

Psalm 134: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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[0:00] Psalm 134, A Song of Ascents Come, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who stand by night in the house of the Lord.

Lift up your hands to the holy place, and bless the Lord. May the Lord bless you from Zion, he who made heaven and earth. Psalm 134 is the last of the Song of Ascents.

It is one of the briefest psalms, and describes the circle of blessing between the Lord and his people. It begins by summoning the servants of the Lord, those who stand by night in the house of the Lord, to bless the Lord.

It is likely that this was addressed to priests and Levites within the house of the Lord. The tasks of such men were not limited to the daytime, something that we see in the story of Samuel, who had to open the doors of the house of the Lord in the morning.

In 1 Chronicles 9, verse 27 and 33, these night-time tasks are described. And they lodged around the house of the Lord, for on them lay the duty of watching, and they had charge of opening it every morning.

[1:03] Now these, the singers, the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites, were in the chambers of the temple, free from other service, for they were on duty day and night. The servants of the Lord addressed here are charged to lift up their hands to the holy place and bless the Lord.

These are two successive postures, lifting up the hands, and then implied in the verb, kneeling to bless the Lord. The original charge to bless the Lord is addressed to a company of people, but verse 3 addresses an individual.

This is the inverse of the more typical movement within the Song of Ascents, and perhaps appropriate for the psalm that ends it. Perhaps the blessing of verse 3 was addressed to the worshippers by the priests.

We should probably think of the blessing of Numbers chapter 6, verses 22 to 27 here. The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel.

You shall say to them, The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

[2:07] So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them. In a condensed form then, this psalm expresses the circle of blessing. The Lord being blessed by his people, and the Lord blessing his people.

A question to consider. Verse 2 mentions two successive postures of prayer and worship. Is there any significance to the physical posture that we adopt in such acts?

Why or why not? Why or why not? Thank you.