh's initiative in choosing Jerusalem and Mount Zion as his dwelling place. Yahweh's hand is at work in highlighting Zion as early as Gen 14:18–20, which speaks of Abraham and his encounter with Melchizedek, king of Salem.³⁰ Melchizedek is a "priest of the God most High" (Gen 14:18), whom Abraham recognizes to be a servant of Yahweh (Gen 14:22). Salem is a place where cultic worship of Yahweh takes place. In this text, the origin of Salem is not explained and it disappears from the text as quickly as it appears. The Genesis account does not give enough specification for the Salem of Melchizedek to be equated with the Jerusalem mountain, but "Psalm 110 associates the king of Zion with Melchizedek, and Ps 76:3 [2] puts Zion

²⁹ Deuteronomy 12:5,11 never actually names the place of worship as being Mount Zion. The place of worship will become Jerusalem, but because worship takes place at several locations before David conquers the mountain, Deuteronomy leaves the place ambiguous.

³⁰ Barth, *God with Us*, 236.

and Salem in parallel.”³¹ It should be noted that Melchizedek is both a priest and king, (a blending of offices) ruling from the geographical location that will later become Mount Zion.³²

As already discussed, Gen 22 introduces Mount Moriah, the place of Abraham’s near sacrifice of Isaac, in parallel with the temple mount (2 Chr 3:1). Genesis 22:2 depicts the mountain of the coming sacrifice to be one of Yahweh’s choosing. This predates Yahweh’s election of Zion more generally as a site of worship to at least as early as the time of Abraham.

2. Ark of the Covenant

The ark of the covenant tradition has a significant impact on the Mount Zion tradition. While Israel is wandering in the wilderness after their exodus from Egypt, the ark is described as leading the people:

Thus they set out from the mount of the LORD three days journey, with the ark of the covenant of the LORD journeying in front of them for the three days, to seek out a resting place for them... and whenever the ark set out, Moses would shout, ‘Arise, O LORD, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you. And when it rested, he said, ‘Return, O LORD, to the ten thousand thousands of Israel.’ (Num 10:33, 35–36)

In Num 14:44 the people go up to the hill country without Moses or the ark of the covenant and it ends in disaster. Barth highlights that it does not say specifically how the ark was carried in these passages, but the point is that Yahweh used it to lead the Israelites.³³ Through this we can see the importance of the ark, not simply for leading the

³¹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 316. Wenham suggests that perhaps the location of Abraham’s encounter occurred somewhere else and the religious tradition was transferred to Mount Zion only later.

³² This tradition of Melchizedek is seen in Hebrews, but prior to this is spoken of in Ps 110. Jer 33:15–18 also speaks of a pairing of the royal Davidic line and the Aaronic line of priests.

³³ Barth, *God with Us*, 102.

Israelites, but also in serving as a refuge and protection. These passages also emphasize the significance of Yahweh's presence that is represented by the ark.

With the transfer of the ark of the covenant from Kiriath-jearim to Jerusalem, Mount Zion gains increased theological significance. Prior to Jerusalem and after the Israelites come into the promised land, the ark of the covenant finds its rest in many different shrines. It is found in Shechem (Josh 8:33), Mizpah (Judg 20:1), Bethel (Judg 20:27), and Shiloh (1 Sam 4:4).³⁴ With the establishment of the temple in Jerusalem, Yahweh's presence is associated with a permanent location. Hoppe suggests that the wandering of Yahweh's presence from tribe to tribe may be a deliberate attempt of the Israelites to war against perceived favouritism.³⁵ With this perspective, the establishment of the temple on Mount Zion can be viewed as an act of favouritism. However, Willis suggests that David's attempt to make Mount Zion the place of this temple is an attempt to bring greater unity between the northern and southern tribes because Mount Zion/Jerusalem is located between the two kingdoms and belongs to neither. In addition, by bringing the ark to Jerusalem, he suggests that David "as human king is willfully submitting himself to Yahweh as divine King and that Yahweh is choosing Jerusalem for his dwelling place."³⁶

3. Mountains and Kingship in the ANE

If the arrival of the ark in Jerusalem highlights Mount Zion as the dwelling place of Yahweh, the establishment of the temple in Solomon's day sets it apart further. It is

³⁴ Hoppe, *The Holy City*, 49.

³⁵ Hoppe, *The Holy City*, 49.

³⁶ Willis, "David and Zion," 139. Willis also draws attention to the close relationship between 2 Sam 6 and Ps 132. The author of Ps 132 uses it to affirm David as the rightful successor of the throne.

not uncommon for temples to be built on mountains in the ANE. In Canaanite literature, kingship is associated with the establishment of a temple, often built after a substantial victory to illustrate a god's superiority.³⁷ Clements highlights that in the ANE, the universe is thought of as one large cosmic mountain, and therefore mountains become a representation of the cosmos.³⁸ Mountains are a place from which the gods express and exercise their rule over the earth. The Ziggurats of Sumeria serve as artificial manmade mountains for the gods, and Marduk in Babylon lives in a great temple which models the stage-tower constructs of the Ziggurats. In Canaanite-Phoenician territory, local hills are used as shrines. Of particular interest is that Mount Zaphon is associated with the ancient Ugarit temple of Baal in Syria.³⁹

Although one should be careful as to how the implications of the Canaanite religions are projected on those of the Hebrew bible, the similarities are apparent. The scriptures quoted above, and many of the psalms, illustrate Mount Zion as the city and dwelling place of Yahweh. In Ps 2:6 we see more of this language used, "*I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.*" This passage is further evidence of how Yahweh claims Mount Zion and Jerusalem as his holy mountain and dwelling place, similar to how the gods of the Canaanites claim and rule from their specific mountains.

Clements suggests that the idea of having a physical mountain to represent the presence of Yahweh within the Israelite culture is due to the influence of the surrounding Canaanite culture. He sees the use of mounts and Mount Zion as a mere assimilation of Canaanite religion into their cultic practices, diminishing the emphasis that scripture seems to be making. He looks at the way in which Yahweh accompanies the Israelites

³⁷ Strong, "Zion, Theology of," 1316.

³⁸ Clements, *God and Temple*, 3.

³⁹ Clements, *God and Temple*, 3.

through their wanderings in the desert as evidence that Yahweh is more concerned about his worshipers than a specific place of worship. He argues that “when the semi-nomadic life began to be forsaken and more settled ways adopted, with it came the temptation to adopt the religion of the Canaanite neighbours with its promise of blessing the land.”⁴⁰ Instead, Clements argues that the Israelite “gods were not associated with the soil, nor with special holy places, but were bound together with their worshippers and were believed to accompany them on their wanderings.”⁴¹ Although Clements raises an important uniqueness to the nomadic nature of Yahweh to dwell where his people reside, his viewpoint overlooks the way that scripture emphasizes the importance of Mount Zion as a holy hill, not simply because David establishes that the temple will be built on it. Scripture clearly outlines an unfolding revelation among the Israelites, that Mount Zion is chosen by Yahweh as his dwelling place (2 Sam 7:13; Ps 2:6; 132:12–13).

The author of Ps 48 makes a clear distinction between the Canaanite holy mountain for Baal: Mount Zaphon and Yahweh’s mountain, Mount Zion. Zaphon is associated with the kingship of Baal.⁴² In Ps 48:2, Zion is described as the height of Mount Zaphon.⁴³ By drawing on the imagery of Zaphon, the author contrasts Yahweh’s power and sovereignty with that of Baal. “*For Lo, the kings gather, they pass by together. They saw, they were stunned, they were terrified, and they hurried away*” (Ps 48:4–5).⁴⁴ Wolverton highlights the importance of these verses to speak of the fear and trembling that Yahweh puts in the hearts of rulers.⁴⁵ All other deities are to look upon Yahweh, the

⁴⁰ Clements, *God and Temple*, 16.

⁴¹ Clements, *God and Temple*, 15.

⁴² Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 353.

⁴³ Cf. Ps 48 translation and discussion in ch. 2.

⁴⁴ This is a personal translation of the passage from the Hebrew.

⁴⁵ Wolverton, “Meaning of Zion,” 22.

great King, and his sovereignty with fear and trembling. The nations are depicted as fleeing in terror at the sight of Yahweh's holy mountain. Thus, this passage depicts Zion as the religious centre, not only of the whole of Israel, but of the whole world.⁴⁶

Beale highlights that where the surrounding cultic expressions think they have an understanding of who Yahweh is, Yahweh responds in protest by presenting his throne and kingdom as ruling from his temple in Zion.⁴⁷ They believe themselves to have divine revelation from their gods, until juxtaposed against Mount Zion. In some cases, pagan nations and their temples are accused of being idolatrous (Deut 32:17; Ps 106:37; 1 Cor 10:19–20). However, it is also true that some of these pagan nations have glimpsed a “shadowy representation about the being of the biblical God and of his design for his dwelling place.”⁴⁸ The Zion tradition begins with a subtle allusion to the election of Mount Zion as the place from which Yahweh reigns. It is in Zion psalms like Ps 48, that the powerful and rich mountain imagery present within Canaanite culture is drawn on, to build on the image of Yahweh who moves and acts from Zion.

4. Yahweh's Dwelling Place

Not only is Zion compared with the power of other nations and their gods, but many parallels emerge in regards to Mount Sinai and the building of the temple. With the implication of temples as a representation of the power and dominion of the gods for whom they are built, it is important to highlight that the building of the Jerusalem temple brings with it very strong implications of Yahweh's presence. In 2 Chronicles one can see how the actual presence of Yahweh descends on the temple upon its completion.

⁴⁶ Strong, “Zion, Theology of,” 1316.

⁴⁷ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 51.

⁴⁸ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 51.

When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offerings and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. The priest could not enter the temple of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled it. When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD. (7:1–3)

This is not the only scriptural account of the glory of Yahweh descending with power in the sight of his people. In Exod 24:13–18 there is a similar depiction of the glory of Yahweh descending upon Mount Sinai. Where Sinai has been a significant symbol of the giving of the “law of Moses” and the covenant made with his people, it is also a symbol of Yahweh’s presence. Yet according to Levenson, with the building of the temple, many of the themes of Sinai are transferred to Mount Zion.⁴⁹ The full memory of Mount Sinai is not forgotten, and it still represents the “law of Moses”, however Mount Zion comes to be depicted as the center of the cosmos. It is to Zion that the nations will gather (Isa 60:1–3), and in Zion that Yahweh dwells.⁵⁰

Solomon is seen pointing to the importance of the physical, geographical location of Yahweh’s city in 1 Kgs 8:30. “*Hear the supplication of your servant and your people Israel when they pray towards this place.*” Further, in Ps 20:2 and Ps 134:3 there is the idea that Yahweh sends blessing and help from Zion. These are just a few of the passages that highlight Jerusalem and its significance as the geographical place where Yahweh dwells and from where he acts on behalf of his people.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 187.

⁵⁰ Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 188, 208. Levenson addresses the complexities of the relationship between Mount Sinai and Zion, admitting that they come into their greatest fulfillment when viewed together. The law given at Sinai reining in the tendency to view the promise of God’s dwelling and presence as separate from responsibility. Zion serves to correct any who have determined that the sacrifices mandated will lead to special favour with God (208).

⁵¹ Wolverson, “Meaning of Zion,” 32.

5. Daughter Zion

Once this image of Mount Zion as the dwelling place of Yahweh is more firmly established, the prophets build on the reader's understanding of the word. In Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Lamentations the phrase 'daughter of Zion' appears more frequently. Although the phrase 'people of Zion' is used on occasion, it is the phrase 'daughter of Zion' that makes a stronger correlation between the people of Yahweh and his dwelling place. In Isa 10:32 the phrase 'daughter of Zion' refers to something more than the mountain: "... *they will shake their fist at the mount of the Daughter of Zion, at the hill of Jerusalem.*" It is unclear who, in this passage, who is shaking their fist at the mountain of 'daughter Zion,' but it is evident that the meaning of Zion extends beyond a simple reference to the geographic mountain. In Isa 16:1 the mountain is depicted as belonging to the 'daughter of Zion.' As one enters the prophetic books, it is not uncommon to see Zion used in reference to people in addition to the geographic location. Isaiah 37 is an example of how one chapter uses the same term in both contexts: "*This is the word the LORD has spoken against him: 'Virgin Daughter Zion despises and mocks you. Daughter Jerusalem tosses her head as you flee'*" (v. 22), and "*For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this*" (v. 32).

6. Inviolability of Zion

As the Israelites begin to grasp the richness of the meaning of Zion, specifically in relation to the promise of Yahweh to dwell on his holy mountain forever, there comes a tension between understanding the inviolable cosmic mountain of Yahweh, and

Jerusalem as the capital city of a sinful people who are subject to the judgments of Yahweh.⁵² The struggle of the Israelites to forget and/or overlook the reality of the latter is seen when they find themselves in exile because they have not taken seriously the covenant they have made with Yahweh.

The first section of Ezekiel (chs. 1–24) addresses the sins of the Israelites that have brought the inviolability of Zion into question. The Israelites are rampant with sin, unashamedly committing idolatry and defiling the temple (Ezek 8). The climax of Ezekiel's vision in ch. 8 is found in vv. 16–18 where he sees men worshipping the sun between the temple building and the house. Yahweh's temple is defiled by the Israelites who turn their backs on him to turn towards the sun in worship, thus defiling the sacred space between the altar of sacrifice and the temple.⁵³ While there is no specific reference to the word "Zion" in the book, the message is clear. Jerusalem and the temple mount are left abandoned by Yahweh's presence due to the wickedness of those who inhabit the city.⁵⁴ Here, Ezekiel rejects the popular Zion theology of the day that believes that Yahweh will dwell in Jerusalem forever despite the wavering and sinful ways of his people.⁵⁵ Yet, in Ezek 33, the message shifts again to a hopeful note, once the Israelites are in exile.⁵⁶ In the midst of highlighting Yahweh's departure, Renz recalls the promises in Ezek 38–39 that reassure the servants of Yahweh that the nations raging against Jerusalem will not stand in the future. For Renz, scripture still testifies to a future day when the people of Israel will again find refuge within the walls of Jerusalem.⁵⁷ This fits

⁵² Dow, *Images of Zion*, 27.

⁵³ Cody, *Ezekiel*, 51.

⁵⁴ Cody, *Ezekiel*, 59.

⁵⁵ Renz, "The Use of Tradition," 100.

⁵⁶ Dow, *Images of Zion*, 95.

⁵⁷ Renz, "The Use of Tradition," 96.

with the developing theme of Zion that is found among the prophetic books. Where the psalms speak of Zion in an idealized form that is not necessarily eschatological, the prophetic books make this shift as they address the fallen state of the earthly Jerusalem, while holding on to the promises of Yahweh's reign and the promise of future peace for the righteous. Through Ezekiel the people are reminded that Yahweh is not tied to a topographic region in the same way the Canaanite gods are. Barth states, "God does not tie himself by his own promise. He is free to be present or not. It is always a wonder when he manifests."⁵⁸

It is important to highlight that there is a unique duality to the images of Zion. It is evident that Mount Zion has spatial and spiritual significance from the way it is referred to in scripture. Even after the exile and the departure of the glory from the temple mount, there is a general orientation towards Jerusalem for those who are distanced from it.⁵⁹ This can be seen through Daniel while he is in Babylon. In Dan 6:10, he prays to Yahweh facing Jerusalem. In later years there are those who return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple in an effort to re-establish the glory that once resided on the mountain. However, the latter glory never supercedes the glory of the time of David and Solomon. The intentions of Yahweh and the meaning of his promise that the glory of the temple will one day exceed that of the former temple (Hag 2:9) leave an air of mystery and anticipation.

⁵⁸ Barth, *God with Us*, 266.

⁵⁹ Wolverson, "Meaning of Zion," 32.

7. Zion in the New Testament

Woven throughout the OT and re-emphasized in the NT, particularly in Hebrews and Revelation, is the desire of Yahweh for his people to be a priesthood. As we begin to understand the use of Mount Zion in scripture as a physical place, the understanding of Israel and the priesthood unfolds as central to this comprehension. The NT highlights in 1 Cor 3:16, “*Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst?*” and in 1 Cor 6:19, “*Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.*” These scriptures communicate a parallelism with Zion, adding further to its theological meaning. Beale suggests that Paul is applying OT passages not as a mere analogy between “a temple idea and that of Christians, but that Christians *are* the beginning fulfillment of the actual prophecy of the end-time temple.”⁶⁰ The glory of Yahweh now rests upon the individuals of his church. This is likely intended to recall the imagery of the temple that is on Mount Zion.

In Heb 12:18–23, there is an evident parallelism between Yahweh’s people and Mount Zion. Beale suggests this as further support for his understanding that the old image of the temple is replaced with a new one: the church.⁶¹ However, it is important to remember that when Mount Sinai is paralleled with Zion, it is not parallel on all accounts. When the church is compared to Mount Zion, one should not assume that it is the fulfillment of all the scriptures regarding Mount Zion. To understand more fully what is intended with the imagery that refers to the specific location of Yahweh’s dwelling, apart from his people, a closer look at some of the passages that refer to Mount Zion as the

⁶⁰ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 254.

⁶¹ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 310.

dwelling, gathering, worship centre and kingdom rule centre is required. Doing so will enhance an understanding of the weight of the word, what images are transferred on to the church, and how they are to be best understood today. In the next chapters, this paper will discuss a Zion psalm (Ps 48), a psalm of ascent (Ps 132), a coronation/enthronement psalm (Ps 2), and several passages from Isaiah (Isa 2:2–5; 11; 54; 65; and 66), selected because they discuss the prominence of Mount Zion as a place of Yahweh's kingdom and dwelling. Once a more detailed discussion of the OT passages has taken place, the exhortation to reflect on Mount Zion in Heb 12 will be examined, along with passages that complement the reader's understanding of the progression of the Zion themes in the book.

CHAPTER 3

ZION IN THE PSALTER

Introduction

The Psalter sometimes functions as a commentary on scripture, in that the individual psalms often reflect on the Torah. They use the medium of poetry to “convey insight, experience, the perception of God and the nature of the relationship with God.”⁶² The psalms are a response of the writers to the covenant between Yahweh and his people, and how that relationship is to be understood and worked out. Some of the psalms are also an important source for affirming the temple as a place of worship to the LORD.⁶³ Not all of the passages surrounding the imagery of the temple are applicable to Zion/Jerusalem. However, in the passages concerning the building of the physical temple in Jerusalem, references to the temple and Jerusalem/Zion become somewhat synonymous.⁶⁴ Of particular interest is that Yahweh establishes his presence in a physical, geographical location.

The previous chapter outlines the development of the meaning of “Zion” throughout scripture. There are many passages both outside and inside the Psalter that point to Jerusalem/Zion as the chosen place of Yahweh’s presence. This chapter will focus on the theology of Yahweh’s divine rule from Zion, Yahweh’s election of Zion and David, and the Davidic rule from Zion. Psalms 48, 132, and 2 offer important

⁶² Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 36.

⁶³ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 267.

⁶⁴ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 268.

commentaries, insights, and responses to Mount Zion as the physical, spatial location of Yahweh's presence and ruling kingdom, as it has been introduced in the Torah.

According to Kraus, the Psalter is not concerned with portraying an eschatological vision.⁶⁵ Apart from the psalms that lament over Zion's destruction, they speak of Zion in idealized terminology as Yahweh's holy mountain in its future restored state.⁶⁶ From the beginning of the Psalter (Ps 2), the psalmists are concerned with depicting Yahweh on his holy mountain. This is because in the ANE, the concept of kingship, mountain, and sanctuary are inseparable.⁶⁷ Yahweh is not an exception to the western Semitic tradition of viewing the abode of the gods to be on the top of a mountain.⁶⁸ After a nation conquers a land, it is the establishment of a mountain sanctuary that is often used to express the sovereignty of the nation's god. Psalm 48 draws on the themes of Yahweh executing his rule from Zion. In Ps 132, the election of David and Zion is clearly addressed. Psalm 2 expresses the Davidic king as ruling from Zion. Zion is the abode of Yahweh and his divinely appointed Davidic king. It is the place from which Yahweh extends his right to rule all of Israel and the nations. The significance of including this declaration at the introduction of the Psalter will be discussed.

⁶⁵ Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, 78. Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, 264. Gunkel suggests that the imagery that the Enthronement and Zion psalms are to be read eschatological. Kraus, instead believes the Zion psalms to be dealing with ancient cultic traditions that have been incorporated into the images of Zion depicted in the Psalms.

⁶⁶ Dow, *Images of Zion*, 82. Dow suggests that the gap between the experienced Zion and the idealized one is the reason why the prophetic books use the imagery of Zion in the Psalter to point towards its future eschatological hope. This distinction is important, as it highlights the progression of Zion theology. It is in the prophetic literature that these concepts begin to be used to point to the future reign of peace or eschatological hope.

⁶⁷ Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 478.

⁶⁸ Roberts, "Zion in the Theology," 100.

1. The Divine Rule from Zion – Psalm 48

As stated in the introduction, a key component of the Zion tradition is seeing Yahweh as the ruling king from Zion, and the way the scriptures present it as a place of his enthronement. Psalm 48, one of the most popular Zion psalms, illustrates the way that Mount Zion is exalted before the nations. It compares and contrasts Zion with the holy mountains and religious understandings of the surrounding nations. As introduced in the first chapter, the exaltation contains a direct comparison with Mount Zaphon and sets Mount Zion above the mountain of Baal and all Canaanite deities, positioning it as the ruling center of the cosmos. Yahweh, the true God, has chosen to dwell on Mount Zion.

Psalm 48 should be viewed as a trilogy with Ps 46 and 47 testifying to the greatness of Jerusalem/Zion or more accurately Yahweh.⁶⁹ The link between these passages is more than just their spatial proximity. Psalm 47:2 calls Yahweh the “*Great King over all the earth.*” Psalm 46:4, speaks of Zion as the “*City of God,*” and vv. 7 and 11 speak of Yahweh as “*our fortress,*” in much the same way as Ps 48 speaks of Zion as the fortress. Limburg assesses Ps 48 to be the concluding psalm of a trilogy centered around Zion (chs. 46–48). Psalm 46 declares that Yahweh is present in Zion, Ps 47 celebrates this presence, and Ps 48 takes our hand and walks us through the city in order to declare the true reality of the place.⁷⁰ Following is a personal translation that highlights the progression of the poetic language:

Psalm 48
Personal Translation

A Song

⁶⁹ Wilson, *Psalms*, 735.

⁷⁰ Limburg, *Psalms*, 160.

A Psalm for the sons of Korah

- 1) Great is Yahweh and greatly to be praised,
In the city of our God,
Upon his Holy Mountain.
- 2) Beautiful is its height,
The joy of the whole earth.
Mount Zion,
The height of Zaphon,⁷¹
The city of the Great King.
- 3) God is known as a refuge in her citadels.
- 4) For Lo, the kings gather,
They pass by together.
- 5) They saw,
They were stunned,
They were terrified,
And they hurried away.
- 6) Trembling seized them,
As pain like that of birth,
- 7) As the east wind shatters the ships of Tarshish.
- 8) As we have heard, so we have seen,
In the city of Yahweh of hosts,
In the city of our God,
He has given permanence to it until forever.
Selah
- 9) God, we ponder your loving kindness
In the midst of your temple.
- 10) Like your name, O God,
So is your praise,
To the ends of the earth.
Your right hand is full of righteousness.
- 11) Mount Zion will rejoice,
The daughter of Judah shout with joy,
Because of your judgments.
- 12) Walk about Zion, and go around her,
Count out her towers,
- 13) Set your heart on her land,
Go through her citadels,
In order to make known to the next generation

⁷¹ Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 351. The word used here for Zaphon is often thought to refer to the mountain of Baal's temple. The contrast suggests a comparison between God's holy mountain and that of opposing nations.

- 14) For this is God,
Your everlasting God.
He will guide us until the end.

While the impact on Zion theology is discussed in the first chapter, its prominence merits further examination. The preceding translation highlights the prominence of Mount Zion, not only in its description of the mount but also in the progression of wording, e.g. “They saw, they were stunned, they were terrified.” The sensory visual experience is followed by the cognitive, and then the emotional response. The pilgrim moves from an external to an internal experience of the mount with increasing intensity. The message of the psalm is strong and confronts the ideologies of the Canaanite religions. Roberts argues that because this psalm depicts Yahweh as sovereign over the other Canaanite gods, the language used to describe these lesser deities can now successfully be transferred onto Zion.⁷²

1.1. Form and Structure

The structure of the psalm helps to identify it as one that is likely to have been used by pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. This is depicted in the personal translation above where each stanza represents the growing proximity to Mount Zion. Zion is not praiseworthy on its own account, but because it is the city of Yahweh.⁷³ It begins by looking at Mount Zion from afar (vv. 1–3). The imagery that follows invites the reader to view Zion as foreigners see her (vv. 4–7). Verses 8–11 finally bring the reader within the walls of Zion, and vv. 12–14 describe the city and its architecture in a way that magnifies

⁷² Roberts, “Zion in the Theology,” 100.

⁷³ Limburg, *Psalms*, 160.

the greatness of Yahweh.⁷⁴ This deliberate structure depicts the importance of Zion, not only in the way it brings believers together for worship, but also in the way it acts as a visual reminder that is more immediate and present with them. Through this tangible mountain, and the temple built on it, the psalm brings glory to Yahweh. In this way, Yahweh redeems the association of mountains with pagan gods, and uses Zion to point believers back to Yahweh, the one true God who lives on the greatest mountain of all.

On their way to Mount Zion, this psalm calls pilgrims to reflect on the significance of the height of the mountain, the awe/terror of Yahweh's presence, his loving kindness, and his presence and protection over them. One of the primary phrases of Ps 48 is found in verse 3:

יפה נוף
 שושן
 כל־הארץ
 וְהֵר־צִיּוֹן
 יִרְכָּתִי צִפּוֹן
 קִרְיַת מֶלֶךְ
 רַב

This may be literally translated: “Its height is beautiful, the joy of the whole earth, Mount Zion the height of Zaphon, the city of the great King.” The word צפון (here interpreted as ‘Zaphon’) has been rendered in some contexts as ‘north’, but the most common application refers to a sacred mountain.⁷⁵ Zaphon is linked with an ancient mythological tradition of the dwelling of the god Baal upon a mountain.⁷⁶ The following quote from an ancient Ugarit text supports this connection:

Ba`lu was seated, as immovable as a mountain,

⁷⁴Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 353.

⁷⁵ Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 354.

⁷⁶ Roberts, “The Davidic Origin,” 334.

Haddu rested like the ocean
 On his mountain, the divine Sapanu
 On the mountain of victory (KTU 1.101)⁷⁷

This is linked with a mountain in Exod 14:2, but there is also other evidence of localized worship in the Near East on “Zaphon”.⁷⁸ Here Mount Zion is compared with Mount Zaphon, the mountain understood as the dwelling of Baal.⁷⁹ The Hebrew word ירִכְתִּי meaning “Heights of” or ‘top side of,’ implies through the comparison that Yahweh’s holy mountain is set above the mountain of the Canaanites. While the literal and physical altitude of Mount Zion is not unique, its beauty excels that of any other mountain because of the worshiper’s encounter with Yahweh.⁸⁰ “The Psalmist affirms, in effect, that the aspirations of all peoples for a place on earth where Yahweh’s presence could be experienced were fulfilled in Mount Zion, the true Zaphon.”⁸¹ A distinction between Yahweh’s earthly dwelling and heavenly one should not be made in this passage. Isaiah 14:13–14 reads, “*You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven;... I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north⁸²; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds.*” This passage does not distinguish between the mountain of Yahweh and his heavenly dwelling. Scaling Yahweh’s holy mountain shall bring you into the heavens.⁸³

In vv. 5–7 we also see the use of הִנֵּה traditionally translated as ‘behold’, but is more accurately to be understood as ‘pay attention to,’ or ‘look,’ carrying with it an

⁷⁷ De Moor, *An Anthology of Religious Texts*, 1.

⁷⁸ Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 353.

⁷⁹ Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 353.

⁸⁰ Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 353.

⁸¹ Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 353.

⁸² Here, north can also be translated as “Zaphon.”

⁸³ Roberts, “Zion in the Theology,” 100. Roberts also draws a connection with the way that Exodus speaks of Mount Sinai. There is not always a distinction made between the meaning of God speaking from heaven or from the top of the mountain (Exod 19:18–19; 20:22).

emphasis on the immediacy; here and now realities of what follows.⁸⁴ This is followed by a description of the nations trembling at the sight of the mountain before them. The terror that strikes them is likened to that of a woman facing labour pains in childbirth, or the strong and bitter winds that threaten to ship wreck those at sea. Yahweh is not simply powerful, but the sight of him resting on Zion sets fear in the hearts of his enemies. This is similar to Moses' reaction to the presence of Yahweh resting on Mount Sinai as described in Heb 12:21, "*The sight was so terrifying that Moses said 'I am trembling with fear.'*" Not only are the foreign kings overwhelmed at the sight of Zion. The pilgrims who come to worship there are also terrified.

1.2. Yahweh's Character, Presence and Protection

It is easy to get caught up in the comparison between Zion and Zaphon, or to simply think of Zion as a place that symbolizes the glory of Yahweh. Yet, what is even more important in this reflection is the aspect of Yahweh's character that is revealed to Moses. In Zion, the pilgrims reflect on the חסד 'loving kindness,' or 'steadfast love' of Yahweh in Ps 48:9. This language recalls Exodus 15:13, where in the midst of the song that praises Yahweh for leading them out of Egypt, Yahweh's steadfast love is remembered.⁸⁵ It also points back to Exod 34:6–7 where Moses experiences Yahweh on the mountain and his חסד 'loving kindness' is revealed to him as Yahweh passes before him. Pilgrims are invited to reflect on Yahweh's loyal love that has brought them to the promised land, as they gaze upon Mount Zion in Yahweh's holy city. In his loyal love he has established his name not only among the Israelites, but also among the nations. On

⁸⁴ Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 168.

⁸⁵ McCann, "The Book of the Psalms," 872.

Mount Zion, in the temple, the people are again invited into the presence of Yahweh, to reflect on his loving kindness, which leads to a deeper understanding of Yahweh himself.

Mount Zion also symbolizes the presence and protection of Yahweh in Ps 48, in the way that he chooses to rest on Mount Zion.⁸⁶ “Since God dwells in Zion, it is to be expected that he will protect and defend his own headquarters.”⁸⁷ He loves to protect his people and make them secure (Ps 48:3–8).⁸⁸ This infers that he acts on behalf of his people in a superior capacity to the lesser gods of the surrounding nations, and is capable of providing his chosen people with protection from danger. In v. 2, Yahweh exalts himself not only as superior to Baal, but also as the King of Jerusalem, and sovereign over all the nations. That is, the verse describes that Yahweh is above or higher than all the gods of the Canaanites.

2. Yahweh’s Election of David and Zion – Psalm 132

Whereas Ps 48 speaks of Zion as the center of the cosmos, and the dwelling place of the Yahweh who is sovereign over all the nations, Ps 132 focuses strongly on the establishment of Mount Zion as Yahweh’s chosen place of dwelling. It reflects on the vow of David, entreating Yahweh to come to his resting place on Mount Zion. The psalm serves to highlight Yahweh’s election of David and Zion, to delineate that Zion is his dwelling place, not by David’s choice, but by Yahweh’s.

The psalms of ascent (Pss 120–134) are typically thought to be a part of a collection of songs that are sung on pilgrimages to the temple on Mount Zion. This one in particular, is often associated more specifically with the bringing of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, entreating Yahweh to establish his presence in the temple, and by

⁸⁶ Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 352.

⁸⁷ Dow, *Images of Zion*, 78.

⁸⁸ Dow, *Images of Zion*, 78–79.

consequence, on Mount Zion. One should note its length, in that it is the longest psalm in this collection. This signifies some level of importance and centrality in relation to the collection of the psalms of ascent. It is unique to the collection as one that emphatically declares Zion as the chosen place of Yahweh's dwelling. It is not the Israelites that have chosen the location for Yahweh's established temple, but Yahweh himself has set his heart on Mount Zion. The strong imagery leads scholars such as Dow and McCann to consider Ps 132 among the Zion psalm tradition (Pss 48; 76; 84; 87; 122).⁸⁹ McCann states this psalm can also fall into the category of a royal psalm due to its focus on David.⁹⁰ Like Ps 122 and 127, these additional suggested categories of Zion psalm and royal psalm contribute to the understanding of the psalm. Where the connection between Zion and the Davidic kingdom is implied in Ps 122 and perhaps Ps 127, Ps 132 is explicit, tying the two themes through the imagery of the ark.⁹¹ The following is a translation of the psalm along with a detailed analysis that introduces the reader to its unique style:

Psalm 132
Personal Translation

A Psalm of Ascent

- 1) Remember, David, O Yahweh
and all his afflictions.
- 2) He swore to Yahweh
He vowed to the strong one of Jacob
- 3) "Surely I will not come into my tent,
I will not even go up to my bed,
- 4) I will not give any sleep to my eyes,
Nor slumber to my eyelids,
- 5) Until I find a place for Yahweh,

⁸⁹ McCann, "The Book of the Psalms," 1213. Dow, *Images of Zion*, 76.

⁹⁰ McCann, "The Book of the Psalms," 1213.

⁹¹ McCann, "The Book of the Psalms," 1210-11.

A dwelling place for the strong one of Jacob.”⁹²

- 6) Pay attention: We heard about it in Ephrata,
We found it in the land of Jaar.⁹³
“Let us go to his dwelling place,
- 7) Let us worship at the footstool, at his feet.”
- 8) Arise, O Yahweh, to your place of rest,
You and the Ark, your strength.
- 9) May your priests be clothed in righteousness,
And your faithful ones⁹⁴ with shouts of Joy.
- 10) For your servant David’s sake,
Do not turn away the face of your anointed.
- 11) Yahweh swore to David,
An oath he will not turn from,
“Your Descendants I will place on your throne,
- 12) If your sons observe my covenant,
And my terms that I teach them,
Then, forevermore their sons will sit on your throne.”
- 13) For Yahweh has chosen Zion,
He has desired it as his dwelling place.
- 14) “This is my house forever and ever.
Here I will dwell because I have desired it.”
- 15) “I will surely bless her with food,
And her poor I will satisfy with bread.”⁹⁵
- 16) I will clothe her priests with salvation,
And her faithful ones will shout for Joy.”⁹⁶
- 17) “There I will make David’s horn successful,
The strength of David will flourish.
- 18) His enemies will be clothed in shame,
And upon his head a sparkling crown.”

⁹² Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 276–278. Here the grammar indicates oath language.

⁹³ The feminine endings here strongly suggest that the verse is referring to the ark of the covenant. 1 Sam 4:17; 2; 2 Chr 8:11.

⁹⁴ Hesed (חסד)– the same word is used to describe God in Exod 32:6–7, translated as loyal love, steadfast love, loving kindness, etc., points to the covenant, and is here used to refer to those who abide/hold to the covenant.

⁹⁵ Both ‘bless’ and ‘satisfy’ are preceded by the infinitive absolute, acting as an intensifier in order to emphasize the sureness of God’s provision.

⁹⁶ Here similar language is used v. 9, symbolizing God’s response to the cry of the psalmist.

2.1. Form and Structure

Barbiero's uses a source-critical approach to Ps 132 to draw out the meaning of the text as a whole.⁹⁷ He divides the text into two major sections. The first half (vv. 1–10) of the psalm is written from the perspective of the psalmist, whereas the second half (vv. 11–18) is from Yahweh's perspective. These major sections can be sub-divided further. Barbiero views this first section in an ABBA chiasm. It begins with an invocation (vv. 1b–2), moves to David's vow (vv. 3–5), the fulfillment of his vow (vv. 6–7), and concludes with another invocation (vv. 8–10).⁹⁸ Verses 6–7 talk about finding the ark of the covenant and worshiping at the footstool of Yahweh. Dow notes that the "ark (I Chr. 28.2), the mountain (Ps. 99.5) and Yahweh's dwelling place in Jerusalem (Ps. 132.7; Lam. 2.1) are all called Yahweh's footstool, the place of his feet (Isa. 60:13). That is, Zion is not the full extent of Yahweh's dwelling place, but the place where his residence touches earth."⁹⁹

David's vow is motivated by his desire to "find" a resting place. "Finding," indicates that it already exists.¹⁰⁰ Ephrata is typically associated with Bethlehem, where David is born. The "fields of Jaar" (v. 6) is the place where David finds the ark before bringing it to Jerusalem.¹⁰¹ The progression in these verses speaks first of the desire that inspires David's vow. It is possible to make the connection to David through the 'Ephrathah' also known as Bethlehem, which is his birth place. David has likely heard about the ark as a youth, when he lived in Bethlehem.¹⁰² Finally, after hearing about the

⁹⁷ Barbiero, "Psalms 132," 240.

⁹⁸ Barbiero, "Psalms 132," 242–246.

⁹⁹ Dow, *Images of Zion*, 107.

¹⁰⁰ Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 270–71.

¹⁰¹ Barbiero, "Psalm 132," 244.

¹⁰² Barbiero, "Psalm 132," 245.

ark, and looking for it, his search is rewarded in the fields of Jaar. David determines to move the ark to a permanent location and makes a tent for the ark (2 Sam 6:17; 1 Chr 15:1, 16:1) until a permanent temple can be built to house the ark. He entreats Yahweh to come to his place of rest on the mountain.

Many of the terms used in the first half of the psalm are repeated in the second, resulting in parallel imagery and language. Considering the parallels, it is apparent that the structure of the psalm is meant to contribute to one's understanding of the poem.

Below is a chart depicting the numerous parallels found in the passage.

Psalmist's Covenant	Yahweh's Covenant
v. 1 Remember, O <u>Yahweh, David</u> and all his afflictions	v. 11 Yahweh swore <u>to David</u> , an oath he will not turn from...
v. 2 How <u>he swore</u> to the Lord	v. 11a. Yahweh <u>swore</u> to David
vv. 3–4 <u>Surely</u> I will not come into my tent, I will not even go on my bed, I will not give any sleep to my eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids.	v. 12a. <u>If</u> your sons observe my covenant, and my terms that I teach them, ...
v. 5a <u>Until</u> ¹⁰³ I find a place for Yahweh,	v. 12 b. <u>Then</u> , forevermore their sons will sit on your throne...
v. 8 Arise, O Yahweh, to your place of <u>rest</u> .	v. 14. This is my <u>resting place</u> forever, and ever. Here I will dwell because I have desired it.
v. 9 May your <u>priests be clothed</u> in righteousness and your <u>faithful ones with shouts of joy</u>	v. 16 Her <u>priests I will clothe</u> with salvation, and her <u>faithful ones will shout for joy</u>
v. 10 For your servant <u>David's sake</u> , do not turn away the face of your <u>anointed</u>	v. 17 <u>I will make David's horn successful</u> , the strength of my <u>anointed</u> will flourish.

With the emphasis of vv 1–10 as a reflection on David, the author calls on Yahweh to remember him. The word זָכַר (to remember) provides an additional link from

¹⁰³ Both vv. 3–4 and 12a use זָכַר to introduce the protasis. Verses 3–4 are used as a part of an oath (GKC 149a), and v. 12a introduces a conditional phrase (GKC 159 l). David took an oath of commitment to restore the ark; his sons should learn the same kind of commitment. The Hebrew aligns these verses by using the same words, but pointing to entirely different meanings.

the first stanza (vv. 1–10) to the second half (vv. 11–18). Another verbal link between the first and second half of the psalm is מנוחה, meaning ‘dwelling place’ or ‘resting place.’

This is important to note, because the act of remembering is a key theme in the scriptures. Throughout the OT, scripture exhorts its readers to remember the laws and precepts of Yahweh and pass them on to their children, and children’s children (Deut 4:9; 6:7, 12; 11:19; Ps 77:11; 78:4–8; 105:5; 111:2; 143:5). The word זכר (to remember) carries with it a sense of understanding of past history when used in this passage. In this context, the readers are called to associate it with Ps 89:47, 50: “*Remember how fleeting is my life. For what futility you have created all men,*” and “*Remember, Lord, how your servant has been mocked, how I bear in my heart the taunts of all the nations,*” where similar pleas are given by the rejected Anointed One. Goldingay suggests that Ps 89 speaks of how Yahweh has abandoned the king. When Ps 89:47 and 50 are set in contrast/comparison with Ps 132, the re-affirmation of Yahweh’s commitment to David and to Zion is highlighted.¹⁰⁴

David is often referred to as a man after Yahweh’s own heart (1 Sam 13:14), and as one who is zealous for the ways of the Yahweh (Ps 69:9). In response to Yahweh establishing Israel in the land and giving them rest from their enemies, David declares that he desires that Yahweh would have a place to rest (2 Sam 7:1–3). Konkel highlights that Yahweh’s intentions for building a temple are different than those of David’s. In actuality, it is Yahweh who is zealous for David’s heart and has chosen him. Yahweh’s zeal precedes David’s zeal.¹⁰⁵

God did not ask David to build a house to represent the divine throne; instead the divine King would build David the house of a continuing dynasty ([2 Sam] 7:12–

¹⁰⁴ Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 691.

¹⁰⁵ Konkel, *1 & 2 Kings*, 134.

17). The confirmation of Solomon's rule is the evidence that God has established the house of David. It is now time to build the house that will testify to the presence of God in his eternal kingdom (2 Chr 28:2–7).¹⁰⁶

The parallel of the ark coming to its resting place (v. 8) with the passage in 2 Sam 6–7 adds a unique perspective to the understanding of Zion as the place of Yahweh's dwelling. Second Samuel 6–7 tells the story of David bringing the ark back to Jerusalem. The word מנוחה "resting place" used in the Ps 132:8 is referred to by Kraus as the finality of the ark's habitation in the temple on Mount Zion. Psalm 132:14 expresses Yahweh's intent to dwell forever above the ark, which rests in the temple on Mount Zion.¹⁰⁷

As the psalmist reflects on Yahweh's zeal for David, he invites Yahweh to remember the way in which David has sacrificed and experienced affliction for the sake of the house of Yahweh. It proceeds to recount the extravagance of David's oath made to Yahweh: "*Surely I will not come into my tent, I will not even go up to my bed. Surely I will not give any sleep to my eyes nor slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the LORD*" (Ps 132:3–5). In the translation above, the וַאֲנִי statements use the phrases 'surely I will not' to express the oath. However, it could be better understood as 'I forbid that.'¹⁰⁸ This latter translation with its emphatic language, communicates the strong commitment of David's heart to finding a resting-place for Yahweh.

David vows that he will not rest in vv. 3–4, and the purpose of the vow/oath comes in v. 5 where he states that he is determined to find a resting place for Yahweh. The oath of David is reciprocated by an oath from Yahweh in vv. 11–12. Here we see Yahweh's clear election of the house and line of David to rule on the throne in Zion. Yahweh intends to establish David's descendents on the throne. Verses 13–14 declare

¹⁰⁶ Konkel, *1 & 2 Kings*, 134–35.

¹⁰⁷ Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 481.

¹⁰⁸ Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 168.

Zion as the place where Yahweh will rest, and the place he will sit enthroned. Verses 15–16 point towards the theme of Yahweh’s coming promise of peace. The language used for “rest” in this second section incorporates the core components of Levenson’s approach to Zion theology, namely, that Yahweh’s resting place in his temple corresponds with his Sabbath rest. Furthermore, Solomon is chosen by Yahweh to build the temple because he “is a man of rest . . . and of peace” which also alludes to the meaning of his name (1 Chr 22:9). These two forms of rest are connected in Isa 66:1 where Yahweh finds rest in heaven where his throne is, as well as on the earth in his temple.¹⁰⁹ The enthronement theme of Yahweh ruling from Zion, the election of David and Zion, and the promise of peace are brought together. The first section reflects on David, however, McCann and Barbiero argue that vv. 17–18 suggest that the psalm’s final form is post-exilic.¹¹⁰ The image of the horn emerging draws on Ezek 29:21, where the horn sprouting symbolizes the restoration of things destroyed.¹¹¹ They see it as a message of hope that the throne and monarch of David and Yahweh’s resting place will be restored as an affirmation that Zion and David are still his elected.

2.2. The Divine Resting Place

In 2 Chr 7, the narrative draws on Ps 132 to describe the glory of Yahweh as it descends on the temple after its completion by Solomon. The descent of Yahweh’s glory marks the temple, and by consequence, marks Mount Zion as the place where the glory of Yahweh rests. Second Chronicles 6:41–42 says:

¹⁰⁹ Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 144.

¹¹⁰ Barbiero, “Psalm 132,” 258. McCann, “The Book of the Psalms,” 1212.

¹¹¹ McCann, “The Book of the Psalms,” 1212.

Now arise, LORD God, and come to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. May your priests, LORD God, be clothed with salvation, may your faithful people rejoice in your goodness. LORD God, do not reject your anointed one. Remember the great love promised to David your servant.

It is important to remember that, as Chronicles is likely speaking with Ps 132 in mind, it is asserting along with the psalmist that that the temple is not Yahweh's dwelling because David has chosen it, but rather because Yahweh has desired it.

Verses 1–10a has a strong affinity with the language in 2 Chr 6 and 7 and the journey of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. Second Chronicles parallels with Ps 132:8–10, emphasizing the connection between the presence of Yahweh that is associated with bringing the ark to Zion. The previous discussion of Melchizedek as king of Salem, ruling from the Jerusalem mount (Gen 14:22), and the mount being the location where Abraham offers Isaac as a sacrifice (Gen 22:14; 2 Chr 3:1; Isa 2:3), suggests that it is a place that Yahweh has pre-destined for special significance. Hence, when the ark, with which Yahweh's presence is associated from the time of its installation in the wilderness tabernacle, arrives at Mount Zion, Yahweh's tangible presence on Mount Zion is realized (2 Chr 6:41; 7:2).

Kraus addresses the connection between Ps 132 and 2 Chr 6–7 more specifically, suggesting that Ps 132 is used as liturgy in a yearly festival.¹¹² However, rather than focusing on the dedication of the temple, the festival likely begins on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles according to 1 Kgs 8:2. He suggests that the two focal points of the psalm are the transfer of the ark to Jerusalem (in order to highlight the way in which Yahweh has chosen Zion) and the recollection of the promises of fidelity Yahweh has made to David. Goldingay affirms the latter emphasis, that Psalm 132 is more concerned

¹¹² Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 476. Kraus, discusses this at length in his reflections on the setting of Ps 132.

with Yahweh's re-commitment to David and Zion.¹¹³ The psalmist reminds Yahweh of his dedication to the temple in the connection that is made between Ps 89:3,4 and Ps 132:11,12. In Ps 89, the pain in the psalmist's words due to the absence of Yahweh's presence from the sanctuary is evident. In his prayer in Ps 132:8–10, the psalmist entreats Yahweh to remain faithful to his promises of fidelity, to look upon his afflictions with mercy, and to be faithful to his 'faithful ones.' Yahweh responds to this cry with favour (Ps 132:11,12). He affirms the psalmist by assuring him that he has not forgotten his elect or his chosen place of dwelling. The ark narrative (Ps 132:8; 2 Chr 6:41; 2 Sam 6:17) becomes "the significant 'sacred word' (*hieros logos*) of the sanctuary of Mount Zion. It is the foundation of Jerusalem's installation and elevation as the central location of all Israel."¹¹⁴

The Israelites, according to Kraus, see the remembrance of Yahweh's role in establishing the Davidic rule and the election of Mount Zion as his spatial resting place, as an important message of the Psalter. Kraus equates the progression of Ps 132 with an Egyptian festival that illustrates the connection between kingship and shrine.¹¹⁵ According to Kraus, they are inseparable, for the king is the founder of the sanctuary. In the case of Ps 132, Yahweh establishes both the Davidic king and his dwelling place on the mountain. This is why the psalmist evokes oath/covenantal language. He reminds not only himself of the promises Yahweh has made, but he also reminds Yahweh of his promise of fidelity towards David and his descendants. The geographical location becomes a visual reminder of Yahweh's presence with his people.

¹¹³ Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 691.

¹¹⁴ Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 476.

¹¹⁵ Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 476

Barbiero believes that both David and Solomon have contributed to the psalm's composition, and that a portion is post-exilic.¹¹⁶ It cannot be said with certainty that the psalm is post-exilic or composed with eschatological implications. It has long been considered a psalm of ascent, suggesting its use in a worship procession. Regardless of whether Barbiero is correct, it is fairly certain that the final redactors compiled the psalm with David and Solomon in mind. David brings the ark into the tent on the mount, and Solomon transfers it to the temple at the time of its completed construction. The psalm communicates a passionate prayer between the psalmist and Yahweh himself, reflecting the anguish over the absence of Yahweh's presence in Zion, yet confident that Yahweh will presence himself in his resting place.

Psalm 132 brings together the central themes of Yahweh's enthronement in Zion, his choice of David and Zion, the eternal reign of the Davidic line from Zion, and the promise of peace. The focus of this psalm has been on Yahweh's choice of David and Zion, and we turn now to discuss the establishment of the Davidic kingship in Zion.

3. The Davidic Rule from Zion – Psalm 2

The importance of Ps 2 and its influence on the understanding of Zion as Yahweh's dwelling increases in significance when it is considered as part of the introduction to the Psalter. Psalm 1 is an obvious introduction to the Psalter that invites the reader to reflect on the Torah through the eyes of the psalmists.¹¹⁷ Psalm 2 is actually

¹¹⁶ Barbiero, "Psalm 132," 242, 243, 258. He argues that vv. 3–5 were composed by David, and vv. 6–10 were composed by Solomon. He places the remainder of the psalm's composition in the post-exilic era, branching from the traditional view that the Psalm was used in procession to the temple because of its placement among the Psalms of Ascent.

¹¹⁷ Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 30.

considered in one Jewish tradition to be an extension of Ps 1, making them one unit.¹¹⁸

There are a number of literary links between these two psalms, a primary one being how Ps 1 begins with a reflection on the good fortune that follows the righteous, and

concludes with the prospect of perishing for those who follow the way of the wicked.

Psalm 2:12 depicts the nations perishing because of the path they have chosen and

concludes the verse with a reminder of the blessings that flow to those who take refuge in *Yahweh*.¹¹⁹ This final statement of blessing serves as an *inclusio* for the two psalms.

Adding further significance is that Ps 2 is classified as a royal psalm and thought to have been used as a coronation psalm in a yearly celebration of *Yahweh*'s election of

Jerusalem and the Davidic line,¹²⁰ in addition to being used in the installment ceremony for a new king.¹²¹

When understood in this way, the prominence of its exaltation of royal qualities and the verse (Ps 2:6) "*I have installed my king upon Zion, my holy mountain*" adds pertinence to the discussion of the Davidic rule from Zion. There is no link within the psalm to a specific historical event. Rather, the psalm speaks to a general context in which the authority of *Yahweh*'s kingship is challenged by the nations (vv. 1–3). In v. 6, *Yahweh* speaks a direct challenge to the nations, stating he has installed his king on Zion. In relation to the Davidic Rule from Zion, the psalm depicts a kingdom that is a blessing to the righteous, and judgment to the wicked. The canonical order of Pss 1 and 2 in the Psalter orient the remainder of the psalms toward a Zion theology that is centered on the

¹¹⁸ Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, 94. Cole, "An Integrated Reading of Psalms 1 and 2," 88. Cole discusses the benefits of reading the two together, principally for their emphasis on the "righteous and royal figure who is granted complete military dominance over wicked rulers from his heavenly throne" (88).

¹¹⁹ Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, 94–95.

¹²⁰ McCann, "The Book of the Psalms," 689.

¹²¹ Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 64.

Davidic covenant. The psalm is an inauguration of this covenant, where Yahweh has chosen the Israelite king and marked him as his “son.”¹²² Yahweh has given the Israelite king the authority through this enthronement, to rule the nations. The message of judgment sets a brief introduction to the theology of Zion that is more thoroughly unpacked in Isaiah. Zion is introduced briefly as the place where the righteous gather to find peace and blessing. The wicked, however, do not experience the inviolability of Zion, but suffer at the hand of its judgments.

At the time of writing Ps 2, the Davidic ruler is understood as the human coronated king. Only from a more distant perspective can one discern the messianic implications.¹²³ The Anointed One is expected to be established on David’s throne in Zion, and Jesus becomes the Anointed King within the kingdom of Yahweh. Scholars such as Dow and McCann have pointed to the future for a fulfillment of this psalm.¹²⁴ This link with the future promise is seen in Heb 1:5a “*For to which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you’?*” where it quotes Ps 2:7, linking Jesus, the Anointed One, to the throne spoken of in Ps 2. This will be discussed further in the fourth chapter.

In summary, as the portrayal of Zion theology develops in scripture, it is important not to take the leap to eschatological interpretations. The selected psalms speak of Zion in terms of Yahweh’s kingship (Ps 48), his election of David and Mount Zion as his place of dwelling (Ps 132), and the fulfillment of Yahweh’s promise to install a Davidic ruler on Zion (Ps 2). As the psalms are written, the text does not suggest a concern with future fulfillment or prophetic components sometimes depicted in the

¹²² Wilson, *Psalms*, 123–24.

¹²³ Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 66.

¹²⁴ Dow, *Images of Zion*, 172, 200. McCann, “The Book of the Psalms,” 692.

prophets. Rather, they speak of Zion in idealized terms to point to the spiritual reality that Yahweh is the sovereign ruler from Zion. Yahweh is the King of Zion, and thus Mount Zion is where his sanctuary and protecting presence rests. Psalm 48 presents an understanding of Yahweh ruling from Zion that is not eschatological in nature. It uses idealized language to depict the spiritual reality of Yahweh's present reign and sovereignty over the nations. The author draws on imagery understood by the Israelites, the Canaanites and surrounding nations to exalt Yahweh and his mountain dwelling above the pagan gods. Yahweh's people are reminded of their glorious king as they journey towards Zion and find refuge within its walls. Its glory is so profound that it strikes terror in the hearts of her enemies. In Ps 132, Zion is Yahweh's chosen place to dwell, and David is his chosen ruler. Yahweh is invited to remember the oath that David makes to find a resting place for Yahweh. Psalm 132:13–14 communicate that Yahweh has chosen Zion to be his resting place forever, building on the theology of Mount Zion's inviolability. Psalm 2 speaks of the Davidic covenant, where the ruler of Zion is identified as Yahweh's "son," giving him authority and power to govern the nations with justice. This means blessing for the righteous and judgment for the wicked. It is through these passages that we see how Zion is communicated to be the place of primary contact between the human and the divine.¹²⁵ Clements suggests that Yahweh is more concerned with dwelling among his people, than dwelling in a geographical place.¹²⁶ However, when these psalms are examined closely there is a special significance in the spatial presence of a dwelling for Yahweh that cannot be ignored. This leads us to conclude that

¹²⁵ Dow, *Images of Zion*, 78.

¹²⁶ Clements, *God and Temple*, 15. He suggests that because the patriarchs did not associate Yahweh with on special holy place, it communicates that Yahweh is not bound geographical as much as he is bound to his people and where they reside.

the reality of Yahweh's presence in a spatial place is of great importance, along with the centrality of its location within the land.

CHAPTER 4

ZION IN ISAIAH

Introduction

Zion appears frequently within the pages of Isaiah, however, unlike in the Psalter, it is much more difficult to present a consistent application and synchronic approach to its individual appearances. As to the methodology of this chapter, Isaiah has long been processed and split into many parts. Most commonly it is divided into three distinct sections: First Isaiah refers to chs. 1–39, Second Isaiah to chs. 40–55, and Third Isaiah to chs. 56–66. The division of these three sections makes source criticism a significant contributor to the theological study of the book. Although the contributions of these sections should not be overlooked, it is also important to note the uniformity of the book itself. Where Motyer, and Oswalt¹²⁷ see this unity in terms of a single author, Childs does not.¹²⁸ Unity of theme between the commonly segmented sections of Isaiah does not need to speak of a single of authorship. While it is interesting to recognize this diversity in scholarship, it is important not to allow this discussion to distract from recognizing the theological significance and themes of the book as a whole.

The book of Isaiah is to be viewed as a unit and thus its parts must, once viewed on their own, be reexamined in light of the book's entirety. Motyer puts forward "the messianic hope, the motif of the city, the Holy One of Israel, history and faith and literary

¹²⁷ Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 25–30. One of Motyer's main arguments for the singular Isaiah authorship is that its unique poetic style of the book is consistent throughout the whole of Isaiah. Oswalt, *Isaiah 40–66*, 6. Oswalt sees the challenge to Isaianic authorship as a dismissal of the phenomenon of biblical prophecy and argues that the change in language from ch. 1–39 to 40–66 is due to the shift to speaking of the future in highly figurative language, typical of prophecy concerned with the distant future.

¹²⁸ Childs, *Isaiah*, 30, views Isaiah as a literary unit but sees singleness of authorship as a flattening of the text. His concern is to approach the text is to develop the meaning of the text from "an exegetical form rather than as a theological or hermeneutical tractate."

and structural features,” as the unifying lines that join Isaiah together in its entirety.¹²⁹ Of most interest to this paper is the motif of the city. Motyer refers to Isaiah as the “tale of two cities.”¹³⁰ Dumbrell views the central theme of Isaiah as structured around Jerusalem, and Webb makes a case for the ‘transformation of Zion’ as the key thematic thrust of the book.¹³¹ Chapters 1–39 are generally categorized under the theme of Yahweh as King. Interwoven in this illustration is the recognition of the sin that will ultimately lead to the destruction of Israel. Isaiah 1–39 recognizes that Yahweh’s holiness cannot dwell among a sinful people, without the people being destroyed.¹³² Isaiah 40–55 opens in ch. 40 with a message of forgiveness. The image of the king shifts to that of the Suffering Servant, who brings life to those who take refuge in him.¹³³ Isaiah 40–55 is a depiction of the grief and sorrow that is the consequence of neglecting the justice and righteousness of Yahweh, but is still presented with hope. Isaiah 56–66 speaks of the Anointed Conqueror. In Isa 56–66, the book reintroduces the hope of Yahweh’s holy redemption with a new strength. This redemption promises to be a joyful restoration for all people, for those who rise against Yahweh will receive their punishment, but those who remain faithful will experience the joy of Yahweh’s righteous kingdom.

Although the preceding description is an over-simplification of the theme of redemption in Isaiah, it is evident that this is, in fact, a prominent theme. The restoration of Zion/Jerusalem is not simply symbolic of the people being restored apart from the mountain city. Mount Zion is the iconic example of Yahweh’s desired place of rule from which he executes his justice that subsequently spills over into the whole earth.

¹²⁹ Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 13.

¹³⁰ Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 16.

¹³¹ Dow, *Images of Zion*, 85.

¹³² Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 37.

¹³³ Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 289.

Due to the length of Isaiah and the prominence of the Jerusalem/Zion imagery woven through its entirety, it is difficult not to overwhelm the reader by addressing the many occurrences of Zion. However, for the sake of space, this paper will examine Isa 2:1–5; Isa 11; Isa 54; and Isa 65–66, looking specifically at the way in which these passages engage the motif of Zion, the mountain city. Each passage summarizes a different component of Zion theology. Isaiah 2:1–5 speaks again to the Divine Rule that comes from Zion, Isa 11 points back to the Davidic rule from Zion, Isa 54 uses the imagery of Zion to speak of the people, and Isa 65–66 concludes by speaking to the eternal rule that will come from Zion. All of these passages together point to the promise of peace that will be established through his people as they are instructed in the ways of the Yahweh.

1. Divine Rule from Zion – Isaiah 2:2–5

Isaiah 2:2–5 is largely concerned with speaking of the divine rule from Zion. Blenkinsopp introduces Isa 2:2–5 as “The Pilgrimage of the Nations to Zion.”¹³⁴ This indirectly connects it with Ps 48 and 132. Psalm 48 is a psalm that models a progression of imagery that brings one increasingly closer to Zion, suggesting it models a pilgrimage. Psalm 132 and the psalms of ascent are also often connected with pilgrimage to Zion. Their context and specific place of use may be different, but the theme of pilgrimage is not simply a novel idea. Here we see, and continue to see through the book of Isaiah, that when the Israelites and nations journey to Zion they find true rest and blessing there. Below, a layout of Isa 2:2–4 is included to model the move towards Zion, and the instruction and justice that comes out of Zion to the nations.

¹³⁴ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 189.

[Journey up to Zion]

- (2) It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the Lord
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be lifted up above the hills;
and the nations shall flow to it.
- (3) and many people shall come, and say:
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways,
and that we may walk in his paths.

[Going to the Nations]

- For out of Zion shall go the law,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
- (4) He shall judge between the nations,
and shall decide disputes for many peoples;
and they shall beat their sword into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nations shall not lift up a sword against nations,
neither shall they learn war anymore.

This particular poem is also found in Mic 4:1–4. Scholarship that seeks to identify the original author has been inconclusive.¹³⁵ Child’s believes that to focus on the complications of redactional theory of this passage, is to politicize it, since there is so much disagreement among commentators. Instead, he recommends a focus to reconcile the text theologically with the surrounding passages, so as not to lose its meaning in historical rationalization.¹³⁶ Thus, he is more concerned about the passage’s theological significance, and that this does not get lost in the quest to determine its authorship. It is generally believed that chs. 2–12 are addressed to Judah and Jerusalem.¹³⁷ Byargeon highlights how both passages elevate Zion in the same manner to communicate a

¹³⁵ Byargeon outlines a detailed overview of previous studies that have addressed the origin and authorship of this passage in “The Relationship of Micah,” 6–26.

¹³⁶ Childs, *Isaiah*, 29.

¹³⁷ Childs, *Isaiah*, 28.

message of peace. “One day the nations that invade and destroy as instruments of God’s wrath will flow upstream to Zion to be taught the law of God.”¹³⁸

In terms of its setting, the phrase “It shall come to pass in the latter days,” is what defines the book as eschatological, indicating that Yahweh’s kingdom will enter in his timing, not connected to, or controlled by any historical events within Israel.¹³⁹ The exhortation in v. 5 suggests that the nation of Israel is being challenged to make a decision between two possible responses: the nations who seek to worship Yahweh on the mountain of Jerusalem (vv. 3–4), and the disobedient who do not follow Yahweh’s laws (referred to in vv. 6–8).¹⁴⁰ Smith sees it as a call to change their thinking, reorient their worldview, and modify their behaviour in light of what Yahweh promises for the future.¹⁴¹ It is their choice that will determine whether they will enjoy the Zion that is governed by Yahweh before them.

There is a particular affinity to Ps 48, where Mount Zion is set high above all others. In addition to the mountain of the Lord being praiseworthy, this poem reflects more deeply on Yahweh who instructs his people. Here, in Isa 2:3, the word מִדְּרָכָיו, translated ‘his ways’, comes from the root word דָּרַךְ, most frequently used in the metaphorical sense, referring to the behavior of the wicked and the righteous (Gen 6:12; Deut 9:16; Ps 1:6; Isa 55:7–9).¹⁴² This word is commonly used among wisdom scriptures to speak of walking in a way that is righteous and pure, and in the ‘way’ that brings life (e.g. Ps 32:8; 86:11; Prov 22:6; 16:7). In this poem, Yahweh is depicted as ruling over multiple nations from his mount: “the nations shall flow to it,” the mountain of Jerusalem (v. 2b). It is on

¹³⁸ Byargeon, “The Relationship of Micah,” 23.

¹³⁹ Childs, *Isaiah*, 29

¹⁴⁰ Childs, *Isaiah*, 31

¹⁴¹ Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 131.

¹⁴² Wolf, “דָּרַךְ derek,” 1:196.

the mountain of Yahweh that his people gather, not only to worship, as the psalms depict, but also to learn the ‘ways’ of the Lord in order that they might be led to life.

Themes of Jerusalem as the cosmic mountain at the center of the world are strong: “For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isa 2:3b), resulting in a settling of disputes and subduing of violence between the nations (Isa 2:4). To the “House of Jacob” (Isa 2:5), that has perhaps lost its vision of the righteousness of Yahweh, Isaiah declares that Yahweh is not simply exalting himself among the nations. Yahweh wants his own people (Israel) to lead the way for the nations. Isaiah includes himself in the call when he encourages his people to come near (to Yahweh) and learn from him: *‘come and let us walk in the light of the LORD’* (Isa 2: 5). The mount is not simply a place of gathering for Israel, but for the whole earth. Isa 2:2–5 invites the readers to reflect on the powerful vision of the future Zion as they move into the remainder of Isaiah that reflects a Zion that does not always measure up to these idealistic images. It points to an image of Zion that will be drawn on in Isa 65–66. Yahweh will establish Zion, and he will instruct and judge the nations from his mountain. This is the purpose and aim of the divine rule from Zion, i.e. to be the instrument of peace to the world.

2. Fulfillment of Davidic Rule from Zion – Isaiah 11

Isaiah 11 develops the Zion theology by uniting the divine rule from Zion with the Davidic covenant. Noting its unique placement tends to more concrete conclusions. Where the setting has proved crucial to the interpretation of Isa 7 and 9 in that these passages are rooted in specific historical events (“the “Syro-Ephraimite war of 734” and

“the Assyrian conquest of Galilee” respectively),¹⁴³ it is not the same for Isa 11. The emphasis of this latter passage rests on the rebirth of the royal dynasty, which is a reiteration of Yahweh’s promise to David (2 Sam 7: 12–17; Ps 132).

In this chapter, Zion is discussed in terms of the Davidic covenant. It is through the Davidic ruler that justice and peace will come (11:4–9). He will also gather the nations to himself (11:10–12). Childs suggests that this rebirth does not stem, however, from the Davidic line, but “from the ancient, uncorrupted line of Jesse.”¹⁴⁴ Isaiah 11 comments on the promise of the messianic Ruler that is to come (Isa 7), and his righteous nature (Isa 9). Yahweh will again put his Chosen One on the throne, but he will not be from the tainted line of David. This is expressed in the reference to the stump of David that evokes the image of a felled tree in Isa 11:1. The signs of life from the tree are gone, but the root is alive.¹⁴⁵ From this root, Yahweh will establish his Ruler through the pure line of Jesse.

The poem continues to unfold, revealing several parallels. The chapter can be split into two main sections: vv. 1–9 and vv. 11–16. Verse 10 sets itself apart, serving as a unique bridge between the two sections. The first section speaks of the coming messianic King, and the kingdom he will usher in. Verse 2, “And the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon him,” parallels with the last phrase of v. 10, “And his resting place shall be glorious.” The messianic King is thus thought to live, or dwell in a glorious abode, upon his glorious mountain. This reinforces the realities proclaimed in Isa 2:1–4. In addition, there are further parallels with Hag 2:1–9 and Zech 2:4–5. In Haggai there is the reminder that, even though the temple is in ruins, Yahweh is very specific about wanting the temple rebuilt so that he can dwell in it. Haggai 1:8 says, “Go up into the mountains and

¹⁴³ Childs, *Isaiah*, 101.

¹⁴⁴ Childs, *Isaiah*, 101.

¹⁴⁵ Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 121.

bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honoured.” Although those doing the rebuilding have not experienced the glory of the original temple of Solomon, there is a promise that Yahweh is with them. He has set his spirit with them. Not only is there a promise that the spirit of Yahweh is with them, but there is also a promise that the glory of the temple will one day outshine that of the former one (Hag 2:9). The temple will be a symbol of peace among them. This promise is repeated again in Zech 2:4–5. However, in Zech 2:5 there is a promise that Yahweh will be the shield and protector of those within Zion’s walls. He will be a literal wall of fire, “For I will be,” said the LORD, “to her a wall of fire all around, and I will be the glory in her midst.”

Reflecting further on the prominence of the Mount Zion imagery, one can see that in Isa 11:2 the spirit rests on the royal messianic figure, and in v. 10 the messianic figure (root of Jesse) provides a place of rest for the nations.¹⁴⁶ When referencing Isa 2:1–4 discussed above, the common theme of the nations flowing to Zion provides a parallel to v. 9, where the gathering and restoration of the people is joined with the image of the holy mountain.

Childs makes a strong case for the two oracles being linked together through v. 10, “*In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal to the people – of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.*” Isaiah 11:11 starts in the same way as v. 10. When v. 10 is seen as a link between vv. 9 and 11, and following the oracle regarding the messianic kingdom, there is a critical message to be understood. The second oracle in vv. 11–16, presents the way in which the Lord’s banner will attract the nations to Mount Zion, his resting place. It extends the promise from a simple Judean or

¹⁴⁶ Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 121.

Israelite application to encompass the whole earth. The locations mentioned reach to the north, south, middle and coastal regions.¹⁴⁷ The first oracle testifies to the coming messianic reign, and despite the possible difference in authorship, redactors join it with vv. 11–16 to speak of the distance that Yahweh’s messianic kingdom will reach. The book of Isaiah repeatedly speaks of how the kingdom of Yahweh is to reach beyond the borders of Judea and Israel (Isa 2:4; 14:1; 49:22; 56:3, 6; 60:5, 10). Yahweh’s kingdom is not simply for one nation, but for all nations.

The stump of Jesse (v. 1) represents the pruning of the Davidic line that has been decimated, but is once again poised to sprout and prosper. The “root of Jesse” in Isa 11:10 suggests that there is life in the stump, and the Davidic line will be restored to the extent that it will serve as a “banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him.”

There are definite eschatological themes drawn in, specifically in v. 9 where it speaks of the peace to come. The word מנוחה ‘resting place,’ used in Isa 11:10, is used elsewhere to speak of a gift for Israel (Ps 23). This word also plays a special role in the way it relates to the Davidic covenant and the temple (Isa 66:1; 1 Chr 28:2; Ps 132:8).¹⁴⁸ Even though it is a different form of the word used in Isa 11:2 to signify the spirit that ‘rests’ on the “stump of Jesse”, the root is the same, providing continuity between vv. 2 and 10. Yahweh will have representation on the throne from the Davidic line. “His place of rest will be glorious,” (v.10) just as Hag 2:1–9 speaks of it. Motyer emphasizes the scope of the Davidic reign. *The root of Jesse* is the banner that places emphasizes the inclusion of the Gentile world, that is poised and waiting for him (Isa 42:4). It is the banner which

¹⁴⁷ Childs, *Isaiah*, 105.

¹⁴⁸ Stromberg, “The ‘Root of Jesse’,” 665.

draws all *peoples* and *nations to himself*.¹⁴⁹ They will now come and inquire of the Messiah. Yahweh's kingdom does not come through peaceful endeavors, but rather through battle, indicated by the use of the word "banner" in v. 10.

3. The Barren and Deserted Wife is Redeemed – Isaiah 54:1–10

Isaiah 54 is found at the end of Isa 40-55. In this second section, Isaiah confronts the nation of Israel with the realities of the sin that has thwarted her success. To this he addresses the political situation of the day, declaring the promise of the coming messianic King that is to set all things right.¹⁵⁰ As Goldingay indicates, this section speaks of the departure from Babylon and a homecoming to Jerusalem. He equates it with Exod 2:23–4:31. Yahweh hears the cry of the Israelites in their bondage and sends his prophet to prepare his people for their release from captivity.¹⁵¹

Isaiah 54:1–3 introduces this passage in light of the Babylonian Exile. The passage begins with the imagery of a barren woman, who is called to rejoice in the face of barrenness, even though this is considered to be the worst fate a woman can have at this time. She is now promised a blessing that will be more than the woman who has been fertile all her life. This blessing is compared with the image of 'expanding her tent,' and a promise that her offspring will spread far, due to their sheer numbers. This imagery is used to show the extent of Yahweh's promise to restore and bless Jerusalem.¹⁵² The

¹⁴⁹ Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 125.

¹⁵⁰ Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 289.

¹⁵¹ Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah*, 7.

¹⁵² Childs, *Isaiah*, 428.

renewed city is depicted as Yahweh's bride who has been cleansed from her unfaithfulness with an opportunity for a fresh start.¹⁵³

Isaiah 54:4–10 is an invitation to the widow to leave her shame behind, and to rest in the great compassion of her Saviour, because the Lord is again going to restore honour to her. In the imagery of the barren woman, Yahweh uses metonymy in the concept of Zion to speak of the people and not the city.

4. The Glorious City of Zion – Isaiah 54:11–17

The architectural imagery found in vv. 11–12 for the city of Zion is intended to enhance the reader's understanding of the transformation that is orchestrated by Yahweh. The "wife Zion" that is depicted as barren and deserted in Isa 54:6–7 is given a new start.

¹⁵⁴ In vv. 11–17 the image of Zion as a barren woman progresses to Zion, the city that will be re-built (Isa 54:11). Isaiah 54:13 speaks of Zion as a woman again as she is promised that "great will be your children's peace." In this way, the imagery of the woman is likened to the city of the Lord, Mount Zion. "The people who live in Zion, the community, will be transformed in character by a sovereign act of God, God will cure their backsliding (Jer. 3.22; Hos. 14:4), give them a spirit of grace and supplication (Zech. 12.10–14), give them a new heart, and write his laws on their hearts. (... Isa 54:13)"¹⁵⁵ Here is another use of metonymy. This time, the author describes the bride as a city with walls that are made of jewels. Thus, although Zion is never mentioned in Isa 54,

¹⁵³ Dow, *Images of Zion*, 106

¹⁵⁴ Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, 473.

¹⁵⁵ Dow, *Images of Zion*, 106.

through the imagery of family, the restored community of Zion is set as its central theme.¹⁵⁶

Isaiah continually contrasts the difference between a city built apart from Yahweh, and one built with him as King. Yahweh displays his compassion towards the Israelites and their city, which has experienced great shame and desolation. The passage holds a double reference. Isaiah 40–55 is about the return of Yahweh’s people to Jerusalem, yet here it specifically addresses the people who make up Jerusalem. He presents himself as the Saviour and the Restorer of not only his people’s dignity, but also the dignity of his previously chosen city. The return of the Israelites to Mount Zion speaks to the location’s geographic significance in the midst of their culture. Yahweh is again positioned as the King who will protect his people. Israel’s hope is not in their own strength or resources, but in Yahweh.¹⁵⁷ They are given an image of hope that the righteous will rest in the inviolability of Yahweh’s protection for the righteous who take refuge in him.

5. The Eternal Rule from Zion – Isaiah 65–66

Third Isaiah (chs. 56–66) takes the future promises for Israel’s salvation and adds an emphasis on their eschatological significance. The glorious idealized picture of Zion that has developed throughout the Psalter and in Isaiah is yet to be realized. There is still hope for Yahweh’s justice and peace to go forth from his holy mountain. Isaiah 65 and 66 form the concluding chapters of the book of Isaiah, and draw out themes from the whole book Isaiah. This lends richness and complexity to the contents of these two chapters.

¹⁵⁶ Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 444.

¹⁵⁷ Oswalt, *Isaiah 40–66*, 427.

These final two chapters of Isaiah highlight the key themes that contribute to the spatial significance of Zion and the people.

5.1. The New Heavens and the New Earth

Childs suggests that Isa 65 draws on both the messianic hope of the Isaiah 1–39, and the promises of Isa 40–55. He finds in Isa 66:18–23 a summary of all the eschatological themes found throughout Isaiah.¹⁵⁸ There is an obvious connection of the fulfillment of Yahweh’s promise to the land and the people. The emphasis on the inherited dwelling is followed by an important question in Isa 66:1: “*What is the house that you would build for me; and what is the place of my rest?*” Oswalt emphasizes the human heart as the sanctuary in this passage.¹⁵⁹ Yahweh emphasizes that building a sanctuary has no value; it is an act of futility, if the heart is not submitted to him. However, It is important to see that there is no dissociation from the land that the servants are to inherit. It is a reminder that the promises that proceed are fully accessible to the contrite. There is an emphasis on the reality that as sovereign over all creation, Yahweh is also fit to dwell wherever he pleases. Through grace he makes his resting place among his people. Dow sees the convergence of the Isaiah prophecies coming together on Mount Zion as a larger message of deliverance. This is where Yahweh has come to dwell (40:3, 9; 52:8; 59:20; 62:11).¹⁶⁰

In the midst of verses that speak of the impending judgment on those who do not serve Yahweh, there is an emphasis on how the righteous remnant will inherit the land in Isa 65:8–11. In Isa 65:9, the faithful servants are described as the inheritors of Yahweh’s

¹⁵⁸ Childs, *Isaiah*, 542.

¹⁵⁹ Oswalt, *Isaiah 40–66*, 667.

¹⁶⁰ Dow, *Images of Zion*, 90.

holy mountain. *“I will bring forth offspring from Jacob, and from Judah possessors of my mountains; my chosen shall possess it, and my servants shall dwell there.”* Verse 10 continues by describing how the land serves as a pasture for animals. This tie to the land is highlighted further in Isa 65:17–19. In these verses Yahweh describes the new creation and the new city, which he will take delight in. Both the people of Yahweh and his city will be a cause for delight. *“But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness”* (65:18).

In Isa 65:20–25 the author radicalizes the theme of Yahweh as creator.¹⁶¹ There is the inference of a return to paradise that is common in apocalyptic writings. The passage, however, is not apocalyptic in nature but illustrates the designed fulfillment of Yahweh’s desired kingdom taking shape in Isaiah. In Isa 65:25 *“The wolf and the lamb shall eat together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,”* is a reference to the imagery of Isa 11:6–7, and Isa 11:9a is repeated: *“They will not harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain”* (NIV). The common reference is to the animals eating in peace alongside each other.

5.2. The Worship of all Nations

Isaiah has addressed the presumption that Yahweh’s rest is guaranteed upon his mountain. In addition, it is a place where the remnant and the nations gather. It is a vision of the promises of Yahweh’s deliverance as they are finally fulfilled with Mount Zion as the centre of all things.¹⁶² He believes that humanity is deprived without Yahweh. Isaiah

¹⁶¹ Childs, *Isaiah*, 537.

¹⁶² Dow, *Images of Zion*, 90.

66:18 speaks of how the nations are drawn to the holy mountain: “...and the time is coming to gather all the nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory.” Here he again references Isa 2:1–4, where it speaks of the nations gathering to the mountain of Yahweh.

Beale suggests that Israel’s earthly temple is a model of the real thing in heaven, which will eventually descend and fill the whole earth with Yahweh’s divine presence.¹⁶³ He bases his application on Isa 66:1–2, where it says that no earthly structure can contain the glory of Yahweh. His emphasis is on Yahweh’s longing to dwell among all people. This passage is a clear affirmation of Yahweh’s choice of Zion as his resting place in Ps 132:13–14.¹⁶⁴ However, Beale overlooks the reality that many of these references see Zion as the gateway to influencing the nations.¹⁶⁵ This is not to deny that the presence of Yahweh and Zion’s influence will go beyond its walls. Rather, it is simply to acknowledge that Zion will be a place of centralized worship to which the nations will come and gather. Isaiah 66:19–20 expands on the theme of Yahweh gathering the nations to the holy mountain. Yahweh initiates the sending out from his dwelling place in Zion, and empowers those he sends with the goal of gathering in the nations. His goal is to gather the nations in a centralized place of worship where he dwells and where peace and prosperity will reign. Isaiah 2:2–5 introduces the righteous who gather to be instructed in the ways of the Lord, and the justice and peace that extends to the nations from Yahweh’s throne. Isaiah 66 serves as an *inclusio*, returning to this theme, only after Isaiah has traveled through the struggles of people’s sins, and the sorrow of being exiled. The book

¹⁶³ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 43–44.

¹⁶⁴ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 62.

¹⁶⁵ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 62.

of Isaiah ends with a message of peace and hope, which has become a central theme of Zion theology through the book.

CHAPTER 5

ZION IN HEBREWS

Introduction

What is it about the mountain imagery, and the importance that the Psalter and Isaiah place on a geographical place of worship that we are to learn? Having a place to gather is of great importance to the followers of Yahweh. We see this as they mourn the loss of the temple, and in their expectation that it will return. We see it again in Hebrews, as the early Jewish followers of Jesus are forced away from the temple after the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8:1).

It has been established in the previous chapters that Mount Zion serves as a focal point for Yahweh's presence in the OT. This is seen clearly in both the Psalter and Isaiah. The question remains as to how the reality of God's presence on Mount Zion transfers into the NT understanding of the OT. Hebrews is a core text to unfold the significance of the interpretation of Zion in our current day. In light of this, this chapter will shift from the OT text to Hebrews.

The Zion themes of Yahweh's rule from Zion, his election of David and Zion, and Zion as a vision for peace are all integrated into Hebrews. Hebrews 12:18–24 serves as a central passage that brings all these themes together in its vision of the heavenly mountain. This passage reflects on the image of Mount Zion in a fresh way, now that Christ has come as the true Davidic ruler. It addresses how believers are to think of Zion

now that their Davidic ruler has come, even though they are still not experiencing the promises spoken of by the prophets (Heb 11:13). Mount Zion still remains an image that is somewhat intangible, for the glory is not immediately before them.

1. Context for The Epistle to the Hebrews

Although there are some intriguing arguments as to authorship, there are too many uncertainties for scholarship to come to agreement on any of the suggested authors. The book does present an extensive knowledge of the OT that could suggest the author is a devout and learned Jew, brought up studying the Torah.¹⁶⁶ This is important because it demonstrates that the author has authority to address the concerns of the early Jewish Christians because he is well acquainted with the challenges they are facing in regards to their faith.

The epistle focuses on the tabernacle as the means of Yahweh's eschatological redemption, playing into the understanding of what is communicated by the Mount Zion text in Heb 12. Another theme of Hebrews is linking the idea of 'city' to 'heaven.' While the teachings of Jesus and Paul give very little attention to this, in Hebrews it becomes more prominent in the association of Mount Zion with the heavenly Jerusalem.¹⁶⁷ Bruce suggests that there is a connection between the audience of the book, and the Gentile world-mission that commences after the death of Stephen.¹⁶⁸ Cockerill reminds us that the distinction between Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians is not made in this book. It is instead concerned with the believers who follow Christ with adherence to various

¹⁶⁶ DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 32.

¹⁶⁷ Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, 883.

¹⁶⁸ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 14.

Jewish cultic practices (i.e. temple worship and sacrifice.)¹⁶⁹ This is surmised from the way in which the author assumes a familiarity with the OT, Mosaic Law, and Jewish cultic institutions on the part of the reader.¹⁷⁰

The author's use of the story of Esau in Heb 12:14–17 adds weight to the view that the intended audience (Hebrew) understands themselves to be descendents of Abraham and will thus see themselves in the story. As in Esau's case, the author does not want his listeners to throw away their inheritance of 'Zion' that is to be found in Jesus.¹⁷¹ Hebrews 12:14–17 parallels with Heb 2:1–4 in its emphasis on the call to holiness: to turn away from anything that would circumvent the grace of Yahweh in their lives.

“Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one can see God” (12:14). Esau is seen as the example of someone who squanders the inheritance he has been given. Perhaps the discouragement is there because the Messiah has come, and has not taken charge of Jerusalem (as priest and king) on his holy mountain, as they anticipate. This leaves some faint hearted, having lost hope in the promise of the Messiah they had hoped would come.

Dating the book of Hebrews comes with less ambiguity than determining the authorship and audience, and becomes important when understanding its message. Hebrews 2:3 claims that the author has received instruction from those who listened to the teachings of Jesus in person. Even more important than this, for the context of the book itself, is the likelihood that it is written prior to the destruction of the temple in AD

¹⁶⁹ Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 20.

¹⁷⁰ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 23.

¹⁷¹ Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 456-58.

70.¹⁷² Much of the language in Hebrews surrounding the cultic practices of the priesthood suggests that sacrificial offerings are still a part of the religious experiences of the early church at the time it is written.¹⁷³ In AD 70 all sacrificial worship comes to an end with the destruction of the temple.

It is evident from the introduction of Hebrews that it does not fit nicely into the genre of the traditional epistles or letters. The author presents it as a ‘word of exhortation’ in Heb 13:22, and it is formatted as a sermon or homily.¹⁷⁴ It integrates Christ into the theology of the priesthood and sacrificial practices, outlining how Jesus has come to shape and inform the understanding of the OT.

With this understanding of the book’s message and context, one can approach the passage concerning Mount Zion in Heb 12:18–24 with greater clarity. This passage needs to be read in light of the verses that come before. Hebrews addresses the present reality of persecution to the readers. Hebrews 12:2 states that the readers have not yet faced martyrdom for their faith, neither have they been exempt from hard struggles and suffering (10:32–34). There is an evident exhortation to endure, and fix their eyes on the promise.¹⁷⁵ Hebrews 12:5–17 explains the suffering the believers are going through as an act of discipline. Verses 12:12–13 weave in athletic language in their exhortation to not give up the race: “*lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees.*” This parallels the exhortation with Isa 35:3–4. “*Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the*

¹⁷² Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 33. He does not give precise dating on the book, but he is in favour of a dating not long before AD 70. If the book was written to the Rome (or from Rome) he states it could not have been much before AD 64.

¹⁷³ See Hebrews 3:11 “the high priest carries [in the present tense] the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering”. The present tense need not mean present time in Greek, but Bruce argues that the wording would likely have changed if the sacrificial offerings had ceased completely. Additional examples of Bruce’s discussion on the dating of the text can be found in his discussion on dating in *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 20–22.

¹⁷⁴ Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 20.

¹⁷⁵ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 23.

feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, 'Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.'" This parallel points the readers to reflect on Yahweh's sufficiency in the face of any threat or pending danger that might bring discouragement. Isaiah directs the reader towards an eschatological vision that remembers the redemption that is coming.¹⁷⁶ Hebrews 12:12–13 references Isa 35:3–4 to point believers to the celestial city.¹⁷⁷ Yet, they are not to be concerned with their own faint heart. DeSilva suggests that the absence of a personal pronoun in Heb 12:12 lends itself to be read as an exhortation to care for community first.¹⁷⁸ They are not to neglect their own spiritual state, but the focus is to uphold each other and look towards the hope of the peace of Zion as a community.

2. Divine Rule from Zion

In Heb 12:18–24 the imagery presents two mountains. Hebrews 12:18–21 refers to Mount Sinai, recalling Exod 19:16–19 and 20:18–21, where the glory of the Lord descends so that even animals cannot approach it without facing death. The people are struck with the fear of death should they draw near, and entreat Moses to speak to Yahweh on their behalf. Instead, Hebrews teaches that the worshiper has not come to a mountain that they can touch (Mount Sinai), but rather to Mount Zion, the heavenly and eternal city of Yahweh. In light of the forgoing discussions on the Psalter and Isaiah, further examination of Mount Zion in Hebrews is merited.

Hebrews 12:22 exhorts the early Hebrew believers not to look to the earthly Jerusalem, or to focus on the temple which is about to be destroyed. Looking to Mount

¹⁷⁶ Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 579.

¹⁷⁷ DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 455.

¹⁷⁸ DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 456.

Zion recalls the way in which scripture speaks of how the Messiah has been enthroned on Zion. Psalms 2:6 states that “*I have installed my King on Zion, my holy mountain.*” In this picture the church is reminded that Jesus is King and is seated on his throne in heaven. The Israelites, while they inhabit their land, declare Mount Zion as synonymous with the Jerusalem mount in Israel. Psalm 48 points to Mount Zion as the glorious mountain that is greater than any other. Those who stand within her walls are struck in awe of the magnificence of Yahweh (vv. 1–3) and her enemies flee in terror (vv. 4–8). As Hebrews draws on the mountain imagery, it evokes the image of the divine King ruling from Zion. The readers are reminded of the prize they are striving for.¹⁷⁹ The mount of Ps 48 also points the readers to the approachability of Yahweh on his throne. The psalm begins by looking at the mountain from afar, and ends with an invitation to praise Yahweh as they walk about his mountain and delight in its magnificence (vv. 12–14). Isaiah 2:25 also points to the divine rule from Zion. In this passage the approachability of the mountain is highlighted. Hebrews 12:18–24 juxtaposes the inapproachability of the earthly mountain that is seen, with the approachability of the unseen mountain. Yahweh is still the King of judgment from Ps 2 and the disobedient should still fear him (Heb 12:29), yet the obedient are faced with a greater reward (Heb 12:28).¹⁸⁰

3. Election of Zion and David

At the introduction of the book of Hebrews (Heb 1:5a) the author quotes Ps 2:7: “*You are my Son, today I have begotten you.*” This is a reference to the coronation psalm

¹⁷⁹ DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 463.

¹⁸⁰ Dow, *Images of Zion*, 174.

(Ps 2) where God promises to establish his King on Mount Zion. The second portion of the Hebrews reference in Heb 1:5b is an excerpt from 2 Sam 7:14:

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. (2 Sam 7:12–14)

The passage is quoted here to show the context for the excerpt. The significance in the excerpt is that it assumes that the reader is familiar with the original context, and thus, affirms the promise that is made to David that Yahweh will place someone on the throne from the Davidic line in perpetuity. Both the words ‘son’ and ‘house’ refer to Solomon, and how Yahweh will establish an eternal dynasty for the descendants of David through him. It is a ‘throne’ that will last forever, and when this passage in 2 Sam 7:12–14 is read in context of Psalm 2 and Heb 1:5, there is a reminder that the ‘throne’ on Mount Zion symbolizes the promise that is fulfilled through Jesus.

Psalm 132:11,12 speaks of the election of the line of David and Zion where there is a recollection of the oath that Yahweh makes to establish the Davidic rule forever. It also echoes the theme of Isa 11 where the Davidic rule from Zion is fulfilled. Jesus is the descendent of David. He is the root of Jesse in Isa 11:10. In this way, Heb 1:5 re-affirms the significance of the establishment of Zion and David at the outset of the epistle. The book is built around the message that Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT prophecies. “Old Testament verses about both the Davidic King (Heb. 1.5, 8, 13) and YAHWEH (1.6, 10–12) are applied to him, for in him, these two essences merge.”¹⁸¹ The human and the divine king come together.

¹⁸¹ Dow, *Images of Zion*, 172.

4. The Davidic and Divine Rule Merge

In the ANE, mountains are seen as a model of the cosmos.¹⁸² In this way, Mount Zion is chosen by Yahweh to represent his dwelling among his people. The worshiper is to remember that the earthly dwellings, first the tabernacle and then the temple, are mere archetypes of the holy Jerusalem that Yahweh intends to bring down to merge and become a part of the new earth described in Rev 21.

Bruce argues, “If the movable tabernacle in the wilderness was constructed according to the pattern of the sanctuary on high, so the temple and city of Jerusalem were material copies of eternal archetypes.”¹⁸³ This understanding is supported in Heb 8:5 where it says:

They (the priests) serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying “See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.”

When Moses is on the mountain, Yahweh shows him the pattern of the heavenly tabernacle, and he is instructed to replicate it on earth with precision (Exod 25:8–9).¹⁸⁴ It can also be understood more clearly when viewed in context of Rev 21:2–3 where the holy city, the new Jerusalem is seen coming down from heaven to the earth, bringing the dwelling of Yahweh to the earth.

¹⁸² Clements, *God and Temple*, 3.

¹⁸³ Bruce, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 356.

¹⁸⁴ Steyn, “On Earth as it is in Heaven...” The heavenly sanctuary motif in Hebrews 8:5 and its textual connection with the ‘shadowy copy’ of LXX Exodus 25:40.” In this article, he discusses the origins of the tradition that the earthly temple is a replica of the heavenly found in Heb 8:5 in his article.

5. Mount Zion – The Heavenly Hope for Peace on Earth

The audience of believers in Hebrews are discouraged that with the coming of Jesus, their promised city and land are still in foreign hands, and they continue to be persecuted. This can be deduced from the exhortation in Heb 12 to “*run with endurance the race that is set before us*” (v. 1), to “not grow weary or fainthearted” (v. 3) while, “looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith” (v. 2). This call to endurance is set in context of the persecution and torture detailed in Heb 11:32–37. The book of Hebrews, thus, reminds them that the temple on the geographical Mount Zion is merely an archetype of the heavenly one. Instead of fixing their eyes on the earthly manmade representation of Yahweh’s dwelling, they are to look to the “heavenly Jerusalem”. It is the invisible heavenly Jerusalem that is before them now, in all of its glory. This Mount Zion is the one where there are “innumerable angels in festal gathering,” and where ‘the spirits of the righteous made perfect’ reside (12:22–23). “*For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come*”(13:14). In this light, we are still on a pilgrimage, awaiting the day when we are no longer in exile from the true Mount Zion that is to come down in all of its glory.

Yet, what are they to do in the mean time? What are they to do while they wait for the eschatological New Jerusalem? Hebrews invites the reader to remember that Yahweh’s presence is intrinsically linked to the people who are in covenant with him. They are to find hope and encouragement in the picture of the Zion that is to come. While they wait for the heavenly city to come down and converge with the earth (Rev 21:1–2), they are to remember that the benefits of the kingdom can be experienced by gazing on the invisible Zion reality with eyes of faith.

6. Yahweh's Desire to Dwell Among His People

Psalm 132 and Isa 54 address those who mourn the loss of Yahweh's presence, much like those in Hebrews are feeling. They represent, in different ways, a type of exile. As the reader looks to the 'city of the Living God,' he/she is reminded that it is still Yahweh's plan to create a dwelling place for himself. Isaiah re-iterates how the glory of Mount Zion draws the nations to itself through the root of Jesse (Isa 11:10). It is to Yahweh's holy mountain that the nations gather to worship and be instructed in the ways of the Lord. In Hebrews, the collective church is invited, as Moses and Abraham have also been, to look to the heavenly city that has inspired the earthly archetype.¹⁸⁵

What is to be understood is that Yahweh moves with his people. Hebrews is not negating the importance of corporate gathering and the importance of choosing a place to worship Yahweh. Rather, Yahweh is releasing them from the tie to the geographical place of the temple on Mount Zion. Zion has become of such importance to them that they have trouble letting go of it. For centuries they have fixed their gaze upon the physical Mount Zion, as the image of their eschatological hope. The writer explains that Jesus has entered the heavenly temple in the heavenly Jerusalem on heavenly Mount Zion, emphasizing the metaphysical nature of this Zion/Jerusalem.¹⁸⁶

Jesus as the root of Jesse in Isa 11:10 is the signal to the nations to gather and be instructed in the ways of the Lord. As we remember the hope in Zion that the OT declares, it brings greater understanding to the new concepts introduced of Zion in Hebrews. It is not uncommon to view the "New Jerusalem" as an image that represents the fellowship between Yahweh and people, the redeemed community. Repeatedly,

¹⁸⁵ Dow, *Images of Zion*, 174.

¹⁸⁶ Dow, *Images of Zion*, 175.

scripture illustrates Yahweh's desire and intent to dwell with his people (Lev 26:11; Ps 90:1; Matt 18:20; Eph 2:22). Beale reminds us that there is a basis to see ourselves as the living temple of Yahweh's presence. "To some degree, God's coming at Sinai stands in the background of the Spirit's coming at Pentecost."¹⁸⁷ He explains that the tongues of fire that appear over the believers at Pentecost accompanied by "a sound like a mighty rushing wind" (Acts 2:1–3) represent a theophany of a latter-day Sinai sanctuary. At Sinai, Yahweh appears in the midst of "thunder and lightening and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast. . . Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire" (Exod 10:16–20).¹⁸⁸ Repeatedly through the OT, Yahweh lets his people know that he is present through fire (Exod 3:2; 13:21; 40:34–38; 1 Kgs 18:38; 2 Chr 7:1). The presence of Yahweh descends on the tabernacle in the wilderness in a cloud and "fire was in the cloud by night" (Exod 40:34–38).

Hebrews presents access to the Yahweh who dwells on Mount Zion, for those who have the faith to believe in Him. "He is immediately accessible to each believing heart, making his dwelling in the fellowship of the faithful."¹⁸⁹ As we come together and offer our sacrifices of praise, we are brought before the city of the Living God who is in heaven.

The transference of Yahweh's presence from Mount Zion to believers is both collective and individual. The tongues of fire rest on individuals at Pentecost, yet this phenomenon occurs when they are gathered together in a group. For David, corporate worship is essential. His oath in Ps 132 is an indication of his passion to see Yahweh's presence come to rest in the temple on Mount Zion. As the people commune with

¹⁸⁷ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 204

¹⁸⁸ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 204.

¹⁸⁹ Bruce, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 357.

Yahweh in the OT, through faithful service and gathering to worship, they are enabled to glimpse Yahweh's kingdom. His kingdom comes to earth, his footstool, as it is in heaven where he sits on his throne (Ps 132:7; Matt 6:9).

The question remains: What is the application of the concept of Yahweh's presence in the temple on Mount Zion for the twenty-first century expression of church and service? The end goal is for Yahweh's people to be with Yahweh, and for Yahweh to dwell with them. How the symbolism, certainty or uncertainty about this heavenly Jerusalem or Mount Zion is viewed, will influence the way that faith and community is practiced. This work does not claim final authority on all the details evoked by 'Mount Zion' imagery and its assertion about eschatology. However, it is clear from scripture that Zion is a place to encounter and worship Yahweh as a collective church, and this is a separate concept from the believer as the "temple of the Holy Spirit". The distinct nature of Hebrews is that it emphasizes the collective nature of the church: "Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing" (Heb 10:25a, NIV). It is important not to overlook the prominent images of passages such as Pss 2, 48, 132, Isa 2, 11, 54, 65 and 66 that describe Zion not simply as the place in which Yahweh dwells, but also as a place where the people come to gather.

Scripture repeatedly calls believers to 'remember', to look back on the things Yahweh has done in order to understand present and future realities. This is not to say we see clearly what is ahead, for scripture also says we only see in part, or as in a mirror dimly (1 Cor 13:12). Yet, it does say we see, and it does call us to remember. The church remembers the original Mount Zion, the glory that dwells, the worship that unfolds, and the joy that is encountered there. Flowing out of this encounter with Yahweh's presence,

we are called to replicate that experience in new ways, always keeping before us our future hope: “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess. . . let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds . . . let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (vv. 23–25) (NIV). This illustrates a taste of what the collective church is meant to experience in the presence of the eschatological Mount Zion. Revelation 21:10 promises that the glory of Zion will return, far surpassing her original glory. Hebrews finds it important to remind its audience of the eternal heavenly city of the Living God that is still to come. Christians should note that this future hope is intended to give strength and perseverance to remain faithful in the current struggles. In Heb 13:14 we are invited to offer up sacrifices of praise as our spiritual offerings, instead of the animal sacrifices that are no longer an option. As we do this, we will find rest and be instructed in the ways of the Lord.

In conclusion, it is important to differentiate between Mount Zion the geographical place, Zion the heavenly reality, and the Zion that comes to be known as the people of Yahweh. This work provides an explanation of how the concept of Mount Zion has progressed through the scriptures, while rooting the concept in its original understanding as a geographical place. Dow reminds us that “It is very difficult for humans to imagine personal existence without some kind of spatial location. The NT envisions bodily resurrection (1 Cor. 15; cf. Rev. 11.11), which implies some kind of spatial existence” within a body.¹⁹⁰ To think of the New Jerusalem as a community without some sort of geographical or spatial (bodily) existence is a difficult concept for a human being to grasp. However, it is in this way that the two concepts of physical geography and metaphysical existence become linked. One concept cannot be

¹⁹⁰ Dow, *Images of Zion*, 226.

emphasized without it leading to the other. Yet, as evidenced by this work, the promise of a spatial existence of the heavenly Jerusalem, whatever that comes to look like, is present in the OT, as well as the NT.

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