

# *Psalm*

## *The Book of Praises*



*“The heavens declare the glory of God;  
And the firmament shows His handiwork.”  
(Psalm 19:1)*

A study by Jeff Stewart  
Tyler, TX | September, 2023

## Class Schedule

<b>Date</b>	<b>Lesson #</b>	<b>Topic</b>
09/03/23	1	Introduction
09/10/23	2	Psalms Praising God's Glory, Omnipotence, and Majesty - Part I
09/17/23	3	Psalms Praising God's Glory, Omnipotence, and Majesty - Part II
09/24/23	4	Instructional Psalms - The Word of God
10/01/23	---	(Gospel Meeting)
10/08/23	5	Individual Lament Psalms - Part I
10/15/23	6	Individual Lament Psalms - Part II
10/22/23	7	Thanksgiving Psalms - God's Mercies to the Psalmist and Others
10/29/23	8	Psalms of Penitence
11/05/23	9	Psalms of Trust and Assurance - Part I
11/12/23	10	Psalms of Trust and Assurance - Part II
11/19/23	11	The Acrostic Psalms
11/26/23	12	Messianic Psalms - Part I
12/03/23	13	Messianic Psalms - Part II
12/10/23	14	Thanksgiving Psalms - God's Goodness to Israel
12/17/23	15	Instructional Psalms - Views of Life
12/24/23	16	Communal Lament Psalms
12/31/23	17	Psalms Praising the Goodness of God - Part I
01/07/24	18	Psalms Praising the Goodness of God - Part II
01/14/24	19	Instructional Psalms - The Righteous & The Wicked - Part I
01/21/24	20	Instructional Psalms - The Righteous & The Wicked - Part II
01/28/24	---	(Gospel Meeting)
02/04/24	21	Psalms of Ascent (or Pilgrimage Psalms)
02/11/24	22	Historical Psalms
02/18/24	23	Imprecatory Psalms
02/25/24	24	Psalms of Nature and Creation

# Daily Readings

Lesson 1 (9/3)	
<b>Introduction to the Psalms</b>	
9/1/23 Fri	100
9/2/23 Sat	Your Favorite
Lesson 2 (9/10)	
<b>Psalms Praising God's Glory, Omnipotence, and Majesty - Part I</b>	
9/3/23 Sun	24
9/4/23 Mon	29
9/5/23 Tue	33
9/6/23 Wed	93, 95
9/7/23 Thu	96
9/8/23 Fri	97
9/9/23 Sat	104
Lesson 3 (9/17)	
<b>Psalms Praising God's Glory, Omnipotence, and Majesty -Part II</b>	
9/10/23 Sun	67
9/11/23 Mon	76
9/12/23 Tue	114
9/13/23 Wed	139
9/14/23 Thu	147
9/15/23 Fri	148
9/16/23 Sat	150
Lesson 4 (9/24)	
<b>Instructional Psalms: The Word of God</b>	
9/17/23 Sun	19
9/18/23 Mon	119:1-32
9/19/23 Tue	119:33-64
9/20/23 Wed	119:65-88
9/21/23 Thu	119:89-120
9/22/23 Fri	119:121-152
9/23/23 Sat	119:153-176
Gospel Meeting (10/1)	
(no class or readings)	
9/24/23 Sun	
9/25/23 Mon	
9/26/23 Tue	
9/27/23 Wed	
9/28/23 Thu	
9/29/23 Fri	
9/30/23 Sat	

Lesson 5 (10/8)	
<b>Individual Lament Psalms - Part I</b>	
10/1/23 Sun	6
10/2/23 Mon	13, 26
10/3/23 Tue	38
10/4/23 Wed	39
10/5/23 Thu	42, 43
10/6/23 Fri	54, 64
10/7/23 Sat	69
Lesson 6 (10/15)	
<b>Individual Lament Psalms - Part II</b>	
10/8/23 Sun	70, 86
10/9/23 Mon	88
10/10/23 Tue	102
10/11/23 Wed	120, 140
10/12/23 Thu	141
10/13/23 Fri	142
10/14/23 Sat	143
Lesson 7 (10/22)	
<b>Thanksgiving Psalms: God's Mercies to the Psalmist and Others</b>	
10/15/23 Sun	30, 34
10/16/23 Mon	66
10/17/23 Tue	75
10/18/23 Wed	103
10/19/23 Thu	116
10/20/23 Fri	118
10/21/23 Sat	138, 144
Lesson 8 (10/29)	
<b>Psalms of Penitence</b>	
10/22/23 Sun	6
10/23/23 Mon	25
10/24/23 Tue	32
10/25/23 Wed	38
10/26/23 Thu	51
10/27/23 Fri	102
10/28/23 Sat	130
Lesson 9 (11/5)	
<b>Psalms of Trust and Assurance - Part I</b>	
10/29/23 Sun	3, 16
10/30/23 Mon	20
10/31/23 Tue	23
11/1/23 Wed	27, 28
11/2/23 Thu	31
11/3/23 Fri	47, 56
11/4/23 Sat	62

Lesson 10 (11/12)	
<b>Psalms of Trust and Assurance - Part II</b>	
11/5/23 Sun	57
11/6/23 Mon	61, 63
11/7/23 Tue	71
11/8/23 Wed	108
11/9/23 Thu	115
11/10/23 Fri	121
11/11/23 Sat	125, 131
Lesson 11 (11/19)	
<b>The Acrostic Psalms</b>	
11/12/23 Sun	9
11/13/23 Mon	10, 25
11/14/23 Tue	34
11/15/23 Wed	37
11/16/23 Thu	111, 112
11/17/23 Fri	119
11/18/23 Sat	145
Lesson 12 (11/26)	
<b>Messianic Psalms - Part I</b>	
11/19/23 Sun	16
11/20/23 Mon	22
11/21/23 Tue	40
11/22/23 Wed	41
11/23/23 Thu	45
11/24/23 Fri	72
11/25/23 Sat	118
Lesson 13 (12/3)	
<b>Messianic Psalms - Part II</b>	
11/26/23 Sun	2
11/27/23 Mon	68
11/28/23 Tue	69
11/29/23 Wed	89
11/30/23 Thu	109
12/1/23 Fri	110
12/2/23 Sat	132
Lesson 14 (12/10)	
<b>Thanksgiving Psalms: God's Goodness to Israel</b>	
12/3/23 Sun	21, 36
12/4/23 Mon	46, 48
12/5/23 Tue	68, 81
12/6/23 Wed	87, 98
12/7/23 Thu	107, 124
12/8/23 Fri	126, 129
12/9/23 Sat	136, 149

# Daily Readings

<b>Lesson 15 (12/17)</b>	
<b>Instructional Psalms: Views of Life</b>	
12/10/23 Sun	10
12/11/23 Mon	14
12/12/23 Tue	39
12/13/23 Wed	49
12/14/23 Thu	53
12/15/23 Fri	73
12/16/23 Sat	90
<b>Lesson 16 (12/24)</b>	
<b>Communal Lament Psalms</b>	
12/17/23 Sun	44
12/18/23 Mon	60
12/19/23 Tue	74
12/20/23 Wed	79
12/21/23 Thu	80
12/22/23 Fri	83
12/23/23 Sat	85, 123
<b>Lesson 17 (12/31)</b>	
<b>Psalms Praising the Goodness of God - Part I</b>	
12/24/23 Sun	4
12/25/23 Mon	9
12/26/23 Tue	18
12/27/23 Wed	32
12/28/23 Thu	36
12/29/23 Fri	65
12/30/23 Sat	84
<b>Lesson 18 (1/7)</b>	
<b>Psalms Praising the Goodness of God - Part II</b>	
12/31/23 Sun	91
1/1/24 Mon	99
1/2/24 Tue	100
1/3/24 Wed	103
1/4/24 Thu	113
1/5/24 Fri	117
1/6/24 Sat	146

<b>Lesson 19 (1/14)</b>	
<b>Instructional Psalms: The Righteous &amp; The Wicked - Part I</b>	
1/7/24 Sun	1, 5
1/8/24 Mon	7
1/9/24 Tue	10
1/10/24 Wed	11, 12
1/11/24 Thu	14, 15
1/12/24 Fri	17, 41
1/13/24 Sat	50
<b>Lesson 20 (1/21)</b>	
<b>Instructional Psalms: The Righteous &amp; The Wicked - Part II</b>	
1/14/24 Sun	52, 58
1/15/24 Mon	82, 92
1/16/24 Tue	94
1/17/24 Wed	101
1/18/24 Thu	112
1/19/24 Fri	127
1/20/24 Sat	128, 133
<b>Gospel Meeting (1/28)</b>	
(no class or readings)	
1/21/24 Sun	
1/22/24 Mon	
1/23/24 Tue	
1/24/24 Wed	
1/25/24 Thu	
1/26/24 Fri	
1/27/24 Sat	
<b>Lesson 21 (2/4)</b>	
<b>Psalms of Ascent (or Pilgrimage Psalms)</b>	
1/28/24 Sun	120, 121
1/29/24 Mon	122, 123, 124
1/30/24 Tue	125, 126
1/31/24 Wed	127, 128
2/1/24 Thu	129, 130, 131
2/2/24 Fri	132
2/3/24 Sat	133, 134

<b>Lesson 22 (2/11)</b>	
<b>Historical Psalms</b>	
2/4/24 Sun	3, 7, 18
2/5/24 Mon	30, 55
2/6/24 Tue	60, 77
2/7/24 Wed	78, 80
2/8/24 Thu	89, 105
2/9/24 Fri	106, 132
2/10/24 Sat	135, 136, 137
<b>Lesson 23 (2/18)</b>	
<b>Imprecatory Psalms</b>	
2/11/24 Sun	35, 40
2/12/24 Mon	58, 59
2/13/24 Tue	69
2/14/24 Wed	83
2/15/24 Thu	109
2/16/24 Fri	137
2/17/24 Sat	140
<b>Lesson 24 (2/25)</b>	
<b>Psalms of Nature and Creation</b>	
2/18/24 Sun	8
2/19/24 Mon	19
2/20/24 Tue	29
2/21/24 Wed	33
2/22/24 Thu	65
2/23/24 Fri	104
2/24/24 Sat	148

# The Psalms Categorized

<p>Psalms Praising God's Glory, Omnipotence, and Majesty</p> <p>2, 3, 8, 18, 19, 24, 29, 33, 45, 46, 48, 50, 65-68, 76, 77, 89, 91-100, 104-108, 110, 111, 113-118, 135, 136, 139, 145-150</p>
<p>Psalms Praising the Goodness of God</p> <p>3, 4, 9, 16, 18, 30, 32, 34, 36, 40, 46, 65, 66, 68, 84, 85, 91, 99, 100, 103, 107, 111, 113, 116, 117, 121, 126, 145, 146</p>
<p>Instructional Psalms - The Righteous &amp; The Wicked</p> <p>1, 3-5, 7, 9-15, 17, 24, 25, 32, 34, 36, 37, 41, 50, 52, 53, 58, 62, 73, 75, 82-84, 91, 92, 94, 101, 112, 119, 121, 125, 127-129, 133, 149</p>
<p>Instructional Psalms: The Word of God</p> <p>19, 119</p>
<p>Instructional Psalms: Views of Life</p> <p>10, 14, 39, 49, 53, 73, 90</p>
<p>Thanksgiving Psalms: God's Mercies to the Psalmist and Others</p> <p>9, 18, 30, 32, 34, 40, 41, 61, 63, 66, 75, 103, 106, 108, 116, 118, 138, 144</p>
<p>Thanksgiving Psalms: God's Goodness to Israel</p> <p>21, 36, 46, 48, 66, 68, 76, 81, 85, 87, 98, 105, 107, 124, 126, 129, 135, 136, 149</p>
<p>Individual Lament Psalms</p> <p>3-7, 12, 13, 22, 25-28, 35, 38-40, 42, 43, 51, 54-57, 59, 61, 63, 64, 69-71, 86, 88, 102, 109, 120, 130, 140-143</p>
<p>Communal Lament Psalms</p> <p>44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 90, 123</p>
<p>Psalms of Trust and Assurance</p> <p>3-5, 11, 12, 16, 20, 23, 27, 28, 31, 42, 43, 47, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 61-64, 71, 77, 86, 108, 115, 118, 121, 125, 131, 138, 141</p>
<p>Psalms of Penitence</p> <p>6, 25, 32, 37, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143</p>
<p>Messianic Psalms</p> <p>2, 16, 22, 40, 41, 45, 68, 69, 72, 89, 109, 110, 118, 132</p>
<p>Psalms of Nature and Creation</p> <p>8, 19, 29, 33, 65, 148</p>
<p>Pilgrimage Psalms</p> <p>43, 46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 120-134</p>
<p>Historical Psalms</p> <p>3, 7, 11, 18, 24, 30, 32, 34, 51, 55, 60, 72, 74, 77, 78, 79, 80, 85, 89, 105, 106, 126, 132, 135, 136, 137</p>
<p>The Acrostic Psalms</p> <p>9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145</p>
<p>Imprecatory Psalms</p> <p>7, 35, 40, 55, 58, 59, 69, 79, 83, 109, 137, 139, 140, 144</p>

# Our Plan of Study

In this workbook, you'll first find the schedule for our study on page 3. We will stick to this schedule, so if you miss a class you'll know where we are when you get back. I'm sure there will be times where we don't finish all the material I want to cover, and we may have to touch on some of those things in the next lesson. But we'll stay on track regardless.

Pages 4 and 5 provide a daily reading schedule. You should do the readings the week prior to each lesson. There is generally just one psalm each day except for a few cases where there may be two or three. If you follow this schedule, you will have read all the psalms at least once during our study. If you do nothing else in preparation for our lessons, I encourage you to read the psalms. Find some quiet time in your day to do so, and read each one more than once. Consider the background of the psalm; sometimes these are recorded at the beginning. You may want to look up a reference passage regarding the background. What is the general mood of the psalm? Contemplate the general theme or message the psalmist is trying to convey. How does the psalm speak to you today? Note your thoughts and any questions that come to mind. You may want to do this in a journal or on the lesson sheets in this workbook.

On page 6, you'll find various topics or categories and all the psalms that I thought fit into that category. There are many ways to categorize the psalms, but I tried to select the ones I thought made the most sense from several sources and listed the psalms that fit that category. You'll find that some psalms appear multiple times because they don't always fit neatly into just one topic.

Each lesson in the workbook has a brief introduction to the category of psalms we will study. Then, you'll notice that there are psalms for reading which should match your reading schedule. Also, there are some of those psalms noted for discussion. These are the particular psalms that we will talk about in more detail during class. You'll want to spend a little more time with these, and there are usually a few questions on those particular psalms. Although we will focus our attention on these psalms for discussion, feel free to ask questions about any of the psalms from the readings. Many of the lessons also refer to an 'Article of Interest.' You will find these articles in the appendix and they are indexed on page 65. These articles came from an issue of Christianity Magazine in 1994. At the time, I found them to be particularly helpful, and so I've included those for some additional insight.

Another thing I'd like to challenge you to do during this class is to write your own psalm(s). I think you'll find it interesting and enlightening. It can be on any variety of topics or themes; it might follow the topic for the lesson that week. Or it could be whatever is on your mind at the time. It can even be humorous. This is your chance to really get creative. I'll read some to the class if you want them read; just give them to me ahead of time.

I hope you enjoy our study together! Let's begin.

*Jeff Stewart*

## Lesson 1 – Introduction to the Psalms

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.” (Ps. 19:14)

“My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord, and all flesh shall bless His holy name forever and ever.” (Ps. 145:21)

As H.C. Leupold wrote, “Who can sufficiently extol the merits and the value of the Psalter? Many eloquent words have been written on the subject ... There does not seem to be any situation in life for which the Psalter does not provide light and guidance ... They are not the fruit of abstract meditation. They did not grow out of the study of the scholar. They were born out of real-life situations. They are often wet with the tears and the blood of the writer ... the Psalms continually carry the reader into the immediate presence of God. They do not refer to Him in the abstract. God is not a God of the distance to the psalmist. All the psalms were prayed on the steps of the throne of mercy. The light that emanates from that presence somehow gives light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.”

Psalms for Daily Reading: Psalm 100, and Read Your Favorite Psalm  
Articles of Interest: “A Bird’s Eye View of the Psalms”

### Questions:

1. Be prepared to share something about your favorite psalm (i.e. what you like about it, how it appeals to you, etc.).

The psalmists truly poured out their heart to God. To them, God was not some far-removed deity; He was present in their everyday lives. They had a deep and abiding relationship with Him, and the psalmists knew God cared for them and condescended to even their simple needs. As we read and meditate on these psalms, I hope we can develop or deepen that sense of closeness to God that was obviously present in these so long ago. The psalms have always been a favorite of believers, and perhaps that is why many printed New Testaments include them at the back. This is where Christians come for: strength in trial, joyful meditation, growth in praise to God, songs to use in worship, dealing with a loss, wisdom and understanding, and much else.

The original Hebrew name given to this book was “Sepher Tellihim” which meant “book of praises.” Praise and worship are central themes of the book; the 100th Psalm beautifully marries the two themes. The title we have in our Bibles is “Psalms.” This is the one used for the book in the Septuagint. It comes from the Greek word “psalmos” meaning a touching, a twang as of a bowstring; a song, as accompanying stringed instruments. These songs held a very special place among the Hebrews as certainly they do today among God’s people.

The Book of Psalms is really five books compiled into one. These five collections were assembled at different times and by different individuals. About 1000 years comprises the span over which the psalms were written: from the time of Moses to the time of Nehemiah. The titles beginning many of the psalms are of ancient origin and are generally considered reliable information as to





## THE BOOK OF PSALMS

What the introductory statement says concerning this book should be carefully read. It will be readily seen that this book is not subject to the same sort of analysis as are other books of the Bible. The number of psalms given by the Septuagint and the Massoretic Hebrew text is 150, as in our Bible. In the Septuagint the 9th and 10th are one, and also 114th and 115th, but it divides the 116th and 147th.

### The Five Books

This is an ancient division of the Psalter. Each book ends with a doxology, while the 150th, the last psalm, is the doxology to the last book and to the entire collection.

#### Book I. Ps. 1-41.

1. With the exception of the first psalm this collection is wholly Davidic, as given by the superscriptions, there being no trace of any but David's authorship.

2. Ancient titles. In the first three books nearly all the psalms have titles which indicate the author, the character of the psalm, the supposed historical occasion, the musical setting and liturgical use.

3. The use of the Divine names. In this book the name of Jehovah is used 272 times, while Elohim is used but 15 times.

#### Book II. Ps. 42-72.

1. About 18 of the psalms of this book are Davidic: 51-65, 68-70.

2. Compilation of the collection. From the date of its latest psalm, the 46th, it appears to have been compiled in the time of Hezekiah, but comprises the Levitical and Davidic psalms of earlier periods.

3. The use of Elohim greatly dominates, being employed 200 times, while Jehovah is used 43 times.

#### Book III. Ps. 73-89.

1. The 86th Psalm is Davidic.

2. The interest of this collection centers in the time of Hezekiah, but the last two psalms carry the time to the reign of Manasseh, and may have been compiled in the time of Josiah.

3. Use of the Divine names. In the earlier part of this book Elohim preponderates, but in the latter portion this is balanced by the more frequent use of Jehovah.

#### Book IV. Ps. 90-106.

1. The Davidic Psalms of this book are 101, 103.

2. This book contains the balance of the psalms to the time of the Exile.

3. The name Jehovah is used exclusively.

4. None of the psalms of this collection have titles.

#### Book V. Ps. 107-150.

1. Fifteen of these psalms are ascribed to David. Thus David was the author of about a half of the Psalter.

2. This book contains the psalms relating to the Restoration. The collection may have been compiled in the time of Nehemiah.

3. With the exception of two uses of Elohim, the name Jehovah is employed exclusively.

4. There are no titles to the psalms of this book.

### Authorship and Date of the Psalms

1. Moses, 90. The earliest in point of date and describes the period in the wilderness.

2. Davidic Psalms, 2-41, 51-65, 68-70, 86, 101, 103, 108-110, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138-145.

3. Solomon, 72, 127, and possibly 132.

4. Asaph, 50, 73-83. Asaph was one of David's chief musicians. Some of these psalms relate to events of a later period as in the case of psalms 74, 79, 80. This difficulty may be overcome by assuming that the name applied to the sons of Asaph. Also the fact that the family for a considerable period continued in its relation to the service of the Temple.

5. Sons of Korah, 42-49, 84, 85, 87.

6. Heman, 88, and Ethan, 89, the Ezrahites.

7. A Babylonian captive, 102.

8. Authorship unknown, 1, 66, 71, 91-100, 104-107, 111-121, 123, 125, 126, 128-130, 134-137, 146-150.

9. Songs of Degrees, 120-134. "Internal evidence," says Dr. William Smith, "refers these to the period when the Jews under Nehemiah were, in the very face of the enemy, repairing the walls of Jerusalem, and the title may well signify 'Songs of goings up upon the walls,' the psalms being, from their brevity, well adapted to be sung by the workmen and guards while engaged in their respective duties."

It may be noted that many of the later psalms are referred by some critics to the Maccabaeen period. This has been discredited quite conclusively by Bishop Westcott who makes clear that "they do not contain the slightest trace of those internal divisions of the people which were the most marked features of the Maccabaeen struggle."

### Classification of the Psalms

#### I. Prayers.

1. Penitential Psalms. Ps. 6, 25, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143.

2. Under affliction. Ps. 6, 7, 10, 13, 17, 22, 31, 35, 39, 41-43, 54-57, 59, 64, 69-71, 77, 86, 88, 94, 102, 109, 120, 140-143.

3. A persecuted church. Ps. 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 89, 94, 102, 123, 137.

4. Prayers of trust and assurance. Ps. 3-5, 11, 12, 16, 20, 23, 27, 28, 31, 42, 43, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 61-64, 71, 77, 86, 108, 115, 118, 121, 125, 131, 138, 141.

## II. Didactic—Instruction.

1. Dealings with the righteous and unrighteous. Ps. 1, 3-5, 7, 9-15, 17, 24, 25, 32, 34, 36, 37, 41, 50, 52, 53, 58, 62, 73, 75, 82-84, 91, 92, 94, 101, 112, 119, 121, 125, 127-129, 133, 149.

2. Magnifying the Law of God. Ps. 19, 119.

3. Views of life. Ps. 14, 39, 49, 53, 73, 90.

## III. Psalms of Thanksgiving.

1. God's goodness to Israel. Ps. 21, 46, 48, 66, 68, 76, 81, 85, 98, 105, 124, 126, 129, 135, 136, 149.

2. God's mercies to the Psalmist and to others. Ps. 9, 18, 30, 32, 34, 40, 61, 63, 75, 103, 108, 116, 118, 138, 144.

## IV. Psalms of Praise.

1. Extolling the goodness of God. Ps. 3, 4, 9, 16, 18, 30, 32, 34, 36, 40, 46, 65, 66, 68, 84, 85, 91, 99, 100, 103, 107, 111, 113, 116, 117, 121, 126, 145, 146.

2. Praising God's glory, omnipotence and majesty. Ps. 2, 3, 8, 18, 19, 24, 29, 33, 45, 46, 48, 50, 65-68, 76, 77, 89, 91-100, 104-108, 110, 111, 113-118, 135, 136, 139, 145-150.

V. Songs of the Sanctuary and Public Worship. Ps. 15, 24, 26, 27, 30, 42, 43, 63, 65, 84, 92, 95-100, 118, 122, 132, 133, 144-150.

VI. Historical and Messianic Psalms. These will be treated separately.

VII. Songs of Nature. Ps. 8, 19, 29, 65.

## Historical Psalms

It is futile to attempt to connect all the psalms with some historical event, since several psalms would be applicable to different events. There are, however, quite a number that are related to points of Israel's history from the time of Moses to the time of the Exile and the Return.

### I. The time of Moses. Ps. 106. 6-33.

1. God's doings in Egypt.

2. The Exodus. At the Red Sea. 136. 10-15.

3. Israel's faith, Moses' Song.

4. The period of wandering. 106. 13, 33; 114.

Complaint, rebellion, judgment.

The sin at Sinai, intercession of Moses.

Defection of Moses and Aaron at Meribah.

The sin in the plains of Moab.

## II. Period of the Judges.

1. Idolatry left in the land and Israel's idolatry. 106. 34-39.

2. Oppression of the nations. 40-42.

3. Deliverance of Israel. 106. 43-46.

This psalm should be studied in connection with the six invasions set forth in the book of Judges.

## III. The Davidic Period.

### 1. Period of David's outlawry.

a. Ps. 7. Saul's insane jealousy of David and his persistent persecution.

b. Ps. 11. When David was advised to escape from Saul. The psalm might refer to his leaving Jerusalem at the time of Absalom's rebellion.

c. Ps. 34. Read 1 Sa. 21. David's escape to Nob and then to Gath where his feigned madness was hardly justifiable (ver. 13).

d. Ps. 34. In the wilderness of Ziph (1 Sa. 23).

### 2. David's reign.

a. Ps. 24. The ark brought to Jerusalem.

b. Ps. 30. Dedication of David's house. Note how he contrasts his time of persecution with his present happy condition.

c. Ps. 60. Conquest of Edom. The victory in the Valley of Salt (2 Sa. 8).

d. Ps. 51. The great penitential psalm. David's sin with Bath-sheba.

e. Ps. 32. Follows Ps. 51 expressing the consciousness of pardon.

f. Ps. 3, 55. Absalom's rebellion. Ps. 3 refers to David's flight from Jerusalem. The taunt of his adversaries and David's faith. Ps. 55 refers, no doubt, to the desertion of Ahithophel to Absalom (2 Sa. 15.12-31).

g. Ps. 18. The Song of David. This is also 2 Sa. 22. The statement, "He delivered me from my strong enemy" probably refers to Saul.

## IV. Solomon. Ps. 72.

This is also one of the great Messianic Psalms. It describes the glory of Solomon's reign, the period of peace and prosperity.

## V. Exilic and Post Exilic Periods.

1. Fall of Jerusalem. Ps. 74, 79. A vivid description of the destructive work of Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B. C. The Temple and city laid in heaps.

2. In Babylon. Ps. 80, 137. The captives languishing in exile, 80. Jehovah's former mercies. The figure of the vine. Ps. 137 portrays their sad lot "by the rivers of Babylon," their harps hanging upon the willows.

3. The Restoration. Ps. 85.1-6; 126.

The release from captivity is set forth

by the first of these psalms. The second presents a picture in striking contrast to that of Psalm 137. They are filled with laughter and singing. It is one swelling anthem of joy.

### Messianic Psalms

In our studies we have traced the development of the Messianic idea in the Law and in Hebrew history. We are now to see how the person and work of the Messiah are portrayed by the Psalter. Our Lord distinctly declared that the things predicted of Him in the Psalms should be fulfilled (Lu. 24.44), and the Messianic significance of the psalms to be noted is supported by the New Testament. This is the court of highest appeal. The utterances of a psalm that could refer only to the person and circumstances of the Christ would not require for their Messianic vindication a New Testament reference. If, for example, the Messianic character of Is. 53 were not supported by the statement in the Acts, we would be none the less sure that it possessed such significance.

#### I. The Coming and Mission of the Messiah. Ps. 40.6-10.

1. The coming One.
2. According to the Scriptures.
3. The purpose of the coming.

No Biblical writer ever declared that the Scriptures had announced or predicted his advent and mission. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares it is Christ who is speaking in this psalm (10.5-10).

#### II. The Betrayal of Jesus.

1. Ps. 41. Note especially verse 9. This passage can easily apply to the treachery of Ahithophel as referred to by Ps. 55. Our Lord gives it an added significance by quoting it in speaking of the treachery of Judas and says, "that the Scripture may be fulfilled," etc. (John 13.18.)

2. Ps. 109. Between the ascension and Pentecost the apostles had the place of Judas filled by the selection of Matthias. Peter declares (Acts. 1.20) that the statement in this psalm, "let another take his office," specifying a particular person, referred to Judas. A portion of Peter's reference is taken from Ps. 69.25.

#### III. The Crucifixion.

1. Ps. 22. The first twenty-one verses so clearly portray the crucifixion that they might have been written by one of the Four Evangelists. The psalm opens with the words used by Jesus in His cry to the Father. Four of the "seven words" of the cross are taken from this psalm. The happenings at the cross are minutely described (Mt. 27.43). The parting of the garments and casting lots for the cloak are declared by John to have been fulfilled on the day of the crucifixion (Jo. 19.24).

2. Ps. 69. Just prior to His death Jesus declared that verse 4—"They hated me with-

out a cause"—was fulfilled in Him. Verses 12, 20, 21 are of special significance: He trod the winepress alone, was given vinegar to drink. The statements by Matthew and John abundantly establish the Messianic character of these passages.

#### IV. The Resurrection and Ascension.

1. Ps. 16.8-11. There are three things in which the speaker rejoices: that his flesh will dwell in safety; that his soul shall not be left in Sheol; that his body shall not see corruption. These words refer to the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord. It is the great Easter announcement of the Old Testament.

That these words refer to Jesus and to Him only is fully demonstrated by Peter in his great sermon on the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2.25-32, and by the apostle Paul in his address at Antioch on the resurrection, Acts 13.34-37.

2. Ps. 68.18. The ascension of Christ. Paul declares that this is the meaning of this passage (Eph. 4.8-10).

#### V. The Kingship and Glory of the Messiah.

1. Ps. 132. 11. The Messiah of the royal line of David.

Peter's interpretation showing that Solomon was not meant (Ac. 2.31).

2. Ps. 118. 19-23. The rejected stone, the head of the corner. This passage is quoted five times by the New Testament as relating to Christ's rejection by the Jews. Note Christ's use of it in Ma. 21.42. Peter's statement is most emphatic, Ac. 4.11; 1 Pe. 2.4-10.

3. Ps. 2. The kingly reign of the Messiah. This psalm is called "Messiah's Coronation Hymn" and the description is justified by the number of times it is quoted by the New Testament. It is one of the most distinctive of the Messianic Psalms.

4. Ps. 72. A portrayal of the kingship and kingdom of Messiah. That it is a description of the glory of Solomon's reign is fully conceded, but there are statements that cannot possibly apply to Solomon and can apply to Christ alone. "A greater than Solomon is here."

5. Ps. 110. This is the most distinctive of the Messianic Psalms in this respect, that every passage applies to Christ. It sets forth not only His kingship, but His priestly kingship—"Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." Note also He. 5.6,10; 6.20; 7.17.

Thus Christ is in the Psalms in His incarnation, betrayal, sufferings, resurrection, ascension, pre-eminence and kingship. If these psalms with their New Testament references are called in question as to their Messianic significance, there is nothing in the Old Testament that can be interpreted in Messianic terms. It is quite sufficient that Jesus declared that He is spoken of in the Psalms, and that what they say concerning Him must be fulfilled (Lu. 24.44).

### The Twenty-third Psalm

With the exception of the "Lord's Prayer" there is no portion of Scripture with which people are so familiar as this psalm. It is a favorite psalm in the Sunday school and is repeated more than any other. It is the psalm of our childhood learned at our mother's knee. It has pillowed many a soul passing through the valley of death, and through the tears of sore bereavement we have spoken it to the consolation of our hearts. It breathes the peace, security and confidence of the trusting soul.

- I. In the Shepherd's Pastures, 1-3.  
In nothing are they wanting—"I shall not want."  
1. Beds of green for the weary.  
2. Refreshed by still waters—waters of rest.  
3. Restoration of soul.

4. The Shepherd's guidance in the paths of the pastures.

#### II. With the Shepherd in the Valley, 4.

- In the shadow of death
1. There will be no fear.
  2. Because of the Shepherd's presence—"For thou art with me."
  3. Because of the comforting, supporting rod and staff.

#### III. The Shepherd's Bounty, 5,6.

1. A prepared table in the midst of adversities.
2. The Shepherd's anointing oil of assurance and joy.
3. The over-running cup.
4. The perpetuity of this bounty—throughout life.
5. The final dwelling in the Shepherd's home of unending blessedness.

## NEW TESTAMENT QUOTATIONS

Ps. 2.7.....Ac. 13.33; He. 1.5; 5.5.  
4.4.....Ep. 4.26.  
5.9.....Ro. 3.13.  
6.8.....Ma. 7.23.  
8.2.....Ma. 21.16.  
8.4-6.....He. 2.6-8.  
8.6.....1 Co. 15.27.  
10.7.....Ro. 3.14.  
14.1-3.....Ro. 3.10-12.  
16.8-11.....Ac. 2.25-28; 13.35.  
18.49.....Ro. 15.9.  
19.4.....Ro. 10.18.  
22.1.....Ma. 27.46; Mk. 15.34.  
22.18.....Ma. 27.35; Jo. 19.24.  
22.22.....He. 2.12.  
24.1.....1 Co. 10.26,28.  
31.5.....Lu. 23.46.  
32.1,2.....Ro. 4.7,8.  
34.12-16.....1 Pe. 3.10-12.  
35.19.....Jo. 15.25.  
36.1.....Ro. 3.18.  
40.6-8.....He. 10.5-7.  
41.9.....Jo. 13.18.  
44.22.....Ro. 8.36.  
45.6,7.....He. 1.8,9.  
51.4.....Ro. 3.4.  
68.18.....Ep. 4.8.

Ps. 69.9.....Jo. 2.17; Ro. 15.3.  
69.22,23.....Ro. 11.9,10.  
69.25.....Ac. 1.20.  
78.2.....Ma. 13.35.  
78.24.....Jo. 6.31.  
82.6.....Jo. 10.34.  
89.20.....Ac. 13.22.  
91.11,12.....Ma. 4.6; Lu. 4.10,11.  
94.11.....1 Co. 3.20.  
95.7-11.....He. 3.7-11; 4.3.  
97.7.....He. 1.6.  
102.25-27.....He. 1.10-12.  
104.4.....He. 1.7.  
109.8.....Ac. 1.20.  
110.1.....Ma. 22.44; Mk. 12.36;  
Lu. 20.42,43; Ac. 2.34,35;  
1 Co. 15.25; He. 1.13;  
10.12,13.  
110.4.....He. 5.6.  
112.9.....2 Co. 9.9.  
116.10.....2 Co. 4.13.  
117.1.....Ro. 15.11.  
118.6.....He. 13.6.  
118.22,23.....Ma. 21.42; Mk. 12.10,11;  
Lu. 20.17; Ac. 4.11; 1 Pe.  
2.6,7.  
118.26.....Ma. 21.9; 23.39; Mk. 11.  
9; Lu. 13.35; Jo. 12.13.

## MUSIC

Jubal, son of Lamech, a Cainite, was the inventor of musical instruments(Ge.4.19-21), "the father of all such as handle the harp and organ," i.e., of all players upon stringed and wind instruments.

### 1. Cultivation of Music Among the Hebrews.

Following the Deluge, the first mention of music is in connection with Laban's interview with Jacob (Ge. 31.27). It is possible

that the Levites had practised music and that a musical service was a part of the worship of the tabernacle. To the time of Saul there does not seem to have been among the Hebrews a systematic cultivation of music. With the institution of the schools of the prophets music became an essential part of the practice of the students, and we are told that David had a musical organization of "singing men and singing women." The great school of music was the Temple and this art was consecrated to the service of God.

## 2. The Use of Music.

Music was employed in the crowning of kings, 1 Ki. 1.39,40; in the triumphs of the nation, Jud. 5; in seasons of worship, frequently mentioned; at sacrificial offerings, 2 Ch. 29.27; in the worship of idols, Da. 3.4-7; in mirth and revelry, Ec. 2.8; Am. 6.5; in mourning and funerals, 2 Ch. 35.25; Ma. 9.23. It was omitted in times of desolation as during the Exile, Ps. 137.1-4. Bridal processions, as they passed through the streets, were attended with music, and on special occasions minstrels and singers accompanied armies to battle.

## 3. Musical Instruments.

Several musical instruments are mentioned in the Scriptures. The word *shophar* is usually rendered "trumpet," but the more correct translation is "cornet," 2 Ch. 15.14; Da. 3.5,7,10,15; Ho. 5.8. It was made of the horn of a ram. It was used by the Hebrews for signals, for announcing the Jubilee, for proclaiming the new year, used in time of war. Silver trumpets were used for the calling of the assembly, for sounding the alarm of war, for festivals and new moons, and in the orchestra of the Temple.

The cymbal consisted of two plates of brass attached to the hands and struck together. They were employed for religious and military purposes and in national dances. The dulcimer was a double pipe (probably bagpipe), Da. 3.5,15. The harp, the national instrument of the Hebrews, had, according to Josephus, ten strings. It was made of almug wood. David was skilled in the use of it (1 Sa. 16.16). It was used in worship (1 Sa. 10.5), in national jubilees (2 Ch. 20.28), in mourning (Job 30.31). The symbol used to indicate when the harp was to be introduced in the music was *Neginoth*.

The psaltery was a stringed instrument to accompany the voice. In some passages it is translated viol (Is. 5.12; 14.11; Am. 5.23; 6.5). The ancient viol was a six-stringed guitar. The Greek word *psalterium* denotes an instrument played with the fingers.

David used cypress in making this instrument (2 Sa. 6.5), while the psalteries of Solomon were made of almug wood. When Nebuchadnezzar set up his golden image (Da. 3.5,10,15) the psaltery was one of the instruments played.

The timbrel was a tambourine. It was used at an early day by the Syrians. It was played with the fingers chiefly by the women (Jud. 11.34) and accompanied the song or dance.

The pipe was one of the simplest of musical instruments and hence was probably one of the most ancient. It was used at the Hebrew banquets (Is. 5.12), and in the simpler religious services. "The sound of the pipe was apparently a soft wailing note, which made it appropriate to be used in mourning and at funerals (Ma. 9.23), and in the lament of the prophet over the destruction of Moab (Je. 48.36)." The pipe was made of the reed which gave a softer sound than metal. It was used very much by the Egyptians. The flute was the pipe.

## 4. Musical Symbols.

There has been considerable conjecture as to the significance of musical symbols. The word *Higgaion* in Ps. 92.3, signifies, according to Gesenius, "the murmuring tone of a harp, and hence that the music should be rendered in a plaintive manner." In Ps. 9.16 it is combined with "Selah," and this may indicate there should be a pause in the vocal music while the instruments rendered an interlude. Its use in Ps. 19.14 is thought to indicate that the music should be rendered so as to stimulate devout meditation. One meaning of the word carries the idea of thought or reflection.

The terms *Mahalath*, *Maschil*, *Leannoth*, found in the titles of Ps. 53 and 88, are obscure. Authorities tell us they may denote the instruments or the melodies. The musical sign *Maschil* occurs in the titles of several psalms the meaning of which is not clear. When it occurs elsewhere it signifies "instruction," or by instruction to become wise (Ps 47.7).

The term *Michtam* occurs in the titles of Psalms 16, 56, 57-60. Ewald interprets it as signifying a plaintive manner.

The use of *Neginah* in the titles of Psalms 4, 54, 55, 61, 67, would seem to indicate that the song should be accompanied by stringed instruments.

The word *Selah* occurs seventy-one times in the Psalms. Its meaning is a matter of conjecture. It is thought that it denoted a pause in the vocal music while an instrumental interlude was rendered.

## Lesson 2 - Psalms Praising God's Glory, Omnipotence, and Majesty - Part I

Most of the Psalms contain at least some element of praise to God. The Psalmists obviously understood its great importance in their lives and the need to give of their heart to God. Sincere, enthusiastic praise among God's people today may sometimes seem to be lacking. As we study these psalms of praise, let's be attentive to the words and come to appreciate the many reasons for praising God, for we are "His people and the sheep of His pasture."

Psalms in the first category under "Psalms of Praise" extol God's glory, omnipotence, and majesty. We will study these in two parts. This first part explores some psalms that emphasize the following: God's power and control in relation to His creation, and God's reigning supreme over all.

Psalms for Daily Reading: 24, 29, 33, 93, 95, 96, 97, 104  
Psalms for Discussion: All  
Articles of Interest: "Psalms of Supreme Praise"  
"The Creation Psalms"

### Questions:

1. Who is regarded as worthy to worship God in Ps. 24? What does this mean in a practical sense as it applies to yourself?
2. In Ps. 29, what perhaps had David watched that inspired this Psalm (esp. v. 3)? What impression or affect do these have on you?
3. The fact that God is in control of everything gives us what? (see 29:11) How can you draw on that from day to day?
4. What does Ps. 33 say about the power of God?
5. Does the Lord know the heart and works of every man? (Ps. 33) Give a verse.
6. How does the 93rd Psalm inspire confidence in us?

7. What does Ps. 95 exhort the people to do and not to do?
  
8. God's righteous \_\_\_\_\_ is the basis for praise in Ps. 96.
9. What do Psalms 96 and 97 say about the Lord and gods?
  
10. In Ps. 104, note the verses that parallel each day of creation.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. From all of these Psalms, list the characteristics of God that are brought out.

Your Thoughts or Questions on these Psalms:



## Lesson 3 - Psalms Praising God's Glory, Omnipotence, and Majesty - Part II

In this second lesson on psalms of praise, we will study some selected psalms that magnify God's "omni" characteristics and His awesome judgment. God's omniscience (all-knowing), omnipotence (all-powerful), and omnipresence (everywhere present) are discussed and should naturally demand a righteous response from man. Notice especially the intimacy of God's knowledge of man and of His workings among mankind.

We also see the majesty of God's judgment; it strikes fear into the hearts of the wicked and provides comfort to the oppressed. Surely, "... who may stand in [His] presence...?" In some of these psalms, we also see the usage of personification, which is a common element in the Book of Psalms. Everyone and everything bring forth praise to God.

Psalms for Daily Reading: 67, 76, 114, 139, 147, 148, 150  
Psalms for Discussion: All  
Articles of Interest: "The 'Omni' Psalms"

### Questions:

1. Ps. 67. What will be the result of giving praise to God?
2. Ps. 76. Is God depicted as simply kind and loving? Explain.
3. Ps. 114. What things are personified and what are they doing? What is the point?
4. Ps. 139. List the things from this Psalm that God knows about us. From how early in life does God know us?

5. Ps. 139. What does the Psalmist ask God to do that indicates a pure and honest heart? Do you pray thus?
  
6. Ps. 147. Describe some of the omnipotent acts of God. Also, His omniscient acts.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Ps. 148. Why should all of these praise God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Ps. 150. Why are all these instruments listed? (i.e. What is the point here?)

Your Thoughts or Questions on these Psalms:

## Lesson 4 - Instructional Psalms - The Word of God

Some of the psalms are instructional in nature. They teach us a great many things, but there are some primary instructional themes that we will notice in three of our lessons. The first of this group will look at “The Word of God Psalms.”

Two of the psalms hold up the Word of God for all generations to look to: Psalms 19 and 119. These magnify the value of the Word in satisfying man's deeper needs; its effect on our lives both now and in eternity are inestimable. Truly, it is “a lamp to [our] feet and a light to [our] path.” You will come away with a greater appreciation for the scriptures after studying these psalms. May we all be able to say, “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.”

Psalms for Daily Reading: 19, 119  
Psalms for Discussion: 19, 119  
Articles of Interest: “The Word of God Psalms (1 & 2)”

### Questions:

#### Psalm 19

1. a) What does nature reveal? b) What does the Word reveal that nature alone cannot?
  
2. Notice the repeating pattern in verses 7-9. List the following: a) how the Word is described, b) how it is characterized, c) its effect.

#### Psalm 119

3. Highlighting. Below is a copy of this psalm; highlight the following (use different colors to make it easier):
  - a) Terms used to refer to the Word (e.g. “statutes,” “testimonies,” etc.)
  - b) What the Psalmist does as regards the Word (e.g. “keep,” “seek,” etc.)
  - c) The Psalmist's requests of God in regard to the Word (e.g. “teach me,” “uphold me,” etc.)
  - d) Underline the phrase “according to”



## Psalm 119

1 Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way,  
Who walk in the law of the LORD!  
2 Blessed *are* those who keep His  
testimonies,  
Who seek Him with the whole heart!  
3 They also do no iniquity;  
They walk in His ways.  
4 You have commanded *us*  
To keep Your precepts diligently.  
5 Oh, that my ways were directed  
To keep Your statutes!  
6 Then I would not be ashamed,  
When I look into all Your  
commandments.  
7 I will praise You with uprightness of  
heart,  
When I learn Your righteous judgments.  
8 I will keep Your statutes;  
Oh, do not forsake me utterly!

9 How can a young man cleanse his way?  
By taking heed according to Your word.  
10 With my whole heart I have sought You;  
Oh, let me not wander from Your  
commandments!  
11 Your word I have hidden in my heart,  
That I might not sin against You!  
12 Blessed *are* You, O LORD!  
Teach me Your statutes!  
13 With my lips I have declared  
All the judgments of Your mouth.  
14 I have rejoiced in the way of Your  
testimonies,  
As much as in all riches.  
15 I will meditate on Your precepts,  
And contemplate Your ways.  
16 I will delight myself in Your statutes;  
I will not forget Your word.

17 Deal bountifully with Your servant,  
That I may live and keep Your word.  
18 Open my eyes, that I may see  
Wondrous things from Your law.  
19 I *am* a stranger in the earth;  
Do not hide Your commandments from  
me.  
20 My soul breaks with longing  
For Your judgments at all times.  
21 You rebuke the proud—the cursed,  
Who stray from Your commandments.  
22 Remove from me reproach and contempt,  
For I have kept Your testimonies.  
23 Princes also sit *and* speak against me,  
But Your servant meditates on Your  
statutes.  
24 Your testimonies also *are* my delight  
And my counselors.

25 My soul clings to the dust;

26 Revive me according to Your word.  
I have declared my ways, and You  
answered me;  
Teach me Your statutes.  
27 Make me understand the way of Your  
precepts;  
So shall I meditate on Your wondrous  
works.  
28 My soul melts from heaviness;  
Strengthen me according to Your word.  
29 Remove from me the way of lying,  
And grant me Your law graciously.  
30 I have chosen the way of truth;  
Your judgments I have laid before me.  
31 I cling to Your testimonies;  
O Lord, do not put me to shame!  
32 I will run the course of Your  
commandments,  
For You shall enlarge my heart.

33 Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your  
statutes,  
And I shall keep it to the end.  
34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep  
Your law;  
Indeed, I shall observe it with my whole  
heart.  
35 Make me walk in the path of Your  
commandments,  
For I delight in it.  
36 Incline my heart to Your testimonies,  
And not to covetousness.  
37 Turn away my eyes from looking at  
worthless things,  
And revive me in Your way.  
38 Establish Your word to Your servant,  
Who is devoted to fearing You.  
39 Turn away my reproach which I dread,  
For Your judgments are good.  
40 Behold, I long for Your precepts;  
Revive me in Your righteousness.

41 Let Your mercies come also to me, O  
LORD—  
Your salvation according to Your word.  
42 So shall I have an answer for him who  
reproaches me,  
For I trust in Your word.  
43 And take not the word of truth utterly out  
of my mouth,  
For I have hoped in Your ordinances.  
44 So shall I keep Your law continually,  
Forever and ever.  
45 And I will walk at liberty,  
For I seek Your precepts.  
46 I will speak of Your testimonies also  
before kings,  
And will not be ashamed.  
47 And I will delight myself in Your  
commandments,

Which I love.  
48 My hands also I will lift up to Your  
commandments,  
Which I love,  
And I will meditate on Your statutes.  
49 Remember the word to Your servant,  
Upon which You have caused me to hope.  
50 This *is* my comfort in my affliction,  
For Your word has given me life.  
51 The proud have me in great derision,  
Yet I do not turn aside from Your law.  
52 I remembered Your judgments of old, O  
LORD,  
And have comforted myself.  
53 Indignation has taken hold of me  
Because of the wicked, who forsake Your  
law.  
54 Your statutes have been my songs  
In the house of my pilgrimage.  
55 I remember Your name in the night, O  
LORD,  
And I keep Your law.  
56 This has become mine,  
Because I kept Your precepts.  
57 *You are* my portion, O LORD;  
I have said that I would keep Your words.  
58 I entreated Your favor with *my* whole  
heart;  
Be merciful to me according to Your  
word.  
59 I thought about my ways,  
And turned my feet to Your testimonies.  
60 I made haste, and did not delay  
To keep Your commandments.  
61 The cords of the wicked have bound me,  
But I have not forgotten Your law.  
62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks to  
You,  
Because of Your righteous judgments.  
63 I *am* a companion of all who fear You,  
And of those who keep Your precepts.  
64 The earth, O LORD, is full of Your mercy;  
Teach me Your statutes.  
65 You have dealt well with Your servant,  
O Lord, according to Your word.  
66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge,  
For I believe Your commandments.  
67 Before I was afflicted I went astray,  
But now I keep Your word.  
68 You *are* good, and do good;  
Teach me Your statutes.  
69 The proud have forged a lie against me,  
But I will keep Your precepts with my  
whole heart.  
70 Their heart is as fat as grease,  
But I delight in Your law.  
71 *It is* good for me that I have been  
afflicted,

That I may learn Your statutes.  
72 The law of Your mouth *is* better to me  
Than thousands of coins of gold and  
silver.  
73 Your hands have made me and fashioned  
me;  
Give me understanding, that I may learn  
Your commandments.  
74 Those who fear You will be glad when  
they see me,  
Because I have hoped in Your word.  
75 I know, O LORD, that Your judgments *are*  
right,  
And that in faithfulness You have  
afflicted me.  
76 Let, I pray, Your merciful kindness be for  
my comfort,  
According to Your word to Your servant.  
77 Let Your tender mercies come to me, that  
I may live;  
For Your law is my delight.  
78 Let the proud be ashamed,  
For they treated me wrongfully with  
falsehood;  
But I will meditate on Your precepts.  
79 Let those who fear You turn to me,  
Those who know Your testimonies.  
80 Let my heart be blameless regarding Your  
statutes,  
That I may not be ashamed.  
81 My soul faints for Your salvation,  
But I hope in Your word.  
82 My eyes fail *from searching* Your word,  
Saying, "When will You comfort me?"  
83 For I have become like a wineskin in  
smoke,  
Yet I do not forget Your statutes.  
84 How many *are* the days of Your servant?  
When will You execute judgment on  
those who persecute me?  
85 The proud have dug pits for me,  
Which is not according to Your law.  
86 All Your commandments *are* faithful;  
They persecute me wrongfully;  
Help me!  
87 They almost made an end of me on earth,  
But I did not forsake Your precepts.  
88 Revive me according to Your  
lovingkindness,  
So that I may keep the testimony of Your  
mouth.  
89 Forever, O LORD,  
Your word is settled in heaven.  
90 Your faithfulness *endures* to all  
generations;  
You established the earth, and it abides.  
91 They continue this day according to Your  
ordinances,

For all are Your servants.  
92 Unless Your law *had been* my delight,  
I would then have perished in my  
affliction.  
93 I will never forget Your precepts,  
For by them You have given me life.  
94 I *am* Yours, save me;  
For I have sought Your precepts.  
95 The wicked wait for me to destroy me,  
But I will consider Your testimonies.  
96 I have seen the consummation of all  
perfection,  
But Your commandment is exceedingly  
broad.  
97 Oh, how I love Your law!  
It is my meditation all the day.  
98 You, through Your commandments, make  
me wiser than my enemies;  
For they are ever with me.  
99 I have more understanding than all my  
teachers,  
For Your testimonies are my meditation.  
100 I understand more than the ancients,  
Because I keep Your precepts.  
101 I have restrained my feet from every evil  
way,  
That I may keep Your word.  
102 I have not departed from Your judgments,  
For You Yourself have taught me.  
103 How sweet are Your words to my taste,  
Sweeter than honey to my mouth!  
104 Through Your precepts I get  
understanding;  
Therefore I hate every false way.  
105 Your word *is* a lamp to my feet  
And a light to my path.  
106 I have sworn and confirmed  
That I will keep Your righteous  
judgments.  
107 I am afflicted very much;  
Revive me, O Lord, according to Your  
word.  
108 Accept, I pray, the freewill offerings of  
my mouth, O LORD,  
And teach me Your judgments.  
109 My life *is* continually in my hand,  
Yet I do not forget Your law.  
110 The wicked have laid a snare for me,  
Yet I have not strayed from Your  
precepts.  
111 Your testimonies I have taken as a  
heritage forever,  
For they are the rejoicing of my heart.  
112 I have inclined my heart to perform Your  
statutes  
Forever, to the very end.  
113 I hate the double-minded,  
But I love Your law.

114 You *are* my hiding place and my shield;  
I hope in Your word.  
115 Depart from me, you evildoers,  
For I will keep the commandments of my  
God!  
116 Uphold me according to Your word, that I  
may live;  
And do not let me be ashamed of my  
hope.  
117 Hold me up, and I shall be safe,  
And I shall observe Your statutes  
continually.  
118 You reject all those who stray from Your  
statutes,  
For their deceit is falsehood.  
119 You put away all the wicked of the earth  
*like* dross;  
Therefore I love Your testimonies.  
120 My flesh trembles for fear of You,  
And I am afraid of Your judgments.  
121 I have done justice and righteousness;  
Do not leave me to my oppressors.  
122 Be surety for Your servant for good;  
Do not let the proud oppress me.  
123 My eyes fail *from seeking* Your salvation  
And Your righteous word.  
124 Deal with Your servant according to Your  
mercy,  
And teach me Your statutes.  
125 I *am* Your servant;  
Give me understanding,  
That I may know Your testimonies.  
126 *It is* time for *You* to act, O LORD,  
For they have regarded Your law as void.  
127 Therefore I love Your commandments  
More than gold, yes, than fine gold!  
128 Therefore all *Your* precepts *concerning* all  
*things*  
I consider to be right;  
I hate every false way.  
129 Your testimonies are wonderful;  
Therefore my soul keeps them.  
130 The entrance of Your words gives light;  
It gives understanding to the simple.  
131 I opened my mouth and panted,  
For I longed for Your commandments.  
132 Look upon me and be merciful to me,  
As Your custom is toward those who love  
Your name.  
133 Direct my steps by Your word,  
And let no iniquity have dominion over  
me.  
134 Redeem me from the oppression of man,  
That I may keep Your precepts.  
135 Make Your face shine upon Your servant,  
And teach me Your statutes.  
136 Rivers of water run down from my eyes,  
Because men do not keep Your law.

137 Righteous *are* You, O LORD,  
 And upright are Your judgments.  
 138 Your testimonies, *which* You have  
 commanded,  
 Are righteous and very faithful.  
 139 My zeal has consumed me,  
 Because my enemies have forgotten Your  
 words.  
 140 Your word *is* very pure;  
 Therefore Your servant loves it.  
 141 I *am* small and despised,  
 Yet I do not forget Your precepts.  
 142 Your righteousness *is* an everlasting  
 righteousness,  
 And Your law is truth.  
 143 Trouble and anguish have overtaken me,  
 Yet Your commandments are my delights.  
 144 The righteousness of Your testimonies *is*  
 everlasting;  
 Give me understanding, and I shall live.  
 145 I cry out with *my* whole heart;  
 Hear me, O Lord!  
 I will keep Your statutes.  
 146 I cry out to You;  
 Save me, and I will keep Your  
 testimonies.  
 147 I rise before the dawning of the morning,  
 And cry for help;  
 I hope in Your word.  
 148 My eyes are awake through the *night*  
 watches,  
 That I may meditate on Your word.  
 149 Hear my voice according to Your  
 lovingkindness;  
 O Lord, revive me according to Your  
 justice.  
 150 They draw near who follow after  
 wickedness;  
 They are far from Your law.  
 151 You *are* near, O LORD,  
 And all Your commandments are truth.  
 152 Concerning Your testimonies,  
 I have known of old that You have  
 founded them forever.  
 153 Consider my affliction and deliver me,  
 For I do not forget Your law.  
 154 Plead my cause and redeem me;  
 Revive me according to Your word.  
 155 Salvation *is* far from the wicked,  
 For they do not seek Your statutes.  
 156 Great *are* Your tender mercies, O LORD;

Revive me according to Your judgments.  
 157 Many *are* my persecutors and my  
 enemies,  
 Yet I do not turn from Your testimonies.  
 158 I see the treacherous, and am disgusted,  
 Because they do not keep Your word.  
 159 Consider how I love Your precepts;  
 Revive me, O Lord, according to Your  
 lovingkindness.  
 160 The entirety of Your word *is* truth,  
 And every one of Your righteous  
 judgments endures forever.  
 161 Princes persecute me without a cause,  
 But my heart stands in awe of Your word.  
 162 I rejoice at Your word  
 As one who finds great treasure.  
 163 I hate and abhor lying,  
 But I love Your law.  
 164 Seven times a day I praise You,  
 Because of Your righteous judgments.  
 165 Great peace have those who love Your  
 law,  
 And nothing causes them to stumble.  
 166 LORD, I hope for Your salvation,  
 And I do Your commandments.  
 167 My soul keeps Your testimonies,  
 And I love them exceedingly.  
 168 I keep Your precepts and Your  
 testimonies,  
 For all my ways are before You.  
 169 Let my cry come before You, O LORD;  
 Give me understanding according to Your  
 word.  
 170 Let my supplication come before You;  
 Deliver me according to Your word.  
 171 My lips shall utter praise,  
 For You teach me Your statutes.  
 172 My tongue shall speak of Your word,  
 For all Your commandments are  
 righteousness.  
 173 Let Your hand become my help,  
 For I have chosen Your precepts.  
 174 I long for Your salvation, O LORD,  
 And Your law is my delight.  
 175 Let my soul live, and it shall praise You;  
 And let Your judgments help me.  
 176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep;  
 Seek Your servant,  
 For I do not forget Your commandments.



## Lesson 5 – Individual Lament Psalms - Part I

“To express sorrow or mourning for, often demonstratively; to cry out in grief.” Thus, Webster defines this term “lament.” Psalms of lament are one of the most common types. In them, the soul is poured forth and the Psalmist's heart is laid bare before God.

In this first lesson of two, we will notice some of the individual laments. The Psalmist directly addresses God and petitions Him for such things as rescue and defense. They typically have the following elements: a) an introduction, b) the lament, c) a confession of trust in God, d) the petition, and e) a declaration or vow of praise. Let us see what we can learn from the Psalmists as they cry out to God and open their hearts for all to see.

Psalms for Daily Reading: 6, 13, 26, 38, 39, 42, 43, 54, 64, 69

Psalms for Discussion: 6, 39, 54, 69

Articles of Interest: “The Pursuit of God Psalms”

### Questions:

#### Psalm 6

1. Describe David's state of mind.
2. What does it appear David is enduring at this time?

#### Psalm 39

3. What does David request of God in this psalm?

#### Psalm 54

4. What was the occasion on which this psalm was written? (see title to the psalm) Give references. How does this relate to its content?

Psalm 69

5. Outline the psalm.

Your Thoughts or Questions on these Psalms:

## Lesson 6 – Individual Lament Psalms - Part II

“Make haste, O God, to deliver me! Make haste to help me, O Lord! ... You are my help and my deliverer; O Lord, do not delay.” The psalms of lament plead for God's help. They express the deepest needs of the heart when pressed down, sometimes to the point of illness. While they often take us to great depths of emotion, they rarely leave us there; often the psalmist will reveal some of his lowest of experiences only to break forth into high and exultant praise of God.

You can certainly see the purity of heart David and others had as they opened themselves up for all of every generation to see. I think you will also see we have a great deal to learn about prayer as you study these psalms; the honesty of heart they had should be ours. “Let my prayer be set before You as incense, The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.”

Psalms for Daily Reading: 70, 86, 88, 102, 120, 140, 141, 142, 143

Psalms for Discussion: 102, 141

Articles of Interest: “The Pursuit of God Psalms”

### Questions:

#### Psalm 102

1. Notice how the first two verses start this psalm. This type of beginning is typical to psalms of lament. Why does the psalmist make such statements? Does he think he won't be heard?
2. Based on vv. 12-22, where might the psalmist (and his people) have been when this was written?
3. What does the psalmist request of God?
4. The psalm closes out with praise of God's \_\_\_\_\_  
and \_\_\_\_\_.

Psalm 141

5. What is the petition David makes to God in vv. 3-4?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What does David desire in v. 5? How do people often react to such actions?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. David asks God to keep him from temptation (v. 9). Give a New Testament reference(s) that speaks to temptation and what God will do for us.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Bonus. Explain vv. 6-7.

Your Thoughts or Questions on these Psalms:

## Lesson 7 – Thanksgiving Psalms: God's Mercies to the Psalmist and Others

“We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks! For Your wondrous works declare that Your name is near.” (Ps. 75:1) Similar to the psalms of praise are those of thanksgiving. The Psalmist expresses his thanks to God for all that God has done; sometimes this is done indirectly through praise of God. As the quotation above bears out, the things God has done give us comfort that He is near to us. In the particular psalms we are studying this week, the thanksgiving is for things done specifically for the psalmist or other individuals.

Psalms for Daily Reading: 30, 34, 66, 75, 103, 116, 118, 138, 144

Psalms for Discussion: 34, 75, 116

Articles of Interest:

### Questions:

1. From all the psalms assigned for reading, list the things for which the Psalmist is thankful.
2. Be prepared to discuss the three psalms noted above. Note your thoughts or questions here.
3. On the back of this sheet or another sheet, write your own psalm of thanksgiving. If you would like to share it with the class, give me a copy beforehand.

A Psalm of Thanksgiving:

Your Thoughts or Questions on these Psalms:

## Lesson 8 – Psalms of Penitence

“Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.” (51:2-3) Penitence is a “sad and humble realization of and regret for one's sins.” (Webster) The psalms of penitence express this vividly. David and other psalmists had an attitude toward sin that is uncommon in today's world; it was abhorrent to them, and they made no excuses for it. We must have this same attitude and learn to confess it earnestly as they did.

As Ralph Walker writes, “Ironically, it's as a sinner that I clearly see David as ‘a man after God's own heart’... If a true understanding of holiness and sin defines the divine heart, I see David as resting in the inner chambers of God's.”

Psalms for Daily Reading: 6, 25, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130

Psalms for Discussion: 51

Articles of Interest: “The Penitential Psalms”

### Questions:

#### Psalm 32

1. What must we do if we desire forgiveness? (Reference a verse)

#### Psalm 130

2. What does the phrase “mark iniquities” mean in v. 3?

#### Psalm 51

3. What is the occasion on which this psalm was written according to the title?
4. Describe the range of emotions you see in David when he wrote this psalm.
5. Who does David say he sinned against? Is this true for us and in every case of sin?

6. Explain v.5. Some suggest that this supports the concept of original sin. Give some other references that help to refute this false doctrine.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Count how many different phrases David uses to request God's forgiveness. Why so many and such variety?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What had David come to realize about sacrifices? Be careful to explain the meaning.

Your Thoughts or Questions on these Psalms:



## Lesson 9 – Psalms of Trust and Assurance - Part I

As we read the psalms, one can't help but see the tremendous amount of faith in God the psalmists had. In Him, they put all their trust; they relied on Him to provide and protect. We see almost a childlike reliance upon Him. Some of the psalms especially dwell on the themes of trust and assurance. The next two lessons will examine this category of psalms. This first lesson includes the most well-known psalm and certainly one full of absolute trust in God: 'The Great Shepherd Psalm,' Psalm 23.

Psalms for Daily Reading: 3, 16, 20, 23, 27, 28, 31, 47, 56, 62  
Psalms for Discussion: 23, 62  
Articles of Interest: "The Great Shepherd Psalm"  
"Psalms of Deliverance"

### Questions:

Complete the following quotations from each psalm:

3: "But you, O Lord, are a \_\_\_\_\_ for me, my glory and the one who lifts up my head."

16: "For You will not leave my soul in \_\_\_\_\_, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see \_\_\_\_\_."

20: "Now I know that the Lord \_\_\_\_\_ His anointed; he will answer him from His holy heaven with the \_\_\_\_\_ strength of His right hand."

23: "The Lord is my \_\_\_\_\_; I shall not \_\_\_\_\_."

27: "The Lord is my \_\_\_\_\_ and my \_\_\_\_\_; whom shall I fear?"

28: "The Lord is my \_\_\_\_\_ and my \_\_\_\_\_."

31: "But as for me, I \_\_\_\_\_ in You, O Lord; I say 'You are My \_\_\_\_\_.'"

47: "For the Lord Most High is \_\_\_\_\_; He is a \_\_\_\_\_ over all the earth."

56: "In God I have put my trust; I will not be \_\_\_\_\_. What can man do to me?"

62: "In God is my \_\_\_\_\_ and my glory; the rock of my \_\_\_\_\_, and my \_\_\_\_\_, is in God."

### Psalm 23

1. What does a shepherd do for his sheep (in general terms)? What does our Shepherd do for us?

### Psalm 62

2. David claims God as his defense, his salvation, and his refuge. Is God this for us today? Explain in what ways He is.

Your Thoughts or Questions on these Psalms:

## Lesson 10 – Psalms of Trust and Assurance - Part II

It is often in the darkest times in this life that we learn real trust in God. He, alone, can bring us through life's most difficult trials. The psalmists recognized this and drew strength from penning their thoughts. Perhaps we too should reflect in this way periodically. Whether we meditate on them or put them to paper, let us consider the difficulties God has brought us through and think on the tremendous blessings we have in Him.

Psalms for Daily Reading: 57, 61, 63, 71, 108, 115, 121, 125, 131  
Psalms for Discussion: 71, 115, 131  
Articles of Interest: "The Pursuit of God Psalms"

### Questions:

#### Psalm 71

1. What is the setting or situation in which we find this psalmist?
2. What is mentioned about the writer's age several times? What bearing does this have on the thoughts expressed in the psalm?
3. Notice how the poem goes back and forth from fears to confidences. Contrast these.

#### Psalm 115

4. This psalm is a strong polemic (aggressive refutation) against what? How is this turned around to instill trust in God?

5. Does verse 8 remind you of some N.T. passage? Cite a reference. (Hint – in Romans)

Psalm 131

6. What virtue does this psalm express? How is this linked with trust in God?

7. Elaborate on the simile used in verse 2.

Your Thoughts or Questions on these Psalms:

## Lesson 11 – The Acrostic Psalms

Webster defines “acrostic” as, “a composition usually in verse in which sets of letters (as the initial or final letters of the lines) taken in order form a word or phrase or a regular sequence of letters of the alphabet.” There are a number of psalms that employ this method. Of course, we do not have the Hebrew text in front of us that bears this out, but commentators have noted the psalms listed below as having such a pattern. Psalm 119 in your Bible is probably an exception in that it gives the Hebrew letter at the beginning of each paragraph. These psalms are of quite varied content. As you read the psalms, think about why the inspired writers would use this format.

Psalms for Daily Reading: 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145

Psalms for Discussion: 111, 112, 145

Articles of Interest: “The Acrostic Psalms”

### Questions:

1. What are some possible reasons the acrostic method is used in these psalms?
2. Give two other examples (references) in the Bible besides the psalms that use the acrostic format (read the article).
3. For each of the psalms assigned for reading, give the general theme of the psalm.  
9:  
10:  
25:  
34:  
37:  
111:  
112:  
119:  
145:

4. Complete the following acrostic, which lists some of the more common types (or categories) of psalms.

P \_\_\_\_\_

S \_\_\_\_\_ T \_\_\_\_\_

A \_\_\_\_\_

L \_\_\_\_\_

M \_\_\_\_\_

S \_\_\_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_\_

Your Thoughts or Questions on these Psalms:

## Lesson 12 – Messianic Psalms - Part I

Many of the psalms specifically anticipated the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the One who came centuries later as Israel's promised Messiah (“anointed one”). One author classifies five different kinds of messianic psalms: (1) Typical messianic: the subject of the psalm is in some feature a type of Christ. (2) Typical prophetic: the psalmist uses language to describe his present experience which points beyond his own life and becomes historically true only in Christ. (3) Indirectly messianic: at the time of composition, the psalm referred to a king or the house of David in general, but awaits final fulfillment in Christ. (4) Purely prophetic: refers solely to Christ without reference to any other son of David. (5) Enthronement: anticipates the coming of the Lord and the consummation of His kingdom. In this first lesson on messianic psalms, we will examine psalms having to do with His pre-existence, incarnation, life, and death (following the outline of the article); we will especially examine Psalm 22.

Psalms for Daily Reading: 16, 22, 40, 41, 45, 72, 118

Psalms for Discussion: 22

Articles of Interest: “The Messianic Psalms (1)” also see the Lesson 1 commentary

### Questions:

1. Could some of the psalmists be considered prophetic in their writings? Give a reference from Luke to support this.

### Psalm 22

2. Describe the sufferings of Christ as borne out by this psalm.
3. What would be the results of His sufferings?

## Fulfilled Prophecies

For each reference given below, describe the prophecy and give a reference showing its fulfillment.

	<u>Description</u>	N.T. <u>Reference</u>
22:1	_____	_____
22:7-8	_____	_____
22:16	_____	_____
22:18	_____	_____
31:5	_____	_____
34:20	_____	_____
35:11	_____	_____
35:19	_____	_____
40:7-8	_____	_____
41:9	_____	_____
45:6	_____	_____
69:9	_____	_____
69:21	_____	_____
109:4	_____	_____
118:22	_____	_____

Your Thoughts or Questions on these Psalms:



## Lesson 13 – Messianic Psalms - Part II

In this lesson, we will continue to examine some of the messianic psalms. Last week we looked at those related to the Messiah's death, but now we turn to those filled with hope as regards the Christ. Specifically, we will notice prophecies of the Messiah's resurrection, ascension, reign, priesthood, and intercession (see article).

Psalms for Daily Reading: 2, 68, 69, 89, 109, 110, 132  
Psalms for Discussion: 2, 110  
Articles of Interest: “The Messianic Psalms (2)”

### Questions:

#### Psalm 2

1. The first two psalms placed at the very beginning of the book discuss what two truths?
2. How might you classify Psalm 2 (see intro. to previous lesson for the various kinds of Messianic psalms)? (Note II Sam. 7:12-16)
3. What is the conclusion of the psalm? Does this have significance to us? Explain.

#### Ps. 110

4. From verses 1-4, what is the dual office of the Messiah?
5. What is the significance of the phrase “Sit at My right hand ...”? Give other references in the Bible that speak of this.

6. In what sense is Christ a priest after the order of Melchizedek? Why is this important to us?
  
7. Verses 5-7 describe what?

Fulfilled Prophecies

For each reference given below, describe the prophecy and give a reference showing its fulfillment.

	<u>Description</u>	N.T. <u>Reference</u>
2:7	_____	_____
8:2	_____	_____
8:6	_____	_____
16:10	_____	_____
68:18	_____	_____
109:8	_____	_____
110:1	_____	_____
110:4	_____	_____
118:22	_____	_____
118:26	_____	_____

Your Thoughts or Questions on these Psalms:

## Lesson 14 – Thanksgiving Psalms - God's Goodness to Israel

“A prayer expressing gratitude; a public acknowledgment or celebration of divine goodness.” Thus, Webster defines the term thanksgiving. It is an expression that seems to be on the endangered species list in today's society. Children, in general, do not seem to be taught the simple but important virtue of thankfulness. Again, we can learn a great lesson from the psalmists. They break forth in thanksgiving to God and admonish others to do so as well. This lesson will look at those psalms that give thanks specifically for God's goodness to Israel. His goodness to His people today should prompt this same thanksgiving amongst us.

Psalms for Daily Reading: 21, 36, 46, 48, 68, 81, 87, 98, 107, 124, 126, 129, 136, 149

Psalms for Discussion: 81, 98, 107, 136

Articles of Interest: “The ‘If Only’ Psalm”

### Questions:

#### Psalm 81

1. Outline the three sections of this psalm.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What is the goodness of God contingent upon?

#### Psalm 98

3. This psalm is filled with exuberant praise and thanksgiving. What is the reason for this praise? How often do we give thanks to God for the same thing?

#### Psalm 107

4. Find a recurring phrase in this psalm. Why this same admonition needed today?

5. Who does the Lord deliver from trouble, affliction, etc.? (It is stated several times)

Psalm 136

6. In one phrase, what is the psalmist giving thanks to God for?

Your Thoughts or Questions on these Psalms:

## Lesson 15 – Instructional Psalms - Views of Life

Some of the didactic (instructional) psalms discuss various aspects of life. The psalmist may make general observations about riches, the wicked, or the fleeting nature of our lives. He may even question why certain things are as they are. There is nothing wrong with asking “why?” as long as we do not despair in doing so; we must seek answers from God's revelation. “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mk. 9:24) “Questioning God from a humble willingness to overcome our doubts builds faith.” (John Kilgore) Let’s examine these psalms together and see what gems we can mine in understanding this life.

Psalms for Daily Reading: 10, 14, 39, 49, 53, 73, 90  
Psalms for Discussion: 14, 39, 49, 53, 73, 90  
Articles of Interest: “The ‘Why’ Psalm”  
“The Folly of Riches Psalm”

### Questions:

For each of the psalms assigned, list or describe the views of life the psalmist writes about.

### Psalm 14

### Psalm 39

### Psalm 49

### Psalm 53

Psalm 73

Psalm 90

Your Thoughts or Questions on these Psalms:

## Lesson 16 – Communal Lament Psalms

Many times in the history of Israel, the chosen nation fell out of favor with God. He would allow them to suffer defeat in battle or give them into the hands of another nation for a time. During these oppressions, the Israelites would usually turn back to God and cry out for deliverance. Some of the Psalters wrote songs lamenting the state of Israel, and would plead the nation's case before God. “Restore us, O God of our salvation, and cause Your anger toward us to cease.” (Ps. 85:4) These communal psalms of lament will be studied in this lesson.

Psalms for Daily Reading: 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 123

Psalms for Discussion: 74, 80, 123

Articles of Interest:

### Questions:

#### Psalm 74

1. What had been destroyed by enemies?
2. Who is no longer among them? Does this part of the lament seem ironic? Explain.
3. How does their plea change in the last two verses (vv. 22-23)?

#### Psalm 80

4. What is the refrain that appears several times which expresses their desire?

5. What is the metaphor used in this psalm to describe Israel? Summarize the descriptions of the metaphor.

### Psalm 123

6. What are these praying for in the psalm?
7. What is the source of their complaint?
8. Would you say it has a submissive tone or a bold and powerful tone?

Your Thoughts or Questions on these Psalms:



## Lesson 17 – Psalms Praising the Goodness of God – Part I

The Hebrew word translated “praise” in the Old Testament is “halal” which, in its simplest form, means “to boast”; Vine defines it thus: “to praise, celebrate, glory, sing, boast.” According to Webster's dictionary, our word “praise” has its root in a word that meant “to prize.” All of these ideas come together in a very full sense when speaking of God and the praise that He is due. While reading psalms of praise, you will find two basic reasons for praising God: for who He is (description), and for what He does or has done (declaration).

The next two lessons will examine those psalms of praise which speak of the goodness of God. These are primarily declarative; that is, praise for all the good that God has done for us. Surely, we can never exhaust the need to praise God for this.

Psalms for Daily Reading: 4, 9, 18, 32, 34, 36, 65, 84  
Psalms for Discussion: 18, 65, 84  
Articles of Interest: “The Hallelujah Psalms”

### Questions:

#### Psalm 18

1. Following is an outline of this psalm. Try to put the appropriate verses with each section.
  - \_\_\_ a) What God now means to the psalmist as a result of his experiences.
  - \_\_\_ b) The story of the psalmist's deliverance.
  - \_\_\_ c) Why God condescended to deliver him.
  - \_\_\_ d) The basic principle involved.
  - \_\_\_ e) The story of deliverance retold, with application to the future.
  - \_\_\_ f) A concluding note of praise.
  
2. List the words used to describe God in vv. 1-2.

### Psalm 65

3. What works of God are praised in this psalm?

### Psalm 84

4. What is praise given for in this psalm?
5. What is meant by “dwelling in Your house”?
6. List the blessings that are given to those who “dwell in the house of the Lord,” both figurative and literal.

Your Thoughts or Questions on these Psalms:

## Lesson 18 – Psalms Praising the Goodness of God – Part II

Psalms for Daily Reading: 91, 99, 100, 103, 113, 117, 146  
Psalms for Discussion: 91, 100, 146  
Articles of Interest: “The Hallelujah Psalms”

### Questions:

#### Psalm 91

1. The refuge we have in God is magnified in this psalm. What are some of the things He protects against?

#### Psalm 100

2. What reason is given that demands our worship?
3. For what three enduring things is God praised?

#### Psalm 146

4. Who should we not put our trust in? Why not?
5. List the classes of people God will help.

Your Thoughts or Questions on these Psalms:

## Lesson 19 – Instructional Psalms: The Righteous & The Wicked - Part I

In this lesson, we look at some additional psalms of instruction. These instruct us particularly regarding those who are righteous and those who are wicked. Some of the characteristics of each are discussed as well as how God deals with each. “Clearly, there are only two roads to travel and only two possible destinations. And just as clearly, we cannot travel wrong and end up right.” (Jim Ward)

We must strive to develop the character consistent with the Godly man. This starts with the heart (mind) as does the first psalm. “... his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.” (Ps. 1:2) If you get this right, then the rest will follow.

Psalms for Daily Reading: 1, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 41, 50  
Psalms for Discussion: 1, 15  
Articles of Interest: “The Psalm of the Godly Man”

### Questions:

#### Psalm 1

1. Explain v. 1. (i.e., What does it mean to not “walk in the counsel of the ungodly”?)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What does the psalmist mean by “whatever he does shall prosper”? Are the righteous promised great prosperity?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Define “chaff.” Explain the illustration used.

Psalm 15

4. Describe the character of the one who dwells with the Lord.

From All Psalms Assigned for Reading

5. Contrast the characteristics of the righteous and the wicked.

6. Contrast how God deals with the righteous and the wicked.

Your Thoughts or Questions on these Psalms:

## Lesson 20 – Instructional Psalms: The Righteous & The Wicked - Part II

We continue our study of the psalms that instruct us regarding the righteous and the wicked. There are many rich thoughts to consider in these psalms. Try to begin each day this week with the readings assigned below; spend time during that day meditating on the thoughts of the psalm(s). It will change the way you approach the day!

Psalms for Daily Reading: 52, 58, 82, 92, 94, 101, 112, 127, 128, 133  
Psalms for Discussion: 101, 112, 127, 133  
Articles of Interest: “The Family Psalms”

### Questions:

#### Psalm 101

1. What two things does David sing about? What's the difference between these two? (i.e., define)
2. Several times David mentions a perfect heart or way. What does this mean?
3. Verse 3 says, “I will set nothing wicked before my eyes.” Give some examples of what this means to you today.
4. List all the evil things stated that we should avoid or that God will not allow.

### Psalm 112

5. List the things that the righteous man does. Are you doing these?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. List the blessings that follow.

### Psalm 127

7. Who wrote this psalm? Does it sound like something from any other book in the Old Testament? Which one?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. When is hard work and being industrious vain?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. How are children to be thought of? How are they like “arrows in the hand of a warrior”?

### Psalm 133

10. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” What kind of attitudes promote unity? (e.g., Phil. 2)

Your Thoughts or Questions on these Psalms:



## Lesson 21 – Psalms of Ascent (or Pilgrimage Psalms)

The fifteen psalms beginning with Psalm 120 all have the same heading: “A Song of Ascents.” The Hebrew word used here allows for four varied interpretations, which we will discuss further. I think it most likely that these are psalms for the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Such “going up” was characteristic for the three major festivals in Israel. It’s possible, then, that these psalms made up a small booklet of devotions useful for the journey. May we join with David as he wrote, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord.’” (Psalm 122:1)

Psalms for Daily Reading: 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134

Psalms for Discussion: All

Articles of Interest: “The Degree or Ascent Psalms”

### Questions:

1. What are some of the common elements in most of these psalms?
2. Why might they lend themselves to singing on their pilgrimage to Jerusalem?
3. In what sense are we pilgrims or sojourners today? Give some N.T. references.
4. Select at least two of the psalms and note the following: the overall theme, the mood or tone of the psalm, the main points, what you like about it, and how it applies to your own pilgrimage.

Your Thoughts or Questions on these Psalms:











### Psalm 19

4. In verses 1-6, what are the various things that can be observed? What are they all teaching or declaring?

### Psalm 104

5. In reading this psalm, do you see a lot of chaos in nature? Elaborate on what you see.
6. Review from Lesson 2 how this psalm parallels the days of creation.
7. What is the message of verses 27-30?

Your Thoughts or Questions on these Psalms:



## Appendix – Reference Articles from Christianity Magazine

On the following page are some articles from Christianity Magazine, March-April 1994 Edition. Here is an index to the article title and page number:

Page #	Article Title
66	A Bird's Eye View of the Psalms
67	The Penitential Psalms
68	The Imprecatory Psalms
69	The Degree or Ascent Psalms
70	The Hallelujah Psalms
71	The Hallelujah Psalms
72	The Psalms of History
73	The Acrostic Psalms
74	The Messianic Psalms (1)
75	The Messianic Psalms (2)
76	The 'Omni' Psalms
77	The Creation Psalms
78	The Family Psalms
79	The Word of God Psalms (1)
80	The Word of God Psalms (2)
81	The Pursuit of God Psalms
82	Psalms of Deliverance
83	The 'If Only' Psalm
84	The 'Why' Psalm
85	The Folly of Riches Psalm
86	The Psalms and Wicked Men
87	The Great Shepherd Psalm
88	Psalms of Supreme Praise
89	The Psalm of the Godly Man
90	God the Father and God the Son Psalm
91	The Unity Psalm

# Theme Editorial

## A Bird's Eye View of the Psalms

EDITOR: Brent Lewis

**O**f all the Old Testament books, none has meant more to Christians than the Psalms. A mixture of praise, thanksgiving, and lament, they express the deepest feelings of the human heart. It was my great pleasure to explore some “snapshot” sections of the Psalms for about ten years in this magazine, attempting to deal with the more practical aspects of the psaltery.

In this expanded issue of *Christianity Magazine*, I have chosen to give an overview of the Psalms in order to acquaint our readers with the wide variety of this inspired poetic literature. The writers have handled their assignments well, providing examples of the different kinds of psalms. Some of them have suggested to me that in the preparation of their article, they wondered if they might profitably use this theme section as a basis for teaching the psalms to others. Indeed, it would serve this purpose well.

The early Christians sang these psalms in their worship services. This literature has been considered to be so necessary that many of our printed editions of the New Testament also contain the Psalms. People who know nothing of Hosea or Ezekiel or Leviticus have some acquaintance with the Psalms.

The Hebrew title of Psalms (*sepher tehillim*) means “book of praises.” This is an appropriate title since about 20 of the collection are pure praise psalms, and portions of many others are given to adoration of God. The Greek versions carry the titles *Psalmoi* and *Psalterios* from which we get our English titles Psalms and Psalter. The Jewish nation used the Psalms as both a prayerbook and songbook.

The psalms are both historical and devotional in character. Many events of history are set forth: the creation of man (8:5), the covenant established with Abraham and his descendants (105:9–11), the priesthood of Melchizedek (110:4), Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and Aaron (105:9ff.), the deliverance from Egypt and the Canaanite inheritance (78:13; 105:44). Many other instances could be cited. Undoubtedly, however, the abiding value of the psalms through the centuries has been in its religious, devotional conceptions.

The psalms are a temple and the Lord Jehovah reigns supreme. Everything in them is to the praise of God. The Lord wants us to live with Him, and the psalms focus our devotion on Him. “I have set the LORD always before me; Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved” (Psalm 16:8). The godly man will meditate on His will, for “His delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night” (Psalm 1:2). God wants our praise. He reaches down from heaven and gives great blessings. All we must do is receive them with open arms and thankful hearts.

Let us give more attention to the psalms. Rich treasures from God’s great storehouse await us there. Read the articles which follow and see if you are not stirred to a greater appreciation for this portion of God’s inspired revelation, and the varied messages contained therein.

It is my firm belief that as we read the Psalms, each one of us will make the discovery that David made (and in turn urged on others) when he wrote: “... taste and see that the LORD is good” (Psalm 34:8).

# The Penitential Psalms

(Psalms 6, 37, 38, 51, 143)

by Ralph Walker

Reading the diary entries of David (for this assignment) which describe his wrestlings with sin, I discovered two things. First, I sensed an attitude toward sin unfamiliar to me. Second, I saw a pattern of thinking emerge from the various texts (Psalms 6, 37, 38, 51, 143).

## David's attitude toward sin

Ironically, it's as a sinner that I clearly see David as "a man after God's own heart." If God's heart is pure holiness, then that same holiness drives David. When in his iniquity, David's revulsion at what he's become stands out. No excuses, justifications or incriminations—just an absolute overwhelming by sorrow and guilt. David knows his rebellion has moved him from God. He admits he is perishing and can do nothing personally to reverse his peril. Don't talk to David of a "little wickedness"—that concept is as foreign to him as it is to his God! If a true understanding of holiness and sin defines the divine heart, I see David as resting in the inner chambers of God's.

## The pattern of penitence

While every step I'll discuss here isn't found in every psalm examined, I see enough repetition to call this a pattern.

**1. Confession.** Confession means "to speak the same thing." In confessing sin, we say about it the same thing God says about it. David is emphatic in his confessions—his sin is his death. He refers to his wasting away physically, the absence of peace of mind, the proliferation of external enemies and the total isolation from God's presence. He has no illusions that God has maybe failed to see his disobedience, or that He may grade him on the curve and pass him anyway. He has failed God and he is devastated by that.

As I re-read David's description of his sin, I became aware of my personal unfamiliarity with this depth of feeling. I don't recall being as crushed in spirit as David when I've sinned. I can't excuse that on the basis that I've not done anything to earn a similar crushing. Sin is sin, and my sins are as deadly to my soul as his were to him. Oh, that I could see sin as David and God see it! God helping me, I will.

Not only does David confess his sinfulness, but he also confesses two facts about God. First, he admits God is righteous. Though David is suffering tremendously at the hands of this God, he acknowledges it is deserved. God, as Judge and Jailor is just, and David is not one unfairly jailed, as he sees it. As the psalmist pleads for release from punishment and pain, it's on the basis of God's fairness; he has paid the price and learned his lessons and begs for acquittal. He even uses God's righteousness as the leverage he needs to regain his favor.

Second, David confesses God's lovingkindness. It seems odd that a man being so crushed by God would be praising His love. Even though parents often speak of love and punishment in the same breath ("Because I love you, I'm spanking you"), no child under the infliction would associate these words together. David does. David knows God loves him. This is the only ray of hope in all his darkness. As Psalm 130:3 puts it, if God isn't loving, who can stand?

**2. Petition.** After confessing his sin, God's righteousness, and God's love, David makes the following requests: "*Cleanse me from sin.*" Obviously, if sin is what blocks him from God, he wants that removed. This desire only comes after he confesses clearly and sorrowfully what he has done wrong. Forgiveness isn't captured where it hasn't been pursued.

"*Purify me for service.*" David wants to be God's servant again. In 51:13 he looks for the time when he can help others convert to his God. If God ever needs motivation to release David from his punishment, this is it. The penitent wants to go back to work for his Master.

David also desires purity which will enable him to effectively worship (51:14–15). I am amazed at saints who will publicly honor Jehovah for years and are then exposed in some long-standing sin. David respects and knows God too well to attempt that game. God doesn't play charades!

These penitential psalms show me more about my sin than I sometimes want to know. But more, they reveal a God worth giving up everything this old world has to offer, just to bask in His love.

Selah.

# The Imprecatory Psalms

(Various, See Below)

by David Holder

Sunday morning worship. Brother Smith will lead our first prayer (after two songs, of course!). We sing, “God is Love” and “Angry Words.” Brother Smith prays: “O Lord, there are wicked people in the world, and their wickedness sometimes insults, injures, and threatens the righteous. O God, smash their teeth in their mouths; break off their lionfangs, O Lord. Destroy them in wrath, destroy them, that they may be no more. May their eyes grow dim so that they cannot see, And make their loins shake continually. May they be blotted out of the book of the living, and may they not be recorded with the righteous. May burning coals fall upon them; may they be cast into the fire, into deep pits from which they cannot rise.”

After the congregation recovers, this is probably a good time for a lesson about “imprecatory psalms.” The worshipers might be shocked to know that brother Smith expressed sentiments taken directly from several psalms (58:6; 59:13; 69:23, 28; 109:9, 13; 140:10). The after-service subject of conversation that day would obviously be the shocking language in brother Smith’s prayer, and whether he was right to pray this way about the wicked.

These imprecations or curses employ vehement and violent language against enemies and evildoers. Such expressions are prevalent in several Psalms (35, 58, 59, 69, 83, 109, 137, 140) and in passing comments (5:10, 10:15, 17:13, 54:5, 55:9, 139:19, etc.). We are helped in understanding this blunt language by knowing about the categories of the righteous and the wicked that dominate the psalms, categories distinguished from the very first psalm: “How blessed is the man [whose] delight is in the law of the Lord ... he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water ... The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away.”

The wicked, the evildoers, and the enemies are prominent throughout Psalms (see 10:1–10 and 36:1–4 for longer descriptions). They are evil, deceptive, proud, violent, cruel—and more and worse. They oppress, threaten, strike, pursue, and otherwise act maliciously against individuals, the nation, and God. The psalmists were obviously in the real world, seeing with their own eyes and sometimes experiencing in their own lives the injustices, cruelty, and violence that people do to other human beings. The psalmists were outraged and their souls were inflamed to the point of a righteous reaction to evil.

The congregation is also helped by recognizing that the psalmists generally are careful to take God’s viewpoint in these matters: “Do I not hate those who hate Thee, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against Thee? I hate them with the utmost hatred; They have become my enemies” (139:21–22). It is not only a personal affront that enrages the psalmists, but their understanding that such wickedness is an affront to God and to them in their seeking after God.

In addition, the Christians should realize that, as in the language of brother Smith’s prayer, the language of most imprecatory psalms is directed to God. The psalmists call on God to activate the appropriate curses in consequence of the wicked words or deeds. No doubt the psalmists personally bore the brunt of evil in many situations, but they were careful to leave the vengeance in the hand of God (Psalm 94:1–7). They were not shy to express their feelings of fear, hurt, and anger, but neither did they take matters in their own hands.

Christians must be persistent in praying for our enemies, refusing to take personal revenge, and returning good for evil (Matthew 5:38–48; Romans 12:14, 17, 19–21). But brother Smith was right in praying as he did, provided it was not a prayer of personal animosity (1 Corinthians 16:22, 1 Timothy 1:20). We should be offended and outraged at the world’s evil and evildoers. We dare not glibly minimize them or think it doesn’t matter. There are some people and some actions that are so blatantly evil, so flagrantly anti-God-and-good that we must righteously react.

We pray that the wicked may know Jesus and His love; we pray that they will seek His forgiveness and righteousness. At the same time, we pray for justice and honor and truth. We pray that evil is diminished and defeated (Revelation 6:12–17; 14:9–12; 16:4–7; 18:1–19:7), that every knee will bow before Jesus and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 3:9–11).

# The Degree or Ascent Psalms

(Psalms 120–134)

by David Posey

Psalms 120–134 make up a little booklet, a Psalter within the Psalter, that could be entitled, “There’s no place like home.” But home is where the heart is, and the heart of true worshippers is always in the home of the heavenly Father.

Each of these psalms are similarly subtitled as a “Song of Ascents” or “Song of Degrees,” but the meaning of “ascents” is not obvious. There may be a step-like progression, or “ascent,” in each of these psalms; or, based on a remark in the *Talmud* that the fifteen “songs of ascent” correspond to the fifteen Temple steps, the idea may be that each of the psalms represents a step leading up to the Court of the Men; or, they could be songs about “going up” from captivity in Babylon to Jerusalem (see Ezra 7:9). Probably, these were songs sung by “pilgrims” on their way up to Jerusalem for one of the feasts.

One is reminded of Psalm 84, where the sons of Korah sing “How lovely is your tabernacle, O Lord of hosts!” The psalmist there is also far from God’s house, desperately longing for “the courts of the Lord.” His attitude is “Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set on pilgrimage” (84:5).

These fifteen psalms amplify the motif of pilgrims longing for the courts of God. There is an urgent desire on the part of the “homeless” to “stand in the house of the Lord” (134:1), because it is where the Lord dwells (132:14). Therefore, the psalmist is “glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the LORD’ ” (122:1). But before they were able to stand in the house of God they had to make a journey, a journey fraught with dangers and snares. It got depressing at times: “Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorn of those who are at ease, with the contempt of the proud” (123:4). But they kept on going, knowing that “Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth” (124:8).

In about 125 A.D., Aristeides wrote in a letter to a friend, “If any righteous man among the Christians passes from this world, they rejoice and offer thanks to God, and they accompany his body with songs and thanksgiving as if he were setting out from one place to another nearby.” But we must “do pilgrimage” before we stand permanently in the house of the Lord. We, too, must “sojourn in Meshech and dwell among the tents of Kedar!” (120:5). We become disillusioned with this world and echo the words of those who are weary of the lying lips and deceitful tongue (120:2), tired of dwelling too long with those who hate peace (120:6), sick of the haughty attitudes of those who are too proud to rely on God (123:4); tired of “crooked ways” (125:5).

We, too, are given to ask, “From whence comes my help?” The answer: “From the Lord, who made heaven and earth” (121:2). Temptations and trials are the lot of earth-dwellers. But to those whose hearts are set on pilgrimage, these changes induce us to rivet our attention squarely on the Lord who made heaven and earth. So we wait on the Lord, and hope in the Lord and in His word (130:5, 6), and enjoy the simple life of a pilgrim (131:1–3). A calm and quiet spirit prevails because, regardless of the turmoil around us, our God is still in heaven. So “Let us go into His tabernacle, let us worship at His footstool” (132:7).

We pay a price for becoming strangers on earth, but we can *enjoy* the price because we know that “the Lord has done great things for us;” therefore, “we are glad” (126:3). We sow in tears here, but we will *reap* in joy. “He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (126:6). Our purpose here is to sow, sometimes in tears. The reaping will come later. But knowing we will reap makes us glad today. So even now we can taste a bit of what we will be doing for all eternity: “... stand in the house of the Lord and lift up our hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord” (134:2).

# The Hallelujah Psalms

(Psalms 113–118)

by Melvin D. Curry

The two primary categories of the psalms are praise and lament, and the hallelujah psalms represent the purest form of the first group. Hallelujah is a transliteration of a Hebrew phrase that means “praise the Lord [Yah].” In Psalms 146–150 each psalm begins and ends with this phrase, clearly marking the group out as hallelujah psalms. Psalm 115 fits this same pattern; however, the lines of demarcation in Psalms 114 and 118 do not include the expression “praise the Lord,” and Psalms 115–117 place it at the end. In the Greek translation (LXX) of the Old Testament, the final “praise the Lord” (113:9; 115:18; 116:19; 117:2) is moved to the beginning of each psalm that follows, making all but Psalm 115 begin with “hallelujah.” Consequently, with some sense of justification, the group is called “hallelujah psalms.”

We may read the psalms of praise, especially hallelujah psalms, with more understanding if we know some things to look for. First, a basic three-part pattern generally emerges: a call to praise, reasons why God should be praised, and further calls to praise. For example, notice how Psalm 117, the shortest psalm (chapter) in the Bible, fits this pattern. However, if the pattern, in part or in whole, is not obvious, there is no reason to classify a psalm as a psalm of praise. It is better, therefore, to call Psalm 114 an historical psalm and to classify Psalm 118 as a thanksgiving psalm.

Second, while reading psalms of praise, one notices two reasons for praising God: for who He is (description), and for what He does or has done (declaration). In the first category, He is “high above the nations, and his glory above the nations” (113:4). In the second category, “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the needy from the dunghill; that he may set him with the princes ... of his people” (113:7–8); “He makes the barren women to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children” (verse 9); He “turned the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a fountain of waters” (114:8); He “made heaven and earth ... the earth hath he given to the children of men” (115:15–16); “out of my distress I called upon Jehovah: Jehovah answered me and set me in a large place” (118:5); “Jehovah is my strength and my song; and He is become my salvation” (verse 14). Notice how the description of God and the declaration of what He has done provide the pivotal point of Psalm 113: “Who is like unto Jehovah our God, that has his throne on high?” (verse 5); “that stoops to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth?” (verse 6).

Third, figurative language abounds in psalms of praise. The most obvious example of such in the group we are studying is personification, a figure in which inanimate things are given characteristics of living beings. “The sea saw it, and fled; the Jordan was driven back; the mountains skipped like rams, the little hills like lambs” (Psalm 114:3–4).

Psalms 113–118 are “orphan” psalms; they have no designated author. Many psalms have headings that provide information about authorship, historical background, melody, function, etc., but these do not. Therefore, when there is no heading, one must depend on the context of a psalm to reveal such matters. To cite but one example, the historical background of Psalm 114 is the exodus: “When Israel went forth out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah became His sanctuary, Israel His dominion” (verses 1–2).

Jewish tradition suggests that Psalms 113–118 were sung at Passover. Psalms 113–114 were sung before the passover meal; Psalms 115–118 afterward. Psalm 136, the Great Hallel, was sung at the climax of the feast. This practice may be reflected in the action of Jesus and His disciples: “When they had sung a hymn, they went out unto the mount of Olives” (Matthew 26:30). Certainly, our practice of singing a song before the Lord’s Supper is commendable. Adding a song afterward would be even better. Perhaps six hallelujah songs would not be amiss.

# The Psalms of History

by C. G. “Colly” Caldwell

**H**istory involves *experience*. What I have done, where I have gone, and what others have done with me, for me and to me, is lodged in my mind. It is a part of my life. History involves *education*. What I have come to learn about the past from my forebears, in the schools I have attended and in the school of observation is also significant to my understanding and to what I do now. History is *evaluation*. What I have come to discern about myself and others from all those events which I have committed to memory is a part of how I reason. It is therefore important with regard to who I am.

Memory is a marvelous blessing from God. The human mind contains the potential to store and recall vast libraries of information gleaned from experience, education, and evaluation. When the ability to remember is taken away from a man, his actions are hampered and his reasoning is negatively impacted. That is why we fear the memory loss diseases associated with aging.

God used history, and Israel’s memory of it, to motivate His people to praise Him and live righteously. He caused Moses and Joshua to recall the great deeds He had done. The chronicles of their kings identified the sins of their leaders and the degradation of the people which followed. Later, He brought their past to mind in the preaching of Peter and Stephen.

In the Psalms, great sweeping accounts of the works of God are presented in sections 78, 105, 106, 135, and 136. Other historical information is recorded in such sections as 77, 89, 132 and numerous others which sometimes illustrate from or elaborate upon only one event.

The first eight verses of Psalm 78 provide the basic reasons for God’s reminders of their history. The psalmist called upon the people to “give ear” to the “sayings of old which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.” Then he said, “We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.” Why tell the children?

## **That the generation to come might know**

God had given a law to Israel. That law was not for one generation alone. Those who received it were to pass it along to their children who would pass it on to their grandchildren who were yet to be born.

The generations to come will not praise God if we do not impress them with the “strength” and “wonderful works” of God. Our children need to hear those same “sayings of old” and learn to properly praise the Lord both in worship and in life (Deuteronomy 6:6–9; 11:19–21; Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 3:15). Parents and Bible teachers do a great thing when they inform children how God delivered the Israelites from Egypt, fed them in the wilderness, punished them for their sins, delivered them from their enemies, and led them to Mount Zion (Psalm 78:9–72). They first must know!

## **That they may set their hope in God**

When the works of God are so deeply ingrained as to become intrinsic to the thinking of a young mind, that person will set his hope in God. God wants us to know what He has done so we will depend upon Him, trust Him, and look forward to His delivering us to eternal bliss. A goal must be set before us. Confidence must be secured. Nothing does that better than hearing how God fulfilled His promises in days of old. The challenges were great. Commitments were met. The vows and oaths of God were met by His power and by His righteousness.

## **That they may keep His commandments**

Knowing and hoping are not enough, however. We must be faithful to God and keep His commandments (Matthew 7:21). We must learn, not only from God but from the “stubborn and rebellious” in generations past whose hearts were not set aright “and whose spirit was not faithful to God.”

History is not included in the wisdom literature of God’s book simply for history’s sake. God did not record these deeds of the past for the disciple to meditate upon without purpose. Neither were they to be sung for entertainment. Rather they are paradigms of our own salvation and relationship with spiritual life. They call us to greater love and appreciation for God and through that to greater service.

# The Acrostic Psalms

by Thaxter Dickey

The acrostic psalms puzzle me since I've always thought acrostics are silly, especially acrostic sermons. You know the kind I mean: a sermon for Mother's day in which each of the letters of the word "mother" begins each point. It seems overly cutesy to me and of little intellectual value. But when I observe that some inspired psalms are acrostics, I have to reconsider. There are nine acrostic psalms. Actually they are alphabetical psalms; that is, they are organized so that each line or each series of lines begins with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. If God uses such an arrangement, it's not silly; there is probably a reason for it.

I can think of three possible reasons for the alphabetic format. First, it is an aid to memory. Most cultures during the time of the Psalms used poetry this way. This is the case with the great epics of the Greeks: the Iliad and Odyssey. In addition to being poetic and thus more easily memorized, an acrostic psalm is arranged in a natural mnemonic order—the alphabet. However, this cannot be the reason for the acrostic format because only a small number of the Psalms are acrostics and I cannot see that they are more important than others.

A second reason to use the acrostic format is to demonstrate the flexibility of the writer. This often seems the case in secular acrostics, even in some acrostic sermons: they are a mere demonstration of cleverness. This is not true of God's Psalms. However, the acrostic format not only demonstrates the flexibility of the poet, it also demonstrates the flexibility of language. It is amazing that we can choose such an artificial format and, with relative ease, complete a coherent series of sentences of praise to God. You might want to try it, to demonstrate for yourself this amazing flexibility of language and also to explore the number of reasons you have to praise God. Language, which is a gift from God, is a wonderfully elastic means of communicating, as is demonstrated in the acrostic psalms.

Perhaps the most reasonable explanation for the acrostic psalms is that the format is a part of the message. Using the entire alphabet is a way of saying: Here is an extensive topic; it takes up the entire alphabet to speak of it. Such is surely the case with the most familiar acrostic psalm, Psalm 119, which is written to praise the wonderful law of God. That also seems to be the point of the use of the acrostic format in Lamentations chapters 1–4, that the distress of God's people is complete. In the book of Proverbs, the verses in praise of the worthy woman are also in the form of an alphabetical acrostic, as if to say that not all the letters of the alphabet can exhaust her praise.

## PSALM

- 9** Verse 2 says to God, I will praise you with my whole heart, and according to my thesis the acrostic format says, I will praise you with the entire alphabet.
- 10** This psalm expresses complete confidence in God's power over evil. (Psalms 9 & 10 are only partial acrostics; may be part of a larger and complete acrostic.)
- 25** An alphabet of entreaties is the title that Kidner gives to this psalm.
- 34** The subject here is the complete happiness of those who trust in God.
- 37** The complete blessings of the righteous are considered in verses 1–8 and contrasted in the second half with the complete calamity brought on the wicked.
- 111** The subject of God's goodness is not exhausted by the entire alphabet.
- 112** The psalmist considers the complete blessedness of the righteous.
- 119** The goodness of God's law is not completely expressed even though the psalmist uses each letter eight times before moving on to the next.
- 145** God's love is a theme for all men (verse 4), and for all the letters of the alphabet, too.

Certain psalms use the acrostic format to emphasize the inexhaustible nature of their subject. Here I list the acrostic psalms with comments indicating how the acrostic format matches and emphasizes their content. Read them and see if you agree.

God has blessed us with the wonderful gift of language. What better use can we make of it than praising Him and teaching others about Him? But even with the almost unlimited power and flexibility of language we shall never exhaust His praise.



# The Messianic Psalms (1)

(Various)

by L. A. Stauffer

Hebrew poets included psalmists who composed songs of Israel, containing cries of adversity and tragedy, hymns of triumph and victory, and confessions of sin and repentance. They sang praises to Jehovah, exalted the nation's history, invoked God's vengeance upon evildoers, and called for the Lord's help in times of trouble.

But beyond the lyrics, composition, and musical performances, the psalmists received special insight into the nature, life, and role of the coming Messiah. These poets were sometimes prophets who, being directed by the Spirit of God, looked to a golden age of Messianic rule (see Acts 1:16; 2:30).

"Messiah" is Hebrew or Aramaic for "Christ" which itself is Greek for "anointed one." Some form of the word is used a number of times in the Psalms to depict Israel's future leader. The psalmists in the role of prophets portray the coming Messiah as vividly as any Old Testament writers with the possible exception of Isaiah. They sing of His eternal existence, lineage and humanity, life of adversity, and death, resurrection, coronation, and rule at God's right hand.

**Pre-existence.** Two psalmists allude to the eternal existence and deity of the coming king. David opens Psalm 110: "Jehovah saith unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand" (verse 1). In a confrontation with the Pharisees Jesus, the Messiah Himself, appeals to this Psalm to argue His eternal nature. He is more than a descendant of David because David in this Psalm called Him—"Lord." As Jesus contends: "If David called him Lord, how is he his son?" (Matthew 22:42–46). Long before He became David's son in the flesh, the Messiah as God was David's Lord. He is specifically identified as God by the Sons of Korah who sing of His anointing by Jehovah: "Thy throne, O GOD, is forever and ever" (Psalm 45:6; Hebrews 1:8).

**Incarnation.** And yet the anointed God became flesh. Jehovah who anointed and exalted the coming prince had made a covenant with David: "Thy seed will I establish for ever, And build up thy throne to all generations" and "of the fruit of thy body will I set [one] upon thy throne" (Psalm 89:3–4; 132:11; Acts 2:30). "The Lord," "O God"—the Messiah—would also be the son of David; He would tabernacle in the flesh, be born of a woman, become a sharer of flesh and blood with the kingdom citizens (see John 1:14; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 2:14).

David's Lord was to become David's son, born of the tribe of Judah and of the house of David. When anointing Jesus to be Messiah Jehovah fulfilled His covenant with David to establish his seed and throne forever (see Psalm 89:20, 29, 34–37; Matthew 1:1–17; Luke 1:31–33).

**Life.** Psalmists also sing of the life of the Messiah—a life of adversity. The nations would rage against Him, a description of the trials before Herod and Pilate in which the people clamor for His death (Psalm 2:12; Acts 4:25–28).

Even this tragedy is exceeded by the betrayal of a disciple—one the Messiah had selected to be a fellow-servant, one He had drawn to His bosom, one who had reclined at His table. Years before, one psalmist states the betrayal in the words of the anointed himself: "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, Who did eat of my bread, Hath lifted up his heel against me" (Psalm 41:9). Jesus declares the fulfillment of this at the "last supper" when He dips sop with Judas and the son of Iscariot turns from the table and hastens off into the dark to sell his Lord for thirty pieces of silver (see John 13:18, 26, 27).

**Death.** The ultimate tragedy of life, portrayed by the psalmist, is the anguished cry of the Messiah when forsaken by God: "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God's anointed sees Himself as a worm and no man; He is laughed to scorn as the people shoot out the lip and shake their heads; trouble is near and He finds none to help (Psalm 22:1, 6, 7, 11; see Matthew 27:46). Forsaken and delivered up to wicked men by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, the Messiah is brought "into the dust of death." He is compassed about by strong bulls who gape on him as a ravening lion; His life is poured out like water, His bones are out of joint, His heart melts within Him, His strength is dried up like a potsherd, and His tongue cleaves to his jaws. His enemies have pierced His hands and His feet, parted His garments, and cast lots for His vestures (see Psalm 22:12–18; see Matthew 27:35).

Yet, the Messiah envisions the God who forsook Him always at His right hand; in Him he finds safety and rejoices that His soul is not left in Sheol and His flesh does not see corruption. Beyond suffering and death God's anointed lives, reigns, intercedes for man—portraits to be viewed in a second article.

# The Messianic Psalms (2)

(Various)

by L. A. Stauffer

Songs of Zion, written and composed by psalmists about the Messiah, are songs of hope. The singers wrote and sang of tragedy, of rejection, and of the death of God's anointed—but not of despair. Beyond the “dust of death” are the expectations of a triumphant king who will be a priest on His throne.

**Hope/Resurrection.** The psalmists saw the soul of the Messiah depart into the unseen realm of Sheol and His flesh descend to the grave. But neither His spirit nor His body would linger among the dead (Psalm 16:10).

The psalmists also saw the anointed one rejected by His peers as an unfit stone set at naught by the builders; and yet a stone that became the head of the corner—a foundation for God's spiritual house and a rock of offense that crushes to dust the disobedient (Psalm 118:22–23; Matthew 21:42, 44; 1 Peter 2:4–7).

And when the nations with their rulers rage against the Messiah, crying out for His death, Jehovah holds them in derision. Despite the sentence of death and the execution of the anointed one, God sets Him on His holy hill of Zion (Psalm 2:1–6).

The psalmists' hope finds fulfillment in the resurrection of God's holy one. The apostle Peter at Pentecost appeals to the Sons of Korah who sang of the resurrection—“that neither was he left in Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption” (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27–31). The apostle Paul quotes the same psalm at Antioch of Pisidia to affirm the resurrection of Jesus, but also calls David to witness—“as it is written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee” (Psalm 2:7; Acts 13:33–37).

**Ascension/Reign.** Beyond the resurrection Israel's singers envision the reign of the Messiah. Psalmists, however, see it not as a rule upon earth but at the right hand of God. Jehovah speaks to David's Lord, the coming Messiah and king, of His rule in heaven: “Sit thou at my right hand, Until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Psalm 110:1).

Peter employs these words of David to describe the ascension of Jesus into the heavens unto the right hand of Jehovah. There, the apostle concludes, He was made “both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:33–36). And God from the heavenly throne sends forth the rod of His strength and the Lord rules in the midst of His enemies. There at God's right hand the anointed one strikes “through kings in the day of his wrath” (Psalm 110:4).

The nations become the Messiah's inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth His possession. He rules with a rod of iron and breaks the nations and dashes them into pieces like a potter's vessel (Psalm 2:7–9). Heaven is the anointed's throne throughout the ages, a fulfillment of the promise and covenant with David that one of the fruit of his loins would sit on his throne forever (Psalm 89:3–4; 132:11).

To this end the Messiah was born and raised from the dead. The Son of the Most High, it is proclaimed by Gabriel at His birth, shall receive the throne of His father David, shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end (Luke 1:31–33). This, God fulfilled, according to Peter, when he raised him to his own right hand—far above all principalities, powers, and dominions (Acts 2:30–36; see Ephesians 1:20–21).

**Priest/Intercession.** David, Israel's sweet singer, foresees, as does the prophet Zechariah, the king as a priest on his throne: “Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent: Thou art a priest forever After the order of Melchizedek” (Psalm 110:4; see Zechariah 6:12–13).

He is a priest who, first of all, had Himself to offer. When Jehovah rejected sacrifices and no longer had any delight in whole burnt offerings, the Messiah volunteered: “Lo, I am come ... I delight to do thy will O my God” (Psalm 40:7–8). Jehovah prepared Him a body in which He was offered “once for all” for the sins of the world (see Hebrews 10:5–10; 9:23–26).

And as a “priest forever After the order of Melchizedek” His “priesthood is unchangeable”—based on the “power of an endless life”; He “ever liveth to make intercession” for the saints (Hebrews 7:16, 24–25).

Messianic psalms span the eternal ages—viewing the anointed one as God who became man, as man who was tragically rejected and slain, and as Lord who was exalted to the heavens from whence he came. There as king and priest He consummates Jehovah's plan for the ages. What a story! What a Savior! And how beautifully told in the lyrics and compositions of the ancient singers in Israel.

# The “Omni” Psalms

(Psalms 139, 147)

by Don Truex

I was relieved to learn that my assignment was to describe the “Omni” characteristics of God, not explain them. In that matter, I must cast my lot with David who confessed that “such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it” (Psalm 139:6). In fact, knowledge of these particulars not only surpasses our comprehension but our imagination as well. After all, we have no human standard by which to measure His divine characteristics. But description, now that is something that David does beautifully.

Humanity would seem to be too much for any god, or pantheon of gods, to handle. But David, in Psalm 139, met Jehovah, the One True God. David found Him, not in the recesses of his imagination, but on the job—caring deeply for His creation, sharing His will and Word, searching every thought and action, and benevolently intervening in our lives. He, and He alone, is the God of power, knowledge and presence.

## “You have searched me and known me”

Most of us must candidly confess that we seldom see ourselves honestly. But God does. He knows us through and through. He is the first to say “Good morning” as we rise and the first to scrutinize our activity during the day: “You know my sitting down and my rising up ... You comprehend my path ... and are acquainted with all my ways” (verses 2, 3). He knows what we are going to say, what we do say, what we wish we would have said, and what we think about saying: “For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O Lord, You know it altogether” (verse 4). And notice how the Psalmist makes this doctrine personal: “You know my sitting down, my rising up, all my ways.” Creation is God’s most grand experiment and humankind His greatest work. As a kind and just Creator and Sustainer, He has knowledge of the most minute detail of our lives.

## “Where can I go from Your presence?”

It’s not just that God is “acquainted” with us, but He is ever our companion and benefactor. His presence is not to be escaped (And why would righteous men want to?), for “in Him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28). Height, depth, speed, darkness, light; none suffice to hide us from the presence of God. That is not to portray the Father as a cosmic policeman, watching every move of every creature, eager to pounce with glee upon our failure. His presence is primarily for our good. What wondrous assurance it is for His children, that regardless of time or place, “even there Thy hand shall lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me” (verse 11).

Perhaps this is what makes sin the heinous crime it is. It is not committed in the secrecy that we naively assume darkness affords. Sin is an affront to the Almighty to His face. It is treason of the highest order committed at the very foot of His throne. And thus He asks, “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth?” (Jeremiah 23:24).

## “I am fearfully and wonderfully made”

Men are awestruck by the latest innovations in computer, medical or scientific technology. Yet all pale in comparison with the ability, the unparalleled power, to create and sustain. We marvel that through human ingenuity we are able to fuse together the elements necessary to animate a robot, while often ignoring the omnipotent hand of Jehovah who “knit me together in my mother’s womb” (verse 13). He “embroidered” or “wove” together veins and sinews, muscles and nerves. True, we are “made a little lower than the angels.” And yet we “are crowned with glory and honor” (Hebrews 2:7). Reflect on the wisdom and power that went into the creation of your heart, the love and kindness spent in the design of your eyes, the benevolent replication of a bit of your Father in the giving of your soul. It’s easy to understand David’s amazement.

## “Search me, O God, and know my heart”

The omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence of our Father ought to naturally evoke a righteous response. Had He been so disposed, God could have used these awesome traits to our detriment rather than for our benefit. How fitting then, how absolutely proper, that David, and we after his similitude, give God the free hand He desires in leading us “in the way everlasting” and the humble, obedient heart necessary to make it so.

# The Creation Psalms

(Psalms 8, 33)

by Dan Petty

## Psalm 33: Praising God as Creator and Sovereign

This triumphant hymn opens with a call to the Lord's saints to give Him praise for His word and work (verse 1–4). They are to use every mode of expression available, and to worship with jubilation (3). Such worship befits one whose work is portrayed by such moral terms as “upright”, “faithfulness”, “righteousness”, “justice”, and “lovingkindness” (4–5).

To know that everything that exists came into being *out of nothing* by God's command is to be confronted with pure creation, and for that alone God deserves all praise (Psalm 148:5; Hebrews 11:3). In figurative language the psalmist describes God's creative work of making the oceans, as effortlessly as one would fill a waterskin with water or store up a water supply in a “storehouse” (verse 7; Genesis 1:9–10). He simply “spoke, and it was done” (verse 9). Therefore all inhabitants of earth should be filled with reverence and awe of His mighty power (8).

God is more to His creation than its Maker. He is also the sovereign King, overruling all the affairs of men. Peoples and nations and their counsel either serve God's immutable purposes, or they come to nought (verses 10–12; see Isaiah 44:25f; 45:4f). But He blesses the nation that serves Jehovah.

This truth is based upon the fact that God sees all human activity and, being the Creator of men, understands all human plans and motives (verses 13–15). Such a realization should remind us that, as God is our Maker, He also is the One who judges even “the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12–13).

Nothing can save a man or a nation, not even a “mighty army” or “great strength” (16–17), apart from God. But to those who fear God and trust in Him, “He is our help and our shield” (18–22), and we praise our Creator as a God of lovingkindness.

## Psalm 8: What is Man?

“O Lord, our Lord, How majestic is Thy name in all the earth!” Thus begins and ends Psalm 8, David's song of praise to Jehovah. This opening and closing statement is the burden of the psalm, and David sees the proof of God's majesty manifested in His creation—both of the universe and of man. It is a truth reflected upon in other psalms of David (19:1), by New Testament writers (Romans 1:20), and by many thoughtful and wise persons who have considered the heavens and the earth and the evidence of purpose, power, and wisdom reflected therein (Job 12:7–9; Jeremiah 5:21f).

The wisdom and power of God are manifested when one beholds the wonder of a newborn baby no less than when marveling at the vastness of space and the numberless stars (verse 1–2). This paradox is the message of the entire psalm. The first impression would suggest the puniness and relative insignificance of man in comparison to the heavens—the intricate and artistic work of God's “fingers” (3). “What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him?” (4). The question is an expression of astonishment that Jehovah, the Creator of such splendor, would not simply ignore man, but would be mindful of him and attend to him.

Yet the question already points to its answer, for what other being in God's entire creation has the insight even to ask such a question? Indeed, man stands not beneath the rest of creation, but above it. Fashioned in God's image (Genesis 1:26), man was made “a little lower than God” and thus is the crowning glory of God's great creation (5).

Man's special status among all God's creatures gives him a dignity unequaled by any other creature. God placed man in that position, and “crowned him with glory and honor” (5). The Creator also endowed man with the right of dominion over His creation (Gen. 1:26–28). Thus man was entrusted with a stewardship, to “rule” over that which was placed in his care (6–8). At his best, man in this majestic position is represented in the New Testament as a type of Jesus, who in His death and resurrection, was “crowned with glory and honor” (Hebrews 2:9).

Man's dominion over nature, however, wonderful as it is, always takes second place to his calling as a servant and worshipper of God. The proper fulfillment of man's role of dominion can be realized only as he recognizes his total dependence upon the Creator (Acts 17:24f). Such a responsibility should not lead to pride, but to an humble acknowledgment of the glory of the Creator. “O Lord, our Lord, How majestic is Thy name in all the earth!” (verse 9).

# The Family Psalms

(Psalms 127, 128)

by Gary Ogden

There is a lot said in the Bible about good family relationships. Psalms 127 and 128 are in effect twins, approaching the subject of family life from different angles. Let us reinstate in our homes the principles stated in these two Psalms.

## Let the Lord be the center of the home

“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it” (127:1). “Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways” (128:1). How can we ever expect to have a good family life if we leave the Lord out of the picture? If things aren’t right with God, how can they be right with your mate, children, parents? When God and His word rule our hearts and lives, family life will be a pleasant and rich experience.

## Don’t worry, be happy

“In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves” (127:2, NIV). “When you eat the labor of your hands, you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you” (128:2, NKJV). The workplace these days can be a real test of stamina and keeping things in proper perspective. Somehow the child of God must find the way to go about his business, do a good job for the boss, use his paycheck wisely and leave the rest to God. A fretful, worrisome disposition creates great havoc in the family. A lack of contentment frequently is the cause. For some families, it makes no difference how much money you make; it is never enough. Poor spending habits create tension, worry and strife.

Worry is a sleep-robber. Most people turn into real grouches when they don’t get enough rest. Reminds me of the woman who lamented, “Sometimes I wake up grumpy, and sometimes I just let him sleep.” There is no substitute for a good night’s rest, and putting our trust in the Lord while we work hard will accomplish the goal.

## Think of family as a blessing from God

“Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward” (127:3). “Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house, your children like olive plants all around your table” (128:3). One of the attitudes that prevailed among the ancients was that children were a gift from God. They besought God for children and considered having a large family as beneficial. Many people view children as a curse and a blight to be eradicated. Why do we have so many “unwanted children” these days? Quite simply, people do not fear the Lord and walk in His ways.

If you have a good wife and a house full of well-behaved children, you are a blessed man indeed. Good children look after the welfare of the parents in days of infirmity and old age; they espouse the cause of their parents when they need a defender; they produce grandchildren who become the “crown of old men” (Proverbs 17:6).

I’m not in the grandparent business yet, although I qualify by reason of age and wisdom. I do have a number of friends who declare that having grandchildren has great recompense of reward. If children are like having “olive plants around your table” (Psalm 128:3), grandchildren must be like having chocolate cake all day long. The best thing about grandchildren is that they give you yet another chance to nurture a soul bound for eternity. Let us help them learn to fear the Lord and walk in His ways.

The psalmist concludes with a prayer: “May the Lord bless you from Zion all the days of your life; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem, and may you live to see your children’s children. Peace be upon Israel” (128:5–6). We need to be praying for our families. I hope and pray that you and yours will make the Lord the center of your home, that you will fear Him and walk in His ways, that you will treat your family as a precious gift from God and that peace, peace of mind, and prosperity will prevail in your home.

# The Word of God Psalms (1)

## (Psalm 19)

by Earl Kimbrough

Psalm 19 praises God's revelation of Himself in nature and the written word. Verses 1–6 describe creation as a wordless voice constantly declaring God's glory. Verses 7–14 extol the power and perfection of His law. Spurgeon called these revelations "The World Book and the Word Book." Creation bears universal witness to the power and deity of God. His word declares His will to Israel. A distinction between the revelations is accented by the replacement of "God" (Creator) in the first part with "the Lord" (the God of Israel) in the second. The heart of the psalm is David's hymn to God's word (verses 7–11). It exalts the word in six synonymized, but progressively enlightening, sentences.

### The description of the Word

The titles for God's word include all His revelation to His people. "The law" is not a book of lifeless precepts, but a living expression of God's will. It is "the testimony of the Lord" in that it witnesses His mind and nature. The testimony consists of "the statutes of the Lord," the definite rules for man clearly marked out in the law. They are further described as "the commandment of the Lord." The law is God's prescription of man's duty. The commandment is also seen as "the fear of the Lord." This describes its relation to its purpose. Its aim is to create reverence for the person and will of God. "The fear of the Lord" embraces His "judgments." It circumscribes the wisdom by which He rules His people in the execution of His will.

### The character of the Word

The psalmist's descriptive terms for God's word reflect its nature. It is "perfect" because whatever comes from God is perfect in kind and purpose. The law is completely free from error, is designed to benefit man, and is entirely suited to the end for which it was given. God's testimony is "sure" (trustworthy). It is fixed and certain, in comparison with the unstable words of men. "Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). God's statutes are "right" because they come from Him of whom only right can come. The commandment is "pure" as the Lord Himself is pure. The fear of the Lord is "clean." No debasing thought, word, or deed comes from following its directions. God's judgments are "true and righteous altogether." The attributes of God are reflected in the character of His word. Perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, true, and completely righteous—what more could be expected from the God of creation and revelation?

### The effect of the Word

These verses tell what the law does for God's people. It converts (restores) "the soul." Revelation alone brings fallen man to God and makes him what God intended from the beginning. It transforms "the simple" into men of wisdom. By revelation, the child of God knows things the wisest of men cannot know without it (1 Corinthians 1:20ff). "The humble He teaches His way" (Psalm 25:9). The law brings joy to "the heart" by giving a clear conscience to those who keep it. There is joy in submitting to God's will, not only because it is right, but because it, being right, is itself the source of joy. The commandment "enlightens the eyes." It is a guiding light to those who walk in it (Psalm 119:105). The last effects are implied by stated traits: enduring, true, and righteous. The law is the fountain from which flows all that is abiding, authentic, and virtuous in this world.

### The value of the Word

The value of the word exceeds anything creation has in store. David saw the qualities of God's law as more desirous than wealth and more pleasant than the earth's sweetest treats (verse 10). It is by observing these enduring qualities of revelation that God's servant is "warned" (11a). Here is the crowning value of the law. It gives blessings, but they do not come without commitment (11b). So the warning is essential. However, the promised reward not only comes *after* keeping God's commandments, but it comes *while they are being kept*. It brings blessings now and in eternity.

The psalm ends with a prayer for help in keeping God's word (12–14).

# The Word of God Psalms (2)

## (Psalm 119)

by Earl Kimbrough

Psalm 119 is perhaps the most skillfully conceived of all the Psalms. It is in structure unlike any other. The word of God is its grand theme. In unbroken stanzas, David weaves his meditations of the word around one of eight, or more, synonyms for it. Most of these are frequently repeated. This psalm, although unique, is an elaborate extension of David's concise hymn to God's law in Psalm 19:7–11. But both his synonyms for the word in Psalm 119 and his comments on its virtues are of special interest here. Eight of his synonyms are noted below.

### “The law of the Lord”

“Law” primarily denotes guidance or instruction. The word sometimes refers to the law given by Moses at Mount Sinai. However, here it refers to God's law in the widest sense of all revelation, in which instruction and guidance from God were found. The psalm begins with a promised blessing to those who walk in God's law (verse 1). The wicked forsake His law and regard it as useless (53, 126), but the righteous love it and delight in it (77, 97). God's servant prays, “Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law” (18).

### “Your testimonies”

More general than law, “testimonies” suggests that God's law is His witness to His will and person. The use of “testimonies” shows that the psalmist regarded the law, not as an impersonal body of legislation, but as the vibrant utterances of God about Himself, His mind, and His relation to His people. He expresses the same devotion to God's “testimonies” as he does to God's “law.” David's confidence in God's word is so sure that he says, “I will speak Your testimonies also before kings, And not be ashamed” (46).

### “His ways”

God's “ways” (“paths”) are His designated rules of conduct, denoting especially their guidance of the psalmist through the complex course of life (Jeremiah 6:16). The writer pleads, “Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, And revive me (preserve my life) in Your way” (37).

### “Your precepts”

The word “precepts” is similar in meaning to statutes and commandments: instructions given to direct behavior. God's precepts are to be “kept diligently” (v. 4). And while they restrict the child of God, they also allow him to “walk in liberty” (46). The worst of masters is sin, but the truth makes one free (John 8:32).

### “Your statutes”

These are the enactments of God as Divine Legislator. Four words (or their synonyms) repeatedly show David's devotion to God's word under its various titles. They are “teach,” “love,” “meditate,” and “keep.” “Teach me Your statutes” (12). “I will *delight* myself in Your statutes” (16). “I will *meditate* in Your statutes” (46). “I have inclined my heart to *perform* Your statutes” (112). The psalmist's immeasurable reverence for God's word is beautifully expressed in the words, “Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage” (54).

### “Your commandments”

The character of God's “commandments” is described in verse 172: “For all your commandments are righteousness.” His commandments are righteous and they result in righteousness.

### “Your judgments”

“Judgments” are judicial pronouncements in that they warn against particular lines of conduct. The word of God underscores His decisions against and punishment of those who fail to conform to His word. Considering this, the psalmist says, “My flesh trembles for fear of You, And I am afraid of Your judgments” (120).

### “Your word”

God's “word” (“words”) refers to the law as the spoken or written utterances of the Almighty. God's word, or sayings, is the disclosing of His mind (see 1 Corinthians 2:11–12). The “word” is more commonly used to signify God's revelation than most of the other synonyms, perhaps because of its seeming simplicity and comprehension.

David's devotion to God's word, so beautifully acclaimed in Psalm 119, is all the more astonishing when we realize how comparatively little he had of it. This should shame those who, having the full revelation of God's will, greatly neglect it. But ever delight in God's word and desire to obey it are not sufficient. Therefore, in the midst of His praise, the psalmist inserts pleas for divine help in living by His word.

# The Pursuit of God Psalms

(Psalms 27, 42, 63)

by Rod Amonett

As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for Thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God” (Psalm 42:1–2a, NASB). With a few simple words the Sons of Korah describe a scene from everyday life that helps us to understand the righteous man’s desperate yearning for God.

In a similar circumstance, David besought the Lord: “O God, Thou art my God, I shall seek Thee earnestly; My soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh yearns for Thee, In a dry and weary land where there is no water” (Psalm 63:1).

The “Pursuit of God Psalms” reflect the deepest and most urgent need which man can know. Once honest hearts have learned of God, the fulfillment of our physical and even emotional needs will no longer be sufficient to make us content. Not even the close companionship of another individual will fill the great void we feel inside. God has indeed set eternity within our hearts and men, enlightened by the truth, long with all of their being to “walk” with their Creator.

What is so marvelous is that God Himself desires and makes possible this communion. Paul declared to the Athenians that God has made us that we should “seek” Him (Acts 17:27), and David assured Solomon that the Lord will reward the diligent and honest searcher: “... for the Lord searches all hearts and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever” (1 Chronicles 28:9b). The psalmists were men that certainly knew God already. They had sought to serve Him faithfully, but in these psalms they find themselves pursued by enemies and feeling cut off from God’s blessings and association. There are two important points we can notice from these psalms:

**1. It is in life’s darkest moments that we are reminded of our great need for God.** In good times men may develop a deep faith in God and gratitude for His blessings, but it is in difficult times when such a faith becomes our much needed comfort and ally. Only when men are brought face-to-face with their frail and helpless nature do they become truly aware of God’s magnificent strength and the precious nature of His love for us.

Each of us face moments of trial or grief when there is no one we can really turn to but God. The psalmist lamented: “My tears have been my food day and night,” and “O my God, my soul is in despair within me; therefore I remember Thee ...” (Psalm 42:3a,6a). David cried, “Do not abandon me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation! For my father and my mother have forsaken me, But the Lord will take me up” (Psalm 27:9b–10). Again, David writes, “I meditate on Thee in the night watches, for Thou hast been my help” (Psalm 63:6b–7a).

Such cries for God’s assistance are with confidence, knowing God cares for us and will act in our behalf: “Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence” (Psalm 42:5).

**2. Opportunities to worship with the Lord’s people are important to our sense of communion with God.** The writer asks, “When shall I come and appear before God?” and says: “These things I remember, and I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God, with the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival” (Psalm 42:2b, 4).

David longed for the time when he would “offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord” (Psalm 27:6b).

The psalmists regarded worship as a great privilege. They felt deeply deprived and frustrated when they were prevented from such blessed occasions. His reliance upon God for help and favor fueled his desire to bow before God and acknowledge His greatness.

Today we are no less desperate in our need for God’s fellowship and help. We come “poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3), aware that His association is only for those who “hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Matthew 5:6). With the psalmist we proclaim, “My soul clings to Thee; Thy right hand upholds me” and “My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth offers praises with joyful lips” (Psalm 63:8, 5).



# Psalms of Deliverance

## (Psalm 31)

by Warren Berkley

One of the great benefits for us in the study of the Psalms is, we are able through these beautiful poems to learn how much God meant to David. Especially when you study the life of David and then consult the Psalms that relate to his life experiences, the psalms become a rich resource filled with constructive and strengthening truths about our Maker.

For example, David often found himself in pain. Because of his own sin, or as a result of a vicious offender, he repeatedly suffered afflictions. How he reacted under pressure becomes a good study for us. And the testimony of psalms is, David was predisposed to rely upon God when under pressure. This is one reason he called God his rock, his fortress, deliverer and buckler (Psalm. 18:2). Many of the psalms fall into this category.

Psalm 31 could be labeled a deliverance psalm. David's ordeal is described, along with his reaction.

**1. David's ordeal.** He was caught in "the net" or "trap" of his enemies (verse 4) and surrounded by idolatry (6). He was suffering affliction and anguish of soul (7) in the hand of his enemies (8). He was being slandered and conspired against (13). He said, "Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly. For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed. I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me" (Psalm 31:9–11, KJV).

**2. David's reaction** to this ordeal was to take refuge in the Lord. "In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness. Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me. For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me. Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength. Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth." (Psalm 31:15, KJV). Because of his predisposition of trust in the Lord, this was David's reaction; to preach (verses 23–24) and praise (19–21) and cry to the Lord his God (22).

*When we find ourselves in the middle of some unpleasant ordeal or calamity, what is our reaction? Do we, almost impulsively, turn to some worldly resource? Do we deceive ourselves into thinking that we have within ourselves the ability to cope and be courageous (humanism)? Or, do we draw near unto God and make Him our refuge? When in distress, we can do nothing better than to trust in God and look upon His countenance of love and mercy. We need to cultivate the same predisposition of trust we observe in David.*

Luther said this Psalm "is spoken in the person of Christ and His saints, who are plagued their life long, internally by trembling and alarm, externally by persecution, slander and contempt, for the sake of the word of God, and yet are delivered by God from them all and comforted." This seems to have some good basis, since the crucified Savior used the words which begin at verse 5 in the moment of His dying (see Luke 23:46; also, the Messianic interpretation of verse 10 would be, Christ bearing the sins of the world).

Psalm 31 is one of many psalms of deliverance, written to bring us in closer union with our God so that we'll call upon Him to help us and uphold us. Brother Earnhart once observed concerning the Psalms: "Many a child of God has rested his heart on the prayers of those ancient worshippers. We find in them the somehow soothing echo of our own anguished despair and know that we are not the first of God's children to 'wrest lone with fears.' Not the first, for that matter, to know an all-consuming joy" (*Christianity Magazine*, December, 1989, p. 27). (*See further Psalm 116.*)

# The “If Only” Psalm

(Psalm 81)

by Bill Moseley

How many times most of us have said, “If only ...” followed by “what might have been!” Psalm 81 demonstrates this concept, dealing with “what might have been” for Israel “if only” they had done certain things. The nation never realized the potential God had for them in many areas. *If only* they had conformed to God’s righteous statutes and judgments, how differently they might have conducted themselves, even when Christ came into the world.

God has ever desired that His people praise Him, as seen in the opening verses of the Psalm. God is “our strength,” and as such we should “sing aloud” to Him. One basis of this worship is the previous benefits God had bestowed upon the nation. In verse 6, we note that God removed the burden of Egypt, and how firmly etched this was in the minds of Israel. Their slavery had been lifted from their shoulders, as they were “delivered from the pots.” In their time of trouble, God delivered them (verse 7). As they cried out to God, He “answered thee in time of trouble.” Following this, He “proved them at Meribah.”

Then God assures them that He indeed is the God that brought them out of Egypt (verse 10). They are to “open thy mouth wide,” and the promise is that “I will fill it.” “Open mouths” indicate a need for the blessings of God; these people were the receptacles wherein God would bestow His goodness. Yet, they refused to hear their God (verse 12), and so as He often did, God “gave them up,” allowing them walk in their own ways.

We then approach the “if only” portion of the psalm in verse 13. There God cries out, “Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!” Or, as we might say it, “If only ... they had done these things!” What then would follow?

First, God tells them He would have subdued their enemies. Instead, because of their refusal to hear God, He often used those enemies as instruments of destruction among them. How clearly this is seen in events such as the carrying away into the captivity of Babylon. That need not have happened—*if only* they had turned their backs upon their idolatry, reversed their conduct and returned to God. The destruction of their enemies was dependent upon their listening to God and walking in His ways.

The “enemies” of verse 14 are then called “haters of the Lord” in verse 15. Instead of God’s people being brought into ignominious subjection to those enemies, it could have been the other way around—*if only* they had been faithful to God. The very nation that God established to bring Christ into the world lost her exalted place among the nations as a world power nearly 600 years before Christ came into the world. *If only* they had been faithful to God, they “should have endured forever.” Instead, they became a “hiss and a byword” among men.

Next we see the great provisions the nation could have expected from God *if only* their faith in Him would have continued. God would have fed them “with the finest of wheat,” as well as with “honey out of the rock” (verse 16). Here are symbols of the splendid blessings they might have expected from God. It was not merely “wheat,” but the “finest of wheat.” In the wilderness they had received water from the flinty rock, but now there is “honey” from the rock.

The first part of this psalm shows us how the people should have conducted themselves before God. *If only* they had done this, the latter part demonstrates what God would have done for them.

Can we make an application of this for our lives as God’s people today? This writer is of the persuasion that we can! When we come to stand before our God in judgment, and it is our lot to hear Him say, “Depart from me, I never knew you,” can the thought escape us that *if only* I had faithfully served God what “might have been!” The Psalms are timeless; their lessons are valuable, for after all, are we as God’s people today much, if any, different than those who originally received these wonderful writings?

# The “How Long?” Psalm

(Psalm 13)

by Harold Tabor

To the Chief Musician.

A Psalm of David

How long, O Jehovah, will you forget me forever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?  
How long shall I take counsel in my soul,  
    having sorrow in my heart daily?  
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

Behold! Answer me, O Jehovah, my God;  
Make my eyes enlighten, lest I sleep the death,  
    lest my enemy say “I have beaten him”,  
    lest my foes rejoice when I am shaken.

But I have trusted in Your mercy. My heart shall rejoice  
    in Your salvation.

I will sing to Jehovah because He has rewarded me.

(The Septuagint adds)  
and I will sing psalms to the name of the Lord Most  
    High.

We do not know who the adversary of despair is for David in this Psalm. It may have been King Saul or Absalom. Both pursued David and would have killed him.

Whenever there is sickness or suffering in one’s life, a person usually expresses the desire to know how long it is going to continue. We want to know when relief is going to come to us. This psalm has been identified as the “How long?” psalm because of this cry for relief. The phrase “How long?” is used uniquely four times in the first stanza. Every other passage (Heb. 8 passages) in the Hebrew Bible the phrase is used only once.

Psalm Thirteen is divided into three strophes or stanzas of two verses each. Each stanza reveals a different stage of experience. The first strophe begins with four “How long?” phrases. The second strophe is a prayer for enlightenment. The third strophe is a song of deliverance.

The first stanza is a cry of desperation unto Jehovah. David feels that Jehovah has abandoned him. David questions whether Jehovah will ever talk to him or manifest Himself unto him ever again. He is having to rely upon his own “counsel” to escape from the unrelenting enemies pursuing him. No help is forthcoming from Jehovah. The enemies of David are apparently victors.

Yet Jehovah does not “forget” His people. He never ceases to love His children. Jehovah is not absentminded to deliberately abandon His people. He may “hide” His face from His people and permit emotional pain and physical suffering to take place as illustrated in the life of Job. But Jehovah is trying to teach a lesson that we can do nothing in ourselves. We need to learn faith, prayer and hope. These lessons will teach us about the source of strength and happiness in this life. All of this is to teach us dependency on Jehovah. We can do nothing in and of ourselves.

The second stanza is David’s prayer song. The prayer is an urgent and demanding call to Jehovah. His plea is for knowledge and understanding of the question of death, the intensity of opposition from his foes and our own frailties. Oh, to be honest with ourselves about these great subjects. There are three petitions in this stanza.

“Consider” or “*Look!*” is the antithesis of “hide” His face (verse 1). “Answer me” is the opposite to forgetting me. The purpose of the prayer is that Jehovah will “lighten mine eyes” (see 1 Samuel 14:27, 29 for the same idiom), that is, improvement of the understanding to see good counsel, by which he may escape the dangers that threaten him. David wants to be able to stand firm even when his “persecutors” rejoice when he is “shaken.”

The third stanza is the psalmist’s victory song. It is a song of praise coming out of his personal prayer. The only explanation for the contrast between the stanzas is cessation of his particular suffering and opposition from his enemies.

The personal pronoun at beginning of verse five may be emphatic. “I, even I, have trusted” translates a verb meaning to rely on, depend on, place confidence in. The Hebrew word “mercy” (*hesed*) includes the more general sense of lovingkindness or favor.

“I will sing” translates a verb used eight times in Psalms. Singing is the expression of the soul’s joyful appreciation to Jehovah. These last two verses are summits of tribute and praise. Out of the depths of despondency, the soul expresses joyful gratitude to Jehovah for the reward of dealing with him.

May we learn the lesson of faith through despair, dependency upon Jehovah through prayer and trust in Jehovah who will always be there for us.

# The “Why” Psalm

(Psalm 73)

by John M. Kilgore

**S**urely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart!” (verse 1) and “surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and washed my hands in innocence; for I have been stricken all day long, and chastened every morning (verses 13–14). Between these two statements by Asaph, each introduced by “surely” (NASB), lies a painful road connecting the valley of disillusionment and doubt to the mountain top of confidence and certitude. The journey was necessitated by the reality of Asaph’s world where he observed the prosperity and care of the wicked (verse 3) and the pain and trouble of the righteous (13–14), and asked “Why?” Why does a good God permit this unfairness? Is He really good to Israel, the pure in heart? For Asaph this was not merely some interesting philosophical question to be debated in the academy, for he was the one suffering, even to the point of being envious of the arrogant wicked (3) and questioning the profitability of keeping his heart pure (13). If Asaph was to keep his faith in the goodness of God, he had to have an answer (2).

Questioning God is like a double-edged sword. It can cut both ways: one way to unbelief and the other to faith. In the case of the Jews with Jesus, their questions punctuated an ever-descending spiral into the pit of hatred and murder. On one occasion, Jesus even characterized their questioning as indicative of an evil and adulterous generation (Matthew 12:39). But in the case of Asaph, and all truly devoted disciples, it is essential in order to climb to the top of confidence in God’s goodness and justice. To ask God “why” is risky but necessary.

Questioning God leads to a destruction of our faith when our questions flow from our pride. An unwillingness to accept the evidence already given to us by God and demand more implies that God lacks truly convincing evidence. If God would only give us true credible evidence, we would believe. This self-delusion, often disguised as intellectualism and “open-mindedness,” is in reality the consequence of a hardened will. The scribes and Pharisees who had already counseled together as to how they might destroy Him (Matthew 12:14) kept asking for a sign (Matthew 12:38). This charade of honest investigation was exposed by Jesus for what it was—self-willed, hardened hearts getting harder and harder. When God wants us to believe the unbelievable, He gives us sufficient evidence to do so (Gideon and his fleece, Judges 6:34–40). To reject His evidence and demand more is to harden our hearts against faith.

Questioning God from an elevated sense of the importance of our own physical circumstances also flows from pride, and will also destroy faith. This rationale allows the temporal to have greater importance than the eternal and places our satisfaction in time in the center of the universe, thus dethroning God. For men to sit in judgment of God’s goodness, especially from the standpoint of their own physical “happiness,” is arrogant.

Asaph came “close to stumbling” (verse 2) as he began to envy the arrogant rich. In essence, he said that God owed him. His purity demanded it. Surely God can’t expect us to serve Him for nothing (verse 13). It’s ironic that it is arrogance that produces envy of the arrogant.

Fortunately, Asaph changed his course of questioning and in the process received a greater faith. He illustrates that questioning God from a humble willingness to overcome our doubts builds faith. “I do believe; help me in my unbelief” (Mark 9:24).

When pain is used as God’s megaphone to get our attention (C. S. Lewis) our “whys” can produce a deeper faith, for now we are ready to listen to God. We have come into God’s sanctuary to be guided by His revelation.

This kind of questioning enables us to see again the God of history, what He has done, and where He (history) is going (verses 15–17). Now we can see the end from the beginning and know what will last (18–20). Listening to Him, we can see that when embittered within, we are like a senseless, ignorant beast (21–22), but when within the grasp of His hand, we are destined for glory (23–24). This way of “why” has led us to the God of our greatest good to make Him our refuge. We will “tell of all Thy works” (28).

Our God is not so weak that He can’t stand our questions nor so weak that He must accommodate our pride.

# The Folly of Riches Psalm

(Psalm 49)

by Harry E. Payne, Sr.

The intrinsic beauty and wisdom of the Psalms are clearly set forth in this solemn didactic psalm. Its main theme is that wicked, wealthy men often thrive in this life while the poor and godly often suffer. And it issues a clarion warning to those who trust in riches.

The introductory verses (1–4) contain an urgent call to all the people to give heed. After gaining their attention, the writer opens his parabolic discourse with the question, “Why should I fear?” (verse 5). He is not writing out of envy toward those who prosper, even though some of them may be antagonistic to him (“when the iniquity at my heels surrounds me,” AV); neither does he have so little trust in God that he lives in constant terror of his “supplanters” (adversaries). He has no reason to fear, although his enemies—the wealthy and the ambitious—do. Why? Because there is no lasting or satisfying happiness for them.

The futility of trusting in earthly wealth and material possessions is graphically emphasized in verses 5–12. Earthly riches will not deliver satisfaction in the evil day. The psalmist sets forth several cogent reasons for this.

**1. Riches will not save a person’s life (verse 7).** Material wealth will not ensure one that he will not die (see Hebrews 9:27). No man, it matters not how wealthy he is, can save even his closest kinsman (“his brother”) from death.

**2. Riches cannot be used as a ransom before God**—“nor give to God a ransom for him.” God cannot be bribed (paid in any material way) to save a person’s life.

**3. Riches will not save a person’s soul (8).** Though the words “life” and “soul” are often used interchangeably in Scripture, I believe this passage is best understood when “life” means “the inner life” or “the eternal soul.” This can only be “redeemed” or “saved” by the grace of the Lord God. What other “ransom” could even the wealthiest, the wisest, the most winsome of human beings give for his own “life” or that of another? (See Matthew 16:24–27.)

**4. Riches will not keep any person from dying and leaving his possessions to others (10).** Wealth, lands, houses, and all material things will perish with the using, or with the ravages of time, or with the final destruction of the earth and its works (2 Peter 3:10–12).

All of these facts show the extreme vanity of a person’s trust in riches: All people will die; when a person dies, he leaves all possessions here on earth; and he will leave them to others, often to strangers, who in turn will pass away.

Yet, the psalmist tells us what people who are minded to be rich think about: (1) They think “that their houses shall continue forever;” and (2) “They call their land after their own names.” Is there anything wrong with a person’s naming a farm, a plantation, a business or any other physical possession after himself? The psalmist is not condemning rightful ownership of lands and possessions, but rather boastful, arrogant, self-sufficient “ownership.” The psalmist tells us that even the rich man’s memory is fleeting! For a person to put his trust in such things is sheer folly!

“But man, in spite of his honor, cannot abide; he is like unto the beasts that perish” (verse 12). The rich man may have seemed to have so many advantages—and through human eyes, he may have been envied or admired. What a pity that all the honors and benefits he possessed should come to nought. But they did! And death swept him away!

In verses 13–15, a noticeable contrast is made between the plight of the rich worldling and that of the man who trusts in God. For the former, “Like sheep they were appointed for Sheol,” and “Death shall be their shepherd.” For the latter, however, the godly psalmist can say, “But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol; for He will receive me.”

In conclusion, the psalmist reminds the godly that it is the ultimate issues of life that count, not the momentary pleasures and the fleeting earthly possessions that most of us have (to some degree) along the way of our life here.

Verse 20 is a refrain-like repetition of verse 12. If a man is “in honor” but “has no understanding,” he is but “like the beasts that perish.” To put this in our own words, if he (1) puts unwarranted and unseemly confidence in earthly possessions; and if he (2) fails to recognize that earthly wealth and riches must fail a man in the end; and if he (3) leaves God out of the picture and does not make Him his confidence, his hope, and his ever-dependable heavenly Father—then he (or she) is acting “like the beasts that perish.” Let none of us make such a grave mistake.

# The Psalms and Wicked Men

(Psalm 10)

by Mark White

Wickedness in all its forms has plagued the righteous since the Garden of Eden. If wickedness and sin were simply imaginary rather than actual realities confronting the righteous man, they would pose no threat. But wickedness is a reality, and it is practiced by wicked men. There are personalities behind wicked deeds and thoughts. Righteous people cannot simply deal with wickedness *per se*. They must also confront those who defy God's will for righteous living, dealing with wicked people themselves. This makes wickedness difficult to handle, and makes the problem of resisting evil even more thorny.

Throughout Scripture, the problem of the wicked is addressed. Righteous men have often wondered, "Why do the wicked prosper?" Jeremiah was so puzzled by this paradox that he humbly asked God why this was so (Jeremiah 12:1). Why does it seem that wickedness is winning over righteousness? Doesn't it appear that it pays to be wicked, and costs to be righteous? The Psalms make this question easier to understand and more simple to bear.

In the Psalms, wickedness and wicked men are exposed for what they really are. Their ultimate end is revealed, and righteous men reading these psalms should be encouraged by them. These passages are imprecatory in tone, because the writer cries out to God for justice. Psalm 10 is one example. Verses one and two register a protesting cry against what seems to be God's indifference to the injustices of the wicked toward the poor. "Why do you stand afar off, O Lord? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? The wicked in his pride persecutes the poor; Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised." And yet, God is blameless. It may seem that the wicked escape punishment. In fact, this psalm suggests that the wicked themselves think that they can do whatever they please! Verse 6 has the wicked man saying, "I shall not be moved. I shall never be in adversity." Verse 11 says, "God has forgotten; He hides His face; He will never see it." And in verse 13, the wicked man renounces God by saying "You will not require an account." He has actually convinced himself that he can sin with impunity. In effect, he is saying "God doesn't see me. I will not be caught. Even if God does see me, He will never judge me!" But such is not the case. God sees the trouble His people experience at the hand of the wicked. He does take such oppressions and mistreatments into account. He feels the grief of His people, and helps them in just the right way at just the right time. The psalmist rejoices that God has "seen it, for you observe trouble and grief, to repay it by Your hand" (verse 14). He then prays that God will "Break the arm of the wicked and evil man; Seek out his wickedness until You find none" (verse 15). It may seem strange indeed, that the righteous would rejoice at the calamity of the wicked. But rather than viewing such elation as a personal vendetta, we should recognize that this is a part of the continuing struggle between good and evil. God will totally defeat the unrighteous and wicked.

It may be that modern thinkers would not so neatly classify all of humanity as either wicked or righteous, but God does. The Psalms speak to this issue rather frequently. For the psalmist, there was no "warm middle ground." Either a man is wicked (because he rejects God's sovereign rule in his life) or he is righteous. Psalm 14:1 is a familiar passage to those of us who have heard a lot of preaching and teaching. A lesson on Christian evidences sooner or later includes the scripture, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" But this psalm is really a contrast between the wicked and the righteous. The righteous are people who have trusted the Lord and seek Him and His will (Psalm 24:5-6). The Psalms define the wicked as those who are "practical atheists." God is not in their hearts. A man may actually profess academic knowledge of God, but if his life ignores the Creator, he is just as wicked as the real atheist. If we disobey God, and mistreat those made in His image, we are corrupt, and therefore do corrupt, abominable things (Psalm 14:1).

Lest we become smug and spiritually proud, let's read the Psalms. We might just see more of ourselves in this mirror than we would like. And we might just be surprised at who God calls "wicked."

(See further Psalm 14, 58.)

# The Great Shepherd Psalm

(Psalm 23)

by Ron Edwards

The few verses which compose this psalm, if erased, would leave but a tiny blank in the pages of our bible. However, if the sentiments expressed were deleted from life they would leave an unfillable hole in the human heart. The hungry heart would find no food; the lost heart, no direction; and the dying heart, no hope. Fortunately, it has not been deleted and for every man who knows the Lord as Shepherd, he shall not lack in any way. Let us trace the psalm's thesis, "the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," through the context's threefold emphasis.

**1. My Shepherd gives. I shall not lack provision.** Provision saturates this psalm: "lush pastures," "quiet waters," an "overflowing cup," etc. These, of course, are symbols of the shepherd giving the sheep the best, and doing so abundantly. But have we ever considered what it costs the shepherd to make such lavish provision? Do green pastures simply materialize on the barren hills of Palestine? No, these provisions are the product of tremendous labor. The shepherd must clear rocks, remove underbrush, prepare the soil, and irrigate the fields. If this cannot be done, then he makes long treks to survey the rugged terrain and find pasturage. Hence, the shepherd's gifts come only after tremendous personal sacrifice. Without his sacrifice there would be no gifts. Thus, without the shepherd there would be no provision.

So, is the sheep's satisfaction found ultimately in the provisions or in the provider? Is their contentment rooted in the gifts or the giver? The giver, of course! May we learn that our Shepherd provided "all spiritual blessings" through tremendous sacrifice (John 10:11). Further, may we realize that if the Lord is our Shepherd, then the provisions are simply welcomed accessories. We should seek the Giving Shepherd for Himself and we will never lack provision (Matthew 6:25–34).

**2. My Shepherd guides. I shall not lack direction.** The shepherd is pictured twice in the text as leading. This is necessary because "no other class of livestock requires more careful handling, more detailed direction, than do sheep" (Keller, p. 71). If left to themselves, they will graze pastures barren and will wander aimlessly, becoming "fast-food" for hungry predators. Man is no different: "All we like sheep have gone astray" (Isaiah 53:6). There are paths that seem right to us, but they always lead to death (Proverbs 14:12). We must trust the Shepherd because He alone knows the right paths. He has been everywhere I am going, even through death, and returned (Hebrews 13:20). His greatest desire is to restore men to the right path, a path that in the end leads to a "crown of glory" (1 Peter 5:4). I guess that is why my Shepherd is nicknamed "The Way" (John 14:6)!

**3. My Shepherd guards. I shall not lack protection.** Sometimes right paths lead through the "valley of the shadow of death." When death looms on the horizon, David immediately drops the third person "He" for the more intimate second person singular "Thou." David is no longer talking about the Shepherd, he is talking to the Shepherd. Also notice: in death's presence the shepherd is no longer ahead leading, He is alongside escorting ("Thou art with me"). The sheep, when escorted by an omnipotent shepherd who is more fearless and ferocious than all foes combined, "fear no evil." They know that the only way danger can approach them is over the shepherd's dead body! We too, can have fearless confidence in the leading of our Shepherd, even when He leads through death's shadowy vale. It surely is reassuring to know that the shadow of a dog cannot bite, the shadow of a sword cannot kill, and with Him the shadow of death cannot harm. Therefore, if He leads us to the tomb, we should go ahead and follow Him in. All that is there is an empty shroud and a folded napkin (John 20:6–7). Death is nothing more than a toothless shadow when we are in the presence of the Guarding Shepherd!

Tragically, while all that has been said about the Shepherd is true, if He is not "my" Shepherd then I shall always lack. That is why He is not called "a" Shepherd, nor "the" Shepherd, but rather "my" Shepherd. It is so unfortunate that there are many who know the psalmist, many more who can quote the psalm, but few that know the Shepherd personally. Do you know Him? If so, you lack nothing. If not, you have nothing.

# Psalms of Supreme Praise

(Psalms 100, 103)

by Mike Schmidt

You've probably heard the story (perhaps apocryphal, perhaps not) of the fellow who visited a church, and during the sermon kept saying "Praise the Lord!" whenever a particularly good point was made. Afterwards, a stern brother approached and rebuked him, saying, "Look we don't praise the Lord around here!"

Or, have you ever read the account of David dancing when the ark was brought into Jerusalem, and instinctively had the same reaction as Michal? (See 2 Samuel 6.)

Psalms 95–100 (and perhaps 103) comprise a small group of worship psalms. They seem to have been specifically written to be used in the public worship at the Temple. And what splendid songs they are! They offer praise to the might, glory, justice and mercy of God—Ruler of the nations and Protector of Israel.

Psalms 100 and Psalm 103 both offer supreme praise to Jehovah, but from different perspectives. Psalm 100, the shortest of these worship songs, is an urgent call for all the nations of the earth to praise Jehovah. They ought to come before Him with the joyful noise of thanksgiving. This certainly is a stark contrast to many psalms in which judgment is passed on the nations, but it illustrates clearly that God "does not desire that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

Psalm 100 is truly universal in its appeal to man—all people belong to Jehovah as the "sheep of His pasture." He guides and feeds all of them (Matthew 5:45). Rather than bless the name of vain idols, they ought to enter His courts with praise and thanksgiving.

In this regard, notice especially that verse 5 extols God's "lovingkindness" (KJV). Lovingkindness has particular reference to the mercy and goodness of God in keeping His covenants. He indeed has kept His promise to bless all nations through Abraham's seed (Genesis 12:1–3), and "in truth I perceive that God shows no partiality; but in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (Acts 10:34, NKJV).

In contrast to the formal style and appeal for all men to worship found in Psalm 100, the 103rd Psalm is personal and emotional. Written by David, it is one of the most beautiful in all the book.

David's heart was moved as he contemplated God and he shouts, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His Holy Name!" If your soul has never been stirred by meditation to utter these words, your knowledge of God, and His working in your life are truly impoverished. Maybe you need to spend more time meditating upon God's word and His gifts to you, and less time complaining, arguing with others about their faults, or grasping after material satisfaction.

In this psalm, four great blessings are enumerated for you to consider: God forgives all our iniquities, redeems our life from ruin, crowns us with mercy and lovingkindness, and satisfies our desires with good things as we go through life. What more do you want? As James says, "every good and perfect gift is from above" (James 1:17).

The picture often painted in sermons of a spiteful God who is anxious to destroy men for the slightest error is a lie! Be sure that God will judge you (verse 18), but He is predisposed to mercy, not condemnation (2 Peter 3:9).

As we close, let's return to where we began. Why do we find it difficult or unnatural to praise God? Of all the things wrong with churches and individuals today, lack of enthusiastic, sincere praise may be the most telling. It affronts God and damages us spiritually in so many ways. (Within itself, it is a manifest symptom of spiritual weakness or deadness.) I am reminded of the opening words of Isaiah's prophecy: "the ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, 'My people do not consider'" (Isaiah 1:3). Even your dog knows who takes care of him, and licks you for it—what about you? Do you consider who takes care of you?

Fall on your knees and say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His Holy Name!"



# The Psalm of the Godly Man

## (Psalm 1)

by Jim Ward

The first Psalm is direct, vivid and powerful. In transparent but compelling imagery, the psalmist confronts and entices us with the call to godliness. We can do nothing wiser than to take up his challenges.

### The challenge of the two ways

We can be “blessed” (verse 1) or we can “perish” (verse 6); we can seek the wisdom of sinners (1) or we can “delight ... in the law of the Lord” (2). We can be fruitful (3) or barren (4). Clearly, there are only two roads to travel and only two possible destinations. And just as clearly, we cannot travel wrong and end up right. Jesus confirmed this principle when He spoke of only two ways, a narrow one leading to life and a broad one leading to destruction (Matthew 7:13–14).

It takes conviction, integrity and courage to stand on the truth that anyone not committed to good is evil. Too many of us waffle on this, seeking some imagined third way out when we are spiritually or morally indecisive. Which brings us to an even more fundamental challenge in this psalm.

### The challenge to develop character

Just as the sage in Proverbs insists that wisdom comes only at the cost of character, the psalmist here says the same of godliness. It is free for all who want it, yet it is as costly as denying self. As is usual in Scripture, the mind is treated as the key to man: “as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7a). Jesus stated the principle in Matthew 12:35: “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.” If a man would enjoy blessedness, then, he must “delight ... in the law of the Lord,” and meditate on it “day and night.” As Derek Kidner puts it, “The psalm is content to develop this one theme, implying that whatever really shapes a man’s thinking shapes his life.” So here is God’s methodology: change the heart and change the man.

“Meditates” has an interesting derivation. It means to “moan, hum, utter, speak, muse.” The New King James Version has a note that gives “ponders by talking to himself.” Here is a man so wrapped up in the word of God that he utters it under his breath, repeating a phrase here and a verse there, saying it low but aloud to catch the sound and sense of it. Obviously, such interest comes only from delight; it cannot be coerced! Trading on the imagery of Jesus in Matthew 4:4, C. H. Spurgeon put it, “‘The law of the Lord’ is the daily bread of the true believer.”

Not so the scoffer; he scorns the law of God, but is doomed to frustration and death. He ridicules God’s word, but he cannot destroy it. He disobeys it, but he cannot escape it. He will not “stand in the judgment” (verse 5). Like the man of Amos 5:19, he flees a lion, only to be taken by a bear; he takes refuge in his house only to be bitten by a serpent. There is no escaping God. Jonah learned that lesson well.

### The challenge to trust God for success

One who resists the way of sinners and rejoices in the will of God will be like a fruitful tree. Perhaps Joshua 1:8 is the best commentary on our text: “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.” Do we need to be reminded that success for the godly is not measured by wealth or station?

There is no greater challenge or sweeter privilege than to walk with God, as did Enoch. Oh, to be righteous and have God “know” our way, to be in His loving fellowship. Oh, to be blessed—and a blessing!

# God the Father and God the Son Psalm

## (Psalm 2)

by Robert F. Turner

The second Psalm is Messianic, as attested by several passages in the New Testament. When the rulers forbade the preaching of Christ, Jerusalem brethren quoted Psalm 2: “Why did the heathen rage ...” (Acts 4:25f). This passage also assigns David as the author of the psalm. Paul connects Christ with this psalm in Acts 13:33; and the Hebrew writer cites it with reference to Christ’s superiority to angels (1:5), and in showing that Christ was a priest after the order of Melchizedek (5:5–6). Delitzsch says, “In the New Testament this Psalm is cited more frequently than any other.”

While Psalm 1 contrasts the righteous and wicked individuals, Psalm 2 pits wicked nations against God’s kingdom, both physical and spiritual. The psalm is easily subdivided on the basis of various speakers. First, the poet asks why the nations rage against Jehovah (verse 1–2, ASV); second, he quotes their desire to escape the restrictions of both Jehovah and his anointed (verse 3); then, third, pictures God as deriding such foolish plots (verse 4–5); and saying, fourth, “I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion” (verse 6). In the physical and immediate sense this could refer to David reigning over Israel; but as a Messianic prophecy certainly refers to Christ (the “Anointed”) reigning over His spiritual kingdom.

Then, fifth, the Son Himself tells of the decree: “Jehovah said unto me, ‘Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee;’ ” adding further promises that the Son will rule over nations, with power to destroy His enemies. The psalm closes, sixth, with the poet exhorting the kings and judges of the earth to “Serve Jehovah with fear,” and “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish in the way” (see Psalm 110.)

Psalm 2 presents the Anointed one as Jehovah’s Son; and has God saying, “This day have I begotten thee.” Yet, John identifies Jesus as “the Word” which was “In the beginning ... [and] was God” (1 John 1:1; John 1:1); Jesus spoke to the Father of “the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (John 17:5); and Paul says that Christ, prior to His incarnation, “thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (Philippians 2:6). How can a begotten son be co-eternal with the Father? For the answer, we must study the inspired usage of this terminology.

Physical Israel was called God’s “son” and “firstborn” (Exodus 4:22), as was Ephraim (Jeremiah 31:9). In this usage, these terms implied “favored” or “exalted” one, with no reference to genetics. Bible readers know that David’s “seed” would be called God’s son, and His “everlasting kingdom” (2 Samuel 7:11f) found its fulfillment in the spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:29–30). He was indeed a “seed of David according to the flesh” but “declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:3–4).

There is a relation between the manner of Mary’s conception (Holy Spirit, and power of the Most High) and the birth of Jesus: “so that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God” (Luke 1:32–35, ASV, footnote). But this was the beginning of His incarnation (being clothed with flesh), certainly not His beginning as deity. We have already seen that He had glory with God prior to creation, and came to earth as “Emmanuel ... God with us” (Matthew 1:23). When Paul quotes Psalm 2—“this day have I begotten thee”—and relates “this day” to the resurrection (Acts 13:33), we may conclude he refers to the “glorification,” “exaltation,” and “favored status” that accompanied Christ’s fulfillment of His purpose in the scheme of redemption. Christ forgave sins “while on earth” (Mark 2:5–12), and in many other ways proved Himself “God with us.” Following His resurrection, the ultimate proof, He became King, High Priest, and our Advocate with the Father, and returned to His place at God’s right hand in heaven (John 17:5).

The one God of the Bible is triune in nature, each having distinct roles and personality traits, yet being one in purpose. David was guided by God the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:34; Mark 12:36), to pen Psalm 2 (Acts 4:25) regarding God the Father and God the Son. It is foolish to think man can fathom and “explain” deity. We must strive to understand the terminology of the Scriptures, accept that which is revealed therein, and prepare for the day when God will receive the faithful and make known all additional things He wishes them to know.

# The Unity Psalm

(Psalm 133)

by Barry Hudson

**H**ave you ever been on vacation and visited a church where unity was a deep-rooted reality? This harmony was clearly seen by the sincere concern, enthusiasm and happiness among them. Or was the church so thick with tension that you could cut it with a knife? Unity among Christians is sometimes like two cold porcupines huddling together; they *need* each other but they *needle* each other!

Psalm 133 gives us the positive side of unity. It is a song of ascents which means that as the pilgrims ascended Mount Zion they would joyously sing this psalm together. One of the reasons God chose one place to worship was to preserve the unity of the nation. Jeroboam's sin of calf worship broke the unity such worship in Jerusalem preserved.

In verse 1, David says that unity is good and pleasant. The Hebrew word for pleasant is variously used for the harmony of music, for a field clothed with corn and for the sweetness of honey. Unity is as sweet as honey or as harmonious as a well-sung song. David had seen enough disunity in his time so that when the nation was united together, how glorious that was! Some people delight in conflict, but how we need to develop a heart which finds delight in unity.

In verses 2–3, David gives two illustrations to describe the blessedness in such unity. First, he refers to the precious oil. This holy oil consisted of myrrh, cinnamon, sweet cane and cassia. When the high priest Aaron would come, you could smell this sweet fragrance. It was not offensive to anyone. That is the way our fellowship with God's people is supposed to be. When Christians dwell together in unity, what a sweet fragrance that is!

Notice also that this oil was poured on the head, ran down his beard and all the way down to the hem of the garment. This tells us of the completeness of this anointing. So our unity should be—thorough, not respecting persons of prominence or power, but loving all who are Christians, no matter what their station in life may be.

The second illustration of the pleasantness of unity is the perpetual dew. Two things are necessary for the formation of dew: moisture and cold. Since Palestine is near the Mediterranean Sea, there is always a large percentage of water vapor in the air. Mount Hermon, that great snow-capped peak to the north, provides the cold. After sunset, with the cold from Hermon, the moisture is condensed into dew. If it were not for the dew in the summer, all vegetation would perish. In northern Israel, the dews are so heavy that the plants and trees are literally soaked with water at night. So the giant mountain is constantly gathering and sending off clouds which float down to Zion to bring dew to the land.

David may be saying that when the Israelite brethren in the north unite with the brethren in the south in Jerusalem to worship God together, it's like this natural weather process. It's what kept the Israelites spiritually nourished as they encouraged one another in the things of God.

And just as the heavy dews of Palestine refresh and invigorate plant life, likewise, the blessing of unity descends on the local church where godly virtues can thrive and flourish in the lives of God's people. Discord disrupts, destroys and kills all the finer virtues that could easily grow under the blessing of true unity.

When Christians dwell together in unity, God can bless that relationship because they have not erected barriers that prevent those blessings. Thus, our "life" (verse 3d), to some degree, depends on true unity.

Real unity. You don't work it up. It doesn't come with cheerleader enthusiasm. You can't make it come, but when all the conditions are just right, unity just comes. All these years we've been trying to produce or seek unity but unity isn't something you can acquire by seeking. It comes by being the right kind of people—Christians—and then it's just a by-product of the character we've established in our lives with other Christians of a like faith.

Have Christians today achieved this Biblical ideal of unity? Let each of us ask ourselves, "Does my relationship with other Christians provide the fragrance of ointment and the refreshing, life-sustaining dew? If not, what needs to change?"

