

PSALM 76

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 76

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm [or] Song of Asaph.

The Targum is,

“by the hand of Asaph:”

concerning “neginoth”, see the title of (~~900~~ Psalm 4:1), this psalm is generally thought to be written on account of some great appearance of God for the Jews, or victory obtained by them over their enemies, either the Ammonites in the times of David; so the first part of the Syriac inscription is,

“when Rabbah of the children of Ammon was destroyed;”

(see ~~1025~~ 2 Samuel 12:26-31) or in the time of Jehoshaphat, when they came up against him, and were in a wonderful manner defeated, which occasioned great joy and thankfulness, (~~400~~ 2 Chronicles 20:1-29). The Septuagint version entitles the psalm “an ode against the Assyrian”, in which it is followed by the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions: and it is the opinion of many that it was written on account of the defeat of Sennacherib, and his army, which came up against Jerusalem in the times of Hezekiah, and was destroyed by an angel in one night, and so slept their sleep, and a dead one, with which agree (~~3975~~ Psalm 76:5,6 ~~1295~~ 2 Kings 19:35), so Arama and Theodoret; Jarchi gives this reason for such an interpretation, because we do not find that any enemy fell at or near Jerusalem but he, as is said (~~3975~~ Psalm 76:3), “there brake he the arrows of the bow”, etc. nor was one arrow suffered to be thrown into the city, (~~1295~~ 2 Kings 19:32). Kimchi and Ben Melech interpret it of the war of Gog and Magog, yet to come; and the latter part of the Syriac inscription is,

“moreover it shows the vengeance of the judgment of Christ against the ungodly;”

and indeed it seems to point out the latter day, when Christ shalt destroy the antichristian kings and states, and save his own people, and shall be

feared and praised; as the former part of it may respect his incarnation, appearance, and dwelling in the land of Judea, and so the whole is of the same argument with the preceding psalm.

Ver. 1. *In Judah is God known*, etc.] God is to be known, and is made known, by his works of creation, and by his providences, and particularly by his judgments in the whole world, even among the Gentiles; and he was made known by his word and ordinances, his statutes and his judgments, among the Jews, to whom these were specially given; and he is made known by his Spirit, and in his Son in a spiritual and saving manner to such who are Jews inwardly, or the true circumcision: moreover this may be understood of Christ, God manifest in the flesh, and regard his appearance in human nature in the land of Judea; he was, according to prophecy, of the tribe of Judah as man, and was born in Bethlehem, a city in that tribe, where David was, and of the family of David, that formerly lived there: and he was made known by John the Baptist, who came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and by his being baptized of him in Jordan; by his own ministry and miracles in that land, and by the preaching of his apostles in the several cities of it, he was known in person to many; and by the fame of his doctrine and miracles to more, though seemingly but to few:

his name is great in Israel; he himself is great, for his name is himself, being the great God, and possessed of all divine perfections; his offices and titles are great, he is a great Saviour, a great High Priest, a great Prophet risen up in Israel, a great King, add the great Shepherd of the sheep; his works which make him known are great, his works of creation and providence, in which he is jointly concerned with his Father; the mighty works he did on earth, and especially the great work of our redemption; and his Gospel, which is called his name, (⁴¹⁹⁵Acts 9:15), brings glad tidings of great and good things; by means of which, and the wonderful things he did in the land of Israel, his fame was spread about in it, for he was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; here his marvellous works were done, and his Gospel first preached, which afterwards went into all the earth.

Ver. 2. *In Salem also is his tabernacle*, etc.] That is, in Jerusalem, as the Targum expresses it, where the tabernacle of Moses and the ark of the covenant were, and afterwards the temple of Solomon, which the Targum here calls the house of the sanctuary; and may be interpreted of the human nature of Christ, the true tabernacle which God pitched, and not man, in

which the divine word when he was made flesh dwelt or tabernacled among the Jews at Jerusalem, and in other parts of Judea, (^{<8022>}Hebrews 8:2 ^{<8014>}John 1:14). Salem or Jerusalem often signifies the church of God in Gospel times, in the midst of which Christ resides, and where he grants his gracious presence, (^{<8022>}Hebrews 12:22-24) and in the New Jerusalem the tabernacle of God will be with men, and he will dwell among them, (^{<6012>}Revelation 21:2,3). The Septuagint translate the word, and render it, “in peace”, as in (^{<8022>}Hebrews 7:2), the God of peace dwells among those that live in peace, (^{<4731>}2 Corinthians 13:11),

and his dwelling place in Zion; where the ark was brought by David, and the temple was built by Solomon, into which, as rebuilt by Zerubbabel, Christ came, and here he preached; a figure of the church, which is his habitation.

Ver. 3. *There brake he the arrows of the bow* etc.] The Targum is,

“there brake he the arrows and the bows of the people that make war;”

the word **ypqr**, translated “arrows”, signifies “sparks or coals of fire”; (see ^{<8022>}Job 5:7 ^{<2186>}Song of Solomon 8:6) and is used of arrows, because they fly swiftly, as sparks do, or because of their brightness, or because fiery; so we read of “the fiery darts of Satan”, (^{<4916>}Ephesians 6:16), and perhaps they may be meant here: when Christ our Lord suffered near Jerusalem, he spoiled principalities and powers, and broke their strength and might, and made peace by the blood of his cross, in which he triumphed over them; for the destroying of these instruments of war with what follow:

the shield, and the sword, and the battle, is expressive of making wars to cease, and causing peace; and may include the peace which was all the world over at the birth of Christ, and was foretold and expressed in much such language as here, (^{<8022>}Zechariah 9:9,10), and also that which was made by his sufferings and death, and which was published in his Gospel by his apostles, whom he sent forth unarmed, whose weapons were not carnal, but spiritual; and likewise the spiritual peace he gives to his people, quenching the fiery darts of Satan, and delivering them from the archers that shoot at them, and sorely grieve them; as well as that peace which shall be in the world and churches in the latter day; (see ^{<1941>}Psalm 46:11),

Selah. (See Gill on “^{<391D>}Psalm 3:2”).

Ver. 4. *Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey.*]

Which is to be understood not of Zion, as some interpret it; though it is true that the mountain of Zion, or the church of Christ, his kingdom and interest, shall in the latter day be more glorious and excellent than all other mountains, kingdoms, and interests; (see ^{<241D>}Isaiah 2:2), but of God or Christ before spoken of; and so the Targum,

“bright, to be feared, art thou, O God, to be praised from the house of thy sanctuary.”

Christ, who is God over all, is “bright”^{f1077}, splendid, and glorious, in his divine nature, being the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person: and “excellent” in his office as Mediator, and in all his works as such; and in human nature, at he is exalted at his Father’s right hand, far above all principality, power, might, and dominion, signified here by “mountains of prey”: the kingdoms of this world, because of their eminence and strength, are compared to mountains: (see ^{<2415>}Isaiah 41:15 ^{<2525>}Jeremiah 51:25 ^{<3007>}Zechariah 4:7) and may be called “mountains of prey”, in allusion to mountains inhabited by beasts of prey, as lions and leopards; (see ^{<2148>}Song of Solomon 4:8) because obtained and possessed by tyranny and oppression. Christ is more glorious and excellent than the kings of the earth; he is higher than they, and is King of kings; he is richer than they, the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein; he is wiser than they, by him kings reign, and princes decree justice; he is more powerful than they, and all must submit to him, and all will serve him hereafter; and his kingdom will be greater than theirs, more large and more lasting; it will be an everlasting one, and reach from sea to sea, and even to the ends of the earth.

Ver. 5. *The stout hearted are spoiled,* etc.] The Assyrian army, its officers and generals, that came up against Jerusalem, with great resolution and courage, and with daring impiety and blasphemy against the God of heaven, as Rabshakeh and others; these were spoiled, and their armour and riches became a prey to those they thought to have made a prey of. So principalities and powers were spoiled by Christ upon the cross, and Satan, the strong man armed, has in the conversion of a sinner his armour taken from him, and his spoils divided by him that is stronger than he; and such as are stouthearted, and far from true righteousness, are stripped of their own, and made willing, in the day of Christ’s power upon them, to submit

to his; and as for antichrist, whose look is more stout than his fellows, that exalts himself above all that is called God, and opens his mouth in blasphemy against him and his followers, he shall be destroyed with the breath of Christ's mouth, and the brightness of his coming: or "the stout hearted have spoiled themselves"^{f1078}; as the Midianites did, or gave themselves for a prey; so the Targum,

"the stouthearted have cast off from them the weapons of war;"

threw away their armour, and ran away, such of them as were not destroyed by the angel. It is observable, that the Hebrew word, translated "spoiled", is in the Syriac form:

they have slept their sleep: the sleep of death, as did the Assyrians when smitten by the angel, which was done in the night, when probably they were fast asleep, and so never awoke more, as the Babylonians, (²⁶¹⁵⁷Jeremiah 51:57). So Jezebel, or the Romish antichrist, shall be cast into a bed, and her children killed with death, (⁴¹⁷⁷Revelation 2:22,23). Death is often in Scripture signified by a sleep, both the death of the righteous and of the wicked; but there is a difference between the one and the other; wherefore the death of the wicked here is called "their sleep"; the one sleep in Jesus, in his arms, and under his guardianship, the other not; to the one death is a true and proper rest from toil and labour, to the other only a cessation from doing mischief, (³⁸⁸⁷Job 3:17), the one rests in hopes of a glorious resurrection, the other not; the one will awake in Christ's likeness, and to everlasting life; the other in the image of Satan, and to everlasting shame and contempt:

and none of the men of might have found their hands; none of the valiant soldiers in the Assyrian army could find their hands to fight their enemies, or defend themselves; as men in a deep sleep cannot find their hands to do anything, and are as if they had none, and still less in a dead sleep. The Targum is,

"they were not able to lay hold on their armour with their hands."

This was the case of them that were killed; and as for those that remained alive, they were struck with such a panic, that their hearts could not endure, nor their hands be strong when God thus dealt with them; and so it will be with the antichristian army at the battle of Armageddon; and so it is with the wicked at death, they cannot find their hands so as to prevent it;

and when it has seized upon them, they cannot find their hands to do any more mischief.

Ver. 6. *At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob*, etc.] The God of Jacob personally, and of his posterity, the children of Israel, and of the church, often so called who rebukes his people in love, but his enemies with furious rebukes, with rebukes in flames of fire; with such he rebukes the Heathen, destroys the wicked, and puts out their name for ever:

both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep; that is, the riders in chariots and on horses; such there were doubtless in the Assyrian army, it being usual to have such in great armies. Kimchi observes, that the word $\mu\delta\rho\eta$, translated “cast into a dead sleep”, is in the singular number, and interprets it of the king, the head of the men of might: but Sennacherib, king of Assyria, was not slain, he departed to his own country; wherefore he applies it to Gog and Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, ($\text{Ezekiel } 39:1$) and may very well be understood of the head of the apostasy, the king of the bottomless pit, the beast or false prophet, who being destroyed, the flesh of his captains and horsemen shall be the food of the fowls of the air, at the supper of the great God, ($\text{Revelation } 19:17-20$).

Ver. 7. *Thou, even thou, art to be feared*, etc.] By his own people with reverence and godly fear, because of his greatness and goodness; and to be dreaded by his enemies; which seems to be the sense here, as appears by what follows:

and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry? or “from the moment thou art angry”^{f1079}; so the Targum, from the “time”, and Jarchi, from the “hour”: that is, as soon as ever his anger begins, when it is kindled but a little, and how much less when it burns in its full strength? there is no standing before his justice, and at his judgment seat, with boldness and confidence, and so as to succeed, or come off acquitted, without having on his righteousness; and much less is there any standing before his wrath and fury, when his hand takes hold on judgment to execute it; (see Na 1:6 $\text{Revelation } 6:16,17$).

Ver. 8. *Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven*, etc.] When an angel was sent down from heaven, and destroyed the Assyrian army, a judgment of God upon them; at which time some think there was a violent clap of thunder, which is the voice of God: and it may refer to the

judgments which God has decreed to execute on the antichristian states, the seven vials of his wrath he will pour upon them; for all decrees, as Aben Ezra on the place observes, come from heaven; or to the last judgment, when Christ the Judge shall descend from heaven, the voice of the archangel shall be heard, the last trumpet shall sound, the dead in their graves shall hear it, and rise and stand before the judgment seat, and hear the sentence pronounced:

the earth feared, and was still: or “trembled, and was quiet”^{f1080}; that is, again: some think there was an earthquake when the angel smote the Assyrian camp, but was quickly over. It may regard the panic the other nations were in when they heard of it, and therefore were still and quiet, and never offered to give the Israelites any disturbance. Some understand this of the remainder of the army that escaped with Sennacherib; these were seized with fear, and quickly withdrew, and silently departed into their own land. Aben Ezra observes it as the sense of some, “the earth feared”, these are the wicked; “and was still”, they are the righteous; so the Targum,

“the land of the people feared, the land of Israel was still;”

reference may be had to the consternation, fear, and dread, that will fall on them that escape the judgments inflicted on the antichristian party, (^{¶1113}Revelation 11:13) and the fear and silence that will attend the last and awful judgment; (see ^{¶1113}Zechariah 2:13).

Ver. 9. *When God arose to judgment*, etc.] He may sometimes seem to be asleep, and to defer judgment, but he will arise and hasten it in his own time, and will take vengeance on all his and his people’s enemies, as he did upon the army of the Assyrians, and will upon the antichristian powers, and upon all the wicked, and at the same time will save his own people, as follows:

to save all the meek of the earth; the quiet in the land, who are afflicted in this world, despised by the men of it, are lowly and humble, and mean in their own eyes; these the Lord takes notice of and cares for them, he will beautify them with salvation; these, all of them, even everyone of them, shall be saved in him with an everlasting salvation; this verse is by some connected with the preceding; so Kimchi, “the earth feared, and was still, when God arose to judgment”, etc. and by others, as R. Moses and Aben Ezra, with the following.

Selah. (See Gill on “~~<390>~~Psalm 3:2”).

Ver. 10. *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee*, etc.] Either the wrath which comes from God, and has man for its object; and that either as it regards the people of God; so the Targum,

“when thou art angry with thy people, thou hast mercy on them, and they shall confess unto thy name;”

or praise thee; (see ~~<2910>~~ Isaiah 12:1), they are deserving of the wrath of God, but are not appointed to it, and are delivered from it by Christ, who bore it for them as their representative; by which as the justice of God is glorified, it is matter of praise to them; when the law enters into their consciences, it works wrath there, which being removed by the application of pardoning grace, is an occasion of praise to God; and whereas, under afflictive dispensations, they apprehend and deprecate the wrath of God, when they are delivered from them their mouths are filled with songs of praise: or, as it regards wicked men, so it came forth upon the old world, and drowned it; upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and reduced them to ashes; upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians, in the plagues inflicted on them; all which turned to the praise and glory of God; of the last instance, (see ~~<8197>~~ Romans 9:17 ~~<12151>~~ Exodus 15:1), it came upon the wicked Jews to the uttermost in the destruction of their nation, city, and temple; and upon Rome Pagan, in the entire demolition of it as such; and so it will come upon Rome Papal, which will be attended with great joy, praise, and thanksgiving in the saints; (see ~~<6117>~~ Revelation 11:17,18) (~~<6650>~~ Revelation 15:1-4 18:20 19:1,2) or else this is to be understood of the wrath which is in man, and comes forth from him, and has him for its subject; which though it does not work the righteousness of God, yet the righteousness of God is glorified both in checking and punishing it; and the more it rages and burns against the people of God, the greater reason have they to praise the Lord when delivered from it; (see ~~<501>~~ Psalm 124:1-3), so the wrath of the Assyrian monarch, and of railing and blaspheming Rabshakeh, gave the people of the Jews a greater occasion to praise the Lord for their wonderful deliverance; so the wrath of men against Christ, his church and people, his ministers, Gospel, and ordinances, will all turn to the glory of his name, when in the issue it will be seen that these are established, overcoming all the rage and malice of men:

the remainder of wrath shall thou restrain: that which remains in a man’s breast, he has not yet vented, God can and does keep in, that it may not

break forth; this very likely was verified in Sennacherib, who might breathe revenge, and threaten the Jews with a second visit; but was prevented by a sudden and violent death. Some read the words, “the remainder of wraths thou wilt gird” ^{f1081}; that is, those that remain, and are not destroyed through the rage and fury of men, God will gird with strength to defend themselves, and resist their enemies that may rise up against them, or with gladness, because of deliverance from them; (see ^{<1952>}Psalm 18:32 30:11,12). Some understand this of the wrath of God, which he has in reserve and store for wicked men, and render the words thus, with the remainder of wrath wilt thou gird thyself ^{f1082}; and so come forth like an armed man, clad with zeal, and arrayed with the garments of wrath and vengeance; (see ^{<2407>}Isaiah 49:17,18).

Ver. 11. *Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God*, etc.] Not monastic vows, which the Papists would infer from these and such like words; nor ceremonial ones, but spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, such as men sometimes make in times of distress, or when delivered, (^{<1963>}Psalm 66:13,14 Jon 1:16) and which when vowed ought to be paid, (^{<2104>}Ecclesiastes 5:4,5), not to creatures, angels, or saints, but to God, from whom the mercy desired must be expected, and from whence it comes, (^{<1914>}Psalm 50:14), these words are an address to such who were delivered from wrath, either of God or man:

let all that be round about him; who surround the throne of his grace, gather together in his house to attend his word and ordinances, who are his servants, and constantly and faithfully adhere to him; among whom he grants his presence, they are near to him, and he to them. It is a periphrasis of the assembly of the saints; (see ^{<1807>}Psalm 89:7). The Targum is,

“all ye that dwell round about his sanctuary;”

the allusion is to the situation of the camp of Israel, and the tabernacle in the wilderness, (^{<1401>}Numbers 2:1) compare with this (^{<1604>}Revelation 4:4),

bring presents unto him that ought to be feared, or “to the fear” ^{f1083}, which is one of the names of God; (see ^{<1314>}Genesis 31:42) and who is and ought to be the object of the fear and reverence of men; the “presents”, to be brought to him are the sacrifices of prayer and praise, yea, the whole persons, the souls and bodies, of men; (see ^{<1970>}Psalm 72:10), compare with this (^{<1422>}2 Chronicles 32:22,23). The Targum is,

“let them bring offerings into the house of the sanctuary of the terrible One;”

of him that is to be feared, with a godly fear by good men, and to be dreaded by evil men, as follows.

Ver. 12. *He shall cut off the spirit of princes*, etc.] The pride of their spirits, as the Targum, humble their proud spirits, and bring them down; or dispirit them, take away their courage from them, upon which they flee apace to rocks and mountains to cover them; or confound them, blast their schemes, and carry their counsel headlong, and even take away their breath, or life; which he can as easily do as a man can cut off a bunch of grapes from the vine, as the word ^{f1084} here used signifies; the destruction of the wicked is expressed by cutting down the vine of the earth, and casting it into the winepress of God’s wrath, (^{<f647>}Revelation 14:17-19),

he is terrible to the kings of the earth; as he was to the king of Assyria, when he sent his angel, and destroyed his army; and as he has been to others in all ages; so he will be to the kings of the earth that have committed fornication with the whore of Rome, who will be in the utmost panic at the time of her destruction, (^{<f689>}Revelation 18:9,10), and who will themselves be overcome by the Lamb, (^{<f664>}Revelation 16:14,16 17:12,14 19:19-21). The Targum is, he is to be feared above all the kings of the earth.