

Psalm 83 • A prayer for God to rescue His people

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Psalm chapter 83 is listed as a Psalm of Asaph. And it is in fact the last Psalm of what we call the, Asaph series. And it's a Psalm in which the psalmist cries out to God on behalf of Israel. He's asking God to come to Israel's aid because her enemies are many and they are bent on her annihilation.

And one of the problems with this Psalm, like many of the psalms is, we don't know where it fits into Israel's history. I mean, there's many opportunities for it to fit in, but we don't know which one it goes to. It may not go to anything we're even aware of in the Bible.

The problem with that is that it causes scholars sometimes to guess. But I don't usually go in for guesses. But frankly, we don't have to guess when it comes to simply understanding historically speaking, the enormous persecution that has been Israel's past.

I mean, just, when you think about Israel as a small nation. And on the grand scheme of things, a fairly insignificant nation particularly in its size of its geography and location. I mean, when you think about Israel, I mean, it's just really, there's really nothing special about it in many ways. And even the Jews would agree. And yet they have gone through so many things. I think it's safe to say that no other nation on earth has gone through the same challenges and still survived. No. No question about that.

And here's what's interesting, this prayer, this final prayer of Asaph is a prayer for God's deliverance against her enemies. For God to move powerfully against those who had come against Israel to annihilate her. And throughout history there've been many opportunities that people have had and desires have been expressed to annihilate Israel. Iran has a current desire to wipe Israel off the map. That is current.

So this is... It was going on then it's still going today. Here's the question. We look at Israel and we ask the question, has God sustained Israel? Well, I don't think there's any question about the fact that He has. I don't know if you're aware of it, but during the rise of the Third Reich the Nazis eliminated 6 million

Jews during the Second World War. 6 million Jews were slaughtered during World War II.

Interesting note here, there are today more Jews than before the Second World War. Who wins in the end? Right? Who has... Can we see that God has in fact taken care of the people of Israel? Yeah, I say we could. I mean, God answered that prayer over the years.

And this prayer goes like this. If you look with me in your Bible.

Verse 1,

"O God, do not keep silence; (He says) do not hold your peace or be still, O God!

2 For behold, your enemies make an uproar; those who hate you have raised their heads.

3 They lay crafty plans against your people; they consult together against your treasured ones.

4 They say, "Come, let us wipe them out as a nation; let the name of Israel be remembered no more!" (ESV)

That is, and again, that's almost word for word what Iran has expressed. We want to make sure that Israel is remembered no more!

And it goes on in verse 5 to say,

"For they conspire with one accord; against you they make a covenant- (And then he goes on to speak of these different groups of people.)

6 the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites.

7 Gebal and Ammon and Amalek, (and) Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;

8 Asshur also has joined them; (and Asshur refers to the Assyrians. And it says,) they are the strong arm of the children of Lot."

It doesn't mean that they're all the children of Lot. That means that they have joined and are strengthening the arm of the children of Lot. Actually, the New

King James renders that phrase a little clear, more clearly when it says, *"they have helped the children of Lot."*

And he begins to pray here now.

Verse 9 he says,

"Do to them as you did to Midian,"

Do you remember when God conquered the Midianites through Gideon with just 300 men? And there was so many Midianites that it says, they couldn't even be counted. The psalmist is calling upon God to do as He had, as He did before.

He says,

"as to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon,"

And that's speaking again of some of the work that God did through Gideon in the book of Judges.

He says,

"10 who were destroyed at Endor, who became dung for the ground."

He says also,

"11 Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,

12 who said, 'Let us take possession for ourselves of the pastures of God.'"

Those last couple of references, different references to the Book of Judges and the victories that came about there for the nation of Israel.

But the psalmist is using that all too familiar approach of reminding God of His actions in the past. And calling Him to repeat those things to move mightily on behalf of His people.

He says in verse 13,

"O my God, make them like whirling dust, like chaff before the wind."

14 As fire consumes the forest, as the flame sets the mountains ablaze,

15 so may you pursue them with your tempest and terrify them with your hurricane!

16 Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek your name, O LORD.

17 Let them be put to shame and dismayed forever; let them perish in disgrace,

18 that they may know that you alone, whose name is the LORD, are the Most High over all the earth."

As we look back over this simple cry for God's deliverance, there's one element of this psalm that I find most interesting. And that is what the psalmist says in verse 2. If you look with me there in verse 2, he outlines the motive for these attacks.

He says, *"For behold, your enemies..."* Notice he doesn't say our enemies. He says, *"behold, your enemies make an uproar;..."*

And then he goes on to say, *"those who hate you have raised their heads."*

Now that's an interesting statement as he reveals here, the motive for destroying God's people, whether it's the Jews or the church, is always the same. It is hatred for God.

And the reason for this is because Satan wants to destroy the things of God. And again, whether he's destroying Israel as the earthly chosen nation of God, or whether he wants to destroy the church, which is the body of Christ, Satan simply wants to eradicate the work of God on the earth. That means the people of the Lord. And we've seen it over and over again. But in both cases, it hasn't come to pass.

I already brought up the fact that Nazism, tried to eliminate all these Jews and there's more now than when before the war happened. And the same has been true of the church over the years.

In the early centuries, one of the Roman emperors... Boy, he was a meanie. A guy by the name of Emperor Diocletian. He hated Christians. And it was his sworn desire to rid the earth of Christians. He felt that they were the scourge of the earth. And he actually set up some monuments with inscriptions on them that spoke of his hatred for born again believers.

And on one of these monuments, he actually wrote the following. He wrote: "Diocletian Jovian Maximum, Maximian Hercules Caesar Augusti;" long name. "For having..." And he wrote, this is what he wanted to be known for. "For having extended the Roman Empire in the east and the west. And for having extinguished the name of Christians who brought the Republic to ruin."

That was, that's a quote from one of the monuments that this Roman Emperor erected. And he actually believed in his pompous pride that he had in fact eradicated all Christians.

He thought he got rid of them all. And here we are. Sitting here today, reading about him as a historical a past event. Sorry buddy! It didn't take! We're still here almost 2,000 years later. God wins!