

## CHRIST, OUR JUBILEE

WEEK 2 – MAY 12-17, 2025

### Psalm 121: Christ, Our Protection

A week has passed, and like the pilgrims on their way back to Jerusalem, we are closer to the day when we will meet one another at the 50<sup>th</sup> District Conference. In order to fully experience the joy God gives us on our spiritual journey and also at our 50<sup>th</sup> Conference, this week we are going to meditate on Psalm 121 to prepare our hearts for this important event.

Psalm 121 is called the Psalm of the Pilgrims or the Psalm of the Travelers, a very familiar Psalm beloved by many of God's children throughout the ages.

Psalm 121 may have been sung by the Israelites as they went on a very difficult and arduous journey traveling on treacherous roads and winding hills to return to the Promised Land from Babylon. However, many believe that this could be the Psalm that groups of pilgrims sang responsively as they went up to the Temple in Jerusalem to attend the annual Feasts. Perhaps Jesus, along with Joseph, Mary, and His siblings, also sang this Psalm as they traveled from Nazareth to Jerusalem for the Feast.

Psalm 121 has two voices – verses 1-2 are the voice of a traveler, and from verses 3-8 is another voice, it's possibly that of a priest, or perhaps from the groups traveling together.

If Psalm 120 is the state of a person besieged by adversities, then Psalm 121 opens with an affirmation of faith in God

**AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** (verses 1-2<sup>a</sup>). At that time, the pilgrimage back to Jerusalem was much more difficult than our upcoming trip to the Conference. The pilgrims didn't have smooth paved roads, only dusty trails crossing valleys, following rivers, and passing over hills and mountains. The rough, rocky paths could cause the traveler's feet to "*slip*" or "*be moved*" (verse 3), the scorching sun could "*strike you by day*," and then "*by night*" (verse 6) there could be dangers from wild animals or robbers.

Having been weary and worried, the pilgrim saw the mountains of Jerusalem in the distance and sang: "*I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?*" (verse 1). There are several different interpretations concerning "*the hills*" which are mentioned here. It's possible that the pilgrim was seeing dangers and difficulties which "*the hills*" represented on his journey to the Holy Land. It could also mean that he was seeing "*the hills*," with their "*high places*," which were the places of worship for the Canaanites. These "*high places*" are mentioned seventy-eight times in the Old Testament, which the Hebrews did not destroy when they occupied Canaan, and they themselves often worshiped idols there (2 Kings 16:4; Jeremiah 3:23; 13:27; 17:2; 50:6; Ezekiel 18:6, 15; Hosea 4:11-13). "*Hills*" could also be the mountains

surrounding Jerusalem, providing a defense system for the city (Psalm 125:1) and symbolizing security.

However, it can also be understood that the mountains surrounding Jerusalem are an image of Jerusalem itself, where God dwells among His people. Thus, *“lifting up one’s eyes to the hills”* really means looking up to God. This interpretation fits with the pilgrim’s next affirmation: *“My help comes from the Lord”* (verse 2<sup>a</sup>).

Whatever difficulties the pilgrim was facing, whatever idols or objects people around him put their trust in, the pilgrim still affirmed his faith in the LORD – the God of the covenant with His people and the faithful God – *“my help”* does not come from anyone or anything, but *“comes from the LORD.”*

In Psalm 120, the first song in the Songs of Ascents, the pilgrim begins in Meshech and Kedar, two symbols of the ungodly world, whereas in Psalm 121 we see him lifting his eyes toward heaven, expressing his faith in God.

**OBJECT OF FAITH** (verses 2<sup>b</sup>-8). Why was this pilgrim able to put his trust in the LORD? Because He is the One *“Who made heaven and earth”* (verse 2<sup>b</sup>). He is the Creator God who made the high hills that many people consider their solid refuge. He is the true God, full of power, and far above the wooden and stone idols that people worshiped in those *“high places.”* He is the Sovereign who rules over all things and has the power to protect His children from harm on the road or on those *“hills.”*

The title *“Who made heaven and earth”* appears three times in the Songs of Ascents (121:2; 124:8; 134:3). Clearly, having *“Who made heaven and earth”* as the Guide and Protector on one’s journey means that the pilgrim will reach his destination in peace (Isaiah 40:1-31).

Who is the God we are worshiping? This answer plays an important role in enabling us to experience peace and joy in our daily life journey. Have we often been anxious and worried because we have allowed difficult circumstances or the voice of the world to shrink the God in our minds? Always remember that the God of the author, of the exiles returning from Babylon, and of the pilgrims to Jerusalem, has not changed! He still is and always will be our God today and forevermore – He’s the God *“Who made heaven and earth.”*

The second voice responds to the pilgrim’s affirmation of faith and further strengthens his faith by emphasizing that the Lord is not only the One *“Who made heaven and earth,”* the Lord of all creation, but He is also the God who is near, loving, and caring for each of His children. The verb *“keep”* is repeated 6 times in verses 3-8, and the name of the Protector – the LORD, appears 5 times. A servant of God said: *“We do not know what the danger is, but God’s protection is clear and certain.”*

It is wonderful that the pilgrim is reminded that the LORD who *“keeps”* him will not slumber. God does not take His eyes off his every step (verses 3-4). God protects him from all calamities day and night (verses 5-6). God leads and cares for him every moment of his life forever (verses 7-8).

It is amazing and beyond our comprehension that He “*Who made heaven and earth,*” the Creator of all things, is the One who would hear and answer the prayers of His people (Psalm 120:1). He’s also the One who stoops down getting to know His people and meeting their needs (Exodus 3:7-10). Hallelujah, praise the Lord!

The pilgrim’s faith is established not based on favorable circumstances but on God Himself and His good attributes. Clearly, the pilgrim still faces problems and difficulties, but what gives him confidence is that in all circumstances, the Lord is always there to “*keep*” him even from the “*evil*” he does not perceive, and even in times when he is not aware of God’s protection.

The experience of the author of Psalm 121, of the pilgrim, of God’s children throughout the ages, is also the experience of each individual, of the Church, of the District throughout the years. There might have been moments in our lives when we felt vulnerable, such as when we were facing financial collapse, sudden illness, broken relationships, emotional breakdown, family separation, or turmoil in the church... At those times, maybe we experienced a sense of loneliness, insignificance, weakness, and insecurity. But even when we cannot find a glimmer of hope in this life, God is still there, still watching over our lives unceasingly, still supporting, encouraging, strengthening, even rebuking and correcting us so that we would continue on our spiritual journey. As a result, the District has the opportunity to joyfully praise God for His goodness over the past 50 years. Hallelujah, praise the Lord!

Many doubters may still ask, how do I know for sure that God always loves and watches over my life every day? The answer has already been there on the hill called Golgotha, where Jesus died, endured humiliation, suffered excruciating pain and the abandonment of the Father when He bore the judgment that we deserved. Jesus died and rose again so that we can walk through life knowing with absolute certainty that we are children of God, He is always watching over us (Romans 8:31-39), and “*He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ*” (Philippians 1:6). Therefore, the proper question is not: “*Does God always love and preserve my life every day?*” but: “*Am I truly a child of God? Have I experienced being born again? Am I truly putting my trust in God? Does the Church and the District truly worship and submit to God?*” May our faith be found in God alone! (2 Timothy 2:13).

**PRAYER.** Remember God’s protection over yourself, your family, the Church, and the District, do offer words of thanksgiving and joyful praises to the LORD.

Recommit our faith as in the words of Psalm 121:1-2.

Pray that our 50<sup>th</sup> District Conference will be a place that exalts the Name of the Lord with deep joy and gratitude.