

# PSALM 73

## DO THE WICKED PROSPER?

A Journey from Doubt to Certainty

Psalm 73 wrestles with a familiar question that has plagued the minds of believers throughout the ages: Why do the wicked prosper? Why do bad things happen to good people, and why do good things happen to bad people? This is no small question. It irked Asaph, the author of this psalm, so much that he nearly lost his faith in God. Just in time, however, he found his answer. With God's help he realized that the key to this question is found in one's final destiny. We need to be constantly reminded of that lesson!

### THE BOOK

The Psalter, or book of Psalms, is a collection of the songs of the people of Israel written over a period of centuries, from the time of Moses until after the return from Babylon. There are 150 psalms in the book that cover nearly every aspect of Christian life and worship. This book is especially suited for use in your personal devotional life.

### THE AUTHOR

Asaph. We learn from 1 Chronicles that Asaph was one of three Levites chosen by King David to be the chief musicians in the worship life of the Israelites. It's therefore natural that Asaph wrote psalms – songs for the Israelites to use in their worship. Psalm 50 and Psalms 73-83 were written by Asaph.

### THE OUTLINE

1. The Problem (Verses 1-12)
2. The Turning Point (Verses 13-17)
3. The Solution (Verses 18-28)

### THE CHARACTERISTICS

Note the openness and honesty of the author as he relates his own personal struggles with this question of the prosperity of the wicked.

Note the clear summary in the psalm's final two verses.

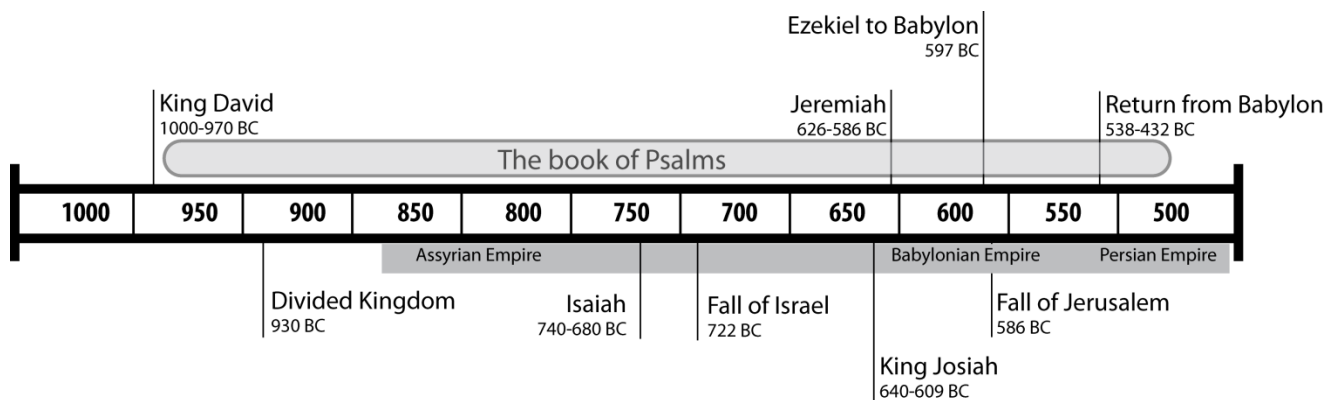
Note the parallelism of ideas in various pairs of verses: a pure heart (1,13), feet slipping (2,19), heaven and earth (9,25).

### THE POINT

Despite outward appearances...

...God will CERTAINLY judge the wicked.

...God will CERTAINLY be with believers forever.



**Read verses 1-3:**

1. Who is Israel? (Romans 9:6-8) Who are the pure in heart? (Matthew 5:8) Who are the wicked?
2. How does Asaph's background make his struggles in this psalm that much more surprising?
3. How can the same man write verses 1-3? Which is stronger: knowledge or experience?
4. What is at the root of Asaph's frustration?

**Read verses 4-5:**

5. What has Asaph's envy led him to do? Can you relate?
6. What do these verses teach about God's blessings?

**Read verses 6-9:**

7. Describe the various types of picture language used here. Is it accurate?
8. How do you lay claim to heaven? Are you guilty?

**Read verses 10-12:**

9. What makes a wicked lifestyle so appealing?
10. Agree/Disagree: The prosperity God gives to the wicked is at times part of his judgment on them.

**Read verses 13-17:**

11. Describe a time when you've thought Asaph's thoughts in verses 13-14.
12. If he had spoken his thoughts out loud, how would Asaph have "betrayed God's children"?
13. What is a sanctuary? What is your sanctuary?
14. What was Asaph's breakthrough realization?

**Read verses 18-22:**

15. What's the significance of the shift to "you"?
16. What ruin do unbelievers run into?
17. Explain the reference to a dream in verse 20.
18. As you look back at your life, what "brute beast" moments have you had?

**Read verses 23-26:**

19. What was the greatest good – the greatest "prosperity" – for Asaph, the believer? What does that mean for your life?
20. Why is that so easy to overlook?

**Read verses 27-28:**

21. Despite outward appearances, what are two certainties?
22. Note who is condemned.
23. Compare the end of verse 28 with verses 13-15.