

## Too Long in the World A study of Psalm 120

**Intro:** This psalm as you can see by looking above the text was originally a part of a collection of songs. Each psalm, from 120-134 is called “a song of ascents or degrees”. The expression has been mystifying; but there is a probable explanation. These psalms were written and sung on the occasion of the pilgrimages of the Israelites to Jerusalem for worship. They were called songs of ascents because the journey to Jerusalem or Mt. Zion involved a geographical change. Thus, as the people “ascended” to the place of worship these songs encouraged them and spoke to them about the worship they would experience together.

### A Quick Overview of Psalm 120

*The psalmist begins with a statement of God’s past deliverance:*

*In my trouble I cried to the Lord, and He answered me. (Psalm 120:1)*

*The Psalmist could look back on the past and see that He had not worshipped God in vain. When trouble had come to his life, he had taken his concerns to God and God had answered his prayer.*

*But now he faces a new problem. He was living among people who were deceitful and hostile. So he prays to God yet again for help.*

*Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue. (Psalm 120:2)*

*The people this godly man was dealing with were not truthful; they were treacherous and hostile.*

*I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war. (Psalm 120:7)*

*He had tried to live in peace with them; but they had responded to his overtures of peace with hostility. And we can see that it had a painful effect on this godly man.*

*Woe is me, for I sojourn in Meshech, for I dwell among the tents of Kedar! (Psalm 120:5)*

*The English word “woe” is onomatopoeic ; that is it sounds like what it describes. In Hebrew it would sound like “Oh ah!” The very sound we would make when we are in pain, when we are hurting. Moreover, the psalmist likens himself to someone living among the people of Mechech and Kedar. Both of these tribes appear to have selected because they called to mind people who did not serve the Lord and who were hostile toward Jews. The psalmist had learned that people like this would eventually get their just due:*

*What shall be given to you, and what more shall be done to you, you deceitful tongue? Sharp arrows of the warrior, with the burning coals of the broom tree. (Psalm 120:3-4)*

*Yes, the hateful and the hostile would eventually get what was coming to them and the psalmist was confident that God would provide deliverance. But it seems that this was not the real reason this psalm was included in this collection. The key is found in v. 6:*

*Too long has my soul had its dwelling with those who hate peace. (Psalm 120:6)*

***Do you see that the psalmist was tired? Do you see that he despaired of his condition? And do you see that he longed to be in a place where there was peace and love. Thus, this psalm appropriately begins the fifteen psalms of ascent about worship. It says in effect; I'm tired of living among ungodly people. I want to go where God is, to His house, to the place where He is worshipped for there I will find peace, love, and acceptance instead of war, hatred, and hostility.***

**Psalm 120 teaches us some valuable lessons connected with the worship of God. Everything is not okay in this world.**

At times, people may say, "Everything is o.k."; but God says, "Everything is not o.k."

*The world is filled with people under the dominion of sin. It is filled with unimaginable violence, greed, and perversion. The world is filled with temptations and trials and difficulties. All of this is the work of Satan, the ruler of this world.*

*...children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Philippians 2:15)*

*Like this man, often God's people who try the hardest to do the right thing may suffer at the hands of the ungodly.*

But in addition, Christians must also participate in the world's trouble. *For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (Romans 8:20-21)*

Everything is not o.k. We are not immune to sickness, to pain, to disappointment and problems. It does no good to pretend that things don't exist.

In fact, we are able to see that such things cause us to long for God and to pray to God. Who among us would not acknowledge that it is life's difficulties that cause us at times to draw nearer to the Lord?

***What we need most in time of trouble is the opportunity to worship God.***

What the psalmist is saying is basically, "I've spent too much time among the unbelieving. Now I need time with God and with His people".

Worship is the place where the troubled can find peace.

*The longer we live, the more trouble we see in this life, the more we should appreciate the opportunity to be in the presence of God. For there everything is altered by the light of His presence. Worship alters our viewpoint and helps us see the truth.*

(1) About ourselves (God loves and cares about us as His children)

(2) About our neighbors (God love and cares about them too and wants us to help them know Him)

- (3) About our enemies (God loves them also, but their evil will not go unpunished if they persist in sin)
- (4) About our problems (they are manageable with God's help and He has the power to take them away if He chooses)
- (5) About what's important (not our physical comfort but our spiritual condition)

Worship is the place where the troubled can find hope and strength.

*The psalmist had learned from his past trips to the temple that God was a strength and refuge to those who trust in Him. He had poured out his heart there and God had answered. And now He looks forward to going there again where he can pray and know that God will answer Him and give him hope and strength.*

*In a sense, worship takes us out of the world for a while; but then we must be dismissed not to leave this world, but to go back into it. And worship gives us the strength to go back into the world we came from with renewed strength and courage to do right.*

We need to make our worship God-centered and healing to the hurting.

*There is of course a place for rebuke to the indifferent and the willing sinner. Someone once said the work of preaching is "to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable". But most of those who come to us don't need affliction; they come for relief and comfort, they come seeking God and His help. Our job is to help them find God. Let us help them see that God of love, compassion, grace, and help. Let's make sure that we are not so focused on ourselves that we get in God's way.*

*And let us make sure that we have a word of healing for the hurting. I'm afraid that God's people have at times added to the grief of the hurting instead of healing it. The worship service should be the one place where we feel safe; where we are accepted; where we are forgiven. It should not be the place where we have the greatest security rather than the greatest anxiety. It should be the place where we find the greatest acceptance, not the greatest criticism.*

**Conclusion: Psalm 120 teaches us an important lesson about the value of worship. Through my life, I have learned that worship services are not the destination of our lives; they are the "filling stations" on the way to the destination! The goal of our lives is heaven. The purpose of our lives is to glorify God every day; but these services are, oh, so important in helping us get to our destination. How desperately we need every opportunity we can make to renew our spirits, encourage each other. I hope you will come to see the value that every one of our services and studies can have in helping you toward the destination.**