

May 17

Scriptures: Read Psalms 74 & 75

Key Verse: “For God is my King from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.”
(Psalm 74:12)

Overview

In Psalm 74 we read of the destruction of Jerusalem, as well as the desecration and burning of the Temple. The title of this psalm tells us that Asaph was the author, but a problem arises when one considers that during Asaph’s life (a contemporary of King David) there was no destruction by an invading enemy in Jerusalem; this did not happen until centuries later by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25:9-10; 2 Chronicles 36:19). There are two possible explanations: a descendant of Asaph (an Asaphite) wrote it at the time of the invasion whose name may also have been Asaph; or the original Asaph of David’s day wrote it prophetically, which is quite possible, since he was known as a seer (a prophet who sees visions of the future, 2 Chronicles 29:30).

The psalmist is totally bewildered by the destruction he sees in Jerusalem, and he cannot understand why God has allowed this to happen to His sheepfold, unless they were terribly guilty of horrendous sins. Asaph is perplexed by what seems to be God’s abandonment of His people. He cries out for God to remember His inheritance whom He had redeemed as His own out of their bondage in Egypt (74:2) and to remember the covenant He had made with Abraham to give his descendants the land (74:20).

What is even more bewildering to Asaph is how God could allow the enemy to destroy His own dwelling in Zion! At that time, when one nation conquered another, it was believed that their gods were more powerful than the God or gods of the enemy. Therefore, their prime target was to deface or destroy the temple of the opposing God or gods and set up the emblems (standards/banners) of their gods and their nation to show they were victorious (74:4). It was heart-rending for Asaph to see in ruins the most beautiful building dedicated to their Lord. All the exquisite carvings were defaced by their axes (74:6; cf. 1 Kings 6:29). Asaph understands this to be a mockery of God. He asks God to remember how the enemy has blasphemed, reproached, and rebelled against him, that He might vindicate Himself by consuming all the wicked fools (74:22). Asaph, however, knows that the God who is powerful enough to part the Red sea, dry up the Jordan river, destroy the Leviathan from the face of the earth (see Job 41 which deals with history many centuries earlier), make a rock into a fountain (Exodus 17:6), create the earth and establish night and day, winter and summer, is certainly able to destroy any foe (74:13-17). The psalmist’s hope is restored when he proclaims that his God is the King of the world who has a plan of salvation for the earth (74:12).

It is significant that in Psalm 75 the questions posed in the preceding psalm are answered. Asaph is also ascribed as the author of this psalm. He begins with a prayer of thanksgiving to God who is not so far removed that He is unconcerned about the affairs on earth; His past gracious dealings prove He is near (75:1). Asaph received the answer to the question he had asked God: “how long will the adversary reproach [You]?” (74:10). The Lord proclaims that He will indeed

bring judgment, but it will be in His own perfect timing, according to His plan (75:2). God further proclaims that no one upon the earth will be able to withstand His righteous judgment. He is all-powerful, the One in whom all things have their being and without His grace in setting up “its pillars firmly”, the earth would collapse (75:3). The Lord warns the boastful to not be conceited and stiff-necked (arrogant, proud, abstinent). To the wicked He says, “Do not lift up your horn on high”, like a beast that attempts to use its power against someone, which is what they were trying to do to God (75:4-5). These types of people exalt themselves, but Asaph rebukes them in saying that there is no place on earth where they will receive exaltation. Only God, the Sovereign Judge, will decide whom to exalt and whom to put down (cf. 1 Samuel 2:7; Daniel 2:21). Since He knows the hearts of all people, He also knows who is to be punished with His cup full of wrath, which He will pour out upon the wicked until the very last drop (75:8). Once again, the Lord speaks to warn that the horn (strength, power) of the wicked will be cut off, but the strength and power of the righteous will be exalted, and they will live to sing praises to the righteous King.

Prayer

Thank You, Father, for Your way of salvation You have planned since the beginning of time. May we walk worthy of our high calling in Christ Jesus and tell others of Your great plan and judgment to come.