

Psalm 78

We Must Remember and Rehearse God's Great Deeds

'To comprehend many things within small compass, it is to be observed, that in this psalm there are two leading topics. On the one hand, it is declared how God adopted for himself a Church from the posterity of Abraham, how tenderly and graciously he cherished it, how wonderfully he brought it out of Egypt, and how varied were the blessings which he bestowed upon it. On the other hand, the Jews, who were so much indebted to him for the great blessings which he had conferred upon them, are upbraided for having from time to time perversely and treacherously revolted from so liberal a father; so that his inestimable goodness was clearly manifested, not only in his free adoption of them at first, but also in continuing by the uninterrupted course of his goodness to strive against the rebellion of so perfidious and sticknecked a people. Moreover, mention is made of the renewal of God's grace, and as it were of a second election which he made when he chose David out of the tribe of Judah to sway the sceptre over the kingdom of Israel' (Calvin).

Prologue—how to guard against replicating Israel's dysfunctional relationship with God (vv. 1–10)

The psalmist's purpose: to tell the next generation about God's great works (vv. 1–4)

Don't forget God's great works, so that you won't replicate Ephraim's faithlessness (vv. 5–10)

1

Israel's dysfunctional relationship with God from the exodus into the wilderness (vv. 11–31)

Israel forgot (vv. 11–12)

God's exodus wonders (vv. 13–16)

Israel provoked (vv. 17–20)

God's anger in the wilderness (vv. 21–31)

2

Israel's dysfunctional relationship with God in the land of Canaan, cf. Book of Judges (vv. 32–41)

Israel sinned—did not believe (v. 32)

God made their days vanish like a breath (v. 33)

Israel remembered, repented, flattered, failed (v. 34–37)

God remembered they were but wind (vv. 38–39)

Israel rebelled, grieved, tested, provoked (40–41)

3

Israel's dysfunctional relationship with God from Egypt to Canaan (vv. 42–64)

Israel did not remember (vv. 42–43)

God's exodus and conquest wonders (vv. 44–55)

Israel provoked (vv. 56–58)

God's anger in the land of Canaan, cf. 1 Samuel 2:12–7:2 (vv. 59–64)

4

Epilogue—God's solution to Israel's dysfunctional relationship with him (vv. 65–72)

God fights the battle Ephraim refused to fight (vv. 65–66)

God rejects Ephraim and chooses Judah, Zion, and David the shepherd-king (vv. 67–72)

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