

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 31.9%

Weekly Readings will cover: Psalms 89, 50, 73 – 82, 2 Chronicles 1 – 3, & 1 Kings 3, 5 – 7

Sunday: Psalms 89, 50 & 73

Monday: Psalms 74, 75 & 76

Tuesday: Psalms 77, 78 & 79

Wednesday: Psalms 80, 81 & 82

Thursday: 2 Chronicles 1 & 1 Kings 3

Friday: 2 Chronicles 2 & 1 Kings 5

Saturday: 2 Chronicles 3 & 1 Kings 6 & 7

Current # of email addresses in the group: 613

I hope each of you had a good week and are feeling refreshed from God's Holy Sabbath and rest.

By now you may be feeling a bit Psalm Psaturated (ha ha). This week we will spend up through Wednesday continuing through Psalms and then shift back into the Chronicles/Kings narrative.

Website archive location for audio files & PDFs:

<https://www.ucg.org/congregations/san-francisco-bay-area-ca/posts/audio-links-re-three-year-chronological-deep-dive-reading-program-circa-2022-2025-903711>

### **3-YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY: Week 54**

Read the following passages & the Daily Deep Dive on the daily reading.

Day 351 - SUNDAY: January 28<sup>th</sup>

Psalm 89, 50 & 73

Daily Deep Dive:

Psalm 89:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 89 begins as a psalm of praise for God's covenant with David, the Lord here seen sharing His dominion over creation with His earthly regent (verses 1-37), but ends as a lament over the apparent downfall of the Davidic dynasty (verses 38-51)—with a doxology (expression of praise) appended at the end to close Book III of the Psalter (verse 52).

This *maskil*—instructive psalm or "contemplation"—was composed by Ethan the Ezrahite. As mentioned above, his identity is disputed. Some believe this refers to David's Levitical choir leader Ethan (also apparently known as Jeduthun), but it more likely seems to refer to the Ethan the Ezrahite of 1 Kings 4:30-31, a descendant of Judah's son Zerah (compare 1 Chronicles 2:6). It should be observed that the earliest time that could conceivably fit with the latter section of this psalm is that of Pharaoh Shishak's invasion during the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam. Perhaps David's choir leader Ethan could have lived until this time, as was postulated in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on Psalms 73-74 with regard to Asaph and his psalms about national invasion—though it seems unlikely that both choir leaders would have lived into their early 100s. (Of course, whether Asaph lived that long is not known. His psalms could have been exclusively prophecies—as could the conclusion of this psalm.) Ethan the Ezrahite in 1 Kings 4 appears to have lived at the time of or prior to Solomon—though it could be that he lived long afterward and that the comparison here between Solomon and him (and the other noted Zerahites) could have been a much later addition to the account of Solomon in the book of Kings.

One possibility worth considering is that Ethan the Ezrahite wrote only the first part of Psalm 89 (verses 1-37) as a positive psalm during the time of David or Solomon and that another author added the downturn of the final section (verses 38-51) at a much later time—perhaps even as late as the fall of the Kingdom of Judah to Babylon. Most, however, take the psalm as a unified composition—with a long setup to give the background for the lament of the final section. Of course, regardless of how the psalm came together, it is presented to us as a unified whole in the Psalter.

Ethan begins with a celebration of God's mercy (*hesed* or covenant love) and faithfulness, which he will sing of "forever...to all generations"

(verses 1). God's merciful love stands firm forever, having been established "in the very heavens" (verse 2). This evidently is all aimed toward the covenant with David in verses 3-4 of a perpetual dynasty, which the prophet Nathan had revealed to David (see 2 Samuel 7:12-17). Evidently much more was said to David than is recorded in 2 Samuel 7. The establishment of the promise in the heavens is explained in more detail in verses 29 and 36-37 of Psalm 89, where it is said that David's dynasty will persist as long as heaven, sun and moon. This is related to God's statement through Jeremiah that His covenant with David was as unbreakable as the pattern of day and night and as the ordinances of heaven and earth (see Jeremiah 33:19-21, Jeremiah 33:25-26). God, moreover, explicitly swore to David that His dynasty would rule in all generations (Psalm 89:3-4). This creates a problem for many modern interpreters, as we will later consider.

Verses 5-17, concerning God's might and power, may appear to be a digression in the psalm. Yet this description of the Almighty Sovereign of heaven and earth is central to the psalm for a number of reasons. First of all, it illustrates His capacity to keep His promises—to fulfill the terms of the covenant He has made. Secondly, we are made to understand that God, on His throne of righteousness and justice (verse 14), is the true and ultimate King. He was actually Israel's King to start with (1 Samuel 12:12). The human king of Israel belongs to Him (Psalm 89:18)—serving as His viceroy, governing for Him on His throne. Note 1 Chronicles 29:23: "Then Solomon sat on the *throne of the Lord* as king instead of David his father." Furthermore, we should bear in mind that the One known to the Israelites as God in the Old Testament was in fact the preincarnate Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 10:4). He would later be born as a human being of David's lineage and, later still, come in glory to take back His throne to Himself as Israel's King forever—in ultimate fulfillment of the promise of the Anointed King, the Messiah.

*The Nelson Study Bible* notes on Psalm 89:9-10: "Rahab [pictured elsewhere as a river- or sea-monster] is a title for Egypt (87:4 [compare Isaiah 30:7]). The sea and Rahab [here] refer to God's great victories: in the beginning, His control of His creation; in the historic past, His victory over Egypt; and in the future, His complete triumph over Satan, sin, and death (Isaiah 27:1; Isaiah 51:9). The psalmists regularly assert God's complete control of creation (see Psalm 24:1). Nothing can challenge God's majestic rule over the entire universe." Compare also Psalm 93:2-4. (And for more on the term Rahab, see the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on Job 25-26.)

In Psalm 89:12, Mount Hermon is the snow-covered, 10,000-foot peak on Israel's northern border with Lebanon. Mount Tabor here, though only 1,800 feet, nevertheless rises grandly above the flatter land around it in the Galilee region. The majesty of these mountains serves but to praise the great God who made them. His arm and hand, symbolizing His strength and authority, is strong and high (verse 13).

The words "joyful sound" in verse 15 are translated from the Hebrew word *teruah*, the same word translated "blowing of trumpets" with respect to the Feast of Trumpets (see Leviticus 23:24). It refers to a great awakening blast on the shofar or ram's horn—like a shout or alarm. Perhaps the idea in Psalm 89:15 is that, in a figurative sense, all creation blares the majesty and power of God—and that those who perceive this are blessed. Responding to God, these people experience His favor, righteousness, empowerment and exaltation (verses 15-17). The horn in verse 17 is a symbol of strength (see verse 24; 75:10; 92:10-11; 132:17).

Verse 18 of Psalm 89 returns to the subject of the human king, who serves God as the people's defensive "shield" (see Psalm 84:9). This provides a transition back into a discussion of the Davidic covenant.

In Psalm 89:19, the Masoretic Text says God spoke in vision to a plurality of "holy ones" rather than the singular "holy one." This does not necessarily mean that multiple people received the vision, especially as the vision itself is singular. The statement more likely means that the one receiving the vision, presumably Nathan, communicated what he received to all of God's people.

With God's mighty arm and hand mentioned earlier, He now establishes and strengthens David as His anointed king (verses 20-21). He and those who follow Him to the throne would prevail against enemies (verses 22-24). As God ruled the sea (verse 9), He would now bestow sovereignty over the seas and rivers to the Davidic dynasty (verse 25). During the reigns of David and Solomon, Israel's borders were extended from the River Euphrates in the north to the River or Brook of Egypt in the south. And in alliance with Hiram of Tyre and later Egypt, Israel came to exercise dominion over maritime commerce in the Mediterranean and Red Seas. In the future, the Davidic dynasty's dominion over the seas would be even greater, as we will see.

The king of Israel would experience a special Father-son relationship with God (verse 26)—being as God's firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth (verse 27). David and Solomon did become the greatest kings of their time. Yet there was still more in store for the Davidic dynasty, which was to go on forever (verse 29).

Verses 30-34 show that God's promise to David was not ultimately contingent on the faithfulness of his descendants. If they disobeyed God, He would punish them but would not bring David's dynasty to an end. Verses 35-37 make it certain that God's promise is absolute and irrevocable.

All of this serves to introduce the shocking contrast of the final section. Things looked bleak for the royal descendant of David—whoever he

was at the time described here. He was evidently guilty of sin for which God was angry (verse 38). And it appeared that God, despite His promises, had renounced His covenant to uphold the dynasty (verse 39). Broken defenses, ruined strongholds, plunder by enemies who are exalted, turning back the edge of the king's sword and not sustaining him in the battle (verses 40-43)—all of this point to a time of national invasion and the suffering of crushing military defeat. As mentioned earlier, the earliest time that would fit such circumstances was the invasion of Pharaoh Shishak during the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam. Yet this could refer to a later invasion and defeat—perhaps even the final cessation of the Davidic dynasty in Judah at the time of the Babylonian invasion. Note the dreadful scale of the events. The psalm says the Davidic crown and throne have been cast down to the ground (verses 39, 44). The dynasty appeared doomed.

How could this be? Had not God utterly sworn that such a thing could never happen? Yet it looked like God was flouting every promise He had made to David regarding his throne and dynasty. How long will God let this horrible situation continue, the psalmist asks (verse 46). Life is so short—will he live to see the end of this situation? (verses 47-48). Where is the lovingkindness (the *hesed*) sworn to David, as noted at the beginning of the psalm? (verse 49; compare verses 1-3). The psalmist concludes by praying that God will think on the heavy burden of shameful reproach—the terrible mocking—that all His people, including His anointed king, are now being made to suffer from enemies (verses 50-51).

As hopeless as the end of the psalm may seem, it is not utterly so. For implicit in the question of how long this situation will go on is the thought that God may yet intervene. Indeed, why bother praying if there is no hope that He will act? Moreover, as much as the psalm ends in lament and confusion, we should recall that most of the psalm—the first part—speaks in glowing terms of God and His faithfulness. Looking

back at the first verse gives us the real focus of the psalm—God's merciful love and faithfulness is eternal and will be extolled forever. This is the lens through which the difficult circumstances at the end of the psalm are to be viewed.

How, then, do we reconcile this? An important clue is found in verse 4. God said David's throne would be built up to all generations—that is, one of his dynastic descendants would rule in all generations. Yet nowhere is it promised that there would be no breaks in the reigns of David's descendants. In fact, the punishing of the kings for transgression (see verse 32) could evidently include the temporary cessation of the Davidic throne—as long as a generation did not pass without David's throne being reestablished.

Yet what of the Davidic dynasty seemingly terminating with Zedekiah at the time of Babylon's invasion? Most Bible commentators today would be hard pressed to explain this in light of the Davidic covenant. Some think the throne was reestablished with the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. But Jesus was born more than 500 years later—after which many generations had passed, despite God's promise that David's throne would rule in all generations. Moreover, Jesus did not come to reign on David's throne at His first coming. He will do that when He later returns. So, have more than 2,500 years now gone by without a descendant of David ruling on his throne? Has God voided His covenant with David and broken His promises after all?

The answer is no. The Davidic throne was in fact transferred from Judah to Israel at the time of Babylon's invasion (compare Ezekiel 17). This entailed planting David's lineage in the British Isles—as Israelite tribes were in the process of migrating there (see our free booklet [\*The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy\*](#)). Shocking though it may seem, the royal dynasty of Great Britain today is the continuation of the line of David. Britain's monarchs have been the highest of the earth (see Psalm

89:27)—with historical dominion over the sea (see verse 25). To trace this amazing story, be sure to read our online publication [The Throne of Britain: Its Biblical Origin and Future](#).

Finally, we should realize that, as previously mentioned, David's descendant Jesus Christ is going to come back and reassume His rightful place as King over Israel as well as all nations. Through Him, the ultimate Anointed One (Messiah) and firstborn of God who will rule supreme over all the earth's kings, the sublime promises to David will come to fullest fruition—and His omnipotent reign will last for all eternity to come.

With the compilation of the Psalter, Psalm 89 in its final form concludes with the grateful praise of verse 52, bringing Book III to a positive ending.” [END]

Psalm 50:

The UCG reading program states: “Psalm 50 is the first of 12 psalms in the Psalter attributed to Asaph, one of David's music leaders (see 1 Chronicles 23:2-5)—with only this one occurring in Book II and the other 11 in Book III. It seems most likely that Asaph composed these. However, as noted in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on Psalms 42-45, it could also be that David wrote these, or just this first one, for Asaph to perform (or one composed the music and the other the lyrics). Yet this particular psalm "may have been separated from the other psalms of Asaph (73-83) in order to be paired with Psalm 51 in the cluster of Psalm 49-53" (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Psalm 50 title)—the idea being that Psalm 50 is a divine calling to account followed by a repentant response in Psalm 51 (where the sacrifices God desires are reiterated).

In Psalm 50 God delivers a summons and declares that He is the supreme Judge. Where the NKJV speaks of God *calling* the earth and



the heavens in verses 1 and 4, the NIV properly renders this as God *summoning* them—or their inhabitants—into His presence for the purpose of judgment. Note verse 4: "He summons the heavens above and the earth, that he may judge his people" (NIV). In verse 1, the summoning of the earth from the rising to the setting of the sun simply means that His summons reaches around the entire world.

Verses 2-3 speak of God shining forth from Zion, "the perfection of beauty," and the coming of God with fire and storm. This would seem to tie the psalm back to Psalms 46-48, which describe God's coming in great power to put down His enemies and His ascension to the throne in Zion in its lofty beauty to rule over all the earth (compare also Isaiah 29:6). At that time, He will gather His saints (see Psalm 50:5; Isaiah 40:11; Isaiah 56:8) and will institute righteous judgment (Psalm 50:6; Daniel 2:20; Daniel 4:34-35; Psalm 75). He will then instruct Israel in the ways of righteousness and warn of the consequences of hypocrisy (Psalm 50:7-23).

Yet just as in Psalm 48, there is likely a measure of duality all these verses. For God shining forth out of Zion could relate to the proclamation of His truth and call to repentance through His Church in this age as well as the law and judgment going forth from Zion in the Kingdom. The gathering of saints for judgment (Psalm 50:4-6) may relate to God's judgment beginning with the Church today (see 1 Peter 4:17)—not in the sense of final sentencing but of an evaluation process through their lives. Alternatively, it may refer to the Church being gathered for the work of delivering God's judgments to the world—especially to physical Israel (see Psalm 50:7).

Yet if the mention of God's saints having made a covenant with Him by sacrifice (verse 5) is related to the discussion of sacrifice in verses 7-15, it is possible that the same people are intended. That is, it could be that the saints or holy ones bound to God in covenant refers to the faithful

of Israel—in ancient times meaning those who persisted in God's covenant and today referring to the elect remnant of Israel according to grace, God's Church.

Getting into the meat of the psalm's message starting in verse 7, note that God is the one speaking—and He has something to say against His people. It is a rebuke. Not for their sacrifices per se, as God has commanded these and they are certainly to offer them (verse 8). The problem is that the people had lost the perspective of *why* God had set up the sacrificial system in the first place. God didn't need their sacrifices (verses 9-13). They were not doing Him a favor by giving them. All the animals already belong to Him (verses 10-11).

In verse 12, God says, "If I were hungry, I would not tell you." This is figurative, as God does not get hungry. The stress should be on the word "you." He is saying that He does not need to go to *them* to be provided for. What physical things could they possibly give Him since He already owns everything? "For the world is mine," He declares, "and all its fullness."

Indeed, the whole point of the sacrificial system was to show the people how much they needed God—His forgiveness and spiritual help—not the other way around. It also afforded them an opportunity for obedience and character development.

And this God *did* want. The offerings of the heart—these were and are the true offerings that God desires as a prelude to any physical offerings, as was noted earlier in the Bible Reading Program comments on Psalm 40. God wants a relationship with His people, wherein they live before Him in humility and obedience and He blesses and provides for them (Psalm 50:14-15). As God says in Hosea 6:6, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings"

(see also Matthew 9:13; Matthew 12:7). We will see this reiterated in the next psalm.

These words are as important to us as they were to the ancient Israelites. We do not offer burnt offerings today, but we do give offerings—of money and service. Yet these things, as important and required as they are, can become a wrong focus in a number of ways. We may start to think that we are upholding the Church or work of God with our tithes and efforts and develop a wrong sort of pride over that. We must never make the mistake of thinking that God needs what we have or is dependent on what we do. The reason He instructs us to give is to benefit us, to help train us for even greater service. Another pitfall is to get so wrapped up in the ritual aspects of prayer, Bible study, Sabbath services, Holy Day observance, etc., that we neglect to consider our utter dependence on God, to humbly repent of our sins or to serve the well being of others. Indeed, even serving others can fall into this category too if it does not flow from a genuine heart of love but, rather, from a desire to appear spiritual (compare 1 Corinthians 13:3).

This brings us to verse 16 of Psalm 50. Some commit to God's laws with their mouths but then turn around and flagrantly violate them as a matter of course (verses 16-20). This is not talking about the wicked of the world in general—but of those who profess to have a relationship with God.

God in His mercy does not immediately destroy such people. But sadly, they tend to take from this that He must be okay with what they're doing (verse 21). In their drift from God they basically forget what He's all about (verse 22). Yet God says He's going to set them straight on the matter (verse 21)—and warns them of dire consequences if they will not consider His words and, by implication, repent (verse 22). Of course, they must desire to change. What power can release a person

from sin who doesn't want to be released? Who can help a person who doesn't understand he needs help? "So are the paths of all who forget God; and the hope of the hypocrite shall perish, whose confidence shall be cut off" (Job 8:13).

Those who remember God and glorify Him will see His salvation (verse 23). The NRSV translates this verse as: "Those who bring thanksgiving as their sacrifice honor me; to those who go the right way I will show the salvation of God." Herein is assurance offered to those who serve God with a proper attitude—and hope offered to those who have drifted from Him. They can repent. God wants to save them. That's the reason He warns them. And He shows them the way to repent in the next psalm—along with a restatement of the kind of sacrifices He is truly looking for." [END]

Psalm 73:

The UCG reading program states: "Book III of the Psalter, as the *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* explains, "consists of three groupings of psalms, having an overall symmetrical pattern (six psalms {73-78}, five psalms {79-83}, six psalms {84-89}) and at its center (Psalm 81) an urgent exhortation to fundamental covenant loyalty to the Lord" (note on Psalms 73-78). Of the 17 psalms in this book, the titles of the first 11 (these psalms constituting the first two clusters of the three mentioned above) bear the name of Asaph, one of David's three choir directors--Asaph evidently being the primary director among the three. We earlier read Psalm 50, another psalm of Asaph that may have been detached from a full grouping of 12 to be placed in Book II during a later process of arrangement.

As mentioned earlier, *le-Asaph* could either mean that the psalms were written *by* Asaph or *for* him to perform. The former seems more likely, though there is some difficulty with respect to Asaph's authorship or

even performance of the psalms bearing his name. A number of the psalms of Book III deal with a time of national invasion and devastation. Indeed, two of Asaph's psalms (74 and 79) concern an enemy invasion of Jerusalem and the ravaging of the temple. This helps to establish a link, as explained in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary's introduction to Psalms, between Book III of the Psalter and the third of the five Festival Scrolls, the book of Lamentations, read annually by the Jews during their fast on the ninth of Ab in commemoration of the Babylonian and Roman destructions of the temple. Asaph, though, lived centuries before the Babylonian destruction.

It is perhaps possible that Asaph did live to see Pharaoh Shishak's invasion during the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam (1 Kings 14:25-28; 2 Chronicles 12). But Asaph would have been extremely old then if he were still alive. Consider that he was given his appointment when the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem shortly after David's establishment there (see 1 Chronicles 15:17-19; 1 Chronicles 16:5). Asaph would then have been over 30, as David's change to allow Levitical service at a younger age did not come until the end of the king's reign (compare Numbers 4:2-3, Numbers 4:22-23, Numbers 4:29-30; 1 Chronicles 23:3, 1 Chronicles 23:25-27). Shishak's invasion came about 78 years after David took over Jerusalem, so Asaph would have been 108 or older. While seemingly unlikely, this is not impossible.

However, other solutions have been put forward. Perhaps the most popular is the general rejection of the superscriptions in the book of Psalms as unreliable. But then we are left with the great mystery of how these scribal attributions arose. If oral tradition, did not the tradition have some basis?

Others would argue that Asaph wrote the psalms in question in a form we no longer have and that later editors rewrote these to fit their later circumstances. This could be, but in such a case it would seem that the

particular psalms would have been chosen for revision because they concerned similar circumstances, in this case national invasion, yet no such invasion took place in Asaph's time prior to Shishak's.

Some believe that "references to Asaph in these titles must sometimes include descendants of Asaph who functioned in his place" (*Zondervan*, note on Psalm 73 title). It is true that Asaph's descendants remained as temple singers in later centuries (see 2 Chronicles 35:15; Ezra 2:41; Nehemiah 7:44; Nehemiah 11:17). But why would the titles not say "*sons of Asaph*," as others say "sons of Korah"?

Another very real possibility is that Asaph was writing prophetically. He is referred to in 2 Chronicles 29:30 as "Asaph the seer." Indeed, many of the psalms are understood to be prophetic, but usually this means that some present circumstance was being written about that reflected future events in a dual sense. Indeed if Asaph did witness, and was writing about, Shishak's invasion, his words were also likely prophetic of future destruction--that is, of the ancient Babylonian and Roman destructions as well as the end-time destruction yet to come. However, it could be that God gave Asaph a vision of the future disconnected from his immediate circumstances. He may have been writing of what he saw with his mind and not with his eyes. We simply don't know for sure. In any event, we will assume Asaph himself as the author of the psalms bearing his name, as this seems most likely despite the apparent difficulty.

We begin, then, with the first cluster of Book II, Psalms 73-78. This "first group is framed by psalms of instruction. Psalm 73 is a word of godly wisdom based on an individual's life experience, while Psalm 78 is a psalm of instruction based on Israel's communal experience in its historical pilgrimage with God. Within this frame, Psalm 74 (a communal prayer) is linked with Psalm 77 (a prayer of an individual) by the common experience of seeming to be rejected by God (see Psalm

74:1; Psalm 77:7) and by an extended evocation of God's saving act in Israel's exodus from Egypt (see Psalm 74:13-15; Psalm 77:16-19). At the center, two psalms (75; 76) express joyful assurance that Israel's God (His 'Name is near,' Psalm 75:1; 'his name is great in Israel,' Psalm 76:1) calls the arrogant wicked to account and rescues their victims; he cuts off 'the horns of the wicked' (Psalm 75:10) and breaks 'the spirit of rulers' (Psalm 76:12 [NIV])" (note on Psalms 73-78).

Psalm 73 explores the dilemma of the wicked seeming to prosper while the godly suffer so much. It is thematically tied in this respect to Psalm 49. Like that song, Psalm 73 gives the clarity of vision that comes from realizing people's future destiny. "Placed at the beginning of Book III, this psalm voices the faith (confessed {v. 1}, tested {vv. 2-26} and reaffirmed {vv. 27-28}) that undergirds the following collection. It serves in Book III as Ps 1-2 serve in Book I" (note on Psalm 73).

Asaph knows that God is good to those in Israel who are pure in heart (verse 1), but he had struggled to understand why the wicked prosper--being nearly tripped up by this as he started to envy their strength, abundance and carefree lives (verses 2-5, 7, 12). It seemed they could do and say whatever they want (verses 8-9). How is it that they could defy God and everything still go so well for them? (verses 11-12). Was it pointless to obey God? (verses 13-14). Besides the personal quandary of Asaph detailed here, this song probably found meaning to the nation at large in later years when wicked enemy nations seemed to freely defy God and prosper while God's own nation suffered greatly at their hand.

In verse 15 Asaph says to God, "If I had really spoken this way, I would have been a traitor to your people" (New Living Translation). Thus he was so far only entertaining these thoughts. He had not yet succumbed to actually believing them. But the confusion was very uncomfortable (verse 16).

Until one day, that is, while he was in God's sanctuary (the tabernacle or temple)--perhaps performing his duties leading prayerful and worshipful music--that it hit him. He realized the *end* of the wicked (verse 17)--they will perish (verse 27). "He rediscovered something that he probably already knew but had not really considered: The prosperity of the wicked will not last. Their wealth will have no value in the next life" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 15-18). Indeed, more than in just this ultimate sense, he realized that without God's overseeing care their demise could come at any moment (verses 18-19; compare Luke 13:1-5). The middle statement of Psalm 73:19, "They are utterly consumed with terrors," means either that terrible events would destroy them (see NIV) or that, deep down, the wicked are really filled with fear of what might happen to them because they do not have the assurance of faith the godly have. Verse 20 says that when God finally does decide to deal with the wicked, they will disappear like a bad dream--the phrase "despise their image" here in context meaning to disregard the sight of them as unreal (compare Isaiah 29:5-8).

Asaph was then rather upset with himself (Psalm 73:21) for being so stupid--like an ignorant beast (verse 22; compare Job 18:3)--in thinking the way he had. Nevertheless, God didn't desert him in his foolishness but enlightened his perspective to keep him on the road to glory (Psalm 73:23-24). Nothing in the universe can compare to a relationship with God (verse 25). Physical life ends, but with Him is eternal life and reward (verse 26). Those who forsake God for unfaithfulness are on the road to death (verse 27).

Contrary to his earlier consideration of serving God being futile (verse 13), Asaph concludes just the opposite: "It is *good* for me to draw near to God" (verse 28). He trusts God and will proclaim to others--as this song does--that what God does for us makes our devotion to Him more than worth it." [END]



## Day 352 - MONDAY: January 29<sup>th</sup>

Psalms 74, 75 & 76

Daily Deep Dive:

Psalm 74:

The UCG reading program states: "According to its superscription, Psalm 74 is a *maskil* (instructional psalm or, as in the NKJV, "contemplation") of Asaph. As mentioned earlier, it, like Psalm 79, concerns a time of national invasion and devastation, including the ransacking of the temple in Jerusalem--the sanctuary (verses 3-4, 7) at Mount Zion (verse 2). The psalm is a lamenting plea for relief from the godless invaders and oppressors.

As mentioned before, it is possible that Asaph lived to see Pharaoh Shishak's invasion of Judah around 925 B.C., which included the looting and defiling of the temple (1 Kings 14:25-28; 2 Chronicles 12). However, it is just as possible that Asaph was given a vision of the future--of events beyond his death, possibly Shishak's invasion but perhaps one long afterward, such as the Babylonian invasion of 586 B.C. or the Roman invasion of A.D. 69-70 (or perhaps the end-time invasion still ahead).

Whatever he saw, the utter sense of shock and misery in Psalm 74 is clear: "Why...? Why...?" he asks (verse 1). "How long...?" and "Why...?" (verses 10-11). He realizes that the invasion is a result of God's judgment (verse 1)--but is stunned at what God has permitted the enemy to do. Asaph implores God to restore His relationship with His people and act to preserve His own reputation against the blasphemous actions of the wicked invaders. "Lift up your feet" in verse 3 is a call for God to walk--to come and see what the enemy is doing.

In verse 5-6, enemy troops are shown hacking with axes and hammers at the temple's carved work--its paneling or other décor--and then in verse 7 they are described as setting fire to the sanctuary, defiling it to

the ground. It is not clear what this means. If this means setting fires in parts of the temple as part of utterly defiling it, this could possibly refer to Shishak's invasion. But if it means that the enemy has burned the temple to the ground (as the NIV translates it), we should realize that such calamity only happened during the Babylonian and Roman invasions.

The statement in verse 9 that "there is no longer any prophet" is interesting in light of the fact that Asaph himself was a seer (2 Chronicles 29:30). This may support the argument that Asaph did not actually live to witness the devastation he is writing about. Yet considering what follows in the verse, this may simply mean that there is no prophet who knows how long the enemy oppression will last. Based on the same verse, the identification of the invasion as that of the Babylonians is problematic because God's prophet Daniel lived through the entire Babylonian captivity. And Jeremiah remained in Judah until he was taken by the remnant of the country to Egypt (after which only a few peasants were left in the land). And Jeremiah even gave a time frame for the dominion of Babylon.

Asaph urges God to take action against the evil adversary (verse 11) and then recounts the mighty acts God accomplished for His people in the past--when He delivered them from Egypt and led them to the Promised Land. (Asaph also reflects on this deliverance in Psalms 77, 78 and 81.)

God divided the Red Sea, opened fountains of water for the people in the wilderness and dried up the Jordan River so the Israelites could cross (Psalm 74:13, Psalm 74:15). The breaking of the heads of the sea serpents, of Leviathan, in pieces (verses 13-14) refers in one sense to the devastation brought against Egypt at that time. Leviathan, the sea serpent of Job 41, is representative of Satan the devil, the true ruler of this world. He is portrayed in Revelation 12:3 as having multiple heads--

in that case the heads being those of prophetic Babylon (a succession of world-ruling empires) shown as springing from him (see Revelation 13; 17). Yet he was also the power behind the thrones of Egypt and the other nations Israel defeated in their wilderness wanderings. Indeed, the Egyptian pharaoh is portrayed in the book of Ezekiel as a crocodilian river monster or sea monster (Psalm 29:3; Psalm 32:2). The heads of Leviathan being given as food to the Israelites in the wilderness would seem to refer to their looting of the Egyptians and the carrying away of Egypt's substance as well as the plunder of other Satan-led nations on the way to the land of Canaan.

In Psalm 74:16-17, Asaph points out God's power to determine day and night, the earth's borders (perhaps the division of land and sea) and the seasons. He is essentially saying, "You can do anything. You are in control of everything." And on that basis, He again pleads with God to consider what the enemy has done (verses 18) and the need of His people (verses 19-21).

The reference to God's people as "Your turtledove" (verse 19) is probably a term of endearment, showing the people as God's beloved (see Song of Solomon 2:14; Song of Solomon 5:2; Song of Solomon 6:9). In Psalm 74:20 Asaph asks that God would have respect to the covenant--wherein God had said that if the people repented and called on Him for help that He would deliver them.

The Contemporary English Version renders the latter part of verse 20 this way: "Violent enemies are hiding in every dark corner of the earth." That is, enemy forces are set to ambush God's people all over the place--emphasizing the urgent need for help. This also reminds us of the fact that God's people today are constantly pursued by spirit enemies, about which Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:12: "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers,

against the world's rulers, of the darkness of this age, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Modern King James Version).

Asaph further calls the people "Your poor" (Psalm 74:19), "the oppressed" and "the poor and needy" (verse 21)--as they have been humbled and are the kind of people God says He will care for and rescue.

Verses 22-23 contain a final plea for God to act against the enemies. While God has permitted them to attack His people for the sake of judgment, these wicked invaders have assaulted and blasphemed God Himself and continue to do so. They must be stopped--and they will be." [END]

Psalm 75:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 75 and 76 are both songs of reassurance of God's justice when things seem to be going so well for the wicked—no doubt sung in later years for encouragement when evil enemy nations encroached. "In some ways this psalm [75] may be regarded as God's answer to the questions presented in Psalm 74" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on Psalm 75). There Asaph had asked: "Will the enemy blaspheme Your name forever? Why do You withdraw Your hand, even Your right hand?" (Psalm 74:10-11). Here God says: "When I choose the proper time, I will judge uprightly" (Psalm 75:2).

Though no attribution is given to God as the One speaking, it is obvious from what is said that He is being quoted. God further says that even when severe distress engulfs the world, He is in control: "When the earth totters, and all its inhabitants, it is I who keep its pillars steady" (verse 3, NRSV). "He is the great Judge-Ruler, who will not permit wickedness, evil powers, and the arrogant to undermine the foundations of his kingdom. The quaking of the earth and peoples is a metaphor for the erosive effects of evil. Immorality undermines the

stability of earth and society...[but] the Lord proclaims that he graciously upholds his creation" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on verse 3).

"Thematic parallels to the song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1-10) are numerous" (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Psalm 75)—particularly in her statement, as a representative mother in Israel, that her "horn is exalted in the Lord" while God deals with her enemies. The horn is a biblical symbol for power and strength.

God here in Psalm 75 warns the wicked to stop arrogantly boasting and flaunting their horn (verses 4-5). Asaph adds that exalting oneself or seeking exaltation from or through other people on earth is vain—as God has ultimate control over who is demoted or promoted in the world's kingdoms (verses 6-7; compare Daniel 4:25b, 32b; Romans 13:1). This applies to our own individual circumstances as well. While there are practical steps we can take to achieve advancement, promotions and leadership opportunities—be it at work, school, church or community—the most important strategy is to rely on God for His direction and help. For "unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Psalm 127:1).

Incidentally, it is interesting to note the cardinal directions mentioned in Psalm 75:6-7—or, rather, the one *not* mentioned. Exaltation does not come from east, west or south but from God. This would appear to identify God with the *north*, as other passages do—that is, either the Temple Mount on the north side of Jerusalem or the farthest north in heaven (compare Psalm 48:2; Isaiah 14:13).

From His throne, God is sovereign throughout the earth. And, as Psalm 75:8 makes clear, He has destined abasement through severe judgment for those who persist in wickedness. The imagery of the winecup of

judgment here is also found in other verses (see Isaiah 51:17; Jeremiah 25:15; Revelation 14:10; Revelation 16:19).

Asaph knows that as God's servant he will live forever—and will throughout eternity continue to sing praise to God (Psalm 75:9). Then in verse 10 God speaks again to conclude that the horns of the wicked will be cut off (compare the imagery in Zechariah 1:18-21) while the horns, again representing strength, of the righteous will be exalted (compare Psalm 89:17; Psalm 92:10-11)—meaning, in concert with Asaph's previous words, for eternity to come.” [END]

Psalm 76:

The UCG reading program states: “Psalm 76, another song of Asaph, is "a celebration of the Lord's invincible power in defense of Jerusalem, his royal city. The psalm is thematically related to Psalms 46; 48; 87" (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Psalm 76). Like Psalm 75, this psalm would provide encouragement when enemy forces seemed unstoppable.

Jerusalem is referred to here in the abbreviated form of Salem (Psalm 76:2; compare Genesis 14:18). The victory over military forces God achieved at Jerusalem (Psalm 76:3) concerns God delivering His own oppressed people from an assault there, as the rest of the psalm makes clear.

Asaph declares God "more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey" (verse 4). The expression "mountains of prey" is interpreted by the next verse: "The stouthearted [referring to the invading enemies] were plundered." Mountains are often symbolic in Scripture of kingdoms or nations. These enemy mountains, seeking to prey upon God's people, have themselves become prey. As God elsewhere says to Israel of the end time: "All those who devour you shall be devoured; and all your adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity;

those who plunder you shall become plunder, and all who prey upon you I will make a prey" (Jeremiah 30:16; compare also Isaiah 31:4).

Though speaking of the victory as already accomplished in most of Psalm 76 (see verses 3, 5-6, 8-9), Asaph was prophesying here of the future (compare verses 10, 12). On one level the prophecy could be looking forward to the overthrow of Sennacherib's army outside Jerusalem in Hezekiah's day (see 2 Kings 19:35). Yet the main focus is God's deliverance of the Jews there in the end time (see Zechariah 12:8-9)—as Psalm 76 shows that the rescue is part of God's deliverance of "all the oppressed of the earth" (verse 9) when He breaks the spirit of rulers in an awesome show of power to "the kings of the earth" (verse 12). This could also represent God's victory in delivering the people of *spiritual* Zion, His Church, from the unseen spiritual rulers of this world bent on destroying them.

Fear of God, mentioned in three verses in this psalm (7, 8, 11), is an important theme here. "For the righteous, the fear of God is a response of awe, wonder, adoration, and worship. For the wicked, the fear of God is terror, for there is no escape from Him (Psalm 14:5)" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on Psalm 76:7).

Even the wrath of man directed against God will actually serve to praise and glorify Him (verse 10). This is because human attempts to fight against God (compare Revelation 19:19) will only demonstrate how irresistibly powerful He is (Revelation 17:14). God in such cases counters with His own wrath. "The remainder of wrath" (Psalm 76:10), indicates "that particular judgments do not exhaust his wrath; a remainder is left to deal with other hostile powers" (*Zondervan*, note on verse 10). Indeed, God will deal with *all* hostile powers when Jesus Christ returns and establishes the Kingdom of God throughout the earth." [END]

## Day 353 - TUESDAY: January 30<sup>th</sup>

Psalms 77, 78 & 79

Daily Deep Dive:

Psalm 77:

The UCG reading program states: “The middle phrase in the superscription of Psalm 77, which may be part of the postscript of Psalm 76, says "To Jeduthun"—the last of three occurrences of this designation in the psalms (see also the titles of Psalms 39 and 62). As mentioned regarding the previous occurrences, Jeduthun was one of David's three music directors, apparently synonymous with Ethan, who was over the Merarite performers (i.e., of the Levitical sub-tribe of Merari), as Asaph led the Gershonite choir and Heman led the Kohathite performers (compare 1 Chronicles 6:16, 1 Chronicles 6:33, 1 Chronicles 6:39, 1 Chronicles 6:43-44; 1 Chronicles 15:17-19; 1 Chronicles 16:41-42; 1 Chronicles 25:1, 1 Chronicles 25:6; 2 Chronicles 5:12; 2 Chronicles 35:15).

In great duress over some unnamed circumstance, Asaph has poured out his heart to God, knowing God has heard him (verse 1). He speaks in verse 2 of "the day of my trouble." While seemingly personal, this may, like some of the other psalms in this section, reflect a time of *national* tragedy—particularly considering the focus of the end of the psalm on God's past intervention for Israel.

Asaph has lifted his outspread hands to God in prayer through the night as he just can't get comfortable or go to sleep (verses 2, 4a). Thinking about God is only troubling to him (verse 3) because he doesn't understand why God is permitting or causing what is happening. He doesn't know what to say (verse 4b).

In verses 5-6, Asaph is trying to put the present situation into perspective by thinking on the past. Yet this engenders the question of



why God is not showing mercy as He has before. In its note on verses 7-9, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* states: "The formulation of questions has a therapeutic effect.... These questions go from the present situation of rejection (v. 7) to the cause: the Lord's 'anger' (v. 9). In asking these questions and in expressing his doubts, the heart of the psalmist comes to rest; for he knows the God of Abraham...will remain faithful to 'his promise.'"

Though in turmoil, Asaph determines to recall and meditate on God's mighty intervention of times past (verses 10-13). If the added italicized "is" in verse 13 (NKJV) is dropped, as it could be, the clause here, starting with the end of the previous verse could read, "...and talk of Your deeds—Your way, O God—in the sanctuary." The next line reflects what he would say: "Who is so great a God as our God?"

Through the remainder of the psalm, Asaph thinks about God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt in the days of Moses and Aaron (verses 14-20). Asaph's mind is moved as he meditates. "Unconsciously he has jumped from (a) talking about God, to (b) talking to God. Then he finds himself in prayer (c) confessing God's greatness, and finally (d) he seizes on the fact that of course...he belongs to that people whom God has already redeemed" (George Knight, *Psalms*, comments on verses 12-15).

Asaph concludes the psalm with declarations of God's sovereignty over the "waters"—a symbol of chaotic, threatening forces. The waters here are viewed as the thunderclouds of storm (verses 17-18) and the mighty sea, which God divided to lead his people through (verses 16, 19-20). "Lost in contemplation of the greatness of God, the poet seems thoroughly distracted from his pain. He does not mention it again, not daring to compare it to the greatness of the Almighty" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 20). God is in control, and His aim is to deliver His people—as He surely will, in the proper time as He determines." [END]

## Psalm 78:

The UCG reading program states: "Like Psalm 74, Psalm 78 is a *maskil*—an instructional psalm or "contemplation" (NKJV)—of Asaph. In this closing psalm of the first cluster of Book III, the second-longest psalm in the Bible, Asaph reflects on God's faithfulness despite Israel's history of rebellion against Him—and on God's decision to dwell with Judah rather than with Israel at large. Where the KJV and NKJV have "my law" in verse 1, the NIV has "my teaching," as the Hebrew word *torah* means instruction—principles to understand and live by, thus a law for life (compare Proverbs 1:8; Proverbs 3:1; Proverbs 4:2).

In Psalm 78:2, "the terms *parable* and *dark sayings* or riddles indicate sayings with 'deeper meanings' or 'teachings with a point' (Proverbs 1:6)" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on Psalm 78:1-2). The apostle Matthew quoted Psalm 78:2 as a prophecy of Jesus' use of parables (Matthew 13:34-35)—using stories to teach lessons. In Psalm 78 the story is that of Israel's history—a pattern followed by Christ's disciple Stephen in his message of Acts 7.

The general instruction here is not new, Asaph explains, as it was to have been passed down from one generation to the next so that succeeding generations would come to know God's laws and learn from the mistakes of past generations who failed to follow these laws (Psalm 78:3-8). Asaph is participating in this passage of instruction on a broad scale through the composition and performance of his psalm for the national audience.

Yet what may be new, the more subtle point of the psalm, as we will see, concerns the shift of the center of God's worship and of civil rule from the northern tribes to Judah. This is first hinted at in verses 9-11. The tribe of Ephraim son of Joseph here, as the leading tribe in Israel, was representative of the nation of Israel in general, particularly the northern tribes. Indeed, the mention of Ephraim in verse 9 with respect

to a battle may be specific. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* states: "From the description of God's judgment on Israel, on Shiloh ([the site of His tabernacle through the period of the judges] located in the mountains of Ephraim), and, particularly, on Ephraim (vv. 56-64, 67), the psalmist may be thinking of the Philistine incursion and victory at Ebenezer, which resulted in the loss of the ark and the destruction of Shiloh (1 Samuel 4:1-11)" (note on Psalm 78:9).

The loss at Shiloh, due to Israel's refusal to obey God, was a momentous development, as the psalm later points out. Yet it followed a pattern of Israel's rebellion since the nation's deliverance from Egypt, which is recounted in the psalm. (Zoan in verses 12 and 43 was an Egyptian city in the Nile Delta.)

Despite God's awesome deliverance (verses 12-16), the Israelites rebelled in the wilderness, trying God's patience (verses 17-18). Though He had divided the Red Sea, they didn't believe He would provide food and drink for them in the desert. They thought they would starve because of His "deliverance" (see Exodus 16). And when He did provide, they were later unsatisfied with what He gave them (see verses 18-22)—even though He gave them manna, the "bread of heaven...angel's food" (verse 24), which Jesus later explained was symbolic of Himself given for others to partake of in a spiritual sense (see John 6). So God gave them what they craved—sending birds in abundance to provide them with meat—but He struck them with a plague for their voracious lust and outrageous ingratitude (Psalm 78:26-31). The full account of this episode is found in Numbers 11.

"In spite of this," says Psalm 76:32, the Israelites continued to sin against God, not believing "in His wonderful works" (Psalm 78:32). How is this possible when they saw the supernatural intervention with their own eyes? Perhaps some did not trust what they had seen—or they willfully forgot. Yet on a wide scale this probably means that the people

did not retain confidence in these things as proof of God's care for them or an indication that He would judge evil the next time as He had before. This too is a form of forgetfulness. In Hebrews 3:12-13, Christians are warned against following the Israelites' example in developing an "evil heart of unbelief...hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

Because they didn't believe Him, God caused the Israelites to spend the rest of their days "in futility" and "fear" rather than entering the Promised Land (Psalm 78:33). For 40 years they wandered, seeking God then forgetting Him and becoming unfaithful (verses 34-42). Yet in His compassion, God averted His wrath on many occasions, remembering "that they were but flesh" (verses 38-39). God is still the same merciful God, for which we can be ever thankful (compare Malachi 3:6).

Again, at the root of the Israelites' unfaithfulness was their failure to remember—in the way they should have—God's power as exercised to deliver them from their enemies (Psalm 78:42). Asaph, expressing what parents should have been teaching their children, again recounts God's striking of Egypt to free His people and His driving out of the Canaanites to give His people the Promised Land (verses 43-55). Having come to "His holy border" in verse 54, "this mountain" in the same verse is evidently the whole land of Israel (as mountains often represent nations in Scripture).

Even in the Promised Land, the people "turned back and acted unfaithfully like their fathers" (verse 57). A major reason is probably that succeeding generations failed to pass on what God did for the nation—and to pass on God's laws. Verses 58-59 show that the Israelites sank into syncretistic and idolatrous practices, which infuriated God.

We come, then, to verse 60. Because of their pattern of unfaithfulness, God forsakes the tabernacle at Shiloh, allowing the enemy Philistines to capture, for a period of time, "His strength...and His glory" (verse 61)—referring to the Ark of the Covenant (compare 1 Samuel 4:22). Many Israelites were killed in the battle, including the high priest Eli's wicked sons Hophni and Phinehas (see Psalm 78:62-64; 1 Samuel 4).

In Psalm 78:65-66, God is portrayed as afterward rousing Himself and, with a great shout, beating back His enemies, putting them to a "perpetual reproach." Asaph is speaking of events leading up to the time he wrote this, essentially describing God leading Israel to defeat its enemies in the time of King David, creating an ongoing period of Israelite peace and triumph under Solomon.

As part of this process, Asaph says that God "rejected the tent of Joseph, and did not choose the tribe of Ephraim, but chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He loved, and He built His sanctuary like the heights" (verses 67-69). Thus, the center of worship is moved from the tabernacle of Shiloh in the territory of Ephraim to the temple of Jerusalem in the land of Judah. Focus is also placed on God choosing David, of Judah, as king over all Israel (verses 70-71). David's demeanor and care-giving knowledge as an actual shepherd of sheep was valuable training for shepherding God's people on behalf of God Himself, the great Shepherd (see Psalm 23).

Yet there may be much more to this psalm. After all, Psalm 78:2 is prophetic of Christ's parables. His parables mostly concerned His servants and the Kingdom of God. Might there be a Kingdom parable here in Psalm 78? Certainly the need to remain faithful to God and His continual faithfulness to forgive upon repentance are Kingdom themes. But there may be more.

The exaltation of Judah as God's dwelling in Psalm 78 would take on greater meaning after the division of the kingdom into north and south upon Solomon's death and the subsequent apostasy of the northern kingdom. As the prophet Hosea would later write in Hosea 11:12: "Ephraim has encircled Me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit [following Israel's historical pattern in Psalm 78—see especially verse 36]; but Judah still walks with God, even with the Holy One who is faithful." Judah was in essence the faithful remnant of Israel. But Judah would later apostatize as well. Even then, however, an elect few remained as the true Jews, so to speak—the true Jews of today, the elect remnant according to grace, being God's Church (compare Romans 2:28-29; Romans 11:5).

In that sense, God building His sanctuary on Mount Zion could today figuratively represent the building of His spiritual temple, His Church, the spiritual Zion. Indeed, the psalm could be seen, in type, as showing the center of God's worship being moved from the physical nation of Israel to the spiritual remnant of Israel—again, the Church. Yet in looking forward to God's Kingdom, we should understand that the people of spiritual Zion will be established at the earthly Zion and all Israel will ultimately be saved—no longer enslaved to the pattern outlined in this psalm. David in the concluding verses of Psalm 78 is in this picture representative of the rulers of God's coming Kingdom, especially the chief ruler, David's descendant Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd who will reign from the throne of David over all nations. David himself and all the saints will then reign with Him in perfect integrity and skill." [END]

Psalm 79:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 79, which begins the second cluster of psalms in Book III, is a lament over a devastating attack on Jerusalem and its temple. As with Psalm 74, this setting raises questions over Asaph's authorship noted in the superscription since Asaph would

have seen no such invasion unless he lived well over a century to witness Pharaoh Shishak's invasion in the fifth year of Solomon's son Rehoboam (ca. 925 B.C.). Refer back to the Beyond Today Bible Commentary's introduction of Psalm 74 to see various suggestions for resolving this matter—the likeliest perhaps being that Asaph, as a seer, was foretelling the future.

Asaph may have been writing in Psalm 79 of Shishak's invasion, but it is likely that even later destruction was also being prophesied, such as that wreaked by the Babylonians (586 B.C.) and, later still, by the Romans (A.D. 70). The invasion and temple defilement by the Greek Syrians during the time of the Maccabees (ca. 168 B.C.) could also be represented here—as could the destruction and defilement of the end time yet to come.

Note verse 2 in this regard: "The dead bodies of Your servants they [the invaders] have given as food for the birds of the heavens, the flesh of Your saints to the beasts of the earth." God through Jeremiah later warned of what His people would experience at the hands of the Babylonian invaders in similar terms: "Their dead bodies shall be for meat for the birds of the heaven and the beasts of the earth" (Jeremiah 34:20; compare Jeremiah 7:33; Jeremiah 16:4; Jeremiah 19:7). Of course, Jeremiah's prophecy, in a dual sense, was foretelling both immediate and end-time devastation.

The word "saints" in Psalm 79:2 means "holy ones." This could perhaps refer to God's holy nation generally or more specifically to priests at the temple, yet it may have referred, as it would today, to spiritually converted people. An end-time setting would indicate the latter—and other prophecies do show that even some of God's end-time saints will be slain in the coming time of tribulation along with the people of Israelite nations generally.

The wording of verse 4, about being a reproach and target of scorn and derision, is very similar to that of Psalm 44:13.

Asaph asks "how long" this terrible situation will continue (verse 5). Will God be angry with His people forever? Will His "jealousy burn like a fire"?—that is, will His anger over His people's unfaithfulness utterly consume them? Things appeared so bad as to seem like this might be the case. So the psalm asks God for mercy, deliverance, atonement and salvation (verses 8-9). And it appeals to God to be true to His name as the Savior of His people—to defend His own reputation, as the enemy taunts, "Where is their God?" (verse 10).

The psalm is also a call for just retribution on the enemy and all nations that oppose God and His people: "Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You...for they have devoured Jacob" (verses 6-7). It asks for God to act as His people's divine Kinsman-Redeemer and Avenger of Blood, avenging the deaths of His slain servants (verse 10) and rescuing those who will likewise die at the hands of the enemy if He doesn't act (verse 11). Again, God's reputation is shown to be at stake: "Pay back into the laps of our neighbors seven times the reproach they have hurled at you, O Lord" (verse 12, NIV). "The sevenfold restitution expresses a concern for full justice...the judgment must be equal to the severity of the reproach of God's name!" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on verse 12).

Asaph at last expresses confidence that God, as a caring shepherd over His flock (see Psalms 23; 80), will act in His people's favor—so that they may praise Him for all time (79:13)." [END]

Day 354 - WEDNESDAY: January 31<sup>st</sup>

Psalms 80, 81 & 82

Daily Deep Dive:

Psalm 80:



The UCG reading program states: "Wherethe superscription of Psalm 80 has "Set to 'The Lilies' [Hebrew *Shoshannim*]. A Testimony [*Eduth*] of Asaph," this could be rendered "Set to 'The Lilies of Testimony.' Of Asaph." The NIV has "The Lilies of the Covenant." Compare the superscription of Psalm 60, which has, "Set to 'Lily of the Testimony'" (*Shushan Eduth*). As in other cases throughout the Psalter, the first part of the superscription of each of these psalms may be a postscript of the preceding psalm.

As in the previous psalm (79), the nation is in distress—plundered by enemies (compare Psalm 80:12-13). And as before, it may be that Asaph was prophesying of national invasion beyond his lifetime—perhaps even of the end time still to come. Yet, just as Psalm 79 ends with reliance on God as the Shepherd of His people (see verse 13), so Psalm 80 opens with an appeal to the Shepherd of Israel who leads Joseph (the leading birthright people and therefore representative of the nation as a whole) like a flock (verse 1; compare Psalm 23; John 10).

God, who dwells between the cherubim—as represented on the earthly copy of God's throne, the mercy seat atop the Ark of the Covenant (see Exodus 25:17-22)—is asked to "shine forth" (Psalm 80:1), showing His glory through His intervening power (verse 2). Note the beginning of verse 2: "Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh." The psalm is here essentially pleading, "March against the [enemy] nations as you marched in the midst of your army from Sinai into the promised land (in that march the ark of the covenant advanced in front of the troops of these three tribes; see Numbers 10:21-24...)" (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Psalm 80:2).

The central theme of the psalm is clear from the repeated refrain asking, "Restore us..." (verses 3, 7, 19), with building intensity in calling on God: "...O God" (verse 3), "...O God of hosts" (verse 7) and "...O Lord God of hosts" (verse 19). The rest of the repeated refrain, "Cause Your

face to shine [i.e., smile favorably on us], and we shall be saved" (same verses), is essentially drawn from the priestly blessing of Numbers 6:25: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace." We have previously noted the use of this language in other psalms as well (see Psalm 4:6; Psalm 44:3; Psalm 67:1; Psalm 119:135). Here in Psalm 80 the people had been experiencing the opposite—the rebuke of God's countenance (His angry expression) causing them to perish (Psalm 80:16).

"How long," Asaph asks (as is common in laments), will God be angry and refuse to answer His people's prayers? (verse 4; compare Psalm 13:1-2; Psalm 79:5). In the desert wilderness, God, as His people's caring Shepherd, fed them with manna and gave them water to drink from the rock. But now, figuratively, He has given His people their tearful misery to eat and drink (80:5). They have become a source of contention and mockery to neighboring countries (verse 6)—rather than the blessing and positive example they were intended to be. So again the plea of restoration is raised (verse 7).

In verses 8-16 Asaph likens Israel to a vine and vineyard, imagery found in other passages (see Isaiah 5:1-7; Isaiah 27:2-6; Jeremiah 2:21; Jeremiah 12:10; Ezekiel 15:1-8; Ezekiel 17:6-8; Ezekiel 19:10-14; Hosea 10:1; Hosea 14:7). God bringing the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land is pictured as transplanting the vine (Psalm 80:8). His driving out of the nations before them (same verse) is compared to a caring vinedresser clearing the ground for the vine (verse 9; compare Isaiah 5:2). The vine filled the land (Psalm 80:9), growing to immense stature so that hills and tall trees, symbolic of other national powers (compare Ezekiel 17), were overshadowed as the vine grew (Psalm 80:10). It spread from the Sea (the Mediterranean) to the River (the Euphrates) (verse 11), representing Israel's dominion reaching this extent, as it did during the reigns of David and Solomon.

Yet things have dramatically changed. God has broken down His vine's hedges—its protective fence (referring to His own divine protection)—and allowed others to plunder it (verse 12). The boar and wild beasts (unclean animals here representing foreign invaders) uproot and devour it. Because of God's anger it is burned with fire and cut down (verse 16). Compare God's later words, probably adapted from Psalm 80, in Isaiah 5:5: "And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down."

The psalm calls on God to look at the sorry state of the vine now and to "visit" it (Psalm 80:14)—to show it care and restore it as it was. There is a play on words in the last several verses here. The Hebrew word for vineyard in verse 15 "is used only here in the Bible; it literally means 'root-stock'" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 4-17). Then we see the word "branch" in the same verse—giving us the common pairing of *root and branch*. Yet the Hebrew word for branch here is *ben*, meaning "son"—the same word translated "son" in verse 17 in the expression "son of man."

The nation of Israel was not just as a mere plant to God as a vinedresser but was God's own son (see Exodus 4:22)—intended to serve as His "right-hand man" (see Psalm 80:17), a model nation to properly represent Him to the world (as a vine bearing godly fruit). Yet the imagery here likely pointed to Israel's Davidic ruler as well, the particular "son of man" (meaning human being) who was to lead the nation in setting the proper example. Moreover, the words here no doubt look to the ultimate "Branch" who would come from the vine of Israel and the line of David—the Messiah. He too would be, in a unique way, God's own Son.

Jesus would later tell His followers that He is the true vine, that God the Father is the vinedresser and that they, abiding in Him as the vine, are

the branches (John 15:1-8). Jesus Himself was brought out of Egypt and replanted in the Promised Land, preaching throughout the breadth of the land. He suffered terribly for sin at the hands of enemies (not His own sin but that of others). He was brutalized and died. But He rose again—and through His death and resurrection all may be saved. Indeed, it is through this Son and His followers that the vine of Israel would be reconstituted in a spiritual sense and revived—so that it would never turn from God again (see Psalm 80:18). The physical Israelites will be restored to God's favor or grace through being grafted into spiritual Israel (compare Romans 11; Galatians 6:16).

Thus, as the final refrain calls for again (Psalm 80:19), Israel will be restored, God will smile favorably on His people and they shall be saved.” [END]

#### Psalm 81:

The UCG reading program states: “The middle of the superscription of Psalm 81, which may be part of a postscript to Psalm 80, contains the Hebrew phrase *al gittith*. We saw this earlier in the superscription of Psalm 8, and it reappears in Psalm 84. The NIV leaves it mostly untranslated as "According to *gittith*," whereas the New King James Version renders it as, "On an instrument of Gath." The *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* comments, "The Hebrew word perhaps refers to either a winepress ('song of the winepress') or the Philistine city of Gath ('Gittite lyre or music'; see 2 Samuel 15:18)" (note on Psalm 8 title).

Asaph composed Psalm 81 as a festival song (verses 1-3)--albeit one in which national enemies remain a serious concern (see verses 14-15), as in other psalms of Asaph in Book III.

The people were to "sing aloud," to "make a joyful shout," to "raise a song," to "strike the timbrel," to play "the pleasant harp with the lute" (verses 1-2), to "blow the trumpet" (the *shofar* or ram's horn) because

it was a statute and law of God to do so (verses 3-4)--revealed by God at the time of the Exodus (verse 5). It is important to recognize the congregational nature of worship here. As commentator George Knight remarks on these verses: "You cannot hold a festival all by yourself. It is God's will, however, that we should hold festivals. These verbs *sing aloud, shout for joy* and so on are all expressed in the plural" (*Psalms*, comments on Psalm 81). The word for "statute" (verse 4) or "decree" (NIV) "refers in its original usage to something that is meant to be imperishable for it has been chiseled in stone. God then 'demands' our regular worship. In his wisdom he knows that it is our regular participation in congregational worship that keeps us right with himself. Public worship is God's good idea, not ours" (same comments).

Verse 3 causes some confusion as to the timing of this particular celebration and trumpet blowing. Some take it to mean every New Moon (new month), every full moon and every sacred festival day. However, there was no law or statute to blow the ram's horn or celebrate at all of these times. Indeed, in the law God gave through Moses the blast of the ram's horn was commanded for only one festival, the Feast of Trumpets (see Leviticus 23:24; Numbers 29:1). This Holy Day actually falls on a New Moon--and is the only annual festival that does. Yet what of the mention of the full moon in Psalm 81:3? Some see other annual festivals indicated here. Passover and the First Day of Unleavened Bread come at the time of the full moon in the first month of the Hebrew sacred calendar. The beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles does as well--and many see verse 3 as indicating the entire fall festival period in the seventh month, from the Feast of Trumpets through Tabernacles. However, the word translated "full moon" can simply mean "full" or "fullness," and could here imply the completion of a month--thus the beginning of a new one. The Ferrar Fenton Translation makes no mention of the full moon--only the New Moon. So it may well be that the Feast of Trumpets is exclusively meant here,

though the call to celebration and reflection on God's deliverance fits with all of God's festivals.

Note again the timing of God's revelation of the statute in verse 5: "This He established in Joseph [representative of all Israel] as a testimony, when He went throughout the land of Egypt." This translation would indicate the time that God sent the plagues against Egypt. However, nothing is recorded in Moses' writings about God revealing the command to blow the shofar at the Feast of Trumpets until Israel was later gathered at Mount Sinai. It is possible that He gave Moses an earlier revelation while in Egypt. Yet it seems more likely that a very general time frame is meant--that is to say, God gave the Israelites this statute long ago around the time that He destroyed Egypt to free them. Alternatively, some versions translate verse 5 as saying that God established the statute when Joseph (i.e., Israel) went out of Egypt (compare Tanakh, New and Revised English Bible, New American Bible, Fenton).

The end of verse 5 says, "I heard a language [literally, lip] I did not understand." There is some dispute as to who is speaking here. In the remainder of the psalm, from verses 6-16, it is clearly God who is speaking, referring to Himself as "I." That would seem to argue for the "I" at the end of verse 5 also being God. Yet how could the omniscient God not understand the Egyptian language? For this reason, many take the "I" in verse 5 to refer to each Israelite singing the song--following the Jewish understanding that each and every Jew even today was personally and individually delivered from ancient Egyptian bondage.

Yet the word rendered "understand" in verse 5, *yada*, has the general meaning of "know." As Strong's Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary notes, this word can mean "acknowledge...regard, have respect [for]" (*Abingdon Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Strong's No. 3045). Indeed, just as God says He does not "know" those who do not

obey Him, He could just as well say that He does not "know" (acknowledge or regard) the speech of those who defy Him. Consider that Egypt's language and speech was thoroughly polluted with idolatrous references. "As in [Psalm] 114:1, there is a disdain for the history, culture, and language of Egypt" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 3-5).

In Psalm 81:7, God answering in "the secret place of thunder" is evidently a reference to the giving of His law and covenant at Mount Sinai, when "there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.... Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire... And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice" (Exodus 19:16-19; compare Exodus 20:18). Thus, it would seem that in the "memorial of blowing of trumpets" at the Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24), the Israelites were to recall this earlier trumpet blast when God came down in power and glory, descending with thunder and fire, as a prelude to giving His law. Interestingly, the Feast of Trumpets primarily represents the time of Christ's return, when He will come in great power and glory, in a devouring fire, as a prelude to revealing His law anew to Israel and all nations. Moses gave the point: "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin" (Exodus 20:20)--as they had at Meribah, when they questioned whether God was among them after having experienced the Exodus (17:1-7; Psalm 81:7).

In verses 8-10, God reminds the people of what He told them at Sinai--and implicitly holds out His offer of covenant relationship anew. In verse 9, He reiterates the first of the Ten Commandments--that there be no foreign gods among His people (see Exodus 20:3). And in verse 10 of Psalm 81, He repeats the preamble to the Ten Commandments: "I

am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt" (see Exodus 20:2). This great episode should have been enough to convince them to trust and obey Him. God promised to be His people's provider (Psalm 81:10b).

Historically, Israel failed to listen (verse 11), so God allowed them to go their own way (verse 12)--although that's not what He wanted (verse 13). If His people would obey, He would subdue their enemies (verse 14). It seems likely that God inspired Asaph to write this psalm while Israel was experiencing problems from enemies--perhaps while David was still battling foreign nations. And the words would certainly take on greater urgency in later times of foreign oppression.

In verse 15, the Israelites' enemies are referred to as *God's* enemies--"the haters of the Lord" (compare 83:1-4). The NKJV says that when God subdues them, they "would pretend submission to Him" (81:15). The NIV alternatively says they "would cringe before him." Then note the latter phrase in verse 15: "But their fate would endure forever." The Hebrew word translated "fate" here actually means "time." Most see this as meaning judgment on the enemies. But "their" might refer back to the Israelites, just as "them" in the next verse does--in which case the verse would mean that obedient Israelites would endure for all time.

God's desire is to give His people the very best of everything (verse 16)--and He eventually will if they will only heed Him and walk in His ways. The Feast of Trumpets and the other fall festivals picture the ushering in of a time when Israel will repent and all God's promises will come to fruition. Even other nations will be grafted into Israel to learn God's way and share in the promises as well. This is certainly a wonderful reason to joyfully celebrate." [END]

Psalm 82



The UCG reading program states: "In Psalm 82, Asaph delivers from God "a word of judgment on unjust rulers and judges.... [He shows] God presiding over his heavenly court [verse 1].... As the Great King (see...Psalm 47) and the Judge of all the earth (see Psalm 94:2; Genesis 18:25; 1 Samuel 2:10) who 'loves justice' (Psalm 99:4) and judges the nations in righteousness (see Psalm 9:8; Psalm 96:13; Psalm 98:9), he is seen calling to account those responsible for defending the weak and oppressed on earth" (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Psalm 82).

Observe in verses 1 and 6 the term "gods" (Hebrew *elohim*). This plural word can refer to a plurality of gods (usually false gods) or in a singular sense to the one God (or God family) comprising more than one Being--God the Father and God the Son, Jesus Christ. To learn more about this terminology and the nature of God, see our free booklet "[Who Is God](#)".

Here the term "gods" refers to human beings--"children of the Most High" (verse 6). Consider that when God created the plants and animals of the earth in Genesis 1, He made them to reproduce each "according to its kind." But in the same context, God said of humanity, "Let Us [the Father and the preincarnate Christ] make man in *Our* image, according to *Our* likeness" (verse 26)--language denoting producing a child in one's image (compare Psalm 5:3). So man was made according to the God-kind. Yet this initially is in an incomplete sense of resembling God in appearance on a physical level and having an intelligent and creative mind (though still unimaginably inferior to God's). God ultimately intends for man to be a spiritual creation completely in His likeness.

Jesus would later use Psalm 82:6 to confound the Jewish religious authorities who were upset because He declared Himself the Son of God. Reminding them that their own law (Scripture) referred to human beings as "gods," he asked them why they were so upset at Him for merely saying He was the *Son* of God (John 10:31-37).

One godlike characteristic human beings were given at man's initial creation was that of having dominion over the earth--representing Him as ruler over creation (Genesis 1:26-28). For many, this dominion would extend over other human beings. Yet for the most part, people have not taken after God's nature in the way they have fulfilled this responsibility. Rather, they have taken advantage of and abused each other. Psalm 82 addresses this failing. It is in fact a message for everyone--but applies all the more to those who are in positions of power, who have the capacity to help others in the ways called for in verses 2-4.

Verse 5 speaks of the colossal failure of human misrule. Commenting on this verse, the *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* notes: "They ought to have shared in the wisdom of God (see 1 Kings 3:9; Proverbs 8:14-16; Isaiah 11:12), but they are utterly devoid of true understanding of moral issues or of the moral order that God's rule sustains (see Isaiah 44:18; Jeremiah 3:15; Jeremiah 9:24)... When such people are the wardens of justice, the whole world order crumbles (see Psalm 11:3; Psalm 75:3...)."

Clearly the human beings addressed in Psalm 82 as gods are not truly gods in an ultimate sense--as God says they will die as mere mortal men, falling "like every other ruler" (verse 7, NIV). Yet for those who submit to God's ways, other passages show that men can receive eternal life and divine glory as spirit-born members of the God family.

Thankfully, while the current societal order will fall to pieces, the ultimate world order God has ordained will stand (Psalm 75:3; Psalm 93:1). As the concluding verse of Psalm 82 calls for, He will intervene and set all things right in all nations. For all nations will at last be His, not just as His property but as His true children in His likeness--not only of form, but of character." [END]

## Day 355 - THURSDAY: February 1<sup>st</sup>

### 2 Chronicles 1 & 1 Kings 3

#### Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program states: "The Egyptian pharaoh gives his daughter in marriage to Solomon, cementing an alliance between Egypt and Israel. "In the ancient Middle East, political alliances were often ratified by the marriage of the son of one king to the daughter of another" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on 1 Kings 3:1). Yet this case is remarkable in two respects. First: "Except in unusual circumstances, the pharaohs of Egypt did not observe this custom (but see 1 Chronicles 4:17-18). Therefore, the giving of Pharaoh's daughter to Solomon attested to the Israelite king's growing prestige and importance to the Egyptian king" (same note). Second: The pharaoh is the one giving his daughter to a foreign ruler along with a dowry, making Solomon appear to be the senior partner in the alliance. It is perhaps even likely that the pharaoh is the one who first proposed the alliance and marriage, rather than it being something Solomon sought. In any case, as part of the dowry, the pharaoh gives Solomon a captured, albeit destroyed, city of the Canaanites located near the Philistine border, which Solomon rebuilds as a fortress city (1 Kings 9:15-17). Solomon provides well for Pharaoh's daughter, building a special house for her patterned after his own (1 Kings 3:1; 1 Kings 7:8; 1 Kings 9:24).

Consider what this development means as far as Solomon's power and prestige is concerned. The image of Israel as an insignificant nation in the time of David and Solomon is simply incorrect. David was already allied with King Hiram of Tyre, the ruler of the Phoenician Empire, which dominated ancient maritime commerce (2 Samuel 5:11-12). This close alliance continues under Solomon (1 Kings 5:1). Assyria remains weak and subdued at this time, David apparently even achieving dominance over the powers of Mesopotamia (see highlights on 1 Chronicles 19 and 2 Samuel 10). And now Egypt, the other great power

of the ancient world, joins the Israel-Phoenician alliance—with Solomon apparently sitting as the dominant figure among the partners. This is rather astonishing. And the true greatness of Solomon's reign has not even been experienced as of this point in the story flow.

We next see the point made that the people sacrificed at high places (1 Kings 3:2). While this originally denoted hilltop shrines, it eventually became a generic term for any place of worship. Since the destruction of Shiloh and the separation of the tabernacle and the ark, and until the temple was built at Jerusalem, no single established place of worship existed. So multiple sites were employed for sacrificing and burning incense—perhaps even some formerly pagan worship places.

Indication that the current practice of the people was not acceptable is found in 1 Kings 3:3, where we are told that Solomon "loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David, *except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places.*" Still, Solomon's overall attitude at this time was one of seeking and obeying God. (It should be noted that later righteous kings of Judah allowed such high places to remain—apparently not understanding the problem with them.)

The *chief* high place—that is, the main worship center—was now at Gibeon, since that is where the tabernacle and original bronze altar were currently located (1 Kings 3:2-4; 2 Chronicles 1:3-6). Clearly this was an acceptable place of worship. Solomon goes there often in his early years as king to worship God. At one such visit, God appears to him in a dream and offers to grant him whatever he wants. Solomon focuses on the immense task of governing the people, and has the humility and sense, thanks to his father David's instructions (compare 1 Chronicles 22:12; Proverbs 4:3-9), to ask for wisdom, knowledge and an understanding heart to carry out his responsibilities in governing God's people (2 Chronicles 1:10; 1 Kings 3:9).

David would have preferred Solomon's focus be on acquiring the understanding and wisdom *to remain faithful in keeping God's laws* (1 Kings 2:3; 1 Chronicles 22:12-13; 1 Chronicles 28:7-9; 1 Chronicles 29:19). It is not enough to judge righteously. A leader must be righteous himself. Nevertheless, God is impressed with Solomon's unselfish request at this point, and not only grants him knowledge and wisdom, but also the tremendous riches and honor he could have asked for. And if he should continue in God's way, he would also be granted a long life (1 Kings 3:14).

An example of the wisdom to judge that God granted the king is shown in the case of the two prostitutes and the baby, a case still famous even among those with little biblical knowledge.” [END]

1 Kings 3:14 – The previous promises of riches, etc...were absolute, however, this promise, “to lengthen” his days, was conditional on his obedience to God.

#### Day 356 - FRIDAY: February 2<sup>nd</sup>

2 Chronicles 2 & 1 Kings 5

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program states: “Hiram, king of Tyre, had been David's ally, and had helped him build his palace at Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:11). Some see the words “Hiram had always loved David” (1 Kings 5:1) to simply denote their political alliance—the word for ally in a number of Old Testament passages literally meaning “lover.” But “Solomon's note about the temple begins, ‘You know,’ suggesting that David had shared his dream of building a temple with Hiram as well, and that the two may have been [actual] friends” (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on 1 Kings 5:1-6). The area of modern Lebanon along the border between the two ancient kingdoms contained some of the best timber around. And Hiram has some highly skilled workers. So Solomon arranges for workmen from this Phoenician king to help cut and deliver

wood for the temple, and to assist in stonecutting. Hiram offers Solomon one craftsman in particular, also named Hiram (or Hiram), the son of a man of Tyre and an Israelite woman, who will make most of the temple furnishings—as Bezalel made things for the tabernacle in the wilderness.

Solomon also drafts thousands of Israelite workers. "In addition to slave labor, Solomon relied on the *corvee* [labor exacted in lieu of taxes by public authorities] to provide workers. This practice was common in ancient times, and involved claiming a person's labor as sort of a personal tax. By alternating shifts Solomon was able to maintain agricultural production at home, while keeping work moving on his massive construction project. Not many years ago some rural counties in the Midwest had a form of corvee: farmers would keep the roadsides mowed in return for reduction of local taxes" (note on verses 13-17)."  
[END]

2 Chronicle 2 notes:

Verses 4 & 5 – I find it interesting that Solomon takes this opportunity to share a few key aspects of truth with the king of Tyre. As we have the opportunity we should share God's truth in appropriate amounts and ways with those around us.

Verse 10 – A "bath" was a Hebrew measure of liquid. It was equal to the dry measure of "ephah".

Verse 15 – "Let him send to his servants" is a way of this king of Tyre accepting these things of Solomon and calling himself one of Solomon's servants.

1 Kings 5 notes:

Verse 18 – The KJV says “stonesquarers” where the NKJV says “Giblites”. The Giblites were men of Gebal who were under the jurisdiction of Tyre and were exceptionally skilled with stones. JFB commentary states “These great beveled or grooved stones, measuring some twenty, others thirty feet in length, and from five to six feet in breadth, are still seen in the substructures about the ancient site of the temple; and, in the judgment of the most competent observers, were those originally employed “to lay the foundation of the house.” [END]

### Day 357 - SATURDAY: February 3<sup>rd</sup>

2 Chronicles 3 & 1 Kings 6 & 7

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program states: “The date of the beginning of the building of the temple is given as the 480th year after the children of Israel came out of Egypt, which was also the fourth year of Solomon's reign. Thanks to the painstaking work of Professor Edwin Thiele, who in 1950 worked out a likely chronology for the kingdoms of Israel and Judah (showing the books of Kings to be entirely trustworthy and in harmony with the well-established Assyrian chronology), it can be reasonably ascertained that Rehoboam began his reign in or very close to 931/930 B.C. As 1 Kings 11:42 informs us that Solomon reigned 40 years, Solomon's first year, according to this chronology, was 970/969 B.C., and his fourth year (in which he began the construction of the temple) was 967/966 B.C. Based on these dates, we may conclude that the Exodus occurred in or very close to the year 1447/1446 B.C.

As regards chronology, this chapter also provides us with a way to determine whether Judah was counting the years of a king's reign using a Nisan-to-Nisan (spring-to-spring) or a Tishri-to-Tishri (autumn-to-autumn) reckoning on the Hebrew calendar. The work on the temple was begun in the second month of Solomon's fourth year (1 Kings 6:1), and completed in the eighth month of Solomon's 11th year, having been under construction seven years (1 Kings 6:38). Months are always

numbered from the spring month of Nisan (first month of the sacred year), regardless of whether one is reckoning a year from Nisan to Nisan (sacred year) or Tishri to Tishri (civil year). Reckoning was also inclusive, meaning the first and last units or fractions of units in a group are included and counted as full units. If Judah had been using a Nisan-to-Nisan reckoning of regnal years, the temple would have been described as eight years in building. However, using a Tishri-to-Tishri reckoning yields the seven years of 1 Kings 6:38.

The temple sanctuary, which contained the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, or Holy of Holies, was a rectangular building measuring about 90 feet long by 30 feet wide by 45 feet high. (This and subsequent measurements assume an 18-inch cubit—although it is possible that they may have used the longer 20.5-inch royal cubit from Egypt or a larger variant, which would make these measurements bigger.) On the eastern side of the sanctuary was an enclosed porch that extended the width of the building, projected about 15 feet from it, and apparently formed a 180-foot tower (compare 2 Chronicles 3:4). Around the sanctuary building Solomon built a very curious "honeycomb" of offices or rooms. These rooms were arranged in three stories; the lowest rooms were about 7.5 feet wide, the middle story rooms were about 9 feet wide, and the upper rooms were about 10.5 feet wide. In 1 Kings 6:6, we are told that Solomon built "narrow ledges around the outside of the temple, so that the support beams would not be fastened into the walls of the temple." This indicates that the sides of the sanctuary had a stepped appearance during construction, and the upper story offices each projected one cubit further toward the sanctuary interior than the office below. No doubt the exterior facade concealed this stepped feature once the building was completed. Within the southern side of the office complex was a "winding stairway"—either a circular or square spiral—that provided access to the second and third story offices. This honeycomb of offices would seem to bear on Christ's statement, "In My Father's house are many



rooms" (John 14:2, NIV). He may have been using the temple's architecture as a visual model to His teaching (though, as we will examine when we later come to this verse in our reading, He was also probably using another analogy of His day—that of a groom building on to his father's house to prepare for the addition of his wife to the family).

Interestingly, 1 Kings 6 also tells us that every stone was cut and polished and prepared for its position *away from* the building site—"so that no hammer or chisel or any iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being built" (verse 7). Just as the physical temple of God was built of stones finished and fitted for their place before they were brought to the mountain and assembled into a glorious building, so Christians, each a living stone (1 Peter 2:5), together a spiritual temple (1 Corinthians 3:16), are being finished and fitted for their place before they will be brought together at the resurrection and assembled in glory.

During the construction of the temple, God sent word to Solomon saying, "If you walk in My statutes, execute My judgments, keep all My commandments, and walk in them, then I will perform My word with you, which I spoke to your father David" (1 Kings 6:12). Some mistakenly think that this puts a condition on God's unconditional promise to David in 2 Samuel 7. It does nothing of the sort. God's promise to David—that he would have an eternal dynasty and never lack a man to sit upon his earthly throne—is unconditional. But God did not promise this eternal dynasty would continue through *Solomon's* line.

The unconditional promise was that one of *David's* descendants would occupy the throne forever. God's promise to Solomon was that *if he* remained faithful, *then his* line would occupy that throne forever. But Solomon, as we will see, did not remain faithful. Although

Solomon's line still occupies that throne in the person of the British monarch, that throne will be turned over to another of David's descendants, Jesus Christ, who is a descendent of David through *Nathan* (Luke 3:31), not Solomon. This will occur at Christ's second coming. Solomon's ruling line will then cease. So, the unconditional promise to David will be kept, but Solomon's dynasty will not endure forever because he failed to fulfill the condition.

Solomon also built the main administrative centers of Israel's government. The massive *House of the Forest of Lebanon* probably served as Solomon's armory. Measuring about 150 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet tall, it obtained its name from the white fragrant cedar wood with which it was paneled—no doubt taken from Lebanon's famous Mount Lebanon—and from its 45 pillars, which must have looked like the trees of a forest. Around the building ran a three-course row of windows, beveled on the inside to maximize the dispersion of daylight. The doors were similarly beveled on the exterior, for aesthetics, and arranged in groups of three, providing quick access to the interior. Before the building was also a colonnade of pillars supporting an exterior roof.

Solomon's court was seated in the *Hall of Judgment*. Here Solomon sat as the Supreme Justice of Israel under God. Under Israel's system of justice, a citizen could appeal directly to the king in matters of law or equity and, if the king agreed to hear the case, the proceedings were held in the Hall of Judgment. Once again, the hall was paneled with Lebanon cedar. Here also was perhaps the main chamber for what some have described as Israel's national Assembly of Elders, a sort of House of Lords or Senate for Israel, which, in the opinion of some modern examiners, assisted the king in the government over which he presided. We'll see further mention of this in a few days.

Solomon's personal residence was modeled on the Hall of Judgment, although little information is given about its own features. If Solomon followed the typical pattern of Middle Eastern monarchs, his personal residence was at one extreme of the complex, the House of the Forest of Lebanon and the Hall of Judgment in the center, and the residence of the daughter of Pharaoh was at the opposite extreme (along with the residence of Solomon's harem).

In mentioning Solomon's personal residence, Scripture adds that Solomon built a similar residence for his wife, the daughter of Pharaoh. It was not the practice of sovereigns to dwell with their spouses, and thus a second residence was provided for the daughter of Pharaoh. But this note also raises some questions we have not yet looked at. When had Solomon taken the daughter of Pharaoh? Was it before or after his father's death? And why was such a pairing permitted, especially given the prohibitions against marrying a non-Israelite (Exodus 23:31-33; Exodus 34:12-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-4)? It would appear that she was his first wife, given her mention here and in 1 Kings 11 (even though Solomon's heir, Rehoboam, was not her son but the son of an Ammonite, 1 Kings 14:21).

First of all, it should be noted that the prohibitions just cited were against marrying Canaanites, not Egyptians. And in 1 Kings 3, the fact that Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh (verse 1) was immediately followed by the fact that he at that time generally walked in obedience to God (verse 3)—that is, his marriage was not referred as something wrong. Still, we can see in it the seeds of what later became a huge problem.

Generally speaking, as mentioned in our earlier highlights on 1 Kings 3 and 2 Chronicles 1, the marriages of Middle Eastern sovereigns often were the seals of political alliances made with foreign potentates. Solomon's marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh was most likely the

sealing of an alliance with Egypt. Josephus, the Jewish historian, states that Solomon took the daughter of Pharaoh after David's death (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 8, chap. 2, sec. 1). And it does follow that way in 1 Kings. Did Solomon undertake the alliance with Egypt on the death of David in an effort to forestall a possible war with Israel's powerful southern neighbor—who might seek to take advantage of a new king suspected of lacking the military acumen of his father? It would appear that one of Solomon's strategies for maintaining peace and the stability of his kingdom was to enter into marriage and trading alliances with the major nations and many trading sheiks of the eastern deserts surrounding Israel. Thus Solomon's 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3) were not so much wives as tokens of international covenants, most of them probably never being seen more than once by Solomon—though there were a number that he clearly did love (verse 2).

Whatever the reason for Solomon's marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh, it began a trend that obviously got out of hand. Indeed, this multiplying of pagan wives was *clearly* in disobedience to God (Deuteronomy 17:17)—as was marrying women from nations that God had certainly forbidden (see 1 Kings 11:2). And it eventually proved to be the undoing of his kingdom for, as recorded in 1 Kings 11, his foreign wives eventually led him into idolatry. The result was the rebellion of the northern 10 tribes after his death, and the voiding of the conditional covenant God made with him concerning the perpetuity of his seed upon the throne of Israel. Solomon had failed to learn the lesson of Psalm 75:6-7: "For exaltation comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south. But God is the Judge: He puts down one, and exalts another." While alliances with other kingdoms did serve to strengthen Israel for a while, the true exaltation of Israel would not come from these alliances with temporary rulers of this earth but from God. And so would abasement for disobedience. It is never prudent or

wise to contravene the commands of God. War, instability and schism—whether personal or national—are the result.’ [END]

2 Chronicles 3 notes:

Verse 11 – Using 18 inches for a cubit, each wing would have been seven and a half feet long. All four together (20 cubits) would have been 30 feet wide. The room was a 20 cubit cubed room (see 1 Kings 6:20). The two wings width was equal to the cherub’s height (10 cubits or approximately 15 tall – 1 Kings 6:23).

Verse 17 – Jachin means “He will establish”. According to the John Gill commentary Boaz means “in Him” or “it is strength”. John Gill also includes this statement: “here stands Jachin, to let them know the Lord will establish and settle them;...here is Boaz to direct them to Christ, in whom their strength lies”

The JFB commentary states: “These names were symbolical, and indicated the strength and stability - not so much of the material temple, for they were destroyed along with it ([Jer 52:17](#)), as of the spiritual kingdom of God, which was embodied in the temple.” [END]

The Adam Clarke commentary states: “That is, He shall establish. The left pillar - Boaz, that is, in strength. These were no doubt emblematical; for notwithstanding their names, they seem to have supported no part of the building.” [END]

The Targum states “The name of that on the right hand was Jachin, because the kingdom of the house of David was established; and the name of the left was Boaz, from the name of Boaz the patriarch of the family of Judah, from whom all the kings of the house of Judah have descended.” [END]