

**BIBLE STUDY**  
**October 22, 2018**

**The Psalms**

1. Prayer: Psalm 131
  
2. The Psalms of Ascent: Psalms 120-134: Psalms that were sung by pilgrims as they traveled to Jerusalem on pilgrimage. There was a law that they should visit Jerusalem three times in their life time.

Going to Jerusalem, one traveled upwards: 1 Kings 12: 28 “you have been going up to Jerusalem long enough” Psalm 24: 3 122:4 “There the tribes go up...”  
Luke 2: 42: “And when he was 12 years old, they went up according to festival custom.”

There was a tradition that there were fifteen stairs going up to the temple. One of these psalms was prayed on each step. Therefore, they are sometimes called the “Gradual Psalms.” Gradual derived from Latin word for step.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph probably prayed these psalms as they traveled to the temple when he was 12 years old. In John’s Gospel Jesus went up to Jerusalem two times to celebrate Passover. He and his disciples would have prayed these psalms on their way.

3. Psalm 121
  - A blessing on someone setting out on a journey
  - The mountains: a source of danger while traveling
  - Who will help them? The creator of heaven and earth—what more do you need?
  - God power is not confined to any one place or time; every step is guarded; God watches over every moment.
  - God is our shade: protection from the harmful rays of the sun in the desert
  
4. Psalm 122
  - A song of pilgrims about to enter the holy city in procession
  - Jerusalem is where the pilgrims meet God in order to give him thanks
  - The thrones of justice: justice meted out by the king
  - May the grace of this place transform people’s lives (122:6-9)
  
5. Psalm 124
  - A thanksgiving hymn that teaches them that their very existence depends on God

- Images of the Exodus-which brought Israel into existence when they were saved, set free from slavery.
- Israel saved from primordial enemies (sea monsters), the Flood, the Red Sea and Pharaoh.
- They escaped like a bird from the trap- from Egypt
- Our help is in the made of the Lord who made heaven and earth

#### 6. Psalm 126

- A lament sung after the return from exile
- The joy of seeing the holy city again
- But, the need for restoration: prosperity and fertility of the land
- Sow in tears but reap in joy

#### 7. Psalm 127

- Our prosperity is not the work of our hands but a gift of God
- Sons are a gift of God; they add to the strength of a man when he has to contend with his enemies or rivals in the public places

#### 8. Psalm 130

- De profundis=Out of the depths
- A penitential psalm, a lament in which the psalmist cries out to God from a place of deep sorrow asking for mercy
- If you keep an account of our sins, who could stand?
- But with you is forgiveness and so you are revered: the experience of God's mercy leads one to greater sense of who God is
- The trust of the psalmist is an example for all
- I wait on the Lord...my soul waits, I hope for his word...more than watchmen wait for dawn...for with the Lord is mercy and plenteous redemption

#### 9. Psalm 133

- A vision of the Beloved Community
- A blessing prayer over a peaceful community
- Israel's history was of divided group trying to live together in peace
- Striving for peace is a blessing like the oil on Aaron's head at his consecration as high priest or like the dew which is precious moisture in a dry climate.

#### 10. Psalm 134

- An exhortation that all those who labor or worship in the temple at night raise their hands in worship and praise
- God is the maker of heaven and earth but his blessing comes forth from Jerusalem. He localizes himself. Like the Incarnation.

#### 11. Closing Prayer: Psalm 121