

Nomads and Pilgrims

The Songs of Ascent

Introduction

I have always loved reading biographies, especially those of Christians. It is such an encouragement to see God's faithfulness at work in so many different ways. And it is helpful for my own spiritual walk to see the choices and commitments others have made. As I read biographies, I am also reminded that God sometimes calls people to step out in new directions and that he gives courage and strength along with that call.

Psalm 132 is biographical; it helps the Jewish people remember a significant event in their life together. It recalls a time when David, their first and greatest king, took a bold step of obedience. As God's people recall David's example, they are reminded of God's call to them to continue to obey.
~ D.S.

Study Notes

Background

The ark was a box that contained the tablets of the Ten Commandments, a pot of manna from the Israelites' time in the wilderness, and Aaron's rod. It was a symbol of God's presence with his people. You can find a description of the ark in Exodus 25:10-22. Two events from Israel's history form the backdrop for this psalm.

The first is recorded in 1 Samuel 4, 5, and 6. At that time, Israel was not obeying God but still expected his blessing. They took the ark into battle against the Philistines, using the ark as a good luck charm to get their way rather than listening to God's way. They were defeated and the ark was captured in the battle. Before long, the Philistines who had captured the ark were struck with diseases and hardships and realized that they were dealing with the power of God. They returned the ark to Israel, placing it on a cart pulled by

(Continued on next page)

Obedience

Psalm 132

Observe & Interpret

1. What person (or people) has inspired you in your walk with God? In what way?
2. *Read Psalm 132:1-10.* What promise did David make to God? What signs do you see that express his sincerity?
3. This story was so familiar to the Jewish people that only a few words or place names could trigger their memory of the whole story. What words or phrases do you see that would help the listeners recall the story? What are the important things the psalmist wants his listeners to remember about this story?

Study Notes

(Continued from previous page)

two calves; they brought the calves to the border and let them find their own way into Israel.

The second event is recorded in 2 Samuel 6. For many years the ark had been stored in a barn just inside the border of Israel. After David became king, one of the first things he did was order the ark to be brought to Jerusalem where it would symbolize that God again lived among his people. David also hoped to build a temple in which to house the ark. David's son Solomon eventually built the temple and this psalm may have been written to commemorate that event.

4. *Read verses 11-18.* The focus in these verses changes from David's promise to God's promise. In what ways does God promise to bless the generations that follow David? How might these promises encourage them to obey God?
5. These promises point beyond David's natural descendants to the coming Messiah, God's anointed one. What things does this psalm tell us will be characteristic of the coming kingdom of the Messiah (Jesus)? What things does the psalm indicate we should be doing as part of that kingdom?

Apply

6. What stories or people from Scripture serve as examples for you in your walk with God? What are the important things for you to remember from these stories? Why?

