

## Psalm 74

**Read Psalm 74:1-2:** A lot of the Bible is about the prophet asking God to stop the ongoing punishments and brutality that the nation of Israel is subjected to. We have to remember that the very punishments and invasions and captivities and plagues are actually answered prayers by common men and prophets before them.

Habakkuk is about a prophet praying that God will bring an end to the violence, injustice, corruption, and division in Judah. God answers his prayer with a Babylonian invasion and captivity. That was the answer to his prayer.

*O Lord, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, “Violence!” And You will not save. 3 Why do You show me iniquity, And cause me to see [b]trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; There is strife, and contention arises. 4 Therefore the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds. (Habakkuk 1:2-4)*

*“Look among the nations and watch— Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days Which you would not believe, though it were told you. 6 For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, A bitter and hasty nation Which marches through the breadth of the earth, To possess dwelling places that are not theirs. 7 They are terrible and dreadful; Their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves. 8 Their horses also are swifter than leopards, And more fierce than evening wolves. Their [c]chargers [d]charge ahead; Their cavalry comes from afar; They fly as the eagle that hastens to eat. 9 “They all come for violence; Their faces are set like the east wind. They gather captives like sand. (Habakkuk 1:5-9)*

Later on, Jeremiah cries out to God about the horrible nightmare that was the result.

*“The Lord has trampled underfoot all my mighty men in my midst; He has called an assembly against me To crush my young men; The Lord trampled as in a winepress The virgin daughter of Judah. 16 “For these things I weep; My eye, my eye overflows with water; Because the comforter, who should restore my life, Is far from me. My children are desolate Because the enemy prevailed.” (Lamentations 1:15-16)*

So here we are; just like the psalmist. We are asking God to stop Covid, election fraud, and to replace our bad leaders with godly leaders. And yet; we have prayed for revival

in our land. This is the pattern for men to be saved. You have to be in need of good news to accept it.

It was “in the days of Herod” that this word of hope came to Zecharias. Herod was an immoral, violent king of Edomite descent who claimed to be a Jew in his religion, but was such in name only. He reigned as king of Judea from 37-4 BC. He held onto power by murdering numerous family members over the years, including one son just five days before his own death. He was the same tyrant who slaughtered the infants of Bethlehem in his attempt to kill the newborn king of the Jews. It was near the end of this evil reign that the Lord broke into history with His gracious message to Zecharias.

Herod’s reign followed the 400 silent years from the time of Malachi, years when Israel had been oppressed by various foreign powers. Even religion in Israel was corrupt. The high priests and members of the Sanhedrin vied for power and prestige. They made a healthy profit in the business of selling animals for sacrifice in the temple precincts. It was a bleak situation spiritually and morally. Perhaps in spite of his name, “God remembers,” Zecharias often wondered if God had forgotten His people.

But it’s often at such bleak times that God breaks into history with true revival. His power is made perfect in our weakness. Both personally and nationally, God’s salvation is revealed to those who are helpless in themselves, who have no hope but God Himself. It was not a coincidence that when God wanted to raise up Samuel as a prophet for Israel, He caused a godly woman, Hannah, to be barren. Even so here, when He wanted to send His forerunner before Messiah, He

withheld children from Elizabeth, and waited until she was too old to produce a child. Then, unmistakably, the resulting blessing came from His almighty hand.

How might God answer our prayers for revival? One of my prayers that God will heal our land...and that we will experience revival resulting in much eternal lives commencing. God has sent judgment against men's idols, to remove their false hopes. The ancient Hebrews began to cry out for God, only after 400 years of slavery and infanticide. He began the process by killing the idols in Egypt. The Nile River was their god. He turned it into blood; and it ceased to provide crops. The sun was a god; which was turned dark. The cattle and frogs and insects and weather and crops were all things worshipped. They all became cursed and despised in the 10 plagues.

*Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like [h]corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. (Romans 1:22-23)*

We may not be river or sun or animal worshippers today. What are our false hopes? Is it a continuation of government checks rolling in; and working from home?

*Therefore you shall obey the voice of the Lord your God, and observe His commandments and His statutes which I command you today.”... “But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:... “The Lord will bring you and the king whom you set over you to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods—wood and stone. 37 And you shall become an[i] astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all nations where the Lord will drive you.... Also every sickness and every plague, which is not written in this Book of the Law, will the Lord bring upon you until you are destroyed. ...(Deuteronomy 26-28 misc verses)*

*“I will give children[c] to be their princes, And [d]babes shall rule over them. 5 The people will be oppressed, Every one by another and every one by his neighbor; The child will be insolent toward the [e]elder, And the [f]base toward the honorable.” (Isaiah 3:4-5)*

Are we fixated on our technology and social media? Are even the democrats beginning to curse their government? What kind of vulnerability is our technology leading us towards? We know that solar flares will become a bigger problem in the tribulations ahead. What if our grid and satellites go down? Does that render our military and supply chain dead in the water? It helps to ride out the storm, if you know that it is the best possible scenario for our society to repent. We know that biometrics and identity theft will push us towards personal bodily identifiers.

**Read Psalm 74: 3-8:** The destruction of Judah has now come in this prophecy.

*And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. (Jeremiah 25:11)*

The scriptures describe judgment as the opposite of creation.

*Behold, the Lord makes the earth empty and makes it waste, Distorts its surface And scatters abroad its inhabitants. 2 And it shall be: As with the people, so with the priest; As with the servant, so with his master; As with the maid, so with her mistress; As with the buyer, so with the seller; As with the lender, so with the borrower; As with the creditor, so with the debtor. 3 The land shall be entirely emptied and utterly plundered, For the Lord has spoken this word. 4 The earth mourns and fades away, The world languishes and fades away; The haughty[a] people of the earth languish. 5 The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, Because they have transgressed the laws, Changed the ordinance, Broken the everlasting covenant. 6 Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, And those who dwell in it are [b]desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, And few men are left. 7 The new wine fails, the vine languishes, All the merry-hearted sigh. 8 The mirth of the tambourine ceases, The noise of the jubilant ends, The joy of the harp ceases. Fear and the pit and the snare Are upon you, O inhabitant of the earth..... 18 And it shall be That he who flees from the noise of the fear Shall fall into the pit, And he who comes up from the midst of the pit Shall be [d]caught in the snare; For the windows from on high are open, And the foundations of the earth are shaken. 19 The earth is violently broken, The earth is split open, The earth is shaken exceedingly. 20 The earth shall reel[e] to and fro like a drunkard, And shall totter like a hut; Its transgression shall be heavy upon it, And it will fall, and not rise again. 21 It shall come to pass in that day That the Lord will punish on high the host of*

*exalted ones, And on the earth the kings of the earth. 22 They will be gathered together, As prisoners are gathered in the [f]pit, And will be shut up in the prison; After many days they will be punished. 23 Then the moon will be disgraced And the sun ashamed; For the Lord of hosts will reign On Mount Zion and in Jerusalem And before His elders, gloriously. (Isaiah 24 various verses)*

What was God doing; when he wiped out Judah? Firstly, God told the Jews that they could not continue to practice idolatry in his land.

*For they prophesy a lie to you, to remove you far from your land; and I will drive you out, and you will perish. (Jeremiah 27:10)*

Secondly, the land was chock full of idols, that had to get burned and removed.

*“You erected your shrine at the head of every road, and built your [k]high place in every street. (Ezekiel 16:31)*

*For he rebuilt the [a]high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; he raised up altars for the Baals, and made wooden images; and he worshiped all [b]the host of heaven and served them. 4 He also built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, “In Jerusalem shall My name be forever.” 5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. 6 Also he caused his sons to pass through the fire in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom; he practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft and sorcery, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger. 7 He even set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the [c]house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, “In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever; 8 and I will not again remove the foot of Israel from the land which I have appointed for your fathers—only if they are careful to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses.” 9 So Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel. (2 Chronicles 33: 3-9)*

The remaining inhabitants just see the cruel war lords tearing up God’s land. They question God’s protective power. You have to go back in time to see what God is allowing. Job similarly was confused by God’s heavy hand on his faithful servant. Even

Job needed to have God hit the reset button in his life. Job had become a compulsive worrier. He feared that his kids would fall to sin or evil. In a sense he had everything to lose; and nothing more to gain. He had become a prisoner of fear to his own creation.

*For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me, And what I dreaded has happened to me. (Job 3:25)*

**Read Psalm 74:9-11:** What is our calling when God is silent? How do we thrive if there are no good churches near us? What about when everything is falling apart in our society? The psalmist was not hearing any prophecy. It was like living in a post-Christian era.

It has to start with a personal and intimate relationship with God. You cannot spend zero time in the scriptures or in prayer during the week; and expect some pastor to revive you. If we find ourselves being overly critical of the pastor; that can mean that we are overly-focused on him. Our flesh has no interest in subjecting itself to a quiet time and scripture reading. We can be in a place where we find ourselves wanting to minimize our prayers as well.

Abraham and Lot are perfect examples of two types of saints. Both men were saved. Abraham is our example; and Lot is our example of what not to do. Abraham communed with God every day. His life reflected an ongoing effort to draw nearer to God. Lot was more motivated to get ahead; and minimize his daily quiet time. When God came to visit, he had lunch and discussions and shared prophecy with Abram. He sent angels to save Lot from Sodom. The angels really did not want to even stay at Lot's house. Lot had tried to minimize his spiritual time; and they honored that in reciprocity. Lot was not known to have any legacy. He brought nobody to heaven.

*and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; 7 and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked 8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)— 9 then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, (2 Peter 6:-9)*

**Read Psalm 74:12-17:** The psalmist wants God to show up and show his power. After all, God did bring down Pharaoh in a very public way. God did show his power over

nature at the crossing of the Red Sea. God did create the heavens and the earth as well. The implication is: how God can stand by idly while the temple is being hacked apart by vile men.

God is not standing by at all. God told his people many times that it is he who is bringing in the Babylonians to cleanse the land of his own corrupted people.

**Read Psalm 74:18-23 :** It is complicated to pray for corrections to our society, and not be affected personally. The same judgements that bring the nations to repentance; put pressure on us. When we pray to save America, it is likely to result in a severe hardship; that we will live through (or not).

The psalmist uses three common prayer techniques to solicit God's power.

1. He points out that his enemy is blaspheming God. The cruel war lords who pounded Israel were all crushed after they served their purposes.
2. The psalmist reminds God that he has made a deal to protect his own faithful followers. God has ways to protect his people during surrounding mayhem. Jeremiah's jail sentence was the best thing for him. He was the only citizen who had regular meals and a safe place to sleep. He was protected when the Babylonians when they broke through the walls of Jerusalem. Lot is an example of how God can deliver a couple people from massive calamity.

*For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to [b]hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; 5 and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; 6 and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; 7 and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked 8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)— 9 then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, (2 Peter 2:4-9)*