

## Questions on Psalm 74

1. This is one of four psalms designated “Altaschith” in the subscript (in our version, at the head of the following psalm). The others are 56, 57, and 58. “Altaschith” means “Do not destroy.” Why is this designation appropriate to this Psalm?
2. The “mode” of a verb is its characteristic as a statement (indicative mode), request (imperative mode), or query (interrogative mode). As Asaph talks to God, the modes of his verbs change, dividing the Psalm into five parts. What are those parts?
3. The two indicative paragraphs differ in the kinds of events that they describe. Please characterize the events in each paragraph.
4. Historically, what events might Asaph have in view in verses 4-9, and why are they of interest to him? Here are some references, to both biblical and secular history:

With v. 7, compare 2 Kings 25:9 and Josephus, “Jewish Wars,” 6.265-266,

and besides, one of those who went into the place ahead of Caesar [Titus], when he ran so hastily out to restrain the soldiers, and threw the fire upon the hinges of the gate, in the dark; whereby the flame burst out from within the holy house itself immediately, when the commanders retired, and Caesar with them, and when no one any longer forbade those who were without to set fire to it. And thus was the holy house burnt down, without Caesar's approbation.

With v. 9, compare the date of the last prophet (Malachi, about 420 BC) with that of the events described in 1 Macc 54-59,

Now the fifteenth day of the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and fifth year, they [the forces of Antiochus Epiphanes] set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar, and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Juda on every side; And burnt incense at the doors of their houses, and in the streets. And when they had rent in pieces the books of the law which they found, they burnt them with fire. And whosoever was found with any the book of the testament, or if any committed to the law, the king's commandment was, that they should put him to death. Thus did they by their authority unto the Israelites every month, to as many as were found in the cities. Now the five and twentieth day of the month they did sacrifice upon the idol altar, which was upon the altar of God.

With v. 4, compare Josephus, “Jewish Wars,” 6.316,

And now the Romans, upon the flight of the seditious into the city, and upon the burning of the holy house itself, and of all the buildings around it, brought their ensigns to the temple and set them opposite its eastern gate; and there did they offer sacrifices to them, and there did they make Titus emperor, with the greatest acclamations of joy.

5. When did Asaph live, in comparison with the dates of these events? There is a further puzzle: no one of these events satisfies all three descriptions, and the Psalm was certainly written before the third.
6. How might 2 Chr 29:30 resolve these puzzles?
7. To what events do verses 12-17 refer, and how are they related to the gods of the heathen?
8. To what events do vv. 13,15 refer? I will explain their significance in the light of ancient near eastern mythology.
9. What motive does Asaph repeatedly lift up to God in asking for his deliverance? Note the second person possessive pronouns throughout the Psalm, and compare Ezek 36:22.
10. What lesson does this Psalm teach us about how we should respond to the Bible's prophecies about the coming times of trouble?