



September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023 • Psalm 134

Seeking & Praising the LORD thru the Psalms • Message #5  
Page 519 in the church Bibles located on the cart in the back  
by Pastor Marcus Johnson



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## **Bless the LORD: & May the LORD Bless You**

### **1. Bless the LORD – all you servants of the LORD**

### **2. Lift up your hands – and bless the LORD**

### **3. May the LORD bless you – He who made heaven & earth**

- as you continue your pilgrimage by faith:  
as Christ’s witnesses in a hostile & dangerous world

### **Excursus on Psalm 134 (“Blessing” & “Songs of Ascent”)**

Paragraphs below taken from *PSALMS 73 – 150* by Derek Kidner(KCC); *PSALMS* by Tremper Longman III (TOTC); and *Psalms Volume 2*, by W. Dennis Tucker Jr. & Jamie A. Grant (NIVAC)

**Blessing** (the difference between our blessing the LORD & the LORD blessing us)

The word *bless* [*barak* in Hebrew] is perhaps the key-note of the psalm, sounded as it is in each verse. So far [vs1-2], it has been directed Godward; now it returns from God to man [v3]. But the exchange is quite unequal: to 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 490)

Although our contemporary culture tends to discount the notion of a blessing, in the ancient Near Eastern world “there was nothing more important than securing the blessing of God in one’s life or nation.” ... While the idea of God’s blessing his people seems logical, the reverse – the people’s blessing God – seems counterintuitive ... Obviously *barak* [bless] functions differently depending on whether Yahweh [the LORD] is the subject or the object of the verb ... Within the framework of a covenant, or even a patron-client relationship, the master or lord would bestow favor on the servant, and in return the servant would speak well of, or “bless,” the master. In the Old Testament, God bestows blessings upon his people, and in return his people speak well of God, they bless or praise God for the good he has brought to them. (Tucker 861)

### **Songs of Ascent (Psalms 120 – 134)**

The next fifteen psalms (Pss 120 – 134) each have a title that includes ‘A song of ascents’. Of course, ancient readers would have known precisely what was meant by the phrase, but this understanding has been lost over time, and we are left with the necessity of educated guesswork ... While some believe these psalms are connected to the specific historical event of the return from Babylonian captivity beginning in 539 BC ... there are no clear indications of this, with the exception of Psalm 126 ... In our opinion, the most persuasive view is that the songs were sung while pilgrims made the journey to Jerusalem from outlying areas in order to worship at the temple there, particular during one of the great annual festivals. Of course, the trip to the temple on Zion in Jerusalem would involve not only a physical journey, but also a spiritual one, since Jerusalem was the place where heaven met earth. (Longman 409-10)

PSALM 134 IS THE FINAL POEM in the Songs of Ascent (see Ps 120). In this last song in the collection, the worshipers have made their way to Jerusalem and now find themselves in the sanctuary and prepared to worship before they depart and return home ... The focus turns away from the hostile world that threatens God’s people and turns instead toward Zion, the place of divine blessing for God’s people [e.g., Jerusalem, the temple] ... Psalm 134 invites those gathered in Zion to praise the Lord – the very reason for their pilgrimage to Jerusalem – and then concludes with a priestly blessing, thereby reinforcing the role of Zion as the place of blessing for God’s people. The final verse serves as a benediction as the pilgrims depart from Jerusalem having received the blessing of the Lord. (Tucker 860)