

PSALM 76 The Majesty of God in Judgment!

12/24/22 – Sat Morn Prayer - P. Twente, 714 425-9221; ptwente@gmail.com www.ptwente.com

O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM- (1868) Phillips Brooks (1835-1893), Nat King Cole

O little town of Bethlehem how still we see thee lie. Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, the silent stars go by. Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light. The hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight

For Christ is born of Mary and gathered all above. While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love. O morning stars together proclaim the holy birth and praises sing to God our King And peace to men on earth

Psalm 76 - The style and matter indicate the same hand as that which wrote the preceding. It is an admirable arrangement which placed the two Psalms side by side. Faith in the 75th Psalm and of victories to come, and here it sings of triumphs achieved. The present Psalm is a most jubilant war song, a praise to the King of kings, the hymn of a theocratic nation to its divine ruler. We have no need to mark divisions in a song where the unity is so well preserved.

PSALM 76 – To the Chief Musician. On Stringed Instruments. A Psalm of Asaph. A Song.

- Psalm 76 may refer to the time during the reign of Hezekiah the king, his chief counselor was Isaiah the prophet. Sennacherib was the king of Assyria, who had been bludgeoning the world into submission. The Assyrian Empire was becoming a dominant force in the world. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had fallen to Assyria and now the Assyrian has moved this great host numbering into the hundreds of thousands of their fighting army against Judah.
- As the Assyrians move in they send their emissaries to taunt the god of Israel and to demand capitulation. They send blasphemous letters, letters that blaspheme God and letters that challenge the faith of Hezekiah. Hezekiah in turn went in before the Lord, laid out the letters and said, “Look what they are saying about You. If I were You I wouldn’t like this. If I were You I’d wipe them out.” Isaiah the king was counseling Hezekiah to trust in the Lord. The battle was not his but God’s.
- We read that one morning when the children of Israel woke up and stood on the wall to see the enemy troops that had blockaded the city, they looked out and saw a field of corpses. The angel of the Lord had passed through the army of the Assyrians and a hundred and eighty-five thousands of the front line troops of the Assyrians were smitten by the angel of the Lord in one night. That was the night that Isaiah tells us that fear took hold of the hearts of the sinners in Zion. I would imagine so. They said, “Who amongst us can dwell in the midst of this devouring fire?” (*Isa 37:33-37*) *“Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: ‘He shall not come into this city, Nor shoot an arrow there, Nor come before it with shield, Nor build a siege mound against it. [34] By the way that he came, By the same shall he return; And he shall not come into this city,’ Says the LORD. [35] ‘For I will defend this city, to save it For My own sake and for My servant David’s sake.’” [36] Then the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead. [37] So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh.*
- This psalm was written in celebration of this occasion. Psalm 76, written by one of the descendants of Asaph, one of the family of Asaph, the descendant of the chief musician of the time of David wrote Psalm 76 in response to God’s tremendous power being manifested in his destruction of the Assyrian army. In Judah is God known, His name is great in Israel.

Psa 76:1 In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel.

- If unknown in all the world beside, He has so revealed Himself to His people by His deeds of grace, that He is not unknown God to them!

- How soon the whole world would know of the power of God in His destroying 185,000 of the strong Assyrian army in one night by one of God's angels!

Psa 76:2 In Salem also is His tabernacle, And His dwelling place in Zion.

- In the peaceful city He dwells, and the peace is perpetuated, because there His sacred tent is pitched.
- *Salem* - Which is a shortening of Jerusalem. Mount Zion there in Jerusalem.
- *Also is His tabernacle, temple of God, and his dwelling place in Zion.* Upon the chosen hill was the palace of Israel's Lord. It is the glory of the church that the Redeemer inhabits her by His Holy Spirit. Vain are the assaults of the enemy, for they attack not us alone, but the Lord Himself.

Psa 76:3 There He broke the arrows of the bow, The shield and sword of battle. Selah

- That is the beginning stanza of this psalm. It is in three stanzas; three verses, six verses, three verses.
- Now in praise and exaltation of God.
- Without leaving His tranquil abode, He sent forth His word and snapped the arrows of His enemies before they could shoot them.

Psa 76:4 You are more glorious and excellent Than the mountains of prey.

- Far more is Jehovah to be extolled than all the invading powers which sought to oppress His people, though they were for power and greatness comparable to mountains.

Psa 76:5 The stouthearted were plundered; They have sunk into their sleep; And none of the mighty men have found the use of their hands.

- They came to spoil, and lo! They are spoiled themselves. Their stout hearts are cold in death, the angel of the pestilence has dried up their lifeblood. Their very heart is taken from them.

Psa 76:6 At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob, Both the chariot and horse were cast into a dead sleep.

- A word from Him, accomplished all. There was no need of a single blow. The acclaiming of God's marvelous victory over that Assyrian army, wiping them out. The world's Rabshakehs can write terrible letters, but the Lord answers not with pen and ink, but with rebukes, which bear death in every syllable.

Psa 76:7 You, Yourself, are to be feared; And who may stand in Your presence When once You are angry?

- Not Sennacherib, nor Nisroch his god, but Jehovah alone, who with a silent rebuke had withered all the monarch's host.

Psa 76:8 You caused judgment to be heard from heaven; The earth feared and was still,

- So complete an overthrow was evidently a judgment from heaven; those who saw it not, yet heard the report of it, and said, "This is the finger of God." Man will not hear God's voice if he can help it, but God takes care to cause it to be heard. The echoes of that judgment executed on the haughty Assyrian are heard still, and will ring on down all the ages, to the praise of divine justice.

Psa 76:9 When God arose to judgment, To deliver all the oppressed of the earth. Selah

- That is the judgement upon the Assyrians to save all of the meek of the earth. Men were hushed when He ascended the judgment-seat and actively carried out the decrees of justice. When God is still the people are in tumult; when He arises they are still as a stone.
- *To deliver all the oppressed of the earth.* The Ruler of men has a special eye towards the poor and despised. He makes it His first point to right all their wrongs.

Psa 76:10 Surely the wrath of man shall praise You; With the remainder of wrath You shall gird Yourself.

- It shall not only be overcome but rendered subservient to thy glory. Man with his breath of threatening is but blowing the trumpet of the Lord's eternal fame. Furious winds often drive vessels the more swiftly into port. The devil blows the fire and melts the iron, and then the Lord fashions it for His own purposes. Let men and devils rage as they may, they cannot do otherwise than subserve the divine purposes.
- *The Advance of the Gospel – Paul in Philippi (Php 1:12-13) But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the*

gospel, [13] so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;

- **THE CROSS AT CALVARY!** The ultimate in God causing *the wrath of man to praise You* - Overcoming the wrath of man at Calvary, to show salvation to the whole world through Christ's death on the cross and His subsequent resurrection and ascension! Working all things for good!

Psa 76:11 Make vows to the LORD your God, and pay them; Let all who are around Him bring presents to Him who ought to be feared.

- *Make vows to the LORD your God, and pay them.* Well may we do so in memory of such mercies and judgments. To vow or not is a matter of choice, but to discharge our vows is our bound duty. He who would defraud God, his own God, is a wretch indeed. He keeps His promises, let not His people fail in theirs. He is their faithful God and deserves to have a faithful people. “
- *Let all who are around Him bring presents to Him who ought to be feared.* Let surrounding nations submit to the only living God. Let his own people present their offerings, and let His priests and Levites be leaders in the sacred sacrifice. He who deserves to be praised as our God does, should not have mere verbal homage, but substantial tribute. Dread Sovereign, behold I give myself to You!

Psa 76:12 He shall cut off the spirit of princes; He is awesome to the kings of the earth.

- When you understand the background of the psalm, the psalm just sort of flows and follows the battle scene, the great victory of God. His marvelous works in delivering His people and the response of the people to that work of God standing in reverence and awe of Him.
- *He shall cut off the spirit of princes.*” Their courage, skill, and life are in his hands, and he can remove them as a gardener cuts off a slip from a plant. None are great in his hand. Caesars and Napoleons fall under his power as the boughs of the tree beneath the woodman's axe. “
- *He is awesome to the kings of the earth.*” While they are awesome to others, He is awesome to them. If they oppose themselves to His people, He will make short work of them. They shall perish before the terror of His arm, “*for the Lord is a Man of war, the Lord is His name.*” Rejoice before Him all you who adore the God of Jacob.

O HOLY NIGHT – Mariah Carey – Shea (3:30)

O holy night, the stars are brightly shining. It is the night of the dear Savior's birth. Long lay the world in sin and error pining Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth. A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices For yonder breaks a new glorious morn. Fall on your knees. O hear the angels' voices. O night divine, O night when Christ was born. O night divine, oh night, when Christ was born!

Truly He taught us to love one another, His law is love and His gospel is peace. Chains he shall break, for the slave is our brother. And in his name, all oppression shall cease. Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we, let all within us praise His holy, name. Fall on your knees. O hear the angels' voices. O night divine, O night when Christ was born. O night divine. Oh night, when Christ was born!

FOR OUR NATION'S LEADERS: PRAY FOR CALIFORNIA: PRAY FOR WORLD LEADERS: -

Pray for World Leaders, especially their salvation, including: Xi Jinping – China; Narendra Modi- India; Joe Biden – USA; Joko Widodo - Indonesia; Jair Bolsonaro - Brazil; Arif Alvi - Pakistan; Shehbaz Sharif - Nigeria; Hasina Wazed - Bangladesh; Vladimir Putin- Russia; Lopez Obrador – Mexico; Benjamin Netanyahu – Israel; Olaf Scholtz – Germany; Rishi Sunak – U.K.; Kim Jong-un – North Korea; Yoon Suk Yeol– South Korea.

PRAY FOR OUR CHURCH/PERSECUTED CHURCH; SCHOOLS; POLICE OFFICERS/MILITARY; ISRAEL:

Background of O Little Town of Bethlehem – Phillips Brooks - In December 1865, exhausted physically, spiritually and emotionally, Brooks made a pilgrimage to Palestine where he hoped to renew his spirit. On Christmas Eve, he distanced himself from the thousands of other pilgrims who had arrived in the Holy Land for Christmas. Un-accompanied, Brooks borrowed a horse and set out across the desolate desert exploring the land of Jesus' birth on his own and with his own eyes. As the sun faded and the stars began to emerge, he rode into the small village of Bethlehem. There he recalled the Gospel stories of Christ's birth and powerfully encountering the true meaning of Christmas. Upon re-turning home, he would tell family and friends that his experience that evening was so overpowering it would permanently be "singing in my soul." In his journal he recorded his Bethlehem experience this way:

Before dark we rode out of town to the field where they say the shepherds saw the star. It is a fenced piece of ground with a cave in it, in which, strangely enough, they put the shepherds . . . somewhere in those fields we rode through, the shepherds must have been. As we passed, the shepherds were still keeping watch over their flocks.

Leaving the field, Brooks went directly into the village of Bethlehem and recalled:

I was standing in the old church in Bethlehem, close to the spot where Jesus was born, when the whole church was ringing hour after hour with the splendid hymns of praise to God, how again and again it seemed as if I could hear voices I know well, telling each other of the Savior's birth.

Although his Holy Land experience was powerful and formative, Brooks did not have the words to fully frame his experience. That came nearly three years later, in 1868. Anticipating Christmas, Brooks wanted a new carol for his church children to sing in their annual Sunday School Christmas program. As he once again reflected on the ride into Bethlehem fields and standing at the church in the village, words came effortlessly into his mind and he quickly began to jot them down: "O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie. Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, The silent stars go by. Yet in thy dark streets shineth, The everlasting light; The hopes and fears of all the years, Are met in thee tonight."

Upon completion of the song, Brooks gave a copy to his organist and church Sunday School Superintendent, Lewis H. Redner, asking him to compose a simple melody especially for children. Redner, a gifted church musician and devoted religious educator, struggled with developing just the right melody. There were several stops and starts. Finally, on the evening before the Christmas program was to be presented, Redner abruptly awakened from sleep, grabbed pen and paper, composing the present melody. It was an immediate hit with children and adults. Other churches began using it, delighting worshippers who were enamored with the words and tune.

Background of 'O Holy Night'

'O Holy Night' had its origins in the mid-1800s in France. But the song stirred a lot of controversy in the church, to the point where it was banned. When asked to pen a poem for his parish's Mass that Christmas, composer Placide Cappeau thought about the birth of Jesus, as cataloged in the Gospel of Luke, as he wrote the lyrics.

He enlisted the help of his Jewish friend Adolphe Charles Adams to aid in the composition of the music. The song was initially titled, "Cantique de Noel." Although the church in France initially accepted the carol, Cappeau was later swayed by socialist propaganda and walked away from his faith. The church in France condemned the work due to this. Nevertheless, the lyrics and music made its way to America through abolitionist John Sullivan Dwight. He changed some of the lyrics slightly. Dwight particularly identified with the third verse which spoke about breaking the chains of slavery and seeing every man as our brother. Thanks to Dwight and the covert efforts of the lyrics being sung during Christmas in Europe, the song's notoriety spread worldwide, rumored to have been even sung on Christmas Eve during the Franco-Prussian War.

The Meaning of 'O Holy Night'

The song reflects on the night of Jesus' birth, as cataloged in Luke 2. But the lyrics show us something else, under the surface, once we know the history of the song. That through a man who lost his faith and a Jewish man who composed the music, that God's message can still shine through. By using the vessel of the American abolitionist Dwight, God managed to help the spread of the lyrics across the globe. So that every Christmas, when we listen to the lyrics to 'O Holy Night,' we can reflect on the night of Jesus' birth. 'O Holy Night' reminds us that Jesus, holy Jesus, was born in a manger. Through his humble beginnings, we remember to love mankind through Jesus' example. We fall on our knees in awe and worship of him. And we recall the true meaning of Christmas, the birth of Jesus underneath brightly shining stars. The same stars that pointed to the Savior of the world on that beautiful, holy, night. *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."* Micah 5:2