

Period of Restoration (535-425 BCE)

The Psalms of a Nation Restored

Readings: *Psalm 78*

Reflections:

- These psalms reflect the celebration of the Israelite nation as they have experienced God's blessing and a sense of his restoration.
- Psalm 78 opens with a concern to pass on the lessons of their nation and the true character of God so that future generations will trust God and not continue in perpetual failure. Israel has been a model of "what doesn't work" and they look forward to the generation that will break that cycle of failure.
- They recount how although past generations witnessed the miracles of God, none of the miracles ultimately made a difference. We will also see this with the religious leaders of Jesus' day.
- They recount how God met their needs by providing for them in the desert and none of that made a difference.
- They recounted God's harsh punishment and how that was only a temporary fix and didn't make a lasting difference.
- They recount how God saved them from Egypt and gave them the security of the Promised Land without their enemies close by to test or tempt them. Yet, none of that changed anything.
- "...their hearts were not loyal to him." "Like their fathers they were disloyal and faithfulness..." The problem was their hearts were fearfully selfish and self-centered.
- This passage ends with the coming of the era of the kings, and particularly King David. It ends on a hopeful note about his shepherding leadership, integrity and skill. Unfortunately by this point we know what happened to David and to the rest of the kings. Israel remains locked in a cycle of self-centeredness and sin and simply having a great leader does nothing to change their hearts. In fact this leader they praise in this psalm will become an adulterer and murderer.

- Another great example right in Scripture of how the writers of the story of God were self-aware that the story of Israel is an unfolding story of “what doesn’t work to change the human heart.”