

Standing Before God – Who may ascend the hill of the Lord?

Throughout much of the Bible, people made a journey up Mount Zion to Jerusalem and the Temple of God. This journey was both a spiritual and physical ascent. They were conscious of the fact that they were going up the hill where the presence of the Lord dwelt in the most holy place. David often spoke of his desire to go up into the house of God.

Psalm 24:3, 4 NIV Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His Holy Place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol.

Psalm 43:3–4 NKJV Let them lead me; Let them bring me to Your holy hill And to Your tabernacle. Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; And on the harp I will praise You, O God, my God.

The idea behind this journey was not just the trip to Jerusalem, but ascending the hill of the Lord to stand before God.

The phrase “we are walking up to your holy hill to worship you” is a reference to the biblical concept of approaching God's dwelling place. It signifies the journey of faith, seeking to draw near to God, and participate in worship and communion with Him. This act of approaching the “holy hill” is often seen as spiritual preparation and seeking a deeper relationship with God.

Have you ever been on an all-night trip?

I remember several of them when I was a child when our family would be on the road for a revival or some special meeting. We would pile into the car and head out. Mom would make a bed on the floor and back seat. All of us kids would be assigned a place to go to sleep. Dad would turn the radio on and we would be rocked to sleep with the movement of the car and the sounds of the road and the radio. I remember one of those all-night trips that was plagued with thunder and lightning and blinding rain. The burst of lightning was striking near the car as we plowed down the highway. Sometimes the sound was so loud it shook the car. I remember looking out the window and seeing a bolt of lightning hit a house and the whole structure burst into flames. That trip the rain was so strong that the road was difficult to see.

Hundreds of years before Jerusalem was established as the city of God, the Israelites were traveling to a land of promise.

Almost 800 years before this occurred, God told Abram that He would bring them out of slavery. They had spent 400 years in slavery when

God called them out.

Exodus 16:6 NKJV Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, “At evening you shall know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt.”

This was an amazing act of God’s deliverance. They were not only delivered from their past troubles, they were on a journey to the land of promise. There is nothing as exciting as the day when God brings you out of your troubles and trials. Have you experienced the kind of joy that comes when the Lord brings you out of the troubles and heartaches of your past?

When Israel came out of Egypt, they were faced with an extensive journey in the wilderness.

Their journey in the wilderness is descriptive of our Christian walk in this troubled world. Have you ever felt that God saved you and then you found yourself in a long and difficult wilderness? Have you gone through some drama and crisis? You are glad that you were saved, but you are tired of this wilderness. I remember when we were tired of riding down the road asking my dad, “Are we there yet?” Mom would say, “Just lay down and go to sleep and when you wake up we will be there.” While they were in the wilderness, God gave them hands full of blessings on purpose, but they were tired of the journey.

Exodus 16:7 NKJV And in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD; for He hears your complaints against the LORD.

This verse reveals God’s provision in the wilderness even though they complained against the LORD.

Their ascent to stand in God’s promised land was filled with God’s provision and blessing.

God did not forsake them in the wilderness.

You should closely examine how God has provided for you during your Christian journey.

Have you ever been sick and God healed you? Have you ever had a problem that God solved? Have you ever been thirsty and He gave you drink and filled you with His Spirit? Can you see how the Lord has helped you through your Christian journey?

Philippians 4:19 NKJV My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Isaiah 49:10 NKJV They shall neither hunger nor thirst, Neither heat nor

sun shall strike them; For He who has mercy on them will lead them, Even by the springs of water He will guide them.

That is God's provision in the wilderness.

With all of God's blessing, covering, and protection, they were looking and longing for the Promised Land.

Many of you have seen how God has provided for you, but you are homesick for a land where there will be no more sorrows, tears, or woe. God gave them the promise of a land that flowed with milk and honey, a land of promise, rest and many blessings. When they became weary with the journey in the wilderness, some of them wanted to go back to Egypt. They were still holding on to their old life and appetites.

It was amazing to see what God did for them on the journey.

None of them were sick, God kept them from all of the plagues that came on Egypt, and they never went without food or water. All of their needs were supplied and God was their defense on every side.

Heaven will be worth the journey.

Some time after they settled in the land, Jerusalem was made the habitation of the ark of God and the tabernacle.

Mount Zion ultimately became the holy hill where the Temple of God was built. In the time of King David, the presence of God, His Shekinah glory was present above the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies.

David spoke often of his great desire to come and stand before God.

He asked, "Who may ascend the hill of the Lord?"

This suggests a journey, both physically and spiritually, toward God. It implies an active effort to draw closer to God and seek His presence. It also highlights the purpose of the journey – to offer praise, adoration, and devotion to God. It signifies a desire to connect with God and express reverence for Him.

This physical and spiritual journey that we are on is filled with the desire to come and stand before the Lord our God.

It represents the process of preparing our heart and mind to encounter God's presence. Mount Zion and the hill of the Lord was a place where heaven touched earth. Throughout the Old Testament, the journey was made, but entrance into the holy place was prohibited. There was a wall of partition separating the hungry and thirsty from the unveiled presence of God.

Jesus changed all of that.

What follows are verses of Scripture that connect the lives of born-again believers living in God's presence today with the 2 questions David asked in Psalm 24. The promise remained that a time would come when in God's presence "streams of living water would flow from within you."

Every Jew in Israel was commanded to make a journey to the Temple on Mount Zion during the three annual feasts – Passover, Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

For most of them, this required an arduous uphill climb, an ascent, from all over Israel. During this climb they sang psalms of praise. Over time these 15 psalms from Psalms 120 to 134 came to be called 'songs of ascent'.

Psalm 121: 1, 2 NIV *"I lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth."*

During the time of Isaiah, the prophet described this ascent to Mount Zion to stand before God.

Isaiah 35: 5, 6; 8, 10 NIV *"Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.*

⁶Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert . . .

⁸and a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness . . . but only the redeemed of the Lord will walk there

¹⁰and the ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing and everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away."

Who are these 'redeemed of the Lord' who return to Zion with gladness and joy? They have been delivered from bondage, and have been "rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into the Kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1: 13, 14 NIV). Through Jesus Christ, we can come into the presence of the Father!

David asked this question that we must find an answer to.

"Who can ascend the hill of the Lord and stand in His Holy Place?" The answer was "Only those who have clean hands, a pure heart..."

Here is the good news. Jesus descended to us, died for us on the cross, and then ascended into heaven and now born-again believers have been made "holy and blameless" in the sight of God.

We are still on a journey and a new day is about to dawn.

When Moses was leading the Israelites toward the land of promise, he held on to the vision and dream of new life beyond the horizon. Everything we have faced in this life cannot be compared to our inheritance in heaven.

“There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.” (Revelation 21:4)

When the morning of that eternal day comes, we shall see Jesus and there will be no more dying or death, pain or sickness. When the morning of that eternal day comes, we shall see Jesus and we shall be like Him. Our old bodies will be changed and we will have a new body. We will walk on streets of gold through gates of pearl and walls of jasper and see those mansions supernal. And we will stand before our God and sing “Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty!”