

# Psalms

**Learning from the Psalms  
of the majesty of God,  
the grandeur of His works,  
and the greatness of His Word.**

by Charles Speer

**SUNSET**  
International Bible Institute



# THE BOOK OF PSALMS



INTRODUCTORY  
OLD TESTAMENT  
STUDIES

Arranged for study by  
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&  
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© 1999

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## **The Psalms**

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## **DISCLAIMER**

The textbook used in this course was selected because we consider it to be the best commentary on the book available written by a conservative author. ***The Wisdom Literature & Psalms***, written by James E Smith (The College Press NIV Commentary series), we believe, is an excellent commentary. This book will re-enforce the teaching you will receive from viewing the video/audio lessons by Charles Speer. As with all books written by men, there may be some things with which you and I would not agree. The principle, “use what is good and discard what is not good” applies to all textbooks used with our courses. Please be wise enough to discard any and all teaching that is not biblical.

# Instructions and Requirements for Level II Students (Secondary Certificate Only)

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Each lesson is built around the instruction on either the DVDs or the CDs. Listen to or view the lecture as you follow along in the course Study Guide.

**Reading:** You are required to **read the book of Psalms** through one time in a modern translation. **(This will be worth 10% or your total grade.)**

**Tests:** There is a **Self Exam** at the end of each lesson. Preview each lesson by reading these questions first. There will be only two test to complete this course. The mid-term test will cover the first twelve (12) lessons, a final test will be given at the end of the study covering the last twelve (12) lessons. Each test will cover only the previous twelve lessons studied. **You must receive a grade of 70% or above to successfully pass this course. (The two major tests will be worth 70% of your final grade)**

**Memory Work:** Memory verses are to be done as you go through the study. You are asked to either write your verses in the presence of the administrator, correct them with a different colored pen and turn them in with the mid-term or final test or quote them to the administrator during the course of study. He will keep track of the verses completed and report them to us. Please be diligent in doing your memory work. All memory work must be completed to pass this course. There are 16 memory verses for this course. **(Memory verses will be 10% or your final grade)**

**Due with mid-term test:** (5 verses)

Psalms 1:1-3; 8:3-4.

**Due with final test:** (11 verses)

23:1-6; 32:1-5.

- All the Self Exams in the Study Guide are to be completed and inspected by the Administrator. **(10% of your final grade)**
- All the memory verses assigned must be completed and either written or quoted before the mid-term, (lessons 1–12), and final test, (lessons 13–24), are taken.
- All assignments, must be completed to pass the course.

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# Instructions and Requirements for Level III Students (Ministry Certificate and Bachelor Degree)

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Each lesson is built around the instruction on either the DVDs or the CDs. Listen to or view the lecture as you follow along in the course Study Guide.

**Reading:** The book of *Psalms* is to be read two (2) times during the course of this study in a modern translation. The section on Psalms in the book entitled, *The Wisdom Literature & Psalms* by James E. Smith must be read as you progress through the course. **A two page evaluation of the section on Psalms must be written and sent in with your final test.** Discuss its value to you, its clarity of teaching and any teaching that was particularly meaningful to you. **(This reading and paper will be worth 10% of your grade).** See the Bibliography for other worthwhile reading material.

**Memory Verses:** You are required to memorize fifty seven (57) verses. These are to be done as you go through the study and the appropriate passages done at the appropriate time. The first 31 verses must be completed by the mid-term exam. The last 26 verses must be completed by the final exam. Either quote these to your Test Administrator or write them out and have someone correct them with a different colored ink. If you write them out turn them in with your exam papers. **(Worth 10% of your total grade) Please indicate which Bible version you are using.**

**Due with the mid-term test:** (31 verses)

Psalms 1:1-3; 8:3-4; 15:1-5; 19:1-2; 23:1-6; 32:1-2; 37:25; 41:9; 42:1-2; 46:1-3; 51:1-4

**Due with the final test:** (26 verses)

Psalms 73:28; 93:2; 100:1-5; 103:12-14; 107:2; 110:1; 111:9; 119:9, 11, 71, 89, 97, 104, 105, 130, 160; 139:7-10 .

**Notebook:** You may want to begin and complete a notebook consisting of material gained in this study. This is not a requirement. Include in the notebook the following:

- Notes taken as you view/listen to the taped lectures.
- Your returned test papers, including your memory verses.
- Any other material you may find important for later use in teaching.

**Exams:** There will be two major exams for this course. One at the end of lesson twelve (12) and the final will be at the end of the course. These two tests will be 75% of your total grade. Complete all "Self Exam" questions in your Course Guide and show them to your Administrator. **(5% of your grade).** A grade of at least 70% is required on the Mid-term and Final exams to pass this course.

**Grade:** Your total grade average for the course must equal 70% or above..

Readings and evaluation paper	10%
Memory verses	10%
Self exams	5%
Mid-term and final exams	<u>75%</u>
	100%

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## LESSON ONE

# Introduction to The Book of Psalms

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### INTRODUCTION:

**H**ave you occasionally wished to know better the heart of God? Would it not be a great source of joy and teaching to encounter someone (or ones) who knows God intimately and can teach us how to relate to Him on a more personal level?

Juan Carlos Ortiz, in a book called *DISCIPLE*, wrote a chapter entitled “The Language of the Kingdom.” He says that the Psalms can help us develop the language of the kingdom, which is the language of praise. Likening the book of Psalms to a symphony, he says it begins in Psalm 1 with a few violins, but ends in the last few psalms with a thunderous refrain by the whole orchestra in creation! Why all the noise? Because of God’s awesome and impeccable nature and character. Because of His mighty deeds—in times past and in the present. If we are to adopt the language of the kingdom, we must learn to praise the Lord. However, we can’t simply repeat the word “praise” or endlessly refrain “Hallelujah’s.” We must know the “why” and the “how” of praise. Then, like the psalmists, “*His praise will always be on my lips*” (34:1).

Our new vocabulary will replace the old, some of which is complaint and murmur. Unlike the ungrateful and disbelieving Israelites in the wilderness who constantly complained, we must learn to praise instead of complain. Out of the same Christian mouth should not come blessing and cursing. We need new language, praise, added to our spiritual vocabulary. We Christians seem to run out of praise language—a part of the language of the kingdom—pretty quickly! We need to let this language displace the language of the worldly kingdom, which is not in harmony with praise of God, and that is that complaining and murmuring syndrome.

This book has great personal value. It is meditation material. It is reflection reading. It is personal pondering.

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**LESSON TEXT:** None

**LESSON AIM:** To introduce some general characteristics of the book of Psalms and thus to become acquainted with the book itself.

**LESSON OBJECTIVES:** You will . . .

1. Discover the different titles to this book and learn the traditional internal breakdown of the book into sections.
  2. Be exposed to the different kinds of parallelism in the poetry of the book of Psalms
- 

## THE PSALMS, THEIR NAME AND NATURE

### A. The Name of the Book



1. "Psalms" or "Psalter," according to Luther.
2. The Hebrew Bible entitles it "Book (or Songs) of Praise."
  - a. One psalm (145) uses this Hebrew word in its title.
  - b. According to the content of the psalms, this Hebrew title is limited in its accuracy.
3. Some have called it "The Prayers of David."
  - a. This too is limited.
  - b. Only one psalm (72) has this title.
  - c. Not all the psalms are Davidic and not all are prayers.
  - d. Call it "Psalms." Psalms simply means poems that are put to music. The Old Testament equivalent, MIZMOR, is used 57 times in titles of these poems.

## **B. The Structure of the Book**

1. The form the book takes in our English Bibles is of ancient origin.
2. The Septuagint, the 2nd century BC Greek translation of the Old Testament Hebrew text, broke it down into five divisions or books.
3. These have been retained in our English translations:
  - a. Book I: 1–41
  - b. Book II: 42–72
  - c. Book III: 73–89
  - d. Book IV: 90–106
  - e. Book V: 107–150.
4. Psalms is a compilation. The form in which we have received the book is the result of compilation of the psalms by the Jews of old. We have several periods of Israelite history represented. The earliest is probably Psalm 90 written by Moses.
  - a. Psalms by David were written around 1,000 BC.
  - b. Some relating to post-exilic days were written during the years 530–430 BC.
  - c. Duplications from one book to another indicate compilation at different times.
  - d. Through the centuries the poems were brought together in a collection to become a "liturgy" for temple worship.
5. The divisions of the book.
  - a. A result of doxologies at the end of each, like 41:13, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen, and Amen".
  - b. Book II ends with a doxology that is similar and then the statement, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended" (72:20).
  - c. Books III and IV end with doxologies too, and Book V ends with a whole psalm of praise. The endings for the first four books seem to be the work of a compiler or editor.
6. The characteristics of the books.
  - a. Book I (1–41) is all "The Psalms of David," except for four.
    - 1) It is also a group of psalms that mostly uses "Yahweh" (or "Jehovah") instead of "Elohim" (God).
    - 2) Because of the Davidic dominance, it has been suggested that these were written and compiled during the reign of David.
  - b. Book II (42–72) is dominated by psalms with the inscription "Sons of Korah." A few by David and one by Asaph are also included.
    - 1) The lack of Davidic influence and the prominence of Korah indicate that this book was composed and compiled during the time of Solomon.
    - 2) Korah was a Levite, and the sons of Korah might have been constituted a temple guild of musicians.

- 3) Book III(73–89) uses both Elohim (73–83) and Yahweh (84–89).
- c. Book III uses the frequent inscription about Asaph.
  - 1) May have been a choir director of some sort or musician for temple worship.
  - 2) It is suggested by Stuart Perowne that these fit the time of King Hezekiah.
- d. Books IV (90–106) and V (107–150) may be post-exilic (536–430 BC).
  - 1) Yahweh is dominant in these two books.
  - 2) There are some “clusters” of kinds of psalms in these last two books: 93–100:
    - a) The worldwide kingship of Yahweh, 113–118:
    - b) Hallel songs for Passover night, 120–134.
    - c) Songs of Ascent, sung as people neared Jerusalem at the end of their pilgrimage.

**NOTE:** There doesn’t seem to be sufficient information on some of these matters for a dogmatic conclusion to be pushed.

### C. The Forms of Hebrew Poetry in the Psalms

1. **The “stresses” of the poetry.** A form of rhythms of stress instead of syllables for rhyme or rhythm.
  - a. The more frequent length of a poetic unit consisted of two lines. Each line had three stresses. Psalm 26:2, “Examine me (one), O Lord (two), and try me (three); test (one) my mind (two) and my heart” (three).
  - b. There are three–two arrangements also. Psalm 27:1, “The Lord (one) is my light (two) and my salvation (three); whom (one) shall I fear (two).” Usually the 3-2 beat is a lament (compare Lamentations; Isaiah 14:12ff).
  - c. The uniformity is in the lines themselves, not so much in whole stanzas. Stanzas can be of variable length. The author is primarily matching thoughts.
2. **Recurring refrains.** Some psalms have recurring refrains or choruses at the end of stanzas.
  - a. Psalm 46:7,11 – “The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.”
  - b. Psalm 49:12,20 – “But man in his pomp will not endure; He is like the beasts that perish.” Both of those psalms demonstrate the varied length of stanzas within the same psalm.
3. **Acrostic or alphabetic.** This technique uses the letters of the Hebrew alphabet to begin consecutive lines or verses or stanzas.
  - a. The first word of every line in Psalm 111 (10 verses) begins with a succeeding letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
  - b. The first word of every verse is the form in Psalms 25 and 34, each having 22 verses, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet.
  - c. Psalms 9 and 10 were originally one psalm wherein every two verses begin with a new letter.
  - d. The grand daddy of acrostic Psalms, 119 contains 176 verses. That’s 22 Hebrew letters times 8 verses each. So each stanza of 8 verses has each verse in that stanza beginning with a single Hebrew letter. The next stanza has 8 verses that begin with the next Hebrew letter. And so on all the way through the Hebrew alphabet.
4. **Alliteration, Paronomasia, and Onomatopoeia.**

Alliteration is the combination of several words, the beginning letter of each is the same. Paronomasia is the play on words. Onomatopoeia is “sound” words, wherein

the word itself when pronounced sounds like the sound described by the word.

5. **Parallelism.** Parallelism is the technique of putting two or more lines of poetry together for the purpose of comparison or contrast. There are two general kinds:
  - a. Internal (use of two lines) and,
  - b. External (use of more than two lines). The categories of each general kind are defined and illustrated below.
6. Parallelism illustrated:
  - a. Internal—two lines.
    - 1) **Synonymous** – **second line repeats** the thought of the first.  
Psalms 18:5 – “The cords of the grave coiled around me;  
...The snares of death confronted me.”
    - 2) **Antithetic** – **second line is the opposite** thought of the first line.  
Psalms 37:21–“The wicked borrow and do not repay;  
...but the righteous give generously.”
    - 3) **Synthetic**—the **second line advances** the thought of the first line.  
Psalms 2:6–“I have installed my King;  
...On Zion, my holy hill.”
    - 4) **Climactic** – the **second line repeats** and completes the thought of the first line.  
Psalms 29:1–“Ascribe to the Lord, O mighty ones;  
...Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.”
    - 5) **Emblematic** – uses **a simile or metaphor to compare** something in line one to another in line two.  
Psalms 42:1–“As the deer pants for the streams of water;  
...So my soul pants for you, O God.”
    - 6) **Inverted** – has **an A-B-B-A arrangement**.  
Psalms 91:14 – “Because he loves me (A), says the Lord, I will rescue him (B),  
...I will protect him (B), for he acknowledges my name (A).” The outer parts match and the inner parts match.
  - b. External – more than two lines of poetry.
    - 1) **Synonymous** – several lines with similar thoughts.  
Psalms 18:4-5 – “The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.”
    - 2) **Antithetic** – first two lines are synonymous, but the last two are the opposite of those first two.  
Psalms 37:10-11 – “For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”
    - 3) **Inverted–A-B-B-A arrangement.** Each line is one letter of the arrangement.  
Psalms 37:5-6 – “Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.”

# **SELF EXAM FOR LESSON ONE:**

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1. Give three titles by which this book has been called and indicate which is the best name.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

Best name: \_\_\_\_\_

2. List the five divisions of the book with the psalms in each division.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

5) \_\_\_\_\_

3. What characterizes Book I of Psalms? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. List five forms of Hebrew poetry in the Psalms.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

5) \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is meant by “Acrostic” form of poetry in the Psalms?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Match the following kinds of “Parallelism”.

___ Synonymous:	a. The second line repeats and completes the thought of the first line.
___ Inverted:	b. The second line advances the thought of the first line.
___ Synthetic:	c. Uses a simile or metaphor to compare in line one to another in line two.
___ Emblematic:	d. Several lines with similar thoughts.
___ Antithetic:	e. First two lines are synonymous, but the last two are the opposite of those first two lines.
___ Climactic:	f. Each line is one letter of the arrangement.

## LESSON TWO

# Introduction – Part (II)

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### INTRODUCTION

If you've attended college, you may have taken a "Music Appreciation" course. It was then that you may have for the first time appreciated classical music, unless you grew up in a home where it was played. For many Bible readers, there is a parallel. Psalms is the biblical "music book." It is long and poetic, too features that may turn off some readers. Hopefully this course will help you better understand and appreciate this aesthetic piece of biblical literature.

In this lesson, we will do several things. First, we will take a look at the topics in the psalms. Then, we will take a close look at the inscriptions at the top of some of the psalms. These have meaning and help us understand the content of the psalms. Third, we will look at some of the theology covered by the psalmists. The lesson will close with a brief look at how Judaism and early Christianity has used the psalms and some quotes from famous people as to the usefulness and meaning of the psalms.

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**LESSON TEXT:** None.

**LESSON AIM:** To introduce the general topics and content in the Psalms.

**LESSON OBJECTIVES:** You will . . .

1. Note some different topical arrangements of the Psalms.
  2. Learn what the headings or inscriptions mean.
  3. Discover what theological themes are addressed in the Psalms.
  4. Note how the Psalter has been used in Judaism and Christianity.
- 

### INDEX OF TOPICS IN THE PSALMS

The Psalms can be classified according to topics.

#### A. **Chart One–John Walton:** Chronological Charts of the Old Testament.

Subject	Examples	Quantity
"Thanks/Adoration"	8,19,113	35
"Individual Praise"	23,139	21
"Individual Lament"	3,102	45
"National Lament"	79,83	6
"Royal"	2,45,72	11
"Enthronement"	47,96–99	6
"Songs of Zion"	42,121	8
"Penitential"	38,51	7
"Imprecatory"	109	6
"Messianic"	2,24,110	7
"Wisdom"	1,10,119	21

**B. Chart Two–Ted Kell:** Psalms course at Sunset School of Preaching.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Quantity</b>
“Attributes of God and His Kingdom”	29,72	13
“Comfort”	23,121	11
“Complaint”	41,74,79	3
“Corruption of Society”	14,53,73	3
“Ethical”	1,14,112	9
“Historical”	78,136	2
“Imprecatory”	10,94	8
“Lament for Wicked”	12,64	4
“Messianic”	2,22,72,110	4
“Penitential”	6,38,51	3
“Praise & Thanksgiving”	8,96,148	45
“Prayers for Deliverance and Protection”	46,141	22
“Prayer for Help”	13,122	11
“Prayer for Trust”	3,4,11	8
“Prayer for Mercy and Joy of Forgiveness”	32,102	4
“Song of Love”	45,133	2
“Suffering”	22,102	4
“Thirst for God”	42,137	4
“Vanity of Life”	39,49	2
“Victory of Song”	18,107	4

**NOTE:** It is apparent to the careful observer that these topics have to do with the heart–prayers, feelings, worship.

**C. Chart Three–Charles Speer:** “Lessons Studies for This Series on Psalms”.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Lessons</b>
“The God of Psalms”	2
“The God of Israelite History”	1
“God’s Revelation to Mankind”	2
“Praise and Thanksgiving”	2
“The Ethical or Wisdom Psalms”	1
“The Royal or Kingly Psalms”	2
“Protection and Deliverance”	1
“The Imprecatory Psalms”	1
“Songs of Ascents”	2
“Forgiveness in the Psalms”	2
“The “Messianic Psalms”	5
“Use of Psalms in Teaching, Personal Study”	1

## THE HEADINGS OR INSCRIPTIONS ON THE PSALMS

### A. Significance of These Headings or Inscriptions

1. Their antiquity.
  - a. These headings are a part of the Hebrew Bible.
  - b. They are not notes in the margin, added by Hebrew copyists known as Massoretics.
  - c. Though they are editorial notes of some kind, they are of ancient origin.
  - d. Their exact meanings were not known in the second century BC when the Septuagint was translated.
2. Use by New Testament writers.
 

The New Testament writers even mention some of these headings and build theological arguments on their accuracy.

  - a. In Mark 12:35-37 Jesus refers to David as the author of Psalm 110. His argument is based on the truthfulness of the inscription of that psalm.
  - b. In Acts 2:25-28 Peter is arguing for the resurrection of Jesus. His argument is based on the truthfulness of the inscription on Psalm 16.

## B. Kinds of Inscriptions

1. According to authors.  
Chart Four—"Authors of the Psalms"

Author	# of Psalms
David	73
Solomon	2
Moses	1
Heman, the Ezrahite	1
Ethan, the Ezrahite	1
Jeduthun	3
Sons of Korah	12
Asaph	12

2. According to historical events.  
Chart Five—"Episodes in the Life of David"

Psalm	Inscription
Psalm 3:	A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son
Psalm 7:	A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to the Lord concerning Cush, a Benjamite
Psalm 18:	For the Choir Director. A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who spoke to the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. And he said,
Psalm 30:	A Psalm; a Song at the Dedication of the House. A Psalm of David.
Psalm 34:	A Psalm of David, when he feigned madness before Abimelech, who drove him away and he departed.
Psalm 51:	For the Choir Director. A Psalm of David. when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.
Psalm 52:	For the Choir Director. A Maskil of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said to him, "David has come to the house of Abimelech."
Psalm 54:	For the Choir Director; on stringed instruments. A Maskil of David,

when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, “Is not David hiding himself among us?”

Psalm 56: For the Choir Director; according to Jonath elem rehokim. A Mikhtam of David, when the Philistines seized him in Gath.

Psalm 57: For the Choir Director, set to Al-tashhet. A Mikhtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.

Psalm 59: For the Choir Director, set to Al-tashheth. A Mikhtam of David, when Saul sent men, and they watched the house in order to kill him.

Psalm 60: For the Choir Director, according to Shushan Eduth. A Mikhtam of David, to teach; when he struggled with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, and Joab returned, and smote twelve thousand of Edom in the Valley of Salt.

Psalm 63: A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

Psalm 142: Maskil of David, when he was in the cave. A Prayer.

3. According to Musical Directions. This is the bulk of the inscriptions.  
Chart Six—“Musical Directions in Inscriptions”

### **Direction**

### **Possible Meaning.**

Selah: To call for an instrumental interlude, or To lift up or strike up with instruments or voices.

Higgaion: To murmur, perhaps meaning meditative psalm.

Shiggaion: A stirring rendition of a song.

Miktam: Comes from “to cover”, perhaps signifying a psalm of deep import.

Maskil: Meditatively or instructively, perhaps indicating “in a skillful strain”.

To the Choir Director:

An official collection of psalms in the custody of the Choir Director.

According to: Instruct singers and players as to the tune.

Others

## **THEOLOGY IN THE PSALMS**

### **A. Believing What We Sing**

Though a songbook, the Psalter is not devoid of theological truths of considerable depth! Someone has said, “If we just believed and practiced what we sing, we would do much better than we do!” I concur, especially if we sing the psalms! They are inspired of the Holy Spirit!

### **B. Theological Subjects Developed in Psalms**

1. Sacrificial Worship.
2. Yahweh as Creator.
3. God in History.
4. God of the Whole World (All Peoples).
5. The Nature of Sin and Its Consequences.
6. The Suffering of the People of God.
7. Rewards and Punishments.
8. The Nature of the Messianic Hope.



## USE OF THE PSALTER IN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

The Jews of David's time used these poems put to music in their temple worship. Many of the Psalms were written by men of that time: David, Asaph, sons of Korah, Ethan, Heman, and Solomon. With the exception of David and Solomon, the rest were "ministers of music" for temple worship. The book of Psalms was the hymn book and liturgy of temple worshippers.

Early Christians of the first century used the psalms as part of their musical worship too. Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19 attest to this. Also, the book of Psalms is the most quoted book of the Old Testament in the New Testament. Therefore, the New Testament writers were very familiar with the book and saw its significance in the life of the church and individual Christians. Many of these references relate to the Messiah. Thus the Psalms describe their Savior.

## CONCLUSION

I'd like to close with quotes from a number of sages through the ages. They all speak of their high esteem for the Psalms. Their love for this book will inspire you too.

- A. **Martin Luther** – "This is the great excellence of the Psalter; that other books, indeed, make a great noise about the works of the saints, but say very little about their words. But herein is the pre-eminence of the Psalter, and hence the sweet fragrance which it sheds, that it not only tells of the works of the saints, but also of the words with which they spake to God and prayed, and still speak and pray."
- B. **Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria in the fourth century** – "He who takes this book in his hands, with admiration and reverence goes through all the prophecies concerning the Saviour which he finds there as in the other Scriptures, but the other Psalms he reads as if they were his own words, and he who hears them is pricked at the heart as if he said them himself."
- C. **Ambrose, another Bishop of the fourth century** – "Although all divine Scripture breathes the grace of God, yet sweet beyond all others is the book of Psalms."  
 "History instructs, the Law teaches, Prophecy announces, Rebuke chastens, Mortality persuades; in the book of Psalms we have the fruit of all these, and a kind of medicine for the salvation of man."  
 "What is more delightful than a Psalm? It is the benediction of the people, the praise of God, the thanksgiving of the multitude,...the voice of the Church, and the harmonious confession of our faith."
- D. **Martin Luther** – "Where will you find words more aptly chosen to express joy, than in the Psalms of praise and the Psalms of thanksgiving? There thou mayest look into the heart of all the saints, as into fair delightful gardens, yea, even into heaven itself, and note with what wonderful variety there spring up therein, like so many exquisite, hearty, delightful flowers, sweet and gladsome thoughts of God and His benefits. On the other hand, where canst thou find deeper, sadder, more lamentable words of sorrow than are to be found in the Psalms of complaint? There again thou mayest look into the heart of all the saints, as into death, yea, as into hell. How dark and gloomy it is thee with the manifold hiding of God's countenance! So likewise when the Psalms speak of fear or hope, they speak in such manner of words that no painter could so paint the fear or the

hope, and no Cicero or master of oratory could express them to the life more happily.”

## **SELF EXAM FOR LESSON TWO:**

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1. Concerning the headings or inscriptions of the Psalms:
  - \_\_\_ They are part of the Hebrew Bible
  - \_\_\_ They are actually notes in the margin added by the Massoretics
  - \_\_\_ They are of ancient origin
  - \_\_\_ Their meanings were not known in the second century BC and are not known now
  
2. Explain how the New Testament writers used some of these headings and what that implies.
   
\_\_\_\_\_
   
\_\_\_\_\_
   
\_\_\_\_\_
  
3. There are some eight subjects developed in the Psalms. List these below.
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 5) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 6) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 7) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 8) \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Give the meaning and significance of each of the following:
  - Selah: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Maskil: \_\_\_\_\_
  - To the Choir Director: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Shiggaion: \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON THREE

# Psalms of Praise and Thanksgiving (I)

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### INTRODUCTION:



*Lord, our Lord,  
How majestic is Thy name in all the earth,  
Who hast displayed Thy splendor above the heavens!*

*From the mouth of infants and nursing babes Thou hast established strength.  
Because of Thine adversaries, To make the enemy and the revengeful cease.*

*When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers,  
The moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained.*

*What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him?  
And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him?*

*Yet Thou hast made him a little lower than God,  
And dost crown him with glory and majesty!*

*Thou dost make him to rule over the works of Thy hands;  
Thou hast put all things under his feet,*

*All sheep and oxen,  
And also the beasts of the field,*

*The birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,  
Whatever passes through the paths of the seas.*

*O Lord, our Lord,  
How majestic is Thy name in all the earth!*

—Psalm 8

Certainly one of the best known and best loved psalms. It fits into the category of “Praise and Thanksgiving” psalms. One of the largest groups of psalms, this category includes one-third of the total number of psalms, or about fifty. Books I (Psalms 1–41), and IV (Psalms 90–106), and V (Psalms 107–150) contain the most.

In the corporate assembly for worship, the Israelites wished to express their adoration for who He was, their praise for what He’d done, and their thanks for His present attention to their needs. The psalms would help them keep from being an ungrateful and disrespectful people.

Our approach in these two lessons on “Praise and Thanksgiving” psalms will be to select representative psalms from this 50 or so. Through this brief look, we will see the variety

in poetic language and style, and we will focus on the reasons why the people of Israel chose to give glory to God.

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**LESSON TEXTS:** Psalms 95, 8, 29, 104.

**LESSON AIM:** To show the expressions of praise and thanksgiving to God for His magnificent creation.

**LESSON OBJECTIVES:** You will . . .

1. Note the different kinds of psalms of praise and thanks.
  2. Study the greatness of God as seen in creation as expressed in some of the Psalms.
- 

### **KINDS AND CATEGORIES OF PSALMS**

Besides the classification according to where they're situated in the book, and besides the large number attributed to David, there are other generalities about these "Praise and Thanksgiving" psalms that deserve mention.

#### **A. Speakers in the Psalms**

"Who's speaking in these psalms?" There are two kinds of speakers: individual and congregational.

#### **B. The Recipients of the Psalms**

"For whom is the psalm intended to stimulate to praise God?" Sometimes the individual writer, sometimes the whole nation of Israel as represented by the congregation gathered to praise, sometimes it's the king, and sometimes it's the meek and lowly.

#### **C. The Themes in the Psalms**

There are a number of "why's," themes. However, all of these themes fit into the plan of God for Israel. Why are creation, protection and deliverance from and judgment on enemies, the king, and the covenants, emphasized. Because all of those relate to God's special relationship to this nation.

### **THEME ONE: "THE GOD OF CREATION"**

*O Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;  
Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation.*

*Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving;  
Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.*

*For the Lord is a great God,  
And a great King above all gods,*

*In whose hand are the depths of the earth;  
The peaks of the mountains are His also.*

*The sea is His, for it was He who made it;  
And His hands formed the dry land.*

–Psalm 95:1-5

#### **A. The Name Above All Names (Psalm 8)**

1. The majesty of God. *“O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all thy earth”* (vs. 1,9).
  - a. The expansiveness of the sky, *“. . .who hast displayed Thy splendor above the heavens”* (v. 1).
  - b. The incredible miracle of a new born babe nursing at its mother’s breast – the big and the little – declare God’s majesty.
2. The dignity of man. No adversary can match that kind of strength and power.
  - a. Those first two verses set up the main thought in this psalm – God’s creation made for His greatest creation, man.
  - b. Picture king David as he remembers those many nights in the open field as he shepherded his father’s flock. In the silence of the night he would peer up into the illuminated heavens. No city lights. No sounds except the bleating of sheep and the whisper of the wind in the trees.
3. The smallness of man contemplated. *“When I consider Thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man that Thou dost take thought of him, and the son of man that Thou dost care for him?”* (vs. 3-4). How insignificant man seems?! He is infinitely small. How could he be important, to the rest of creation and especially to God?
  - a. The importance of man – he is the supreme creation. How so? He’s only a little lower than God. He’s made in His image (Gen. 1:26-27). Nothing else is.
  - b. Man is in the image of God. We are the most like God Himself! How so?
    - 1) He made us authoritative over the rest of creation (6-8). It’s been made for our benefit – food, transportation, housing, etc.. It is all there for our use. We are allowed to subdue it for our purposes. The command He gave in Eden, *“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth”* (Genesis 1:28).
    - 2) God has made us king over the rest of creation. He made creation for man. Creation is magnificent in and of itself, and should cause us to praise Him; but His greatest creation, man, is much more reason to praise Him.

*Praise the Lord! Praise, O servants of the Lord.  
Praise the name of the Lord.*

*Blessed be the name of the Lord  
From this time forth and forever.*

*From the rising of the sun to its setting  
The name of the Lord is to be praised.*

*The Lord is high above all nations;  
His glory is above the heavens.*

–Psalm 113:1-4

## B. “The God of the Storm” (Psalm 29)

1. God’s heavenly chorus. A call to the sons of the Mighty (vs. 1-2).  
These are probably the angels, so the heavenly chorus is called together to confess God’s glory by worshiping Him, perhaps in the heavenly temple.
2. God’s powerful voice (vs. 3-9).
  - a. Mentioned some seven times and likened to the thunder of a Palestinian storm.
  - b. God’s thunder “is over many waters,” which would be the Mediterranean Sea. That huge dark mass of clouds slowly moves inland near Lebanon. That’s where the “cedars” are (verse 5). A powerful thunderstorm could seem to snap those huge stately symbols of stability. It could make Mt Lebanon and Mt. Hermon (or Sirion, the old Sidonian name for Hermon) dance!
  - c. The similes say it well, “*He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox*”(v. 6).
  - d. As the wind reduces the cedars to splinters, the lightning darts through the mountains and the thunder rumbles and echoes back and forth, causing even the eternal mountains to jump in fear!

**NOTE:** A storm would usually turn South and makes its way down the Jordan River Valley, past the Dead Sea, and finally fizzle out near Kadesh, some 50 miles South of Beersheba, in the Sinai Desert. On the way, it “strips forests bare” (9), scares the pregnant deer and makes her calve (9), and “shakes the wilderness” (8). From top to bottom Israel has been forced to notice the power of God’s storm. That storm is representative of God’s power.

3. Contemplation when storm is over (vs. 10-11).
  - a. Once over, the people are left to contemplate.
  - b. Perhaps they gather in the temple afterward to give glory to God. These are the thoughts the psalmist (and God) wants the worshiper to contemplate (vs. 10-11):
    - 1) God is King over creation. The power of the swelling flood left by a violent rainstorm in a dry land is another proof of that. He is King forever.
    - 2) God is King over creation for the benefit of man. This power and strength will be used by God to give strength and peace to His people.

*I will extol Thee, my God, O King;  
And I will bless Thy name forever and ever.*

*Every day I will bless Thee,  
And I will praise Thy name forever and ever.*

*Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised;  
And His greatness is unsearchable.*

*One generation shall praise Thy works to another,  
And shall declare Thy mighty acts.*

*On the glorious splendor of Thy majesty,  
And on Thy wonderful works, I will meditate.*

*And men shall speak of the power of Thine awesome acts.  
—Psalm 145:1-6a*

### C. “God’s Care for Creation” (Psalm 104)

This psalm has correctly been likened to Genesis 1. You may be able to see some references to the days of creation: For example, verse 2 talks about the “stretching out of heaven like a tent curtain,” similar to the creation of light, heavens, and the firmament.

1. God’s care expressed in supplying:
  - a. Water for the thirsty. *“He sends forth springs in the valley. They flow between the mountains. They supply water to every beast of the field. The wild donkeys quench their thirst”* (vs. 10-11).
  - b. Food for the hungry. *“He causes the grass to grow for the cattle. . .”* (v. 14).
  - c. Homes for the weak. *“The cedars of Lebanon which He planted, where the birds build their nests”* (vs. 16-17). He not only created it initially but also sustains it now.
  - d. Sustenance for all. He still “looks at the earth” and “touches the mountains” (v. 32). *“They all wait for Thee to give them their food in due season”* (vs. 27).
  - e. Constant and continuity. *“He (still) sends forth springs in the valleys”* (v. 10).
2. God’s sustenance of His creation.
  - a. Job heard God speak similar words in Job 38-41. There the two-fold emphasis is apparent too – God’s initial creation and His continual sustaining of the creation.
  - b. In the New Testament we find two interesting descriptions of Christ in this regard.
    - 1) Colossians 1:16-17: *“... by Him all things were created. . .”* and *“in Him all things hold together.”*
    - 2) Hebrew 1:2-3: *“In these last days (God) has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world...and upholds (sustains) all things by the word of His power”*.
3. Creation is all for man! *“So that he may bring forth food from the earth, and wine which makes man’s heart glad, so that he may make his face glisten with oil, and food which sustains man’s heart”* (vs. 14-15). All of creation is systematized to work well **for man’s benefit**. It is a well-ordered system, designed for man’s well being.
4. Man is dependent on God. Therefore, just as the creation “waits for Thee” (v. 27), so man should develop the same dependency. And we, unlike the animals and unique in creation, can praise our God for it. *“Let the glory of the Lord endure forever. Let the Lord be glad in His works”* (v. 31). *“I will sing to the Lord as long as I live. I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. Let my meditation be pleasing to Him. As for me I shall be glad in the Lord...Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord”* (33-35).

Verse 4 is quoted in Hebrews 1:7 and interpreted as meaning “angels.” Angels are like the winds. Angels are like fiery ministers. The writer of Hebrews claims that these messengers and ministers of God, these angels, are at our disposal. They “*render service for the sake of those inheriting salvation*” (Hebrews 1:14). **Even the heavenly creations were for man’s benefit!** Praise God once again!

## CONCLUSION

As we close this part of our study of the “Praise and Thanksgiving” psalms, I’ll mention two others. Psalms 135–136 are similar. They both open with a call to praise and/or thank God. The reason given is His love for His chosen nation Israel. The psalmist proves His assertion two ways. One, God’s work in creation – for man’s benefit. Two, God’s work in their history to build them into a great nation and put them on the Promised Land. Psalm 136 has a refrain after each line, to be the answer of the congregation to each line’s assertion of God’s goodness to Israel. Try having someone read the first part and the group respond with the refrain.

## SELF EXAM FOR LESSON THREE:

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1. Give the “Theme” of the following psalms.  
 Psalm 8: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Psalm 29: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Psalm 104: \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. What in Psalm 8 pictures the importance of man? In relation to:  
 Creation: \_\_\_\_\_  
 God: \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Give a three point outline of Psalm 29.  
 1) \_\_\_\_\_  
 2) \_\_\_\_\_  
 3) \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Give four ways God’s supplying care is expressed in Psalm 104.  
 1) \_\_\_\_\_  
 2) \_\_\_\_\_  
 3) \_\_\_\_\_  
 4) \_\_\_\_\_



## LESSON FOUR

# Psalms of Praise and Thanksgiving (II)

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### INTRODUCTION:



his is the second part of our consideration of “Praise and Thanksgiving” psalms. You may have recognized that song as coming from Psalm 108 or a similar phrase in Psalm 57. It expresses well our commitment to give God the glory in song and prayer and life and conversation.

We will explore two more groups of “Praise and Thanksgiving” psalms. One, the psalms that thank God for deliverance from defeat by an enemy. A fairly large number of psalms fit here. Two, psalms that express praise to God for keeping His covenant promises to Israel. Let’s begin by looking at that first group, deliverance from enemies.

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**LESSON TEXTS:** Psalms 108, 68, 95, 96, 98, 93, 105.

**LESSON AIM:** To see that the God of creation is also a personal God.

**LESSON OBJECTIVES:** You will . . .

1. Note the protection from enemies God provided the Israelites.
  2. See that the Lord reigns in the affairs of men.
  3. Hear the psalmists talk of God’s keeping His covenant with man.
- 

*I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord,  
among the peoples;  
And I will sing praises to Thee  
among the nations.  
For Thy lovingkindness is great  
above the heavens;  
And Thy truth reaches to the skies.  
Be exalted, O God, above the heavens,  
And Thy glory above all the earth.  
—Psalm 108:3-5*

### DELIVERANCE FROM ENEMIES

#### A. God Give Us Aid (Psalm 34)

Praise God because He delivers His people from their enemies. A large group of psalms beseech God for protection, help, and deliverance. Others proclaim that He does give that aid to His people, and they praise and thank Him for it. Psalm 34 is

such a psalm.

1. The inscription. *A Psalm of David*: When he changed his behavior before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed.  
The heading refers it to the occasion recorded in 1 Samuel 21:10ff. Fleeing from king Saul, David sought refuge among the Philistines. “*He feigned madness before Abimelech (the king)*” so he would not be killed. Some time later, apparently, David wrote this psalm.
2. The call (vs. 1-3).  
In verses 1-3 he praises or blesses the Lord, and claims he’ll do it “at all times.” Not only when peace and prosperity dominate his life, but also when pressures mount he will retain his joy in the Lord. “*Rejoice in the Lord always*,” Paul says. This praise comes from a humble heart (v. 2). He knows who delivered him! Then comes the call in verse 3, “*Rejoice with me!*”
3. The reason (vs. 4-10).  
Why the call? What reason does he offer? He’s a delivered man! He was a poor and troubled (v. 6), fearful (v. 4), afflicted (v. 19), and brokenhearted and crushed man (v. 18). “But the Lord delivers him out of them all” (v. 19), “from all my fears” (v. 4). He cried unto the Lord, and he was heard (v. 5) and saved (v. 6).

Verse 7 reads, “*The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them.*” Other Old Testament passages and events that are similar. The captain of the Lord’s host of angels appeared to Joshua in Joshua 5:12-13 and assured him that he would help Israel take Jericho and the rest of the Promised Land. Elisha asked the Lord to show his unbelieving servant something. The servant saw the angelic army in the mountain tops (2 Kings 6:17).

Once that angel has done his work, David can say, “*O taste and see that the Lord is good*” (v. 8). Peter refers to this verse in 1 Peter 2:3 as motivation to grow up in our salvation. The psalmist is inviting others to put the Lord to the test. He will not fail you – ever! You will want for nothing, “*. . . for there is no want*” (v. 9) and “*The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they who seek the Lord shall not be in want of any good thing*” (v. 10). James echoes this sentiment, also in the context of trials, when he says, “*. . . that you may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing*” (James 1:4).

4. The instruction (vs. 11-22).  
The second half of the psalm is instruction as to what leads to such heartening experiences, chiefly, living in the fear of the Lord (vs. 11-12). “*The eyes of the Lord are directed toward the righteous*” (v. 15). These are the ones who do good and not evil (vs. 12-14). Verses 12-15 are quoted in 1 Peter 3:10-12.

While holding onto one’s purity, the believer should be assured that “*The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous*” to do them good (v. 15), but “*The face of the Lord is against evildoers, to cut off the memory of them from the earth*” (v. 16).

Meanwhile the righteous “*will never be ashamed*” (v. 5), never wanting (vs. 9-10), enjoys length of days (v. 12), is delivered (v. 17), not condemned (v. 22).

Thus, the singer has turned teacher and has taught us to rely upon Him and praise Him at all times, even in trials, because He is the Deliverer!

## B. God Leads His People (Psalm 68)

Verses 28-35 suggest that Jerusalem is in danger, “*Show Thyself strong, O God, who hast acted on our behalf, . . . Rebuke the beasts in the reeds, the herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples*” (vs. 28, 30). Egypt and Ethiopia may well be the oppressor, according to verse 31.

### 1. A plea for present help (vs. 1-2).

He calls on God for help. “*Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered; and let those who hate Him flee before Him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away; as wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish before God*” (vs. 1-2).

### 2. Praise for past care (vs. 3-23).

He is a king, riding on His chariot throughout the land. From this vantage point, He sees what’s happening to Israel and can come against his enemies. “*Sing to God, sing praise to His name, cast up a highway for Him who rides through the deserts*” (v. 4). “*Sing praises to the Lord to Him who rides upon the highest heavens which are from ancient times*” (v. 33). Psalm 104:3 comments similarly, “*He makes the clouds His chariot; He walks upon the wings of the wind.*” Psalm 68:17 says, “*The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands*” (of angels).

It is for the downtrodden and the outcast and the oppressed that He acts: “*A father for the fatherless and a judge for the widows. . . , God makes a home for the lonely; He leads out the prisoners into prosperity*” (vs. 5-6). So God is to be praised as the keeper of the little person.

This theme is further enhanced by what appears to be a picture, a description of God’s care of Israel on their trek from Mt. Sinai to Jerusalem. “*The Lord is among them*” at Mt. Sinai (v. 17). That’s where Israel began to be His people. In verses 7-27 the psalmist rehearses some of the works God has done for Israel since then. He has gone up before them. It may be that the movement of the ark of the covenant represents in this psalm the movement of God from Sinai to Jerusalem, and therefore His presence and care the whole way. “*Let God arise*” (v. 1), Willis suggests, is like Moses’ call to Israel when it was time to move from one desert location to another. “*Let God arise!*” In other words, “*Lead us on! Show us the path of peace and protection.*”

In verses 7-10 we learn that’s what He did in the wilderness to the land of Canaan (Read vs. 7-10). He is the King, leading His armies in defeat of the enemies, “*The Lord gives the command, ‘Kings of armies flee,’ they flee . . . whom the Almighty scattered the kings there, it was snowing in Zalmon*” (vs. 7,11,12,14).

Verse 13 may refer to the conquest of Canaan. The Canaanite people might have considered the peaks of Hermon as special, even divine (v. 15), but they are urged to look to Mt. Zion, where now the Lord dwells in His Temple (v. 16). “*Surely the Lord will dwell there forever*” (v. 19).

### 3. Celebration of all Israel (vs. 24-27).

Verses 24-27 seem to describe a celebration procession, perhaps at one of the annual feasts. The worshipers are praising God, and the psalmist even mentions

four of the tribes involved. Two are from the North, and two from the South, as if to include all of Israel.

4. Call to the people (vs. 32-35).
  - a. He calls on God to act again, as He has in the past, for His people. “*Show Thyself strong, O God, who hast acted on our behalf. Because of Thy Temple at Jerusalem*” (vs. 28-29).
  - b. The psalm closes with another call to the people to praise God for His care of Israel (vs. 32-35).
5. Postscript.
  - a. Verse 18 is quoted by Paul in Ephesians 4:8. Just as the Lord took the Israelites captive up to the Temple and gave them gifts of blessing, so Jesus, when He ascended to heaven, took us captive spiritually. We are now His!
  - b. The gifts He has given us are the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. These gifted people are gifts to the church for the sake of unity and strength.

### C. Hallel Psalms (Psalms 95, 96, 98)

Psalms 95, 96, and 97 seem to form a triad within the group of what are called “Hallel Psalms” (92–100). These three revolve around that same theme, the God of deliverance of His people while defeating the enemy. Psalms 95–97 all call upon Israel to praise God “*because of Thy judgments, O Lord*” (97:8); “*He will judge the peoples with equity*” (96:10); and “*righteousness*” (98:9).

1. The Lord reigns! (Psalm 96).
  - a. Praise God because of His glory (vs. 1-6).
    - 1) God’s glory is seen in His creation of the heavens (vs. 5-6), and in sharp contrast to the “gods” or “idols.”
    - 2) The word for “idols” (v. 5) is translated “worthless divinations” in Jeremiah 14:14 and in Job 13:4. They can do nothing; they are useless when it comes to help for the people.
    - 3) Jehovah God is shrouded in His sanctuary with “splendor and majesty,” “strength and beauty” (v. 6). The “sanctuary” may be the Temple, or it may be the universe, the heavens He created as His backdrop, in which we see “*His wonderful deeds among all the peoples*” (v. 3). This is the God that is to be “proclaimed” (v. 2) among the nations.
    - 4) Thus the double crescendo. Verses 1-2, “*Sing to the Lord! Sing to the Lord!! Sing to the Lord!!!*” (not the angels here, but mankind).
  - b. Praise God because He is coming in judgment.
 

“*He is coming*” (v. 13) doesn’t refer to the end of time. The coming of the Lord is a way of describing God’s judgment on a (any) wicked nation.

**NOTE:** Thus, the Lord has come many times in history, as many times as nations have fallen. He meted out justice to exonerate Himself and vindicate His oppressed people. The “Day of the Lord,” is two-fold in effect: judgment of the evil, salvation of the righteous. Every one of these comings is a type of the Final Judgment Day, the last “Day of the Lord.” It too will be a day of judgment upon the wicked and salvation for the righteous.

The message to the nations is “The Lord reigns.” Things are firmly set in place. He’s

in control of it all. Nothing will escape His notice or His justice. “*He will judge the peoples with equity*” (v. 10). Then in verses 11-12 he calls on all creation to join the crescendo: “*Let the heavens. . . Let the sea. . . Let the field. . .*” Oh the King is coming! Let’s sing a new song then (v. 1).

2. The victory song (Psalm 98).

Psalm 98 opens with the same refrain, “*O sing to the Lord a new song*” (v. 1). This psalm is a close companion to the 96th psalm, except that it excludes any comparisons to idols or the heathen and concentrates on praise. Though not authorized under the new covenant regulations and therefore unacceptable in our worship, instruments were commanded and employed in the temple worship. Thus the psalmist calls for the fullness of musical praise: “*Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth; break forth and sing for joy and sing praises. Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre; with the lyre and the sound of melody. With trumpets and the sound of the horn shout joyfully before the King, the Lord*” (vs. 4-6).

On either side of those middle three verses are two other songs:

- a. The Victory Song of Man (vs. 1-3).
- b. The Call for Musical Praise (vs. 4-6).
- c. The Chorus of Nature (vs. 7-9).

The Victory Song tells of God’s wondrous deeds in bringing about man’s salvation. This salvation is physical deliverance from the enemy. He hath “*gained the victory*” (1). He’s able to do that because of “*His right hand and His holy arm.*” We read in verses 2-3 of His publishing the victory abroad, “*All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God*” (v. 3). A chorus of nature’s sounds closes the psalm in verses 7-9. The sea roars and the rivers clap and the mountains sing while watching the Lord judge the earth and bring about righteousness and equity. Nature is ruled by God in righteousness and equity, so it exults when God demonstrates that’s the way He’ll rule among men too.

Some scholars believe this psalm was composed following the deliverance of Israel from Babylonian Captivity in about 536 B.C.. Several similarities exist between its verses and references in Isaiah 40-66 (Check a good commentary if you’re interested in those details.). If this is the occasion (and even if it’s not, the sentiment would be the same, regardless of the particular deliverance), what joy and exultation would be felt and expressed by Israel! Once again the people of God are exonerated and their God is seen to be powerful. He felled the tree of Babylon and put a Mede named Cyrus on the throne in order to allow Judah to be re-inhabited, the temple rebuilt, and fellowship with God restored.

## GOD KEEPS COVENANT

### A. The Eternal and Holy King (Psalm 93)

1. The Lord reigns (v. 1).

That’s the proclamation of most of the psalms from 93–100. It is a fact; God rules all! Does He look like a king? Indeed! His garments, figuratively speaking, are majesty and strength (v. 1). So He’s not just dressed up in kingly robes; He’s wearing the character of His rule! As a result, “*Indeed, the world is firmly established; it will not be moved*” (v. 1). In other words the world is in His

control. No force, no person, not even Satan who is called the “god of this world,” can undermine God’s control or make it do what he wants without God’s permission.

This psalm is not talking about God’s recent ascension to the throne! Whatever glorious event in Israelite history precipitated the writing of this psalm only accentuated, only publicized, only authenticated His already in-existence rule. There has never been a time when the full rule of God was ever in question. It’s just that His effective rule has again become apparent. “*Thy throne is established from of old; Thou art from everlasting*” (v. 2). He’s always reigned!

2. The world appears to be in tumult (vs. 3-4).  
Floods and pounding waves and many waters and mighty breakers toss our life’s boat to and fro. These waters may even represent antagonistic nations in their hostility against the people of God (Psalms 46:3; 89:9). Whatever ill betide, God is still on High and is Mighty (v. 4).
3. Thy testimonies are fully confirmed (v. 5).
  - a. Verse 5 is the key verse in this psalm to tie it to our present study of the God of Covenant. He is a man of His word. He doesn’t change His mind in the middle of the stream. No enemy or tumultuous circumstance will cause Him to alter His unbreakable word.
  - b. He is holy. “*Holiness befits Thy house, O Lord, forevermore.*” Holiness and Eternity. Two characteristics of God and therefore of His reign. Holiness won’t allow Him to alter His promises to mankind. His majestic, strong, eternal rule will allow Him always to fulfill His promises, to keep the conditions of the covenant with His people.

### C. A Holy Kingship (Psalm 99)

1. The Lord of Zion reigns (v. 1).  
Psalm 99 repeats the emphasis of a holy kingship. It adds the concept of the cherubim as God’s throne and war wagon (See Ezekiel 1). A fuller picture is found in Psalm 18:6-19.
2. The Lord of Zion is great (v. 2).  
The psalmist may also have in mind the ark of the covenant in the inner sanctuary of the temple. The Lord is said to be enthroned there above the cherubim (Exodus 25:22; 2 Samuel 6:2). The psalmist’s statement, “The Lord is great in Zion” (v. 2) would emphasize that idea, because Zion is where the temple is. As that kind of King, and as One who is enthroned over the covenant in the ark, He will and can keep the covenant.
3. The Lord of Zion is just (vs. 4-5).  
In the middle stanza, verses 4-5, we have once again the emphasis on His justice in dealing with enemies, and in dealing with Jacob.
4. The Lord of Zion keeps covenant (vs. 6-9).  
Using Moses, Aaron, and Samuel as examples of all Israelites (perhaps because they represent the first official priests and prophet of Israel), the psalmist notes how God has dealt with His creation – according to the terms of the covenant. The conditions of the covenant were: Offer sacrifices – Moses and Aaron did that; Call on God – Samuel and the prophets helped Israel do that; and Keep the statutes – again, the prophet’s job. God’s part of the covenant is described in

Leviticus 4–5 and Deuteronomy 28–30. If they are faithful, He will bless them richly; and if they sin and offer from the heart the appropriate sacrifices, He will forgive them. However, if they are rebellious, He will punish them.

Verse 8 of this psalm says that same thing, “*Thou wast a forgiving God to them, and yet Thou didst take vengeance on their evil deeds.*” Then the psalmist says, “*Exalt the Lord, our God. . . For holy is the Lord our God*” (v. 9). He has kept covenant conditions. At times in Israel’s history, the people forgot the punishment part of the covenant. They chose to believe that God would only bless them and never punish them. The covenant conditions demanded otherwise. Had they realized that their trials were a sign from God that the covenant relationship was in jeopardy, they might have repented more often!

### **GOD IN ISRAELITE HISTORY (PSALM 105)**

#### **A. Remember All God Has Done (v. 5)**

The psalmist calls on the worshipers to remember all that God has done to keep His covenants, particularly the Abrahamic land covenant (Genesis 12:7).

#### **B. Examples From Israelite History (vs. 12-45)**

The rest of the psalm, verses 12-45, tells of the times in their history when God was seen to be active in keeping that covenant promise.

1. God protected those original patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – as they wandered about in foreign lands. They were aliens, but, “*He allowed no one to oppress them*” (v. 14).
2. God protected His chosen tribe of Jacob, by placing Joseph in such an influential position in Egypt (vs. 17-22).
3. God delivers His people from Egyptian slavery (vs. 28-36). Thus the plagues. He adds some interesting details that are excluded in Exodus. For instance, the frogs invaded even the chambers of their kings (v. 30), or the bedrooms (NIV).
4. Provision and leadership in the desert (vs. 37-45).
  - a. He provided leadership in the cloud (v. 39).
  - b. Money from the plunder (v. 37).
  - c. Food with manna and quail (v. 40 – “bread of angels” elsewhere).
  - d. Water from the rock (v. 41). All this tells that He brought them into the land which He’d promised (v. 44), “*For He remembered His holy word with Abraham His servant*” (v. 42).

This instance could be multiplied in Israelite history. He has always worked to keep His end of the bargain. Therefore He deserves praise.

**SELF EXAM FOR LESSON FOUR:**

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1. Give the themes of the following psalms.  
Psalm 34: \_\_\_\_\_  
Psalm 68: \_\_\_\_\_  
Psalm 96: \_\_\_\_\_  
Psalm 98: \_\_\_\_\_  
Psalm 93: \_\_\_\_\_  
Psalm 99: \_\_\_\_\_  
Psalm 105: \_\_\_\_\_
2. In the setting of extreme danger the psalmist in the Psalm 68 does what two things?  
1) \_\_\_\_\_  
2) \_\_\_\_\_
3. For what two reasons does the 96th psalm call for people to praise God?  
1) \_\_\_\_\_  
2) \_\_\_\_\_
4. Give the three-point outline of Psalm 98 with the correct verse division.  
1) \_\_\_\_\_  
2) \_\_\_\_\_  
3) \_\_\_\_\_
5. Give the four-points concerning the Kingship of the Lord in psalm 99.  
1) \_\_\_\_\_  
2) \_\_\_\_\_  
3) \_\_\_\_\_  
4) \_\_\_\_\_
6. In psalm 105 the psalmist gives four examples of God's protection and provision in Israel's past history. What are these four illustrations>  
1) \_\_\_\_\_  
2) \_\_\_\_\_  
3) \_\_\_\_\_  
4) \_\_\_\_\_
7. What is the overall theme/aim of this lesson?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## LESSON FIVE

# The God of the Psalms (I)

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### INTRODUCTION:

**I**n this session we will look at “The God of the Psalms,” the first of two lessons on this subject. The God of the Psalms! What an overwhelming topic! How do you compress 150 psalms into half an hour?! After all, if the psalms are temple worship then God is surely at the center of their language. We would expect what is revealed about the nature of God to be the same in Psalms as anywhere else in Scripture, but the kind of literature of Psalms is uniquely able to expound upon His character and deeds.

The God of the Psalms. “*The Lord is my Shepherd*” (23:1); “*O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Thy name in all the earth*” (8:1); “*The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge*” (18:2); “*My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken me?*” (22:1); “*Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the king of glory*” (24:10); “*The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread?*” (27:1); “*The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is majestic. . . The voice of the Lord hews out flames of fire*” (29:4,7).

The psalms are the inspired record of the feelings and thoughts of men. They constitute, for the most part, reactions to events or circumstances. Thus the hearts of men are exposed as they speak and sing of God, sin, creation, hurt, anger, victory, history, and self. They are real! Real life! Real feelings! Real relationship with God. So this is not just temple music, or cathedral praise. This is on-the-job praise; kitchen praise, fun praise, trial praise, youth praise, old age praise – real praise! The soul is naked before God. The true view of God is revealed.

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**LESSON TEXT:** Psalms 8,19,68,18,144.

**LESSON AIM:** To come to know the God of the Bible better.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. Become acquainted with the symbolic images used in the Psalms to refer to God.
2. See the names of God in the Psalms.

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### SURVEY OF IMAGES AND DESCRIPTIONS ALREADY COVERED

#### A. God Seen in Other Topical Studies in this Series

In our other topical studies, we’ve seen some of this nature of God revealed.

1. The two lessons on “Praise and Thanksgiving” deal in part with the God who has created all things, and who now sustains them. That lesson also speaks of God as the deliverer of His people.

2. In the lessons on “The Royal Psalms,” – God was the first and is the ultimate King of Israel, even though a son of David literally sits on the throne of Israel in Jerusalem. His reign is characterized by righteousness and justice.
3. In the lesson on “The Imprecatory Psalms,” we will see a God of wrath. He will not tolerate rebellion and unchanging evil.
4. In “Forgiveness in the Psalms,” we are touched by David’s assurance that God has forgiven his sin. Thus as “The Ethical Psalms” lesson reveals, He has instituted a system of right and wrong for mankind and holds him accountable but will pardon his iniquity if he is contrite in spirit.
5. In “The Messianic Psalms” we see Him in flesh in the person of Jesus. Thus, in every study we do in this series from Psalms much is revealed about the nature, character, and work of God.

#### **B. The Majesty of God, the Dignity of Man (Psalm 8)**

1. The setting.
  - a. Its message about God is, “*He is so great and majestic, as creation shows.*” I imagine David walking alone at night. As he reflects upon the affairs of state that press him, or as he walks the fields at night as a shepherd, he gazes up into the heavens. Willis says, “*In such a country as Palestine, in that clear Eastern atmosphere, ‘the moon and the stars, would appear with a splendor and a brilliancy of which we can scarcely conceive; and as he fixes his eyes upon them, awed and solemnized and yet attracted and inspired by the spectacle, he breaks forth into admiring acknowledgment of the God, who, as the God of Israel, has set His glory so conspicuously in the heavens, that it is seen by all eyes and confessed even by the lisping tongues of children.’*”
  - b. The praise of creation is an articulate rebuke to the wicked men who disregard or resist Him.
2. The insignificance of man.  
In sight of all that vastness, before all that evidence of creative power, how insignificant is man! “*What is man that Thou art mindful of him?*” is the natural utterance of the heart. What is man in his frailty and littleness and sin? What is man in the sight of the One who made these heavens and planted them in the sky?
3. The significance of man.
  - a. The consciousness of man’s true greatness and dignity.
  - b. He has been put in charge of all creation on earth, at least the living things.
  - c. God has exalted him to this highest position among created things in the universe. The subject is boldly but briefly handled and then the Psalm is brought to a fitting close with the same ascription of praise with which it opened (These are Stuart Perowne’s comments).

#### **C. God’s Glory Revealed in Nature and in the Word (Psalm 19)**

1. Creation speaks of God – Psalm 19 follows closely on that.
  - a. The first part (vs. 1-6) speaks of His glory as seen in the heavens. We catch David in another meditative mood, perhaps strolling along outside when the first flush of an Eastern sunrise appears (v. 6).
  - b. The creation of God is like a chorus, singing out the message of God’s glory and greatness.
  - c. That is figurative. They don’t literally talk, but by being so beautifully and

wonderfully made and by doing what their Creator appointed them to do, they speak an internationally understood message that is more beautiful than any language of man. Anyone can read it and understand it, that there is a powerful and eternal and intelligent Supreme Being. It is as if God pitched a show tent and every human being is inside as a spectator to view the “performance” of God in nature. This is the revelation of God, or El (the Hebrew word for “God”).

2. The word speaks of God.
  - a. The second half of the psalm (vs. 7-11) declares that Jehovah, the Lord, the covenant God, is revealed through His Word.
  - b. The written record reveals Jehovah by telling man what to do to be in fellowship with Him and by telling man the secrets to joyful, peaceful life on earth.
  - c. Synonyms for the Word are descriptive of its effect – law, statutes, precepts, commands, and ordinances.
  - d. The real effect – reviving the soul, making wise the simple, giving joy to the heart, giving light to the eyes, enduring forever, giving righteousness.
3. Conclusion.  
The conclusion is an appeal to God to help man respond to these revelations of glory (vs. 12-14). He is especially concerned about his sin and purity in God’s sight.

## THE NAMES AND IMAGES OF GOD

Two other ways of looking at God, besides through whole psalms, are through the names of God in Scripture and through the figures or images used to describe Him.

### A. Names of God in the Psalms

1. Three names basically used of God in the Psalms.
  - a. Adonai – “Sir” or “Master” or “Lord.” This is the least used of the three.
  - b. Elohim – “Mighty One” or “Powerful One.” Elohim is the plural of El and refers to the object of our worship.
  - b. Yahweh/Jehovah – “Being One” or “Covenant God.” This is the next most frequent in the Psalms. (First explained in Exodus 3:13ff; 6:2-5)
    - 1) A God who is eternal, unchanging and who will keep covenant.
    - 2) Covenant-keeping is an emphasis in the Psalms.
2. The Psalms are intended as praise to Him who is worthy in distinction from anything or anyone else.

### B. Images of God in the Psalms

1. Inanimate Images.
  - a. God is “LIGHT” – *The Lord is my LIGHT and my salvation, whom shall I fear (27:1).*
  - b. God is “SUN” – *For the LORD God is a sun and shield; he bestows favor and honor. (84:11 NRSV)*
  - c. God is our “ROCK” – *The LORD lives! Blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation, (18:46 NRSV).*
  - d. God is our “REFUGE” – *In you, O LORD, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me (Psalm 31:1 NRSV).*
  - e. *I love you, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. (18:1-2)*
  - f. *Blessed be the LORD, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle; my rock and my fortress, my stronghold and my*

*deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues the peoples under me.* (144:1-2)

2. Animate Images.
  - a. Animate or human figures describing God are numerous. The psalms give Him all kinds of human qualities—fingers, voice, hands, laughter. These are called “**anthropomorphisms**.”
  - b. Descriptive symbols. The King imagery is most notable and includes the most references.
    - 1) “*The Lord is King forever and ever*” (10:16).
    - 2) “*Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory*” (24:10).
    - 3) “*For God is the King of all the earth. . . God reigns over the nations. God sits on His holy throne*” (47:7-8).
    - 4) He is pictured as the Sovereign; the ruler of heaven and earth, especially of Israel. God is our KING!
  - c. He is pictured as a King who is a Righteous JUDGE.
    - 1) “*And the heavens declare His righteousness, for God Himself is JUDGE*” (50:6).
    - 2) “*O Lord, God of vengeance; God of vengeance, shine forth! Rise up, O JUDGE of the earth*” (94:1-2).
    - 3) He is the One who will not let the enemies of God’s people get away with oppression and wickedness.
    - 4) He is the Advocate (43:1) of the righteous, and the JUDGE of the wicked. God is the JUDGE!
3. Deliverance connotation. God is Israel’s Deliverer, Redeemer, and Savior.
  - a. In New Testament literature these terms take on spiritual connotations – rescue from sin’s penalty and power.
  - b. In the Psalms they usually convey the meaning of rescue from troubled circumstances and or attacking enemies.
    - 1) “*My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to Thee, and my soul (or life) which Thou hast REDEEMED*” (71:23).
    - 2) The psalm speaks of deliverance from enemies, not so much salvation from sin.
  - c. The concept of **redemption** originated for the Israelites in the redemption of the Israelite nation from Egyptian slavery (cf. Ex. 6:6; 15:13).
    - Psalm 143:9, “*DELIVER me, O Lord, from my enemies; I take refuge in Thee.*”
  - d. **SAVIOR** is a very frequent word or concept in the Psalms. For example, “*My soul waits in silence for God only; from Him is my SALVATION. He only is my rock and my SALVATION*” (62:1-2).

**NOTE:** Recall what Moses said to the fearful Israelites who heard the rumble of the chariot wheels of Pharaoh’s army behind them and the crash of waves of the Red Sea in front of them? Moses said, “*Stand still and see the SALVATION of the Lord*” (Exodus 14:13). That is the concept in it as well. A God who rescues His people from the straits of disaster. Our God is SAVIOR, DELIVERER, REDEEMER!

- e. Other less used images are DOCTOR or HEALER (6:2), BIRD or EAGLE (57:1; 91:1; Ex. 19:1), GUIDE (48:14), HOUSE or HOUSE BUILDER (90:1; 127:1; 147:2), and TEACHER or DISCIPLINER (94:12).

- f. Another prominent figure is that of **WARRIOR**. The term warrior is not specifically used, but the picture is certainly in the Psalms. **SHIELDS** and **BOW** and **ARROWS** and **CHARIOTS** are His tools of warfare as He comes forth from Zion to fight against the enemies of His people. "If a man does not repent, He shall sharpen His **SWORD**. He has bent His **BOW** and made it ready. He has also prepared for Himself deadly **WEAPONS**, He makes His **ARROWS** fiery shafts" (7:12-13). "Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me. Take hold of **BUCKLER** and **SHIELD**, and rise up for my help. Draw also the spear and the **BATTLE-AXE** to meet those who pursue me.
4. Read Psalms 68:1-4,17; 18:7-14; 144:5-7 in succession. God fights for His people, and you can be sure He always wins!

### **SELF EXAM FOR LESSON FIVE:**

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1. What is the message of Psalm 8? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What two things does Psalm say about man?  
1) \_\_\_\_\_  
2) \_\_\_\_\_
3. God's glory is revealed in what two ways in Psalm 19?  
1) \_\_\_\_\_  
2) \_\_\_\_\_
4. What three names is basically used of God in the Psalms?  
1) \_\_\_\_\_  
2) \_\_\_\_\_  
3) \_\_\_\_\_
5. Give four images of God in the Psalms in relation to inanimate images.  
1) \_\_\_\_\_  
2) \_\_\_\_\_  
3) \_\_\_\_\_  
4) \_\_\_\_\_
6. List several other images of God in the Psalms.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON SIX

# The God of the Psalms (II)

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### INTRODUCTION:

**I**n our last lesson we began our two part study of “The God of the Psalms.” In looking at His names and the various figures used to describe Him, we obtained a partial picture of Him as the Psalms view Him. It was a picture of power and might, protection and refuge. He is Israel’s God. If other nations want to know, Israel’s God is more than formidable!

Because we used the survey method of study in that first session, we might have left untouched the very personal picture of God in some of the Psalms. He’s not just a dashing, flashing warrior to the whole nation. What would that mean for the individual? He’s also a very personal God to each individual Israelite. Two psalms which show that side of His character.

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**LESSON TEXT:** Psalms 23 and 139.

**LESSON AIM:** To come to know God as the Good Shepherd the omnipresent God.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. Explore the characteristics of the Shepherd of Psalm 23.
  2. See the magnificent concept of God presented by the psalmist and his response to the glory of God
- 

### PSALM 23: THE GOOD SHEPHERD

**A. “Personal” Shepherd.** *“The Lord is my shepherd.”*

1. The best known of all the psalms, the 23rd psalm is also one of the most beautiful in content. We will treat it like this—look at each phrase and label it as a description of the kind of Shepherd He is. Note how each part can be considered a role of a shepherd.
2. The psalm begins with the words “The Lord.” That’s Yahweh, not Adonai. As the Shepherd of Israel, God is eternal and therefore able to keep His covenant conditions with Israel.

**B. “Supplier” Shepherd.** *“I shall not want.”*

1. David and Israel will have no needs. God is the “Shepherd Supplier.”
2. He knows what things we have need of before we ask Him (Matthew 6:8,32).
3. He is committed to meeting all our needs, “according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

**C. “Feeder” Shepherd.** *“He makes me lie down in green pastures.”*

1. A sheep lies down when he’s had enough to eat. God is the “Shepherd Feeder.”

Jesus said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”

2. Psalm 119 states over and over the usefulness of the Word in feeding and sustaining His people.

**D. “Rester” Shepherd.** *“Makes me lie down.”*

When we, like sheep, don’t know we need rest or a change, God providentially sometimes slows us down where we have to stop our fast pace. He surrounds us with the atmosphere and opportunity for peace and quiet.

**E. “Leader” Shepherd.** *“He leads me beside still waters.”*

1. Sustenance. The water parallels the green pastures—food and water—sustenance.
2. Guidance. The word “leads” adds a new dimension – “Shepherd Leader.” Sheep know little about finding water and food. They need a Leader.

**F. “Restorer” Shepherd.** *“He restores my soul.”*

1. He leaves the ninety and nine, goes out to find the lost sheep; and when He finds it, He puts it on His shoulders and brings it home (Luke 15:4-6).
2. Men get lost easily too, because we humans do not know how to direct our own steps (Jeremiah 10:23). In restoring us, He forgives us; thus the “Shepherd Forgiver”.

**G. “Guider” Shepherd.** *“He guides me in the paths of righteousness.”*

1. “He leadeth me, O blessed thought.” “Savior, like a shepherd lead us.” “Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah,” the songs say. We pray in the Lord’s prayer, “Lead me not into temptation.”
2. Those led by the Spirit are the sons of God (Romans 8:14).

**H. “Calmer” and “Protector” Shepherd.** *“Thou art with me.”*

1. He’s always there, even through the valley of the shadow of death.
2. A Good Shepherd never leaves a helpless sheep alone to face the dangers of the world, especially when it’s hurt. When it hurts like death, He’ll be there. *“Never will I leave you. Never will I forsake you.”* (Hebrews 13:5).

**I. “Comforter” Shepherd.** *“Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”*

1. He’s the “Shepherd Comforter.” Paul calls Him the “God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).
2. The Spirit that lives within us is in some places called the “Comforter,” “another Comforter” like Jesus (John 14:16).
3. That Spirit produces “love, joy, peace” within us. “God, who comforts the downcast” (2 Corinthians 7:6).
4. Just as the sheep finds comfort in the touch of the shepherd through the rod or staff, so we find comfort in the assurance of the Lord’s presence and care. He uses that staff and rod to protect the sheep from wild animals and to rescue from danger. Many are the “tools” of God for this task in our behalf.

**J. “Feeder” and “Sustainer” Shepherd.** *“Thou dost prepare a table before me.”*  
He is the “Shepherd Feeder and Sustainer.” A repeat of the previous thought.

**K. “Vindicator” Shepherd.** *“In the presence of my enemies.”*

1. Many are the enemies of a Christian; Satan is behind every one. None will be

successful against the faithful child of God. Many psalms echo that truth.

2. The book of Revelation is a good example.
  - a. Hit by persecutions of several kinds, the churches of Asia are reeling – and wondering. John, by revelation assures them that they will be protected by God, and that the enemy will be defeated.
  - b. Riding on His white horse, as conquering and going forth to conquer, Jesus leads His armies against the enemies of the church (ch. 19).
  - c. Satan and his cohorts are defeated once again.

**L. “Honor” Shepherd.** *“Thou hast anointed my head with oil.”*

1. God honors us with dignity, identity, and purpose.
2. That honor comes to us because:
  - a. Of what He calls us – sons, children, army of God, etc.
  - b. Of what we do – preach and exhibit Christ to the world.
  - c. Of our destiny – eternal habitation with the Shepherd in heaven.

**M. “Blessing” Shepherd.** *“My cup overflows.”*

1. We enjoy all spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).
2. It’s not just forgiveness, it’s not just salvation from sin that He gives us.
3. It’s prayer, the fellowship of other Christians, providence, the Spirit, and on and on.

**N. “Companion” Shepherd.** *“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.”*

1. He is our constant benevolent “Shepherd Companion.” What a lovely way to say it!
2. Goodness and mercy are personified as people who follow me around for the specific purpose of blessing me.
3. He never quits wanting to help me, bless me, and be with me. *“Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you”* (James 4:8).

**O. Hope Shepherd.** *“And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”*

He’s told me He awaits my coming, and He desires my coming. He will be there waiting when I cross over Jordan’s waves.

What a Shepherd! That’s the God of the Psalms! That’s my God!

## **PSALM 139: MY GOD AND I**

**A. Introduction to the Psalm**

1. One of man’s strongest desires is to walk close to God.
  - a. Adam and Eve must have enjoyed such a relationship with Him in the Garden as they walked with Him in the cool of the evenings (Genesis 3:8).
  - b. Abraham often had those “friend-to-friend” conversations with the Father (cf. Genesis 18:33).
  - c. Enoch walked with God (Genesis 5:22).
  - d. Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord (Genesis 6:9).
  - e. Moses had that special time in the tent with the Lord.
  - f. Jesus spent much time in prayer and being close to His Father. When we get to heaven, paradise it’s called, we will walk with our God in the closest of fellowship.
2. Psalm 139 describes that closeness of fellowship and walk with the Father. The



basis of our closeness with God is His knowledge of us and His being here and there, wherever I am or wherever I go, and His constant care in all circumstances.

### B. Background of the Psalm

1. The occasion: The author is under attack.
  - a. The probable situation is that the author was under attack (Read vs. 19-20). Whether physical harm is intended or just accusation, ridicule, and hurt (vs. 2,4), the effect upon the victim is the same.
  - b. The writer finds solace and strength in the personal omniscience and omnipresence and care of his Lord.
2. The theme: A man and his creator.
  - a. Not written to express the theology of the nature and character of God.
  - b. The poem throbs with warm emotion and strong feeling for the Friend of friends. It is a remarkable exposure of the feelings and thoughts of a man for his Creator. It has such a variety of ideas and thoughts:
    - 1) Grand thoughts of God's omniscience and omnipresence but also the personal side of God.
    - 2) Greatness of God's control, but man's individual responsibility.
    - 3) God as Judge but also as Friend.
3. The form: Four six verse stanzas.  
Each group of six verses goes together and presents a certain thought.

### C. The Teaching of the Psalm

1. God knows me (vs. 1-6).  
God knows me and searches me. The latter phrase-He searches me-is a little more intense in meaning than just "knows me." Actually, the words "search" in verses 1 and 3 are different. The word in verse 1 literally means "dig for precious metals." The one in verse 3 literally means "winnow" as you would grain. Putting those together, we get the concept that God thoroughly examines man's heart and separates out the good from the bad.
  - a. Minute details of my life (v. 2).
    - 1) The extent to which God knows us. God knows the daily, minute details of my life. He is not oblivious to anything that goes on in our lives, no matter how small or insignificant it seems.
    - 2) Jesus said, "*Indeed the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not be afraid, you are worth more than many sparrows*" (Luke 12:7).
  - b. He knows our thoughts (v. 2). He knows our innermost thoughts, even before we do!
  - c. He knows my words (v. 4).
    - 1) He is not just acquainted with the outward, but the inward too. He never misjudges or misinterprets me because He knows me inside out.
    - 2) We are transparent before Him, and He knows us better than we know ourselves.
  - d. He foreknows all our deeds (v. 16).
    - 1) It is personal care for the psalmist that God is showing (v. 5). We are surrounded by the Lord, hemmed in like Jerusalem by the Roman armies in 70 AD. **Behind us** God foreknows all our deeds (v. 16). He protects us from all enemies that would attack us. **Before us**, He provides for all our needs. He has laid his hand upon him – a very personal touch the psalmist feels. He perceives a closeness of God, not

- a far-away, uninterested, incapable Deity.
- 2) Man's mind and comprehension is boggled by such deep and inexplicable thoughts. He cannot grasp it, hardly talk of it. It overwhelms him. Oh, he tries to climb the mount, but gets dizzy when he reaches the top. No matter how high he climbs, the real top is always out of sight, out of reach. (And that is good for us).
  - 3) We do not need to figure God out completely. We need to be left by Him in the awe that results from our ignorance and finite nature. God has come down and revealed Himself to man, but let not man think he can thoroughly bring Deity down to the level of his mind's understanding! Let us just relish the finite thoughts we can have of His grandeur and love and care for us. *"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law"* (Deuteronomy 29:29). Let God have His secrecy from us. It keeps us in awe.
2. God surrounds me with his presence (vs. 7-12).
- a. The benevolent omnipresence of God.  
No one can escape the all-pervading presence of Jehovah. That is a comfort to the faithful child of God. Remember the situation in the Psalm. The author is being attacked or assailed. He rests in his confidence that God knows him and goes with him everywhere. He is clear with God, and protected by God and that is all that matters.
  - b. Details of the text.
    - 1) "Spirit" is parallel to God's presence. The Holy Spirit in the Christian is certainly the presence of God in our lives, and He is the Lord's presence in other circumstances, as evidenced by His work in the Pentecost affair and the conversion of Cornelius.
    - 2) Heaven is the antithesis to Sheol. He's making a contrast. Heaven and hell as we think of them is not the message here. The heights as represented by "heavens" and the depths as represented by "Sheol" is the meaning. Far and wide, high and low.
    - 3) Wings of the morning are the rays of the sun at dawn as they spread over the earth. If I ride the rays of the sun to the ends of the earth, God is there.
    - 4) Where have men and women of God found God to be? Everywhere! On mountains, in boats, in deserts, in caves, in crowds, in solitude, in friends, in the workings of foes, within and without, in gardens, in temples, in tabernacles, in war, in peace. There is no place or situation into which one can enter and God not be there.
    - 5) An amazing thought in verses 11-12. Darkness is not any darker to God than light! He can see the same in both! Therefore the illustration says that God cannot be lost by my being in the darkness somewhere.
    - 6) Not only is He there; He cares (v. 10). He guides; He holds me fast; He leads. He makes me to stand. He does not let my foot slip in slippery places. He is the Rock of Ages. He is the Shepherd who leads us by still waters.
3. God made us just the way we are (vs. 13-18).
- a. God's involvement in his conception and formation.  
He created my inmost parts. He gave me a special set of intellectual and emotional propensities, as well as a special look in the flesh. I am unique. He knit me together like a skilled artisan weaves a basket together. God

- weaves us together into the person He intends us to be.
- b. God thinks I'm a person.  
The psalmist's reaction in verse 14 is indicative of his belief that God would think of him as a person before he was fully developed physically or delivered as a baby into this world. He considers God's work in this area not only from the viewpoint of His control that He has over the ways of nature, but the personalized involvement of God with each individual. This surely indicates that God would not want to abort babies that He had formed in the womb! That baby is a person as far as God is concerned!
- 4. The psalmist's reactions (vs. 17-24).
  - a. Prayer to know God.  
He has a deep desire to know God and please Him because of what has preceded (vs. 17-18). He knows the depth of God's thoughts, a pinch of which he has revealed in this psalm (only a pinch though). He is in awe of God's depth and therefore humble before Him.
  - b. Prayer for vindication. (vs. 19-22). They do not just hate the individual. They hate God too. It is not a selfish or evil hatred of the enemy, but a desire to see God's dignity upheld. When he is exonerated, God will be exalted.
  - c. The desire to be in the closest fellowship with God (vs. 23-24). There is that complete openness with God to continue to know him. There is a desire to be penitent and open to His scrutiny too. And finally a request to be led by Him.

## CONCLUSION

That's only a partial picture of the God of the Psalms. The other psalms studied in this series concerning other topics in the Psalms could well be considered from this standpoint of what they say about God. I suppose every psalm has a message about God. That's what makes this book such a rich source of material for my personal relationship with Him.

**SELF EXAM FOR LESSON SIX:**

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1. Outline the 23rd Psalm by listing the fifteen descriptions of the Shepherd.
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 5) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 6) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 7) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 8) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 9) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 10) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 11) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 12) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 13) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 14) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 15) \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the theme of Psalm 139? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the three-fold teaching of Psalm 139?
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
4. What does Psalm 139 have to say about the person-hood of a baby in the womb?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. How does Psalm 139 describe the omnipresence of God? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON SEVEN

# God's Revelation in The Psalms (I)

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### INTRODUCTION:

**H**ow does God make Himself known to man? That's long been a question of mankind, and an important one. From the standpoint of the Psalms, men of all cultures and generations seem to, want to know this God whom we can worship. If I as a worshiper, am to give Him the praise, call on Him for help, and live with Him eternally, I must know Him. Psalms does speak to this question of God's revelation to mankind.

When Paul the apostle arrived in Athens on his second missionary journey, he experienced religious culture shock. The people of Athens filled their city with idols, so as not to miss or offend any supreme being. Why would such a heathen culture have so much religion? Paul's approach to the Athenians centered in God's revelation of Himself through creation. Seizing the opportunity to speak about their "unknown god," he said,

*The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'*

In other words, "Your 'unknown god' is Jehovah God. He is the one who created all things and put them in their rightful and respective places in creation, so that men would see them and seek their Creator." The same apostle wrote in Romans 1:18-20,

*The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*

God reveals His eternal existence, powerful capacity, and divine nature through two means: the very intricate design and order in creation and the judgments He brings on people for their sin. These two instruments of God's revelation are employed by Him throughout Israelite history. To these two revelations Israel is called to respond. The theme of some psalms focuses on God's work in creation and His revelations through those works of creation.

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**LESSON TEXT:** Psalms 19 and 104.

**LESSON AIM:** To learn of the two ways in which God has chosen to reveal Himself to mankind.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. You will come to know that Psalms 19 and 104 show two ways in which God's revelation in creation is known:
  2. Learn that in the Psalms there are references to God's revelation through creation in two ways: God's nature and God's judgments.
- 

### **PIECES OF THE "CREATION THEME" IN THE PSALMS**

#### **A. God's Revelation Through Creation Referred to in Two Ways: God's Nature and God's Judgment**

##### **B. God Reveals Himself Through Creation (Nature)**

1. Psalm 29: A great thunderstorm.
  - a. God's powerful word is parallel to a storm.
  - b. His word is powerful in its effect.
2. Psalms 33 and 65: It was through the mere spoken word that creation came to be.
  - a. The word that created sustains as well.
  - b. His strength in our lives is proved by His strength in creation.
  - c. The Lord's powerful answers to our prayers is like His power in creation.
3. Psalm 74: Asaph confesses his faith in God to deliver him (or the nation).
  - a. God's power was and is displayed in creation (vs. 13-17).
  - b. God is able and willing to deliver him.
4. Psalm 89: Ethan acknowledges God's power and rule in the creation (vs. 11-12).
  - a. His rule has always been for Israel's sake.
  - b. He trusts the promise to David being as sure as the spoken word which created the earth and which controls it now.

##### **C. God Reveals Himself Through His Judgment in Creation**

1. Psalm 95: Water from the rock (vs. 8-9).
  - a. The Israelites murmur about water.
  - b. God had Moses strike the rock and bring forth water for them.
  - c. God was not pleased and called it Meribah (quarreling) and Massah (testing).
  - d. Israel tested God's goodness – He judged them because of it.
2. Psalms 136:10-15; 146:5-6; 105:28-36: God's great curses on Egypt.
  - a. Exodus 12:12 calls them "judgments" upon the gods of Egypt.
  - b. God's power in creation used as a judgment upon the sin and idolatry of Egypt.

**NOTE:** In the end, because God created it all by his powerful word, because He sustains and cares for it by that same powerful word, because He employs creation to supply the needs of the righteous or to punish the sin of the wicked, because His creation speaks of His majesty and glory and eternity; all creation and especially mankind should praise Him. .

## GOD'S REVELATION IN CREATION AND IN HIS WORD (PSALMS 19 AND 104)

### A. Psalm 19 – Consists of Two Distinct Parts

1. General Revelation – “*The heavens are telling the glory of God*” (v.1).
2. Special Revelation – “*The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul*” (v.7).
3. Another approach to this Psalm.
  - a. Part One: A glorification of the Lawgiver, God, and not an emphasis on creation's voice from God (vs. 1-6). It introduces the Lawgiver.
  - b. Part Two: Focuses on that Law, the Word (vs. 7-11).
    - 1) Paul's use of verse 4 in Romans 10:18: The Jew of his day has had sufficient revelation through the written Word (not through creation) to choose to believe in Jesus.
    - 2) Paul could have been using the verse as a principle because of its appropriate wording.
4. The content of Psalm 19:1-6.
  - a. The general revelation.
    - 1) Creation – the heavens, stars, sun and moon – declares that God is glorious.
    - 2) The existence of God is assumed.
    - 3) Creation's order, uniqueness and design witness to His existence.
  - b. Mankind in all places in all times has had the opportunity to hear the witness of creation:
    - 1) To God's existence.
    - 2) To His divinity.
    - 3) To His eternity.
    - 4) To His power.
5. The content of Psalm 19:7-11.
  - a. The focus on special revelation.
    - 1) Certain things about God can only be revealed through His word.
    - 2) Synonyms for the spoken or written revelation:
      - ▶ Law (v. 7) – indicating God's revealed will.
      - ▶ Testimony – indicating the truthfulness of His word.
      - ▶ Precepts and commandments – indicating specific ways of thinking about things and of doing things.
      - ▶ Judgments – deciphering right and wrong.
    - 3) Adjectives describing the Word.
      - ▶ Perfect – always right, never wrong, blameless.
      - ▶ Sure – steadfast and immovable.
      - ▶ Right – maps out a correct course for man.
      - ▶ Pure – thoroughly purified and has no alloy, unadulterated with man's faulty ways of thinking.
      - ▶ Clean – same as pure.
      - ▶ True – utterly dependable.
      - ▶ Summing up – they are righteous altogether (v. 9).
  - 4) The effects of the Word on man's spiritual well being.
    - ▶ Restoring the soul.
    - ▶ Making wise the simple.
    - ▶ Rejoicing the heart.
    - ▶ Enlightening the eyes.
    - ▶ Enduring forever – never loses its value.
    - ▶ More valuable than gold.

### B. Psalm 104 – The God Who Cares For His Creation

1. God glorifies Himself through creation (vs. 1-4).

- a. God figuratively clothes Himself in creation.
- b. He performs His works from the heavens.
- c. The clouds are His chariot and the winds His messengers.
- d. God's creation the instrument of His wrath.
  - 1) The flood, Sodom and Gomorrah.
  - 2) The Covenant of Blessing and Cursing (Deuteronomy 28-30).
  - 3) The judgments on Egypt (Psalm 105:28-34). "*When God's judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants learn righteousness*" (Isaiah 26:9).
2. He sustains the creation (v. 27). "*These all look to you to give them their food at their proper time.*"
3. God rules creation for a purpose (v. 24).
4. All creation should glorify Him (v.31).

### CONCLUSION

God, the Creator! He did it to glorify Himself. He did it for man. He makes it in such a way that it reflects His glory and points all men to a Creator. It shows His nature in many ways. If man refuses to see Him, God has often used creation to judge man. In so doing He makes a last attempt to cause man to repent and see a higher being. More on God's revelation next time.

### SELF EXAM FOR LESSON SEVEN:

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1. Give the two kinds of revelation discussed in this lesson and describe each one.
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Match the psalm with the appropriate description.
 

___ Psalm 74	a. A great thunderstorm
___ Psalm 29	b. Ehan acknowledges God's power and rule in creation.
___ Psalm 89	c. Through the mere spoken word that creation came to be.
___ Psalms 33&65	d. Asaph confesses his faith in God to deliver him (nation).
3. Give two examples of God revealing Himself in judgment in creation.
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is the theme of Psalm 104? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



## LESSON EIGHT

# God's Revelation In the Psalms (II)

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### INTRODUCTION:

**I**n our last few sessions we have been focusing on God in the Psalms. Of particular emphasis in the preceding session is God's revelation of Himself to mankind. Romans 1:18-20 asserts that God reveals Himself through creation in two ways. Just the sheer power, design, and order of creation proclaims that He exists, that He's eternal, and that He is powerful. Second, God's use of creation's calamities – plagues on Egypt (lice, murrain, frogs) for instance—proclaims His righteousness in the earth. Isaiah 26:9 says people pay attention to those life-stopping events caused by God.

Of course God's word is the other means by which God reveals Himself. Our study of Psalm 19 in our last lesson combined God's revelation through creation with the revelation through His Word. He closes that psalm with this statement, *"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer."*

And what about these words: *"Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against thee."* *"Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path"* (v. 105). The 119th psalm is the longest psalm and maybe for that reason it has been neglected! However, it is a magnificent, poetical piece with enduring lessons for every believer.

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**LESSON TEXT:** Psalm 119

**LESSON AIM:** To magnify, honor and praise God by honoring His word by our obedience and dependence on His Word.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. Discover the character and setting of Psalm 119.
  2. Investigate the kind of attitudes we should have toward both God and His Word.
  3. Learn four attitudes a person should have toward God.
  4. Learn four attitudes a person should have toward God's Word.
  5. See that God's Word reveals the covenants which God has made with mankind through the ages.
- 

### GOOD ATTITUDES TOWARDS GOD AND HIS WORD (PSALM 119)

#### A. The Character and Makeup of Psalm 119

1. Arranged in stanzas of eight verses each.
2. It is acrostic.
  - a. Successive letters in the Hebrew alphabet before each stanza.
  - b. Each verse in that stanza begins with a word that begins with that letter.
  - c. With 22 letters and eight verses per letter, the psalm comes out 176 verses.

## B. The Setting for the Psalm Seems to Be Trouble for the Psalmist

1. A number of verses describe his affliction:
  - a. *"This is my comfort in my affliction. . ."* (v. 50).
  - b. *"I am exceedingly afflicted"* (v. 107).
  - c. *"I have gone astray, like a lost sheep"* (v. 176).
2. The affliction is viewed as an instrument in God's hands to bring him to his senses:
  - a. *"It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn thy statutes"* (v. 71).
  - b. These afflictions have come in the form of enemies and persecution:
    - 1) *"The arrogant utterly deride me"* (v. 51).
    - 2) *"When will Thou execute judgment upon those who persecute me? The arrogant have dug pits for me. They have persecuted me with a lie; help me. They almost destroyed me on earth"* (vs. 85-87).
3. Apparently the psalmist wandered away from God. His relationship to the Father grew cold.
4. Because the Lord loves His child, He punishes him to get his attention.
5. In his affliction he called out to God for help.
  - a. He pleads for deliverance: *"Do not forsake me utterly!"* (v. 8).
  - b. *"O Lord, do not put me to shame!"* (v. 31).
6. He must cooperate with God's providential protection from his enemies.
  - a. The Word will guide his life back to a life of righteous living and close relationship to God.
  - b. God will take care of His part in shaming the detractors.
  - c. The psalmist must do his part with the Word in his life.

## GOOD ATTITUDES TOWARD GOD AND HIS WORD

### A. Good Attitudes Toward God

1. A desire to seek with the whole heart (v. 2). *"How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart."*
  - a. Seeking God to know Him, to want to have fellowship Him, to want to be owned by Him, to love Him; to know God and to be known by Him (cf. Galatians 4:9).
  - b. Jeremiah 9:23-24: *". . .but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me."*
  - c. The main way to come to know the Lord is through the Word.
  - d. God created man for fellowship with Him. Coming to know Him and be like Him must be of highest priority.
2. A desire to seek understanding from God (vs. 18-19). *"Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Thy law. I am a stranger in the earth; do not hide Thy commandments from me."*
  - a. A strong sense of need and DEPENDENCY upon God (vs. 19, 40, 66).
  - b. A strong sense of EXPECTANCY about what one will receive from this relationship with God through His word (vs. 18, 98-99).
3. A reverent awe of God (v. 161). *"Princes persecute me without cause, but my heart stands in awe of Thy words."*
  - a. Before one approaches the Word, there must be a healthy respect for God.
    - 1) Moses at Mt. Sinai and the burning bush.
    - 2) Daniel when he heard the messenger of the Lord.
    - 3) John in Revelation 1:17 as he was shown the grandeur of God's heavenly abode.
  - b. We cannot afford to treat this book or our relationship with God as if we can take it or leave it. This is the Word, the proclamation of the Lord Almighty! He is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29). He is holy (1 Peter

- 1:16). We will be judged by this Word (John 12:48).
- c. When He speaks through His word, true worshipers listen. We need a healthy respect for God.
- 4. An attitude of thanksgiving and praise.
  - a. *"I shall give thanks to Thee with uprightness of heart"* (v. 7).
  - b. *"I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches"* (v. 14).
  - c. *"At midnight I shall rise to give thanks to Thee because of Thy righteous ordinances"* (v. 62).
  - d. *"Seven times a day I praise Thee, because of Thy righteous ordinances"* (v. 164).

**NOTE:** It is interesting to note that this psalm is 176 verses long, the longest chapter in the Bible, and its theme is the Word of God. It is as if the author cannot say enough to extol the merits of the Law of the Lord and of the Lord Himself! *"Let my soul live that it may praise Thee, and let Thine ordinances help me"* (v. 175).

### **B. Good Attitudes Toward the Word**

1. A desire to understand the Word.
  - a. *"My soul is crushed with longing after Thine ordinances at all times"* (v. 20).
  - b. *"Thy testimonies also are my delight; they are my counselors"* (v. 24).
  - c. *"I have inherited Thy testimonies forever, for they are the joy of my heart"* (v. 111).
  - d. *"And I shall delight in Thy commandments which I love"* (v. 47).
  - e. These verses express an attitude which should dwell in all searchers.
2. A dependence on the Word (vs. 42-43, 151).
  - a. Jesus said, *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*" (Matthew 4:4).
  - b. He also proclaimed His dependency on God when He said, *"My meat (food) is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish His work"* (John 4:34).
  - c. *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge"* (Hosea. 4:6). They no longer knew right from wrong.
3. A desire to obey the Word. *"I hastened and did not delay to keep Thy commandments"* (v. 60); *"Depart from me, evildoers, that I may observe the commandments of my God"* (v. 115).
  - a. The command of the Lord is not a take-or-leave-it proposition.
  - b. Christianity is not a cafeteria style religion, where the adherent is permitted to choose his own personal set of likeable commands.
  - c. The motivation to obey is also to please Him. *"We make it our goal (aim) to please Him"* (II Corinthians 5:9).
4. A reverent respect for the Word. *"Thou art my hiding place and my shield; I wait for Thy word"* (v. 114).
  - a. The psalmist believes God says what He means and means what He says.
  - b. When God's Word is read in worship assemblies, it should be read by competent, expressive readers. Remember, God is speaking.

### **C. God's Word in Covenant Form**

1. God's Word becomes necessary because it spells out the conditions of a covenant relationship with God.
2. The Holy One to set out the conditions by which man will be allowed again to fellowship the Perfect One.

3. The Abrahamic Covenant serves as the base, the foundation for all other Israelite covenants.
  - a. God promised to give Abraham's descendants the land of Palestine (Genesis 12:7).
  - b. The psalmist recalls God's commitment to that Abrahamic promise in 105:8-10.
  - c. Fulfilled when Joshua's armies conquered Canaan land (Joshua 21; 23).
4. The Covenant of Blessings and Cursings included warnings of pests, pestilence and removal from the land if the people rebelled (Deuteronomy 28-29).
5. The Davidic Covenant too was important to Israel. God promises to keep David's descendants on the throne of Israel (89:3,28,34,39).
  - a. The condition: "*If your sons keep my covenant and the statutes I teach them, then their sons will sit on your throne for ever and ever*" (103:12).
  - b. The psalmists recall those covenants as the terms of Israel's relationship with God.

### CONCLUSION

The message should be clear to us today too. Look around, God is speaking to us. "*The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork* (19:1). *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my way*" (119:105). In an age where many people live in the concrete jungles of huge cities God's voices in creation is often drowned out by honking horns and blocked out by high rise buildings. We must find time and place to hear his voice in creation. But His Word is also being blocked out of our lives. Busyness drains us. Entertainment captures us. Meanwhile God's promises of covenant relationship with man catches dust on our bookshelves. "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.*" Take time, make time to listen to God's revelations. Your eternal destiny depends on it.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a  
light unto my way

**SELF EXAM FOR LESSON EIGHT:**

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1. Describe the acrostic nature of Psalm 119.

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2. What seems to be the setting for Psalm 119? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Give four attitudes toward God contained in Psalm 119.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

4. What are four attitudes toward the “Word” are expressed in Psalm 119?

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

5. Explain the relation of God’s “Word” to God’s “Covenants”.

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6. List three covenants used as examples in this lesson.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

# The God of Israelite History

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## INTRODUCTION:

**A** proper view of history is a must for a proper world view. World view includes one's perceptions of reality about God, Man, the Universe, Sin, Time, and History. Any one of these elements improperly perceived causes wrong thinking and wrong behaving. For instance, if one views God as a cruel tyrant who destroys anyone and everyone who even slightly steps out of line, he will possess a particular mind set and a certain emotional makeup and a way of living that would accompany such a view. We who are religious know how important a correct view of God is. It not only affects one's eternal destiny, but also every facet of his life.

We live in a culture that focuses on the here and now, today only. To such a society, history is irrelevant to today's challenges. Perhaps our faith in developing technology deceives us into believing that we have the knowledge and power to escape any problem today. Thus, the past teaches us little because people in the past did not have the technology we have today. More likely, however, our culture just wants to do what it wants to do! When that involves a profligate lifestyle, people don't want to hear the voice of history saying, "Better watch out! Someone has rightly said, "The person (or society) that does not listen to history, that doesn't pay attention to mistakes of the past, is bound to repeat those mistakes!" We need to listen to the voice of history. That's not just me talking. That's indeed a biblical principle which is seen in a number of scriptures, including the Psalms. Of course the Bible is our best history book because it gives God's interpretation of history.

What about the way in which God tried to use history to speak to the Jewish mind? Even the New Testament gives us an indication of that. Jesus, Stephen, Peter, Paul, James, Jude, and the Hebrew writer all use history to teach lessons to Jewish people.

Is the approach of using Israelite history to exemplify and motivate unique to the New Testament? No. The Lord wanted to keep Israelite history in the forefront of each generation's thinking. When Deuteronomy was periodically read to the people, it included, along with a repetition of the Law of Moses given at Sinai, a part of history. The Abrahamic and Davidic covenants are also frequently called to mind. There are numerous references in Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles to Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The Prophets too call this to the minds of their hearers (cf. Hosea 11:12). Thus when you come to the liturgy of Israelite worship, especially that written during the time of David and Solomon, you expect some historical references. The piece of history most often rehearsed is the deliverance from Egypt. That is often carried through to the time when the Israelites inherited Canaan land, the Promised Land. This emphasis is significant, I believe, because it is the time of fulfillment of the Nation and Land parts of the Abrahamic covenant. God redeemed Israel from Egyptian bondage to become His people. Exodus tells us that became official at Mt. Sinai, when they received the Law. They are now a nation. The land promise is fulfilled when they conquer Canaan (Joshua 21:43-45). The psalmists take the history in Canaan on to the time of David's

reign. Of course that's the height of Israelite prosperity and notoriety. Rescue from Egypt and the reign by David become two pylons of Israelite history upon which so much else in Israelite thinking and acting is to be built.

**LESSON TEXT:** Psalms 78, 105, 106.

**LESSON AIM:** To appreciate the God who works in the affairs of men throughout history to effect His purposes through His people.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. Learn the importance of studying history.
2. Be convinced not to make the mistakes of past history.

## **PSALM 78: THE MISTAKES ISRAEL MADE IN THE PAST**

### **A. The Theme and Purpose of the Psalm**

1. The theme of this psalm is "The mistakes Israel made in the past."
2. The purpose of the psalm is "Teach your children (and their children) not to make the same mistakes Israel has made in the past."

### **B. The Problems of Israel (vs. 1-8)**

1. Those mistakes stem from unbelief.
  - a. Lack of trust in God.
  - b. Forgot the works of God in the past (this is the basis upon which they should have chosen to trust in the present!).
  - c. Failed to keep His commands.
  - d. Stubborn and rebellious spirit.
  - e. Not faithful or lacking in belief.
2. Subsequent verses develop these thoughts.
  - a. *"In spite of all this, they still sinned* (that's stubbornness and rebellion), *and did not believe in his wonderful works"* (that's unbelief) (v. 32).
  - b. *"They forgot His deeds"* (v. 11).
  - c. *"They did not remember his power"* (v. 42). (That's forgetting His awesome deeds and works in the past.)
  - d. *"They did not keep his statutes"* (v. 56).

### **C. Examples from Israelite History**

1. Lack of faith and dedication of Ephraim.
  - a. Ephraim is remembered for his cowardice in the time of battle.
  - b. The psalmist may have in mind one or both incidents recorded in Judges. When Gideon and Jephthah were chasing enemies of Israel, Ephraim seems hesitant to join them because of the uncertainty of the outcome (Judges 8; 12). Jephthah says, *"I and my people were engaged in a great struggle with the Ammonites, and although I called, you did not save me out of their hands. When I saw you wouldn't help, I took my life in my hands. . . and the Lord gave me the victory. . ."* (Judges 12:2-3). They wanted in on the glory of the victory, but had been afraid to join in the fight when great faith was demanded. Ephraim did not display great faith then, or in later Israelite history as the Northern Kingdom slipped into idolatry and immorality.
2. Deliverance from Egypt and provision in the desert (vs. 11-16).
  - a. They *"forgot His deeds"* (v. 11).
    - 1) He showed His power by splitting the Red Sea. *"He made the waters*

- stand up like a heap*” (v. 13).
  - 2) Control of nature is further shown in the pillar of cloud to lead them by day and the pillar of fire by night.
- b. Through Moses He split ageless rocks and made water run out for two million people. It’s like He borrowed it from the oceans (v. 15).

#### **D. The Unbelief of Israel (vs. 18-31)**

1. The Israelites are said to have tested God. *“And in their heart they put God to the test”* (v. 18).
  - a. Ten times in the wilderness (Numbers 14:22).
  - b. Doubting God’s ability to give them sufficient food in the desert, they brashly said, *“Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?...Will He provide meat for His people!”* (vs. 19-20). Exodus 16 reveals, God gave them manna and quail – more control of nature for His benevolent purposes. The people called it “manna,” which means “What is it?”

#### **E. The Hypocrisy of Israel (vs. 32-39)**

1. Their hypocrisy seen in their feigned repentance. *“They deceived Him with their mouth, and lied to Him with their tongue; for their heart was not steadfast toward Him, nor were they faithful in His covenant”* (vs. 36-37).
  - a. With their lips they praise Him but their hearts are far from Him.
  - b. They worship Him in vain. God is not fooled or one to be mocked. He shows more great wonders by sending plagues and pestilence and fire to devour them, for example 14,700 after Korah’s rebellion (Numbers 16:48). That too was a great “work” they chose to ignore (v. 32).
  - c. The Lord forgave them time after time (vs. 38-39). He refrained from judgment at times.
2. The penalty of hypocrisy – judgment. He kept them out of the Promised Land.
  - a. He killed them all in the desert (v. 33; Numbers 14:28ff).
  - b. They tried to go up into the land, but God’s power manifested in the inhabitants of Canaan repelled them back into the desert.

#### **F. The Redemption Process from Egyptian Bondage (vs. 40-56)**

1. The redemption process described.
  - a. Redemption from Egypt by the plagues and provision in the desert and conquest of the land for the new generation.
  - b. He mentions six of the plagues (what incredible power!) but notes that *“They did not remember this power”* (v. 42) (later in their history).
  - c. These plagues devastated the greatest nation on earth at that time, reaching even into the family of the most powerful monarch of the time: *“He smote all the firstborn of Egypt”* (v. 51).
  - d. Then with the hornet before them, the Israelites drove out the inhabitants of Canaan and received a land flowing with milk and honey.
2. More rebellion and unfaithfulness during the time of the judges, especially Eli, the high priest, led to more judgment. God allowed the Philistines to capture the ark (vs. 56-64). Israel was defeated and devastated (1 Samuel 4).

#### **G. The Lord Still Loves Israel (vs. 65-72)**

1. In verses 65-72 we hear about God awakening, as from a sleep, to again deliver and bless Israel.



2. He raised up David as His servant to defeat the Philistines and other enemies of Israel. This same David brought the reclaimed ark to Jerusalem. God dwells there now. David rules from a posture of power now. He shepherds the people with integrity and skill (72). Once again, Israel is the beneficiary of God's power and blessing.

## CONCLUSION

That's the way the psalm ends, but the introductory thought is surely to be remembered. Here you are, Israel, in a time of peace and prosperity. Surely, you will not again repeat the sin of your forefathers. Surely you will heed the lessons from your past mistakes and avoid future judgment. And surely you will impress this strongly upon succeeding generations, preventing their downfall and the addition of another sad chapter in Israelite history.

Psalms 78 ends its historical jaunt at the coming of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. Psalms 105 and 106, the next two historical psalms in the book, are parts of Asaph's psalm of thanksgiving, written to commemorate this very event (1 Chronicles 16:7ff).

## PSALM 105: AN EXHORTATION TO WORSHIPERS TO PRAISE GOD AND TRUST HIM

### A. Old Testament Background

1. Agreement with the patriarchs, Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 12:7; 26:4; 28:4). "*To your descendants I will give this land.*"
2. When the Israelite nation under Joshua's leadership conquered the land of Canaan, this promise was fulfilled, "*So the Lord gave Israel all the land He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it*" (Joshua 21:43).
3. To the Israelites, the existence of a tabernacle and later a temple with their sacrificial system was proof that they were the nation God had specifically chosen to fulfill the nation part of the Abrahamic covenant.
4. Their continual possession of the land of Canaan was proof to them that the land part of the Abrahamic covenant was also fulfilled.
5. It is this promise that is celebrated in Psalm 105. God has sustained that promise throughout their history so far.

### B. Call to Sing (vs. 1-7)

The introduction (vs. 1-7) calls on the "seed of Abraham" (v. 4) to sing praises and thanks to God. That praise is to "*Remember His wonders which He has done, His marvels and the judgments uttered by His mouth*" (v. 5). Israel is to make this known among the nations (v. 1).

### C. Description of the Historical Development of the Abrahamic Covenant (vs. 8-43)

Verses 8-11 speak of the Abrahamic covenant made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: "*To you I will give the land of Canaan*" (v. 11). **The theme is the Lord has used His power throughout history to give Israel the land and to retain it for them.**

1. First three patriarchs were protected by God from any harm (vs. 12-15). The particular reference is to Genesis 20. Abimelech, the Philistine, was going to take Abraham's wife, but the Lord prevented him, rebuked him, and touted Abraham as a prophet. This kind of protection is repeated for Isaac under almost identical conditions in Genesis 26.

2. Israel's descendants in Egypt.  
The next chapter in the saga transfers Israel's descendants to Egypt (vs. 12-24). As the last quarter of Genesis records, God through Joseph preserves the family of Israel to whom He'd made these promises. Again, God's great power is seen. He used the jealousy of ten brothers, the lust of Potiphar's wife, the faulty memory of Pharaoh's butler, an unusually bad famine, and two dreams to cause a young Joseph to be exalted to the second highest position in Egypt!
3. Events in Egypt to free them.  
The next part of Israel's history, though hard on them physically, is also a part of God's shaping of a nation for the blessing of a Promised Land. Centuries in Egypt and some of that in slavery are strange tools of molding clay! Verses 25-38 rehearse those great events of Exodus 3-16. God raises up a leader, Moses. Then the plagues are noted. Eight of the ten are specifically mentioned. God was judging Egyptian gods (Exodus 12:12) and building faith in the Israelites.
4. God's care for them in the desert.  
Verses 39-43 tell of God's care in the desert. Again, we could recall the many manifestations of God's power. Finally, the psalmist gets the Israelite nation to Canaan, "He gave them also the lands of the nations" (v. 44). All that remains is for Israel to be faithful to the conditions of the Mosaic covenant given on Mt. Sinai. Verse 45 concludes, "*So that they might keep His statutes and observe His laws.*" Israel is urged in this psalm to keep that Sinaitic covenant so that God can allow them to keep the land.

#### **PSALM 106: NOT ONE LESSON WAS LEARNED**

##### **A. Theme (vs. 3-5). National Confession**

Two verses sum it up well: "*We have sinned like our fathers*" (v. 6), and "*Many times He would deliver them. They, however, were rebellious. . .*" (v. 43). Thus we can expect this psalm to accentuate Israelite mistakes and rebellions in past history. **It is a praise of God's goodness, a confession of sin, a national lament over that sin, and a plea for restoration of blessing.**

##### **B. The Proof of Their Failure (vs.6-46)**

1. Their record of failure and God's restoration and blessing (vs. 6-46).
  - a. Rebellion at the Red Sea because they had quickly forgotten the plagues, but God saved them (vs. 7-12).
  - b. Discontent at Massah and Meribah, but God gave them their lust and then punished them (vs. 13-15).
  - c. Jealous Korah and Dathan led a revolt against the leadership of Moses (vs. 16-18).
  - d. Only four months after God had struck down Egypt's firstborn, they were making a golden calf to worship and involving themselves in all kinds of revelry, but Moses intervened and prevented the Lord from destroying them completely (vs. 19-23).
  - e. Lack of faith in taking possession of the land already theirs (vs. 24-27).
  - f. Idolatry and immorality with the Moabites (vs. 28-31).
  - g. Complaint at Meribah (vs. 32-33).
  - f. Letting foreigners live among them in Canaan (vs. 34-39).
2. The theme: God's lovingkindness in the midst of judgment (vs. 40-46).

##### **C. The Application (vs. 47-48)**

It is a confession, a lament, a praise, and a plea all in one. "*One more time, Lord, save us, even though we don't deserve it.*"

**SELF EXAM FOR LESSON NINE:**

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1. What is the theme of Psalm 78 and what is its purpose?  
Theme: \_\_\_\_\_  
Purpose: \_\_\_\_\_
2. The problems of Israel in Psalm 78 stem from unbelief. List five areas where this unbelief is manifested.
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 5) \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the “Theme” of Psalm 105?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Find and give the two themes of Psalm 106.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. List five proofs (there are at least 7) given by the writer in Psalm 106 that manifest Israel’s failure.
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 5) \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is the importance of knowing History, especially the History in the Bible?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON TEN

# The Royal Psalms (I)

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### INTRODUCTION

**I**f you think of the psalms as primarily temple worship, you might not anticipate any appreciable focus on the king. There is, however, a significant emphasis on the king in many psalms, over half in fact!

With this large number of psalms relating to some aspect of the kingly office, one would expect some overlap with other types of psalms. Indeed, such is the case. In another lesson in this series on Psalms, we discuss the Protection and Deliverance Psalms. The kingly psalms sometimes fit into that category. We spend two sessions investigating the Praise and Thanksgiving Psalms. Again, some of the kingly psalms are of that variety. Another group of psalms is considered Messianic in nature. Since Jesus was a king, some kingly psalms are used by God to prophecy the coming kingdom and kingship of the Christ. We will approach this rather hefty grouping from two reference points. In 1 Samuel 8 we learn of God's allowance of an earthly king for the Israelite nation. In 2 Samuel 7 we learn of the special covenant God makes with king David.

As Samuel grew older and his sons more wicked, the Israelites begged for a king. They wanted to be like the other nations and have a king to lead them out into battle (1 Samuel 8:5,20). Instead of trusting God, they desired a visible person in which to put their confidence. When Samuel angrily takes their plea to the Lord, He says, They have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them (v. 7).

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**LESSON TEXT:** 1 Samuel 8; 2 Samuel 7; Psalms 97, 72, 20, 61, 63

**LESSON AIM:** To come to appreciate the kingship of God over His people.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. Investigate the relationship between the physical throne of Israel and the rule of God in that nation.
2. See the nature of the petitions (by the king himself and his subjects) for the king.
3. Note the ties between psalms and other Old Testament historical markers.

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### WHO RULES ISRAEL – THE KINGDOM AND ITS KING

#### A. God Is the Ultimate King of Israel

1. The king is God's representative over the Israelite nation.
  - a. When He brought them out of Egypt, He made them into a great nation, called them "my people," and told them He would be their God.
  - b. Balaam's prophecy in Numbers 23:21 says, "*The Lord his God is with him (Israel), and the shout of a king is among them,*" meaning God, their King, is among the Israelites.
  - c. Before he died, Moses blessed the people in Deuteronomy 33; in which he

says, “*He (God) was king*” (v. 5).

- d. The Lord chose that first king, Saul (1 Samuel 10:24), and then David, the second king (1 Samuel 16:12-13). **The king, then, becomes God’s representative over the Israelite nation.**
2. God has not abdicated the throne, but has acquiesced to the people’s desires to have an earthly representative of His leadership.

### B. Psalm 97: The Lord Reigns

When you come to the psalms, you see this duality of leadership expressed. Psalms 92 – 99, as a group, emphasize God’s reign. For example, **Psalms 93,97,99 all open with “The Lord reigns”** – a fact! He reigns over creation, enemies, and Israel. He is a “great King” (95:3).

1. The righteousness and resulting judgment of His reign (vs. 1-6).
  - a. The clouds, the darkness (v. 2), the fire (v. 3), the lightnings (v. 4), the trembling earth all conjure up judgment pictures from other passages in the Old Testament.
  - b. All creation trembles and shakes simply from the approaching presence of Jehovah, but more so because He comes to judge His enemies. “*Because of Thy judgments, O Lord, For Thou art the Lord Most High over all the earth*” (vs. 8-9).
2. A challenge for all people to serve this King (vs. 7-10).
  - a. You idolaters worship God (v. 7)! No idol or so-called god is anything. God is higher. He is King (v. 9).
  - b. You lovers of the Lord, stay on course. Hate what He hates and be upright in heart (vs. 10-11). Remember, He is your preserver and deliverer (v. 10), and your light (v. 11). So, “*Be glad in the Lord, you righteous ones, and give thanks to His holy name*” (v. 12).

### C. Psalm 72: The Peoples’ Intercession for the King

1. The king is the King’s son.
  - a. The physical king became God’s representative. Psalm 72:1 says, “*Give the king Thy judgments (or principles of righteous judgment), O God, and Thy righteousness to the king’s son*”.
  - b. Synonymous parallelism demands that “king” in line one equals the “king’s son” in line two.
  - c. Any king in Judah/Israel is to be of royal stock, in a lineage, God being the ultimate ancestor, as it were. He is the King’s son (with a capital K)! He is God’s son, in that sense. Any king in the lineage of David is referred to as “son”.
2. The peoples’ prayer (vs. 2-19).
  - a. God will bestow on his son the ability to rule and judge. “*May he judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thy afflicted with justice*” (v. 2). Thus he imitates God.
  - b. Calling for a long and successful reign (vs. 5-7).
    - 1) That righteous rule that affords the blessing of peace may continue “*Till the moon is no more*” (v. 7).
    - 2) May those blessings be “*like showers that water the earth*” (v. 6).
  - c. The extent of his rule (vs. 8-14).
    - 1) The particulars of the domains he should rule. “*From the river*” (v. 8), which refers to the Euphrates River and probably means the outer limit of the Promised Land.
    - 2) From there to the ends of the earth. To make it plain, the psalmist says let him rule over even the desert tribes that wander about in nomadic

fashion, usually free from localized government (v. 9). Then from the Western extreme of Tarshish to the Eastern extreme of Sheba in the Arabian desert, “*let all kings bow down before him, all nations serve him*” (v. 11).

- 3) For the sake of the oppressed (vs. 12-15). The afflicted “*who has no helper*” (v. 12) has this benevolent and just ruler looking out after him. He now has a chance to escape “oppression and violence” from unscrupulous rich people (v. 14).
- d. Long live the king! (vs. 15-17). “So may he live” (v. 15) is like the British wish, “Long live the king!”
  - 1) The prayer is for his long life, so that the land and its inhabitants will flourish.
  - 2) His life, the land . . . and his name. “*May his name endure forever; may his name increase as long as the sun shines*” (v. 17). His name represents everything about him – his whole character, nature, and work. May it last forever!

#### **D. Conclusion**

What have we seen so far? God is Israel’s ultimate Ruler and King. His physical representative on earth is the king who sits on the throne in Jerusalem. That king, just as God would, is to lead the nation against enemies and to protect the needy and lowly individuals in the nation. You might call that his foreign and domestic policies!

### **PSALM 20: ABOUT THE EARTHLY KING**

#### **A. Occasion of the Psalm (v. 1)**

1. It is a “day of trouble” (v. 1) that occasions the psalm. Perhaps the scene is that the king is set to lead his armies off to war against the oppressor.
2. Though a mighty leader and though commanding the respect of the people, the king needs help from above.

#### **B. Prayer for a Faithful and Trusting King (v. 2)**

1. This prayer assumes their belief in the king’s trust in God.
2. Asserts their faith in God too.
  - a. Their faith is expressed in verse 2, “*May he send you help.*”
  - b. But most of the their petitions assert his faithfulness and trust. For example, verse one, “*May the Lord answer you.*” Verse three, “*May He remember all your meal offerings.*”
  - c. This king sacrifices and prays. (If the inscription is accurate, it’s David.) The meal and burnt offerings are self-surrendering, sweet smelling savor sacrifices.

#### **C. Confession of Need**

He is renouncing all he has and all that he is. He is confessing that he and his are God’s. He’s admitting bankruptcy of strength and wisdom to win the battles and to lead his people successfully.

#### **D. Pledge and Victory**

1. The worshipers pledge to raise their banners and voices in a victory shout. Would the Lord not be pleased with a vow that says that the subjects of the king are willing to acknowledge God’s power and part in the victory and to exult in the king as God’s instrument of protection and justice?!
2. They stand ready to form a victory parade – flags and all!

**E. Confidence**

Even before the battle ensues, the people express confidence that God will indeed answer theirs and the king's petitions in this regard. "*Now I know that the Lord saves His anointed* (the king, that is)" (verse 6). Why? Because of the trust they and he place in God, not in the war machine of the day, the chariots and horses (v. 7). Remember Pharaoh at the Red Sea! It's interesting that verse 6 is in the past tense, as if it should be translated, "*Now I know that the Lord hath saved.*" It could be a reflection on past history, or an assurance that, though in the future in the case before us, it's as good as done. Either interpretation asserts the faith of the people.

**F. Concluding Petition (v. 9)**

"*Save, O Lord; May the King answer us in the day we call,*" the King being God, the ultimate King of Israel. The whole psalm has expressed this trust. Help comes "*from the sanctuary*" (where God dwells), "*from Zion*" (v. 2), and "*in the name of our God*" (stated three times).

**PSALMS 61 and 63: PETITIONS OF THE KING HIMSELF****A. Psalm 61: A Psalm of Petition, Praise, and Pronouncement of Assurance**

1. His petition is deliverance (vs. 1-4).
  - a. The figures of strength and protection from God. "*Lead me to the rock that is higher than I*" (v. 2) has even been made into a song. God is the rock above all rocks. He is especially above the rock of human effort and strength, even that of David! "*A refuge for me, a tower of strength against the enemy*" (v. 3). The citadel or city tower was the place of refuge and strength in any city. Here it is another figure of God's strength. It's in behalf of the king too. The fortress, the tower is a refuge for the king, away from all enemies.
  - b. "Dwell in Thy tent" (v. 4) refers to the tabernacle. That's where God dwells, and where safety is. "*Let me take refuge in the shelter of Thy wings*" (v. 4) probably is the picture of a mother hen gathering her chicks under his protective wings (cf. 57:1; Luke 13:34). God is seen as the protector of the king who trusts in Him.
2. His pronouncement of assurance (vs. 5-7).
  - a. He is sure God has seen and respected his vows of dedication.
  - b. He is sure He will give him the inheritance, the land of Israel, long life, fellowship with God, and the favor of God.
  - c. Praise must follow, "*So I will sing praise to Thy name forever; that I may pay my vows day by day*" (v. 8). Sounds like his vows were to praise God continually.

**B. Psalm 63: The Thirsting Soul Satisfied in God**

The psalm itself seems to break down into three parts.

1. Verses 1-5 are the first part and speak of his desire for a close personal relationship with God. Note two particular sentences: "*My soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh yearns for Thee, in a dry and weary land where there is no water*" (v. 1), and "*My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth offers praises with joyful lips*" (v. 5). Those are the extremes of before and after. That petition is answered, verse 5.
2. Verses 6-8 express more satisfaction in that fellowship.
3. The third part of the psalm expresses confidence that God has delivered him from the enemies, and that they have received their just due (vs. 9-10). "Foxes" is better translated "jackals." The enemy is pictured as dead lying on the

battlefield. There's no one left to give them a decent burial. The jackals are the land scavengers who feast on these dead!

### CONCLUSION

Let's look at one other psalm, and that's 113. Psalms 113-117 are known as the "Egyptian Hallel." They were sung at the Passover feast each year as part of Israel's continual celebration of freedom from Egyptian bondage. This first psalm in the group praises a God who looks out after the needy (vs. 4-9). If it's God's role, as King of Israel, it's David's role as king of Israel. No wonder when Jesus came to the earth, He as Messianic King, as King in the mode of a David, fulfills Isaiah 61:1-2. The prophet foretold a Messianic King who would, "*preach good news to the poor . . . bind up the broken-hearted . . . proclaim freedom from the captives . . . release from darkness for the prisoners.*" These are the little guys, the needy. Jesus in Luke 4 announces that this prophecy describes the recipients of His ministry's efforts.

### SELF EXAM FOR LESSON NINE:

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1. What relationship did the kingships of Saul, David and the rest of Israel's kings hold to the kingship of God?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Psalms 93, 97, 99 all open with what great fact?\_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the major emphasis of Psalm 72?\_\_\_\_\_
4. Psalm 20 expresses the prayer of the people for whom?\_\_\_\_\_
5. What expresses the content of Psalms 61?\_\_\_\_\_
6. What is the content of Psalm 63?\_\_\_\_\_
7. What is the title of this group of Psalms?\_\_\_\_\_
8. When the people requested a king of Samuel who were they rejecting?\_\_\_\_\_



## LESSON ELEVEN

# The Royal Psalms (II)

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### INTRODUCTION:

**I**n our previous lesson we looked at the “Royal” or “King” Psalms. We noted that Israel acknowledged God as their ultimate King. We also noted, however, that the man on the throne at the time was God’s representative in that role as king of the nation. This man was to be of the line of David and was to carry out God’s work, especially in the work of taking care of the needy and lowly. He was, in other words, God’s man on the throne over Israel (1 Samuel 8). We also noted that a number of psalms are prayers, either by the king himself or by the nation as a whole, for the king’s health and his victory as he went forth to fight for the people of Israel.

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**LESSON TEXT:** 1 Samuel 8; 2 Samuel 7; Psalms 45, 89, 132.

**LESSON AIM:** To see the God of covenant at work in Israel in relationship to the kingship.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. Investigate the relationship between the Psalms and the Davidic Covenant given in 2 Samuel 7.
- 

### REVIEW

#### A. People’s Request (1 Samuel 8)

1. The people requested a king. The Lord gave them their wish but there were conditions. He reserved the right to choose the man to be king.
2. Saul was the man to serve as the first king. Humble at first, he seemed to grow arrogant and independent of God’s help. God chose another king, David.
  - a. David becomes the elite model for all subsequent Israelite kings.
  - b. David typifies the Messianic King.

#### B. The Promise of Second Samuel 7

At one point in his reign, David was convinced he should build a house for the Lord. Nathan, the king’s prophet, encouraged him in this noble venture, till the Lord told him otherwise. Nathan’s vision from the Lord in 2 Samuel 7:5ff revealed that David’s son was to be God’s choice to build the Temple, God’s house. It is revealed to David that God will enter into a special covenant with him. The Lord will build David’s house instead of David building a house for God (v. 11). An offspring from his own body will build a kingdom that will last forever (vs. 12,13,16). This is a Messianic passage, foretelling the coming of Jesus and the establishment of His spiritual and eternal kingdom. Peter interprets this prophecy as having found its fulfillment when Jesus ascended to the right hand of God and sat down on David’s throne (Acts 2:29-36). In between David and Jesus, however, is a long line of kings, men, who assume

the throne of David. In so doing, they, like David, become types of Jesus. The most significant one in terms of this typology is David's son, Solomon. Remember the context and promise of 2 Samuel 7. God promises David that his son will build the house of the Lord. As you know, that was Solomon. When David addresses the people about the Temple to be built, he repeats this promise about Solomon (1 Chronicles 28:4-8). Not only did he continue the kingly line of David, but he built the Temple. Jesus fulfills the Davidic covenant-king promise and is the antitype of Solomon in terms of building the house of the Lord, the church, which is the spiritual kingdom (Matthew 16:18-19).

## CONTINUATION OF THE DAVIDIC COVENANT IN THE PSALMS

### A. The Abundance of "Davidic" Psalms

1. Almost half – some 72 – have specific references to David in their inscriptions or headings.
2. We don't know how many David himself wrote, and we don't know if others not specifically designated as being "Of David" might not also refer to him. David is of major importance in the Psalms.

### B. God's Throne and David's Throne the Same

1. David and Solomon sit on the throne of the Lord.
  - a. 1 Chronicles 28:4-5: Solomon will sit "*on the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel.*"
  - b. 1 Chronicles 29:23: "*Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father.*" The throne of David is the throne of the Lord and now Solomon sits there.
  - c. 2 Chronicles 13:8: Abijah, a later king of Judah, challenges Israel's king with this statement: "*Now you intend to resist the kingdom of the Lord through the sons of David.*"
  - d. 1 Kings 2:12: Solomon "*sat on the throne of his father David,*" but the Queen of Sheba claims, "*Blessed be the Lord your God who delighted in you, setting you on His throne, as king for the Lord your God;*" (2 Chronicles 9:8).
2. God's throne and David's throne become synonymous in the literature.

### C. David Is the First King Who Is Said to Assume That Throne of Justice and Righteousness. We've already seen that God rules Israel with this kind of reign (Psalm 9:7-8).

1. **The king is praised.** The wedding psalm (Psalm 45). It appears to be a celebration of the king's marriage.
  - a. **For his handsome looks** (v. 2). Remember that David was handsome (1 Samuel 17:42).
  - b. **For his military prowess** (vs. 3-5). Remember David "hath slain his ten thousands" (1 Samuel 18:7).
  - c. **For his high character in judging and ruling the people** (vs. 6-7). These last verses are like the description of God's rule in Psalm 97:2,6,11, and also are quoted in Hebrews 1 and applied to the rulership of Jesus. Thus, this psalm could well be of David, the type of Jesus in kingship.
  - d. **For his long-lasting dynasty.** The writer closes with this statement to the king, "*In place of thy father will be thy sons; thou shalt make them princes*

*of all the earth (or land). I will cause thy name to be remembered in all generations, therefore the people will give thee thanks forever and ever”* (vs. 16-17). Apparently the king’s dynasty will last a long time.

**NOTE:** Some think these verses to be Messianic, but I prefer to interpret them as part of the Davidic Covenant which promises David a descendant on the throne forever, or as long as the age shall last. Of course, ultimately that does translate into the Messianic rule.

2. **King David is God’s representative (Psalm 101).**

That the king is to be God’s representative, upholding justice and protecting the needy, is further evidenced in Psalm 101. It is inscribed as being “Of David,” and seems to be his commitment to God to be that kind of king.

3. **God chose His king and protects His king. Two isolated statements.**

- a. Psalm 78:70: *“He also chose David His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds.”*
- b. Psalm 18:50: *“He gives great deliverance to His king and shows lovingkindness to His anointed, to David and his descendants forever.”* That’s very similar to 2 Samuel 7.

4. **God’s covenant with David (Psalm 132).** (A Song of Ascent)

- a. Setting. The occasion is not known. Might have been written by Solomon in commemoration or dedication of the Temple.

- 1) Its historical point of reference is **the bringing of the ark of the covenant into the city of Jerusalem**. The Philistines had captured the ark during the time of Eli. The foolish Israelites had taken the ark into the battle zone, mistakenly thinking that its presence would insure them of victory. After God had toppled their idol of Dagon and afflicted the captors with painful tumors, the Philistines returned the ark to Israel. It stayed in Kiriath-jearim for twenty years before David learned of it and decided to bring it to Jerusalem.

- 2) The psalm is listed as a **“Song of Ascent,”** which is a pilgrim’s song, either as he nears the city of Jerusalem for a feast, or as he proceeds through the streets of the city on the way to the Temple to offer sacrifice. Thus the similarity of content between the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem in the first place, and the dedication of the Temple and the ascent of pilgrims to that Temple in later years.

- 3) This psalm is **a prayer to God for the kingship**. David’s desire and vow to God is repeated in this psalm in verses 3-5, *“Surely I will not enter my house, nor lie on my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.”* Verses 6-9 describe his desire to bring the ark to Jerusalem. “Jaar” in verse 6 is probably the same as Kiriath-jearim, where the ark had been kept. “Ephrathah” in verse 6 is Bethlehem (See Micah 5:2).

- b. David’s kingship.

From the ark moving, the writer turns to David’s kingship (vs. 10-12). These verses recall the promise by God to David concerning his progeny, *“Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne. If your sons will keep My covenant, and my testimony which I teach them, their sons also shall sit upon your throne forever”* (vs. 11-12).

From that promise, he shifts back to the sanctuary in Zion (v. 13). The Lord

has declared this as His residence on earth. Therefore He will provide for Zion's needs, I suppose meaning Jerusalem, all Israel, and the priesthood particularly. It will cause Israel to rejoice (v. 16).

- c. The covenant promises and assurances.

*"There I will cause the horn of David to spring forth, I have prepared a lamp for my anointed. His enemies I will clothe with shame, but upon himself his crown shall shine"* (vs. 17-18). The blessings upon David are several. The "horn" is an Old Testament figure of authority and strength, originating from the wild ox or bull. God promises to keep David's sons on the throne, in other words. They will be a mighty victorious set of rulers. "A lamp" or light probably refers to the continuation of the line itself. Son after son will ascend the throne of Israel. Finally, God will protect David's sons from the enemies (v. 18). All this for the sake of the Temple. The Davidic covenant and kingly line are put in place by God to protect the dwelling place of God! A type of Christ who protects the New Testament temple, the church!

## 5. The Davidic covenant (Psalm 89).

- a. **Setting.** Time of composition unknown. Written by Ethan the Ezrahite.

- 1) The situation is one of devastation and despair (38-45).
- 2) Some invading force has overrun the city of Jerusalem or all Israel.
- 3) Walls have been broken down; strongholds have been ruined; cities have been plundered by passersby; enemies are rejoicing in their victory and gloating over Israel's shame (vs. 39-42).
- 4) It's not just a loss by Israel, but by the king, a son of David, one of Jehovah's anointed (v. 38).
- 5) The writer feels like God has abandoned His commitment to the Davidic Covenant. *"Thou hast been full of wrath against Thine anointed"* (v. 38); *"Thou hast spurned the covenant of Thy servant; Thou hast profaned his crown in the dust"* (v. 39); *"And cast his throne to the ground"* (v. 44). **Note the three-point outline of this psalm.**

- b. **Praise for God's faithfulness to the covenant (vs. 1-4).**

He acknowledges in verses 1-4 the existence of the original covenant. In fact verse 4 is a paraphrase of 2 Samuel 7. The psalmist is committed to singing praise about God's love in this regard (v. 1). That praise continues in verses 5-18, especially for God's faithfulness to His covenants. *"Thy faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones"* (v. 5); *"O Lord God of hosts, who is like Thee, O Mighty Lord? Thy faithfulness also surrounds Thee"* (v. 8); *"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Thy throne; lovingkindness and truth (faithfulness) go before Thee"* (v. 14). This same faithfulness theme is repeated in verses 24, 33, 37, and 49. His faithfulness and lovingkindness are first of all seen in His rule over creation (vs. 9-14). He has been strong in His rule over creation for Israel's benefit. Two possible allusions: One in verse 9, *"Thou dost rule the swelling of the sea; when its waves rise, Thou dost still them"* could refer to His parting of the Red Sea to let Israel out of Egyptian bondage. Another in verse 10, *"Thou Thyself didst crush Rahab"* is probably another reference to Egypt (cf. 87:4). He did that through many acts of nature – water to blood, locusts, darkness, etc. The last in verse 12, *"Thou hast created them; Tabor and Hermon . . ."* tell of two mountains of the land of Palestine that are under

His control too. All for Israel! He rules it, and mankind with a strong arm, a mighty hand, and with righteousness, justice, lovingkindness and truth (or faithfulness) (vs. 13-14).

c. **Petition to God to help his people (vs. 15-45).**

The psalmist now petitions God to help His people because they do now walk in His light (vs. 15-18), and in view of His covenant with David (vs. 19-37). Once again, it is a free paraphrase of 2 Samuel 7:8-16. God is represented as being the speaker. He tells of finding David (and therefore choosing him), of anointing him king (v. 20). He had promised then to support and protect him (v. 21). No enemy will be victorious against him (vs. 22-23). Though sounding heavily like Jesus, the type is meant primarily in vs. 24-29. His kingdom will be extended overseas (v. 25), but he will still acknowledge the Lord as his Father (v. 26). He will be made pre-eminent among kings in the earth (v. 27). David and Solomon were!

His kingdom will be perpetuated through his sons (vs. 28-29). God must do this because He must keep the Davidic Covenant, “*My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall be confirmed to him*” (v. 28). The covenant does apply to David’s descendants. Part of that covenant involves discipline if he sins (vs. 30-32). Thus the psalmist acknowledges that the present king has sinned and deserved the punishment. However, the rest of the covenant states that God will not quit loving the king (v. 33). Surely, the psalmist thinks, that means an end to the oppression and a return to peace and blessing. God is sworn to this part too (Read vs. 33-37). Just as sure as the sun and moon come up, God will “come up” to keep this part of the Davidic Covenant!

d. **Plea for God to end the pain (vs 46-52).**

The last part of the psalm is an impassioned plea for the Lord to get the pain over with and restore peace. He calls on God not to forget that man’s life is determined by time, and it is slipping away in the trial of fire (vs. 47-48). Surely He does not wish His people to suffer for an extended period of time?! Death comes soon unless the Lord delivers.

## CONCLUSION

Leupold, in his commentary, summarizes the rest of the psalm with this statement, “Blessed be the Lord forever! Amen and Amen” (v. 52). The God of covenant keeps covenant!

**SELF EXAM FOR LESSON ELEVEN:**

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1. How many psalms have specific references to David in their inscriptions or headings?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. On whose throne did David, Solomon and all the rest of Israel's kings sit?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Psalm 45 is what kind of psalm?\_\_\_\_\_
4. What is the historical point of reference in Psalm 132?\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. God chose David to be king and he became what two things in relation to all other kings and to the Messiah?
  - 1)\_\_\_\_\_
  - 2)\_\_\_\_\_
6. Psalm 101 presents David as what?\_\_\_\_\_
7. What is the central theme of Psalm 89?\_\_\_\_\_
8. Give the three-point outline of Psalm 89.
  - 1)\_\_\_\_\_
  - 2)\_\_\_\_\_
  - 3)\_\_\_\_\_
9. Psalm 132 is what kind of psalm?\_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON TWELVE

# Songs of Ascents (I)

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### INTRODUCTION



It is our purpose in this session to look at what is called the “Songs of Ascents.” These psalms are from 120–134 and all have that inscription, “Songs of Ascents.” We will spend two lessons looking at these fifteen psalms.

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**LESSON TEXT:** Psalms 120–127.

**LESSON AIM:** To introduce to readers the “Steps of the Pilgrims” psalms.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. Expose the different approaches to these psalms.
  2. Note some of these themes.
  3. Look briefly at the thrust of each psalm.
- 

### INTRODUCTION TO THE SONGS OF ASCENTS

#### A. Different Views of These Psalms

1. **The first view**, held by some Old Testament scholars is based on the possible translation “Songs of Steps”.
  - a. The word “steps” refers to the internal cadence or rhythm. A word or an expression which is stated and then taken up in a succeeding line or verse in an ascending sort of beat.
  - b. Example: 121:1-2, “*I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; from whence shall my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*” The word “help” is taken from line 1b and built into line 2a. The “ascent” then is in the rhymical progression up the steps of the poetic ladder. The problem with this view is that **not all the poems have that characteristic**.
2. **A second interpretation** also relies on the word “steps.” Some Jewish expositors believed that the fifteen psalms corresponded to the fifteen steps from the Court of the Men to the Court of the Women in the Temple. Thus, they believed that a psalm was sung on each step as the worshipers ascended. The coincidence of the numbers are very strong evidence for this interpretation.
3. **A third interpretation** is based on the translation “ascents” or “goings up.” It holds that these pilgrims were coming from Babylonian captivity back home to Jerusalem. (This would be after 536 BC.) “Ascents” is plural, though, and seems to mitigate against such a view.
4. **A fourth, and the favored interpretation.**
  - a. These psalms are “pilgrims’ songs.” Caravans of pilgrims to Jerusalem did sing songs (Isaiah 30:29).
  - b. They also sung these psalms as they proceeded through the streets of Jerusalem, led by priests, to the Temple to offer sacrifices. Psalm 122:2, “*Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem,*” and 125:2, “*As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds His people*” give

hints of pilgrims in and around Jerusalem.

### **B. Israelite Gatherings in Jerusalem**

1. The Israelites were commanded to come to Jerusalem several times a year for particular feasts and Sabbaths.
2. These feasts recalled significant moments in Israelite history and turned on the conditions of their covenant relationship with God.
3. For most Jews, getting to these feasts meant traveling from their homes to the city of Jerusalem.
  - a. The city of Jerusalem where God dwelt and where these festival sacrifices could be offered became very important.
  - b. Thus, the feeling in these “Songs of Ascents” as these pilgrims headed toward their city of importance to celebrate their relationship with God Almighty.

### **C. Occasion and Authors of These Psalms**

1. Some are individual in scope and application; some are national.
2. One has “Of Solomon.” Another is part of Solomon’s Temple Dedication speech.
3. The rest are unknown in terms of authorship, though some may be attached to the Babylonian exilic period.

### **D. General Observations About These Psalms**

1. **They are short.** With the exception of Psalm 132 which has 18 verses, the others range from 3 to 8 or 9 verses.
2. **They say a lot about deliverance from oppression.** Some of it on a personal level and some on a national level. Psalms 120, 123, 124, and 125 include these prayers for help.
3. **They contain some imprecation.** See Psalm 129.
4. **They show God in a number of roles and ways.**  
Note the following chart.

<b>THEOLOGY OF GOD IN THE SONGS OF ASCENTS</b>	
<b>REFERENCE</b>	<b>PSALMS</b>
Maker of heaven and earth – Creator and Controller.	121,124,134
Yahweh – Covenant Keeper. . . . .	121
Dwells in Zion – Attendant to Israel. . . . .	122,125,126,132
In the mountains, surrounds people – Protector. . . .	121,125,129,132
Heaps blessings on Israel – Supplier, Blessor. . . . .	126,127,128,132,134
Keeps David’s line going – Sustainer. . . . .	132
Keeps vigil over Israel – Watcher. . . . .	121
Helps build the house of God – Temple Builder. . . .	127,132
Pardons Sins – Forgiver. . . . .	130

## **DISCUSSION OF THE FIRST EIGHT SONGS OF ASCENTS**

### **A. Cause to Turn My Eyes Toward Zion and the Holy Temple (Psalm 120)**

1. Setting:  
The psalmist begins by remembering the time or times in the past when in



trouble he'd prayed towards Jerusalem and been heard by God (v. 1). Now he finds himself in trouble again. This time it's the slandering by his enemies.

2. Call for the Lord's vengeance.
3. Judgement figures.
  - a. Sharp arrows to pierce the body, and coals to burn the head.
  - b. He then expresses woe because he feels a long way off. This may not be a literal separation from Jerusalem because the mention of Meshech and Kedar are places separated from each other by quite a distance. He feels like he's dwelt too long among these people of sin.
4. Longing to come to Zion.

#### **B. The Lord of the Hills, Israel's Protector (Psalm 121)**

1. Nearing the city of Jerusalem.  
Some commentators have suggested that the first line pictures the thoughts and actions of the pilgrims as they neared the city of Jerusalem. As the city came into view, the pilgrims lifted up their eyes to the mountains or hills of the city, thinking especially of Mount Zion upon which the Temple was located. Of course it's not the city itself or the specific mountain that inherently exudes strength and deliverance. It is the God who lives there.
2. Jehovah is committed to keeping covenant with Jerusalem.  
He is Yahweh (vs. 2, 5, 7). Therefore He is committed to keeping His covenant promises, and that includes deliverance.
  - a. He is the God who created it all (v. 2).
  - b. He is the God who never sleeps (vs. 3-4). He keeps constant vigil. He stands at our right hand (the place of closest association). He is the God who can protect us from harm.

#### **C. Jerusalem, the City of the Great King (Psalm 122)**

1. Why Jerusalem is important.
  - a. Jerusalem was the center of an Israelite's religious focus.
  - b. Psalm 122 builds on 121 and tells us why Jerusalem is so very important.
2. Within the gates pictured!  
When others suggested that they as a group go up to Jerusalem, the psalmist already pictures himself within the gates of the city (v. 2). Verse 3 has a curious phrase, "*As a city that is compact together.*" Perhaps by the time this psalm was penned, the Temple and palace of the king and perhaps other buildings of distinction were completed. These gave the city a look of dignity and a picture of pride and stateliness and solidarity.
3. A fortress for the Lord's people.
4. Reason for Jerusalem's significance (vs. 4-5).
  - a. **One, it's the place of worship for the people.**
  - b. **Two, it's where David's throne for judgment resides.** It's the heart of religious, civil, and covenant life for all Israel.
  - c. The psalmist closes with a prayer for God to provide peace for the city (vs. 6-9). The worshipers also commit themselves to promote peace in the city.

#### **D. Looking to the Lord (Psalm 123)**

"A sigh and an upward gaze" is how one man described psalm 123. Another calls it "Looking to the Lord."

1. Attitude of submission, humility and dependence. As he turns his eyes towards God, the psalmist pleads for the gracious blessing of God.
2. Because of the contemptuous, scoffing people that care not for Zion or its adherents. Thus the Lord and Zion become a true refuge, a haven from

evildoers.

**E. Praise for Deliverance from Enemies (Psalm 124)**

1. Uniqueness of the psalm in its figures of speech.
  - a. That prayer is quickly answered in psalm 124. God is praised for having delivered Israel from his detractors.
  - b. The uniqueness of the psalm lies in its metaphors and similes to describe both the seriousness of the oppression and the difficulty of escape.
  - c. Deliverance. If it had not been for the Lord, Yahweh, the covenant God, Israel would have been drowned in the waters of a flood, had his teeth yanked out by someone trying to drag him off, or caught in the snare of an enemy like a helpless bird.
2. Confidence expressed.  
The psalmist calls on the pilgrims to remember, rehearse, and reverberate the saying, "*Had it not been the Lord who was on our side . . .*" we would have been dead. Verse 8 closes the psalm with a statement very much like 121:2, "*Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*"

**F. The Encircler (Psalm 125)**

1. Mount Zion – the place of justice.  
That protection of His people theme continues in 125 and centers on Mount Zion and Jerusalem as the place from which the Lord comes to render justice to the enemy.
2. God cannot be removed from Zion.  
How do you remove God from His dwelling place? You can't! It is impossible! Just as immovable and sure as Mount Zion is the stability of the believer. His strength is Jerusalem which is surrounded by mountains (Recall 121:1-2). If God cannot be moved off Mount Zion, and His followers are there, they cannot be defeated either. No foreigner will be able to raise his scepter of rule over the lot or land of Judah. It's theirs by lot and inheritance from the Lord.
3. Prayer to God to respond to their faith. Protect the faithful and wear out the wicked so that peace will be upon Israel.

**INTERLUDE:** These first six Songs of Ascents have expressed a need to be in Jerusalem, at Mount Zion. The trials and tribulations of life necessitate the trek. Why Jerusalem? Because that's where God dwells and because that's where David's throne of justice is. It's the place to praise the God of deliverance and protection.

**G. Prayer and Thanks for a Return from Captivity (Psalm 126)**

1. Written after the exile from Babylonia – 536 B.C. The 126th psalm continues those thoughts except from a different circumstance.
2. Initial joy of the return (vs. 1-3).  
The returnees were giddy with laughter, and the Gentiles were aware of what Jehovah had done for His people. They may not have been happy for Israel, but they had to be honest and recognize the Lord's providential work in behalf of His people. Meanwhile Israel could recognize the same thing and be happy too (v. 3).
3. Plea for completion of restoration (vs. 4-6)  
Perhaps the initial laughter is over and the hard work of putting it back together has set in. I recall the books of Haggai and Zechariah in this regard. Sixteen years after their return from Babylonian captivity, the Israelites still hadn't succeeded in rebuilding the Temple. The people were discouraged because of

opposition from surrounding nations. They turned their attention to building their own worlds. Perhaps a piece of these prophets' preaching stirred up the spirit of this psalm.

#### **H. Unless the Lord Build the House (Psalm 127)**

1. Psalm 127 is said to be "Of Solomon." Remembering that Solomon build the Temple, verse 1 sets the tone of this psalm.
2. Must have the Lord's help.  
Using this background of his having built the Temple, Solomon strives to make the point that without the Lord's help and blessing, nothing of significance is accomplished. The Lord must be trusted; He must be obeyed or the house will not be built well, if at all, and it will afterward fall prey to invaders. Recall 124:1. However if a house – any house, Temple or personal – is built upon trust in the Lord, He will bless the builder(s) with progeny.
3. Children are a sign of blessing.  
To a Jew, children and especially sons, are a sign of blessing from the Lord, and in this psalm said to be arrows in a man's hand. To have children to stand by your side in defense of your inheritance was indeed considered a blessing from the Lord. And you are blessed if your quiver is full of them!

#### **CONCLUSION**

We've looked at the first eight of the "Songs of Ascents." They have led us to the Temple from places far away from Jerusalem. They have accentuated the importance of the city, Mount Zion, and the throne of David. They have prayed for deliverance and protection.

#### **SELF EXAM FOR LESSON TWELVE:**

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1. Of the four explanations offered, what most likely is the significance of the title, "Songs of Ascents/Degrees" for Psalms 120 – 127?

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2. Give four general observations concerning these psalms.

- 1) 

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- 2) 

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- 3) 

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- 4) 

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3. Give the Theme/Title of Psalms 120 through 127.

Psalm 120 

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Psalm 121 

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Psalm 122 

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Psalm 123 

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Psalm 124 

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Psalm 125 

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Psalm 126 

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Psalm 127 

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## LESSON THIRTEEN

# Songs of Ascents (II)

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### INTRODUCTION

**T**he book of Psalms is such a great source of strength for the faltering faith. It bolsters a fainting heart with wonderful praise language. What a panorama of spiritual emotions it includes – joy in the fellowship of God, pain in the depths of opposition, and anger toward the enemies of God. Every worshiper will experience these emotions at some time during his life.

The “Songs of Ascents” contain these emotions. There’s longing in the heart of the pilgrim (Psalm 120). There’s anticipation and anxiety in his heart as he approaches Jerusalem and as he prays for protection from the enemy (121, 125). There’s even some imprecation in Psalm 129. Psalms 126–128 speak of the joy of blessings of one’s fellowship with God in the city.

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**LESSON TEXT:** Psalms 128 – 134.

**LESSON AIM:** To continue the ascent to Zion in song.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. Sense the emotional impact on a Hebrew when he approached the temple or the city of Jerusalem.
  2. Look briefly at the thrust of each of the psalms.
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### DISCUSSION OF PSALMS 128 – 134

#### A. Count Your Many Blessings (Psalm 128)

1. “Blessings” theme continues in this psalm. Those who fear the Lord are the recipients of seven blessings, according to this psalm.
  - a. **Blessing one:** He will be allowed to partake of the fruit of his labors. *“You shall eat of the fruit of your hands”* (v. 2). This was part of the conditions of the Covenant of Blessings and Cursings (Deuteronomy 28).
  - b. **Blessings two and three:** A happy and pleasant life. *“You will be happy, and it will be well with you”* (v. 2). Followers of God avoid many pitfalls which the wicked self impose because of their choice of lifestyle. God specifically providentially benefits the God-fearing person!
  - c. **Blessing four:** Healthy wife and children (v. 3). His wife is likened to a fruitful vine inside his house. Once again, this blessing is part of the promises in the Covenant of Blessing.
  - d. **Blessing five:** His children will be a blessing (v. 3). They are a gift and a reward from God (cf. 127:3). Malachi 2 talks about God’s displeasure with the Jewish man who puts away the wife of his youth to secure a wife of foreign origin with attachments to foreign gods. Because it prevents “godly offspring.” In other words, Jewish sons cannot be born to such a union, sons who will worship Jehovah God.
  - e. **Blessing six:** Prosperity in Jerusalem (v. 5).

The circle is drawn wider than just around the individual Israelite now. It now encompasses the city of Jerusalem.

- f. **Blessing seven:** Future generations will benefit (v. 6).

You will see your grandchildren grow up in this peace and prosperity.

2. **Picture of peace and prosperity.**  
This scene is of elderly Jewish men watching their grandchildren playing in the streets. A picture of peace and one that even the prophet Zechariah adopted and used to describe the days of the Messiah (Zechariah 8:4-5).

These blessings are reserved only to the man who fears the Lord and walks with Him (vs. 1, 4).

## **B. Preserve Zion, O Lord! (Psalm 129)**

Psalm 129 notes the enemies of Zion and its people and prays for the downfall of those foes.

1. **Pictures of oppression** (vs. 1-4).  
Surrounding nations have treated Israel like a field, something to be plowed deep and long! They plowed his back! Perhaps Israel, like a mistreated captive or slave, is made to lie down and then is run over with a plow or is beaten with stripes which look like furrows made by a plow.
2. **Picture of retribution** (vs. 5-8).  
The Lord has never let the enemy prevail, so once more He's being called upon to put them down. The last half of the psalm is imprecatory in nature. The picture is of making them like grass, of no value except to serve as a roof for a house. May they, like that worthless grass on the roof, never receive the praise or blessings of passers-by (v. 8).

## **C. God, Be Merciful to Me, a Sinner! (Psalm 130)**

Psalm 130 takes a different road but one that is crucial to the temple worshiper.

1. **Recognition of need for forgiveness** (vs. 1-4).
  - a. He realizes that his afflictions are a result of his sins.
  - b. He acknowledges God's willingness to forgive the penitent.
  - c. He wants for that forgiveness and encourages Israel to do the same.
  - d. The Lord alone is able to pardon Israel.

**NOTE:** This psalm hits on the sin problem, which is of major importance in the sacrificial system performed at the Temple. The people dare not approach the Temple in festival mood if sin is present in their lives! However God stands ready to forgive in order to facilitate that kind of celebration and worship.

2. **Humble waiting on the Lord** (v. 5-8).
  - a. For forgiveness first and then for help from distress. How could he presumptuously demand (even plead for) deliverance without having repented and humbly plead for forgiveness?!
  - b. He waits as a watchman waiting for morning light. The night seems long, the wait an anxious one because night-time is when the enemy strikes. There is indeed some tension for the pilgrim at this point in his ascent, but at the end he's sure God will grant the forgiveness.

## **D. Safe in the Arms of God (Psalm 131)**

Sure of that forgiveness, the worshiper rests like a child in his mother's arms.

A possible scenario for this psalm is that the psalmist at one time raced after the "great matters" of life. Perhaps he got lost in the hubbub of life, but has now come

to rest quietly in humility and simpler affairs of life.

1. **Picture of security** (vs. 1-3).
  - a. Like a weaned child held by his mother, who rests quietly and contentedly there, so he rests humbly and contentedly in his present state. He trusts God and lives close to Him, and that's all that matters to him. He does not long for the "great matters," nor does he need to clamor for the breast. He has been well nourished on the milk of God, and now is growing up in his faith.
  - b. This trust and hope he urges on Israel as well (v. 3). What a great thought for a pilgrim as he leaves the "great matters" of the world and draws near to the breast of God as it were, the Temple.
2. **Triumphant hope** (v. 3). Picture David, the great king, as he lays down the great matters of state and now lies contentedly in the Father's arms.

#### **E. God Dwells in Zion (Psalm 132)**

1. **Setting – A solemn vow** (vs. 1-5).  
In this the longest "Song of Ascents" (18 verses), the psalmist recounts the story of the return of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. It had been taken captive by the Philistines during the time of Eli and Samuel. When finally returned to Judah, it was kept in the house of Abinadab in Kiriath-Jearim (1 Samuel 7:1-2). David brought the ark to Jerusalem and wanted to build a house for God to dwell in (2 Samuel 6-7).
2. **The promises of God to David** (vs. 6-12).  
The procession of those who brought the ark to Jerusalem and God's subsequent promises to David about establishing his kingly house are rehearsed in vs. 6-12. (Verses 8-10 are used by Solomon in his Temple Dedication speech as recorded in 2 Chronicles 6:41-42).
3. **Jerusalem is important for three reasons** (vs. 13-18).
  - a. God is there, represented by the presence of the ark. He dwells above the cherubim on the ark.
  - b. Throne of David is there.  
God has promised to sustain his kingly line, and in so doing bless and protect the nation of Israel. The psalm reminds God of this crucial covenant, crucial because Israel's survival depends on it.
  - c. The ark is now in Jerusalem, and it is from there that the Lord wishes to bless David and Israel.
4. **Commitment of God to His covenant**.
  - a. Blessing upon the Levites – the blessing of salvation by which they in turn can minister for the people to insure their salvation too.
  - b. Blessing of sustenance upon the poor – the essentials of life.
  - c. Blessing of supremacy for the descendants of David who sit on the throne and act in behalf of God's cause for His people.

#### **F. How Sweet, How Heavenly Is the Sight (Psalm 133)**

The "Songs of Ascents" close with two short but beautiful psalms, three verses each.

1. **Picture of unity**.  
Believers, Jews, worshipers in Jerusalem, all together around the Temple! What a lovely picture of unity, especially since these pilgrims have traveled to Jerusalem from all over Palestine and perhaps from beyond its borders. They have left their jobs and left nations and hometowns and come to Jerusalem to join every other Jew in worship to God. What a blessed sign of unity!
2. **Importance of unity – Four reasons**:
  - a. One, it is good (v. 1).

- b. Two, it is pleasant (v. 1). Anyone who has lived in turmoil knows the truth of that. Peace is pleasant and good!
- c. Three, it is like the oil of the consecration of Aaron to the Levitical priesthood (v. 2; Exodus 29-30; Leviticus 9). Perhaps the oil symbolizes the peace between God and man and between Jew and Jew. Perhaps the covering of head and body is symbolic of unity of the entire person, or in this case, the whole nation.
- d. Fourth, unity is life-giving (v. 3). Like the life-giving heavy dew on Mt. Hermon, so unity gives life to the people of God.

#### **G. A Call to Praise God (Psalm 134)**

The last “Song of Ascents” calls upon the priesthood to praise the Lord day and night. The Levitical priests were originally commissioned to do that very thing (Deuteronomy 10:8). David later reaffirmed the charge, “*they shall stand every morning thanking and praising the Lord, and likewise at evening*” (1 Chronicles 23:30). Unceasing praise! Day and night! Bless the Lord (v. 1) and He will bless you from Zion (v. 3).

### **CONCLUSION**

So the pilgrimage songs begin afar. They proceed to bring the worshiper closer to Jerusalem – to the Temple, to David’s throne, and to God’s dwelling place. As they come closer, they are reminded in the songs of God’s protection, illustrated by the mountains that surround the city. There is a mix of calls for help, praise for protection, and projected blessings from the Lord for having been faithful. Then it comes to a close as a unified body of believers moves toward the Temple, led by the priests to engage in unceasing praise of God at the Temple itself! These psalms can be summed up in the following words:

YEARNING – PROTECTION – BLESSING – FORGIVENESS – PEACE –  
COVENANT – UNITY – PRAISE

Picture Jesus at age 12 coming to Jerusalem for the first time as a human being. He’d watched from heaven, in Old Testament times, Jerusalem and its people go through all kinds of ups and downs. As a boy, He’d heard these psalms read in the synagogue in Galilee. Now He heads towards Jerusalem for the first time, singing these great songs He’s helped write by inspiration. What He must have felt as He came over the hill and Jerusalem came into view for the first time!

#### **Application to Us.**

Do you long for Zion? Are we not pilgrims too? Are we not on our way to Zion? If you’re a Christian, you’re already in Zion (Hebrews 12:22)! But we go on to the ultimate Zion, heaven! “We’re Marching to Zion” – YEARNING; “Here We Are But Straying Pilgrims” – YEARNING; “Unto The Hills, Around Do I Lift Up” – PROTECTION; “Count Your Blessing, Name Them One By One” – BLESSING; “Now Wash Me And I Shall Be Whiter Than Snow” – FORGIVENESS; “When Peace Like A River Attendeth My Way” – PEACE; “Standing On the Promises of Christ My King” – COVENANT; “How Sweet How Heavenly Is the Sight When Those That Love the Lord in One Another’s Peace Delight” – UNITY; “There Is A Habitation, O Zion, Lovely Zion” – PRAISE.

These are some of our “Songs of Ascents” to our Zion!

### **SELF EXAM FOR LESSON THIRTEEN:**

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1. Psalm 128 continues the theme of “blessings” and extends seven blessings to those who fear the Lord. List these below.
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 5) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 6) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 7) \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. For whom are these blessings reserved? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Give the theme/message of the following psalms.
 

Psalm 128 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 129 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 130 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 131 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 132 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 133 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 134 \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. According to Psalm 132:13-18 why was Jerusalem to the Jew? List three reasons.
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Psalms 128-134 can be summed up in what eight words?
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 5) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 6) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 7) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 8) \_\_\_\_\_



## LESSON FOURTEEN

# Deliverance Psalms

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### INTRODUCTION



Some years ago one of the more popular TV shows was “Rescue 911.” Sometimes an episode begins with the recording of the call in. Often that caller is frightened and hysterical. About all he or she can do is shout “Help,” and often that is couched in tears and grief.

This illustration sets the stage for our next two studies in Psalms. One of the largest groups of psalms is that of what we’ll call “Deliverance Psalms.” Perhaps as many as 50, or one-third, of the total number of psalms, fit this category. These psalms are the supplications of hurting people. They are petitions for deliverance or rescue from these afflictions. Like the caller to 911, these afflicted ones are in agony and begging for help (Psalm 13:1-4).

The “Deliverance Psalms” are written by people in different kinds of pits! Affliction comes from several sources. A king of Israel and his nation may be set upon by an enemy from without the country. An individual may be facing the foes within his own society. He may even have a close friend turned enemy (Psalms 41,88). He may be old (71). He may be young. The afflicted seem not to be of just one class of people. We also could break these down into individual and national laments. That’s the normal terminology used by the commentators, but “lament” doesn’t convey the full content of these psalms.

Though a pattern doesn’t hold in every psalm, certain component parts seem to recur frequently. Often it will begin with a cry for help or deliverance or for hearing or for vindication. Grief or pain may then be described. The psalmists can be pretty descriptive! The psalm may also describe the enemy, in no uncertain terms either! There is perhaps prayer again, and often finishes with praise for God and assurance that the righteous will indeed flourish. He might also set forth his dedication, consecration, or vows based on that deliverance forthcoming.

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**LESSON TEXT:** Psalms 42, 43, 56, 57, 60.

**LESSON AIM:** To gain confidence in the faithfulness of God to deliver His people.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. To note the concept of “Deliverance” and “Imprecation” in the psalms.
2. To get a sense of the oppression felt by some of the psalmists.
3. To see God’s faithfulness to deliver His people Israel from all kinds of enemies

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### WHY ARE YOU IN DESPAIR? (PSALMS 42-43)

#### A. The Setting of These Psalms

1. Inscription. “For the Choir Director. A Maskil of the sons of Korah.”
  - a. Psalms 42 and 43 may originally have been one psalm.

- b. Psalm 42 and Psalms 44-49 all have as headings, “For the Choir Director. A Maskil of the Sons of Korah.”
- 2. Refrain.
  - a. Psalm 43 is the only one that does not have that heading, yet it contains the same recurring refrain as is in 42:5,11: “*Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within you? Hope in God for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance, and my God*” (43:5).
  - b. Psalm 43 seems to bring the hurt of Psalm 42 to a completion with a plea for vindication (v. 1) and one last expression of confidence and hope (v. 5).

## B. Stanzas

- 1. Author. Probably one of the sons of Korah.
  - a. Psalm 42 begins the Book II grouping in the psalter and begins the predominance of God (or Elohim) psalms.
  - b. The Sons of Korah probably belonged to a guild of singers at the Temple (2 Chronicles 20:19).
  - c. These two psalms are “Individual Laments.”
    - 1) Some scholars have suggested that the author of these two psalms was writing for David, to express for him what was going on inside his soul. This view may be due to the identity of the oppressor as “an ungodly nation,” perhaps as a foreign nation.
    - 2) Others have suggested that this is a son of Korah expressing pain over the oppression of wicked Israel. This view is supported by the descriptive phrases in 42:4, “*For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God,*” and 43:4, “*And upon the lyre I shall praise Thee, O God, My God.*”
  - d. We will treat the two as one. It appears to be in three stanzas of 5-6 verses each: 42:1-5; 42:6-11; and 43:1-5. Each stanza ends with that refrain mentioned previously, “*Why are you in despair, O my soul?*”
- 2. Stanza One (42:1-5): “**My soul is dying of thirst.**”
  - a. The psalmist’s strong desire for fellowship with God. He begins with that strong image of a deer who after running away from the stalker, running much further than necessary – the killer had long stopped pursuing – never stopping for food, water, or even a glance backward, now finally halts because it can go no further. It pants uncontrollably, desperately needing air and water. The psalmist likewise pants for fellowship with God with the same ache of this animal for water. In pain of spirit, he cries, “*When shall I come and appear before God?*” (v. 2). But look, he has water! Oh, it’s only the water of salty tears. Salt and water, that’s his food and water! All his pain is accentuated by the jabs of enemies: “*Where is your God?!*” they scornfully ask. (I remember some people at the foot of Calvary saying that to Jesus. Oh how it must have increased the pain!)
  - b. Then, the pain in soul is flooded with good times from the past (v. 4). Those festive celebrations at the Temple. Throngs of happy pilgrims, rejoicing and celebrating God’s presence and Israel’s good fortune. “And I use to be their leader,” the psalmist recalls. “Perhaps,” he thinks, “it will happen again!” That thought gives him hope, and so the refrain (v. 5).
- 3. Stanza Two (42:6-11): “**At least I see the water!**”
 

Verse six may indicate the place of banishment, near Mt. Hermon or the Anti-Lebanon Mountains east of the Jordan River. Some have suggested because of this that it is David fleeing from Absalom. Or it may simply be a figurative way of expressing his feelings right now. It does go along with the water imagery of

verse 1. The author sees the water that seemingly his soul needs. That water is waterfalls or cataracts (LXX translation), but then he sees the breakers and waves as troubles that roll over him, not as water to slake his thirst. Perhaps his head droops in despair for a moment,...,before he renews his hope by remembering God's "lovingkindness in the daytime, and His song...in the night" (v. 8). When troubles molest, correct therapy includes rejoicing in the Lord (Philippians 4:4). The psalmist makes a conscious effort to recall the things that are still true about God. Those thoughts enable him to sing and pray still. Though still not comprehending the "why,": "*Why hast Thou forgotten me?*" (v. 9) and though adversaries still revile and chide, "Where is your God?!" (v. 10), the psalmist musters the courage in his spirit to challenge the despair in his soul. (v. 11)

4. Stanza Three (43:1-5): **"Show them, O God, show them! Please!"**  
His plea is for vindication, "Vindicate me, O God, and plead my case against an ungodly nation" (v. 1). The problem includes lying. He may be the victim of deception. He asks God for vindication and advocacy in a court of justice. He wants his name cleared and his integrity upheld. In verse three he continues this thought, "*O send out Thy light and Thy truth.*" This, he believes, stands a good chance of happening, because God is his strength (v. 2) and his joy (v. 4). Yet in spite of that truth, he is still hurting and asking "Why?": "*Why hast Thou rejected me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?*" (v. 2). He vows to God, if He will deliver him, the psalmist promises to return to his love of worshiping in the house of the Lord. He will not offer animal sacrifices, but himself in joyful praise, "*Then will I go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and upon the lyre I shall praise Thee, O God, my God*" (v. 4). Thus, once more he expresses hope (v. 5). Hope at last has conquered even though the deliverance has not yet been seen or felt.

#### **PRAYERS FOR DELIVERANCE (PSALMS 56-57)**

Two other similar psalms are 56 and 57. They too are "Prayers for Deliverance." Both psalms have headings related to David's fleeing from Saul and include what seems to be a specified time, known to the worshipers.

##### **A. Psalm 56: David's Cry for Help When He Was Held Captive**

Psalm 56 is supposed to be David's cry for help when he was held captive by the Philistines at Gath. The psalm itself breaks down into three parts, the first two with the same basic message, and a closing one of vows and confidence.

1. Stanza One (vs. 1-4): **A plea for deliverance from determined foes.**  
The plea is for mercy and grace, "Be gracious, O God" (v. 1), for the "*foes have trampled upon me all day long,*" and "*They are many*" (v. 2). The psalmist makes a choice to trust in God, even when times are at their worst (vs. 3-4). This last verse is repeated at the end of stanza two (vs. 10-11), and is the same phrase as in Psalm 118:6, which the Hebrew writer quotes in Hebrews 13:6 to encourage those Christians. The psalmist is applying that very principle as he cries out, "*Be gracious, O God.*" And that last part of verse 4, what a thought provoking question! "*What can mere man do to me?*" He can do nothing to take away my relationship to God! All he can ultimately do is kill me, but that just sends me home to be even closer to my Father!
2. Stanza Two (vs. 5-11): **Repetition of confident plea.**  
He begins by describing these enemies (vs. 5-6). They are deceiving, lying, distorting under-miners. They're out to get him, one way or the other. You know, to live in fear of one's life is bad enough, but for someone to lie about

you behind your back and thus destroy your reputation and influence is almost as bad as losing life itself. The psalmist pictures these enemies as robbers and thieves, lying in ambush, just waiting for an opportune time to pounce on him (v. 6). (Verse 7 is somewhat difficult, but may be a note of imprecation called down upon the enemies. It's interesting to note that David was not willing to be the instrument of God's wrath upon king Saul, who was unjustly seeking his life at this time.)

- a. A lovely and touching figure (v. 8).  
*"Thou hast taken account of my wanderings, put my tears in Thy bottle. Are they not in Thy book?"* God has collected every tear David has shed because of his trouble. Those tears become the ink for God's pen as He records the wicked deeds of David's enemies. Is our God not tenderhearted, to note and save, as it were, our every tear?! It hurts Him when it hurts us!
- b. A burst of hope (vs. 9-11).  
 That confidence is followed by the conclusion of the psalm, verses 12-13. The way some of the translations read, one might think the vows in verse 12 are God's. However, they seem to be the psalmist's. Because of his confidence in God's deliverance, he has made vows that are binding, even before the deliverance is seen. What faith! Those vows include thank offerings. No, he's not trying to influence God to deliver sooner or at all, but he's merely expressing his confidence and gratitude. The psalmist is so confident of God's care that he puts the future deliverance in past tense, *"For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, indeed my feet from stumbling"* (v. 13).

## B. Psalm 57: David Was Hiding From Saul

1. The refrain (vs. 5, 11).  
 Again we have a refrain that guides us in identifying the stanzas. That refrain is an acknowledgment of God's exalted glory, *"Be exalted above the heavens, O God. Let Thy glory be above all the earth"* (vs. 5, 11).
2. Stanza One. **An initial expression of confidence in God's deliverance.** The first stanza includes two things.
  - a. One is an **initial expression of confidence in God's deliverance** (vs. 1-3). Note two things in those verses. One is the opening line, *"Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me,"* very similar to the preceding psalm. Also, note the figure of God's refuge, *"the shadow of Thy wings."* That's probably the picture of a baby chick under the protective wings of the mother hen. Jesus uses that imagery in Luke 13:34 to refer to God's constant attempt to treat Israel with this kind of care, but Israel refused it.
  - b. The second is a **description of the enemy** (v. 4).  
 Their real sin is the use of their tongues against him (as before in 56), but note the imagery. They are lions come to devour him, dragons come to torch him, teeth like lances and arrows come to pierce him.
3. Stanza Two. **Description of the enemy and his treachery.**
  - a. He's prepared a trap for him (v. 6). He would treat him like an animal and throw a net over him like over a bird, or dig a pit to capture him like a wild beast.
  - b. Proclamation of God's praise (vs. 7-11). The rest of Stanza Two is of such noteworthy proportions that it's repeated in Psalm 108. Not only does he praise God, but he calls upon himself to awaken, to be aroused, to strike up the instruments and have them accompany his voice in praise. He'll spread

the tidings far and wide, to all nations if possible – “God is the Deliverer!”

### **A NATIONAL LAMENT (PSALM 60)**

#### **A. Disaster as a Judgment from God (vs. 1-5)**

1. An example of a “National Lament” is Psalm 60. Apparently there has been a great national disaster.
2. Verses 1-5 describe that disaster as a judgment of God. Rightly so, the psalmist has interpreted invasion as punishment for sin. Israel has been made to drink the cup of God’s wrath (v. 3). This imagery in the prophets (and from Genesis 15) pictures each nation with a cup for collecting its sins. When full, it becomes the wrath of God, a wine made from their own blood. God makes that nation drink it; they reel and stagger in a drunken stupor; and eventually they die.

#### **B. Recall the Ancient Land Promise (vs. 6-8)**

A second part of the psalm recalls the ancient land promise which God had given the patriarchs concerning the land of Canaan, that it would be given to their descendants. It was when Israel under Joshua conquered the land. The Covenant of Blessing and Cursing (Deuteronomy 28-30) insured the retention of the land as long as Israel was faithful. However, if Israel was unfaithful, they would lose it. The psalmist calls on God to renew the promise and give Israel back the land. He has always considered Israel above Moab, a mere washbowl, and Edom, a mere resting place for His dirty sandals.

#### **C. Expression of Concern and Plea for Help (vs. 9-12)**

Confession that there is no strength to be found in man, but only in God. So, please, beat back Edom and restore to Israel the land of his forefathers. *“Through God we shall do valiantly, and it is He who will tread down our adversaries”* (v. 12).

**CONCLUSION:** A few observations are in order.

#### **A. Hurt Is Real**

First, hurt is real in the lives of people. The psalms reveal the intensity of that pain and the helplessness the person feels. The sheer number of psalms in this category attest to the fact that trials and sufferings are normal, frequent, and intense. For Christians, it includes real enemies, not just ill circumstances.

#### **B. Trials Drive Us to God**

Second, the psalmists were driven to God by these trials. It’s not the time to turn away, get bitter, and blame God. It’s time to repent if necessary and cast our burdens on the Lord and wait for Him to lift us up. Thank God for trials! They create an opportunity for intense fellowship with God. These psalmists are in their Gardens of Gethsemane. We have our “gardens” too. Let’s use them for agonizing in prayer.

#### **C. Praise At the End**

God is praised in all circumstances, not just when deliverance actually arrived. These bursts of praise should include statements of confidence that He will do it. They should reflect my new resolve to praise Him and share the good news of deliverance with others.

Read Psalms 121,124 on your own.

### **SELF EXAM FOR LESSON FOURTEEN:**

1. Give two reasons why it is thought that Psalms 42 and 43 may have originally been one psalm.
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. The three stanzas of Psalms 42 and 43 are described by what phrases?
 

Stanza One: \_\_\_\_\_

Stanza Two: \_\_\_\_\_

Stanza Three: \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. What is the theme or heading of Psalm 56? \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Give the heading and the two stanzas of Psalm 57.
 

Heading: \_\_\_\_\_

Stanza One: \_\_\_\_\_

Stanza Two: \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. How does the psalmist view the disaster Israel is suffering in Psalm 60:1-5?
 

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_
  
6. For what does the psalmist ask God in Psalm 60:6-8? \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. The Psalms teach us that hurt is real in the lives of people and this includes Christians. What two responses should the Christian have when he/she encounters trials and sufferings?
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON FIFTEEN

# Imprecatory Psalms

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### INTRODUCTION:

**T**his particular session will concern itself with what's called "The Imprecatory Psalms." "Imprecation" means **the act of invoking evil upon, calling down curses upon another**. An illustration will help. When Jesus and His disciples were refused entry into a Samaritan village, James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven on the people. That's imprecation!

The Psalms contain a number of the "Imprecatory" variety. They go a step beyond simply calling on God for help and deliverance from the enemy. Listen to these examples: "*O God, shatter their teeth in their mouth; break out the fangs of the young lions, O Lord*" (58:6); "*Break the arm of the wicked and the evildoer*" (10:15); "*Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow*" (109:9). What do you think about that?! A little taken back, perhaps, at the strong language?! Try to hold off drawing too many hard and fast conclusions until we've completed our study.

As in the case of "The Deliverance Psalms," so are there common elements in most of the "Imprecatory" psalms: (1)A prayer for protection and deliverance; (2)A lament of grief and anguish; (3)A request for vengeance; (4)A praise and thanks for expected results; and (5)A pledge of the psalmist's response. Not all of these will be in every psalm however.

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**LESSON TEXT:** Psalms 12, 17, 35, 79, 83, 109.

**LESSON AIM:** To wrestle with whether we can or should call fire down from heaven on our enemies.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. Look at some specifics of "Imprecatory" psalms.
  2. Explore some different philosophical approaches to the dilemma of imprecation.
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### PSALM 12: WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE FAITHFUL?

The psalmist begins with a plea for "Help!" and the reason why (vs. 1-2). "Help, Lord" includes the term "Yahweh," the covenant name of God. Just the use of it presumes the psalmist's trust in God to keep covenant with the faithful.

#### A. The Godly Are Surrounded

1. There are, however, very few godly and faithful people left!
2. The godly that are left are surrounded by wicked people who are bent on destroying those godly few.

#### B. Description of the Ungodly (v. 1-2)

1. Their method is deceit. Three verses describe these evil ones (vs. 2, 4, 8).
  - a. Lies and flattery conceal their treachery. This society has lost its honesty ethic. Their countenance is brazenly bold and arrogant (v. 4).
  - b. Feeling no threat, they boldly proclaim self determination of their ways.

- “No one,” they assert, “is going to tell them what to do.”
2. Their pride is openly demonstrated.
    - a. They strut along and openly flaunt their evil ways! They talk big (v. 3)!
    - b. This society exalts vileness, calls good evil and evil good.

**C. The Imprecation (Prayer) of the Godly (vs. 3-4)**

1. The request: “*May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that speaks great things.*”
2. He calls on God to cut off their flapping lips, a part of the whole body that needs and deserves cutting off.

**D. Assurance that God Will Act (vs. 5-6)**

1. The moment for action has come.
  - a. The Lord is pictured as seeing the needy in trouble and arising to do something about it.
  - b. This assurance is based on two things.
    - 1) God’s covenant relationship conditions require this action in behalf of the needy righteous.
    - 2) His word is pure and will be true always! It’s so pure and faithful that it’s compared to silver refined by fire seven times.
2. Even though the psalmist has not yet seen the deliverance or the judgment, he knows it will be done because God promised.(v. 7).

**PSALM 17: VINDICATE YOU AND ME, LORD**

**A. A Plea to Be Heard (vs. 1-5). Based on his innocence.**

1. His claim to be upright. A plea to be heard by God because the psalmist is upright.
2. He claims to pray without hypocrisy (v. 1).
  - a. To possess a clean heart (v. 3).
  - b. To withhold his tongue from sin (v. 3).
  - c. To avoid the companionship and ways of the wicked (v. 4).
  - d. To tread the straight and narrow pathway of God (v. 5). No slips; he’s on course. “Hear...give heed...give ear...Let thine eyes look.”

**B. A Plea for Protection (vs. 6-12). Just how bad are they? The second part of the psalm reinforces the plea for help but adds a different reason – the nature of the wicked.**

1. The plea (vs. 6-8). Several phrases deserve explanation.
  - a. “*O Savior of those who take refuge at Thy right hand*” (v. 7). The right hand is the place of authority and strength. Because it’s His right hand, the psalmist expects a wondrous display of lovingkindness.
  - b. “*Keep me as the apple of Thy eye. Hide me in the shadow of Thy wings*” (v. 8) is a reference to Deuteronomy 32:10-11. The Song of Moses concludes the Covenant of Blessing and Cursing by acknowledging God’s care for Israel. Thus the psalmist is depending on God’s keeping covenant.
2. Description of the wicked (vs. 9-11).
  - a. Unfeeling hearts. At the heart level they are about to have a spiritual heart attack! Verse 10 literally reads, “*They are enclosed in their own fat.*” This phrase may refer to their luxuriant lifestyle and extremely carnal mindedness. It may rather, as most translations indicate, mean a condition of an unfeeling heart.
  - b. Hurtful mouths. With their proud mouths and deviant ways, they plan and carry out their destruction of the righteous. It is their desire to overthrow



- us and cast us to the ground (v. 11).
- c. Ravenous beasts. “*He is like a lion that is eager to tear, and as a young lion lurking in hiding places*” (v. 12). They’re no better than carnivorous, brute beasts!
- d. Unrestrained life-style. Verse 14 says they are people “*whose portion is in this life.*” They live for today, for the flesh, for the seeable. No thought of afterlife or judgment and therefore no restraint. They deserve to be judged, but is it okay to call on God the way the psalmist does here?!

### C. Intensified Prayer for Vindication (vs. 13-14)

1. God must act – to deliver and to judge: “Arise. . .confront. . .deliver” (v. 13). Confront, bring him low. Give them what they have been doling out, a taste of their own medicine (v. 14).
2. Take it into the next generation and afflict their children too (v. 14). Even the generation beyond that!

### D. Conclusion. As for the author, he expresses confidence (v. 15)

## PSALM 35: AN INDIVIDUAL LAMENT

### A. Earnest Prayer for Divine Judgment on Enemies (vs. 1-10). Intensity of the imprecation (vs. 1-6, 8, 26).

1. Appeal for God’s intervention (vs. 1-3). Enemies who contend (v. 1).
  - a. “Contend” is a legal term. His conflict resembles a lawsuit, but he wants God to take the conflict outside the courtroom and settle it on the battlefield.
  - b. These enemies “*seek my life*” (v. 4), “*devise evil against me*” (v. 4), “*hid their net for me*” and “*dug a pit for my soul*” (v. 7). They speak malicious things against him and repay him evil for good (vs. 11-12).
  - c. This behavior is “without cause” (v. 7). They are lying (v. 20). They evilly gloat over his misfortune (vs. 15-16, 26). They deserve to be punished.
2. Roles God fills (vs. 2-6).
  - a. He’s to be a fully dressed warrior (vs. 2-3).
  - b. Wind that blows away the chaff (v. 5).
  - c. Tripper in the dark (v. 6).
  - d. He’s to send the angel of the Lord in pursuit of them (v. 6).

### C. Foundation for the Request – How They’ve Treated Him (vs. 11-16)

1. Apparently he was sympathetic when they were hurting, but they only gloat and rejoice when he’s down.
2. What else is a man to do but pray that God will deliver him and at the same time defeat the evildoers?!

## PSALMS 79 AND 83: NATIONAL LAMENTS

Psalms 79 and 83 are “National Laments.” They too include imprecatory pleas.

### A. Occasion of Both – Invasion

1. Psalm 79 describes a fairly thorough destruction of Jerusalem (vs. 1-4).
  - a. The city lies in ruins, the Temple defiled. Many are dead in the streets, in rivers of their own blood. Scavenger birds pick at their flesh.
  - b. Scornful enemies, probably Edom and Moab and the like, gloat over her downfall.
2. Psalm 83 describes a threatening situation, which if implemented, could result in the same devastation described in Psalm 79. They are encircled by hostile

nations and these have been joined by the cruel Assyrians.

## **B. Prayer of Imprecation**

1. There is **an acknowledgment of sin** (v. 5).
  - a. God would not allow this devastation had He not been angry with Israel.
  - b. He would not have been angry if Israel had not sinned by breaking covenant.
2. **The plea itself is for the Lord to relent** now that Israel has learned its lesson. *“Refocus your anger, O Lord, on the instruments of your justice against us. They too have sinned. They have been cruel to Your people.”*
3. The “Pour out” imagery in verse 6 is similar to the bowls of wrath poured out in Revelation 16 (v. 12).
4. Requiring sevenfold implies completeness. They get what they deserve – in full.
5. The imprecatory part of Psalm 83 is very strong (and longer) (vs. 9-11). He requests that God treat the enemy as Gideon treated the Midianites (Judges 7-8). Oreb and Zeeb, Zebah and Zalmunna were captured, killed, and two were beheaded! Sisera was defeated at Megiddo by Deborah and Barak, and as he retreated, he stopped to rest in the house of Jael. While he slept, she drove a tent peg through his temple (Judges 4)! The other figures in verses 13-17 are typical Old Testament judgment figures.

## **PSALM 109: GET ‘EM, GOD**

The main idea: *“God will deal righteously to punish evil”*.

### **A. Battered State of the Author (vs. 1-5, 22-25)**

### **B. Plea for Help (vs. 1, 26)**

### **C. Vow of Praise (v. 30)**

1. Vow of praise (v. 30).
2. Expressions of confidence (vs. 21, 31).

### **D. Imprecation (vs. 6-20)**

1. The request for God to hurt the adversary (vs. 6-20).
2. It is all committed to the Lord’s care and decision (vs. 6-9).
  - a. Make sure he has to face his day in court (vs. 6-7).
  - b. Shorten his life and shame his family name (vs. 8-10).
  - c. Let the creditors take all his widow’s possessions and leave them shamed and helpless (vs. 11-15).
  - d. Let him reap what he sowed (vs. 16-20).

## **REFLECTION**

### **A. Two Questions with Which We Should Deal**

1. Is it acceptable to God that I hate any person for any reason?
2. Is it ever right to call down God’s wrath on others?

### **B. Various Answers**

Derek Kidner in his commentary on Psalm 109 calls the imprecation cruel, horrific, on the dark side, and of ugly motivation (p. 390).

#### **1. Not recommended for imitation by the righteous today.**

Thus, though the recording of the words is by inspiration, the content is not recommended for imitation by the righteous. It is true that Scripture does include untruths, e.g. Job and his friends make inaccurate statements. However, these psalms are liturgical pieces for regular use in worship in the Temple! Would such error and unjustifiable anger be sung and read over and over?! To

clearly distinguish between righteous themes and this one would have been difficult for the worshiper.

2. **Life under the new covenant is different.**

Another suggestion is that the old covenant allowed and sanctioned retaliation, an eye-for-an-eye ethic, but the new covenant is different. When Jesus refers back to a number of Old Testament Scriptures in Matthew 5, and then comments, “But I say unto you.” He’s not differentiating between covenants so much as reinterpreting the originals which have been distorted by rabbinical perversion. The Old Testament did indeed teach that God’s people were to return good for evil (1 Samuel 24:16; Jeremiah 17:16; 18:20), that they should love their enemies (Exodus 23:4-5), and that they should not rejoice over an enemy’s calamity (Job 31:29-35). There is no different in new and old covenant injunctions in this regard.

3. **This is simply Old Testament, Hebrew language.**

Another suggestion is that this language is more typical of Israelite culture. It is the outpouring of a hurting heart, and Israelites were given to expressing their feelings strongly. Sort of a cultural way of venting their anger, blowing off steam and frustration. There may be some truth to the cultural thing of which I’m not aware, or there may be something to this being poetry, which is more prone to express strong feelings. I still feel dissatisfied with such an explanation because these are to be used in worship. Could we then sing these psalms today like we sing others?!

**C. Preferred Explanation**

I would like to suggest an answer, or at least a partial one, that may be somewhat hard to accept because of our cultural bias.

1. **The character of the enemies.**

First, let me review the character of the enemies. Were they really evil? Were those foreign nations really guilty of cruel treatment of Israel? The answer to both questions is an unequivocal “Yes.” Were they deserving of judgment then? “Yes” again! I’d like to bring to your attention a passage in Romans 3:10-18. Paul is culminating his three chapter argument on “All have sinned and are falling short of God’s glory.” All are without excuse for their sins (1:20; 2:1). It’s very interesting that in a last argument to establish the fact that all men are evil and deserve condemnation that Paul quotes Scriptures, four of which come from Psalms (10:7; 53:1-3; 36:1; 140:3). All four psalms quoted have imprecatory pleas or statements of the plight of these wicked ones. Thus Paul, by implication, agrees with the imprecatory psalmists that these wicked people deserve and will get death! Thus it is a truth, the wicked will be judged severely.

2. **Imitation of the Psalmists.**

Of course our problem is with man calling down that judgment on enemies, not just saying they’ll be judged.

a. **Pure motives.**

Actually, there’s not a lot of difference if the motive is unselfish. Since the psalms are inspired worship material, I’m persuaded the psalmists’ motives are pure. If they are, they can teach us in an area where I’m persuaded we’re deficient. First, some key Scriptures: “*And return to our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom the reproach with which they have reproached Thee, O Lord*” (79:12). “*Fill their faces with dishonor, that they may seek Thy name, O Lord. . . That they may know that Thou alone, whose name is the Lord, art the Most High over all the earth*” (83:16,18). “*And let them know that this is Thy hand, Thou, Lord, hast done it*” (109:27). “*For when*

*the earth experiences Thy judgments, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness*" (Isaiah 26:9). Now, we see **the motives of the psalmists – exaltation of God, His people, and His righteous standard of ethics**. We should want that too.

b. **Desire that God and righteousness prevail.**

We should desire that God and His ways prevail and triumph in this world. Yes, many will get hurt in the judgment, and that's awful, but the outcome is the exaltation of God. Sometimes I think we are more for the prevention of anything hurtful happening even to the defiantly wicked than we are for the exaltation of God and the vindication of His people and cause. Do we really want righteousness to win out? What if it costs lives? Are we really on God's side, that we should want Him to get the glory and credit, or are we willing that He should be spit upon and His people derided before we'd want anything hurtful to happen to the wicked?! I think when we pray, "*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*," we're approaching the psalmists' wishes! And so we should. A spirit of selfishness or revenge? Never! A desire to see all men come to a knowledge of the truth and be saved? Always! A spirit that is willing to give men many chances? Of course! But at some point, when all mercies have been rejected, God must be proved just!

### **SELF EXAM FOR LESSON FIFTEEN:**

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1. Define the term "Imprecation". \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Give three possible explanations why Christians should not pray prayers of Imprecation.
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
3. There are two things that are absolutely essential if Christians are to pray imprecatory prayers. Give these below and discuss each one.
   
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\_\_\_\_\_
   
\_\_\_\_\_
   
\_\_\_\_\_
   
\_\_\_\_\_
   
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What are the five common elements in most of the "Imprecatory" psalms?
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 5) \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON SIXTEEN

# The Ethical Psalms

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### INTRODUCTION:

**T**his session will concern itself with “The Ethical Psalms”, also called “The Wisdom Psalms.” “Ethics” has to do with what’s right and wrong, good and bad, moral and immoral. It defines the standard of what is correct and what is best. You would expect the Law to cover thoroughly this aspect of God’s revelation, and it does! However, because the Israelites are prone to slip away from God, the prophets must preach repentance and return to the Law. Because people just need reminding of those fundamentals, the psalms reiterate them to some degree.

Worship is not just praise and adoration, prayer and supplication. It includes instruction from God’s word. That is the function of the Ethical or Wisdom psalms. Or these psalms might have been for personal mediational use. They might better be classified with other wisdom literature such as Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. There are noticeable likenesses. Leslie Allen comments on their purpose: “Wisdom teaching had a theology and ethical system all its own, these overlapped with the covenant traditions of Israel. It investigated the questions posed by human experience and endeavored to relate the individual to society, and both to God. It possessed distinctive forms of expression, which makes it practicable to recognize wisdom terminology and themes in the Psalter” (p. 31).

Allen categorizes the “Wisdom Psalms” into three groups: “Wisdom Psalms Proper” – perhaps for that personal use (37,49,112,127), “Wisdom Temple Psalms” – for the assembly (32,34,73,111), and “Wisdom Torah Psalms” – wedded the Law and Wisdom literature characteristics (1,19,119). (pp. 31-32).

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**LESSON TEXT:** Psalms 1,14,15,37,112,128.

**LESSON AIM:** To understand the relationship between worship and ethics or the wisdom of God.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. Become aware of how the psalms combine worship and the wisdom of God in ethical form.
  2. See the contrast between worldly and godly wisdom.
  3. Thrill at the rewards of appropriating God’s wisdom in your life.
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### INTRODUCTION TO THE ETHICAL PSALMS (PSALM 1)

#### A. Psalm 1 Is an Introduction or Prologue to the Rest of the Psalter

1. The theme of the entire book: **True piety is the source or secret of blessedness**

**or happiness.**

2. The writer is unknown because there is no inscription on it or tradition that surrounds it.
  - a. Presents a contrast of the wicked and the righteous.
  - b. The Psalter is sort of the “Yea” and “Amen” in hymn form of the Torah, the Law of Moses.
  - c. The man who loves the law is blessed, and the man who does not is wicked and will be judged.

## **B. The Righteous and the Wicked (vs. 1-3)**

Some break the psalm down into three presentations or contrasts of the righteous and wicked (vs. 1-2 – way of life, vs. 3-4 – result, vs. 5-6 – judgment). Others break it down into two sections and just one contrast: the righteous in verses 1-3, and the wicked in verses 4-6.

1. Begins with a beatitude.
  - a. A Jewish expression or poetical feature of their literature. There are quite a number of beatitudes in the Psalter.
  - b. It’s almost an exclamation, a burst of strong emotion, “O the happiness!” *“O how very happy is the man!”*
2. The way to be blessed (vs. 1-2). Stated negatively:
  - a. *“Walk in the counsel of the wicked”* – Association. He’s too close to them. He stays in their presence and listens to their corrupt talk.
  - b. *“Standeth in the path of sinners”* – Identification and Participation. We need to stand all right, but in the grace of God and in faith and in liberty.
  - c. *“Sit in the seat of scoffers”* – Fellowship. He has sat down with them in open rebellion against God and His people.
3. What blesses a man’s life. Stated positively:
  - a. Forsaking the fellowship of the wicked, he seeks the Lord’s word (v. 2).
    - 1) The word “delight” conveys “adherence to,” more than a passing interest in; a knowledge of its content and import.
    - 2) To be inclined toward His way of doing things because His ways are precious.
  - b. It will take meditation on that Word to be able to do it. Thus, with a proper attitude – “delight” – and a proper method – “meditate” – he will reap the benefits of God’s word and fellowship.
4. Description of that blessedness? *“Like a tree firmly planted by streams of water”* (v. 3).
  - a. “Planted” – stable, grounded, no wind can uproot you.
  - b. “Watered” – sustained so you can live and not die.
  - c. “Fruitful” – always makes a difference, an impact with his life.
  - d. “Evergreen” – “leaf does not wither,” no trials or hot sun can wilt this healthy plant.
  - e. “Prosperous” – more fruit, vivacious!

## **C. The Plight of the Wicked (vs. 4-6)**

1. The wicked is called chaff.  
What a drastic picture of futility when one’s life produces that which can’t be

found; it is blown away or burned up! It is opposite the tree – no roots, no leaf, no fruit, no life! His life is wasted. It's unfruitful and is worthless.

2. Cannot be a witness in the assembly of the saints.
  - a. First of all he wouldn't be allowed in.
  - b. Second because his life has nothing good to say.
  - c. He cannot stand before God in judgment either. He is drunk because of drinking the cup of God's wrath (Isaiah 51:17-22). He reels and staggers in that stupor (Psalm 107:27; Isaiah 24:20).

**NOTE:** Verse 6 summarizes the contrast between the wicked and the righteous: "*For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*"

## CONTRAST OF EVIL AND GOOD CONTINUED (PSALMS 14, 15)

### **A. Affliction of the Righteous By the Wicked (Psalm 14)**

No concern for human life (v. 4). Verse 4 says they "eat up my people," literally "eaters of my people, they eat bread." The righteous are simply to be taken advantage of. Reminds me of Micah's description of the people of his day. He likened them to cannibals, "*Who tear off their skin from them and their flesh from their bones, and who eat the flesh of my people, strip off their skin from them, break their bones, and chop them up as for the pot, and as meat in a kettle*" (Micah 3:2-3). The psalmist calls out for deliverance by the Lord in Zion from these oppressors (v. 7).

1. The fool denies God's justice.
  - a. The statement: "*The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'*"
  - b. Not simply a philosophical atheist; he's a practical atheist. If we could use the time of Jesus to illustrate this man of Psalms 14:2, we would see the Jewish ruler who denies the authority of God and Christ to live the way he wants to live.
2. An event of the past, the effect of which continues.
  - a. Paul takes this passage in Psalm 14:1b,3 (and other Old Testament passages) and makes a case for the lost condition of all men (Romans 3:9-20).
  - b. Paul's Roman letter interprets that to mean no one is "good" in the sense of perfection like can be attributed to God.
  - c. All are "corrupt" or spoiled, like soured milk (this is root word connotation). God has surveyed it all (v. 2) and will rescue His afflicted people by taking vengeance on these evildoers (v. 7).

### **B. True Worshiper of Jehovah (Psalm 15)**

1. Description of the righteous. The question: "*O Lord, who may abide in Thy tent? Who may dwell on Thy holy hill?*" (v. 1). Then come the descriptions.
  - a. A person of true character. "*He who walks in integrity and works righteousness*" (v. 2).
  - b. Control over his tongue (vs. 2b-3; James 3:2).
  - c. A clear cut allegiance. "*In whose eyes a reprobate is despised, but who honors those who fear the Lord*" (v. 4).
  - d. Honorable in his dealings (vs. 4c-5). He would rather be hurt himself than

- take advantage of others.
2. Position of the righteous. He will be immovable, unshaken (v. 5c).

### WHEN WICKEDNESS TRIUMPHS ON EARTH (PSALM 37)

An acrostic psalm, which in this case means that every other verse has a word at its beginning that begins with a succeeding letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

#### A. The Setting

A word of wisdom from an old man to a younger man, *“I have been young, and now I am old. . .”* (v. 25). The older gentleman is encouraging his readers to know the importance of trusting in God.

#### B. Don’t Get Heated Up

1. God will in the end make all things right (vs. 1,9-10).
2. Note the key words and phrases: *“Trust in the Lord,” “Delight yourself in the Lord,” “Commit your way to the Lord,” “Trust also in Him.”*
3. Concentrate on the Lord. Keep your eyes fixed on Him and His promises, not on the prosperity of the wicked. That word “commit” literally means “roll.” *“Roll your burdens to the Lord.”*

#### C. The Reason for Not Being Concerned (vs. 12-20)

1. The Lord will fight against them.
  - a. God will take the sword they would have used on the innocent to build their fortunes, and use it against them (vs. 14-15).
  - b. He’ll break their bows (v. 15) and their armies (v. 17).
2. The bottom line: *“He delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in Him”* (v. 40).

#### D. References to the Land

1. *“Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness”* (v. 3).
2. *“But the humble (or meek in NIV) will inherit the land”* (v. 11).

**NOTE:** To the Jew, the land of Palestine was part of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12:7. Keeping the land, having the land, was symbolic of covenant relationship with God. If they ever lost it, they could be sure the Lord was unhappy with them. The psalmist ties the fact of keeping the land or staying in covenant relationship to God to faithfulness, trust, and humility or meekness. Jesus reasserts that that covenant relationship to God is still tied to trust, faith, and humility.

### THE REWARDS OF GOOD ETHICS

#### A. Psalm 112: “Be Ye Perfect”

1. Psalm 112 seems to be a companion to the previous psalm.
2. What Psalm 111 says about God, Psalm 112 says about the righteous man. Thus, some commentators have summed up 112 as *“Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect”* (Matthew 5:48).



- a. God praised for the blessed state of the man who fears God (v. 1).
- b. The specifics of his blissful state:
  - 1) His family and descendants will reap the blessings of his life (v. 2).
  - 2) Wealth and riches follow him (v. 3).
  - 3) His attitude and actions toward others is unselfishness (v. 4).
  - 4) When he stands in judgment – whether here or on the final day – he will be upheld (v. 5).
  - 5) He is immovable and will be remembered (v. 6).
  - 6) He is not afraid of life and its challenges (v. 7).
  - 7) He will conquer the adversaries (v. 8).
  - 8) His heart is filled with benevolence and he will be honored (v. 9).

#### **B. Psalm 128: “A Righteous Man and His Reward”**

Psalm 128 doesn’t cover quite so much ground! It tunes in on one particular area of blessedness, which in turn affects all of society. He opens in verse 2 by saying that like a hard working farmer gets to eat the labor of his hands, so a righteous man will see and enjoy some of the fruit of his life.

- 1. The fruit of his family.  
Both wife and children have been attended to with the care of an attentive, loving husband and father.
- 2. The righteous man’s reward.  
*“The Lord bless you from Zion, and may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. Indeed may you see your children’s children! Peace be upon Israel” (5-6).*

#### **C. Psalm 49 – “The Great Equalizer, Death”**

The main thrust of this psalm has to do with the great equalizer, Death! In talking to the righteous, the psalmist urges him not to envy the wicked or fear days of personal poverty and adversity (v. 5). Why? All men die! Yes, the wise die (v. 10), but so do the foolish (v. 10). They can’t with all their money buy their soul for God’s keeping (v. 7). Not so for the righteous. The last reward of the righteous? Eternal life with the Lord.

### **SELF EXAM FOR LESSON SIXTEEN:**

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1. Psalm one (1) is said to be what in relation to the rest of the Psalter? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the theme of the entire book as expressed in Psalm 1? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Give a two-point breakdown of Psalm 1.
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is the theme of Psalms 14 and 15?
 

Psalm 14: \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 15: \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is the theme of Psalm 37? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Give the themes of the following psalms.
 

Psalm 112: \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 128: \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 49: \_\_\_\_\_
7. In Psalm 112 eight specifics of the blissful state of the man who fears God. List these.
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 5) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 6) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 7) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 8) \_\_\_\_\_
8. Read all the psalms in this lesson carefully.

## LESSON SEVENTEEN

# Forgiveness in the Psalms

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### INTRODUCTION:

**I**n this segment of our study, we want to investigate the topic of “‘Forgiveness’ in the Psalms.” Many people believe that there are two Gods (or at least two different sides of God) emphasized in Scripture, and that they are opposites and set against each other in some sense. There is first of all the God of wrath in the Old Testament, and the God of love in the New Testament. Because of this misconception, you might wonder if forgiveness was even available in Old Testament times. Yes, there is a covenant under which we live, and no, we don’t live under the old covenant given through Moses at Sinai. The payment for sin on Calvary had not been made during the Old Testament times. So we have sometimes spoken of sins being “rolled forward” each year on the Day of Atonement. Hebrews 10:3 says, “*In those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins each year.*” The reminder, however, is not in God’s mind in “rolling forward to the next year” sort of way, but a reminder to the people of their sin and need for cleansing. The Lord was granting forgiveness, real forgiveness on the basis of the prospect of Jesus’ sacrifice for sin on the cross, throughout the Old Testament times. Abraham was declared righteous (Genesis 15:6). If there is no forgiveness, there is no righteousness. The Law stated provisions for attaining forgiveness for certain sins (Leviticus 4). David was told by Nathan, “The Lord also has taken away your sin....” (2 Samuel 12:13). Forgiveness was available and received by many, both before the Law was given on Sinai and during the time of the Law’s effectiveness.

The Psalms agree with that premise. They develop it further and combine the concept of forgiveness of sins with some other things relating to life’s sustenance. It’s also significant that Paul uses Psalm 32 in Romans 4 to establish the concept of justification by faith, a concept which certainly includes forgiveness. The Psalms are oft quoted by New Testament writers in reference to a Savior, a Kingdom, and a People, all of which are primarily concerned with the forgiveness of sins. They, the Psalms, are witnesses to the salvation from sin through Jesus Christ and His body, the church.

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**LESSON TEXT:** Psalms 25,65,78,79,99,38.

**LESSON AIM:** To see that the Old Testament concept of forgiveness is like the New Testament and that it surfaced in Israelite worship liturgy.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. Investigate the different words in the Psalms that convey the idea of forgiveness.
  2. See hints of forgiveness in a number of psalms.
  3. Hear the agonizing cries of a guilty sinner.
- 

### WORDS OF FORGIVENESS IN THE PSALMS

#### A. The Concept of Sin and Personal Accountability

1. In the Psalms the writers had a very clear conception of sin and personal accountability. The three typical words are:
  - a. Sin – a missing of God’s intended standard for your life.
  - b. Transgression – stepping over the boundaries established by His law.
  - c. Iniquity – violation of an established standard. The last word, iniquity, is by far the predominant one in Psalms, 55 times, but all three are used in Psalm 32:1-2 and 51:1-2, psalms that are associated with David’s spiritual debacle.
2. These words are used to confess personal error, point out the wickedness of an enemy, or admit national mistakes.
3. With their use there is the sense of guilt for one’s own sins (40:12 – “*My iniquities have overtaken me*”).
4. Of need for justice and wrath against enemies (69:24,27 – “*Pour out thine indignation on them; and may thy burning anger overtake them; Do thou add iniquity to their iniquity, and may they not come into thy righteousness*”).
5. Of need for forgiveness from God (25:11 – “*Lord, pardon mine iniquity*”).

#### **B. The Concept of Forgiveness and Release for the Penitent**

1. Words in Psalms to reflect God’s response to man’s repentance. Mercy, Love, Rescue, Deliver, Salvation, Redemption, Righteousness, Pardon, and of course Forgiveness.
2. Love is used to describe man’s response to God, but mercy is the much more prevalent word to describe God’s attitude and action toward His contrite children.
  - a. Psalm 103:8 – “*The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness* (or mercy).”
  - b. We today use the word “save” most of the time, but the more frequent words by far in Psalms are “deliver” and “redeem” or “redemption.” “*Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me*” (40:13).
  - c. David uses the word in reference to forgiveness in 51:14, “*Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation.*”
3. “Redemption” also takes on two contexts in Psalms.
  - a. The word and concept had its roots in God’s removal of the people of Israel from the bondage of Egyptian slavery to become His people (Exodus 6:3-7).
  - b. The circumstances can be of a physical or a spiritual nature. For instance, 69:18, “*Oh draw near to my soul and redeem it; ransom me because of my enemies.*” In relation to sin, 25:22 says, “*Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.*” The Psalm reveals troubles of a number of kinds, including sin, verse 11, “*For thy name’s sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great.*”
4. The word “righteous” is used in the psalms to describe the faithful, but “righteousness” is used about 50 times to refer to God’s perfection and rightness, which apparently can be man’s because the psalmists frequently also talk of their righteousness. For example, “*I will give thanks to the Lord according to His righteousness,*” (7:17), but in the same psalm, verse 8 says, “*Vindicate me, O Lord, according to my righteousness and my integrity that is within me.*” That is harmonized with the rest of Scripture in 106:30-31, where Phinehas, a son of Aaron that stopped sin in the Israelite camp (Numbers 25:8), is said to have been declared or reckoned as righteous. That coincides with Paul’s language in Romans 4 concerning the salvation that Abraham, David, and Christians received.

## HINTS IN OR PIECES OF PSALMS

### A. Psalm 25: “Beseeching the Lord for Mercy.” He needs the Lord for all things:

1. “*Redeem Israel from all their troubles*” (v. 22).
  - a. He’s lonely and afflicted (v. 16).
  - b. He’s under attack (v. 20).
  - c. He needs teaching about life (vs. 4-5).
2. In all of this, he needs forgiveness too. In verses 7,11: “*Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions,*” “*For thy name’s sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great.*”

### B. Psalm 65: “Praise God Who Hears”

1. He proves worthiness by enumerating ways in which God has answered prayer requests.
  - a. “*By awesome deeds Thou dost answer us*” (v. 5).
  - b. Verses 5-13 list the ways. They have to do with the conditions necessary to bring about a harvest of crops. This was the promise of the Lord to Israel under the Law and the Covenant of Blessing and Cursing (Deuteronomy 28:30).
2. In the same psalm is this statement: “*Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, Thou dost forgive them*” (v. 3).

### C. Psalm 78: “Historical Forgiveness”

1. It emphasizes the patience and blessing of God toward Israel from the time of the Exodus from Egypt till the present reign of king David.
2. In spite of the recurring rebellion and stubbornness of heart on the part of Israel, God is willing to keep on protecting, delivering, blessing – and forgiving!
3. Verse 38 states, “*But He, being compassionate, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them, and often He restrained His anger, and did not arouse His wrath.*”
4. National forgiveness, like what Jesus said on Calvary, “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*”

### D. Psalm 79: “Forgive Us, Lord”

1. He describes a city of Jerusalem in ruins.
2. He pleads for a reprieve, “*Do not remember the iniquities of our forefathers against us; let thy compassion come quickly to meet us. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name; and deliver us, and forgive us our sins, for Thy name’s sake*” (vs. 8-9).

### E. Psalm 89: “Deliver Me From Danger and From Sin”

1. A prayer for relief from oppression: “*Do preserve my soul (or life), for I am a godly man; O Thou my God, save Thy servant who trusts in Thee*” (v. 2).
2. Forgiveness needs to be a part of any request. “*For, Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon Thee*” (v. 5). Whether the oppression is a judgment of God or not, he doesn’t comment. If it is, he claims to be righteous, godly now, which should persuade the Lord to lift the affliction and forgive any wrongdoing.

### F. Psalm 99: “Call to the Forgiven to Exalt Jehovah”

1. Because He is holy. He sits on the chariot of the cherubim (v. 1) from whence He can

- whisk away to any place of needed judgment.
2. Such a holy and just God has had to punish the evil deeds of even Israel, not just of Gentile nations (v. 8).
  3. People like Moses and Samuel called on Him for help and forgiveness, and the Lord obliged; *“O Lord our God, Thou didst answer them, Thou wast a forgiving God to them”* (v. 8). In the same verse we read of judgment and forgiveness. They are compatible. Paul comments, *“Behold, then, the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity; but to you, God’s kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off”* (Romans 11:22).

## THE PENITENTIAL PSALMS

A number of psalms are classified as either “An Individual Lament” or “A National Lament”.

### A. Beseeching God for Relief

The main emphasis of these psalms seems to be beseeching God for relief.

### B. Psalm 38: “I’m Hurting”

1. Introduction.
  - a. It begins with *“O Lord, rebuke me not in Thy wrath; and chasten me not in Thy burning anger”* (v. 1).
  - b. Some scholars have connected the psalm with Psalms 32 and 51 and the event of David’s sin with Bathsheba. Regardless of the circumstance, the effect of unresolved sin in one’s life is the same!
2. Open admission of sin and guilt.
 

Verses 4,18: *“For my iniquities have gone over my head; as a heavy burden they weigh too much for me”* . . . *“I confess my iniquity; I am full of anxiety because of my sin.”*
3. Effects of unconfessed sin.
  - a. He has felt or sensed the pressure of God upon him: *“Thine arrows have sunk deep into me; and Thy hand has pressed down on me”* (v. 2).
  - b. His relationship to God has suffered.
  - c. Apparently it has affected his physical health too (Read vs. 5-7).

**NOTE:** We are told by doctors that many physical ailments result from worry and guilt. Ulcers and back pain are not uncommon. Then too, the emotional stability of a person is upset by unresolved guilt. Listen to his consternation (Read vs. 6,8,10). He’s torn up inside! He’s depressed (v. 11)! He has no ambition (v. 10). When you’ve been taught well and your conscience is properly trained, and then you violate that and don’t receive forgiveness, it will eat you up inside! It stops you in your tracks. So, his whole person – body, mind, emotions, and soul – is affected. His relationships to self, God, and friends are severely impaired.

- d. In agony, he cries out, *“O Lord, rebuke me not in Thy wrath”* (v.1). *“Lord, all my desire is before Thee, and my sighing is not hidden from Thee”* (v. 9). *“Do not forsake me, O Lord; O my God, do not be far from me! Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation”* (vs. 21-22).

### C. Psalm 130: “What Sin Does to Man”

1. What sin does to a man’s relationship to God and what is needed to correct it – justification! (vs. 3-4).

2. A cry to the Lord for attention to his plight (vs. 1-2).
  - a. The word “depths” is used to describe a man caught in dangerous and deep waters.
  - b. Acknowledges that the source of justification and forgiveness is Jehovah God.
  - c. Because He holds the key in His hand to restoration, we should but fear (v. 4) and wait and hope (vs. 5-6).
3. A note of assurance at the end. A sermon to Israel from his own experience. It says, “Never doubt the forgiving nature of God.” Now as the congregation sang this as they went to Jerusalem or to the Temple to sacrifice, it signified to them the perilous position that sin puts them in with their God, but of God’s readiness to forgive. Thus, the issue of sin is emphasized again to the Israelites as they go to sacrifice. In most of those sacrifices is the shedding of blood, which again emphasizes the sin – atonement concept.

### **SELF EXAM FOR LESSON SEVENTEEN:**

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1. Some say that there was no forgiveness before the death of Christ. Using Scripture and logic show that there was forgiveness before the Law and under the Law.

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2. What three typical words are used to show the concept of personal accountability in the Psalms? Define each word.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Give the theme for each of the following psalms.

Psalm 25: \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 65: \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 78: \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 79: \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 89: \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 99: \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 38: \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 130: \_\_\_\_\_

## Forgiveness in the Palms (II)

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### INTRODUCTION:

**I**f I were to offer you only one spiritual blessing, which one would it be? I know the Christian has all spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3), but suppose you could only have one. What would it be? Surely we would say “Forgiveness. I must have forgiveness.” Perhaps we’re playing senseless theological games here to suggest that we could do without any of God’s precious blessings, but I know for sure that we cannot do without forgiveness and retain any kind of close relationship with God. We must have it.

In our last session we began our study of “Forgiveness in the Psalms.” In this second session on the subject, we will look at only two psalms, Psalms 51 and 32. Perhaps you immediately recognize them as psalms from David following the time he committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered Uriah and tried to cover it all up after the fact (2 Samuel 11-12). While his armies are off to war, David stays home. It’s a time when kings are supposed to be out on the battlefield, leading their armies against the enemy. However, David is at home. From the roof of his palace one evening, he sees the beautiful Bathsheba bathing. His lust for her is fulfilled in the act of adultery. He sends for her, and from their union a child is conceived. After his attempts to cover up his sin, David decides to kill her husband, Uriah. It’s all been suppressed until Nathan, the prophet, exposes the deed. He tells David the story about a rich man who steals the only lamb from a poor man. David is enraged against the lustful and greedy rich man. Nathan then says, “Thou art the man!” David penitently confesses and Nathan assures him of forgiveness.

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**LESSON TEXTS:** Psalms 51 & 32

**LESSON AIM:** To see the nature of forgiveness and the steps to recovery as illustrated in the actions of David.

**LESSON OBJECTIVES:** You will . . .

1. Examine David’s cry to God for forgiveness and restoration.
2. Learn six steps David took to recovery in Psalm 51.
3. Learn six ways to test whether forgiveness has been given and received.

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### PSALM 51: DAVID’S CRY TO GOD FOR FORGIVENESS

#### A. His Plea and Confession (vs. 1-5)

1. He pleads for grace and mercy, both of which are undeserved favor from God.
  - a. Justice would be stoning under the Mosaic Law’s conditions.
  - b. His error falls into three categories:
    - 1) Sin or missing the mark.
    - 2) Transgression or stepping over the boundary.
    - 3) Iniquity or violating the standard (vs. 1-3).
  - c. That’s going to require God to “blot out,” “cleanse,” and “wash away” the sin
2. In this opening stanza he confesses God’s omnipotence: “My sin is ever before thee” (v.



- 3).
3. Any sin is a personal affront to God: “*Against thee, Thee only, have I sinned*” (v. 4).
  - a. He acknowledges God’s perfection and right to punish sin (v. 4).
  - b. And his own tendency to sin (v. 5).
4. Verse 5 does not indicate the doctrine of “Original Sin” or “Total Depravity.” That is not the true statement of Scripture elsewhere, nor is it his point here. All of Scripture would, however, attest to the fact that all men do choose to sin (Romans 3:9,23; 5:12). It is the way men are and it is therefore a good way to describe our lives in this world – a life that is lived – from birth as it were-in a sinful world.

## B. Steps to Recovery (vs. 6-12)

1. **Recognize the sin and admit it plainly** (v. 6).
  - a. It demands an honesty with God and self as to the nature and consequences of the sin.
  - b. Admitting my sin goes something like this, “*I see my rebellion, and it plagues me day and night.*” Verse 3 adds to that, “*I know my transgressions.*” His conscience had continually bothered him, because he knew the Law of Moses. Yet he now faced sin, his sin, and once Nathan pointed it out, he admitted it more publicly.
  - c. James says, “*Confess your faults one to another and pray one for another that you may be healed.*” In David’s case, he had a prophet and friend who confronted him and then he repented. It’s so important to have brothers and sisters in the church with whom we can share our sins and be helped. The plan of Matthew 18:15-17 facilitates this recognition of sin too. When we have brethren who are committed to coming to us when we sin, we will be helped over our pride in facing sin.
  - d. The story of the Prodigal Son. This man finally, in the pig’s pen, recognized what a sinner he was. It may take that pig pen experience to bring us to a recognition of sin.
2. **Ask God’s forgiveness and receive it** (vs. 7, 1-2, 14)..
  - a. This is the plea. This indicates his intensity in receiving forgiveness. “Blood-guiltiness” is intense in the Hebrew, probably refers to murder of Uriah. We are to believe that He will forgive because of His love and pity. To doubt God’s forgiveness is to challenge His power and ability. It is a lack of faith on our part. If we believe He can and will supply our physical needs, then why should we doubt that He will supply our spiritual needs, including forgiveness. Sometimes, it seems like we believe He can forgive the “little sins” but not the big ones.
  - b. Again, the Prodigal Son is a good example. He came to his father asking for forgiveness, and realizing that he had sinned against him and against heaven.
3. **Believe that God has forgotten the sin.**
  - a. The child of God knows that nothing is concealed from God’s sight (Jeremiah 16:17).
  - b. Everything is laid bare before His eyes (Hebrews 4:13). In Hebrews 8:12 we read, “For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.”
  - c. The Hebrew word “remembering” in Jeremiah 31:34 was not a mere mental effort. It entailed the thought of doing something to the advantage or disadvantage of the person remembered. If he sinned and did not repent, God will not only note it, but actively bring disadvantage or judgment to that person.
4. **Create a new heart and a steadfast spirit within** (vs. 1,10)
  - a. A steadfast spirit means assurance of God’s grace and pardon. We have been created for good works, Ephesians 2:10 says, but I cannot do those good works if I have a nagging conscience and a hurting heart.

- b. Hebrews 9:14 says, “*How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God*”.
  - c. Paul says we are cut off from the old life by the renewing of the mind or heart (Ephesians 4:22-24; Romans 12:2).
  - d. The Word and Spirit are the renewing powers. We are said to be saved “. . . *by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit*” (Titus 3:5). The Spirit wields His sword, the Word, and plants all kinds of good, wholesome thoughts, which will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7-8). They bring peace to the troubled heart. I must use the spiritual weapons of warfare so that I can bring every thought into captivity, to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). That is a picture of the mind subjugating rebellious thoughts like Rome crushed the fortifications of enemies. The guilt removed, the walls are rebuilt to withstand further attacks from the Devil. Paul is able to bring up the fact that he had sinned in 1 Timothy 1:11-16, but it does not keep him from forging ahead in sharing the gospel and progressing in his own personal spiritual life.
5. **Believe in God’s presence** (v. 11).
- a. God gives His Spirit to His 1 Samuel says that the Lord gave His Spirit to Saul when he became king (1 Samuel 11:6).
  - b. God removes His Spirit when His people rebel (1 Samuel 16:14; Isaiah 63:10). 1 Samuel 18:12 says that “. . . *Saul was afraid of David because Jehovah was with him and was departed from Saul.*”
  - c. That Spirit is our seal and earnest of our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14).
  - d. To know that God still lives within us assures us of His presence and of His approval and help.
  - e. Besides the Spirit within, we need assurance that the providence of God still works for us.
6. **Restore assurance and joy** (v. 12).
- a. Assurance comes through study (especially of grace and faith) and a closer relationship with God through prayer, fellowship with saints, and involvement in His work.
  - b. That assurance gives two results:
    - 1) Joy in salvation.
    - 2) A willing spirit, one that wants to work for the Lord.

## CONCLUSION

When these steps are accomplished, recovery is complete. How do I know? It’s then that he can teach others. He is a witness to the congregation of his recovery from sin (Read vs. 12-17). It is also then – when cleansed from sin – that he can offer the burnt offering. The Burnt Offering signifies giving of self to God. However its prerequisite is holiness, righteous before God.

## PSALM 32: THE JOY OF FORGIVENESS

### A. Setting

- 1. Written by David and probably rejoicing in his forgiveness of these particular sins.
- 2. Called a “maskil,” perhaps meaning a didactic or teaching psalm.
  - a. Paul quotes verses 1-2 in Romans 4 to validate justification by faith under the Law. Those two verses are a beatitude, stating the blessing, the favor, the bliss of being forgiven.
  - b. Theological concepts.
    - 1) The term “forgiveness” means to cancel an unpayable large debt.

- 2) "Sin is covered" alludes to the concept of "propitiation" or "atonement."
- 3) "Does not impute iniquity" refers to "justification" (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:19-21).

### **B. Effects of Not Being Honest about the Sin**

1. Verses 3-4 are a microcosm of what we read in Psalm 38. However, he did confess his sin to God and relieved that pressure (v. 5).
2. As one who is healed, he becomes an "evangelist," a bearer of good tidings and exhortation to other children of God who might be caught in the same trap of sin (vs. 6-7).
3. He knows from experience that if a person fails to confess, God withdraws. He is not to be found, but there does come a time when He can be found. That's when one is penitent. In that time He becomes a "hiding place," a shelter in the time of storm.
  - a. He "acknowledged" sin – admits it as fact.
  - b. He "confesses" sin – agrees with what God thinks about it.
  - c. He "prays" (v. 6). He reaches out to God
5. A solemn warning follows:
  - a. *"Do not be as the (stubborn) horse or as the mule which have no understanding"* (v. 9).
  - b. Don't let pride keep you from returning to God.
  - c. Don't wait too long to repent either, or He may not be easy to find!
6. Joy is found in the Lord (vs. 10-11), and only sorrow awaits the impenitent.

## **TESTS OF FORGIVENESS**

Have I really forgiven myself?

### **A. Is Anger Still Present**

### **B. How Is My Prayer Life**

"Am I praying at least as much, and more now than before the sin?" If not, I have to question my belief in being forgiven.

### **C. Can I Thank God for the Trial**

"Can I thank God for the lessons learned and the character gained from the painful experience?" Or is it too painful to ever bring up again, especially to anyone else? That's the power of what Paul does time after time in his writings. He is able to talk about it without guilt.

### **D. Can I Talk about the Hurt Without Recurring Feelings**

"Can I talk about the hurt and the situation without recurring bad feelings and thoughts?"

### **E. Have I Accepted My Part in the Situation**

"Do I accept fully the responsibility for the sin, or am I still looking for an excuse to excuse my conduct?"

### **F. Do I Still Love Myself**

"Do I still love myself, and treat myself the same way as before, or am I punishing myself?"

Reading from Psalm 103:1-5,8-18.

**SELF EXAM FOR LESSON EIGHTEEN:**


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1. Concerning David's sin as confessed in Psalm 51, his error falls into what three categories?
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. David confessed that his sin was against whom? \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. What are the six steps David took to recovery from his sin in Psalm 51?
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 5) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 6) \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Restored assurance and joy (v. 12) gives what two results?
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. What is the "Theme" of Psalm 32? \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. List six ways to test whether forgiveness has been given and received.
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 5) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 6) \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. Give the "Theological" concepts of the following words/terms.
 

"Forgiveness": \_\_\_\_\_

"Sin": \_\_\_\_\_

"Does not impute iniquity": \_\_\_\_\_
  
8. How and where does Paul use verses 32:1-2? \_\_\_\_\_

# The Messianic Psalms (I)

## INTRODUCTION:

All of what we have studied so far from the Psalms has dealt with an historical situation – such as David running from Saul, and the feelings, thoughts, prayers and praise of men under those conditions. Our new track takes us to the New Testament, straight to Jesus! These are the Messianic Psalms.

Isaiah is often called the “Messianic Prophet,” because of the many references in his book to the coming Messiah. Of no less importance in this area, however, is the book of Psalms. It is the most often quoted Old Testament book by New Testament writers, and many of those are references to Christ. The following chart shows the number of quotations in the New Testament – book by book.

BOOK	NUMBER OF QUOTES	HEBREWS	17
FOUR GOSPELS	26	I PETER	2
ACTS	8	REVELATION	5
ROMANS	15	(varies with the scholar)	
I & II CORINTHIANS	4		
EPHESIANS	2	TOTAL	79

Twelve New Testament books quote and/or allude to the Psalms. There are approximately 80 easily identifiable quotes from Psalms in these twelve books. That number goes higher when certain aspects of the book of Revelation are taken into account. A well respected scholar by the name of Swete has decided that John in Revelation was quoting from 27 psalms, based on the similarity of John’s Greek and the Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint. If these are indeed quotes, that puts the total number of quotes from Psalms in the New Testament at about 100, far and away the most of any Old Testament book. I used the word “allusion” a minute ago. That means the New Testament passage is not an exact quote but is similar in language and/or content to a psalm. There are two sections of Scripture that seem to have a number of allusions to Psalms. Revelation again is the big one in this regard. Another commentator named James Strauss suggests that John quotes from seven psalms and alludes to seven others. The New International Version Reference Edition by Zondervan lists references to 32 psalms, 46 times in its center reference column. Most of these that are considered allusions are quite different from Swete’s list of quotes! We’re in an area of speculation, I believe. The other section of Scripture that seems heavily reliant on Psalms is Luke 1. The two “songs” by Mary and Zechariah (Luke 1:46-55,67-79). These two beautiful songs allude to some 17 different psalms! (See Chart) My best count in all the New Testament is 81 allusions. Put that with 80 – 100 quotes and you have between 150 – 180 New Testament references to the psalms! The most quoted psalms are 2 (6), 22 (5), 69 (5), 110 (5), 118 (9) (See Chart). The most alluded to are 79 (4), 111 (4), 115 (5). The alluded to psalms are not considered Messianic, but the most quoted ones all are! Thirty-nine psalms quoted, 46 alluded to; 71 different psalms either quoted or alluded to! That’s almost half the psalms!

The majority are in four areas: Gospels and Acts, Romans, Hebrews, and Revelation. Two of these are heavily Messianic and the other two aren't.

**LESSON TEXT:** None.

**LESSON AIM:** To comprehend the significant Messianic content in the Psalms.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will survey the Messianic psalm content in Revelation, Romans, Paul's other letters, and the Gospels.

## PSALMS IN REVELATION

### A. Most References Are Allusions

1. Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Psalms are most frequently referred to.
2. Psalms contributes to the poetic and descriptive language and style.

### B. Two Messianic Psalms in Revelation (Psalms 89 & 2)

1. Both deal with the kingly aspect. Psalms 89:27 – "I also shall make him my firstborn," and 89:37 – "*And the witness in the sky is faithful*" may well be the basis for describing Jesus as ". . . *the faithful witness and the firstborn of the dead*" (Revelation 1:5). This is the only New Testament reference to the 89th psalm, with the possible exception of Luke 1:69 where Zechariah may allude to 89:17 in presenting Jesus as the horn of our salvation from the house of David.
2. Psalm 89 is a prayer for the deliverance of the Davidic son that sits on the throne of Israel.
  - a. The psalmist repeatedly lauds God's faithfulness to the Davidic covenant and hopes it will show itself again in the present circumstance (v. 49).
  - b. David and his kingly line are to be seen as types of the Messiah to come, who is Christ exalted in Revelation 1.
  - c. John, the writer of Revelation, borrows those descriptions of the Davidic line that fit Jesus too and apply them to Him.
  - d. This is a "Dual Prophecy," applicable equally well to both the type (David or his sons) and the antitype (the Messiah or Jesus).
3. Psalm 2 is different from 89 in that it appears to be wholly Messianic. Psalm 2:9 is quoted twice in Revelation (2:27; 19:15) to establish Jesus' authority over the nations to requite them for their fury against God and His people. Messiah is a warrior in the book of Revelation!

## PSALMS IN ROMANS

The use of Psalms in Romans is not primarily to describe the Messiah or His kingdom.

### A. Quotes from Psalms in Romans

REFERENCE IN PSALMS	QUOTE IN ROMANS
62:12	2:6
51:4	3:4
14:1-3	3:10-12
53:1-3	
5:9	3:13a

140:3	3:13b
10:7	3:14
36:1	3:18
32:1-2	4:7-8
44:22	8:36
19:4	10:18
69:22-23	11:9-10
69:9	15:3
18:49	15:9
117:1	15:11

Paul quotes from 15 different psalms, only one of which contains a verse quoted by Paul and specifically referred to Jesus.

1. Features of these Messianic quotes.
  - a. One, they are pretty much unique to Romans. Perhaps that's because they are not Messianic and wouldn't necessarily be used by other authors to refer to Jesus. Paul's purpose in this book is not necessarily to establish or describe the Messiah concept. He uses the psalms quotations in a different way.
  - b. The second and main thing: Paul quotes from a psalm to state or to prove a principle.  
Again, with the exception of one, they are all quoted to make a point that the quote makes, though the psalm as a whole is not Messianic and is not necessarily written to make the same point as Paul. Even the verse quoted may not here have as its primary purpose the establishment of the same point Paul wishes to make. However, he, by inspiration knows they do imply the point and so by inspiration can use them to that end. We might call these "Principle Prophecies."
2. One reference to Jesus.
  - a. The one quotation from Psalms that Paul uses to describe Jesus is from 69:9.
  - b. Quoted by John in his gospel (John 15:25) and 69:9a is quoted by John in John 2:17.
  - c. Both are used to describe Jesus. Paul quotes the last half of verse 9 to describe Jesus' unselfish and sacrificial spirit, "For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, *'The reproaches of those who reproached Thee fell on me'*" (Romans 15:3).
  - d. The psalm itself appears to be a "Type Psalm." It is an imprecatory psalm, which describes David in distress. He cries out for help and expects to receive it because of his innocence (v. 4) and his zeal for God's house (v. 9).
  - e. Verse 25 is used by Luke to describe what will happen to Judas and all such enemies of God's people (Acts 1:20). David then is seen by the New Testament writers in those particular ways to be a type of Jesus.

## PSALMS IN PAUL'S OTHER EPISTLES

Paul's use of Psalms is to establish and prove true principles.

### A. Application of Psalm 8:6 in 1 Corinthians 15:27

1. Psalm 8 is descriptive of all men's dignity in and authority over creation.
2. That is taken one step further by the Hebrew writer (chapter 2) and here in I Corinthians 15. Here Paul says the statement: "*For he has put everything under his feet*" may be applied to God's having subjected all things, even death, to Jesus. Even death will be subjugated and destroyed by the resurrection of the saints.

**B. Application of Psalm 68:18 in Ephesians 4:8**

1. Paul quotes Psalm 68:18, as saying, *“Therefore it says, ‘When he ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.’”* Paul says this explains His resurrection and ascension to heaven.
2. When He did sit down at the right hand of God, He poured forth the Holy Spirit on all flesh on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). That Spirit is to indwell the obedient believer (Acts 2:38; 5:32; 2 Timothy 1:14).
3. Christians were also to be the recipient of some spiritual gift or gifts.
  - a. The Spirit was the giver of both miraculous and non-miraculous gifts (1 Corinthians 12:11,13; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Peter 4:10).
  - b. The non-miraculous gifts are still given by the Spirit today to Christians for the building up of the body. That’s the point of Ephesians 4:11-16 and the reason he quoted Psalm 68:18 in the first place. Jesus is the great gift giver, spiritual gifts that is.

**C. About Psalm 68**

1. The psalm praises God for being the one who comes to conquer the enemy (vs. 1-6).
2. Who kept His promise of giving them Canaan (vs. 11-14).
3. Who chose Zion as His dwelling place (vs. 15-18).
4. Who defeats all enemies (vs. 19-23).
5. Who is worshiped in His sanctuary (vs. 24-27).
6. Who deserves the praise of all the earth (vs. 32-35).

**NOTE:** The picture in verses 15-17 is that of choosing to come and dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem’s temple. In so doing, He led Israel “captive” there and gave them the gifts of being in the Promised Land. That deliverance from Egypt and dwelling in Canaan is a type of the Christian’s experience. Even though there is only one quote from this psalm, I’m tempted to categorize it as a “Type Psalm.” It really does in so many ways foreshadow the Christian’s spiritual relationship with God.

**PSALMS IN THE GOSPELS****A. Introduction**

1. First of all, in the Gospels, Psalms is used frequently to describe some aspect of Jesus’ life or character. He was the fulfillment of a number of Messianic Prophecies in the Psalms.
2. Twenty-three different psalms are quoted or alluded to, and the total number of references is about 45.

**B. Allusions in Luke Chapter One**

1. The allusions are mostly in Mary’s and Zechariah’s songs in Luke 1.
2. Mary’s songs alludes to some 9 psalms.
  - a. Most of them are pleas for help, deliverance, rescue, and forgiveness.
  - b. Some include special mention of the meek and lowly, who would need His special help because of their destitute situation.
  - c. They also include praise to God for the attention He’ll give them, though at the time of writing, they had not seen it.
2. Zechariah’s song has a theme relating to the keeping of covenant.  
The allusions basically tell us two things about the Messiah.



- a. Number one, He will be of humble origin.
- b. Number two, He will not be born in Herod's household or Caesar's palace, but He will be a king. This Messiah will be the fulfillment of the promise to King David. He will be a king in the line of David.

### C. Specific Quotes

1. Psalm 91:11-12 – Matthew 4:6.
  - a. Matthew and Luke (chapter four in both gospels) record the temptations of Jesus. In an attempt to deceive Jesus, Satan quotes Psalm 91:11-12, "He will give His angels charge concerning you to guard you, and, on their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone." Jesus does not deny that this is a specific prophecy about God's care for Him. In fact, He quotes another Old Testament passage to assert that He shouldn't use this promise to test God's providential protection. Because He promises angelic care should not cause the Son to throw Himself off the Temple heights simply to make a sensational point!
  - b. The Messiah will have angelic care. We see that in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:43; Matthew 26:53-54).
    - 1) Psalm 91 could well be wholly Messianic. It has no inscription or internal circumstances or human limitation put upon the subject to prevent the subject from being wholly Jesus! The Psalm seems timeless and widely applicable. The way the "I's" and "you's" of the psalm appear, I conclude that the psalm is a confession by the worshipers of God's care for the king, perhaps specifically David.
    - 2) The psalmist acknowledges God's protection in verse one, then pledges to make God his refuge (v. 2).
    - 3) The bulk of the psalm appears to be directed at another person who is urged to assume the same stance before God. God is even spoken for at the end (vs. 14-16). There the Lord pledges His protection and care. I tend, therefore, to take the psalm typically. Christ is the antitype of the type king of Israel, whom God will protect even with His angels.
2. Psalm 78:2 – Matthew 13:35.
  - a. Jesus had been speaking in parables which apparently hid the true message from worldly minded people. Matthew records, "So that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled saying, 'I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the world.'"
  - b. Psalm 78 is said to be the word of a prophet, so it's inspired and therefore the words of God.
  - c. The main point seems to be that it had been prophesied, specifically so, that the Messiah would use parables as a teaching method. The original use of the word "parables" in Psalm 78:2 seems to be to use stories from the past to make a point for the people of the present.
  - d. Jesus doesn't always use stories from the past history of Israel, but He does use stories to make a point. Matthew's point, then, in quoting Psalm 78:2 was to show that **Jesus' method was prophesied.**
  - e. Psalm 78 seems totally historical, not Messianic! Here's one isolated verse lifted by Matthew and said to be "fulfilled" in Jesus' method. The word "fulfilled" does not mean "primary fulfillment," but again typically, or even in principle. In other words the psalmists' parables are a foreshadow of the way Jesus would do it, or

Matthew is lifting the mention of the technique in Psalms and saying it applies to Jesus as well. Asaph is a type of Jesus, who would perfect to the utmost the method of teaching in parables. Asaph said, "I'll bubble forth riddles," Jesus says, "I will spit or spew out," and that He did!

3. Psalm 118:24 – all four Gospels.
  - a. Most of the quotes in the Gospels are in the Passion week narrative. As Jesus enters Jerusalem on the donkey, the crowds shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest."
  - b. Jesus is seen as the King entering His city. John 12:13 adds on the end, "Even the King of Israel," and follows that with another Old Testament quote, Zechariah 9:9, "*Fear not, Daughter of Zion; behold, your King comes sitting on a donkey's colt*" (John 12:15).
  - c. He comes to Jerusalem to assume the throne of David.
    - 1) That's exactly what Amos 9:11-12 prophecies and what Peter says is accomplished in the resurrection and ascension (Acts 2).
    - 2) It is the final psalm of what is called the 'Egyptian Hallel' and was sung in celebration at the Passover Feast.
4. Psalm 118:22-23 – Synoptic Gospels.
  - a. In the same chapter in Matthew (also quoted by Mark, John, and other New Testament writers), 21:42 quotes Psalm 118:22-23, "*The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief cornerstone; this came about from the Lord and it is marvelous in our eyes.*"
  - b. The context of this quote in the Gospels is rejection of Jesus by the Jewish leaders. Following the parable of the Tenants, Jesus quotes this as being a prophecy of this rejection. However, the quote adds, ". . . *has become the cornerstone.*" The picture is of building the house of the Lord, the Temple as it were. Jewish scribes, priests, and Pharisees – those who know the Law, supposedly – should be expert builders. They're so misinformed, however, that they toss away the most important building block, the cornerstone, which is Jesus! Jesus is the Temple builder!
5. Psalm 110:1 – Matthew 22.
  - a. Jesus asks the Pharisees, "*Whose son is the Christ?*" He complicates it for them by quoting 110:1, "*The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I put Thine enemies under Thy feet.'*"
  - b. Jesus uses this passage to establish one thing about the Messiah. He is the Lord of David, which makes Him more than just David's son in the flesh (also accepted by Jesus). He is superior to David, because He is David's Lord.
  - c. The word "Lord" in the New Testament is KURIOS and in the Old Testament is ADONAI, both of which mean "Master." The Messiah must be Deity, Jesus asserts. Mark 12:36 and Luke 20:42 also include this quote.
6. Psalm 22:1 – Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.
 

Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34 include a quote of Psalm 22:1, "*My God; My God; Why hast Thou forsaken me?*" Of course this is Jesus in agony on Calvary being prophesied. He's crying out for the Lord's presence, fellowship, and help because the Lord has withdrawn from the sin-bearer. I take it to be wholly Messianic.

## CONCLUSION

Let's review what the Psalms have said about Jesus so far.

- ▶ He's specially and particularly protected by God's angelic band (91:11-12).
- ▶ He speaks in parabolic stories to communicate His saving and condemning message (78:2).
- ▶ He's a king, the king of Israel, come to Jerusalem to sit on David's throne and save Israel (118:25-26).
- ▶ He is the Temple Builder, but the helper-builders, the Jews, reject Him (118:22-23).
- ▶ He is the Lord of David, and therefore David's king, the preeminent one (110:1).
- ▶ He is the one hanging in agony on Calvary, saying, "*My God; My God; Why hast Thou forsaken me?*"

## **SELF EXAM FOR LESSON NINETEEN:**

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Summarize what the Psalms have said about Jesus in this lesson by listing the six statements above.

- ▶ Jesus is: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ Jesus speaks: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ Jesus is a: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ Jesus is the: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ Jesus is: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ Jesus is the one: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON TWENTY

# The Messianic Psalms (II)

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### INTRODUCTION:

**T**his lesson is the second one on “The Messianic Psalms.” In our first lesson we noted that some 70 or more psalms are quoted or alluded to some 175 different times by New Testament writers. Not all of those New Testament references are descriptive of the Messiah and His kingdom, but many of them are.

We will continue in this lesson to investigate the Messianic Psalms quoted in John’s Gospel, Acts, and Hebrews. We are interested in two things: one, what the psalm says about the Messiah as interpreted by the New Testament writer, and two, the psalm as a whole, is it wholly Messianic, typically Messianic, or is the verse quoted lifted by the New Testament writer because it in principle describes the Messiah?

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**LESSON TEXT:** All the passages in the outline.

**LESSON AIM:** To comprehend the significant Messianic content in the Psalms.

### LESSON PREVIEW:

You will survey the Messianic psalm content in John, Acts, and Hebrews.

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## PSALMS IN JOHN’S GOSPEL

### A. Introduction

1. The Gospel of John contains about seven quotations from the Psalms, two of which we have discussed in the preceding lesson. Those two are quoted by the Synoptic authors too.
2. Five quotes in this fourth Gospel are unique from the other Gospels and from the rest of the New Testament, and they all say something about Jesus.

### B. John 2:17 – Psalm 69:9

1. **Jesus’ cleansing of the Temple** (John 2:12-22). “*His disciples remembered that it is written, ‘Zeal for Thy house will consume me’*” (Psalm 69:9). One of the most frequently referred to psalms in the New Testament.
2. The disciples feared for Jesus’ safety. When He boldly rebuked the Jews they recalled this passage about David and wondered if it didn’t also apply to Jesus.
3. When we go back to Psalm 69, we see that David is aware that his uprightness provokes opposition. He must endure scorn and shame for His choice to follow God (v. 8). David’s treatment prefigures that of Jesus not only when He cleansed the Temple but throughout His life and in His death.

### C. John 6:31 – Psalm 78:24-25

1. The day after **feeding of the 5,000** (John 6).
  - a. Discipleship is not a free ride. They must partake of His lifestyle and mind-set and even His death to be party to His kingdom.
  - b. Psalm 78:24-25, “*What then do you do for a sign, that we may see and believe*

*You? What work do You perform? Our forefathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread out of heaven to eat' (John 6:30-31).*

2. The psalmist's reference is interpreted by Jesus to be a prophecy in type of Himself.
3. Psalm 78 itself is an historical psalm, a record of a number of incidents and people in that history, especially from Exodus, are types referring to Jesus and Christians. Jesus says that a person cannot live unless He ingests this new bread from heaven which is Himself. *"For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world"* (John 6:33), and *"I am the bread of life"* (v. 35).

#### **D. John 10:34 – Psalm 82:6**

1. **Jesus' claim of unity with the Father** validated by psalm 82. The Jews are enraged *"because you, being a man, make Yourself out to be God"* (v. 33).
2. Jesus quotes from Psalm 82:6 and then argues from the lesser to the greater. *"Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'?"* (6:34). Seemingly, the best possible interpretation of Psalm 82 is that the Lord is unhappy with the appointed Israelite judges. Because they are supposed to stand in the place of God as administrators of justice and law, they can be termed "gods" (ELOHIM, same word as for the God of heaven).
  - a. Like Moses who was told he would be like God's Message to Aaron and Pharaoh (Exodus 4:16; 7:1).
  - b. Like David would be like God the King to Israel; these judges are to be to Israel like God the Judge. In that sense, they are termed "gods".
3. The psalm is not Messianic, but these judges of Israel were typical of Jesus. Jesus' argument in John 10 is that since God was willing to call mere men "gods," then, these angry Jews, should not immediately condemn Jesus for asserting that He is God. In fact, His teaching and miracles prove His testimony to be true. They say they aren't stoning Him for the miracles, so they accept them as real. Jesus, then, demands that they let those miracles validate His claim to Deity. He is God the Judge, as typified by Psalm 82, and He will make that even clearer in John 12:48-50.

#### **E. John 13:18 – Psalm 41:9**

1. **A prophecy of Judas' betrayal.** *I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against me'.*
2. Psalm 41 from which the quote comes, is a plea for mercy from God.
  - a. David has been betrayed by a close friend (v. 9). He had eaten bread with David, they had been in close fellowship.
  - b. Now this friend has hurt David. Some commentators suspect this describes the betrayal by Ahithophel (2 Samuel 15:12; 16:23). He was a double-crosser. What more appropriate type could be found for what Judas does to Jesus?!
3. "Fulfilled" has the meaning here of a type-antitype relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament passages. We usually think of a specific foretelling kind of prophecy as one to be "fulfilled", but it can be a type-antitype kind too. A type finds its ultimate fulfillment in the New Testament antitype.

#### **F. John 15:25 – Psalm 35:19 or 69:4**

1. The psalm quoted. *"But they have done this in order that the word may be fulfilled that is written in the Law, 'They hated me without a cause'"* (v. 25).
2. The rejection of the psalmist is then typical of the reaction Jesus receives from His Jewish enemies and that which we Christians also experience.

**NOTE:** You've probably noticed a time or two where Jesus called the Psalms "the Law." That term is sometimes used to refer to the Pentateuch – the first five books of the Old Testament, other times the entire Old Testament, other times everything but the Prophets, other times everything but the Psalms and the Prophets, and other times just the Psalms. The Psalms are not just Temple songs. They are based on the Law of Moses. Therefore they are rightfully called "Law".

### **REVIEW:**

Summing up what the Psalms said about Jesus as recorded in John's Gospel.

- ▶ He is a zealous devotee to righteousness, but it will get Him killed (2:17).
- ▶ He is the manna of spiritual life to all who will partake (6:31).
- ▶ He is indeed God (10:34).
- ▶ He will be betrayed by a close friend (13:18).
- ▶ The Jews will hate Him for no justifiable reason (15:35).

The two others in John we've referred to earlier as being in the other Gospels too tell of His kingship (12:13) and of the parting of His garments at Calvary (19:24).

## **PSALMS IN ACTS**

### **A. Introduction**

1. The book of Acts is a continuation of Jesus' life (1:1). That life is in His church.
2. The book contains eight references to psalms, which include six different psalms. Five of the six are heavily Messianic, while the other (109) is quoted only here in the New Testament. That one quote is attached to a quote from another psalm which is heavily Messianic.

### **B. Acts 1:20 – Psalm 69:25**

1. The psalm quoted: "*Let his homestead be made desolate, and let no man dwell in it*" (Psalm 69:25). A prayer that the dwelling place of certain enemies become a ruin.
2. Psalm 109:8, "*His office let another man take,*" to establish the precedent for picking a successor.
3. Psalm 69 is Messianic, so the enemy of the psalmist is typical of Jesus. Psalm 109 is only quoted here, so it appears that Peter sees a principle there that is applicable. It may not be considered a specific prophecy of picking Judas' replacement, but in principle it is. Thus, Jesus is the betrayed one.

### **C. Acts 2:25-28 – Psalm 16:8-11**

This well known passage is a part of Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost and is a quote of Psalm 16:8-11 (Read it in Acts 2:25-28). Peter interprets this passage as David's having foreseen the resurrection of Jesus, that He was not to decay in body, nor was His soul to remain in Hades (Acts 2:31). This is a prophecy of Jesus' resurrection.

### **D. Acts 2:35 – Psalm 110:1**

In that same sermon, Peter quotes Psalm 110:1 to establish that Jesus ascended, sat down at the right of God, and sits there now on David's throne (Acts 2:33-36). Thus Peter quotes twice from major Messianic psalms to witness to Jesus' resurrection, ascension, and kingship.

### **E. Acts 4:11 – Psalm 118:22**

Acts chapter four records the first wave of opposition to Peter and his Gospel. He and John

are put in jail, and the next day when asked to explain, Peter said, (Read 4:8-12). Verse 11 is that oft quoted verse from Psalm 118:22. Their persecution of the apostles is an extension of their persecution of Jesus before His death. Thus this prophecy is still finding fulfillment. In the psalm the rejected one was probably the Israelite nation, God's chosen one, rejected by the other nations. Its ultimate fulfillment, however, is in Jesus' experience at the hands of the Jewish rulers.

**F. Acts 4:24-26 – Psalm 2:1-2**

1. Peter and John are released that day and after their story is told, they lead the congregation in a prayer of praise to God (4:24-26). A quote from Psalm 2:1-2 is included, *"Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples devise futile things? The kings of the earth took their stand and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ"* (4:25-26).
2. The prayer acknowledges God's sovereignty over creation, and then it quotes this and closes! They interpret their persecution as being part of or a result of this prophecy in Psalm 2. The Romans put Jesus to death, and He was the Messiah. That rage continues against His body, the church. Thus the Christians interpret their persecution as a sign of their Divine origin.

**G. Acts 13:33 – Psalm 2:7**

Two more Psalms quotes occur in Paul's speech in the Jewish synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13). Psalm 2:7 is quoted in Acts 13:33, *"Thou art My Son; today I have begotten Thee."* Paul says this is fulfilled when God raised up Jesus, not in the resurrection of the dead sense, but in the sense of bringing Him to the earth. I recall some statements in the gospels that are related to this. Matthew 2:15, *"Out of Egypt I called my son."* At His baptism, He said, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (Matthew 3:17). The same heavenly declaration came ringing down when He was transfigured (Matthew 17:5). God has begotten Jesus by birth through a virgin named Mary to be His Son.

**H. Acts 13:35 – Psalm 16:10**

Some will interpret this to be a prophecy of His physical resurrection, but that seems to be the subject of the following verses (Read vs. 34-35). Verse 35 is a quote of Psalm 16:10, which is joined to Isaiah 55:3 to establish that Jesus' resurrection was foretold by Old Testament prophets. You will recognize the Psalm 16:10 quote as the same one Peter used in Acts 2 to make the same point – that Jesus is raised! David said he would be! Thus Paul asserts that Jesus' whole life and even His resurrection were foretold by the psalmists.

**NOTE:**

- ▶ He is the Betrayed One.
- ▶ He's the Raised One.
- ▶ He is the Rejected One.
- ▶ He is the Son of God, both in His life and in His resurrection. That's how Acts uses Psalms to describe the Messiah.

## PSALMS IN HEBREWS

**A. Setting**

1. This letter addresses a situation among some Jewish Christians at the time.
  - a. They are older in the faith (5:11 – 6:6), but have not progressed in their knowledge and faith.
  - b. Seemingly some pressure or persecution has come their way. They have suffered before and endured it successfully, but this present crisis seems to be taking its toll.
  - c. They are tempted to return to the Jewish religious system, which includes the

- sacrificial system and temple worship.
- d. The consequences of such a compromise, losing the benefit of the one efficacious sacrifice for sin (10:26).
- 2. The writer will present the preeminent Christ in all His glory.
- 3. In all the Old Testament imagery, detail, types, and quotes he uses are included 17 references to the psalms. Twelve different psalms are referred to, one four different times. We see some familiar psalms here that are distinctively Messianic, 2, 22, 110, 118.

**B. Hebrews 1:5; 5:5 – Psalm 2:7**

- 1. Psalm 2:7 is quoted twice in Hebrews (1:5; 5:5). Chapter One is a proof of Jesus' superiority to the angels.
  - a. This quote most likely represents the crowning of King Jesus as He sits down on David's throne, following His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God.
  - b. The Father says, "Now, officially, I declare you my Son. You have ascended my throne and now rule with me."
- 2. Chapter five, verse five, repeats these words, this time emphasizing the Father's part in declaring Jesus to be preeminent. Jesus didn't just take upon Himself the right to the throne, the Father declared Him preeminent (Read 5:4-5).

**C. Hebrews 1:6 – Psalm 97:7**

- 1. Chapter one contains six of the book's 17 psalter references.
  - a. Psalm 97:7 is quoted in 1:6 to show that Jesus is to be worshiped by the angels. That makes Him superior. That Psalm's theme is "The Lord reigns" (v. 1).
  - b. To read the psalm without knowing verse 7 is used in Hebrews to describe Jesus, one would conclude that the psalmist is talking about the Father, but Jesus is Jehovah too! Thus the angels should worship Him too. And the Spirit too, because He too is Jehovah!
- 2. The whole Psalm is not predicting descriptions of the Messiah, but the truth of Jehovah's superiority applies to Jesus and may rightfully be used to make the point of Hebrews 1. The angels are always pictured as worshipers, not as the worshiped. Jesus, however, is to be worshiped.

**D. Hebrews 1:7 – Psalm 104:4**

The Hebrew writer quotes Psalm 104:4 to describe angels as the Lord's servants. Like the winds, the angels are His tools/instruments to carry out His will. In that sense, they fit into the category of created things. Jesus does not. He's the Creator. This is the only New Testament reference to Psalm 104, and it's not used to describe Jesus, so it's obviously not Messianic. A quote from Psalm 45 follows though, and that Psalm does seem to be Messianic, at least in type.

**E. Hebrews 1:9 – Psalm 45:6-7**

The Hebrew writer says that 45:6-7 describes the righteous reign of King Jesus (Read Heb. 1:8-9). If Jesus is a king, and the angels in contrast are servants, He is superior. Even the psalm says "*God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy companions.*" "Thy companions" would be the angels in this context, it seems. Taking a quick look at Psalm 45 reveals that it tells of a royal wedding, perhaps of some king in the Davidic line. It's not foreign to the Old Testament for a Davidic king to be called "God," in the sense of his being God's viceregent to Israel. Once again we have an Old Testament type of Christ as the antitype.



**CONCLUSION**

In our next session I'd like to continue in Hebrews one to see what else is quoted, and then finish the rest of Hebrews.

**SELF EXAM FOR LESSON TWENTY:**

- 
- 
1. How many quotations from the Psalms does John contain?\_\_\_\_\_
  2. List five quotes in John, with scripture, which are unique to John.
    - 1)\_\_\_\_\_
    - 2)\_\_\_\_\_
    - 3)\_\_\_\_\_
    - 4)\_\_\_\_\_
    - 5)\_\_\_\_\_
  3. How many references to Psalms are contained in the book of Acts?\_\_\_\_\_
 

How many different Psalms are involved in these references?\_\_\_\_\_
  4. List four ways the book of Acts uses the Psalms to describe the Messiah.
    - 1)\_\_\_\_\_
    - 2)\_\_\_\_\_
    - 3)\_\_\_\_\_
    - 4)\_\_\_\_\_
  5. In all the Old Testament imagery, detail, types, and quotes how many times does the Hebrew writer refer to the Psalms?\_\_\_\_\_
  6. How many different Psalms are referred to in Hebrews?\_\_\_\_\_
  7. How many Psalms are referred to in Hebrews One?\_\_\_\_\_

## The Messianic Psalms (III)

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### INTRODUCTION:

**W**e ended our last session in the book of Hebrews, noting the Psalms quoted in chapter one of that book. The Hebrew writer is attempting to show that Christ is superior. He's trying to show Jesus' superiority to the angels with his argumentation in chapters one and two. Let's finish that study and then go back to the Psalms themselves and look at what we're calling "wholly" Messianic Psalms.

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**LESSON TEXT:** Psalm 2

**LESSON AIM:** To comprehend the significant Messianic content in the Psalms.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. Complete the overall survey of Psalms in the New Testament.
  2. Begin studying wholly Messianic Psalms and their fulfillment.
- 

### PSALMS IN HEBREWS(Cont.)

**A. Hebrews 1:10-12 – Psalm 102:25-27**

1. The only New Testament reference to this Psalm.
2. The psalm is the prayer of an afflicted man, but includes a good bit of confession and praise of God's greatness.
  - a. These verses apply to Jesus.
  - b. Everything said about Yahweh in this psalm could be said of any member of the Godhead because each one is Jehovah.
  - c. The writer of Hebrews picked for his purposes the eternal nature of Jesus. He created the heavens, and when they are old and need to be removed, Jesus will be there. He'll roll them up.

**B. Hebrews 1:13 – Psalm 110:1**

1. The conversation between Father and Son upon Jesus' ascension to heaven. "*But to which of the angels has He ever said, 'Sit at my right hand until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet'?*" (v. 13). That's Psalm 110:1 again.
2. The Father gave no angel a place on the throne, but He did to Jesus. Jesus is King. The Hebrew writer says it; the psalmist said it too.

**C. Hebrews 2:6-8 – Psalm 4:6**

1. This quotation is in relation to Jesus' superiority (vs. 5-9).
  - a. Psalm 8, which is the one quoted here, is a beautiful expression of a man's awe in view of God's creative genius.
  - b. The universe is the work of His fingers, the sun and moon and stars for example.

David is taken back by all of this creative beauty and because of it's overwhelming nature, it seems that man should not seem of any significance to God, but he is significant to God!

2. David in his psalm applies what the Hebrew writer quotes to all mankind. Man's dignity is seen in his exalted place in creation.
  - a. He has been given precedence over all creation.
  - b. The Hebrew writer says that fits Jesus too. In taking on flesh, He was made a little lower than the angels, but exalting Him to His right hand and promising to subject all things to Him, even His enemies and death, Christ is seen to be exalted over all things. That can't be said of angels.
3. The psalm is not Messianic at its core, but that passage was used to describe a similar role for Jesus that had originally been given to man in the Garden of Eden.

#### **D. Hebrews 2:12 – Psalm 22:22**

1. Jesus has power to exalt mere men to the status of divine family, or to brother status ( Hebrews 2:11-12).
  - a. A quote from Psalm 22, one of several New Testament quotes from this Psalm. Both are of Jesus. This one says Jesus calls all Christians "brothers".
  - b. He's the "Big Brother" in the spiritual family of all believers.
2. The psalm itself is wholly Messianic.

#### **E. Hebrews 5:5-6 – Psalm 110:4**

1. In Hebrews 5:5-6 we have two quotes. Psalm 2:7 in Hebrews 5:5 and 110:4 in verse 6. This is quoted again in 7:17,21.
2. The Hebrew writer is attempting in this section of his book to prove the superiority of Jesus' priesthood to the Levitical priesthood.
  - a. He quotes 110:4 in verse 6 to establish that Jesus was indeed a high priest.
  - b. Jesus' priesthood is superior because it's eternal, after the figurative likeness of Melchizedek's priesthood. Jesus' indestructible life is the basis of that claim of superiority (7:16-17).
  - c. This time the superiority of Jesus' priesthood is based on the fact that God swore with an oath that Jesus' priesthood would be eternal (Hebrews 7:21). No other priesthood was accompanied by an oath. God did establish the Levitical and Aaronic priesthood, but not with an oath that it should be eternal.

#### **F. Hebrews 10:5-7 – Psalm 40:6-8**

1. He has just said that the sacrifices of the Levitical sacrificial system could not take away sin (v. 4). He then borrows a part of a Davidic psalm (40:6-8) to summarize what Christ's incarnation said, *"I did not come to offer more bulls and goats. Those cannot atone for sin. I came to present my body as a complete sacrifice for sin, for consecration, for peace and fellowship with man."*
2. He did God's will perfectly and thus was holy and able to make us holy and cleanse us from sin.
  - a. Looking back at Psalm 40, it appears that David realized that the sacrifices in and of themselves could not atone for sin. His life must be one of faith, consecration, and obedience. Only then would the sacrifices be viewed as typical of Christ's and be accepted by God as walking by faith, upon which basis God could credit righteousness to David's account.
  - b. The Hebrew writer applies it to Jesus and says in Jesus' case, it means that He is the efficacious sin offering!

### G. Hebrews 13:5-6 – Psalm 118:6-7

1. The context of Hebrews 13 is of God the Father as our protector. However this quote comes from a Messianic psalm, a frequently referred to psalm in the New Testament. Thus I feel it is acceptable to attribute this characteristic of caretaker to Christ as well as to the Father.
2. In summary, Hebrews has quoted psalms to:
  - a. Establish Jesus' superiority over angels and Levitical priests.
  - b. He is shown to be a King and an eternal High Priest.
  - c. He is also the one atoning sacrifice for sin.
  - d. He is our personal Protector and Caretaker.

## PSALM 2: THE REIGN OF THE LORD'S ANOINTED

### A. Psalm 2 Is Quoted Some Seven Times in the New Testament and Applied to Jesus Every Time. Note the chart

Verses 1-2	– Acts 4:25-26
Verse 7	– Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:7
Verse 7	– Hebrews 5:5
Verse 9	– Revelation 2:26-27; 12:5; 19:15

The psalm from start to finish is seen by New Testament writers to apply to the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

### B. Directly Messianic? Two viewpoints:

1. A psalm that is an out-and-out prophecy of Christ and does not have an Old Testament setting at all.
2. "Typically" Messianic, which is one that refers to an actual situation in the days of some king of Judah but which serves as a type of the Messiah to come. This seems to be the correct view.

### C. Exegeting the Psalm Itself

It breaks down into four strophes of three verses each.

1. **Antagonism of the enemies of the king** (vs. 1-3).
  - a. Increased revolt by nations in the Near East is characteristic of a time of the coronation of the new king.
  - b. The revolt appears to be widespread. "The nations," "the peoples," "the kings," "the rulers" are mentioned. Listen to the wording: "uproar," "devising a vile thing," "against His anointed." It is directed against "His anointed".
  - c. The kings of Judah in the line of David were God's anointed. (The word "anointed" is the name Messiah.) These enemies don't want to be submissive anymore to the king of Judah.
2. The Messianic interpretation.
  - a. The Jewish opposition to Jesus during His life and the Roman crucifixion are the fulfillment.
  - b. We see prophesied all that opposition, rejection, and persecution of Jesus by the Jews, culminating in His death on Calvary. It all is described as rebellion against His Kingship.
  - c. That's why the Jews cannot stand His admission to being King of the Jews and of Pilate's plaque over Jesus' head acclaiming Him "King of the Jews".

- d. Further, it is fulfilled, as Acts 4:25-26 indicates, in the continual through the centuries rejection of Christ and His rule by nations and their leaders.
3. **God's response to the enemies** (vs. 4-6)
  - a. The rebellion is not only against the Son, but against the Lord as well! He too is personally affected by such adverse behavior. God's response is laughter (v. 4), anger (v. 5), and resolve (v. 6). Their feeble plot causes God to laugh.
  - b. He views their rebellion as senseless and bound to fail.
  - c. It will utterly fail because God is invincible and has never lost a battle! After scornful laugh subsides, He becomes righteously angry. He will personally bring judgment on them.
  - d. The prophets describes that as invasion, economic downturn, or natural calamities. He closes with resolve to keep His anointed King safely in power. He will sustain His Kingship (v. 6).
4. The New Testament fulfillment.
  - a. Hebrews 12:22ff talks about the eternal, rock solid kingdom of Christ.
  - b. Matthew 16:18, "*Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.*" Not even death (Hades) can knock down the walls of the kingdom of Christ.
  - c. Matthew 21; Mark 13; and Luke 21 all describe the destruction of Jerusalem and Judaism for its resistance to Christ's kingdom.
  - d. Revelation vividly describes and predicts the downfall of Rome, who would attempt to wipe Christianity out and exalt Caesar as lord.
5. **The king as God's son** (vs. 7-9).
  - a. Verse 7 is quoted in the New Testament. Here it describes what happened at the coronation. When a son of David was anointed king of Israel, the Lord anointed him as king too but also adopted him as His son.
  - b. The literal kings of Israel were called "sons of God," attested to in 2 Samuel 7:14; 1 Chronicles 22:10; 28:6; Psalm 89:26-27. He became the begotten son at his coronation.
  - c. In applying this to Jesus we should relate it to His resurrection, ascension, and coronation primarily. Hebrews 1 certainly seems to use it that way. The Father officially begat Jesus as His King-Son when He was raised and ascended to heaven and sat down at the right hand of God (Acts 13:33).
6. Verse 9 in the Book of Revelation.
 

As the son, the king is entitled to the rights and privileges of sonship. He is the rightful heir. In actuality the king of Israel is king over the nations as well. Jesus is given that power too. Verse 9 is quoted three times in Revelation to prove Jesus' power over His enemy, Rome. He mounts the white horse and leads His armies against the foe and is victorious (Revelation 19). The picture in this psalm is of the ease with which He smashes His enemies, like bringing down a heavy iron rod on a piece of pottery. The enemies will be as easily destroyed by the King's anointed as by God Himself (v. 5). Jesus is the warring king here.
7. **Kiss the Son!** (vs. 9-12). It includes a summons (vs. 10-11), a warning (vs. 10,12a), and a blessing (v. 12b).
  - a. Be wise and be warned (vs. 10-11).
  - b. Submit to the benevolent rulership of this anointed one?
    - 1) "Worship the Lord in reverence." Another translation says, "Serve the Lord with fear."
    - 2) "Rejoice (in His rule) with trembling."

- 3) “Do homage to the Son.” Some translations say, “Kiss the Son,” referring to the custom of kissing the feet of the superior.
- c. One more time-He might become angry with you and destroy you and He will be able to do it!
- d. The psalm then closes with a beatitude (v. 12c), “*How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!*” The submissive ones will benefit from the benevolent reign of this God appointed King. Remember, we are co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). We share in the inheritance from His Father. He is even willing to call us brothers, which would convey the same inheritance concept. Oh what a blessing to be on the Lord’s side, but oh how fearful to be the object of His wrath.

### CONCLUSION

What a thought, that the people in David’s time and following sung and read so much in their worship assemblies that either spoke directly or typically of the coming Messiah. Seems like if they were cognizant of the fact that these were speaking of the Messiah, their Messianic conscience would be held at a high level. They should have been ready for Him when He came. Unfortunately even the psalms predict that the stone that would be the cornerstone of the temple would be rejected by the builders.

### **SELF EXAM FOR LESSON TWENTY-ONE:**

1. List seven references in Hebrews with the psalm quoted in these references.
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 5) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 6) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 7) \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many times is Psalm two quoted in the New Testament and to whom is it applied?
 

\_\_\_\_\_
3. Is Psalm two “Directly” Messianic or “Typically” Messianic? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Give the four-point outline of Psalm Two.
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4) \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON TWENTY-TWO

# The Messianic Psalms (IV)

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### INTRODUCTION:

**J**ames E. Smith in his book “What the Bible Says About the Promised Messiah”, exegetes what he believes are “directly Messianic psalms,” psalms that do not have some event or person in Hebrew history as a type of Christ. To him these psalms are 2, 16, 22, 40, 45, 68, 69, 102, 109, 110, 118. I have some difficulty with all of these being “directly Messianic.” I could agree in most cases that they are “wholly Messianic,” meaning the whole psalm can and does refer to Christ, but in some cases is the type-antitype approach, wherein David (or some other author) and his situation typifies/foreshadows Jesus and His condition. Our main concern is to find the descriptions of Messiah in the psalms, whether they are typical or direct references to Him. In this particular session we will look at two of these wholly Messianic psalms-16 and 110.

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**LESSON TEXT:** Psalms 16,110.

**LESSON AIM:** To investigate the nature of wholly Messianic Psalms.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. Study two psalms in their context and in the context of their Messianic import.
  2. Study the fulfillments in the New Testament.
- 

### THE MESSIAH FROM PSALM 16

#### A Views of the Psalm

1. Quoted by Paul in Acts 13:35 (v. 10) and Peter in Acts 2:25-28 (vs. 8-11).
  - a. Both New Testament preachers say that the verses quoted refer to the Messiah.
  - b. Peter claims David foresaw the resurrection of Jesus and spoke of it.
2. It is a typical, wholly Messianic psalm.

#### B. Setting and Background of the Psalm

1. Title: “Jehovah Is My Portion In Life and My Deliverer in Death”.
  - a. A psalm expressing confidence in the Lord.
  - b. Inscription: “A Miktam of David.” “Miktam” has a root meaning of “gold,” perhaps indicating “A Golden Poem.” “Of David” probably indicates that David is describing a personal situation, which typifies the Messiah.
2. The psalmist is apparently confronted with some distressing situation, perhaps even the threat of death (vs. 1, 10).
  - a. The psalm is a plea to God for help and an expression of assurance that he will be delivered.
  - b. “God” is the word EL in Hebrew, the mighty One.

#### C. The Confessions of Who God Is and What He Does

1. Besides being the mighty one, he is David’s refuge (v. 1). His fellowship is God’s hiding place, the one to whom he flees to escape danger.
2. He acknowledges Him as Yahweh and Adonai (v. 2).

- a. He is Yahweh, the One who always keeps His promises to the ones with whom He's in covenant relationship.
  - b. He's Adonai, the Lord, the Master, the controller of His life.
  - c. David confesses His supply: "I have no good besides Thee." Nothing can ever mean anything to him if He's not Lord.
  - d. "Thou dost support my lot," or "You have made my lot secure" (v. 5). This is a figure taken from the days when the Lord through Joshua divided the land up among the tribes. Each family had ample room to live. Retaining that piece of property was very important to an Israelite..
3. Confidence that even in death God will deliver (vs. 10-11). The psalmist says, "*For Thou wilt not abandon my soul (or life) to Sheol (or the grave or death), neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to see the pit.*"
    - a. That's synonymous parallelism, which has the second line repeating in different words the thought of the first line.
    - b. He believes his close fellowship with God will stretch even into the valley of the shadow of death.
    - c. He follows that with a statement of assurance about life, "Thou wilt make known to me the path of life; in Thy presence is fullness of joy; in Thy right hand there are pleasures forever" (v. 11). Life in the Lord's blessings is the opposite of death. Deliverance from death?

#### **D. Peter's Interpretation**

1. Peter quotes verses 8-11 and applies them to Jesus' resurrection. Peter's interpretation seems to be that Jesus' body would not see corruption in the ground because of the short time it would be there, and that His spirit or soul would not stay in Hades, the abode of the souls of the disembodied (Luke 16:16-31). His soul would return to His body, be reunited, and then He would be raised on the third day.
2. Verse 11 applied to Jesus, speaks of His state in heaven with the Father. He ascends to the Father's right hand and receives the crowning gifts of sitting down on David's throne. Joy eternally for the Messiah.

#### **E. "I Take Refuge in Thee"**

1. The psalmist's commitment and trust in God (v. 1). "*I take refuge in Thee.*" He trusts the Lord to be a place of safety from all enemies and trials. He's made a decision to put his full faith in God.
2. His commitment and association with the people who love God, "*...the saints who are in the earth*" (v. 3). They will be his delight.
3. He refuses to enter into the idolatrous practices. Nor will he offer a libation of blood for them. This could be a reference to an idolatrous practice, or to the offering of a blood sacrifice in the Temple for their sins.
4. He detests the fellowship of the unrighteous.
5. He is committed to blessing the Lord (v. 7). His mind or conscience is clear about this. He's made the right decision. He will eulogize the Lord publicly. No shame. No hiding it. He will proclaim that he's on the Lord's side.
6. He is committed to making God's will his course and mind-set (v. 8). "*I have set the Lord continually before me; because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken*".

#### **F. The Messianic Fulfillment**

1. Jesus acknowledged His belief in God over and over. He said, "*My father is greater than I*" (John 14:28). "*My Father is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand*" (John 10:29). He wants people to realize that God sent Him (John 11:42). He acknowledges that God the Father has given Him authority to do



- what He is doing (John 17:2; Matthew 28:18), and that He is the only true God (John 17:3).
2. Based on His beliefs about the Father, Jesus the Messiah commits Himself to the Father's will and to His saints.
    - a. John 4:34, "*My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to accomplish His work.*"
    - b. "*For I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent me*" (John 6:38).
    - c. "*I do nothing of my own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught me*" (John 8:28).
    - d. "*I always do the things that are pleasing to Him*" (John 8:29).
  3. He kept His focus on the Father, "*...who for the joy set before Him (that joy is the fellowship with the Father) endured the cross, despising the shame, and has set down at the right hand of the throne of God*" (Hebrews 12:2).
    - a. He was willing to call the saints "brothers" (Hebrews 2:11).
    - b. He told everyone from the beginning of His ministry that He came to preach to the receptive, the ones who would be God's children (Luke 4:18-19; 5:31-32; 17:10). They were His delight-and still are! From a young age He knew He must be about His Father's business, and even in His death he committed His spirit to God's safe keeping. Confession and Commitment from start to finish.

## THE ROYAL PRIEST IN PSALM 110

### A. Introduction

1. Has been called: "the pearl of the Messianic psalms." It is quoted ten times in the New Testament. Verse 1 is quoted in Matthew 22:41-46; Mark.12:35-37; Luke.20:41-44; Acts 2:34-35; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Hebrews 1:3; Ephesians 1:22. Verse 4 is quoted in Hebrews 5:6.
2. The inscription on the psalm states "A Psalm of David," and the New Testament ascribes it to David as well. His authorship is a key element in the use of this quote by Jesus in Matthew 22:41-46.

### B. Directly Messianic

There was no Old Testament king of Israel, including David, who was allowed to be a priest. Royalty and Priesthood come from two different tribes: Judah and Levi respectively. The only possible person who fits this combination of roles is Jesus, the Messiah!

### C. The Four-Part Outline of the Psalm

1. **His coronation** (v. 1).  
Peter quotes it in Acts 2 as proof of Jesus' resurrection and ascension to the throne of David. That throne is equated with sitting down at the right hand of the Father. This is apparently the conversation between Yahweh, the Father, and Jesus, David's Master. "*The LORD* (Jehovah it is – God the Father) *said to my Lord* (Adonai it is – Jesus the Son), '*Sit at My (Father's) right hand.*'" There are a number of New Testament references to the fact of Jesus now sitting at the right hand of the Father, especially in the book of Hebrews (Hebrews 1:1-5; 8:1-2; 10:1-12; 12:1-3). There He shares the throne with the Father. He has been given all authority in heaven and on earth. That authority is validated by the Father's promise to subjugate all of Jesus' enemies. I Corinthians 15:25 quotes that part and says death will be the last enemy to be conquered.
2. **The kind of rule of the Messiah** (vs. 2-3).  
His sovereignty is displayed in two arenas – the arena of His enemies, and the

fellowship of His followers. He has been given a “strong scepter,” perhaps like the rod of iron (2:7) to rule the rebellious enemies. They will be subjugated (v. 1) and made to submit to His rule. Reminds me of Philippians 2:9-10, “*Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth.*” Verse 3 speaks of the willing subject of Messiah’s rule. “The womb of the dawn” seems to refer to the early morning when dew is prevalent. Like the consistent dew of every morning, so will the willing followers of Messiah be. They are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

3. **His high priesthood** (v. 4).

The Hebrew writer makes much of this verse in establishing the superiority of Jesus High Priesthood in comparison to the Levitical priesthood.

a. His priesthood is sure.

“*The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind.*” God gave Messiah this role; man didn’t. Jesus didn’t assume it nor was He given it by man. God gave it to Him and took an oath to show that He really meant it. Of course He didn’t have to do that, but He did it for emphasis sake, for man’s sake. The Hebrew writer concludes, “. . .so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant” (7:22).

b. His priesthood is unique and singular. The Lord only swore about one person, Jesus.

c. His priesthood is eternal.

“Forever,” he says, “*According to the order of Melchizedek,*” he adds. Melchizedek wasn’t without birth and death, beginning and end in reality, but the Hebrew writer, as well as the psalmist uses a literary device to make Melchizedek a type of Jesus. Because his birth and death are not recorded in Genesis, he may from a figurative point of view, be seen as without beginning or ending, thus eternal. Melchizedek was eternal only in the figurative sense, but Jesus is literally eternal. That eternal priesthood gives assurance to man. No changes. No new High Priest who will be different from the last one. No change. Jesus, eternal High Priest, appointed by God, sure and unchanging.

4. **He is the conqueror of His enemies** (vs. 5-7).

He is still at the right hand of Jehovah (Lord is Adonai again, and that’s the Messiah in this psalm). What that seems to say in this last part is that the Messiah and the Father are joined in this battle. Verses 5-6 describe that victory. Listen to the devastation of the enemy: “shatter kings,” “judge,” “fill them with corpses,” “shatter the chief men.” Then, as if to convey the fact that the battle’s won, he says, “*He will drink from the brook by the wayside; Therefore He will lift up His head*” (v. 7). His head is high in pride in victory. He’s fought and won and now takes a peaceful drink from the stream.

## CONCLUSION

I’d like to close with a reference to the prophet Zechariah. In this apocalyptic book, we have another reference to the dual role of the coming Messiah. Zechariah was one of two prophets (Haggai being the other) who was to stimulate the people in Jerusalem and around the city to finish rebuilding the Temple. Zechariah attempts in the first part of the book to say that God is with them; He will protect them. His two instruments of getting the job done will be Joshua, the High Priest, and Zerubbabel, the governor (a descendant of David and in the line of Jesus). In other words, the Temple Builder will be a combination of Priest and King. Listen to two passages: Read Zechariah 3:8-9; Haggai 2:23. Jesus will be like Joshua the High Priest. I know it’s Jesus, because He is well known to be the “Branch.” Thus Joshua the High Priest is a type of

Jesus. But Branch is of Jesse or David's father, thus the kingly connection too. Jesus is also an antitype of Zerubbabel (Haggai 2:23). He has the signet ring of kingly authority. Thus the prophets validate the psalmist's assertion that Messiah will be both King and Priest. And they add that He will in that role build the Temple of the Lord, the church of Jesus Christ.

**SELF EXAM FOR LESSON TWENTY-TWO:**

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1. Give two places in the New Testament where Psalm 16 is quoted and by whom it is quoted.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

2. What title does Charles Speer give to Psalm 16?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Of what does Psalm 16:8-11 speak? How do we know this?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Give the four-part outline of Psalm 110.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

5. What kind of Psalm are these two psalms?

\_\_\_\_\_

# The Messianic Psalms (V)

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## INTRODUCTION:



Every book points to Jesus! We're spending five lessons looking at the "Messianic Psalms." That may seem like a lot of time, but remember that Jesus is the focal point and primary person in the biblical literature. Every book in the Bible has something to say about Him. When you study any book, He should be seen in type, in prophecy, in plan, in preparation. Psalms is a book that is not used just sparingly either by New Testament authors in referring to Jesus. It is plentiful in its prophecies of Jesus. We're dealing with directly or wholly Messianic Psalms in this lesson, Psalms 22 and 118.

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**LESSON TEXT:** Psalms 22, 118.

**LESSON AIM:** To investigate the nature of wholly Messianic Psalms.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. Study the content and Messianic import of two Messianic Psalms.
  2. Study their fulfillment in the New Testament.
- 

## PSALM 22 AND THE MESSIAH

### A. Proof of Its Messianic Nature

Psalm 22 is quoted or referred to five times in the New Testament, and all refer to Jesus' experience, primarily at Calvary.

1. Four approaches to this psalm.
  - a. One is **the "personal" interpretation**, which purports that some individual, like David, lived through the experiences described in this psalm, some parts of which typify Jesus' experience on Calvary.
  - b. Another interpretation is **the "ideal" approach**, which says that this is not a record of a real life experience, but a description of what every righteous person experiences at times in his life. Again, parts of it typify Jesus' particular experience.
  - c. A third way is **the "national" approach**, which refers the psalm to Israel in Babylonian exile.
  - d. A fourth is **the "predictive" approach** which regards the whole psalm as describing Jesus. This approach assumes the author was conscious of the fact he was predicting the life and death of the Messiah.
2. My preferred approach **"wholly but not directly."** It appears to me to be wholly Messianic. In other words, it can all be applied to the Messiah. I base that conclusion on the fact that verses 1, 8, 15, 22 are quoted in the New Testament as referring to Jesus and that the rest of the psalm is consistent with the thoughts in these quoted verses. Thus, it is wholly Messianic, but is it directly Messianic (not speaking of anything in the psalmist's life but exclusively predictive of Messiah)? I prefer the wholly but not directly interpretative approach. This would make it wholly typical of Messiah,

but referring to something in the author's life as well. Just because we can't match something in David's or the exiles' lives to this psalm may only speak of our lack of knowledge in these areas. It could still be applicable to David (my preference because of the inscription) and typical of Jesus as well.

**B. Setting:** If it were not Messianic, this psalm would fit categorically into what we call the "Deliverance Psalms." The psalm naturally divides into two parts, at verse 21.

1. Sources of pain. The first part, verses 1-21, speaks of Messiah's (and the psalmist's) trials and His call to God for help.
  - a. His agony stated: "*My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken me?*" See Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34. Messiah's agony is from three sources:
    - 1) **A perception that God is not attentive to the present suffering** (vs. 1-5). The intensity of the pain causes Him to think God is not attentive or that He is too long in coming. Of course Christ has been up all day and night and is very tired and weary. There is in this outcry, a confession of God's holiness which would not allow pain in His children to go on unrequited for very long. He also looks to past history for His assurance that God will come. The faithful forefathers trusted in Him and He came to their aid. Thus it's a mix of trust and impatience in agony that cries, "My God, My God...."
    - 2) **The ridicule of the wicked ones** (vs. 6-11). He was a reproach among men. The taunt of verse 8 is almost word for word what the detractors said at Calvary (Matthew 27:39-44). Messiah feels He's lost His dignity (v. 6). People treat him not as a human being anymore, but as a worm to be played with and smashed. Yet there is still that element of trust. From His birth till this moment He believes God has protected Him. Why should it change now? The agony causes Him to wonder, but history restores His trust. He can't help but cry out once more thought, "*Be not far from me, trouble is near, for there is none to help*" (v. 11).
    - 3) **The physical and emotional hurt of Calvary** (vs. 13-18). There is certainly an overlap of the last section in this one. We still have the oppressors pictured as "strong bulls of Bashan" and as "ravening and roaring lions" and as "dogs."
2. Messianic Content.
  - a. Verse 18 is referred to in Matthew 27:35; Luke 23:23; and John 19:24. Verse 15 may be alluded to by John 19:28 where John says, "*After this, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, 'I am thirsty'.*"
  - b. Add to the emotional abuse the physical suffering. The pain is certainly extreme, as expressed by verse 14, "*I am poured out like water; and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax; it is melted within me.*"
  - c. Verse 16 is certainly typical of Jesus, "*They pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones.*"
  - d. Once again, as he began, now at the end of this section, he begs for deliverance (vs. 19-21).

### C. Thanks For Personal Deliverance

1. The mood of the psalm changes.  
There's a mood change beginning in verse 22. The first part has shorter verses, almost

gasps of breath barely utterable, while the last part has longer sentences. Relief! Or confidence and assurance! Some commentators suggest that deliverance has been perpetrated and now the delivered one promises to praise God and convert the world. However, I prefer to think that this assurance is confessed before the deliverance is experienced. This is not atypical of these kinds of psalms.

2. His belief in God's attentive care. *"For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted. Neither has He hidden His face from Him; but when he cried to Him for help, He heard."*
  - a. His assurance of personal deliverance leads Him to believe that that protection is for all who love God. Therefore He makes vows to share the news of His deliverance with others after His salvation has come.
  - b. The addressees? (vs. 22, 25b-26).
  - c. The message? (vs. 22, 24, 28-29).
  - d. The results? (vs. 27, 30-31). Christ's deliverance from ultimate and final humiliation and death is His message through the apostles and prophets, the New Testament writers. That message gets to those who are oppressed too and who fear the Lord and put their faith in Him as did the Messiah. They too will be delivered and then they too will become messengers to the world of the saving grace of God. It will be a universal result! *"All the ends of the earth"* and their *"posterity"* will participate. It's universal and age-lasting. And what does it really mean for these many people? Righteousness! *"They will come and declare His righteousness"* (v. 31). The Messiah's deliverance resulted in righteousness for all. *"Him who knew no sin, He made to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God"* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

## PSALM 118 AND THE MESSIAH

### A. One of the Most Frequently Quoted Psalms

1. Quoted almost as much as 110.
  - a. Six of its ten quotes are in the Synoptic Gospels and are repeats of the same instance.
  - b. John has one; Acts has one; 1 Peter has one, and Hebrews has one besides the ones in the Synoptics. The verses quoted in these New Testament references are verses 6-7 (Hebrews 13:5-6), verse 25, and especially verse 22 which is specifically and frequently applied to Jesus.
2. In the New Testament quotes, the inspired speaker (including Jesus) interpret this verse to be a Messianic prophecy of Jesus' rejection by the Jews and of His vital part in building the spiritual temple of the Lord, the church.

### B. Directly, Wholly, Typically, or Partially Messianic

Smith says, "Most conservative scholars, however, have not adopted this view (that the whole psalm describes Messiah-directly or typically)" (p. 122). Smith holds the view that it is directly and wholly Messianic. If verse 22 is Messianic, and other verses, like verse 22 are spoken in first person, why should they not also describe Messiah?! Willis, on the other hand, says, "They begin with what seems to be a popular proverb used in connection with building great buildings." Then he quotes verse 22. "It is appropriate," he says, "that the New Testament writers took the same proverb and reapplied it to Christ" (II, p. 34). Since they merely borrowed the proverb, the psalm as a whole is not in view. Thus, to Willis, the

psalm is not wholly Messianic. I lean toward a mix of these two views, or a middle road view. Because of the first person voice in other parts besides verse 22, I think it's wholly Messianic, but only typically, not directly as Smith contends. Either way, we will deem it Messianic.

### **C. Giving Thanks for His Lovingkindness (vs. 1-4)**

#### **D. Reasons for the Thanks (vs. 5-6)**

1. The Lord has delivered Him and exalted Him. Verses 5-6, are quoted in Hebrews 13:5-6. There it is, the motto of the confident Christian. We should have learned it from the Christ whom we attempt to emulate.
2. The Messiah learned that there is no refuge, no trust, like God (vs. 8-9). He, like all men, was tempted to trust in others or in His own strength, but He learned to trust the Father.

#### **E. Specific Distress (vs. 10-14)**

1. The recurring statement (three times): "*In the name of the Lord I will surely cut them off.*" The New American Standard Version puts this in the future tense, but other translations do not. The action of the enemy is in the past tense, so it seems that the psalmist is recounting the victory, in past tense.
2. The Lord was His strength (vs. 13-14).

#### **F. Messianic Import**

From the Messianic standpoint, who are these enemies? Are they not the Jews and the Romans? Indeed it looked as though messiah was surrounded at His trial and at Calvary, but did He not rise from the dead in victory? Did He not prophecy and carry out destruction on Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (Matthew 24)? Did He not prophecy and carry out destruction on Rome (Revelation, especially chapter 19)? Indeed He cut them off! Like the thorn fueled fire goes out quickly, where is Rome? Jerusalem?

Pause, before going on in the psalm, to recall why he's talking about these things (vs. 15-16). More rejoicing-in the Lord! It was His right hand that has done these mighty deeds through Messiah. It's always been that way (cf. Exodus 15:6,12).

#### **G. Situation Needing Deliverance (vs. 17-18)**

1. The situation was a life and death struggle. He interprets it as chastening from the Lord (v. 18). Applying that to Israel as a nation or the king as a person, it is to be viewed as punishment for sin. That was part of the covenant relationship (Deuteronomy 28-30).
2. In Jesus' case, the Hebrew writer says Jesus had to learn obedience through the things He suffered (Hebrews 6:8-9). He didn't sin, but the Father allowed Him to experience suffering, to build greater faith in Him.

#### **H. Procession to the Temple, Completing His Thanksgiving (v. 19)**

1. He enters as the stone the builders rejected as worthless, but as the stone which is the cornerstone of the new temple.
2. Verse 26 is part of what the people of Jerusalem said to Jesus as He entered the city.
3. The Hebrew writer talks about Jesus' suffering being the way He made His spiritual brothers holy (2:10).
4. To do that He had to enter the Most Holy Place with His blood and cleanse them with

that blood (Hebrews 9:11-14). That allows us to enter the Most Holy Place in prayer through that same blood (Hebrews 10:19-22). Thus, as the Messiah enters the Temple, so can the processionists. They celebrate with these words (vs. 24-29).

## CONCLUSION

We've seen many Messianic references in the Psalms. Those references describe many things about Him. They talk of His being protected by angels, using parables in His teachings, being welcomed triumphantly into Jerusalem, being rejected by the Jews and Gentiles, describing His physical and emotional and spiritual suffering on Calvary, foreshadowing the fact that He's the bread of life, predicting Judas' betrayal, assuring us of His resurrection, depicting His kingship at God's right hand, telling us of His unselfish and sacrificial nature, prophesying that all things including death would be put under His feet, proving Him superior to angels, announcing His unique King-Priest role, assigning Him the job of temple-builder, and giving Him authority to crush all enemies. What a Savior even before His birth! Surely Israel should have been excited about the advent of the Messiah. Surely we should be as excited about His return!

## SELF EXAM FOR LESSON TWENTY-THREE:

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1. How many times is Psalm 22 quoted or referred to in the New Testament and in what light? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Give four possible approaches to Psalm 22.
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4) \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the approach Charles Speer takes to this Psalm?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. In Psalm 22 the Messiah's agony is derived from what three sources?
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
5. List at least six things we have learned about the Messiah from the Psalms.
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 5) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 6) \_\_\_\_\_




## LESSON TWENTY-FOUR

# How to Use the Psalms

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### INTRODUCTION:

salms, the longest book in the Bible in terms of chapters and total length, and yet we hear a disproportionate amount of teaching and preaching from this book. Is it because it is of less value than let's say the Pauline epistles? Is it because it's from the Old Testament, to which we generally give less attention in our study? Quite possible, and to our detriment, I might add. Is it because Psalms is such a personal book? We use it for our daily devotionals perhaps more than any other book. But it was collected to be used in the corporate assembly! It was intended for public use as well! Is it because we sing so many of the Psalms and thus they don't need exposition in sermon form? A possibility, but I'm afraid we sing paltry few of the psalms, considering there are 150 of them. You find relatively few of them put to music and put in most of our church songbooks.

This lesson is intended to give some general suggestions about how to use the Psalms in a better way. This includes public and private use. I'm in hopes that you will employ the Psalms more frequently in your personal and public worship and adoration of our great God.

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**LESSON TEXT:** None.

**LESSON AIM:** To see how Psalms can be used appropriately today.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. See how Psalms ought to be used in teaching and preaching.
  2. Look at examples of use of the Psalms in a thematic worship.
- 

### REVIEW OF GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PSALMS

#### A. Psalms Is a Book of Feelings

The innermost thoughts, frustrations, angers, worries, sorrows, and hurts of a typical man or woman.

#### B. Psalms Is the Praise Language of the Kingdom of God, of its Occupants

1. Psalms give us a way to express similar feelings we have today.
2. The God who made us inspired men to put down on paper, in poem and song form a way to tell God how we feel about ourselves, about Him, about our enemies, circumstances, and even death.

## USE OF THE PSALMS IN PREACHING AND TEACHING

### A. In Their “Natural Setting”

1. The reason for the lack of teaching and preaching the psalms is that we are more attuned to the analysis-thought approach to Scripture than the feeling approach.
2. Most Bible passages have a mood. It may be tension, sorrow, joy, love, fear, etc. Discerning the mood and atmosphere will help in the exegesis of a text.
3. God chose a certain kind of format through which to convey certain kinds of truths.
  - a. Some of the Minor Prophets are in poetic form, e.g. Nahum, Habakkuk 3, Zechariah.
  - b. Proverbs is in proverbial parallelism.
  - c. Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, and Revelation include picture forms.
4. Man needs to learn to appreciate the different kinds of literature.
  - a. to receive the impact of different kinds of literature.
  - b. To appropriate means of interpretation and presentation.

**NOTE:** Suppose you took a psalm and put it into a three point sermon outline as an analytical analysis of its truths. Our outline presents propositional truths from the psalm, but misses the “natural setting,” the intended setting of those truths as God presented them.

Before a teacher analyzes and outlines the truths therein, he should present God’s word as it was originally presented. For the Psalms, that mode of presentation is reading or singing.

### B. Good Reading of Psalms

1. Realize the importance of reading the Word to the people.  
*“Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation (preaching, NIV) and teaching”* (1 Timothy 4:13). *“Preach the Word,”* Paul says in 2 Timothy 4:4.
2. Three ways of presenting the Word, reading, preaching, and teaching (1 Timothy 4:13). We often emphasize the latter two-teaching and preaching-and neglect the former-public reading of Scripture.
3. The public reading of Scripture presents the Word in its natural setting.
  - a. *“And when this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea”* (Colossians 4:16).
  - b. The Scripture had to be obtained through listening to inspired prophets in the congregation or from letters by inspired writers.
4. The importance of reading the Scripture well.
  - a. Often when the Scripture is read or quoted, it is read poorly or quoted too fast.
  - b. The typical person in most audiences tune out when the Word is read, because often those who read do a poor job.
  - c. We dare not let the unskilled read the Word publicly, anymore than letting the unskilled preach and teach.
  - d. People must be retrained to listen to and appreciate the read word and show reverence when God speaks.

**NOTE:** Remember the case of Ezra reading the word to the Israelites, as recorded in the book of Nehemiah. As Ezra began to read, the people stood up and listened all morning to the Law being read to them!

### **C. Examples of Use of Psalms in Assemblies**

1. Psalms may be read in assemblies for worship.
2. Specific examples for assemblies.  
Besides their use with songs or just as the Scripture reading for the day, the Psalms may be the focal point of the whole service. I'd like to show you several examples.

#### Example One: "A Time of Praise"

Songs:

"All Hail the Power of Jesus Name"

"Praise Him! Praise Him!"

"Worthy Art Thou"

Introduce the Service:

Reading: Psalm 118:1-9,15-16,28-29

Song: "We Have An Anchor" or "Shelter In the Time of Storm"

Reading: Psalm 111

Song: "Standing On the Promises"

Reading: Psalm 146

Song: "Be With Me, Lord"

Prayer of Praise:

Reading: Psalm 103:1-14,20-22

Song: "Hallelujah, What A Savior!"

Reading: Psalm 144:1-10,15

Song: "We Shall See the King Some Day"

Reading: Psalm 9:1-10,19-20

Song: "Glory, Glory Hallelujah"

Reading: Psalm 46

Prayer Song: "Where No One Stands Alone"

**NOTE:** As you can see from this "order of worship," I've combined Psalms and songs and prayers. The whole service is centered on praising God. Some great general praise songs begin the assembly and immediately set the stage for the kind of service it will be. Then the preacher may introduce the service with some brief thoughts about the supplication or lament type Psalms. Even the Psalms contain praise for a number of things. Then, after that brief introduction, the rest of the time is spent in reading a Psalm or part of one and accompanying them with appropriate songs, which are not necessarily from the Psalms but possess a similar emphasis.

#### Example Two: "We're Marching to Zion!"

Opening Song: "We're Marching to Zion!"

Reading and Talk: Psalms 120,122-"Yearning"

Song: "Here We Are But Straying Pilgrims"  
 Reading and Talk: Psalm 121,125,129-"Protection"  
 Song: "Unto the Hills"  
 Reading and Talk: Psalm 130-"Forgiveness"  
 Song: "Whiter Than Snow"  
 Reading and Talk: Psalm 131-"Peace"  
 Song: "When Peace Like A River"  
 Reading and Talk: Psalm 132-"Covenant"  
 Song: Standing on the Promises"  
 Reading and Talk: Psalm 133-"Unity"  
 Song: "How Sweet, How Heavenly"  
 Reading and Talk: Psalm 134-"Praise"  
 Song-"There Is A Habitation"

**NOTE:** Example two shows another use of the Psalms in an assembly. Remember that the "Songs of Ascents" are fifteen psalms (120-134) which are songs Jewish pilgrims would sing on their way to a feast in Jerusalem or Zion, or as they made the trek across the city of Jerusalem to the Temple to worship. They were headed for Zion. We Christians are now living in Zion, the church (Hebrews 12), but heaven is Zion too! Our journey through this life could be likened to the expressions in the "Songs of Ascents," because we too are ascending to the heavenly Zion to worship God eternally! Thus, interspersed between readings and songs are short talks which parallel the psalm to our own Christian walk. Powerful message but not preaching in the traditional mode.

Example Three: "A Festival of Praise to God"

Introduction:

Song: "This Is The Day" (from Psalm 118:24)  
 Reading: Psalm 95:1-5  
 Song: "Come, Let Us Sing" (from Psalm 95:1-5 in the NIV)  
 Reading: Psalm 96  
 Reading: Psalm 98  
 Song: "All People That On Earth Do Dwell" (from Psalm 100)  
 Reading: Psalm 100  
 Song: "I Will Enter His Courts" (from Psalm 100)  
 Reading: Psalm 29  
 Reading: Psalm 19  
 Song: "The Spacious Firmament" (from Psalm 19)  
 Song: "May the Words of My Mouth" (from Psalm 19)  
 Reading: Psalm 8 (harmonized reading)  
 Song: "How Majestic Is Your Name" (from Psalm 8:1,9)  
 Reading: Psalm 61  
 Song: "O Sometimes The Shadows Are Deep"  
 Reading: Psalm 121  
 Song: "Unto the Hills" (from Psalm 121)  
 Reading: Psalm 23 (harmonized reading or quoting)

Song: “The Lord’s My Shepherd” (from Psalm 23)

Song: “Surely Goodness and Mercy” (from Psalm 23:6)

Reading: Psalm 37:21-24

Song: “The Steps of A Good Man” (from Psalm 37:21-24)

Reading: Psalm 57:9-11

Song: “Be Exalted, O God” (from Psalm 57:9-11)

Reading: Psalm 115:1

Song: “Not to Us” (from Psa. 115:1-8)

Reading: Psalm 92

Reading: Psalm 148; 150:1,6

Song: “Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah!” (from Psalm 148)

**NOTE:** This last example attempts to let the Psalms speak for themselves. Primarily the ones selected are Psalms of praise to God. The songs that accompany them are from the preceding Psalms. There’s no better way to learn and to teach Scripture than through music, especially to children.

Our last session together in this series will be a “performance” of this last example. This will give you an idea of how it goes.

#### Example Four: “Sermon on the Psalms”

Basically, it is a combination of reading and commenting on some favorite psalms. The commentary is not really preaching. It’s rehearsing the content of the psalms with descriptions in your own words. To give you an example of what I mean, I’ve included the part on Psalm 8.

#### Psalm 8 – “God’s Glory Revealed in Man’s Dignity”

There are a number of verses in this psalm that are quoted in the New Testament: Verse 2 is quoted in Matthew 21:6 and verse 5 is quoted in Hebrews 2:6-8. The psalm has an inscription, “for the Director of Music”, meaning that this is to be read by the one leading the song. “According to the Gittith” is the direction itself given to the director. It probably is a musical term, which can refer to a musical instrument invented in Gath, or to a tune from that city. It could also be taken from “Gittith” and could be a song sung to a vintage melody.

The creation is not in and of itself. God’s presence is there. He fills the earth, and there is no escape. There is a closeness of God to man. The heavens declare His glory. “The sun and moon are His witnesses and heralds; the light is His robe, the clouds are His chariot, the thunder is His voice, the flashes of the lightning are His arrows and His spear” (Perowne). Picture David looking up into the heavens one clear night, perhaps as a young man or shepherd boy (v. 2). There are no city lights to disrupt the beautiful display. He is awed, but then a deeper thought rests on him. How insignificant man is! Yes, God has made him great. (Dropping the hyperbole in verse 2, any unbiased and uncorrupted mind recognizes God, without difficulty, from His creation.) God invested man with a dignity second only to His own.

This dignity picture surely comes from a knowledge of Genesis 1. We are made in the likeness of God Himself. We are just a little lower than God and the angels (New Testament interpretation).

The creation is so magnificent that even children can see its import—that God is Creator. It is strong evidence against atheists (v. 2). God had made man a king over creation. In another way of looking at it, He made creation for man. “A thousand years later other shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks by night on the same hills of Bethlehem, while the same stars looked down upon them from heaven. But a brighter glory than the glory of the stars shone round about them; and they knew better than David himself the meaning of David’s words, Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him? For to them it was said by the angel, ‘Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord’” (Perowne, p. 156).

## USE OF THE PSALMS IN FUNERALS

### A. Great Value of the Psalms in Funerals

1. For readings or for texts for the funeral sermon or for grave-side service.
2. To comfort mourners when you visit them at their homes and before and after the funeral itself.
3. The sorrow, anger, frustration, fatigue, and loneliness felt by mourners is seen in the Psalms as well.
  - a. The inspired writers have a fine way of putting our similar feelings into words.
  - b. Our identity with others who’ve experienced the same hurtful feelings helps us grieve.

### B. Examples of Use of Psalms in Funerals

1. Psalm 23: “Our Good Shepherd.”
  - a. The best known psalm of all and is often used in funerals for that reason. It is particularly profitable when the family of the deceased is not that familiar with Scripture.
  - b. Using something familiar to them truly does minister to them and may build a relationship or open a door for follow-up study of the Bible with them, and may lead to their salvation. The death of a loved one strikes a spiritual cord. While the iron is hot, the preacher should be there with the Word of God.
  - c. Psalm 23 is a comfort to the child of God as well.
  - d. It can’t be used to give comfort to unbelievers or to the death of an unbeliever.
2. Psalm 90: “The Shortness of Life”.
  - a. Emphasizes the shortness of life and the need to make it count for the Lord.
  - b. Death of a loved one forces us to pause and look introspectively. While in that pause, the person might be receptive to this exhortation from Moses: “*Teach us to number our days aright. . .*” (v. 12).
3. Psalm 15: “The Life of the Faithful”.
  - a. Psalm 15 might be appropriate to characterize that person’s life and encourage the survivors to seek a similar path in life.
  - b. The psalm is in contrast to Psalm 14, which describes the fool.

- c. The person in Psalm 15 is the one who will dwell in Zion. His character is true (v. 2); his words truthful (vs. 2-3); his allegiance to God clear-cut (v. 4); and his dealings with others honorable and honest (vs. 4-5). *“He who does these things will never be shaken”* (v. 5).
- 3. Psalm 73: “I Don’t Understand, Lord!”
  - a. Psalm 73 is a good psalm to help hurting people. It pictures the frustration and anger of a man besieged by enemies. He’s struggling with the reason why God would allow enemies to get the better of him.
  - b. A key verse is verse 17, “. . . till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understand their final destiny.”
  - c. Pointing people to God and His Word is a good way to bring comfort and relieve some of the questioning, doubt, anger, blaming, and frustration.

### USE OF THE PSALMS IN ONE’S OWN PERSONAL LIFE

#### A. As Devotional Material

1. The Writer of the 119th Psalm talks of his meditation upon God’s laws day and night (vs. 55, 97).
2. As the text from which our daily morning devotionals come. Since they’re units within themselves, they allow you to cover in a relatively short time a complete piece of Scripture.
3. Each day take a psalm for your reading. Begin with prayer, asking God to feed your soul with His word. Then read the Psalms, perhaps out loud. After you finish, sit back and meditate on the truthfulness of the words, the feelings expressed, and the reality in your own
4. It would help to write some thoughts down-both from the psalm and from your heart. Prayer should follow. Keep a notebook of meditations for future reference. That prayer might include the use of praise words from the psalm itself.
5. I should also pray my meditations to God, particularly as they relate to my feelings, strengths, and weaknesses. The psalm, then, has provided a way for me to know myself better and to be more intimate with God.
6. As a part of your daily devotional, it would be good to sing the psalm, if you know music to it. Or even make up a tune or use a tune you know already that fits. Also, memorization of the psalm is good-either a part or all of it. You may recall it during the day to keep the thoughts of the psalm in your mind all day.

### PSALMS AS USED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

A very good study from the Psalms would be to preach, teach, study in a class situation the use the New Testament writers make of the Psalms.

#### A. Messianic Psalms

There are many quotations from the Psalms in the New Testament. To study these quotations would give the student a unique picture of Jesus, from the perspective of the Psalms.

**B. Other Uses of Psalms**

1. Paul uses quotes from six psalms in Romans 3:10-18 to establish that all men without God are lost.
2. See what Paul used them to mean in Romans 3 and then turn back and study the whole Psalm and see the original context for the quote.
3. How the inspired New Testament writers saw and were allowed the use of the Psalm in establishing their New Testament points of doctrine!
4. The way Satan used Psalm 91:11-12 when tempting Jesus (Matthew 4:6).
5. Peter's quotations of Psalm 69:25 and 109:25 to prove that another must be chosen to take Judas' place.
6. Paul quotes Psalm 51:4 to establish the sovereignty of God (Romans 3:4) and 32:1-2 to establish the fact that righteousness was by faith under the Law of Moses (Romans 4:7-8).

**CONCLUSION**

This brings us to the end of our study of the Psalms. Our exegetical, topical, and commentary study; we end here. I truly hope you gained a new and perhaps different appreciation for this great book. I hope you've seen some new thoughts and have been drawn to this book for much study and meditation for the rest of your life. I pray that it will be your "closet friend." When with God in private may it serve as the avenue of praise and the stimulus for personal reflection.



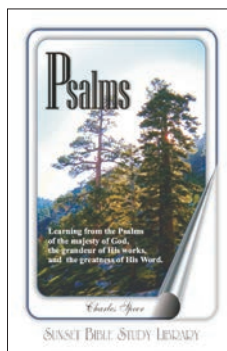
# Study Guide

## Charles Speer



Charles Speer received a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from Southern Methodist University in 1970. From there he went directly to Sunset School of Preaching in Lubbock, Texas. After graduation from there in 1972, Charles went to work with the Northside congregation in Dallas for five years. In 1977 Charles and Cara were married and moved to Weatherford, Oklahoma, where he preached for eight years. Their two children, Bryn and Jamin, were born in Weatherford. In 1985 the Speer family attended six months of mission training at Sunset School of Preaching before leaving for New Zealand where they worked for three and a half years training preachers for New Zealand, New Guinea, and other points in the south Pacific at South Pacific Bible College.

Since 1989, Charles has been working full time with Sunset International Bible Institute. (Formerly Sunset School of Preaching.) Charles has a passion for the word of God and believes deeply that we need to have more respect and love for the word of God. He emphasizes the need for a strong family life and the need to take the gospel to the lost. This study will convince you of man's need to study the Bible to know God and His word.



*This study guide is a companion to **Psalms**, a textbook and commentary, also by Charles Speer.*

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