

Psalm 129:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion.

Analysis

A curse is pronounced: 'Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion.' The imperative 'let them be' is prayer for divine judgment, not personal vengeance. The word 'confounded' (Hebrew 'bosh') means ashamed, disappointed, or put to shame - enemies' plots will fail, producing humiliation. 'Turned back' means repelled, defeated, sent away unsuccessfully. Those 'that hate Zion' aren't merely political enemies but theological opponents - they hate God's dwelling place and covenant people. Hatred of Zion is ultimately hatred of God. The prayer asks that God frustrate and shame those who oppose His purposes. This imprecatory element is common in psalms, expressing desire for divine justice and vindication. It's appropriate to pray for defeat of God's enemies, leaving judgment and execution to God alone.

Historical Context

Israel's enemies repeatedly attacked Zion/Jerusalem - Assyria, Babylon, and various coalition forces. These attacks weren't merely political but religious - attempting to discredit Israel's God. The prayer for enemies' confusion and defeat appears throughout Scripture (Psalm 35:4; 40:14; 70:2; 83). God's honor is at stake when His people are attacked.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How do imprecatory psalms (curses on enemies) fit with Christian ethics and love of enemies?
2. What is the difference between praying for enemies' defeat and taking personal vengeance?
3. Why is hating Zion ultimately hating God, not merely disliking a people or place?
4. How does leaving judgment to God free believers from bitterness while maintaining desire for justice?
5. In what ways might we pray for confusion and defeat of spiritual enemies (sin, Satan, evil systems)?

Interlinear Text

צִיּוֹן: שָׁנָא אֵיכֶם לְאַחֲרֵיכֶם וְיִשְׁעַתְּנָה בְּשָׁעָה !

Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion

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Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 10:12 (Parallel theme): Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.

Isaiah 37:35 (Parallel theme): For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

Psalms 71:13 (Parallel theme): Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt.

Zechariah 12:3 (Parallel theme): And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.

Micah 4:11 (Parallel theme): Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion.

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