

Sunday Morning Message

July 9, 2023

Title – *Psalm 115 – Where Is Their God*

Text – Psalm 115 (Text Verse 2); Psalm 79 (Text Verse 10); Joel 2:15 – 17 (Text Verse 17)

Congregational Reading – Psalm 115:1 - 8

Introduction

In Psalm 115:2, the psalmist asks the question:

"2 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?" (Psalm 115:2)

We see this question posed two other times in the Scripture: in Psalm 79 and in the Minor Prophet Book of Joel. Each time the question is asked because the events that are taking place in lives of the people of Israel are causing the enemies of God in the lost world to doubt that Israel has a God at all.

Our lives are supposed to bring glory to the Lord. People should be able to observe our lives, seeing the things that we do and hearing the words that we say, and know that we are believers. They should be able to witness God's hand of blessing on our lives and know that there is something very real about our faith. They should come closer to believing that God exists simply because they see what God is doing in and through us.

Today, we will quickly examine the three passages of Scripture that ask the question: "where is their God," and try to understand what was happening within the historical context to cause it to be asked. After we look at what happened in Old Testament Israel to cause the writer to make that statement, we will attempt to make an application to our lives today. Do our lives cause people to see the reality of God in our lives, or do our lives cause them to doubt that God exists.

Psalm 115 Context

This psalm was believed to be sung in the upper room at the Last Supper. This psalm was a litany where the congregation sang their part, and the choir sang theirs.

It seems that this psalm was written after the Jews were released from their exile in Persia and Babylon.

I. The Congregation's Call (vs. 1 – 8)

The call is for God to shew Himself powerful in the land, as He did in days of old. They go on to compare the God of Israel with the heathen gods that were worshipped by the many foreigners that had moved into the region while they were in exile.

II. The Choir's Command (vs. 9 – 11)

Trust in the Lord – found three times in these verses.

“It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.” (Psalm 118:8)

“It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.” (Psalm 118:9)

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” (Proverbs 3:5 - 6)

III. The Congregation's Confidence (vs. 12 – 18)

God is blessing us, and God will bless us.

Psalm 79 Context (Text Verse is 10)

This Psalm is attributed to Asaph who was a contemporary of David. However, the events in this Psalm seem to depict the destruction of Judah by the Babylonians several hundred years after the time of Asaph and David. This must have been another Asaph, or it is possibly one of his descendants.

The main idea here is the Psalmist is pleading to God to bring victory to the people of God over their enemies. It is important to remember that this period of judgment that Israel was enduring only came about because the people of God had forsaken Him. They were warned many times and through many years to repent, but they refused. As a result, God raised up the Babylonians to conquer what was left of Israel and take the people into captivity. The omnipotent God of Israel was seen by Israel's enemies as weak or even non-existent.

Joel Context (Text Verses are 2:15 – 17) – not much known – believed to be written around 835 BC. The book deals in chapter one with a severe drought, and a literal invasion of locusts – many believe that v. 4 of chapter one speaks of 4 different varieties of locusts that infested the land one right after the other.

In chapter 2, however the book seems to use the actual, literal locust invasion to picture a prophetic invading army. This is long before the time of the Assyrians, Babylonians,

Persians, and Romans. It is possible that this is a reference to a still yet future army that will threaten Israel. (i.e., the King of the North – Ezekiel 38:15; Daniel 11:40)

There are frequent references to “the day of the Lord in this book:

"Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come." - (Joel 1:15)

"Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand;" - (Joel 2:1)

"And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" - (Joel 2:11)

"The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come." - (Joel 2:31)

"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision." - (Joel 3:14)

The day of the Lord is used throughout the Bible to represent the Millennium, including the Great Tribulation Period, and the Second Coming of Christ.

One thing is for sure – Joel is calling Israel to a national repentance. (Joel 2:12 – 17)

Again, we see that the writer, Joel, is concerned about the glory of God. The fallen spiritual condition of Israel caused God to withhold His blessing and protection from them, and they were in a mess. The shame of it was not that the blessings were being withheld, or that the Israel was under attack by her enemies, but that the people were blaspheming Israel’s God as a result.

Illustrate – when David sinned against God by committing adultery and killing the woman’s husband, the prophet Nathan stated that David’s actions caused God’s enemies to blaspheme the God of Israel:

"14 Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die." (2 Samuel 12:14)

Transition

Just as Israel and Judah could make the world around them doubt the existence of their God, I believe that Christians today can either show people the reality of an omnipotent God in their life or demonstrate that God doesn't exist at all.

Three Ways That We Can Show the Reality of God in Our Lives:

1. By Living Victoriously According to His Principles

a. Walk with Him

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" - (Micah 6:8)

b. Work for Him

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." - (1 Corinthians 15:57-58)

c. Weed Out the World's Influence

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you," - (2 Corinthians 6:17)

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." - (1 John 2:15- 17)

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." - (Romans 12:1-2)

2. By Loving Sacrificially His People

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." - (John 13:34 & 35)

Agape love is not a natural love – it is supernatural.

Illustrate – Jon Ankerberg Show – Anton Levay’s daughter – The world, and even Satanist have a natural love.

Illustrate – Stephen – “Lay not this sin to their charge.”

a. We are also commanded to love our enemies.

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;" - (Matthew 5:44)

"But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." - (Luke 6:35)

b. We are also commanded to love the people of the world by giving them the gospel.

3. By Lasting Finally Until He Is Present (through your death or until the rapture)

Many people that make a profession of faith in Christ don’t last very long. They fizzle out after a while.

The Christian who was once zealous for the Lord – if he were to turn back – he sends a message to everyone he knows that “it” wasn’t real.

"62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62)

Paul had ministry friends that he counted on, but they quit.

"For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia." - (2 Timothy 4:10)

But Paul did not quit - He finished his course:

"6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

Jesus set his face like a flint and stayed the course.

Moses stayed faithful until the Lord took him.

David also:

"For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:" - (Acts 13:36)

Illustrate - Matthew 13 – The Parable of the Sower

"3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; 4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: 5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: 6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. 7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: 8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold." (Matthew 13:3-8)

"Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. 19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. 20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; 21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. 22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. 23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." (Matthew 13:18-23)

Illustrate – My brother George said that many “Born-Again” Christians are “fad – people”