

Psalm 76

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm [or] Song of Asaph.

Psalm 76:

Verses 3-9 indicate that the psalm was written on the occasion of a miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem (called “Salem” in verse 2), perhaps from Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:32-35).

In any case, the psalm contains a narrative of the deliverance (verses 1-9), and a call to all peoples to submit to the Lord’s sovereignty (verses 10-12).

Verses 1-12:

This psalm teaches that God is willing to use His great power for His people.

Some commentators, including the editors of the LXX, have suggested that this psalm was written to celebrate the destruction of Sennacherib’s Assyrian army (in 701 B.C.), as well as the subsequent assassination of Sennacherib himself (verses 5-6; compare 2 Kings chapters 18 and 19; Isa. Chapters 36 and 37).

The psalm also includes eschatological overtones (especially verses 8-12), when Jehovah will defeat His enemies and bring them into judgment.

- I. God’s Nearness to His People (76:1-3).
- II. God’s Deliverance of His People (76:4-9).
- III. God’s Majesty to His People (76:10-12).

Title: “Asaph” (see notes on Psalms 50, 73, 74 and Title).

Verses 1-6:

Happy people are those who have their land filled with the knowledge of God!

Happy persons that have their hearts filled with that knowledge!

It is the glory and happiness of a people to have God among them by His ordinances.

Wherein the enemies of the church deal proudly, it will appear that God is above them.

See the power of God's rebukes.

With pleasure may Christians apply this to the advantages bestowed by the Redeemer.

Psalm 76:1 "In Judah [is] God known: his name [is] great in Israel."

God is to be known, and is made known, by His works of creation, and by His providences, and particularly by His judgments in the whole world, even among the Gentiles.

And He was made known by His word and ordinances, His statutes and His judgments, among the Jews, to whom these were especially given.

And He is made known by His Spirit, and in His Son in a spiritual and saving manner to such who are Jews inwardly, or the true circumcision.

Moreover, this may be understood of Christ, God manifest in the flesh, and regard his appearance in human nature in the land of Judea.

He was, according to prophecy, of the tribe of Judah as man, and was born in Bethlehem, a city in that tribe, where David was, and of the family of David, that formerly lived there.

And he was made known by John the Baptist, who came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and by His being baptized of him in Jordan.

By His own ministry and miracles in that land, and by the preaching of His apostles in the several cities of it.

He was known in person to many; and by the fame of His doctrine and miracles to more.

"His name is great in Israel":

He Himself is great, for His name is Himself, thus being the great God, and possessed of all divine perfections.

His offices and titles are great, He is a great Savior, a great High Priest, a great Prophet risen up in Israel.

A great King, (add the great Shepherd of the sheep).

His works which make Him known are great, His works of creation and providence, in which He is jointly concerned with his Father.

The mighty works He did on earth, and especially the great work of our redemption; and His Gospel, which is called His name (Acts 9:15).

Brings glad tidings of great and good things; by means of which, and the wonderful things He did in the land of Israel.

His fame was spread about in it, for He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Here His marvelous works were done, and His Gospel first preached, which afterwards went into all the earth.

Though the world may not know God, or even believe that He exists, Israel always knows.

As we have said before, there is a physical Israel (the people who received the law of God).

There is also a spiritual Israel (the people who received the grace of God).

Both are Israel.

Looking at this with physical eyes, we do know that even though they were divided at the time this was written, both Judah and Israel believed in God.

They both had their ancestry in Abraham.

The believers in Christ, also, have their spiritual ancestry in Abraham.

Galatians 3:29 "And if ye [be] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Whichever way that you want to look at Israel here, God is known by Israel.

Psalms 76:2 "In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion."

This was the ancient name for Jerusalem, and is evidently so used here.

It continued to be given to the town until the time of David, when it was called "Jerusalem."

See the notes at (Isa. 1:1).

This word properly means "peace".

And it is so rendered here by the Septuagint, "His place is in peace."

There may have been an allusion here to that ancient signification of the name, as being more poetical, and as suggesting the fact that God had restored peace to the city and nation when invaded.

"Is his tabernacle":

The tent, or sacred place where He is worshipped.

Salem or Jerusalem was made the place of public worship, and the ark moved there by David (see 2 Sam. 6:17).

"And his dwelling-place in Zion":

That is, on Mount Zion.

The portion of Jerusalem in which David built his own palace, and which he made the place of public worship.

This remained so until the temple was built on Mount Moriah (see the notes at Psalm 2:6; compare Psalm 9:11; 48:12; 65:1).

Salem is the same as Jerusalem.

The temple of God was built in Jerusalem.

Salem means peace.

So we know that it is peaceful in Salem.

Zion spiritually means the church.

We are looking at these lessons from the spiritual standpoint.

So we believe that the Spirit of God in His church.

And His tabernacle at present, is with His believers.

Psalm 76:3 There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah."

"Brake ... arrows ... shield ... sword":

God destroyed the enemy's weapons.

Jesus fought the battle with the devil on the cross, and He won the victory for us.

This is just saying, that we do not need physical weapons for this war.

Isaiah 54:17 "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue [that] shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This [is] the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness [is] of me, saith the LORD."

I love each time the Scripture says Selah.

It tells us to pause and think on the things we have just read.

Psalm 76:4 "Thou [art] more glorious [and] excellent than the mountains of prey."

“Mountains of prey”: Probably a poetic description of the attackers.

To have the Lord in all His glory within us and within the church is so much greater than anything we might bring home from a physical battle.

We should want to win their soul, not their goods.

Psalm 76:5 "The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands."

The Assyrian army, its officers and generals, that came up against Jerusalem, with great resolution and courage, and with daring impiety and blasphemy against the God of heaven, as Rabshakeh and others.

These were spoiled, and their armor and riches became a prey to those they thought to have made a prey of.

So principalities and powers were spoiled by Christ upon the cross, and Satan, the strong man armed, has in the conversion of a sinner his armor taken from him, and his spoils divided by Him that is stronger than he.

And such as are stouthearted, and far from true righteousness, are stripped of their own, and made willing, in the day of Christ's power upon them.

"They have slept their sleep":

The sleep of death, as did the Assyrians when smitten by the angel, which was done in the night, when probably they were fast asleep, and so never awoke more, as the Babylonians (Jer. 51:57).

"And none of the men of might have found their hands":

None of the valiant soldiers in the Assyrian army could find their hands to fight their enemies, or defend themselves.

As men in a deep sleep cannot find their hands to do anything, and are as if they had none, and still less in a dead sleep.

The Targum says, "they were not able to lay hold on their armor with their hands."

This was the case of them that were killed.

And as for those that remained alive, they were struck with such a panic, that their hearts could not endure, nor their hands be strong when God thus dealt with them.

The stouthearted of this world are no match for the God of this whole universe.

Possibly the “slept their sleep” means that they were killed.

They could not even raise their hands up against God's people.

This reminds me so much of the battle of Gideon, when the LORD sent nearly all the army of Israel home, and only 300 remained to fight thousands of their enemies.

God helped Gideon and his army, and the thousands fled. To get the whole study on this, read the 7th chapter of Judges.

Psalm 76:6 "At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep."

At thy word; thy bidding; or, when God rebuked them for their attempt to attack the city.

The idea is, that they were discomfited by a word spoken by God.

"Both the chariot and horse":

The Septuagint renders this, "They who are mounted on horses."

The word rendered "chariot" here may mean "riders, cavalry," as well as chariot (see notes at Isaiah 21:7).

Hence, there would be less incongruity in the Hebrew than in our translation, where it is said that the "chariots" have fallen into a deep sleep.

The idea may be either that horsemen and horses had fallen into a deep slumber, or that the rumbling of the chariot-wheels had ceased, and that there was a profound silence, like being in a deep sleep.

I am sure it was a frightening thing for the Israelites to hear the rattle of many chariots coming.

This Scripture says that God will cause a deep sleep to come on them, and they will not be awoken to battle.

I find it quite interesting that God can cause even horses to sleep when He wants them to.

God of Jacob is God of the covenant.

Verses 7-12:

God's people are the meek of the earth, the quiet in the land, that suffer wrong, but do none.

The righteous God seems to keep silence long, yet, sooner or later, He will make His judgment to be heard.

We live in an angry, provoking world; we often feel much, and are apt to fear more, from the wrath of man.

What will not turn to His praise, shall not be suffered to break out.

He can set bounds to the wrath of man, as He does to the raging sea; hitherto it shall come, and no further.

Let all submit to God.

Our prayers and praises, especially our hearts, are the presents we should bring to the Lord.

His name is glorious, and he is the proper object of our fear.

He shall cut off the spirit of princes; he shall slip it off easily, as we slip off a flower from the stalk, or a bunch of grapes from the vine; so the word signifies.

He can dispirit the most daring: since there is no contending with God, it is our wisdom, as it is our duty, to submit to Him.

Let us seek His favor as our portion, and commit all our concerns to Him.

Psalm 76:7 Thou, [even] thou, [art] to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?

By His own people with reverence and godly fear, because of His greatness and goodness.

And to be dreaded by His enemies; which seems to be the sense here, as it appears from what next follows.

"And who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?"

Or "from the moment thou art angry".

So the Targum says, from the "time", and Jarchi says, from the "hour".

That is, as soon as ever His anger begins, when it is kindled but a little, and how much less when it burns in its full strength?

There is no standing before His justice, and at His judgment seat, with boldness and confidence, and so as to succeed, or come off acquitted, without having on His righteousness.

And much less is there any standing before His wrath and fury, when His hand takes hold on judgment to execute it (see Nahum 1:6).

When Satan comes against us, we just pray and use the name of Jesus to battle him.

We have nothing to fear from the old devil, because Jesus gave us the authority to use His name against him.

The sad thing is, there is nowhere to go and nothing you or anyone else can do, when God pours out His wrath.

There is no one to stay the Hand of God.

We should not fear anything in this world, or anyone in this world, or even the devil himself.

God is the only one we should fear.

Matthew 10:28 "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

The only fear that is permissible is fear of God.

That fear is wise to have.

Psalm 76:8 "Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still,"

It seemed to come from heaven; it was manifestly from thee.

The overthrow of these enemies of thy people was a manifest judgment from thee, and should be so regarded.

"The earth feared":

The world itself seemed to hear the voice of God, and to stand in awe.

"And was still":

It seemed to be profoundly attentive as to what God said, and as if it reverently listened to His holy voice.

It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to represent the earth, the hills, the mountains, the streams, the rivers, or the plains.

As conscious of the presence of God; as either rejoicing or trembling at His voice.

Compare (Psalms 65:12-13; 114:3-7; Hab. 3:8-11).

Judgement has fallen from heaven a few times, and when it does, it is terrible.

We know when Moses came down the mountain and found the children of Israel committing sin with the golden calf, God killed literally thousands.

We know also, that God judged Pharaoh and his false gods, and also God killed all the first born in Egypt.

We know also, that God judged 2 of Aaron's sons in the tabernacle, and God killed them both.

The judgement of God is something that is to be greatly feared.

There is nothing to do, but be still when His judgement is being carried out.

Psalms 46:10 "Be still, and know that I [am] God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

Psalm 76:9 "When God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. Selah."

That is, when He came to overthrow and destroy the enemies of His people, as referred to in the former part of the psalm.

"To save all the meek of the earth":

Of the land, to wit, the land of Judea.

Or, to save his people when in affliction.

The word "meek," which with us usually means those who are forbearing under injuries, means here the humble, the afflicted, the crushed, the oppressed.

It is time to be still when the God of all the earth arises to judge.

We are told that the meek shall inherit the earth.

God fights the battle for those who are depending upon Him.

This possibly is speaking of those who have already humbled themselves and received the Lord into their lives.

The Lord loves those who have a humble heart, those who have repented and been saved.

Psalm 76:10 "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

“Wrath of man shall praise thee”:

The railings against God and His people are turned into praise to God when God providentially brings the wicked down (compare Isa. 36:4-20; Acts 2:23; Rom. 8:28).

Even the most hostile acts against God’s rule will bring Him “praise”.

The Lord arms Himself against the rebellious hostility of the human race.

Man is no match for God.

Evil mankind, or the devil, is no match for God.

Romans 12:21 "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

The wrath of man stops abruptly when it comes into contact with the power of God.

Pharaoh's magicians could turn their staffs into serpents the same as Moses, their staffs turned into serpents, but Moses’ serpent swallowed up the magicians' serpents.

Psalm 76:11 "Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God: let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared."

Not monastic vows, which the Papists would infer from these and such like words.

Nor ceremonial ones, but spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving.

Such as men sometimes make in times of distress, or when delivered (Psalm 66:13).

And which when vowed ought to be paid (Eccl. 5:4).

Not to creatures, angels, or saints, but to God, from whom the mercy desired must be expected, and from whence it comes (Psalm 50:14).

These words are an address to such who were delivered from wrath, either of God or man.

"Let all that be round about him":

Who surround the throne of His grace, gather together in His house to attend His word and Ordinances, who are His servants, and constantly and faithfully adhere to Him.

Among whom He grants His presence, they are near to Him, and He to them.

It is a periphrasis of the assembly of the saints (see Psalm 89:7).

The Targum is, "all ye that dwell round about His sanctuary."

The allusion is to the situation of the camp of Israel, and the tabernacle in the wilderness (Num. 2:1; compare with Rev. 4:4).

"Bring presents unto Him that ought to be feared":

Whom, though they do not love, yet they see and feel that they have great reason to fear, and to seek His favor.

The best way in the world to be abundantly blessed of God, is to bring offerings and the things you have vowed to God into His temple.

You should never promise to do anything for God, unless you fully intend to carry out the work.

It is the same with your money, you already owe God one tenth of everything you make, but really that is not enough.

Gifts come above that 10%.

Psalm 76:12 "He shall cut off the spirit of princes: [he is] terrible to the kings of the earth."

"Cut off the spirit of princes":

God shatters the attitude of proud governmental leaders who rebel against Him.

God is not impressed with the worldly fame of someone.

You may be king in the country you live in, but to God you are just another of His creations.

Worldly wealth and fame do not impress Him at all.

All that any of us are, is because He ordained it from heaven.

Psalm 76 Questions

1. In _____ is God known.
2. His name is great in _____.
3. What are the 2 Israels?
4. The ancestry of both Judah and Israel go back to _____.
5. What city is spoken of as Salem here?
6. What does the word, Salem, mean?

7. What does Zion symbolize spiritually?
8. Where is His tabernacle at present?
9. When did Jesus win the battle for us?
10. What does it mean when it says, Selah?
11. To have the Lord in all His glory is better than what?
12. What does slept their sleep mean?
13. What does verse 5 remind the author of?
14. What happens to the chariot and horse in verse 6?
15. What weapon can Christians use against Satan?
16. What is the only fear permissible?
17. Give some examples of God's judgement of those on the earth.
18. When is it time to be still before God?
19. What was different about the serpent from Moses' staff and the serpents of the Pharaoh's magicians' staff?
20. How is the best way in the world to be abundantly blessed of God?
21. When does the wrath of man stop abruptly?
22. Gifts to God are _____ 10%.
23. Worldly _____ and _____ do not impress God.