

Psalms

Longing for God in Zion

Lesson #11 for March 16, 2024

Scriptures: Psalm 46; 84; 87; 122; 125; Revelation 21:3; Galatians 3:28-29; Matthew 28:18-20.

1. For what are we “longing”? Is it for God? Is it for Zion? To get an idea of what the Bible teaches about Zion, we will study Psalms 46, 84, 87, 122, and 125.

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] The songs of Zion are joyous hymns that magnify the beauty of Zion and the sovereignty of the Lord, who reigns from His holy mountain. These psalms often praise the merits of the Lord’s house and express a love for the sanctuary that can be found in other psalms, as well. Many of these psalms were composed by the sons of Korah, who had firsthand experience of the blessedness of the Lord’s house as the temple musicians (*1 Chron. 6:31–38*) and keepers of the temple gates (*1 Chron. 9:19*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, March 9.^{‡§}

2. First Chronicles 6:31-38 and 1 Chronicles 9:19 tell us that the descendants of Korah, whose ancestor was swallowed up by the ground with the families of Dathan and Abiram for the rebellion during the wilderness wanderings, became keepers and singers for the temple.

Numbers 26:9-11: (⁹These are the Dathan and Abiram who were chosen by the community. They defied Moses and Aaron and joined the followers of Korah when they rebelled against the LORD. ¹⁰The ground opened and swallowed them, and they died with Korah and his followers when fire destroyed 250 men; they became a warning to the people. ¹¹**But the sons of Korah were not killed.**)—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Numbers 26:9-11). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].[†] [The family of Korah did not rebel.][‡]

[BSG:] What makes Zion the source of hope and joy? Zion represented God’s living presence among His people. As the people of Israel are God’s chosen people (*Deut. 7:6*), so Zion is God’s chosen mountain (*Ps. 78:68, Ps. 87:2*). God reigns from Zion (*Ps. 99:1, 2*) and founded His temple on Zion, as well (*Ps. 87:1*). Thus, Zion is a place of divine blessings and refuge. **Zion is often referred to in parallel, or even interchangeably with, Jerusalem and the sanctuary, the center of God’s work of salvation for the ancient world.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, March 9.^{†§} [Should we consider “Zion” as a special place in our day?][‡]

[BSG:] We shall focus on the trope [topic of], “Zion,” as expressed in the book of Psalms (see *Psalm 46, Psalm 84, Psalm 87, Psalm 122, and Psalm 125*). Psalms is full of hope and the expectation of the righteous to visit and dwell securely in God’s sanctuary, a refuge of safety and peace.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 145.^{‡§}

Deuteronomy 7:6: “Do this because you belong to the LORD your God. **From all the peoples on earth he chose you to be his own special people.**”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†} [Compare Exodus 19:5-8 and 1 Peter 2:9-10.][‡]

Psalm 78:68: Instead he chose the tribe of Judah

and Mount Zion, which he dearly loves.—*Good News Bible*.*

3. For a nation that considered itself as a theocracy, directly ruled by God, the presence of that God was a very important aspect of their existence. Repeatedly in the Psalms, God told them that Zion was His place of residence. We, of course, recognize that God's residence is not fixed to one spot; but, He chose *Zion* to represent His presence among them and us. God's presence was connected to the presence of the ark of the covenant or covenant box, which was built at Sinai after God appeared on the mountain. It was then transferred to Shiloh and then, finally, to Jerusalem to the place called Zion.
4. Several of the people who wrote Psalms had active conversations with God. Especially think of the stories of Moses and David. Did that help them to understand Him?
5. How did the psalmists regard the temple of God?

Psalm 84:1-4: ¹ How I love your Temple, LORD Almighty!

² How I want to be there!

I long to be in the LORD's Temple.

With my whole being I sing for joy
to the living God.

³ Even the sparrows have built a nest,
and the swallows have their own home;
they keep their young near your altars....

⁴ How happy are those who live in your Temple,
always singing praise to you.—*Good News Bible*.*

[BSG:] The psalmist “longs” and “faints” to make the sanctuary his permanent abode so that he can be near God forever (*Ps. 84:1, 2*). God's living presence (*Ps. 84:2*) makes the sanctuary a unique place. In the sanctuary, worshipers can “behold the beauty of the LORD” (*Ps. 27:4, NKJV; also, see Ps. 63:2*) and be “satisfied with the goodness of [His] house” (*Ps. 65:4, NKJV*). In Psalm 84, unparalleled happiness is achieved in relationship with God, which consists of praising Him (*Ps. 84:4*), finding strength in Him (*Ps. 84:5*), and trusting Him (*Ps. 84:12*). The sanctuary is the place where such a relationship is nourished through worship and fellowship with fellow believers. The living presence of God in the sanctuary gives the worshipers a glimpse of God's glorious kingdom and a taste of eternal life.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, March 10.†Ω§

6. Why do you suppose the psalmists felt such inspiration and happiness when they thought about God's dwelling place? Note, especially:

Psalm 84:10: One day spent in your Temple

is better than a thousand anywhere else.—*Good News Bible*.*

7. One reason why the psalmists felt such a longing for God's temple is that they believed that God's blessings radiated out from the sanctuary location; thus, the closer one lived to Mount Zion, the closer s/he was to God's blessings. This was a continuation of the fact that God dwelt in the sanctuary in the midst of the children of Israel during the wilderness wanderings.
8. David especially realized that it was God who went with him to battle against his enemies. But, not only David but also many of the other psalmists were continually praying for peace

for Jerusalem. And they realized that apart from God's presence and God's guidance and protection, peace would not be possible.

9. If it was a blessed thing to live close to God's presence at Mount Zion, it would also be a blessing to travel to Jerusalem for one of the three annual celebrations that the children of Israel were required to attend.

Psalm 122:1-5: ¹ I was glad when they said to me,

“Let us go to the LORD's house.”

² And now we are here,

standing inside the gates of Jerusalem!

³ Jerusalem is a city restored
in beautiful order and harmony.

⁴ This is where the tribes come,
the tribes of Israel,
to give thanks to the LORD
according to his command.

⁵ Here the kings of Israel

sat to judge their people.—*Good News Bible*.*

[BSG:] Psalm 122 expresses the pilgrims' excitement upon their arrival at Jerusalem. The pilgrimages to Jerusalem were joyful occasions when God's people joined together three times during the year to commemorate God's goodness toward them in the past and present (*Deut. 16:16*). Jerusalem was the center of the nation's life because it contained “the Testimony of Israel” (*Ps. 122:4, NKJV*) and the thrones for judgment (*Ps. 122:5*). “The Testimony of Israel” refers to the sanctuary that was at times called “the tabernacle of the Testimony” (*Num. 1:50, NKJV*) and contained the “ark of the Testimony” (*Exod. 25:22, NKJV*). The thrones set for judgment depict the judicial system in Jerusalem (*2 Sam. 8:15*). Pilgrimage was thus the time when one could seek and obtain justice. Faithfulness to God and administering justice to people were never to be separated.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, March 11.†§

10. Traveling to Jerusalem for one of the feast celebrations was a great vacation for the children of Israel. It was a time of celebration and rejoicing. And they recognized that praying for peace in Jerusalem would mean peace for all of them.
11. How should these ideas be expressed and carried out by Seventh-day Adventist Christians in 2024?
12. What made Jerusalem such a special place?

Psalm 87:1-2: The LORD built his city on the sacred hill;

² more than any other place in Israel

he loves the city of Jerusalem.—*Good News Bible*.*

[BSG:] **Psalm 87 is a hymn celebrating Zion as God's specially chosen and beloved city.** The foundation of God's temple is on Mount Zion (*Ps. 2:6, Ps. 15:1*). At the end of time, Zion will rise above all mountains, signifying the Lord's sovereign supremacy over the whole world (*Ps. 99:2, Isa. 2:2, Mic. 4:1*). Psalm 87 refers to Zion as “mountains” to highlight its majesty (*Ps. 133:3*). God

loves the gates of Zion “more than all the dwellings of Jacob” (*Ps. 87:2, NKJV*), expressing the superiority of Zion over all other places in Israel that were special gathering places of God’s people in the past, such as Shiloh and Bethel. Thus, **the psalm affirms that true worship of God is in His chosen place and in His prescribed way.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, March 12.^{†‡§}

Isaiah 2:2: In days to come
the mountain where the Temple stands
will be the highest one of all,
towering above all the hills.

Many nations will come streaming to it.—*Good News Bible.**

13. The psalmist and the prophet Isaiah both recognized that one day, Jerusalem will be the center of the universe and the place where God dwells forever.

Psalm 87:3-5: ³ Listen, city of God,
to the wonderful things he says about you:
⁴ **“I will include Egypt and Babylonia
when I list the nations that obey me;
I will number among the inhabitants of Jerusalem
the people of Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia.”**

⁵ Of Zion it will be said
that all nations belong there
and that the Almighty will make her strong.—*Good News Bible.*†*

14. It is hard to know for sure how the children of Israel understood this passage in the days when they were surrounded by their enemies. But, this passage suggests that from Egypt to Mesopotamia (Iraq today), the people would be going to Jerusalem to worship God.

[BSG:] Psalm 87 points to salvation of both the Jews and the Gentiles and their being united in one church through Christ’s redeeming ministry (*Rom. 3:22; Rom. 10:12; Gal. 3:28, 29; Col. 3:11*). The psalm’s portrayal of the prosperity of Zion is **reminiscent of Daniel’s vision of God’s kingdom becoming an enormous mountain that fills the whole earth** (*Dan. 2:34, 35, 44, 45*) and of **Jesus’ parable about God’s kingdom growing into a huge tree that hosts the birds of the air** (*Matt. 13:32*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, March 12.^{†‡§}

Galatians 3:28-29: ²⁸ So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free people, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus. ²⁹If you belong to Christ, then you are the descendants of Abraham and will receive what God has promised.—*Good News Bible.**

Colossians 3:11: As a result, there is no longer any distinction between Gentiles and Jews, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarians, savages, slaves, and free, but Christ is all, Christ is in all.—*Good News Bible.** [Do you agree with Paul?][†]

15. This appeal that Zion was supposed to be the future headquarters for all of the ancient Near East suggests a similarity to Christ’s commission to the disciples to spread the gospel to the whole world.

Matthew 28:18-20: ¹⁸ Jesus drew near and said to them, “I have been given all

authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹**Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples:** baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

16. **Read Psalm 46:1-7.**

[BSG:] This psalm [Psalm 46] gives a vivid description of the world in turmoil, and it is portrayed with the images of natural disasters of unprecedented intensity (*Ps. 46:2, 3*). **The image of disturbed waters often depicts the rebellious nations and various problems that the wicked cause in the world** (*Ps. 93:3, 4; Ps. 124:2–5*). Likewise, in Psalm 46 the images of natural calamities depict the world controlled by nations waging wars (*Ps. 46:6*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, March 12.^{†‡§}

17. The contrast between what is supposed to happen to our world and the security of Zion, the dwelling place of God, suggests that no matter how bad things might seem to be on this earth, God will still dwell with His faithful people and preserve them.

18. While God recognizes that terrible times are coming at the end of this world’s history, how will He respond?

Psalm 46:8-11: ⁸ Come and see what the LORD has done.

See what amazing things he has done on earth.

⁹ He stops wars all over the world;
he breaks bows, destroys spears,
and sets shields on fire.

¹⁰ “Stop fighting,” he says, “and know that I am God,
supreme among the nations,
supreme over the world.”

¹¹ The LORD Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

[BSG:] God responds with such a force of displeasure that His word, which had created the earth, now **causes the earth to melt** (*Ps. 46:6*). Yet, **the melting does not end in destruction but renewal**. Notice that God extends His peace from Zion to the ends of the earth. God will make wars cease and extinguish the tools of destruction, which the wicked nations used to bring oppression into the world (*Ps. 46:9*). **This is the great hope that Christians have, which will occur at the second coming of Jesus.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, March 12.^{†‡§}

19. Can we learn to have peace and to trust God in a world that, indeed, has so much turmoil, even war? And how does this contrast with God’s promise through the psalmists about Jerusalem? See Psalm 46:2.

Psalm 125:1-2: ¹ Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion,
which can never be shaken, never be moved.

² As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
so the LORD surrounds his people
now and for ever [*sic-Br*].—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

20. In the final events of this earth’s history, mountains will be thrown into the sea and the wicked

with them. But, God's dwelling place in Zion will be steadfast and strong. Why wouldn't everyone want to be connected to that strength supplied by God? So, where would you want to be? **Read Psalm 32:7,10.**

21. God realizes that so long as we are here on this world, there will be times when it seems like the wicked are succeeding and the righteous are in trouble. But, the psalmists assure us that that will not always be the case. We may look with envy to the wicked as they succeed; but, we need to remember that, ultimately, it is God's faithful people who will go to heaven.

22. **Read Psalm 73:2-13.** Compare Psalm 94:3; 125:3,5.

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] The entrance of sin into the world, the incarnation of Christ, regeneration, the resurrection, and many other subjects presented in the Bible, are mysteries too deep for the human mind to explain, or even fully to comprehend. But we have no reason to doubt God's word because we cannot understand the mysteries of His providence.... Everywhere are wonders beyond our ken [range of knowledge]. Should we then be surprised to find that in the spiritual world also there are mysteries that we cannot fathom? The difficulty lies solely in the weakness and narrowness of the human mind. God has given us in the Scriptures sufficient evidence of their divine character, and we are not to doubt His word because we cannot understand all the mysteries of His providence.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ** 106.2-107.0.‡ [We will spend the rest of eternity studying God's plan.]‡

23. **Isaiah 40** and **Psalm 51:1-16** are passages of great comfort to God's faithful people. We notice that distant lands wait for God to come their way with the hope for God's salvation.

[BSG:] The songs of Zion make an absolute commitment to staying mindful of Zion and the living hope in God's sovereign reign that it represents. While many blessings of God's sanctuary are experienced in this life, the hope in the fullness of life and joy in Zion is still in the future. Many of God's children long for the heavenly Zion with tears (*Ps. 137:1*). **To remember Zion implies not merely an occasional thought but also a deliberate mindfulness and decision to live in accordance with that living memory** (*Exod. 13:3, Exod. 20:8*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, March 15.†‡§

24. Singing songs of praise and adoration of God should, as it did for the Jews, remind us that the final solution will be the second coming of Jesus.

Revelation 21:1-5: ¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth disappeared, and the sea vanished. ²And I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared and ready, like a bride dressed to meet her husband. ³I heard a loud voice speaking from the throne: "Now God's home is with human beings! He will live with them, and they shall be his people. God Himself will be with them, and he will be their God. ⁴He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain. The old things have disappeared."

⁵ Then the one who sits on the throne said, "And now I make all things new!" He also said to me, "Write this, because these words are true and can be trusted."—*Good News Bible*.*

[EGW:] There, immortal minds will contemplate with never-failing delight the

wonders of creative power, the mysteries of redeeming love. There is no cruel, deceiving foe to tempt to forgetfulness of God. Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. **There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body.**—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 677.2.†

25. **All of these promises should convince us never to think of this earth as a permanent home. We await a better land!**

26. Paul, the probable author of Hebrews, suggested that even today, we can be a part of Zion.

Hebrews 12:22-24: ²² Instead, you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, with its thousands of angels. ²³You have come to the joyful gathering of God's firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, who is the judge of all people, and to the spirits of good people made perfect. ²⁴You have come to Jesus, who arranged the new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that promises much better things than does the blood of Abel.—*Good News Bible*.*

27. It is essential that we recognize that God's plan is to include people from every "race, tribe, language, and nation." (Revelation 14:6, *GNB**)

28. As Seventh-day Adventists who have the writings of Ellen White in addition to what the Bible teaches us, we should recognize that troublous times are still ahead of us. When the time of trouble comes, Satan will do everything that he can to get God's people to join his side in the great controversy. If he cannot get them to join his side, he will try to destroy them. (See Revelation 13:15-18.)

29. It is important to recognize that **the idea of Zion includes geography, politics, and theology**. Psalms 46, 84, 87, 122, and 125 talk about Zion.

[BSG:] The concept of "Zion" in the Scriptures is itself a mix of geography, politics, and theology. We shall consider these different aspects in order to grasp Zion's spiritual meaning for God's people in the past as well as for ourselves, who are in urgent need today of the hope that Zion offers.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 145.‡

30. Mount Moriah is located near Mount Zion and should be included in all that we say about the dwelling place of God. It was there that Abraham was prepared to offer Isaac, his only son. (Genesis 22) It was there that the plague was stopped in the days of David. (2 Samuel 24:16)

[BSG:] The location of Mount Zion in Jerusalem in relation to Mount Moriah has important theological significance. David conquered Mount Zion (*2 Samuel* 5:6, 7; *1 Chron.* 11:5–7), occupying a relatively small area of the hill that came to be called the City of David. To the north, about 600 meters away, stood Mount Moriah, where Isaac had been "offered" in sacrifice (*Gen.* 22:1–12). Here also the angel of the Lord stood by the threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite, and was halted in the midst of destroying Israel in consequence of the sin of David, who attempted to carry out a census (*2 Sam.* 24:16) contrary to God's will....

Solomon's temple and its outbuildings also were built on this same spot (2

Chron. 3:1). The city of Jerusalem extended to the north and embraced the holy mountain, and eventually the name “Zion” came to include the Temple Mount. As we have seen in the Psalms, “Zion” often refers to the city of Jerusalem as a whole (*Ps. 48:1–3; Ps. 69:35; Ps. 74:2; Ps. 87:2–5; Ps. 125:1, 2*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 145.†§

Exodus 25:8-9: ⁸ “**The people must make a sacred tent for me, so that I may live among them.** ⁹Make it and all its furnishings according to the plan that I will show you.”—*Good News Bible*.*† [This took place at the foot of Mount Sinai.]‡

31. When the tent was finished, God’s presence filled it with “dazzling light.”

Exodus 40:34-38: ³⁴ Then the cloud covered the Tent and the **dazzling light of the LORD’s presence** filled it. ³⁵Because of this, Moses could not go into the Tent. ³⁶The Israelites moved their camp to another place only when the cloud lifted from the Tent. ³⁷As long as the cloud stayed there, they did not move their camp. ³⁸**During all their wanderings they could see the cloud of the LORD’s presence over the Tent during the day and a fire burning above it during the night.**—*Good News Bible*.*† [Would you have dared to enter that tent?]‡

32. Much later, when Solomon’s Temple was completed and the celebrations were ongoing:

2 Chronicles 7:1-3: ¹ When King Solomon finished his prayer [for the dedication of the temple], fire came down from heaven and burnt up the sacrifices that had been offered, and **the dazzling light of the LORD’s presence filled the Temple.** ²Because the Temple was full of the dazzling light, the priests could not enter it. ³When the people of Israel saw the fire fall from heaven and the light fill the Temple, they fell face downwards on the pavement, worshipping God and praising him for his goodness and his eternal love.—*Good News Bible*.*††

[BSG:] Keep in mind that Jehovah is never confined to a specific mountain. Nor is He limited to a particular earthly location in the Old Testament because no location is, in and of itself, holy. Although He is frequently linked to Sinai and Zion, God reveals Himself in connection with a wide variety of mountains. He manifests His presence wherever He desires. Even Zion itself merits no special distinction as the earthly residence of the Lord. Rather, Zion is simply the footstool of a majesty that not even the heavens can contain (*1 Kings 8:27, 2 Chron. 6:18*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 146.†§

1 Kings 8:27: “But can you, O God, really live on earth? Not even all heaven is large enough to hold you, so how can this Temple that I have built be large enough?”—*Good News Bible*.* [What did the visiting idol worshipers think?]‡

33. Israel should never have forgotten that God Himself came down to bless Mount Moriah and Mount Zion. When His presence filled the temple, not even the priests could enter.

34. But, Zion will not cease to exist in our future.

[BSG:] How is Zion portrayed in the Scriptures? **Mount Zion, which is a symbol of God’s people** (*Isa. 29:8*), **also is the place from which Jehovah fights against enemy nations** (*Isa. 31:4*) who war against Israel. A remnant of Israel will go forth from Zion and be preserved (*2 Kings 19:31*), and to Zion

they will return Israel (*Isa. 51:11*). Salvation is found in Zion (*Isa. 37:32, Joel 2:32*). This mount also relates to cosmic signs (*Isa. 24:23*). **Ultimately, the Lord will reign over His people in Mount Zion** (*Mic. 4:7*) in the earth made new.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 146.†§

Isaiah 29:8: All the nations that assemble to attack Jerusalem will be like a starving person who dreams he is eating and wakes up hungry, or like someone dying of thirst who dreams he is drinking and wakes with a dry throat.—*Good News Bible*.*

35. Another location closely associated with Mount Zion and Mount Moriah is the valley of Jehoshaphat. Notice what Joel said about that location as discussed in the Bible study guide.

[BSG:] Joel 3:1–17 speaks of the gathering of the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat, where God will contend with them in judgment and plead for the deliverance of His people. The valley of Jehoshaphat is the symbolic name given to the place of ultimate judgment. Geographically, it was a deep ravine that separated Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, through which the Kidron flowed. Because of its location, the valley of Jehoshaphat played a significant role in Israel's religious traditions and rituals (*1 Kings 1:9, 33*), such as in the religious reforms of Asa (*1 Kings 15:13, 2 Chron. 15:16*), in the reigns of Jehoshaphat (*2 Kings 23:4, 6, 12*) and Hezekiah (*2 Chron. 29:16, 2 Chron. 30:14*), and in the future purification of Jerusalem (*Jer. 31:40*). It was there that Solomon was anointed as monarch. Therefore, there is a close relationship between the “holy mount,” or Zion, with the judgment and coronation of the king.

At the climax of the confrontation between the Lord and the nations, “the LORD also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem” (*Joel 3:16, NKJV*), and God's people will know that “I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain” (*Joel 3:17, NKJV*).

The righteous (*Ps. 15:2–5*) are depicted as those who will dwell on the holy mountain of God (*Ps. 15:1*), from whence God answers prayers (*Ps. 3:4*). In contrast, those who forsake Jehovah forget His holy mountain (*Isa. 65:11*). The Lord chose to make the earthly Zion His center of action, not because it was inherently unique or valuable but because He willed it so.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 146-147.†§

36. In the earth made new, God's home will be on Mount Zion.

Micah 4:1-4: ¹ In days to come
the mountain where the Temple stands
will be the highest one of all,
towering above all the hills.
Many nations will come streaming to it,
² and their people will say,
“Let us go up the hill of the LORD,
to the Temple of Israel's God.
He will teach us what he wants us to do;
we will walk in the paths he has chosen.

For the LORD's teaching comes from Jerusalem;
from Zion he speaks to his people."

³ He will settle disputes
among the nations, among the great powers near and far.
They will hammer their swords into ploughs
and their spears into pruning knives.
Nations will never again go to war,
never prepare for battle again.

⁴ Everyone will live in peace
among his own vineyards and fig trees,
and no one will make him afraid.

The LORD Almighty has promised this.—*Good News Bible*.*

37. Read Psalm 99.

[BSG:] The psalm [Psalm 99] concludes with a call for the people to exalt the Lord and worship Him "at his holy mountain" (*Ps. 99:9, ESV*) because of the forgiveness that God manifested toward them there (*verse 8*). As we see from our study, **the holiness that Mount Sinai once held as the abode of God was transferred to Zion after the temple was built there.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 148.†‡§

[BSG:] Our Creator God is a most excellent Teacher. He uses physical places and material things to express spiritual concepts, as in the case of the literal Mount Zion and its surrounding hills. Through this object lesson, Israelites could better understand God's redemption plan.

Zion is a symbol of God's presence, the place where the Lord is interceding for, and protecting, His people. As the Israelites in the past, we should keep in our hearts a burning desire to be in the presence of the Almighty.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 148.†‡

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