

Having A Basic Understanding of Some Old Testament Truths

Part 109 – The Heathen Invasion Through Desiring God To Judge (Psalms 79-82)

1. As we begin the seventy-ninth Psalm, do we find Israel peacefully safe?

No, they are under enemy invasion at the hand of the heathen: *“(1) O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. (2) The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. (3) Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them” (Psalms 79:1-3).*

** “Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest” (Jeremiah 26:18; cf. Micah 3:12).*

2. Who really was making Israel a reproach unto their neighbors?

God: *“(4) We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. (5) How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire” (Psalms 79:4-5)?*

** “(8) And as the evil figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so evil; surely thus saith the LORD, So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land, and them that dwell in the land of Egypt: (9) And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them. (10) And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers” (Jeremiah 24:8-10).*

**God knows how to punish His people so that they are seen as being punished by Him (II Kings 21:12-16).*

3. Who did the Psalmist ask God to pour His anger out upon?

“(6) Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. (7) For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place” (Psalms 79:6-7).

** For one, why has Israel suffered at the hand of the heathen: “(24) Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the LORD, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. (25) Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart” (Isaiah 42:24-25).*

**Having said that, God then often punishes the heathen who does not turn to Him though He used them as a sword against His disobedient people (Isaiah 10:5-15).*

4. What did the Psalmist want God to forget?

“O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low” (Psalms 79:8).

*This was, unfortunately, a common request: *“Be not wroth very sore, O LORD, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people” (Isaiah 64:9).*

5. What tactic of appeal did the Psalmist use to try and turn away God’s anger from Israel?

“(9) Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake. (10) Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed. (11) Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die; (12) And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord. (13) So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations” (Psalms 79:9-13).

*In times of conflict Israel remembered that their fate was tied to God and His reputation: *“And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee” (II Chronicles 14:11).*

6. As the Psalmist approaches God as the Shepherd of Israel in the eightieth Psalm, is Israel on good terms with God at the time this Psalm was written?

No: *“(1) Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. (2) Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us. (3) Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. (4) O LORD God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? (5) Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure. (6) Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours: and our enemies laugh among themselves. (7) Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved” (Psalms 80:1-7).*

7. What is the Psalmist talking about with his illustration of a vine being brought out of Egypt?

He is comparing Israel to a vine being planted and cared for, then forsaken. He is asking God to come back to the people He planted: *“(8) Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. (9) Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. (10) The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. (11) She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. (12) Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? (13) The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it.*

(14) Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; (15) And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself. (16) It is burned with fire, it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. (17) Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself. (18) So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. (19) Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved" (Psalms 80:8-19).

8. Does the eighty-first Psalm begin with a request for mercy or a command to praise God?
Unlike the two previous psalms, this psalm begins with an instruction of praise: "*(1) Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. (2) Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery*" (Psalms 81:1-2).

9. At what time did God originally ordain the blowing of the trumpet during the solemn feast?
In the days of Joseph when he went through the land of Egypt: "*(3) Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. (4) For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. (5) This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not. (6) I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots. (7) Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah*" (Psalms 80:3-7).

10. If Israel would listen to God, what would they not have in Israel?
Idolatry: "*(8) Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me; (9) There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god*" (Psalms 81:8-9).

*** Exodus 20:3-5, Deuteronomy 6:14, and Deuteronomy 32:12.**

11. Did the Lord want to care for (i.e. feed) His people?
Yes: "*I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it*" (Psalms 81:10). See also: **Psalms 37:3-4.**

12. Why did the Lord give up His people to their own lusts?
"*(11) But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. (12) So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels*" (Psalms 81:11-12).

13. Can you see, from the eighty-first Psalm, that God really wants His people to listen to Him?
Yes: "*Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways*" (Psalms 81:13)!

***See also: Deuteronomy 5:29, Deuteronomy 32:29, Ezekiel 18:32, and Matthew 23:37.**

*** "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea" (Isaiah 48:18).**

14. Had Israel listened to God, what would have happened for them?
“(14) I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. (15) The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever. (16) He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee” (Psalms 81:14-16).
15. Does the penman of the eighty-second Psalm realize that God judges above all others?
Yes: *“God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods” (Psalms 82:1).*
16. What charge is being made about God’s judgments?
“How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah” (Psalms 82:2).
God is a just judge (**Luke 18:1-7, John 5:30, and II Timothy 4:8**).
17. Did this particular Psalmist feel that God was helping those who were poor, needy, and fatherless?
No: *“(3) Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. (4) Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked.” (Psalms 82:3).*
This is an unfounded charge: **Psalms 146:9**.
18. In the eyes of the Psalmist, did he consider those discussed in this chapter as understanding people?
No: *“They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course” (Psalms 82:5).*

* Saying someone walks in darkness is an accusation of ignorance (**John 12:35**).
19. What did the Psalmist tell the people he is discussing in the eighty-second Psalm?
“(6) I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. (7) But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes” (Psalms 82:6-7).
20. What did the Psalmist want God to arise and do?
“Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations” (Psalms 82:8).