

IN PREPARATION FOR THE 50TH DISTRICT CONFERENCE – 06/20-23/2025

CHRIST, OUR JUBILEE

In just seven weeks, God's people of the Vietnamese District will gather to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its founding at the 50th Conference, hosted at the Sheraton Fairplex Suites & Conference Center in Pomona, CA. The theme of this special Conference is CHRIST, OUR JUBILEE – a reminder that Christ is the center of the Church and of every believer's life

As we draw closer to this historic event, we will dedicate one day each week to meditate on God's Word and pray specifically for the Conference, the Organizing Committee, God's Servants, the programs, all participating believers, and especially ourselves.

We will meditate God's Word on 7 Psalms, selected from the 15 Psalms known as the *Songs of Ascents* (120-134). Among them are Psalm 127, written by Solomon, and four Psalms by King David – Psalms 122, 124, 131, and 133. The remaining ten Psalms are by unknown authors.

There are several theories about the meaning behind the name *Songs of Ascents*, but two are widely accepted. The first is that these were the songs sung by the exiles returning from Babylon as they praised God on their journey back to Jerusalem. The second is that these fifteen Songs of Ascents were used by the Israelites during their pilgrimages to Jerusalem – a city set 2,700 feet high on Mount Zion, as they traveled to worship God at the three major annual festivals: Passover in the Spring, Pentecost in early Summer, and the Feast of Tabernacles in the Fall. As God's people ascended the holy hill together, they joyfully sang these songs, preparing their hearts and minds to remember and celebrate all that God had done for their nation.

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#### WEEK 1 – MAY 5-10, 2025

#### Psalm 120: Christ, Our Refuge

At first glance, Psalm 120 may seem like an unusual choice for the Israelites' joyful pilgrimage to Jerusalem, as it begins with "*trouble*" (verse 1) and ends with "*war*" (verse 7). Yet remembering God's mercy, guidance, and protection during past hardships plays a vital role in strengthening faith in the present. The pilgrims began their songs of praise by reflecting on the difficulties they had faced – times that, though painful, revealed God as their solid refuge, the One who hears and "*answers*" them (verse 1).

**THE CIRCUMSTANCES** (verses 1-2). The author begins by saying he is in "*trouble*" – a word rooted in the Hebrew verb meaning "*to bind*" or "*to tie up*." It conveys the intense emotional pressure a person feels when facing external threats or internal struggles caused by wrong decisions or passions. Here, the author describes being surrounded by "*lying lips*" and "*deceitful tongues*" (verse 2), and by people who "*are for war*" (verse 7).

Who are these adversaries seeking to attack the author? The author says, “*I sojourn in Meshech and dwell among the tents of Kedar*” (verse 5). Since Meshech was located near the Black Sea and Kedar was in the Arabian Desert, these references are likely not meant to describe literal locations. Instead, it seems the author is living in his own homeland among his own people, yet feels a deep sense of alienation, as if he were a foreigner, because those around him are deceitful, constantly seeking to harm him. They are people who do not fear God, and perhaps even people who do not know Him at all.

The pilgrims shared the same experience as the author during their exile in Babylon, living among foreigners; and even after returning to the Promised Land, they still faced daily hardships caused by the wickedness of those around them.

Like the pilgrims, each of us experiences this to some degree. Living in this world, we all face lies, deceit, and even attacks, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual. Spiritually, we all once walked through dark days when we did not know God. But by His mercy, God chose us, called us to be His children (Romans 8:28-30), and gave us new life and every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 2:1-7).

Perhaps over the past 50 years, the District has likely faced many of these same “*troubles*.” Established by God, the District began with a small group of His people from Vietnam who came to the United States after the war in our homeland. In a remarkable turn, it was in the midst of that “*trouble*” that the first churches in the District were founded in Lincoln, NE, and San Diego, CA, on June 29, 1975. Over the decades, the District has encountered opposition from both outside and within, from those with “*lying lips*” and “*deceitful tongues*,” from those who are “*for war*.” As we prepare for the 50th Conference, it is fitting that we start by reflecting on the “*troubles*” we have faced together, as individuals, families, churches, and as a District.

**THE SOLUTION** (verses 1-7). First, the author “*cried to the Lord*,” asking Him to deliver him from “*lying lips and deceitful tongues*” (verses 1–2). In times of adversity, we all face choices. We can worry, complain, or try to manipulate our circumstances. Or we can pray. The author’s “*trouble*” ultimately works for his good (Romans 8:28), because it forces him to make a choice. And he wisely chooses the path of prayer, to kneel before God and seek His help. This is the first part of the true solution.

Second, the author places his complete trust in God’s goodness, faithfulness, and power (verses 3-4). He has experienced firsthand that God never abandons him and is always willing to listen to his cry and “*answer*” him (verse 1).

The enemy seeks to use difficulties and afflictions to pull us away from God, hoping to lead us into wrong choices by tempting us to compromise with evil and the wicked. But God, in His good and wise purpose, allows us to face these “*troubles*” so that, with absolute faith in Him, we can experience great spiritual growth and results (James 1:2-4).

The author’s faith is also reflected in his trust in God’s judgment upon the wicked. Verses 3-4 can be understood in two ways: first, as a prayer asking God to punish the wicked; and second, as a declaration of God’s judgment on them. Regardless of how we interpret it, the author

chooses not to retaliate against the wicked but to entrust retribution to the hands of the righteous God.

God declares His judgment on those with *“lying lips,” “deceitful tongues,”* and those who *“are for war.”* He will bring destruction to the wicked and to those who do not fear Him. However, as God’s people, we must always remember that their punishment is in His hands, not ours. In His perfect timing, He will expose them and remove them.

In *“trouble,”* the author chose to pray and trust God, but he also implemented a third solution, which is to persevere in living according to God’s Word (verses 5-7). It would have been very easy for the author to repay evil with evil, but here, he cried out to the Lord to deliver him from deceit and deception. The deceit and deception of whom? Of course, of the wicked, those who do not fear God, but also possibly his own! He asks God to save him from the attack of the wicked and also asks God to save him from committing the same sins as them. And no matter how many people *“are for war”* with the author, he still perseveres in pursuing *“peace”* (verse 7).

In the midst of *“trouble,”* the author chose to pray and trust God, but he also embraced a third solution: to persevere in living according to God’s Word (verses 5-7). It would have been easy for him to repay evil with evil, but instead, he cried out to the Lord for deliverance from deceit and deception. Deceit and deception from whom? Certainly from the wicked, those who do not fear God, but perhaps also from his own! He asks God to save him not only from the attacks of the wicked but also from falling into the same sins they commit. No matter how many *“are for war”* against him, he remains steadfast in pursuing *“peace”* (verse 7).

There is no excuse for the sins we commit when we disobey God. We live among those who *“are for war”* and sow lies, but we must remember that we are children of God, *“the peacemakers”* (Matthew 5:9). We are called to confront lies with truth (Matthew 5:33-37) and to repay hatred with love (Matthew 5:43-45).

Let us pray for ourselves, for the Church, and for the District, that in every *“trouble,”* we would always make God’s Word the foundation of all our actions and decisions. May we become *“the salt of the earth and the light of the world”* (Matthew 5:13-14).

Today, we are blessed with great privileges through salvation: the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and Christ, who sits at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us. Christ, our refuge, is the One who will lead us through all *“troubles.”* Hallelujah. Praise the Lord.

**PRAYER.** First and foremost, offer God words of praise and thanksgiving, for He is our Lord, the faithful, good, and loving One who always sees and cares for the lives of His children.

Pray for yourself and your family, that you may remain steadfast in trusting God and committed to living according to His Word in every circumstance.

Also, take time to pray for the District Executive Committee and God’s servants, that they may receive God’s grace, fear Him, and obey His Word as they lead the Church and the District.