

## Psalm 137

**Read Psalm 137:1-4:** This is a psalm that was written during the Babylonian captivity of Judah. Babylon was the capital for idol worship. There were Jews who assimilated well into the Babylonian culture; and others who wanted to go back home to Jerusalem. Jerusalem and the temple are a part of their identity as Jews. Solomon's temple dedication declared it as the place where men's prayers could be heard by God. The displaced Jews who identified with their homeland and their temple felt lost. They felt disconnected from God and from each other. We might also feel like fish out of water in our post-Christian culture. We have nothing in common with pop culture or the media. That makes us sigh and can be a source of discouragement.

*If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do? (Psalm 11: 3)*

### ***Ruined for this World's Purposes***

God showed a lot of mercy to his people, while they were in captivity. They were able to carry on with normal life in this new home away from home. Even so, the Jews missed their own homeland and worship. There are no substitutions that this world has that can satisfy true believers.

Once we are saved, we are kind of *ruined for this world*. We can be effective at work and in all of our previous normal pursuits. The difference is that these things no longer define us. Some people live for the weekend. Some people work their whole life to play golf or fish. Some people live to succeed or make accomplishments. We can participate in the same old things; but they all lose some of their meaning.

The Babylonians wanted to hear some good old Jewish folk songs. It would be like asking a slave to sing a celebration song from his homeland. It would just have an empty ring. These Jews were depressed, and unable to summon the enthusiasm to do so. This is not to say that Christians should not have excellence in all that they do. It is just a reminder that these things no longer define us.

God was breaking the Jews of their idolatry. In fact, a lot of our trials have to do with reducing our reliance on other things. As it turns out, their unbridled access to idolatry was not at all what it was cracked up to be. There is nothing more sad than when a sinner has all the free access they want...and then they see that it does not fulfill them anymore. The Jews wanted idols; so God sent them to *idol-city*. It was a disappointment. The end result of chasing ungodly desire is death.

*Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. (James 1:14-15)*

The point is that the things we compromise ultimately bring depression and disconnect us from our Christian vitality. Its like fools' gold. We migrate to these empty pursuits. We may even find ways to qualify our involvement in things that God does not approve of.

Sadly, we may conclude that our good stuff will offset our bad stuff. The Jews kept the temple open right up to their captivity. They began their fall by dabbling in idolatry. Then idolatry became all that they cared about; and God was not even a consideration. You cannot mess around with any of that. It will eventually take over any remaining fellowship that you have with God.

*Be not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." (2 Corinthians 6:14-17)*

### ***What is a Synagogue?***

The Jews gathered to study the Torah (Old Testament). The *synagogue concept* required a minimum of ten men. Synagogue means *place of assembly*. The synagogue was a place to study scripture together; and it also served as a cultural center. There are some prayers that the Jews felt could only be prayed with ten or more men. Synagogues always had at least 10 men. Secondly, a synagogue should be by a river. This is recorded by *the river*. There were baptisms and ceremonial washings that required water. Stale water from a cistern or pool was considered the least clean. The cleanest water was from either large bodies of water or from running streams. God only really wanted a tabernacle; not really a temple. A tabernacle is a *portable place of worship*. It is a symbol of the human body.

*Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Then the Jews said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?” But He was speaking of the temple of His body. (John 2:19-21)*

Solomon built a permanent structure (temple) to fulfill his father’s wishes. David did not want to see God left out in a tent while he lived in a nice house.

*Now it came to pass when the king was dwelling in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies all around, that the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains.” Then Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.” But it happened that night that the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, “Go and tell My servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Would you build a house for Me to dwell in? For I have not dwelt in a house since the time that I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt, even to this day, but have moved about in a tent and in a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about with all the children of Israel, have I ever spoken a word to anyone from the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, ‘Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?’” ’ Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: “I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel. And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a great name, like the name of the great men who are on the earth. Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously, since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house. ( 2 Samuel 7:1-11)*

**Read Psalm 137:5-6:** How can these people pretend to be happy in an upside-down world? We know what it is like to live in a land where right is wrong and wrong is right. How can they pretend to be having a good time watching people follow virtual gods? Babylon is - in some ways, the opposite of Jerusalem.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in

tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (Hebrews 11:8-10)

Jerusalem is God's city; and the spiritual capital; and Babylon is the homeland of demons.

*"Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury." (Revelation 18:2-3)*

Jerusalem is translated as *foundation of peace*. Jerusalem is God's city. It is where God has chosen to receive sacrifices and provide atonement for sin. The psalmist and the Jews don't realize that the real temple is our body. God wants to live within us all. Regardless, the psalmist feels that there is no longer a place where God meets with men and forgives them. The idea of fellowshiping with the Holy Spirit where you stand is a New Testament concept.

*Where there is no vision, the people perish (Proverbs 29:18)*

*Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20-21)*

Everything that God allows is for our strengthening. Demons are trying to get us to quit and give up. The temple had become so corrupt and idol-influenced that it was worthless and toxic. This poor believer wants his temple back; but God will not share his glory with anyone. God kicked his own people out of the land to cleanse them of their idolatry.

**Read Psalm 137:7-9:** The sons of Edom are the descendants of Esau. Esau is a representative of the man who lives to satisfy his appetites; the carnal man. Jacob represents the spiritual man.

*And the LORD said to her: "Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger." So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb. And the first came out red. He was*

*like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau. Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. (Genesis 25:23-26)*

*For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. but if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. (Galatians 5:17-26)*

*"Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." (Romans 9:13)*

It is fitting to describe the fleshly opposite of the spiritual man in the same discussion of the demonic capital verses Jerusalem. The two worlds always clash.

*Can two walk together, unless they are agreed? (Amos 3: 3)*

The two world capitals cater to the two opposite types of men. Putting lustful man in a spiritual environment will make him very uncomfortable; likewise a spiritual man who is surrounded by sin.

*We are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. (2 Corinthians 2:15)*

We are people of life who thrive on what keeps men healthy and alive; but we live in a death culture.