

Psalm 122

The Peace of the Church

Psalm 122 is a Zion Song. But rather than sing of Zion, it sings of Jerusalem. Jerusalem ("The Foundation of Peace") is written all over the Psalm. This Psalm is about the peace of the Church.

1. Rejoice in the peace of the Church (vv. 1-2)

Vv. 1-2 introduce the experience of the psalmist. Verse 1 begins with the joy with which he embarked on pilgrimage ("I rejoiced") and verse 2 ends with arrival at his destination ("Standing were our feet in your gates, O Jerusalem"). The mention of Jerusalem catalyses the many allusions to the city with which the remainder of the Psalm is filled:

(a) *The sound of "Jerusalem"* (vv. 3-5)

Jerusalem is "Yerushalaim". The consonants "SH", "L" and "M" form the word "shalom" (= peace). In vv. 4-5 the psalmist employs several word plays based on these sounds.

(b) *The meaning of "Jerusalem"* (vv. 6-9)

In vv. 6-8 the Psalmist emphasises the meaning of "Jerusalem" by repeatedly employing the words "shalom = peace" and "shalwah = prosperity/security".

The effect is to make the word "peace" run through the psalm from v. 2 to v. 8, with "I rejoiced" as the headline, i.e. "I rejoiced in peace, peace, peace..."

Peace (reconciliation with God, with one another, and [in the new creation] with the environment) is founded on the Cross of Christ and is available only in the Church. Membership of the Church is the cause of deep, abiding joy.

2. Receive the peace of the Church (vv. 3-5)

The peace of the Church is a gift. Its source is the two houses mentioned in the Psalm: the house of the LORD (vv. 1 and 9) and the house of David (v. 5). These houses are the places of glory and justice. It was during Solomon's reign that Jerusalem's pre-eminence as the place of the Temple and the Palace was established. It is Jesus (greater than Solomon) who is both King and Priest – he is the giver of peace to the Church.

Notice that Jerusalem *is built* (passive) and *bound together* (passive) – the building and the binding is done by God.

The verb "to build" is first used in Genesis 2:22 – God "built" the woman from the flesh and bone taken from the side of the man; he built her to be the man's wife. This suggests that God built Jerusalem/the Church to be his Son's wife (c.f. Eph. 5:25-27).

The verb "to bind together" is used in Exodus (e.g. Ex. 26:3,6,9,11) for the "uniting together" of the Tabernacle. This suggests that God has bound Jerusalem/the Church together to be his dwelling place (c.f. Eph. 2:22).

3. Pray for the peace of the Church (vv. 6-7)

"*Pray* for the peace of Jerusalem" = "*Ask* for the peace of Jerusalem". It is a Hebrew idiom for inquiring after someone's welfare. E.g. Genesis 43:27 tells us about Joseph's second encounter with his brothers in Egypt: "And he inquired about their welfare [literally, *he asked for their peace*] and said, 'Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?'"

So "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" = "Inquire about the welfare of the Church. Have a concern about how things are going in the Church."

This is the commitment of love: "May they be secure who love you!"

It will lead to informed prayer: "Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!"

Steps you can take:

- Use the RP "Missionary Prayer Letter".
- Read the "Reformed Vision".
- Read the magazines published by Barnabas Fund, Release International, etc.

4. Work for the peace of the Church (vv. 8-9)

Verses 8 and 9 both begin with the expression "For the sake of". This is about orientation.

If we orientate ourselves towards selfish goals ("For my sake! For my sake!") we will damage the peace of the Church: many examples in the New Testament (e.g. Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Diotrephes [3 John 10], Romans 16:17-18).

Psalm 122 recommends the opposite orientation: "For the sake of my brothers and companions...For the sake of the house of the LORD our God." When we have this orientation (when we consider others better than ourselves, and seek to serve rather than be served) then each member of the Church will be working properly, and the Church will grow and build itself up in love.

The determination of a follower of Jesus Christ is suggested by the verb "to seek"; e.g. when a person "seeks the face of God" it is because he has a strong desire to know God and God's will. So to "seek the good of Jerusalem/the Church" is to work strenuously for her peace.