

PSALMS

Chapter 122

Let Us Go to the House of the LORD

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD!” 2 Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem! 3 Jerusalem—built as a city that is bound firmly together, 4 to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD. 5 There thrones for judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David. 6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! “May they be secure who love you! 7 Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!” 8 For my brothers and companions' sake I will say, “Peace be within you!” 9 For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your good.

Ps 122 A hymn of joy over Jerusalem (see Ps 42–43; 46; 48; 84; 87; 137 and the introductions to those psalms). Sung by a pilgrim in Jerusalem (very likely at one of the three annual festivals, Dt 16:16), it expresses his deep joy over the city and his prayer for its welfare. As the third of the pilgrimage psalms (see introduction to Ps 120), it shares many dominant themes with Ps 132, the third from the end of this collection—possibly a deliberate arrangement. Structurally, a two-verse introduction locates the worshiper with the festival throng in the city of his joy, and the major themes are developed in two stanzas of four (Hebrew) lines each. References to “the house of the LORD” (vv. 1, 9) frame the song. (CSB)

Focuses on the entry to Jerusalem as the place of God’s judgment and the peaceful gathering of His people (cf Ps 121). From the time of David on, Jerusalem served as the center of worship and justice. Peace with God and peace between the people of Israel are both found in Jerusalem. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–2, going to the Lord’s house; vv 3–5, the tribes go to Jerusalem; vv 6–9, prayer of peace for Jerusalem. (TLSB)

The 122nd psalm is a psalm that gives thanks with joy for the Word God, which in a specific people, namely the Levites and kings, and received by specific hearers, namely the tribe of Israel. How much is it to be lamented that, seeking everywhere for God’s Word and being nowhere able to find it, the children of Israel would their way to idols? And we Christians did the same with our running to pilgrimages and winding our way to the cloister. But the Holy Church is our Jerusalem, and Christ is our temple, city, altar, and mercy seat, to which, from which, and with which we seek and hear his Word. (Reading the Psalms with Luther)

Psalm 122 is the third Psalm of Ascent. This psalm builds upon what has come before. Psalm 120 is a plea for help during the trip. In Psalm 121, the pilgrims scan the horizon for their first glimpse of the temple on Mt. Zion in the holy city. (LL)

122 title *Of David*. This element is not present in all ancient witnesses to the text, and the content suggests a later date. (CSB)

122:1–2 Joy for having joined the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. (CSB)

122:1 *I was glad* – As the pilgrims arrive in Jerusalem, they rejoice at the opportunity to worship. If we're honest, we must admit that our own attitude toward worship is often lukewarm. Being in God's presence doesn't always thrill us. But that coldness is symptomatic of our sin, of a love for our Savior-God that doesn't at all begin to match His infinite love for us. (LL)

the house of the LORD. The temple (2Sa 7:5, 13; 1Ki 5:3, 5, “temple”; 8:10, “temple”). That Jerusalem became the city of pilgrimage before the dedication of the temple is doubtful in light of 1Ki 3:4; 8:1–11. (CSB)

Given the Davidic attribution, this is likely the tabernacle, particularly once the ark of the covenant had come into Jerusalem (2Sm 6:12–15). The tabernacle was called the “house of the LORD” elsewhere (Jgs 19:18; 1Sm 1:7; 2Sm 12:20). (TLSB)

122:2 *feet have been standing* – His eagerness may have carried him a bit ahead of the rest of the group. Besides, it may have been understood that, if their group should have become disorganized, they would reassemble at the city gate. Thus, while the pilgrim pauses there, he engages in reflection. (Leupold) Good reason to go the church early – Prelude.

gates. Gateways. (CSB)

Jerusalem – Jerusalem was built on a hill higher than the surrounding countryside, people commonly spoke of “going up to Jerusalem.” (LL)

Mark 13:1-3 – Disciples talk about the beauty of the Temple – They went out to Bethany-Mt. Olives each night during Holy Week.

122:3–5 Jerusalem's significance for the faithful. (CSB)

122:3 *built as a city* – Literally, “Jerusalem, the built one.” By this time the royal palace (2 Samuel 5:11), administrative buildings, sturdy home of prominent citizens as well as the new and adequate walls of the enlarged city (2 Samuel 5:9) were very much in evidence. This gave the city a dignity that no other city in the land had, and one that could well be the pride and joy of the people. (Leupold)

bound firmly together. Perhaps refers to the city's well-knit construction (see Ps 48) and probably recalls the construction of the tabernacle (cf. Ex 26:11, “fasten ... together as a unit”). If so, Jerusalem is being celebrated as the earthly residence of God. (CSB)

May refer to the city wall, which brought together settlements on the eastern hill and the western hill. (TLSB)

This suggests that the city has profited immensely by all these building operations and now represents a composite whole that has no ugly gaps; it represents houses and structures in solid rows wherever the eye may look. (Leupold)

122:4 *which the tribes go up* – Prior to this time, when there was no capital city to serve as a rallying point, almost the entire history of the people since Joshua's day had been one of internal strife and dissension. These old tensions were now becoming a thing of the past. To have representatives of all tribes rub shoulders together in the narrow streets, to have them pray and

worship together, to make acquaintances with men of tribes other than their own – all these things built up better understanding and wiped out old prejudices. (Leupold)

In Jerusalem, the tribes have a single city in which to meet. This gathering fulfills God's command that all Israel should gather three times a year (Ex 23:17; 34:23; Dt 16:16). (TLSB)

to give thanks. For God's saving acts in behalf of Israel and his blessings on the nation. (CSB)

122:5 *There ... the thrones of the house of David.* Jerusalem is both the city of the Lord and the royal city of his chosen dynasty, through which he (ideally) protects and governs the nation (see 2:2, 6–7; 89:3–4, 19–37; 110; 2Sa 7:8–16 and notes). In postexilic times it remained, though now in Messianic hope, the city of David. (CSB)

Beginning with David, the king of Israel in Jerusalem provided the courts of justice. Cf 2Sm 8:15; Ps 101:8. *house of David.* David's kingly line was to bring justice (Jer 21:12). Is 16:5 prophesies that a just judge will sit on the throne in David's tent. Jesus' final judgment fulfills this hope. (TLSB)

David had taken to provide for better courts for better order. This psalm reminds all such Israelites to consider carefully what an achievement this was. (Leupold)

122:6–9 Prayers for Jerusalem's peace. (CSB)

In Hbr, these verses use wordplay on the sounds of *shalom* ("saalem," "peace"), which forms the last part of "Jerusalem." (TLSB)

122:6 In Hebrew a beautiful wordplay tightly binds together "pray," "peace," "Jerusalem" and "be secure." (CSB)

While Jerusalem at the time of David was undoubtedly impressive, the real beauty of the city did not lie in its structure, but in what happened here. (LL) - The Nave of the church.

who love you. The psalmist, those referred to in vv. 1, 8 and all who love Jerusalem because they are devoted to the Lord and his chosen king. These constitute a loving brotherhood, who worship together, pray together and seek each other's welfare as the people of God (see Ps 133). (CSB)

secure– More glorious than Jerusalem is the spiritual Jerusalem, the church of all who believe. Each time we worship together we are gathering in Jerusalem. This gathering will reach its most glorious stages in the New Jerusalem described in Revelation 21:22-27. There God's people will live in complete safety. (PBC)

122:7 *peace* – Peace is far more than the absence of war. It involves having all that a well-rounded life needs. If this is to extend for the outermost tip of the fortifications of the city to the citadels or palaces that constitute the innermost strength of it, that, according to a colorful Hebrew idiom, aims to cover all by referring to the outside limits. (Leupold)

It did not remain a city of peace, because it rejected the one who was its peace (Luke 19:42). Today strife and hatred rule there. (PBC)

122:8–9 *For my brothers... For the sake of.* Because Jerusalem is the place supreme where God and his people meet together in fruitful union, the psalmist vows to seek the city's peace. (CSB)

David sees the gathering of relatives among the 12 tribes. There is also a return to the pilgrimage idea of v 1, as the traveling companions going to Jerusalem come into view. (TLSB)

It should be unselfish prayer offered wholeheartedly for the sake of “brothers and friends” and should think only of them and their prosperity. Such is the nature of a wholesome prayer for success. (Leupold)

peace be within you – The travelers may have greeted one another with “Peace be to you,” and now this greeting is extended to Jerusalem. Recall also Jesus’ weeping over Jerusalem, wishing to gather it to Himself (Mt 23:37–39; Lk 13:34–35). (TLSB)

your good – A wish for peace on Jerusalem, where God and His people meet. Cf Heb 12:22–24. (TLSB)

Ps 122 Like David, we are welcomed to the Lord’s house and can rejoice at the invitation. We are drawn to a heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22). At the throne of Christ, the eternal Son of David, we find a place of peace (Rm 5:1; 8:1). • May God give us a place among all His people who walk by faith in Christ (Gal 6:16). Amen. (TLSB)