

The Psalms  
(Lesson 20)

Introduction:

1. The book of Psalms is a collection of 150 poems, songs, and prayers composed by a number of people over a long period of time.
2. In this lesson we are studying Psalm 137.
3. The writer of this psalm is not identified; however, it seems to have been written while the Jews were in captivity in Babylon.
4. To fully appreciate the message presented in this psalm we must understand . . .

Discussion:

I. THE HISTORICAL SETTING

- A. Israel was a united kingdom when Saul, David, and Solomon ruled as kings.
- B. When Rehoboam became king after Solomon died, Israel divided into 2 kingdoms:
  1. the northern kingdom (Israel)
  2. the southern kingdom (Judah).
- C. In 722 BC, the Assyrians took the northern kingdom into captivity (2 Kings 17:23).
- D. In 606 BC, the Babylonians took control of Judah.
- E. Details of the Babylonian captivity are revealed in 2 Chronicles 36.
  1. (vs.5-8) Nebuchadnezzar carried Jehoiakim to Babylon (Daniel 1:1-2).
  2. (vs.9-10) Nebuchadnezzar carried Jehoiachin to Babylon (Ezekiel 1:1-3).
  3. (vs.11-19) Nebuchadnezzar finally destroyed Jerusalem and the temple.
  4. (vs.20-21) The Babylonian captivity would not last forever (Jeremiah 25:8-12; Isaiah 13:1, 15-19).
  5. (vs.22-23) In 536 BC, the Persians defeated the Babylonians and allowed the Jews who so desired to return to Jerusalem.
- F. Psalm 137 relates to something that occurred when the Jews were in Babylon.

II. PSALM 137

- A. (vs.1-2) The Jews were unable to praise God on this occasion.
  1. They had assembled "*by the rivers of Babylon*" [perhaps for worship -- Acts 16:13].
  2. Memories of Zion caused them to sit down and weep.
  3. They placed their harps on the willows.
- B. (vs.3-4) The Babylonians had insulted the Jews.
  1. They wanted the Jews to entertain them.
  2. They wanted the Jews to perform "*one of the songs of Zion.*"
  3. How could the Jews sing praise under these circumstances?
- C. (vs.5-6) Attention is turned to Jerusalem.
  1. Isaiah and Jeremiah had prophesied that the captivity would not last forever.
  2. Eventually, the Jews would return to their home.
  3. They did not want to forget Jerusalem while they were in captivity.
- D. (vs.7-9) The Jews looked forward to the day when God would take vengeance on their enemies.
  1. (vs.7) They asked God to remember the deeds of "*the children of Edom*" [the descendants of Esau] (Obadiah 1, 8-12).
  2. (vs.8-9) They knew that Babylon would eventually be destroyed.

III. NOTE THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN PSALM 137 AND 2 THESSALONIANS 1:3-10