

Psalm 129

This psalm sees the history of the nation of Israel reflected in David's life, and behind that the future experiences of the Messiah.

Psalm 129:1-2 - "Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say: Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me."

Israel's experiences are often pictured in terms of an individual's life.

"from my youth" - *nâ'uw*r - youth, early life, childhood - Anywhere from early childhood to a young man of 20.

It can also mean adolescence: To "rejoice with the wife of thy youth" (**Proverbs 5:18**) means in adolescence, after puberty.

So, when the Lord tells Noah "for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth (*na`uwr*)" it probably means from puberty.

David as a youth saved Israel from the affliction of Goliath and the Philistines.

- **1 Samuel 17:33** - "And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth (*na`ar*), and he a man of war from his youth (*na`uwr*)."

The bondage in Egypt and the Exodus into the wilderness is called the time of Israel's youth

- **Jeremiah 2:2** - "Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown."

- **Hosea 2:15** - "...as in the days of her youth, and as in the days when she came up out of the land of Egypt"

In **Hebrews 11** we see a list of afflictions of the patriarchs, of Israel and the prophets. Similar troubles awaited the early church saints.

Christ was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief from his birth - hunted by Herod in his infancy, **Matthew 2:13** and carried into Egypt for safety.

Isaiah 53:3-4 - "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."

"yet they have not prevailed against me." - God's plan for David, for Israel and for the Messiah could not be stopped. The enemies of God are finally destroyed

- **Matthew 16:18** - "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

- **Revelation 12:7-8** - "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven."

Plowers Plowed...

Psalm 129:3 - "The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows."

Targum: "upon my body"

It was predicted that Zion should be ploughed as a field in **Micah 3:12**.

Literally fulfilled for Israel when a plough was symbolically driven over the site of the Temple by the Roman general Terentius Rufus after the capture of Jerusalem by Titus.

Prophesied of Messiah in Isaiah 60:6 - "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

- **Matthew 27:26** - "And when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified" and by His stripes we are healed.

The metaphor is perhaps taken from the cruel treatment of captives in those days, who, in certain cases, were "put under saws and harrows of iron" (**2 Samuel 12:31**), or, as it is elsewhere expressed, "threshed with threshing instruments of iron" (Amos 1:3).

Psalm 129:4 - "The LORD is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked."

Targum: "the chains of the wicked"

The cord binding the slave is cut to free him. Or the plower's harness is broken so that they can no longer continue their work.

From Looking Back, to Anticipation

This psalm isn't talking about the reasons for God's chastisement, or the spiritual benefits of suffering, etc. It looks at the retribution on the wicked for being the instruments for the affliction, and God's final triumph over them.

Psalm 129:5 - "Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion."

i.e. Forced to retreat with shame and disappointment.

A picture of this is Sanballat and Tobiah, who tried to prevent the restoration of Jerusalem and “were grieved exceedingly” when Nehemiah came “to seek the welfare of the children of Israel” (**Nehemiah 2:10**).

Psalm 129:6-7 - "Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, which withereth afore it groweth up: Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand; nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom."

The tops of the houses in Judea were flat, and so grass grew on them, but the scorching heat would quickly cause it to turn brown and die.

Isaiah uses the same analogy when he prophesies the fall of Sennacherib:

- **Isaiah 37:27** - "Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up." (repeated in 2 Kings 19:26)

This represents the insignificance and worthlessness of wicked men; who, when the harvest comes at the end of the world, will not be gathered in by the reapers, the angels, into Christ's garner into heaven as the wheat, the righteous will; but like the tares and chaff will be cast into unquenchable fire, **Matthew 3:12**. - *Gill's Exposition*

Psalm 129:8 - "Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the LORD be upon you: we bless you in the name of the LORD."

Traditionally, passersby would bless the reapers and binders at harvest time.

- **Ruth 2:4** - "And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee."

Instead, the wicked were like the cursed earth, that is covered with briars and thorns; which is nigh unto cursing, and its end is to be burned.