

WHAT'S IN A SONG?

By Sally Campbell



He Who Dwells

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***He dwells in the shelter of The Most High
will rest in the shadow of The Almighty
I will say of the Lord;
He is my refuge, He is my refuge
And my fortress; My God, in whom I trust.***

Psalm 91:1-2

To live in the shelter of God means more than just entering a building, or (back in the day) a tent. If it was a specific place, then what about those who do not live anywhere near the neighbourhood of said “dwelling”? This is what the Jews said of the Samaritans¹. The meaning “to dwell”, in this context, is a narrative description implying one who is welcome, belongs and is entitled to all the amenities available, is accepted, feels comfortable. So why is this so important? Why devote so many Psalms to it?

If it isn't about a place, then what does it mean to dwell in the shelter of The Most High (one of the names attributed to God). The song is composed of the first two verses of this passage. The basic message of the song is that if we walk with and follow God, we will have divine rest and all the protection that this affords us. But considering the reality of our day to day lives, it might ring hollow to some. If that is the case, then after a while, the phrases roll off our tongues, with barely a passing thought, like seeds on dry ground².

To further grasp this principle in scripture, we might look at it in a negative re-statement. What if we chose not to “dwell in the shelter of The Most High”? What would that look like? Personally speaking, I might find that my rest is fleeting, instead riddled with insecurity and agitation, reacting to every unrest in my environment. If the Lord is not my refuge and fortress, then I am left to depend on my own defences and ability to strategize solutions and control outcomes. That sounds exhausting.

Now back to the positive context. What does such a dwelling offer us? Deeper into the passage we read that we will be covered under his wing, we have a refuge, we will not be afraid of the terrors and arrows that the conflicts this world bring us. We also have the assurance that God is with us in trouble and guiding us through it³. This passage reflects the provision offered those who put their trust in God. Trust is the prerequisite assumption, but that sounds more like solid ground.

It might be interpreted that dwelling in the shelter of the Most High is a choice of faith and a change in perspective. Daily we are confronted by the unknown and the unpredictable, scrambling to find our way. Are we trying to solve these problems on our own, or are we looking for solutions through God's guidance? Are we taking the rest he is providing? Do we trust in his leading of our lives? There are many questions and finding answers takes a bit of fortitude. But courage for the journey is what is promised. If these questions are creating more doubt, perhaps instead of changing your mind, it is time to consider changing your location.

1. John 4:20
2. Matthew 13:5 and 6
3. Psalm 91:3-6