

"Psalm 73: Destiny" Psalm 73

Telling of his doubts which nearly overwhelmed him when he compared the life of the worldly with himself, the psalmist confesses the sinfulness of his thoughts and explains that a contrast of destinies enabled him to overcome his doubt.

Psalms Bible Study: Evening

- Week 1 Intro & Psalm 6
- Week 2 Psalm 19
- Week 3 Psalm 30
- Week 4 Psalm 51
- Week 5 Psalm 73**

"Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." (vss. 25-26)

Psalm 73: A Psalm of Wisdom

Wisdom Psalms

- Intent: convey/infuse "skill" for living
- 1, 37, 49, 73, 91, 112, 119, 127, 128, 133, and 139

Characteristics of wisdom literature:

- Contrasts righteous & wicked
- Fear of the Lord/Love for the Law
- Inevitability of retribution
- Use of simile (like or as)
- "Blessed" formula
- Terms (way, know, righteous, wicked, Law, meditation, prosper, scorner, etc.)

As a piece of wisdom literature, Psalm 73 not only instructs people to obey the Word of God, but demonstrates the wisdom in doing so, and the utter folly of living a life apart from it.

Note: Psalm 73 begins the 3rd major section (Book III) of the Psalter.

Asaph: praise & worship leader

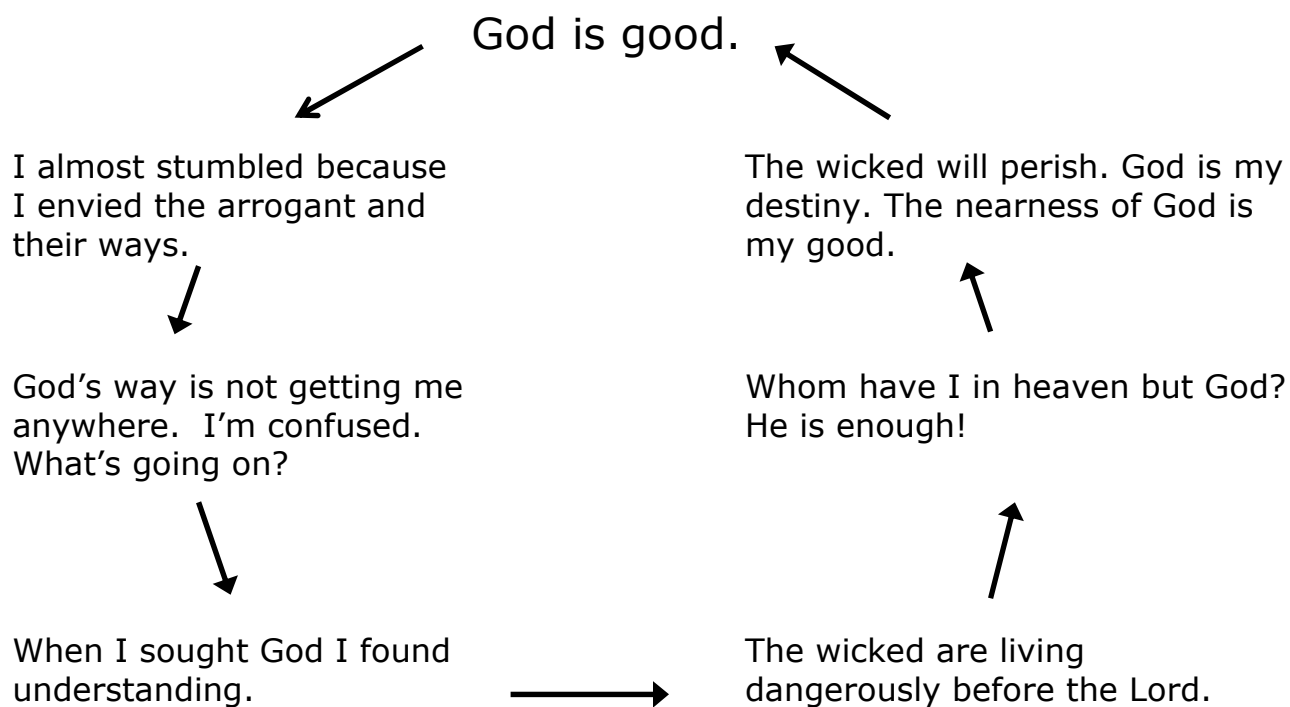
- Son of Berechiah, an important Levitical tabernacle musician (1 Chr. 6:31-32, 39)

- Sounded bronze cymbals during the ceremony when Ark brought to new tabernacle (1 Chr. 15:1-19)
- Appointed praise/worship leader by David (1 Chr. 16)
- David's private prophet (1 Chr. 25:1-2)
- Established musical guild ("sons of Asaph")
- Authored Psalms 50 & 73-83

Psalm 73: Message

Telling of his doubts which nearly overwhelmed him when he compared the life of the worldly with himself, the psalmist confesses the sinfulness of his thoughts and explains that a contrast of destinies enabled him to overcome his doubt.

1. The psalmist tells of his doubts which arose when he compared the life of the worldly with himself (1-16).
2. The psalmist overcame his doubts by considering the destinies of the righteous and the wicked (17-28).



Psalm 73 A Psalm of Asaph.

- 1 Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart!
- 2 But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling, my steps had almost slipped.
- 3 For I was envious of the arrogant, as I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
- 4 For there are no pains in their death, and their body is fat.
- 5 They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like mankind.

6 Therefore pride is their necklace; The garment of violence covers them.
 7 Their eye bulges from fatness; The imaginations of their heart run riot.
 8 They mock and wickedly speak of oppression; They speak from on high.
 9 They have set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue parades through the earth.
 10 Therefore his people return to this place, and waters of abundance are drunk by them.
 11 They say, "How does God know? And is there knowledge with the Most High?"
 12 Behold, these are the wicked; And always at ease, they have increased in wealth.
 13 Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and washed my hands in innocence;
 14 For I have been stricken all day long and chastened every morning.
 15 If I had said, "I will speak thus," Behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children.
 16 When I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight
 17 Until I came into the sanctuary of God; Then I perceived their end.
 18 Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction.
 19 How they are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors!
 20 Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when aroused, You will despise their form.
 21 When my heart was embittered and I was pierced within,
 22 Then I was senseless and ignorant; I was like a beast before You.
 23 Nevertheless I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand.
 24 With Your counsel You will guide me, and afterward receive me to glory.
 25 Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.
 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
 27 For, behold, those who are far from You will perish; You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You.
 28 But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, that I may tell of all Your works.

1. The psalmist tells of his doubts which arose when he compared the life of the worldly with himself (1-16).

A. He attests that God is good, but he almost stumbled in his faith (1-3).

- "Surely" –used in 73:1 as well as 73:13, 18
- Note: God introduced as "good" (*tob*)
- "pure in heart" = clear in focus toward God
- "But as for me" – key structural marker in this psalm. Exact construction in vvs. 2, 22, 23, 28

- Stumbling ("bend"); slipped ("pour out")
- Reason: envy; jealous
- Arrogant = "the praising ones" (*halal*)
- Prosperity = *shalom* (complete)

B. He explains that the prosperity of the proud and arrogant ("they") perplexed him (4-12).

- They don't suffer in trouble as others (4-5).
- They are covered with pride and violence (6).
- They have their heart's desire (7).
- They are lofty in their speech (8-9)
- They are insolent in God's face (10-11)
- Always at ease, they increase in wealth (12)

C. He confesses his confusion regarding his walk of faith (13-14).

- Note parallelisms!
- Note the switch to the first person (I..my)
- He was convinced ("surely" again) that his pure heart = "cleansed my heart" was in vain (13)
- He was plagued and chastened in his life of faith (14) = confusing

D. He acknowledges the treachery his conclusion might have caused among the congregation (15-16).

- Point: if I continue in this thinking I will speak out and betray the congregation's trust. (crux)
- Key insight: "betray the generation of Thy people"
- Pondered: "calculate, devise, plan"
- Troublesome: "toil, labor, trouble"

2. The psalmist overcame his doubts by considering the destinies of the righteous and the wicked (17-28).

A. He explains that while seeking God he discovered the end of the wicked (17-20).

- 73:17 – the key to biblical wisdom = seek God
- His doubts were absolved in God's presence
- He discovered the final end of the wicked will be a sudden desolation (17b-18)
- "Surely" – used again here (vvs. 1 & 13 also)
- Note the terms: slippery, cast down, destruction, destroyed, utterly swept, sudden terror, despise their own form.

B. He acknowledges the conviction that restored his confidence and hope (21-26).

- His grief: his brutish ignorance (21-22).
- His conviction: God is with me and for me (23-24).
- God is his most valued possession (25-26)

C. He concludes that those estranged from God will perish but that his good is nearness to God (27-28).

- The wicked who play the harlot (“unfaithful”) will perish (27).
- The destiny of the wicked (wisdom psalm!)

“The nearness of God is my good”

- Nearness (“approach”)
- Good (*tob*) – same word as seen in vs. 1

- Before: good = prosperity & fame
- Now: good = the nearness (presence) of God

Final Words: learn of God’s wisdom and go tell of God’s works!

An Overview of Old Testament History

