

Psalm 120:1-7

A Song of degrees

“In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me. Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue. What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper. Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar! My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war.”

Introduction

“How many of you have read ahead, all three, four, come on you guys, it’s your homework, we don’t tell you how to dress, we don’t beg you for money, read ahead, that’s your homework, read ahead. Read ahead. Ah, we’re heading into a group of Psalms now, from Psalm 120 to Psalm 134, if you have a King James you’re going to see they’ll all say “A Song of degrees.” If you have a different translation it may say “Songs of Ascent.” They are a portion of Psalms that go together. The word to “ascend,” “the Songs of ascent,” the idea of moving higher, of climbing, moving to a higher place. So the “Songs of ascent” is a proper way to look at these songs, ten of them are anonymous, four are by David, one by Solomon. David’s Psalms seem to be prophetic, there’s a prophetic sense to these Psalms, prophetic shadows throughout that are remarkable. These are the songs that were sung, I believe, when the children of Israel came up to the mandatory Feasts in Jerusalem [cf. Leviticus 23, which is part of the Sabbath Command, the 4th Commandment, Exodus 20:8-11]. And no doubt they were sung by pilgrims who came up for whatever reason. Jerusalem is always up, even if you’re coming from the northern part of Israel to the south to go to Jerusalem, you’re going up because Jerusalem is 2500 foot above sea level, Jerusalem is always up spiritually, Jerusalem is just always up. Particularly if you’re coming from Jericho, which is down by the Dead Sea, the lowest place on the earth, up to Jerusalem, ah, you’re going from 1600 foot below sea level to 2500 feet above sea level. And you’re going through the wilderness of Judea. As Americans when we hear wilderness we’re thinking about forest, you know. It is barren, stony, dusty, a few weeds here and there that the sheep and goats know about, and not much else. That is where Jesus was tempted by the devil, in the wilderness and so forth, it’s a remarkable rocky terrain to traverse. And in these days, as in the days of Christ, there were many robbers, and gangs of robbers, it was a treacherous journey, people traveled in groups, they traveled together. And no doubt, at least for me, as we came up these hills, to come up to

see the mountains of Jerusalem, knowing what was at the top of that journey, they would sing these Songs of ascent. Now, if you're in Bible school or seminary, and you're shaking your head, that's because there's kinds of other opinions about what these are about. Some say that they're written before Israel's carried away, some say they're post-Exilic, I don't see how that fits at all. Some say that they're specifically in the days of Hezekiah, because you can go to verses in Chronicles and Isaiah, and the degrees on the sundial that went backward, and they add up all the degrees and these are songs of degrees. It's torturous, it's just torturous [these weird opinions]. Look, these are songs, the songs are visceral, they are deeply felt, these are things that are in the hearts of God's ancient people, and no doubt these are songs that were sung as they made their mandatory journeys their pilgrimage to Jerusalem, to the Feasts. [see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/messianicmovement/Holydayshadow.s.htm>] And when we go, this year, and always when we go, we'll take the time, when we're coming up those hills, to read through some of these Psalms, and they really come to life as we do that. No doubt these Songs were sung by millions through the ages. Again, to me, greatly emotional, just to read through them, and I think prophetic in some remarkable ways. Ready to jump in? We'll see how many we can get through here.

What Happens To The Deceitful, Those With Lying Lips?

It begins, Psalm 120, Song of degrees, it says **“In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me.”** the cry was, **“Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.” (verses 1-2)** So some lies, evidently, some more deceitful than others, “from lying lips” you'll notice, plural. This would be very rare to meet the person with one lying lip, the other one not. And he's going to mention sojourning in Mesech, in Kedar, far to the north, far to the southeast away from Jerusalem. He wants to be delivered from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue, no doubt the pagan world, possibly many of these pilgrims were used to being surrounded by, wanting to come to Jerusalem to hear the truth, wanting to hear the Word of the LORD, wanting to sing antificial hymns with, and the priests and so forth, as they were there. So, **‘Deliver me from the deceitful tongue,’** everybody in this room should know that feeling. Everybody here? **‘LORD, deliver me from lying lips and the deceitful tongue,’** especially if you live with one, you just can't get away from that, you know. The question, **“What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?” (verse 3)** **‘What shall be given, what shall be done?’** the idea is, **‘what shall it profit you, you false speakers?’** there's no profit in this, And he answers the question in **verse 4**, this is what is going to be handed to

those that are deceitful and those that are liars, he says **“Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.” (verse 4)** “juniper” speaking of the broom tree that was burned because of the heat of its coals. So the sharpest arrows, the hottest coals are going to be added into liars and deceivers, there’s no gain. It says **‘What profits it?’** you know, here’s this pilgrim, here’s this sojourner, wants to come to the counsel of God, wants to come into the light, wants to come to the place where there’s forgiveness, wants to come to the place where there’s atonement, wants to come to the place where all of the pagan insanity is set behind him. And he says, how often we have to be reminded, as you and I do, out in the world, that deception, the lying tongue, carnality, what the world has to offer, there’s really no profit in it. It may seem like it temporarily, Moses said he didn’t want to enjoy the pleasures of sin “for a season,” so sometimes we get caught up in that. And the singer is saying, **‘what if there’s really no profit, you know what’s going to be added to that? Sharpest arrows and the hottest coals.’**

This Is Not Our Home

“Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!” (verse 5) you know, any pilgrim out there, this is not our home, if you haven’t noticed, if you haven’t noticed. Hopefully, recently, we feel less at home than ever, in this world. He says **“My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace.” (verse 6)** and those kind of people can wear you out. I like peace, I want peace. You want a house that’s full of small kids? I want peace, I get up early before they’re noisy. I don’t know, if you’re anything like me, I want peace. Half the time their arguments are just not worth it. Vance Havner, in one of my favorite lines, he said *“A bulldog can beat a skunk any day, it’s just not worth it.”* I like peace, I don’t want a hassle, let alone being in an area, I got a call from somebody today headed to Kurdistan, and just getting in to work with Heather Mercer who was here with us, just the insanity that’s going on there, **“My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace.” (verse 6)** and the singer says, **“I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war.” (verse 7)** I think of Israel today, you read of Jerusalem, the City of Peace, Shalom, Peace, I can’t think of a people on the planet that want peace more. I am for peace. **‘When they speak, they are for war.’** Response to that, how do you respond to that? This next Song of degrees tells us.

Psalm 121:1-8

A Song of degrees

“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.”

‘Where’s My Help Come From?’

“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,” there’s a question, **“from whence cometh my help.”** This world is terrible. You know, the Psalmist is lifting up his eyes, **‘Where am I going to get help?’** And it’s almost, you know, a rhetorical question in the sense that he’s already told us, because his eyes are lifted up. **“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,”** **Where does my help come from?’** He answers **“My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.”** (verse 2) Now, when we go to Jerusalem, when we take that ride up, and we’re going up from the Jordan Valley, up and up and up, and you can hear it, **“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.”** (verses 1-2) and then it says, when we go through “he will,” “he does this,” “the LORD will keep,” “the LORD is my shade,” “the LORD will preserve me,” “the LORD will preserve.” In fact, as we go through the Psalm, let’s just read through the Psalm, he’s going to begin by saying twice “the LORD is my help,” then he is going to use the word “keepeth” or “keeper” three times, and then “preserve” three times, but the Hebrew word, they’re all the same word. So it’s really a theme here of this pilgrim going up to Jerusalem, it’s the One he trusts who will keep him. And he answers his first question, **“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,”** **‘Where’s my help going to come from?’** **“My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.”** (verses 1-8) So this pilgrim going up. Over and over he says “preserve” and “keep,” those are the same words, they mean “to hedge about,” it means “to guard, to preserve,” you know, the idea is “he is going to put a hedge about us.” There’s a treacherous pilgrimage in some ways up to the mountains of Jerusalem, and he says

wonderfully, **“He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.” (verse 3)** You know, you’re climbing, there are crags, cliffs, you’re not going to suffer your foot to be moved. It’s interesting, because they’re coming in obedience to God’s Word, to the Feasts, and there’s a great confidence that the obedient pilgrim has, and I think God won’t let them stumble. He’s not slumbering, he’s never off-duty. It’s very interesting to watch David, the guys tried to bring the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem, and it says they loaded it on a cart, and as they were moving the ox stumbled, Aholiab put forth his hand to steady it and dropped dead. That Ark had gone through the Wilderness for over 38 years, and nobody ever stumbled, because it was borne, it was carried, they were obedient pilgrims, they did it the way God said to do it, and there was never a problem. Here, **“He will not suffer thy foot to be moved:”** Are you on his path this evening? Are you on your way to higher ground? [yup, and it’s a difficult climb at this point in time.] Holiness, what is holiness? God is a holy God. Again, the easy way to understand that, is there is that which is God, and there is that which is not God. Those are the only two things that exist. There is Creator, and there is creation. You ain’t God, neither am I. We were made, we’re part of what is not God. That makes him holy, he’s distinct, he’s set aside from everything else. And holiness for you and I is a direction. Are we moving in that direction, growing in that direction? We’re washed in the blood of Christ, judicially in heaven we can never be holier, we’re cleansed, washed experientially in our lives, holiness is a direction, we’re maturing, we’re growing in this present exercise. And we’re being conformed into the image and likeness of God’s Son, our destination is not just a place but an image. And here you look at the obedient pilgrim, the one whose doing what God says to do in his Word, it says **‘He’s not going to suffer their foot to be moved,’ “He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” (verses 3-4) ‘He that keepeth, hedges, guards Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.’** The idea is, he’s always watching. You remember Elijah confronting the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, and as they were working themselves into a frenzy, you know, he said **‘Maybe Baal’s doing this, maybe he’s on a vacation, maybe he’s relieving himself, he’s going potty,’** and he said, **‘Maybe he’s sleeping.’ “Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” (verse 4)**

‘The LORD Is Thy Keeper’

“The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.” (verses 5-6) Traveling through the desert, you know the children of Israel in their history, is the idea that he always shelters us, he always

watches over us, he's the shade on our right hand. That meant a huge relief in the culture here, particularly going up through this barren wilderness, **"The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul." (verses 6-7)** Notice, "thy soul," the ultimate issue of life. **"The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore." (verse 8)** ...Look, normally, going out this morning, and coming in this evening, he's going to preserve you in the ordinary routine of life. I appreciate that greatly, because my going out is usually in the morning, and my coming home is usually in the evening. And it should say **'he will preserve thy going out and thy coming in, and thy crashing,'** when you get home, and he will. And notice, it's **"from this time forth, and forevermore."** What he has always been, is what he is, and that is what he will always be, morning, evening, the routines of life, our going out, our coming in, from this time forth, even forevermore.

Psalm 122:1-9

A Song of degrees of David

"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: wither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD. For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good."

*Introduction: "Let Us Go Up To The House Of The LORD"—That's
The Church For Us*

"And now we come to this third Psalm, and it says it's a Psalm of David, which is highly unusual, because the words say how much David loved the house of God, which wasn't built yet. It was in his heart, he longed for it, so no doubt, if that's a genuine title, and some say because it's not in the Septuagint, and other places, that there's doubt. I don't think there's ever really been doubt among ancient scholars. This is a Song of David, and if it is a Song of David, it's a song about the love of God's house, this pilgrim talks about his situation in the world, and he talks about him ascending, looking up into the hills, he's moving now. Now he's going from the hills to the gates, there, he's coming in it seems, into

the city of Jerusalem, speaking about the love of God's house. Look, **"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD." (verse 1)** Look, for you and I that's the church, by the way. I don't know about you guys, I love church. And you think, blessed because you get to beat everybody's ear for an hour. No, that doesn't have anything to do with it. [Comment: I attend a Messianic Jewish congregation, and no, I'm not in total doctrinal agreement with them, I'm a Sabbath-keeping Church of God transplant. But I go there to hear what the Lord has for me, what he has to say to me. And often times I get specific answers to my prayers to him in the sermon, or by which Psalms are read during the Praise & Worship portion of the service. I go there to commune and hear from God, in a personal way. The fellowshiping with other members is nice, but secondary.] I just can't wait to get here to see what is going to happen. Is the worship going to be good, is the sermon going to be good? I don't know before I get here. I stand over there and say *"Lord, don't let me go up there alone, you were with Paul, when he stood before Nero and said 'No man stood with him,' but you stood with him, don't let me go up there alone, if I'm going up there alone, I do not want to go up there without you."* So I just come to see what's going to happen, are people going to get saved? Are people going to cry, are people going to get healed, what's going to happen? Because the Lord is doing something right now in our midst, and we're highly privileged. [Just this past Sabbath, a man was saved, came to Christ, right after the service. It was an awesome experience.] Our church, I believe, is alive right now, it's a living church, I can't wait to come and see. He says **"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD." (verse 1)** He's up now, no doubt in Jerusalem. And look what it says, **"Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." (verse 2)** And I wonder how much of this David is looking forward, and seeing [the Temple], Zechariah says in the day when Jerusalem, Israel becomes a stumbling block to all the nations, a cup of trembling, he says ***"In that day will I make the governors of Judah like a hearth of fire among the wood, like a torch of fire in a sheaf, they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left hand, and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again, in her own place."*** Even in Jerusalem it's laid out. I think David is seeing shadows of it here. **"Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." (verse 2)** I love when we go there, you know, we read the Songs of ascent, you know, I've been there many times. So it's always a delight for me to watch the faces of the people for the first time, when we walk into the gates of Jerusalem, and you're in the city and you realize the Scripture says we will stand within thy gates O Jerusalem. [refer back to and see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/Psalms/Psalm%2024%201-10.htm> for a 2nd Coming prophecy about the Eastern Gate, as well as good links

describing all the gates leading into and out of Jerusalem.] Remarkable. You have to go there and you'll find out.

David Looks Forward To Jerusalem's Future

“Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together:” (verse 3)

The idea is “joined together, bound together,” it’s a built city, there’s something about it, it’s knit together, there’s no place like it in the world.

“whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.” (verse 4)

By the way, I love that here. Here’s a picture of the tribes, all of the different tribes coming from different places, coming up to Jerusalem. I feel that way when we come here, all the tribes are here. I love it, there’s all different kinds of people, all different colors, all different shades, all different widths, different ages, some are hairy, some are follicly challenged, everybody’s here, that’s the way it’s supposed to be. And I love to come, it says **‘all of the tribes come up, and they come up to the testimony of the LORD, the Word of the LORD, the Word of the LORD.’** **“the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.”** **‘praise and worship tonight, to the name of the LORD.’** And just think, David’s doing this, he’s saying this, and David was a prophet, we know that, and I wonder what’s in his heart as he’s seeing this.

Listen, **“For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.” (verse 5)**

So he had seen something in the future. There’s judgment seats in the gates, there’s all that. But it seems like he’s speaking of something else, God had promised to build him a house he wanted. To build a house, LORD, Nathan got in trouble for saying *‘Oh, David, do what’s in your heart.’* God came back to Nathan, said, **‘Did I tell you to say that? Go back to him and straighten this out.’** And he went back and said **‘David, you’re a man of blood, I know what’s in your heart,’** God gave David plans for the Temple, showed him the drawings, he showed him all the courses of the priests, David laid up for it. It’s really David’s Temple, it wasn’t Solomon’s Temple, David had kind of pre-fabbed it, made all of the necessary arrangements, all of the financing, all of that was there. David is looking down the road here, because God had said to him **‘David, you’re not going to build me a house, David, I’m going to build you a house, and there’s going to be no end to it. And the blood of your lives is going to sit on that throne forever.’** Gabriel to Mary, **‘He shall sit on the throne of his father David forever.’** So David in his last breath, signing off, again, not David the king, not David the giant slayer, David the sweet Psalmist of Israel. **‘God spoke to me, and he told me what he’s going to do, and he showed it to me, and I understand he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, even morning without clouds, like the tender grass growing on the earth, clear shining after the**

rain. It's going to be like a new day, morning is going to blossom, beautiful, it's going to glisten like the dew on the herbs. But I won't see it now, it's going to come.' And I look at this, and I think, you know, David, he talks about it, coming to the city that's built together, all the tribes are there, and he says there's thrones and judgment that is set there, the thrones of the house of David. Imagine what it was for him to write that?

"Pray For The Peace Of Jerusalem"

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee." (verse 6) We should be doing that every day, when we pray "thy kingdom come, thy will be done." **"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem"** and it should be part of our constant prayer. Listen, **"they shall prosper that love thee." (verse 6)** **"Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee." (verses 7-8)** for my grandkids, and my children, it is my prayer, *'peace be within thee.'* Because I know that's when the Prince of Peace is here. **"Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good." (verse 9)** David, looking in.

Psalm 123:1-4

A Song of degrees

"Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us. Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt. Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud."

'Our Eyes Wait Upon The LORD Our God, Until He Have Mercy Upon Us'

"Coming from the hills, to the gates, now it seems Psalm 123 arrived and now worship, now looking, now expecting mercy. **"Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens." (verse 1)** So, what he was looking at when he lifted up his eyes to the hills before, he knew there was something higher than that. **"Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens."** And listen, I'll read this to you, this is beautiful, **"Behold, as the eyes of servants"** he doesn't say that's

the way it is, he says it is like this, **“as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress;”** now here’s reality, **“so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until he have mercy upon us.”** (verse 2) Look again, **“Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.”** (verse 3) Again, **‘Have mercy upon us,’** and each time, it’s probably a better translation, **‘Be gracious to us, LORD, be gracious to us, LORD, be gracious.’** [I’ll take the “mercy.”] **“For we are exceedingly filled with contempt. Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and the contempt of the proud.”** (verses 3b-4) it’s really “the proud doves” at the end there. He says here, **“Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.”** (verse 1) Isn’t that interesting? And look what he says, **“Behold, as the eyes of servants”** here’s the way he’s looking to the LORD, **“as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until he have mercy upon us.”** (verse 2) So he says this, he’s there and he’s come to worship, and he’s lifted up his eyes now, it’s higher than Jerusalem, higher than the Temple, up to the LORD who dwells in the heavens. And he says **‘LORD, the way I’m kind of looking to you, is like a servant,’** and this was part of the culture of a great house, **‘who stands in his position, and he watches the hand of his master.’** Because if there was a feast or something going on, it was noisy, they didn’t care anything about ambient sound, sound reflecting off the walls, it was all stone walls, it was a noisy party, it was a noisy place. And the master didn’t get off of his seat of honor and come to his servant and ask him to do something. So the servant’s responsibility was, he just stood there, and he watched for the motion of his master’s hand. The master would go [he waves, points], and he knew exactly what that was. Or he would go [pointing], he knew what that was. And those were signals, I’ve watched guys, baseball [he’s making all these weird hand-signals]. And I’m thinking *‘What in the world!?! how do you know what that means?’* He said **‘He would watch as a servant watches the hand of his master, or a maiden watches the hand of her mistress, that’s the way I am, you only have to go like this [pointing], I’m waiting LORD. My eyes are lifted up, you’re dwelling in the heavens, and the eyes of my heart are upon you.’** Here’s the thing, he’s expecting God to be gracious with his hand motions. He’s not expecting this [thumbs down], he’s not expecting this [cutting across the throat motion] [laughter]. He’s expecting this [open arms]. He says **‘I’m watching for you LORD, like a servant watches the hand of his master, my eyes are upon you, expecting you to be gracious, LORD.’** You know, what we do, is when difficult things happen in life, we think *‘He’s getting me, he’s getting me. I was mean to my aunt when I was 4,’* I mean, Satan helps us do this

ridiculous stuff in our minds, *'He's punishing me because of this,'* I'll tell you something, it's bad theology. He's not getting you, you're his child, and he's not punishing you, because 2,000 years ago on a wooden cross, a voice said, **"it is finished."** He's not "getting you," that's bad theology, he's not punishing you. Jesus said the father ran to the prodigal son, girded himself, he wept, he kissed him, embraced him. For you and I to say that about God Almighty, it would be blasphemous. Jesus says no man knows the Father but the one whose come down from above, he's the one who told us that that's who God Almighty is. You know, the Pharisees and Sadducees were standing there giving him a hard time, saying *'You don't know what God is like,'* and there's God sitting there with the tax gatherers and sinners, with crumbs in his beard and grease on his hands, and says **'No, really, you don't know what God is like,'** then he takes them into those parables. He says **'As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of the maiden unto the hand of her mistress, LORD, so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God until he have mercy, he's going to be gracious to us.'**

Why We Need God's Mercy

"Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt." (verse 3) "Exceedingly filled" in verse 3 and 4 has the idea of satiated, we're saturated, **'LORD, this is what we live in, we are exceedingly filled with contempt,'** **"Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud."** (verses 3b-4) That's the culture that we live in. And it has been the lot of God's people through the ages. You know, we want to say prayer before a football game, and everybody screams and yells, a prayer at the end. Hey, when a player gets hurt on the field, everybody goes out and kneels down. 9/11, I saw the Congress and the Senate, if I'm not mistaken, standing out on the steps of the Capitol building singing God Bless America out loud. That was a sight, nervous people do strange things. ["No atheists on a life-raft" principle.] We live in a culture where it's held in contempt. *'You believe marriage is between a man and a woman, you believe Creation and not evolution, you believe in morality, you believe there's right and wrong, you actually believe something? well there's something wrong with you, you don't have to believe anything. You can't be certain of anything.'* Well can I be certain of what you're telling me then?—that I can't be certain of anything? He says here, **'LORD, in the middle of all this insanity, give me a signal LORD, just I'm watching you, LORD, you're going to be gracious, because LORD, we're saturated with this insanity, LORD, we're saturated with the scorning among the leading people, they're fat, they're at ease, they sit around, they're proud, they're**

proud doves, cooing, laughing at you, they're proud doves, that's the culture we live in.' (exposition of verse 4)

Psalm 124:1-8

A Song of degrees of David

"If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say; if it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: then the proud waters had gone over our soul. Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth."

'If It Had Not Been For The LORD, Look Where We'd Be'

David now again, in Psalm 124 does this. He's going to now remember the mercy that the Psalm before this had asked for. He's going to talk about that great mercy. And again, I think there are prophetic shadows here, remarkably. He says, and you want to notice the "If" in verse 1, the "If" in verse 2, "then" here's the response, "then" in verse 3, "then" in verse 4, "then" in verse 5, and then the "Blessed" that starts in verse 6. He says, **"If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say; if it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us:"** now the interesting thing is, you see the words in *italics* that are inserted, this is almost a fumbling, there's almost so much emotion in the beginning, it's almost like **'If not, the LORD, who was on our side, now may Israel say this, If not the LORD, who was on our side, when men rose up against us, if it wasn't for the LORD,'** he says it twice in a row, **'If it wasn't for the LORD, If it wasn't for the LORD, what would happen to us? If it wasn't for the LORD,'** he tells you what would happen if it wasn't for the LORD. Verse 3 says, **"Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us:"** "quick," that's the old King James word for "alive." I know most of us swallow up things "quick" because we're always in a rush, but this is different. **'Then they had eaten us up alive'** is the idea, **'when their wrath was kindled against me.'** "If it hadn't been for the LORD," twice, if it hadn't been for the LORD, well what would it have been like? David's remembering now the mercy that we've been talking about, **'Then they'd have swallowed us up alive, their wrath would have been kindled against us.'** **"Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul:"** (verse 4)

Notice, not over our physical body, **“over our soul.”** So he’s talking about something, remember David said **‘How long O LORD, will all your waves and your billows go over me?’** You know, in the culture, even in the mountains, the wadis when it would rain, all of a sudden it would be a torrent, it would be deadly sometimes. He’s drawing this picture here of that happening to the soul. Anybody here have their soul overwhelmed? [yes] Three of us. The rest of you keep breathing, because it’s coming. ok. Build your house on the Rock, when the storm comes, not if it comes, when it comes, your house will stand, because it’s built on the Rock. He says **“Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: then the proud waters had gone over our soul.” (verses 4-5)** and we’re going to hear “our soul” “our soul” “our soul escapes” finally. **“then the proud waters had gone over our soul.”**

But The LORD Rescues Us—Look How He Does It

and he says this, **“Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth.”** **‘If the LORD had not been on our side, If the LORD had not been on our side, they’d have rose up against us, then,’** this is what they’d have done, **‘then it would have been like this with our soul, then it would have been like this with our soul again,’** but he says, **“Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers:”** and he says it isn’t just like a bird escaping out of the trap, look what he says, **“the snare is broken, and we are escaped.” (verses 6-7)** Anybody ever know that experience? Look, you guys, I know that we don’t have free Espresso before you get here, but you gotta ramp up a little bit when you come here, I might ask some questions. Right? Look, how many of us saved look back to times, can you look back to times in your life before you were saved, and think **‘You know what, I could have died then, and he kept me alive.’** Now everybody’s all worked up [laughter]. **‘I could have died then, here I am still alive.’** He says **“our soul is escaped out of the snare of the fowlers:”** he says, **‘No, no, not even that, the trap itself was broken, and we are escaped.’** I think the LORD, how many of us, kept us alive so we can get saved. I remember things as a kid, I remember running between parked cars, running into an invisible something and falling backward on my rear-end, four or five years old, and a car flying by. And if I’d have taken one more step I’d have been gone. How many of us can think back, even to pre-salvation, the things the LORD was doing in our lives, to get hold of us, to lead us? And we’re here, here we are, we’re saved. Isn’t always comfortable, but our soul, sometimes you know, we pray with people, talk with people, going through difficult things. But think, would you rather be, again, a multi-millionaire with a silver spoon in your mouth

and no problems, and go to hell when you die? Or would you rather kind of get beat up a little bit, and come to the knowledge of the truth? He says **'Our soul is escaped, LORD, you didn't give us over to their teeth, if you hadn't saved us, worse, it would have been unimaginable, we are escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers,'** he says the snare itself is actually broken, **'we've escaped,'** and then he says, **"Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth."** (verse 8) and we're going to get to Psalm 125, I think we're going to get through that Psalm this evening.

Psalm 125:1-5

A Song of degrees.

"They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever. For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity. Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel."

Introduction

"Now, you know, the confidence, beautiful picture what the singer now says in regards to worship, Jerusalem. I'll read through it and then we'll go back, **"They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever. For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity. Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel."** And in the Scripture there's only really two categories of human beings, and that is the wicked and the just, ah, the upright and the iniquitous, the repentant and the sinner. Wonderful picture here.

"They That Trust In The LORD Shall Be As Mount Zion, Which Cannot Be Removed, But Abideth For Ever."

“They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.” (verse 1) It’s interesting, it kind of gives the sense of, it says **“They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion”** the sense of it is, **‘does not totter unto eternity, it sits.’** It’s a really interesting phrase. You know, it’s not just standing against something else, it’s a picture of Jerusalem, **‘sits, it doesn’t totter, it’s just so firm, and this is the way it is for eternity, unto eternity.’** And we shouldn’t be surprised, they that trust in the LORD, what are they like? They’re like “as,” they’re not mount Zion, **‘they’re like mount Zion, which cannot be removed, abideth for ever.’** Understanding creation, it tells us in *Ephesians, chapter 1*, we were there, *verse 4*, that we were chosen, out from among, remarkable, **‘We were chosen before the foundation of the world, we were chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world we were chosen in Christ.’** [And for old-earth creationists, and according to the timing of uranium’s half-life and the proportion of radioactive lead in every uranium mine around the world (and the proportions are the same between lead and uranium in every single mine), the earth is between 4 and 4.5 billion years old. So what this verse is telling us, is that God foreknew each of us, and that he would call each and every one of us, over 4 to 4.5 billion years ago. He looked down through the entire creation, through the creation of man, through man’s entire history, right up to and beyond your birth, right to the moment he called you (John 6:44), and here you are. The implications of this verse are pretty profound and heavy.] **‘That we should be holy and without blame, without blemish, before him, before the foundation of the world.’** Which means that, as it says in Revelation, that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. So God, obviously, was not surprised when Adam and Eve fell, the plan was a plan from eternity. So before the foundation of the world, the Lamb had offered himself, and in that work, you and I were chosen before the foundation of the world in Christ. That means when God laid out the universe, it was Jerusalem-centric. Ah, it’s geo-centric, he creates the heavens and the earth, and then he separates the light from the darkness, let there be light, and it wasn’t until the 4th day when he said, **‘Ya, there probably should be light bearers, because it’ll freak everybody out if there’s just light, and it’s not coming from anything.’** So the 4th day he made the stars, the sun, the moon, he made something to bear the light that he made on the 2nd day. [Comment: From an old-earth Creationist interpretation (we’ll see which is correct at the 2nd coming, at the wedding feast) see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/Does/Genesis%201%201-31.html>.

This explains from astronomical science how light came to be first before the stars were created, which is interesting, and a fully scientific explanation.] And forms the world, and then he puts in all of the stars and all of everything, to mark off seasons. They say they’re out there with Hubble and all this, and finding other solar systems, they’re not

finding anything out there, I hate to tell you that [Pastor Joe is a new-earth Creationist], there's Doppler light effects that they see, and what they say is *'They must be there around that star, because we see the light wobbling. Therefore in our genius, we know there must be something orbiting that star.'* They don't have any pictures, they don't know. [Astronomy isn't Pastor Joe's realm of expertise, so he doesn't really know either—I'm an astronomy buff myself, as well as being an extreme history buff too. The astronomers are more than likely correct.]. As far as we know, and it's fine with me, we're the apple of God's eye, this is the center of everything, and it's gonna roll up like a scroll [and I believe that too] and be done with it (cf. Revelation 21:1-23). It's the stage of redemption. So when he laid everything out, he laid it out around redemption, which means he laid it out around Jerusalem, which means he laid it out around a hill called Golgotha, Moriah, higher than Zion itself. And he laid the world out, with that as the epicenter of everything. So of course, David trusted in the LORD, ***'they're going to be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed.'*** It has eternal significance, ***'it abideth for ever, it abideth for ever,'*** remarkable.

"As The Mountains Are Round About Jerusalem, So The LORD Is Round About His People"

And then he says this, ***"As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever."*** (verse 2) By the way, that's you and I. The beautiful picture's there, certainly Jerusalem, ***'as the mountains are around Jerusalem, so is the LORD round about his people, from henceforth even for ever.'*** Again, highlight of the trip, in some ways, one of the highlights of the [Israel-Jerusalem] trip, how many of you are going this year? I can't tell you, I'll give things away, it's gotta be secret, no I'm just kidding. The day we traveled down the Jordan Valley and we come to the Jerusalem mountains, and we take that long ride up the Jerusalem mountains, until you come over the Mount of Olives, and all of a sudden they're lying in front of you, like a jewel, is Jerusalem, the Temple Mount, Dome of the Rock, the Golden Gate, the Eastern Gate, all of it, everything you've read about, everything you've heard about, the center of world tensions. You know, the Muslims are worshipping on Friday, the Jews are worshipping on Saturday, the Christians [Sunday-observing Christians, that is] are worshipping on Sunday, the whole world is going to go to war over that piece of ground. There's no oil there, there's no jewels there, no gold there, it's the conviction of men's hearts, you can't negotiate that away, and it's this place. And you pull over the hill and see that, and I always watch the people in the church, the tears start to run down their faces, the impression is just incredible. And the mountains around Jerusalem are a little bit higher than Jerusalem, kind of the north, west, have to

turn my head around, is mount Scopus, and on the west side is the Mount of Olives, then on the southern side is the Hill of Evil Counsel, that's where the U.N. has their headquarters. The mountains around Jerusalem, it's only on the north side there's not a mountain, which is why they always have to defend themselves there. But you see the city sitting there, with the beautiful hills and valleys all around it. The Psalmist is saying, **'You know what, those that trust in the LORD, you know what, they're like mount Zion, which will never be moved from henceforth forever. It's like the mountains that are around Jerusalem, so is the LORD around his people, from henceforth forever.'** That's the way the LORD hovers around his people, he cares for them, he watches over them, just like those mountains are around Jerusalem. Remarkable scene.

'The Sceptre Of The Wicked Shall Not Rest Upon The Lot Of The Righteous'

He says this, **"For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity."** (verse 3) Now, the idea, you can translate that "staff" for rod. It seems to bring across the idea of sceptre, the idea "is the rule of the wicked," **"the rod of the wicked shall not rest"** it's not going to remain **"upon the lot of the righteous,"** look, the world is out of kilter now, there's something wrong, there's something wrong. When Jesus Christ comes and sets up his Kingdom, things are going to be right. No child abuse, no decapitation, no divorce, no hospitals, no lawyers, no police, no armies, no old age, old people will be walking in the streets, these are 900-year-olds in the Kingdom. Just, you run down a list of what we pay for now that we ain't going to need then, it's delightful just in that respect [see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/kingdomofgod/mkg1.htm>]. He says **'the rod, the sceptre of the wicked is no longer going to rest upon the lot of the righteous,'** finally things are going to be made right, the lion and the wolf, the lamb, the calf laying down together (cf. Isaiah 11), peace restored to the earth, it says **'it's not going to rest upon the lot of the righteous.'** Interesting, **"lest"** it doesn't say it's going to happen, **"lest"**, it's like the "lest" at the end of Malachi...here it is, **"the rod of the wicked is not going to rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest"** and the Hebrew kind of says **"so that they will not put forth their hands unto iniquity."** The idea is, "God's not going to allow that to happen." He's going to rule, he's going to reign, he's going to rule the earth with a rod of iron, the rod of the wicked will no longer be upon the lot of the righteous, and God is not going to let that infection be in the earth any more, for a thousand years it's going to be set aside when he

rules the earth from Jerusalem. And no one will be tempted, the righteous will not be tempted to put their hand to iniquity.

'Do Good O LORD, To Those That Are Good, Them That Are Upright In Their Hearts'

And the Psalmist says **"Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts."** (verse 4) not a goody-two-shoes. And the idea is, their heart is towards the LORD, **"to them that are upright"** not sinless, **"upright in their hearts"** **'those that love you, those that long for you, those that are making these pilgrimages, those who come up, they lift up their eyes, LORD, those who are men of peace, they don't want to dwell with war, don't want to dwell with the wicked, LORD, those are right, do good O LORD, to those that are good, them that are upright in their hearts,'** (exposition of verse 4) **"As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel."** (verse 5) **'as to their crooked ways, that's all they want LORD, the only thing that makes them happy,'** he said over here in Psalm 123:3-4), **'they were exceedingly filled with their contempt, our soul is exceedingly filled with their scorning, those that are fat and living at ease, they're filled with contempt, LORD, they're like fat doves,'** he says, **'As for them, LORD, turn aside their crooked ways, and LORD, lead them forth with the workers of iniquity, but peace shall be upon Israel.'** (exposition of verse 5) as you watch the news today, that's an encouraging thought "peace shall be upon Israel," as you look at the Middle East, **'peace shall be upon Jerusalem.'** And those who scorn God, and scorn his ways, and scorn his Word, and scorn his people, will be dealt with. Again, God says "I will bless them that bless thee and curse them that curse thee," that's still in place, and it's proved that way through the centuries (Genesis 12:3). [Comment: I love this one example, a historic tid-bit out of World War II, and just prior to World War II. There were three Japanese ocean liners, sister ships. One took a bunch of Jewish refugees who had escaped across Siberia from Nazi Germany just prior to WWII, and they transported them from Vladivostok to British Columbia, treating them very nicely. During World War II all three ocean liners were converted to hospital ships. The other two were blown out of the water, killing everyone, when they hit naval mines. But the one that had transported the Jewish refugees to British Columbia survived the war unscathed. It even hit a mine on the stern, but had no ill effects, and not one crewmember lost their lives while serving on that ship, for the entire war. The ship is now a floating museum in, I believe, Yokohama harbor. God honoured his word in Genesis 12:3 quite literally concerning this ship and her crew.] You saw it happened with England,

you saw with Spain, it happens with every nation. The thing we should pray for with this President is that we do not turn away from supporting the nation of Israel, because that will be the last straw, it will be the last straw. And I heartily believe that most Americans still feel that we should support the nation of Israel. [Comment: currently our nation is divided in half, almost 50/50, between a rabidly alt-Left that hates God and the nation of Israel, and those that do love Israel, but sadly, there is also developing an alt-Right in the political arena of America, a divisive spirit has come into the land not seen since just before the Civil War broke out between the North and South.]

In Closing

Ah, beautiful pictures, Songs of ascent, we got through five of them, read ahead. We've got nine more of them to go through, remarkable pictures. Let's stand, let's pray, we'll have the musicians come, we'll sing. Trouble this evening, ok, ***'LORD, I'm going to lift up my eyes to the hills from whence cometh my help, my help comes from the LORD, he made heaven and earth, he will not suffer my foot to be moved, he's the keeper of Israel, he shall not slumber or sleep, the sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night,'*** and you just read through when we're struggling whatever we're going through, there's the pulling back, there's the putting in perspective. ***'Our feet shall stand within thy gates O Jerusalem. LORD, you are not going to allow the rod of the wicked to be planted and to rest on the lot of the righteous,'*** it's not gonna happen, your Kingdom is coming, and that day will be the day. And by the way, awhile before that he's going to come for his Bride [there is doctrinal disagreement as to how far "awhile before that" is going to be], to carry her over the threshold before this all starts...[connective expository sermon on Psalm 120:1-7; 121:1-8; 122:1-9; 123:1-4; 124:1-8 and Psalm 125:1-5, given by Pastor Joe Focht, Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia, 13500 Philmont Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19116]

related links:

The Songs of Ascent were sung by those ascending up to Jerusalem to keep God's Feasts, Holy Days. What do those Holy Days represent prophetically? See

<http://www.unityinchrist.com/messianicmovement/Holydayshadow.s.htm>

"Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." What about those gates? See

<http://www.unityinchrist.com/Psalms/Psalm%2024%201-10.htm>

Christ's coming Millennial Kingdom of God.
<http://www.unityinchrist.com/kingdomofgod/mkg1.htm>

see