New Apostolic Church International

September 9, 2020: Thoughts on the Bible text

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Foto: P. Johanning

“Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set on pilgrimage (Psalm 84: 5). Psalm 84 is sung or chanted by pilgrims in which they ask God for His protection on their long and sometimes dangerous pilgrim journeys to the temple. As is made clear in the psalm, it is important to rely on the strength and power of God and not on our own strength.

There are many examples of this in both the Old and New Testament. Abraham, for example, who was asked by God to leave his homeland (Genesis 12: 1); his servant who was sent to find a wife for Isaac (Genesis 24: 56); the Israelites who journeyed through the desert; and the men and women who accompanied Jesus as He travelled through the towns and villages of Palestine!

The pilgrimage of the Christian

Christians know that they have no lasting city on earth (Hebrews 13: 14). They are therefore not on their way to an earthly temple, but on a pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem and the new creation. Whoever is on the pilgrimage to the eternal city will direct his or her life to the gospel and can then already experience a foretaste of the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ while on their way. Those who embark on this journey need be aware of the difficulties that may arise and must place their trust in God that they will receive the strength they need. This is why Psalm 84: 6–7 says: “As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a spring; the rain also covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion.”

The longer the journey the more difficult it can become to deal with the problems that may arise, and it is therefore not always easy to trust in God especially when He seems silent. There are many examples in Holy Scripture which testify of God’s faithfulness. He hears our cries, inclines Himself towards us, pulls us out of the pit and sets our feet on a rock, and establishes our steps Psalm 40: 1–3.

Growing in knowledge on our pilgrimage

During the pilgrimage it is important to remain focused on the goal which will provide the necessary motivation to continue and not to give up. In spiritual terms, this means that the gospel should be studied in order to reach a deeper understanding of it. By doing this we will deepen our relationship to God and our neighbour as well as have a better focus for our own life so that even when faced with obstacles while on our way, we will be able to remain composed and at peace.

On the pilgrim journey together

God does not leave us all alone but instead He gives us brothers and sisters at our side with whom we can walk together. We support and encourage one another on our pilgrim journey.

In order to preserve strength and to avoid delays the pilgrim will only carry belongings which are essential. Let us therefore not burden ourselves with things that make our journey to the eternal city more difficult!

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