

## The Defiled Sanctuary

Jesus in the Psalms

Psalm 74

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### I. Preparing for Suffering

Our psalm today was written in response to a devastating calamity – likely, the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians c. 586BC – and teaches us how to respond to such calamities in faith.

#### *Psalm 74 - A Contemplation of Asaph*

<sup>1</sup>O God, why have You cast us off forever? Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture? <sup>2</sup>Remember Your congregation, which You have purchased of old, The tribe of Your inheritance, which You have redeemed— This Mount Zion where You have dwelt. <sup>3</sup>Lift up Your feet to the perpetual desolations. The enemy has damaged everything in the sanctuary.

<sup>4</sup>Your enemies roar in the midst of Your meeting place; They set up their banners for signs. <sup>5</sup>They seem like men who lift up Axes among the thick trees. <sup>6</sup>And now they break down its carved work, all at once, With axes and hammers. <sup>7</sup>They have set fire to Your sanctuary; They have defiled the dwelling place of Your name to the ground. <sup>8</sup>They said in their hearts, “Let us destroy them altogether.” They have burned up all the meeting places of God in the land. <sup>9</sup>We do not see our signs; There is no longer any prophet; Nor is there any among us who knows how long. <sup>10</sup>O God, how long will the adversary reproach? Will the enemy blaspheme Your name forever? <sup>11</sup>Why do You withdraw Your hand, even Your right hand? Take it out of Your bosom and destroy them.

<sup>12</sup>For God is my King from of old, Working salvation in the midst of the earth. <sup>13</sup>You divided the sea by Your strength; You broke the heads of the sea serpents in the waters. <sup>14</sup>You broke the heads of Leviathan in pieces, And gave him as food to the people inhabiting the wilderness. <sup>15</sup>You broke open the fountain and the flood; You dried up mighty rivers. <sup>16</sup>The day is Yours, the night also is Yours; You have prepared the light and the sun. <sup>17</sup>You have set all the borders of the earth; You have made summer and winter.

<sup>18</sup>Remember this, that the enemy has reproached, O LORD, And that a foolish people has blasphemed Your name. <sup>19</sup>Oh, do not deliver the life of Your turtledove to the wild beast! Do not forget the life of Your poor forever. <sup>20</sup>Have respect to the covenant; For the dark places of the earth are full of the haunts of cruelty. <sup>21</sup>Oh, do not let the oppressed return ashamed! Let the poor and needy praise Your name. <sup>22</sup>Arise, O God, plead Your own cause; Remember how the foolish man reproaches You daily. <sup>23</sup>Do not forget the voice of Your enemies; The tumult of those who rise up against You increases continually.

### II. The Defiled Sanctuary

#### A. Overview (1-3)

This psalm laments not so much *personal* suffering but \_\_\_\_\_ suffering. While Judah’s suffering is from God’s hands, the psalm petitions God to *remember* His people and save them.

#### B. Present Devastation (4-11 cf. v. 1)

God’s enemies have entered the sanctuary and torn it down. They roar like lions, have chopped down the sanctuary like a clear-cut forest, and have set fire to the ruins. Further, God seems to have abandoned them and is no longer speaking. So the psalmist repeats and develops the questions of v. 1.

#### C. Past Deliverance (12-17 cf. v. 2)

The psalmist next recounts his own trust in God and recalls God’s past acts of salvation. He appeals to God as Redeemer and \_\_\_\_\_ – what we might call God’s “*extraordinary*” and “*ordinary*” acts of salvation. He knows that God’s power is almighty.

#### D. *Future Hope* (18-23 cf. v. 3)

The heart of the psalmist's request is that God "*have respect to the \_\_\_\_\_*" (20) – His oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – that He would make of them a great and mighty nation and use them to bless all the nations of the earth. If this is to happen, then God must save.

### III. Dealing with Defiled Churches

One of the immense benefits of studying the psalms is that they equip us as followers of Jesus to respond to different events throughout history. Currently we are in a time of widescale apostasy in America. Politics is always downstream of culture. And culture is, as Chuck Colson often said, "*a reflection of the belief system, or 'cult' of a group of people. When you have a healthy \_\_\_\_\_, you have a healthy culture*" (Stonestreet, 30).

Hence, we have increasingly experienced God's judgment. But none of this means that we are witnessing "*the end of the \_\_\_\_\_*" and the imminent return of Christ. Throughout history the Church has witnessed times of judgment and purification. Sometimes God's enemies triumph (Pr 29:2); but their triumph is always \_\_\_\_\_ (cf. Ps 73:27).

#### A. Lament the defilement and condemn the defilers (cf. Mt 5:43ff; Rom 12:20-21)

First, our psalm teaches us to lament the defilement of the Church and to condemn the defilers. As the psalmist observed the defilement of the temple (7) and the destruction of God's meeting places in the land (8), he lamented. He laid before God the state of His Church. Advent reminds us that we are still awaiting the consummation of God's work on earth. So we will often face enemies of God and His people. So how do we face their opposition, their mistreatment, and their persecution? "*But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you...*" (Mt 5:44).

#### B. Recall God's Character and Salvation (cf. Gen 8:22; Ps 30:4-5; Lk 2:10-11)

Second, our psalm teaches us to call to mind God's character and God's past acts of salvation. As sinners, lament can easily turn to despair – but our psalmist does not despair. Why not? Because he is a man of \_\_\_\_\_. Note v. 12, "*For God is my King from of old, Working salvation in the midst of the earth.*" He knows his God; he knows that the triumph of God's enemies is not so much a result of their strength as of God's \_\_\_\_\_. "*Sing praise to the Lord, you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name. For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning*" (Ps 30:4-5).

#### C. Petition God to Vindicate His Cause

So, third and finally, the psalmist teaches us to petition God to vindicate His cause in all the earth. "*Arise, O God, plead Your own cause...*" (22a). The most important single word in this psalm is \_\_\_\_\_ (cf. 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 19, 21, 22, 25). This psalm reminds us that God is far more concerned about His cause than we are.

### IV. Conclusion