

“The House of God in The City of God” Psalm 122

Intro: Clark’s Commentary

In the preceding Psalms we find the poor captives crying to God for deliverance; here they are returning thanks that they find they are permitted to return to their own land and to the ordinances of their God.

Each of the fifteen Psalm 120 to 134 is entitled ‘A Song of Ascents’ (RSV; NIV). These psalms were apparently sung by worshippers from the country areas as they made the journey up to Jerusalem for the various annual festivals.

Whether or not the psalms were written for this purpose, they have been arranged in a sequence that reflects the feelings of the travellers. They provide expressions of worship for the travellers as they set out from distant regions, travel through the country, come to Jerusalem, and finally join in the temple ceremonies.

PSALM 122 Clarke’s Commentary

DAVID'S THANKFUL PRAYER FOR JERUSALEM

This, the third of the Songs of Ascent is ascribed to David in the superscription; and there is no dependable contradiction of this either in the psalm itself or in the opinions of critics.

Current scholars usually assign it to some pilgrim, and some even identify it with the post-exilic period; but the fact of Jerusalem being "builded" ([Psalms 122:3](#)) is opposed to that view. Of course, scholars intent on establishing a theory merely change "builded" to "rebuilt," (without authority, we might add). Dahood

found a single word in the psalm which he thought certified a very late date; but how do they know that such a word is not a gloss? or a copyist's error? The critics have no trouble at all finding such things to support their speculations! To us, it seems reasonable enough that David wrote the psalm. Who would have been any more likely to do so than the king who made it his capital and built it? One alternative view is that the psalm is Davidic in the sense of its emphasis upon "the thrones of the house of David. ([Psalms 122:5](#)) Such questions cannot now be answered with any finality.

Treasury of David: TITLE AND SUBJECT. This brief but spirited Psalm is entitled "*A Song of Degrees of David,*" and thus we are informed as to its author, and the occasion for which it was designed: David wrote it for the people to sing at the time of their goings up to the holy feasts at Jerusalem. It comes third in the series, and appears to be suitable to be sung when the people had entered the gates, and their feet stood within the city. It was most natural that they should sing of Jerusalem itself, and invoke peace and prosperity upon the Holy City, for it was the center of their worship, and the place where the Lord revealed himself above the mercy seat. Possibly the city was not all built in David's day, but he wrote under the spirit of prophecy, and spoke of it as it would be in the age of Solomon; a poet has license to speak of things, not only as they are, but as they will be when they come to their perfection. Jerusalem, or the Habitation of Peace, is used as the key word of this Psalm, wherein we have in the original many happy allusions to the salem, or peace, which they implored upon Jerusalem. When they stood within the triple walls, all things around the pilgrims helped to explain the words which they sang within her ramparts of strength. One voice led the Psalm with its personal "I," but ten thousand brethren and companions united with the first musician and swelled the chorus of the strain.

Daniel J. Estes The New American Commentary

Estes has a great introduction to this psalm, which I think catches the sense of the psalm. It is my opinion that this psalm celebrates the city and the future temple. The house of the Lord and the city of the Lord are important to the psalmist. All references that were from David had to be about the temple and referred to a future time when Solomon would build the temple. The pilgrims would be the Jews going up to the Temple. Spurgeon is right in that the psalmist or prophet always has the license to write about the future as he is under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The entire city was not finished and the Solomonic temple not completed but the King spoke as the Holy Spirit moved Him.

2 Peter 1:19-21

19 And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

NIV

“Unlike laments and praise psalms, which are distinguished by their form, Psalm 122 by its content belongs to the songs of Zion. Its references to the house of the Lord in vv. 1, 9 to Jerusalem in vv. 2, 3, 6, and to the house of David in v. 5, place in the company of psalms 46, 48, 76, 84, 87, and 132. As a song of Zion, it celebrates the glories of Jerusalem as the political and religious

center of the nation of Israel, but also as the footstool of the throne of Yahweh.” Estes NAC, p. 455.

Grey’s Outline And Exegesis:

It is my belief that this section pictures beautifully the importance and love that the Jews have had for their land and temple. The city was placed there by David and grew into what it is today. You would have to have lived in a cave to not understand the importance of this plot of land in the Middle-East. The pride, heritage, religion, progenitorship, prophecy, law giving, patriarchs, geographical location and specific racial customs of the Jews are all attached to this land, the people, and their place of worship.

Gerstenberger, quoted by Estes, says that *“psalm 122 was rooted in the pilgrimage tradition from the beginning. It testifies to a deeply, almost mystical personal attachment to the place elected by Yahweh. Both the city, and within the city, the temple of Yahweh became unifying symbols of Israel’s (and Judah’s) faith in the only authentic Deity who held all the power of the world in His hands”*

Zion, Jerusalem, yes all of Israel, is the eternal symbol of God’s work in history and the center of end times events. When Israel returns to a pure time of worship of Messiah, then the words of this psalm will truly be fulfilled. There will actually be a time in the Millennium that worship of the Messiah will be pure, holy, and directed by Jesus Himself (Ezek. 41-48). The word of God tells us that if the people do not come to the city and to the temple for worship that Jesus the Messiah will punish those nations with famine. Rain will be withheld from those who refuse to go up to the house of God.

The Jews were required to go up three times a year. There was a day when they had no temple for God and when they did, they

allowed the enemy to destroy it. The Jews had no land, city, or temple. They were in bondage. They were slaves and they put themselves in bondage. They rejected God and sought a king. Their kings led them to stop Yahweh worship and they turned from the house of God. Here in psalm 122 they were allowed to return. When this all happened, and the exact context, is not known but I think this was after the return in Nehemiah's days. Ezra led the people back spiritually. They rebuilt the temple and rebuilt the walls and established worship again. Maybe this was the days when the people began to pilgrimage back to the house of God. They were happy to be able to worship again. Those who can go to worship should do so. You never know when it will be taken from you.

What if God cut off all the blessings (Rain) of those who do not respect the house of God and worship of our King. I bet the house of God would be full this Sunday if people knew how important it was to the Father. Suppose that God caused every soul that skipped church to be hurt financially? Would it get their attention? What if everybody that missed without providential hinderance got sick and their house fell in? I bet we would have a full house every week.

Let's all desire the house of God. Let's give it the respect and service it deserves. Above all, let's rejoice that we can go to the house of God of our own free will.

Psalm 100 was a great *call to worship* psalm for the Jews as they made their way to the temple. There was excitement and anticipation about the service. How could people read these psalms about the house of God and come into His presence in such a foul mood every week. It's a pity.

Note these psalms (Psalms 46, 48, 76, 84, 87, and 132) for the picture that the psalmists give us about Zion, the temple, Jacob,

Jerusalem, the city of God, the house of God, the Almighty's dwelling, etc. This is quite revealing.

Exegesis:

I. Remembering The Past: I Rejoiced: Verse 1

I was glad when they said - When Cyrus published an edict for their return, the very first object of their thanksgiving was the kindness of God in permitting them to return to his ordinances.
Clark.

A single voice that represented thousands. *I rejoiced.*

Can you imagine what it would be like to be able to return to the House of God after a time of absence? If you were going back after captivity and allowed to worship. Americans have never been told they could not worship. But the day is coming.

Many who have been sick or hurt or hospitalized for a time will tell you the joy of returning to the house of God. This is why worship is so important. The reason I try to pour my heart into you each week is because for many people it's all the spiritual food they are getting for a whole week.

The Hebrew word for **rejoice** is **samach**. This refers to being glad, cheerful, or merry. This is to brighten up or be gleeful. Does this describe your countenance on worship day? Well brother Jerry the bible says be reverent.

The Hebrew words for reverence refer to fear. The NT Greek words are very similar. The fear of the Lord and modesty in worship are acceptable. None of these words refer to silence. As a matter of fact we are told to come into the courts with thanksgiving and praise.

Ps 5:7

*7 But I, by your great mercy,
will come into your house;
in reverence will I bow down
toward your holy temple.*

NIV

Lev 26:2

*2 "Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the
Lord.*

NIV

There is no doubt that reverence and respect for the house of God are demanded, but to create a monastery for worship is even worse.

Philippians 2:9-11 *Therefore God has highly exalted him [Jesus] and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Psalms 99:5 *Exalt the LORD our God; worship at his footstool! Holy is he!*

Psalms 8:1 *O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.*

Psalms 29:2 *Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.*

Revelation 5:9 *And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation ..."*

Revelation 4:11 *"Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."*

Psalms 100:4 *Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!*

Romans 12:1-2 *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Psalms 59:16 *But I will sing of your strength; I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning. For you have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress.*

Psalms 63:3-4 *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.*

Psalms 66:4 *All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name.” Selah*

Psalms 150 *Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness! Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!*

Christian Quotes About Worship

“Fruitful and acceptable worship begins before it begins.” ~ Alexander MacLaren

“It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ! For this very reason peoples of other faiths have been afforded asylum, prosperity, and freedom of worship.” ~ Patrick Henry

“The highest form of worship is the worship of unselfish Christian service.” ~ Billy Graham

“A man can no more diminish God’s glory by refusing to worship Him than a lunatic can put out the sun by scribbling the word ‘darkness’ on the walls of his cell.” ~ C. S. Lewis

“Depend on it, my hearer, you never will go to heaven unless you are prepared to worship Jesus Christ as God.” ~ Charles Spurgeon

Rev 5:8-14

8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

9 And they sang a new song:

"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. 12 In a loud voice they sang:

*"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!"*

13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:

*"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"*

14 The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

NIV

Worship requires:

- Attendance
- Participation

- Respect or reverence
- Passion, not apathy
- Knowledge, about the one worshipped. You can't love what you don't know about. Knowledge precedes love.
- Rejoicing, Joy, controlled emotion.

My Favorite definition of Worship:

Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple:

“To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.”

What's missing? Is there anything missing? Look at verse 1. I **rejoiced** said the King when they told me we were going to the house of God. Worship lives with joy and gladness. Can we really say we have worshipped without expressing joy?

Can you write me a definition of worship? It would not be wrong, it's yours. Give it a try. Writing your own definition of worship will reveal a lot to you about what you believe about worship. You might be surprised at what you think that's not biblical. Mostly, through the years, most people have a definition of worship that fits their personal preferences. It may not even be biblical. They have never even studied the scriptures to see what is biblical.

Someone share what worship means to you!

II. Reclaiming The Present: I Repair, Rebuild : Verse 2-5

Prov 13:12

*12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick,
but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.*

NIV

Verse 2: My heart was in Israel but now my feet are there. I was a slave in Babylon but now I am in the sanctuary at WBC. There should be a little Joy since you ain't going to hell, and I am now your pastor. My feet are in the gates. That means that the gates have been repaired. I am not going to spiritualize the text but there are applications here about a restored people and a restored life. The gates had to be restored or they would not have been standing in the gates. Jesus did bring me from Babylon, so to speak, and put me in the gates.

Here is this difference in people who don't understand that the heart is more important than the bricks. Do you remember this?

Ezra 3:10-13

10 When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the Lord, as prescribed by David king of Israel. 11 With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the Lord:

"He is good;

his love to Israel endures forever."

And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. 12 But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. 13 No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away.

NIV

Remember when we went through 1 Kings and we studied about Solomon's temple. Do you remember how I painstakingly went through all that detail to show you the beauty of the temple and the detailed craftsmanship and caution about every thing that was done in that temple. Cost was not even considered. The jewels,

gold, and precious stones with foreign and rare wood was unthinkable.

Yet the kings sinned and disregarded the Word of God and His commands. They even sold or gave away articles and gold of the temple... and even lost the articles of gold from the Holy of Holies by tribute or foreign invasion. God punished their sin. So evidently the beauty of the gates and the city with its gorgeous temple of gold didn't mean a thing to them.

But many of the people who were in captivity were now standing in the gates and they wept out of gratitude to God for letting their feet be in the city gates. Some cried over the small foundation and said it's not like what we had. Well, you should have thought about that before the priest sinned against the Lord.

I can't tell you the ungodly things I have heard people say about this building. I am proud of this building and it came about by way of God's mighty hand and literally through the sovereign hand of God. And people still refused to give glory to God. **But we are standing in the gates.** When I preach, my feet are standing on what used to be the highest point on the property. Everything you see coming into the property leads you to the pulpit and the alter. I stood there when it was dirt and saw the foundation laid. I watched the house of God go up. I saw people's hard earned money put to use for the kingdom. We were short about 150,000 dollars and people came to me and put CD's up as collateral so we could get the bank to give us the money to build. I never asked one soul for money. They did it on their own. Those people, love this house.

The returning Jews loved their God, their land, and their temple. So do I. Kingdom work is more important than any other. Oh, Jerusalem... The city and house of God.

Verse 3: The city is like this today as well. The streets mostly narrow and packed with people and daily business. The city of Israel is a beautiful place and closely connected. There are Christians, Jews, Druze (descendants of a monotheistic Abrahamic religion), and Muslims there today. This is ironically the most religious place in the world. David is speaking of the tribes of Israel spiritually here as well as geographically. The city is united by their relationship with God, the temple and land.

Today the city is built in close quarters but the differences in the people and their beliefs keep the city divided. This is a volatile place and ironically a place named for peace.

Verse 4: This is a reference to the command of the Lord for the festival services. The Jews were required to “go up” to the temple. This psalm fits well into the songs of ascent because that’s what this section is about. The focus is on the Jews renewed worship of Yahweh. What a joy to see and know that the people approached the temple and worship with Joy and anticipation.

It is my belief that we bring worship with us when we come to the house of God. Dr. Rogers used to say that if no one worshipped in your seat on Sunday that it was your fault. He’s right. The responsibility lies with each of us concerning our preparation for worship. This is a grave mistake and sin many of us make. We do not prepare for worship; usually, we just show up. The condition of the heart is important.

When the tribes “go up,” there should be unity.

Verse 5: Estes says this of verse 5... *“In addition to its theological significance, Jerusalem also had an important political and judicial function. The royal authority of the house of David was based on the Davidic covenant. The king was obligated to judge the people in righteousness and this judicial*

rule protected the opportunity for Israel to continue to worship the Lord at the temple in Jerusalem. Unfortunately, justice did not always prevail as the prophetic denunciations in Amos make abundantly evident. When the royal line declined, eventually the temple was destroyed and the worship of the Lord was disrupted.

Note **2 Samuel 7** and **Psalms 132**. The eternal line of David was established.

Also Amos' and Mica's prophetic words.

Amos 5:7

*7 You who turn justice into bitterness
and cast righteousness to the ground
NIV*

Amos 6:12

*12 Do horses run on the rocky crags?
Does one plow there with oxen?
But you have turned justice into poison
and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness—
NIV*

Mic 3:9

*9 Hear this, you leaders of the house of Jacob,
you rulers of the house of Israel,
who despise justice
and distort all that is right;
NIV*

The missing ingredient in the life of Israel today and in the NT church of Jesus Christ is that of holiness. Disobedience to God caused Israel to fall. The people are crying out for justice and holiness. Even the “godly” or orthodox Jewish leaders today have

missed the Messiah. They rule without the direction of God. Verse 5 pictures a day when the people wanted restoration of their judicial system. Think of what a great nation we would be if we had holiness in Washington? What if the thrones of justice stood for the Lord in politics and law. What if the houses of God stood for holiness today? Don't let what happened in the past happen again.

III. Remaining Faithful for The Future: I Will Pray: vv. 6-9

Verse 6: To pray for the peace of Jerusalem is to pray for the return of Christ. We bear a responsibility to pray for Israel. Support the causes of Israel and support them financially. The King has already prayed for you. How awesome that David prayed for us to be secure.

The Hebrew word for **secure** is **prosperity** and security. **Shalah** refers to being tranquil. Do you need peace? Then make Israel a part of your prayer time.

Verse 7: Pray for peace inside the city. Do you know what all needs to take place for that to happen?

Verse 8: Pray for the people that are scattered. The friends and brothers need prayer. The unity that we will experience from prayer is a peace bringer. Pray for the city. Pray for the diaspora.

Verse 9: If you pray verse 9 you are praying prophetically. David knew the significance of the future and the prophecy that would one day be fulfilled. If David knew it and believed it, why would we not believe it and pray for it. If you want to pray in the will of God, pray for Israel and the house of God. If that house is rebuilt, Jesus is coming.

God, please bless this nation that you chose to be a witness to the Gentiles. The nation that displays the glory of God in the earth. Restore them to the place you originally planned for your people. Let come to fruition the plans and prophecy of God in the Jews. We pray for the peace of Israel.