Part 2 – A Time to Sing, and a Time to 'Hang it Up'

In chapter 137, part 1, we learned the subject/title of this Psalm is "***Israel, Deliverance from Babylon***" because (not surprisingly) it's a prayer of deliverance from captivity to Babylon. However, this Psalm is anonymous, so we are not told *who* wrote it nor *when* it was written. And, while many scholars think it was written by someone who was taken captive, to Babylon, when the southern kingdom of Judah was conquered by the Babylonians (as 2 Chron 36 records), it's possible it was written by king Manasseh, who was a *very* wicked king of the southern kingdom of Judah. And, because of that, the Lord (YHVH) caused him to be taken captive (*literally* in chains), *by the Assryians*… yet they took him *to Babylon*, which was under their control at that time. Yet, because he *actually* besought the Lord (YHVH), humbled himself, repented, and prayed to the Lord (YHVH) for help, the Lord (YHVH) caused the heathen to *free* Manasseh, and allowed him *to go back to* Jerusalem, where he was allowed to rule again (2 Chron 33:10-13). But, regardless of who actually wrote it, we know that ***all*** *scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is* ***profitable*** *for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for* ***instruction in righteousness****: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works* (2 Tim 3:16-4:1).

So, we know the Lord (YHVH) has a purpose for this Psalm being in His Word. And we began to see that purpose when we studied the first verse in the Psalm, where the Psalmist began to tell us about his experience in Babylon. So, while the Psalmist was stuck sitting (or dwelling) by the 'rivers of Babylon' (possibly the River Euphrates, or even its extensive river, canal, and irrigation network), he 'wept' (even bemoaned about) when remembering (and/or speaking of) 'Zion' (i.e. Jerusalem). And from this one verse alone we learned many things. First off, 'Babylon' means *confusion* and comes from prim word that means *to mix*… which is *exactly* what Satan's doctrine is all about, and *why* he's called the "tree of knowledge of good and evil' in Genesis 2:9. For Satan mixes 'good' (God's Word) with 'evil' (his words, which are lies) to *deceive people* into disobeying God. After all, when you mix evil with good, any 'good' that was there *becomes* evil! And that's why Satan's lies are *so* deceptive; because they are mixed with *just enough* truth to make them *sound* good. The way he deceived Eve, and the way he tempted Jesus (unsuccessfully) are both good examples of that (Gen 3, Mth 4, Lk 4). And sadly, that form of deception has worked *well* ever since Adam and Eve fell for Satan's lies in the Garden of Eden. Thus, we learned that 'Babylon' was *not just* a city, and not just an empire; it's Satan's *wicked system* that *continues to exist* yet today. And thus, this 'Babylonian system' continues to deceive many of God's children (even Christians) into thinking they are doing good, when they are really doing evil – thanks mostly to the 'traditions of man' which pervert God's Word! And then, we also learned that the 'king' of this wicked 'Babylonian system' is none other than *Satan himself*. So, when we read Scriptures about the 'king of Babylon', many times they are *prophetical* 'types' of Satan himself (ex: Isa 14).

And then we learned that the Psalmist 'wept' (even bemoaned about) when remembering (and/or speaking of) 'Zion' (i.e. Jerusalem) *because* that city was very dear to the hearts of Israelites (and gentiles alike) wh*o loved the Lord* (YHVH) – because that's where they were *supposed* to worship *back then*. However, we also learned that the Jerusalem of today is **not** something we should hold dear to our heart because the city is *terribly* corrupt. Further, the Jerusalem that exists today is where the *false* Christ (who is Satan himself) will appear, claiming to be 'God' our 'Savior' (Rev 12, 2 Thess 2), which **is** the 'abomination of desolation' Jesus warned us about (Mth 21, Mk 13, Lk 21, Dan 9, 11, etc.). So, if our 'heart' is longing for Jerusalem today, we need to remind ourselves *what type of city* Jerusalem is *today*. And if you need a reminder, Ezek 16 gives a *vivid* description of it. For it's *not* inhabited with those who love Jesus Christ but, (for the most part) those who *hate* Him. And thus, *our enemies are now dwelling there*, which is *why* the city will be cleansed *before* Jesus Christ returns to dwell there (Zech 14; rev 11:13, 15:18-20, 16:17-21, etc.). Further, Christians have something *much better* to look forward to, i.e. New Jerusalem! And that will only come *after* the false Christ (Satan) comes to the earth, which will be *before* the return of the *true* Christ, i.e. Jesus.

So, while we learned that the Psalmist was stuck sitting (or dwelling) by the 'rivers of Babylon' (possibly the River Euphrates, or even its extensive river, canal, and irrigation network) where he 'wept' (even bemoaned about) when remembering (and/or speaking of) 'Zion' (i.e. Jerusalem), this is *symbolic* of the *faithful* **Christians living today** under the 'Babylonian system' that *runs* our current world. And we, like the Psalmist, truly do weep (spiritually speaking) for it. Not only because of all the abominations going on there now but, also when we think of what *New* Jerusalem will be like. And further, in the *prophetical* sense, those who love 'Jerusalem' (i.e. are looking forward to NEW Jerusalem) will indeed be morning when they see Satan's Babylonian system get *full* control over all the world – i.e. when Satan is kicked out of heaven, to earth, with his fallen angels (as Rev 12 and 2 Thess so clearly warns us - but that will only be *until* Jesus Christ returns to clean it. So, this first verse is truly quite *prophetical* of how those who are *currently* living under the wicked 'Babylonian system' *spiritually* 'weep' for <u>New</u> Jerusalem *yet to come* <u>and</u> for the current wicked (Babylonian) system that controls our 'modern' world. And that truly does 'vex' our hearts *just as much* as it did Lot when he lived in Sodom (2 Peter 2:7). However, the Psalmist is *not yet* done explaining his experience in Babylon…

Psalm 137
2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.
3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

So, while the Psalmist was by the rivers of Babylon (possibly the Euphrates, or even its extensive river, canal, and irrigation network), weeping (even bemoaning about) when remembering (and/or speaking of) 'Zion' (i.e. Jerusalem), he '**hanged**' (***suspended***, #8518) his '**harp**' (which

does mean ***a harp***, #3658) in the 'midst' (***center***, #8432) of the '**willows**' (which does mean ***a willow*** #6155). This likely is referring to a type of tree which preferred watery areas and had very dark wood. Some think this was the plant now called the Euphrates Poplar, which is a kind of willow tree (Isaiah 44:4; Leviticus 23:40). So then, the Psalmist (and possibly others with him; although the Hebrew truly does *not* indicate others were with him, as the pronouns [such as 'we' and 'they'] are *not* in the original language) was sitting under the willow trees growing near the rivers (or even the extensive canal systems) in Babylon. And, though he had his harp with him, he 'hung it up'. And, interestingly, to 'hang up' something is still a common (English) expression of *ending some effort or practice*. For example, an athlete who retires is said to 'hang up' their cleats. And politicians defeated in an election may decide to 'hang it up' and concede. Or even when someone retires from a job, they'll say they decided to 'hang up' their 'hat'. So, the Psalmist 'hanging up' his harp shows *how* defeated he felt and thus, no longer had *any reason* to play his harp. And, for a deeper look into the *symbolism* of the Psalmist 'hanging up' his harp on the willow, consider how the word '**willow**' *comes from* a prim root that means ***to braid***, i.e. ***intermix***. And it can also mean ***to traffic*** (as if by barter); or even ***to give to be security*** (as a kind of exchange, #6148). Thus, on a *spiritual* level, this *symbolizes* how we are to 'hang up' (put away from us) Satan's wicked Babylonian system (which is described, in detail, in Ezek 28 and Rev 18) because it 'intermixes' 'good with evil' [https://t.me/BibleStudyDownload/579], and thus *corrupts all things* it comes into contact with. Therefore, one has to 'traffic' (i.e. sell) their own 'soul' (Christian morals) in order to be a part of it. And that truly is what *we* are to 'hang up' in a *spiritual* sense, as the study **Builders of Cities and a Good Repentance** explains so very well [https://t.me/BibleStudyDownload/304].

But, the Psalmist's grief was made *even worse* by those who 'carried him away' (transported into captivity, #7617). For they 'required' a song of him. The word '**required**' here does mean ***to inquire***, or even ***to request***. However, by extension, it can also mean ***to demand*** (#7592). And the word '**song**' here is actually two Hebrew words. The first means ***a word, matter, thing*** or ***cause*** (#1697) and the second does mean ***a song***, or ***singing*** (#7892). So really, the Psalmist's captors were *mockingly demanding* him to sing about Zion (Jerusalem). This would have been similar to (but clearly not nearly as bad) how the chief priests, scribes and elders mockingly called Jesus to 'come down from the cross' when He was (at that very moment) paying for the sins of the world (whomsoever would believe upon Him, Matt 27:41-43). So, the Psalmist's anguish was made *much worse* by his oppressors, who *mockingly* demanded him to sing a *joyful* song about his beloved 'Zion'.

And truly, this is how many people have come to feel today, *even* Christians! For, even though many *don't* realize that there is a *terribly* wicked 'Babylonian system' that controls the world today, they *do* realize that the 'system' IS 'rigged' *against* them! And that's why many don't know what to do about it. And sadly, instead of turning to God's ways (His Word and righteous Laws - https://t.me/BestStudyBible/155) many (even Christians) are *seduced* (spiritually) by

ideas of socialism or communism (etc.) being 'the way' they can make things better. But those too (like the Babylonian system) are *also* Satanic; and thus, they will *only make things worse* for everyone… as history has *already* proved! And this is why God's Word tells us, "*Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity*" for "*For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb*" (Ps 37:1-2). Instead, we are supposed to "*trust in the Lord*" (YHVH)" and "*do good*", which means to *stick to* obeying God's Word *despite* how wicked (and crooked) the world system is. And, if we do so, we are promised that we'll get to "dwell in the land" and "be fed" (Ps 37:3). And Psalms 37 also gives us *many other* promises for sticking with obeying God's Word [https://t.me/BibleStudyDownload/297], even though we do live in the wicked 'Babylonian system' *right now*.

As Jesus promised us, IF we seek the "kingdom of God' (and His righteousness) then all the things we need (not lust for) will be "added" to us (Matt 6:34). In other words, IF we earnestly strive to obey God's Word – even though we live in a crooked (Babylonian) system - the Lord (YHVH) *will make sure* we have *all* we *need*. But, as Peter reminds us (in 1 Peter 4:1-2), we must live our life for *God's* will and *not* the 'lusts of the flesh'. So, while the Lord (YHVH) does ***not*** promise us a 'bed of roses', *nor* that we'll be filthy rich, He *does* ***promise*** to take care of all that we need (physically and spiritually) IF we simply study His Word, and try hard to obey Him, *earnestly*. And this is where most people go wrong! For many *don't want* to put off their lusts; and that's *why* they keep seeking for a 'system' that will benefit them *personally*, even if it does go against God's righteous Laws, and even if others get 'shafted'. And sadly, this is even how many Christians feel today too. They can't keep their *spiritual* 'eyes' on the *promises* of God. And, to reiterate, God does *not* promise us a 'bed of roses' in this life. Nor does He promise to make us millionaires if we serve Him. Rather, Jesus warned us there would be suffering, and persecutions, for following him (John 15:20; 2 Tim 3:12).

However, He *also* promised us that we *will* be well rewarded for serving Him (Mth 5:10-12) IF we don't 'deny Him' in our heart, mind, word or actions (Mth 10:32-33; Mk 8:34-38). And that means we *cannot* embrace the Satanic 'Babylonian system' that governs the world today. That's called 'selling out' our Christian morals and there will be *no* rewards (when Jesus Christ returns, or when you die) for doing that (as Jesus warned in Mth 7:21-23). And, while *most* of the rewards will come at the *end* of our flesh life (either when we die, or when Jesus Christ returns; whichever comes first), we will *still* be blessed (physically *and* spiritually) by the Lord (YHVH) for serving Him, and *not* embracing Satan's wicked 'Babylonian system'. Again, that doesn't mean we'll be a millionaire nor that we won't have problems. It means that IF we trust in Him, the Lord (YHVH) will *always* make sure we have what we need (not lust for). And many times, we'll have *much more* than that. And truly, we should be happy with that. As Paul so well wrote, "*godliness with contentment is great gain*" (1 Tim 6:6)!

Further, just as the Psalmist was cruelly mocked by his oppressors (when they demanded they sing a song about Zion), so too are those who serve Jesus Christ mocked today. And this should not surprise us, for they mocked Jesus Christ too; even when He was on the cross dying for our sins! But, if we *really* do love the Lord (YHVH, Jesus Christ) then *that won't bother us*. For we know the 'timeless truth' that, *no matter how* we are treated on earth, *only* those who *earnestly* love, fear, *and obey* the Lord (YHVH, Jesus Christ) will inherit the earth *and* receive eternal life (Ps 37:9, 11, 37:22, 29, 34; Matt 5:5, 5:10, 19:29, 25:34, etc.)! But those who embrace Satan's wicked 'Babylonian system' will be punished for their sins, *exactly* according to the wickedness they have done (Mth 7:21-23, Ps 5:10, Ps 7:14-17, Ps 9:15, Ps 10:2, 18:25-26, Ps 34:21, Ps 35:4-8, Ps 37:14-15, Ps 57:6, Psalm 64:1-10, Ps 69:22, Ps 140:4-5, Prov 1:29-31, 11:5-6, Jer 23:11-12, Mth 21:28-44)! So, we too should 'hang up' our 'lust of the flesh' because the things of this life are only *temporary*; and only those who DO the will of God will abide forever (1 John 2:15-17). And while this certainly does *not* mean it's bad (or sinful) to have material things (**if** they are blessings from God, not from ill-gotten gain), it does mean we should not *lust for* things of the world. As Paul so well wrote, "*the **love of** money is the **root of all evil**: which while some **coveted after**, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows*" (1 Tim 6:10). So, we *should* 'flee' these things and "*follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness*" while we "*Fight the good fight of faith*" to "*lay hold on eternal life*" (1 Tim 6:10-12).

Psalm 137
4 How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land?

So, after the Psalmist 'hung up' his harp and heard his cruel oppressors *mockingly* calling him to sing a song of 'Zion', he now asks a *rhetorical* question: how could he possibly sing the "Lord's song" in a 'strange' land? Now, the word '**Lord**' here is God's sacred (and covenantal) name ***Yehovah*** (i.e. YHVH) which means (the) ***self-Existent*** or ***Eternal*** (#3068). So, His name *reveals* that our Heavenly Father (Yehovah) is the *only* one who has *always* existed and *always* will, which is why He is *eternal* (Rev 1:8, 4:9, 11:17, 16:5, 22:13). But, don't overlook this is also God's *covenantal* name, i.e. the name He uses with those who He is *in a conventional relationship* with, i.e. Israel *and* any heathen who wants to worship Him. That's why, His Sacred name was not made known *until* He sent Moses to free Israel from Egyptian bondage (Ex 3:14, https://t.me/BibleStudyTruth/946). For the purpose was to make a national *covenant* with them (Ex 19-20). So then, the word '**strange**' here means ***foreign***, ***a foreigner***, or ***heathendom*** (#5236). Therefore, this question is rhetorical *because* truly, it wasn't mean to get an answer or information; it was written (said) *to make a point*. And the point clearly is that, there's no way singing praise to the Lord (YHVH) was appropriate when the Psalmist was held captive in a foreign land.

And that's because many of "the Lord's songs" *celebrated* God's delivering, and protecting Israel, from their enemies (ex: Psalm 9:3-6, 28:7-8, 44:7-8, 76:1-3, etc.). Further, the request to sing was *not* sincere, i.e. he was being *ridiculed*. So, performing songs about the glory of God *so that others can mock them* (even mock the Lord, YHVH) is *not* honoring to the Lord (YHVH). So clearly, singing godly songs to heathen captors would, not only be a waste of time (Matt 7:6), but would also *not* be honoring the Lord (YHVH). And further still, being asked to sing songs about Zion was a *painful* reminder of *why* the Psalmist was in captivity in the first place! For, the Lord (YHVH) warned Israel that, **if** they rejected (continued to disobey) Him, they **would** be taken into captivity (Deut 28:1, 64; Jer 29:10-14, etc.). So, it would have also been difficult to sing songs of praise to the Lord (YHVH) when the Psalmist was *being punished* for his sins against the Lord (YHVH).

As Solomon so wisely wrote, "*To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven*" (Eccl 3:1). So, just as there is a "*A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance*" (etc., Eccl 3:4), so likewise there is also a time to sing and a time not to! So, while a song praying for deliverance (or even a lamentation) would have been appropriate for the Psalmist to sing, one of the song about 'Zion' *wouldn't* have been, at that time in his life. And while Christians *are* supposed to be "*singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Eph 5:19-20), there will be a time when we will be mourning too. And that time will come when the 'king of Babylon' (Satan himself) is kicked out of heaven (with his fallen angels) to this earth (Rev 12, 2 Thess 2, etc.)! So, while it's *always* good to praise (and thank) the Lord (YHVH), we know that the time to sing "the Lord's song" is *not* while we're in the midst of the 'great tribulation' (Mth 24:21). For, even though we know we (through Jesus Christ) will have the victory (when Jesus Christ returns to free us from this wicked Babylonian system), it's only after He actually does so that we'll be singing "the Lord's song", i.e. "*the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb*" (Rev 15:3). In other words, 'victory songs' won't be sung until the victory (via Jesus Christ) actually comes (Isa 42:10-12, 52:8-9, 54:1; Jer 20:14, 31:6-14; Zeph 3:14-17; Rev 14:1-5)! And that was a similar position the Psalmist found himself in, when he was in a foreign land, being mocked by his oppressors. But, lets never forget that, while the time to 'mourn' is soon coming [https://t.me/BibleStudyDownload/440], the time to 'sing' *victory* songs is *not far* behind that…

1 In that day ***shall this song be sung*** *in the land of Judah; We have a* ***strong*** *city;* ***salvation*** *will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.*
2 Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation ***which keepeth the truth*** *may enter in.*
3 ***Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.***
4 ***Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength****:*

5 For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he layeth it low; he layeth it low, even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust.
6 The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy.
7 The way of the just is uprightness: thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just.
8 Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; ***the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.***
9 With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: ***for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness****.*
Isa 26:1-9

We'll pick this up in part 3…

AMEN.