

Bible Study ~ June 2022

PSALMS: The Character of GOD

(Author: Dr. Jerry Rankin – Missionary in Asia for 23 years.
Past-President, now President Emeritus, of International Mission)

Wednesday, August 3rd, 2022

GOD'S Character is known by *Providence*, **GOD** seeing before...

Providence is **GOD'S** ability to see beforehand... **GOD** knows (**OMINSCIENCIENT**) and is able to see all that is going to happen and beforehand has determined how it will be used for **HIS purpose** and **Glory**.

(Romans 8: 28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love **GOD**, to them who are the called according to **HIS** purpose.")

Tonight, we begin Chapter 4 of our Book, *Psalm 73-83* page 47-58; the title...

"GOD Goodness Can Be Seen in HIS JUST-ice and Mercy"

Psalm 73 dealt with a "*personal crisis*," *the Age-Old problem*?

WHY do the *righteous* suffer while the *ungodly* seem to prosper?

Psalm 74 deals with a "*national crisis*" focusing on the destruction of The Temple in Jerusalem... destroyed by the Babylonians in 587-86 B C. (Psalm 74 associates with Psalm 79)

Psalm 75 deals with "**The Promise of Judgment**." **GOD'S Judgment** against "boasting" by the Assyrian invaders during King Hezekiah reign in Jerusalem. (This Psalm is also associated with Psalm 76, 77 and 78.)

Psalm 79 declares **GOD, WHO** gave **HIS** people Israel victory over Egypt (Psalm 77) and helped them march through the wilderness and then conquer Canaan (Psalm 78) Then **HE** gave them King David, through whom **GOD** and **HE** defeated their enemies and expanded their Kingdom. But now **GOD'S** people are captive... the city and the Temple are ruined, and the heathen nations are triumphant. [Parallel verses: Psalm 79: 1/74: 3, 7; 79: 2/74: 19; 79: 5/74: 10; 79:12/74: 10, 18, 22]

Asaph is playing 4 different roles as he contemplates the defeat of Judah by the Babylonians. Notice, each role Asaph depicts opens with an address to **JEHOVAH—GOD** of our Salvation: Psalm 79: 1, "O **GOD**...". 79: 5, "How long, **LORD**?" 79: 9, "Help us, O **GOD** of our salvation..." 79: 12, "... O **LORD**."

Outline: *79: 1-4, **The Mourner: Beholding GOD'S Judgment!**

[Babylon was the leading nation in the conquest of Judah, but the neighboring nations (Ammon, Moab, Edom) were delighted to see **GOD'S** people defeated. Note how Asaph identified The LORD with the situation: v. 1, "**THINE inheritance**," **GOD'S** land; v. 1, "**THY HOLY Temple**"; v. 2, "**THY servants**... the flesh of **THY saints**." V. 6b, "Pour out **THY** wrath upon the heathen that have not known **THEE**, and upon the kingdom that have not call upon **THY Name**."]

*79: 5-8, **The Sufferer**: Feeling **GOD'S Anger!**

Q. How do we know Asaph is Feeling **GOD'S Anger** in these verses?

Answer: He ask, "How Long in verse 5.

Q. Is **GOD** jealous of any one or anything? (We know **HE** is wholly **SELF-SUFFICIENT** and need nothing) Read 78: 58—**HIS** land and people; Read Ezekiel 39-25—**HIS HOLY Name**; Read Joel 2: 18—**HIS** Land; Read Zechariah 1: 14—**HIS** Inheritance.

Notice, Asaph does not deny that he and the people deserve chastening (v. 9), but if **GOD'S** people are guilty, then how much guiltier the heathen nations that have attack the Jews?

Q. What do you think about this question?

*79: 9-11, **The Intercessor**: Pleading for **GOD'S Help!**

[Asaph concern was for "The glory of **GOD'S Name** (v. 9), and **HE** felt that a miraculous deliverance for Judah would accomplish that, but no deliverance came.

Q. Why, the delayed request for deliverance, even if **GOD'S Name** was on the line?

Answer: Asaph had to confess his own sin and the sins of his contemporaries, for it was not only his ancestors who disobeyed **The LORD**.

In V. 11, Asaph prayed on the basis of **GOD'S Great COMpassion... The Cross of JESUS CHRIST** is for us today the only evidence we need that **GOD** Loves us today (Read Romans 5: 8)

*79: 12-13, **The Worshipper: Promising to Praise GOD!**

How could any person witness what Babylon did to **GOD'S** people and not cry out to **GOD** for retribution (Jews in Egypt, Jews during Holocaust-Concentration Camps, Days of Slavery...)

Q. Is there anything wrong in asking **GOD** to repay our enemies "sevenfold into their bosom their reproach..."? (v. 12)

Psalm 80, is Asaph prayer to **GOD** on behalf of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, its capital—Samaria, after it was taken captive by Assyria in 722-21 B C. Joseph in vs. 1, can refers to the whole nation of Israel, and the mentioning of Ephraim and Manasseh (Joseph's sons) and Benjamin in verse 2, suggests that the Northern Kingdom is meant. These are the children and grandchildren of Rachel, Jacob's favorite wife. The Temple is still standing in Jerusalem (v. 1) and the fall of Samaria should have been a warning for Judah (the Southern Kingdom), not to disobey **The LORD**. It's unfortunate that it takes dissension, division, and destruction to bring brothers closer together.

Notice the refrain "Turn us again..." in verses, 3, 7, 19... they mark 3 requests of Asaph to **The LORD** for both Kingdoms.

Outline: "Save Your Flock" – (Psalm 80: 1-3)

[v. 2, "Stir up **YOUR** Strength and bring salvation to **YOUR** people." "Cause **THY** face to shine—a priestly benediction" in verses 3, 7, 19. When **GOD** hides **HIS** face there is always trouble.

"Turn us again, means "restore us to our former state of blessing and fellowship with **The LORD**."

"Pity **YOUR** People" – (Psalm 80: 4-7) See **The SHEPHERD** Image... "We are his people, the sheep of **HIS** pasture." (Psalm 100: 3) [**JEHOVAH** is **The LORD** of the armies of heaven and earth, but **HIS** people no longer marched in victory.]

"Revive **YOUR** Vine" – (Psalm 80: 8-19) The image changes to that of **GOD'S** People being **HIS Vine**. Remember **JESUS** is this image to describe **HIMSELF** and **HIS** followers (John 15)

The LORD transplanted Israel from Egypt to Canaan, uprooted the nations in Canaan, and planted **HIS** people in the land of their inheritances.

As long as **HIS** people obeyed **HIM**, **The Vine** grew and covered more and more of the land. But the luxurious Vine disobeyed **The LORD**, producing “worthless fruit” (Isaiah 5: 2), and felt the chastening had of **The LORD**. He withdrew **HIS** protection and permitted the enemy to enter the land and ruin the vineyard. Asaph prayed that **The LORD** might forgive and once again bless **HIS** people.

Psalm 81, **The LORD** called **HIS** people together to Worship **HIM**, but then **The LORD’S** messenger received a special message from **GOD** and delivered it to the people. The occasion, a stated Feast on the Jewish calendar, but they were not told what the Feast was.

Vss. 5-7 and 10 suggested Passover. The mentioning of “new moon” in verse 3, suggests the Feast of Tabernacle. The Passover celebrated the deliverance from Egypt and Tabernacles, **The LORD’S** care of **HIS** people during their wilderness years.

This Psalm reminds us of 3 different aspects of “*True Worship of GOD!*”

Outline:

1. **Praising GOD’S Name!** (Psalm 81: 1-5)

V. 1, The Leader calls together The People of GOD. V. 2, The Musicians are called upon to provide Music. Music and Worship go hand and hand. Worship involves the whole person, and Music helps lift a person’s thoughts and emotions to GOD. The Priest blows the trumpets (v. 3). What do you think about this: “If all Worship were personal and spontaneous, there would be diversity but no Unity. And If all Worship was only following a schedule, there would be uniformity and no diversity. (Read John 4: 20-24)

2. **Hearing GOD’S WORD!** (Psalm 81: 6-10)

The last clause of verse 5, could be translated “We heard a voice we had not known.” The emphasis in this Psalm is on “Hearing **The WORD of GOD**,” (vss. 6, 11, 13) Its delightful to sing praises to **GOD** and to pray, but if we want **HIM** to listen to us, we must listen to **HIM!**

3. **Obeying GOD’S Will!** (Psalm 81: 11-16)

Worship and service go together (Read Matthew 4: 10 and Deuteronomy 6: 13). This means we must obey what **The LORD** commands. But the nation did not obey **GOD’S WORD** and **HE** had to destroy all the people 23 years and older (Numbers 14: 26) Beware of the attitude of “spiritual deafness and willful disobedience! **The Greatest Judgment GOD** can send is “to let people have their own way! (Read Romans 1: 24, 26, 28)

The word “Oh that **MY** people had hearkened unto **ME**...” in verse 13, suggests “*if*,” such a small word, but it carries big consequences (Read Deuteronomy 5: 29; 32: 29; Isaiah 48: 18 and Matthew 23: 37)

Of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these: “It might have been.” (John Whittier)

Psalm 82, speaks of **GOD’S Judgment** against Judges. Asaph prays that **GOD** will bring Justice to the whole earth. **GOD** will Judge the wicked who have unfairly treated others.

Outline: **The JUDGE—GOD!** (Psalms 81: 1)

Since **GOD is The Lawgiver**, **HE** is also **The JUDGE** and **The JUDGE** of all the earth does what is Right (Genesis 18: 25) **The LORD** is not sitting at a bench, patiently listening to the presentation

of the case, because **GOD is JUDGE** and Jury and needs nobody to tell **HIM** the facts. **HE** knows what people are doing on the earth and will execute Judgment righteously. In **GOD'S** court, there is no "defense" or "appeal." **GOD is OMNISCIENT** and **HIS** verdict is final.

The "gods" in verses 1, 6, are not the false gods of the heathen, nor are these "gods" the holy angels, for angels cannot die (v. 7). These "gods" are people who have been given the awesome responsibility of representing The LORD on earth and interpreting and applying **HIS** Laws.

JESUS made this clear in **HIS** quotation in verse 6 in John 10: 34-36.

2. **The Judges** (Psalm 81: 2-7)

"And what does **The LORD** require of you but to do Justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your **GOD**?" (Micah 6: 8)

These Judges did not do justly (v. 2), or love mercy (vss. 3, 4), and they walked in defiance of **GOD'S Will** (v. 5). They championed the causes of "guilty" because they were bribed, and they failed to care for the orphans and widows.

Q. Does verse 5 describe the evil Judges or the abused people?

If the Judges, then it is terrible indictment against people who are supposed to know the Law and walk in its light. But it's possible that the pronoun "they" in verse 5 refers back to the weak and needy people described in verse 4. The priests and Levites did not always do their jobs well, and the common people did not know the Law well enough to defend themselves.

"**MY** people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge." (Hosea 4: 6)

3. **The Judgment** (Psalm 81: 6-8)

Though these people held high offices and were called "gods", they were only humans and would be judged for their sins. Privilege brings responsibility, and responsibility brings accountability.

Asaph added his prayer that **GOD** would bring Justice to all the earth and not just to Israel.

His prayer echoes The Church's Prayer: "...**THY KINGdom** come; **THY Will** be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Psalm 83 identifies with Psalms 50, 73-83). It describes the coalition of 10 Gentile nations that attempted to wipe Israel off the face of the earth. This reminds us that

The Church of JESUS CHRIST is likewise hated and attacked by the world (John 15: 18-19; 17: 14), and our defense is in Prayer and Faith in **GOD'S Promises** (Acts 4: 23-31).

Asaph lifts 3 heartfelt requests to The LORD in this Psalm...

1. "**LORD, See What is Happening!**" (Psalm 83: 1-8)

Two Names of GOD opens this Psalm—ELOHIM and EL, (v. 1) and two Names close it—JEHOVAH (JESUS our Salvation) and EL ELYON (GOD Most High). Asaph was troubled because The LORD had done nothing through HIS prophets and done nothing through HIS Providential Workings to stop the huge confederacy from advancing. Vss. 1-3, these invaders were many, they were united, and they proudly lifted their heads as they defied The LORD GOD of Israel.

2. "**LORD, Do What is Necessary!**" (Psalm 83: 9-15)

Asaph remembered some of **JHAVOH'S** great victories in Israel's history (v. 9a, 11—Gideon's victory over the Midianites, Judges 6-8); the victory of Deborah and Barak against Sisera and Jabin (9b-10; Judges 4-5) ...

Asaph closed his prayer by asking **GOD** to send such a victory to Israel that the enemy soldiers would flee in panic and look like tumbleweeds and chaff blowing before the wind.

3. "Glorify **YOUR Name!**" (Psalm 83: 16-18)

Before asking for their destruction, Asaph prayed that the enemy would be "ashamed and dismayed" and turn to The True and **Living GOD**. The armies of the ten nations depended on many gods to give them success, but **The GOD** of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob defeated the armies and their gods!

"Hallowed be **THY Name**" is the first request in The Model Prayer that **JESUS** taught (Matthew 6: 9) and must be the motive that governs all of our praying.

The Highest **GOD is SOVEREIGN** over all the earth!