

Psalms of Ascent
Lesson Two
Sunday September 22nd 2019

Psalm 120

- A. Opening Questions:
 - 1. What do you do as a way to prepare to worship?
 - 2. Do you do anything to prepare while you are still at home?
 - 3. What are you normally feeling on Sunday morning as you get ready to come for worship?
- B. Point of Review from last week;
 - a. the Psalms of Ascent were used by worshippers who were on their way to Jerusalem for worship.
 - b. They would sing them on the way and these songs would help them prepare for worship.
- C. Discussion:
 - a. The attitude of the worshipper in this Psalm is one of distress.
 - 2. The distress is being caused by the slander of others; the Psalmist is the victim of sin/injustice committed against them.
 - 3. In response to this injustice this person cries out to God.
 - 4. We do not get the impression that this person found justification? (No)
 - 5. We are told however, that God answered his prayer. How so?
 - a. This person was reminded by God that he will exact justice.
 - 6. Why would the Psalms of Ascent begin in such a dark and sad way?
 - a. We might expect a section of Psalms designed to prepare us for worship to open with bright praise.
 - b. Worship doesn't begin when we enter the building, or when the music starts.
 - c. Worship begins with longing in our heart.
 - d. Worship begins with a sense of "this can't be it."
 - e. Worship begins in a place of crisis where we turn to God for what we can't find anywhere else.
 - 7. What is Meshech and Kedar?
 - a. Places far removed from the land of Israel and the Temple in Jerusalem.
 - 8. This person is communicating that they do not fit in this world.
 - a. They try to find shalom (peace) in this world but all they find is conflict.
 - b. Only God can satisfy.
 - c. This also reflects the position of the Christian who feels like they are built for another kingdom.
 - 9. Quote from Long Obedience in the same Direction. p. 25

Psalm 121

A. Opening Questions:

- a. Can you think of a time when you didn't feel safe?
- b. Would anyone be willing to share some details about that time?
- c. How would you describe your thoughts or feelings during that time?
- d. What/who helped you as you went through that time?

B. Discussion

- a. As the Psalmist is writing these words he is looking at the Hills/mountains.
 - i. We don't know which ones but perhaps it's reasonable to assume the mountains leading to Jerusalem.
- b. What do we know of the topography of the Holy Land?
 - i. A mixture of landscapes.
 - ii. A pilgrim would have crossed (low rolling hills, open plains, arid regions, lush forests, steep ascents and treacherous descents.
- c. There are many dangers which might present themselves to the pilgrim on their way to Jerusalem.
 - i. Slips, trips, and falls, heat exposure, cold at night, robbers, animals, storms.
 - ii. This Summer was I contemplating these Psalms as I did some hiking and mountain climbing.
 1. He will not allow your foot to slip was very important to the person climbing a mountain.
 2. If I (in 2019) slipped and broke my leg, others would come for me, if they (in the ancient world) slipped and broke a leg it might be disastrous.
- d. Why is it comforting to the Psalmist that God is the "Maker" of heaven and earth?
 - i. Who better to protect from the elements than the one who made it.
- e. How about the comment about sleeping and slumbering; why is this important?
 - i. God is not like other gods. (1 Kings 18:25-29)
- f. Compare the descriptions of God's actions in verses 4 & 5; how is 'The Lord is the protector of Israel, different from "The Lord is Your Protector."
 - i. The Lord is Israel's protector speaks to history.
 1. In the days of Moses...
 2. When David was fighting Philistines...
 3. When the Apostles were being pursued and imprisoned...
 - ii. The Lord is your protector brings this truth into present reality.
 1. On September 22nd 2019 at 10:00 in the morning...
- g. If you were a pilgrim on your way to worship in Jerusalem, where and when might you sing this Psalm?
- h. How do these Psalms help us prepare for worship today?