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A Song of Ascents. By David.

PSALM 122: 1 I was glad when they said to me, "Let's go to the LORD's house!"

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The satisfaction of a gracious soul in the use of God's ordinances, Psa 122:1, Psa 122:2. Description of the internal government of Jerusalem, Psa 122:3-5. Prayers for its peace and prosperity, Psa 122:6-9.

In the preceding Psalms we find the poor captives crying to God for deliverance; here they are returning thanks that they find they are permitted to return to their own land and to the ordinances of their God.

Verse 1

I was glad when they said - When Cyrus published an edict for their return, the very first object of their thanksgiving was the kindness of God in permitting them to return to his ordinances.

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PSALM 122: 2 Our feet are standing within your gates, Jerusalem;

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Verse 2

Our feet shad stand - For seventy years we have been exiled from our own land; our heart was in Jerusalem, but our feet were in Chaldea. Now God has turned our captivity, and our feet shall shortly stand within the gates of Jerusalem. What a transition from misery to happiness! and what a subject for rejoicing!

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PSALM 122: 3 Jerusalem, that is built as a city that is compact together;

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Verse 3

Jerusalem - compact together - It is now well rebuilt, every part contributing to the strength of the whole. It is also a state of great political and spiritual union. It is the center of union to all the tribes, for each tribe has an equal interest in that God who is worshipped there.

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PSALM 122: 4 where the tribes go up, even the LORD's tribes, according to an ordinance for Israel, to give thanks to the LORD's name.

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Verse 4

The testimony of Israel - There is the ark, where the presence of God is manifested; there is the holy of holies; and there all the tribes assembled to worship Jehovah. He no doubt alludes to the assembling of the tribes annually at each of the three grand national festivals.

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PSALM 122: 5 For there are set thrones for judgement, the thrones of David's house.

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Verse 5

There are set thrones of judgment - There were the public courts, and thither the people went to obtain justice; and while the thrones of the house of David were there, they had justice.

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PSALM 122: 6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Those who love you will prosper.

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Verse 6

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem - שלום shalom signifies both peace and prosperity. Let her unanimity never be disturbed; let her prosperity ever be on the increase!

They shall prosper that love thee - In the peace and prosperity of the city, they shall find their peace and their prosperity; and even on this ground they should love the city, and labor to promote its best interests. There is a remarkable alliteration in this verse, the letter ש shin frequently recurring. שאלו שאלו שאלו ירושלם ישליו אהביך

Shaalu shelom yerushalam yishlayu ohabeycha. "Ask ye the prosperity of Jerusalem; they shall be quiet that love thee."

There are remarkable specimens of similar alliteration to be found in all poets, ancient and modern. This formed the chief feature of our ancient poetry. Thus in Peter the ploughman: - "In a somers seysoun whan sete was the sonne

I schoop me in a shrowde as I a sheep were."

And the same manner often appears, even in Milton himself. See the Il Penseroso: - "Oft, on a plat of rising ground,

I hear the far-off curfew sound

Over some wide-watered shore,

Swinging slow with sullen roar."

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PSALM 122: 7 Peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces.

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Verse 7

Peace be within thy walls - This is the form of prayer that they are to use: "May prosperity ever reside within thy walls, on all the people that dwell there; and tranquillity within thy palaces or high places, among the rulers and governors of the people."

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PSALM 122: 8 For my brothers' and companions' sakes, I will now say, "Peace be within you."

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Verse 8

For any brethren and companions' sakes - Because this city is the abode of my kinsfolk and countrymen, I will wish it prosperity. I will promote its peace and tranquillity by all means in my power. I will affectionately say, May peace be within thee!

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PSALM 122: 9 For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your good.

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Verse 9

Because of the house of the Lord our God - Particularly will I wish thee well, because thou art the seat of religion, the place where our merciful God has condescended to dwell.

To the captives in Babylon the Prophet Jeremiah had given this charge, Jer 29:7 : "And seek שלום shalom, the prosperity of the city, whither I have caused you to be carried captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the prosperity thereof ye shall have prosperity."

Was this a duty for the captives? Yes. And is it the duty of every man for his own country! God, nature, common sense, and self-interest say, Yes! And what must we think of the wretches who not only do not thus pray, but labor to destroy the public peace, to subvert the government of their country, to raise seditions, and to destroy all its civil and religious institutions? Think of them! Why, that hemp would be disgraced by hanging them.

There is a fine picture given us here of the state of Jerusalem after the restoration of the Jews. The walls were finished, the city rebuilt, beautiful, strong, and regular, the temple and its worship were restored, the courts of justice were re-established, the constituted authorities in Church and state were doing their duty; and God was pouring out his blessing upon all. Who could see this without praying, May God increase thy peace, and establish thy prosperity for ever!