

# Psalm Sundays

**Text**  
**Psalm 134**

**Topic**  
**A group of the night shift workers are acknowledged for making sure there was always worship in the House of the LORD**

**Title**  
***"We Tone the Night"***

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Those of you who are old enough... Do you remember when you would go to a theater to watch a movie? Those were good times.

I especially liked the trailers. You know, the previews for upcoming movies. They preceded the movie, but that wasn't always the case. When movies were sent to theaters on film, the previews were added to the *end* of the reel; hence, *trailers*.

End credits are another story. They have gotten longer and longer over the years. Ten... Twelve... Sixteen minutes is not unusual. Why not leave? We are forced to watch them because the producers have added mid-credit and end-of-credit scenes.

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Gang Boss... Gaffer... Grip... Wrangler... Best Boy. Who cares, beyond their moms? No one ever says, "Look - isn't that the Gang Boss from *Rogue One*?" Instagram isn't blowing up with Best Boy selfies.

These folks are absolutely essential to the movie. Without them behind the scenes, *there would be no scenes*.

Psalm 134 introduces us to some end-credit-like servants behind the scenes of the annual feasts. Look at verse one: "You servants of the LORD, Who by **night** stand in the house of the LORD!"

We will see that this special unseen night shift included *workers* and *watchmen*.

Can we see ourselves in this psalm? Sure.

- 👤 In First Thessalonians 5:6 we read, "Therefore let us **not sleep**, as others *do*, but let us **watch** and be sober."
- 👤 In the Revelation, Jesus told us, "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to give to every one according to his **work**" (22:12).

Don't sleep; you've got the night shift and should watch and work, behind the scenes of the great drama unfolding, because the Lord is coming.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 You Are The Lord's Behind-the-Scenes Worker**, and **#2 You Are The Lord's Behind-the-Scenes Watchman**.

## **#1 - You Are The Lord's Behind-the-Scenes Worker (v1-2)**

Those of you who are old enough... Do you remember when you could go to a magical place called Disneyland? Those were good times.

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Over 1500 workers were employed on the night shift to get the park ready for the next-day's guests.

The Temple in Jerusalem required a lot of night shift workers. It's hard to be totally accurate about exactly what went on overnight. Both Jewish and Gentile sources are spotty at best; and they sometimes disagree on details.

We don't need to know exact details. We only need to realize that there was a lot to be done. Whether it was the Feast of Passover & Unleavened Bread, or Pentecost, or Tabernacles, Jerusalem would swell with pilgrims coming to the Temple for the prescribed days of those festivals. The numbers of pilgrims is hard to calculate. At its lowest it had to be tens of thousands.

Sometimes at a large gathering, e.g., a dinner, the host will recognize the kitchen staff, or others, who "made it all possible." That is essentially what happens in verses one and two.

Psa 134:1 A Song of Ascents. Behold, bless the LORD, All *you* servants of the LORD, Who by night stand in the house of the LORD!

As the returning pilgrims say, adios, to Jerusalem, we say, au revoir to the Songs of Ascent - Psalms 120 through 134. These going-up-to-worship songs, Israel's festival playlist, end fittingly in 134.

The pilgrims pause to recognize those "servants of the LORD, Who by night stand in the house of the LORD!"

In the Old Testament book of Second Chronicles, in chapter nine, some of the general duties of workers in the Temple are listed. Let me read you an edited passage:

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The gatekeepers were assigned to the four directions: the east, west, north, and south... in this trusted office *were* four chief gatekeepers; they were Levites. And they had charge over the chambers and treasuries of the house of God. And they lodged *all* around the house of God because they *had* the responsibility, and they *were* in charge of opening *it* every morning... Now *some* of them were in charge of the serving vessels, for they brought them in and took them out by count. Some of them *were* appointed over the furnishings and over all the implements of the sanctuary, and over the fine flour and the wine and the oil and the incense and the spices. And *some* of the sons of the priests made the ointment of the spices. [Some] of the Levites... had the trusted office over the things that were baked in the pans. And some... *were* in charge of preparing the showbread for every Sabbath. [There were] the singers... Levites, *who lodged* in the chambers, *and were free from other duties*; for they were employed in *that* work day and night.

The “gatekeepers” were the watchmen we will discuss in our second point. Notice some of the additional duties: Treasury security guard, those charged with the vessels and implements, those who oversaw the furnishings, perfumers, and bakers. It isn’t an exhaustive list. There was plenty of additional work to do.

Let’s see if we can make a biblical application to the church. The Jews attended the annual feasts. There were seven altogether, but only three were required.

We know that **all** seven of the feasts pointed forward to Jesus:

1. Jesus was the final Passover lamb, the Lamb of God slain for the sins of the world. He died on the Cross exactly when the lambs were being slain in the Temple.

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2. Passover included the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It pointed to Jesus' sinless life (as leaven is a picture of sin in the Bible), making Him the perfect sacrifice for our sins.
3. First Fruits pointed to Jesus' resurrection as the first fruits of the righteous. Jesus was resurrected on this very day, which is one of the reasons that Paul refers to him in First Corinthians 15:20 as the "first fruits from the dead."
4. Pentecost occurred fifty days after the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and pointed to the great harvest of souls and the gift of the Holy Spirit for both Jew and Gentile, who would be brought into the kingdom of God during the Church Age. The Church was established on this day when God poured out His Holy Spirit and 3000 Jews responded to Peter's great sermon and his first proclamation of the Gospel.
5. Trumpets was the first of the fall feasts. Many believe this day points to the rapture of the church when Jesus will appear in the heavens as He comes for His bride, the church. The Rapture is always associated in Scripture with the blowing of a loud trumpet (First Thessalonians 4:13-18 & First Corinthians 15:52).
6. The Day of Atonement points to the Second Coming of Jesus when He will return to earth. That will be the Day of Atonement for the Jewish remnant when they "look upon Him whom they have pierced," repent of their sins, and receive Him as their Messiah.
7. The Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths) points to the Lord's promise that He will once again "tabernacle" with His people when He returns to reign over all the world.

When we meet on the first day of the week, following the custom of the early church, *it be like celebrating all four feasts that were fulfilled, and the three that will be fulfilled.*

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When the Lord died on the Cross, one of the miracles that accompanied His accomplishment was that the veil in the Temple, that kept the Ark of the Covenant out of view, was torn from top-to-bottom.

It forever signified that access to God was immediate and for everyone through Jesus Christ. It communicated that everything preceding the veil was now done away with. All the sacrifices and ceremonies were fulfilled in Jesus.

The gathering of the church to celebrate Jesus requires behind-the-scenes work and workers. Let me ask you this - not to burden you, but to make a point. Can you name all of our Children's Ministry workers? *I can't!!*

Yet they have prepared all week to minister to children Jesus desires would come to Him.

Back to our psalm... Verse one mentions those who by night stand in the house of the Lord. The passage we heard from Chronicles specifically mentioned "singers... the Levites, *who lodged in the chambers, and were free from other duties; for they were employed in that work **day and night.***"

As I mentioned, details are spotty. But from these two passages I think it safe to say that there was singing in the Temple all through the night, every night.

Why not? We know that the earthly Temple was patterned after the Temple in Heaven (Hebrews 8:5). In the Revelation, in Heaven, we read that there is constant worship singing.

Commentator Derek Kidner wrote, "The Temple was never left without... Levites, to... *sing praises in it.*"

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Should we form choirs that sing 24/7 while we are not having services? It'd be hard to fill some slots.

Not necessary IF we obey the apostle Paul's exhortation that we each, "[speak] to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19). It is an example of what we mean when we say that everything is fulfilled in Jesus. The constant worship in the Temple is replaced by constant worship in our hearts.

Psa 134:2 Lift up your hands *in* the sanctuary, And bless the LORD.

A quick word regarding lifting your hands, and worship posture in general. A good rule to follow when you feel led to express worship in a more physical manner is this: **Do not disturb.** Will your movement disturb others, distracting them? Will it call attention to you, instead of to the Lord? In First Corinthians 14:32, in a passage about orderly worship, the apostle Paul said we can control ourselves; and we should, for the sake of others.

The bakers were baking for the LORD; the perfumers were perfuming for the LORD.

In the church, we are told, "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:23-24).

That's great - until you start to think that what you are doing for the Lord is menial, or that it doesn't matter. If it is service for the Lord, and it is done as unto Him, it *cannot* be menial, and it *does* matter.

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In one of the great movie sequences of all time, Daniel Russo was given three tasks:

1. Wax car.
2. Paint fence.
3. Sand floor.

Mr. Miyagi gives him very explicit instructions about how to perform each task. "Wax on; wax off." Daniel despairs, thinking what he is doing has no connection to karate.

Until Mr. Myagi takes him through the sequence. "Show me wax car... Show me paint fence... Show me sand floor." The repetitive motions had become second-hand reactions and functioned as defensive blocks.

I think sometimes the Lord says to us, "Show Me clean toilet." "Show Me wash feet."

## #2 - You Are The Lord's Behind-the-Scenes Watchman (v3)

Somewhere during our study of the psalms we mentioned that many are *antiphonal*. Loosely defined, that means they are written so that the singers are responding to one another.

In Psalm 134, it seems verses one and two are the good-bye recognition of the pilgrims directed to the night shift. That makes verse three the response of those tireless, mostly anonymous workers.

Psa 134:3 The LORD who made heaven and earth Bless you from Zion!  
As if they had said, "We **will** lift up our hands and bless the LORD; now go in peace, and may God shower down his blessings upon **you!**"

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The "heavens" is the universe God created. In it is the earth upon which He placed mankind.

In all of that created universe, in all its splendor and wonder, on the earth... "Zion," Jerusalem, is arguably the most important geography. It is the spiritual center. It is the place God chose to dwell among His people in the Ark of the Covenant, in the Holy of Holies, in the Temple.

All "blessing" comes from God and thus, in a sense, it comes from "Zion," from Jerusalem.

Jesus died on the Cross at Calvary just outside of Jerusalem. He was buried; He rose from the dead there. When He comes again, in His Second Coming, it will be to Jerusalem. He will rule over the world on David's throne in Jerusalem.

The future seven-year Great Tribulation is a time when God will be dealing especially with the Jews; and much of it will focus on Jerusalem and the Promised Land.

Let's talk specifically about the night watchmen at the gates. We have the most agreed upon information about them. One reliable source, the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, says the following:

A strict watch over the Temple was maintained, the guard being composed of three priests and twenty-one Levites. The Levites kept guard as follows: One at each of the five gates of the mount entrances; one at each of the four corners within the mount enclosure; one at each of the five important gates of the courts; one at each of the four corners within the court; one at the Chamber of Sacrifice; one at the Chamber of Curtains; and one behind the Holy of Holies.

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The captain of the guard saw that every man was alert, chastising a priest if found asleep at his post, beating him with his staff, and sometimes even punishing him by burning his shirt upon him, as a warning to others (Midrash i. 1).

The info about shirt-burning comes to us through what is called midrash, which is ancient Jewish interpretation of the Scriptures.

The watchmen - they didn't know when their captain might visit their posting. Other reliable sources explain that the napping watchman would puff-up his outer garment as a pillow to rest his head upon. Caught napping, his captain would burn his puffy-shirt.

Watching, staying awake, not slumbering, are all exhortations given to us as believers in the Church Age. We're the watchmen, the watch-women, the watch-children.

Our Captain is Jesus. He could come to resurrect the dead believers of the Church Age, and to rapture we who are alive, **at any moment.**

If He needs to chastise me for slumbering, I know that Jesus only chastens those He loves, for our own good.

Commentators see a devotional insight in Psalm 134. They compare the night watches with afflictions, sufferings, troubles of all kind.

I came across a quote attributed to C.S. Lewis that is appropriate. *"Mental pain is less dramatic than physical pain, but it is more common and also more hard to bear. The frequent attempt to conceal mental pain increases the burden: it is easier to say "My tooth is aching" than to say "My heart is broken."*

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When you find yourself in a difficult night watch, be encouraged by Paul and Silas singing praises while in the disgusting, dismal, dreadful, dank, deep, dirty, dreary, dark, Philippian dungeon.

Transform your troubles into a sanctuary in which you bless the Lord.

**H**uman history is a drama being played-out. It's been called *The Romance of Redemption*. God's love was spurned by our original parents. But they had no idea the length, the breadth, and the depth of His love. He would redeem them, restore them.

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. The drama is one story, told in 66 books, that progressively reveals how God sent Jesus to woo us back to a relationship with Him.

There are a kind of end credits in the Bible. It's the Book of Life. If you're saved, your name is found written there.

If you die in your sins, without Jesus, your name won't be found in the Book of Life. It will appear in other books, pertaining to the lost.

Rev 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

Rev 20:15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

The Lake of Fire, and an eternity of conscious suffering, need not be your end-of-credits scene.

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