

PSALMS 73-89

Bible Reading Schedule

3 Weeks

WEEK 1

This section is unique because the authors are not David. But Asaph is known to be someone whom David assigned as the overseer of the singers and musicians on that day. Asaph and his descendants seem to have served as the worship directors for God's people. Any number of his descendants may have written these psalms, but others might have as well. Then, as the worship director, he incorporated them into the worship used in the assembly of God's people. I will launch into this section with open eyes and ears, as these psalms are not nearly as familiar to me as others.

DAY 1 – Psalm 73

To me, this Psalm seems more like a journal entry of what Asaph was thinking and feeling about the circumstances surrounding him. He is saying that the wicked are "getting away with murder." At least that is how it sounds to me. The first sixteen verses highlight the questions of Asaph and his frustration over the prosperity of the ungodly and the lack of punishment God utilizes to straighten them out. A major move happens in verse 17 as the psalmist pursues an audience with God. The Lord begins to shape his heart as he realizes he has become bitter. His faith also expands as he reflects on the role that the Lord has in his life. "Yet I still belong to you; you hold my right hand." (V23) His posture is changed as he meditates on the Lord and renews his devotion. He displays a confidence that God will lead him through his troubles and challenges into safety and splendor. How might you find direction, safety, and renewal in the Lord by pursuing alone time with him?

DAY 2 – Psalm 74

The title Asaph seems to be more generic than one person who worked with David. This Psalm must be dated around the time of the fall of Jerusalem, which was in 586 BC. That fact is especially interesting because it reveals that the Book of Psalms was in formation for several centuries. The psalmist laments the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem with sadness, questions, and a direct appeal for the Lord to act (Verses 19-23). The first words of this Psalm

emphasize the special place that Israel has as the Lord's chosen and redeemed people (V2). It seems as if God has forgotten his covenant with them. The psalmist does not admit the waywardness of God's people, which would deserve punishment. His main focus is restoration because God has previously shown his power to intervene. "How long will you allow our enemies to insult you?" (V10) This type of question is repeated several times, leading up to the urgent request of verse 22, "Arise, O God, and defend your cause. Remember how these fools insult you all day long." Isn't interesting to know that this Psalm was written around the time of Jerusalem's overthrow by Nebuchadnezzar? David launched an emphasis on worship 400 years ago that became an important theme for the Jews, which has been handed down to believers. Worship is a crucial aspect of following the Lord and honoring his name. How do you view worship?

DAY 3 – Psalm 75

I like how this Psalm begins with an emphasis on thanksgiving. I think the Lord loves a thankful person. I recall the 10 lepers who were healed by Jesus, and he seems disappointed that only one returned to thank him (Luke 17:11-19). Another principle that is announced by the psalmist has to do with "pride." Pride is something that God opposes. "I warned the proud, 'Stop your boasting!'" (V4) Verse 7 seems to be a summary of this Psalm: "It is God alone who judges; he decides who will rise and who will fall." I think of God's sovereignty when I read these words. I want to have a high view of God and exalt him as Lord. Verse 9 expresses the devotion of Asaph, "But as for me, I will proclaim what God has done; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob." I appreciate the allegiance of the psalmist and want my heartfelt devotion to be the same. Would these words match your heart for the Lord? How so?

DAY 4 – Psalm 76

The first three verses are my favorite, as well as the literal title in verse 2 of the city Salem, another name used for Jerusalem. His reputation is great, and his power makes the enemy's attack inconsequential. The response of verses 4-6 views the Lord as glorious and majestic; no foe can stand against him. Verses 7-10 raise the banner of God's greatness even higher. The enemies are silenced, and awe covers the earth. Verse 8 says, "the earth trembled and stood silent before you." He is worthy of our deepest commitments. "Let everyone bring tribute to the Awesome One." (V11) You can feel the message of worship and praise to our God. He triumphs over earthly kings and many nations. This Psalm serves as a powerful reminder that God is Sovereign over the chaos and conflicts of the world. In my devotions this morning, I read Acts 4:23-26 when the Lord answered the prayers of the people as Peter and John were released

from prison. Their first prayer when Peter and John showed up was, “O Sovereign Lord...” How does this sound to you? What is your response?

DAY 5 – Psalm 77

This Psalm reminds me of David’s psalms with honest frustration or brokenness leading to surrender and praise. This Psalm might have been written a 100 or more years after David lived, but I am fascinated by the obvious influence that David had on the descendants of Asaph. These worship leaders follow in the footsteps of David, many generations after him. We call this influence “one’s legacy.” David had a profound legacy. The first ten verses are raw and filled with angst. But beginning in verse 11, the emphasis changes drastically for the good. The psalmist is remembering the amazing acts of God and his faithfulness. God is holy, mighty, powerful, and strong (Verses 13-15). The psalmist remembers the events of Egypt and God’s deliverance from verse 16 to the end of the psalm. Why not open yourself up to the Lord with honest and deep prayers that will surely lead you to a close connection with God and draw your thoughts to his goodness rather than your problems? What stands out to you in this Psalm?

DAY 6 – Psalm 78

How’s that for the longest Psalm besides Psalm 119?! Very interesting and filled with history, right? The most inspiring verses, to me, are the first eight as the psalmist exhorts the reader to pass on the truths of God to the next generation, which is something I am thinking about more so. “Each generation should set its hope anew on God!” (V7) But most of the Psalm tells us about God’s righteous anger. Verse 8 is the hinge verse as the Psalm warns God’s people of following their ancestors who were “stubborn, rebellious, and unfaithful.” After this warning, the Psalm recites the past and how often the people ignored and disobeyed the Lord. God showed his righteous anger against the Egyptians (Verses 49-50) as an object lesson for the people who were rescued. No matter, the people provoked the Lord’s anger anyway, time and again. It wasn’t until David (Verses 70-72) arrived on the scene that things began to turn in the right direction. Of course, it would be short-lived, but encouraging nonetheless because it revealed God’s heart to be gracious and lead the people through a godly shepherd. This could easily be a foreshadowing of the Messiah as our Good Shepherd. Even though this was a rather long devotional reading, there were several important points of application. Which ones are you noticing? Why? PS – I plan to send you six psalms a week because there are 17 psalms in Book Three, which fills three weeks from Psalm 73 to 89.

WEEK 2

Again, this is another week in Psalms with Songs of Asaph. Plus, these are psalms you probably haven't read too often. I am most familiar with Psalm 84, which will be our last reading this week. Asaph brings words of lament and warning. However, Psalm 84 rises in my mind as a beautiful expression of longing for closeness with God and his people. I appreciate the opportunity to read less familiar psalms with you; otherwise, I might not take the time to read and reflect on God's message through these psalms. Thank you for reading with me!

DAY 7 – Psalm 79

This Psalm points to the fall of Jerusalem, even as we noticed the psalmist focusing on this event in Psalm 74. The rebellion of God's people that had been highlighted many years previously provoked God's anger, resulting in the destruction of Jerusalem and even the Temple. The people are now ready to repent. Verse 8 is a turning point in the Psalm: "Do not hold us guilty for the sins of our ancestors! Let your compassion quickly meet our needs, for we are on the brink of despair." (The historical record of the fall of Jerusalem is found in 2 Kings 24 & 25.) This Psalm must have been written as the people of Judah were in exile under Babylonian captivity. Verse 9 is a heartfelt prayer; if it is sincere, the Lord will honor their request in his timing and in his way: "Help us, O God of our salvation! Help us for the glory of your name. Save us and forgive our sins for the honor of your name." Have you prayed that prayer before? I sure have. As I contemplate the sincerity of these words, I am praying for people in my life who need to pray this prayer. This prayer is a prayer for today, offered for the lost and honored by God when a sinner calls out to him. Who in your life could you pray for by pleading to God for their salvation?

DAY 8 – Psalm 80

I often focus on that which catches my eye. These words are repeated in verses 3, 7 & 19, "Make your face shine down upon us. Only then will we be saved." It sounds like a blessing, similar to "May the Lord bless and keep you..." (Numbers 6:24-26) "...the Lord make his face shine on you..." The people long for God's blessing as they are in the midst of a national crisis. Literally the most repeated phrase uses the words "restore us, O God..." They suggest that God is no longer listening to them and that their enemies have made a joke of them. Couldn't God do again what he did for us in Egypt? Why has he left us to ruin? This psalm is called a "lament" as they cry out to God in their brokenness and shame. If you help us, "then we shall not turn back from you..." (V18). The Psalm suggests that the people are desperate and begin to bargain with God. I have seen this many times, and I sense this is not pleasing to the Lord. We are called

to repent and obey even if the Lord doesn't seem to do anything. When people go through difficulty, the tendency is to say, "God, I will do this, if you do that." I think of this as a fairly shallow way of approaching God. Do you agree? What stands out to you in this Psalm? I think the people know God can do great things, but they are coming to him on their terms. My experience tells me that God is not moved by this approach. What do you think?

DAY 9 – Psalm 81

This Psalm seems like a prophetic warning rather than a worship song. Maybe you are like me in that you find a verse or sentence in the Psalm that grabs your attention. This happens to me more often than not. The first verse on my mind is #12, "So I let them follow their own stubborn desires, living according to their ideas." The consequences connected to living my own way are that I end up with the results of disappointment and failure. In Romans 1, it tells us that God left them go down the path of destruction, which they wanted to do. "So, God abandoned (gave them over) them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies." (Romans 1:24) Sometimes God just lets us find out how empty and disappointing life can be when left to ourselves. The other verse that caught my eye is verse 16, focusing on the second line, "I would satisfy you with wild honey from the rock." I kept on thinking about this phrase, "honey from the rock." I remember hearing a worship song on KLOVE with those words. The singer whose name I listened to on the radio is Kelsy Breedlove. Verse 1 is an accurate meaning for how this phrase is used in our Psalm: "You (God) take all my hardships, pressed down and shaken over, and from them bring a sweetness, I've never been this satisfied before, You're breaking down my idols, Oh, just 'cause You can give me so much more, You're bringing me revival, I'm satiated feasting on Your Word = Like honey from the rock!" Deuteronomy also uses this phrase in 32:13, FYI. I believe God often brings fruit from hardship. Do you agree? Why or why not?

DAY 10 – Psalm 82

There is much to interpret in this Psalm with "heavenly beings," "justice" for all, "the whole world shaken," "you are gods," and "rise up, O God." After reading through this Psalm, I felt a bit confused. I knew the theme was justice, and the implication is that the rulers were ignoring the needs of the people and the fairness of God. So, the Lord presides over his heavenly court and challenges the powers of this world with death and defeat. Again, I think of the Psalm as a prophetic message to some specific audience as well as for all of history. Our God cares about the poor, the oppressed, the helpless, and the orphan. When people/leaders do not, this incites the judgment of God. Ultimately, the last verse is the most intriguing to me because I think it points to the Messiah. The OT promises a messianic king who will have the nations as his

inheritance. I think verse 8 looks forward to a Messiah who will bring all nations under his sway, shedding God's light into their hearts and transforming a world dominated by true justice. Of course, I see God's Word continually pointing to the Son of God with Jesus as the hope of the world since the beginning of time. What do you think?

DAY 11 – Psalm 83

We can only imagine how cruel and ungodly these surrounding nations were when the psalmist wrote these words. It is a desperate lament asking God to intervene. These words seem specific to me about the present situation, which could be referring to any number of difficult seasons in the history of God's people. Verse 4 expresses the urgency they feel as pagan nations are threatening God's people with destruction. And it isn't just one but many enemies allying against Israel. But the emphasis of the Psalm turns to remembrance as God had intervened before, and Israel hopes that he will again. The specific reference in verses 9-11 can be found in Judges 7:1-8:5 with Gideon. May the ungodly realize that the Lord is the Most High and their only hope is to call on the Lord, "Then they (pagan nations) will learn that you alone are called the Lord..." (V18). God has demonstrated his power and presence in many ways so that people who ignore him are without excuse. God's hand has been evident since the beginning; the Lord has given people ample reason to believe in him and turn to him in faith. The pagan nations of the world experience hardship and defeat so often, which is always an opportunity to turn to the One True God who has been and continues to be seen clearly through his Son, Jesus.

DAY 12 – Psalm 84

The eagerness to worship God and join with others in the assembly is clearly the theme of this Psalm. It is also a favorite among many because it uses such memorable words and phrases like, "Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere." (V10) The place of worship seems to be on the psalmist's mind, but I think he is focused on experiencing God's presence more than where he worships. There is nothing that compares to sensing God especially close. The intensity of his desire is reflected in verse 2, "My soul yearns, even faints..." for the Lord. There's another comparison that caught my eye: "I would rather be a gatekeeper in the house of my God than live the good life in the homes of the wicked." In other words, God's presence is better than being anywhere else. Verse 5 says, "What joy for those whose strength comes from the Lord." It reminds me of Nehemiah 8:10, "The joy of the Lord is my strength." Verse 11 in the NIV gives me ample reason to praise and worship God: "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless." The gods of the nations often worship the sun god. In this verse, God is the creator of the sun, and his light shines on those who follow after him. This Psalm energizes me and

reminds me that nothing compares to what the living God can do and who he is. After reading these words, I am definitely compelled to praise and worship the Lord. How do these words affect you?

WEEK 3

One psalm of David is tucked into this week's readings, which is the only psalm of David in Book Three. These last five psalms in this section are rather random in topic and flow from positive praise to frustrating anger. Reading these Psalms reminds me that God's Word consists of the greatest blessings in life, as well as the raw emotions of pain and disappointment. I would suggest that our reading this week is a bit of a roller coaster ride, which matches how life is oftentimes.

DAY 13 – Psalm 85

The words "restore" and "revive" stand out to me. Maybe the reason is that I have prayed these very words in prayer for people, our country, and even the entire globe. But quite frankly, I resonate with many of the psalmist's words and phrases in this Psalm. God has poured out his blessings and has freely offered forgiveness, not to mention his unfailing love and salvation. To me, this is a very rich Psalm. Which phrase(s) are you noticing? Why? We can expect the faithfulness of God to reign unless we fall into the trap of verse 8, "But let them not return to their foolish ways." Verses 10 & 11 are especially uplifting and classified as God pouring down his blessings. "Unfailing love and truth have met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed! Truth springs up from the earth, and righteousness smiles down from heaven." These are the results of the Lord's restoration and the revival of his people on earth. We do well to pray for God's restoration and revival in our day. Amen!

DAY 14 – Psalm 86

Like yesterday, I really appreciate this psalm. David expresses himself so well. From the very first line to the closing statement, "Lord, you are my help and comfort." (V17). Which is a great way to close, but the way he begins his prayer is especially meaningful: "Bend down, O Lord, and hear my prayer." I try to get at eye level with my grandkids so they can see my eyes and sense my love. I believe David is asking the Lord to bend down so he can meet with God face to face. In Psalm 27 David wrote these words, "My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, Lord, I will seek." (27:8) I can easily identify this Psalm as written by David because he uses this often-repeated statement about the character of God in verse 15, "But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness." Also, David often prays this prayer, "Teach me your ways, O Lord, that I may live according to your truth!" (V11). David is seeking the Lord in a wholehearted way throughout Psalm 86. I take pleasure in repeating his words in prayer to the Lord. "With all my heart I will praise you... I will give glory to your name." (V12) What verse or phrase might you turn into a prayer?

DAY 15 – Psalm 87

Isn't this an interesting Psalm?! It obviously highlights Jerusalem as God's city. That is not hard to realize since Jerusalem is the focal point of prophecy and the anticipated dwelling of God with his people (Rev 21, New Jerusalem). The inclusion of foreign nations also points to the future as Revelation says, "After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands. And they were shouting with a great roar, 'Salvation comes from our God who sits on the throne and from the Lamb!'" (REV 7:9-10) Even though it doesn't specifically mention Jerusalem in this passage from Revelation, the gathering of God's people as he reigns forever points to the New Jerusalem. Some scholars suggest that one day Jerusalem will be the international city where all God's children are citizens. The idea is that this will take place before the return of Christ, but I cannot envision such a movement being actualized in this fallen world. We need a new order, and I believe this Psalm is prophetic, pointing to the eternal reign of God and the Lamb on the new earth. What makes sense to you? Why is this an encouraging word for us/you?

DAY 16 – Psalm 88

Oftentimes, the stark message from the psalmist is surprising to us but also very real. We can all relate to times when God has felt distant. Most of the time, the psalmist ends with hope and renewed faith. But not in this Psalm. The last words portray the theme in verse 18, "Darkness is my closest friend." It reminds me of a popular song from my younger days, "The Sounds of Silence." The first verse is what I am remembering. "Hello darkness, my old friend, I've come to talk to you again. Because a vision softly creeping, left its seeds while I was sleeping. And the vision that was planted in my brain, still remains... within the sound of silence." (Paul Simon) The heaviness of this Psalm remains throughout the entirety of the 18 verses. Verses 6-7 blame God for the troubles. Verses 8-12 claim that God has brought on his loneliness. Verses 13-17 accuse God of rejecting him. There's no resolution; we are left with the uncertainty of what will be. That posture is hard to accept, but sometimes we get stuck, and the people we love around us get stuck. In that way, this Psalm seems realistic. How do you respond to this challenging lament?

DAY 17 – Psalm 89

Have you ever tried to soften the situation with affirmations and positive memories? I see the Psalmist doing that in this chapter. For the first 18 verses, the psalmist is complimentary to God

in so many ways. It is actually a very uplifting message of poetry and worship. Then, he highlights the life and legacy of David from verses 19-37. But these words seem a bit shallow to me because the writer is soon to criticize and complain. I remember my mom telling me to say nice things to your father and let him finish his dinner, then tell him about what you did that was disobedient. Maybe it will soften the blow. I see that approach in this Psalm. The main purpose of this Psalm is to question God with the accusation of God abandoning David's throne (Verses 38-39), for example. What other questions surface in this final section of the Psalm? These kinds of questions were on the minds of God's people during and after the Exile, referring to the captivity with Assyria and Babylonia. There is a tension because the situation remains difficult and unresolved. What possible answer might you give to questions like, "How long will God's anger last? (V46) Does God understand human frailty? (VV47-48) Is God true to his nature? (V49) Is God just in not avenging his people?" (VV50-51). Oftentimes, God's people lived without clear answers to their questions. Thus, Book Three of Psalms closes with heavy questions.