

# Abide in Me

**John 15:4**  
*Bible studies for disciples  
who make disciples*



Volume 7 - Number 24

The Week of May 15, 2022

*Life is Hard, God is Good*  
**When All Hell Breaks Loose**  
Psalm 74

The desolation caused by war is emotionally-crushing and mind-numbing. In this psalm, Asaph is at the pinnacle of despair when he looks out over the devastation of Jerusalem at the hands of a blaspheming enemy. He turns to God with cries of complaint and a plea for deliverance.

Bible commentators differ over the background of this psalm. Most think that it speaks of the devastation of Jerusalem following the Babylonian invasion of 586 B.C. If so, Asaph was not the composer. They attribute its composition to the sons of Asaph. It seems more likely that it refers to an Egyptian invasion of Jerusalem around 930 B.C. recorded in 2 Chronicles 10-12 which also fits Asaph's timeline. In either case, the psalmist is an eye-witness to the aftermath of a direct assault against the Sovereign God and the Temple in Jerusalem.

## READING THE PSALM

As you read Psalm 74, mark the following:

- Circle each time the question *why?* occurs.
- Draw a square around the question *how long?* in verse 10.
- Draw a long bracket down the left margin between verses 2-9 and label it, *The Carnage*.
- Draw a long bracket down the left margin between verses 13-17 and label it, *God's Power*.
- Draw a long bracket down the left margin between verses 18-23 and label it, *God's Cause*.
- Double underline *yet* in verse 12.
- In the margin to the left of verse 12 write *The Turning Point*.

- <sup>1</sup> O God, why do you cast us off forever?  
Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture?
- <sup>2</sup> Remember your congregation, which you have purchased of old,  
which you have redeemed to be the tribe of your heritage!  
Remember Mount Zion, where you have dwelt.
- <sup>3</sup> Direct your steps to the perpetual ruins;  
the enemy has destroyed everything in the sanctuary!
- <sup>4</sup> Your foes have roared in the midst of your meeting place;  
they set up their own signs for signs.
- <sup>5</sup> They were like those who swing axes  
in a forest of trees.
- <sup>6</sup> And all its carved wood  
they broke down with hatchets and hammers.
- <sup>7</sup> They set your sanctuary on fire;  
they profaned the dwelling place of your name,  
bringing it down to the ground.

<sup>8</sup> They said to themselves, "We will utterly subdue them";  
they burned all the meeting places of God in the land.

<sup>9</sup> We do not see our signs;  
there is no longer any prophet,  
and there is none among us who knows how long.

<sup>10</sup> How long, O God, is the foe to scoff?  
Is the enemy to revile your name forever?

<sup>11</sup> Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand?  
Take it from the fold of your garment and destroy them!

<sup>12</sup> Yet God my King is from of old,  
working salvation in the midst of the earth.

<sup>13</sup> You divided the sea by your might;  
you broke the heads of the sea monsters on the waters.

<sup>14</sup> You crushed the heads of Leviathan;  
you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.

<sup>15</sup> You split open springs and brooks;  
you dried up ever-flowing streams.

<sup>16</sup> Yours is the day, yours also the night;  
you have established the heavenly lights and the sun.

<sup>17</sup> You have fixed all the boundaries of the earth;  
you have made summer and winter.

<sup>18</sup> Remember this, O Lord, how the enemy scoffs,  
and a foolish people reviles your name.

<sup>19</sup> Do not deliver the soul of your dove to the wild beasts;  
do not forget the life of your poor forever.

<sup>20</sup> Have regard for the covenant,  
for the dark places of the land are full of the habitations of violence.

<sup>21</sup> Let not the downtrodden turn back in shame;  
let the poor and needy praise your name.

<sup>22</sup> Arise, O God, defend your cause;  
remember how the foolish scoff at you all the day!

<sup>23</sup> Do not forget the clamor of your foes,  
the uproar of those who rise against you, which goes up continually!

## EXPLORING THE PASSAGE IN DISCUSSION

1. In verse 1 and verses 10-11 Asaph issues two complaints. What is he concerned about in this psalm and how are his two complaints the same and different?

2. How are Asaph's wrenching questions a sign of his faith and not cynicism?

3. In verses 2-9 Asaph is clearly overwhelmed by the carnage he sees everywhere, yet that is not his primary concern. What stirs him the most?

4. What was the motivation of Israel's enemies for such wanton destruction?

5. It is easy to list the spiritual carnage we see all around us. What about it should affect the followers of Jesus the most?

6. How is verse 12 the turning point for Asaph? How does he see God's power displayed in verses 13-17?

7. How does recalling God's power displayed in the past help you to depend on Him in the face of present distress?

8. What does Asaph want God to do? (see verses 18-23).

9. Is it appropriate to categorize this psalm as a prayer? If so, what kind of prayer is it and what does it teach us about prayer?

10. How are you encouraged by this psalm and how does it guide you to help a friend who is going through a difficult time?

