

## 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.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By Asaph—Song.

- 1 We give thanks to thee O God we give thanks to thee;  
and they who call on thy name<sup>1</sup> 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 Rock<sup>2</sup> with arrogance.

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

2. So it shd. be (w. Sep.)—Gn.

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- 6 For neither from the east nor from the west,  
nor from the wilderness<sup>3</sup> (cometh) lifting up;<sup>4</sup>  
7 For God is judge,  
this one he putteth down and that one he lifteth up.  
8 For a cup is in the hand of Jehovah with wine which  
foameth,  
it is full of spiced-wine which he poureth out—from one to  
another,<sup>5</sup>  
surely the dregs thereof shall all the lawless of the earth  
drain out and drink.  
9 But I will exult<sup>6</sup> to the ages,  
let me make melody unto the God of Jacob!  
10 And all the horns of lawless ones will I hew off,  
lifted up shall be the horns of the righteous.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

(CMm.) With stringed instruments.<sup>7</sup>

## PARAPHRASE

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How we thank You Lord! Your mighty miracles give proof that You care.

2 "Yes," the Lord replies, "And when I am ready, I will punish the wicked!

3 Though the earth shakes and all its people live in turmoil, yet its pillars are firm, for I have set them in place!"

4 I warned the proud to cease their arrogance! I told the wicked to lower their insolent gaze,<sup>1</sup>

5 And to stop being stubborn and proud.

6, 7 For promotion and power come from nowhere on earth, but only from God. He promotes one and deposes another.

8 In Jehovah's hand there is a cup of pale and sparkling wine. It is His judgment, poured out upon the wicked of the earth. They must drain that cup to the dregs.

3. Prob.—"south." "North" perh. omitted as quarter whence the enemy was coming.

4. Heb.: *Harim*, generally—"mountains"; but, according to a Heb. tradition, exceptionally here—"lifting up" (as derived from *rum*, to be high): which seems to strike the key-note of the psalm, for which cp. vers. 4, 5, 7, 10.

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

6. So it shd. be (w. Sep.)—Gn.

7. And therefore with all the choirs in the temple.

1. Literally, "lift not up the horn."

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9 But as for me, I shall forever declare the praises of the God of Jacob.

10 "I will cut off the strength of evil men," says the Lord,<sup>2</sup> "and increase the power of good men in their place."

### EXPOSITION

Standing where it does, this psalm requires but a moderate exercise of the historical imagination, to bring out its practical effectiveness. It follows well the outcry of the previous psalm. "How long?" by declaring that, *at the right time*, Divine Interposition shall come. With equal fitness, it anticipates the exulting outburst of the psalm which follows it, already claiming the souls of those who are yet waiting, to the sore trial of their faith. It may thus be placed historically anywhere between the invasion of Shishak and the overthrow of Sennacherib the Assyrian, and could, with fine effect, be used in temple worship either during the days of trial which befell Jehoshaphat or during those which came upon Hezekiah.

When the dramatic structure of the psalm is perceived, its dignity and force rise to the sublime. The opening stanza reveals the congregation giving thanks as for an answer received, and as if in anticipation of Divine Wonders to follow.

Then, with an effective change of measure, Jehovah is represented as giving, in the first person, his assurance that in due time he will effectively interpose. Society—and perhaps especially the society of nations—may appear to be *falling to pieces—dissolving*—for lack of the effective grip of the bonds of *equity*; but already Jehovah prophetically declares he has *adjusted the pillars* of the social structure. That those "pillars" are to be understood as fundamental *moral principles*, is at once intimated by the two Divine behests—*Do not boast, Do not lift up the horn*, which two proclamations may perhaps be distributively applied: the former to Israel and the latter to the nations ready to oppress them; though, indeed, both may well be heeded by all concerned, seeing that *boasting* and *oppression* so often go hand in hand.

It is not quite certain at what point the direct Divine address ends; but, having regard to the propriety of letting an oracle appear brief, and to the difficulty of carrying on the direct address to the close of ver. 7, it is probably best to close the quotation at the end of ver. 4. This naturally leads us to take

2. Implied.

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vers. 5-7 as a continuing prophetic address, by the psalmist himself, in enforcement of the Divine Oracle. It seems to be fittingly left to the *psalmist* to emphasize, in amplified hortatory words (ver. 5a), the previous briefer oracular words (ver. 4b); and then that he, *the psalmist*, should go on (ver. 5b) to speak of Jehovah as a *Rock*, in the third person; just as, also, (in ver. 7) he naturally refers to God, in the third person. These niceties may not appear very important, inasmuch as they respect the mere *form* of what must all, in substance, be regarded as a Divine utterance; but an approximately correct settlement of them, sensibly contributes to the impressiveness of the psalm.

The psalmist now, in Stanza IV., gives a highly figurative but effective reason for the urgency of his exhortations to prepare for judgment. Equitable as is the Divine Rule, in the long run, in dealing with both individuals and nations, it nevertheless is framed upon the pattern of "times and seasons,"—"times" of delay, in which God as judge is silent and seemingly inactive, as though he were taking no notice of the moral quality of human conduct; and then, "seasons" of activity, involving the principle of bringing up arrears, and dealing all at once with long series of actions; and implying, where wicked conduct has been in the ascendant, an accumulation of punishment, corresponding with the accumulation of unvisited sin. But an accumulation of punishment implies an accumulation of Divine displeasure, *so far as its manifestation is concerned*. And so we arrive at the conception of stored-up wrath: arrears of displeasure: intensified punishment, involving stroke upon stroke, when it does come. This is the revealed principle of Divine resentment of sin. No doubt this principle could be philosophically defended: as necessitated, not by infirmity in God, but by the limitation of man. But whether or not we can account for such a method of divine government, and successfully defend it, as probably we may; it suffices to maintain, that such in fact is God's governmental method of dealing with the moral quality of the actions of men and of nations. This being so, that very fact lies at the root of such representations as that which here confronts us in this psalm: accumulated wrath breaking forth in accumulated punishment, being figuratively represented as a *cup* in the hand of Jehovah, a cup *foaming* in the activity of its contents, *mixed* as with *stimulating spices* in the intensity of its action, and held forth to the individuals who are to drink, and to be compelled to drain their cup to its *dregs*. Such is the figure. We may

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call it oriental. But, instead of therefore under-estimating it, our wisdom is to accept it as a common, and, in the East, most natural as well as effective style of speech; and at once seek to translate it into our own methods of thought. The following list of passages, alluding to the *wine-cup of wrath*, will shew how familiar the figure is in the Old Testament, and will suggest the deeper principles to which our thoughts are thereby conducted: Job 21:20, Ps. 60:3, Isa. 51:17, Jer. 25:15, 27, 49:12, 51:7, Ob. 16.

Glancing, finally, at Stanza V. (vers. 9, 10), and connecting it with Stanza I., as together constituting the devotional framework of the psalm, we recognise the appropriateness of the observations of Delitzsch: "The prophetic picture stands upon a lyric background of gold; it rises up out of the depths of emotion and is withdrawn again into these same depths . . . The psalm closes as subjectively as it began. The prophetic picture is set in a lyric frame." This is well said. But when the same expositor, in calling attention to the obvious fact that the psalmist in ver. 10 ascribes to himself what he in ver. 7 sets forth as God's own doing, associates this human fellowship in the judicial rectification with the reigning "Church," we respectfully withhold our consent; preferring to connect the *hewing off of the horns of the lawless* with the triumphant *nation* of Israel than with the triumphant *ecclesia*. The callings of the two communities are distinct, and as such should be carefully preserved

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This psalm is "a revelation of the principle of God's government of the world, of His action in human history". Please follow this line of reasoning and outline the principles suggested.
2. This psalm balances well between the two psalms of before and after—explain how.
3. There seems to be a dialogue in this psalm. Who speaks? What is said? Discuss.
4. "Jesus who died shall be justified, God is the ruler yet"—so wrote the song writer. There are at present millions and millions who have never heard—now reconcile this with the rule of God?
5. America and Israel stand together in God's Judgment. Explain and discuss.