

## THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

### **Psalms: God's Nurture Of The Inner Man In The Life Of Faith**

#### **CXXXVII: A Psalm Out Of The Refiner's Fire**

**(Psalm 137:1-9)**

#### **I. Introduction**

- A. When God sent the people of Judah into the Babylonian Captivity, He did so not only to punish His people for their sin, but to refine them, to get them to see their waywardness that they might repent, Leviticus 26:40-45.
- B. Accordingly, the Babylonian Captivity was God the Refiner's fire for the people of Judah, and Psalm 137:1-9 reveals this truth that is invaluable for God's people of any age (as follows):

#### **II. A Psalm Out Of The Refiner's Fire, Psalm 137:1-9.**

- A. The numbering system of the psalm in the Hebrew text matches that of the English Bible (Kittel, Biblia Hebraica, p. 1094), so we stay with the English Bible's numbering system for this lesson.
- B. We then translate Psalm 137:1-9 (as follows):
  1. "By the rivers (the Euphrates and its tributaries and many man-made canals; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Psa. 137:1) of Babylon, there (emphatic position) we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion," Psalm 137:1.
  2. "We hanged our harps upon the poplars (*'arabah*, H. A. W., Theol. Wrdbk. of the O. T., 1980, v. II, p. 695; B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 788) in the midst (of Babylon)," (Psalm 137:2)
  3. "for there (emphatic position) our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!'" (Psalm 137:3)
  4. "How can we sing the songs of Jahweh while in a foreign land?" (Psalm 137:4)
  5. "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget (its skill, the right hand signifying skill since most people are right-handed)," Psalm 137:5.
  6. "May my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy," Psalm 137:6.
  7. "Remember, O Jahweh, what the Edomites did on the day Jerusalem fell: 'Tear it down,' they cried, 'Tear it down to its foundations!'" (Psalm 137:7)
  8. "O daughter of Babylon (a term of personification where a prized, delicate virgin is put for the people and kingdom prized by the Babylonians), doomed to destruction! Happy is he who repays you for what you have done to us;" (Psalm 137:8)
  9. "happy is he who seizes and dashes your infants against the rocks," Psalm 137:9.
- C. We note significant observations regarding this psalm (as follows):
  1. At first glance, this psalm shows the intense suffering the Judaeans captives faced upon Jerusalem's fall and their deportation into Babylon Captivity: their grief over the Edomites' urging the Babylonians to tear their beloved capitol city of Jerusalem down to its foundation and how the Babylonians cruelly grabbed the Hebrew babies from their mothers' arms to dash their heads against the rocks to kill them left Judah's people emotionally and mentally incapable of even wanting to sing joyful songs of Zion!
  2. However, putting this psalm into its wide historical context, we see the permissive hand of God using this fiery trial to begin to turn the hearts of His people back to Himself: (a) Judah had been sent into captivity due to her long rejection of God's messengers and truth, 2 Chron. 36:15-20. (b) Only when Jeremiah's predicted time of seventy years had elapsed -- the time needed to compensate for the seventy years that Judah had failed to observe her land Sabbaths so that the Promised Land had enjoyed her Sabbath rests -- only then would the captivity be over and Judah be returned to the land, 2 Chronicles 36:21.
  3. We might ask why God would allow the Babylonian soldiers to commit the atrocity against the Hebrew babies as intimated in verse 9, but in the historical context, the people of Judah themselves had burned their own infant sons and daughters to death as they sacrificed them in the fire to pagan god Molech, one of the reasons God Himself stated in Jeremiah 32:28-30, 35 for why He was bringing the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem. Psalm 137:1-9 is thus a psalm of God's people given out of God's refining fire!

**Lesson: For her prolonged rebellion against the Lord, God punished Judah's people with the fiery trial of the Babylonian Captivity, using it to cause her to long for a return to God's blessing that she might repent of her sin.**

**Application: If we face fiery trials in God's will, may we learn the lessons He has for us, and adjust as needed.**