

# Psalms 79:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.

## Analysis

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**The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.** This horrifying image depicts covenant violation of the most extreme kind. The Hebrew *nevelah* (נֶבֶלָה) for "dead bodies" specifically refers to corpses denied proper burial—an unspeakable disgrace in ancient Near Eastern culture. The psalmist laments that God's *avadim* (עֲבָדָיו, servants) and *chasidim* (חֲסִידָיו, faithful ones/saints) have been left as carrion.

Denial of burial violated the most basic human dignity. Deuteronomy 21:22-23 mandated same-day burial even for executed criminals. Leaving bodies exposed to scavengers was reserved for the most contemptible enemies (1 Kings 14:11; Jeremiah 7:33). Yet here, God's covenant people—those who served Him faithfully—suffer this ultimate indignity. The parallel structure emphasizes the horror: "fowls of the heaven" and "beasts of the earth" together consume those who belonged to the God of heaven and earth.

This verse echoes Jeremiah's prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction (Jeremiah 7:33, 16:4, 19:7), suggesting the psalm reflects the Babylonian conquest of 586 BC. The theological crisis is acute: if God's faithful servants suffer such desecration, where is His covenant faithfulness? The lament doesn't question God's existence but demands explanation for apparent abandonment of those who bore His name.

## Historical Context

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This psalm likely commemorates the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar's armies breached the walls, burned the temple, and slaughtered thousands. Archaeological evidence from this period reveals burn layers in Jerusalem and mass burial sites. The siege and its aftermath were catastrophic—starvation, mass executions, deportation, and temple desecration. Bodies would have been left unburied during the chaos, precisely fulfilling the covenant curses of Deuteronomy 28:26.

## Related Passages

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**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

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1. How do believers today process apparent divine abandonment when God's people suffer extreme persecution and martyrdom?
2. What does it mean that even God's 'servants' and 'saints' are not promised exemption from brutal suffering in this fallen world?
3. How does this verse prepare us to pray honestly about atrocities committed against Christians in hostile nations?

## Interlinear Text

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|                 |           |                    |                 |              |                |
|-----------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------|
| נָתַן וְ        | אֶת       | גְּבוֹלֵי ת        | עַבְדֵי יְיָ    | מִן אֲכָל    | לֵע וְ         |
| have they given | H853      | The dead bodies    | of thy servants | to be meat   | unto the fowls |
| H5414           |           | H5038              | H5650           | H3978        | H5775          |
| הַשָּׁמַיִם     | בֶּשֶׁר   | חַיֵּי סִידֵי יְיָ | לְחַיֵּיתוֹ     | אֶרֶץ:       |                |
| of the heaven   | the flesh | of thy saints      | unto the beasts | of the earth |                |
| H8064           | H1320     | H2623              | H2416           | H776         |                |

## Additional Cross-References

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**Jeremiah 7:33** (Parallel theme): And the carcasses of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away.

**Jeremiah 16:4** (Parallel theme): They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.

**Jeremiah 34:20** (Parallel theme): I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth.

**Deuteronomy 28:26** (Parallel theme): And thy carcase shall be meat unto all fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away.

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