

(How to Understand the KJV Bible) 50 Psalm 126

by Keith Simons

Psalm 126 is a joyful psalm that celebrates God's power to bring life to a dead place and to bring about a wonderful harvest in our lives.

Duration: 24:13

Scripture: Psalm 126:1

Topics: "KJV Bible", "Joy in Deliverance", "Restoration"

Description

Keith Simons teaches on Psalm 126, emphasizing the joy of God's deliverance as He restores His people from captivity. The psalm reflects the journey of pilgrims returning to Jerusalem, celebrating God's miraculous work in turning their sorrow into joy. Simons highlights the importance of recognizing God's hand in our lives, as the Israelites did when they proclaimed, 'The Lord hath done great things for us.' He encourages believers to pray for complete restoration and to trust in God's ability to bring life and abundance from desolation. The sermon concludes with a reminder that those who sow in tears will reap in joy, affirming God's promise of a bountiful harvest.

Transcript

Welcome, this is the 50th in our series of talks on how to understand the King James Bible using the psalms. That means of course that we've done a third of the 150 psalms in the Bible. Each episode we've looked at a different psalm, word by word and verse by verse, understanding its meaning.

And today I've chosen for you an appropriately joyful psalm, it's Psalm 126. My name is Keith Symons, I'm a Bible teacher and this episode comes to you like all the previous ones from my home in England. So we're looking at Psalm 126.

The ancient title of this psalm in the King James Bible is a Song of Degrees. Degrees means steps upwards and the title seems to refer to the walk of people who were going on pilgrimage at the sacred feasts of God to the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem. And because the temple was on the top of a hill and Jerusalem itself is set in the hills, it was an upward journey to climb up the hills towards Jerusalem and towards the temple.

And that's what this title seems to refer to. It seems that the series of 15 psalms with this title were songs that the pilgrims would sing on their journey to Jerusalem. So first one reads, when the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion we were like them that dream.

The captivity of Zion. To be a captive is the same as to be a prisoner. The verse is saying that Zion's people were prisoners but the Lord turned around their situation.

Now Zion is the name that is generally used for the hill on which the temple stood. And so the people of Israel, all the people of Israel, are described here as Zion's people. They are the people who belong to God.

They are the people who belong to his temple, his holy house, once they were prisoners but God brought them back. Once they were far from Zion, far from Israel, far from the land that God had promised to them but God brought them back. He turned around their situation.

They couldn't leave the place where they were. They had no choice about where they lived. They had no way to return to God and to his temple but God did it for them.

It was entirely God's work and it was so unexpected. We were like them that dream. It was like as if maybe their current situation was a dream.

They could hardly believe that they were back worshipping God at his house in Jerusalem or maybe it means that their former situation seemed like a dream. Now that they were there worshipping God at his temple they remembered back to those years when they'd been forced to live in a foreign country by an evil power and under the cruelty of its military officers and they looked back in their memory at that situation and it seemed as if it was a dream. It had gone by.

No wonder they were joyful. Now there is the Hebrew form of this verse and it actually doesn't refer to captivity. The Hebrew words translate roughly as when the Lord returned the returners to Zion.

In other words it's repeating the word return, return. It's emphasizing the return. You might say where does the word captivity come from and the answer is verse four which almost repeats the same words except the form of the word for captivity definitely does mean prisoners.

It's a form that's used elsewhere in the Bible for prisoners and so our King James translators have seen verse four and they've transferred the idea into the very similar Hebrew words in verse one. But notice that repetition in the Hebrew of return. When the sort of repetition happening in verse six of this psalm where the translation is shall doubtless come again and as we'll see soon that in the Hebrew is a repetition of the word come, shall come, come again with rejoicing.

But there's another reason to have the word captivity here because it may refer to the point in history to which this psalm refers. We speak of the Babylonian captivity. That was the end of Israel's time in the promised land under its kings.

The people who remained in Judah and Jerusalem were forced to leave their homeland. Jerusalem was destroyed totally. They were taken away as prisoners to work in Babylon because it was Babylon's army that had destroyed Jerusalem and amongst those who were taken at various times in the lead up to the destruction of Jerusalem was prophet Daniel.

And then after 70 years of captivity God brought back Israel's people to Zion. Just a few of them at first and we can read about how they returned in the books of Ezra and later on in the book of Nehemiah. God had turned their captivity.

God had rescued them and isn't it wonderful when God takes people who are captives, who are prisoners, who are slaves and gives them their freedom. When God takes exiles who've been driven far away from their homeland and brings them back to their home. When God takes people who are bound by Satan, by sin, by the fear of death and frees them from it.

God is a God who saves. God is a God who redeems and his redeemed people should be joyful in what he has done. Verse 2. Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing.

Oh we laughed in our joy. We sang for joy to celebrate that God had returned us back to our land. There was a time when we couldn't sing and that time is described in a few pages on in Psalm 137.

When people said sing us one of the songs of Zion and they were in Babylon they couldn't sing and they said Psalm 137 verse 4. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land. It seemed impossible to sing for God when Jerusalem and God's holy temple was destroyed. But now they were back in their land in Psalm 126 verse 2. Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing.

But what did the foreigners make of this? What did the people of Babylon make of this? They'd taken Israel's people from their own land. They'd forced them to go to a foreign place but God had changed around the history. Just as he promised God brought Israel's people back to their own land.

And then said they among the heathen the Lord hath done great things for them. The heathen means the foreign nations and nations other than Israel. And they saw that the Jews that Israel's people had returned home.

That God had returned them home. And even the foreigners gave honour to God. They declared the Lord hath done great things for them.

It's God who's done this great thing. We can see that the false God cannot achieve such a thing. We see that God in his mercy and love has brought these people back home.

And Israel's people agree with that. Verse 3. They don't say by our skill, by our political intrigue, by our careful planning we've got ourselves back in our own land. No they give all the honour to God.

And they give praise to God. And they repeat the language that the foreigners have said to them. And they declare gladly the Lord hath done great things for us.

Whereof we are glad. And shouldn't all God's people take a similar attitude? Those people whom God has rescued, he's saved, he's brought to himself, he's given the right relationship with himself. Shouldn't they declare that God is the one who's done this wonderful thing? Shouldn't they rejoice and celebrate and be glad before God? God who's shown such kindness to them.

Who sent his son to save them from their sin. Who's rescued them from their troubles. Who's given them that right, that right relationship with himself.

Verse 4 then surprises us. Turn again our captivity O Lord. Turn again.

What is this? We said in verse 1 when the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion. And now we're asking for it again. Well I've said that this psalm might refer to the time of the Exodus.

And you read the history of that, you'll realise that when God brought Israel's people back to Jerusalem, only a few of them could go back. And many of them remained in exile. Many of them remained in a foreign country.

So of course then it was right for them to pray again. Those first few who'd returned back, turn again our captivity. What God has done, God can complete.

We trust God to bring back Israel's people as a whole. So it's not just a few people back in Jerusalem, but an entire nation. The entire people of God returned to the home that God has given to them.

That God will complete his promise to them to bring them back. When they returned they saw a land which was basically empty and destitute and destroyed. And maybe they saw almost in a vision what it could be and what it is today.

A land full of people as God's people return home to the place that God has for them. Yes what God has begun, he is able to complete. And so for Christians today, yes God has rescued them from sin and from the devil, but still in this world they have so many troubles.

Still in this world, although Christ rules over his people and although his rule over heaven and earth is a complete rule, still the devil has some power in this world. Still people have turned away from God. So isn't it for God's people today too to pray, turn again our captivity oh Lord.

God you've saved us from sin. You've given us a right relationship with yourself. You've turned our lives around, but there's so much more that we ask you to do.

To perfect the rule of your son. To defeat every evil force, every evil power in this world. To bind the devil in his proper place in hell.

Turn again our captivity oh Lord. There's a lovely word picture at the end of that verse. Turn again our captivity oh Lord, as the streams in the south.

The south part of Israel was at that time called and is today called the Negev. And the word Negev appears in the Hebrew word for south in this verse. As the streams in the south.

But the Negev is dry. It's a desert. There are dried up riverbeds running through the desert country.

And usually there's no sign of any life there. It's as you would expect a desert to be. But occasionally rain does fall in those dry hills.

And occasionally then the rivers are filled with water. I've seen a video on YouTube of this actually happening. And the people know that there's been rain in the mountains and they've gathered by the side of a totally dry riverbed with no plants on either side.

Just this dry riverbed running through the hilly country. And they hear the sound in the distance. The sound of rushing water.

And it gets louder and louder as the water gets near. And suddenly in a moment of time that stream, that dried up riverbed is filled with water. And a strong torrent of water is flowing through the river.

God did it. God did it wonderfully. And suddenly.

And the prayer here is that God will do this to the people. Just as that stream was returned. That river was returned by the heavy rain that fell in the mountains.

So God can return his people back home in a moment of time. Can a nation be born in a day? One of the prophets asks. What God does he can do suddenly and wonderfully.

And that is the prayer. That just as those streams are filled with water. So God can send back his people.

And this dry land, this destitute land, this desert land can have a population again. And there's something more wonderful even that that happens in the Negev when those rivers are once again filled with water. It didn't show it in the video because of course video lasts for a few minutes.

But over the days and the weeks afterwards, the dry dead seeds, dormant seeds I should say, in the desert sand, they are brought to life by the rain. They grow quickly and flowers bloom in the desert. The desert is filled with flowers because the water has come.

Yes, God has brought life to a dead place. And just think of those first few people from Israel who returned back home. And they look round at the ruined cities around them.

A country abandoned by people. A country which was so destitute. How suddenly did God bring back those people? How suddenly did life return to those cities? The word pictures continue in verse 5. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

They that sow in tears. The seed, the grain seed that's sown in Israel is sown at the beginning of the rainy season. There's a dry season in Israel that lasts for about six months.

But the grain has to grow in wet soil. And so when the rain returns at the beginning of winter, it's then that the seed is sown. And if it's been a hard year, people do or may sow in tears.

Because they have to take seed from their house. That seed which they're taking is the same grain that they could be feeding their children with. But they must take a step of faith.

They must take some of that grain and they must sow the seed, otherwise there will be no harvest. And so they take the grain, they sow it, well might they sow in tears. But think of the joy when six months later, the harvest is ready and they go out to reap that grain which has grown and sprung forth.

They know not how to yield an increase, an abundant increase, with the luxury and the joy of the harvest. To reap means to collect the food at the time of the harvest from the fields. Verse six.

He that goeth forth and weepeth bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. Precious seed. Some people have suggested that the translation should be bearing a basket of seed.

Well, maybe. But when that word appears in one other place in the Bible, it does, it does seem to indicate something that's precious. So maybe the description of precious seed is right.

And we've got this person going forth and weeping with his seed, taking out his basket of seed and sowing it on the ground in tears because of his desperate poverty. But there is a promise of the harvest and how he looks forward that harvest. He shall doubtless come again.

As I've already said, that's repetition of the word come. He shall come, shall come again with rejoicing. And when you get that repetition in the Hebrew Bible, it's done for emphasis, which is why we've got the word doubtless.

There's no doubt he's going to come again. The promise is there. He's sown his seed.

God will bring about the harvest and that will be such a time of rejoicing. Oh, all he sowed was seed. He sowed seed by the handful, but he's going to harvest sheaves.

He shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing sheaves with him. Armfuls of grain. Sheaves is what you call the grain when it's harvested and the harvester gathers up the bundles under his arms.

He sowed by the handful. He reaps by the armful. God has brought an increase.

God has brought a wonderful harvest. Well, as always, I would love you to write to me. Tell me which of these psalms have been a blessing to you.

My email address is 333kjv at gmail.com. You know, in many churches, they read a psalm as part of their act of worship and many people like to read a psalm in their prayer time. And that's a wonderful thing to do. But if you're not understanding the psalm, the benefit you're getting from that act of worship is limited.

And in these talks, I've tried to make it so that you understand more and more of the psalms, so that you can take different psalms for worship than the ones that you've done before, and so that you can understand what's going on in them. I know that my interpretations may not be those which everyone agrees with, but they're all mainstream interpretations. They're all the main sort of ideas that come in relation to these psalms.

Sometimes when there's different ideas in the books, I've given you those different ideas so that you can think about them. More of these talks will be coming along soon. But if you haven't listened to some of the past talks, maybe this is your first time or your second time listening to these talks, don't miss the past talks.

There's some wonderful talks in there for you to explore. There's 50 of the psalms which you can study and learn from. My email address again, so you can write to me, 333kjv at gmail.com. And I'm going to finish the talk today as I've done in each of these psalm talks by reading to you the complete psalm, Psalm 126, a song of degrees.

When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing. Then said they among the heathen, the Lord hath done great things for them.

The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad. Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

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