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## Psalm 129

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

## Psalm 129.

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### Topics.

- They have greatly afflicted me from my youth, yet not prevailed.
- The plowers plowed upon my back; they made long their furrows.
- Let them be like the grass on the housetops, which withers before it grows.
- May all who hate Zion be put to shame and turned backward.

**FOR INFORMATION:** concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

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### INTRODUCTION

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Psalms are songs and prayers offered to God by the nation Israel, they cover the range of human emotion, expressing praise, faith, victory, sorrow, despair, depression, frustration and the troubled heart of a mourner. They contrast the righteous with the wicked, and include the wisdom and the treasure of God's word. Psalms were written at the beginning of the 15th century BC and probably collected in their final form in the 3rd century.

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### BOOK FIVE (PSALM 107-150)

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### PSALM 129:6-8

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A Song of Ascents.

#### **They have Greatly Afflicted Me from My Youth, yet Not Prevailed.**

- **Psalm 129:1-5:** "Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth"— let Israel now say—  
2"Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth, yet they have not prevailed against me.  
3The plowers plowed upon my back; they made long their furrows." 4The LORD is righteous; he has cut the cords of the wicked. 5May all who hate Zion be put to shame and turned backward!

**Ascents:** means a climactic progression or journey to a higher place it carries the idea of a thought arising.

In these verses the nation of Israel is personified as a person, who has been afflicted from their youth. As one travels through the Old Testament it becomes very clear that the United Kingdom of Israel has always been God's special and unique nation unlike any other nation on earth.

God said of Israel:

- Israel was his son who he called out of Egypt and he loved them when they were a child (Hosea 11:1).
- He gave birth to Israel and carried them from the womb even to their old age. (Isaiah 46:3-4).
- Israel is his allotted heritage (Deut. 32:9) and the apple of his eye (Deuteronomy 32:10).

- Israel is a people holy to him (Deut. 7:6) and his treasured possession (Deuteronomy 14:2).

The LORD has not spoken this way with any other nation, but God has not only spoken of Israel differently, but always dealt with them differently to any other nation:

- To Israel God gave the Ten Commandments and showed his great power. (Exodus 20:1-17).
- To Israel God declared his word, statutes and his rules. (Rom. 9:4).
- To Israel God gave the prophets, the worship and the promises. (Romans 3:4).
- To Israel belonged the covenant, the adoption, the patriarchs and the glory. (Romans 3:5).
- To Israel the oracles of God were entrusted. (Rom. 3:2).
- The people of Israel are the offspring of Abraham the father of faith. (Romans 9:7).
- From Israel's race came the Christ the Saviour of the world. (Romans 9:5).

Added to these God said:

- Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine. (Exod. 19:5).
- The LORD has declared today that you are a people for his treasured possession, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments. (Deut. 26:18).

The Psalmist wrote:

- God declared his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know his rules. Praise the LORD! (Psalm 147:19-20).

The LORD has not given any other nations such great privileges. These are the many reasons the Jews (especially the religious leaders of Jesus generation) considered themselves to be the holy race with God and the Gentile nations to be the unclean race without God.

**The thermometer of God's prophecy:** it is true that Israel has been and still is a special nation to God, but since Christ death and resurrection salvation for both Jews and Gentiles is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Israel remains a clear sign of where we are in prophecy concerning Christ's return. It could be said that they are the thermometer of God's prophecy much like the mercury on a natural thermometer measures the heat of the day and moves up the vertical red line warning us of impending danger when the heat of the sun is reaching temperatures that are dangerous for the good health of the skin and our well-being. Likewise Israel can be seen as the mercury of Bible prophecy in the sense that world events that come upon the nation of Israel (especially Jerusalem) are signs that give us some insight as to how close we are to that glorious breathtaking and world changing day when the Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory. But God's focus during our present age for eternal salvation is upon creating a new nation in Christ made up of Jews and Gentiles. This new nation is also called a new creation in Christ, the body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, the church and the Kingdom of God. For further information concerning this new nation God is building in Christ see the title: "The Commonwealth of Israel," at the end of this chapter.

**The plowers plowed upon my back; they made long their furrows:** (v3) at the time of the Psalm being written refers to the wounds and scars the enemies of Israel inflicted upon their people, their city and their land, but it also carries an echo of the scars the enemies of Jesus inflicted upon his back and the wounds they inflicted upon his body.

**Let them be Like the Grass on the Housetops, which Withers.**

- **Psalm 129:6-8:** Let them (all who hate Zion) (v5) be like the grass on the housetops, which withers before it grows up, <sup>7</sup>with which the reaper does not fill his hand nor the binder of sheaves his arms, <sup>8</sup>nor do those who pass by say, "The blessing of the LORD be upon you! We bless you in the name of the LORD!"

**Zion:** is called God's Holy Mountain because Jerusalem God's Holy City sits on it.

**Zion** comes from the Hebrew word (*Tsiyown*) and refers to the mountain the city of Jerusalem is built upon. It carries the idea of a permanent capital mountain of Jerusalem in the sense of being readily seen and easily visible and noticed as an important sign (i.e., a significant and historic sign and guiding pillar). It is called God's Holy Mountain because Jerusalem God's Holy City sits on it. Though Mount Zion is not distinguished for its elevation or grandeur and though it had nothing in itself to claim attention or to excite wonder, it was the most exalted and honoured above all mountains because it was selected as the place where God was to be worshipped and the place where God's city and God's temple is built and God's worship was established. Even though Mount Sinai had all the awesome glory of the Almighty God descend upon it and the law came from there, Mount Zion excels in excellence over it. This is because from Mount Zion came the Messiah the Christ attended by a multitude of angels celebrating his birth and on Mount Zion the Messiah the Christ came into his own temple as Malachi in the following verse prophesied concerning him.

- Behold, I send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. (Mal. 3:1).

Added to all this royal glory, multitudes of angels ministered to the Lord in his temptation, at his resurrection and accompanied him in his ascension all from Mount Zion.

- Mount Sinai is the mountain of the Old Covenant of Law in contrast Mount Zion is the mountain of the New Covenant of Grace.
- Mount Sinai's glory of the law pales when stood before Mount Zion's grace and Christ's death and resurrection upon it.

Neither Mount Sinai nor Mount Zion can glory and boast in themselves for the following reasons. Mount Sinai is not famous or respected as a holy mountain and a mountain of God because of any majesty of itself, but because it was upon this mountain God descended and gave the Ten Commandments. It is this awesome and holy event that exalts Mount Sinai and not the mountain itself.

Likewise Mount Zion has no fame or glory of itself, its glory comes from being the honoured mountain God chose to build His Holy city upon and is the mountain that the Messiah the Christ the Saviour of the world died and rose again from. The real strength is not in Mount Zion itself, but in the LORD, who is the head of the thousands of chariots and the heavenly host surrounding it and as such is the protector of his chosen dwelling-place. Zion is sometimes used as an ancient name for Jerusalem itself and because it is often used in poetic and prophetic passages it can refer to:

- The hill the city of Jerusalem is built on.
- The city of Jerusalem.
- The temple and by extension Judah and the people of God.

**Like grass on the housetops:** (v6) in eastern countries Oriental roof tops are flat and usually covered in early spring with a crop of bright-green grass, but the scorching rays of the sun soon burn it up and it becomes dry and withered. The flourishing of the grass can be seen as symbolising the temporary state of all who hate Israel and all who hate God's people and the withering of their mortal life and their condemnation to destruction when they stand before the judgment seat of God and His wrath. The idea here is that while God's people flourish as the green and fruitful olive tree and ascend up to eternal life their enemies will wither and descend to the darkness of the grave never to rise. The following verse shows that Peter (and no-doubt many others) would go onto a flat roof top to pray.

- The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. (Acts 10:9).

There is no-doubt a roof top would be a most beautiful place to pray and escape the noise, business and rush of life.

**Everyone who hates Zion:** refers to everyone who hates the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Israel and by extension to everyone who hates God's people. The writer is praying that the work, businesses, farms and all that those who hate Israel put their hand to would fail and that they would be like the grass that withers away and dies and no one would feel pity or pray a blessing for them. This may seem like a harsh prayer to pray, but remember the Psalm are not written to be nice and appeal to our Christian calling or expectations, they are the honest expression of the writers' heart before God. The Sermon on the Mount is a very high calling and only one man has attained to its perfection and his name is the Lord Jesus Christ. Before judging the writer of this Psalm to harshly we need to ponder for a moment how we would feel in our heart if a pagan group of people attacked our family, destroyed our home and abused our daughters, or we were standing with the crowd watching the religious leaders of Jesus day smiling as they watched the Roman soldiers cruelly mock and crucify our Lord and Saviour perhaps we might pray the same prayer with tears in our eyes.

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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