

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes Book of Psalms
6-29-11

PSALM 87

The Story Behind the Psalms

These Psalms were written for the sons of Korah, who were Levites. The Levites formed one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Each of the twelve tribes was given a portion of the land of Canaan, except for the tribe of Levi. The other eleven tribes were to bring tithes of their increase to a storehouse. From the storehouse the Levites gathered their necessities.

Now there were three families in the tribe of Levi. The family of Gershon, which became the Gershonites, whose job it was to carry the tent itself; that is, the tabernacle. Then there was the family of Kohath, which carried the furniture. Then the family of Merari carried the boards and the bars.

Kohath had a son whose name was Korah. (By the way, Moses and Aaron both came from the family of Kohath.) The family of Korah formed the singers and they were known as the sons of Korah. It was their job to praise the Lord, and from them David organized a great choir. These Psalms are choir specials sung by the sons of Korah and written for their use.

The Way They Were Used by God's People

These Psalms were especially dear to the Jews while in captivity in Babylon.

Theme: The city of God, where all believers will one day gather.

Author: The sons of Korah (Temple assistants)

A psalm of the descendants of Korah. A song

PSALM 87:1

Zion (the holy mountain, Jerusalem) and its Temple here represent the future community of all believers. This psalm looks ahead to the Holy City of God described in Revelation 21:10-27. The honor of living there will be granted to all whose names are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 21:27). It is God's grace that forms and sustains this wonderful community. How could anyone refuse God's offer to be part of this celebration?

PSALM 88

The Story Behind the Psalm

Here perhaps is the saddest of all the Psalms. It was written at the time of the division of the kingdom under Rehoboam. The theme of the Psalm and perhaps the key word would be the word "dark." Notice verses 6, 12 and 18. Heman was one of the wise men that Rehoboam had rejected. Solomon, Rehoboam's father, had burdened the people with taxes. Rehoboam was asked to lighten the load. He asked for three days in which to make up his mind. He first sought advice from the older men. They advised him to lighten the tax load. He then sought the younger men's advice. They advised him to make the tax load even heavier. Heman was one of the wise old men whose advice was shunned. Though Rehoboam had been taught by his father, he nevertheless reached adulthood without much character. When one becomes an adult and is void of character, it becomes exceedingly difficult to acquire it. In such cases, the wise man will borrow it. Rehoboam not only was void of character, but he was void of enough wisdom to accept the advice of the wise old men. One of the wise old men, Heman, wrote the 88th Psalm when rejected because of the plight of a divided kingdom. This Psalm is almost a lamentation as the case seems hopeless.

The Way It Was Used by God's People

This Psalm was reserved to be used when God's people were at the very bottom. When the blackest midnight would come, the wise Israelite fled to the 88th Psalm.

Theme: When there is no relief in sight. God understands even our deepest misery.

Author: Heman, one of the sons of Korah (possibly the same man mentioned in 1 Chronicles 15:19; 16:41; 25:4-5 as a musician and the king's seer)

For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah, to be sung to the tune "The Suffering of Affliction." A psalm of Heman the Ezrahite. A song

PSALM 88:1

Have you ever felt as though you have hit bottom? The psalmist is so low that he even despairs of life itself. Although everything is bad and getting worse, he is able to tell it all to God. This is one of the few psalms that gives no answer or expression of hope. Don't think that you must always be cheerful and positive. Grief and depression take time to heal. No matter how low we feel, we can always take our problems to God and express our anguish to him.

PSALM 88:13, 14

When writing this, the psalmist was close to death, perhaps debilitated by disease, and forsaken by friends. But he could still pray. Perhaps you are not so afflicted, but you know someone who is. Consider being a prayer companion for that person. This psalm can be a prayer you can lift to God on his or her behalf.