

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

CHRIST, OUR JUBILEE

WEEK 3 – MAY 19-24, 2025

Psalm 120: Christ, Our Unity

We begin a new week, the third week of May, and we are just one month away from gathering at the 50th Conference, a historic Conference of the Vietnamese District. To prepare our minds and spirits well for the Conference, we would like to ask all of God's servants in the District to spend quality time to meditate on God's word and call upon your congregation to set aside one day during the week to pray for themselves, for the Church, and for the District to be filled with God's grace during this year's District Conference.

This week, districtwide we will meditate on Psalm 122, one of the four Psalms composed by King David, found within the Songs of Ascents. It can be said that Psalm 122 is the most characteristic Pilgrim Psalm among the 15 Songs of Ascents.

Despite knowing that the journey back to Jerusalem was arduous, beginning from a hostile environment (Psalm 120), with a long road full of obstacles and dangers (Psalm 121), the pilgrim was always eagerly anticipating being united with all of God's people to worship Him (Psalm 122:1-2). The joy of the pilgrim was ignited by the love of God, the longing to worship Him, and also the anticipation of fellowship with the community of God's children. These things were characteristic of God's people in both the Old and New Testament periods (Hebrews 10:25), and certainly remain so today.

Now the group of pilgrims has left behind the difficulties and weariness, and *"our feet are standing within your gates"* – Jerusalem is truly before them. At that time, the Jerusalem of Israel was a *physical Entity*, a city located on the summit of Mount Zion. However, today we can contemplate this Psalm as a citizen of a *spiritual* Jerusalem, which is the Church of God (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5). Moreover, let us contemplate this Psalm with a vision of a complete and glorious Jerusalem, *the New Jerusalem* (Revelation 21:2, 10), which we are looking forward to.

THE PHYSICAL JERUSALEM. The first impression for the group of pilgrims upon setting foot in Jerusalem was *"a city that is compact together"* (verse 3^b). However, the pilgrim might not be thinking only about the architectural aspect of the city but also the role of Jerusalem in forming the unity of the nation, the place where *"the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, as was decreed for Israel"* (verse 4, ESV). In other words, Jerusalem was a symbol of the unity of the people of Israel not only in a political sense, *"for there thrones were set for judgment, the thrones of the house of David,"* but also in a spiritual sense, because it was the place where the people came *"to give thanks to the name of the Lord"* (verse 4).

God and the faith of his people Israel were the essential glue that bound the nation together and helped them overcome the darkest periods of their country's history. Politically speaking, the unity of the nation was destroyed in the hands of King Rehoboam, the third generation of the of King David's Dynasty. The only thing that preserved the continued existence as a nation in the post-exilic period was the spirit of worshipping the Lord, the one and only true God.

We do not know which family or tribe the pilgrim singing this Psalm belonged to, or which city of Palestine he lived in, but it is remarkable that this pilgrim loved the residents of Jerusalem, calling them "*my brothers and my friends*" (verse 8), and thus he called on everyone to "*pray for the peace of Jerusalem*" (verse 6), with a blessing that those who pray for and seek the peace of Jerusalem will "*prosper*" – a fullness beyond the meaning of material wealth, but rather a state of "*peace*" (verse 7), a state of tranquility, quiet, safety, and ease.

Why did the author call on everyone to pray for peace in Jerusalem? It was because Jerusalem did not truly have peace. Although the name Jerusalem means "*city of peace*" or "*foundation of peace*," history shows that this city has been a center of conflict for countless centuries up to the present day. Hence, if Jerusalem has peace and prosperity the residents of Jerusalem will also have peace and prosperity. Nevertheless, the main reason the author called for prayer for Jerusalem was not for the city itself but because it was "*the house of the Lord our God*" (verse 9).

THE SPIRITUAL JERUSALEM. The Church which the Lord Jesus Christ established for us is not unlike Jerusalem for God's chosen people in ancient times, however, the Church is much more significant. The Church is the magnificent work of Jesus, established by the sacrifice of His own body on the cross to bring those who believe in Christ into peace with God and with one another in His Body (Eph. 2:11-22).

When we put our faith in Jesus, we are baptized by the Holy Spirit and are placed into the Body of Christ, which is the Church (1 Corinthians 12:13). Of course, this refers to the invisible Church, the congregation of all the saints throughout the ages, but according to the New Testament teaching, God also places us in the visible Church, where we are called to come together to worship and serve the Lord also to serve and have fellowship with our brothers and sisters.

We have a great privilege, having been saved by His grace, we are brought into "*the house of the Lord*," we, therefore, belong to the Lord and also belong to one another. Having had such a great privilege, are we "*glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord'?*" Do we rejoice when we take every opportunity to join with our brothers and sisters to "*give thanks to the name of the Lord*" in His house? Are we willing to overcome all difficulties and inconveniences to joyfully attend the Conference and worship the Lord together with the children of God from other churches? Do we "*pray for the peace*" for our churches, our District, and our Conference?

"*Pray for peace*" should not be empty words but concrete actions. First, "*examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?*" (2 Corinthians 13:5). If the answer is "*Yes!*" Then, ask the Lord to use you as a stone to build "*a holy temple in the Lord*" (Ephesians 2:20-22).

Therefore, let us build the Church together on the foundation of the Word of God. The people of Israel were ruled by the laws and sovereignty of *“the house of David”* (verses 4-5), but the Church must be ruled by the sovereignty of *“the house of the LORD”*. The Church must be placed under the absolute authority of God and His Word. No matter how much we *“pray for the peace”* of the Church, our Church will never have peace if we do not respect the authority of God and His Word.

And just as Jerusalem was built and managed in a proper order, so also the Church of God must have order. *“For God is not a God of confusion but of peace”* (1 Corinthians 14:33), and the work of the Holy Spirit *“is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace”* (James 3:17-18). Therefore, we must also build the Church in love, humility, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22), coupling with respect and submission to the authorities which God has placed in the Church (1 Peter 5:5-7).

So, do love and pray for your church and for the District. War still rages in Jerusalem, and there are also wars, sometimes silent, sometimes visible, in our churches and in our District. Even in a church with a good reputation like the Church in Philippi, in a letter called the Letter of Joy, the Apostle Paul urged the church to exhort Euodia and Syntyche to reconcile with each other. Now this is the characteristic of true Christians, being *“the peacemakers”* (Matthew 5:9).

When dealing with conflicts in your church and in the District, when you are in the most stressful or discouraging moments, do not forget that we are *“citizens of the spiritual Jerusalem,”* all of God’s children are *“my brothers and my friends”* (verse 8). We are members of the same Body. Healing for the wounds comes from the work of the Holy Spirit through the love that we have for one another and through our faithfulness to the Word of God. Do not let the devil take advantage of us by *“lying lips and a deceitful tongue”* to stir up war among ourselves (Psalm 120:2, 7), causing us to lose the peace in our churches and in the District, and thereby caused us to lose the peace in our souls.

And the last thing is, let us continue the journey towards:

THE NEW JERUSALEM. Always remember that we are on our journey towards the New Jerusalem, we still are pilgrims. We have not yet reached our destination, therefore our eyes should not be fixed just on our churches, as wonderful as they may be, but also on our heavenly city, *“the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God”* (Hebrews 11:10).

PRAYER. Let us offer thanks to the Lord for the salvation He has given us by bringing us into *“the house of the Lord,”* so that we can call God *“Abba! Father!”* and become members in one Family.

Let us pray that the Lord will heal the wounds in our families, our churches, and our District. Let us *“pray for the peace”* at this year’s District Conference, so that we all may truly experience Christ as Our Jubilee and Our Unity.