

The Land Blessed

Completed Study Outline – Grace Bible Chapel

Psalm 85:1-13

Sunday – July 9th, 2017

CONTEXT of Psalm 85: - Last time we looked at Psalm 84 concerning the restoration of the people of Israel. This additional Psalm of the sons of Korah (those assigned for worship music) is addressing their restoration into the “promised land” and the future of that land. The foundation for this prayer is the special covenant relationship God has with Israel, and His promises through the covenant.

Israel, as no other nation, has covenant relations with God (Deut. 28-30). God (Jehovah – the title used in this Psalm as the covenant keeping God) has both a clearly defined method He uses in dealing with Israel, and direct promises for Israel’s future. This relationship must be understood to follow the prayer of this Psalmist. In the first 3 verse the writer addresses, using the past tense, what appears in the remaining portion of the Psalm as a setting of Israel’s destruction and captivity (likely Babylon) as the basis for his prayer. The emphasis of this Psalm is on the “land” (used 3 times) along with “restore” providing the prayer for Israel’s return and blessings for them in their own land. The ultimate fulfillment of God’s promise is seen in the coming kingdom of God on the earth described in the last 4 verse (Psalm 85:10-13). In order for this kingdom to exist there must be restoration (Psalm 85:4-7), and for that restoration there must be change in the heart attitude of the people (Psalm 85:8-9). The last four verses paint a picture of Christ’s coming kingdom of which Israel will be the central location of His reign. It is thus called “Your land” (God’s land) in verse 1.

Introduction:

- I am afraid the Psalms are often thought of as flowery words that can be interpreted any way the reader wants – why? - because the words are so poetic they can accomplish spiritual good even apart from the intended meaning.
- But, studying the Psalms is not just a matter of poetic words to feel good, or flowery speech to be interpreted individually for personal effect. Each Psalm has a basis for writing from a real event, and is loaded within God’s truth for the understanding of what God is doing in history, and will do in history to bring salvation & blessing.
- This is particularly true when studying in relation to Israel’s history. Israel is God’s time piece (Dan. 9:24-27) – They have the covenant, the promises, and the future. To observe where Israel is in their literal physical and spiritual condition is to track the pre-written history given by God. We have a reminder of that in today’s study.
- Our context is obviously the remnant returning from Babylonian captivity to a land that has been destroyed (Vs. 1). The Psalmist is praying for a new beginning.

I. Claiming God’s promise (85:1-3)

- **Vs. 1** – O Lord – this is Jehovah – significantly the Hebrew title used as God the covenant keeping God.
 - “restored the captivity of Jacob” – referring to the remnant returning from Babylonian captivity. That “glory may dwell in our land” (Vs. 9) would indicate their disappointment of the sad reality of their desolated home place upon their return (Neh. 2:17; Haggai: 2:3, 9; Zech. 1:16-17).
 - Interesting that it is called “Your land” – in reality this can only because of the relationship God has toward this land, and the coming kingdom of Jesus Christ that will rule from this land (Isaiah 2; 60-63).
 - It is called to this day “the Holy Land.”
- Where did this begin? Gen. 12:1 (make great nation); 15:18-21(specific land definition).

Point: The emphasis of this Psalm is on restoration in the land given Israel by God, and other prophesy would tell us the land where the Messiah will rule the earth.

Point: Certainly in addition to this fact of the Psalm are other principles & encouragements regarding God’s care of His people & fulfillment of promises – temporary blessings of God carry the same directions as those given here for Israel.

- **Vs. 2** – “forgave” is a direct reference to the fact of their return into the land, but obviously also has a reference to the character of God as a forgiving God ultimately through the sin bearer – the Lord Jesus.
 - God is shown in Scripture as willing to forgive – He is gracious.
 - The language here is obvious “covered all their sin” as a reference to the work of the coming Messiah.
- **Vs. 3** – “withdrew all your fury...turned away from burning anger” – almost the exact wording of the Mosaic covenant (Deut. 29:26-28) – when Israel would return to the Lord and honestly seek Him.

Point: We have in the covenant wording the return to the land, but what then follows is the need for God to work in the hearts of these (Deut. 30:1-6) who will dwell in the land. We will learn later (Ezk. 36:26) the work on the inside is the new covenant – the same spoken of by our Lord.

Point: With this understanding in mind we have then the prayer for restoration found in verses 4-7 which is a plea for God’s true restoration of His people.

II. Cry for restoration (85:4-7)

- **Vs. 4-5** – is a cry for God to go further in His relation to the people than the bringing of them back into the land. The Psalmist wants the relationship fully restored. This would be consistent with salvation – think of Rom. 5:1 “peace with God” following the explanation of God’s salvation.
 - “Will You prolong...generations?” – equivalent to – will you still go on holding us accountable & punishing us for our past sins? He is praying for God’s mercy to abound.
- **Vs. 6** – this is further clarified in the language used: “revive us” but even more “that your people may rejoice in You” – that is an attitude of a person changed from within.
- **Vs. 7** – “lovingkindness” is a word meaning “covenant faithfulness” or promise – the promise of a circumcised heart or a new heart.
 - Then it is stated in the clearest possible terms “grant us your salvation.” There it is – that is the work of God in salvation that issues forth in true conversion seen in a people who then live by faith.
 - This is of course the great need – we may need physical things, many need to be healed from disease, or need financial help, or are going through a rough relationship, etc.. – but beyond all these matters is the need to have a true relationship with Christ.

Point: These had moved from captivity to be brought back into the land. That is a blessing, but the Psalmist rightly knew more was ultimately needed. The real need is salvation & so it is today.

Point: We can pray about all our troubles – which by the way are endless, but the need far above all others is spiritual – we need peace with God!

III. Change required (85:8-9)

- **Vs. 8** – “I will hear” – here is a person waiting on the Lord, listening to the Lord – how do we do that today? Through His Word.
 - Note the attention of this person is on God, not on themselves – that alone shows that a work of God on the person is taking place.
 - What will God speak? “peace to His people” – does this not remind us again of Rom. 5:1 “peace with God” – peace comes with salvation = to blessedness.
 - Here he calls them “His godly ones” – these are those whom God has granted life by His grace in every age.
 - These are those also “not turn back to folly” – showing their conversion is real, they will not turn back to the old ways.

Point: This is showing us the need or requirement of the work of God in the heart – the same that is true today. God must change us from within. These returning to Israel from Babylonian

captivity are mostly the offspring of those in rebellion of God & that is why they were in such massive trouble.

- **Vs. 9** – “surely” – carries the idea of the truthfulness of what he will state.
 - “His salvation....to those who fear Him” – this is likely referring to deliverance beginning with appropriate fear of God. As fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom so it is the starting point of a right relationship to God.
 - Notice where the blessing is seen – “in our land.”
 - The reference to “glory” is the idea of blessedness – if God is dwelling in the land, than blessedness will envelope the land.

Point: All of this is pointing to the need for faith among the people, the need for God to work in hearts, and the recognition that when people serve and honor the Lord He is with them to bring peace, blessedness, and peace to the land.

IV. **Confident future** (85:10-13) – this last portion is poetry likened to a great painting one would stand with mouth open & admire – yet this one is a living painting.

- Now we know that what is described here as a hope of the psalmist did not come true. That is Israel would continue in many troubles and eventually (70 AD) be dispersed into the whole world.
 - So what is it referring? We could call it the dream of the psalmist contingent on Israel obeying God under the covenant. To be likened to that is would be to be dominated by truly changed people who would serve God. Although God always had a remnant – that was not the general way of Israel.
 - But, most directly this is what it must refer (Is. 11:6-10; 44:1-5; 62:1-4). These picture promises are all over the OT – they are attached to a coming kingdom.
 - The wording of these many pictures is not unlike what we read in these closing verses – this is the promise of God’s blessing that will be fulfilled at the return of Jesus when His kingdom is established.
- **Vs. 10** – All the characteristics of God have come together in one place of blessing (lovingkindness, truth, righteousness, & peace). IE: there are not just little glimpses here & there of blessings – but this is a time when all will be right.
 - Every significant aspect will be in complete balance - at time of great joy!
 - **Vs. 11** – “Truth springs from the earth” – that of course is just the opposite of what is going on now - implied is the end of the curse.
 - Today the world is not noted for truth, but for lies and confusion – can you imagine how glorious it will be when truth is not only the norm, but is the complete reality.
 - Here we have both directions covered - “righteousness looks down” – the putrid sinfulness of man will no longer pollute the earth such that God can look with favor – His face to shine upon the earth.
 - **Vs. 12** – As the Lord will no longer judge the earth, the produce of the field will be incredible – like the garden of Eden.
 - “Give what is good” – that is good will be at every turn – God will bless constantly & consistently. Can you imagine how wonderful to get up every day & only face that which is good.
 - **Vs. 13** – If there was yet any doubt this passage is Messianic – this final verse puts us over.
 - Without question this verse is speaking of Christ - “Him” is rightly capitalized by the translators. “His footsteps into a way” – He is the way, and He will be the only way on the earth when this promised kingdom is a reality.

Point: We are 2600 years past the writing describing this event. Israel has been troubled & dispersed into the nations of the world, and then re-gathered into the land in our day – amazing to consider. We are obviously very near the time of the promised fulfillment of that described here by the Psalmist.

Closing:

- How does this apply to us today?
- What do we learn of God here?
- What do we learn of man here?
- Based on these passages, what should you & I do?