

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BABIES

PSALM 137

Introduction:

Have you noticed how our songs reflect our times? The music of my youth brings back good, warm feelings, but it does not seem to match the turbulent times in which we now live. In the days of my youth we sang in Tennessee about a Tennessee Waltz, and even a Baptist kid who would never dance enjoyed the quiet rhythm of the song. The lifestyle reflected in that simple song died in the turbulent sixties, and was replaced by the violent sounding music of the rock world.

The psalmist had gone through a similar experience with the songs of his faith. He has recently returned from the devastating years of the Exile, and is now trying to settle in the rubble of Jerusalem. He remembers how he could not sing the songs of Zion while he was in Babylon. Even though the captors chided him and demanded that he sing some of the songs of Zion, he could not. He hung his musical instrument on a tree and refused to play or sing.

But now that he is back in Jerusalem, he writes a song. It is stirred in him by the memory of those mournful years in Babylon, and the many signs of devastation that he sees all around him. What the Babylonians did to the Holy City with the support and aid of Edom was more than his mind could receive. His song of mourning turns into a prophetic announcement about

what awaits Edom and Babylon because of their crimes against the Holy City and its citizens. Even though Holy God had decreed the destruction of the city, they had zealously gone beyond what the chastisement of the Lord required.

The last stanza of this mournful song bothers us. It declares happiness upon those who destroy Babylon, and especially on those who smash the heads of the babies against the rocks. Such a picture is horrifying to us, such violence! What do we make of such a reference in this piece of Holy Scripture? What about the destruction of the babies?

I. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BABIES EMBODIES THE WORKINGS OF DIVINE JUSTICE.

Nations reap what they sow just like individuals. One of the violent things the Babylonian army did as they subdued Jerusalem was take little Jewish babies out of the arms of their weeping mothers and forcefully smash their little heads against a nearby rock, thus spreading the blood and brains of the little one on the ground thus ending its life. You can almost hear the frightened cries of the babies as they are forcefully snatched from the arms of their resisting mothers. Then you can hear the soul-rending wails of the broken hearted mothers as their little ones are destroyed, the laughter and curses of the heartless soldiers as they carried out their bloody assignment.

But the inspired psalmist reminds us that such deeds are actually seeds that will produce a harvest. If you unjustly smash the heads of innocent little ones, some day your little ones will be smashed.

There is a holy God who has decreed this as one of the moral principles that governs this universe in which we live. No nation or individual can ignore this principle and get by.

More than three hundred years earlier Isaiah had warned Babylon about such a consequence. In describing the fateful end of the nation of Babylon, the prophet declares, “their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished.” (Isaiah 13:13) And that is exactly the way it happened! On a fateful day chosen by the God of all nations the Medes invaded Babylon and repaid them for what they had done to the nations—including Israel. The repayment included the destruction of her babies.

God has not repealed the law of the harvest. Individuals and nations still reap what they sow. Let the destruction of the babies be a warning to all of us.

What will the harvest look like for a nation that destroys her babies before they are born? Our unborn infants are not being destroyed by the hands of foreign invaders, but rather are being smashed by instruments held in the

hands of greedy doctors who enable misguided mothers-to-be to end a life they do not want. Let this be a warning to all of us.

II. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BABIES PREVENTS THE CONTINUATION OF EVIL.

There is another level of truth in this imprecation against Babylon. There is a very practical reality involved here. Babylon has become a cancer in the world—it is a danger to the whole realm of human existence. The Great Physician has decided that surgery must be performed. How do you prevent the continuation of a cancerous nation—you cause the destruction of the babies that could potentially continue the nation. The children are the seed of the next generation of evil—without the children the kingdom will perish. This was the thought of the Babylonians when they dashed the heads of the children of Judah against the rocks, and thus killed them. They were tired of dealing with the rebellious Jews, so they will destroy them.

This raises a serious possibility. Could it be that God has decided that the United States has become a kingdom of evil that must be destroyed, or at least humbled? Could this explain why He has allowed the position of the abortionist to prevail in this generation? You must not forget that God works through the processes of history to accomplish His purposes.

III. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BABIES CONTRASTS WITH THE ATTITUDE OF JESUS.

There is yet another consideration when we come this declaration by the returnee from the exile who wrote this psalm. A part of our reaction to this imprecation is that it is in obvious conflict with what we see in Jesus and what we hear Him say in the Gospels. Jesus was no baby basher, nor did He encourage the bashing of children.

Consider some clear statements from the lips of our Lord. One of the more familiar concludes some sobering words of condemnation in the Gospel of Matthew: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her children under her wings, and ye would not.” (Matthew 23:37) No bashing of the children here, but rather a heart-deep desire to save the children, to protect them like a mother hen protecting her little chicks.

While Jesus did not repeal the law of the harvest, He did move us beyond a tit for tat approach to revenge. He admonished His disciples: “Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on they right cheek, turn to him the other also.”—Ye have heard that it hath been

said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. That ye may be the children of Your Father, which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.” (Matthew 5:38-39, 43-45)

Thanks be to God that we are not called to destroy babies, but rather to save them. We need to use our influence to save the unborn from the smashing of the abortionists. We need to do what we can to feed the hungry children of the world. We need to involve ourselves in nurturing the little ones through the ministries of our churches. We need to make our homes places where the little one can be safe and loved.