

**June 9**

**Scriptures:** Read Psalms 120-124

**Key Verse:** “I will lift up my eyes to the hills —from whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord...” (Psalm 121: 1, 2)

## **Overview**

Psalms 120 to 134 form a collection called the “Songs of Ascent”. This likely refers to the pilgrimage of worshippers who have to ascend in order to get to Jerusalem. The city is topographically higher than the surrounding land. These songs may have been sung as the pilgrims went up to Jerusalem on the joyous occasions of the great feasts when they went to worship in the House of the Lord.

The writer of Psalm 120 is greatly distressed because his neighbours showed him animosity. Unlike his adversaries, who were violent and loved war (metaphorically described as the barbaric people of Meshech and Kedar), he was a man of peace, therefore he did not take vengeance against them, though they maliciously slandered him. He went to the Lord in prayer. His past experiences of God’s faithfulness strengthened the faith that God would again save him, and indeed God heard him. Since the enemies’ lying lips and false tongues were like sharp fiery arrows that hit him, they deserved to be shot with equally sharp arrows, and to suffer upon burning hot coals (cf. Jer. 9:3, 8; Prov. 26:18,19; James 3:6). Significantly, we learn from the New Testament that this type of lying people will indeed suffer upon burning coals, for they shall go to the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8).

Psalm 121 teaches us that our loving God is interested in us and He continually watches over us and cares for us. The psalmist’s face is toward Jerusalem, which is in the hill country. He looks up with faith and expectancy toward the Holy City of God. In the Lord’s House is the presence of the Almighty God. He who created the universe, condescended to be near His people and to be their source of help (119:151). God watches over His people, not only collectively, but individually. He is a personal God (33:13-14; 2 Chron. 16:9; Prov. 15:3; Heb. 4:13). Unlike the unanswering Baal whom Elijah taunted about sleeping (1 Kings 18:27), our God never sleeps. He is ever watchful to protect us from harm (e.g. Jonah 4:6). He is the One who preserves us, physically and spiritually, at all times, wherever we are, even into eternity (cf. Gen. 28:15).

Psalm 122 may have been the song the joyous pilgrims sang after they had entered the gates of Jerusalem. As such, it serves as a sequel to the previous two songs of ascent. Those who came to worship God, from all the tribes or families, were so glad to congregate together in unity for the purpose of giving thanks to the Lord. We, likewise should count it a joy and a privilege to have fellowship in God’s House with other believers. One of the things for which the worshippers thanked God was the righteous and just rule of their king (possibly David himself or one of his descendants who, like David, did what was right in the sight of the Lord). Their desire was to see the continuance of worship to the Lord at His Holy House which would be possible only if Jerusalem was secure, prosperous, and peaceful. Therefore, they resolved to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. This ultimately means to pray for Jerusalem to see the true peace of God that is found

only in His Son Jesus, the Prince of Peace, who will come as the King of the world, to rule and reign from His Holy City, the New Jerusalem.

In the previous psalm, the pilgrims lifted up their eyes to the House of the Lord. Now, in Psalm 123, they lift up their eyes to the Lord Himself, for only He can deliver them from their distress. The look of the eye can often communicate better than words. We are to be the Lord's submissive servants, always watching our Master that we may do His bidding for His pleasure. Just as the servant waits patiently to receive favour from his master, so we can look to God for mercy, and our Master knows our every need.

Psalm 124 beautifully describes God's deliverance, expressing that if God is for us, who can be against us (Rom. 8:31)? If it had not been that the Lord was on their side, the pilgrims' destruction would be certain. God rescued them, just in the nick of time, before the flood waters of death overcame them. In gratitude and confidence in Him, the rescued pilgrims express their thanks by blessing the Lord, who has not only given them life, but who has given them justice, mercy, and new-found freedom to enjoy life, like a bird released from captivity (cf. 91:3). Through Jesus Christ, we too have been made free indeed! (John 8:36; Gal. 5:1).

## **Prayer**

Lord God, we lift up our eyes to You today and every day for help and protection. You are our Keeper, the Maker of heaven and earth who never sleeps or slumbers. We put our faith and trust in You to protect us from all evil. Thank You for the freedom from fear we have as we rest in Your perfect love.