

October 1

Psalm 126, 128, 129, 132, 147, 149

We read numerous Psalms today and will touch on a couple briefly.

Psalm 128 contains these words. "Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in His ways. You will eat the fruit of your labor. Blessing and prosperity will be yours." That was Hezekiah's experience. He would have had no difficulty writing or singing that one! Let it be a principle among us that God honors those who obey and honor him! It is true that the devil challenges those same people just like Hezekiah was challenged, but the Lord honors them nonetheless.

The 129th Psalm could easily have come from Hezekiah's heart. "They have greatly oppressed me from my youth. Let Israel say 'they have greatly oppressed me from my youth'. But they have not gained the victory over me. But the Lord is righteous and he has cut me free from the cords of the wicked." I guess that would be just about how Hezekiah would have felt the day after Sennacherib packed up and went back to Nineveh.

Psalm 132 recalls the fervor of David to build a temple for the Lord and the excitement that surrounded the execution of that dream under Solomon, his son. It highlights the promise of God to David that one of his descendants would sit upon the throne. A king in David's line might well have written that line and spent a lot of time reflecting on that promise.

Both of the Psalms that we read today make it very clear that even before David brought the Ark up to Jerusalem, his new capital, there was a second part to his plan. He also wanted to build a temple -- a house for God's honor -- where the Ark could reside and where people from all nations could come and get a sense of the glory and wonder of God.

Psalm 147 also "fits" a post-exilic setting and could easily have been written or sung by the returnees who gathered around Zerubbabel. "Praise the Lord" it begins, "How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise Him. The Lord builds up Jerusalem. He gathers the exiles of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." Clearly this Psalm also "fits" the time of Zerubbabel.

Psalm 149, the last of those that are associated with Zerubbabel, also contains a passage that "fits" the time period, though less obviously than the two passages we have seen in 147. "May the praise of God" it says, "be in their mouths" (that is the mouths of the saints) "and a double edged sword in their hands, to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples to bind their kings with fetters, their nobles with shackles of iron" (perhaps reflecting back on what Nebuchadnezzar had done to the kings and nobles of Judah?), "to carry out the sentence written against them. This is the glory of all his saints. Amen. Praise the Lord!" Ezekiel had promised and so had Isaiah and more recently Zechariah that when God had finished using the nations around Israel as His instruments of judgment that He would turn and punish

them as well for the evil they had done. Psalm 149 reflects the expectation of the people of Israel that now their time of chastening had ended and the favor of the Almighty had been restored to the people of Jerusalem, that now God's attention would be turned to the nations He had allowed to oppress the Israelites.

The single command that is repeated over and over again in Psalms 147 and 149 is to "Praise the Lord." Both these songs begin and end with the command, "Praise the Lord." In between these framing commands these two Psalms are entirely devoted to telling us why we should praise the Lord -- that is the main thrust of 147 and 149.

I can think of nothing better to focus on today! Praise the Lord!