

## Day 352 - MONDAY: January 29th

Psalms 74, 75 & 76

### Psalms 74:1-23 NKJV

A Contemplation of Asaph. O God, why have You cast us off forever? Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture? Remember Your congregation, which You have purchased of old, The tribe of Your inheritance, which You have redeemed—This Mount Zion where You have dwelt. Lift up Your feet to the perpetual desolations. The enemy has damaged everything in the sanctuary. Your enemies roar in the midst of Your meeting place; They set up their banners for signs. They seem like men who lift up Axes among the thick trees. And now they break down its carved work, all at once, With axes and hammers. They have set fire to Your sanctuary; They have defiled the dwelling place of Your name to the ground. They said in their hearts, "Let us destroy them altogether." They have burned up all the meeting places of God in the land. We do not see our signs; There is no longer any prophet; Nor is there any among us who knows how long. O God, how long will the adversary reproach? Will the enemy blaspheme Your name forever? Why do You withdraw Your hand, even Your right hand? Take it out of Your bosom and destroy them. For God is my King from of old, Working salvation in the midst of the earth. You divided the sea by Your strength; You broke the heads of the sea serpents in the waters. You broke the heads of Leviathan in pieces, And gave him as food to the people inhabiting the wilderness. You broke open the fountain and the flood; You dried up mighty rivers. The day is Yours, the night also is Yours; You have prepared the light

and the sun. You have set all the borders of the earth; You have made summer and winter. Remember this, that the enemy has reproached, O LORD, And that a foolish people has blasphemed Your name. Oh, do not deliver the life of Your turtledove to the wild beast! Do not forget the life of Your poor forever. Have respect to the covenant; For the dark places of the earth are full of the haunts of cruelty. Oh, do not let the oppressed return ashamed! Let the poor and needy praise Your name. Arise, O God, plead Your own cause; Remember how the foolish man reproaches You daily. Do not forget the voice of Your enemies; The tumult of those who rise up against You increases continually.

#### Psalms 75:1-10 NKJV

To the Chief Musician. Set to "Do Not Destroy." a Psalm of Asaph. A Song. We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks! For Your wondrous works declare that Your name is near. "When I choose the proper time, I will judge uprightly. The earth and all its inhabitants are dissolved; I set up its pillars firmly. Selah "I said to the boastful, 'Do not deal boastfully,' And to the wicked, 'Do not lift up the horn. Do not lift up your horn on high; Do not speak with a stiff neck.' " 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. For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, And the wine is red; It is fully mixed, and He pours it out; Surely its dregs shall all the wicked of the earth Drain and drink down. But I will declare forever, I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. "All the horns of the wicked I will also cut off, But the horns of the righteous shall be exalted."

#### Psalms 76:1-12 NKJV

To the Chief Musician. On Stringed Instruments. A Psalm of Asaph. A Song. In Judah God is known; His name is great in

Israel. In Salem also is His tabernacle, And His dwelling place in Zion. There He broke the arrows of the bow, The shield and sword of battle. Selah You are more glorious and excellent Than the mountains of prey. The stouthearted were plundered; They have sunk into their sleep; And none of the mighty men have found the use of their hands. At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob, Both the chariot and horse were cast into a dead sleep. You, Yourself, are to be feared; And who may stand in Your presence When once You are angry? You caused judgment to be heard from heaven; The earth feared and was still, When God arose to judgment, To deliver all the oppressed of the earth. Selah Surely the wrath of man shall praise You; With the remainder of wrath You shall gird Yourself. Make vows to the LORD your God, and pay them; Let all who are around Him bring presents to Him who ought to be feared. He shall cut off the spirit of princes; He is awesome to the kings of the earth.

### **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](#)

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]