

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician’s Melodies

**Bereans Adult Bible Fellowship
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by
William D. Barrick, Th.D.
Professor of OT, The Master’s Seminary



**Psalm 133 — Blessing Descending on Pilgrims from God
Psalm 134 — Blessing Ascending to God from Pilgrims**

1.0 Introducing Psalms 133–134

- Pilgrims sang Psalms 132–134 on approaching, entering, and leaving the sanctuary. Psalms 133 and 134 give attention to the unity of the worshipping community and the ministry of the sanctuary servants, respectively.
- Psalm 132 depicts David bringing the ark of the covenant **to Zion**. Psalm 133 pictures God bringing blessing **upon Zion**. Psalm 134 reveals that **from Zion** God blesses the pilgrims.

| | I | II | III | IV | V |
|------------------------------------|--|---|--|---|---|
| <i>Trouble – Problem</i> | Psalm 120 Anonymous | Psalm 123 Anonymous | Psalm 126 Anonymous Zion | Psalm 129 Anonymous <u>Israel</u> Zion Blessing | Psalm 132 Anonymous Zion Blessing |
| <i>Trust – Power</i> | Psalm 121 Anonymous <u>Israel</u> | Psalm 124 David <u>Israel</u> | Psalm 127 Solomon Blessing | Psalm 130 Anonymous <u>Israel</u> | Psalm 133 David Zion Blessing |
| <i>Triumph – Protection</i> | Psalm 122 David <u>Israel</u> Jerusalem “house of the LORD” | Psalm 125 Anonymous <u>Israel</u> Jerusalem Zion | Psalm 128 Anonymous <u>Israel</u> Jerusalem Zion Blessing | Psalm 131 David <u>Israel</u> | Psalm 134 Anonymous Zion “house of the LORD” Blessing |

- Psalms 132–134 are Zion psalms speaking of blessing (cp. Pss 127–129).
- David wrote Psalm 133 — the fourth and final Psalm of Ascents from his pen.
- Theme of Psalm 133: *Unified travelers receive divine blessing.*
- Theme of Psalm 134: *Worshipful travelers return homeward.*

2.0 Reading Psalm 133 (NAU)

133:1 A Song of Ascents, of David.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brothers to dwell together in unity!

133:2 It is like the precious oil upon the head,
Coming down upon the beard,
Even Aaron's beard,
Coming down upon the edge of his robes.

133:3 It is like the dew of Hermon
Coming down upon the mountains of Zion;
For there the LORD commanded the **blessing** — life forever.

Reading Psalm 134 (NAU)

134:1 A Song of Ascents.

Behold, **bless the LORD**, all servants of the LORD,
Who serve by night in the house of the LORD!

134:2 Lift up your hands to the sanctuary
And **bless the LORD**.

134:3 May **the LORD bless you** from Zion,
He who made heaven and earth.

3.0 Understanding Psalm 133

3.1 Outline

Psalm Heading (v. 1a)

- I. Exclamation Expressing Blessing of Unity (v. 1b)
- II. Examples Explaining Bounty of Unity (vv. 2–3)



3.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “Behold”
 - Psalms 133 and 134 are the only psalms that begin with “Behold” — implying that they are a pair, at least in the compiler’s thinking. The word indicates that the reader should pay attention to the content.
- **v. 1** “brothers to dwell together in unity”
 - Physical family or spiritual community?
 - Compare Deuteronomy 25:5 for the only other occurrence of the phraseology “brothers dwelling together.”
 - Pilgrims faced not only the potential disharmony within individual families, but the tensions of getting along with others in competition for the same resources for lodging, food, and water. In addition, there may have been clan rivalries that could disrupt the peace of a pilgrim encampment after days of weary travel.
 - Context indicates that this is a reference to fellow worshippers.

- vv. 2, 3 “Coming down upon”
 - A threefold emphasis occurs in the repetition of this phrase.
 - Unity and blessing come from above — they are divine gifts.
- v. 2 “like the precious oil upon the head”
 - “Precious oil” is literally “good [or, excellent] oil.”
 - The figure of anointing portrays “a people as differentiated, but also as integrated, as a priest and his robes; a people among whom God’s blessings are not the preserve of a few but are free to spread and be shared, unifying the recipients all the more, just as the anointing oil intended for the head (Ex. 29:7) was not confined to it, nor could its fragrance be contained.” — Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 452–53.
 - Cf. Leviticus 8 (esp. vv. 12 and 30) for the anointing ceremony involved in ordaining the priests.
- v. 2 “the beard”
 - The beard of the priest included the sidelocks (Lev 21:5, “edges”) that would potentially reach to the robe.
 - The picture is of an abundance of fragrant oil.
- v. 2 “the edge of his robes”
 - This refers to the opening at the top (collar) of the priestly garment through which his head would go, not to the hem of the garment.
- v. 3 “like the dew of Hermon”
 - Whether the highest peak in Israel (Mt. Hermon at 9232 feet above sea level) or the comparatively insignificant Mt. Zion (at 2846 feet), both enjoyed the same gift of dew.
 - ✓ So the dews on Hermon’s hill
Which the summer clouds distil,
Floating southward in the night,
Pearly gems on Zion light.
— William Digby Seymour, cited by C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 3 vols. (reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.), 3/2:173.
 - Summer crops depend upon the dew for reaching maturity and harvestability (Zech 8:12; cp. Hos 14:5). Dew is symbolic of blessing (Gen 27:28; Deut 33:13). Absence of dew destroys a crop as certainly as a lack of rain (cf. 2 Sam 1:21; 1 Kgs 17:1; Hag 1:10). Even more importantly to this context, dew supports new life (Isa 26:19).
- v. 3 “life forever”
 - According to some interpreters, this phrase “implies not personal immortality but the ever continuing vitality of the community.” — Robert Davidson, *The Vitality of Worship: A Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 433.
 - See Genesis 3:22; Psalm 21:4; Daniel 12:2; Zechariah 1:5.
 - Compare John 6:51, 58.



4.0 Understanding Psalm 134

4.1 Outline

- Psalm Heading (v. 1a)
- I. Priests Requested to Bless God (vv. 1b–2)
- II. Priests Responding with God’s Blessing (v. 3)



4.2 Notes

- **vv. 1–3** “This brief psalm provides a fitting climax to the Songs of Ascents. It sums up two essential elements in worship: what we offer to the God we worship and what we receive from God in worship.” — Davidson, *The Vitality of Worship*, 433.
- **vv. 1, 2** “bless the LORD, all servants of the LORD”
 - Pilgrims to the sanctuary address the words of verses 1 and 2 to the priests who serve the Lord there.
 - Blessing is the theme of this psalm. Verses 1–2 speaks of blessing God, while verse 3 is a blessing on the pilgrims.
 - ✓ “[T]o bless God is to acknowledge gratefully what He is; but to bless man, God must make of him what he is not, and give him what he has not.” — Kidner, *Psalms 73–150*, 454.
- **v. 1** “Who serve by night”
 - “Serve” is literally “stand” (see Deut 10:8).
 - Ministering in the sanctuary even at night is solely the role of priests (cf. 1 Chron 9:27; 23:28–32 [esp. v. 30]).
- **v. 2** “Lift up your hands”
 - Raising the hands symbolizes supplication (Ps 28:2; Lam 2:19) or praise (Ps 63:4; Neh 8:6) or prayer (Ps 141:2; 1 Tim 2:8) or blessing (Lev 9:22).
 - In 1 Kings 8:30 Solomon mentions praying in the direction of the sanctuary.
- **v. 2** “to the sanctuary”
 - This phrase can also be translated “with holiness” (cp. 1 Tim 2:8).
 - Psalms 5:7 and 138:2 suggest that the reference is to the Temple.
- **v. 3** “May the LORD bless you”
 - The priests respond to the pilgrims with this final verse of the Psalms of Ascents.
 - Compare Numbers 6:24.
 - “You” here is singular, referring to the individual.
 - “The relationship of worship and blessing is reciprocal.”—John Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3 vols., Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 3:574.
- **v. 3** “He who made heaven and earth”
 - The Psalms of Ascents end as they began (121:2).

5.0 Singing Psalm 133

“Gracious Lord, Remember David”

(Tune: “Amazing Grace” or “Our God our Help in Ages Past” or “Alas, and Did My Savior Bleed”)

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| <p>1 O what a happy thing it is, and joyful for to see Brethren to dwell together in friendship and unity!</p> <p>3 And as the lower ground doth drink the dew of Hermon hill, And Zion with his silver drops the fields with fruit doth fill;</p> | <p>2 'Tis like the precious ointment that was poured on Aaron's head, Which from his beard down to the skirts of his rich garments spread.</p> <p>4 E'en so the Lord doth pour on them his blessings manifold, Whose hearts and minds sincerely do this knot fast keep and hold.</p> |
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— Words: Thomas Sternhold, John Hopkins et al.,
The Whole Book of Psalms (1812)

Singing Psalm 134

“Ye That Obey Th’immortal King”

(Tune: “Oh, How I Love Jesus”)



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|--|--|
| <p>1 Ye that obey th’immortal King, Attend His holy place; Bow to the glories of His power, And bless His wondrous grace.</p> <p>3 The God of Zion cheers our hearts With rays of quick’ning grace; The God that spread the heav’ns abroad, And rules the swelling seas.</p> | <p>2 Lift up your hands by morning light, And send your souls on high; Raise your admiring thoughts by night Above the starry sky.</p> |
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— Words: Isaac Watts, *The Psalms of David* (1719)

6.0 Praying Psalm 133

- Oh God, help me live in unity with my physical and spiritual families. [v. 1]
- Lord, use me to spread a spirit of unity. [vv. 2–3]
- Father, thank You for the supreme blessing of everlasting life. [v. 3]

Praying Psalm 134

- Lord, You are supremely worthy of all praise! [v. 1]
- Keep me faithful, Father, in serving You day and night. [v. 1]
- Oh Creator of heaven and earth, how I praise You for Your blessings. [v. 3]

7.0 Applying Psalm 133 (adapted from James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, 3 vols. [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998], 3:1159–60)

- God alone gives true unity to believers no matter their stations in life.
- True unity flows from one believer to another — it is contagious.
- True unity is a foretaste of heaven itself.

Applying Psalm 134

- Our greatest duty is to praise and glorify God.
- We cannot out-bless or out-give the Lord.

. . . Scripture knows nothing of the solitary Christian. People of faith are always members of a community. . . .

Christians make this explicit in their act of worship each week by gathering as a community: other people are unavoidably present. As we come to declare our love for God we must face the unlovely and lovely fellow sinners whom God loves and commands us to love.

— Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*
(Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 170–71

And because God blesses us, we bless God. We respond with that which we have received. We participate in the process which God has initiated and continues. We who are blessed, bless. When the word is used for what people do, it has in Scripture, the sense of “praise and gratitude for blessing received.” The people who learn what it is like to receive the blessing, persons who travel the way of faith experiencing the ways of grace in all kinds of weather and over every kind of terrain, become good at blessing.

— Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, 186

A Pilgrim’s Summary of the Psalms of Ascents

Psalm 120: Troubled with living in a land dark with God’s absence.

Psalm 121: Trusting in God’s protection.

Psalm 122: Thankful for fellow travelers to God’s house.

Psalm 123: Transfixed by God’s grace.

Psalm 124: Transformed by God’s deliverance.

Psalm 125: Trekking onward in God’s presence.

Psalm 126: Transported in joy for God’s deeds.

Psalm 127: Transcending labor by God’s gifts.

Psalm 128: Treasuring God’s blessings.

Psalm 129: Trading persecution for God’s justice.

Psalm 130: Transfused by God’s forgiveness.

Psalm 131: Tranquilized by God’s hope.

Psalm 132: Triumphant in God’s promises.

Psalm 133: Treated to the unity of God’s people.

Psalm 134: Tracking God’s blessing.