

STUDIES IN PSALMS

an expanding and descending force, however gentle and unobserved; which reaches down far below the point of original bestowment of the grace. By the help of these simple analogies the mind of the reader climbs to higher things: to the rich influences descending from public worship into family life and into civic communities. The Christian will be forgiven if he is reminded of the ever descending grace which flows down from his Head in heaven: if a poetic Christian, he may indulge in a smile at the psalmist's adroitness in fetching one of his similes from the far North beyond where the Northern tribes dwelt, to their quite legitimate gratification; and, if at the same time he is a breezy Christian, possessing some breadth and flexibility of apprehension,—he will be unable to restrain himself from a feeling of additional pleasure that the spell of the psalmist's genius, having first appropriated a *sacred* symbol, then goes farther afield and presses a *secular* symbol into his service; reflecting that, even the dew of Hermon may benefit Zion, even as Christ is head over all things to his Church. Yet, when all comes to all, lowly Zion will be loftier in his eyes than Lebanon; for, *there, in Zion, hath Jehovah commanded the blessing even life for evermore.*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What particular event seems to fit this psalm?
2. What are the motivations and methods of fellowship and unity?
3. There are two beautiful figures of speech in this psalm—show how they perfectly accomplish their purpose.

PSALM 134

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Night Service in the Temple.

ANALYSIS

(See Inserted Headlines.)

(Lm.) Song of the Steps.

PSALM 134

(ADDRESSED TO NIGHT-WATCHERS IN THE TEMPLE.)

- 1 Lo! bless ye Jehovah all ye servants of Jehovah,
who stand in the house of Jehovah in the dark night:¹
- 2 Lift up your hands in holiness² and bless ye Jehovah.

(THEIR REPLY.)

- 3 May Jehovah bless thee out of Zion—[He who is] Maker of
heaven and earth!

(Nm.)³

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 134

Oh, bless the Lord, you who serve Him as watchmen in the Temple every night.

2 Lift your hands in holiness and bless the Lord.

3 The Lord bless you from Zion—the Lord who made heaven and earth.

EXPOSITION

The purpose and structure of this psalm are simple and evident. There is in the Temple a Night-service, which becomes the occasion of a charge from the people to the Levites who represent them, and of a benediction from the Levites on the people before they depart to their homes. There is a probable reference to such a service in 1 Ch. 9:33; and the priestly response is after the manner of Num. 6:24. The stair-like movement characteristic of the previous "Step-Songs" is perceptible in this psalm also, as witness the five-fold repetition of the name *Jehovah*, which, reverently uttered, would impart to this final song a suitable solemnity. That the *standing in the house of Jehovah* points to the ministrations of the officials of the Temple, is sufficiently evident from the following passages; namely, Deu. 10:8, 18:7, 1 Ch. 23:30 and 2 Ch. 29:11. Concerning the lifting up of hands in worship, Pss. 28:2, 44:20, 63:4, 88:9, 119:48, and 141:2, may be profitably compared; while, as to the accompanying words "in holiness" or "to the sanctuary," the preference of Delitzsch, with R.V. text, for the "accusative of direction"—*unto the sanctuary*, is perhaps not quite so plainly

1. So Br. "in the nights"—Dr.

2. Or: "unto the sanctuary."

3. See Ps. 135 (beginning).

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correct as the "accusative of definition"=*in holiness*, with R.V. margin; although the reason given by Aglen for the latter is scarcely conclusive. He says: "Since the servants of Jehovah are here addressed as standing in the sanctuary, this direction seems unreasonable." The unreasonableness disappears if we remember that the ministrants might be already standing within the Temple courts, and yet direct their uplifted hands toward the holy shrine. Still, *in holiness* appears the more obvious rendering; which becomes doubly acceptable when viewed as supplying the idea of "holy hands" in 1 Tim. 2:8. It remains only to add: that the simple structure of this psalm by no means pre-supposes the elaborate ritual of perambulating the Temple courts during the night, which the Talmud connects with the Second Temple. There is nothing here which the reforming King Hezekiah might not have arranged or restored.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This is the last of the fifteen psalms devoted to the *Song of the Steps*—it is appropriate that it be a night service in the temple—Read I Chronicles 9:33 and Numbers 6:24 to aid in visualizing the circumstances.
2. Delitzsch seems to see some objections to an in the temple worship. How does Rotherham answer the objection?
3. Are we to actually "lift up our hands" in the worship of our Lord? cf. I Timothy 2:8.

PSALM 135

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Call to Temple-Worship.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, A Charge to the Levites to Lead in the Delightful Duty of Praise. Stanza II., vers. 5-7, A Personal Enforcement of this Duty—based on the Works of Creation. Stanza III., vers. 8-12, The Same—based on Israel's History. Stanza IV., vers. 13, 14, Jehovah's Name and Memorial a Guarantee of Future National Blessing. Stanza V., vers. 15-18, Reproach cast on Idols. Stanza VI., vers. 19-21, Four Classes called upon to Bless Jehovah.