

Excited to Be With the Lord



SABBATH—MARCH 9

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Psalm 84:5–12; Psalm 122:1–5; Psalm 87:1, 2; Psalm 46:1–7; Psalm 125:1, 2.

Zion, God's temple, is the center of His work to save the human family on earth.

MEMORY VERSE: “LORD, I cannot wait to enter your Temple. I am so excited! Every part of me cries out to be with the Living God” (Psalm 84:2, ERV).

THE BOOK OF PSALMS is filled with songs about Zion. Zion is a name for God's holy mountain. The songs about Zion tell us about its beauty. They tell us about the Lord on His holy mountain. The whole earth is under His control. The songs about Zion often praise the Lord's house of worship. The sons of Korah wrote many of these songs about Zion. The sons of Korah were musicians in the Lord's temple (1 Chronicles 6:31–38). The sons of Korah were in charge of the temple gates (1 Chronicles 9:19).

Why does Zion fill God's people with hope and joy? Zion is a symbol that shows us that God lives with His people. The people of Israel were God's chosen people (Deuteronomy 7:6). So, Zion is God's chosen mountain (Psalm 78:68; Psalm 87:2). The Lord sits as king in Zion (Psalm 99:1, 2). The Lord's temple is located on Zion, too (Psalm 87:1, 2). Zion is the place where God blesses His people. Also, Zion is a place of safety for God's people. Zion is often used as a name for God's temple and the city of Jerusalem. God's temple is the center of His work to save the human family on earth.

God blesses the whole earth from Zion. The whole earth belongs to the Lord. So, Zion is a place of joy for people everywhere on earth (Psalm 48:2).

A DAY IN YOUR TEMPLE IS BETTER THAN 1,000 DAYS ANYWHERE ELSE (Psalm 84:5–12)

Why does the poet want to live in God’s temple? Read Psalm 84:1–4 for the answer.

The poet wants to live in God’s temple all his life. Then he will always be close to God (Psalm 84:1, 2). God lives in His temple (Psalm 84:2). That’s why the temple is a special place. In the temple, God’s people can “see the Lord’s beauty” (Psalm 27:4, ICB; also read Psalm 63:2). Then God’s people will be “filled with good things in your house, your holy Temple” (Psalm 65:4, ICB). In Psalm 84, the people are happy because they have a relationship with God. They praise Him (Psalm 84:4) because God gives His people strength (Psalm 84:5). So, the people trust in Him (Psalm 84:12). The people come to God’s temple to worship God and fellowship with other people. God lives in His temple. So, His people understand His kingdom better. They also have a better understanding of everlasting life.

Who else can come to God’s temple to get a blessing? Read Psalm 84:5–12 for the answer.

God pours His blessings out from His temple. First, God gives His blessings to the people who serve Him in His temple (Psalm 84:4). Then God pours His blessing on Jewish travelers who are on their way to His temple (Psalm 84:5–10). Finally, God’s blessings go to people everywhere on earth. People who travel to Zion expect to meet God in His temple. This hope makes their faith strong (Psalm 84:7).

When God’s people leave His temple, they carry home in their hearts the experience of meeting with God. This experience helps them to live holy lives (Psalm 84:11). The people try to live holy lives all the time so that they may be worthy of entering God’s temple again (Psalm 15:1, 2). In Psalm 84:11, we also see that the poet compares the Lord to a “sun.” The Lord’s blessings shine from His temple the same as sunrays to the ends of the earth (Psalm 84:11). God “shines” His mercy on everyone who lives with Him in faith.

Read Revelation 21:3. This verse tells us that God will make His home with us on the new earth. What hope does this verse give you?



The people come to God’s temple to worship God and fellowship with other people.

PRAY FOR JERUSALEM TO HAVE PEACE
(Psalm 122:1–5)

How do God’s people feel when they arrive in Jerusalem? What do they hope to find in Jerusalem? Read Psalm 122:1–5 for the answers.

In Psalm 122, God’s people are happy and excited to arrive at Jerusalem. The trip to Jerusalem was a joyful time. God’s people traveled three times during the year to celebrate God’s love for them for that year and in their past history (Deuteronomy 16:16). Jerusalem was the center of Israel’s life. Also, “the law he [God] gave to Israel” was in Jerusalem (Psalm 122:4, NIRV). Jerusalem was the place “where the people are judged” (Psalm 122:5, NIRV). When people traveled to Jerusalem for the religious celebrations, they could go to court and ask for help.



When God’s people pray for peace in Jerusalem, they ask God to help them live in peace together with other people and with God.

In Psalm 122:6–9, what do God’s people pray for?

The people pray for God to bless the city of Jerusalem with peace. This prayer causes all of God’s people to join together in heart and mind. When the people join together in this way, there is peace among them (Psalm 122:8). There can be peace in Jerusalem only if God’s people were at peace with Him and each other. So, when God’s people pray for peace in Jerusalem, they ask God to help them live in peace together with other people and with God. When Jerusalem is at peace, the people enjoy success in life (Psalm 147:12–14).

Psalm 122 teaches us that we must pray for our church and its members. When we are at peace and agreement with each other, we will be strong as a church. Then we can announce the Good News about God’s peace and His saving mercy to everyone on earth (John 13:34, 35).

When we pray for peace in the church, we keep alive the hope in God’s end-time kingdom of peace. This kingdom is much bigger than the city of Jerusalem. This kingdom includes the whole earth (Isaiah 52:7; Isaiah 66:12, 13; Revelation 21–22).

What can we do now to have peace among us as people?

ZION: THE HOME FOR ALL PEOPLE (PSALM 87:1, 2)

What makes Zion so special? Why is it a wonderful place? Read Psalm 87:1, 2 for the answer.

Psalm 87 is a hymn that celebrates Zion. God loves Zion. God chose Zion to be His special city. God's temple is on Mount Zion (Psalm 2:6; Psalm 15:1). The Lord in Zion is an all-powerful King. Everyone on earth will honor Him there (Psalm 99:2; Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:1). The poet says, "The LORD has built his city on the holy mountain" (Psalm 87:1, NIV). From there, the Lord gives people His blessing of everlasting life (Psalm 133:3). God loves Zion more than any other place in all Israel (Psalm 87:2), including Bethel and Shiloh. In times past, Bethel and Shiloh were special meeting places for God's people. Psalm 87 shows us that we must worship God in the place He chooses. We also must worship Him in the way He commands us.

In Psalm 87:3–7, what wonderful things are said about Zion?

Zion's glory causes other people to want to know more about God. So, God's kingdom includes the whole earth. Do you see that God doesn't reject people who aren't from Israel? God will accept all people who come to Him and accept the Lord as their Savior.

In Bible times, people belonged to the country where they were born (Nehemiah 7:5; Luke 2:1–3). In Psalm 87, the poet tells us three times that the people from other countries outside of Israel are "born" in Zion. What do we learn from this idea? We learn that God makes these people citizens of Zion even when they are born in other countries. God gives them the same blessings that He gives to the children who were born in Zion (Psalm 87:4–6).

Psalm 87 talks about the day when both Jews and non-Jews will be members of one holy kingdom (also read Romans 3:22; Romans 10:12; Galatians 3:28, 29). Compare the picture of Zion in Psalm 87 with Daniel's dream about God's kingdom (Daniel 2:34, 35, 44, 45). In Daniel's dream, God's kingdom becomes a big mountain that fills the earth.

Psalm 87 shows us that God is ready to adopt all people into Zion. How does this idea help us to better understand that we must preach the good news to everyone on earth (Matthew 28:18–20)?



God gives people born in other countries the same blessings that He gives to the children who were born in Zion (Psalm 87:4–6).

SAFETY AND PEACE IN ZION (Psalm 46:1–7)

Read Psalm 46:1–7. What do these verses tell us about the earth?

Psalm 46 shows us the earth in trouble. Natural disasters are happening everywhere (Psalm 46:2, 3). The Bible uses crashing waves or water as a word picture to show us evil people or the problems they cause on this earth (Psalm 93:3, 4; Psalm 124:2–5). In Psalm 46, we read about a time when “nations [people groups] will shake with fear and kingdoms will fall” (Psalm 46:6, ERV).

The people who fear and fall don’t know God. God is not living with them. How do we know? They have no peace. When God is with His people, they have peace (Psalm 46:4, 5). The people on the earth may reject God, but God doesn’t give up on them or reject them. Yes, things may get very bad on this earth. But we can have hope in this life because God is always with us.

The Lord is our place of safety. He gives Zion peace and makes it a safe place. The people on the earth may fight and go to war. But God’s people are safe. Peace is a gift that only God can give. He gives this gift to His trusting children. When we trust in God with all our hearts, God can give us peace and make us feel safe in the middle of a war or a terrible storm (Matthew 8:23–27). Someone may ask you: When will the wars and the storms end? Will God allow people to keep hurting each other until everyone is destroyed? Tell the person who asks these questions to read Psalm 46. Let’s read it now.

How does God feel about all the evil and suffering on this earth? Read Psalm 46:6–11 for the answer.

God is very upset with all the evil on this earth. He gets so angry about it that His anger causes the earth to melt (Psalm 46:6). God’s anger doesn’t destroy the earth. His anger makes the earth new. God will stop the wars and destroy the evil tools that humans make to hurt people (Psalm 46:9). Jesus promises to do these things at His Second Coming. His promise fills Christians with hope.

How do we learn to have peace in life when so many bad things are happening all around us? How do we learn to trust in God during hard times?



The Bible uses crashing waves or water as a word picture to show us evil people or the problems they cause on this earth (Psalm 93:3, 4; Psalm 124:2–5).

THE MOUNTAIN THAT CANNOT BE MOVED (Psalm 125:1, 2)

In Psalm 125:1, what does the poet compare God's people to?

In Psalm 125:1, God's people are compared to Mount Zion. Mount Zion is a symbol for strength. Mount Zion cannot be moved. When God's people trust in Him, they are as strong as Mount Zion. The poet knows that God will protect His people (Psalm 5:12; Psalm 32:7, 10). Mount Zion fills the hearts of God's people with trust. Evil fills the earth around them. But God's people continue to have hope.

What causes God's people to feel discouraged? Read Psalm 125:3–5 for the answer. What lesson can we learn from their experience?

God's children can feel discouraged when they see evil people enjoying much success in this life. Their success may cause some of God's people to leave God and go enjoy a life of sin, too (Psalm 73:2–13; Psalm 94:3). God made us free to choose to do evil (Psalm 125:3, 5). But God will not keep people safe who leave Him to enjoy a life of sin. In the end, God will judge the ones who sin against Him and refuse to accept His forgiveness.

Psalm 125 is an invitation to all God's people to stay strong in their faith in God. They must stay strong as Mount Zion. We may not always understand why evil happens. But we can continue to trust in the Lord.

"Many topics in the Bible are difficult for us to explain or fully understand. These topics include how sin started, Jesus' being born, our being born again, and how humans wake up from the dead. There are many other topics, too, along with these topics that are mysteries. But we must not doubt the Bible because we can't understand God's mysteries. All around us on this earth there are mysteries we can't understand. . . . Should we be surprised to learn that there are spiritual mysteries we also can't understand? The problem is with our own thinking. Our minds are weak and limited. God gives us enough proof in the Bible to show us that the Bible is from Him. We may not always understand everything God does. But we must trust in Him anyway and not doubt the Bible."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, pages 106, 107, adapted.



God will not keep people safe who leave Him to enjoy a life of sin.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: When we sing the songs about Zion, we will have hope. The songs about Zion keep our hope alive in God’s promise. God promises to make the earth new (Revelation 21:1–5). Then He will sit as the King on the new earth forever.

On the new earth, “God’s people will live forever. They will study with joy the many wonders that God has made. God’s people will study about God’s saving love. This love is a mystery. On the new earth, there will be no devil to cause us to forget about God. We will learn new skills. We will learn new knowledge and never get tired of learning. Nothing will be too hard for us to do. We will do many wonderful things. On the new earth, there will always be something more wonderful to do next. There will be new wonders to see and new spiritual truths to learn.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 677, adapted.



**“On the new earth,
there will always be
something more wonderful
to do next.”**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What important rules did we learn this week about God’s people in Zion? We learned that Zion is a real place in Jerusalem. How can the important rules we learned about Zion help us to understand our own work for God?
- ② How can God’s followers live with God in His temple today (John 1:14–18; Hebrew 12:22–24)?
- ③ In Psalm 87, we see a picture of the future. We learn that Zion will become the city of all people groups on this earth (also read Romans 5:10; Ephesians 2:11–16; Colossians 1:19–23). How will this wonderful promise happen?
- ④ What if someone asks you to explain why evil people enjoy so much success in this life while “many” good people suffer? How would you answer this person? Why is it important to understand that we may not always have full answers now for everything bad that happens in this life?

SEKULE'S STORY (PART 7): SKIN AND BONES

Sekule came back to army headquarters after digging coal on a mountain. Then Sekule went to see his commander. He told his commander that he refused to carry a gun in the war in Bosnia.

Sekule explained, "I don't want to shoot people."

The commander said, "You must carry a gun. If you refuse, then you must serve two years in the army instead of one year."

Sekule answered, "I don't care. I won't carry a weapon."

The commander sent Sekule to a special commander. Only soldiers who were in deep trouble were sent to the special commander. The special commander could send soldiers to prison.

Sekule explained his beliefs to the special commander.

The commander said, "Fine. Take a gun anyway. If you must fight, give the gun back. That way you will serve only one year and not two years."

Sekule didn't understand. "What do you mean?"

The commander explained, "Agree to carry a gun during training. The training you will get will be on how to type on a teleprinter. You will not be trained to kill people." Sekule liked this plan. He was sent to work in the army's communications office. Sekule's job was typing on a teleprinter.

Because of the war, Sekule needed to finish his training quickly. But Sekule refused to go to training classes on the Sabbath. The army gave Sekule more trouble about his refusing to work on Sabbath than they did about his refusing to carry a gun.

Food was also a problem. The army food was made with lard or pig grease. Sekule's parents refused to send him any money to buy food because they wanted him to get so hungry that he'd start eating meat.

Sekule prayed, "Lord, please bless me the same as You blessed Daniel. Daniel decided not to eat food that wasn't clean. I want to do the same."

Sekule's commander didn't know what to do with Sekule.

The commander asked, "You won't work on Saturday?"

Sekule said, "No, sir."

The commander asked, "You won't eat meat?"

Sekule answered, "No, sir."

The only thing Sekule could eat was bread and tea. In four months, he lost 50 pounds (23 kilograms). He weighed only 137 pounds (62 kilograms). He was skin and bones.

Sekule Sekulić is a businessman who lives in Montenegro. Read more about his story next week. Thank you for your Sabbath School offerings that help share the Good News about Jesus in Montenegro.

INSIDE
Story

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Sekule ate only bread and tea. So, he was skin and bones.