

Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem

Scripture Reading: Psalm 122

This psalm belongs to a group of psalms called “The Songs of Degrees” or “The Songs of Ascents.” Fifteen psalms (120 – 134) were sung by Jewish pilgrims on their way “up” to Jerusalem – which was about 2700 feet in elevation). There were three special occasions for doing this: 1) The Feast of Unleavened Bread; 2) The Feast of Pentecost; 3) The Feast of Tabernacles (or Feast of Booths). They would start from far away. As they ascended towards Jerusalem they would stop at certain stations and sing these psalms. They would end their procession at the Temple (See Psalm 134). This gives insight into the meaning of Psalm 121:1. The hills are not just any hills, which we might look at and think of the God who created them. These are the hills of Jerusalem, which are being climbed to arrive at The House of God / The Temple, Where God meets with His people; where the blood of sacrifice and atonement is offered. Among these hills the Son of God would eventually offer Himself as the ultimate and complete sacrifice for the sins of the world (John 19:1-22; Luke 23:32-33; Hebrews 10:1-14; 13:11-12).

Psalm 122 draws our attention to the importance of Jerusalem to the Jewish people. It was the place of focus for the spiritual lives of God’s people. God gave them that place. He met with them there through the ordinances which were carried out in the temple. The whole nation had only one temple – one official meeting place to do God’s business. Jerusalem, Mount Zion, the Temple, and the Ark of the Covenant: all were called God’s “footstool” in the sense that Israel would come and sit at the feet of the Lord, be instructed, guided, forgiven and blessed. See I Chronicles 28:2; Psalm 99:5; 132:7; Lamentations 2:1. Here are other passages that show the importance of the city of Jerusalem to the Jews: Matthew 5:32; Psalm 48; 84; 87.

[Note: there are other uses of the word “footstool” that denote God’s greatness above the earth and His future victory over all of His enemies, bringing them into submission. See Isaiah 66:1; Acts 7:49; Psalm 110:1; Matthew 22:44; Hebrews 10:12-13 and many more.]

Daniel’s great burden to know the mind of the Lord included a tremendous concern for the city of Jerusalem (Daniel 9:2, 7, 12, 16-19, 24-26). Daniel would pray, facing Jerusalem, three times a day

– even when it was a capital offense, by law, to do so! See Daniel 6 – especially vs. 10.

So, with all of this emphasis on the importance of Jerusalem to the Jews, is Psalm 122 only telling **them** to pray for its peace? Should Christians pay any attention to this psalm? Should Christians have a passionate and compassionate interest in this ancient city?

Four ways for Christians to pray, as instructed in Psalm 122:6 – We are instructed to “pray for the peace of Jerusalem.” We are promised prosperity if we love this city. There are four ways that a Christian can apply this passage to their prayer life:

- **Literally** – For the Jews

The psalm was written by David (a Jew) for Jews of the Old Covenant. We can pray for Jews (and Israel) today. See Romans 9:1-5; 10:1; 11:1-2a. We should feel indebted to the Jews for how God has used them in our lives and the world (John 4:20-22; Romans 9:4-5; 11:25-31; 15:25-28). Anti-Semitism (*hostility, prejudice, or discrimination against Jews*) is a historic problem in the world and is very prevalent today. See Psalm 83.

- **Spiritually** – For the Christians

Today, God’s spiritual house is the New Testament Church (I Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 2:11-22; I Peter 2:3-10). We can pray for the unity of the believers and for their faithful service in the Kingdom of Christ (Psalm 133 cp. Romans 15:5-7; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 2:14-16; Colossians 3:12-17).

- **Geo-Politically** – For the World

If there is no peace in Jerusalem, there will be no peace in the world. I Timothy 2:1-2 applies to all nations (as does I Timothy 2:3-6) not just our own nation.

- **Prophetically** – For the Return of Christ

There will be no real and lasting peace until Christ physically returns to Jerusalem and establishes His kingdom on earth (Isaiah 2:1-4 cp. Zechariah 14:1-7). “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20-21)