

Day 347 - WEDNESDAY: January 24th

Psalms 122:1-9 NKJV

A Song of Ascents. Of David. I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the LORD." Our feet have been standing Within your gates, O Jerusalem! Jerusalem is built As a city that is compact together, Where the tribes go up, The tribes of the LORD, To the Testimony of Israel, To give thanks to the name of the LORD. For thrones are set there for judgment, The thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, Prosperity within your palaces." For the sake of my brethren and companions, I will now say, "Peace be within you." Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek your good.

Psalms 124:1-8 NKJV

A Song of Ascents. Of David. "If it had not been the LORD who was on our side," Let Israel now say— "If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, When men rose up against us, Then they would have swallowed us alive, When their wrath was kindled against us; Then the waters would have overwhelmed us, The stream would have gone over our soul; Then the swollen waters Would have gone over our soul." Blessed be the LORD, Who has not given us as prey to their teeth. Our soul has escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers; The snare is broken, and we have escaped. Our help is in the name of the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.

Psalms 131:1-3 NKJV

A Song of Ascents. Of David. LORD, my heart is not haughty, Nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, Nor with things too profound for me. Surely I have calmed and quieted

my soul, Like a weaned child with his mother; Like a weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, hope in the LORD From this time forth and forever.

Daily Deep Dive:

Psalm 122:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 122, the third song of ascents in the first set of three, centers on blessing and peace in Zion. "This poem describes the joy of the pilgrim on arriving at Jerusalem to worship God" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on Psalm 122). It is the first of four psalms of David among the songs of ascents.

David was "glad"--the Hebrew connotes laughter and cheerful delight--when companions encouraged him to accompany them into "the house of the Lord" at Jerusalem (verses 1-2). As David lived prior to his son Solomon's construction of the temple, this would immediately refer to the tabernacle that David erected in Jerusalem for the Ark of the Covenant, a place of public worship (2 Samuel 6:17-18). Yet David may have intended this psalm to be used in later temple worship. In a greater sense, it prefigures people coming into the spiritual temple of God--His Church--and ultimately God's Kingdom.

Because he lived in Jerusalem, David himself did not have to go far to worship in God's house. But he does mention others coming from afar--stating that the tribes of God (all His people) "go up" (ascend in their journey) to Jerusalem to give Him thanks (verse 4). Packed with throngs of pilgrims, the city is "compact together" (verse 3)--with all the tribes pressed together and blended. They come to the "Testimony of Israel" (verse 4). This likely referred to the tablets of the Testimony bearing the Ten Commandments within the Ark of the Covenant (compare Exodus 31:18; Exodus

25:21-22; Exodus 16:34). It also may entail coming to God's festivals to learn His laws generally. Indeed, the entire law was to be read every seventh Feast of Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 31:9-13).

Besides God's law being housed and taught in Jerusalem, it was also administratively applied here in civil judgment--providing the blessing of the rule of law and resultant civil order to God's nation (Psalm 122:5). The leading judges in the land were Israel's kings. When David speaks of "thrones of the house of David" in the plural, he may be referring to the seats of himself and Solomon after he had Solomon crowned king prior to his own death. There may also be a prophetic foreshadowing here of the future thrones of judgment in God's Kingdom, when Jesus Christ sits on the throne of David and His faithful followers reign with Him (see Luke 1:31-33; Revelation 3:21; 20:4, Matthew 19:28).

David calls on worshippers to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6). Actually, the name Jerusalem *means* "Possession of Peace" or "Foundation of Peace." And there is wordplay centered on this fact in the psalm. For a feel of the poetic construction, notice the alliteration (repeated consonant sounds) in the following list of Hebrew words and phrases in the song:

<Begin: Text conversion of table in original>

Verses 2-3:

Hebrew words: Yerushalem Yerushalem;

English translation: Jerusalem. Jerusalem;

Verse 4:

Hebrew words: shesham alu shebetim shebeti-Yah...le-shem

English translation: where go up tribes, tribes of Yah...to name

Verse: 5

Hebrew words: shammah...le-mishpat

English translation: there...of judgment

Verse: 6

Hebrew words: sha'alu shalom Yerushalem yeshaleyu

English translation: Pray peace Jerusalem; shall prosper

Verse: 7

Hebrew words: shalom...shaluah

English translation: peace...prosperity

Verse: 8

Hebrew words: shalom

English translation: peace

<End: Text conversion of table in original>

David's prayer--"May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, prosperity within your palaces" (verse 6)--may have been looking ahead to the divinely promised peaceful and blessed reign of his son Solomon, whose name meant "Peaceful." No doubt it was also David's desire for his ongoing dynasty--that the city would be a place of peace and harmony for God's people always, especially as they came together for worship at the annual feasts.

Sadly, Jerusalem has too often failed to live up to its name as the City of Peace. In the nearly 3,000 years since Solomon's death, it has seen numerous wars and conflicts--and today it sits as a geopolitical powder keg. Thus, the psalm looks forward to the time of the Kingdom of the Messiah, the Prince of Peace, for its

complete fulfillment--a time of which Solomon's peaceful reign was only a small foretaste. The Feast of Tabernacles also provides such a foretaste.

Yet though the peace sought in the psalm was ultimately far off, because the house of the Lord was in Jerusalem, David was committed to praying for peace in his day and seeking to rule righteously for the good of the city (verse 9). As before, besides the application of the words of this psalm to David's immediate situation, we should also understand them as applying to the people of spiritual Zion who constitute the spiritual temple of God today--the Church--the peace and good of which we should all continually pray and strive for even as we look forward to ultimate peace in the Kingdom of God." [END]

Psalm 124:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 124, the second song of ascents of the second set of three, expresses trust in God--acknowledging Him as the reason for Israel's survival. This is the second of four songs of ascents attributed to King David.

David encourages national participation in this hymn with the formula "Let Israel now say" (verse 1; compare 118:2; 129:1). The repeated opening statement "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side..." (verses 1-2) takes as a given that God *had* been on their side. Indeed, God is on the side of His people. This was historically true for Israel, just as it is for *spiritual* Israel--God's Church. Being on the side of His people does not mean that God endorses everything that they do, as they stumble and sin. The sense here is of being with them, supporting them. God works with His people to guide them, help them and ultimately save them--often against antagonists who try to thwart them. In a

powerful New Testament parallel, the apostle Paul remarks, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

Without God's aid, the enemies of His people, in both the physical and spiritual realm, would have swallowed them up (Psalm 124:2-3)--in the metaphoric senses of a flood running over them (verses 4-5) and of predatory wild animals devouring them (verse 6).

David used such flood imagery in other psalms for threats and persecution (Psalm 18:16; Psalm 32:6; Psalm 69:1-2; compare also Job 27:20; Revelation 12:15-16). And he elsewhere compares persecution to being attacked by lions (Psalm 7:1-2; Psalm 10:8-11; Psalm 57:4).

Yet God has given deliverance, seen also in the figure of a bird escaping the fowler's snare--the trap of a bird trapper (compare Psalm 91:3). *The Zondervan Student Bible* comments: "Some trouble is quick--bang and it's over...but with other trouble, trying to escape only gets you more deeply entangled...if you try to undo the damage, you only make it worse. That's exactly the picture of 'the fowler's snare.' The bird that caught its neck in the noose only tightened the snare's choke-hold by struggling. The bird could not get out by its own effort. But this time, says David, the snare has miraculously broken, and the bird has flown to safety. When you escape that way, there's only one person to thank: the Lord" (note on verse 7).

Indeed, the past deliverance on which the song reflects is the basis for continued trust in the help of the Almighty Creator God--the One who made heaven and earth (verse 8; compare Psalm 121:2; Psalm 134:3). This confidence is essential for our journey to God's Kingdom." [END]

Psalm 131

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 131 is the third of four psalms of David among the songs of ascents. As the third song of ascents in the fourth set of three, we would expect its theme to be blessing and peace in Zion--and this does fit with the mention of David, the king in Jerusalem, having a calmed and quieted soul and of Israel living in the hope of God forever (verses 2-3). The same exhortation for Israel to hope in God in Psalms 130:7 and Psalm 131:3 serves to link these two psalms thematically--as does proximity and the continued mood of humility before God. In light of his accomplishments, David could have been proud. Yet he presents himself to the Lord as a humble man. At heart he is not arrogant or filled with self-importance, nor does he have aspirations for personal greatness (verse 1). He does not deem himself more capable than he is, recognizing his limitations (same verse).

He is at peace and content in God's presence, like a weaned child who no longer frets and cries for milk from his mother's breast (verse 2). A breastfeeding baby can be satisfied--but only temporarily. Note furthermore that this does not mean David views himself as independent of God and no longer in need of His provision. Indeed, a weaned child must still be taken care of and fed by his or her mother. Certainly God will continue to provide and care for all His people--and they should look to Him in confident hope for the present and for eternity to come (verse 3). Thus, humility, maturity to a point of settled and ongoing contentment, and faith in God's promises are important focuses to maintain in observing God's festivals and in living godly lives generally in the lifelong march to His Kingdom." [END]