

## *Songs of Ascents: 122, 123, 124*

## *Psalms that lift the soul*

Each psalm in Psalms 120-134 has the title “a song of ascents.”

*Ascents* may refer to pilgrimages up to Jerusalem for Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.

So far we have covered Psalms 120 and 121.

Psalm 120 called to the Lord for help against liars and people who hate peace.

In Psalm 121 the Maker of heaven and earth helps you and always watches over you.

Do you go to church, or do you come to church?

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### ***Psalm 122***

*A song of ascents. Of David.*

*<sup>1</sup> I rejoiced with those who said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD.”*

*<sup>2</sup> Our feet are standing in your gates, O Jerusalem.*

*<sup>3</sup> Jerusalem is built like a city that is closely compacted together.*

*<sup>4</sup> That is where the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, to praise the name of the LORD according to the statute given to Israel.*

*<sup>5</sup> There the thrones for judgment stand, the thrones of the house of David.*

*<sup>6</sup> Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May those who love you be secure.*

*<sup>7</sup> May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels.”*

*<sup>8</sup> For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say, “Peace be within you.”*

*<sup>9</sup> For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your prosperity.*

Write your own one-sentence summary of this psalm.

Why do you think it brought David so much joy to go to the house of the LORD?

What brings you joy in going (or coming) to the house of the LORD?

Concentrate on verses 3-5. What made Jerusalem such a special place?

Hebrews 12:22 tells us Christians, “You have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem.” Concentrate on verses 6-7. How do we put these words into practice as Christians?

In verses 8-9 what are David’s top priorities?

Where do you find Jesus Christ in this psalm?

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**Psalm 123**

*A song of ascents.*

*<sup>1</sup> I lift up my eyes to you, to you who whose throne is in heaven.*

*<sup>2</sup> As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master,  
as the eyes of a maid look to the hand of her mistress,  
so our eyes look to the LORD our God, till he shows us his mercy.*

*<sup>3</sup> Have mercy on us, O LORD, have mercy on us, for we have endured much contempt.*

*<sup>4</sup> We have endured much ridicule from the proud, much contempt from the arrogant.*

Write your own one-sentence summary of this psalm.

Note how similar 123:1 is to 121:1 (“*I lift up my eyes to the hills...*”). It is an uplifting beginning.

Explain how the two similes in verse 2 describe our relationship with the Lord.

How does the writer show how adamant the prayer is in verse 3?

What difficulty did the writer and his fellow believers experience?

How do we experience similar difficulty now?

## **Psalm 124**

*A song of ascents. Of David.*

*<sup>1</sup> If the LORD had not been on our side—let Israel say—  
<sup>2</sup> if the LORD had not been on our side when men attacked us,  
<sup>3</sup> when their anger flared against us, they would have swallowed us alive;  
<sup>4</sup> the flood would have engulfed us, the torrent would have swept over us,  
<sup>5</sup> the raging waters would have swept us away.  
<sup>6</sup> Praise be to the LORD, who has not let us be torn by their teeth.  
<sup>7</sup> We have escaped like a bird from the fowler's snare;  
    *the snare has been broken, and we have escaped.*  
<sup>8</sup> Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.*

Write your own one-sentence summary of this psalm.

What is unsettling about the first word in the psalm?

David uses three images to describe how threatening the enemies are. Find the three.

How did verses 6-7 come true in Israel's history?

How have verses 6-7 come true in the lives of Christians?

Note how similar 124:8 is to 121:2 ("*My help comes from...*"). It is an uplifting confidence.

Martin Luther wrote a hymn based on this psalm (hymn 202 CW). It was published in 1524.

*If God had not been on our side and had not come to aid us,  
our foes with all their pow'r and pride would surely have dismayed us,  
for we, his flock, would have to fear the devil's wolves, both far and near, who rise in might against us.  
Their furious wrath, did God permit, would surely have consumed us  
and as a deep and yawning pit with life and limb entombed us.  
A hellish storm would o'er us roll from Satan, who desires our soul and seeks to overwhelm us.  
Blest be the Lord, who foiled their threat that they could not devour us.  
Our souls, like birds, escaped their net; they could not overpower us.  
The snare is broken—we are free! Our helper and our strength is he who made the earth and heavens.*