

CURSES, ANATHEMAS, MALEDICTIONS, EXECRATIONS, & IMPRECATIONS: SINGING THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL!

Genesis 3:13-19

I. IMPRECATORY PSALMS & PRAYERS (Psalm 7; 35; 52; 55; 58; 59; 69; 79; 109; 137; cf. Psalm 83; **Jer.11:18-20; 15:15-18; 17:18; 18:19-23; 20:11,12; 42:18; 44:12; Nehemiah 6:14; 13:29; 1 Cor.16:22; Gal.1:8**)

- A. Imprecatory Psalms are psalms of cursing God's enemies, and praying to God for their destruction (cf. Psalm 5:10; 21:8-12; 28:4,5; 31:17-18; 35:3a,4-8,20-21,24-26; 40:14-15; 54:5; 55:15; 56:6b-7; 59:5-8,11-15; 63:9-11; 69:22-28; 79:6,7,12; 110:6; 137:7-9; 139:19-22; 140:9-11; 141:10; 143:12).
- B. Probably the two most famous songs of cursing are Psalm 109 and Psalm 137.
- C. One of the characteristics of the false prophets in the Old Testament was that they preached about God's peace, prosperity and blessing while neglecting that the covenant stipulated curses for disobedience (1 Kings 22:1-28; Jer.5:12; 6:14; 8:11; 14:13; 23:17; 28:1-17; Ezek.13:10; Micah 2:6-11; 3:5-7; etc.).
- D. Curses, anathemas, maledictions, execrations, and imprecations are not exclusive to the Psalms. Beside the Psalms, the prayers of Jeremiah are some of the strongest but least appreciated maledictions of Scripture (Jeremiah 11:18-20; 15:15; 17:18; 18:21-23; 20:11,12; 42:18; 44:12).

II. THE IMPRECATORY PSALMS ARE GOSPEL (Gen.3:14,15)

- A. The first promise God makes in Scripture is the infant of all the imprecations found in the Psalms (Gen.3:14,15).
- B. The imprecatory Psalms are good news because they assure us that God is going to once again destroy the wicked not with water but with fire (2 Peter 3:3-9).
- C. Placing one's heel over the head of another was a sign of final victory, dominance or judgment (**Josh.10:24,25** [Five Amorite Kings]; **2 Samuel 22:39; 1 Kings 5:3; 2 Kings 9:33**; 19:24=Isa.37:25 [Sennacherib's boast]; Psalm 8:6; 18:38; 36:11 [The "foot of pride"]; **47:3**; 58:10; 68:23; **110:1; Mal.4:3**; cf. **Gen.49:8,17**; Deut.28:48).
 - 1. Once one realizes that the placing of one's heel over the head of an enemy was a sign of final victory, dominance and judgment, then it becomes more clear that the imprecatory Psalms are simply a development of the promise of Genesis 3:14,15.
 - 2. Some try to say that David wasn't a Christian and so he didn't understand the Gospel of love. David *did* understand the Gospel better than many professing Christians do. The judgment of God's enemies is part of the Gospel.

III. THE IMPRECATIONS ARE APPEALS TO GOD'S COVENANTAL FAITHFULNESS (Gen.12:3).

- A. The one who curses you I will curse (Gen.12:3).
- B. I will bless those who bless you...And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed (Gen.12:3).

IV. HOW DO WE USE IMPRECATORY PSALMS TODAY IN OUR PRAYER LIFE AND WORSHIP?

- A. The imprecatory Psalms are not personal vendettas.
- B. The imprecatory Psalms do not take away from the second great commandment: Love your neighbor as yourself (Ex.23:4,5; Lev.19:18; Prov.24:17; 25:21).
- C. The usefulness of the imprecatory Psalms in worship can be seen when we compare them with the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9,10).

QUESTIONS FOR SABBATH DISCUSSION & MEDITATION:

Take what you have learned this morning and make it into a prayer for yourself, your family, the church and/or your nation. Remember that prayer consists in Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication (Feel free to use the outline for praying).

What are imprecatory Psalms? Can you give three examples of imprecatory Psalms?

How should the imprecatory Psalms comfort God's people? Do you think that these Psalms would be more comforting to Christians in Sudan or the United States? Why?

Explain how the imprecatory Psalms are rooted in Genesis 3:14,15.

Explain why the imprecatory Psalms are essential to our understanding of the Gospel.

How is the message of the Gospel compromised when only God's promise of blessing for obedience is offered and not His cursing for disobedience?

Do the imprecatory Psalms contradict the need to love our enemy? Why or why not?

David was a warrior and a man of blood. Is Jesus a "warrior" and a "man of blood?"

ILLUSTRATIONS

“Sensitive Christians can easily be offended by certain parts of the Old Testament. In this connection John Bright raised the interesting question as to why, “although the Old Testament on occasion offends our Christian feelings, it did not apparently offend Christ’s ‘Christian feelings’! Could it really be that we are ethically and religiously more sensitive than he? Or is it perhaps that we do not view the Old Testament – and its God – as he did?” (John Bright as quoted in Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* pp.24f.).

Did you know that Charles Wesley wrote an “imprecatory hymn”? Next time your are at a Methodist hymn sing request the following hymn "For the Mohometans" a selection from John and Charles Wesley's 1780 hymn collection. The hymn contains the following stanzas:

*The smoke of the infernal cave,
Which half the Christian world o'erspread,
Disperse, Thou heavenly Light, and save
The souls by that Impostor led,
That Arab-chief, as Satan bold,
Who quite destroyed Thy Asian fold.*

*O might the blood of sprinkling cry
For those who spurn the sprinkled blood!
Assert Thy glorious Deity,
Stretch out Thine arm, Thou Triune God
The Unitarian fiend expel,
And chase his doctrine back to hell.*
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/2002/002/13.2.html>

Disclaimer: We do not agree with Wesley’s hymn as it does not contain the same spirit as the inspired hymns of the Old Testament.