

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes Book of Psalms

12-28-11

The Story Behind the Psalms

These are called "Psalms of ascension." They were basically travel Psalms. They were used specifically for the three annual feasts. As the Jews would march to Jerusalem for the feast, they would sing these Psalms of ascension. From anywhere in the promised land, it was always "up" to Jerusalem, for Jerusalem was the highest point in the land. So as the people would ascend to Jerusalem, they would sing these songs one after another.

When they arrived at Jerusalem, they would go to the temple. These Psalms were sung on the steps of the temple. Psalm 120 would be sung on the first step, Psalm 121 on the second step, etc. until each Psalm had been sung. Since these were sung going up the steps, they were called "Psalms of ascension." As they are read it should be kept in mind that these were travelers going to the holy city for a feast. Read carefully Psalm 128 and imagine a great group of pilgrims journeying for a time of worship in the beloved city.

The Way They Were Used by God's People

Not only were they used for trips to the feasts and to Jerusalem, these were Psalms used for any journey. What a tremendous thing it would be for a Christian family to claim Psalm 128 as they leave on vacation or for a Christian businessman to claim its promises as he leaves for a business trip! In these days of advanced travel, these Psalms should be used over and over again as we journey to and fro.

Psalm 126

Theme: God does great things. His power not only releases us from sin's captive hold but brings us back to him.

Author: Anonymous

PSALM 126:5, 6

God's ability to restore life is beyond our understanding. Forests burn down and are able to grow back. Broken bones heal. Even grief is not a permanent condition. Our tears can be seeds that will grow into a harvest of joy because God is able to bring good out of tragedy. When burdened by sorrow, know that your times of grief will end and that you will again find joy. We must be patient as we wait. God's great harvest of joy is coming!

Psalm 127

Theme: Life without God is senseless. All of life's work—building a home, establishing a career, and raising a family—must have God as the foundation.

Author: Solomon

PSALM 127:1

Families establish homes and sentries guard cities, but both these activities are futile unless God is in them. A family without God can never experience the spiritual bond God brings to relationships. A city without God will crumble from evil and corruption on the inside. Don't make the mistake of leaving God out of your life. If you do, all your accomplishments will be futile. Make God your highest priority, and let him do the building.

PSALM 127:2

God is not against human effort. Hard work honors God (Proverbs 31:10-29). But working to the exclusion of rest or to the neglect of family may be a cover-up for an inability to trust God to provide for our needs. We all need adequate rest and times of spiritual refreshment. On the other hand, this verse is not an excuse to be lazy (Proverbs 18:9). Be careful to maintain a balance: Work while trusting God, and also rest while trusting him.

PSALM 127:3-5

Too often children are seen as liabilities rather than assets. But the Bible calls children "a gift from the LORD," a reward. We can learn valuable lessons from their inquisitive minds and trusting spirits. Those who view children as a distraction or nuisance should instead see them as an opportunity to shape the future. We dare not treat children as an inconvenience when God values them so highly.

Psalm 128

Theme: God, the true head of the home. [This is called the marriage prayer because it was often sung at Israelite marriages.] God will reward your devotion to him with inner peace.

Author: Anonymous, some suggest Hezekiah

PSALM 128:1

The psalmist wrote that a good family life is a reward for following God. The values outlined in God's Word include love, service, honesty, integrity, and prayer. These help all relationships, and they are especially vital to home life. Is your home life heavenly or hectic? Reading and obeying God's Word is a good place to start to make your family all that it should be.

Psalm 129

Theme: Confidence in times of persecution. God will bring us through the tough times.

Author: Anonymous, some suggest Hezekiah

PSALM 129:2

The people of Israel were persecuted from their earliest days but never destroyed completely. The same is true of the church. Christians have faced times of severe persecution, but the church has never been destroyed. As Jesus said to Peter, “Now I say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it” (Matthew 16:18). When you face persecution and discrimination, take courage—the church will never be destroyed.

PSALM 129:3

This verse foreshadowed Jesus’ unjust punishment before his death. He endured horrible lashes from the whip of his tormentors, which indeed made “furrows” on his back (John 19:1).

Psalm 130

Theme: Assurance of the Lord’s forgiveness. God will surely forgive us if we confess our sins to him.

Author: Anonymous, some suggest Hezekiah

PSALM 130:1, 2

In the depths of despair, the psalmist cried out to God. Despair makes us feel isolated and distant from God, but this is precisely when we need God most. Despair over sin should not lead to self-pity, causing us to think more about ourselves than God. Instead, it should lead to confession and then to God’s mercy, forgiveness, and redemption. When we feel overwhelmed by a problem, feeling sorry for ourselves will only increase feelings of hopelessness; but crying out to God will turn our attention to the only one who can really help.

PSALM 130:3, 4

Keeping a record of sins (or holding a grudge) is like building a wall between you and another person, and it is nearly impossible to talk openly while the wall is there. God doesn’t keep a record of our sins; when he forgives, he forgives completely, tearing down any wall between us and him. Therefore, we fear (revere) God, yet we can talk to him about anything. When you pray, realize that God is holding nothing against you. His lines of communication are completely open.

Psalm 131

Theme: Trust and contentment. Quiet trust in God is the basis for our contentment.

Author: David

PSALM 131:1, 2

Pride results from overvaluing ourselves above others. It leads to restlessness because it makes us dissatisfied with what we have and concerned about what everyone else is doing. It keeps us always hungering for more attention and adoration. By contrast, humility puts others first and allows us to be content with God's leading in our lives. Such contentment gives us security so that we no longer have to prove ourselves to others. Let humility and trust affect your perspective and give you the strength and freedom to serve God and others.