**“HAPPY TO BE IN CHURCH”**

**PSALM 122**

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INTRODUCTION

Original background—David’s Jerusalem as the central place of worship and justice.

The psalm was written with the typical pilgrim worshipper in view; he has just arrived at the city.

We get some perspective on the future peace of Jerusalem, and on the present day application of vv. 6-9.

As we proceed, let us focus on *application to our worship today*.

In this psalm, the author expresses his deep love for Jerusalem (v. 6), and pledges to pray for Jerusalem’s peace and encourages others to do so also (vv. 6-9); he uses the noun “peace” three times in this short psalm (vv.6, 7, and 8) and also uses both the verbal root and the cognate noun for the terms “prosper/prosperity” (vv. 6, 7). Such an emphasis upon “peace” connects this psalm with Ps. 120, and the arrival in Jerusalem of the pilgrims in v. 2 connects it with Psalm 121. He mentions Jerusalem by name three times (vv. 2, 3, and 6), describes it as the designated place to which worshippers are to go for the worship of Yahweh (vv. 1-4), and also as the place where Yahweh established the thrones of the house of David to rule over Israel (v. 5). The expression “the house of the LORD” frames the entire psalm (vv. 1, 9).

Did the house of the Lord exist in David’s time, and did he write this psalm. Yes, and yes. Although David was forbidden to build such a “house” (II Sam. 7:5, 13) and Solomon did so (I K. 5:3, 5; 8:10; p. 872), the expression “house of Yahweh” itself does not have to reference the temple building, since the OT uses the expression for the tabernacle in I Sam. 1:7, 24; II Sam. 12:20; and possibly Jud. 19:18. There was worship centered in Jerusalem at Mount Zion even in the days of David, and there is no reason why the worshippers would not come up to the place of the Ark for worship during the annual festivals, especially if David had the ark situated there more than 20 years by the time he wrote this psalm (cf. Leupold, p. 872). After all, the ark was the central and most important feature of both the Tabernacle and later of the Temple. Moreover, the mention of legal proceedings in Jerusalem in David’s time is quite natural (v. 5).

**There is a miniature of this gladness in any meeting for true worship**. When the worshiper is at the “house of the LORD” (vv. 1, 9), his experience of awe and reverence overcome all efforts it has taken to get to the sacred place. One day the believer, in the words of Jude 24, will find himself standing “in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy”—a final and far greater fulfillment than all such preliminary experiences such as described in Ps. 122.

1. THE INVITATION AND ARRIVAL (vv. 1-2).
2. Love for God’s house and people (1).
3. “Glad over those who said to me”—he liked these kind of people, and of course what they were saying to him. He loved God’s house.
4. They knew that he was in sympathy with “going.”
5. Enthusiasm at Arrival (2).
6. Ancient Israelite standing in the gates of Jerusalem.
7. A church member gathered for worship.
8. A future standing in the presence of the Lord (Jude 24--read).
9. THE BONDS OF UNITY (vv. 3-5).

The picture painted here of Jerusalem’s internal unity is an outward portrayal of the inward unity of purpose and worship of the true people of God depicted later in vv. 4 and 8. The Jerusalem in the days of our Lord was the exact opposite of this ideal portrait—“the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her,” and who would not have anything to do with He who came to “gather her children together” (Lk. 13:34**). But, this unity will indeed be the picture of the ultimate unity in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10ff).**

1. The compactness of the city (3).
2. Compare the verb as used in Ex. 26:11 for the binding together of the tent (tabernacle).
3. As a city, the reference is to its solid architecture, defense, royal personnel, etc.
4. The Union of the Tribes (4).
5. The diversity of the tribes.
6. The unity in the Lord (see Eph. 4:3-6)

The unity depicted in v. 3 is also manifested in a variety as seen in all “the tribes” of Israel” here, and when “all the nations will come and worship before You” in Rev. 15:4. In this text the ties of union are not only national, but are centered in Yahweh—the “tribes of Yahweh.” In Jerusalem they met not only one another (v. 8), but especially Yahweh Himself.

1. The obedience to the divine command—“testimony/ordinance’ (cf. Dt. 12:13-14).

The noun “testimony” is often used in Psalm 119 as a synonym for the revealed Word of God—that is the Law of Yahweh to which He authoritatively “testified” when He instituted such laws. English translations often render the noun “ordinance” with the same meaning. David speaks specifically of the command to go up to Jerusalem for the three annual festivals (e.g. Dt. 16:1-17). Jerusalem was “the place that Yahweh would choose” as mentioned by Moses (see Dt. 12:5; 14:23; 16:16). To such demands Yahweh has borne “testimony.”

1. The worship—giving thanks.

* Not the pagan emphasis upon personal prosperity.

1. The object of worship—“the name of the Lord.”
2. The righteousness of the Justice (5; see Dt. 17:8-9—shows that the political center would be where the religious center was located.).
3. The Lord had established the Davidic lineage of rulers (see II Sam. 7).
4. The opening “for” shows that Jerusalem became the religious center due to the fact that Yahweh had made it the political center from which David and his successors ruled. But, Jerusalem first became the civil headquarters of David (II Sam. 5:9; 6:12) before the Ark of the Covenant was brought up and it also became the religious headquarters. But to the people of Israel the two stood together.
5. The plural “thrones” refers to those subsidiary thrones for those ruling under David, and also of his lineage of rulers following him.
6. THE PRAYER FOR PEACE (vv. 6-9).

The emphasis upon “peace” and “security.” Such peace for Jerusalem “will ensure its stability and accessibility, in order that God’s people might be able always to journey to the **house of the LORD”** (ESV St. Bib. p. 1104). The goals for Jerusalem’s future are quite lofty, and God’s people must work for the fulfillment of that goals, so that what they pray for may actually happen. Also, the “pride” in the city expressed in vv. 1-5 could easily be distorted into sinful pride and vainglory if Israel does not seek Yahweh in prayer for His genuine blessing upon His people and especially upon His chosen city, including the sanctuary (v. 9).

1. The Request (6a).
2. The tabernacle in Jerusalem was God’s established place for worship in that day; do church members today seek the “peace” of their place of worship?
3. The literal meaning of the verb is “ask.”
4. Compare the expression, “May Peace be unto you” as a common greeting.
5. Peace has it full implication of “well-being” in every way, spiritually, physically, financially, emotionally; the verb and noun have the idea of being complete, completeness, soundness. Jerusalem is the object of this peace—the city benefiting from such peace. The name “Jerusalem” has the noun “peace” as part of its name (cf. Heb. 7:2); note also the term “security in v. 7 along with the verb “be secure” here in v. 6 from a very similar root form. The word play by David is obvious. Even the verb “ask, pray” uses the same two letters found in the other three terms.
6. The Response (6b-7).
7. For true believers—“who love her”—“they shall prosper.” All the chosen people of God are the lovers of Jerusalem here.
8. Extensive well-being for the city.
9. Her “walls and palaces”; both outward fortifications (ramparts) and inward strengthening.
10. Her peace and prosperity.
11. The Reasons (8-9).
12. For the blessing of others—“brothers and friends.”
13. Certainly we need to reach and care for our loved ones; we want them to spiritually prosper!
14. “May I say/speak peace concerning/to be in you.”
15. David uses two terms speaking of not only literal relatives and close friends, but all those with whom he is close and has some kind of congenial relationship. David is concerned for all of his subjects over whom he reigns. With all such persons David “forms a loving brotherhood who worship together, pray together and seek each other’s welfare as the people of God” (cf. Ps. 133; *NASB St. Bib.*, 873). So it must be with Christian worshipers today. **With our brethren are our closest ties, and together we must meet before the throne of grace until one day we permanently stand before His throne in glory.**
16. For the Glory of God (9)—i.e. “God’s house.”
17. So today, the church is the Lord’s, not ours.
18. We need to ‘seek her good’.

The “good” of which David speaks here is a close synonym of the “peace” to which he refers three times. **Seeking such “good” “had no upper limit,” and “for the Christian it has, besides, no territorial boundary.” See Hebrews 12:22-24 for “the inspiring implications of this”** (K.).

1. Do we really want what is best for the church?

CONCLUSION

As for Jerusalem, Jesus brought what was good for their ‘peace.’ Jesus’ lament over the Jerusalem of His day sheds light on the prayer of this psalm. They considered Him a threat (Jn. 11:48), and rejected Him and His plan. They brought down ruin and destruction upon themselves (Lk. 19:41-28). He could have shown them “the things which make for peace, but now they have been hidden from your eyes” (Lk. 23:41-42).

Today we can pray for Jerusalem’s peace—which they can experience when they repent and respond to their Messiah (Mt. 23:39). They are not yet under the full favor of God as they reject Him. Nations rise and fall often based at least in part upon their treatment of Israel, and in the millennial future their existence and prosperity will depend upon their treatment of the covenant nation.

We can see many applications to our church today. We must not be so focused upon the future glorious worship with believers in heaven that we neglect the very practical responsibilities given to us here with our fellow believers (Heb. 13:1-8).