

Out of Zion

Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth. Ps 50:2

Introduction

Zion is a symbolic title for the elect. This is often ignored today because the word has been hijacked by political agitators in the secular realm and by Messianic Christian heretics in the church world. Both reduce the word to a materialistic framework but the title was always meant to convey something far deeper. This paper will seek to explain this.

Technical details: what was Zion?

Usage

Although 'Zion' was sometimes used as an abbreviation for all of Jerusalem, or parts of the city, since the time of David, the place called 'Zion' was only a small part of the whole.

The meaning

The meaning of the word 'Zion' is unknown, though there have been many conjectures.

Gesenius and others have derived it from a Hebrew root צָהַח, *cahah*, 'to be dry' or 'parched', which is odd since it had a spring. Delitzsch derives it from צִוְוָה, *ciwwah*, 'to set up'. Gesenius also suggests the Arabic equivalent *sihw*, the Arabic *sahwat* meaning 'ridge of a mountain' or 'citadel', which at least conjures up the picture of the original Zion.

The location

Jerusalem originally belonged to the Jebusites and this name goes back 400 years before David. When David went against the city we are told that David took 'the stronghold of Zion' (2 Sam 5:6-9). From that point Zion was called, 'the City of David' (2 Sam 5:7, 9; 1 Chron 11:2, 7).¹ From this it is clear that Zion was the citadel, or the central strongpoint of Jerusalem.

It was the place that people went UP to (1 Kg 8:1; 2, 9:24; 2 Chron 5:2). The expression 'up' could not be used of any other hill than of the lower-lying eastern ridge; to go from the south-western hill (traditional Zion) to the Temple is to go down. Hezekiah constructed the Siloam tunnel from Gihon to the Pool of Siloam. He is described (2 Chron 32:30) as bringing the waters of Gihon down on the west side of the city of David.

The citadel of Zion was on a long ridge or hill running south of the Temple (the south-eastern hill), and Jerusalem was built around it. It was a defensible rocky spur surrounded on three sides by steep valleys. David occupied Zion as his place of residence and the kings of Judah were buried there. There was also a spring of water there called Gihon.

Archaeological remains on these hills show that this was the earliest settlement in pre-Israelite times.

Over time the name Zion was extended to the temple site; in the Prophets the references to Zion appear to have referred to the Temple Hill (Isa 4:5, 8:18; Jer 31:6; Mic 4:7).

¹ 2 Sam 5:7 'David took the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David)'.

In later writings, particularly poetical references, Zion appears as the equivalent of Jerusalem; either in parallelism (Ps 102:21; Amos 1:2; Mic 3:10, 12; Zech 1:14, 17; 8:3; Zeph 3:16) or alone (Jer 3:14; Lam 5:11). It is also used of captive Jews in foreign lands and Jews in desolation (Isa 1:8, 52:2; Jer 4:31; Lam 4:22).

What it was NOT

- It was not Mt. Moriah.² Zion is 105 feet higher.
- It was not the south-western site, traditionally known as Zion.

Notable absences

- Ezekiel, Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, have no mention of Zion, except the incidental reference to David's capture of the Jebusite fort. The multiple references in the prophets and psalms are so numerous that there must be some reason for this.³
- 2 Chron 3:1 alone refers to the temple as being on Mount Moriah.
- It is noticeable that only in 2 Chron 27:3, 33:14; Neh 3:26 f, 11:21 does the name 'Ophel' appear as a designation of a part of the south-eastern hill, which might equally apply to Zion.
- Josephus never uses the name Zion nor does it occur in the New Testament, except in two quotations (Heb 12:22; Rev 14:1).

Wrong uses

There have been multiple hijackings of the word 'Zion' as an idealist term, usually to conjure up thoughts of a utopia or of some sort of chosen people.

Rastafarianism⁴

Zion is frequently used as a term for Rastafarians as the chosen people of God. Note the use of the word in Bob Marley songs.

Zionism

The political elite used this word as a means to advance Jewish political objectives around the turn of the 20th century, particularly the setting up of Israel as a nation state in Palestine. Many orthodox rabbis object to Zionism as being apostasy.

Christian Zionists

This is an oxymoron.⁵ Christians are devoted to Christ not political Israel and are also focused on a spiritual kingdom, not an earthly state. Despite this, certain heretics have

² Moriah 'the chosen of Jehovah'; one of the hills of Jerusalem on which Solomon's temple was built, on the spot that had been the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite (2 Sam 24:24, 25; 2 Chron 3:1). It is usually included in Zion, to the north-east of which it lay, and from which it was separated by the Tyropoean valley. This was 'the land of Moriah' to which Abraham went to offer up his son Isaac (Gen 22:2).

³ I could speculate that: Ezekiel refers to the people under God's judgment in exile, so Zion was not applicable. Ezra and Nehemiah refer to the remnant under probation having returned from exile. Chronicles was written by Ezra after the exile to apply religious lessons from Israel's history to exhort the returned exiles. During all these periods Jerusalem and the temple were either in ruins or were under construction again. None of these books suit the typology of Zion.

⁴ Rastafarianism is a religious movement of Jamaican origin holding that blacks are the chosen people. Rastafarians believe that Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia was the Messiah, and that black people will eventually return to their African homeland. Rastafarians have distinctive codes of behaviour and dress, including the wearing of dreadlocks, the smoking of cannabis, and the rejection of Western medicine, and they follow a diet that excludes pork, shellfish, and milk.

⁵ A figure of speech in which contradictory terms appear in conjunction.

used this term to cover supposed Christians that are centred upon Jews, Jewish things and Judaism.

Jews

Many secular people use the term to describe Jews in general. This is technically incorrect since the NT changes the meaning, or rather advances the meaning, to refer to Christians and not Jews (Heb 12:22; 1 Pt 2:6; Rev 14:1).

Non-Conformist chapels

It was a Victorian tradition to name dissenting chapels by OT terms, such as 'Bethel' ('House of God') or 'Rehoboth' (a well dug by Isaac) but 'Zion' was also very popular. Now I am sure that the purpose was to identify the people contained in the buildings as being the blessed elect, but the actual buildings carried the name, which is wrong. Bricks and mortar cannot be blessed and cannot represent God in any way. In any case, we never see the apostles naming churches in any form at all.

Zion is symbolic for the elect

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels. **Heb 12:22**

OT Zion is a type of the elect

In the OT Jerusalem is a type of the visible church containing all sorts of people, faithful elect and wicked professing folk. 'Zion' is a much smaller area, which is symbolic of the smaller number of elect people within the visible church.

In any church situation, no matter how orthodox, there are always going to be folk who are not truly converted. In certain types of modern churches the number of false Christians within form a majority; so great is the modern apostasy.

Apart from the logic of the symbolism, the Biblical references to Zion fully teach that it is the centre of God's blessing and power in the world.

- It is the royal dwelling of the Messiah (Ps 2:6).
- It is the centre of salvation (Ps 14:7, 53:6; Isa 46:13).
- It is the only place of salvation (Isa 46:13).
- It is where God shines out from (Ps 50:2).
- It is where the name of the Lord is declared (Ps 102:21).
- It is the place of the sanctuary of God (Ps 20:2).
- It is the place of God's help (Ps 20:2).
- It is the centre of God's praise (Ps 65:1).
- It is the place of God's strength (Ps 110:2).
- It is the place of God's rule (Ps 110:2).
- It is the place of God's blessing (Ps 128:5).
- It is where the Lord dwells (Ps 9:11, 74:2, 76:2, 135:21; Isa 12:6).
- It is where God's law emanates from (Isa 2:3; Mic 4:2).
- It is where those who are pleasing to God dwell (Lam 2:4).
- It is the place that God comforts (Zech 1:17).
- It is the only place that God loves (Ps 76:68, 87:2).

- It is where people appear before God (Ps 84:7).
- It is the place of the Messiah (Rm 11:26).
- It abides forever (Ps 125:1).

There is no place on earth today where these blessings reside other than in the gathered elect, the church. The church is the centre of God's blessings and testimony on earth (Matt 16:18; Eph 1:22-23, 3:21); it is where God dwells (1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21-22; 1 Tim 3:15; 1 Pt 2:5; Heb 12:22).

The church is the elect present in any given place. The local church is the gathering of the elect in a certain area. The visible church is the gathering of all the elect alive on earth at any given time. The invisible church is the total number of elect in God's decree, including those not yet born and those who have died. The church is the elect.

The heavenly elect

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred *and* forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. ... They sang as it were a new song before the throne ... the hundred *and* forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. ... These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from *among* men, *being* firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God. **Rev 14:1-5**

This categorically proves that the 144,000 are not some elitist group of overcomers but are the elect; all the elect; all the redeemed. 144,000 is symbolic for a perfect and complete covenantal group (12 is the number of covenant, 10 is the number of divine completion, hence 12 x 12 x 10 x 10 x 10. The power of two [12 x 12] is symbolic of testimony; the power of three [10 x 10 x 10] is symbolic of divine action).

The elect are standing on Mt Zion; thus Zion is the place of the elect. The final culmination of all that Zion means is the elect united with Christ, firstfruits to God. Zion, the fulness of the elect, is before the throne of God.

Use of the phrase, 'Out of Zion', in Scripture

For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and those who escape from Mount Zion. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. **2 Kg 19:31**

Oh, that the salvation of Israel *would come* out of Zion! When the LORD brings back the captivity of His people, let Jacob rejoice *and* Israel be glad. **Ps 14:7**

May He send you help from the sanctuary, and strengthen you out of Zion. **Ps 20:2**

Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth. **Ps 50:2**

Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When God brings back the captivity of His people, Let Jacob rejoice *and* Israel be glad. **Ps 53:6**

The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies! **Ps 110:2**

The LORD bless you out of Zion, and may you see the good of Jerusalem all the days of your life. **Ps 128:5**

Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, who dwells in Jerusalem! Praise the LORD! **Ps 135:21**

Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths". For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. **Isa 2:3**

Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion, for great *is* the Holy One of Israel in your midst! **Isa 12:6**

For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and those who escape from Mount Zion. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. **Isa 37:32**

For a voice of wailing is heard from Zion: 'How we are plundered! We are greatly ashamed, Because we have forsaken the land, Because we have been cast out of our dwellings'. **Jer 9:19**

Standing like an enemy, He has bent His bow; with His right hand, like an adversary, He has slain all *who were* pleasing to His eye; on the tent of the daughter of Zion, He has poured out His fury like fire. **Lam 2:4**

The LORD has purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion. He has stretched out a line; He has not withdrawn His hand from destroying; therefore He has caused the rampart and wall to lament; they languished together. **Lam 2:8**

Their heart cried out to the Lord, 'O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night; give yourself no relief; give your eyes no rest'. **Lam 2:18**

Many nations shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths'. For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. **Mic 4:2**

Again proclaim, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "My cities shall again spread out through prosperity; The LORD will again comfort Zion, and will again choose Jerusalem"'. **Zech 1:17**

And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob'. **Rm 11:26**

Application

Manifestation of God

The elect are the source of God's covenantal activity upon the earth at any given time. God's power and blessing come out of the church. This fact is far too often ignored by God's people. The church needs to understand how important it is in God's plan and how vital it is to serve God fully.

The temptations of the enemy are not just to get us to commit sin. He doesn't care if we sin or not. What worries him is the elect people of God understanding who they are and what they are called to in the service of God. Therefore, his main tactic is to get Christians to ignore, or fail to understand, what they represent as Zion.

Zion is the citadel. Zion is the stronghold of God. Zion is the central point of God's dwelling place. Zion is where God shines forth. Zion IS YOU!

The place of glory

When God shines forth from Zion, today, he is shining from the church; he is shining from you when you serve him by faith.

For the LORD shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory. **Ps 102:16**

Where is the Lord today? He is in the local churches. He is building up his true people, even they are in small groups of two or three (Matt 18:20), and training them to glorify him.

Reigning as kings

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light. **1 Pt 2:9**

And has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. **Rev 1:6**

Zion was also the City of David; it was the place from where the king reigned. It was a place of royal splendour and monarchical authority. God expects you to reign in life (Rm 5:17) like David reigned in Jerusalem. He expects you to take authority and to work out his decree; most especially in the proclamation of the Gospel which is the authority of the good news of King Jesus. You are a royal ambassador of the divine proclamation of Good News.

This royal authority is nothing like the vaunted speculations of Charismatic teachers; it has nothing to do with materialism. The exercise of spiritual authority by Christians is a heavenly matter; it is where heaven is brought down to earth by Christians being in Christ and walking according to the Lord's will.

When you do good to others you are manifesting a divine testimony and asserting the reign of Jesus. When you witness to Christ and preach the Gospel you are reigning with Christ. When you pray against evil; when you worship God in private; when you give to the poor in God's name; when you pacify the effects of evil; when you walk in humility; when you live righteously, and so many other examples; you are manifesting the authority of the King of Kings.

The citadel

Men of war set in array against you, O daughter of Zion. **Jer 6:23**

Like Zion, the church is also the place of warfare. It is the last defence of man on earth against the onslaught of the enemy. You cannot be a Christian enjoying the blessings of salvation and not be in the fight. The fight is centred in you.

The fight is chiefly determined by what you think. The warfare is mainly about deception and trying to get you off the place of power and authority so that you become ineffective.

You cannot exercise your energy as the testimony of God, the reflection of God on earth, and not be caught up in spiritual battles.

Just as no one could capture Jerusalem unless they first defeated the citadel of Zion, so the devil throws all his efforts into deceiving the church today so that it loses its testimony and ceases to be a threat. It is what you think and believe that determines the outcome of this battle.

The Christian life is a constant renewing of the mind (Rm 12:1-2) to get rid of all deception and to soak up truth; the truth as it is in Jesus. To do God's will you must first know it; without a renewed mind you cannot know God's will and thus will be ineffective.

Christian spiritual warfare has nothing to do with fighting demons in people, in spiritual mapping, in identifying the demons in a given town, in strategic level spiritual warfare using apostles and prophets and all the other nonsensical Charismatic incantations. It is about truth; it is about doctrine; it is about obedience to God's will. It is about walking in righteousness. It is about establishing God's law; the law of Christ. It is about testimony.

Above all else, it is about the pre-eminence of Christ and establishing believers in the authority of Christ and doing all to glorify Christ.

Conclusion

We need to understand what Zion means when we read it in the Bible and we must not be distracted by the various false meanings that the world and heretics give to it. Zion means the elect of God, the place where God dwells.

After understanding that, we need to learn how to apply to ourselves all that Zion means – such as being the source of God's power, strength, word, and glory. This is the church. Therefore we must learn to do our job as residents of Zion.

For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place. **Ps 132:13**

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