

Psalms of National Lament

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Psalms is the longest book in the Bible and may be divided up for study and meditation in two ways: *Five Books* (Book 1, 1-41; Book 2, 42-72; Book 3, 73-89; Book 4, 90-106; and Book 5, 107-150) and *Types of Psalms* (Thanksgiving and Adoration, Individual Praise, Individual Lament, National Lament, Royal, Enthronement, Songs of Zion, Penitential, Imprecatory, Messianic, and Wisdom). The chapters or individual Psalms that fall under each category are as follows: Thanksgiving and Adoration, 8, 19, 29, 33, 65, 67, 68, 81, 91, 95, 96, 98, 100, 103, 104, 105, 107, 111, 113, 114, 115, 117, 123, 124, 131, 133, 134, 135, 136, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150; Individual Praise, 11, 18, 23, 30, 32, 34, 40, 41, 46, 48, 66, 75, 84, 85, 92, 106, 108, 116, 118, 138, 139; Individual Lament, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 35, 39, 42, 43, 51, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 69, 70, 71, 76, 77, 86, 88, 102, 109, 120, 130, 140, 141, 142, 143; National Lament, 44, 74, 79, 80, 83, 90; Royal, 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, 144; Enthronement, 47, 93, 96, 97, 98, 99; Songs of Zion, 42, 43, 87, 121, 122, 125, 126, 129; Penitential, 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143; Imprecatory, 35, 58, 69, 83, 109, 137; Messianic, 2, 16, 22, 24, 45, 72, 110, 118; and Wisdom, 1, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 19, 36, 37, 49, 50, 52, 53, 73, 78, 82, 94, 112, 119, 127, 128. (Some come under more than one category, specifically 22, 42, 43, 96, 98, 110, 118, and 143). Most of the Psalms are authored by David and an unknown writer. Other writers include Asaph, Solomon, the Sons of Korah, Heman, Ethan, and Moses.

There are six Psalms of National Lament (44, 74, 79, 80, 83, 90). The Sons of Korah authored Psalm 44; Asaph authored Psalms 47, 79, 80, and 83; and Moses authored Psalm 90. The nation that is lamenting its position before God is the nation of Israel. A study of these six Psalms will point out what a nation that is wanting the favor of God should be thinking about on a national level. Take, for example, Psalm 90.

Psalm 90

- 1 LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.
- 2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.
- 3 Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.
- 4 For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.
- 5 Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up.
- 6 In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.
- 7 For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled.
- 8 Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.
- 9 For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.

10 The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

11 Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.

12 So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

13 Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants.

14 O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

15 Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.

16 Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.

17 And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

In this Psalm a long-standing relationship of dependence upon God is acknowledged (v. 1). A knowledge and belief in the eternal nature of God is present with them (v. 2). Knowledge of God's desire for sinful man to repent is stated (v. 3). The omniscience of the eternal God is given as the background for why men should want to be penitent (v. 4). The frailty and mortality of human beings who have made God angry because of their sins is acknowledged (vv. 5-7). They have become aware that God does not ignore or excuse their sins, even "secret sins" are brought under the light of God's examination (v. 8). There is a continual displeasure of God toward the nation for their sins (v. 9). The usual lifespan (70 years) of humans relative to eternity is short; the soul leaves the body and regardless of what has been accomplished over that lifetime the person must leave it behind and go to be with God (v. 10). No one knows how angry God can be with the wicked (v. 11). Wisdom demands an awareness of the brevity of life here and a concentration on pleasing God (v. 12). A plea for the favor of God that He might spare sinful men reaches a critical point (v. 13). A heartfelt desire to receive the saving mercy of God will be accompanied with joy and rejoicing forever more (v. 14). As problems have been endured because of their sins, even so a plea for gladness through submissive obedience has become the focus of their attention (v. 15). Their desire for the elevation of God and His divine will among them and the promulgation of it to their children has developed into a commitment (v. 16). Finally, all they may accomplish will be for the glory of God (v. 17).

We ourselves make and hear others commenting about America turning back to God. Perhaps specific guidance from the Bible as shown from the Psalms of National Lament will show us the only way by which that may be accomplished.