

#6 Northside Natter

29 April, 2020

This week, I'm taking a brief look at **Asaph**.

Asaph wrote twelve of the Psalms.

Asaph was a young Levite priest in the days of King David (circa 1000-995 BC), perhaps 20 or so, and a worker in the tabernacle of God. He would have been destined to serve as the Doorkeeper of the Ark, as his father, Berechiah, was at that time. However, King David recognised Asaph's talent for music and set him over the tabernacle singers instead (under the oversight of Heman). Asaph continued in this position during the reign of kings David and Solomon. Asaph even lived to see Rehoboam ascend the throne after Solomon's death.

Asaph's brother, Zechariah, was also assigned by King David to assist Asaph in the music, under Heman's oversight. (Heman was the main musician and/or singer with Asaph at his right hand and the Merarites at his left).

Asaph personally witnessed the blessings of God in Israel during his life. He was there when David brought the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem. He was there to witness Solomon's magnificent Temple being built. He, and his sons, were at the majestic Temple Dedication to the Lord. He saw the humble beginnings of David's reign become one of great prosperity and world acclaim under Solomon.

He also witnessed the moral degradation in Solomon's later years as the king accrued more power, wealth, luxurious living, beautiful women, and pursued the worship of hundreds of other gods. Solomon denied himself none of the pleasures of a debauched life. The people were oppressed in servitude to their king and were heavily taxed to support his indulgent lifestyle.

Imagine the anguish Asaph felt for the direction life had taken in those days. Things did not improve after Rehoboam took the throne of his father. The kingdom was rent in two! Ten tribes formed the kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam, rejecting the Levites as well as the Temple of God, while the remainder formed the kingdom of Judah. To thrust the knife in further, Egypt invaded the land and took control of Jerusalem, removed the holy and precious dedicated things from the Temple, set fire to the Temple and killed many of the Levitical priests.

In these latter days of Asaph's life, with his family members and friends now murdered, the magnificent Temple in ruins, the kingdom itself all but destroyed, it seemed that God had abandoned his people. In this state of great sorrow and regret for Israel, Asaph wrote some of his psalms. They are well worth reading for the lessons they contain or the conclusions they present.

When you read these psalms of Asaph, remember his humble beginnings and the joy he would have felt during Israel's life of blessings. Consider the ultimate betrayal and failure of his kings. This nation went from great glory to poverty and ruin in one man's lifetime. In the Lord's timing it was simply a breath.

What this man experienced in that short breath of time, we have a glimpse of from his songs, poems and laments known as Psalms. They were written by Asaph, not only to vent his anguish, but also to teach us something very important. Let's take a quick look at a portion of **Psalm 77**:

7 Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more?

8 Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore?

9 Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah.

10 And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.

11 I will remember the works of the LORD: surely, I will remember thy wonders of old.

12 I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.

13 Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?

14 Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people.

15 Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.

When all seems lost, when your burden is too much to bear, remember what the Lord has done for his children. Don't forget his mercifulness and forgiveness. Remember his plan for you. Speak to others about what God has done in your life to remind yourself. If you feel your prayers are not being heard, remember God's promises and continue to pray. The Lord's timing is perfect. Wait upon him and he will hear and answer.

Asaph penned **Psalms 50, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82 & 83**.

There is a suggestion that Asaph also penned Psalm 94. The words could fit the latter time of Solomon's reign. **Psalm 94:20-21** is particularly telling during this plea towards God – *Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law? They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.*

I hope this gives you food for thought and plenty to read over the coming week.