

Some think that Psalm 83 was written in the days of Jehoshaphat –
2 Chronicles 20 relates how the sons of Lot came against Jehoshaphat.
(read 2 Chronicles 20:1-23).

You may have noted Jeiel in verse 14 – “of the sons of Asaph” –
who prophesied concerning the victory of Jehoshaphat.

Certainly this would be a good context for the writing of Psalm 83,
but it would be just as likely that the sons of Asaph
would have written Psalm 83 years later,
in memory of such an event as this.

After all, if you find a hymn celebrating the resurrection of Jesus,
that doesn’t mean that the hymn was written 2,000 years ago –
it means that the resurrection of Jesus still has powerful meaning today.

Likewise, the fact that Psalm 83 has strong resonance with 2 Chronicles 20
only demonstrates that the power of the sons of Lot remained significant for Israel.

After all, we saw this morning that the sons of Lot remained a problem for Israel
several hundred years later.

And so Psalm 83 fits well with Ezekiel 25 as well.
Most of the same enemies appear in Psalm 83 –
Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia –
and Tyre (from Ezekiel 26).

So rather than try to figure out *when* the Psalm was written,
we will instead focus on *what* Psalm 83 says about God and his righteous deeds.

1. Pray for God to Speak (v1-8)

The Psalm begins with a prayer for God to speak.

*O God, do not keep silence;
do not hold your peace or be still, O God!*

The idea here is that from the standpoint of earth,
it appears that God is not really doing anything.
God appears silent.
God appears indifferent –
as though the troubles of his people are irrelevant to him.

There are many who think this way about God.

If there is a god, they say, he is not especially interested in my troubles.

Of course, there are others who go to the opposite extreme!

There are some who seem to think that God's only reason for existing
is to make *my* life better.

Psalm 83 avoids both pitfalls.

Asaph pleads with God to act –
not because of me and my well-being –
but because God's name and covenant are at stake.

In other words, Asaph seeks first the kingdom of God and *his* righteousness!

And the first point he makes is that God should speak,

a. Because God's Enemies Are Noisy (v2)

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

God's enemies are noisy.

They are assertive.

They make a clamor – seeking to drown out the voice of God.

Think of the Rabshakeh of Assyria in the days of Hezekiah.

He sought to persuade Jerusalem not to listen to the voice of the LORD,
using the noise of a powerful army to intimidate God's people.

While the enemies of God may change in form from time to time,
the strategies are consistent.

The serpent used the same strategy in the Garden –

trying to drown out the voice of the LORD

by twisting the truth and convincing Eve to listen to another voice.

And as we head into another Christmas season,

the voice of God's enemies grows noisy once again.

After all, if you are obsessed with "stuff" for the next month,

then that is one more month that you are not seeking first the kingdom of God!

There are two million people in X.

And there are only two churches – along with a handful of housechurches.

The Muslims are pouring millions into several new mosques around the city.

And as you go south and west the Christian presence drops off even more.

There are also two million people in Paris.

There are a couple of liberal reformed churches –

and one reformed Baptist church.
The gospel is rarely heard anywhere in the city.

There are 500,000 people in Edinburgh.
The largest church in the city might get 400-500 people on a Sunday.
Only 2% of the population was in church yesterday.

And while the churches in South Bend, Indiana, are comparatively stuffed –
the voices of consumerism and materialism
lure us away from making disciples.

Psalm 83 calls on God to speak –
Psalm 83 calls on God to act.

And the second reason that God should speak is,
b. Because God's Enemies Are Plotting Against Your People (v3-8)
This is not an accidental happenstance.

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

“treasured” or “hidden” – the point is that these are those whom God values as his own

As Calvin puts it,
“those who molest the Church are chargeable with making war against God,
who has taken her under his protection.” (343)

*4 They say, “Come, let us wipe them out as a nation;
let the name of Israel be remembered no more!”*

I said earlier that it is not *about* me.
I am not the center of the universe.

But because I pray “thy kingdom come” –
and the coming of God's kingdom means the destruction of his enemies
and the salvation of his people –
therefore, when I pray that God will act,
I also pray, “but deliver us from evil.”

In our travels we heard of a church who had hired a construction firm
to build them a building.
The firm not only defrauded them out of their money,
but then bought off the judge,

and sent a gang of thugs to beat up one of the elders.

Do not be silent, God!

Do not remain at rest – do not be tranquil in the face of the plots of your enemies!

For now, we endure the cross –

we suffer unjustly for the sake of Jesus.

But we also pray that God will see – that he will hear –

and that he will speak and act,

bringing justice to the earth!

In verses 5-8 we hear who these enemies are:

5 For they conspire with one accord;

against you they make a covenant—

6 the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites,

Moab and the Hagrites,

7 Gebal and Ammon and Amalek,

Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;

8 Asshur also has joined them;

they are the strong arm of the children of Lot. Selah

We heard about Edom, Moab, Ammon, Philistia, and Tyre this morning.

The reference to Asshur (Assyria) suggests an pre-Babylonian date –

though it seems a little odd that Assyria would be lumped under the sons of Lot.

The point is that everyone has united against God's people

There is an international conspiracy –

a universal covenant –

and notice who it is against!

Not “your people.”

Not “your treasured ones.”

But *against you*.

This is the way that the apostles prayed in Acts 4.

There they quoted Psalm 2 – but the point is the same as Psalm 83:

“Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,

who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,

‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain?’

The kings of the earth set themselves,

and the rulers were gathered together,

against the Lord and against his Anointed' –
for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus,
whom you anointed,
both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,
to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.
And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants
to continue to speak your word with all boldness,
while you stretch out your hand to heal,
and signs and wonders are performed
through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” (Acts 4:24-30)

In other words,

Do not be silent, God!

Do not stand idly by – but act!

And verse 31 says,

“and when they had prayed,

the place in which they were gathered was shaken,

and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit

and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.”

God speaks through the preaching of the gospel.

He speaks as he fills his people with his Spirit and send forth the Word to the nations!

2. Pray for God to Act (v9-18)

So in verses 1-8 we pray that God would speak.

And in verses 9-18, then, we pray that God would act.

And again there are two parts to this.

First, we pray that God would act as he has in the past:

a. That He Would Do as He Has Done in the Past (v9-12)

In verses 9-12 we are reminded of the days of the Judges.

Verses 9-10 speak of the days of Deborah.

Verses 11-12 speak of the days of Gideon.

*9 Do to them as you did to Midian,
as to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon,
10 who were destroyed at En-dor,
who became dung for the ground.*

The reference to Midian connects more with verse 11,

because Jabin was a Canaanite king in the north of the land,
and Sisera was his general.

Judges 4 tells us that Jabin oppressed Israel cruelly for 20 years.

But then God raised up Barak and Deborah –
and the armies of Jabin were slaughtered by Israel,
and Sisera perished by the hand of a woman (Jael).

The Song of Deborah tells of how the “stars” fought for Israel,
and the torrent of Kishon (a wadi, or dry riverbed,
that seems to have flooded at just the right moment)
swept Sisera’s army away.

Psalm 83 prays that God would do this again.

That God would turn his enemies into dung – into manure!

*11 Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb,
all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,
12 who said, “Let us take possession for ourselves
of the pastures of God.”*

Oreb and Zeeb were the princes of Midian who oppressed Israel in the days of Gideon.

But the LORD raised up Gideon and went before him,
and Gideon’s 300 men routed the 10,000 men of Midian
because the LORD was with him.

And they captured Oreb and Zeeb and killed them.

Zebah and Zalmunna were the kings of Midian –
and after Gideon had slaughtered Oreb and Zeeb,
he led Israel against Zebah and Zalmunna,
captured them and killed them.

Psalm 83 prays that God would do to his enemies what he did to Oreb and Zeeb,
Zebah and Zalmunna.

Remember how you defeated your enemies in the days of the Judges?

Please, O God, do it again!

This is not purely selfish –
this is not about personal (or even national) revenge.

The reason why we pray that God would destroy his enemies is:

b. That They Might Be Ashamed and Know that You Are the LORD (v13-18)
*13 O my God, make them like whirling dust, [or tumbleweed]
like chaff before the wind.
14 As fire consumes the forest,
as the flame sets the mountains ablaze,*

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

Psalm 1 spoke of how the wicked are like the chaff which the wind drives away.
Psalm 83 now asks God to treat his enemies like chaff.

There is considerable debate about whether verses 16-18 leaves any hope for them:

*16 Fill their faces with shame,
that they may seek your name, O Lord.
17 Let them be put to shame and dismayed forever;
let them perish in disgrace,
18 that they may know that you alone,
whose name is the Lord,
are the Most High over all the earth.*

Does the Psalmist hope that they will *repent*?
Or are they simply humbled?

At the final day, every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord.
But that confession will be joined with shame and disgrace for the wicked.

I am not certain what the Psalmist was thinking when he wrote this.
What I do know is how *we* should sing Psalm 83!

We sing Psalm 83, asking God to put his human enemies to shame,
that they might be humbled in this life – and come to repentance.
But of course, there are other enemies (Satan and his minions)
whose destruction is our only prayer!

The world, the flesh and the devil are implacably opposed to God –
and are incapable of conversion.
We pray that they might perish in disgrace,
that they might know that you alone,
you are the LORD Most High over all the earth.

And in answer to Psalm 83's cry for God not to be silent,
Hebrews 1 tells us that God has spoken in Jesus Christ:
"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,
but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son,
whom he appointed the heir of all things,
through whom also he created the world.
He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature,
and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
having become as much superior to angels
as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.” (1:1-4)

God’s speech is powerful.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

The incarnation of Christ – which we sing about this time of year –
is God’s answer to his noisy foes who plot against him.
And all their plots backfire.

They even succeed at killing the Messiah –
but that turns out to be God’s plan for redeeming his people!

And because our Lord Jesus Christ has made purification for sins,
he now sits at the right hand of the Father
as the righteous judge who will make all things right in the end.

And so we pray that God will continue to do what he has done before –
that he might humble his foes –

preferably the way he humbled Saul of Tarsus,
by bringing him to faith in Jesus Christ!

But if they will not repent and believe the gospel,
then they will come to know that he is Lord the hard way,
when they stand before him at the final judgment.