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## **Psalm 79**

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

## Psalm 79.

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### Topics.

- They have defiled your holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins.
- We have become a taunt and mocked by all those around us.
- Pour your anger on nations that devoured Israel and Jerusalem.
- Let your compassion come speedily O God for the glory of your name.
- Return sevenfold the taunts our neighbours taunted you, O LORD.
- We your people will give thanks to you forever and recount your praise.
- The Commonwealth of Israel.
- The glory of the spiritual temple God is building in Christ.

**FOR INFORMATION:** concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

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### INTRODUCTION

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Psalms are songs and prayers offered to God by the nation Israel, they cover the range of human emotion, expressing praise, faith, victory, sorrow, despair, depression, frustration and the troubled heart of a mourner. They contrast the righteous with the wicked, and include the wisdom and the treasure of God's word. Psalms were written at the beginning of the 15th century BC and probably collected in their final form in the 3rd century.

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### BOOK THREE (PSALM 73-89)

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#### Psalm 79:1-3

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A Psalm of Asaph.

#### **They have Defiled your Holy Temple; and Laid Jerusalem in Ruins.**

- **Psalm 79:1-3:** O God, the nations have come into your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins. <sup>2</sup>They have given the bodies of your servants to the birds of the heavens for food, the flesh of your faithful to the beasts of the earth. <sup>3</sup>They have poured out their blood like water all around Jerusalem, and there was no one to bury them.

The words, "They have defiled your holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins." (v1) most likely refers to Babylon's invasion of Jerusalem. Prior to the armies of Babylon invading Jerusalem Israel had set their hearts diamond hard against the word of God's prophets and had rebelled against the LORD. They had turned to other gods and entered into gross sin so the LORD used Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon (who He called His servant (Jer. 25:9) to bring the curses of the covenant upon them. The blessing of the Covenant is found in (Deut. 28:1-14) and the curses (Deut. 28:15-68). The fierce armies of Babylon invaded the land of Judah, laid their farm land waste, attacked Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) and pillaged the temple. Zedekiah was blinded and carried to Babylon, and

the great bulk of the population was taken in chains there with him (around 587 B.C.). Later Babylon conquered Assyria who had previously taken Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) captive. They went into captivity to Babylon as two rebellious nations who had turned from God to idols and who were even sacrificing their own children to pagan gods and were under Babylonian rule for the next seventy years. Archaeologists have found that all of the cities of Judah were completely destroyed at this time, thus ended the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon. Observers would have said that the Hebrew nation was annihilated, and indeed, the other nations conquered by the Assyrians and Babylonians did cease to exist. But the prophets proclaimed a better hope for the chosen people. "A remnant shall return" Isaiah had said, and in time this remnant, purged and returned, became the basis on which a new Israel would be built.

**Now here is the good news:** while in captivity God moulded them like a master potter moulds a beautiful clay jar, Israel and Judah went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later, Cyrus (King of Persia) who the LORD called His anointed shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) and took by His right hand (Isaiah 45:1) to conquer the Empire of Babylon gave written permission for Israel to return to Jerusalem. Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel and Judah back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one united nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again). Multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel with triumphant joy and rejoicing. When the temple of God was completed their faith was once again established and a time of prosperity and peace followed. Sadly Israel as a nation never recognised their Messiah the Christ when he came, but even this was in the LORD'S sovereign will. The prophet Zechariah tells us when, the Lord returns in glory:

- God will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn (Zech. 12:10-14).

**They have given the bodies of your servants to the birds and beasts for food:** (v2) means that the slaughter of the people of Israel was so great that no one was left to bury the bodies they were left upon the surface of the earth for birds and wild animals to eat.

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### **Psalm 79:4-5**

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**We have become a Taunt and Mocked by all those Around Us.**

- **Psalm 79:4-5:** We have become a taunt to our neighbours, mocked and derided by those around us. <sup>5</sup>How long, O LORD? Will you be angry forever? Will your jealousy burn like fire?

This verse refers to the nations mocking the Jews as they were led in chains from their burning city Jerusalem by the soldiers of Babylon and being taken into captivity in Babylon for the next seventy years and them being scorned while in captivity to their enemies.

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### **Psalm 79:6-7**

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**Pour your Anger on Nations that Devoured Israel and Jerusalem.**

- **Psalm 79:6-7:** Pour out your anger on the nations that do not know you, and on the kingdoms that do not call upon your name! <sup>7</sup>For they have devoured Jacob and laid waste his habitation.

Asaph is either in captivity to Babylon or viewing the people of Israel who are in bondage to Babylon, either way his heart is torn over the ruin of Israel's beloved city Jerusalem and the destruction of God's temple, but most of all the oppression the people of Israel are suffering under the rule of Babylon. He prays God would bring judgment upon the nations and kingdoms that have devoured His people. This of course embraces Babylon and all nations aligned to them who fought against Israel and brought them to ruin.

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### Psalm 79:8-9

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#### **Let Your Compassion come O God for the Glory of Your Name.**

- **Psalm 79:8-9:** Do not remember against us our former iniquities; let your compassion come speedily to meet us, for we are brought very low. <sup>9</sup>Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; deliver us, and atone for our sins, for your name's sake!

Following is a list of sins that permeated the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem throughout their generations. Unrestrained these sins eventually became like a contagious virus running rampant throughout the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. They defiled God's Holy name and their own land by their lifestyle, deeds and actions. They committed gross idolatry and Baal altars were set up throughout their land. They worshipped the goddess of love and fertility (her worship was sexually indecent). Worse than this they worshipped Moloch and sacrificed their sons to him in the Hinnom valley. They worshipped a golden calf at a religious centre at Dan and at a religious centre at Bethel. Altars were set up in the temple court for planetary worship and the worship of the host of heaven (i.e., the sun, moon and stars) and worship of idols and altars had been built under shady trees on their hills throughout their land. Added to this innocent people were killed and cheated out of justice, leaders oppressed others for their own selfish gain and drunkenness, violence, robbery and gross sensuality was rampant. The rich cheated the innocent out of justice, and showed no sense of responsibility towards the poor and instead of relieving their economic distress they devised new means of depriving them of their property. Is it any wonder the LORD compares Israel's ways to the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity? (Ezek. 36:17) and poured out His wrath upon Judah, Israel and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

**The lesson for today:** by wicked behaviour Israel defiled the name of God which resulted in the surrounding nations mocking and despising God. This shines a light on the following truth: the behaviour of everyone who confesses the name of God and Christ His Son will determine to some extent whether outsiders are drawn to God or to despise Him. We are not witnesses to the Lord only when we are sharing our faith with another person our entire life is a witness to our faith and of God it can be a good witness or a bad witness.

**Asaph prays:** God would not remember their former sins against them. (v8) This does not mean that Asaph is praying God would forget their sins since God's mind is eternal, it carries the idea that God would not hold their past sins against them, but instead forgive them which of course God did at the end of the seventy year captivity He used Cyrus to set the people of Israel free from the bondage and captivity of Babylon. The following verses of the prophet Isaiah show that God not only called Cyrus (the secular king of Persia) His anointed shepherd and also called him by name they also show that God said He would equip Cyrus and take him by the right hand and go before him. They picture God holding Cyrus by the right hand and opening all doors that no man can shut while Cyrus the king of Persia subdues all nations. It could be said, "God used Cyrus to answer Asaph's prayer." God not only favoured Cyrus and gave him a great victory over the Empire of Babylon and all nations aligned with Babylon, but also used him as His anointed shepherd to give written permission that allowed Israel to return to their beloved city and rebuild the Temple of God.

- Thus says the LORD to *his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped*, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed. (Isaiah 45:1).
- I (*the LORD*) will go before you (*Cyrus king of Persia*) and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, <sup>3</sup>I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, *who call you (Cyrus) by your name.* <sup>4</sup>For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, *I call you by your name, I name you*, though you do not know me. (Isaiah 45:2-3).
- I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; *I equip you (Cyrus) though you do not know me,* <sup>6</sup>that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, there is none besides me; I am the LORD, there is no other. (Isaiah 45:5-6).
- Thus says the LORD: "The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and the Sabeans, *men of stature, shall come over to you (Cyrus)* and be yours; they shall follow you; they shall come over in chains and bow down to you. They will plead with you, saying: '*Surely God is in you*, and there is no other, no god besides him.'" (Isaiah 45:14).

At this time Isaiah is speaking to Israel who is held captive in Babylon. God used Cyrus King of Persia as His anointed shepherd to set His people free. Cyrus after Conquering the mighty Empire of Babylon gave Israel written permission to return to their beloved city and rebuild the Temple of God. But, Isaiah's message transcends the era of Isaiah and Cyrus and echoes a future King who the LORD also calls His anointed shepherd, and his name is not Cyrus, but the Lord Jesus Christ, in who God is also building a Temple made up of Jews and Gentiles (also called a new nation and new creation in Christ). For further information concerning the spiritual temple God is building in Christ at this present time, see the title:

- The Commonwealth of Israel (at end of this Chapter).

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## Psalm 79:10-12

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### Return Sevenfold our Neighbours who Taunted You, O LORD.

- **Psalm 79:10-12:** Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?" Let the avenging of the outpoured blood of your servants be known among the nations before our eyes! <sup>11</sup>Let the groans of the prisoners come before you; according to your great power, preserve those doomed to die! <sup>12</sup>Return sevenfold into the lap of our neighbours the taunts with which they have taunted you, O Lord!

Asaphs prayer, "Let the avenging of the outpoured blood of your servants be known among the nations before our eyes," (v10) was answered. God brought judgment upon all the nations who had joined with Babylon to destroy Israel and who had laid their city, temple and farms waste and who mocked and scorned them while they were suffering.

**Those doomed to die:** (v11) refer to the people of Israel in captivity, Asaph is deeply moved at the suffering of God's people and the fact that the surrounding nations are mockingly saying, "Where is Israel's God," implying that He is weak and feeble and that the gods of Babylon are far greater."

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## Psalm 79:13

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### We Your People Will Give thanks to You and Recount your Praise.

- **Psalm 79:13:** But we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever; from generation to generation we will recount your praise.

Here is the great faith of Asaph and the faithful of Israel they are at this time in the most horrific circumstances they as a nation have ever been in. Their beloved city lays in ruin, the temple of God is destroyed, strangers have occupied their homes and farm lands and they are in

captivity to their enemies. Added to this those of the surrounding nations are mocking them by saying, "Where is your God now, where is the God of Israel," implying that the gods of Babylon are far greater than the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and have conquered and destroyed Israel's God. Yet despite all this Asaph instead of turning bitter and resentful because of Israel's horrific circumstance proclaims that they will meditate upon all the goodness of God and give Him thanks and praise from generation to generation. His faith in God is not dented by his terrible circumstances it rises above them. This is because His faith and devotion toward God is not based upon outward circumstance, but upon the truth God is the Most High God of all and as such is worthy to be praised regardless of outward troubles, grief, sorrows and hardships this was the faith that the faithful of the Old Testament had. Job and Habakkuk expressed this great faith in the following way, even though he suffered great affliction, his attitude was:

- Though he slays me, yet will I trust in him (Job 13:15).
- I know that my redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God (Job 19:25-26).

Habakkuk begins his prayer saying, "Even though his body trembles at the power of the LORD and he feels weak and feeble because of the enemies who are coming to invade his land, he will quietly wait for the day of trouble." He then ends his prayer with the following great words of faith.

- Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, <sup>18</sup>yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. <sup>19</sup>GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places. (Hab. 3:17-19).

We make the Lord our fortress and refuge, in the same way that Asaph, Job and Habakkuk did, which is by making him our greatest love, our best thought and the passion of our heart and mind and rest in the knowledge if everything fails in this life we will be raised to be with the Lord in eternal glory where happiness everlasting dwells and in this life rest in the confidence and faith that the Lord is with us by his Spirit, his love and his grace. Sadly, some today do not perceive the love of God and because of this lack of perception of God's love and grace tend to determine whether God loves them by their good or bad circumstances. They feel if life is charmed and blessed God loves them, but if it suddenly takes a turn for the worse and troubles come, they feel God has withdrawn his love, but this is superstition and judging God according to the fickle circumstances of this world. When anyone today who believes in Christ doubts God's love all we have to do is look back to the bloodstained cross and see what it cost the heart of the Father to save us and how much his Son suffered to redeem us and spiritually crown and cloth us with his royal and majestic robe of righteous so that we could be justified and granted eternal life in everlasting glory apart from self-effort and strictly adhering to ceremonial rites and holy days or keeping religious customs and traditions. This truth should comfort every faithful brother and sister in Christ since it is certain if God was prepared to sacrifice his Son for us, while we were indifferent and apathetic toward Him and uninterested and unconcerned about what honoured Him and what didn't He will with great joy do everything to keep us for eternal life now we love His Son. (He does this by daily lavishing us with grace).

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## THE COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL

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It is important to understand that the promised seed of Abraham and David is Christ, all the promises to Israel are now fulfilled in Christ therefore they are not limited to Israel only, but extend and embrace all those who belong to Christ. This is because God is now creating one new



nation in Christ made up of both Jew and Gentiles. (Gentiles are everyone who is not a Hebrew or Jew). This means that Jews and Gentiles become one new nation in Christ (also called a new man, a new creation, the church, the body of Christ and the Kingdom of God).

The Apostle Paul said:

- Remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision (Jews), which is made in the flesh by hands—<sup>12</sup>remember that you (Gentiles) were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the *COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL* and *STRANGERS* to the *COVENANTS* of *PROMISE*, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup>But now in Christ Jesus you (Gentiles) who once were far off (from God) have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup>For he himself is our (Jews and Gentiles) peace, who has made us both *ONE* and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup>by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he (Jesus) might create in himself *ONE NEW MAN* (or Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles), so making peace, <sup>16</sup>and might reconcile us (Jews and Gentiles) both to God in *ONE BODY* through the cross, thereby killing the hostility (between the Jews and Gentiles). <sup>17</sup>And he (Jesus) came and preached peace to you (Gentiles) who were far off (from God) and peace to those who were near (Jews). <sup>18</sup>For through him (Jesus) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access in *ONE SPIRIT* to the Father. <sup>19</sup>So then you (Gentiles) are *NO LONGER* strangers and aliens, but you are *FELLOW CITIZENS* with the *SAINTS* (the Jews) and members of the *HOUSEHOLD* of God, <sup>20</sup>built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone <sup>21</sup>in whom the *WHOLE STRUCTURE* being joined together (Jews and Gentiles) grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup>In him you (Jews and Gentiles) also are being built together into a *DWELLING PLACE* for *GOD* by the Spirit (Ephes. 2:11-22).

Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the, Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles).

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In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Christ is the head of this new nation and its Jewish and Gentile citizens are now equal in status before God since in Christ we are all brothers and sisters in the same eternal family that God is now establishing in the Lord Jesus Christ throughout all nations of the world. The practical application of what this means to those who belong to Christ is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel also apply to them. The book of Revelation states: -

- When Christ returns in glory every eye will see him, even those who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth (Rev. 1:7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (i.e., Jews and Gentiles) and he has made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

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### **THE GLORY OF THE SPIRITUAL TEMPLE GOD IS BUILDING IN CHRIST**

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Jews and Gentiles are being united together as one body in Christ to be a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Believing Jews and Gentiles are being prepared by the prophets and apostles' teachings and by the influence of Christ and the Holy Spirit to become a majestic and glorious sacred temple in which God dwells for all eternity. When this majestic building is completed there will be nothing so worthy of reverence since God dwells in it; so ancient since the patriarchs and prophets laboured in building it; so solid since love cements it together; so closely united and indivisible

since Christ is the corner stone; so exalted since it reaches as high as heaven and to God himself; so full of wisdom since its specifications are the word of God; so full of light since the Holy Spirit dispels every dark corner; so spacious since it is spread over the whole earth; so invincible and indestructible since it is being built by God, by Christ, by the Holy Spirit and by the influence of God's eternal word; so divine since it is a living, vibrant, dynamic temple inhabited by the Holy Spirit, and so universal since all its unique stones though spread throughout the world are compacted together in Christ.

God is the master builder of this majestic and glorious temple; Christ is the corner stone; faithful believers are the proper materials; the prophets and apostles are its foundation and the Gospel and love its pillars. Christ is the door and faith is the entrance into it. It is a spiritual building and through, faith and grace this living building is growing into an eternal house fit for the most Holy God to dwell in. It's beauty and radiance will surpass all temples that have ever gone before it since it will be adorned with a vast variety of rich colour made up of Jews and Gentiles of every age, country, sex, and condition: the mightiest of kings, the most renowned lawgivers, the most profound philosophers, the most eminent scholars and all those of whom the world was not worthy have formed this building (taken from an unknown brother in Christ who has gone before me).

Peter wrote:

- Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame (1 Pet. 2:6).

Every faithful brother and sister in Christ are represented as living stones that God is using to build this spiritual, majestic temple of eternal glory which will be manifested in splendour for all to see when:

- The Lord himself descends from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ are raised then we who are alive are caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:15-18).

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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