

PSALMS BOOK 3

Psalm 79

A psalm of Asaph

1. O God, the nations have invaded Your inheritance;

- a. they have defiled Your holy temple, (See Ps 74)
- b. they have reduced Jerusalem to rubble.
- c. They have given the dead bodies of Your servants as food to the birds of the air, the flesh of Your saints to the beasts of the earth. (Which they had been warned about - Dt 28:26)
- d. They have poured out blood like water all around Jerusalem, and there is no one to bury the dead.
- e. We are objects of reproach to our neighbors, of scorn and derision to those around us (Ez 35:1-15).

2. How long, O LORD? Will You be angry forever?

- a. How long will Your jealousy ("*zealous anger*") burn like fire? (Dt 4:24)
- b. Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not acknowledge You, on the kingdoms that do not call on Your name;
 - for they have devoured Jacob
 - and destroyed his homeland.
- c. Do not hold against us the sins of the fathers ("*former iniquities, past sins*"); (He does not - Dt 24:16)
- d. may Your mercy ("*compassion*") come quickly to meet us, for we are in desperate need.

3. Help us, O God our Savior, for the glory of Your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for Your name's sake.

- a. Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?"
 - Before our eyes, make known among the nations that You avenge the blood of Your servants. (Am 1-2, Rev 6:9, Lk 6:28)
 - May the groans of the prisoners come before You; by the strength of Your arm preserve those condemned to die (*Lit.*, "*sons of death*"). See also Ps 33:19
 - Pay back into the laps of our neighbors seven times the reproach they have hurled at You, O LORD.
 - Then we your people, the sheep of Your pasture, will praise You forever; from generation to generation we will recount Your praise.

vs 1-3: The psalmist cries out in distress to God over the destruction of Jerusalem and especially, the temple. It had been defiled ("*become unclean*"). God's servants (*His covenant people*) had been slaughtered and left for the carrion birds and other scavengers.

vs 4: The neighboring nations gloated over and scorned Judah in its judgment (Dt 28:37, 1 King 9:7, Ps 44:14, Ez 25-26, 35:1-15, Dan 9:16) - yet God would judge them as well.

vs 5: Asaph asks of God, "How long must we endure Your wrath? God had decreed (e.g., Lev 26) that His people would be defeated and scattered among the nations for as long as it took for the land to recover by making up its lost sabbath rests. In Daniel 9:2 it is stated that Daniel understood from the book of Jeremiah that Jerusalem's desolation would last 70 years. That is confirmed by 2 Chr 36:21. We need to take the long view in watching for God's deliverance. This calls for patience on the part of His saints - 2 Pet 3:9.

vs 6-7: Asaph asks God to judge the nations that did not acknowledge or call on Him. These nations had devoured and laid waste Israel's God-given land. God had used these nations to judge His people but they too were unjust and Asaph calls on God to hold them accountable. See Is 10:5-19 and Rev 6:9.

vs 8-9: He pleads for compassion and asks God not to remember/hold the sins of Israel's past against them. It may seem that way but He does not - Ps 106:6, Ez 18:1, 24:6 (1-14), Lk 11:45-52. We are each held accountable for our own sin. The psalmist pleads for God to forgive ("*cover, purge away*" the sin of) His people for the sake of His name (See Ps 25:11).

vs 10: He asks, Why should the nations be allowed to ask, "Where is their God?" (Ps 115:1, Joel 2:17). May God uphold His people. In other words he is saying, "God, do not let the unbelieving people's around us see our trouble and doubt Your reality and power. He pleads with God to avenge them for their troubles (Dt 32, Rom 12:14-21). In our distress we need to reach out to God and depend on Him, not taking judgment into our own hands.

vs 11: Their enemies may have them marked for death, but Asaph hopes in God to preserve them according to His great power ("*arm*"). Ps 33:19

vs 12: He prays that God would hold accountable those nations that rejoiced and aided in their destruction (See Ez 25). Again, he accepts that the exacting of justice is God's prerogative. We are to love even our enemies, trusting in God's plan. If we demand justice for them, we must accept it for ourselves. We are to speak and act as those who have received mercy (Matt 11:10-13, Jas 2:12). When we have suffered at the hands of others, it is always good to remember our own culpability before a holy God.

vs 13: Israel's (and our) response to God's justice should naturally be praise and worship.