

Psalms 84:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!

Analysis

How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! This exclamation opens one of Scripture's most beloved psalms, expressing profound longing for God's presence in His sanctuary. The Hebrew mah-yedidot (מַה־יְדִידוֹת) means "how lovely, how beloved, how pleasant"—conveying deep affection and emotional attachment. The plural "tabernacles" (mishkenotekha, מִשְׁכְּנֹתֶיךָ) refers to the various courts and chambers of the temple, or possibly the plural of majesty emphasizing the temple's grandeur.

"O LORD of hosts" (Yahweh Tzeva'ot, יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת) is a military title meaning "LORD of armies"—referring to heavenly hosts of angels who serve God. This powerful name contrasts beautifully with the tender emotion of the verse. The God who commands angel armies is also the God whose dwelling place evokes loving devotion. This juxtaposition of divine transcendence and intimacy runs throughout the psalm.

The psalm likely reflects a pilgrim's anticipation approaching Jerusalem for one of the annual festivals (Passover, Pentecost, or Tabernacles). After long, arduous journey through barren wilderness, the first sight of the temple complex prompted this outburst of joy. The psalmist doesn't merely admire the building's architecture but loves what it represents: God's dwelling among His people. The tabernacle/temple was where heaven and earth met, where God's glory resided, where sacrifices atoned for sin, where prayers ascended and blessings descended.

For Christians, this longing finds fulfillment in Christ who "tabernacled among us" (John 1:14, Greek eskenosen). The church becomes God's temple (1 Corinthians

3:16), and believers gather for worship with even greater privilege than Old Testament worshipers—we approach not an earthly sanctuary but the heavenly one through Christ's blood (Hebrews 10:19-22). Yet the psalmist's affection for God's dwelling should characterize Christian devotion to corporate worship.

Historical Context

Temple Worship and Pilgrimage in Ancient Israel

The Jerusalem temple was central to Israel's religious, cultural, and national identity. Solomon's temple (957-586 BC) stood as magnificent testimony to God's presence among His people. After its destruction by Babylon, the second temple (515 BC-AD 70) became the focus of restored Jewish worship, though it never achieved Solomon's temple's splendor until Herod's massive renovation project (20 BC-AD 64).

Mosaic Law commanded all Israelite males to appear before the LORD three times annually (Exodus 23:14-17, Deuteronomy 16:16)—at Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. These pilgrimage festivals brought Jews from throughout Israel and the diaspora to Jerusalem. Psalms 120-134 comprise the "Songs of Ascents," sung by pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem. Psalm 84 shares this pilgrimage theme, expressing the joy of approaching God's house.

For Jews living far from Jerusalem, these festivals represented rare opportunities for temple worship. Daily life offered prayer and Torah study, but sacrificial worship, priestly ministry, and corporate celebration occurred only in Jerusalem. The temple was where God's name dwelt (1 Kings 8:29), where His glory appeared (1 Kings 8:10-11), and where atonement was made (Leviticus 16). To be excluded from the temple was to be cut off from Israel's covenant life.

After AD 70 when Rome destroyed the temple, Judaism transformed into a religion centered on Torah, synagogue, and Rabbinic interpretation. Christianity had already transcended temple worship—Jesus's death rent the temple veil (Matthew 27:51), His resurrection established Him as the true temple (John 2:19-21), and His ascension opened the heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews 9:24). Yet Psalm 84's

longing for God's presence should still characterize believers who gather in Jesus's name (Matthew 18:20).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. What makes God's dwelling place "amiable" (lovely, beloved), and how should this affect our attitude toward corporate worship?
2. How does the title "LORD of hosts" (military commander of angel armies) combined with tender longing for His house reveal God's character?
3. In what ways has Christ fulfilled the temple's purpose, making God's presence accessible to all believers?
4. What aspects of temple worship in ancient Israel (pilgrimage, sacrifice, corporate celebration) have parallels in Christian practice?
5. How can modern believers cultivate the psalmist's deep affection for God's dwelling place when we gather for worship?

Interlinear Text

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|-------|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| מֶה | יָדִיד וְ | מִשְ�כְּנוֹתֶיךָ | יְהוָה | צְבָאוֹת: |
| H4100 | How amiable | are thy tabernacles | O LORD | of hosts |
| | H3039 | H4908 | H3068 | H6635 |

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 27:4 (Temple): One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

Psalms 43:3 (Temple): O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.

Psalms 36:8 (Parallel theme): They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.

Psalms 8:1 (References Lord): O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

Psalms 122:1 (References Lord): I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.

Psalms 132:5 (References Lord): Until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.

Nehemiah 9:6 (References Lord): Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.

1 Kings 22:19 (References Lord): And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.