

TBC – 5/9/04 p.m.

THE LORD OUR HELPER

Psalm 121

Intro: This Psalm is the second of the Psalms of Ascent, or as it is named in the KJV, “A Song of Degrees.” Beginning with Psalm 120 and going all the way through Psalm 134, or for 15 Psalms, we have the Psalms that were sung by the children of Israel as they made their way up to Jerusalem on their feast days. There is no real agreement among expositors as to how they were sung, or where, but they form an interesting study of the spiritual journey of the children of Israel.

We note in Psalm 120, the first of these Psalms, that the people were in great distress. Their condition was obviously a difficult one, in fact, an impossible one. They appear to be coming from a distant land where they have no peace. They cry out to the Lord, and they believe that He has heard them. But their situation has not changed.

When we come to Psalm 121 we see that they were looking for help, and that they were made to realize that the Lord was the only One Who could help them, the only One Who could meet their needs.

The unique thing about this Psalm is that there is no request in the entire Psalm, just absolute confidence in the Lord. The one possible exception is in verse 3. Derek Kidner points out that the word “not” in Hebrew is the word commonly used for requests or commands. And so it could be translated, “May He not suffer your foot to be moved; may He that keepeth thee not slumber. And from there on faith seems to be strengthened

Notice also that the Psalmist is speaking in verses 1 and 2. Then he is being answered in the rest of the Psalm, someone speaking on behalf of the Lord directly about both the nation and the psalmist.

Concerning verse 1 some commentators believe that the word “whence” always indicate that the statement is a question. And it seems very likely that this is the case here.

Every verse from verse 3 through verse 8 except for verse 6 uses the Hebrew word *shamar* (keep, or preserve) to emphasize the idea that the Lord is the Protector of His people.

Psa. 121:1-8 (2)

The Psalm pictures life as a pilgrimage, arriving finally in verse 8, at home. So it builds up throughout the Psalm to the place of absolute security at the last.

JFB suggest that this whole Psalm is a commentary on God's words to Jacob in Gen. 28:15

Emphasize:

1) The name of Deity given here in vv. 2, 3, 7, and 8: "The Lord."

In verse 3 the reference to the "foot" is a reminder that most of the travel that was done in Israel was done on foot. It was easy to misstep and to fall.