

# Triennial Torah Study – 1<sup>st</sup> Year 06/11/2010

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By Joseph F. Dumond

This week's Triennial Torah reading can be found at:

<https://sightedmoon.com/files/TriennialCycleBeginningAviv.pdf>

Gen 36	1 Sam 31	Ps 72-75	Mark 14:32-72
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## Gen 36

Now these are the records of the generations of Esau (that is, Edom). (Genesis 36:1). As we read through this chapter, we are confronted with a very long list of names and places that are unfamiliar to us. If the truth were told, we are usually inclined to skip this section and to proceed on to the next chapter. In doing so, we would miss some hidden treasures that lie waiting for us to discover.

When we hear this reference to generations, it should serve as a reminder to us of something that we have been seeing all throughout the book of Genesis. It is a promise of two seeds. Here we have the seed Esau and the Seed of Jacob. It will be these two at the end of this present age who will be at war with each other. Esau as the king of the South will join forces with the King of the north to attack and destroy the children of Jacob known as the time of Jacobs trouble.

Esau took his wives from the daughters of Canaan: Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Oholibamah the daughter of Anah and the granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite; 3 also Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, the sister of Nebaioth. 4 And Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau, and Basemath bore Reuel, 5 and Oholibamah bore Jeush and Jalam and Korah. These are the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan. (Genesis 36:2-5).

Marriages in the ancient world were often arranged by the parents. It was for this reason that Abraham had made his servant Eliakim swear an oath that he would not choose a wife for Isaac from among the daughters of the Canaanites (Genesis 24:3). In the same way, Jacob had been sent by his father to Haran with explicit instructions that he not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan (Genesis 28:1). What was wrong with the Canaanites? They were idolaters. They worshiped false gods and they would infect the people of Yahovah with those same false systems of worship.

There is an old saying that goes: "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." There is a lot of truth to that statement. Women have a tremendous ability to influence their children. There is

a sense in which the continuation of any religion is always dependent upon the evangelization of the next generation and this ministry lies primarily in the hands of mothers.

Esau took a number of wives. And to make matters worse, all of these wives were from among the Canaanites. They brought their false gods into the marriage with them. There is no more important decision that a man or woman can make than in the matter of marriage. The Bible is very specific in its command. Believers are not to marry unbelievers.

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? (2 Corinthians 6:14-15).

Now these are the names of the chiefs descended from Esau, according to their families and their localities, by their names: chief Timna, chief Alvah, chief Jetheth, 41 chief Oholibamah, chief Elah, chief Pinon, 42 chief Kenaz, chief Teman, chief Mibzar, 43 chief Magdiel, chief Iram. These are the chiefs of Edom (that is, Esau, the father of the Edomites), according to their habitations in the land of their possession. (Genesis 36:40-43).

This chapter closes with a listing of some of the chieftains. These were the leaders of some of the tribes who made up the Edomites. As our chapter closes, they are seen carrying on the legacy of Esau. It is a legacy that holds the spiritual birthright in low esteem. It is a legacy of the secular. Can I tell you the rest of the story? It is found in the last book of the Old Testament. It is found in the words of the Lord in the book of Malachi.

2 “I have loved you,” said ??????. “But you asked, ‘In what way have You loved us?’ “Was not ? saw Ya’aqob’s brother?” declares ??????. “And I love Ya’aqob?, 3 but I have hated ?saw, and have laid waste his mountains and his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.” 4 If Edom says, “We have been beaten down, let us return and build the ruins,” ????? of hosts said thus: “Let them build, but I tear down. And they shall be called ‘Border of Wrongness’, and the people against whom ????? is enraged forever. (Malachi 1:2-4).

Yahovah eventually brought a desolation and a destruction upon the land of Edom. This was due, in part, to the fact that Edom set itself up against the people of Yahovah when the Babylonians came to destroy Jerusalem. When Nebuchadnezzar went to destroy the Temple, the people of Edom lined up to cheer and to make a profit at Judah’s expense. Obadiah 1:13 speaks of how the Edomites gloated over Judah in the day of her disaster and how they looted their wealth in the day of their distress. Yet even after this, Edom was given a second chance. Many years after the words of Malachi, a king came to power from the land of Edom. His name was Herod the Great. It was under his reign that Yahshua was born. Yahovah actually sent magi from the east to tell Herod about this wonderful event. What was his reaction? Did he seek to come and worship Yahshua? His pretense was exactly that. But it was only a pretense and a sham.

In reality, he sought to murder Yahshua. In doing so, he was demonstrating the continuing legacy of Esau. It was a legacy of kings who set themselves up in place of Yahovah. It was the legacy of the secular. It was the legacy of those who had no interest in the things of Yahovah and who were willing to trade away a spiritual heritage for a cup of stew.

At the end of this age The Muslims will be joined with the Assyrians also known as the German people today. The Muslim religion will have taken over the Emperor of this Holy Roman Empire and as Daniel tells us this Emperor will not care for Yahovah or His people.

### We read in Obadiah

1: 1 The vision of Obad'ayah: This is what the Master ???? said concerning Edom. We have heard a report from ????, and a messenger has been sent among the nations, saying, "Arise, and let us rise up against her for battle!" 2 "See, I have made you small among the nations, you are greatly despised. 3 "The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose dwelling is high, who say in your heart, 'Who shall bring me down to the ground?' 4 "Though you rise high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I shall bring you down," declares ????. 5 "If thieves came to you, if robbers by night, how ruined you would have been! Would they not steal till they had enough? If grape-gatherers had come to you, would they not leave gleanings? 6 "How ?saw shall be searched out! His hidden treasures shall be sought out! 7 "All your allies shall send you forth to the border, your friends shall deceive you and overpower you. They make your bread a snare under you, without you discerning it! 8 "In that day," declares ????, "I shall destroy the wise men from Edom, and discernment from the mountains of ?saw! 9 "And your mighty men shall be discouraged, O T'man, so that everyone from the mountains of ?saw is cut off by slaughter. 10 "Because of your violence against your brother Ya?aQob?, let shame cover you. And you shall be cut off forever. 11 "In the day that you stood on the other side, in the day that strangers took captive his wealth, when foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Yerushalayim, you also were like one of them! 12 "And you should not have looked on your brother's day in the day of his estrangement, nor rejoiced over the children of Yehudah in the day of their destruction, nor made your mouth great in the day of distress, 13 nor have entered the gate of My people in the day of their calamity, nor looked down on their evil in the day of their calamity, nor have seized their wealth in the day of their calamity, 14 nor have stood at the parting of the way to cut off his fugitives, nor handed over his survivors in the day of distress. 15 "For the day of ???? is near upon all the gentiles. As you have done, it shall be done to you, your reward shall come back on your own head. 16 "For as you have drunk on my set-apart mountain, so do all the gentiles drink continually. And they shall drink and shall swallow, and they shall be as though they had never been. 17 "But on Mount Tsiyon there shall be an escape<sup>1</sup>, and they shall be set-apart. And the house of Ya?aQob? shall possess their possessions.

Footnote:

<sup>1</sup>Isa. 4:2-3, Joel 2:32, Rev. 14:1.

18 "And the house of Ya?aQob? shall be a fire, and the house of Yoseph a flame, but the house of ?saw for stubble. And they shall burn among them and they shall consume them, so that no survivor is left of the house of ?saw." For ???? has spoken. 19 And they shall possess the South with the

mountains of ?saw, and low country with the Philistines. And they shall possess the fields of Ephrayim and the fields of Shomeron, and Binyamin with Gilad?, 20 and the exiles of this host of the children of Yisra’?l possess that of the Kenaanites as far as Tsarephath, and the exiles of Yerushalayim who are in Sepharad? possess the cities of the South. 21 And saviours shall come to Mount Tsiyon to judge the mountains of ?saw. And the reign shall belong to ????.1. Footnote: 1Ps. 2:8, Ps. 22:28, Dan. 2:44, Dan. 7:13-14 & 27, Zech. 14: 9, Rev. 11:15, Rev. 12:10.

## 1 Samuel 31

At Passover in 2010 Nehemiah Gordon took me to Gilboa after we did the Barley Search. We walked along a path which was difficult to walk on due to the rocky ground. The fields were even harder to walk in because of the rocks. I could not help but wonder how difficult it would have been to fight hand to hand in war over such difficult terrain. Trying to fight with a sword and not stumble.

The unfortunate battle of Gilboa completely changed the situation in Israel. Saul and three of his sons lay dead on the field; Israel was prostrate; and the country west of the Jordan was again under Philistine rule. The last great victory of the Philistines had been when they had captured the ark of the covenant and had placed it in the temple of their god. Now they take the body of the Lord’s anointed king and mutilate it, placing it on display on the walls of a nearby city Beth Shean. Beth-shan sits at the junction of the Valley of Jezreel as it intersects with the Jordan Valley. This may have been one of the cities which the Philistines now occupied.

Now when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, 12 all the valiant men rose and walked all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and they came to Jabesh, and burned them there. And they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days. (1 Samuel 31:11-13).

Jabesh-gilead was the city which Saul had rescued at the very beginning of his reign (1 Samuel 11). This was a city on the east bank of the Jordan. When they had been besieged by the Ammonites and threatened with the disfigurement of having the right eye of every man gouged out, it was Saul who had led the forces of Israel to fight on their behalf. He had called Israel to arms but cutting up two yoke of oxen and sending these grisly tokens throughout the land.

Now it is the body of Saul which has been cut apart. And the men of Jabesh-gilead remember the debt which they owed their king and place themselves at risk by coming to rescue his mutilated corpse.

Thus, the bodies of Saul and his sons which were first humiliated are now honored. 3 And the battle went hard against Sha'ul, and the archers hit him, so that he was severely wounded by the archers. 4 And Sha'ul said to his armour-bearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and thrust me through and roll themselves on me." But his armour-bearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. So Sha'ul took the sword and fell on it.

This is the same thing that Judas did when he killed himself after betraying Yahshua.

Mathew 27: 3 Then Yehud'ah – he who delivered Him up – having seen that He had been condemned, repented, returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and to the elders, 4 saying, "I have sinned in delivering up innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!" 5 And throwing down the pieces of silver in the Dwelling Place he left, and went and hanged himself. But in Acts 1 we read of his stomach coming out of him. 15 And in those days K? pha, standing up in the midst of the taught ones – and there was a gathering of about a hundred and twenty – said, 16 "Men and brothers, this Scripture had to be filled which the Set-apart Spirit spoke before by the mouth of Dawid? concerning Yehud?ah, who became a guide to those who seized ?????, 17 because he was numbered with us and did receive his share in this service." 18 (This one, therefore, purchased a field with the wages of unrighteousness, and falling forward, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out. 19 And it became known to all those dwelling in Yerushalayim, so that in their own language that field was called, H'aqal Dema, that is, Field of Blood). 20 "For it has been written in the Book of Psalms, 'Let his dwelling lie waste, and let no one live in it,' and, 'Let another take his office.'

When Judas fell forward his sword disemboweled him as he fell. This is what Saul did and it is what today we call harakiri. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seppuku> Seppuku (???, "stomach cutting") is a form of Japanese ritual suicide by disembowelment. Seppuku was originally reserved only for samurai. Part of the samurai bushido honor code, seppuku was used voluntarily by samurai to die with honor rather than fall into the hands of their enemies (and likely suffer torture), as a form of capital punishment for samurai who had committed serious offenses, or performed for other reasons that had brought shame to them. The ceremonial disembowelment, which is usually part of a more elaborate ritual and performed in front of spectators, consists of plunging a short blade, traditionally a tant?, into the abdomen and moving the blade from left to right in a slicing motion. Seppuku is also known as 'harakiri (???, "cutting the belly") and is written with the same kanji as seppuku, but in reverse order with an okurigana.

## Psalm 72-75

<http://www.ucg.org/brp/brp.asp?get=daily&day=20&month=August&year=2005&Layout=>

Psalm 72 is the last psalm in Book II of the Psalter. At its end appear the words, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended"—apparently closing the collection of David's psalms in Books

I and II as of the time this note was appended. (Other psalms of David do appear in later books.) Psalm 72 concerns the reign of a succeeding “king...the king’s son” (verse 1). The superscription says “Of Solomon,” which could mean, as with Psalm 127 (the only other psalm bearing his name), that Solomon wrote it. Yet, because of the appended note about the prayers of David, many feel that David wrote Psalm 72 about or for Solomon. The Greek Septuagint translation has eis, meaning “to” or “for.” As pointed out in the Bible Reading Program’s introduction to Psalms, it could be that Solomon wrote it prior to David’s death and that David included it in his own collection—or it could just as well be that, following David’s death, Solomon appended his own psalm to the end of the collection of his father’s psalms. The Protestant Reformer John Calvin argued that David gave the substance of Psalm 72 in a spoken prayer before his death and that Solomon afterward set it down in the form of a psalm, composing the poetry and music himself (see Expositor’s Bible Commentary, footnote on verse 1). It would thus be a prayer of David but a psalm of Solomon. In any case, Psalm 72 was probably also used by the nation as a prayer for later kings in David’s line. Yet it should be clear from reading this remarkable psalm that it is not the reign of Solomon or any merely human king that is primarily in view here. Rather, Psalm 72 concerns the reign of the ultimate Son of David, who is also the Son of the Almighty King, God. As The Nelson Study Bible comments, “This psalm is intensely messianic, speaking in ideal terms of the coming of the great King...who will establish this glorious reign” (note on Psalm 72). Indeed, as pointed out in prior comments, we should notice again a most interesting pattern of arrangement in Book II of the Psalter. Book II begins with a cluster of lamenting prayers to God for help against enemies (Psalms 42-44), figurative of the suffering of Jesus Christ at His first coming, followed by a psalm about the Messiah’s marriage to His Bride at the beginning of His glorious reign at His second coming (Psalm 45). Likewise, the book ends with a cluster of lamenting pleas for God’s help against enemies, which expressly relate to the Messiah’s sufferings in His first coming (Psalms 69-71), followed by a psalm that portrays Christ’s majestic reign when He comes again (Psalm 72). Realize also that David himself, whose grief in the lamenting psalms foreshadowed Christ’s own, will himself be raised to rule with Christ as king over Israel at that time. Moreover, all Christ’s followers should also see in these psalms that our own suffering for His sake today will be followed by our future glory when we are at last raised to reign with Him in His Kingdom. Verse 3 says that during the King’s reign the mountains and hills will bring forth peace by righteousness. On one level this may concern productivity. The Hebrew word for peace, shalom, means more than absence of war. It concerns perfect contentment and happiness and may connote prosperity. Mountains and hills are not typically fertile areas, but blessing will flow even from them (compare Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13). Yet mountains and hills can also be figurative of great and small nations—and that may be intended here as well, considering the universal reign of this King, as later described. The verse would then entail all peoples learning God’s way, resulting in world peace. The reign of Solomon, whose name meant peace, was a time of peace and prosperity—yet it was only a small foretaste of the peace and prosperity of the Kingdom to come. The King will be feared—denoting “an expression of wonder, awe, reverence, worship, and obedience” (Nelson Study Bible, note on Psalm 72:5-7)—and this for as long as the sun and moon exist, throughout all generations (verse 5). Righteousness and abundant peace would

flourish during His reign “until the moon is no more” (verse 7). Clearly this did not concern merely Solomon’s earthly reign. Again, the Kingdom of the immortal Messiah is primarily intended. The Messiah’s coming is as the gentle rains to bring forth righteousness and peace (verse 6; compare Hosea 6:3; 10:12; Isaiah 55:10-11). Isaiah states, “Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end”

(9:7). The King’s dominion, Psalm 72:8 tells us, will extend “from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.” The expression “the River” typically denotes the Euphrates River, the northern boundary God promised for the Promised Land—as it was during Solomon’s reign. “Sea to sea” might then appear to represent the east-west boundaries of the land of Israel—from the Dead to the Mediterranean Sea. However, since the dominion extends to the ends of the earth, “sea to sea” could have a much broader meaning. Solomon did experience the royalty of other lands, including Sheba, presenting him with gifts, as described in verse 10 (see also verse 15). But He did not experience the fulfillment of verse 11, which says that all kings would fall down before the Great King and that all nations would serve Him. This will only happen following the return of Jesus Christ. Verses 12-14 expand on the important theme introduced in verses 2 and 4—bringing justice to the lowly and needy, saving them from those who oppress them. Indeed verse 12 seems to imply that this is part of the reason nations will choose to serve Him. “The little word [‘for’ at the beginning of verse 12] directs our look back at the prediction, ‘All kings will bow down to Him’ (v. 11). What makes the rule of this king so special? Simply that he is dedicated to save the needy and rescue the oppressed. He has God’s own compassion and the power to act on others’ behalf. These verses forever change our notion of ‘rule.’ The central issue of rule is not the power to use others, but the willingness to serve them” (Lawrence Richards, *The Bible Reader’s*

*Companion*, note on verses 12-14). The statement “precious is their blood in His sight” (verse 14) does not mean the King desires their deaths. Just the opposite, this phrase should be seen as the reason that He saves people from violence, as mentioned immediately before in the verse. Their blood is what sustains their lives (Leviticus 17:14), and it is their lives that are precious to Him (for similar wording, see 2 Kings 1:13-14). In short, the King will not look on human life as cheap—as so many cruel despots throughout history have done. Rather, He values it very highly. And violence will be eliminated during the rule of His Kingdom (Isaiah 11:9). In Psalm 72:17, the mention of all peoples being blessed through Him “recalls the promise to Abraham (see Ge 12:3; 22:18) and suggests that it will be fulfilled through the royal son of David—ultimately the Messiah” (Zondervan NIV Study Bible, note on Psalm 72:17). Verses 18-19 were probably added to the psalm a closing doxology (expression of praise) when Book II of the Psalter was completed. And the “prayers of David” note in verse 20, as already mentioned, was probably also appended at that time. Book III of the Psalter, as the Zondervan NIV Study Bible explains, “consists of three groupings of psalms, having an overall symmetrical pattern (six psalms {73-78}, five psalms {79-83}, six psalms {84-89}) and at its center (Ps 81) an urgent exhortation to fundamental covenant loyalty to the Lord” (note on Psalms 73-78). Of the 17 psalms in this book, the titles of the first 11 (these psalms constituting the first two clusters of the three mentioned above) bear the name of Asaph, one of David’s three choir directors—Asaph evidently being the primary director among the three. We earlier read Psalm 50, another psalm

of Asaph that may have been detached from a full grouping of 12 to be placed in Book II during a later process of arrangement. As mentioned earlier, le-Asaph could either mean that the psalms were written by Asaph or for him to perform. The former seems more likely, though there is some difficulty with respect to Asaph's authorship or even performance of the psalms bearing his name. A number of the psalms of Book III deal with a time of national invasion and devastation. Indeed, two of Asaph's psalms (74 and 79) concern an enemy invasion of Jerusalem and the ravaging of the temple. This helps to establish a link, as explained in the Bible Reading Program's introduction to Psalms, between Book III of the Psalter and the third of the five Festival Scrolls, the book of Lamentations, read annually by the Jews during their fast on the ninth of Ab in commemoration of the Babylonian and Roman destructions of the temple. Asaph, though, lived centuries before the Babylonian destruction. It is perhaps possible that Asaph did live to see Pharaoh Shishak's invasion during the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam (1 Kings 14:25-28; 2 Chronicles 12). But Asaph would have been extremely old then if he were still alive. Consider that he was given his appointment when the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem shortly after David's establishment there (see 1 Chronicles 15:17-19; 16:5). Asaph would then have been over 30, as David's change to allow Levitical service at a younger age did not come until the end of the king's reign (compare Numbers 4:2-3, 22-23, 29-30; 1 Chronicles 23:3, 25-27). Shishak's invasion came about 78 years after David took over Jerusalem, so Asaph would have been 108 or older. While seemingly unlikely, this is not impossible. However, other solutions have been put forward. Perhaps the most popular is the general rejection of the superscriptions in the book of Psalms as unreliable. But then we are left with the great mystery of how these scribal attributions arose. If oral tradition, did not the tradition have some basis? Others would argue that Asaph wrote the psalms in question in a form we no longer have and that later editors rewrote these to fit their later circumstances. This could be, but in such a case it would seem that the particular psalms would have been chosen for revision because they concerned similar circumstances, in this case national invasion, yet no such invasion took place in Asaph's time prior to Shishak's. Some believe that "references to Asaph in these titles must sometimes include descendants of Asaph who functioned in his place" (Zondervan, note on Psalm 73 title). It is true that Asaph's descendants remained as temple singers in later centuries (see 2 Chronicles 35:15; Ezra 2:41; Nehemiah 7:44; 11:17). But why would the titles not say "sons of Asaph," as others say "sons of Korah"? Another very real possibility is that Asaph was writing prophetically. He is referred to in 2 Chronicles 29:30 as "Asaph the seer." Indeed, many of the psalms are understood to be prophetic, but usually this means that some present circumstance was being written about that reflected future events in a dual sense. Indeed if Asaph did witness, and was writing about, Shishak's invasion, his words were also likely prophetic of future destruction—that is, of the ancient Babylonian and Roman destructions as well as the end-time destruction yet to come. However, it could be that God gave Asaph a vision of the future disconnected from his immediate circumstances. He may have been writing of what he saw with his mind and not with his eyes. We simply don't know for sure. In any event, we will assume Asaph himself as the author of the psalms bearing his name, as this seems most likely despite the apparent difficulty. We begin, then, with the first cluster of Book II, Psalms 73-78. This "first



group is framed by psalms of instruction. Ps 73 is a word of godly wisdom based on an individual's life experience, while Ps 78 is a psalm of instruction based on Israel's communal experience in its historical pilgrimage with God. Within this frame, Ps 74 (a communal prayer) is linked with Ps 77 (a prayer of an individual) by the common experience of seeming to be rejected by God (see 74:1; 77:7) and by an extended evocation of God's saving act in Israel's exodus from Egypt (see 74:13-15; 77:16-19). At the center, two psalms (75; 76) express joyful assurance that Israel's God (His 'Name is near,' 75:1; 'his name is great in Israel,' 76:1) calls the arrogant wicked to account and rescues their victims; he cuts off 'the horns of the wicked' (75:10) and breaks 'the spirit of rulers' (76:12 [NIV])" (note on Psalms 73-78). Psalm 73 explores the dilemma of the wicked seeming to prosper while the godly suffer so much. It is thematically tied in this respect to Psalm 49. Like that song, Psalm 73 gives the clarity of vision that comes from realizing people's future destiny. "Placed at the beginning of Book III, this psalm voices the faith (confessed {v. 1}, tested {vv. 2-26} and reaffirmed {v. 27-28}) that undergirds the following collection. It serves in Book III as Ps 1-2 serve in Book I" (note on Psalm 73). Asaph knows that God is good to those in Israel who are pure in heart (verse 1), but he had struggled to understand why the wicked prosper-being nearly tripped up by this as he started to envy their strength, abundance and carefree lives (verses 2-5, 7, 12). It seemed they could do and say whatever they want (verses 8-9). How is it that they could defy God and everything still go so well for them? (verses 11-12). Was it pointless to obey God? (verses 13-14). Besides the personal quandary of Asaph detailed here, this song probably found meaning to the nation at large in later years when wicked enemy nations seemed to freely defy God and prosper while God's own nation suffered greatly at their hand. In verse 15 Asaph says to God, "If I had really spoken this way, I would have been a traitor to your people" (New Living Translation). Thus he was so far only entertaining these thoughts. He had not yet succumbed to actually believing them. But the confusion was very uncomfortable (verse 16). Until one day, that is, while he was in God's sanctuary (the tabernacle or temple)-perhaps performing his duties leading prayerful and worshipful music-that it hit him. He realized the end of the wicked (verse 17)-they will perish (verse 27). "He rediscovered something that he probably already knew but had not really considered: The prosperity of the wicked will not last. Their wealth will have no value in the next life" (Nelson Study Bible, note on verses 15-18). Indeed, more than in just this ultimate sense, he realized that without God's overseeing care their demise could come at any moment (verses 18-19; compare Luke 13:1-5). The middle statement of Psalm 73:19, "They are utterly consumed with terrors," means either that terrible events would destroy them (see NIV) or that, deep down, the wicked are really filled with fear of what might happen to them because they do not have the assurance of faith the godly have. Verse 20 says that when God finally does decide to deal with the wicked, they will disappear like a bad dream-the phrase "despise their image" here in context meaning to disregard the sight of them as unreal (compare Isaiah 29:5-8). Asaph was then rather upset with himself (Psalm 73:21) for being so stupid-like an ignorant beast (verse 22; compare Job 18:3)-in thinking the way he had. Nevertheless, God didn't desert him in his foolishness but enlightened his perspective to keep him on the road to glory (Psalm 73:23-24). Nothing in the universe can compare to a relationship with God (verse 25). Physical life ends, but with Him is eternal life and

reward (verse 26). Those who forsake God for unfaithfulness are on the road to death (verse 27). Contrary to his earlier consideration of serving God being futile (verse 13), Asaph concludes just the opposite: "It is good for me to draw near to God" (verse 28). He trusts God and will proclaim to others-as this song does-that what God does for us makes our devotion to Him more than worth it. According to its superscription, Psalm 74 is a maskil (instructional psalm or, as in the NKJV, "contemplation") of Asaph. As mentioned earlier, it, like Psalm 79, concerns a time of national invasion and devastation, including the ransacking of the temple in Jerusalem-the sanctuary (verses 3-4, 7) at Mount Zion (verse 2). The psalm is a lamenting plea for relief from the godless invaders and oppressors. As mentioned before, it is possible that Asaph lived to see Pharaoh Shishak's invasion of Judah around 925 B.C., which included the looting and defiling of the temple (1 Kings 14:25-28; 2 Chronicles 12). However, it is just as possible that Asaph was given a vision of the future-of events beyond his death, possibly Shishak's invasion but perhaps one long afterward, such as the Babylonian invasion of 586 B.C. or the Roman invasion of A.D. 69-70 (or perhaps the end-time invasion still ahead). Whatever he saw, the utter sense of shock and misery in Psalm 74 is clear: "Why...? Why...?" he asks (verse 1). "How long...?" and "Why...?" (verses 10-11). He realizes that the invasion is a result of God's judgment (verse 1)-but is stunned at what God has permitted the enemy to do. Asaph implores God to restore His relationship with His people and act to preserve His own reputation against the blasphemous actions of the wicked invaders. "Lift up your feet" in verse 3 is a call for God to walk-to come and see what the enemy is doing. In verse 5-6, enemy troops are shown hacking with axes and hammers at the temple's carved work-its paneling or other décor-and then in verse 7 they are described as setting fire to the sanctuary, defiling it to the ground. It is not clear what this means. If this means setting fires in parts of the temple as part of utterly defiling it, this could possibly refer to Shishak's invasion. But if it means that the enemy has burned the temple to the ground (as the NIV translates it), we should realize that such calamity only happened during the Babylonian and Roman invasions. The statement in verse 9 that "there is no longer any prophet" is interesting in light of the fact that Asaph himself was a seer (2 Chronicles 29:30). This may support the argument that Asaph did not actually live to witness the devastation he is writing about. Yet considering what follows in the verse, this may simply mean that there is no prophet who knows how long the enemy oppression will last. Based on the same verse, the identification of the invasion as that of the Babylonians is problematic because God's prophet Daniel lived through the entire Babylonian captivity. And Jeremiah remained in Judah until he was taken by the remnant of the country to Egypt (after which only a few peasants were left in the land). And Jeremiah even gave a time frame for the dominion of Babylon. Asaph urges God to take action against the evil adversary (verse 11) and then recounts the mighty acts God accomplished for His people in the past-when He delivered them from Egypt and led them to the Promised Land. (Asaph also reflects on this deliverance in Psalms 77, 78 and 81.) God divided the Red Sea, opened fountains of water for the people in the wilderness and dried up the Jordan River so the Israelites could cross (74:13, 15). The breaking of the heads of the sea serpents, of Leviathan, in pieces (verses 13-14) refers in one sense to the devastation brought against Egypt at that time. Leviathan, the sea serpent of Job 41, is representative of Satan the devil, the true ruler of this world. He is portrayed in Revelation 12:3 as having multiple heads-in that case the heads being

those of prophetic Babylon (a succession of world-ruling empires) shown as springing from him (see Revelation 13; 17). Yet he was also the power behind the thrones of Egypt and the other nations Israel defeated in their wilderness wanderings. Indeed, the Egyptian pharaoh is portrayed in the book of Ezekiel as a crocodilian river monster or sea monster (29:3; 32:2). The heads of Leviathan being given as food to the Israelites in the wilderness would seem to refer to their looting of the Egyptians and the carrying away of Egypt's substance as well as the plunder of other Satan-led nations on the way to the land of Canaan. In Psalm 74:16-17, Asaph points out God's power to determine day and night, the earth's borders (perhaps the division of land and sea) and the seasons. He is essentially saying, "You can do anything. You are in control of everything." And on that basis, He again pleads with God to consider what the enemy has done (verses 18) and the need of His people (verses 19-21). The reference to God's people as "Your turtledove" (verse 19) is probably a term of endearment, showing the people as God's beloved (see Song of Solomon 2:14; 5:2; 6:9). In Psalm 74:20 Asaph asks that God would have respect to the covenant-wherein God had said that if the people repented and called on Him for help that He would deliver them. The Contemporary English Version renders the latter part of verse 20 this way: "Violent enemies are hiding in every dark corner of the earth." That is, enemy forces are set to ambush God's people all over the place emphasizing the urgent need for help. This also reminds us of the fact that God's people today are constantly pursued by spirit enemies, about which Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:12: "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the world's rulers, of the darkness of this age, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Modern King James Version). Asaph further calls the people "Your poor" (Psalm 74:19), "the oppressed" and "the poor and needy" (verse 21)-as they have been humbled and are the kind of people God says He will care for and rescue. Verses 22-23 contain a final plea for God to act against the enemies. While God has permitted them to attack His people for the sake of judgment, these wicked invaders have assaulted and blasphemed God Himself and continue to do so. They must be stopped-and they will be. Psalms 75 and 76 are both songs of reassurance of God's justice when things seem to be going so well for the wicked—no doubt sung in later years for encouragement when evil enemy nations encroached. "In some ways this psalm [75] may be regarded as God's answer to the questions presented in Ps 74? (Nelson Study Bible, note on Psalm 75). There Asaph had asked: "Will the enemy blaspheme Your name forever? Why do You withdraw Your hand, even Your right hand?" (Psalm 74:10-11). Here God says: "When I choose the proper time, I will judge uprightly" (75:2). Though no attribution is given to God as the One speaking, it is obvious from what is said that He is being quoted. God further says that even when severe distress engulfs the world, He is in control: "When the earth totters, and all its inhabitants, it is I who keep its pillars steady" (verse 3, NRSV). "He is the great Judge-Ruler, who will not permit wickedness, evil powers, and the arrogant to undermine the foundations of his kingdom. The quaking of the earth and peoples is a metaphor for the erosive effects of evil. Immorality undermines the stability of earth and society...[but] the Lord proclaims that he graciously upholds his creation" (Expositor's Bible Commentary, note on verse 3). "Thematic parallels to the song of Hannah (1Sa 2:1-10) are numerous" (Zondervan NIV Study Bible, note on Psalm 75)—particularly in her statement, as a

representative mother in Israel, that her “horn is exalted in the Lord” while God deals with her enemies. The horn is a biblical symbol for power and strength. God here in Psalm 75 warns the wicked to stop arrogantly boasting and flaunting their horn (verses 4-5). Asaph adds that exalting oneself or seeking exaltation from or through other people on earth is vain—as God has ultimate control over who is demoted or promoted in the world’s kingdoms (verses 6-7; compare Daniel 4:25b, 32b; Romans 13:1). This applies to our own individual circumstances as well. While there are practical steps we can take to achieve advancement, promotions and leadership opportunities—be it at work, school, church or community—the most important strategy is to rely on God for His direction and help. For “unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it” (Psalm 127:1). Incidentally, it is interesting to note the cardinal directions mentioned in Psalm 75:6-7—or, rather, the one not mentioned. Exaltation does not come from east, west or south but from God. This would appear to identify God with the north, as other passages do—that is, either the Temple Mount on the north side of Jerusalem or the farthest north in heaven (compare Psalm 48:2; Isaiah 14:13). From His throne, God is sovereign throughout the earth. And, as Psalm 75:8 makes clear, He has destined abasement through severe judgment for those who persist in wickedness. The imagery of the winecup of judgment here is also found in other verses (see Isaiah 51:17; Jeremiah 25:15; Revelation 14:10; 16:19). Asaph knows that as God’s servant he will live forever—and will throughout eternity continue to sing praise to God (Psalm 75:9). Then in verse 10 God speaks again to conclude that the horns of the wicked will be cut off (compare the imagery in Zechariah 1:18-21) while the horns, again representing strength, of the righteous will be exalted (compare Psalm 89:17; 92:10-11)—meaning, in concert with Asaph’s previous words, for eternity to come.

### **Mark 14:32-72**

In verse 51 is a strange scripture. 51 And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: 52 And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked. Many of the Gospel writers speak of themselves in the third person. John says “and the disciple whom Yahshua loved outran Peter and came to the tomb first” without directly naming himself—I think Mark is doing the same thing. We have covered much of this when we looked at Mathew so I will leave the rest of this chapter to you.