

Psalm 122:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.

Analysis

The purpose of Jerusalem's gathering is stated: 'Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.' The phrase 'tribes go up' refers to the three annual pilgrimage feasts (Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles) when all Israel assembled in Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 16:16). These tribes are designated 'tribes of the LORD' - their identity derives from covenant relationship with YHWH. The phrase 'testimony of Israel' likely refers to the law/covenant that defines Israel's relationship with God. The ultimate purpose is 'to give thanks unto the name of the LORD' - worship centered on gratitude for God's character and deeds. This verse establishes that gathering is not optional or individual preference but covenant obligation ('testimony'), and that thanksgiving is worship's essence. Corporate gratitude binds the community together in recognition of shared grace.

Historical Context

The law required all Israelite males to appear before the LORD three times annually (Exodus 23:14-17). These pilgrimages created national unity, reinforced covenant identity, and provided opportunity for communal worship. The festivals recounted God's redemptive acts (exodus, law-giving, wilderness provision), making thanksgiving the natural response.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. Why did God design His people's worship to be corporate rather than purely individual?
2. What is the 'testimony of Israel' that draws God's people together?
3. How does thanksgiving function as the heart of authentic worship?
4. In what ways do Christian gatherings continue the pattern of 'tribes going up' to worship?
5. What happens to faith communities when thanksgiving fades and complaint increases?

Interlinear Text

וְיַעֲשֵׂה	לִשְׁבָּטִים	לִשְׁבָּטִים	לִשְׁבָּטִים	לְהַלְלֵה	עַד וְתַעֲשֶׂה
Whither	go up	the tribes	the tribes	of the LORD	unto the testimony
H8033	H5927	H7626	H7626	H3050	H5715
לִשְׁבָּטִים	לְהַלְלֵה	לִשְׁבָּטִים	לְהַלְלֵה	לִשְׁבָּטִים	לְהַלְלֵה
of Israel	to give thanks	unto the name	of the LORD		
H3478	H3034	H8034	H3068		

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 16:16 (References Lord): Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty:

Exodus 23:17 (References Lord): Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord GOD.

