

Psalms 46

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[0 : 00] Well, the mountains fell into the sea on Thursday night and on Friday morning, and it was a tumultuous couple of days.

I don't think anybody expected the result that we had in the election. And there was lots of fears in the days leading up to the election, wasn't there? Turmoil. I am told that financial institutions were worried.

And that the city, which is always nervous at election time. And so in times of instability, where do you look? Where do you turn?

Where should we go when the city quakes? Well, look at verse 4 of Psalm 46. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God.

And so begins the section, and that we're looking at today from verses 4 to 7. While the city quakes and fears, there is another city which stands firm, and it is the city of God.

[1 : 04] There's a city whose streams make glad the city of God. And that's saying, that is the city for you and I to be investing in, to be trusting in, to be living for.

This is the city that has a future even beyond this world. Which city is the object of your dreams? Which city is the hopes, are your hopes pinned in? Where are young visions, please? The city of man or the city of God? 1859, so the publication of Charles Dickens' second historical novel. It was a tale of two cities, as you will have read. And on one level, it wouldn't be a bad substitute as a title for the Bible. Because the Bible is the tale of two cities, isn't it?

It is the tale of the city of man and the city of God. The city of man is organised independently of God, and is in rebellion against God.

[2 : 07] It's the kingdom of this age. The city of man is sometimes referred to in the Bible as Babylon. And the city that we live in, at times, at its worst, epitomises everything that Babylon stands for.

People living for themselves, living for themselves in greed, materialism, luxury, pride, glory, and selfish ambition.

And although it seems appealing, doesn't it, the city is so appealing, the consistent message of the Bible is, do not be deceived by appearances.

That the city of man is built on sand, and it is doomed to fail. But there is another city. The city of God.

The kingdom God has established, which is going to last forever. In the Old Testament, the ancient city, the ancient historical city, which was set on Mount Zion, is the city of Jerusalem.

[3 : 10] But in the New Testament, it becomes clear that this historical city, it was picturing something greater on that bit of land in the Middle East. It was picturing a spiritual reality.

The kingdom of God. Which is called the New Jerusalem, or the Heavenly Jerusalem. And those who trust in the Lord Jesus, those of us who believe in him, we become citizens of this heavenly city right now.

So Hebrews 12, verse 22, speaks about the present reality for Christians. And it says to you and I, and the Hebrews, it says, you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

But it also finds its ultimate fulfillment. It is fulfilled now. We have come to the city. But its ultimate fulfillment is found in the world to come. In Revelation 21, after this world has passed away, John, in his vision, sees the holy city.

He sees the new Jerusalem coming out of heaven from God. So in which city have you invested your house? In which city are you investing your dreams and your ambitions?

[4 : 19] The city of man or the city of God? To which city are you tied? And this middle section of Psalm 46, verses 4 to 7, shows you why the city of God is the place to invest in.

It's like a marketing brochure for the city of God. It outlines the blessings of being a citizen of that city. And so if you are already a citizen of the city of God, these verses will remind you that you've got no need to panic, no matter who is in government.

But if until now you realize that you've put everything into the city of man, today is an opportunity. It's an opportunity to reconsider your investment policy.

Why is the city of God the place to invest your life in? Three reasons. First of all, the city of God enjoys God's provision. The city of God enjoys God's provision.

So verse 4, there is a city, there is a river, whose streams make glad the city of God. Do you remember that, verses 2 and 3? And they describe a world that was falling apart.

[5 : 28] The earth quaking. The mountains shaking. The seas roaring. There's a world in turmoil. There's a scene of chaos, of deafening noise.

But now in verse 4, someone's hit the mute button, haven't they? Suddenly, all is calm, and all is peaceful. And we find ourselves within the city of God.

And the only sound is the sound of that river. Can't make the sound of a river, but you know what it's like. A river that is gently running through it. But the point of the river is not so much peace, but rather provision.

That is what it seems to symbolize. When you think of a river or stream, maybe you think of a peaceful brook rolling down the hills in the Lake District.

Maybe you think of the River Brent. That beautiful river with trolleys and plastic bags and scum and dirty brown water.

[6 : 35] Maybe you think of the River Thames. The dirt of the River Thames and congested traffic trying to get over too few bridges. It's not a peaceful scene. But in the ancient world, a river meant one thing, and it meant water supply.

No water supply, no city. And for a city under siege, it was imperative, wasn't it? It was important that you protected your water supply. If you lost that, the city would fall.

There was no way back from that. So when the psalmist was writing the city of God as the ancient city of Jerusalem, that was, as verse 4 says, can you see that?

The holy habitation of the Most High. That is where God especially lived amongst his people. And the water supply in Jerusalem came from a spring that was just outside the city wall, and that spring was called Gihon.

Gihon, however you want to pronounce it. It fed a stream. So we read about it in Isaiah chapter 6 and verse 8, verse 6. We read that the waters of Shiloh have flowed gently.

[7 : 41] And those waters came to symbolise God's provision for his people. And so just as water supplied the city, has God abundantly provided for the needs of his people.

But the city of God today is not an earthly city that you can find on Google Maps. But rather it is the kingdom of God.

It is the people living under God's rule. And the river supply in the city is no longer H₂O, but it is a spiritual reality God's people now enjoy.

So come with me to John chapter 7 and verse 37, alright? John 7 verse 37. John 7 and verse 37. It's on page 893 if you've got a church Bible.

893. John 7, 37. It's the last day of the feast. It's the great day. And Jesus stands up and he cries out. And he says this, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

[8 : 49] Whoever believes in me, as the scriptures say, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. Now this he said about the Holy Spirit, who those who believed in him were to receive.

So those who believe in the Lord Jesus, receive the Spirit of God. Every believer receives the Spirit of God. And he becomes in them a spiritual water supply.

Giving them spiritual life and refreshment and sustenance. A constantly flowing stream of spiritual life, which brings you spiritual life and joy.

A river whose streams make glad the city of God. And that comes with being a citizen of the city of God. One of the fears of being an ancient city was that of being besieged.

The great fear of having the water supply cut off. It was a real problem. It was a real problem for ancient Jerusalem. Being that the spring was outside the city walls.

[9 : 56] And it was very vulnerable. So they had to come up with ingenious tunnels, such as Hezekiah's tunnel. But this water supply that we have as the people of God is something that God's people carry around within them.

So it's unaffected by an election. Unaffected by trials. Unaffected by a siege.

This inest spring will sustain you during the worst of times. Do you know people who are spiritually thirsty? Maybe that you are. That you long for water.

To bring light and refreshment to your soul. Onto the dry, cracked ground of your soul. If I can put a line on that. So you find, well you do find, don't you? That whatever the world offers, it fails to meet your deepest needs.

Spiritually. It's virtually. Jesus says, if anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. But this present experience that we have, it's just a tiny foretaste of something that God's people will enjoy one day in the world to come.

[11 : 13] So come with me to the end of the Bible, to Revelation chapter 22. Revelation 22. The end of the Bible. And verses 1 and 2. It's the last verse.

The last chapter. Revelation chapter 22, verses 1 and 2. Where there's a description of the new creation. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life.

Bright as crystal flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. Through the middle of the speed of the city. The water of spiritual, eternal life there to enjoy forever.

The city of God enjoys God's provision. Now can the city of man that we live in offer anything that comes even close to that.

The best that the city of man can offer is what? Well, it can offer you financial rewards, can't it? It can offer you money. It can offer you possessions. It can offer you titles, status.

[12 : 17] But those things do not satisfy. They cannot meet your deepest needs and longings. They will not. Those things don't last.

And when we die, they die with us. So Freddie Mercury, do you remember? He summed it up in that song. He summed up the dilemma in the words of his haunting song.

There must be more to life than this. There must be more to life than this. What good is life in the end? We all must die. There must be more to life than this. And there is.

But it is only found in the city of God. Not in the city of man. John Newton put it this way.

Back way. This. Put it brilliantly. Way back in 1779. So tune in your hymn books. Tune in your hymn books. To our last hymn. Which I pray I got the right one.

[13 : 17] Number 57. All right. Keep a finger there. Because it is a remarkable piece of writing. So 570. And I'm going to refer to three of the verses in this song.

So keep your finger there. Listen. So see verse 2. What he says? He says this. See the streams of living waters. Springing from eternal love.

Well supply your sons and daughters. And all fear of want to remove. Who can faint while such a river ever flows their thirst to assuage.

Grace which like the Lord the giver never fails from age to age. But the one who is thirsty Jesus says come and take the water of life without price.

Secondly the city of God enjoys God's presence. Look at verse 4 of Psalm 46. Go back there.

Psalm 46 and verse 4. Psalm 46 and verse 4.

[14 : 26] It says this. The city of God enjoys God's presence. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God. The holy habitation of the Most High.

And then verse 7. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress. So in the Old Testament.

Jerusalem was the city where God dwells in a special way. So that city was the holy habitation of God. Of the God Most High. It was his dwelling place.

So although God lived in heaven. Of course he did. He had chosen to reveal himself in a very special way among his people in Jerusalem. In the temple. But access to him was restricted wasn't it?

To just once a year. One man. Nevertheless it was an amazing blessing. And it did set apart this city from all the other cities of the world. Of no other city would it have been said that this was God's dwelling place in any way.

[15 : 28] Jerusalem was in the words of Psalm 48. It's the city of our God. The city of the great King. The New Testament begins with the birth of a child in a little town just outside Jerusalem.

The child of whom it was said they shall call his name Emmanuel. Which means God with us. And God had now entered our world in the presence of his son Jesus Christ.

God's presence was now revealed in physical form. In a body. But restricted to being in one place at a time. But before he left this world Jesus promised his disciples in John 14.

That after he returned to heaven his father would give you another helper. To be with you forever. The spirit of truth. He dwells with you.

And he will be with you. He promised in Matthew chapter 18 to me. That wherever two or three are gathered in my name. There I am in the midst of them. The presence of God with and in you.

[16:34] It is a wonderful blessing to be enjoyed by all the citizens of the city of God. Now our circumstances.

They may be no different at all from the people around us. God's people lose their jobs. God's people suffer from depression.

God's people get sick like everybody else. But it does make a difference. That through it all knowing that God is with you.

And God is in you by his spirit. And this relationship with God is what you were created for. And if we don't have it we are left with an aching emptiness.

Which nothing else can fill. Tom Brady I didn't know who he was until I followed the link on the internet. But he is an American footballer. He is I never hear anybody. He is one of America's biggest sports stars.

[17:37] He's won the Super Bowl three times. He's got more money than he could have ever dreamed of. He's dating a Brazilian supermodel. And everybody wants to be around Tom Brady. He was regarded before the supermodel came along as the most eligible bachelor in America.

There was an interview with him. Towards the end of the interview. He is asked about whether he is satisfied. Together with all that money, fame and career accomplishments. The interviewer says we were surprised to hear this from him.

Tom says maybe a lot of people would say hey man this is what it is. I've reached my goal. I've got the dream life. But I think to myself God has got to be more than this.

And the interviewer asked Tom what's the answer. To which Tom Brady replied in a tone of desperation and longing. I wish I knew. I wish I knew.

He's won the Super Bowl three times. More money than you could ever imagine. And he's dating a Brazilian supermodel. I wish I knew. You see the city of man cannot meet our deepest longings.

[18:50] Because we were made and you were made for a relationship with God. And whatever rewards the city of man can give. They cannot make up to the absence of God in our lives.

And conversely with the presence of God in your life. You can be content without any of those other rewards. And you have the ultimate fulfillment of this reality.

To move forward to eternity. Eternity. And so Ezekiel. In his vision of the heavenly city. In the last verse of his book. He writes this. And the name of the city from that time on shall be the Lord is there.

That's the climax of Ezekiel. There will be a city which will be called the Lord is there. John in his vision of the heavenly city.

From Revelation 21. He writes in verses 1 to 3. That we will be with God forever. In a relationship of intimacy. That we can hardly even begin to imagine now.

[19:51] From our perspective. It says that his servants will worship him. And they will see his face. By contrast those outside the city will be shut out of his presence forever.

And again I think John Newton puts it really well. I think he gets it. So look at the last verse. Number 570. Number 570.

He says this. The saviour. Since of Zion's city. I through grace a member of. Let the world derive your pity. I will glory in your name.

Fading are the world's best pleasures. All its boasted pomp and show. Solid joys and lasting treasures. None but Zion's children.

Lastly the city of God enjoys God's protection. Isn't that what verse 5 of Psalm 146 said? Verse 5 of Psalm 146. Says this. It says God is in the midst of her.

[20:57] She shall not be moved. God will help her when morning dawns. The nations rage. The kingdoms totter.

It utters his voice. The earth ignites. The city of God is secure. And it cannot be moved. The word moved.

Comes up three times in the psalm. So verse 2. Can you see it? The mountains will be moved into the sea. In the cosmic upheaval.

Even the mountains are moving and falling. But the city of God stands firm. Then in verse 6. I don't know why the translators have changed it. It comes up again. The kingdoms totter.

It's exactly the same word. So the kingdoms of this world. They rise and they fall. The nations rage. But the city of God stands firm.

[21 : 57] Psalm 48 verse 8 says. The city of God. Which God will establish forever. God's kingdom is an everlasting one. Which cannot be destroyed. What makes it so immovable? What makes it so immovable?

It's very simple. God is in it. The Lord of house. Of armies. As he's described in verse 7. The one who is so powerful.

That in verse 6. That he utters his voice. And the earth melts. And if that God is on your side. Then you cannot be overcome.

You will not be moved. And so in the past. The ancient city of Jerusalem. Was invincible. Because God was in it. And when it was under siege.

When it was facing. Overwhelming on it. It stood firm. But because of people's idolatry. God departed from the city. And it fell. But in the New Testament.

[22 : 56] God's protection. Is not enjoyed by some physical place. In the Middle East. Somewhere in the world. But it is enjoyed by all of those. Who believe in the Lord Jesus. They are secure.

They are secure. Because God is with them. And God is in them. That's how 1 John 4.4 puts it. It says. He who is in you. Is greater than he who is in the world.

Romans 8 verse 31. Says. If God is for us. Who can be against us? And in contrast. For ancient Jerusalem. God now promises. I will never leave you.

Nor forsake you. And as God's people. We often feel. Don't we. Like a city under siege. And I wonder if you ever feel like that. Maybe you feel like that.

Right at this moment. That you are a city under siege. And we too face the loss of our jobs. Financial uncertainty. We face relationship breakdowns. We face ill health.

[23 : 54] Depression. Bereavement. And in addition to that. We face the attacks of the world. The flesh and the devil. But in all of this. God assures us of his protection.

That was the experience. Of the Apostle Paul. Was this? He was under enormous pressure. In 2 Corinthians. And he writes in 2 Corinthians 1. We were so utterly burdened.

Beyond our strength. That we despaired of life itself. But God delivered us. From such a deadly peril. And he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope.

That's why Paul writes 2 Timothy. Doesn't he? But the Lord has stood by me. And he strengthened me. The Lord will rescue me. And bring me safely. Into his heavenly kingdom. And that is the assurance.

All of God's people have. That God will protect them. And God will bring them home. Safely to the heavenly kingdom. It is a kingdom that will endure forever.

[24 : 55] Whereas this world. And its kingdom. They will one day. Pass away. Many. What a contrast. To the instability. Of the city of man.

No government. No human system. Can provide lasting security. Can it? Many people thought. That the city of Rome. And the Roman Empire.

Would last forever. That it was invincible. But in 410. The unthinkable happened. And Rome fell to the Visigoths. It was as if.

An immovable mountain. Had fallen into the sea. And in the wake of that shock. Augustine wrote. His famous work.

The City of God. And in it. He urged people. Not to set their hopes. On some earthly empire. But on the hopes. Of an eternal city.

[25 : 56] The instability of life. Is something that you cannot ignore. We are fragile. And the world we live in. Is fragile.

As a society. That is organized. Without God. Revelation 19. Warns us. That one day. Babylon will fall. And even now. Babylon is burning. But the city of God.

Is going to remain forever. So again. I'll see. Turn to the Bible. Do you see what it says? It says.

Glorious things. 570. It says. No. 570. No glorious things. Of you are spoken. Zion. City of our God. He whose world. Word cannot be broken. Broken.

Formed you for his own abode. On the rock of ages founded. What can shake. What can shake your sure repose. With salvation's walls surrounded.

[26 : 58] You may smile. At all your foes. And so which city are you living for? Where are you investing your hopes? Your dreams.

And your ambitions. And your security. And your security. And your security. By nature. Every single one of us. We are citizens of the city of man.

But by grace. God calls us to be citizens of the city of God. God. But when that happens. We don't leave the city of man.

Do we? We don't leave the place where we live. The place where we work. But our ambitions. And our dreams. And our security. That all should transfer.

From the city of man. To the city of God. Where we enjoy his protection. And his provision. And his presence. And if we are God's people tonight.

[27 : 58] We need to focus on the city of God. And we need to follow. The example of Abraham. Remember Abraham in Hebrews 11. It says that Abraham was looking forward to the city.

That has foundations. Whose designer and builder was God. And for those of you tonight. Who are not God's people. Well there's no better time. Is there than to apply for citizenship tonight.

The application process for citizenship. In the kingdom of heaven. It's very very simple. It's that you get on your knees. And you beg for forgiveness. And you trust the Lord Jesus. And you have him as Lord of your life.

So let's close in for now.