

The Psalms  
(Lesson 21)

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. This lesson is a study of Psalm 126, "A Song of degrees."
3. The writer of this psalm is not identified; however, internal evidence suggests it was written after the Jews were released from captivity in Babylon.
4. To properly understand this psalm we must be mindful of . . .

Discussion:

I. THE HISTORICAL SETTING

- A. In 606 BC, the Babylonians took control of Judah, the southern kingdom.
- B. Some of the details relating to the Babylonian captivity are revealed in 2 Chronicles 36.
  1. (vs.5-8) Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiakim to Babylon.
  2. (vs.9-10) Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin to Babylon.
  3. (vs.11-19) The Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the temple.
  4. (vs.20-21) The Jews who escaped death were taken from Jerusalem to Babylon, and they would remain in Babylon until the 70-year captivity was over.
- C. Psalm 137 shows how the Jews felt while they were in Babylon.
  1. (vs.1-4) They were unable to praise God because the Babylonians had insulted them.
  2. (vs.5-6) They looked forward to returning to Jerusalem.
  3. (vs.7-9) They trusted God to take vengeance on their enemies.
- D. (2 Chronicles 36:22-23) The Persians conquered Babylon and allowed the Jews who so desired to return to Jerusalem.
- E. Several psalms were written after the captivity ended (ex.: Psalm 85).
- F. Psalm 126 expresses the feelings of the Jews after they were released from captivity.

II. PSALM 126

- A. (vs.1-3) The Jews reflected upon their release from captivity.
  1. (vs.1a) The time element is revealed -- *"when the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion."*
  2. How the Jews felt:
    - a. (vs.1b) *"We were like them that dream."*
    - b. (vs.2a) They laughed.
    - c. (vs.2b) They sang.
    - d. (vs.3b) They were glad.
  3. God was praised for what He had done.
    - a. (vs.3a) The Jews said, *"The Lord hath done great things for us."*
    - b. (vs.2c) Heathens said, *"The Lord hath done great things for them."*
  4. Years earlier,:
    - a. Solomon had made a request of God on behalf of his people when he dedicated the temple (2 Chronicles 6:24-31)
    - b. God granted Solomon's request (2 Chronicles 7:12-14).
  5. As the Jews reflected upon their release from captivity, they acknowledged God's greatness, and they experienced great joy.
- B. (vs.4-6) The Jews made an additional request of God.
  1. (vs.4a) The request: *"Turn again our captivity, O Lord."*
    - a. When the Jews returned to Jerusalem, they found devastation, the land needed to be planted, and the land needed rain.
    - b. (vs.4b) They asked God to return their captivity *"as the streams in the south."*
  2. (vs.5-6) The Jews expected to rejoice again.
    - a. They might have to sow in tears (vs.5a, 6a).
    - b. However, they were confident they would reap in joy (vs.5b, 6b).
  3. As the Jews asked God to bless their land, they were confident He would do so.