

Nomads and Pilgrims

The Songs of Ascent

Introduction

Have you ever lost your way while you were on a trip or looking for a new place? You were traveling along when, suddenly, you got an uneasy feeling that you were off-track. At first, you didn't want to admit that you were lost, and tried to find your way back to familiar territory. When you realized that you needed to ask for directions, there was nobody to ask.

Psalm 121 addresses people who are afraid of losing their way. They know that being God's people does not make them immune to life's issues. When we have fallen or lost our way, the psalmist calls us to perceive the truth about God that overarches the circumstances we face. God is ever-present, all knowing, and possesses all power. These are more than theological concepts, but realities that can help us deal with life's pressures, perplexities, and problems.

~ K.W.

Study Notes

Question 2

• The opening line, I lift my eyes to the hills, can be interpreted in several different ways. He may be looking toward his destination, Zion, the mountain of God, and anticipating the help that God will provide. He may be thinking of the dangers of travel through the isolated mountain region and reminding himself of the God who goes with him. Or he may be thinking of the mountains and their role in the idol worship of the nations that surround Israel. Mountaintops were often the sites of the altars of Baal. In contrast, the psalmist looks for help to the God who created the mountains.

Providence

Psalm 121

Observe & Interpret

1. We've all gotten lost at some time in our lives. When you are going to a new place, what steps do you take to try to keep from getting lost? How are maps and landmarks helpful?
2. *Read Psalm 121.* As the psalmist sets out on his journey, what are the things that he fears along the way?
3. In what ways does the psalmist expect God to provide for him as he travels? What characteristics of God do we see in the psalmist's description?

Study Notes

Question 5

• The Bible is realistic and honest about the harsh facts of life. At no time does it give the faintest suggestion that a life of faith exempts us from a life of difficulty. What it does promise is *preservation from all the evil* in the midst of trials. We have a big God. Our understanding of God's magnitude directly impacts our prayer life in times of trouble.

4. What part does the psalmist's past experience of God play in shaping his expectations on this journey?

Apply

5. In Psalm 121 God is described as an ever-present help every step of the way. How does the knowledge that God is watching provide a sense of peace in the midst of turbulent circumstances? How have you experienced this in your life?
6. God is described as a "watcher" or "keeper" several times in this passage. In what circumstances can you imagine that this image of God would be a particular encouragement to you?

