

The Imprecatory Psalms

Psalm 137

Terminology

Samples: *Pss. 35, 55, 59, 69, 79, 83, 109, 137, 139

*Psalm 137

*Lament

- 1 By the waters of Babylon,
there we sat down and wept,
when we remembered Zion.
- 2 On the willows there
we hung up our lyres.
- 3 For there our captors
required of us songs,
and our tormentors, mirth, saying,
“Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”
- 4 How shall we sing the LORD’s song
in a foreign land?

Petition

- 5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand forget its skill!
- 6 Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth,
if I do not remember you,
if I do not set Jerusalem
above my highest joy!
- 7 Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites
the day of Jerusalem,
how they said, “Lay it bare, lay it bare,
down to its foundations!”
- 8 O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed,
blessed shall he be who repays you
with what you have done to us!
- 9 Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones
and dashes them against the rock!

The “Problem” of Imprecatory Psalms

Towards a Christian Understanding

Are these just prophecies?

Old Testament Context

- The Violence of Enemies & Warfare
- The Psalmists’ Innocence
- The King’s Enemies
- Evangelistic Connotations
- Imprecations as Prayers of Faith
- Exceptions Allowed
- Church & State Considerations

Conclusions: Can we pray these psalms?