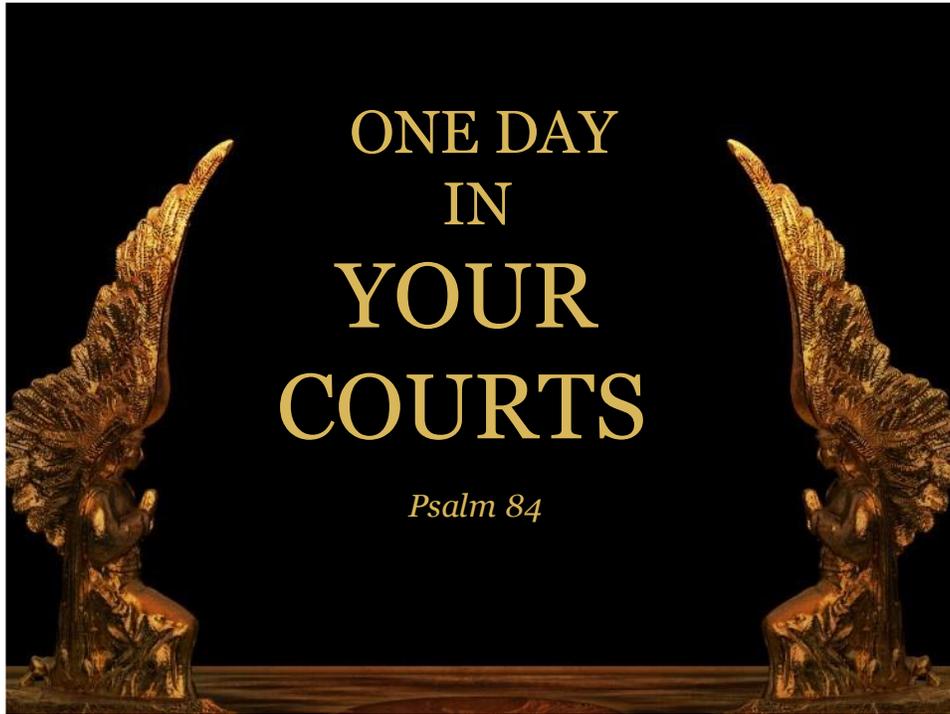


TBC SERMON NOTES & STUDY

January 03, 2021 – Dr. Bryan Ferrell, Senior Pastor

Video file: www.timberlakebaptist.org – (Or on Facebook & YouTube)



Sermon Text:

Psalm 84:1-12 (ESV)

¹ How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!

² My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.

³ Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God.

⁴ Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! Selah

⁵ Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

⁶ As they go through the Valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools.

⁷ They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion.

⁸ O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah

⁹ Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed!

¹⁰ For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather

be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.
¹¹ For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor.
No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.
¹² O LORD of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!

INTRODUCTION: (Small Group Discussion Questions)

1. How are blessings promised to those who gather in God's presence? (Vs.1-4)
2. How does gathering as God's people protect our souls from sin and Satan?
3. How are blessings promised to those who look to God when they *are not* gathered? (Vs.5-8)
4. Why is it our tendency to withdraw from God when we are struggling?
5. Why is it that we do not run to God as a normal spiritual default in our suffering and struggles?
6. How is God's kind providence keep you going in troubled times? (Vs.6-7)
7. What things get in our way in preparation for Sunday gatherings? Why?
8. How is blessings a promise to those who love God no matter the time? Explain. (Vs. 9-12)
9. Explain how it is a blessing to those who trust in the Lord? (Vs.12)
10. How is James 1:5 a practical picture of God's giving heart?

I. Sermon Outline:

3 Promised Blessings Related to God's House

1. Those Who Long to Gather (vs. 1-4)
2. Those Who Look to God When Not (vs. 5-8)
3. Those Who Love God at All Times (vs. 9-12)

Deeper Study #1: (Expositional Study)

Psalm 84

When You Yearn to Be in the Presence of God, 84:1-12

(84:1-12) **Introduction:** even with the amazing means of communication we have in our modern age, nothing compares to actually being *with* someone we love. Telephone conversations, instant messaging, and video conferencing are great

blessings for those who cannot be together. Even so, as helpful as they are, they cannot replace being in the presence of someone who is dear to us. Nothing is the same as actually *being together*.

Psalm 84 is the psalmist's own testimony: he loves being in the presence of God. In the psalm, he describes what it meant to abide in God's house and to make the journey of those who traveled to Jerusalem to worship at the tabernacle and later at the temple. The psalm is attributed to the *sons of Korah*, who were devoted worshippers. They served in the tabernacle as singers and musicians and were also the doorkeepers of God's house (see Introduction—Ps. 42-43 for more discussion). Many scholars think one of the sons of Korah wrote Psalm 84 while away from Jerusalem for a period of time, perhaps during the Babylonian captivity. He expressed his longing to return and once again worship in God's presence, at the tabernacle. To the Jew, the tabernacle was the place where God's presence dwelled in a very special way.

The author's passion for God's presence should remind us, as believers, how privileged we are to have God's presence dwelling in us through His Holy Spirit. It should also move us to look forward to eternity, when we will dwell forevermore with the Lord in a new heaven and new earth. For the here and now, though, it should stir us to dedicate ourselves daily to living in God's presence through prayer, the study of His Word, and worship. This is, *When You Yearn to Be in the Presence of God*, 84:1-12.

1. Tell God that you love Him—love being in His presence (vv. 1-3).

2. Thank God for the blessings of His presence (vv. 4-7).

3. Ask God to hear your prayer (vv. 8-12).

1. (84:1-3) Tell God that you love Him—love being in His presence.

The psalmist could not contain his love for God, his longing to be in God's presence. His delighted spirit overflowed with an exclamation of praise for the Lord's tabernacle or dwelling place, the place where God abode in a unique way. He described this holy place as *amiable* (*yadid*), well-loved or dearly loved (De. 33:12; Isa. 5:1). This word is a term of affection often used in romantic poetry. It appears in the heading to Psalm 45, a wedding song, as a *song of loves*. The psalmist's passionate love of God's presence reflected his passionate love for God.

a. Because your soul longs to worship Him: Your heart and your flesh cry out for the presence of the living God (v. 2).

The soul of the psalmist ached to be in the Lord's courts, the place where people went when they wanted to experience God's glorious presence. *Courts* refers to the courtyards of the tabernacle, the areas outside of the Holy Place and Holy of Holies. The psalmist's use of a number of words expresses his intense longing to worship God. Soul, heart, and flesh describe his entire being, all that he is and all that is within him. Long, faint, and cry out speak of how desperately he needed to be in the presence of the living God. Notice that the psalmist was careful to clarify that it was not the building or structure of the tabernacle he longed for, but the living God whose presence was distinctly manifested there.

b. Because your heart longs to live where even the sparrow and swallow have access: Near the very altar of God's presence (v. 3).

Speaking poetically, the psalmist declared that even the birds longed to be close to God. They built their houses and nests near His altars—likely in the eaves of the open tabernacle. The tabernacle area contained three altars (see Tabernacle illustrations at the end of Ex. 25:1-2).

- The altar of burnt offerings in the outer courtyard where sacrifices were offered (Ex. 27:1-8)
- The altar of incense in the inner courtyard that pictured the prayers of the people rising to heaven (Ex. 30:1-10, 34-38; Ps. 141:2; Re. 8:3-4)
- The mercy seat on the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies. This is the altar upon which the blood of the atoning sacrifice was sprinkled annually and where God's presence was centered (Ex. 25:10-32; 37:1-9)

Because sparrows and swallows were so abundant in ancient Israel, they were considered a worthless nuisance. Yet, the psalmist stated, they were welcome in the presence of God. They had found a home—a haven, a shelter, a safe place where they could lay their eggs—in God's house. Surely, these despised birds are meant to be a symbol of sinners who are welcomed into the presence of the Lord through the blood of the covenant. We are all wandering strangers flitting about in a foreign land (this world), but we find refuge and refreshment in the presence of God.

The psalmist emphasized the privilege of being in God's presence by mentioning two facts: first, God is the *Lord of hosts*, the Commander of heaven's armies.

Second, he, the psalmist, had a personal relationship with the Lord. The Lord is *my King and my God*.

Thought 1. The psalmist emphasized how much he loved to be in God's presence. Under the Old Covenant, God's people were allowed to go only so far into the tabernacle itself. They could not go into the Most Holy Place (the Holy of Holies) where God's presence actually dwelled at the mercy seat.

As believers on this side of the cross, however, we can enter the very presence of God at any time. When Christ died, God supernaturally split the veil of the tabernacle (Mk. 15:38). Consequently, Christ's sacrifice permanently removed the barrier between God and humanity.

We have a privilege that Old Testament saints never knew. We can enter directly into God's presence. Christ has made a way for us to go beyond the veil (Heb. 10:19-20). Yet, how much of our lives do we actually spend in the glorious presence of God?

Psalm 84 emphasized the strenuous journey believers would make just for the privilege of spending time in God's presence. God's special presence no longer abides in a tent or a temple; rather, it abides within *us*. God dwells in believers through His Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9). Out of heartfelt love and gratitude for God, we ought to live every day in the awareness of His presence, not act as if He were not there. We should set aside time daily for the sole purpose of going before God's throne in prayer. We have this glorious privilege that has been purchased for us by the blood of Jesus Christ. We also have a standing invitation to come boldly before God's throne (Heb. 4:16). But, sadly, many professing believers spend little, if any, time in God's presence.

The psalmist's passion for God's house was a reflection of his passion for God. Likewise, if we truly love the Lord, we will love being in His presence. Neglecting to spend time in God's presence reveals a heart that is lacking in deep devotion and love for the Lord, a heart that loves other things far more than God.

“And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom” (Mk. 15:38).

“Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, made

an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (Heb. 6:19-20).

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And *having* an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:19-22).

“Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth” (Ps. 26:8).

“One *thing* have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple” (Ps. 27:4).

2. (84:4-7) Thank God for the blessings of His presence.

The psalmist declared that those who are privileged to dwell in God’s house, to abide in His presence, are blessed. To be *blessed* (esher) is to be happy, but it is so much more than just surface or superficial happiness. It is a joy, peace, and assurance that rises above our circumstances (see Deeper Study #1—Psalm 1:1 for more discussion). The psalmist proceeded to cite four blessings of living in God’s presence.

a. *Happiness*: Joy and praise (v. 4^b).

Those who abide in God’s presence experience genuine happiness. They are fulfilled, whole, content, and filled with the joy of the Lord. As a result, they praise God continually. *Praise* is an imperfect Hebrew verb, meaning that their praise is never complete or finished.

b. *Strength*: Given to you when you set your heart on seeking God’s presence (v. 5).

Those who are blessed to abide in God’s presence find their *strength* in Him. “In whose heart are the ways of them” refers to the Jews who journeyed up to Zion to worship in God’s house. *Ways* (mesillah) means highways or public roads (Jdg. 20:31). The hearts of those who were determined to travel to Jerusalem to worship were truly set on seeking God’s presence. Their longing to worship God was so strong that they were willing to travel many miles in difficult conditions. They

found their strength for the journey in the joy they would experience when they reached Zion and basked in the Lord's presence (Heb. 12:2).

c. Comfort: A refreshed and renewed spirit—even when you pass through the valley of weeping (Baca) (v. 6).

Many of the worshippers who traveled up to Jerusalem had to pass through the *valley of Baca*, which means weeping. Apparently, it was a dry place and the most dreaded section of the journey. *Baca* is the Hebrew word for balsam or mulberry trees (2 Sa. 5:23-24; 1 Chr. 14:14-15). The valley of Baca may have been an area where these trees grew abundantly.

Mentioned in the Bible only here, many scholars are not sure that Baca was an actual geographical location. Rather, they think it may have been used here poetically as a symbol of the painful experiences of our journey through life.

Whether Baca is a real or symbolic place, the message of this verse is tender and beautiful. Baca represents the trials and troubles of life, the painful experiences that cause us to weep. God's presence comforts us in this valley, refreshing and renewing our spirits in the worst times. His presence empowers us to *make it a well*, that is, to turn our most trying times into experiences of spiritual refreshing and joy. When we make *pools* in life's deserts, the Lord will fill them with the heavenly *rain* of His presence.

d. Sustaining power: Growing stronger through life's pilgrimage—until you appear before Him (v. 7).

Those who abide in God's presence are not only comforted but also sustained throughout their lives. They go from strength to strength, growing ever stronger through life's pilgrimage until they appear before God in Zion (Job 17:9; Isa. 40:31). In every difficult place, they find the strength they need to persevere and continue on. As they near the end of their journey, their capacity to endure actually increases instead of decreasing the longer they travel. God's presence energizes them along the way (Jn. 1:16). As preacher Charles Spurgeon said, "If we spend our strength in God's ways we shall find it increase."

Thought 1. The saints' journey to Jerusalem is a picture of our journey through life. We are strangers and pilgrims in this world; it is not our true home (Heb. 11:13; 1 Pet. 2:11; Phil. 3:20). We are on our way to a better country, heaven, where we will live eternally in God's presence (Heb. 11:14-16). The journey is filled with many dangers—both temptations and trials—and is often difficult and

exhausting. Nevertheless, we are blessed along the way, for the Lord's presence is always with us (Heb. 13:5; Mt. 28:20). As a result, the journey is a happy one, filled with joy and praise (Ps. 16:11). We are given divine strength for every mile of every day (Isa. 40:31; Phil. 4:13). When we have to pass through a valley of tears, God Himself comforts us, refreshing us and renewing our spirits (2 Cor. 1:3-5; 4:16). Though we sometimes become tired, our endurance increases as we grow in grace and Christian maturity (2 Pet. 3:18; Eph. 4:15; 2 Thess. 1:3; Jude 20). The burdens of the journey seem lighter as the glory of our destination comes into view (2 Cor. 4:17-18). Commentator J. J. Stewart Perowne offered this rich description of the pilgrimage:

Every spot of the familiar road, every station at which they rested, lives in their heart. The path may be dry and dusty, through a lonely and sorrowful valley, but nevertheless they love it. The pilgrim band, rich in hope, forgets the trials and difficulties of the way: hope changes the rugged and stony waste into living fountains. The vale blossoms as if the sweet rain of heaven had covered it with blessings. Hope sustains them at every step; from station to station they renew their strength as they draw nearer to the end of their journey, till at last they appear before God, present themselves as His worshipers, in His sanctuary in Zion. ... No wonder that in all ages men have rejoiced to find in this beautiful picture an image of the Christian life.

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt. 18:20).

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen” (Mt. 28:20).

“*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me*” (Heb. 13:5-6).

“And, behold, I *am* with thee, and will keep thee in all *places* whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done *that* which I have spoken to thee of” (Ge. 28:15).

“And he said, My presence shall go *with thee*, and I will give thee rest” (Ex. 33:14).

“Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore” (Ps. 16:11).

“Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine. When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isa. 43:1^b-2).

3. (84:8-12) Ask God to hear your prayer.

The psalmist asked God to hear his prayer and to give it His full attention. More than anything else, he longed to spend the rest of his life serving in God’s house. Dwelling in God’s glorious presence was more important to him than anything else in the world.

a. That He favor and honor the anointed (Messianic) king, your protector: A picture of Christ (v. 9).

The psalmist’s first request was for God to favor and honor the king, Israel’s shield or protector. *Thine anointed* or *anointed one* speaks not only of Israel’s present king but also of the Messiah who would come from the line of David (Ps. 2:2; 2 Sam. 7:12-16). By praying for the king to be favored and blessed, the psalmist prayed for the coming of the Messiah as well. And when the Messiah came, He would thereafter be the shield and protector of His dear people as they walked through life.

b. That He grant His presence (vv. 10-11).

The psalmist prayed that God would grant him the privilege of continuing to dwell in His presence. In addition to being musicians and singers, the sons of Korah were also the doorkeepers or gatekeepers of the temple. They guarded the entrance to God’s House (1 Chr. 6:16-33; 9:19; 26:1-19). They considered themselves greatly blessed to have the privilege of serving in God’s presence, even though they served in a somewhat low-level position. To the psalmist, one day in God’s presence was better than a thousand anywhere else; and having the privilege of serving in God’s house—even in a low position—was better than all the wealth and recognition the world could offer (v. 10; vv. 3-4).

Next, the psalmist testified that the Lord God was his sun and shield (v. 11). Like the sun, God's presence was the light of his life and guided him along the right path (Ps. 27:1). Like a shield, it protected him from every danger and threat. These blessings, the psalmist noted, are reserved for those who walk uprightly or righteously. They alone are granted the privilege of abiding in God's presence (Ps. 15:1-5; 24:3-5). God will bestow honor upon them: they will be the recipients of His grace and glory. The Lord gives them "grace for the journey and glory at the end of the journey (Rom. 5:1-2; 1 Pet. 5:10)." He will withhold no good thing from them. Those who choose a life of holiness will enjoy *all* the blessings of God's presence and *all* the riches of His grace.

c. That He bless—give joy and happiness to—the person who trusts Him (v. 12).

Having described the *blessed* man as one who dwells in God's presence and finds his strength in Him (vv. 4-5), the psalmist closed by adding that the man who *trusts* in God is blessed. Because the Lord is his confidence and security, he will know a joy and happiness that nothing on this earth can supply.

Thought 1. We should pray daily for God to help us to live holy lives so that we too can enjoy the full blessings of His presence. If we have genuinely repented of our sin and accepted Christ, we know that we will spend eternity in God's presence. We need to remember, though, that we are not saved by our works or by holy living but by the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross. By Him, we are declared to be righteous before God (Rom. 3:24; 5:1, 9).

When we have sin in our lives, however, our fellowship with God is hindered. We do not enjoy the full blessing of His presence in our lives because our sin strains our relationship with Him. The joy of the Lord vanishes. We live in our own strength rather than in His. Instead of being renewed and refreshed by spending time in God's Word and in prayer, Scripture becomes silent to us and our attempts at prayer are feeble.

We need to walk in the power of God's indwelling Spirit moment by moment, day after day. We need to ask Him to deliver us from temptation and to strengthen us to resist sin (Gal. 5:16; Rom. 8:4). Thank God, when we do sin, we can confess our sins and be restored to fellowship with Him immediately (1 Jn. 1:9). Yet the greater way to live is to walk uprightly, choosing to obey God and resist the temptation to sin. If we do, then we can enjoy the fullness of God's presence in our lives at all times. This is possible only through God's power and through the

continuous cleansing of His Word (Eph. 5:26; Jn. 15:3). When we trust in Him, we will be richly blessed.

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples” (Jn. 15:7-8).

“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:22-23).

“For the eyes of the Lord *are* over the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord *is* against them that do evil” (1 Pet. 3:12).

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2 Chr. 7:14).

“Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart” (Ps. 15:1-2).

(Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - Psalms II)

Deeper Study #2 (Exegetical Study)

Psalm 84

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Translation

- 1 For the music master. According to the Gittith.
Of the Korahites. A psalm.
- 2 How dear/lovely are your dwellings,
YHWH Sabaoth/of hosts.
- 3 My soul has (always) longed, indeed it faints
for the courts of YHWH;
my heart and my flesh cry out
to the living God.
- 4 Even the sparrow has found a house
and the swallow a nest,
where she has laid her young,
beside your altars.
YHWH Sabaoth/of hosts,
my king and my God,
- 5 happy are they who dwell in your house;
they are always praising you. *Selah*
- 6 Happy the people whose strength is founded on you,
who have the paths of pilgrimage in their hearts.
- 7 When they pass through the valley of drought/Baca,
they make it a place of springs;
indeed, the early rain covers it with blessing.
- 8 They go from strength to strength,

(until they) behold the God of gods in Zion.

9 O YHWH God Sabaoth/of hosts,
hear my prayer;
give ear, O God of Jacob. *Selah*

10 Behold, O God, our shield,
and look upon the face of your anointed.

11 For better is a day in your courts
than a thousand I would have chosen for myself;
(it is better) to stand on the threshold of the house of my God
than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

12 Indeed, YHWH God is sun and shield,
YHWH gives steadfast love and glory.
No good thing does he withhold
from those who walk with integrity.

13 YHWH Sabaoth/of hosts,
happy are the people who trust in you.

Analysis

Genre

This psalm is indisputably shaped, through and through, by motifs of Temple theology. However, there is thorough disagreement on whether the psalm has a cultic or poetic *Sitz im Leben* in the sanctuary, or whether its spiritual home is quite distant from the sanctuary—whether the sanctuary has here already become a (mythical) metaphor for the God of Zion himself, who works wonders from the sanctuary.

“*Liturgy at the Temple portal*”? The classic representative of the cultic interpretation of Psalm 84, in the narrow sense, is Hans Schmidt, who understands the psalm as a “liturgy at the Temple portal.” He describes the sequence, reflected in the textual form of Psalm 84, as follows:

This beautiful and profound liturgy clearly has its locus at the entrance to “the courts” of YHWH(3:11), on the “threshold” (11) of the great gate in the wall enclosing the mountain of God. It resembles 15, 24A, 95, 121.

First (2-5) we have the word of a pilgrim, probably the speaker for a pilgrimage group. How he has longed for the moment he is now experiencing; how he has been consumed with longing! Every drop of blood from his heart, every fiber in his body has positively cried out for this path leading to the face of God (3). He seeks an image to express the peace he now feels embracing him. Like the bird that seeks long for a place to nest—a swallow perhaps—and now, at last, has found one, so is his feeling before the altars of YHWH, of which there must have been several in the courts of the sanctuary (4). “How dear is your dwelling, YHWH of hosts” (1)! There is a wondrous profundity in this greeting addressed to the God of Zion.

At the same time, however, this greeting is for those who serve at YHWH’s altar, who “dwell in his house,” and are so fortunate as to be able to join in the services of jubilation not only now and then, on a pilgrimage, but “always” (5).

This greeting finds its response (6-10). Those who have not shunned the difficulties of the pilgrim path, but instead have borne it in their hearts, are greeted with a joyful shout (6). Immediately is added an expression of what value, what a blessing, such a pilgrimage has. Zechariah 14 says that only those fields experience the divine gift of rain whose owners make pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Feast of Booths. So it is also said here that a visit to the sanctuary brings the “early rain,” the much-desired first rain of the fall (7). Where pilgrim feet have trod, vegetation springs from the ground; the dried-out and barren plains suddenly stand clad in bright green. The festival pilgrims have mysterious powers within themselves. And the closer they come to the sanctuary, the more they are filled with strength, attaining at last the climax of the fullness of blessing that comes upon them in the “sight of God” on the day of his festival (8).

At the end (9-10) the greeting turns to prayer, and indeed to a prayer for the “anointed of YHWH,” the king, “our shield” (cf. 47:10). It is unnecessary to suppose that he himself is present. But the fall festival at which this pilgrimage apparently takes place is also the feast of the royal anniversary. The thought is directed to that aspect of the celebration. The priest who receives the pilgrims gives expression to it.

Now follows a second dialogue (11-13). First there is again a profound praise of the unspeakable joy of standing on the threshold of the divine palace (11, 12). It is answered by a priestly prayer greeting the pilgrims, the “men who trust in you” (13).

What is problematic in this interpretation is not only the liturgical ritual that is imposed on the text, but still more the superficial-realistic understanding of the section in vv. 6-8, which does not fit with the longing for the living God that is described in vv. 2-3. But even in the section in vv. 6-8, if we consider especially v. 6 (“pilgrim paths in the heart”), the subject is more than (merely) the pilgrim feet that announce the early rain.

Prayer of lament far from the Temple (“Temple piety”). Thus the other direction for interpretation seems to be more appropriate to the text, reading Psalm 84 as a prayer of lament, spoken far from the Temple, in longing for YHWH Sabaoth, who on Zion, or from Zion, gives “grace and glory.” This understanding is suggested especially by the structure of the basic psalm discernible in Psalm 84. The reading of Psalm 84 as a longing lament is also recommended by its kinship to or dependence on Psalm 42/ 43. It is the consensus of scholarship that Psalm 42/ 43 is shaped as a (spiritual) “pilgrimage song” far from the sanctuary. In spite of the dependence of our psalm on Psalm 42/ 43, this one is interpreted *differently*; this is apparently due to the strong pressure of the “liturgy at the portal hypothesis.” The problems that result are evident, for example, in Günther Wanke:

The song contains expressions that appear to be addressed to the pilgrims rather than spoken by them: 6-8, 12-13. This observation leads to the suggestion that in Ps 84 we are viewing a pilgrimage liturgy ... in the form of the “liturgy at the Temple portal,” to which especially v. 12 is intended to point. But the evident closeness of this song to the “songs of Zion” that may have arisen in the circles of Korahite collectors, and the striking parallels to Ps 42/ 43 (cf. vv. 3-4 with 42:2-3a and v. 8 with 43:3), as well as the expressions addressed to the pilgrims, indicate that this song was composed exclusively for pilgrims, and in fact by an author oriented to Zion theology, who has the pilgrims and himself speak in alternation. On the one hand he puts himself in the place of the approaching pilgrim, vv. 2-5, 11; on the other hand he describes the situation of the pilgrims and the faith attitude expected of them, vv. 7-8, and 12-13. ... The ... parallels to Ps 42/ 43, which in contrast to Ps 84 could not have originated in the sanctuary itself and whose poetry is more original than Ps 84, indicate that our psalm can only have been composed after the collectors had become familiar with Ps 42/ 43.

Three-Strophe Structure

In its final form the psalm is divided into three strophes, vv. 2-5, 6-8, 9-13. The most striking feature of the division is the changing direction of discourse or speech situation. In vv. 2-5 and 9-13 an “I” speaks *to* his God (speech situation: “I-

thou”), while vv. 6-8 speak *about* the people who are on the way to God on Zion (speech situation: “they”). This three-strophe division is emphasized by the fact that every strophe has, at a structurally prominent position, a beatitude that summarizes the theme of the strophe. The positioning of the beatitude at the beginning of the second strophe gives that strophe a particular weight. The special position of *this* middle strophe in comparison to the two external strophes is shown, on the one hand, by its brevity (the two external strophes have seven bicola, the middle strophe only three), and on the other hand by the absence of the divine predicate YHWH Sabaoth, which appears twice in each of the two external strophes—and each time in the structural opening and closing position (*inclusio*). This difference in itself reveals an important indicator for interpretation: while the two external strophes make statements about the works of YHWH Sabaoth, the middle strophe formulates statements about the people who are on the way to this YHWH Sabaoth.

Literary-Critical Observations

Scholars have repeatedly suggested that the final form of the psalm as we have it is, from a literary-critical point of view, not original. The weightiest observation has to do with the so-called royal petition in vv. 9-10, which many interpreters deem problematic, because of the following considerations:

1. Verses 9-10 are the only petitions in the whole psalm. As such, they are surprising within the overall flow of the psalm. The ׀ clause that follows vv. 9-10 comes without any transition, especially if we understand it as causal. But even if we take ׀ as deictic (“indeed, certainly”), the sequence of vv. 9-10 and v. 11 is unwieldy. Instead, v. 11 readily continues the context of vv. 6-8.
2. The royal theme itself is not present in the rest of the psalm. It is true that one can introduce the theme *somewhere* in the psalm, but even then it is a valid observation that *this* concrete petition is awkward in its wording. In fact, it is controversial in its very language. Depending on whether one understands מגנו in v. 10a as vocative or as the accusative object (see textual above), the speaker of vv. 9-10 could be the king himself, the “I” who prays the rest of the psalm, or the congregation (“our shield”). If one takes the king himself or the congregation as the speaker, this presumes that the petition is spoken in the sanctuary; but in that case especially there is a tension with the remaining overall flow of the psalm, which in our reading is a song of longing, far distant from the sanctuary.

3. Verse 9 is difficult from a colometric point of view. If we read the verse as a bicolon, it is one colon too long. If we read it as a tricolon, this verse falls outside the consistent bicolon structure.

Two Literary-Critical Positions

In the commentaries there are, if we simplify the matter somewhat, two approaches to a solution:

1. The section in vv. 9-10 is adjudged a liturgical fragment that was mistakenly placed in its present context. For example, Gunkel regards vv. 9-10 as a later expansion: “9, 10 : added to the text, and also shifted into a wrong position, is a short prayer, in a different verse length, for the reigning king, which, as the name ‘Yahweh Sabaoth’ suggests, was probably inserted when the poem was performed in the Temple at Jerusalem.” Duhm even sees vv. 9-10 and 12-13 as a later addition: “These verses ... in themselves have nothing to do with Ps 84A. It is possible that the pilgrims used to speak or sing a prayer for the supervisor of the Temple and that in this way this short poem came to follow immediately after 84A in a ritual for pilgrim worship services, but it was certainly not composed by a pilgrim; more probably it is a liturgical composition from the period of the Hasmonean rulers.”

2. The section is interpreted as the climax of the psalm and its original conclusion. Verses 11-13 are then regarded as a later addition of sayings that have no context of their own. This is, for example, the opinion of Seybold:

Ps 84 is a strophic poem like its counterpart, Ps 42-43, and probably at first had two parts (2-5, 6-9) of five lines apiece, in a five-rhythm. A third strophe, 10-12 (13), seems to have been attached later. Both rhythm and theme indicate an individual prayer of lament by a pilgrim who, for unnamed reasons, has been prevented from making the pilgrimage (3-4), and who pleads for his prayer from a distance (9, תפלה) to be heard. He stresses his longing for the sanctuary, his home. There is much in favor of the idea that, as in 42-43, this was originally the temple at Dan, at the source of the Jordan (6ff.). The psalm-poem would then later have been rewritten for Zion (8), and at that time or later also—especially in and around 6ff.—10ff. are added individual sayings from the last phase of the history of the psalm’s development.

Our Literary-Critical Proposal

Both these suggested solutions are so problematic that we would like to make another proposal: the expansion is associated with the embedding of the psalm in the context in which it now stands.

1. In vv. 9-10, on the one hand, the royal theological line that begins with Psalm 2 and is visible as a later expansion, for example, in 6:7-8 and 63:12 also, and programmatically in Psalm 72, is taken up again. On the other hand, an arc is created that links to the royal Psalm 89. However the literary-critical explanation may turn out, it seems relatively certain that vv. 9-10 were not originally part of the psalm, even though there are determined defenders of the unity of Psalm 84; some of them even regard vv. 9-10 as the climax of the psalm. Thus, for example, Thijs Booij defends the unity of the psalm and regards it as a late-preexilic prayer of the king in the context of the autumn festival:

A text born from cultic ideas and concentrating on a cultic act (viz. entering the temple) is likely to be connected with a particular cultic situation. ... Because of the allusions to pilgrimage in vv. 6-8, it may be presumed that Ps lxxxiv was intended to be used at one of the annual festivals in Jerusalem; in view of the “early rain,” mentioned in v. 7, this may have been the great autumn festival. It is imaginable that at a fixed time, when the pilgrims had arrived, people came together at a place outside the gates to enter Zion in a festive procession. Traditionally, in the course of such an entry various songs were sung, especially songs of praise (see Pss xxiv, xlxvii, xcv...). Ps cxxxii conveys the impression that in pre-exilic times prayers for the king could be recited, by himself or others, at some point of the procession route (see vv. 7-8, 10). This context would suit Ps lxxxiv.

Here not only is the “early dating” of the psalm problematic, but also its direct attachment to the cult.

2. In the same way, v. 4c-f (from אשׁר to the end of v. 4) and v. 7c can scarcely be regarded as original components of the psalm: (a) Verse 7c is colometrically problematic because it produces a tricolon, striking in view of the consistently maintained bicolon structure of the rest of the psalm. Above all, the perspective of the speaker deviates from the immediate context of vv. 6-8. While vv. 6-8 have in view the plural group of “pilgrims” as actors, in v. 7c the early rain is the acting subject. Moreover, the particle אֲשֶׁר is frequently an indicator of subsequent (commentative) expansion. This expansion is probably also due to the redaction that placed Psalms 84 and 85 alongside one another and attempted to create a motif connection between the two psalms by means of v. 7c. (b) The literary-critical problem of v. 4c-f consists, in the first place, of the fact that the relative clause in

v. 4c-d, strictly speaking, does not continue the imagery established in v. 4a-b, but changes it. Verse 4a-b, as a self-contained image, emphasizes that even the “homeless” circling birds have found a “home” with YHWH. This image corresponds to the pictorial world that underlies vv. 2-3. The continuation of the image in the motif of the care of the swallow for her young in v. 4c-d shifts the perspective slightly. In addition, the syntactic inclusion in the divine discourse in v. 4e-f, which from a colometric point of view should be read as a bicolon, is unclear. If one regards v. 4c-f as a subsequent expansion of the psalm, vv. 2-4b present a sequential text that consistently develops the theme of “longing for the house/dwellings of YHWH.”

The Primary Psalm (vv. 2-4b, 5-8, 11-13)

On the basis of the literary-critical observations we have sketched, there emerges a primary psalm consisting of three strophes: first strophe: vv. 2-4b, 5 = five bicola; second strophe: vv. 6-8 = three bicola; third strophe: vv. 11-13 = five bicola.

Each of the three strophes has a specific content or metaphorical profile. The first sings of the “dwellings” or “house” of YHWH as a place of shelter and a home—and as such the house of YHWH is the object of the petitioner’s longing; he clings to it with his whole existence (“soul,” “heart,” “flesh”). The second strophe sketches the “pilgrims” who put themselves on the road in order to see the face of the God of Zion and encounter him. The third strophe shows the God of Zion himself and his vivifying works (“sun and shield,” giver of “grace and glory,” distributor of “good things”).

These three strophes are to be read as a connected event with a linear progression. The text begins with fascination that there is a place in this world where God “dwells,” a “house” God offers to human beings (and animals) as a “home” (first strophe). This fascination drives the one praying the psalm, and many others with him, onto the (pilgrim) path to this “house,” there to encounter that God himself (second strophe). The psalm culminates in its third strophe, where it shows the people who enter the “house” of this God (“with integrity,” v. 12d) and their encounter with the God who appears in this “house.”

The three strophes constitute, in their metaphorical structure of events, a “God-world” that our psalm also projects as a counter-world. The “other” world to which the God-world is a contrast also speaks within the three strophes. This is most clear in the third strophe, at the point where it is characterized by the metaphor “tents of wickedness.”

But the time of the “God-world” is also confronted, in v. 11a-b, with a contrast—in fact, a contrast-time. Unfortunately at this point the text is unintelligible in detail, but the tendency of the statement is clear: the time of the “God-world” is the “good” time pure and simple, because it is the God-time that can be experienced in this world.

Specific Statement-Profile

The psalm achieves its specific statement-profile through the three collective beatitudes in vv. 5, 6, and 13. Here people are presented as figures of happy or happiness-creating life who have a relationship to the “God-world” or live in the “God-world” toward which the praying “I” is moving. In our context there is significance in how the middle strophe (vv. 6-8) represents the life of these people in the “God-world.” The scenery of this strophe is inspired by the prophetic utopias of the book of Isaiah, which announce and portray the return from exile and from scattering throughout the world to a restored/renewed Zion as a miraculous second and third exodus. This “new”/“eschatological” exodus is presented as a path through the wilderness that transforms the wilderness itself into the “primeval” paradise; more precisely it is YHWH who causes springs to break forth in the wilderness, making it thus a region of the most bountiful life, and who bestows almost inhuman strength on those who travel on these paths of redemption to Zion. According to Isa 35:1-10 it is YHWH himself who travels at the head of the redeemed and causes the springs to arise in the desert and brooks to flow in the steppes, so that the burning sand becomes a pool and the thirsty land springs of water (cf. Isa 35:6f.). Isaiah 41:17-20 and 43:10-20 even show YHWH figuratively producing the miraculous waters in the wilderness, or where the redeemed pass by.

In all these passages the motif proper to the exodus tradition of a miraculous gift of water is transformed in terms of creation and Zion theology, and thus simultaneously mythicized: where the God of Zion appears, he transforms chaos into cosmos and causes the “paradisiacal” waters of life to spring up. This mythic world as “God-world,” which echoes in our psalm in the Temple-theology motifs of the two external strophes, is also poetically evoked in the middle strophe—in a new form that is certainly of great significance. Now it is no longer YHWH who moves through the wilderness in mythic form and transforms it into a paradisiacal landscape of life, but the “God-pilgrims.” They bring about the “God-world” by having “the paths of Zion in their heart” (v. 6), that is, by holding in their hearts the promises associated with the paths to Zion, and above all the God who gives the fullness of life to those who seek him as their “house.”

■2-4 The first strophe (vv. 2-5) begins with a declaration of love for the whole Temple district. It is certainly not the external splendor of the Temple that fascinates the person praying the psalm. The edifice of the Second (postexilic) Temple was in any case quite modest in comparison with the First (preexilic) Temple. The one praying the psalm is moved by the “inner” quality of the Temple area with its various buildings (the Temple proper as well as other buildings required for various services) and the great courts. It is YHWH’s residence, where one can see, hear, and experience *him*. But there may also be an element of the idea that many people gather in the courts or plazas within the Temple area and feel themselves “at home” in them—like the birds that nest there. *This* closeness to his or her God, loyally declared to be “my King,” is something the one praying also desires to experience. His or her thinking, desiring, and feeling, literally everything in him or her (v. 3a : “my soul”; v. 3c : “my heart and my flesh”), revolves, full of longing, around this place of God’s special presence.

■5 Thus the praying person’s wonder ascends in v. 5 to a beatitude for all those who “dwell” there, whether because they belong to the cultic and service personnel of the Temple; or because, as Jerusalemites, they have the privilege of being able to go whenever they wish to the Temple and its liturgy; or they are existentially “at home” there because they are “rooted” in that place. The most important thing these “continual visitors” to the Temple do (or should do) is, according to v. 5b, to give (constant) praise to the good God. Certainly, in this the one praying our psalm is shown to be united with them, even from a distance: “my heart and my flesh cry out to the *living* God,” that is, the God who gives a share in *his* life. This “dwelling” with/in YHWH is the form of life for which the petitioner longs (see the Significance below).

■6 The second strophe (vv. 6-8) begins with a beatitude for all those in whom—as in the one praying the psalm—longing burns for a community of life with the God of Zion, and who therefore set themselves on the (real or spiritual) pilgrim way to Zion. The formulation “who have the paths of pilgrimage in their hearts” (v. 6b) has, of course, been repeatedly “improved” by exegetes through changes to the text, and yet this metaphor appears elsewhere as well (e.g., in *Jer 31:21*). The theme is not the roads, but the (real or metaphorical) walking on them. In v. 6 those are declared happy whose hearts are full of the idea that their whole life is a “pilgrim path” to the living God—and who find in that thought their strength and power.

■7-8 It is precisely this idea that is developed pictorially in vv. 7-8. Here again the received text has been called into question, especially since the ancient translations (LXX, Vg) already made the “valley of drought” in v. 7a a “valley of tears.” If we follow the received Hebrew text (see textual above) and read “Baca valley,” the verse makes good sense. “Baca” is not an allusion to the Hebrew word for “weeping” (בכה with the third consonant ה, not א), which led to the translation “valley of tears,” but describes a shrub that grows only in dry, waterless regions. The “Baca valley” is not a localizable valley near Jerusalem or anywhere else in Israel, but a metaphor for “valley of drought” or “valley of death” (cf. 23:4 : “valley of darkness/evil”). If that is what is meant, the text is quite tangible: when people who are moved by longing for God enter regions of death, they transform these wildernesses into paradisiacal oases in which the water of life (v. 7b : “place of springs”) flows forth. If we take vv. 6 and 7 together, the text says: “Those who find in God the source of their strength make even the most desolate paths of life (23:4) the paths of salvation for themselves and the very kingdom of God.”

The psalm even intensifies this: those whose hearts are filled with longing for the living God bear within themselves a life force that is utterly inexhaustible and tireless: “They go/walk from strength to strength” (v. 8a), that is, “Unlike ordinary travelers, whose strength becomes exhausted the longer they are on the way, the pilgrim never tires; rather, he walks with steadily increasing strength toward his beautiful, grand goal.” That is the experience of all lovers. Genuine longing releases unsuspected powers—and makes the world a manifold reference to the beloved. The same is true of longing for God: “Those who hope in God continually renew their strength; they grow wings like eagles. They run and are not weary; they walk and are not faint” (Isa 40:31). That is the “energy” that gives them wings—“until they behold the God of gods in Zion” (v. 8b). This is typical pilgrimage terminology and in its fullest form reads “until they may appear before the face of God” (e.g., Exod 34:23). It is above all a metaphor for intimate closeness to God (Pss 27:4; 42:3; 63:3).

■9-10 The third strophe (vv. 9-13) first presents, in vv. 9-10, the “audience petition” to YHWH, whose protective function is invoked with the metaphor of the “shield.” It must remain open whether in v. 10b the reference is to a reigning king of Israel (which would, of course, mean that the psalm would have to be preexilic), or whether the high priest is in view (against which is the royal title “anointed”), or whether there is hope here for a “new” kingship that requires the special care of the

God of Zion (which seems to us most probable, for redaction-critical reasons [see Context below]). What is more important is what this strophe as a whole promises about the effective power of the God of Zion: he is the “sun,” that is, the always newly arising source of life and law (cf. Psalm 19; Mal 3:20), and the “shield,” that is, protector against hostile, deadly threats (cf. Pss 3:4; 18:3, 31; 28:7). Is it any wonder that a single day of immersion in this fullness of life is better and more desirable than an assured and enduring place in the tents of wickedness (cf. v. 11), that is, of death?

■ 11-12 Verses 11-12 intensify the life-sustaining power of the God of Zion for those who “live” with/in him: he gives them a share in his royal glory (v. 12b; cf. esp. 8:6) and in all the good things that can fulfill one’s life (v. 12c)—and he gives these as “wages” for their effort to follow the path of their life (to him) “in integrity” (v. 12d; cf. esp. 15:2 and Gen 17:1). It is precisely this explicit ethicizing of the “pilgrimage to the God of Zion” that again makes the following clear: the “Temple piety” of Psalm 84 is not restricted to the cult, but rather projects a comprehensive spirituality of daily life (Wisdom perspective!).

■ 13 That the psalm closes in v. 13 by calling blessed those who understand and live their whole existence as a journey to *this* God most assuredly awakens in Christians who pray the psalm an echo of the beatitudes at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt 5:1-12).

Context, Reception, and Significance

Psalm 84 in the Context of the Korahite Psalms

The superscription added to the psalm (secondarily) by the collectors inserts it in the group of Korahite Psalms. These occur within the Psalter in two groups, both easily distinguished linguistically and thematically: Psalms 42-49 and 84-85, 87-88. They are all marked (individually to different degrees) by ideas typical of Zion theology: Zion is the mountain on which stands the Temple, the residence of YHWH, the king of the world, and from which he orders and blesses his people, and indeed all the world. YHWH has chosen the Temple on Zion and the city of God in order that here he may show himself in an especially intensive way as the giver and protector of life. Therefore the devout in Israel long with all their hearts to experience, literally, this closeness of God on Zion, either through walking/traveling to the Temple or through a “spiritual” pilgrimage. Our Psalm 84

was suited for either—a really accomplished and/or a spiritually experienced pilgrimage to the God of Zion.

Psalm 84 opens the second group of Korahite Psalms in the Psalter, 84-85, 87-88, which both in the arrangement of the individual psalms and in their theology is very similar to the first group of Korahite Psalms, 42-49. There is much in favor of the proposition that the partial group of Psalms 84-88 imitates the composition of Psalms 42-49, its model. That both groups, despite their kinship, were not assembled by the same hand and at the same time can be deduced from the fact that Psalms 84-88 are not Elohistically infused, like Psalms 42-83; that is, they no longer reveal the theology of the divine name that is visible in Psalms 42-83, and which deliberately works with the generic word *Elohim*, “God,” and the proper name YHWH.

Parallelism of Psalms 42-49 and 84-85,87-88 as Directions for Reading

The consequence of the parallelism in arrangement and theology between the two groups of Korahite Psalms, 42-49 and 84-88, is that in the Psalter (to apply an image from church architecture) they constitute two matching *external* side aisles flanking the central aisle of the Davidic collection in Psalms 51-72 and the two (unequally broad) *internal* side aisles of the Asaph psalms, 50, 73-83.

In terms of this layout, Psalms 42/ 43 and Psalm 84 correspond, as the opening psalms of their respective compositions. Both these psalms are individual prayers (the speaker is a lyric “I”) of longing for encounter with the God of Zion, before whose face the petitioner desires to appear (cf. 42:3, 6, 12; 43:5; 84:8). In the entire Psalter the divine epithet “living God” (יָיָהּ) is found only in these two psalms (42:3; 84:3). Both psalms articulate this longing with the image of “the soul,” which almost dies of desire. In both psalms this longing drives the one praying to a real or spiritual pilgrimage to Zion. Both psalms know the mystery that the God of Zion is light and shelter—and that he secretly regards human beings from Zion, even though both psalms express the suffering the petitioner experiences by not yet being “at home” with his/her God.

This suffering over separation from (the beloved) God increases in the two subsequent psalms, 44 and 85 (or 85:2-8). These are collective laments that God has turned away from his people, that the people feel itself rejected by him, and that they have experienced his incomprehensible wrath instead of his joy-bringing grace. At the same time both the lament psalms 44 and 85 hold fast to the

conviction that the last and decisive word of God will be his steadfast love (: 707).85:11; 44:27

These laments (Psalms 44 and 85:2-8) are then each followed by hymnic psalms (Psalms 45-48 and 85:9-14; 87), intended to be read as responses to the laments over abandonment by God. They celebrate the omnipotence of the God of Zion, who binds the chaos that blazes about Zion and bestows peace on his people (Psalms 45-48), indeed, who makes Zion a source of life for all nations (Psalm 87). In Psalm 87 it is YHWH himself who bestows citizenship in his city on the members of the various nations by writing them with his own hand in the “citizens’ list”: “YHWH records, as he registers the peoples: ‘This one was born there [namely in Zion]’” (87:6). This, then, is the longing of “the soul” (compared to the *additional* echo in Psalm 84 when read by itself), which expresses itself in Psalm 42/ 43 and in Psalm 84 when each is prayed as the opening psalm of its respective composition, Psalms 42-49 and 84-88. It is the longing for the time when the God of Zion will, on Zion and from Zion, bring together the hostile nations in peace—for the salvation of the world.

That the composition in each case ends with a psalm that laments death and the ephemeral nature of life (Psalms 49, 88) may seem surprising in view of the soaring hymnic compositions that preceded. But this is the realistic view of the world and of life found in the First Testament: it is aware of death in the midst of life—and *in this way* it confronts both praise of God and accusation against God, not as a no to God but as the expression of an unshakable hope, precisely in the face of a hostile world.

Beginning with this concept, the Korahite redaction invites us to walk meditatively, in the sequence of Psalms 42-49 and 84-85, 87-88, on the path from longing for God (42/ 43, 84) and from lamenting over abandonment by God (44; 85:2-8) to an abounding joy over the God of Zion’s promises of salvation (45-48; 85:9-14; 87), even and especially in the face of awareness of death (49, 88)—and, having arrived at the “death psalms” 49 and 88, to begin again at the beginning, at Psalms 42/ 43 and 84: “My soul longs and pines for you, the living God” (84:3). In this perspective Psalm 84 is an impressive testimony of personal devotion in which official and “private” religion are fused (“Temple piety”; see above on Psalm 63).

The LXX, which introduces the metaphor of the “valley of tears” in v. 7a (see above), intensifies the theocentricity of the psalm (v. 6b) and at the same time gives it a massively eschatological perspective (v. 7b).

New Testament

The longing for an enduring, even eternal “dwelling” in the house or dwellings of YHWH that is expressed in Psalm 84 (and the related Psalms 23, 42/ 43, 91, 92) was taken up in the NT primarily in the Gospel of John (cf. especially the Johannine farewell discourse in John 14): “Even during the lifetime of the Fourth Evangelist, that is, not long after the destruction of the Second Temple, people apparently began to interpret the passages in the Psalter that spoke of the Temple, the ‘house of God’ and God’s ‘dwellings,’ in terms of the end time. Two models can be distinguished: either these passages were interpreted in general terms toward the future, when God would cause the Temple to be reestablished, or they were applied to the perfected state of the righteous, in which they would even now, after death, find a place in the heavenly ‘dwellings.’”

Significance

The contemporary significance of the psalm can be summarized as follows, with Loersch:

Psalm 84 is a brilliant light within the Old Testament literature. Its core is a text that formulates the “nevertheless” of hope. Even though it was first and foremost spoken for the festival pilgrims to Zion, the message of Ps 84:6-8 is eternally valid. It applies also to those who today are on the path, as “the people of the Way” (Acts 9:2), and who often find it so difficult not to be overwhelmed by the surging waves of resignation and multiple sorrows.

Our attention is first drawn to a basic experience of human beings, namely walking, moving as a way of life that encompasses the whole person. The archaic rhythm of walking has “reciprocal effects ... on the condition of the soul. The one who surrenders to the rhythm of pacing experiences himself or herself ultimately as a whole, as identical with the self. But that calls for long stretches of walking, day after day” (A. Rotzetter, in *Christ in der Gegenwart* 24 [17 June 1990]).

The movement of walking does not lead to exhaustion, but conveys calmness and strength. This universally valid experience applies above all to walking on pilgrimage. It is true also of the service of God’s messengers on their way to the people, and finally of human life as a pilgrimage....

Enthusiastic joy in YHWH, the theme developed in the first strophe of our psalm (vv. 2-5), and unshakable trust in him, the essential statement of the third strophe (vv. 9-13), are the two basic attitudes on the basis of which human paths succeed, because they kindle in the human person an inner strength that empowers to withstand obstacles and overcome them. Joy and trust, however, are the gifts of the love of God....

In its climax and core Psalm 84 calls happy those people who thus, in the way of joy and trust, have “anchored themselves” in YHWH and find their strength in him. This strength is never exhausted, but becomes all the greater and stronger the more it is claimed and made use of. The blessing of God is to be experienced by such people as a growing confidence and consolation along all their ways in service to the kingdom of God. What Elie Wiesel says of the Hasidim applies to those who live in this way from the strength of YHWH, those who are on the way: “Equipped with mysterious strengths, [they] wander the earth, warm it and change it,” mightily empowered to “transform doubt and care into enthusiasm, into the praise of life” (E. Wiesel, *Chassidische Feier*[Freiburg: Herder, 1988] 9-10).

—Erich Zenger

(*Hermeneia - Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100.*)

Deeper Study #3 (Practical Theology Study)

Read the article, *The Church is a Purposefully Unified Temple* - (<https://wordtruth.org/PDF/Church...a%20Purposefully%20Unified%20Temple.pdf>.) Write a summary statement and/or bullet points on how important it is for us to understand our involvement and commitment to the local Church as the temple of God and/or the Body of Christ.

My reflective thoughts: