

2001

Psalm 76: To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Psalm of Asaph. A Song.

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Psalm 76

To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Psalm of Asaph. A Song.

(NRSV)

- 1** In Judah God is known,
his name is great in Israel.
- 2** His abode has been established in Salem,
his dwelling place in Zion.
- 3** There he broke the flashing arrows,
the shield, the sword, and the weapons of war. *Selah*
- 4** Glorious are you, more majestic
than the everlasting mountains.^(a)
- 5** The stouthearted were stripped of their spoil;
they sank into sleep;
none of the troops
was able to lift a hand.
- 6** At your rebuke, O God of Jacob,
both rider and horse lay stunned.
- 7** But you indeed are awesome!
Who can stand before you
when once your anger is roused?
- 8** From the heavens you uttered judgment;
the earth feared and was still
- 9** when God rose up to establish judgment,
to save all the oppressed of the earth. *Selah*
- 10** Human wrath serves only to praise you,
when you bind the last bit of your^(b) wrath around you.
- 11** Make vows to the LORD your God, and perform them;
let all who are around him bring gifts
to the one who is awesome,
- 12** who cuts off the spirit of princes,
who inspires fear in the kings of the earth.

Footnotes:

a. (v.4) Gk: Heb *the mountains of prey*

b. (v.10) Heb lacks *your*

Psalm 76 in its original context may have been a celebration commemorating a victory of a Judean king over Israel's enemies (i.e. the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib in 701 B.C. during King Hezekiah's reign – see 2 Kings 18:13 through 19:37). For us New Testament Christians it celebrates the final victory of the God of Israel over all his enemies. Typically, it represents a future victory as having already taken place in the past, as for example in verse 3. That is a measure of the faith of Israel: God will surely overcome his enemies – and ours! – in the End!

But what God's own People (in verse 9b characterized as “the oppressed of the earth”) experience as the final, awesome victory and salvation, is by the enemies of God – and Israel! – experienced as the overpowering wrath of God. Therefore the Psalmist ends with the plea to all to turn to the LORD Yahweh with our worship and gifts.

Christians have no difficulty in seeing in this Psalm a prototype of the resurrection of Jesus, triumphant over all his – and God's! – enemies.

Prayer to accompany Psalm 76:

Mighty God, awesome in power and splendid in holiness, in your presence the earth both trembles and stands still, for you shattered death's power by the cross. Rise to help your people; give the light of your salvation to the meek of the earth, that they may praise your name forever; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.