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Psalm 120

(2019)

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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Psalm 120.

Topics.

- Deliver me, O LORD, from lying lips and a deceitful tongue.
- What more shall be done to you, you deceitful tongue?
- The sharp arrows of a warrior and the glowing coals of a broom tree.
- I sojourn in Meshech and dwell among the tents of Kedar.
- I am for peace, but they are for war.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION

Psalms are songs and prayers offered to God by the nation Israel, they cover the range of human emotion, expressing praise, faith, victory, sorrow, despair, depression, frustration and the troubled heart of a mourner. They contrast the righteous with the wicked, and include the wisdom and the treasure of God's word. Psalms were written at the beginning of the 15th century BC and probably collected in their final form in the 3rd century.

BOOK FIVE (PSALM 107-150)

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A SONG OF ASCENTS

PSALM 120:1-2

Deliver me, O LORD, from Lying Lips and a Deceitful Tongue.

- **Psalm 120:1-2:** In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me. ²Deliver me, O LORD, from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue.

Ascents: means a climactic progression or journey to a higher place and carries the idea of a thought arising.

In verse six and seven the Psalmist says: "I am for peace, but I dwell amongst those who hate peace," showing that those who the Psalmist was dwelling with favoured war rather than peace and because of their lies and deceit he was in great distress and the two concluding verses show that some troubled state of affairs was affecting the entire nation and not just an individual. It is most likely the leaders and rulers of those who he dwells amongst entice their nations and armies to make war by lies and deception. The motivation for this would be so that they gain more land, control and power and are able to take possession of all the spoils of war. In contrast to making war the Psalmist desires they would follow the way of peace. Even today the rulers of our nations know they have to get the populations of their nations on their side before they make war upon another nation and bomb them with weapons of mass destruction. Many use global communications and worldwide TV news programs and media to spread subtle lies and deceptions concerning the nations they desire to attack and bomb to win the minds of the masses.

What More Shall Be Done to You, You Deceitful Tongue?

- **Psalm 120:3:** What shall be given to you, and what more shall be done to you, you deceitful tongue?

This verse can carry the following two ideas:

1. What shall the tongue of deceit give to God and what shall it add to Him referring to the offender themselves. The essential idea here would be, what will be the result of such conduct and what should be expected from following a deceitful tongue and taking such a lying path except the eventual ruin of one's own reputation and the judgment and condemnation of God

- The cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars will have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death. (Rev. 20:1-15).

The sense of the verse maybe seen in the following way, though some may gain for a moment by their lies and deceit, what benefit do they really get by it, because even though they may obtain some advantage from their lies and deceptions they will also by them bring the curse and wrath of God upon themselves since to inflict such harm upon others is a great wickedness before God and then they will be no richer by their deceit and lies, but doomed to the darkness of the grave never to rise again.

2. What will, the deceitful tongue give to those who tell such lies or to anyone influenced by them except injury, distress and hurt to the character of the innocent being lied against and trouble to those who act upon such falsehoods and deceptions and God's judgment and condemnation to the darkness of the grave (never to rise) for those who speak such lies.

- Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who act faithfully are his delight. (Proverbs 12:22).

Verse three of this Psalm may also carry the idea that the Psalmist is confident that God will turn the wickedness of those telling lies to their own destruction.

Sharp Arrows of a Warrior and the Glowing Coals of a Broom Tree.

- **Psalm 120:4:** A warrior's sharp arrows, with glowing coals of the broom tree! (Coals of juniper in KJV).

The Broom (or Juniper tree): refers to a species of juniper or shrub growing in the deserts of Arabia, with yellowish flowers and a bitter root it sometimes grows so large that it is able to give shade to those exposed to the heat of the sun in the desert (1 Kings 19:4-5). It is said that the wood makes the best charcoal and throws out the most intense heat and retain it for a long time. Stories are told of travellers, having cooked their food by fires made of the wood and returning sometime later (even a year) and finding the embers still alive.

Arrows of the mighty and coals of juniper can refer to:

1. The terrors, judgment and punishment of the LORD upon a lying and deceitful tongue.

2. The hurt, sorrow, grief and destruction that comes upon a nation that is ruled by a powerful king who uses lies and deceit.

It is very appropriate that the lying and deceitful tongue is likened to a warrior's sharp arrows and burning coals since the context of the Psalm is contrasting the violent that plot and plan war to those who love the way of peace. This verse may be read as an answer to the following question asked in verse three, "what shall be given to you, and what more shall be done to you, deceitful tongue?"

The following verses show that God's judgments are often compared to arrows:

- I will heap disasters upon them; I will spend my arrows on them. (Deut. 32:23).
- For the arrows of the Almighty are in me; my spirit drinks their poison; the terrors of God are arrayed against me. (Job 6:4).

God's judgments are compared to arrows because they come from above, and bring swift and sudden destruction with them so the answer to the question, "what more shall be done to you, you deceitful tongue," is that it will face the wrath, judgment and condemnation of God. But the prophet Jeremiah also compares fierce armies to arrows:

- For behold, I am stirring up and bringing against Babylon a gathering of great nations, from the north country. And they shall array themselves against her. From there she shall be taken. Their arrows are like a skilled warrior who does not return empty-handed. (Jeremiah 50:9).

In this context the expression, "A warrior's sharp arrows, with glowing coals of the juniper tree (v4) would carry the following idea, "what more damage, hurt and harm can those who speak lies do and what more do they expect to gain."

PSALM 120:5-6

I sojourn in Meshech and dwell among the tents of Kedar.

- **Psalm 120:5-6:** Woe to me, that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar! ⁶Too long have I had my dwelling among those who hate peace.

It appears that the Psalmist was living in Kedar, but travelled to Meshech where he stayed for a certain period of time, before returning home, whether this is so or not matters little since the primary focus is that he is dwelling amongst people who prefer war over peace.

Meshech: comes from the Hebrew word (Meshek) and means a sowing. It carries the idea of a possession of a precious, price. He was a son of Japheth and his name naturally refers to the people and tribe descendant from him (Gen 10:2). His future generations are thought by some to be:

- The Muscovites and Scythians (a barbarous race).
- The Moschi, a tribe (a barbarous sort of people) inhabiting the Moschian regions between Iberia, Armenia, and Colchis.
- The Tibarenes.
- In later times the word Meshech seems to have had a similar identification to the names Goths, Vandals, Turks, Tartars and the Cossacks.

Though the precise location of Meshech may not be exactly known it is clear they were a barbarous people who opposed God and favoured war over peace.

- The name Meshech is commonly connected with Tubal who were merchants that God was against. (Ezek. 39:1).
- Meshech is spoken of as being traffickers with Tyre in slaves as well as vessels of brass (Ezekiel. 27:13).
- It is prophesied that Meshech will join in a northern confederation against Israel, but will be destroyed upon the mountains of Israel. The leader of this northern group is called Gog. (Ezek. 38-39).

Meshech appears in the following verses:

- Javan, Tubal, and Meshech traded with you; they exchanged human beings and vessels of bronze for your merchandise. (Ezek. 27:13).
- Son of man, set your face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him ³and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. (Ezekiel 38:2-3).
- You, son of man, prophesy against Gog and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. (Ezek. 39:1).

Kedar: comes from the Hebrew word (Qedar) and means, dusky, dark coloured and blackish (of the skin or of a tent). He was one of the twelve sons of Ishmael, the son of Abram by Hagar (Gen. 25:13). These sons were called princes and helped originate the Arab peoples. The name Kedar was given to an Arabian tribe descended from him. For the most part they were nomads (Psalm 120:5) (Song. of Solomon 1:5) rising sheep (Isaiah 60:7), but sometimes the people dwelt in villages (Isaiah 42:11). The "doom of Kedar" declared in (Jer. 49:28-33) reveals something of their desert civilization and also of their terror when they learned that Nebuchadnezzar was coming against them. Their territory was in the northern part of the Arabian Desert.

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Kedar appears in the following verses:

- Woe to me, that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar! (Psalm 120:5).
- SHE: I am very dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. (Song. of Solomon 1:5).
- All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to you; the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you; they shall come up with acceptance on my altar, and I will beautify my beautiful house. (Isaiah 60:7).
- Let the desert and its cities lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits; let the habitants of Sela sing for joy and shout from the top of the mountains. (Isaiah 42:11).
- Concerning Kedar and the kingdoms of Hazor that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon struck down. Thus says the LORD: "Rise up, advance against Kedar! Destroy the people of the east! ²⁹Their tents and their flocks shall be taken, their curtains and all their goods; their camels shall be led away from them, and men shall cry to them: 'Terror on every side!' ³⁰Flee, wander far away, dwell in the depths, O inhabitants of Hazor! declares the LORD. For Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has made a plan against you and formed a purpose against you. ³¹"Rise up, advance against a nation at ease, that dwells securely, declares the LORD, that has no gates or bars, that dwells alone. ³²Their camels shall become plunder, their herds of livestock a spoil. I will scatter to every wind those who cut the corners of their hair, and I will bring their calamity from every side of them, declares the LORD. ³³Hazor shall become a haunt of jackals, an everlasting waste; no man shall dwell there or sojourn in her." (Jer. 49:28-33).

What is important here is not so much the exact location, but the fact Kedar and Meshech were two nations that dwelt outside of Palestine, beyond what was regarded as the borders of civilization who were powerful and barbarous nations that favoured war and violence over peace which means that Meshech and Kedar maybe seen as symbols of

any nation of any generations that denies God and goes the way of violence and war rather than seeking the ways of peace. The Psalmist words, "Woe is me," carry the idea that it was very sad, grieving and distressing to dwell among such barbarous and violent people and hear their lies and deceptions and their talk of war and violence. The Psalmist expression, "Woe is me," also echoes the heartfelt expression of the faithful in Christ who dwell amongst all the corruptions of the world and see the grief, sorrow and destruction war causes and hear of the innocent being murdered, teenage girls raped, children abused and others beaten simply because some love violence and the poor oppressed for the gain of others, the list of grief and sorrow is endless amongst all the populations of the world today, thus the cry of the heart of all who love peace is, "Woe is me," and the cry of those who love Christ, "Come Lord Jesus."

PSALM 120:7

I am for Peace, but they are for War.

- **Psalm 120:7:** I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war!

The King James Bible says: -

- My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace (Psalm 120:6).

This seems to imply that there is only one man who is afflicting the Psalmist and causing him trouble, yet other verses of the Psalm clearly show that it is all the people he lives amongst that are causing him trouble and grief. Added to this the focus of those causing him such trouble and grief is the people of Meshech and Kedar. It is most likely that this man who hated peace was the head of all who prefer to go the way of war rather than seek the way of peace and for whatever reason the Psalmist had close ties with him and for these reasons he is the one in focus in this final verse.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
