

Psalm 120:-

In these next few Bible Studies we will look at Psalms 120 – 134. These have variously been called ‘Songs of Ascents’ in RSV etc.; ‘Songs of Degrees’ in AV and, as I would prefer ‘Pilgrim Songs’. Among the theories as to the meaning of the term relate to the return from Babylon or maybe the fifteen steps from the women's’ court in the Temple to the men's court! The most likely theory is that the collection arose as a ‘hymnbook’ for pilgrims coming up to the Temple in Jerusalem for the great feasts. As we work our way through them we will note the references to ‘The House of the Lord’, ‘Mount Zion’ etc.

Psalm 120 – The Sojourn of the Pilgrims:-

Verses 1 – 2:- A Cry for Deliverance. The psalmist finds himself in the wretched plight of someone who has to associate with people given to falsehood. Many understand that there is reference here to the slanderous opposition of Sanballat and Tobiah to Nehemiah’s rebuilding of the Temple. See Nehemiah chapters 4 and 6.

Verses 3 – 4:- This is a plea for retribution. “*What shall be given to you?*”. The deceitful tongue and its owner are singled out for judgement. The answer to the rhetorical question is based on the nature of the alleged offence. Sharp arrows and hot coals will provide a fitting retribution.

Verses 5 – 7:- A lament for peace! The writer’s basic complaint is that he finds it necessary to dwell among bloodthirsty men. Meshech in Asia Minor (probably in eastern Turkey) and Kedar in the north Arabian desert (probably where Saudi Arabia is today) are used symbolically to represent barbaric powers.

As ‘the people of God’ living in the world but not of the world, it is worth using this Psalm in the context of the prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ for us His people, see the Gospel of John chapter 17, especially verses 14 – 20. Remember that we are included in the prayer as those who have believed in the word passed down through the apostles.

Remember also that “*we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead . . .*” read 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 3 – 6.

1) *Who Would True Valour See,
Let Him Come Hither;
One Here Will Constant Be,
Come Wind, Come Weather;
There's No Discouragement
Shall Make Him Once Relent
His First Avowed Intent
To Be A Pilgrim.*

2) *Who So Beset Him Round
With Dismal Stories,
Do But Themselves Confound;
His Strength The More Is.
No Lion Can Him Fright,
He'll With A Giant Fight,
But He Will Have A Right
To Be A Pilgrim.*

3) *Hobgoblin Nor Foul Fiend
Can Daunt His Spirit;
He Knows He At The End
Shall Life Inherit.
Then Fancies Flee Away;
He'll Fear Not What Men Say;
He'll Labour Night And Day
To Be A Pilgrim.*

John Bunyan 1628 - 1688