

The content of this psalm seems to celebrate the arrival of the ark of the covenant in Jerusalem where David had prepared a tabernacle for it (2 Samuel 6). The psalmist speaks of David's vow to find a permanent place for the ark, as well as the joy and worship inspired by the ark's arrival in Jerusalem. This psalm ends with a reminder of the LORD's promise to dwell in Jerusalem and His choice of David and his descendants to rule over Israel.

A Song of degrees.

The Hebrew word translated "degrees" means "steps" or "ascent" and some Bible translations render this title as "A Song of Ascents." As with a previous psalm we've studied that was described as a psalm of "degrees" (Psalm 122), this psalm is apparently intended to be sung or recited by worshipers as they ascended to Jerusalem or to the temple mount to worship the LORD. The title of this psalm does not give us the author or the occasion for writing it, but many commentators see the content of the psalm as suggesting that the occasion may be in celebration of when David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem.

1 LORD, remember David, *and* all his afflictions: 2 How he swore unto the LORD, *and* vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob;

"LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions [hardship; to be humbled]" – The prayer to the LORD is that He would remember the hardships that David suffered in order to remain faithful to the LORD. These afflictions may also include all that transpired because of David's desire to bring the ark to Jerusalem. The death of Uzza during the first attempt (1 Chr. 13:1-11) was no doubt humbling to David, who was both surprised and mortified by the turn of events.

"How he swore unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob" – David vowed to the LORD that he would find a permanent location for the ark to reside and vs. 3-5 recite that vow.

3 Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; 4 I will not give sleep to mine eyes, *or* slumber to mine eyelids, 5 Until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.

The tabernacle was designed to be a mobile structure, and even after Israel had taken possession of the land of Canaan, the tabernacle did not have a permanent location to house the ark of the LORD. For a while the tabernacle stood at Shiloh and then later it was at Kirjath-Jearim, which was where it was when David attempted to bring the ark to Jerusalem. Later, in the aftermath of David's sin in numbering Israel, the tabernacle was at Gibeon while the ark was in Jerusalem (1 Chr. 21:29). David made a promise to the LORD that he would not rest until he had found a place for the ark to reside (the ark represented the presence of the LORD). Moving the ark from Kirjath-Jearim to a tabernacle he had prepared for it was part of David fulfilling this promise (2 Sam. 6:17; 1 Chr. 15:1). Later, after David had repented of the sin of numbering Israel, he came to realize that the place where Ornan's threshing floor was located on Mt. Moriah would be the location that the LORD had chosen for the future temple (1 Chr. 21:28; 2 Chr. 3:1).

6 Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood.

"Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah" – Ephratah was the ancient name of Bethlehem, where David grew up. This line likely refers to David's early days when he and his family had heard reports of the ark but had never been able to see it for themselves.

"we found it in the fields of the wood" – Kirjath-Jearim was known as "the city of the woods" because it was located in a forest. This line seems to be speaking of the time when David moved the ark from Kirjath-Jearim to Jerusalem (1 Chr. 13:5).

7 We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool.

David described the ark as the LORD's footstool when he was commissioning the leaders of Israel to assist his son Solomon in building the temple (1 Chr. 28:2 "*Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building*"). The psalmist is saying that we will enter the "tabernacles" (dwelling places) of the LORD and worship Him at the ark, His "footstool." Notice that he isn't calling for worship of the ark, but acknowledging it as a representation of the LORD's presence.

8 Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength.

"Arise, O LORD, into thy rest" – The ark and the tabernacle where it resided had moved from place to place, even after Israel entered the land of Canaan. Now that David had moved the ark to Jerusalem, it had a permanent place to reside. The psalmist is asking the LORD to accept the new location as the permanent place of "rest" for Himself and the ark. The road to Jerusalem was uphill and people used the expression "to go up to Jerusalem." By "Arise, O LORD," perhaps the psalmist was meaning for the LORD to "arise" from where the ark had been to reside up at Jerusalem, despite the fact that, in reality, the LORD would have to descend in order to reside anywhere on earth.

"thou, and the ark of thy strength" – The ark was the means through which the LORD often demonstrated His strength. Notice that the psalmist is making the distinction between the LORD ("thou") and the ark. The ark was not used as an idol or a substitute focus of worship for the LORD. It was merely the place where the LORD manifested His presence (Ex. 25:22 "*And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel*"; 2 Sam. 6:2 "*And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims*").

9 Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy.

“Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness” – As the ark is being brought into Jerusalem, the priests are called upon to exhibit personal righteousness. Their righteousness should not be external only like the scribes and Pharisees that Jesus condemned (**Matt. 23:27** “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness*”). The idea may also carry the idea of the righteousness that can only come from the LORD (v. 16). The psalmist’s prayer is for the righteousness of the priests that are to minister to the people. **“and let thy saints shout for joy”** – The people of Jerusalem are urged to rejoice as the ark enters Jerusalem.

10 For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thine anointed.

“Thine anointed” seems to refer to the descendants of David, who would each be anointed as king over Israel. Turning one’s face away indicates abandonment or a withholding of favor and blessing. The psalmist is asking that the blessings promised to David would not be withheld from his descendants. However, the LORD will never turn His face away from Jesus Christ, Who is the final and ultimate descendant of David to be anointed as King.

11 The LORD hath sworn *in truth* unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.

“The LORD hath sworn [to take an oath] in truth [firmness; reliability] unto David; he will not turn from it” – The LORD has sworn an oath to David, an oath that is firm and reliable and that He will never change His mind about.

“Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne” – The LORD’s promise is that only David’s descendants would sit upon the throne of Israel. No other family line would be substituted in the place of David’s family line.

12 If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore.

There is only one condition to this promise: each individual descendant must be faithful to the LORD and obey Him. Those who were faithful were blessed by the LORD while those who were not suffered the consequences of their sin. However, the LORD did not allow David’s royal line to be permanently replaced by another family line. Jesus Christ Himself will be the final and eternal descendant of David to sit on the throne.

13 For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired *it* for his habitation. 14 This *is* my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.

“For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation” – “Zion” refers to Jerusalem and of all the cities on the earth, the LORD chose it to be the place where He would permanently manifest His earthly presence (**2 Chr. 6:6** “*But I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there; and have chosen David to be over my people Israel*”).

“This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it” – Verses 14-18 quote the LORD speaking of His choice of Jerusalem and His promises to bless it. He begins by declaring that Jerusalem will be the permanent resting place of the ark, which represented His presence. His reason for choosing Jerusalem is not one of convenience or necessity, but because “I have desired it.” We frequently cannot explain the LORD’s choices. Why does He love and save sinners? The only reason is because He has desired it.

15 I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. 16 I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.

“I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread” – The LORD continues speaking with a promise to bless Jerusalem with provisions of food so that even her poor will have plenty to eat.

“I will also clothe her priests with salvation [deliverance; safety; prosperity]” – This verse mirrors v. 9 and seems to be the LORD’s promise to answer the prayer of v. 9. Many commentators substitute the word “righteousness” from v. 9 in place of the word “salvation” here to help explain this verse. The LORD is promising to provide His righteousness and salvation to the priests that serve in the temple/tabernacle.

“and her saints shall shout aloud for joy” – The LORD promises that His presence in Jerusalem and the blessings He will provide will give the saints that reside there reason to shout for joy.

17 There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. 18 His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish.

“There will I make the horn of David to bud” – The LORD’s promises extend to David (and ultimately to Jesus Christ), as He promises that David will have a horn sprout and start to grow. A horn was a reference to strength, power and the LORD promises that David and his descendants would have the strength and power of the LORD. Jerusalem will be the place where this will happen.

“I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed” – “Mine anointed” may generally refer to David’s royal line anointed as king, but likely it more specifically refers to Christ, the LORD’s anointed, Whom the LORD has ordained to be a light to the world.

“His enemies will I clothe with shame” – Those who oppose David and his royal line (and thus the will of the LORD) will be clothed in the shame of defeat, judgment and condemnation.

“but upon himself shall his crown flourish” – In contrast to the shame of His enemies, David and his descendants (and ultimately Jesus Christ) will flourish on the throne under the blessings of the LORD.