

GROWING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD *continued*

(a) THE ESSENCE OF JUDGMENT: Jeremiah calls on the Lord to take vengeance on His enemies, clearly believing this is an issue of divine justice – sin must be punished. The “*sorrow of heart*” (3:65) is strictly a reference to spiritual blindness – the imposition of a veil over the heart that leads to stubbornness and hardness, and in turn to the curse of God.

(b) THE EXTENT OF JUDGMENT: “*The heavens of the LORD*” is a reference to the whole world, over which the authority and power of God extends, therefore this call from the prophet is nothing less than to, “*exterminate them wholly from the sphere of Thy dominion in the world.*”

(c) THE EQUITY OF JUDGMENT: Does this not cut against New Testament teaching about how we relate to our enemies (Luke 6:27-28)? No; the Christian is genuinely concerned for the honour and justice of God and, with complete consistency, offer this petition (cf. Psalm 68:1-3). If God’s enemies are not converted by grace, there is nothing else for them apart from that full, final and righteous outpouring of God’s wrath which divine justice is obligated to render at the end of the day.

After Mark Twain had made his triumphant tour through Europe, where he was honoured by great universities and kings, his daughter said: “*Daddy, I guess pretty soon you will know everybody except God.*”

“*Disregard the study of God,*” Packer says, “*and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder through life blindfolded, as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you. This way you can waste your life and lose your soul.*”



MEETINGS TODAY

- Morning Worship – 11.30am:
*9th Message in Lamentations Series:
“Growing in the Knowledge of God.”*
- Evening Service – 7.00pm:
*“Everything that Cannot Follow Us
Home to Heaven.”*



CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE AT CULTRA

The last I checked with the ‘ticket office,’ 175 people plan to be in attendance at the Old Presbyterian Meeting House, Cultra, for our annual Carol Service on Wednesday, 5 December 2018. This represents a tremendous response for which we are immensely thankful.

As on previous years, ‘old style dress’ (whatever that means!) is encouraged, though of course not obligatory. The same cannot be said for warm clothing. While the staff at the Folk Museum will ensure that the building is heated for our arrival – and lighting is being provided for the steps into the venue – do ensure that you dress appropriately for the time of year. Since this is a time not only for church fellowship but also evangelism, do make every effort to bring family and friends with you on this occasion.

Our theme will centre on the wonderful announcement of **Matthew 1:21**, “*And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins.*” Our prayer is that precious souls will be led to the Saviour through this message as it goes out in song, poetry and preaching on the night.



GROWING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Lamentations 3:52-66.

At the end of one of Dan DeHaan's meetings a student approached and spoke to him with a lump in his throat: *"I am here because I long to know God. I have been listening to you week after week, and God has made me desperately hungry to know him as you do."* This should not be an unusual request.

It was the Lord's prayer on behalf of His people; **John 17:3**: *"And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."* (cf. **Philippians 3:10**; **2 Peter 3:18**; **Exodus 33:13**; **Jeremiah 9:23-24**). J. I. Packer explained the reason for it in book 'Knowing God': *"The conviction behind the book is that ignorance of God—ignorance both of his ways and of the practice of communion with him—lies at the root of much of the church's weakness today."* Knowing God is our greatest quest.

[1] GOD AS THE RESPONDER: HE HEARS THE PRAYER OF HIS PEOPLE; 3:52-57.

Previously, their prayers had lacked the power of penetration (**3:44**), now God is responding. Note:

(a) THE TIMING FOR HIS PRAYER; **3:52-54**. The situation was dire: captured, caged and closed off at the top with water now cascading down upon him and filling up the pit in which he is a prisoner. *"Cut off"* may mean, *"put an end to,"* though it may also point to enemies who, *"seek to silence the speaker"* (cf.

Jeremiah 38:4-28). In our own nation, the Word of God is not tolerated by increasingly vocal and vicious elements within our population. However, the fate of those nations who make determined efforts to silence God's speakers among them is sealed (cf. **Matthew 23:37-38**).

(b) THE TRAJECTORY FOR HIS PRAYER; **3:55**: it had a low starting point (cf. **Psalms 130:1**). No matter how many negatives push us down, God delights to hear the voice of His people.

(c) THE TYPE OF HIS PRAYER; **3:56**. Whether a loud bleat, a gasp, or a plea for help – or a combination of all three (as are included here) – God responds when His faithful children come to His throne. An old Bible carried these words in its fly-leaf: *"Pray hardest when it's hardest to pray."*

(d) THE TRUST FOR HIS PRAYER; **3:57**. All the colours of the rainbow of God's care is unfolded in this statement: His nearness, love, sympathy, graciousness, promptness, tenderness and sweetness are all layered one on top of the other right here.

[2] GOD AS THE REDEEMER: HE DELIVERS THE SOUL OF HIS PEOPLE; 3:58.

He is (a) THE DEFENDER (ADVOCATE) IN OUR CASE.

"Thou hast pleaded the pleadings of my soul" (Calvin). In effect, God becomes our lawyer, our advocate – intervening when we face an unjust and dangerous enemy.

(b) THE DELIVERER OF OUR SOULS: Even when it appears that everything is lost, He is the Kinsman-Redeemer, who is pleased to draw near to His people and rescue them from the depths of their trouble (cf. **Psalms 34:4-6, 19-22**). Hymn #580.

[3] GOD AS THE RECOGNISER: HE SEES THE NEED OF HIS PEOPLE; 3:59-63.

Lamentations has been full of descriptions of the previous treatment of God's people by their (and God's) enemies on account of their sins; (a) THE SUFFERINGS THEY ENDURED. More examples appear in every verse of this segment, **3:59-63**.

Their encouragement and assurance comes in the fact that God is the all-seeing One; the Omniscient God; (b) THE SIGHT HE ENGAGED: *"seen"* (**3:59-60**); *"behold"* (**3:63**). Heaven is never indifferent. God recognises every wrong done to His people.

(c) THE SONG THEY ENGINEERED; **3:63**. Harrison tells us that mocking songs were frequently used in the Ancient Near East to express derision or contempt for an enemy – cf.

Numbers 21:27-30; **Isaiah 47:1-15**; **Habakkuk 2:6-19**.

[4] GOD AS THE RETRIBUTOR: HE VINDICATES THE CAUSE OF HIS PEOPLE; 3:64-66.

A retributor is *"one that exacts or pays retribution."*