



The Songs of Ascent: God's Roadtrip Playlist Lesson 3 - Psalm 122

"Does anyone need the restroom?!"

Before we get going with this lesson...

... any comments or questions from last week?

... did you do the homework?

TURNING THE CAR ON.

If you were going on a long trip, would you rather drive alone or with company?

Let's have a volunteer read Psalm 122. (NIV translation printed on the last page.)

As you listen, think about the following things.

- What parallelism do you note? Of what type(s)?
- Are you using a different Bible translation? Do you note any differences?
- What names or concepts are mentioned with which you're unfamiliar?

Note also that Psalms 120 and 121 were spoken by one person, alone. What change do you notice in this psalm? See particularly verse 2.

The Israelite pilgrims are traveling together to Jerusalem to celebrate one of the pilgrim feasts. These feasts are listed in **Deuteronomy 16:16**.

- 1 - The Festival of _____ (better known as _____)
- 2 - The Festival of _____ (also called "Shavuot")
- 3 - The Festival of _____ (also called "Booths," "Tents," or "Sukkot")

The Pilgrim Festivals in the Life of Christ

The following is a thorough (but not exhaustive) list of Christ's recorded attendance at the pilgrim festivals.

Tabernacles - John 7:1-3, 8-10

Passover at twelve years old - Luke 2:41-42

Passover, first during his ministry - John 2:13

Passover, second during his ministry - John 6:4

Passover of Holy Week (final during his ministry) - John 12:1, 9-13

Hannukah - John 10:22-23

An unnamed festival (perhaps another Passover) - John 5

There is no specific mention of Christ attending the Feast of Weeks (which we know better by its Greek name, *Pentecost*). We can definitively say that Jesus did not make the pilgrimage for every single pilgrim festival during his life on earth. (For a few years of his early life, he and his parents were in hiding in Egypt.) We are not even sure that he attended every single Passover after reaching manhood. (John 7 may indicate that he did not attend the preceding Passover mentioned in John 6.)

If Jesus did not attend every single pilgrim festival that occurred during his adulthood, this would not be out of the norm. The Israelites before the Exile, and the Jews of Jesus' day, did not view God's command to make these pilgrimages as a completely rigid demand. The proper view of the pilgrim festivals was that of a privilege and right which Israel enjoyed; a gift, given to them by God.

[The laws governing these festivals] simply command the observance of three feasts during the year, and the appearance of the people three times in the year before the Lord; that is to say, the holding of three national assemblies to keep a feast before the Lord, or three annual pilgrimages to the sanctuary of Jehovah. These... are *mishpatim*, or *rights*, conferred upon the people of Israel in their relation to Jehovah; for keeping a feast to the Lord, and appearing before Him, were both of them privileges bestowed by Jehovah upon His covenant people. Even in itself the festal rejoicing was a blessing in the midst of this life of labour, toil, and trouble; but when accompanied with the right of appearing before the Lord their God and Redeemer, to whom they were indebted for everything they had and were, it was one that no other nation enjoyed.¹

How does this view of the pilgrim festivals compare to...

... our understanding of the Lord's Supper?

... our understanding of God's encouragement to be in his Word regularly?

¹ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on Exodus*, notes on Exodus 23:14ff.

God urges us to attend worship at church in much the same way that he urged the Israelites to make their pilgrim festivals. We want to take care not to make church attendance into a law. **How would you reply to a non-church-going friend who asks you, “Why do you have to go to church?”** Discuss this with the people sitting around you.

Verse 4 has an interesting depiction of the city of Jerusalem. It is built “closely compacted together.” The New Testament teaches us that the Holy Christian Church is the “new Zion,” the “Jerusalem that is above.”² Despite the divisions that exist among visible churches today, what can we see in them that reveals the presence of the invisible Church?

Jerusalem is the place where “the thrones for judgment” stand (verse 5). What exactly is the function of these thrones? **Read 1 Corinthians 5:9-6:3.** Who occupies the “thrones of judgment”? Who is judged?

The pilgrims are urged to pray for Jerusalem’s peace. See the definitions of “peace” given by Eugene Peterson and Michael Berg. What are we praying for the church to enjoy as we pray for its *peace*?

Shalom can be translated as “peace” but also as “security” or “prosperity.” At its base, it means “wholeness.” [It is...] a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed.”³

Peace is continuous, complex, and strenuous... Church is where peace is understood comprehensively as Christ present and working among us. But none of us who meet and worship together as church were admitted into the company on the strength of our peace skills.⁴

² 1 Peter 2:6, Hebrews 12:22; Galatians 4:26.

³ Berg, “Vocation.” 87-88.

⁴ Peterson, “Practice Resurrection.” 126.

Read **Hebrews 10:24-25, 12:22-24, and 13:20-21**. These are printed for you on the last page. What things does the writer to the Hebrews mention as blessings we enjoy through corporate worship?

Homework!

This psalm reminds us of the blessing God gives us by joining us to a church. We don't travel alone on our pilgrimage. Psalm 121 reminded us that God goes with us; Psalm 122 reminds us to look around and give thanks for our brothers and sisters in our local congregation.

This week, **pray for someone at church who's not a member of your family**. Give thanks to God for them. If you know something about which to pray for them, pray about it!

If you know someone who hasn't been in church for some time, consider inviting them to attend worship with you. David in the psalm tells us that he "*rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD.'*" That response was created in his heart by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit can create the same response in the heart of someone you invite!

Closing Prayer.

Holy Spirit of God, you brought us to faith and united us to the new Jerusalem, Jesus' church. We thank you for the beautiful gift of fellowship we enjoy with our brothers and sisters. Give us always joy in that fellowship. When discord arises, give us humility that seeks not to justify ourselves, but to bring about reconciliation. Prosper the work of your church until the day that Zion's King returns. Amen.

Psalm 122

<p>1 I rejoiced with those who said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD.”</p> <p>2 Our feet are standing in your gates, Jerusalem.</p> <p>3 Jerusalem is built like a city that is closely compacted together.</p> <p>4 That is where the tribes go up— the tribes of the LORD— to praise the name of the LORD according to the statute given to Israel.</p> <p>5 There stand the thrones for judgment, the thrones of the house of David.</p> <p>6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May those who love you be secure.</p> <p>7 May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels.”</p> <p>8 For the sake of my family and friends, I will say, “Peace be within you.”</p> <p>9 For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your prosperity.</p>	
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Selected Hebrews verses

10:24-25. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

12:22-24. But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

13:20-21 Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.