

Part 4 – How Long?

In part 3 we learned more about the desolations of the enemy. They really wreaked havoc in the assemblies of the people, destroying all their Churches and other meeting places. They tore down their national standards and burned all the houses in Jerusalem, of both the prominent people and the poor alike; even destroying the Temple itself with fire. While back when the Temple was being built, the people who built it were famous – but now the famous ones were those who destroyed it. The enemy truly was intent on destroying the entire city - and did so - according to all that God had warned would happen Israel would not repent and turn back to Him. And this is prophetic of the destruction (mostly spiritual) that will happen when Satan (and his fallen angels) are cast to earth. For he will ‘destroy’ people’s ‘religions’ by seducing most all people into worshipping *him*, through his incredible ability to lie, and also through ‘signs and wonders’. Thus, just as God allowed his city, Temple and people to be destroyed – so too will He allow Satan to ‘destroy’ all the religions of the earth by causing everyone to worship *him*. All, that is, except those who are sealed with the truth (Rev 7). So, the desolations that are coming are even worse than they were when the Psalmist wrote this Psalm. Thus, this Psalm is a beautifully prophetic one we can still learn from today. And we’ll pick up with the thought of the entire land being destroyed...

Psalms 74

9 We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.

The word ‘**sign**’ here means **a signal** (literally or figuratively), as a **flag, beacon, monument, omen, prodigy, evidence**, etc. (#226). And the *Companion Bible* has a helpful note explaining this verse. It explains that, the words ‘*there is no more any prophet*’ is actually a figure of speech (*Metonymy*, of cause, apx 6) which is when a name or noun is used instead of another, to which it stands in relation. So, what this means is that the Psalmist is not really saying there were no prophets, but that there were no *prophetic utterances* given to them at this time. That’s why he also wrote that they ‘see not our signs’. It means that, the signs of God’s presence and power – i.e. miraculous signs or prophetic utterances from His prophets - were totally absent. And that’s why no one knew ‘how long’ these desolations would continue. And the reason for this is simple. It is because God sent prophets to warn the people of what *was coming* **if** they didn’t stop sinning and turn from their wicked ways. But, after the warning(s) was given, and He gave them ample time to change, there comes a time when there’s no need for signs or prophetic utterances (warnings) because *the time for punishment has come*. And that’s what was going on when the Psalmist wrote this Psalm. Again, that’s why he says that no one knew how long the desolations would last. They had been warned it was coming, and now were seeing the things Jeremiah warned them of come to pass - but the Psalmist is wondering ‘how long’ it’s going to last, which is actually what he then asks in the next verse...

Psalms 74

10 O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?

Now, the word ‘**God**’ here is the most frequently used ‘title’ for our Heavenly Father in the Psalms. It is ‘**Elohiym**’ (#430), which means *the Supreme God*, who is our *Creator*. And the *Companion Bible* has another note that’s really helpful. It explains that the words ‘how long’ are another figure of speech (*Erotesis*, apx 6) that was also used in the first verse of this Psalm. It’s the asking of a question, not for information or an answer, but for several reasons. And the likely reason here is that the Psalmist is still lamenting over what he sees, as he was in verse 1. But truly, he really did want to know how long the desolations would last. How long was God going to allow the adversary (opponent #6862) to ‘**reproach**’ Him, which means (in the context of this Psalm) *to carp at*, i.e. *defame* (#2778). It’s also been translated as to blaspheme, which would be an appropriate rendering here.

And then, to stress his point, he asks if God will let the enemy (adversary, #341) blaspheme (scorn, #5006) His name *forever*. This is likely still part of the figure of speech; for the Psalmist surely knew that God would not put up with that *forever*. But, the reality was, God allowed the enemies of Israel to defile His city, Temple and take His people captive *because His own ‘chosen people’ had long been* reproaching and blaspheming His Name, city (Jerusalem) and Temple! And *that’s* why He allowed the enemy to do so; it was chastisement for His own chosen people’s *doing the same thing*, albeit not quite as bad in the physical sense (they didn’t burn it down). At least when the enemy was destroying His Temple, the wickedness of Israel stopped because they were forced into slavery by the heathen Babylonians. So, they didn’t have the power to oppress others and they (especially the ruling class) got to experience the pain of being oppressed and enslaved, which they were doing to others (Jer 7, 26:12-15, 35:12-17, ect.).

And the Word of God is very clear about the question of ‘how long’ will the desolations continue: no, our Heavenly Father will *not* let His Holy Name be blasphemed *forever*; nor will He allow wickedness to continue to flourish *forever*. All that will stop, instantly, when the *true* Jesus Christ returns and pours out the ‘cup of wrath’ upon the wicked ones on the earth. As God swore, by His own name, in Num 14:21: all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD. And, at when Jesus Christ finally returns, all people will be forced to bow a knee to Jesus Christ *and* confess that Yehovah is the one and only true God *and* that Jesus Christ *really is* the true Messiah (Isa 45:21-25, Rom 14:11-12, Phil 2:9-11). Rom 14:12 adds that, at that time, every one of us shall give account of himself to God. So, there will be a ‘judgment’ when Jesus Christ returns (2 Cor 5:10), which is why the wicked ones will be imprisoned (Isa 24:22, Rev 20:1-3) and the faithful will be given eternal life and allowed to reign with Jesus Christ for a thousand years (Phil 3:27, Rev 20:4-6).

Psalms 74

11 Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck it out of thy bosom.

The word ‘**withdrawest**’ means *to turn back* or *retreat* (#7725), so the Psalmist is basically asking God why He’s withholding a ‘helping hand’ to them. And the right hand is often used in the Scriptures as an analogy for power. And that’s simply because most people are often right-handed (even back then) and, thus, their right hand is the most powerful hand. And then he asks God to pluck his hand out of his bosom, which again means he’s asking God to help them. Now, the Psalmist surely knew why God was allowing these desolations to come upon them. But, what he is struggling with is why God allowed it to keep going on *so long*, because the things he saw happening (especially the destruction of the Temple) were so horrifying to him that he couldn’t really wrap his head around why God is allow *such* terrible destructions to continue. That, again, is why he asked ‘how long’ in the prior verse (10). And faithful Christians today often ask God the same thing (how long) when they see the horrible things happening in our countries. When God is all powerful, why does He allow wickedness to go on like this?

The answer is quite simple. Because it is the ‘negative’ part of His plan of Salvation. When Satan rebelled in the first earth age [<https://t.me/BibleStudyTruth/1288>] he deceived many of God’s children into rebelling (with him) against God. And God did not want to have to kill His children (albeit Satan is already sentenced to death, as Ezekiel 28:18-29 and Rev 20:10 explain). He actually states this quite clearly in Ezekiel 18, 33 and 2 Pt 3:9. But, part of helping people turn back to Him is also letting them experience the consequences of their actions, no matter how hard that might be. And the people in this Psalmist time had been warned many times, yet hardened their hearts and refused to listen to God’s warnings. Jeremiah prophesied for *decades*, yet most people did not listen to him. A few did, but not enough to turn the country back around, *just as it is today*. So, God did do what He warned them, and that’s what this Psalmist is writing about. And while it felt like, for the Psalmist, these ‘bad things’ would last forever, they did not. It was just difficult to go through, just as it’s hard for us to see our Christian nations destroyed physically and spiritually. And, prophetically speaking, it will be far harder to see the entire world being seduced into worshiping Satan, as though he is God Almighty. But it will happen and we will have to endure it.

But, so long as we remain faithful to our Heavenly Father, He will show us how we can fight against this, spiritually. And we do this by learning to use our gifts and share the truth with others, as the opportunities arise (Eph 5:15-16, Col 4:5-6). While we can’t change everyone, we can do our part to help turn the hearts of God’s children back to Him (through faith in Jesus Christ) - and that’s what our Heavenly Father expects of us. So, even though it’s hard to see (and will be more so when Satan’s on earth masquerading as the Messiah) we’ve got to ‘hang tough’ and continue to strive to keep our *own* heart and mind clean and serve God the best we can, with

what gift(s) He's given us. And never forget that our Heavenly Father is *always* in control and He knows how much time is needed before He sends His Son, Jesus Christ back. So, our job is not to tell Him what to do, but to continue to serve Him the best we can. And when we keep busy doing that (instead of fretting, as Ps 37 told us not to do) then time does go a lot quicker, and we will have peace of mind because we're keeping our heart and mind focused on Him *more* than others (Isa 26:3-4) ...

Psalms 74

12 For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.

The word '**God**' here is yet again '**Elohiym** (#430), which means *the Supreme God*, who is our *Creator*. '**Elohiym** (or '**Elohim**) is God the Creator putting His omnipotence ('**El**) into operation. And the word '**my**' is actually the same word as '**King**' here (which does mean king, #4428), so the Psalmist is saying that God is King 'of old', which means *from antiquity* (#6924) and has even been translated as *eternal* or *everlasting*. In other words, he's saying that our Creator has always been the King of kings (the Supreme God) and that's because He created all things (Rev 4:11, Ezek 18:4). And He has long worked 'salvation' throughout the earth. The word '**salvation**' here is *yeshuw' ah* (#3444) and means *something saved*, i.e. (abstractly) *deliverance*; hence, *aid*, *victory*, *prosperity*. It comes from #3467, which is one of the prime roots of the Hebrew word (#3091) that Jesus' name (#2424 Greek) comes from. So, while it really hurt the Psalmist to see God blasphemed, and His sanctuary (and people) destroyed, he is now reminding professing that '**Elohiym** has *always* been the King of kings and has *always* saved His children. The stipulation, of course, is those who fear, love and obey Him (Ps 145:17-20). So basically, what the Psalmist is beginning to do (instead of focusing on the desolation) is redirecting his thoughts (and kind of reminding God too, Isa 43:26) to God's previous deliverance; and he'll also point out the natural wonders of God's creation. And this is good for us to do, too. Paul admonishes us to do so in Phil 4:6-8. And, as the Psalmist of Ps 119 learned (who was likely king Hezekiah), remembering God's Word, and His judgments 'of old', **is** what comforts us, and gives us the inner strength to get through whatever trials and tribulations we're experiencing (Ps 119:50-55) ...

Psalms 74

13 Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters.

And now the Psalmist is beginning to speak of the former merciful deliverances of God. The word '**divide**' here means *to break up*, usually figuratively, i.e. *to violate, frustrate* (#6565) and the word '**strength**' means *strength in various applications (force, security, majesty, praise)* (#5797). And the word '**dragons**' means *a marine or land monster*, i.e. *sea-serpent* or *jackal* (#8577). The *Companion Bible* has several notes on this verse that are quite helpful. It points out that the Psalmist is speaking of the time when God parted the 'Red' Sea; and he is describing how it was a sudden, and even forceful act. Ex 14:21-22 tells us that God sent a strong east wind

that night and it was so strong (intense) that the waters were as a wall on each side to the children of Israel. And the wind was also so intense that it dried up the land (that was previously saturated with water) *so much* that the children of Israel could walk on it without any problems.

And, the semi-colon here lets us know that the second part of the verse is closely connected to the first part. The *Companion Bible* yet again helps us understand what this means because it renders the word ‘**dragon**’ as pertaining actually to a ***crocodile*** (something common in the Nile River) and thus, ***symbolical of Egypt***. So, the Psalmist is simply saying that the Egyptian army (symbolized by crocodiles, which was rendered as ‘dragons’ here) had their heads broke in the waters. That was, of course, after Israel crossed the sea safely and then God lifted up the cloud so the Egyptian army could chase them. And when they were in the middle of the sea, He allowed the sea to come back down and literally crush them (i.e. breaking their heads) with an enormous force of *a ton of* water that was formerly being held up by God’s mighty wind.

Psalms 74

14 Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.

This verse is likely referring to the same event and simply continuing on explaining it. For the word ‘**leviathan**’ means ***a wreathed animal***, i.e. ***a serpent, especially the crocodile or some other large seamonster*** (#3882). So again, God crushed (broke) the heads of those soldiers who are symbolically called crocodiles (i.e. dragons and leviathans) and their dead bodies (that washed to the shore) were meat to the inhabitants. The word ‘**people**’ can mean a people, a tribe, troops or attendants but is likely being used (symbolically) for *the wild beasts* who inhabited the wilderness, as the *Companion Bible* points out. The *Moffet Bible*’s translation backs up this interpretation. The point is clearly that, when our Heavenly Father wants to, He can do very great and mighty works. Things that no one else on earth, or in heaven, can do. And He well knows how to (and is quite able to) destroy His enemies, *when He chooses to...*

Psalms 74

15 Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: thou driedst up mighty rivers.

Now, this verse is referring a couple more miraculous event our Heavenly Father did when the children of Israel were in the wilderness, after they had been freed from Egyptian bondage. The word ‘**cleave**’ does mean ***to cleave*** but can also mean to ***rend, break, rip or open*** (#1234). The *Companion Bible* has a note explaining that the word ‘fountain’ here is a figure of speech (*Metonymy*, of effect, apx 6) which is when one name or noun is used instead of another, to which it stands in a certain relation. So, the word ‘**fountain**’ is used instead of ***the rock from which the water flowed***. And this is referring to how the Lord (YHVH) *twice* gave Israel water to drink while they were in the wilderness. The first time, shortly after they had left Egypt, is

recorded in Ex 17:1-7. The people chided (complained terribly to) Moses about not having any water, and God told Moses to go a rock in Horeb (a generic name for the Sinaitic mountains, #2722) and smite the rock (in front of the elders of Israel). And when Moses did so, indeed abundant waters poured out of the rock... keep in mind this was in the middle of the wilderness! Water was (and still is) a precious commodity there and God provided it, miraculously, for the children of Israel. Yet He did so again, when they were in Kadesh. Num 20:1-11 records how the children of Israel (yet again) chided with Moses (complained terribly instead of asking humbly for water) and God (again) gave them water to drink. Yet, that time, instead of smiting the rock, Moses was supposed to *speak* to it. But, because Moses was so angry at the children of Israel (because they continued to complain instead of simply asking nicely) that he disobeyed God (out of anger for Israel) and smote the rock – not only once, but *twice* – instead of simply *speaking* to it. This act caused him to lose his right to go into the Promise Land (Num 20:12) albeit the Lord did allow him to see it, just before he died (Deut 34:1-5). So, *twice* did the Lord miraculously give Israel water to drink by causing water to gush out of a rock (like a fountain) that had previously not been a water source.

And then, the latter part of this 15th verse (in Ps 74) is speaking about the *second* time the Lord (YHWH) parted the waters for Israel to cross over. Only this time, it was as they were getting ready to go into the Promise Land. However, they were on the east side of the Jordan River and needed to be on the west side, in order to invade the first city of the Promise Land (i.e. Jericho). Josh 3:9-17 records how the priests (who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant) went before Israel and, as their feet touched the Jordan River (which was flooded at that time), the waters upstream ‘*rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan*’ and the waters that were downstream ‘*failed, and were cut off*’ and ‘*the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan*’! So, this was yet another miraculous deliverance by our Heavenly Father. Instead of having to find a way to cross the Jordan River (which would be a long and slow process) He simply ‘held it up’ so Israel could cross the river, again *on dry land*!

So, the point the Psalmist is making is that he *knows* that our Heavenly Father is able to do very mighty works. And he cites historical references to prove it. In other words, the Psalmist knows that God is able to stop the enemy from doing wickedly in His Temple, and Jerusalem, and even to His people... and he wonders how long until the Lord will ‘pluck His hand out of His bosom’ and stop the desolations! But, he’s not done yet; he’ll continue on a couple more verses citing proof that God has all power, and authority over His creation. But we’ll have to wait until part 5 to learn more! So, until then, let’s remember...

35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

*36 For ye have need of patience, that, **after** ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.*

37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

*38 Now **the just shall live by faith**: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.*

*39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but **of them that believe to the saving of the soul**.*

Heb 10:35-39

We'll pick this up in part 5...

AMEN.