

PSALM 120

Prayer for Deliverance from the Treacherous.

INTRODUCTION.

- A. From Roy H. Enoch (10-16-96).
- B. Introduction to Songs of Ascents (Psa. 120-134).
 1. Coffman quotes Spurgeon, "We have left the continent of the vast 119th Psalm for the islands and islets of Songs of Degrees.' However, he reminded us that God is the author of both the great and small, and that all of the Word of God is precious."
 2. Coffman quotes the *Interpreter's Bible* on the arrangement of these psalms: "These fifteen psalms constitute a Little Psalter, which contains indications of a formal arrangement. The central psalm in this collection, the only one ascribed to Solomon, has on either side of it a group of seven psalms, each such group having two psalms ascribed to David and five anonymous psalms. The ascribed psalms are separated one from another by the anonymous psalms, in such a sort that no two ascribed psalms come together. This is evidently not the result of chance." (Vol. IV, p. 638.)
 3. The Jews explained the number of psalms of this group as the fifteen steps from the Court of Women to the Court of Men in the Temple, and that a song was sung in succession on those steps. Others have suggested that they were sung by pilgrims going to Jerusalem for the three great annual feasts, Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.
 4. It is interesting that Dummelow points out that, "there is an indication in these titles that these Psalms were especially intended for vocal music. Exquisitely beautiful they are, well fitted for pilgrim songs, either for the Jew to Jerusalem, or for the Christian to that heavenly Zion whose builder and maker is God."
- C. Introduction to Psalm 120.
 1. A Song of Ascents. "Prayer for Deliverance From Bad Neighbors."
 2. Clyde M. Miller points out in the *Living Word Commentary* that the verbs in this psalm can be rendered in the past tense which would make the psalm one of thanksgiving for having been delivered from the problems described. But if it is rendered in the present tense as in the RSV, it would suggest that the psalm is a lament and petition to be relieved of the distress that is described. The RSV and NIV have the present tense and the KJV, NKJ, ASV and NAS translate it in the past tense. It seems to me that the psalm fits the context of the pilgrims journeying to Jerusalem for the festivals better when considered as a psalm of thanksgiving.

THE TEXT.

- 120:1** In my trouble I cried to the LORD,
And He answered me.
- 2** Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips,
From a deceitful tongue.
- 3** What shall be given to you, and what more shall be done to you,
You deceitful tongue?
- 4** Sharp arrows of the warrior,
With the *burning* coals of the broom tree.
- 5** Woe is me, for I sojourn in Meshech,
For I dwell among the tents of Kedar!
- 6** Too long has my soul had its dwelling
With those who hate peace.
- 7** I am *for* peace, but when I speak,
They are for war.

COMMENTS.

[v1,2] With 120:1 translated in the past tense, 120:2 is the prayer that the psalmist had offered in asking God to deliver him.

[v3,4] Verse 3 is a question of what God would do to a deceitful and false tongue. Verse 4 describes God's punishment as sharp arrows and hot coals from the broom tree.

[v5-7] Verse 5 describes the pilgrims as living in distant lands. Meshech was in northern Asia Minor near the Black Sea. Kedar was of the descendants of Ishmael who lived southeast of Israel. They were having difficulty living among a warring people. It also is appropriate as the first psalm for the pilgrims, as it pictures them starting in a far country.