

Studies in Psalms by [John T Polk II](#) For [The Fellowship Room](#)

Psalm 74

12/27/12

Vs. 1-11 contain the lament over destruction in Jerusalem;
Vs. 12-23 are the appeal for God to care for Judah as He had so often before.

The background for this Psalm seems to be rooted in the destruction of Jerusalem caused by "Shishak, king of Egypt" ([2 Chronicles 12:2-12](#)). It indicated great displeasure by God for Him to allow pagan people to overthrow the Jerusalem, capital of political and religious practices in the Southern Kingdom of God's People. The explanation is found in [2 Chronicles 12:5](#): "Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and the leaders of Judah, who were gathered together in Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said to them, 'Thus says the LORD: 'You have forsaken Me, and therefore I also have left you in the hand of Shishak.'"

Verses 1-11: The oft-asked question "Why?" (**verse 1**) shows awareness that was lacking previously. This Psalm makes their dilemma belong to God by using "You," "Your," "Yours" some 34 times. Had the people thought of their sinful actions as directly reflecting upon God, and repented before, this might not have had to happen. God did not cast them off "forever," for Jews and Gentiles are the people of God today in Jesus Christ ([Romans 11:1-5](#); [1:16-17](#); [6:3-7](#)). It takes destruction to drive stubborn sinners to their knees, causing them to appeal to God for forgiveness. Suddenly, they acknowledge they are the "sheep of Your pasture (**verse 1**); it is His "purchased" "congregation," His "redeemed" "tribe" of "inheritance," and His worship place "Mount Zion"(**verse 2**)!

God's People had improperly changed their worship of God, but now wanted something done because the enemy had: "damaged everything in the sanctuary" (**verse 3**) but left it standing; set banners of false gods in God's "meeting place" (**verse 4**); because Solomon's temple and palace were structured with cedar, often gold-plated ([1 Kings 6:21-22](#)), the Egyptians hacked their way through (**verses 5-6**), burning up their rubble (**verses 7-8**). The expression "meeting places" is the same as "assemblies" (**verses 4, 8**), and not the total destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, itself. Why can't people see that to destroy worship practices God has given is no different than an outsider "defiling" the sacred elements of that worship? The same Scriptures that detail the sanctity of worship also demand the sacredness of assemblies. To violate one is the same as violating the other. NOW, after what an enemy has done, God's People become keenly aware that God is not with them through: prophecy (**verse 9**), reaction to reviling (**verse 10**), or protection (**verse 11**)? They should have noticed this when they left the LORD.

Verses 12-23: The people, not God, needed this reminder of God's past dealings. This is simply a re-study of Scriptures, for when God is King to His People (as Jehovah), He saves (**verse 12**). In **verse 13**, He parted the Red Sea for Israelites ([Exodus 14:21-31](#)), then drowned Pharaoh's army, whose "gods" were "sea serpents" ([Exodus 7:8-13](#)); later in time from Shishak, God would describe Pharaoh as "like a monster in the seas" ([Ezekiel 32:2](#)), so **verse 14** pictures Pharaoh as a broken Leviathan head. When

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God is recognized as Creator (Elohim), He: broke fountain and flood in Noah’s day (**verse 15**; **Genesis 6-9**), and has “dried up mighty rivers,” such as the flooded Jordan (**Joshua 3:14-17**); made day and night and light and sun (**verse 16**; **Genesis 1:3-5, 14-19**); set earth’s borders and seasons (**verse 17**; **Acts 17:26**; **Genesis 8:22**).

God’s People may become foolish, but an enemy is “a foolish people” who reproach and blaspheme God’s Name (**verse 18**); would be a “wild beast” to the “turtledove” Jews (**verse 19**); would provide cruel homes for a covenant people (**verse 20**). God’s People needed to be freed so they might praise God’s Name (**verse 21**); enemies vanquished because they increase in reproaches and riots against God (**verse 22-23**).

Lesson: The only way to correct corrupt practices is to return to God’s Word!

