

Lesson 5 Singing *the Lord's Song in a Strange Land*

Psalm 137:4 "How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land?"

- Rhetorical question = Psalm 137 / Israel was distressed/disheartened
 - Lamenting life as Babylonian captives
- Expressing bitter resentment toward enemy
 - for terrible wrongs done to Jerusalem and her people
- Cries out for God's judgment upon Babylon
 - repay them evil for evil = according to principle of Obadiah 1:15

Obadiah 1:15 (AMP) ¹⁵For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your dealings will return upon your own head.

- Many Psalmists respond to God's PRESENCE
 - but also many respond to what they perceive as His ABSENCE
- Ask same question we ask = WHY, GOD? WHERE ARE YOU, GOD?
HOW LONG, O LORD?
- How happy we are when God demonstrates kindness/patience w/us
 - graciously holding back His judgment / wooing us w/His love, granting opportunity to us = turn from sin to Christ
 - to receive RBF for salvation from penalty / power of sin.

Romans 2:4 It is God's goodness, forbearance and longsuffering that leads us to repentance

- Yet, when it comes to our enemies, our plea is STRIKE THEM DOWN NOW, LORD
- When He does not = question His presence

Psalm 145:9 The LORD is good to all, And His tender mercies are over all His works.

- God's perfect created order disrupted by introduction of sin
- Proliferation of Evil/suffering/death make world = "strange land"
- Like author/ Psalm 137, we question
 - How to we live a life of faith in a strange land

SUNDAY The Days of Evil

Read Psalm 74:18–22 and Psalm 79:5–13. What is at stake here?

Psalm 74:18–22 (AMP) Psalmist cries out for vindication = call on God to remember covenant made with Abraham ²²**Arise, O God, plead Your own cause**; remember [earnestly] how the foolish and impious man scoffs and reproaches You day after day and all day long.

Psalm 79:5–13 ⁵How long, LORD? Will You be angry forever? Will Your jealousy burn like fire? [Jealousy = God cannot endure a divided allegiance] ⁶Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You, And on the kingdoms that do not call on Your name. ⁷For they have devoured Jacob, And laid waste his dwelling place.

- Psalmist struggling to understand great controversy between God/ power of evil
- Points to God's infinite wisdom/power = but finds God's self-restraint/His patience with enemy incapable of understanding
- Sees enemy's invasion as threatening God's divine promises to His covenant people
- People of Israel = God's inheritance / but end-time dimension must be considered and that is God planned for believers from all nations to become His inheritance

⁸Oh, do not remember former iniquities against us! Let Your tender mercies come speedily to meet us, For we have been brought very low.

- psalmist acknowledges = sins of people / corrupted people's covenantal relationship w/ God = brought all consequences down upon them .

⁹Help us, O God of our salvation, For the glory of Your name; And deliver us, and provide atonement for our sins, For Your name's sake!

- "God of our salvation" = conveys God's faithfulness to His covenantal promises
- People's survival depends solely upon God's gracious intervention
 - restoration of = covenantal bond thru atonement of sin.
- More important than restoration of Israel's fortunes = defense of God's character in the world
- Today = sins people = our backsliding/ our wickedness = brings shame/dishonor on God (whom we profess)
- Many people have been turned away from faith in Christ because of wrong actions of those who profess to be Christians.

"The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of His people."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

¹⁰Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?" Let there be known among the nations in our sight The avenging of the blood of Your servants which has been shed.

- If evil actions of enemy go unpunished = nations will think God has lost His power

¹¹Let the groaning of the prisoner come before You; According to the greatness of Your power Preserve those who are appointed to die;

¹²And return to our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom Their reproach with which they have reproached You, O Lord. ¹³**So we, Your people and sheep of Your pasture, Will give You thanks forever; We will show forth Your praise to all generations.**