

# **Psalms of Ascent**

## **Message 3**

### **Enter into the Church Life**

#### **– A City Compacted Together – Jerusalem**

#### **Monday**

Psa. 122:1; 42:4; Deut. 12:5-7

After we experience His presence, He supports us, cares for us and leads us into the church life.

#### **A. Enter into church life through the healthy fellowship**

1. Verse 1 starts this way: “I rejoiced when they said to me, Let us go to the house of Jehovah.” When we desire to have the church life, we find that we are not alone; rather we have many brothers and sisters who love the Lord and His testimony. They come together to proclaim nothing but “Let us go to the house of Jehovah.” How sweet is this fellowship in the church life. With this, within you there is much rejoicing, encouragement and uplifting!
2. David is like a person who is longing for God, for God’s temple, for Jerusalem. When he hears many saints proclaiming “Let us go to the house of Jehovah”, his joy is unspeakable. He comes to realize that it is not only me alone, but many others are just as desirous for Jerusalem. Not only I myself want to go, but many other also desire to go to His house. This shows that God has prepared spiritual companions for our encouragement.

The Psalms of Ascent lead us to go up step by step. This is our journey as a believer. It begins from the time we are in distress in the Gentile land, in the world. When we come forward to God we experience His help from all kinds of situations and obstacles on the journey. Our God helps us and keeps us. He is by our right hand so that we have a way to run the race. Psalm 122:1 tells us that those who pursue the Lord find companions: “They said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord.’” This psalm was written by David, one who cared for God’s house. He cared for God’s testimony on earth.

He touched what God really wanted on earth. After he became king of Israel, the first thing that David did was to fight to bring back Jerusalem from the hands of the Jebusites. Jerusalem is the place that Moses had spoken of as the place that God has chosen for His worship. Three times a year the children of Israel were to go there to worship the Lord, but after a few hundred years they still had not conquered Jerusalem. David must have received revelation from God that the place that God had chosen was Jerusalem. Because David was concerned for God's testimony and cared for God's house, the first thing he did was to fight for Jerusalem.

The second thing he did was to bring the ark of God to Jerusalem. You can see in 2 Samuel chapter 6 how much God cared for the ark, for God's testimony. Then he wanted to build a house for God. After establishing the capital in Jerusalem, David desired to bring the ark to Jerusalem. The Philistines had captured the ark from the sons of Eli. When they put the ark in their idol temple, their idol fell down before it. God directly was caring for His ark. Then it was brought back to the house of Abinadab where it remained for a long time in the days of Samuel and the days that Saul ruled Israel. It seems that no one cared for the ark. In the 40 years that Saul was king, he did not do anything to care for the ark even once. But David was a man after God's heart. First, he gained Jerusalem; then he brought the ark to Jerusalem. The first time David was moving the ark, Uzzah died because he touched the ark. They had put the ark on an ox cart but Uzzah tried to steady it when the oxen stumbled. That was not the proper way to move the ark. The second time David gathered the priests to move the ark according to God's way and rejoiced to bring it to the tent he had prepared for it in Jerusalem.

The third thing that David did was that he desired to build a house for God's dwelling in Jerusalem. Then the prophet told David that he was not to build a house, but God promised him a son who would be a man of peace who would build God's house. God gave David the blueprint for the building of the house. Then David sanctified everything that he had captured in battle for the building of the house of God.

David was a person who cared for God's house. How can we be people who please God and are after His heart? We must rise up for the building of God's house in the church life. This is what God is

doing in this age. Jesus declared, “I will build the church on this rock and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” First, we must keep the testimony of oneness in the church life. This to build the house of God in this age. The Lord has called us in this age for the building of the church.

## Tuesday

Psa. 122:2; 100:4

### **B. Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem – being separated apart, being a part of the church life**

1. Jerusalem is a place of God's Testimony
  - a. In Psalm 122, the focal point is Jerusalem. Jerusalem, being God's testimony on earth, occupies a special place in God's heart.
  - b. From the time Israel entered into Canaan until the time of David, Jerusalem had been occupied by the Jebusites, one of the seven tribes of Canaanites. As soon as David was anointed as a king, the first thing he did was to gather the Israelites to capture Jerusalem and made it his capital.
  - c. In the book of Deuteronomy, God repeated many times in charging Israelites that after they entered into the land of Canaan, He will choose a place to set up His name there and all the males of Israel should go to that place to worship God. They were not supposed to offer sacrifices anywhere except at that place.
  - d. David needed to get God's revelation and know that Jerusalem was the place of God's choice. He was a man after God's heart. After he learned what was in God's heart, he took it to his heart. He came to know that God wanted to dwell among His people, he went ahead to prepare Jerusalem to be His testimony on earth.
  - e. David went further to move the Ark of Testimony to Jerusalem. The ark represents God's presence and glory on earth. Psalm 122 was most probably the song that was sung when people of Israel went to Jerusalem three times a year.
2. Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem – Being separated apart and becoming a part in the church life
  - a. When we are initiated in the church life, we experience a kind of separation, the separation from the world; we are being separated from the world. We left the world behind us and now we belong to the church and belong to the church life.
  - b. It is a sweet to announce that our feet are standing within

your gate, O Jerusalem. In the church life today, we ought to announce this often.

David wrote Psalm 122. He began, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'" At that time, the ark was in a tent; the temple had not yet been built. But in David's heart it seemed that the temple was there. All those who know God's heart will rejoice to go to God's house. Do we rejoice when others gather in the meeting for the Lord's testimony? David rejoiced with spiritual companions who also cared for God's testimony. Many other brothers and sisters love the Lord's testimony just like we do. We go to the house of the Lord to live the church life together in oneness to build the house of God.

We must care for the church life just as the Old Testament saints cared for the temple. The law was a guardian to lead people to Christ. No one can keep it; we are all condemned. So God gave the tabernacle with the offerings and later the temple so that man could come forward to God. Through the offerings the people of Israel could have peace with God and enjoy His presence. All the Old Testament overcomers approached God through the offerings. Psalm 23 ends, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever." David desired to dwell in the house of the Lord. In Psalm 27:4 David said, "One thing I have desired of the Lord, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord, And to inquire in His temple." There are many verses like that. The secret of their overcoming life was to go to the temple and dwell there.

## Wednesday

Psa. 122:3; 48:1-2;

### C. **Jerusalem has been built**

1. God dwells in heaven as well as in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the place where He set up His name. It is where His throne is located. His temple was there in Jerusalem and there He received people's worship. His throne was set up there for the judgment of His people, even the whole world. Therefore Jerusalem is God's testimony on earth.
2. In New Testament times, God also chose to set up His name in the church. At David's time, there was Jerusalem; with us today, there is the church. The church is His temple on earth to receive our worship. It is also the place where His throne is set up to rule and reign. The church is God's testimony today on earth.
3. After we get saved, the Lord starts to build us together to be a city. Peter tells us in his first epistle that the Lord is a living stone, and coming to Him we become living stones for building. Our regeneration causes us to become stones, even living stones, so that God can build us up together into a city which is the church, His testimony.
4. In typology, Adam typifies Christ and Eve typifies the church. From where does the church come? The church comes into being through building, a building out of God's purposeful plan. It is built with Christ as material. Today I have Christ in me and you have Christ in you; our God is using the Christ within us to build up His Church.

Jerusalem is the place of the testimony of oneness of God's people. Normally they were scattered among the tribes, but three times a year they came together at the feasts to testify that they were one. Their testimony was that they were standing within the gates of Jerusalem. Jerusalem had both the temple of God and the throne of David. Both these places were very important. At the temple the priests led the people to worship God. David ruled the people from his throne. Once the people entered into Jerusalem, they were being sanctified. Today we are sanctified from the world to enter into the

church life. We put away the world so that we can live the church life. This is to have our feet within the gates of Jerusalem. The sweetest thing in the church life is to worship the Lord together and live under the Lord's ruling. Here we worship God and enjoy God. We also enjoy God's ruling. This is the sweetest thing on earth.

Jerusalem has been built as a city that is compact together. When we come together, there is building in the church life. Jerusalem was the place of the testimony of oneness. In the New Testament, the church is the testimony of God's oneness. The last prayer of the Lord was that His believers would be one just as He and the Father are one. The Lord cares for the testimony of oneness. We must preserve the testimony of God on earth. God is building us up together to become a city, to build up the body of Christ. Paul, Peter and John all talked about building. All the apostles said that we need to be built together as the body of Christ. This is God's original desire when he created man. God took a rib from Adam's side and built it into a woman. Adam represents Christ; Eve represents the church. Christ is the material to build the church.

## Thursday

Psa. 122:3; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Eph. 4:15-16

### D. As a city compacted together

1. A city compacted together is a unit with many parts. This is like what Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12:12: “for even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body. So also is the Christ.” This is the church which has many members and yet is one body. It is one body and yet has many members, not just one member! This is the city, the body, the church.
2. Jerusalem has been built as a city compacted together. In the book of Ephesians 4:15: “...we may grow into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ.” And in 4:16: “Out from all the Body, being joined together and being knitted together through every joint of rich supply and through operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.”
3. We all grow into Christ who is our Head and in whom the whole body is joined together. As soon as the body is joined together, the function of the body is manifested. Every joint and every member operates and helps one another, then the body starts to grow and to be built up in love.
4. A built up church is so well done that the gates of Hades cannot prevail against it. Just like in a city compacted together, there will be no gaps or holes through which the enemy and worldly things can come in to damage us.

There are many members but one body. We are being built together as one city. We all need to grow into Christ. Then out from Him all the body will be joined together. We grow into Christ and then through our functioning all the body is built together. When we are growing in the church life we are growing into Christ. Every member functions and the joints also are functioning. This is the building of the church. The end result of this building is the city. The gates of Hades cannot prevail against such a builded church. When the church is compacted together, the enemy has no opportunity to attack the church.



The tribes of the Lord go up to give testimony of Israel. This testimony is that even though they are twelve tribes, they are one people. Today we must testify that we are one in the church. We need such a oneness in the church as a testimony. All the tribes must testify to this oneness.

## **Friday**

Psa. 122:4; Rev. 3:8

### **E. Christ is exalted by all, resulting in a testimony of oneness, a testimony for Israel**

1. To which the tribes go up. The tribes of Jehovah – a testimony for Israel – go to give thanks to the name of Jehovah. A testimony for Israel is a testimony of oneness, testifying that we being many are one. As 12 tribes, we are scattered in Canaan, but Jerusalem is our center. Whenever we come back to Jerusalem, there we testify we are one. When other people see us they will say: “You are one people.” This is a testimony for Israel.
2. In the church, we are testifying to the world that we are one. This oneness is our testimony. Here we give our thanks to the name of the Lord. In the church there is only the Lord, only the name of the Lord, and the exaltation of only His name. When Christ is lifted up alone, we have a testimony of oneness.

Our Lord is exalted in such a testimony. Only the Lord’s name is uplifted. This is the testimony of His oneness. Whenever we bring other things into the church, we lose the testimony of this oneness. There is only one name here, the name of the Lord. This is the praise that the Lord gives to the church in Philadelphia. The church in Philadelphia was not a powerful church; the Lord said that though they have little strength yet they kept the word of God and did not forsake the Lord’s name. They exalt no other name than the name of the Lord.

## Saturday

Psa. 122:5; Rev. 5:9-10

### **F. In the church life there are thrones of judgment**

1. In verse 5 “for there thrones are set for judgment, thrones of the house of David.” In Jerusalem, there is God’s temple and David’s palace. God’s temple was built on Mount Moriah while the palace of David is on Mount Zion. The temple denotes worship and it is associated with priesthood, while the throne in the palace is related to reigning power and is associated with kingship.
2. Rev. 5:9-10: “...for You were slain and have purchased for God by Your blood men out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made them a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign on the earth.” Today in our church life, on one hand we have the temple so that God’s children can perform priestly service towards God; on the other hand our Lord sitting on His throne to reign together with us .
3. Therefore, our church life is a life of judgment. The more you are in the church, the more you experience judgment. We experience judgment from the Lord as well as from the brothers and sisters in the church.
  - a. We are judged by the presence of the Lord, by His speaking and by His countenance.
  - b. We are also judged by the presence of dear saints.
  - c. A meeting full of supply and revelations also judges us.
  - d. The more powerful the church life is, the more we experience judgment.
4. God is building us up together in the church. Today we have God’s temple and His throne. We can start our service to Him and our reigning with Him. What a foretaste of the New Jerusalem in His blessed grace! What a blessing!

At that place there are thrones of judgment. This verse stands out. It is not speaking of the throne of grace but thrones set there for judgment. When they are giving thanks to the name of the Lord, all of a sudden it mentions the thrones of judgment. The more we are in

the church life, the more we are in the Lord's presence, the more we have the testimony of oneness, the more we will be under judgment. Everything that does not belong to Christ or fit God's desire needs to be dealt with. The city of Jerusalem has both the temple of God and the throne of David. The temple was built on Mount Moriah where Abraham offered Isaac, but the throne of David was on Mount Zion. This is the place of his ruling. The Israelites did not just come to worship and give thanks to God; they came to David's throne. In today's terminology, we do not just have the temple of God in the church, we have the ruling of Christ here. The Lord must reign and have absolute sovereignty in the church. He will establish His throne in the church. The more we approach Him, the more we enjoy the testimony of oneness with each other, the more the Lord's judgment will cast all our flesh, our natural man, and our self out of the church life. This is the building of the church.

Revelation 5 tells us that the Lord will have priests among the nations. Those who were purchased by the Lord must firstly be the priests and also must be co-kings with the Lord. In the church life we have the temple of God are priests to God. On the other hand is the throne. In the real church life there must be judgment from the Lord and from the brothers and sisters. This is not to judge one another but for us to be enlightened when we are with the brothers and sisters. Their speaking becomes the light that judges us. There is no place for our flesh.

Watchman Nee testified that he received much help from sister M. E. Barber. He brought the problems he had with the other brothers to her. He had good suggestions but the other brothers all opposed him so that he suffered a lot. When he brought those issues to sister Barber, she would not stand with him. However, when he went he felt the presence of the Lord with her. All his troubles seemed to be gone and his problems solved. This is the throne of judgment. There was one brother who was about 5 years older than brother Nee. At the beginning they came together. Sister Barber always reminded brother Nee that the younger ones should submit to older ones. Brother Nee regretted that he had not been born before that other brother. Then one time another brother came who was 2 years older than the other brother. But the brother who was with Watchman Nee still insisted on his own way; he would not submit to the one who was older than him.

So then Watchman Nee felt that he had reason to talk about his problem. However, sister Barber did not stand with Watchman Nee. She asked him about his attitude: “Are you a person bearing the cross of Christ?” From then on brother Nee was enlightened and judged thoroughly; he learned to bear the cross. He no longer defended himself or argued with others. He learned to be one who bore the cross to follow the Lord. This affected his entire life. If our church life has both the temple of God and the throne of judgment, then it will be the place that God can use.

## Sunday

Psa. 122:6-9; Gal. 5:14-15

### **G. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem**

1. Peace issues from judgment. If you realize that this is God's plan and purpose, how can you withhold your prayer for the peace of Jerusalem? The church is today's Jerusalem and is a house of peace. In the church, we cannot devour one another, fight one another. O Jerusalem. May peace be to you! O the church of God, May peace be to you! May the reality match the name itself! God be among you and so the peace of God!

When we enter into the church life, experience the building in the church life, testify to the oneness of the church, and experience the throne of judgment, then you will find that Jerusalem is so precious. Thus you need to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. It is the place of peace. The strongest testimony of the church is peace. The building of the church must be in peace. Our relationship with one another is very important. We must care for one another, supply one another, build one another up, forgive one another, and love one another. There must be a peaceful situation in the church life. Paul told the Galatians that if they would fight among one another, they would destroy one another. The church cannot be built up if there is no peace but fighting with one another in the church life. So we must pray peace in the church life.

### **H. O Jerusalem! May they prosper who love you**

1. Here whoever loves the Lord will prosper. If we love the church, love the saints, it will bring the prosperity of life.

We must love the church, not just love the Lord. Those who love the church will prosper in life.

### **I. Seek good for Jerusalem**

1. "Peace be within your bulwarks and prosperity within your citadels." May the priests in the city serve well and David fully exercise his kingship in the palace. In our church life today, all the saints serve as priests in a peaceful way. And

Christ's authority can manifest on each one of us in a prosperous way.

2. "For my brothers' and companions' sake I will say. Peace be within you." I love my brother who is my precious companion. I truly pray that peace be within the church, all saints in one accord with no murmurings and reasonings.
3. "I will seek your good." Seeking for Jerusalem's good is seeking for the church's good. Since we have seen the church and what is good for the church, from now on we are for nothing else but something good for the church life.

Someone who knows God's desire prays for peace and prosperity in the church. Within the city are priests who serve God and within the palace is god's ruling. This is a harmonious environment and situation. The saints in the church life are all like priests serving God and kings having the authority of the Lord. Such a church life is so sweet and pleases God. God can praise such a church life.

Three verses in Psalm 122 speak about peace. We pray for the peace of Jerusalem for the benefit of the companions, the brothers and sisters. We seek peace for the church for our companions. We must enlarge ourselves to care for our brothers and sisters in the church life. We treasure our companions. When there is peace in the church with no murmuring or gossip, this pleases God. The person who wrote this psalm enjoyed Jerusalem. In today's terms, he enjoyed all God's blessings in the church life, no longer just caring for himself, but caring for the blessings and benefit of all his companions. For this we must stop arguing, but seek the good of our companions. For their sake we seek peace. Then all the brothers and sisters are different in our eyes.