

PSALM 73 AND 74

4. Into which "sanctuary" did the Psalmist go? Into what sanctuary can we go? Is the church building a sanctuary? Is there a better one?
5. Please be honest with yourself and give a personal answer to the several questions asked in the text: (1) "Does God realize what is going on?"; (2) "Have I been wasting my time?"; (3) "Why take the trouble to be pure?"; (4) "Whom have I in heaven but You?"; (5) "Whom do I desire on earth but Thee?"
6. A large part of the problem is in what others will see and say about the believer—Discuss.
7. Is the problem of this Psalm larger in America or in Asia or Africa or Europe? Discuss.

PSALM 74

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Ruthless Injuries to the Sanctuary and Oppression in the Land
by an Enemy, call forth Expostulation with God
for his quiescence.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-3a, In Expostulation for Present Rejection, the Psalmist Reminds God how he had Acquired, Redeemed, and Exalted His Inheritance. Stanza II., vers. 3b-7, Profanation of the Sanctuary Described. Stanza III., vers. 8, 9, Extent of the Desolation. Stanza IV., vers 10, 11, Renewed Expostulation with God. Stanzas V., VI., VII., vers, 12, 13; 14, 15; 16, 17, Divine Activities Aforetime in History and in Creation. Stanzas VIII., IX., X., vers. 18, 19; 20, 21; 22, 23, Earnest Pleadings for Divine Interposition.

(Lm.) An Instructive Psalm—By Asaph.

- 1 Wherefore O God hast thou cast off utterly?
wherefore smoketh thine anger against the flock of thy
shepherding?
- 2 Remember thy congregation (which) thou acquiredst
aforetime?
(which) thou redeemest to be the tribe of thine
inheritance,—
Mount Zion wherein thou didst make thy habitation,

STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 3 which thy footsteps exalted to perpetual dignity.¹
 Everything hath the enemy marred in the sanctuary:
- 4 roared have thine adversaries in the midst of thy place of
 meeting,
 they have set up their signs for signs.
- 5 A man used to become known as one who had wielded on
 high
 in a thicket of trees axes!²
- 6 But now the doors³ thereof all at once
 with hatchets and hammers they smite!
- 7 They have thrust into the fire thy holy things,⁴
 to the ground have they profaned the habitation of thy name.
- 8 They have said in their heart—"We will force them down
 altogether!"⁵
 they have caused to cease all the festivals of God in the
 land:⁶
- 9 Our signs we see not,
 there is no longer a prophet;
 nor is there with us one who knoweth how long.
- 10 How long O God shall an adversary reproach?
 shall an enemy blaspheme thy name perpetually?
- 11 Wherefore shouldst thou draw back thy hand?
 and thy right hand in the midst of thy bosom retain?⁷
- 12 And yet God was my king from aforetime,
 working victories⁸ in the midst of the earth.
- 13 Thou didst divide in thy strength the sea,
 didst shatter the heads of (river) monsters⁹ upon the waters:
- 14 Thou didst crush the heads of the crocodile,
 didst give him as food to the creatures¹⁰ that dwell in the
 deserts.

1. So Br., who says: "Requires no change in the unpointed text."

2. Supply, perhaps, in thought: "when the sanctuary was built."

3. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

4. So in some cod. (w. 3 ear. pr. edns.)—Gn.

5. So Del.

6. So Sep. M.T.: "They have burned up all the meeting-places of God in the land."

7. So Br. "From the midst of thy bosom (pluck it forth) and consume." So Driver and others, following M.T. and supplying "pluck forth." Ginsburg says that *kalleh*, "consume," shd. be *selah* (? "lift up," as in 68:4).

8. Or: "a great salvation" (pl. intensive).

9. So Dr.

10. Ml.: "people." Dr.: "folk" as in Prov. 30:25, 26.

PSALM 74

- 15 Thou didst cleave open fountain and torrent,
thou didst dry up rivers of steady flow.
- 16 Thine is the day yea thine the night,
thou didst establish light-bearer¹¹ and sun:¹²
- 17 Thou didst set up all the bounds of the earth,
summer and autumn thou didst fashion them.
- 18 Remember this! an enemy hath reproached Jehovah,
yea the people of a vile¹³ person have blasphemed thy name.
- 19 Do not give up to a wild beast the life¹⁴ of thy turtle-dove,¹⁵
the living host of thy humbled ones do not forget perpetually.
- 20 Look well to thy¹⁶ covenant,
for filled are the dark places of the land¹⁷ with the
habitations of violence.
- 21 May the crushed one not turn back confounded!
the humbled and the needy let them praise thy name.
- 22 Arise! O God O plead thine own plea,
remember the reproach of thee from the vile¹³ person all the
day:
- 23 Do not forget the voice of thine adversaries,—
the noise of them who rise up against thee ascending
continually.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) "Do not destroy."

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 74

O God, why have You cast us away forever? Why is your anger hot against us—the sheep of Your own pasture?

2 Remember that we are Your people—the ones You chose in ancient times from slavery and made the choicest of Your possessions. You chose Jerusalem¹ as Your home on earth!

3 Walk through the awful ruins of the city, and see what the enemy has done to Your sanctuary.

4 There they shouted their battle cry and erected their idols to flaunt their victory.

11. Prob.: "moon."

12. Sep.: "sun and moon."

13. Or: "senseless." Cp. on Ps. 14.

14. U.: "soul."

15. Sep.: "a soul giving thanks unto thee."

16. So it shd. be (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.)—Gn.

17. Or: "earth." Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Earth."

1. Literally, "Mount Zion."

STUDIES IN PSALMS

5, 6 Everything lies in shambles like a forest chopped to the ground. They came with their axes and sledgehammers and smashed and chopped the carved paneling,

7 And set the sanctuary on fire, and razed it to the ground—
Your sanctuary, Lord.

8 "Let's wipe out every trace of God," they said, and went through the entire country burning down the assembly places where we worshiped You.

9, 10 There is nothing left to show that we are Your people. The prophets are gone, and who can say when it all will end? How long, O God, will You allow our enemies to dishonor Your name? Will You let them get away with this forever?

11 Why do You delay? Why hold back Your power? Unleash Your fist and give them a final blow.

12 God is my King from ages past; You have been actively helping me everywhere throughout the land.

13, 14 You divided the Red Sea with Your strength; You crushed the sea-god's heads! You gave him to the desert tribes to eat!

15 At Your command the springs burst forth to give Your people water; and then You dried a path for them across the everflowing Jordan.

16 Day and night alike belong to You; You made the starlight and the sun.

17 All nature is within Your hands; You make the summer and the winter too.

18 Lord, see how these enemies scoff at You. O Jehovah, an arrogant nation has blasphemed Your name.

19 O Lord, save me! Protect Your turtle-dove from the hawks.² Save Your beloved people from these beasts.

20 Remember Your promise! For the land is full of darkness and cruel men.

21 O Lord, don't let Your downtrodden people be constantly insulted. Give cause for these poor and needy ones to praise Your name!

22 Arise, O God, and state Your case against our enemies. Remember the insults these rebels have hurled against You all day long.

23 Don't overlook the cursing of these enemies of Yours; it grows louder and louder.

2. Literally, "the wild beasts."

PSALM 74
EXPOSITION

It is clear that the composition of this psalm was occasioned by the desecration of the Temple and the oppression of the Land by some foreign invader; but precisely which event of this kind is here intended, is uncertain. Some have confidently pointed to the time of the Maccabees, when the temple was desecrated under Antiochus: against which may be urged the standing unlikelihood that any psalm had so late an origin, and yet found its way as did this, and the rest, into the ancient Septuagint version of the Old Testament; and the particular objection that the very line in the psalm which might otherwise have seemed to point to a Maccabean origin, viz. ver. 8, "And they have burned up all the meeting-places of God in the land," appears in the Sep. in the milder form, *And they have caused to cease all the festivals of God in the land.* It may be true, that the erection of synagogues cannot be traced further back than to the time of the Maccabees; but it is inconceivable that the Greek translators should have obliterated such an allusion, had it existed in their Hebrew exemplars, though quite possible that later Sopherim should have adapted the Hebrew of the old psalm, so as to conform it to later and more startling events. Others again, have advocated the time of the Chaldean invasion under Nebuchadnezzar, as having probably given birth to this psalm. And that is a possible date; although the lament over the want of a *prophet* or one who *knew how long* but ill agrees with the presence of Jeremiah and Ezekiel in those days. Even if, to avoid this awkwardness, the origin of the psalm be thrown further down the Exile, and in favour of that time the words be cited, "Lift up thy footsteps to the perpetual desolations," as showing that now the desolation of Jerusalem had lasted a long time,—then it is at least disconcerting to note, what Briggs says, that the same consonants, otherwise vowel-pointed, may be read (surely more in harmony with the immediate context) *Which thy footsteps exalted to perpetual dignity.* Under these circumstances, it may be questioned whether the "Speaker's Commentary" has not more nearly hit the mark in suggesting as the probable time and occasion of origin, the invasion of the Egyptian monarch Shishak in the days of Rehoboam. In favour of this comparatively early date, may be mentioned: the care which the psalmist observes to express rather a desecration than a demolition of the temple; and the aptness of his language in vers. 5, 6 to apply to a time when the *building* of the temple

STUDIES IN PSALMS

was yet a comparatively recent event. While yet the honour of having lifted an *axe* in the Lebanon to supply cedar for the erection of the temple was well remembered, here are profane *hatchets and hammers* engaged in ruthlessly tearing off the plates of gold which covered *the doors*. It seems as though the psalm was written while this profanation was going on; and not merely concerning a conflagration viewed from afar! Given, a psalmist well remembering the glory of the erection of the temple; given also, the instinctive horror felt by such a man on occasion of the first intrusion of foreign feet within the sacred precincts;—and you have probably a more fitting psychological condition to suit the origin of this psalm than any other that can be imagined with due regard to known facts. It is difficult to say why the psalm does not contain a confession of *sin*; as the true reason why such a foreign invasion was permitted, especially as this is made so prominent in the history; but we may perhaps surmise that this element lay, for the moment, comparatively dormant in the psalmist's mind, because of his ignorance of the lengths to which the invader might be permitted to go, and the vividness with which he saw in those broader views of God's gracious purposes in calling Israel to be his people and in making Mount Zion his dwelling-place, such weighty pleas against the destruction which at the time appeared imminent. Whatever the cause of this absence of confession from the psalm, it should be remembered that the fact of its omission bears as much upon one foreign invasion as another: any such invasion—whether Egyptian, Chaldean or Syrian—must have in reality seemed permissible only because of grievous national sin committed.

The course of thought which the psalm actually pursues is noteworthy, especially in respect of the broad collateral facts in history and in nature by which the psalmist strengthens his pleading with God.

After reminding God of the wonderful way in which he had made the Hebrew *congregation* peculiarly his own (vers. 1-3a); and then vividly depicting the present devastation of the sanctuary (vers. 3b-7), and the forlorn condition of the land, especially as regards religious privileges (vers. 8, 9); and after pleading with God no longer to delay his silencing of the profanity of the invader (vers. 10, 11);—the psalmist then enlarges on the almighty deeds of Israel's King. He introduces the great facts clustering around the deliverance from Egypt and the ad-

PSALM 74

mission into the promised land (vers. 12-15)—facts which constituted an almighty handling of the powers of nature and pressing them into the service of creating and redeeming a Nation. At this point, in a stanza of great simplicity and beauty (vers. 16-17) the poet passes on to a notice of the Divine relation to *day* and *night*, *moon* and *sun*, *earth* and *seas*, *summer* as presupposing *spring* and *autumn* as bringing after it *winter*. These allusions are not only beautiful in themselves, and a poetic relief to the mind of the reader but they are true aids to devotion, and give pleasing force to the petitions which they introduce. They suggest more than they formally articulate. They seem to say: "Such, O God, are the praises, which habitually ascend to thee from this holy place; but now, only hear the reproaches and the defiance which are from this very spot directed against thy Holy Name! Canst thou be the Divine *King* whom we thus adore, and not be able and willing to hearken to our prayers?" And then follows a volley of petitions: *remember—do not give up—do not forget—look well—arise—remember—do not forget*. The very close of the prayer is intercessionally dramatic. Instead of a final benediction, we hear the gentle but undaunted voice of this petitioner making a last effort to turn the sustained *din* and *roar* of the *adversary* in the sanctuary into so much prayer for speedy Divine Intervention. Noting these things, even Christian intercessors may learn valuable lessons from this psalm, as to the reality, boldness and scope of prayer. Moreover, it would be upardonable to forget what we owe to Dr. Thirtle for the collateral warrant he affords for moving the inscription *Do not destroy*, from the beginning of the next psalm, where its applicability is not very evident, to the foot of this, where its appropriateness must strike every unprejudiced mind: *that* has really been the prayer of this psalm—*Do not destroy!*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The Temple is desecrated—but when? By whom? Give and defend your opinion.
2. List the descriptive terms for the nation of Israel. Remember "we are the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16).
3. List the great works of Jehovah which prove He could overcome these profainers of His holy Temple.
4. To what three attributes of God does the psalmist appeal as reasons for the restoration of worship in the Temple?

STUDIES IN PSALMS

5. Give at least two possible explanations as to why God sometimes delays His blessings.
6. Notice the petitions addressed to God—which also could be addressed to ourselves in relation to God.

PSALM 75

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Song, Enshrining an Oracular Assurance of Equitable Judgment by the Judge of the Earth.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., ver. 1, Congregational Thanksgiving, Promising a Rehearsal of Divine Wonders. Stanza II., vers. 2-4, A Divine Oracle: Declaring that, at the Right Time, Justice shall be Done; and Admonishing that Moral Preparations for Judgment be Made. Stanza III., vers. 5-7, Prophetic Exhortation Enforcing the Oracle. Stanza IV., ver. 8, A Prophetic Warning of Coming Wrath. Stanza V., vers. 9, 10, With Prophetic Exultation, the Psalmist, in the Name of the Nation, Counts on being Employed in the Judicial Adjustment.

(Lm.) Psalm—By Asaph—Song.

- 1 We give thanks to thee O God we give thanks to thee;
and they who call on thy name¹ tell of all thy wondrous works.
- 2 "Yea! I will seize a right time,
I with equity will judge:
- 3 Dissolving may be the earth and all the dwellers therein,
I have adjusted the pillars thereof:
- 4 have said to boasters—"Do not boast!"
and to lawless ones—"Do not lift up a horn!" "
- 5 Do not lift up on high your horn,
nor speak against a Rock² with arrogance.

1. So "read probably"—Dr. And so (?)—Gn.

2. So it shd. be (w. Sep.)—Gn.