Longing for the Temple

Psalm 84:1-12
Longing for the Temple

Commentary

by

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Text:

Psalm 84:1-12,

1. How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty!
2. My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.
3. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young—a place near your altar, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God.
4. Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Selah
5. Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage.
6. As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools.
7. They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion.
8. Hear my prayer, O LORD God Almighty; listen to me, O God of Jacob. Selah
9. Look upon our shield, O God; look with favor on your anointed one.
10. Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.
11. For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.
12. O LORD Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you. NIV

Introduction:

I. "A Psalm of the Sons of Korah" indicates a psalm written, authorized, or collected by one or a group of the sons of Korah, who were authorized by David as temple singers and musicians, gatekeepers and caretakers of the temple (1 Chron. 15).

A. 1 Chronicles 15:1-29, After David had constructed buildings for himself in the City of David, he prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it. Then David said, "No one but the Levites may carry the ark of God, because the LORD chose them to carry the ark of the LORD and to minister before him forever." David assembled all Israel in Jerusalem to bring up the ark of the LORD to the place he had prepared for it. He called together the descendants of Aaron and the Levites: From the descendants of Kohath, Uriel the leader and 120 relatives; from the descendants of Merari, Asaiah the leader and 220 relatives; from the descendants of Gershon, Joel the leader and 130 relatives; from the descendants of Elizaphan, Shemaiah the leader and 200 relatives; from the descendants of Hebron, Eliel the leader and 80 relatives; from the descendants of Uzziel, Amminadab the leader and 112 relatives. Then David summoned Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel and Amminadab the Levites. He said to them, "You are the heads of the Levitical families; you and your fellow Levites are to consecrate yourselves and bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to the place I have prepared for it. It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the
LORD our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way." So the priests and Levites consecrated themselves in order to bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel. And the Levites carried the ark of God with the poles on their shoulders, as Moses had commanded in accordance with the word of the LORD. David told the leaders of the Levites to appoint their brothers as singers to sing joyful songs, accompanied by musical instruments: lyres, harps and cymbals. So the Levites appointed Heman son of Joel; from his brothers, Asaph son of Berekiah; and from their brothers the Merarites, Ethan son of Kushaiah; and with them their brothers next in rank: Zechariah, Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-Edom and Jeiel, the gatekeepers. The musicians Heman, Asaph and Ethan were to sound the bronze cymbals; Zechariah, Aziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah and Benaiah were to play the lyres according to alamoth , and Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-Edom, Jeiel and Azaziah were to play the harps, directing according to sheminith . Kenaniah the head Levite was in charge of the singing; that was his responsibility because he was skillful at it. Berekiah and Elkanah were to be doorkeepers for the ark. Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethanel, Amasai, Zechariah, Benaiah and Eliezer the priests were to blow trumpets before the ark of God. Obed-Edom and Jehiah were also to be doorkeepers for the ark. So David and the elders of Israel and the commanders of units of a thousand went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the house of Obed-Edom, with rejoicing. Because God had helped the Levites who were carrying the ark of the covenant of the LORD, seven bulls and seven rams were sacrificed. Now David was clothed in a robe of fine linen, as were all the Levites who were carrying the ark, and as were the singers, and Kenaniah, who was in
charge of the singing of the choirs. David also wore a linen ephod. So all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouts, with the sounding of rams' horns and trumpets, and of cymbals, and the playing of lyres and harps. As the ark of the covenant of the LORD was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David dancing and celebrating, she despised him in her heart. NIV

B. For the rest of the title, see the notes on Psalm 76 and Psalm 81.

II. The reference to the king (84:9) and the mention of temple singers (84:4) and possibly official doorkeepers (84:10) suggest that the psalm was written sometime in the monarchical period but not earlier than David.

A. Psalm 84:4,9,10, Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Selah Look upon our shield, O God; look with favor on your anointed one. Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. NIV

III. The psalm is a hymn of praise to God who meets His people at the temple.

A. In this respect it can be compared with Psalms 42–43.

1. Psalm 42:1-11, As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" These things I remember as I pour out
my soul: how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng. Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me. By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me—a prayer to the God of my life. I say to God my Rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?"

My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, "Where is your God?" Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. NIV

2. Psalm 43:1-5, As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng. Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and NIV
3. The psalmist there was prevented from going to the temple and leading the procession of pilgrims as had been his custom.

4. This is possibly the circumstance in Psalm 84, although the evidence is not clear.

IV. The psalm is symmetrically divided into three stanzas of four verses each.

A. Each stanza is built around a beatitude (84:4,5,12).

1. Psalm 84:4, 5, 12, Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Selah Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. O LORD Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you. NIV

B. These three beatitudes serve to emphasize the development of the theme, as the outline reflected in the headings below indicates.

Commentary:

Blessed Are Those Who Dwell in God's House

Psalm 84:1-4, How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young— a place near your altar, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Selah NIV
Psalm 84:1, How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty! NIV

I. God's “dwelling place” in this context is the temple where “the courts of the Lord” (84:2) and His “altars” (84:3) are located.

A. Psalm 84:2, 3, My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young— a place near your altar, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God. NIV

B. The emphasis in all three phrases is on God rather than the facilities for worship.

1. Truly the temple was “lovely”, but the psalmist is likely reflecting upon the fact that the temple is beloved to him because God is there (cf. Isa. 5:1, where the same root is used).

   a. Isaiah 5:1, I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. NIV

2. “Amiable” (KJV) suggests the fellowship available at the temple.

3. For the phrase “O Lord Almighty” and its variants (84:3,8,12), see Psalm 80.

   a. Psalm 84:3, 8, 12, Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young— a place near your altar, O LORD Almighty, my King
and my God. Hear my prayer, O LORD God Almighty; listen to me, O God of Jacob. Selah
O LORD Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you. NIV

b. Psalm 80:1-19, Hear us, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock; you who
sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. Awaken your might; come and save us. Restore us, O God; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved. O LORD God Almighty, how long will your anger smolder against the prayers of your people? You have fed them with the bread of tears; you have made them drink tears by the bowlful. You have made us a source of contention to our neighbors, and our enemies mock us. Restore us, O God Almighty; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved. You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land. The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches. It sent out its boughs to the Sea, its shoots as far as the River. Why have you broken down its walls so that all who pass by pick its grapes? Boars from the forest ravage it and the creatures of the field feed on it. Return to us, O God Almighty! Look down from heaven and see! Watch over this vine, the root your right hand has planted, the son you have raised up for yourself. Your vine is cut down, it is burned with fire; at your rebuke your people perish. Let your hand rest on the
man at your right hand, the son of man you have raised up for yourself. Then we will not turn away from you; revive us, and we will call on your name. Restore us, O LORD God Almighty; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved. NIV

4. “Hosts” (ASV, ESV, KJV, NKJV, RSV, NRSV) may refer to Israel (Ex. 12:41) or any nation (Josh. 10:5), to armies (1 Kings 15:20), or to angels (Psalm 148:2; Luke 2:13).

a. Here it refers to Israel.

b. Exodus 12:41, At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the LORD's divisions left Egypt. NIV

c. Joshua 10:5, Then the five kings of the Amorites—the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon—joined forces. They moved up with all their troops and took up positions against Gibeon and attacked it. NIV

d. 1 Kings 15:20, Ben-Hadad agreed with King Asa and sent the commanders of his forces against the towns of Israel. He conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel Beth Maacah and all Kinnereth in addition to Naphtali. NIV

e. Psalm 148:2, Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts. NIV
f. Luke 2:13, Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, NIV

Psalm 84:2, My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. NIV

I. The interpretation of the psalm hinges on the meaning to be attached to three key words in this verse, all of which are capable of varied connotations.

A. “Longs” (Hebrew: [kacaph]) can mean “to be depressed or disappointed” according to cognate languages, but in the Bible it means “to be eager or yearn for” (Gen. 31:30; Psalm 17:12).

1. Genesis 31:30, Now you have gone off because you longed to return to your father's house. But why did you steal my gods?” NIV

2. Psalm 17:12, They are like a lion hungry for prey, like a great lion crouching in cover. NIV

II. “Faints” (“yearns”, NASB; Hebrew: [kalah]) can mean “to fail or languish” (Lam. 4:17) or “be accomplished or fulfilled” (Ezra 1:1).

A. Lamentations 4:17, Moreover, our eyes failed, looking in vain for help; from our towers we watched for a nation that could not save us. NIV

B. Ezra 1:1, In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing: NIV
II. “Sing for joy” (NASB, NASB95, RSV, NRSV; “crieth out”, KJV; Hebrew: [ranan]) means “to give a ringing cry either in joy or exultation” (Jer. 31:7), or “in distress or anguish” (Lam. 2:19).

A. Jeremiah 31:7, This is what the LORD says: "Sing with joy for Jacob; shout for the foremost of the nations. Make your praises heard, and say, 'O LORD, save your people, the remnant of Israel.' NIV

B. Lamentations 2:19, Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street. NIV

III. Since the third word is used regularly in the psalms to mean a cry of joy, it seems best to interpret the other two words in the positive sense of yearning.

IV. There is nothing here to require the conclusion of some that the psalmist is prevented from going to the temple at the appointed seasons. Psalm 84:8,9 could reflect a time of distress, but not necessarily so.

A. Psalm 84:8, 9, Hear my prayer, O LORD God Almighty; listen to me, O God of Jacob. Selah Look upon our shield, O God; look with favor on your anointed one. NIV

V. “Soul”, “heart”, and “flesh” are variants indicating the whole person rather than suggesting that man is a threefold being (cf. Matt. 22:37; 1 Thess. 5:23).

A. Matthew 22:37, Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' NIV
B. 1 Thessalonians 5:23, May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. NIV

VI. “The living God” (cf. Psalm 42:2) is the only God who has reality and who can bless man (cf. Isa. 38:14-20).

A. Psalm 42:2, My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? NIV

B. Isaiah 38:14-20, I cried like a swift or thrush, I moaned like a mourning dove. My eyes grew weak as I looked to the heavens. I am troubled; O Lord, come to my aid!" But what can I say? He has spoken to me, and he himself has done this. I will walk humbly all my years because of this anguish of my soul. Lord, by such things men live; and my spirit finds life in them too. You restored me to health and let me live. Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back. For the grave cannot praise you, death cannot sing your praise; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness. The living, the living—they praise you, as I am doing today; fathers tell their children about your faithfulness. The LORD will save me, and we will sing with stringed instruments all the days of our lives in the temple of the LORD. NIV

VII. The final phrase indicating the longing of the psalmist to be in God’s presence sets the tone for the entire verse.

Psalm 84:3,4, Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young— a place near your altar, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God.
Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Selah NIV

I. The word for “sparrow” literally means “bird” (NASB), but is used here in a specific way to correspond to the word “swallow”.

A. “Home” (84:3) and “house” (84:4) are from the same Hebrew word, but “nest” shows that it means “home” in 84:3.

1. Psalm 84:3, 4, Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young—a place near your altar, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Selah NIV

2. There may be an intentional play on the word to indicate that even birds' nests, as well as the facilities for worship, demonstrate the hospitality of God.

B. The beatitude in 84:4 summarizes the thought of the stanza.

1. Psalm 84:4, Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Selah NIV

II. How blessed are those who never have to long for God's house because they are continually there!

Blessed Are Those Who Journey to Zion (Psalm 84:5-8)

Psalm 84:5-8, Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, till each appears
before God in Zion. Hear my prayer, O LORD God Almighty; listen to me, O God of Jacob. Selah  NIV

Psalm 84:5, Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. NIV

I. While the beatitude in the first and third stanzas is given at the end, this one is given at the beginning.

A. “Pilgrim ways” (NEB) takes the word for “pilgrimage” to mean a raised road or main thoroughfare over which the pilgrims would journey.

1. Psalm 84:6-7 indicates that a pilgrimage to Jerusalem is intended.

a. Psalm 84:6, 7, As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion. NIV

B. “Strength” doubtless has primary reference here to the weariness of the journey that can only be offset by the joyous anticipation of arriving at God's house (cf. 84:7).

1. Psalm 84:7, They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion. NIV

Psalm 84:6, As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. NIV

I. There is no known “Valley of Baca” in Palestine.
A. The word probably refers to a place of balsam trees (cf. 2 Sam. 5:23), an arid place that the pilgrims psychologically “make a place of springs”.

1. 2 Samuel 5:23, so David inquired of the LORD, and he answered, "Do not go straight up, but circle around behind them and attack them in front of the balsam trees. NIV

2. The causative verb stem indicates not something ready at hand, but that which they created in their hearts.

II. “Pools” involves a different vocalization of the consonants for “blessings” (Masoretic Text, NASB).

A. “Autumn rains” can also carry an alternative meaning, “teacher”.

1. Thus, the LXX translates “the teacher (or lawgiver) will give blessings”.

III. If the festival contemplated is the Feast of Tabernacles, the early rains would soon begin and turn the dry region into a watered place.

A. Anticipation of this may have prompted this poetic strain.

Psalm 84:7, They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion. NIV

I. “From strength to strength” seems to suggest that the nearer they approach the temple the more strength they receive from their anticipation of the glorious fellowship to be enjoyed there.

A. Compare “grace upon grace” (John 1:16), which refers to our coming into the fullness of Christ, and Paul's “from one de-
gree of glory to another” (2 Cor. 3:18), which anticipates the fi-
nal glory to be received (cf. 2 Thess. 1:10-12).

1. John 1:16, From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. NIV

2. 2 Corinthians 3:18, And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. NIV

3. 2 Thessalonians 1:10-12, on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you. With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. NIV

II. God promises to renew the strength of those who trust in him (Isa. 40:31).

A. Isaiah 40:31, but those who hope in the LORD will re-
new their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. NIV

B. Every male was commanded to appear at the temple for the annual festivals (Ex. 23:17), and God would be seen there in the sense of being present and meeting Israel in fellowship (Ex. 29:42-43; 30:6,36; Num. 17:4).
1. Exodus 23:17, "Three times a year all the men are to appear before the Sovereign LORD. NIV

2. Exodus 29:42, 43, "For the generations to come this burnt offering is to be made regularly at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting before the LORD. There I will meet you and speak to you; there also I will meet with the Israelites, and the place will be consecrated by my glory. NIV

3. Exodus 30:6, 36, Put the altar in front of the curtain that is before the ark of the Testimony—before the atonement cover that is over the Testimony—where I will meet with you. Grind some of it to powder and place it in front of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. NIV

4. Numbers 17:4, Place them in the Tent of Meeting in front of the Testimony, where I meet with you. NIV

Psalm 84:8, Hear my prayer, O LORD God Almighty; listen to me, O God of Jacob. Selah NIV

I. Earnestness is indicated by the phrases “hear my prayer” and “listen to me”.

A. Such terminology is frequently employed in time of trouble (cf. Psalm 17:1; 54:2; 55:1; 86:6).

1. Psalm 17:1, Hear, O LORD, my righteous plea; listen to my cry. Give ear to my prayer— it does not rise from deceitful lips. NIV
2. Psalm 54:2, Hear my prayer, O God; listen to the words of my mouth. NIV

3. Psalm 55:1, Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea; NIV

4. Psalm 86:6, Hear my prayer, O LORD; listen to my cry for mercy. NIV

B. The psalmist may be unable to go to the temple (cf. Psalm 84:2), or he may be making an earnest petition for strength and protection on the wearisome journey to Jerusalem (cf. Psalm 84:5-7).

1. Psalm 84:2, My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. NIV

2. Psalm 84:5-7, Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion. NIV

Blessed Are Those Who Trust in God (Psalm 84:9-12)

Psalm 84:9-12, Look upon our shield, O God; look with favor on your anointed one. Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. NIV
Psalm 84:9, Look upon our shield, O God; look with favor on your anointed one. NIV

I. “Shield” and “anointed one” are synonymous expressions used of the king.

A. Though God may be designated as Israel's shield (cf. Psalm 84:11), so may the king (cf. Psalm 89:18; 47:9).

1. Psalm 84:11, For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. NIV

2. Psalm 89:18, Indeed, our shield belongs to the LORD, our king to the Holy One of Israel. NIV

3. Psalm 47:9, The nobles of the nations assemble as the people of the God of Abraham, for the kings of the earth belong to God; he is greatly exalted. NIV

B. “Look” and “look with favor” both implore God to bless.

Psalm 84:10, Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. NIV

I. The word “elsewhere” (cf. “without”, NASB) is an addition to the Hebrew text but is essential to complete the thought.

A. The verbal phrase “be a doorkeeper” could also be translated “stand at the threshold” (NASB; cf. “linger”, NEB).

1. It is not certain, therefore, that an official doorkeeper is intended.
2. There is a cognate nominal phrase, “keeper of the threshold” (Jer. 35:4; 2 Kings 12:9; 22:4 = 2 Chron. 34:9; 2 Kings 23:4; 25:18-19 = Jer. 52:24), which refers to a lesser official at the temple.

a. Jeremiah 35:4, I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the room of the sons of Hanan son of Igdaliah the man of God. It was next to the room of the officials, which was over that of Maaseiah son of Shallum the doorkeeper. NIV

b. 2 Kings 12:9, Jehoiada the priest took a chest and bored a hole in its lid. He placed it beside the altar, on the right side as one enters the temple of the LORD. The priests who guarded the entrance put into the chest all the money that was brought to the temple of the LORD. NIV

c. 2 Kings 22:4, "Go up to Hilkiah the high priest and have him get ready the money that has been brought into the temple of the LORD, which the doorkeepers have collected from the people. NIV

d. 2 Chronicles 34:9, They went to Hilkiah the high priest and gave him the money that had been brought into the temple of God, which the Levites who were the doorkeepers had collected from the people of Manasseh, Ephraim and the entire remnant of Israel and from all the people of Judah and Benjamin and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. NIV
e. 2 Kings 23:4, The king ordered Hilkiah the high priest, the priests next in rank and the doorkeepers to remove from the temple of the LORD all the articles made for Baal and Asherah and all the starry hosts. He burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron Valley and took the ashes to Bethel. NIV

f. 2 Kings 25:18, 19, The commander of the guard took as prisoners Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the priest next in rank and the three doorkeepers. Of those still in the city, he took the officer in charge of the fighting men and five royal advisers. He also took the secretary who was chief officer in charge of conscripting the people of the land and sixty of his men who were found in the city. NIV

g. Jeremiah 52:24, The commander of the guard took as prisoners Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the priest next in rank and the three doorkeepers. NIV

B. There were some four thousand “gatekeepers” or “porters, (1 Chron. 23:5), who had various duties, among them that of acting as attendants for the ark of the covenant (1 Chron. 15:23,24).

1. 1 Chronicles 23:5, Four thousand are to be gatekeepers and four thousand are to praise the LORD with the musical instruments I have provided for that purpose." NIV
2. 1 Chronicles 15:23, 24, Berekiah and Elkanah were to be doorkeepers for the ark. Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethanel, Amasai, Zechariah, Benaiah and Eliezer the priests were to blow trumpets before the ark of God. Obed-Edom and Jehiah were also to be doorkeepers for the ark. NIV

II. Since Psalm 84:1-4 reflects upon the glory of the temple servants, “be a doorkeeper” likely refers to an officiant at the temple. NIV

A. Psalm 84:1-4, How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young—a place near your altar, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Selah NIV

B. If so, the contrast is not between the lowly work of such an officiant and an exalted position elsewhere, but between the righteous work of the doorkeeper and “the tents of wickedness”, that is, places where wickedness is practiced.

C. Even temporary service at the temple for only “one day” would be “better than a thousand” days spent elsewhere, especially in wickedness.

III. There is another thought here, too.

A. The layman could approach no closer than the altar of burnt offering outside the sanctuary proper (Num. 1:47-54).

1. Numbers 1:47-54, The families of the tribe of Levi, however, were not counted along with the others. The LORD had said to Moses: "You must not count the
tribe of Levi or include them in the census of the other Israelites. Instead, appoint the Levites to be in charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony—over all its furnishings and everything belonging to it. They are to carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings; they are to take care of it and encamp around it. Whenever the tabernacle is to move, the Levites are to take it down, and whenever the tabernacle is to be set up, the Levites shall do it. Anyone else who goes near it shall be put to death. The Israelites are to set up their tents by divisions, each man in his own camp under his own standard. The Levites, however, are to set up their tents around the tabernacle of the Testimony so that wrath will not fall on the Israelite community. The Levites are to be responsible for the care of the tabernacle of the Testimony." The Israelites did all this just as the LORD commanded Moses. NIV

B. Even the Levites who were not officiating priests could not enter the sanctuary but performed their services outside the sanctuary (Num. 18:1-7).

1. Numbers 18:1-7, The LORD said to Aaron, "You, your sons and your father's family are to bear the responsibility for offenses against the sanctuary, and you and your sons alone are to bear the responsibility for offenses against the priesthood. Bring your fellow Levites from your ancestral tribe to join you and assist you when you and your sons minister before the Tent of the Testimony. They are to be responsible to you and are to perform all the duties of the Tent, but they must not go near the furnishings of the sanctuary or the altar, or both they and you will die. They are to join you and be responsible for the care of the Tent of Meeting—all the work at the Tent—and no
one else may come near where you are. "You are to be responsible for the care of the sanctuary and the altar, so that wrath will not fall on the Israelites again. I myself have selected your fellow Levites from among the Israelites as a gift to you, dedicated to the LORD to do the work at the Tent of Meeting. But only you and your sons may serve as priests in connection with everything at the altar and inside the curtain. I am giving you the service of the priesthood as a gift. Anyone else who comes near the sanctuary must be put to death." NIV

C. The contrast, therefore, may be between only being able to approach the holy sanctuary and dwelling in the tents of wickedness.

Psalm 84:11, For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. NIV

I. God is frequently referred to as a “shield” (cf. Gen. 15:1; Deut. 33:29; Psalm 3:3; 18:2,35; 28:7; 33:20; 59:11; 91:4; 115:9,10,11; 119:114; 144:2; Prov. 30:5), but seldom as a “sun” (cf. Isa. 60:19-20; Mal. 4:2).

A. Genesis 15:1, After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." NIV

B. Deuteronomy 33:29, Blessed are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is your shield and helper and your glorious sword. Your enemies will cower before you, and you will trample down their high places." NIV
C. Psalm 3:3, But you are a shield around me, O LORD; you bestow glory on me and lift up my head. NIV

D. Psalm 18:2, 35, The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. You give me your shield of victory, and your right hand sustains me; you stoop down to make me great. NIV

E. Psalm 28:7, The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song. NIV

F. Psalm 33:20, We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. NIV

G. Psalm 59:11, But do not kill them, O Lord our shield, or my people will forget. In your might make them wander about, and bring them down. NIV

H. Psalm 91:4, He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. NIV

I. Psalm 115:9-11, O house of Israel, trust in the LORD - he is their help and shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD - he is their help and shield. You who fear him, trust in the LORD - he is their help and shield. NIV

J. Psalm 119:114, You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word. NIV

K. Psalm 144:2, He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me. NIV
L. Proverbs 30:5, "Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. NIV

M. Isaiah 60:19, 20, The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end. NIV

N. Malachi 4:2, But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. NIV

O. This restraint doubtless is an effort to avoid any taint of pagan thought, since most of the ancient nations worshiped the sun.

II. God is Israel's source of “favor” and “honor” (more literally, “grace and glory”, KJV, NASB).

A. God will withhold “no good thing” from His own (cf. Psalm 34:10; Rom. 8:32).

1. Psalm 34:10, The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. NIV

2. Romans 8:32, He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? NIV
B. The precondition of divine blessing is for one “whose walk is blameless”, for sin alienates man from God's good things (Isa. 59:1-2; Jer. 5:25).

1. Isaiah 59:1, 2, Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. NIV

2. Jeremiah 5:25, Your wrongdoings have kept these away; your sins have deprived you of good. NIV

Psalm 84:12, O LORD Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you. NIV

I. The final beatitude reaches to the heights of spiritual perception.

A. Though he does not live in God's house (Psalm 84:4) and possibly cannot presently make the pilgrimage to the temple, or at least cannot remain there long (84:5), the psalmist can and will trust in God, for this is the greatest blessing of all.

1. Psalm 84:4, 5, Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Selah Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. NIV

B. This beatitude implies that God is present to bless His own even when they are not at the sanctuary.

C. This thought does not discredit public assemblies (cf. Heb. 10:25), but emphasizes the fact that religion should be a daily experience.
1. Hebrews 10:25, Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. NIV

Application:

I. Jesus pointed out that the locality of worship should be of little concern to Christians.

   A. Rather, the requirement is that we worship God “in spirit and in truth”.

   B. The former refers to the sincerity of our worship, and the latter refers to our following the commands given in Scripture for the things to be done in worship.

   C. We should desire a commodious place that will contribute to a proper spirit of worship, but that could be situated in any suitable location (John 4:23,24).

1. John 4:23, 24, Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."  NIV
Questions

Psalm 84:1-12

(Questions based on NIV text.)

1. “How __________ is your ________________, O ______________ __ ______________! My ______________ __ ______________, even ______________, for the ______________ of the _____________; my ______________ __ ______________ and my ______________ __ ______________ out for the ______________ __ ______________.”

2. “Even the ________________ has found a ________________, and the ________________ a ________________ for ________________, where she may have her ________________ - a ________________ near your ________________, O ______________ __ ________________, my ______________ __ ______________ and my ______________ __ ______________. ________________ are those who _________________ in ________________; they are ________________ __ ______________ _ ________________.

3. “________________ are those whose ________________ is in _______________, who have ________________ their ______________ on _______________. As they _________ through the ______________ of ________________, they make it a ________________ of ________________; the ________________ __ ______________ also ________________ it with _________________. They go from ________________ to ________________ __ ______________, till each ________________ before ________________ in ________________.”

4. “______________ my ________________, O ______________ __ ______________; ________________ to me, O ______________ of ______________ __ ______________ __ ______________ upon our ________________ __ ______________, O ______________; look with ______________ on your ______________ __ ______________ __ ______________.”
is ________________ ________________ in your ________________ than a ________________ ________________; I would rather be a ________________ in the ________________ of my ________________ than ________________ in the ________________ of the ________________.

For the ________________ ________________ is a ________________ and ________________ ; the ________________ ________________ and ________________; no ________________ ________________ does he ________________ from those whose ________________ is ________________.”

5. “O ________________ ________________, ________________ is the ________________ who ________________ in you.”

6. Explain the meaning of the superscription to Psalm 84. __________

7. Around what three beatitudes are the stanzas of Psalm 84 built? Define beatitudes. __________

8. What was the psalmist’s attitude, feeling toward God’s dwelling place? By what other designations is this place known? __________
9. In the Scriptures to what does the word *hosts* refer?  ______________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

10. Upon what does the interpretation of Psalm 84 hinge?  Explain your answer.  ______________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

11. Specify the meaning of the words *soul*, *heart* and *flesh* as used in Psalm 84.  ______________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

12. To what *journey* does the psalmist make reference in Psalm 84:5-9?  ______________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

13. Where is the Valley of Boca and to what does it refer?  ______________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
14. For what festival was this journey made? How difficult would it have been to make this journey? According to the psalmist was the journey worth the effort? If so, explain how.

15. How many times each year were Israelite males required to journey to Jerusalem? What were the occasions during which these journeys were to be made?

16. ______________ is indicated by the phrases “____________ __________________ ____________.” and “________________ to me.” Under what circumstances are similar expressions used in Scripture?

17. What were the duties of the doorkeeper or keeper of the threshold? Were these the same position?
18. Was the psalmist able to make the journey to Jerusalem. If not, why not? ____________________________________________

19. Why is God often referenced as a shield, but rarely as a sun? _____

20. What have you learned from this study of Psalm 84 which will help you live more in keeping with God’s will? _________________