

PSALMS
BOOK THREE
Psalm 74

A maskil (Skillful or artistic poem) of Asaph

1. Why have You rejected (“cast off”) us forever, O God?

- a. Why does Your anger smolder (“smoke”) against the sheep of Your pasture?
- b. Remember the people (or “congregation, family, community”) You purchased of old, the tribe (or “staff/rod”) of Your inheritance, whom You redeemed - Mt Zion where You dwelt.
- c. Turn (“lift up”) Your steps toward these everlasting ruins, all this destruction (“damage/evil”) the enemy has brought on the sanctuary. ***In hardship, we have some questions to ask.***

2. Your foes roared in the place where You met with us; they set up their standards as signs.

- a. They behaved like men wielding axes to cut through a thicket of trees.
 - They smashed all the carved paneling with their axes and hatchets.
 - They burned Your sanctuary to the ground; (*It would happen again* - Mk 13:2)
 - They defiled the dwelling place of Your Name.
- b. They said in their hearts, “We will crush (“oppress”) them completely!”
- c. They burned every place where God was worshipped in the land.
 - We are given n miraculous signs; no prophets are left, (Mic 3:5-7, Am 8:11)
 - and no one knows how long this will be.
- d. How long will the enemy mock (“revile, blaspheme”) You, O God?
 - Will the foe revile (“hold in contempt”) Your Name forever?
 - Why do You hold back Your right hand? Take it from the folds of garment (“bosom”) and destroy them! ***We see disaster and pain and wonder, “Why?”***

3. But You, O God, are my king from of old; You bring salvation upon the earth.

- a. It was You who spilt open the sea by Your power,
- b. You broke the heads of the monster in the waters. (Egypt - e.g., Ez 29:2-4)
 - It was You who crushed the heads of Leviathan and gave him as food to the creatures of the desert (Ex 14:21-31).
 - It was You who opened up springs and streams; You dried up the ever flowing rivers.
- c. The day is Yours, and Yours also the night; you established the sun and moon.
- d. It is You who set all the boundaries of the earth; You made both summer and winter.
We need to remember God’s faithfulness.

4. Remember how the enemy has mocked You, O LORD, how foolish (“senseless, stupid,” *impious,*” i.e., *no moral / ethical sense*) people have reviled Your name (See Ps 14:1).

- a. Do not hand over the life of Your dove to wild beasts; do not forget the lives of Your afflicted (“poor, wretched, needy”) people forever.
- b. Have regard for Your covenant, because haunts of violence fill the dark places of the land.
 - Do not let the oppressed retreat in disgrace;
 - May the poor and needy praise Your name.
- c. Rise up, O God, and defend Your cause;
 - remember how fools mock You all day long.
 - Do not ignore the clamor of your adversaries, the uproar of Your enemies, which rises continually. ***We need to look to ourselves as well as to God.***

PSALM 74

Notes

A maskil (“skillful/artistic poem) by Asaph.

vs 1: The Psalmist looks at the condition of his exiled people and asks, “Why has God cast us off? How long will it last - forever?” In judgment/discipline we are *never* abandoned but at the time it can seem that way. And we often blame others and give ourselves a pass.

Vs 2: He asks why God’s anger smolders (“smokes”) against His people (sheep of His pasture. God led them to a land of “Milk and Honey.” A place He set apart for them and gave them. He was their Shepherd/Provider. They were His people (“sheep”). He asks, “If we are yours, why are we exiled?” Yet the Lord disciplines His beloved (Heb 12:4-12) and was fulfilling His covenant (Lev 26, Deut 28). Being loved by God does *not* mean having things our way. He also asks why God seems to have forgotten Mt Zion that He chose (Ps 78:68-69, Mt 7:21)?

Vs 3: Asaph calls on God to look at the state of His ruined sanctuary that sits in ruins.

Vs 4-7 Asaph describes the actions of the Babylonians as they destroyed the temple (2 King 25:8-12, 2 Chr 36:15-19). They cut and smashed the cedar paneling inside the temple (to most likely strip off and take the gold - 23 ton’s worth. See 2 Chr 3:6-9. Why? See 2 Chr 7:19-22.

Vs 8: The Babylonian’s were bent on revenge and wanted to punish Judah. Judah had rebelled more than once and had been a thorn in their side. The king, Zedekiah, had violated an oath of loyalty that he had made to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. An oath that he had sworn in the name of the LORD (2 Chr 36:11-14, Ez 17:12-14). And they had destroyed all the “meeting places of God” in the land. High Places where the people met ostensibly to worship God? Places of instruction? This cannot be known for sure. The former seems likely.

Vs 9: God was not revealing Himself prophetically and supernaturally as He had in the past and Asaph wondered how much longer this might continue? Look at Am 8:1-14. God was silent because His people refused to listen (See Is 6:9-13)

Vs 10-11 Asaph asks God how much longer He will tolerate the taunts of the foe? When will He stretch out His arm and act?

Vs 12-17 Yet Asaph remembers that God is King. He destroyed Egypt, the “monster in the waters.” It was he who gave His people food and drink in the desert. It was He who parted the sea and rules over creation.

Vs 18: Asaph asks God to remember the mocking of fools within and enemies.

Vs 19: He cries to God for deliverance - Israel/Judah, God’s “dove” (His beloved people) were in danger as Asaph saw it, of being handed over to vicious people (“wild beasts”). See Hab 1-3

Vs 20: Asaph implores God to remember His covenant. He always maintains it. (Lev 26/Dt 28)

Vs 21-23: Asaph prays that God uphold justice and defend His name.

There is injustice in this (sinful) world. Yet when calamity comes consider - maybe it’s us. Even in disaster, God is faithful. Dan 9