

**Studies in Psalms** by [John T Polk II](#)  
For [The Fellowship Room](#)

Psalm 85

1/11/13

Vs. 1-3 express Israel's relief from being exiled from their land;  
Vs. 4-7 express Israel's concern that God wouldn't forget their sins;  
Vs. 8-9 express Israel's lesson they learned from 70 years away;  
Vs. 10-13 express Israel's acknowledgement of God's good character.

This Psalm obviously fits into the restoration of the Israelites (including Jews!) to their Promised Land, which indicated that God's punishment for their sins, by removing them from that land, had suddenly ended. All prophecies about Israelites (including Jews!) being restored to their Promised Land have been fulfilled as recorded in the Books of Ezra-Nehemiah ([2 Chronicles 36:1-23](#); [Ezra 1:1-11](#); [Ezra 3:1-13](#); [4:4-5](#)).

**Verses 1-3:** The past tense of these verbs describe a feeling of relief that God has finished His past punishment for Israel/Judah's sins: (**verse 1**) "have been favorable," "have brought back," (**verse 2**) "have forgiven the iniquity," "have covered," (**verse 3**) "have taken away," "have turned from." To show this is not just the Southern Kingdom returning, the terms used for this restoration include: "Your land," "the captivity of Jacob," "Your people," "all their sin," "all Your wrath," and the "fierceness of Your anger."

Every tribe whom God had removed from that land were represented in those who returned to that land! The Northern Kingdom (Israel) had been removed by an Assyrian king ([2 Kings 17:3-6](#)), and the Southern Kingdom (Judah) had been removed by a Babylonian king ([2 Chronicles 36:11-23](#)). All that God had brought upon them, now God had removed (**Psalm 85:1-3**).

**Verses 4-7:** When God forgave their sin and restored their land, the sinners needed to be restored in realizing that forgiveness, also (**verse 4**). Their insecurity is expressed in their questioning His plan for them (**verses 5-7**).

**Verses 8-9:** The people's resolve is to "hear what God the LORD will speak" and "not turn back to folly" (**verse 8**). The people's realization is that God will "speak peace," make "His salvation near," and let glory (God's presence, [Exodus 24:16-17](#); [40:34-35](#)) "dwell in our land" (**verses 8-9**). While rebuilding the temple was progressing, God said there would come another temple whose "glory shall be greater than the former" and "in this place I will give peace," says the LORD of hosts" ([Haggai 2:1-9](#)). The church of Christ is led by the Prince of



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Peace ([Isaiah 9:6](#); [Ephesians 2:14-18](#)), so Christians “Pursue peace with all people” ([Hebrews 12:14](#); [Mark 9:50](#); [Romans 14:18-19](#)).

**Verses 10-13:** When a sinner is forgiven, then “mercy and truth have met together” and “righteousness and peace have kissed” (**verse 10**). “Mercy” is God’s plan for sinners ([Matthew 5:7](#); [9:13](#)) and “truth” is God’s expression of that plan ([John 1:14](#); [8:32, 40](#); [17:17](#)). “Righteousness” is what God expects people to do ([Romans 3:21-26](#)), “peace” is the result of people’s obedience to God’s expectations ([Acts 10:38-43](#); [2:38](#)). **Psalm 85:11** pictures the contentment when such reconciliation occurs; **verse 12** shows what the obedient may expect from God; **verse 13** tell the obedient to look for the way they should follow. Jesus Christ is “the way” ([John 14:6](#); [Matthew 7:13-14](#); [Acts 19:9](#)), so “he who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked” ([1 John 2:6](#)).

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