

Onward Towards Jerusalem (2)

God's Longing For Jerusalem

Psalm 87:2: "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."

Psalm 132:1-18: "Jehovah, remember for David all his affliction; How he swore unto Jehovah, vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob: I will not come into the tent of my house, I will not go up to the couch of my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, slumber to mine eyelids, Until I find out a place for Jehovah, habitations for the Mighty One of Jacob. Behold, we heard of it at Ephratah, we found it in the fields of the wood. Let us go into his habitations, let us worship at his footstool. Arise, Jehovah, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let thy saints shout for joy. For thy servant David's sake, turn not away the face of thine anointed. Jehovah hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it: Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne; If thy children keep my covenant, and my testimonies which I will teach them, their children also for evermore shall sit upon thy throne. For Jehovah hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his dwelling: This is my rest forever; here will I well, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her needy ones with bread; And I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There will I cause the horn of David to bud forth; I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame; but upon himself shall his crown flourish."

Psalm 137:1-9: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that made us wail required mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How should we sing a song of Jehovah's upon a foreign soil? If I forget thee, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill; If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to my palate: if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy. Remember, O Jehovah, against the sons of Edom, the day of Jerusalem; who said, Lay it bare, lay it bare, down to its foundation! Daughter of Babylon, who art to be laid waste, happy is he that rendereth unto thee that which thou hast meted out to us. Happy he that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the rock." (This may be a little upsetting to you, but you will understand this in the context.)

Lord, Your Word is precious; Your Word has great and deep secrets. We can only know them by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. Your words are Spirit and life. And as we come to You this morning, we ask that You would open Your Word to us. Do what man cannot do. Make us understand by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit what we cannot understand and do not see. Lord, open our eyes to behold the mysteries in Your Word. We ask this in the precious name of our Lord Jesus and for His sake. Amen.

Now most of you know that I began a series, "Onward Towards Jerusalem." That is a burden that the Lord really impressed me with after a conference I did in San Antonia this past summer. In fact, I believe the Bible is consistently full of that theme, "Onward Towards Jerusalem." You can see it in early history when God found the King in Jerusalem, His King David, and His whole burden and passion and longing was to have Jerusalem.

You can see it at the end of the Old Testament when those of the remnant that we read about in Psalm 137, who were captives, came back. And God used them in His longing to restore what He wanted for Jerusalem.

You can see it in the New Testament. Remember when the Lord came. I saw this phrase numerous times when I read the Bible: "He went on towards Jerusalem." It is there for a purpose. He went there to accomplish His ultimate work, and when He accomplished His ultimate work, He brought into view God's heart for Jerusalem, what it really means. Now I hope you know already that I am not talking about a physical city, but I am talking about a spiritual reality that is in Jerusalem. And then think of it when you come to the close of the Bible in Revelation 21, and it says, "Wonderful, wonderful," in the revealing of Jerusalem with all of its glory and all of its fulness. We can hardly imagine what awaits us, but we can know today the reality of it, the foreshadowing of it. I think the whole Bible is related to Jerusalem.

When I started these messages, I had three thoughts, which the Lord gave me, about "Onward Towards Jerusalem." First of all, the thought is, "Looking towards Jerusalem." You remember, in Hebrews chapter 11, which we often refer to as the "Hall of faith," Abraham was so caught by this vision. It says in Hebrews 11:10: "He looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." This was what possessed the man, motivated the man and changed the man. So the first burden was "Looking Towards Jerusalem." As a matter of fact, when you read of those who came after Abraham in that history in Hebrews 11, you begin to discover that all of those saints who were referred to in the Old Testament were looking for that city. They were sojourners; they were pilgrims; they were wandering in a world, but they were looking for a city. And it concludes with: "God will give them that city." How wonderful! Their eyes were on that city, and they were looking.

The second part that we will deal with today is an indispensable part of this onward towards Jerusalem. There is this phrase, "Longing for Jerusalem." You may have seen something, and you have to see something. When you see something as you are looking towards Jerusalem and it apprehends you, captures you, arrests you and changes your life, there has to be something more. Otherwise, you just end up being a visionary. We have too many visionaries in the church. We need people who are much more practical in the church. Not only have they seen something, but they are longing for it. That is what I mean by this "Longing for Jerusalem."

Finally, another time we will get into this practical part, "Living in Jerusalem." You may have seen something, and it may be very real to you. You can explain it to people. You can talk about it for days and days, and you can go to conferences and say, "This is what Jerusalem is." This is God's thought for Jerusalem, but you do not have that longing, and you do not know the reality of living in it. God never meant for it to be a message. God never meant for it to be a conference word. God meant for it to be a reality among the saints, and in the end His heart, His burden, His longing, His desire was that we would live in Jerusalem. In other words, we would experience it today while we are on the earth, and it will be a natural transition when we come to the glory that is spoken of in Revelation chapter 21. So the last message is "Living in Jerusalem."

God's Longing for Jerusalem

First of all, the first thing that came to me as I meditated on this, as I considered it and thought much about it, I discovered God's longing for Jerusalem in the Bible. You have to see that. If you do not see it, we are off from the beginning. But in the very first place, it is clear in the Bible about His longing for Jerusalem. In other words, Jerusalem has a special place in the heart of God.

We read that verse in Psalm 87:2: "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." That is quite a statement: "more than all the dwellings of Jacob." There was something in the heart of God about Jerusalem that is so real to Him, so important to Him that He gave His Son to bring about the reality of Jerusalem in His people. I think that is very clear when you study the Scriptures.

Psalm 87:2 tells us what God loves, and it tells us also how much He loves it. Nothing in Israel could compare. Nothing could even begin to come up to this thought of Zion, to this thought of Jerusalem that is embedded in His heart and inseparable from the heart of God.

In the New Testament when it says in Hebrews 12:22, "But you have come to Mount Zion," isn't that a wonderful verse! That explains in New Testament language, not in Old Testament types, what we have come to and what God has for us. "You have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem.

Sometimes I think people get hung up in their studying and say, "Well, is it Zion? is it Jerusalem? Is there any difference between Zion and Jerusalem? And people have taken such pains to try and differentiate. You hear it often: "Zion is the mount and Jerusalem is the city. But if you look at the Word of God, they are inseparable. When God speaks about His love, it is Zion. When He speaks about His desire, it is Jerusalem. When He tells the people what He will do, it is all for the sake of His righteousness and for Jerusalem. They are one and the same.

Isaiah 4:3 says, "And it shall come to pass that he who remaineth in Zion, and he that is left in Jerusalem, (they are always connected) shall be called holy,—every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem." There you get the last point already. He is looking for the living in Jerusalem. That is what that verse means.

God's Love for Jerusalem

Why does God love it so? You have to think about that. What is it about Jerusalem? I think if you look at Jerusalem, it is a dusty little city. I know the gardens have been transformed into wonderful things along with other things that the Jews have transformed, but remember that we are not talking about the earthly city. If you think I am, if you think I am trying to turn you all into Messianic Christians, you have missed the whole point. There is a reason God loves Jerusalem so much: it is His gift for His Son.

You remember in Revelation 21 at the end the city is coming down as a bride prepared for her Husband. It is God's gift. The city and the bride are one.

Not only that, Psalm 2:6 says, "And I have anointed my King upon Zion, the hill of My holiness"

It is the place of His authority. It is the place where God has chosen to set His King. That is why it means so much. It is the place where the house of God is built on Mount Moriah. It is the expression of the church. It is the expression of God with a people for all eternity. Do not think I am talking about the city. We are not talking about the natural city. It is His dwelling, His eternal home, that longing that is in His heart for the full expression of all that Jerusalem and Zion mean. It is not that the Jews would be returned to the homeland. Thank God, I think that is an illustration. Now for those of you who think I do not care a whit about the natural Jerusalem, I do; I believe 1948 was the sovereign hand of God to call a people who had been scattered back to a place to be an earthly expression of the heavenly reality that He was after. I say that people who have moved on from that whole Old Testament thing and say, "It has nothing to do with it. No longer does God have any heart for that place." I hardly find that acceptable. When I read Romans 9, 10, 11, and see how He will yet again provoke the Jews to jealousy, and He will save all Israel. I still do not know what that means, but I believe it with all my heart. This is what was anticipated in Genesis 1-2. It was always this living experience of Jerusalem. This is what we see throughout the New Testament. This is what God is after, and He includes us in it.

I think often, and I will make a point here. You might think that I am getting on you, but I am not because it includes me. We often think about what is in it for me. Christians can be the most self-centered people in the world. You may not think so, you may not agree with me. You may want to yell at me, and if you do feel free to yell, and I will talk over you.

People in the world are so self-centered. What is in it for me? It is all about me. I am the center of the universe, and when you read it carefully, you see that it is all for God; it is all for His Son. But you see a wonderful mystery, for it includes us. Isn't that marvelous?! You are included in that biggest thing in His heart for His Son. You are to be a living part of it, part of the full expression of it, and it will be for all eternity, and that is what Jerusalem is.

I believe that is exactly what Galatians is talking about when Paul wrote to the Galatian Church, and he was really dealing with the two covenants in Galatians 4. He said that these two children of Abraham, by the way, are allegorical. Now it is hard for an engineer to even say that word much less to understand what it means. But these are allegorical; they mean something. They talk about the two covenants which are expressed in the two sons of Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac. And it goes on to say, Ishmael tends towards bondage, this "is the Jerusalem which is now." That was the emphasis. But when it talks about the other Jerusalem, it does not mention Isaac; it goes far beyond Isaac.

It said, "but the Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother." God has His view on that Jerusalem. Everything else is an illustration.

Psalm 132:13: "For Jehovah had chosen Zion; He had desired it for his dwelling." Think about that! Doesn't that speak volumes?

He had chosen Zion, Jerusalem; He had desired it for His dwelling. Now if you look up the Hebrew word for 'desire' it speaks about 'passion.' It speaks about 'longing;' He is longing for Jerusalem, and he does not just say it once.

V. 14: "This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it." He says it twice—it was not enough to say it once, but the God of the heavens and the God of the earth had to declare it twice. "I have desired it." It is unmistakable what the longing is in His heart. Jerusalem is His passion, and He is committed to it. How wonderful that is! If you want to talk about desire, talk about God's desire. Think about what was in His heart. Think about what He is doing. Think about His end, and you will begin to see so clearly what His longing is. And the question, the anxiety that I have when I pray to the Lord, when I seek the Lord, I tell the Lord, "Is this my longing? Is this the ache, the spiritual ache in my heart? If this is Your longing, if this is the spiritual ache in Your heart, let it be the spiritual ache in my heart."

God's Provision for Jerusalem

In verse 15 he begins to show you how much He loves Jerusalem, how much He desires Jerusalem. He says some phenomenal things in verses 15-18; he tells us what He is going to do for Jerusalem.

Verse 15 says, "I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her needy ones with bread."

He will abundantly bless her provision. Now think about it. We are in Christ; could He have blessed us anymore? You remember what it says in the very first chapter of Ephesians 1:3: "God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus."

Now I am a number's guy. I like numbers, and when it says, "Every spiritual blessing" it is innumerable. It includes all of it. You cannot add to that list. I will tell you a little secret about Linda. She will not send me to the grocery store alone because she is afraid of what I will come back with. So she gives me a list: get these, exactly where it is, what the label says, what the weight is. I can even follow those directions. Then I bring back the cookies that I like, and she says that I was not supposed to get these. You were supposed to get the list; you cannot add to the list. So when you think of God and His list—He will bless us with every spiritual blessing. I will bless abundantly. Notice that adjective. "I will abundantly bless her provision."

Think about what we heard in Romans 8:31. Could He love us more? In Psalm 132:15 it talks about how He will satisfy her needy ones with bread. That is you and me. We have been talking about what is in God's heart, but that is you and me. We are the needy ones. How much will He satisfy the needy ones with bread? He did not hold back from giving to us His only begotten Son. Can you imagine? And then Paul said, "How shall He not also with Him grant us all things?" Incalculable what He did! Everything we need; not one need is left out. Not one need is overlooked, abundant blessing and innumerable needs met. This is His love. This is what He will do for Jerusalem.

"And I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud with joy" (Psalm 132:16).

I do not know what you think of your salvation, but it is the most grand thing. I remember one of those great warnings in Hebrews. It talks about what He will do, "if we neglect so great salvation." What salvation will He give us? "So great salvation." Then you think of Hebrews 7:25 where it speaks of this great High Priest, and it says, "He who will save us to the uttermost." I like that word 'uttermost.' I do not quite understand it, but I love it. It sounds like a word that Brother Sparks would say, 'uttermost.' He said it three times, and I would say, "What did he say?" Brothers and sisters, He will clothe His priests with salvation, not just saved from death. Often we say, "Are you saved? Are you going to heaven?" That is only a minor part of salvation. He is able to save us even to the uttermost. He is able to bring us into a full salvation, a so great salvation. And because He loves Jerusalem, that heavenly Jerusalem so muchm this is what He will do for her.

And the result is they shall shout aloud for joy, joy inexpressible and full of glory. It is the way Peter described His testimony in one of his epistles. But when we discover these needy ones and every need has been met, every blessing given and salvation even to the uttermost, we have to conclude it is beyond anything that we could ask or even imagine as it says in Ephesians.

This Psalm is so precious and it says in verse 17: "There will I cause the horn of David to bud forth; I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed."

What does that mean? Sometimes these words about 'horn' or 'bud,' in the Old Testament are puzzling. What on earth do they mean? It is Messianic in nature. The horn of David which shall bud forth is the Lord Jesus; it is a great Messianic prophecy. "I will send My only One and He will make sure; He is the guarantee that all of this will be done." How spectacular! Then he goes further and says, "I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed." Do you know what that means? Do you know what the lampstand stood for? Do you know what the lampstand stood for in Revelation in all those seven churches with all their various problems, with all the things the Lord tried to adjust them on as He was walking in their midst? It stood for a living testimony in everyone of those places. We could name them and go in great detail, but there was a testimony there. And in the end the Lord said, "This is what I will do. I have ordained a lampstand there, a testimony, and you are part of it." How wonderful that thought is!

The last verse in this Psalm that talks about the Lord's desire twice, the Lord's longing, the Lord's passion, says, "His enemies will I clothe with shame, but upon Himself shall His crown flourish."

"I will clothe with shame." Do you know the wonder of Revelation 20 when Satan and God's arch enemies before the kingdom are cast into the bottomless pit, the abyss? Some of us are reading Luke chapter 8 and those demons were so afraid. They said, "Don't throw us into the abyss; throw us to the pigs." The abyss is really for Satan; it was never meant for you or me. God has something far greater.

But then you go on to Revelation 20:10, and he talks about the beginning of eternity. It talks about Satan, the false prophet and the beast, and they are all cast into that fiery furnace, never to be worried about them again. Isn't that wonderful! This is a promise, this is a guarantee that

the enemy will be done away with. We do not have to think about a return of this happening again because His promise and His longing for Jerusalem is to do away with His enemy forever.

I think these few verses are something that opens our eyes to see how great His longing, how great His intention, how great His love is for Jerusalem.

Not only does He love Zion and Jerusalem, not only does He long for Zion and Jerusalem, but He is jealous for Zion in Jerusalem. Let me read a few verses. This is a marvelous thing. This is what God says He will do for Jerusalem.

God's Jealousy for Zion

Zechariah 1:14-17: "And the angel that talked with me said unto me, Cry, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy, and I am wroth exceedingly with the nations that are at ease; for I was but a little wroth, and they helped forward the affliction. (Do you see the mercy in that? God was a little angry at Israel, and those enemies stepped it up a notch.) Therefore thus saith Jehovah: I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith Jehovah of hosts, and the line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Cry further, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: and the line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Cry further, saying Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: My cities shall yet overflow with prosperity, and Jehovah shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem."

Isn't that wonderful! At the very end of the Old Testament this is the proclamation of the Lord. Do you see in these verses God's longing for Jerusalem? Can it be more? Do you see what He promises to do for Jerusalem? Can it be any more? I think it is evident.

I think of another time in the Bible about God's longing for Jerusalem. Do you remember when the Lord Jesus went to Jerusalem just before the period of that greatest sacrifice He was to be? Do you remember as He stood and looked at Jerusalem and His longing? I cannot imagine. If I were the Lord (and you are grateful that I am not) I would only be thinking about the agony. I would only be thinking about the separation. I would only be thinking about what faced me in Jerusalem. That is not what He said. If you read His longing in Matthew 23:37, He said, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, (I do not think He said it so calm as I just did.) He must have yelled to His highest voice, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets" (Can you imagine what He was about to face? There was no one like Him; He was the Son of God.) and stones those that are sent unto her, how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!"

Do you think that is the longing that He has in His heart for Jerusalem? He was about to pay the infinite price, but His longing was for Jerusalem. This is the first thing that is in my heart.

Brothers and sisters, I had to confess, I had to weep, I had to cry out and say, "Lord, give me this passion. Give me this longing. Make it real. If it is only a message, don't let me share it. If it is real, let us consider it.

David's Longing for Jerusalem

The second part of Psalm 132, a Song of degrees, is actually the first part, and it is all about David. I think that is remarkable. In that Psalm where God's heart is so expressed for Jerusalem, His desire which he mentions twice, and all that He will do for her, but in this same Psalm the major part of twelve verses is about David. Isn't that striking to you? If I were writing that Psalm and not David, I would have had two separate psalms, but in God's heart He is after men and women who had that same desire in their hearts. He is looking, His eyes going to and fro looking in the earth among His people, wondering if there are some who will catch this vision or are there some whose hearts will be captured by this vision. Are there some who will be constrained? I think He is wondering, for the first part of that psalm is about one that was like that.

You remember what God says in I Samuel 13:14, "I have found the man." You remember when He sent Samuel to Saul, and He told Saul, "You are rejected." What a day that was for Saul! "I have found a man after my own heart to be the king." Isn't that marvelous! There was such a man. There was a man like that to whom God said the strangest thing. He did not say "follower;" He did not just say, "One whom I will anoint and make king." He said the strangest thing in the Word of God. He said, "A man after My own heart." And when you come to chapter 13:22 in the book of Acts He said it again. It is the New Testament summary of David, and it has the sense, "For I have sought a man." Much stronger words. That was Luke's understanding as he meditated in the Old Testament. He discovered something, something powerful, something real. God was seeking a man, and that man is "a man after My own heart that will do all of My will."

I think that is the explanation of the first part of Psalm 132. You see David's longing. It is something quite remarkable. In other words, it is not only God's longing that we are talking about, it is the longing of men and women. What is your longing? Is it, "Will God say of you? I sought a man, a woman, who are after My own heart who will do all of my will." I think it is one of the most precious verses in the whole Bible. It captured David; it controlled him; it constrained him. He pursued it, and he possessed it. When you read this Psalm, you discover the intensity of his longing. I know that I am an intense person and probably half of you like me need to take a nap when I am finished. But David was intense; that passion was so great; he was intense.

In verse 2 he says, "How he swore unto Jehovah, vowed unto the Mighty one of Jacob." Think about that. Do you remember in the New Testament the Sermon on the Mount where He talks about the Lord's prohibition about swearing? He said, "Swear not to the heavens, because that is God's throne. Swear not by the earth for it is God's footstool, swear not by Jerusalem because it is the city of the living God." There was no rebuke to David in that. I think we are so legalistic sometimes. We would say, "Ah, he should not have sworn; another fault of David." But he swore to the God of heavens, and what he swore was that he would find Him a place. What he swore was that he would not rest. What he swore was that he would not give sleep to his eyelids and slumber for himself until he found the place for Jehovah. Don't you think that is wonderful? I think it is wonderful. If only there would be more ones like that. I think this is what God is after. It is that spiritual longing until I find a place for Jehovah. It was the longing for Jerusalem.

Verse 6: Everything was about Jerusalem with David. Do you remember when he came to that city, the Jebusites had it? He and those who were with him took that city. In II Samuel 5 he

called it the city of David. I think that is remarkable that he called it the city of David. If I was David I would have said, "Hey buddy, it is the city of God; just keep that straight, will you?" But no, it was so much that he possessed it. He owned it. He would save the city of David. This is my city too! This is just as real to me in my limited revelation. You know the city of David occurs in the Old Testament forty five or forty-seven times. Do you know that the city of David occurs in the New Testament two times. How wonderful that is! The city of the living God became the city of David because of his longing. I believe this is what the Lord wants, and I believe that it is quite clear.

In verse 6 he is speaking of the ark of the covenant: "Behold, we heard of it at Ephratah, (Bethlehem), we found in the fields of the woods of Kirjath-jeaim." What did he find? It was the ark of the covenant, he said in verse 8: "Arise, Jehovah, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength."

How he loved the ark. Do you know the ark is an illustration of who the Lord is? Do you know the ark was all of gold? That means all of God. Do you know that in the ark there were only three things? There was the pot of manna. What do you think that means? It means that God can keep food longer than our modern day refrigerators? It means "I am the bread of life." There was Aaron's rod that budded. What do you think that means? Miracle-Gro would love to have that formula of that old dead branch that budded. It means that He is our resurrection life. Even when we are a dead old branch, we can bud forth in the power of His life. There were tablets of stone. They were broken, but God reinscribed them. When the children of Israel rebelled, it was the Lord who was the embodiment of the Law; He fulfilled it. You never have to. I will give you a little secret, you cannot. That is the ark.

And He said, "Arise, Jehovah, into Thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength." It seems to me that this is what the Lord is looking for—more Davids. And if He finds them, He has those men and women after His own heart. Now you can study the history, but if you just study the history in II Samuel chapters 5-6 and in the corresponding chapters in the books of Kings, you will miss much. You need to see the heart. History is important. I love hearing about the history and see those who have gone before us. We are encouraged by them, but what we have to see first of all is the heart. That is the difference. I think that is why this psalm is so important.

David so longed for Jerusalem that he made a fool out of himself. When he brought up that ark, they were dancing, and Saul's daughter, who was David's wife rebuked the king for making such a fool out of himself. I thought about what Paul said, "We are fools for Christ." I am a fool for a lot of things, and some of you prayed me through them. I used to go to so many Redskin games and make a complete fool out of myself. I did not wear all the warpaint and stuff, but I had all the attire, and I would yell. When I would come home, I could hardly talk, and Linda would wonder what happened. I made a fool out of myself. How we make a fool of ourselves from the things of this world that are passing! But are you willing like David, like the apostle Paul, to be a fool for Christ? I think that is what he did that was so remarkable.

The Captives' Longing for Jerusalem

The last bit I want to talk about is this matter of the captives longing for Jerusalem.

In Psalm 137 we find that it was not just God's longing, it was not just David's longing; it was the captives' longing for Jerusalem. But these ones were given up to captivity—God's own children. Now you may think that is really cruel. Maybe He should have just made them sit in the corner for a few hours. Maybe He should not have been so harsh. He has already said in His words, "I was a little wroth with you, and the enemies extended it, and I am wroth with them." It was loving discipline.

Do we understand loving discipline? Do we understand Hebrews 12: "Everyone he loves He disciplines and scourges those that He loves." They had turned away from this longing for Jerusalem, and they had taken for themselves the idols of the land, and they had married the daughters of the land. He had to do something. It was an emergency method. He sent the whole thing into captivity. His beloved Jerusalem was ransacked, and everything carried away. They all became prisoners of Babylon, but yet He does that only to recover. He does that so that He might restore in the hearts of His own what they are missing. That is the story of Psalm 137.

It is like the story of the prodigal son. He went away from the father because he wanted to live it up for today. And as he was in that pigsty eating husks, he began to think about the father's house. He began to think how the servants were better off. It literally means that the slaves were better off than his present experience among the corn husks. Now I have slopped pigs before. I know how horrible it is, the smell is something horrible. But God does it. He did it to His own. He sent them into captivity to cure them forever. And when you read this psalm, it begins to tell you how that longing for Jerusalem redeveloped.

It says, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept when we remembered Zion." They began to think, this thing of Zion is so great. They wept when they remembered it. "We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive and required of us a song; and they that made us wail [required] mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion."

It literally means they terrorized them. They mocked them, they ridiculed them, and the more they ridiculed them the more I believe the Holy Spirit spoke to them about God's love for Jerusalem. He goes on to say: "How shall we sing a song of Jehovah upon a foreign soil?"

Then he says a remarkable thing in verses 5-6: "If I forget thee, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to my palate: if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

Have you ever thought about that? Now some Christians are way too legal for me. They say that it is to be your only joy. I do not think that is true, above your chief joy. Is that not a little different. But these ones that were now captives, who had once experienced the wonder of Jerusalem and the land, and because of their disobedience and sin were carried into captivity by the loving hand of God and by the mercy of God to deliver them once and for all, and to restore in them that missing longing. That is what this psalm means. I believe it is very clear.

God is looking for such a people, and when you look at these people, they changed the world at that time. God put something in their hearts, and it changed them; then He moved. I love to combine history with where God is moving and speaking into hearts. Then He moved on Cyrus,

King of Persia. Can you believe it! It is in Ezra chapter 1:1-3. He said, "All of you, any of you, whose hearts stir them, go back and build the house of God which is at Jerusalem, for He is God." Jerusalem once again became their view, and they had to get back. They paid a great cost to get back. Only 60,000 responded (a rough number) to get back, but with those 60,000 who once again caught that vision of the longing for Jerusalem, they changed the world, and the testimony of God was once again restored in the land. The temple was rebuilt, and the wall around Jerusalem was rebuilt, and there were those who began living in Jerusalem. This is what was in God's heart. May the Lord find it in our hearts.

Is there a Longing in Our Hearts for Jerusalem

Just a few questions: Do you understand the longing of God for Zion and Jerusalem? Is it some strange concept? Are you like David, a man or woman after His own Heart? Are you like these captives, who wandered off. You have lost your passion, lost your longing, wandered into sin? He is calling you back.

Linda was reading to me "The Hound of Heaven" because I cannot understand it; the English is too high. They are beautiful words, but she will have to educate me some more. He is the Hound of heaven; He will never stop coming for you. He will never stop wanting to put in you His longing and His love. He is not GoGo, (sister Kaung's dog) the dog; he is the Hound of heaven, and sooner or later if there is a hope, if the fire has almost gone out, He will light again that fire, and it will become a flame. You will be constrained to give yourself to this, and you will say, "I too desire Jerusalem and desire Zion."

This is the burden the Lord laid upon my heart. It may be too simple, but I think it is real, and if you are going to journey towards Jerusalem, you have to have this indispensable quality. It is the quality of God Himself. It was the quality of the man that He said the most spectacular things about, David. And then when the New Testament began, it talks about the Lord Jesus' birth, and the first name of Him mentioned is Son of David. You may be someone who has not fulfilled what God had for your life. You may have been one who turned away. You may have been one who chose other loves, you may have been one that turned from what you once knew. He is the Hound of Heaven. He will never leave you; He will never forsake you. He is calling you back. This is what the captives did, and they changed the world.

Lord, we just come, so marvelous are the mysteries contained in Your Word. We can hardly take them in. But we sense even in our limited light they are forever true. Lord, I want to confess before You, I want to be one that has this longing that You have. Whatever it takes, wherever I go, and I want my brothers and sisters to experience this longing so that God would have a place for Himself that includes us. How wonderful! Amen.