

Israel's Place in the Plan of God
 The Songs of Ascent, Psalms 120—134
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Psalm 122

The City of God

1. I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of Jehovah.
2. Our feet are standing Within thy gates, O Jerusalem,
3. Jerusalem, that art builded As a city that is compact together;
4. Whither the tribes go up, even the tribes of Jehovah,
 For an ordinance for Israel,
To give thanks unto the name of Jehovah.
5. For there are set thrones for judgment, The thrones of the house of David.
6. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: They shall prosper that love thee.
7. Peace be within thy walls, And prosperity within thy palaces.
8. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.
9. For the sake of the house of Jehovah our God, I will seek thy good (Psalm 122).

The Songs of Ascent are thought by some scholars to have come out of the time of Hezekiah, for to such scholars there appear to be indications pointing in the direction of the conditions that existed in Hezekiah's day. It is altogether possible that some of these may reflect that period of Israel's history. But if we are to give any credence to the superscription of four of these psalms (122, 124, 131, and 133), these were composed by David, the human author. Moreover, Psalm 127 is attributed to Solomon. In view of these facts, I cannot believe that all of these songs were written by some inspired psalmist in the days of Hezekiah—at least these that are attributed to David and to Solomon could not have come from that period.

The Jerusalem Of David's Day

Since Psalm 122 is attributed to David, we may believe that the Jerusalem mentioned in verses 1-3 refers to the city as it was in his day and time. Do we know anything about the Jerusalem of David's day?

Joab, at the command of David, entered the old Jebusite stronghold, going through the gutter, as is set forth by the chronicler in the historical books of the Old Testament. When the forces of David captured this stronghold, it became his capital. Archaeological discoveries reveal that this Jebusite stronghold was on Mount Ophel, the southernmost point of Mount Moriah, south of that which now is the Temple area. The old Jebusite wall has been uncovered at places. We now have a definite knowledge of this stronghold. It covers something like sixteen acres. For that day and time, it was "As a city that is compact together ..." (vs. 3). Solomon and his various successors extended the limits of the city very greatly as time passed. Thus, in order to have the proper conception of Jerusalem at any stage of its development, a person must understand the times concerning which he is studying.

When Israel, under the leadership of Joshua, entered the land of Palestine, the tabernacle, with the ark of the covenant and other furniture, was first set up at Gilgal (Joshua 4:15-19). Later it was located at Shiloh (Joshua 18:1). Still later it was brought to Nob, just north of the present city of Jerusalem. When David came to the throne, he wanted the tabernacle to be in the midst of Jerusalem, his capital. Thus the tabernacle was brought from Nob southward to Jerusalem. Then the ark, which had been captured by the Philistines, and which had been returned to the house of Abinadab at Kiriath-jearim (1 Sam. 7:1ff.) was brought by David, the priests, and the officials of the government to Jerusalem. Thus the worship of God was inaugurated in the city of Jerusalem by David. It was a glad and joyous occasion for the Israelites when Jerusalem became the capital of the little Israelitish kingdom, and when the worship of God was centralized at the sanctuary and made accessible to all.

Probably in commemoration of these historical facts Psalm 122 was composed. Hence the writer in verse 1 said: *"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of Jehovah."* David spoke to others, and they in turn addressed one another, saying, "Let us go unto the house of Jehovah." They were delighted at the prospect of going to the house where the God of the universe, in a symbolic manner, took up His abode and resided. Thus Israel began to speak of going up and standing in the presence of God, when they spoke of going to the Temple to worship the Almighty. In this connection, friends, may I ask you, are you glad, overjoyed, when the suggestion is made to you and you are exhorted to come and go to the house of God—which now is the church of the living God—to worship Him in spirit and in truth? May it be true of you and me!

The psalmist thinks of himself and his friends as having accepted the invitation. They have come to the city from all parts of the country and are standing within the gates of Jerusalem, the Holy City. I recall, with fondest recollections, the time when I made my first visit to the city of Jerusalem. I remember with pleasure the experience. Often I live through it again, remembering how I felt when I approached the Holy City and entered it. I also recall the first night that I spent in it. Those experiences are very dear to me. That and each succeeding visit to Jerusalem have contributed much to my spiritual development.

In our psalm we see the writer and his friends entering the Jerusalem of their day and time and hear them speaking of it thus: *"Jerusalem, that art builded As a city that is compact together ..."* Archeological evidence shows that the city was one that was compacted and built very closely together, as were all Oriental cities, towns, and fortifications.

Jerusalem Of The Future

The author, in writing Psalm 122, followed the law of double reference, which may be illustrated, as I repeatedly say, by a stereopticon which gives the dissolving effect. One picture is thrown upon the screen. The audience looks at it for a while. Presently it begins to fade. At the same time the dim outlines of another one appear upon the screen. By the time the first picture has disappeared, the second one is in full view. Thus in verses 1-3 we see the city of David's day and time on the screen. But by the time we reach verse 4 his capital has faded and its place has been taken by another, a more glorious city. This fact is seen by the statement found in verse 5:

5. For there are set thrones for judgment, The thrones of the house of David.

In David's day there was but his single throne. But this city of Jerusalem has *thrones* of David. This is quite significant and must have a definite, specific meaning. When we realize that our Lord said to the Apostles that those of them—the Apostles—who had followed Him should in the regeneration sit upon the twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, we conclude that David was here speaking of the reign of Christ upon the earth, when He will reign in Jerusalem for a thousand years. "And Jesus said unto them. Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). We are driven to this conclusion, since at no time in the past have there been "set thrones for Judgment, The thrones of the house of David." But since this condition will exist in the Millennial Age, we are driven, by cold facts, to the conclusion that in verses 4 and 5 we get a picture of Jerusalem as it will be when our Lord returns.

In verse 4 we are told that the tribes go up to Jerusalem for "an ordinance for Israel, To give thanks unto the name of Jehovah." In the past the tribes of Israel were commanded to go to that place when they reached the land of Canaan, where God would place His name, and there appear before the Lord for worship. All the males within a certain age limit were commanded to appear before the Lord three times a year (Deut. 16). At these three outstanding feasts the Jews joyfully and gladly went up to Jerusalem and thus appeared before the Lord.

But their going up in the past was only typical of the time when they will go up from year to year to worship Jehovah of hosts, the Great King, in the Kingdom Age. From various passages of Scripture we know that the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech. 14) will be observed during our Lord's reign. Moreover, the Passover likewise will be observed during the Kingdom Age, as we see in Luke 22:14-18. In reading this last passage one should notice particularly that verses 14-18 deal with the observance of the Passover by our Lord and His Apostles on the night on which He was betrayed; but Immediately after this paschal supper, He instituted what is known as "the Lord's Supper," the account of which is found in Luke 22:19-23. As to how much of the ritualism of the Old Covenant will be reestablished and observed, we cannot say. But we know that Israel will go up to Jerusalem from year to year to worship Jehovah.

In Ezekiel, chapters 40-48, we have a description—very much in detail—of the mountain of Jehovah's house, the city of Jerusalem, and the great millennial temple which will be the house of prayer for all the nations. At that time Israel will be in the land promised to him by the Lord. That portion given to Abraham, which we call Palestine, will be divided into equal sections: one portion for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. But the top of this mountain of Jehovah's house will be where the millennial Jerusalem will stand. At that time it will cover one hundred square miles. The temple of Jehovah, the house of prayer for all the nations, will be thirty miles north of the city. The priests and the Levites will occupy the greater portion of the summit of this mountain in order that they might carry on their official duties in connection with the worship of God in that glorious era.

Then all nations—for all peoples will then turn to the Lord and be saved—will go up to Jerusalem to worship Jehovah the true and living God. The prophets spoke in the most glowing terms of the streams of pilgrims as they will go up from the ends of the earth to worship Jehovah. (As an example, read Isaiah 2:1-4 and Micah 4:1-7.) At that time Jehovah, who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, in His glorified body, will teach the nations that go up from year to year to worship Him and the Holy Trinity. He will teach, not only the law of God, but also the Word of God, the message of revelation concerning the spiritual life as well as the various laws that will govern the nations upon the earth. The saints of the

present age will help administer this righteous reign. There will of course have to be local courts in every community to adjust all differences that may arise among the people who will be here upon the earth in the flesh at that time. But the Lord Jesus Christ will be the Supreme Court Justice who will render decisions that arise between the nations, the larger groups, the ethnical units.

The Eternal Jerusalem

We have already distinguished between the Jerusalem of David's day and the Jerusalem of the Millennial Period, the pictures of which blend one into the other, as we have already seen. In this connection it will be well for us to recall that the city of Jerusalem during the Millennium will cover one hundred square miles of territory. We must, however, differentiate between it and the eternal Jerusalem, of which we read in the Book of Revelation, chapters 21 and 22. At the end of the Millennium—when the judgment of the great white throne is set—the present material heavens and earth will pass away. Then God will create the eternal order—the eternal heavens, the eternal earth, and the eternal Jerusalem, which comes down out of the heavens of that day and time and rests upon that eternal earth. This city will be enormous, being 1,500 miles in length, 1,500 miles in breadth, and the same in height. When a person realizes these facts, he can never confound the millennial Jerusalem, in which our Lord reigns for a thousand years, with the eternal Jerusalem of the eternal order.

Pray for The Peace of Jerusalem

One of the characteristics of the Psalms is that the writer very frequently describes in the most glowing terms some vision of the future, speaking of those conditions as if they were already in existence. Following this, he would pray—and urge others to do the same—for the realization of his vision. Thus, after giving us a picture of the great millennial Jerusalem in 122:4,5 our author then realizes the need of prayer, recognizing that prayer changes things, and that prayer, as someone has forcefully said, unties the hands of God and permits Him to develop His plans and purposes among men. The psalmist therefore urged in verse 6:

6. *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: They shall prosper that love thee.* (Jerusalem)

We shall never be able to realize the force that prayer is in the spiritual world until we see eye to eye and face to face with our Lord. By faith we must take this exhortation and pray daily for the peace of Jerusalem. In this connection, read Isaiah 62:6,7. Believers are to take no rest and to give God no rest until He makes Jerusalem the praise in all the earth, the capital of the millennial earth.

There is a special promise of blessing to those who really and truly love Jerusalem. In their loving Jerusalem they will naturally love the people who inhabit the city, and to whom the city and the nation of Israel belong. There is no place or room for anti-Semitism in the heart of any Christian.

According to verse 7 the author prays that peace may be within the walls of Jerusalem, and that prosperity may reside as a permanent guest in her palaces. We know that this will be realized when our Lord returns. There can be no peace and no genuine prosperity in Jerusalem or anywhere else until the Lord of glory returns, who alone can stop all wars and establish a righteous and a just peace. The psalmist, being bound together by not only fleshly, but also spiritual ties, declares that he will now say: "Peace be within thee," that is, in the city of Jerusalem.

He concludes this marvelous revelation by saying:

9. For the sake of the house of Jehovah our God I will seek thy good.

May we always have the glory of God and the salvation and the blessing of humanity at heart. Thus may we seek the good of all.