

Lord's Day Worship: Why Are You Here? – *Psalm 122, Heb 12:18-29*

Introduction – Why are you here this morning? And how are you feeling about being here? What are you anticipating? One of the distinctives we have been cultivating is that the Bible teaches that our Lord's Day Worship service is to be entered into with reverence along with great and glad expectation. Reverence because we truly are coming before the Lord as He summons us; and glad expectation because we truly expect that the Lord will change us and the world as we obediently gather.

"O 'Twas a Joyful Sound to Hear" – Psalm 122 is one of the Psalms of Ascent, traditionally sung by the pilgrims travelling up to Jerusalem on the special feast days of ancient Israel. This was probably sung as they entered into the city. This was not "David's Psalm" in that these are his thoughts alone. They are to be sung by all worshippers as they approach the gatherings they had been summoned to. Meditate on the Psalm in light of the fulfillment of these things in Christ and the New Covenant.

I Was Glad When they Said... (vv1-2) - What makes a heart glad when you are summoned to gather? This is the heart of a believer, one who is walking with God and with His people. We come to the Father in the name of the Son by the power of the Spirit.

This City Jerusalem (vv3-4) – No matter where they came from, coming to Jerusalem was, in a sense, coming home. The city was "compact," that is, well-ordered, knit together, and well protected. Regardless of where we have been all week, among our different "tribes," now we gather, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph 4:4-6). That Jerusalem was only a copy of the real "new Jerusalem" that we are (Rev 21:1-3, 9-10). The gathering took place according to "the Testimony of Israel," the statutes of God, where they "give thanks to the name of God" (v4). We gather on the first day of the week, where these feasts find their fulfillment in the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ and our service is a sacrifice of praise culminating at a Table of Thanksgiving.

Thrones of David (v5) – David served in Jerusalem as the anointed king and shepherd of the people; but he was only a type. Jesus is the King of kings Whom we serve and we come before this Judge Who wields His sword upon us, which is the Word (Heb 4:12). But there are also thrones which we sit upon with Him as we judge the world in counsel with Christ, calling upon Him to do on earth what is in heaven through our prayers and petitions.

Peace and Prosperity (vv6-9) – Because of the worship at Jerusalem before God, they would ask for peace and for prosperity from the One who could give those things (vv6-7). They would pray those things for their brethren (v8) and because God gave abundantly, they would commit to do so as well to one another (v9).

Well, That Was the Old Testament – Yes, and we no longer travel to Jerusalem. But the Bible teaches that we do something far greater. We go to heaven.

Worship Just Before 70AD - The book of Hebrews, in one sense, is a book about how to worship God. The warning throughout this book is that these Christians should not return to Jerusalem to worship because if they do, they would find themselves at a place coming under apocalyptic judgment. Also, they would be denying their faith in Jesus Christ, the better-Moses, the better-Aaron, the better, once-for-all sacrifice. They were instead to go to a place that, on the face of it, seemed to be less glorious, less real. But it is not less glorious or real for those who have faith like those in Chapter 11 (see 11:1). If the readers in that day did not understand this (and here our application is the same) they will not understand that there is now a better-mountain, a better-city, a better-temple for worship and it no longer has a single location on earth. But faith is not pretending. Faith is living what you know to be true even when it is not visible or fully apparent to all – even yourself.

So You're Going to Heaven I Hear (Heb 12:18-24) – We have come to a real and more terrifying mountain than the real and terrifying Mt. Sinai. The holiness, the 'real-ness' of God is greater at Mt. Zion to which we have come, also known as the city of the living God. Now, where is that? Through verses 22-24 we see that we have been brought up into heaven.

And What Is Happening There? (Heb 12:25-29) – Our eyes cannot tell us. But by faith, scripture does tell us what is happening. Our worship service must be enveloped in faith – the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. The whole church on earth, the church catholic, is drawn together and united with the church triumphant (triumphing?) in heaven. Here, God Himself speaks to us (v25). These words are shaking heaven and earth. In Revelation, we have all kinds of examples where words are spoken and things are released upon the earth. The earth is also being shaken, like a dog shaking off the unwanted water or a crab shaking off the old crusted, outgrown shell.

At the same time, before this better, more real temple, we are being shaken by God's Word, for we have not yet been fully sanctified. Yet, we are received perfectly and gladly because we are in Christ, justified through His blood.

Our God is a Consuming Fire – That is why we come with great reverence and not with a sense of breezy informality. That is why we come expecting to see change, as the Fire purifies us. As we grow in this by faith, it will change your preparation, your expectation, and your participation in the worship service. It will also change your anticipation as you leave. May God grant us hearts that cry out, "I was glad when they said to me, Let us go into the house of the LORD."