

Bible Study # 78
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Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Book Three—Psalms
73—89

This evening we **are going through Psalms 73—89, known as Book Three of Psalms.** We have noted, in our progression through the Psalms, the extent to which there is a correlation between the five books of the Psalms with the five books of the Torah (the Law), as well as with the five Festival Scrolls and the festival occasions on which those scrolls were read.

The section of the Torah that correlates with this third book of the Psalms is the book of Leviticus. The third of the Festival Scrolls is the book of Lamentations, read at the national holiday of the fast of Ob, which commemorated the destruction of the temple and the destruction of Jerusalem. It is interesting because there **is a great deal of correlation in Leviticus and Lamentations with this book of Psalms—some of which we want to note.**

Let's just note the very beginning of Psalm 73. Psalm 73 sort of sets the theme for this section of the Psalms. **We have the theme that is emphasized in each of the sections, and the first Psalm of this section tends to indicate the theme of obedience and avoidance of unclean conduct.**

Psalm 73:1, "Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart."

Before we go any further, let's think in terms of the book of Leviticus. The book of Leviticus was written to the Levites as instruction to the Levitical priesthood. What does it deal with? It is filled with instruction on holiness and cleanness. There is a very distinct correlation between cleanness and holiness. It is one that we need to understand because there are spiritual lessons and spiritual ramifications. We are told in several places in the Old Testament that the responsibility of the priesthood was to teach the people to make a distinction between the clean and the unclean, the holy and the profane.

This is what we are told in Ezekiel 44:15, 23-24, when we're told of the job of the priesthood. There are other places that mention it as well, but that's what the job of the priesthood "boils down" to. They were responsible to teach the people to distinguish between the clean and the unclean, between the holy and the profane. There was to be a distinction made.

In the book of Leviticus, we have many instructions that deal with cleanness. We have the laws of clean and unclean meat. We have numerous laws that deal with sanitation and hygiene. There are laws that deal with the contaminating effect of contagious disease and with various things of that sort. We look at it and recognize it as legislation relating to sanitation and hygiene—and, yes, it does.

If those principles were applied, particularly in many of the third world areas that are wracked by such horrible disease problems, they would be far better off just from a purely physical, sanitary, hygienic standpoint. They would learn that you don't dump raw sewage in the streets. We sort of take that for granted, but if you were to look at certain areas of Central and South America and certain areas of Africa and Asia, you would find that what we sort of take for granted is not universally taken for granted.

There are laws relating to washing. If people touched something that died of itself, they had to go outside the camp and were unclean until evening. What it amounted to is that they had to wash their clothes and take a bath before they came back. If you had to wash your clothes and take a bath the way they did, it would take you until evening to get it tended to. It was not the simple matter as some of these things are today.

There is certainly a sanitary and hygienic point. I am not taking away from that in relating to clean and unclean meats. But when you read the way it is emphasized in the book of Leviticus, one thing that becomes apparent is that there is more than simply what is necessary for sanitation and hygienic purposes. There is an emphasis on cleanness in the physical realm that carries over to cleanness in the spiritual realm. There are spiritual lessons to be derived from physical things.

There is a specific example in Deuteronomy, but it parallels much of the legislation in Leviticus. There is the statement in Deuteronomy regarding the disposal of body wastes. People in the camp of Israel were to go outside of the camp; they were to dig a hole and bury the waste matter. It was not simply dumped some place there in the camp. Obviously, from a sanitary standpoint, this is going to solve an awful lot of disease problems. But it goes beyond that because in Deuteronomy, it gave a reason why they were to do that. It didn't say that no diseases would come among them, but it is a physical benefit.

It gives the reason in Deuteronomy as to why they were to do it.

Deuteronomy 23:14, “For the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and give your enemies over to you; therefore your camp shall be holy [You are to do this.], that He may see no unclean thing among you, and turn away from you.”

The emphasis was that God is there. God is walking up and down in the midst of the camp and God does not dwell in the midst of uncleanness. This was the emphasis. Over and over it was emphasized in the book of Leviticus that they were to be clean because they were a holy people. Now, let's understand the relationship between cleanliness and holiness.

Holiness is something that can only be imparted by God. God is holy. Where God puts and places His presence is holy. That's why the area around the burning bush was holy ground (Exodus 3:1-5). What made it holy? God was there. The Holy Place in the temple and the Holy of Holies were holy because of the proximity to God and the presence of God. The point is that God is holy and God does not dwell in the midst of uncleanness.

We see instruction on cleanness in the book of Leviticus because God was going to dwell among them and be their God. The point we have to understand is that the Levites were to teach that lesson to the people. They were to teach them to distinguish between the clean and the unclean, the holy and the profane.

Now, if God would not dwell in the midst of physical uncleanness in ancient Israel, how much less would He dwell in the midst of spiritual uncleanness in His people and His Church today? God does not dwell in the midst of uncleanness. God does not dwell in the midst of what is unclean.

There is symbolism in terms of baptism. It's not just a matter of happenstance that the ceremony of baptism is carried out the way it is. We don't ever reverse the order. We don't lay hands on people and then baptize them. We always do it the other way, following the Biblical example. There is a spiritual lesson that is taught. When you go into the waters of baptism, this is symbolic of washing away sin. First, you have to be clean. Then God will dwell within you and make you holy. You can't make yourself holy. God's presence makes you holy.

We are told to remember the Sabbath day and to keep it holy. You can't keep Sunday holy because God hasn't made it holy. You can't keep Sunday holy any more than you can keep cold water hot. If you are going to keep something, you keep it in the state that it is. You can keep

and maintain it in a particular state, but unless you have the ability to impart that state to it, then you can only keep it the way it is. You and I cannot make something holy.

God tells us that He will dwell in us. Our bodies become the temple of His Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19). We become holy.

The word “saint” in both the Hebrew in the Old Testament and the Greek in the New Testament means the same thing. “Saint” simply means “a holy one.” Maybe you've never thought of yourself as a holy one. Why are you holy? What makes you holy? God's presence in us is the only thing that makes any of us holy. God's Holy Spirit imparts holiness to us. When God dwells in us through the power of His Spirit, we become set apart as holy, set apart as a saint of the Most High.

Daniel 7:18, ultimately, “...the saints of the Most High shall receive the Kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.””

The saints of the Most High are those made holy by God's indwelling presence. God dwells in us, and imparts His presence to us. We become a new creation at the time of baptism and the receiving of His Spirit. But God continues to renew the inward man. We are renewed and transformed by the renewing of our mind in an ongoing basis of the Christian life.

At the resurrection, there is a culmination of that process when this mortal shall put on immortality. We are a part of God's Family now, but not in the full sense that we will be because, right now, we are still human beings. We are still flesh and blood. We are still subject to death and decay. We have human nature that we have to fight. But there is a culmination to the conversion process that will occur at the resurrection.

That's when the saints of the Most High (those made holy by God) will take and possess the Kingdom. We won't have all the political chicanery. Christ is not going to run for election. It's not going to work that way. Who's going to be in charge? It is going to be Jesus Christ. He is going to take charge and give responsibility—to share with Him—to those who are the saints of the Most High. They had to ultimately learn to make a distinction between the clean and the unclean, the holy and the profane.

Psalms 73:1, “Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart.”

Psalms 51:10, David prayed, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

Verse 7, he asked God to purge him and clean him up.

The book of Leviticus places an emphasis on cleanness as a prerequisite to holiness. Holiness and cleanness go hand-in-hand together. That carries over into conduct, then to obedience and then to avoidance of unclean conduct.

There's a great correlation of what happened when the Levites failed in their responsibility to transmit and to really impart to the people a clear sense of distinction between the holy and the profane, the clean and the unclean. What was the result? The result was the curses that were mentioned in Leviticus and the destruction of the temple.

It's interesting how God builds things in. If the Levites had faithfully taught and instructed the people in God's way, they certainly would have been blessed for that. After all, the people were supposed to tithe to the Levites, so the Levites would have been rewarded. God believes in being rewarded according to your work (Revelation 22:12). That is a Biblical principle. A laborer is worthy of his hire (Luke 10:7). The Levites would certainly have been rewarded with the tithe of the people.

What do you think happened when the Levites fell down on the job, became greedy and not attuned to teaching the people? The people got further and further away from God. And what is always the first thing that happens when people begin to drift away from God? They pretty quickly begin to get careless in their tithing. So God sort of built that in. If the Levites weren't doing their job, they were going to feel the "pinch." They ultimately felt more than the "pinch" because the temple was destroyed and they were totally out of a job. In that sense, their failure to carry out their responsibility resulted in a direct punishment on them.

God built it in and designed the system to where those who were responsible would reap rewards or curses depending upon their faithfulness in carrying out their responsibility that He gave them. God has ways of designing things in and building it to where it works a certain way.

The book of Lamentations is a lament connected with the destruction of the temple. It has to do with why the temple was destroyed. Why was Jerusalem destroyed? —Because the people became unclean, God no longer dwelt in their midst and provided His blessing and protection. God removed His presence because of uncleanness.

When we bring it down to the spiritual level, Paul talks about that in the New Testament.

I Corinthians 6:19-20, "...do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who [that] is in you, whom [which] you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." That's what He is talking about.

Hebrew 12:15, it says, "...lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled." Do you know what "defile" means? "Defile" means "to make unclean." "Lest any root of bitterness trouble you, and by this many become defiled" or "made unclean." That's why he mentions this.

What is it that defiles? The Pharisees didn't understand. They never got beyond the physical things. They said, 'Your disciples didn't wash their hands. They are defiled; they are unclean' (Mark 7:1-5). Christ said, 'That's not really the primary problem; that's not the main point.' Christ was not saying you should go around seeing how dirty you can get your hands before you eat a meal. Obviously, I think we understand that there are principles of cleanliness and hygiene.

Verses 17-23, he was saying, 'What really defiles somebody is not a speck of dirt on your hands. It is the fact of what is on the inside. It is attitudes that come out of the mouth.'

Why does that defile?

Matthew 12:34, "...For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

What we have to do is right here in Psalm 73.

Psalm 73:1, "Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart."

This section of the Psalms deals, a great deal, with a parallel to the material in the book of Leviticus—to cleanness and holiness.

One key Psalm in this section is Psalm 89 because of it's a description of the Davidic covenant. It's a Psalm of faith that was written in a time of national calamity, when it appeared that all the promises of God were suddenly being made of non-effect. The outward signs of God's faithfulness to His people, the temple, Jerusalem, the throne of David—all these things were apparently being cast aside and destroyed. It required faith to believe that God would fulfill His promises, even though all the physical evidence pointed to a contrary conclusion. It is not hard to believe God when you see, right before your eyes, God bringing these things out.

For instance, it takes, in that sense, a lot less faith to believe that Germany is going to emerge as the leader of the United States of Europe. I

think that requires a lot less faith in 1991 than it did in 1951. It is a lot easier to see. There are a lot of people who have never read the Bible, but just from looking at world events, it looks like Germany is sort of moving to the top. There seems to be a United States of Europe emerging. You can see that. You don't have to have read the book of Daniel or the book of Revelation to figure that out. But in 1951 when Germany was divided, lay prostrate and just helpless, there was an idea afoot that we would never, ever let them emerge as a major power. The iron boot of the Soviet Union (Stalin's troops) imposed their will on Eastern Europe and then the iron curtain. Then, West Germany was not our enemy; West Germany was our friend. Russia was our enemy. If we fought a war, we would fight with Russia. Some of you remember that Mr. Herbert Armstrong wrote an article back at that time entitled, "Will Russia Attack America?" The answer he gave was, "No." He said that. Those whose contact with this work goes back to that period and before—back in the early '50s, '60s, the time of the Cuban missile crisis—remember? When everybody answered, 'Oh, Russia and America,' this work was teaching something different.

Now, it requires less faith. When you don't see it, then it is based on faith. As things begin to emerge, it doesn't take quite the same level of faith because you can see it with your eyes and on the basis of physical analysis.

Psalms 89 reflects that. It deals with God's faithfulness to His people. God made a promise to David. We are going to see that in Psalm 89. But at the time of the destruction of the temple (at the time of King Zedekiah), the clear impression was, 'How is God going to fulfill what He said? God made a promise and yet physical evidence seemed to indicate that things aren't going the way we expected them to go.' They were going the way God expected them to go. You think God's sitting all shocked and surprised—kind of wringing His hands and not knowing what to do next? It's going the way God expected it to go. It may not be going the way we expected it to go. What we have to do is stay close to God, and that way we will be where He is.

Psalm 73:1-3, "Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."

The psalmist deals with something we often have to deal with. Have you ever noticed that

sometimes people seem to be getting by with things? We almost slip because we become envious. We see all these people who are wicked. They aren't even trying to do what is right, and they are prospering and getting rich. And here we are struggling along trying to do what's right, and this guy is cheating on his income tax, cheating on his wife, beating the dog and everything. It seems like he is getting by with all kinds of things, and he is getting rich.

It's not a matter that the wicked never prosper. Sometimes they do quite well. The attitude was an attitude of envy and sort of feeling like, 'Boy, they have it better than we do.' I have even heard people make the statement, 'Boy, if I weren't in the Church, I could be doing some of this stuff.' Yeah, if you weren't in the Church, you could go through the Great Tribulation. You might even end up in the lake of fire. Yeah, there are a lot of things that could happen if you weren't in the Church. If you don't come into the Church, there's ultimately going to be a lot of things that are going to happen.

Verses 5-9, the point is, and the psalmist went through this, "They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride serves as their necklace; violence covers them like a garment. Their eyes bulge with abundance; they have more than heart could wish. They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walks through the earth."

Verse 12, "Behold, these are the ungodly, who are always at ease; they increase in riches."

Verses 13-14, he begins to say, "Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning." He said, 'I have all kinds of problems. What's the point in trying to do what's right? It seems like they're getting all the breaks.'

The psalmist expresses feelings that sometimes we have. Sometimes we look around and life is unfair. Yes, it is. It is never going to be completely fair, just and equitable in Satan's world. If we could have it fair, just and equitable, what do we need the Kingdom of God for?

Verses 16-17, but he continues, "When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me—until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end." Oh! First, he was standing around and sort of feeling sorry for himself, looking with a little bit of envy at what others were getting by with and thinking, 'It's not fair.' But then, how did he work through it?

How did he resolve it? How did he deal with that? Did he just go off, get in a bad attitude and say he would join the Philistines and work for Dagon? No! He went into the sanctuary and into the presence of God. It has to do with coming before God in prayer. When he came before God and really began to pray about it, contemplated and considered it, then he understood their end.

Verses 18-19, “Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.” He began to think about the final results and realized that they were the ones set in slippery places. They are going to be brought down to destruction as in a moment.

He talks about how he repented.

Psalm 73:21-22, “Thus my heart was grieved, and I was vexed in my mind. I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You.”

Here, we have the progression. First, a matter of sort of casting envious glances at what the world was getting by with. That’s human nature. We can find ourselves in that situation. We begin to feel a little bit of self-pity and think how we have it so much harder than other people. Things seem to be going so well for all these people not in the Church. It doesn’t seem fair.

If that’s where we stop, then we bog down in resentment toward God, self-pity and depression. But that’s not where the psalmist stopped. He noticed those things. He had some of those feelings to wrestle with, but how did he resolve them? He went to God. He spent time on his knees. He spent time in the presence of God to get it in perspective. Then he began to look and see how it all works out. He began to focus on the end result and then he repented before God for his ungrateful attitude.

A thankful, appreciative attitude is one of the greatest keys to spiritual growth. An ungrateful, unappreciative attitude is fertile ground for Satan to work with because, after all, didn’t Satan have an ungrateful, unappreciative attitude? Stop and think about it. Lucifer had everything. He was one of the anointed cherubs that covered God’s throne. He was right there and had access to the very presence of God. He summed up beauty and wisdom and all sorts of power. He had everything, but he didn’t have gratitude. He wasn’t appreciative or thankful, and that is one of the greatest keys to our spiritual state.

Psalm 73 is a very important Psalm. There is a lot of food for meditation. As I mentioned before, one of the purposes of the Psalms, when we find ourselves with certain thoughts and

feelings, is to express feelings and resolution of those feelings. Therefore, it is an important place to go for meditation.

Psalm 74:1-2, “O God, why have You cast us off forever? Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture? Remember Your congregation, which You have purchased of old....”

Verse 7, “They have set fire to Your sanctuary; they have defiled the dwelling place of Your name to the ground.” Seemingly, the historical setting here would be the destruction of the temple.

This section of Psalms began to be added at the time of Hezekiah. The Psalms of Asaph began to be added. There were others added later at the time of King Josiah and, undoubtedly, others that had been written were added into the canon at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah because we find different historical context relating to it. There were poetic songs written by the sons of Asaph for performance in the temple choir. The family of Asaph was the Levitical musicians.

We find different historical contexts that are here. We see the destruction that comes. We see the national lament, which certainly ties in with correlation to the book of Lamentations.

Psalm 75:1-3, “We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks! For Your wondrous works declare that Your name is near. When I choose the proper time, I will judge uprightly. The earth and all its inhabitants are dissolved; I set up its pillars firmly.”

Verse 7, he continues, “But God is the Judge: He puts down one, and exalts another.”

Verse 10, “All the horns of the wicked I will also cut off, but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.”

We find important areas focusing in on giving thanks to God and that He is the deliverer.

Verses 6-7, notice, “For exaltation [KJV, “promotion”] comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south. But God is the Judge: He puts down one, and exalts another.” Promotion ultimately does not come from advancing ourselves. There have been those who have promoted and advanced themselves, but that’s not really the way that is going to solve the problems. The only lasting promotion is the promotion that Jesus Christ gives. That’s where we have to look. We are to look for the promotion that comes from God.

In Psalm 76, we have the theme of the time of Jesus Christ’s return—the time when He is going to judge the world.

Psalm 76:9, it mentions, “When God arose to judgment, to deliver all the oppressed [KJV, “meek”] of the earth.”

Verses 1-2, “In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel. In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling place in Zion.” This is talking of the time when God will be dwelling and ruling from Jerusalem. His government will be firmly established at the time when He is going to arise to judgment and save the meek of the earth.

God is our hope; He is our Savior. He is the One who will solve the problems—not the Republicans, Democrats, not this guy or that guy. The only salvation and the only real solution to the problem lie in the government that God is going to set up. It is very important that we have our focus there and recognize that it is the government of God that will bring about the results the world needs. Jesus Christ came preaching and proclaiming that.

Psalm 77 emphasizes that God is the only sure safety.

Psalm 77:1-3, “I cried out to God with my voice—to God with my voice; and He gave ear to me. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; my hand was stretched out in the night without ceasing; my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.” It is a cry to God for help—recognizing and working through the fact that God is the Deliverer.

Psalm 78 addresses a very important theme of the history of Israel from the time of the Exodus to the time of King David.

It is emphasized over and over in Psalm 78 that Israel continually fell short of her covenant obligations. We also see God’s continual mercy and His forgiveness.

Psalm 78:1, “Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.”

Verses 4-7, “We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.”

He established this as a testimony in Jacob; He established the account of things that are evidence, things that should be recorded, practiced and talked about, generation to generation. We learn by example and also by direct commandment and instruction. He established the testimony and appointed a law. God teaches us both by example and by illustration of what His people did and didn’t do, as well as His direct instruction and commandment. He talks about this sort of thing.

Verses 10-12, “They did not keep the covenant of God; they refused to walk in His law, and forgot His works and His wonders that He had shown them. Marvelous things He did in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.”

Verses 17-22, “But they sinned even more against Him by rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness. And they tested God in their heart by asking for the food of their fancy [KJV, “lust”]. Yes, they spoke against God: They said, ‘Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? Behold, He struck the rock, so that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. Can He give bread also? Can He provide meat for his people?’ Therefore the Lord heard this and was furious; so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel, because they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation.”

Verses 40-41, “How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, and grieved Him in the desert! Yes, again and again they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.”

Have you ever thought about the fact that you can limit God? The Bible talks about that. It talks about certain ones and about an attitude that was reflected. How do you limit God? What does that mean?

Let’s notice an example.

Mark 6:1-6, “Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, ‘Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this, which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?’ And they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them. ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.’ Now He could do no mighty work there, except that

He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.”

What are we told here? Is that an example?

Psalm 78:22, we are told right here, “Because they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation.”

Verse 41, “Yes, again and again they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.” They tempted God by doubting. ‘We don’t know if God’s up to it.’ –An attitude of doubt and disbelief in God’s promises. That is certainly a way that we can limit God. *We limit God’s working in us to the extent that we do not trust Him and do not believe and follow Him.* We place a limit on the extent to which God can and will work in our lives and in our heart and mind. Doubt and disbelief are the opposite of faith. Faith opens up doors. It expands the extent to which God will work through us. Disbelief (a lack of faith) imposes a limit on what God can and will do in our lives. This is an important thing.

I would call your attention to one other matter here in Psalm 78. It’s sort of interesting. Everyone has heard of angel’s food. You’ve heard of angel’s food cake. Is there such a thing as angel’s food?

Verses 24-25, it says, “Had rained down manna on them to eat, and given them of the bread of heaven. Men ate angels’ food; He sent them food to the full.” Manna is referred to as angel’s food. What do angels eat? Well, maybe sometimes they eat manna. They don’t eat in order to sustain their life. But that is not to say there is not an enjoyment of food. We see this whole setup in Psalm 78, and it culminates in verse 70 with choosing David as the king. So there is a development through this Psalm from the time of Moses down to the time of King David.

Psalm 79:1, “O God, the nations [KJV, “heathens”] have come into Your inheritance; Your holy temple they have defiled; they have laid Jerusalem in heaps.” Here we would clearly see an indication or reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by Nebuchadnezzar. It’s an appeal to God for deliverance. Yet God is punishing because of disobedience. But there are always those who are seeking to serve God, and they were crying out to God for mercy and for forgiveness.

Psalm 80:1-2, “Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth! Before

Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up Your strength, and come and save us!”

Here is a clear reference to God, and His role as the Shepherd of Israel. In His role as Shepherd, God is Protector of His people. He’s the One who sees that their needs are tended to and the One who will lead and rescue them. God likens His people, both nationally in terms of Israel and spiritually in terms of the Church, to being the sheep of His pasture. God compares His people to sheep and the fact that He is the Shepherd.

One of the indictments that He has in the book of Ezekiel is that the shepherds of Israel (the physical leaders) have not properly protected and watched out for His people nationally (Ezekiel 34:1-19).

Psalm 81:1-3, “Sing aloud to God our strength; make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob. Raise a song and strike the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the lute. Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, at the full moon, on our solemn feast day.” The word “trumpet” in Hebrew is “*shofar*.” Normally, there was a silver trumpet that was blown every new moon, but a different trumpet was blown for the new moon on the first day of the seventh moon (the Feast of Trumpets). It was not the silver trumpet but the ram’s horn, the blast of the shofar. The reference in Psalm 81:3 to blow the trumpet in the new moon is a reference to sounding the shofar.

KJV, “Blow the trumpet in the new moon [the Feast of Trumpets], in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.” The term “time appointed” is a reference to the full moon. The reference is to the fall festival season—to the blast of the shofar on the new moon (the Feast of Trumpets) and the time appointed (the full moon, which follows, which is the Feast of Tabernacles), our solemn feast day.

Verses 4-5, “For this is a statue for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. This He established in Joseph for a testimony, when He went throughout the land of Egypt...”

God prefigured His great end-time work. He ordained it in Joseph for a testimony. Joseph went through the land of Egypt with a message of warning of God’s impending judgment—the seven years of famine (Genesis 41:25-43). He proclaimed a message; the trumpet was blown. Joseph proclaimed a message through the land of Egypt—a warning of God’s impending judgment and the only way of salvation in the physical sense. The work that God did through Joseph was a testimony, example, illustration. God’s end-time work based in the nations of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) was what? –To

blow the trumpet! Isn't that what it says in Isaiah?

Isaiah 58:1, “Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” The work that God did anciently, through the patriarch Joseph, was a type of what He would do in the end-time that sets the stage for the fulfillment of God's intervention in man's history, which is pictured in the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Tabernacles. A part of the job of God's work today is blowing the trumpet of alarm and of warning. We have this reference and sort of a little interesting note here in Psalm 81.

Psalm 82:1-8, “God stands in the congregation of the mighty; He judges among the gods. How long will you judge unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; free them from the hand of the wicked. They do not know, nor do they understand; they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are unstable. I said, ‘You are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High. But you shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.’ Arise, O God, judge the earth; for You shall inherit all nations.”

There is a play-on-words here. The Hebrew word “Elohim” is a word that in some contexts is rendered “judges” in the Old Testament. It is not the common word for judges, but in certain contexts, it is a term that can refer to human judges. Certainly, God is the ultimate Judge. But there is a play-on-words here. You have to understand that the Old Testament is interpreted by the New Testament and Jesus quoted Psalm 82:6 in John 10:34. Let's see how He quoted it. How did He translate this word?

John 10:34, “Jesus answered them, ‘Is it not written in your law, “I said, ‘You are gods’?””

If you have a marginal reference in your Bible, this is a reference to Psalm 82:6.

Verses 35-36, “If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, “You are blaspheming,” because I said, “I am the Son of God”?”

Christ quoted this scripture to them, and they didn't know quite how to explain it or what to say. One thing to note, the Greek word here for “God” in the Greek language in John 10:34-35 is a Greek word that only means “God” and it is “Theos.” It is never used in the Greek language as synonymous with judge. So the Hebrew is

subject to more than one understanding. Christ quoted it here, not translating it by the Greek word that means judge. You can say Christ didn't speak in Greek. No, but John wrote it down in Greek. Christ probably spoke it in Aramaic. But John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, recorded Christ's words in Greek.

The Greek New Testament gives us an insight here. This is one of the sections of the Old Testament that gives just a flash of insight into the ultimate destiny and purpose of man. It's not spelled out in great detail in the Old Testament. Even the resurrection and many of these things are not spelled out clearly in the Old Testament, but there are insights that are given. We find that it is quoted in the New Testament, and on the basis of the explanation in the New Testament, we can understand clearly what was being said in the Old Testament. The point is not what Asaph understood and meant when he wrote it down, but what God meant when He inspired it to be written down. It was certainly made clear by Jesus Christ who is the very One who inspired it—the very God of the Old Testament.

Psalm 82:1, “God stands in the congregation of the mighty; He judges among the gods.” It could be rendered, “in the congregation of the gods.” The word “mighty” is also derived from the Hebrew word “elohim.” “...He judges among the gods.” In that sense, the Hebrew word for “elohim” means “mighty judge.” It is normally used to refer to God, but is also applied in other contexts. Who are ultimately going to be the ones that are going to rule and reign as kings and priests under Jesus Christ?

Revelation 5:10, “And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.”

Who are going to judge the world? Well, in I Corinthians 6:2 and other places, it says the saints are going to judge the world.

Daniel 7:27, “Then the Kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High....” Jesus Christ is going to take the Kingdom and give it to the saints of the Most High.

You can say there is a reference to the responsibility of human leaders' accountability to God and the fact that God expects human judges and human leaders to deal fairly and equitably because they will ultimately give account to Him. But in the full and complete sense of Psalm 82, you have a picture of the resurrection and the instructions that will be given to the glorified resurrected saints at the

time of the resurrection—the time when God will rise and judge the earth, the time when He will inherit all nations. That’s what verse 8 says.

Psalms 82:8, “Arise, O God, judge the earth; for You shall inherit all nations.”

The context here is sort of interesting.

Psalm 83:1-3, “Do not keep silent, O God! Do not hold Your peace, and do not be still, O God! For behold, Your enemies make a tumult; and those who hate You have lifted up their head. They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, and consulted together against Your sheltered ones [KJV, “Your hidden ones”].” This could be a reference to the Church in the place of safety.

Verse 4, “They have said, ‘Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more.’” There is a nation in the Middle East that bears the name Israel. Here’s a reference to a confederation that is going to cut them off, and they won’t even be remembered. They won’t be a nation any more.

Verse 5, “For they have consulted together with one consent; they form a confederacy against You.” Here’s a reference to a confederation—a combine of nations whose aim is to wipe out Israel and wipe out the name Israel.

Verses 6-8, “The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab and the Hagarites; Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assyria [Germany] also has joined with them; they have helped the children of Lot.”

If you go through these nations, you are looking at the nations in the Middle East—nations that certainly would involve places like Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, probably Turkey and some of the North African areas. Interestingly enough, the only Middle Eastern nation left out is Egypt, which is the only nation in the Middle East that signed a peace treaty with Israel. It’s sort of interesting.

They are involved with this and Assyria (Germany) has joined with them. They have come together and have put together a secret alliance, a confederation. They have taken crafty counsel. They have been deceitful about it. ‘They have taken crafty counsel against Your people.’ This could refer both to the people spiritually and the people physically. They are going to cut them off.

So based on Psalm 83, I would not place great hope in the Middle East peace conference, which is not even being held in the Middle East. They can’t hold the Middle East peace conference in

the Middle East because none of the Arabs will go to Israel and they won’t invite the Jews to any of the Arab nations. They can’t even sit down at a table in the same place in the Middle East. They have to go to Spain to have a conference. They have to find a place where they all will agree to go.

Do you realize that if mapmakers in American countries are going to sell an atlas in the Arab world, they have to omit Israel from the map? When the World Almanac is sold over there, they actually glue together the pages that have Israel, and they print a special edition that leaves Israel off because in Saudi Arabia, they won’t allow something to be sold that actually shows Israel. They won’t even show the existence of it. They have to leave a blank spot there on the map. They label it Palestine or something. If you label it Israel, you can’t sell it over there. They have a long way to go before there’s any meeting of the minds. If you won’t even admit your neighbor exists, it’s sort of hard to really work out a deal with them.

Then people say the Jews sure are uncooperative. They won’t agree to give all this back to them. Do you know why they don’t want to give back the Golan Heights? Do you know what the Golan Heights is? Do you know how many people were killed scaling the Golan Heights? Do you know what Syria did with the Golan Heights for 20 years—from 1947 to 1967?

It’s a big high spot, and they had all their guns up on top of it aimed down at Israel. They (Israel) were “sitting ducks” down there. So when the ’67 War broke out, one of the first things they did was scale the Heights. They lost a lot of men doing it, but they scaled the Heights and conquered it. And Syria’s been howling for the last 20 years they want the Golan Heights back. Well, sure they do! It’s kind of hard to shoot at somebody if he’s on the hill and you are in the valley. It’s a lot easier to shoot at them if you are on the hill and he is in the valley. You look at some of it and ask, ‘Why won’t they give it back?’ –Because they remember what happened from that area for the entire time the nation existed up until they took it. And the “great humanitarian” Asaad of Syria just does not inspire tremendous confidence in Israel.

The Bible has the news ahead of time. It already tells you that they are amassing nations. That is going on behind the scenes. They are ultimately going to put an “under-the-table, behind-the-closed-doors” agreement together, and Germany’s going to be in with it. Nobody is going to know about that. You and I can know.

Since we can read Psalm 83 and figure out some of these things that are going to be going on, we don't have to be shocked and surprised.

Psalm 84 focuses on the desire to be in God's presence.

Psalm 84:10, "For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness." There is a literal application to the temple of old, but the real application looks forward to dwelling with God in His Kingdom. That's what it is talking about.

Verses 1-2, "How lovely is Your tabernacle, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." –A desire to be in the presence of God.

Psalm 85:1-4, "Lord, You have been favorable to Your land; You have brought back the captivity of Jacob. You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin. You have taken away all Your wrath; You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger. Restore us, O God of our salvation, and cause Your anger toward us to cease." This was very likely written at the time the captives were returning from Babylon under Zerubbabel. The very likely time for the composition of this was a time when God was bringing His people back.

Psalm 86 is a Psalm of David inserted into this section. It's not part of the original canon of David's Psalms, but one that he had written that was added in later. It's on looking to God for mercy and preservation.

Psalm 87:1-3, "His foundation is in the holy mountain. The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God!" This is a description of Zion as the city of God. It's certainly a reference to Jerusalem, but Zion, in many passages, is often used figuratively to refer to the Church. The Church is the inhabitant of the New Jerusalem. So there is a very definite tie-in.

Psalm 88:1-6, "O Lord, God of my salvation, I have cried out day and night before You. Let my prayer come before You; incline Your ear to my cry. For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to the grave. I am counted with those who go down to the pit; I am like a man who has no strength, adrift among the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom You remember no more, and who are cut off from Your hand. You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the depths."

Verses 10-12, "Will You work wonders for the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise You? Shall Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave? Or Your faithfulness in the place of destruction? Shall Your wonders be known in the dark? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?" Here is a reference to the state of the dead. It's described as the land of forgetfulness. It's described as a time when there is an absence of consciousness and, certainly, a reference to the fact that the psalmist didn't think he was going up to heaven when he died. It is very clear that he didn't think he was going to go flitting off to heaven, but rather the dead are dead.

Verse 10, he asks the question, "Shall the dead arise and praise You?" "Is the time going to come when the dead will rise and praise You?" Other parts of the Bible certainly answer that in the affirmative. The reference is to seeking God. Psalm 89 is a Psalm that refers to and centers on the covenant with David.

Psalm 89:1-7, "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, 'Mercy shall be built up forever; Your faithfulness You shall establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations.' Selah. And the heavens will praise Your wonders, O Lord; Your faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. For who in the heavens can be compared to the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the Lord? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence by all those who are around Him."

Verses 28-37, "'My mercy I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall stand firm with him. His seed also I will make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his sons forsake My law and do not walk in My judgments, if they break My statutes and do not keep My commandments, then I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail. My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me; it shall be established forever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky.' Selah."

God had made this promise. The psalmist quotes it. He reminds God of the promise that had been made concerning the throne of David. If the descendants of David who occupied his throne sinned or if they departed from God, God would deal with them and punish them, but He would not forsake them. He would chasten them if necessary, but He would not remove His lovingkindness from them. He would not deal with the house of David as He dealt with the house of Saul.

Verse 34, He made a promise, “My covenant I will not break nor alter the things that have gone out of My lips.” God had promised that David’s throne would endure to all generations.

The issue of faith was when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem, Zedekiah was taken captive, his sons were slain, Jerusalem and the temple were burned and the nation went into captivity. At that point, faith in God’s promise is tried and tested. How can we depend on and trust God when it seems like everything is falling apart? Well, that’s when we have to trust God the most. God showed them that He made a covenant with David.

Verses 3-4, “I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: “Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations.”” The throne of David is going to endure in every generation.

You want to know the story? This sets the stage for the booklet, *What’s Ahead for America and Britain*. At the time of the destruction of the temple, there was a transfer of the throne of David from the Middle East to Ireland by the prophet Jeremiah. From the things that occurred at that time, God continued His promise. It certainly took faith to understand that because they hadn’t anticipated that it was going to work that way. There is an enigmatic reference in verses 24-25 that we can see a little more clearly now—things that they didn’t see back at that time.

Verses 24-25, “But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him, and in My name his horn shall be exalted. Also I will set his hand over the sea, and his right hand over the rivers.”

“I will set his hand over the sea.” What does that mean? Well, the British Isles, where the throne was transferred, certainly is set in the sea. It’s one of those things that at the time it was written, the full sense of it wasn’t appreciated. We can look at it from a different perspective now. In retrospect, we can see that was not just a poetic statement. God literally fulfilled that. He literally did that.

We see that the setting of this writing is around the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the death of Zedekiah. The first part of the Psalm is a rehearsal and gives the promises God made. God made these promises to David, and they are absolute. Toward the conclusion, the writer focuses in on how events seem to contradict God’s word. The throne disappeared from common view. Then, finally, at the end, he reiterates his faith in God and God’s promises.

Verses 50-52, “Remember, Lord, the reproach of Your servants—how I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the many peoples, with which Your enemies have reproached, O Lord, with which they have reproached the footsteps of Your anointed. Blessed be the Lord forevermore! Amen and Amen.” A reiteration, ‘Yes, there’s been reproach, but God is going to remember and blessed be God.’ The psalmist who wrote this at the time, very likely did not fully understand how God was going to fulfill His promise. He just believed that God would. Sometimes we find ourselves in a situation where God makes a promise and we look at it and say we don’t see how God is going to do that. How can God fulfill that? We don’t see how that can work out. It’s not necessary for me to understand how God is going to do everything. What’s necessary is for me to trust Him to do what He says.

What was the commercial? The old Greyhound Bus commercial, “Sit back and leave the driving to us.” That’s sort of what we need to do in our lives—sit back and leave the driving to God. We don’t have to know how God is going to do everything He says He will do. That’s where faith comes in. It’s a matter of believing, trusting and depending on God, recognizing our dependence on God, and recognizing that God will do what He says. God can be depended upon.

Human leaders make promises. We generally find that there is nothing as stale and empty as election promises the day after election. All of a sudden, their memory sort of jams up. They don’t quite remember that. They begin to “crawlfish” (go backwards).

God’s not that way. When God tells you something, you can “take it to the bank.” That’s the way it is. God’s not like human beings who make promises to sort of ingratiate themselves or try to maneuver and manipulate and then don’t fulfill it. In some cases, they may be sincere and are just not able to fulfill it. In other cases, they never meant to fulfill it to begin with. They just said it because they thought it would be popular.

God never does that. Neither of those criteria fits God. If God tells you He will do something, He can do it. He's not like human leaders who have limits. I think sometimes there are those who do make sincere promises and, yet, are unable to put them into practice. Too many other things come in or they lack the power. Well, God doesn't lack the power. He can put into effect what He said. In other cases, they make promises that they never intend to keep. God doesn't do that either. If God tells you something, He means it. That really is a focus on the basis of faith, and that has much to do with our relationship with God.

Hopefully, this evening we got a little bit of an overview of this section of the Psalms and many of things that relate to Book Three of Psalms. There is a tremendous amount that God has packed in there.

Next Bible study we will be covering the fourth section of the Psalms, Book Four of Psalms—Psalms 90—106.