
Day 12 – May 4

Israel as a Monarchy (1100 – 930 BCE)

Psalms of Joy and Praise

Readings: *Psalm 122, 124, 133, 134, 135, 136, 138*

Reflections:

- Psalm 122: A prayer for Jerusalem, city of peace. Although this is still in a season when war is a part of Israel's concept of being a kingdom, at the centre of their nation is a city called "city of peace." Again, here is a sign of the centrality of peace or shalom (Jeru = city, Salem or Shalom = Peace) to God's purposes and helps set the stage for the kingdom of peace under the Messiah.
- Psalm 124: A song of praise for God's protection. Again, the emphasis is on trusting God rather than trusting in one's self.
- Psalm 134: Simple song of praise.
- Psalm 135: A song that tells Israel's story and affirms the power and deliverance of God. It also clearly speaks against all of the religions of its day. An interesting insight is found within this psalm. Those who worship idols become spiritually blind and deaf. "Idols have mouths but cannot speak, eyes but cannot see, ears but cannot hear...those who make them will be like them, so will all who trust in them." Religion has the form of relationship but is not true relationship. They have the form of communication but not the substance of relationship. People feel like they are communicating with God but they cannot truly hear God nor understand his heart when they are bound up in religion, whether that is worshipping an idol or making an idol of some religious system of approaching God, any system of rules, regulations, routines or magical experiences.
- Psalm 136: An interactive song that tells the story of Israel and drives home the point of God's enduring love. Key lines: "to the One who remembered us in our low estate and freed us from our enemies and who gives food to every creature." God is the God of the poor, needy and hungry.
- Psalm 138: A song of David that again reveals God's intimate relationship with his people and his heart for them in their broken and needy position. Key thoughts: God has exalted his name (character) and his word (communication about himself). These are both primarily relational dimensions of God. It could have been his majesty and power he exalted but rather he chose to exalt his name (his character and how we approach

him) and his word (how he communicates with us.) David immediately follows this up by saying: "When I called, you answered me; you made me bold and stouthearted." God lifts us up and strengthens us by communicating with us and speaking into our hearts and lives. David continues. "The Lord is on high, he looks upon the lowly (a phrase expressing a look of compassion) but the proud he knows from afar." God draws near to us in our humility and brokenness. When we are proud he pulls back. David is renewed in his confidence in God because of God's response to him and so he concludes, "The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your love O Lord endures forever - do not abandon the works of your hands." David can face his calling and the challenges of his calling because God is with him and through his communication with God David is experientially reassured that God loves him and is with him. This psalm points out again how our relationship with God functionally works to give us strength and confidence to live out his purposes in the world.