

Psalms

A Study Book by

David A. DeWitt

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The cover photo is of a painting of "King David Playing the Harp" by Gerrit van Honthorst (1590-1656). It is displayed at the Central Museum, Utrecht, Holland.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Psalms 1 – 2	6
Questions for Discussion	6
Psalms 3 – 12	7
Questions for Discussion	9
Psalms 13 – 23	10
Questions for Discussion	13
Psalms 24 – 35	13
Questions for Discussion	16
Psalms 36 – 47	16
Questions for Discussion	20
Psalms 48 – 58	20
Questions for Discussion	23
Psalms 59 – 71	23
Questions for Discussion	26
Psalms 72 – 83	27
Questions for Discussion	30
Psalms 84 – 95	30
Questions for Discussion	33
Psalms 96 – 107	33
Questions for Discussion	37
Psalms 108 – 118	37
Questions for Discussion	40
Psalms 119 – 132	40
Questions for Discussion	43
Psalms 133 – 143	43
Questions for Discussion	46
Psalms 144 – 150	46
Questions for Discussion	48

Introduction

The Structure of the Book

There are five collections included in Psalms: Book I is Psalms 1–41, Book II is Psalms 42–72, Book III is Psalms 73–89, Book IV is Psalms 90–106, Book V is Psalms 107–150.

Each book concludes with its own doxology, and Psalm 150 is a doxology to the whole collection. This five-book form comes from the Dead Sea Scrolls and is only the final form of the Psalm. The Psalms were gradually collected over about a thousand years, from Moses (mid-1400s BC) to Ezra (mid-400s BC), although most of them were written by and around the time of David (1000 BC). This final form shows the work of one single collector. Most likely it was Ezra, since he probably finalized much of the form of the Old Testament (Nehemiah 8:1-8).

Authorship of the Psalms

Of the 150 Psalms, 100 of them have designated authors. They are:

David	73	37 in Book 1; 18 in Book 2; 1 in Book 3; 2 in Book 4; 15 in Book 5
Asaph	12	Psalms 50 and 73-83
Sons of Korah	10	Psalms 42, 44-49, 84, 85, 87
Solomon	2	Psalms 72,127
Ethan	1	Psalm 89
Herman	1	Psalm 88
Moses	1	Psalm 90

Some of the 50 undesignated Psalms were clearly written by David (for example, Acts 4:25 says David wrote Psalm 2). So we can safely say that David wrote at least half of the Psalms. David, being a musician and interested in music, had the Psalms put to music for the national *Choir Director* (mentioned 55 times). Determining what the music and meter sounded like is an exercise in speculation, so we won't go there. We do know that the Psalms were often sung accompanied by musical instruments. Cymbals, timbrels, wind and stringed instruments of various types are mentioned.

When and where the choir sang is also not clear. The choir is connected with the house of God, but the Temple was not in existence at David's time. David housed the Ark of the Covenant in a tent in Jerusalem near his own palace (2 Samuel 7:2). [The Ark was in Shiloh for 400 years, lost to the Philistines, returned to Kiriath-jearim, then put in the house of Abinadab until it was brought to Jerusalem by David (1 Samuel 7:1ff).] This *tent* near David's house in Zion is probably what is meant by the house of God (2 Samuel 7:6). The choir probably sang the Psalms there, and for the seven holidays designated by the Mosaic Law (see 1 Chronicles 6:31-32; 13:8; 15:3-28; 16:4-43; 23:1-5; 25; 2 Samuel 6:5).

The Psalms are a collection of songs not named in the Old Testament. The Jews referred to it as "The Book of Praises," while the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament done in 250 BC) called it "The Book of Psalms." The Greek word means "songs sung to the accompaniment of stringed instruments."

Fourteen Psalms Have Historical Notations

- Psalm 3 seems to be connected with 2 Samuel 15–18, when David fled from Absalom.
- Psalm 7 may be related to 1 Samuel 23:24–29, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite.
- Psalm 18 is almost identical to 2 Samuel 22, the day God delivered David from his enemies.
- Psalm 30, with 1 Chronicles 21:1–22:1, may be written by David for the dedication of the Temple.
- Psalm 34 is with 1 Samuel 21:10–22:2, when David pretended madness before Abimelech.
- Psalm 51 is based on the incident of David's sin over Bathsheba, recorded in 2 Samuel 11–12.
- Psalm 52 is with 1 Samuel 22:9, when Doeg the Edomite warned Saul about David.
- Psalm 54 is with 1 Samuel 23:15-23, when the Ziphites warned David about Saul.
- Psalm 56 is connected with 1 Samuel 21:10-15, when the Philistines captured David in Gath.
- Psalm 57 may be related to the incident at Adullam (1 Samuel 22:1-2) or at En Gedi (1 Samuel 24)

Psalm 59 is connected with 1 Samuel 19:11, when Saul tried to kill David.
 Psalm 60 is from 2 Samuel 8:3-13, David's battle with Mesopotamia and Syria.
 Psalm 63 may be related to 2 Samuel 15:23, when David was in the wilderness of Judea.
 Psalm 142 may be from 1 Samuel 22:1 or 24:3, another passage that reports David being in a cave.

Different Numbering of Some Psalms

The numbering of the Psalms in the Greek Septuagint (LXX) text is a little different from the Hebrew text. This could be important when using Roman Catholic commentaries. The list on the right shows the differences.

MT	LXX
Psalms 1-8	Psalms 1-8
9-10	9
11-113	10-112
114-115	113
116:1-9	114
116:10-19	115
117-146	116-145
147:1-11	146
147:12-20	147
148-150	148-150

Poetic Parallelism in the Psalms

Hebrew poets do not use rhyme as we often do. Instead, the Hebrew poet states an idea in the first line, and then reinforces it by various means in the succeeding line or lines. Parallelism includes:

- Synonymous parallelism, where the next lines repeat the idea of the first (3:1).
- Antithetic parallelism, where the second line is the opposite of the first (1:6).
- Synthetic parallelism, where the succeeding lines add to or develop the first (1:1-2).
- Emblematic parallelism, where the next lines elevate the thought of the first (42:1).

Personal, Emotional, and Individual

In his commentary on Psalms ("Bible Knowledge Commentary"), Ron Allen said:

Of all the books in the Old Testament the Book of Psalms most vividly represents the faith of individuals in the Lord. The Psalms are the inspired responses of human hearts to God's revelation of Himself in law, history, and prophecy.

The Psalms are, in a sense, the opposite of Proverbs. Proverbs begin with the fear of God and **look down** at life here on earth, concluding how to live wisely. Psalms begin with the situation of the author here on earth and **look up** toward God, concluding something about the character of God.

The Psalms were written while Israel was under the Mosaic Law. But the Law is corporate, the Psalms are individual. The Law is logical, the Psalms are emotional. The Law is about commands, statutes, and ordinances, the Psalms are about facts, faith, and feelings. The Law is about obeying God, the Psalms are about experiencing God. The Psalms are poetic, not judicial, real not mystical, personal not societal, and coming from the heart and soul of a believer seeking God. The Law is from God to man, the Psalms are from man to God.

Thoughts and Applications

Psalms are emotional poetry. Most of the judges and the kings were, what we might call, goal-oriented. Even Christ and the apostles worked from an objective. Jesus came to reveal the nature of the Kingdom of God and pay for our sins. The apostles had a mission, to make disciples of all nations. As we read about Peter and Paul, they seem to be driven by an objective. If we study the prophets of Scripture, they are not so much goal-oriented as obedience-oriented. They are given a revelation from God, and they are determined to write it down, or declare it to the people, or the churches, or whatever God directed them to do with it.

But the psalmists are different. The psalmist is not particularly goal-oriented or obedience-oriented. (Of course, all biblical authors have some goal and are obedient to God, but I'm talking about the structure or their writing.) The psalmists are experiencing something about life with no goal or objective except to share their struggle and how it led them to a deeper understanding of God—His heart, His works, His attributes, His will. The psalmist brings us into his life situation on an emotional level. As we feel what he feels, we join with him in finding an answer in the character of God. It's more about joining his experience and learning from the experience than it is about accomplishing any goal or objective. His experience is emotional, though not illogical. He invites us with him into his feelings, from the way things actually are, to the God who is actually there.

Psalm 1 — What the Blessed Man Does

Theme: The blessed man (subject) delights in the law of the Lord (complement). [The Hebrew for *blessed* is plural and means, *Oh, how very happy!* (“Ryrie Study Bible,” p. 832.)]

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 2

Structure: The major division is between verses 3 and 4. In verses 1-3, the blessed man knows enough not to walk with the wicked sinners and scoffers because he delights in the Mosaic Law. The result is, he becomes metaphorically like a fruitful, strong, well-watered tree. In verses 4-5, the wicked are metaphorically like chaff because they will not stand, in the sense of withstand, the judgment of God. *The assembly of the righteous* may refer to a heavenly assembly. Verse 6 speaks of both men in the context of certain judgment.

Thoughts and Applications: This Psalm tells us that some people are like a tree, some like chaff. The ones who live like trees are rooted in the Word of God, and they avoid the chaff.

1:2 *But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and*

Psalm 2 — The Lord’s Anointed King

Theme: The Lord’s *Anointed* (subject) rules over the nations (complement).

Author: David (Acts 4:25)

Historical Setting: David’s thoughts about the Lord’s *Anointed*, possibly when he became king in Zion/Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:1-9).

The other royal Psalms are 18, 20–21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, and 144.

Key Passage: verse 7

Structure: The major division is between verses 3 and 4. Verses 1-3 tell us that the *גוֹיִם* (*Goyim*), nations or Gentiles or unbelievers, are in an uproar. But why would they care about a king in Israel? Because if Israel’s God is the only God, then Israel’s king is the only king. The *rulers take counsel together* against His *Anointed One* (מָשִׁיחַ, *Messiah*, which in Greek is *χριστός*, *Christ*). *Today I have begotten You* is a metaphor for God’s decree to install His king in Jerusalem. The New Testament also uses this phrase in reference to Christ’s resurrection (Acts 13:33-34; Romans 1:4; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5). Like many prophetic passages (Isaiah 14 and Daniel 11), this begins with a historical figure (the coronation of David) and ends with a future person (Jesus Christ reigning during the Millennial Kingdom). The final future outcome is what the nations dread. They will all *worship the Lord with reverence*.

Thoughts and Applications: This Psalm tells us that most unbelievers, most of today’s secular, worldly, entertainers, educators, journalists, politicians, social and religious leaders will hate Jesus Christ and His followers. They will be in an *uproar*, devise *vain* things and *counsel together* against the Lord’s anointed (literally the Messiah or Christ). David asked: “Why do they do that?” And the answer is because Christ is the only God, and they will all be forced one day to *worship the Lord with reverence* (verse 11).

2:7 *“I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD:
He said to Me, ‘You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.*

Questions for Discussion

True or False?

1. The Psalms were written over a thousand years, and gathered together in five books.
2. The Psalms, as we have them, are generally in chronological order.
3. Psalms are different from Proverbs, in that Psalms begin with a human situation on earth.
4. Psalms are personal, individual, emotional, and experiential, yet logical and reasonable.
5. The Psalms assume the people are living under the Mosaic Law.
6. In Psalm 1, the word for *Anointed* is “Messiah” or “Christ.”
7. *The assembly of the righteous* in Psalm 1:5 refers to the Temple, not synagogues.
8. In Psalm 2:7, the phrase *today I have begotten You* is about God the Son coming from God the Father and, therefore, being of the same nature as God.

Answers: (1) True. (2) False (For example, Psalm 90 is the oldest.) (3) True (The Psalms begin with man and end with God. Proverbs begin with the fear of God and move toward wisdom on earth.) (4) True. (5) True. (6) True. (7) False (The context is the assembly of the righteous standing before God in judgment.) (8) False (This is a metaphor about David being crowned as king.)

Psalm 3 — When “They” Say There Is No Deliverance

Theme: When there seems to be no deliverance from the Lord (subject), depend upon the Lord (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: when David fled from his son Absalom

Key Passage: verses 2-3

Structure: The main division comes early, between verses 2 and 3. The superscription through verse 2 tells us of David’s situation.

He has been forced out of his palace by his son and a rebelling army. Many are calling his situation hopeless. Then the pivot—*But You, O Lord*. The *Selah* (a purposeful pause, which may also have been a musical interlude) after verse 2 is to emphasize, and anticipate, the answer of verse 3. The answer section divides into three statements: verses 3-4, 5-6, and 7-8.

Thoughts and Applications: We can notice a clear pattern in how David wrote. Very often he pictured his situation as hopeless, desperate, and on the edge of death or despair, then he found his hope in God. That is often our case in life. God seems to bring us to the edge, then He lets us hang over the edge before He catches us.

3:2 *Many are saying of my soul,
“There is no deliverance for him in God.” Selah.*
3:3 *But You, O LORD, are a shield about me,
My glory, and the One who lifts my head.*

Psalm 4 — The Man God Has Set Apart

Theme: Sons of men (subject) know that God has set apart the godly man for Himself (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: probably the same as Psalm 3, when David fled from Absalom his son

Key Passage: verse 3

Structure: Verse 1 is a call to God. Verses 2-5 are addressed to the people who believe David is doomed by Absalom’s rebellion.

The Psalm’s major division is before 6-8, where David trusts God alone. Verse 2 points out the world’s technique: to *love what is worthless and aim at deception*. But that will not destroy the man God has set apart for Himself (verse 3). That’s the main point of the Psalm. The world does not understand that God has set apart certain people for Himself. Next, David gave worldly people four statements of advice (in verses 4-5): *Tremble, Meditate, sacrifice* righteously, and *trust in the Lord*. The main phrase in the last section is in verse 7: *You have put gladness in my heart*. That’s what God does for the man He *has set apart*. [“The *heart* was considered the center of the immaterial aspects of life, such as emotions, thoughts, motivations, courage” (“Ryrie Study Bible,” p. 834)].

Thoughts and Applications: Psalm 4 makes a significant point about the selectivity of God. Verse 3 says: *the Lord has set apart the godly man for Himself*. It sounds something like Isaiah 66:2—*But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit and who trembles at My word*.

4:3 *But know that the LORD has set apart the godly
man for Himself;
The LORD hears when I call to Him.*

Psalm 5 — The Character of God and Men

Theme: The character of God (subject) reveals the evil of men (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown, possibly also during Absalom’s rebellion

Key Passage: verse 4

Structure: In verses 1-3, David asked God to give attention to his morning prayer. Verses 4-6 are the defining paragraph, where David gave seven aspects of the moral character of God. In verses 7-8, David responded by worshiping God and being led by God. In the last paragraph, verses 9-12, David contrasted the wicked and the righteous and concluded that God blesses the righteous and surrounds *him with favor as with a shield*.

Thoughts and Applications: Psalm 5 tells us a lot about the character of God by what God hates. Notice the list (of seven things) includes boasting. God does not want us to speak about how good we are, or about our accomplishments. The list also includes bloodshed. This is not military bloodshed for a just cause. On certain occasions, God ordered that for Israel. Nor is it capital punishment. God ordered that, too (Genesis 9). It is about an individual taking the life of another individual, even to carry out justice.

5:4 *For You are not a God who takes
pleasure in wickedness;
No evil dwells with You.*

Psalm 6 — Prayer In the Midst of Dismay

Theme: The repentant sinner (subject) should appeal to the grace of God (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 2

6:2 *Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am pining away;
Heal me, O LORD, for my bones are dismayed.*

Structure: Psalm 6 has only one division, between verses 7 and 8. The first part appeals to God, the second part addresses evildoers.

Thoughts and Applications: This is the first of seven penitential or confession Psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143). In these Psalms, the author is confessing sin and begging for God's forgiveness. Notice that David asked for the grace of God, but unlike the previous Psalms, he did not declare that he would receive it because God never promised grace to the individual in the Old Testament. His appeal was based upon the God's lovingkindness and that *in Sheol, who will give You thanks?* The idea seems to be that David could not praise God as a flesh-and-blood man if he was dead. Psalms 6 and 7 are interesting in that they come from the opposite spiritual position. Psalm 6 is one of several confession Psalms, where the author is guilty, looking for forgiveness.

Psalm 7 — Vindication for the Righteous

Theme: The innocent (subject) need to be vindicated by God (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: This was most likely during the time David was hunted by Saul's men (1 Samuel 22:8; 24:9; 26:19). *Cush the Benjamite* is not mentioned elsewhere but was probably one of Saul's men (Saul also being a Benjamite—1 Samuel 9:21).

Key Passage: verse 10

Structure: This is called a *Shiggaion*, a strange word, which some say means a poem of intense feeling or one to be sung to emotionally stimulating music. In verses 1-2, David stated his dependence upon God for deliverance. In verses 3-5, David declared his innocence. In verses 6-17, David was assured of God's vindication. The last verse, stands apart from the rest in some of David's Psalms. I have not listed these benedictions as a separate paragraph.

Thoughts and Applications: This Psalm is where the author is innocent, looking for vindication. It seems odd because we are sinners, and in every situation, we do something wrong. Yet David made his appeal to God based on the fact that he was innocent of the specific things he was being accused of.

*7:10 My shield is with God,
Who saves the upright in heart.*

Psalm 8 — The Majesty of God

Theme: God's majestic creation (subject) is ruled over by man (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown. A *Gittith* (in the prefix) is probably a type of music from Gath.

Key Passage: verse 6

Structure: The Psalm has two main paragraphs bracketed by the phrase *O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth*, at the beginning (verse 1) and the end (verse 8). The main division is between verses 4 and 5. First, David marveled over God's creation, including man (verses 1-4). Then he told us that man has been given a certain majesty of his own from God to rule over God's creation (verses 5-9). Verse 9 is the closing benediction.

*8:6 You make him to rule over the works
of Your hands;
You have put all things under his*

Psalm 9 — A Song of Thanksgiving for Vindication

Theme: God as a judge (subject) will vindicate His people (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown. *Muth-labben* (in the prefix) means *death of (or for) the son*, but we don't know the significance of that.

Key Passage: verses 7-10. We could say verse 8 alone is the key verse but these 4 are tied together.

Structure: Verses 1-6 speak of what God has done. Verses 7-10 talk about what God will do. Verses 11-18 tell us about how God responds to various groups. Verses 19-20 call for God to judge the (unbelieving) nations.

Thoughts and Applications: Psalms 9 and 10 were clearly meant to be sung together. The Septuagint makes them the same Psalm because together they form an alphabetic acrostic in the Hebrew text. Each alternate verse (for the most part) begins with the next successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. But they are separate Psalms because their themes are different.

*9:7 But the LORD abides forever;
He has established His throne for judgment,
9:8 And He will judge the world in righteousness;
He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity.
9:9 The LORD also will be a stronghold for the oppressed,
A stronghold in times of trouble;
9:10 And those who know Your name will put their trust in You*

Psalm 10 — The Power of the Wicked

Theme: The wicked (subject) operate as if “*There is no God*” (complement).

Author: David (because of the close association to Psalm 9)

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 4

Structure: The first verse stands alone as a question David put to God. *Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?* Then in verses 2-11, he described what the wicked are like, what they are thinking, and who they are oppressing. Finally, in verses 12-18, David came back to where he started and appealed to God to get involved and help those afflicted by the wicked.

Thoughts and Applications: This Psalm is fascinating in that it tells us that the wicked actually are functioning as if there is no God. Romans 1 seems to say that there are no real atheists. But Psalm 10 tells us that there are a lot of people who function as atheists. [A true atheist is a naturalist, a phony atheist just hates God.]

10:4 The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek Him. All his thoughts are, “There is no God.”

Psalm 11 — Fleeing from Danger

Theme: When tempted to flee from danger (subject), cling to the Lord (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: not stated, but probably one of the times Saul was trying to kill David (1 Samuel 18:11; 19:10)

Key Passage: verse 4

Structure: Verses 1-3 discuss the psalmist’s temptation to *flee as a bird* because his *foundations are destroyed*. But in verses 4-7, he turned to God because of three things: (1) *The LORD is in His holy temple*; (2) *the LORD’S throne is in heaven*; and (3) *His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men ... the righteous and the wicked*.

11:4 The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD’S throne is in heaven His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.

Psalm 12 — The Words of Men and the Word of God

Theme: The false words of wicked men (subject) are destroyed by the pure Word of God (complement).

Author: David

Key Passage: verse 6

Structure: In verses 1-5, the words of wicked men made it seem like faithful men had disappeared. The wicked used *falsehood* and *flattering lips*, and they thought, *with our tongue we will prevail*. That is, they don’t even consider telling the truth, they just use facts to “spin” them to say what they want. In verses 6-8, David saw the Word of God as prevailing in the midst of the lies of men.

12:6 The words of the LORD are pure words; As silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times.

Questions for Discussion

True or False?

1. In Psalm 3, David laid down and slept because he was exhausted from fleeing from Absalom.
2. The historical setting of Psalm 4 is probably the same as Psalm 3.
3. In Psalm 5:4-6, the seven things God opposes are: wickedness, evil, boastfulness, iniquity, speaking falsehood, bloodshed, and deceit.
4. In Psalm 6, David declared that he would receive the grace of God.
5. The main difference between Psalm 6 and Psalm 7 is that, in Psalm 6, David saw himself as guilty, and in Psalm 7, he saw himself as innocent.
6. In Psalm 8, we are told God has majesty, but man does not.
7. Psalms 9 and 10 are actually the same Psalm.
8. Psalm 11 tells us that God tests both the righteous and wicked.
9. In Psalm 12, David said that God will preserve His own words.

Answers: (1) False (He slept because he trusted God.) (2) True. (3) True. (4) False (He asked for grace but did not say he would receive it because, although grace was sometimes given to some individuals, grace was not **offered** to the individual in the Old Testament.) (5) True. (6) False (Verse 5 says of man: *You crown him with glory and majesty*.) (7) False (They are meant to be sung together, but they have a very different theme.) (8) True (verse 5). (9) False (David said God will preserve the needy with His words.)

Psalm 13 — How Long O Lord

Theme: Waiting on the Lord (subject) is believing in His lovingkindness (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verses 1-2

Structure: Four times David asked God *How long* it will be before God answers his prayer. It is not actually a question but

a statement of agony and frustration. The main division of the Psalm is between verses 4 and 5, where David's focus went from his suffering to God's lovingkindness. But notice that David never told us that God answered his prayer, only that He is a God of love, salvation, and in the past, He had dealt bountifully with David.

Thoughts and Applications: In this Psalm, David showed us it is okay to complain to God if we are not doubting His faithfulness or lovingkindness or goodness. Actually, God is the One we should complain to. By taking his complaint to God, David was saying God is sovereign, and, therefore, ultimately responsible for our situation. The problem comes when we demand things from God and expect answers. For example, Job complained to God about not understanding his suffering. But the only thing God reprimanded him for was doubting God's sovereignty and trying to understand what God was doing in his life.

13:1 *How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?
How long will You hide Your face from me?*
13:2 *How long shall I take counsel in my soul,
Having sorrow in my heart all the day?
How long will my enemy be exalted over me?*

Psalm 14 — There Is None Who Does Good

Theme: The whole human race (subject) has become corrupt (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 3

Structure: This Psalm is very similar to Psalm 53. Verses 2-3 are

the theme of the Psalm (and are cited in Romans 3:10-12.) David described the human race (*the sons of men*) as fools who say *there is no God, They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good.*

There is no major division. The whole Psalm is a unit, with verse 7 standing apart as a benediction, where David longed for salvation for Israel *when the Lord restores His captive people* from the dispersion, a restoration in what will be the Millennial Kingdom.

14:3 *They have all turned aside, together they
have become corrupt
There is no one who does good, not even one.*

Psalm 15 — Who May Dwell with God

Theme: Abiding with God (subject) requires a walk of righteousness (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verses 1-2

Structure: There is only one division in this Psalm.

Verse 1 asks the question: "Who may dwell with God?" (in two different ways). The rest of the Psalm gives us ten virtues of the one who may dwell with or abide with God.

Thoughts and Applications: In this Psalm, David asked: *O LORD, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill?* The answer is fascinating because it does not mention faith or repentance or sacrifices. Rather, David gave ten virtues (by my count) which qualify someone to *dwell* with God. Faith, repentance, and the blood of Christ get us saved, but it is our moral character that allows us to dwell with God.

15:1 *O LORD, who may abide in Your tent?
Who may dwell on Your holy hill?*
15:2 *He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness,
And speaks truth in his heart.*

Psalm 16 — The Lord Preserves in Life and Death

Theme: Trusting the Lord in life (subject) results in trusting the Lord in death (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown. *Mikhtam* (also in the prefix of Psalms 56-60) comes from a verb meaning "to cover," but what is being covered is uncertain. Some say it is the covering of God. Some say it is covering your mouth, in other words, a Psalm prayed silently.

Key Passage: verse 10

Structure: The Psalm is divided into two paragraphs between verses 8 and 9. Verses 1-8 are about preservation in life, and verses 9-11 are about preservation in death. Verses 1-2 are a general call for God's preservation. Then there are three specific examples of that. In verses 3-4, David delighted in the *majestic* saints of God. In verses 5-6, he acknowledged that his own (earthly) inheritance was beautiful and pleasant. In verses 7-8, he blessed the Lord for his instruction (via

16:10 *For You will not abandon my soul to
Sheol;
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to
undergo decay.*

wisdom). Then in the last half of the Psalm, David stated that, eternally speaking, *My flesh also will dwell securely. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol.* By *Sheol* David meant death.

Thoughts and Applications: The next phrase, *Nor will you allow your Holy one to undergo decay*, is referenced by Peter in Acts 2:25-28, 31, and by Paul in Acts 13:35 as referring to the resurrection of Christ. David seemed to have only his future in mind, whereas God also had in mind the future Messiah.

Psalm 17 — Imminent Danger

Theme: When help from the Lord is urgent (subject), pray for justice (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown. Many Psalms are prayers, but this is one of only five Psalms which are actually called prayers (17, 86, 90, 102, 142).

Key Passage: verses 3-4

Structure: The Psalm is in three paragraphs, but the major division is between verses 12 and 13. In verses 1-5, David called for justice. In verses 6-12, he asked for protection. Then, in verses 13-15, he looked to a glorious future, including resurrection from the dead (verse 17).

*17:3 You have tried my heart;
You have visited me by night;
You have tested me and You find nothing;
I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress.
17:4 As for the deeds of men, by the word of Your lips
I have kept from the paths of the violent.*

Psalm 18 — Victory by God's Deliverance

Theme: An earthly victory (subject) is a deliverance by God (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: David's victory celebration *in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul*

Key Passage: verse 17

Structure: Verses 1-3 express David's love for God. Verses 4-29 discuss the main idea of God's deliverance. Verses 30-50 are about rejoicing in the blessings of God.

Thoughts and Applications: This is the fourth longest Psalm. With many colorful metaphors (like: *Smoke went up out of His nostrils, And fire from His mouth devoured*—verse 8), David declared it was God, not David's army, who caused his victory.

*18:17 He delivered me from my strong enemy,
And from those who hated me, for they were too
mighty for me.*

Psalm 19 — General and Special Revelation from God

Theme: The revelation of God (subject) purifies the soul (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 9

Structure: Verses 1-6 speak of general (or natural) revelation. Verses 7-9 address special (or scriptural) revelation. Verses 10-14 tell us the result of following the revelation of God, best stated in verse 14—one of the great benedictions of the Bible.

*19:9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD are true; they are
righteous altogether.*

Psalm 20 — A Prayer for the People

Theme: The people and the king have one thing in common (subject)—they both must trust in God alone (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 5, but David's confidence (indeed his heart in all the Psalms) is in verse 7.

Structure: Verses 1-6 are David's prayer for the people of Israel. Verses 7-9 are David's confidence in God.

Thoughts and Applications: In this unusual Psalm, David turned his attention to the people of the land and prayed *May He grant you your heart's desire, And fulfill all your counsel!*

*20:7 Some boast in chariots and some in horses,
But we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God.*

Psalm 21 — The Reign of the King

Theme: The king and the messianic king (subject) will not be shaken (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 7

Structure: Verses 1-7 are about the blessings of God on the king. Verses 8-13 are about God destroying the enemies of the king, with verse 13 being one of David's typical majestic benedictions.

Thoughts and Applications: This is ultimately a messianic Psalm, where the language is hyperbolic of David but literally fulfilled by the Messiah.

*21:7 For the king trusts in the LORD,
And through the lovingkindness of the
Most High he will not be shaken.*

Psalm 22 — The Suffering Servant

Theme: Suffering (subject), while waiting on deliverance from God (complement)

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown. Actually, there is no record of anything like this happening to David.

Key Passage: verses 1 and 16-18

Structure: Verses 1-18 express extreme suffering. On all sides, the servant is attacked by evildoers, but his real suffering is expressed by the opening cry: *My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?* Verses 19-31 focus on a call for God's deliverance. David declared confidence in God, and what he would do for God when he was delivered.

Thoughts and Applications: This is one of the most quoted and referenced Psalms. Psalms 22–24 are considered Messianic Psalms because there is no record of this happening to David literally, and some of it describes precisely what happened to Christ literally. Some of the suffering describes a cross crucifixion (*They pierced my hands and my feet*). But some statements are also only true of Christ's crucifixion (*They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots*). Crucifixions were performed by several nations (especially Rome) from the 6th century BC to the 4th century AD. So David's description precedes cross crucifixions by at least 400 years, and Christ's crucifixion by 1000 years. The meaning of any passage (anywhere) is the author's intended meaning. The Bible is unique in that it has two authors—the human author and God. God may have something to say beyond the thoughts that generated the words written by the human author. But that can only be known if some other human author tells us that, or the course of events make that obvious.

*22:1 My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? ...
22:16 For dogs have surrounded me;
A band of evildoers has encompassed me;
They pierced my hands and my feet.
22:17 I can count all my bones.
They look, they stare at me;
22:18 They divide my garments among them,
And for my clothing they cast lots.*

Psalm 23 — The Lord Is My Shepherd

Theme: The Lord is my shepherd (subject), therefore I shall not want (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verses 1-6

Structure: If there is a division, it is between verses 3 and 4, but the poem flows as a unit from beginning to end.

Thoughts and Applications: *This is probably the most beautiful poem ever written by anybody in all of history.* David used metaphors from his whole life. First, of his youth as a shepherd (*green pastures ... quiet waters*), then his life fleeing from Saul (*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies*), and finally, his blessings as king (*You have anointed my head with oil, My cup overflows.*)

*23:1 The LORD is my shepherd,
I shall not want.
23:2 He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside quiet waters.
23:3 He restores my soul;
He guides me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.
23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You have anointed my head with oil;
My cup overflows.
23:6 Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the
days of my life,
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

Questions for Discussion

True or False?

1. In Psalm 13, David concluded that God had already rescued him.
2. Psalm 14 is a lot like the first half of Romans 3.
3. Psalm 15 says the man who will *abide* in God's *tent* does not lend out money at interest.
4. Psalm 15:4 says the man who abides with God *swears to his own hurt*. That means he makes a vow to do things for others, even if it causes harm to himself.
5. In Psalm 16:10, when David said: *For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol*, he meant God will not allow him to go to hell.
6. In Psalm 17:5, when David said: *My steps have held fast to Your paths. My feet have not slipped*, he meant he was not sinning.
7. Psalm 18 teaches that God helps those who help themselves.
8. In Psalm 19, when David said: *The heavens are telling of the glory of God*, he was speaking about the special revelation of God.
9. Psalm 20:5 says, one way or another, God will answer all the prayers of His people.
10. When Psalm 21:2 says, *You have given him his heart's desire*, it's referring to both David and the future Messiah.
11. When David said: *My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?* in Psalm 22:1, he was referring to the suffering of Christ on the cross.
12. The 23rd Psalm says God cares for us in the midst of our suffering.

Answers: (1) False (*He trusts in God's lovingkindness* because God has *dealt bountifully* with him in the past.) (2) True. (3) True (verse 5). (4) True. (5) False (The context is about death, not hell.) (6) False (He was saying he did not commit the specific sin he was being accused of.) (7) False (It teaches that God helps those who cannot help themselves.) (8) False (This is general revelation of God.) (9) False (David wished for that in the context of an obedient people living in the land of Israel.) (10) True. (11) False (We know God had Christ in mind because Jesus quoted this on the cross, but David was referring to his own suffering.) (12) True (verse 5).

Psalm 24 — The Lord Strong and Mighty

Theme: The Lord, the God of David (subject) is strong and mighty (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: not stated, but many believe (from the content) that this is a song David wrote to accompany the entrance of the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6)

Key Passage: verse 8

Structure: There are three paragraphs in this Psalm. Actually, at first reading, they seem so different as to be three separate short Psalms. But the three are connected by the question and answer: *Who is the King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty*. Verses 1-2 tell us that the earth is the Lord's. Verses 3-6 ask: *who may stand in His holy place?* Verses 7-10 declare that *the Lord strong and mighty* is the King of glory.

Thoughts and Applications: The significant thing is that David was king in Jerusalem over all of the 12 tribes of Israel, yet he made it clear that the Lord is the real King. The question: *Who is the King of glory?* is answered four ways. He is: (1) *The Lord strong and mighty*, (2) *The Lord mighty in battle*, (3) *The King of glory*, and (4) *the Lord of hosts*.

*24:8 Who is the King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
The LORD mighty in battle.*

Psalm 25 — Do Not Remember the Sins of My Youth

Theme: Relating to God (subject) depends upon knowing His attributes (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 7, discussed further in verses 10-12

Structure: Verses 1-3 are a statement of trust in, or waiting on, the Lord.

Verses 4-14 tell us that the knowledge of God is based in humility and confession of sin. This is the main body of the Psalm. It tells us who God

is (with attributes of truth, salvation, compassion, lovingkindness, goodness, uprightness, and justice), also what He does (instructs sinners, as well as those who fear Him, and leads the humble). Verses 15-22 have ten personal prayer requests

*25:7 Do not remember the sins of my
youth or my transgressions;
According to Your lovingkindness
remember me,
For Your goodness' sake, O LORD.*

(turn to me, be gracious, bring me out of my distresses, look upon my affliction, forgive all my sins, Look upon my enemies, guard (deliver) my soul, do not let me be ashamed, let integrity ... preserve me, redeem Israel).

Thoughts and Applications: In this Psalm, David brought up the sins of his youth. You'd think that was part of his past and he'd moved on. Either David was thinking about sins he had never confessed, or he remembered those sins and confessed them again. At any rate, it seems that David would say that it is always good to confess sins before God, whenever they come to mind, even if we have confessed them before.

Psalm 26 — I Have Walked in Integrity

Theme: To walk with God (subject) is to walk in integrity (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 11

Structure: Verses 1-7 are a plea for God to vindicate him. Verses 8-12 are a prayer for God to deliver him.

Thoughts and Applications: Psalms 25 and 26 are the opposite moral dilemma. In Psalm 25, David saw himself as a sinner, totally dependent upon the mercy of God. In Psalm 26, David saw himself as innocent and in need of vindication by God. Sometimes our problems are because of our sins, sometimes because of the sins of others. In both cases, we should do as David did and turn to a sovereign God for the answer.

*26:11 But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity;
Redeem me, and be gracious to me.*

Psalm 27 — Confidence in the Goodness of the Lord

Theme: Confidence in God (subject) leads to making requests of God (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 5

Structure: The Psalm is in two paragraphs, but like many of David's Psalms, the last verse is set apart from the rest. Usually, it is a benediction. This time, it is a statement of instruction for the reader to *wait for the Lord*. Verses 1-6 express confidence in God. Verses 7-14 are a sudden change of mood as David turned to the Lord, asking Him not to forsake him.

Thoughts and Applications: If you could ask God for anything, what would it be? In verse 4, David said: *One thing I have asked from the LORD ... That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to meditate in His temple.*

*27:5 For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in
His tabernacle;
In the secret place of His tent He will hide me;
He will lift me up on a rock.*

Psalm 28 — God Is Not Deaf or Silent

Theme: God is not deaf (subject), to those who are heaven bound (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 1

Structure: The Psalm is in two paragraphs, with the last verse (again) being set apart as a benediction request. Verses 1-5 are David's request for God to deal justly with him and his enemies. Verses 6-9 bless the Lord for being David's *strength* and *shield*.

Thoughts and Applications: The Psalm is built upon the idea in verse 1 that if God is deaf and silent, then we have no more hope than *those who go down to the pit*.

*28:1 To You, O LORD, I call;
My rock, do not be deaf to me,
For if You are silent to me,
I will become like those who go
down to the pit.*

Psalm 29 — The Glory of the Lord Thunders

Theme: Thunderstorms, and all of nature (subject), reveal the glory of God (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: This seems to be David's thoughts about God, while observing a thunderstorm.

Key Passage: verse 3

Structure: David seemed to be observing a thunderstorm and reflecting on the glory of God. Seven times David referred to *the voice of the Lord*, apparently referring to the thunder of the storm. Verses 1-2 are a call to worship. Verses 3-11 are the main body of the Psalm, reflecting on the God of thunder, water, and the Flood. Verse 11 is another of David's wonderful benediction endings.

*29:3 The voice of the LORD is upon the waters;
The God of glory thunders,
The LORD is over many waters.*

Thoughts and Applications: In this Psalm, David apparently saw a thunderstorm and thought of the power of God. What is interesting here is that God is pictured as sovereign over the violent, and often destructive, parts of nature (thunder, lightning, flood, stripping the forests bare).

Psalm 30 — You Brought Up My Soul from Sheol

Theme: Forgiveness and restoration (subject) are available for the repentant (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: The prefix says: *A Song at the Dedication of the House*. There is a lot of discussion as to what that means. Some say it is for the dedication of the hill where the Temple would later be built by Solomon (1 Chronicles 21:26; 22:1). Others say it is a song to be sung for future dedications. The occasion, however, is after a specific sin of David, probably numbering the people (1 Chronicles 21:1-13).

Key Passage: verse 3

Structure: There are no divisions of thought in this Psalm.

Thoughts and Applications: The whole song is one of confession of sin and repeated appeals for, and confidence in, God's forgiveness and restoration.

*30:3 O LORD, You have brought up my soul
from Sheol;
You have kept me alive, that I would not
go down to the pit.*

Psalm 31 — The Life of Sorrow

Theme: A life filled with much sorrow (subject) is a basis for trusting in the Lord (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown, but one of the many times of sorrow in David's life

Key Passage: verse 10

Structure: Verses 1-8 address this as a prayer to God. In verses 9-18, David asked God specifically for deliverance from his enemies. Verses 19-24 are a praise for deliverance and a word for other believers to take courage in the Lord when they are suffering.

*31:10 For my life is spent with sorrow
And my years with sighing;
My strength has failed because of my iniquity,
And my body has wasted away.*

Psalm 32 — The Blessing of Forgiven Transgressions

Theme: Seeking God's forgiveness (subject) is better than continuing in sin (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: It is called a *Maskil*, which probably just means a Psalm of contemplation. Most feel this is a follow-up to Psalm 51, where David confessed his sin with Bathsheba.

Key Passage: verse 5

Structure: Verses 1-5 tell us about David's conviction of sin and depressed condition before he acknowledged his sin. Verses 6-11 find David encouraging *everyone who is godly* [to] *pray to You in a time when You may be found*. Again, verse 11 stands apart as a separate exhortation.

*32:5 I acknowledged my sin to You,
And my iniquity I did not hide;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD";
And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.*

Psalm 33 — The Fear of the Word of the Lord

Theme: The fear of the Word of the Lord (subject) should be upon all the nations (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 18

Structure: There are three paragraphs in this Psalm, but the first and last have their own significant message. Verses 1-3 are a call to sing to the Lord with six qualifications (for joy, in praise, giving thanks, with musical instruments, a new song, played skillfully). [Recall the tune "Sing Unto the Lord a New Song."] Verses 4-19 are the message of the Psalm, for all the nations to fear the Lord because of the accomplishments of His Word. Verses 20-22 are a concluding statement of hope.

*33:18 Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who
fear Him,
On those who hope for His lovingkindness,*

Psalm 34 — What It Means to Fear the Lord

Theme: To fear the Lord (subject) is to obey His Word (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: *A Psalm of David when he feigned madness before Abimelech, who drove him away and he departed* (see 1 Samuel 21:10-15).

Key Passage: verse 11

Structure: Verses 1-10 say that the Lord delivers all those who fear Him. Verses 11-22 are instruction from David about what it means to fear the Lord (*keep your tongue from evil, depart from evil, do good, seek peace, be righteous*), for those who desire many good days.

*34:11 Come, you children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.*

Psalm 35 — A Need for Vindication

Theme: When persecuted (subject), continually call on the Lord for deliverance (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unstated, but it seems clear that it is when he was being chased by Saul

Key Passage: verse 17

Structure: This Psalm is filled with repetition—one idea with multiple ways of saying it poetically. Verses 1-8 call upon God to destroy David's enemies. Verses 9-16 declare David's innocence. Verses 17-26 go back and forth between an appeal for God to deliver David soon, and making a case as to why God should do that. Verses 27-28 call for everyone to *shout for joy and rejoice* [those] *who favor my vindication*.

*35:17 Lord, how long will You look on?
Rescue my soul from their ravages,
My only life from the lions.*

Questions for Discussion

True or False?

1. In Psalm 24, David did not consider himself to be the king over Israel.
2. In Psalm 25, David thought he was guilty, and in Psalm 26, he thought he was not guilty.
3. In Psalm 28:1, David wrote: *For if You are silent to me, I will become like those who go down to the pit*. He meant that, if God did not personally speak to him, he would be like the unbelievers.
4. Psalm 29 says God is responsible for violent weather.
5. In Psalm 30:3, when David wrote: *O LORD, You have brought up my soul from Sheol*, he meant that God delivered him from the brink of death.
6. In Psalm 31, David said that a life filled with sorrow is a reason for trusting God.
7. Psalm 32 says God will always forgive our sins.
8. According to Psalm 33, Christian music should be played skillfully.
9. In Psalm 34, David concluded that those who fear the Lord are those who love life.
10. According to Psalm 35, it's okay to ask God to fight against our enemies.

Answer: (1) False (He just considered God to be the supreme and ultimate king.) (2) True. (3) False (He meant that, if God did not answer his prayers, he would be dragged away to Sheol with the wicked.) (4) True (It is ascribed to God in verses 1 and 2.) (5) True. (6) True. (7) False (Psalm 32 says God forgives our sin when we confess it to Him.) (8) True (verse 3). (9) True (verse 12). (10) True.

Psalm 36 — God and the Ungodly

Theme: The ungodly live in sin (subject) because they do not fear God (complement).

Author: David is called *the servant of God*, which is a title God gave David as His anointed king (2 Samuel 3:18; 7:5, 8).

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 1

Structure: Verses 1-4 describe the ungodly eight ways: (1) sin speaks to him in his heart, (2) he has no fear of God, (3) he flatters himself, (4) his words are wicked and deceitful, (5) he ceases to be wise, (6) he plans wickedness, (7) he sets a path that is not good, and (8) he does not despise evil. Clearly, these overlap, and they all seem to be a development of not fearing God. Verses 5-9 (in contrast to the ungodly) describe the Lord as loving, faithful, righteous, judgmental, and preserving of all mankind. Verses 10-11 are a prayer from David, asking that he not go the prideful way of the ungodly.

*36:1 Transgression speaks to the
ungodly within his heart;
There is no fear of God before
his eyes.*

Psalm 37 — The Preservation of the Righteous

Theme: Those who trust in the Lord (subject) will be prosperous (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: when David is old (verse 25)

Key Passage: verse 4

Structure: Verses 1-9 are a prediction of prosperity for the righteous. Verses 10-22 focus on the punishment of the wicked. Verses 23-40 tell us that God delivers the righteous from the hand of the wicked.

Thoughts and Applications: This Psalm contains many proverbial statements (wise sayings, generally true, but not without exception). David firmly taught that if you live delighting yourself in the Lord (meaning your delights are God's delights), then you will prosper during this life. Of course, David is referring to the life of obedient Israelites living in the Land. Nonetheless, as with Solomon's proverbs, they are generally true for all time. Those who live a righteous life will usually, generally, most of the time, live a more earthly prosperous life.

37:4 Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart

Psalm 38 — Sin and Suffering

Theme: Personal sin (subject) causes personal suffering for the people of God (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: after one of David's significant sins (probably either with Bathsheba, Uriah, or numbering the people)

Key Passage: verse 18

Structure: The Psalm has three paragraphs. Each begins with an address to God. Verses 1-8 describe David's suffering from his sin. Verses 9-14 tell us about David's loneliness because of his sin. Verses 15-22 are a confession and plea for God to not forsake him.

38:18 For I confess my iniquity; I am full of anxiety because of my sin.

Psalm 39 — Life Is Brief

Theme: Life is short (subject), no matter how you live (complement).

Author: David. *Jeduthun* is a choir director appointed by David (1 Chronicles 16:41; 25:1-3).

Historical Setting: probably when David is old and facing his inevitable mortality

Key Passage: verse 5

Structure: Verses 1-8 describe the brevity of life. Verses 9-13 look to hope in God.

Thoughts and Applications: There is an old saying: "Life is hard, but it is also short." The first part of this old saying is in Psalm 38, and the second part is in Psalm 39.

39:5 "Behold, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; Surely every man at his best is a mere breath.

Psalm 40 — A New Song from God

Theme: God delivers (subject) those who wait patiently for Him (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 3

Structure: Verses 1-5 are a declaration of the theme that God delivers the faithful. In verses 6-10 David declared that God desires obedience to His Word, not sacrifices. Then in verses 11-17, David brought up to God the special case of suffering from his enemies.

40:3 He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Many will see and fear And will trust in the LORD.

Psalm 41 — When Enemies Take Advantage of Sinners

Theme: When enemies capitalize on the helpless (subject), blessed is the one who helps (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 1

Structure: Verses 1-3 are about how the Lord will bless the one who helps the helpless. In verses 4-9, David reveals the wicked schemes planned against him by his enemies. Verses 10-13 are about God upholding David, a helper to the helpless, so his enemies don't triumph over him. Verse 13 is another of David's great benedictions.

41:1 How blessed is he who considers the helpless; The LORD will deliver him in a day of trouble.

Psalm 42 — The Soul in Despair (1)

Theme: The soul in despair (subject) speaks to itself about God (complement).

Author: dedicated to or written by the sons of Korah. Twelve Psalms (42–49, 84, 85, 87, 88) are dedicated to the sons of *Korah*. The most noted *Korah* is in Numbers 16:1-3, the great-grandson of Levi and younger contemporary of Moses, who attempted revolt against the authority of Moses and Aaron. But *Korah* is a common name. More likely this is a musician's family appointed by David.

Historical Setting: unknown, but the author seems to be stranded up north by Mount Hermon

Key Passage: verse 5 (repeated in verse 11 and Psalm 43:5)

Structure: In verses 1-5, the psalmist told himself that his soul longs for God (*As the deer pants for the water brooks*). In verses 6-11, he told God that his soul is in despair.

Thoughts and Applications: Psalms 42 and 43 go together. Some have them as the same Psalm, but there is a difference. In Psalm 42, the psalmist is talking to himself, and in 43, he is talking to God. But the same key verse (stated twice in Psalm 42) is the conclusion of verse 43.

*42:5 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 43 — The Soul in Despair (2)

Theme: The soul in despair (subject), speaks to God about itself (complement).

Author: dedicated to or written by the sons of Korah

Historical Setting: unknown, but the author seems to be stranded up north by Mount Hermon

Key Passage: verse 5 (repeated in 42:5, 11)

Structure: Verses 1-4 are a call to God. Verse 5 returns to the last verse of Psalm 42.

*43:5 Why are you in despair, O my soul?
And why are you disturbed within me?
Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him,
The help of my countenance and my God.*

Psalm 44 — A National Defeat

Theme: At the time of disaster (subject), make your lament to God (complement).

Author: dedicated to or written by the sons of Korah

Historical Setting: some unknown national defeat

Key Passage: verse 12

Structure: Verses 1-8 speak of past deliverance. Verses 9-26 speak of their present defeat.

Thoughts and Applications: Notice how the psalmist credits God, not only with their past deliverance, but with their defeat.

*44:12 You sell Your people cheaply,
And have not profited by their sale.*

Psalm 45 — A Royal Wedding

Theme: A righteous leader (subject) is anointed by God (complement).

Author: dedicated to or written by the sons of Korah

Historical Setting: *Shoshannim* means "lilies." Allen Ross says: "The song is set 'to the tune of Lilies' and is called 'a wedding song' (literally, 'a song of loves')" ("Bible Knowledge Commentary"). The Psalm is written for a royal wedding, possibly (one of) Solomon's.

Key Passage: verse 7

Structure: This Psalm reminds us of the Song of Solomon, except here the emphasis is on the majesty of the wedding, rather than the love of the bride and groom. Verses 1-9 focus on the groom/king. Verses 10-17 focus on the bride/queen. There are several difficult passages. Verse 6 is a hyperbola calling the king God and His throne forever. The king's daughters in verse 9 may be his other wives, since the bride/queen is called a daughter in verse 10. Daughter probably refers to the queen of Tyre in verse 12. Verse 16 is a wish for the queen to have many distinguished children.

Thoughts and Applications: This is applied to Christ in Hebrews 1:8-9. Of course, an eternal throne was promised to the house of David (2 Samuel 7:16), and Jesus fulfilled that promise when He rose from the dead (Luke 1:32-33).

*45:7 You have loved righteousness and hated
wickedness;
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed
You
With the oil of joy above Your fellows.*

Psalm 46 — The God Who Melts the Earth

Theme: The God who shakes the earth (subject) is the stronghold of His people (complement).

Author: dedicated to or written by the sons of Korah

Historical Setting: unknown, but some say it describes the invasion of Israel by Sennacherib during the reign of Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:13–19:37)

Key Passage: verses 6-7

Structure: Verses 1-3 describe God as a refuge when the earth changes physically. Verses 4-7 describe the security of the city of God. Verses 8-11 describe the deliverance of God.

*46:6 The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered;
He raised His voice, the earth melted.
46:7 The LORD of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our stronghold.*

Thoughts and Applications: This Psalm sounds a whole lot like the upcoming tribulation period (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24; Revelation 6–18), and Psalm 47 sounds a whole lot like the millennial reign of Christ after the Second Coming. The author may be describing a historical invasion, but the comparison to the Tribulation and Millennium is too close to ignore. Also, the author made a big deal out of God being sovereign over the catastrophic elements of nature, *the mountains slip into the heart of the sea ... its waters roar and foam ...*, etc.

Psalm 47 — The God Who Reigns Over the Earth

Theme: The God who reigns over the earth (subject) is the joy of His people (complement).

Author: dedicated to or written by the sons of Korah

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verses 1-2

Structure: There are no clear divisions in this Psalm. There is also no prayer in it. The Psalm addresses the people to be joyful about the reign of God over all the nations of the earth. Notice that the call for joy is (in part, at least) because God is to be feared. Verse 4 is also fascinating. It says: *He chooses our inheritance for us*. The context is *The glory of Jacob whom He loves*, but the application would be that God chooses the inheritance of all believers.

*47:1 O clap your hands, all peoples;
Shout to God with the voice of joy.
47:2 For the LORD Most High is to be feared,
A great King over all the earth.*

Thoughts and Applications

David's Theology of Suffering

We have covered enough of David's Psalms that we can pause for a minute and reflect on his theology of suffering. Here are some points we can discern (note the darkened words).

1. Since David believed in a sovereign God, his suffering was in the sovereign plan of God. So God is ultimately **responsible for** David's suffering. That's why David only appeals to God to relieve it.
2. David would **not** have said that God **caused** his suffering even though God could have prevented it. It was often caused by David's enemies or his own sin. If you look only at God's sovereignty, then to allow suffering is the same as to cause it. But David never makes that conclusion. If allows = causes (because God is sovereign), then free will is eliminated. Therefore, God was responsible for David's suffering, but not the sin or wickedness that often caused it.
3. Since David always appealed to God to relieve his suffering, and never to his enemies, he assumed that God **had the authority** over his suffering. So, although others may have caused David's suffering, he continued in suffering because God had not removed it. Therefore, God was **actively**, not just passively, **involved** in David's suffering.
4. David understood that God is good, therefore, **the reason God had not removed David's suffering was good**, even though the suffering was not good.
5. David understood that God tests everyone, but he did **not** see his suffering as a **test** from God.
6. David saw **God as the only one to go to for relief** from suffering. David never saw that the solution to suffering was to deal with the ones who were causing it, whether it was himself (as in self-improvement) or the wicked people surrounding him (as in punishment or justice).
7. David understood that **when our sin causes suffering** from guilt, the suffering will not end until we **confess the sin and repent** of it. Suffering from sin cannot be relieved by performing a religious exercise or to changing our lives for the better.
8. David did not believe that the purpose of suffering was to bring him closer to God. When he was at peace, he rejoiced before God. When he was suffering, he cried out to God. There is no evidence David saw himself closer to God because of suffering.

Questions for Discussion

True or False?

1. In Psalm 37:4, David wrote: *Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart.* That means we will get what we desire, when it is what He desires.
2. In Psalm 38, David's enemies take advantage of him when he is suffering because of his sin.
3. We know Psalms 42 and 43 are to be sung together because the last verse is the same.
4. We know Psalm 45 is a royal wedding because it says so halfway through the Psalm.
5. The psalmist understood Psalms 46 and 47 to be ultimately fulfilled in the future Tribulation and Millennial Kingdom.

Answers: (1) True (Because when you delight in the Lord, your desires are the same.) (2) True (38:18-20). (3) True. (4) False (It is discerned from poetic symbols.) (5) False. (Not necessarily. Because of future revelation, God seems to have these events in mind, but it is not sure the psalmist did.)

Psalm 48 — The City of God

Theme: Mount Zion (subject) is where the true God reigns (complement).

Author: *A Psalm of the sons of Korah*

Historical Setting: unknown, but it's all about Jerusalem

Key Passage: verse 2

*48:2 Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth,
Is Mount Zion in the far north, The city of the great King.*

Structure: Verses 1-3 proclaim praise to God and Zion (Jerusalem), His dwelling place. Verses 4-8 present the city's enemies as fleeing in terror. Verses 9-14 are a call for the people to praise the God of Zion. In verse 2, *the far north* is a metaphor for the place where God dwells (Isaiah 14:13-14), and *the great King* is God. Notice in the last verse, the psalmist believes in God's guidance but reveals no eternal perspective.

Thoughts and Applications: Notice this Psalm is dedicated to Zion. Zion is David's Jerusalem, that finger of land south of the Temple mount sticking out into the Kidron Valley. This is where Abraham climbed to sacrifice Isaac. This is where David founded Jerusalem, built his palace, and committed adultery. This is the city God defended because of David 300 years after his death. This is the city that will endure through all generations and into the Millennial Kingdom. No other city in the world is being preserved by God.

Psalm 49 — Eternal Life for the Upright

Theme: Eternal life is for the upright (subject), not the wealthy (complement).

Author: *A Psalm of the sons of Korah*

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verses 14-15

Structure: Verses 1-4 are a call to wisdom, as if this were a proverb. Verses 5-13 are about the foolish

wealthy, who trust in their wealth, and a warning for the wise not to envy them because they foolishly believe their wealth will endure. Verses 14-20 zero in on the real point of all this—eternal life (*the morning*) is for the upright, not the wealthy without understanding.

Thoughts and Applications: This Psalm is unusual in that it focuses on the afterlife. That's rare in the Old Testament. The psalmist does not know about heaven (the New Jerusalem) or hell (the lake of fire), which God has not yet revealed. He seemed to see the afterlife as darkness of some sort for the unbeliever, but for himself, he said: *God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, for He will receive me.*

49:14-15 As sheep they are appointed for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd; And the upright shall rule over them in the morning And their form shall be for Sheol to consume, So that they have no habitation. But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, For He will receive me.

Psalm 50 — A Perspective on Sacrifices

Theme: Sacrifices honor God (subject), when they are the thanksgiving of the upright (complement).

Author: Asaph

Historical Setting: unknown, but the focus is the sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem

50:23 "He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me; And to him who orders his way aright I shall show the salvation of God."

Key Passage: verse 23

Structure: Verses 1-6 are a statement of the certain judgment from God. Verses 7-15 declare that there is nothing you can do for God because He doesn't need anything. Verses 16-23 declare that it's about being, not doing.

Thoughts and Applications: The only thing you can do to please God is to **be** a righteous person who *offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving*.

Psalm 51 — The Plea for Grace

Theme: The grace of God (subject) is our only hope (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: *when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he [David] had gone in to Bathsheba*

Key Passage: verse 1

Structure: The whole Psalm is a confession of sin and a request for God to graciously forgive and restore David after his adultery with Bathsheba. The only division is right before the end, where in verses 18-19 he requests God's favor on Zion. This is probably a request for God to not punish the city of Jerusalem or reject their sacrifices because of David's sin.

Thoughts and Applications: This Psalm is one of the most read Psalms of all literature. It is filled with statements which reveal a great deal of our theology. For example:

- Verses 1-3 are a call for the grace of God, even though God never offered grace to the individual in the Old Testament.
- Verse 4 declares that all sin is only committed against God.
- Verse 5 teaches original sin. We are sinners from conception. It also shows that we come into existence as eternal beings from the time of our conception.
- Verse 6 says that what God desires for us is that we have inner truth, and that leads to wisdom.
- Verses 7-10 tell us that forgiveness and restoration (*a clean heart*) come only from God.
- Verse 11 shows that it was possible for David to lose the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as Saul did. [In our church age, believers do not lose the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but they can lose the filling of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:19).]
- Verse 16 says there was no sacrifice for David's sin because the Mosaic Law called for the death penalty.

51:1 Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.

Psalm 52 — The Condemnation of Doeg the Edomite

Theme: Treacherous acts (subject) should be condemned by us even though they will be judged by God (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: *when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul and said to him, "David has come to the house of Ahimelech."* This resulted in Doeg killing 85 priests at Nob (1 Samuel 21-22).

Key Passage: verse 1

Structure: In verses 1-4, David condemned Doeg the Edomite. In verses 5-7, David said God will condemn Doeg. In verses 8-9, David praised God.

Thoughts and Applications: Rarely does David mention his enemies by name, but in Psalm 52, he specified Doeg the Edomite as a bad guy. Sometimes we need to bring our enemies to God by name. Notice, too, in all of David's Psalms, David's enemies are always assumed to be enemies of God. There is no such thing as an enemy of David who is not also an enemy of God. Don't have enemies who are not also God's enemies.

52:1 Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? The lovingkindness of God endures all day long.

Psalm 53 — No One Does Good, Not Even One

Theme: *God looks for anyone who understands* (subject), and finds none (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown, but this Psalm is another version of Psalm 14

Key Passage: verse 1

Structure: There are two paragraphs in this Psalm, but it's really all about the first three verses. Verses 1-3 declare the universal sin of mankind. Verses 4-6 lament universal sin, give an example of it, and call for the salvation of Israel to come from Zion. This is the theme of Roman 3:10ff.

53:1 The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God," They are corrupt, and have committed abominable injustice; There is no one who does good.

Thoughts and Applications: The phrase *The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God* in verse 1 is usually applied to atheism. But the context is more about one who disregards God, rather than one who disbelieves.

Psalm 54 — *The Lord Is the Sustainer of My Soul*

Theme: When a believer is in physical danger (subject), he should look to God to be sustained (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: *when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, "Is not David hiding himself among us?"* This is when David was being pursued by Saul, and he was betrayed by "the Ziphites" (1 Samuel 23:19).

Key Passage: verse 4

Structure: Verses 1-3 ask for God's help. Verses 4-7 express confidence in God's deliverance.

*54:4 Behold, God is my helper;
The Lord is the sustainer of my soul.*

Psalm 55 — *The Attack of a Former Friend*

Theme: When you want to escape the attacks of a former close friend (subject), ask God to deal with him (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: an unknown event where David was betrayed by a close friend

Key Passage: verse 23

Structure: Verses 1-5 are a statement of David's fear [*trembling come upon me, And horror has overwhelmed me*]. In verses 6-8, David wants to escape [*I would wander far away, I would lodge in the wilderness*]. In verses 9-21, David called for God to deal with not an unknown enemy but his *companion and* [his] *familiar friend* [*We who had sweet fellowship together, Walked in the house of God in the throng*]. Verses 22-23 are another one of David's great benedictions, calling on God to *bring them down to the pit of destruction*.

*55:23 But You, O God, will bring them down to
the pit of destruction;
Men of bloodshed and deceit will not live
out half their days.
But I will trust in You.*

Psalm 56 — *What Can Mere Men Do to Me?*

Theme: When enemies increase (subject), remember, they are just men, not gods (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: *when the Philistines seized him in Gath*. This is where David faked insanity in order to escape (1 Samuel 21:10-15).

Key Passage: verse 4

Structure: Verses 1-11 are David's appeal to God for deliverance from the gossip about him in Gath. Verses 12-13 are a promise by David to pay his vows. Probably David vowed something to God if He would help David escape from Gath.

Thoughts and Applications: The idea of this Psalm is that one plus God is a majority. So when we are overwhelmed by enemies, remember, they are mere men.

*56:4 In God, whose word I praise,
In God I have put my trust;
I shall not be afraid.
What can mere man do to me?*

Psalm 57 — *Taking Refuge In a Cave*

Theme: When praying for help (subject), sing praises to God (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: *when David fled from Saul in the cave*, but it is not clear which cave, Adullam (1 Samuel 22) or Engedi (1 Samuel 24). *Al-tashheth* means "do not destroy." *Mikhtam* (Psalms 56-60) was discussed in Psalm 16.

Key Passage: verse 1

Structure: Verses 1-6 are David calling upon the Lord while waiting for the threat to pass. Verses 7-11 are thanks and praise to God in advance for saving him.

Thoughts and Applications: The unique aspect of this Psalm is that David is writing while hiding in a cave *until destruction passes by*. This tells me, if I am innocent, then sometimes it is a good idea to hide in a cave (metaphorically speaking) *until destruction passes by*. Hiding will not work if you are guilty.

*57:1 Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me,
For my soul takes refuge in You;
And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge
Until destruction passes by.*

Psalm 58 — Bad Judgment

Theme: Bad judgment (subject) will be overturned by God's good judgment (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verses 1-2

Structure: In verses 1-5, David said that, because of bad judgement, evil people go free. In verses 6-9, David called upon God to *sweep them away with a whirlwind*. In verses 10-11, we are told *the righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance of God*.

58:1 *Do you indeed speak righteousness, O gods?*

Do you judge uprightly, O sons of men?

58:2 *No, in heart you work unrighteousness;*

On earth you weigh out the violence of your hands.

Questions for Discussion

True or False?

1. Psalm 43:13 says: *Consider her ramparts; Go through her palaces, That you may tell it to the next generation.* That means Jerusalem will endure through all generations.
2. In Psalm 49, the term *the morning* refers to the resurrection from the dead.
3. The point of Psalm 50:53 is that salvation does not come through sacrifices.
4. In Psalm 51, David called for the grace of God because God promised grace to those who repent and humble themselves before Him.
5. Psalm 53 has the same message as Psalm 14.
6. In Psalm 55, David wants a former close friend killed.
7. Psalm 58 tells us there is nothing you can do about bad judgment except pray and wait on God.

Answers: (1) True. (2) True. (3) False (Or, not exactly. Salvation is described here as coming through sacrifices of thanksgiving and a rightly ordered life.) (4) False (There is no promise of grace to the individual in the Old Testament. David asked for grace because he knew the nature of God was to be gracious, not because God promised it.) (5) True. (6) True (verse 15). (7) True.

Psalm 59 — The Escape

Theme: The judgment of God (subject) will humiliate His enemies (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: *when Saul sent men and they watched the house in order to kill him.* This is about Saul's siege of David's house (1 Samuel 19:8-11), when Saul's daughter (David's wife) Michal helped David escape through a window (1 Samuel 19:11b-14).

Key Passage: verse 13

Structure: Verses 1-5 are David's request for God's help. Verses 6-10 describe his situation. Verses 11-17 ask for judgment from God and give praise to God in advance for that judgment.

Thoughts and Applications: David prayed this before he escaped through a window with the help of his wife, the daughter of the one pursuing him. The emphasis here is not just on David's enemies being destroyed but on them being humiliated. In verse 11, he prayed: *Do not slay them, or my people will forget; Scatter them by Your power, and bring them down.* The point is for God to destroy them in such a way *That men may know that God rules in Jacob.* Two times David called his enemies dogs: verses 6 and 14 (dogs are never mentioned in a positive way in the Bible).

59:13 *Destroy them in wrath, destroy them that they may be no more;*

That men may know that God rules in Jacob

To the ends of the earth. Selah.

Psalm 60 — Prayer for Military Victory

Theme: When God causes the suffering (subject), God is the only relief for the suffering (complement).

Author: David

Historical Background: This Psalm was written when David was waging war in the north against the Arameans, and Edom invaded Judah in the south. Joab was dispatched and achieved an important victory over the Edomites (2 Samuel 8; 1 Chronicles 18).

60:3 *You have made Your people experience hardship;*

You have given us wine to drink that makes us stagger.

In 1 Chronicles 18:12, the number of Edomites said to have been killed was 18,000, whereas this Psalm's superscription has 12,000. Also, the chronicler gave credit for success to David's nephew Abishai (see 2 Samuel 8:13). This difference is explainable by noting that the entire campaign was under David's nephew who killed 18,000 Edomites, but that Joab was responsible for killing two thirds of the Edomites.

Key Passage: verse 3

Structure: Verses 1-5 tell us that God caused the conflict. Verses 6-8 declare that the land belongs to God. Verses 9-12 tell us that *deliverance by man is in vain*.

Thoughts and Applications: Notice again in this Psalm that God, not any one of David's enemies, is named as the One who *made Your people experience hardship*. David saw the cause of his suffering coming from the free will choice of his enemies. But God allowed the suffering. So from the perspective of sovereignty, it is God who ultimately made them to suffer hardship. So:

- Does God cause everything? — no, because He does not cause sin.
- Does God allow everything? — yes, because He can put a stop to anything.
- Does God make us suffer hardship? — yes, because everything is in His sovereign plan.

Psalm 61 — The Rock that Is Higher than I

Theme: The character of God (subject) is the ultimate desire (complement).

Author: David

Historical Background: unknown

Key Passage: verse 4

Structure: Verses 1-4 focus on dwelling on the person of God. Verses 5-8 express confidence that David will *abide before God forever*.

*61:4 Let me dwell in Your tent forever;
Let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings. Selah.*

Psalm 62 — My Rock and My Salvation

Theme: To wait on God (subject) may be to wait in silence (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verses 1 and 5

Structure: The Psalm goes back and forth between David's waiting on God and the actions of his enemies.

*62:1 My soul waits in silence for God only;
From Him is my salvation.
62:5 My soul, await in silence for God only,*

Psalm 63 — Meditation ... in the Night Watches

Theme: Your lovingkindness (subject) is better than life (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: *When he was in the wilderness of Judah*

Key Passage: verses 1 and 3

Structure: Verses 1-8 are David meditating on God.

Verses 9-11 are David rejoicing in God's deliverance.

Thoughts and Applications: This Psalm is written *in the wilderness of Judah*. David longed to be in the sanctuary in Jerusalem but fellowshiped with God during the night in this dry desert.

*63:1 O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly;
My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You,
In a dry and weary land where there is no water.
63:3 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life,
My lips will praise You.*

Psalm 64 — David's Complaint

Theme: If you are going to complain (subject), complain to God (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 1

Structure: Verses 1-6 are David complaining to God. Verses 7-10 are David's confidence in God.

Thoughts and Applications: The key element of this Psalm is the Hebrew word *שָׁחַ* (*sach*) for "complaint." This is not just a prayer, it is to *muse, talk, or complain*. So David complained to God, without doubting the goodness of God.

*64:1 Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint;
Preserve my life from dread of the enemy.*

Psalm 65 — The God of the Earth's Abundance

Theme: The God of Zion (subject) is the God of the bounty of all the earth (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: not given, but many think it was a song written to be sung annually at the dedication offering of the barley harvest waved by the priest in Leviticus 23:9-14.

Key Passage: verse 9

Structure: The Psalm has two paragraphs which stand in contrast with each other. Verses 1-4 are about God bringing the individual Jewish believer close to Himself by forgiving his sins. Verses 5-13 are about God supplying the earth with abundance.

*65:9 You visit the earth and cause it to overflow;
You greatly enrich it;
The stream of God is full of water;
You prepare their grain, for thus You prepare
the earth.*

Psalm 66 — The God of the World and the Jews

Theme: The God of the world (subject) is our God and my God (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 4

Structure: Verses 1-7 are about God globally, describing God as the God of the whole earth. Verses 8-15 are about God nationally, as God of the nation Israel. Verses 16-20 are about God personally, as the God of David.

*66:4 All the earth will worship You,
And will sing praises to You;
They will sing praises to Your name. Selah.*

Psalm 67 — Let the Nations Praise God

Theme: All the earth (subject) should praise the God of Israel (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 2

Structure: Other than that the first verse is set apart as an introductory prayer, there are no divisions in this Psalm. The Psalm is a song of global evangelism. It is addressed to the whole earth to come and praise the God of Israel because He is their judge.

*67:2 That Your way may be known on the earth,
Your salvation among all nations.*

Psalm 68 — God Enters His Sanctuary in Zion

Theme: The majesty of God (subject) will be revealed in Jerusalem (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: not given, but the Psalm seems to be written for a victorious occasion, such as David's conquering Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:6-8), or moving the Ark into the city (2 Samuel 6)

Key Passage: verse 24

Structure: Verses 1-6 call for the wicked to flee before God. Verses 7-18 review some of the historical incidents as God proceeded from Egypt to Zion. This culminates in verse 18, God's entry into Jerusalem, a picture (type or foreshadow—Ephesians 4:8) of the ascension of Christ. Also in this paragraph, Bashan (probably the Hermon range) is pictured as jealous of Jerusalem. Verses 19-31 emphasize God's choice of Zion/Jerusalem. Verses 32-33 are, like Psalm 67, a call for all nations to praise God.

*68:24 They have seen Your procession, O God, The procession
of my God, my King, into the sanctuary.*

Psalm 69 — Zeal for Your House Has Consumed Me

Theme: Zeal for God's house [Temple] (subject) brings suffering caused by those close to you (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown. As in Psalm 45, *Shoshannim* means "lilies."

Key Passage: verse 9

Structure: Verses 1-4 are a desperate call for God's deliverance. Verses 5-12 are interesting in that David admitted that he is a sinner, but said that his sin did not cause this particular time of suffering. His suffering was caused by his zeal for God and those who oppose him in that zeal. Verses 13-29 specifically call for the eternal destruction of David's

*69:9 For zeal for Your house has consumed me,
And the reproaches of those who reproach You
have fallen on me.*

enemies, culminating in the scathing request *May they be blotted out of the book of life. And may they not be recorded with the righteous* (verse 28). Verses 30-36 look to hope in God with a benediction in verses 34-36, to be fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom.

Thoughts and Applications: Psalm 59, 64, and 69 contain prayers which we never hear anywhere today, nor would we consider them appropriate. In Psalm 59, David called for his enemies to be humiliated, in Psalm 64, he complained to God about his enemies, and in Psalm 69, he went further and said: *May they be blotted out of the book of life. And may they not be recorded with the righteous* (verse 28). There is no doubt a dispensational difference here. David did not have the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20, but that does not dismiss these prayers. The application is that our anguish, and the resentment caused by that, should be brought to God. It is okay to ask God to cause our enemies to suffer, as long as our enemies are God's enemies. But it is not okay to take it upon ourselves to cause them to suffer.

Also, verse 9, *For zeal for Your house has consumed me, And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me*, is applied to Christ by His disciples in John 2:17. This zeal is seen as an upmost dedication to God, and it causes extreme acts of righteousness, which bring about criticism from almost everyone, including other believers.

Psalm 70 — Make Haste, O God

Theme: Praying for God to hurry up and answer (subject) is a good prayer (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key passage: verse 5

Structure: Verse 1 is a call for God to deliver David quickly. Verses 2-4 describe David's enemies. Verse 5 returns to the theme of verse 1—deliver quickly.

*70:5 But I am afflicted and needy;
Hasten to me, O God!
You are my help and my deliverer;
O LORD, do not delay.*

Psalm 71 — Taught by God from Youth to Old Age

Theme: We should never stop learning (subject) from youth to old age (complement).

Author: not listed, but probably David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key passage: verses 17-18

Structure: Verses 1-4 are a familiar call for God's deliverance. But verses 5-21 are a unique call for God to help the psalmist finish his life well, learning from God as he did in his youth. Verses 22-24 are a call for musical praise.

*71:17-18 O God, You have taught me from my youth,
And I still declare Your wondrous deeds.
And even when I am old and gray, O God, do not
forsake me,
Until I declare Your strength to this generation,
Your power to all who are to come.*

Questions for Discussion

True or False?

1. In Psalm 59:13, when David said: *Destroy them in wrath, destroy them that they may be no more*, he meant: "Destroy them before I do it."
2. In Psalm 60:3, David said God allowed His people to suffer to make them stronger.
3. From Psalm 62:1 and 5, we can conclude that sometimes it's better to not pray.
4. The emphasis of Psalm 65 is that God is the Creator of the whole earth.
5. Psalms 66 and 67 are like Old Testament evangelism.
6. In Psalm 69:9, *zeal for Your house has consumed me* is a good thing.
7. Psalm 70 says it is good to ask God to hurry up and answer our prayers.
8. In Psalm 70:3, "*Aha, aha!*" is David's enemies laughing at him.
9. God makes us suffer hardship.

Answers: (1) False (He continued to wait on God to do it.) (2) False (It's *to make us stagger*.) (3) True (Sometimes we should wait on God in silence.) (4) False (Well, it's almost true. This Psalm emphasizes God sustaining the whole earth.) (5) True. (6) False (It is about God entering Jerusalem. In Ephesians 4:8, Paul used the phrase for Christ's entering heaven, but the context here is Jerusalem.) (7) True. (8) True. (9) True. (10) True (Psalm 60:3).

Psalm 72 — The Reign of the Righteous King

Theme: A righteous monarchy (subject) is the best form of government (complement).

Author: Solomon. This and Psalm 127 are the only Psalms ascribed to Solomon.

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verses 1-2

Structure: Verses 1-4 declare the theme. Verses 5-17 describe the power, compassion, and prosperity of the ideal king. Verses 18-19 are a benediction blessing. Verse 20 closes out Book 2 of the Psalms.

Thoughts and Applications: This Psalm is a prayer by Solomon for his own reign, but it is clearly extended to an ideal King, the Messiah in the Millennial Kingdom. The Psalm teaches that the perfect government is a monarchy with a perfect king, ruling perfectly. That was what Solomon prayed for and what will be the case in the Millennial Kingdom. Actually, God seemed to prefer the judges to the kings. These were sporadic God-appointed military figures chosen for a specific task but with no ongoing authority. The church was not set up either of those ways. The apostles were a plurality, with no central leadership. What they set up was also a plurality of leaders/elders over city-wide churches, with no single king-type figure (Philippians 1:1; 3 John 9). The monarchy will be the final form of government because God Himself, in the person of Christ, will be the King. A democracy is never suggested.

*72:1 Give the king Your judgments, O God,
And Your righteousness to the king's son.
72:2 May he judge Your people with righteousness
And Your afflicted with justice.*

Psalm 73 — The Prosperity of the Wicked

Theme: The prosperity of the wicked (subject) is temporary (complement).

Author: Asaph wrote Psalm 50 and Psalms 73–83. Apparently, he was an outstanding musician during the time of King David and was appointed minister of music in the Temple (1 Chronicles 15:19; 16:5). His descendants were also official musicians (Ezra 2:41).

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verses 16-17

Structure: Verses 1-16 describe Asaph's inner turmoil over the prosperity of the wicked. The Psalm pivots around verse 17. Verses 17-28 tell us what happened to Asaph's thoughts when he looked at God instead of the wicked. He saw the goodness of God and the end of the wicked.

Thoughts and Applications: Asaph believed what David wrote, that the righteous will prosper and the wicked will perish. But, like Job's friends, he also believed that would always be the case, and he would experience that during this life. So he was confused when he observed the prosperity of the wicked. He almost gave up on his faith over it, until he focused on God and *perceived their end*. Psalm 73 is one of the greatest Psalms of all times because it deals with the injustice of this life. To paraphrase C.S. Lewis: The best argument for an afterlife is that there is no justice in this life.

*73:16 When I pondered to understand this,
It was troublesome in my sight
73:17 Until I came into the sanctuary of God;
Then I perceived their end.*

Psalm 74 — When God Allows Destruction

Theme: When God allows destruction (subject), remember that He is also the Creator (complement).

Author: Asaph is listed, but this was probably written 500 years after his time, by his descendants, or it was attributed to his memory

Historical Setting: apparently, at the time of the destruction of the Temple by Babylon in 586.

Key Passage: verse 2

Structure: Verses 1-11 lament that God's anger has appointed the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple. Verses 12-17 remember that God is the Creator of everything. Verses 18-23 beg God to remember His people.

*74:2 Remember Your congregation, which You
have purchased of old,
Which You have redeemed to be the tribe of
Your inheritance;
And this Mount Zion, where You have dwelt.*

Psalm 75 — God Judges the Earth

Theme: God alone (subject) judges the earth (complement).

Author: Asaph

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verses 6-7

Structure: Verses 1-3 give thanks to God because He sets a specific time for judgment. Verses 4-8 tell us that judgment is from God, not from the east or the west or the deserts. Verses 9-10 praise God for His judgment.

Thoughts and Applications: In verse 2, God said He judged with *משׁרִים* (*mesharim*) *uprightness*, or literally, *evenness*. The judgment of God is one of the major subjects in the Psalms. Sometimes the psalmist wanted God to judge,

*75:6 For not from the east, nor from the west,
Nor from the desert comes exaltation;
75:7 But God is the Judge;
He puts down one and exalts another.*

sometimes he wanted God to cease His judgment. Sometimes he gave the reason for God’s judgment, but the constant assumption was: God is the judge, God has judged, and God will continue to judge everyone for everything.

Psalm 76 — God Is a Warrior

Theme: The God of Israel (subject) is a warrior to be feared (complement).

Author: Asaph

Historical Setting: unknown, but many believe this, as with Psalm 75, celebrates the defeat of the Assyrians in 701 BC (2 Kings 18:13–19:37; Isaiah 36–37). If that is true, then the *Asaph* mentioned here is either a descendant of the Asaph of David’s time, or a recognition of his name.

Key Passage: verse 6

Structure: Verses 1-3 tell us God is recognized as a warrior in Israel. Verses 4-10 tell us the accomplishments of God as a warrior. Verses 11-12 encourage the people to make vows to God because He is a feared warrior.

*76:6 At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob,
Both rider and horse were cast into a dead sleep.*

Psalm 77 — The Works of God in History

Theme: When you think God is silent (subject), remember what He has done in the past (complement).

Author: Asaph

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 11

Structure: Verses 1-10 see God as silent when the psalmist is suffering. Verses 11-20 remember the involvement of God in the past.

Thoughts and Applications: One of the interesting things about this Psalm is that the psalmist is more disturbed when he remembers God (verse 3). Suffering may be easier, if you don’t see God as in charge of it. When you do see God as in charge of it, then you must fit that into your concept of God.

*77:11 I shall remember the deeds of the LORD;
Surely I will remember Your wonders of old.*

Psalm 78 — A History of Disobedience

Theme: A history of disobedience (subject) tells us we should not follow our past (complement).

Author: Asaph

Historical Setting: unknown, but the Psalm covers the history of Israel from the wilderness to the Judges

Key Passage: verses 7-8

Structure: Verses 1-8 are a call to remember the past, and (unlike their forefathers) put confidence in God. Verses 9-53 can, of course, be subdivided. But the whole section contains historical examples of the Israelites not following the commands of God before they reached the Holy Land, because of a *stubborn and rebellious ... heart*. This develops the theme in verses 7-8. The same can be said for verses 54-64, except this paragraph deals with Israel after they entered the Land. Verses 65-72 separate Israel and Judah, showing God’s choice for Judah and especially David.

*78:7 That they should put their confidence in God
And not forget the works of God,
But keep His commandments,
78:8 And not be like their fathers,
A stubborn and rebellious generation,
A generation that did not Iprepare its heart
And whose spirit was not faithful to God.*

Psalm 79 — The Impact of the Jealousy of God

Theme: The jealousy of God (subject) leads to judgment (complement).

Author: Asaph, but probably his descendants, as in Psalm 74

Historical Setting: probably at the time of the Babylonian Captivity, as in Psalm 74

Key Passage: verse 5

Structure: Verses 1-7 agonize over the wrath God, which is caused by His anger, which in turn is caused by His jealousy, which is because they followed idols. Verses 8-13 confess Israel’s sins and beg God for forgiveness and restoration.

Thoughts and Applications: Another continual theme in Psalms is the jealousy of God. The word only occurs twice: in Psalm 78:58, *For they provoked Him with their high places, And aroused His jealousy with their graven images*, and in Psalm 79:5, *How long, O LORD? Will You be angry forever? Will Your jealousy burn like fire?* But the idea is in almost every Psalm. The word is *qanah* (qanah), which can mean *zealous*, but almost always means *jealous* or *envious*. The point is—God will absolutely not tolerate any other religious concepts of God. The post-modern tolerance movement is a case in point.

*79:5 How long, O LORD? Will You be angry forever?
Will Your jealousy burn like fire?*

Psalm 80 — The Vine

Theme: The suffering God causes (subject) can be relieved by the Son of Man (complement).

Author: Asaph

Historical Setting: unknown, but the mention of

Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh may mean this is a reference to the Assyrian Captivity of the northern kingdom in 722 BC

Key Passage: verse 17

Structure: Verses 1-7 ask God how long He will be angry with Israel (three tribes are mentioned) and declares *You have made them to drink tears in large measure*. Verses 8-16 describe the history of Israel as a vine God removed from Egypt and planted in the land. Verses 17-19 pray for deliverance by *the son of man whom You make strong for Yourself*.

80:17 *Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand,
Upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself.*

Psalm 81 — Admonition During the Feast

Theme: God admonishes His people (subject) so that they will listen to Him (complement).

Author: Asaph

Historical Setting: *At the full moon, on our feast day,* traditionally the autumn feast of tabernacles/booths (Leviticus 23:33-36, 39-43; Deuteronomy 16:13-15)

Key Passage: verses 8-9

Structure: In verses 1-5, the psalmist sings of joy at the feast. In verses 6-16, God speaks to the people, admonishing them for following other gods.

81:8 *Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you;
O Israel, if you would listen to Me!*
81:9 *“Let there be no strange god among you;
Nor shall you worship any foreign god.*

Psalm 82 — God Judges the Whole Earth

Theme: God judges (subject) the judges of the earth (complement).

Author: Asaph

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 8

Structure: Verse 1 announces that God judges the rulers of *His own congregation*. And in the end, we find that congregation is the whole earth. Verses 2-7 are instruction, and the announcement of judgment, as if from God to the judges. Verse 8 is a call from Asaph for God to judge the earth. Judges are (hyperbolically) called **אֱלֹהִים** (*elohim*) gods two times in this Psalm (verses 1 and 6). The point is, they were sovereign rulers over the people and set up by God, so they were to represent God’s judgment (Romans 13:1-3).

Thoughts and Applications: Jesus used this in John 10:34 when He is condemned for calling Himself God. He said: *Has it not been written in your Law, “I said, you are gods”?* *If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?* Since the psalmist is using the word **אֱלֹהִים** (*elohim*) for gods hyperbolically for those rulers who were supposed to be representative of God, then the Jews should not oppose Jesus for calling Himself the Son of God.

82:8 *Arise, O God, judge the earth!
For it is You who possesses all the nations.*

Psalm 83 — The Specific Enemies of God

Theme: The reason to call upon God for judgment (subject) is for God’s enemies to know He alone is God (complement).

Author: Asaph

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verses 17-18

Structure: Verses 1-4 are a general call for God to *not be still*. Verses 5-8 mention the specific nations opposing Israel. Verses 9-18 call for God to judge them as He did specific people in the past.

83:17 *Let them be ashamed and dismayed forever,
And let them be humiliated and perish,
83:18 *That they may know that You alone, whose name is the
LORD, Are the Most High over all the earth.**

Questions for Discussion

True or False?

1. Psalm 72 teaches that the best form of government is a monarchy.
2. What bothered Asaph in Psalm 73 was the huge wealth of undeserving people.
3. Psalm 74 says that, since God created everything, He has the right to destroy anything. He does not owe anything to His creation.
4. Psalms 75, 76, and 82 tell us that God's judgment extends beyond Israel to the whole earth.
5. Psalms 77 and 78 tell us to look at history to see what God has done for His people.
6. According to Psalm 79, God is angry with nations who do not even know who He is.
7. In Psalm 80, even though only three tribes are mentioned, the *vine* refers to the whole nation.
8. Psalm 81:8-9 is a reference to the jealousy of God.
9. The *congregation* referred to in 82:1 is all the people of Israel.
10. Psalm 83 refers to both the people and the judges as *gods*.

Answers: (1) True (But only if you have a righteous monarch.) (2) False (What bothered Asaph was the prosperity of the wicked.) (3) True. (4) True. (5) False (Psalm 78 looks to history to see the sins of God's people.) (6) True (verse 6). (7) True. (8) True. (9) False (It is the whole earth—verse 8). (10) False (Just the judges are called *gods*.)

Psalm 84 — Yearning for the House of God

Theme: The presence of God (subject) requires the righteousness of God (complement).

Author: unknown, but it's called *A Psalm of the sons of Korah*.

Historical Setting: It is similar to Psalms 42 and 43,

because it expresses the same yearning for the formal place of worship, the Temple in Zion/Jerusalem. It seems to be a pilgrimage song, though it is not in the collection of pilgrimage Psalms (Psalms 120–134).

Key Passage: verse 10

Structure: Verses 1-4 express a longing and yearning *for the courts of the Lord*. Verses 5-8 discuss the pilgrimage to the house of God. Verses 9-12 are about praising God while in His house.

Thoughts and Applications: This Psalm stresses a significant aspect of worship which is foreign, or at least it should be foreign, to the church, namely, a formal place of worship. There are several Psalms that emphasize Zion/Jerusalem, others emphasize the house of God, which was a tent that housed the Ark of the Covenant, others refer to the Temple on Mount Mariah built by Solomon. The church is to be recognized as not having a geographic location, rather our bodies are a *temple of the Holy Spirit* (1 Corinthians 6:19). The identification of Christianity with a house is part of the false idea that the church replaced Israel.

84:10 *For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand outside.
I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God
Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.*

Psalm 85 — When Love and Truth Meet

Theme: When salvation comes (subject), love and truth meet (complement).

Author: unknown, but it's called *A Psalm of the sons of Korah*.

Historical Setting: None is given. Possibly (although it's hard to prove), this Psalm was written in the early days of the exiles' return from the Babylonian Captivity. At that time, God *restored the captivity of Jacob* (verse 1), yet they were still living in peril, so there was a need for the prayer: *Restore us, O God of our salvation, And cause Your indignation toward us to cease.*

Key Passage: verses 10-11

Structure: Verses 1-3 describe God's past restoration of Israel (possibly from the Babylonian Captivity). Verses 4-7 call upon God to restore them from their current suffering caused by their sin (possibly because they did not finish the Temple). Verses 8-13 look to a future salvation when the truth of God (from the earth) will meet the love of God (from heaven), ultimately, in the Millennial Kingdom.

85:10 *Lovingkindness and truth have met together;
Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*
85:11 *Truth springs from the earth,
And righteousness looks down from heaven.*

Psalm 86 — Ready to Forgive

Theme: The goodness of God (subject) means that He is ready to forgive (complement).

Author: David, the only Psalm of David in Book III.

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 5

Structure: The Psalm has an introduction/call for the grace of God (verses 1-4) and a concluding verse asking for a sign that his enemies can observe. Other than that, there are no real divisions. The main body of the Psalm (verses 5-13) are a fantastic insight into why David loved God, and why he was loved by God. Starting in verse 5 God is called:

- (1) *good*
- (2) *ready to forgive*
- (3) *abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You*
- (4) *There are none like You among the gods*
- (5) *All nations ... shall come and worship before You*
- (6) *You alone are God*
- (7) *merciful*
- (8) *gracious*
- (9) *slow to anger*
- (10) *abundant in ... truth*

Thoughts and Applications: What a different side of God than the lawgiver and judge revealed in the Mosaic Law. Clearly, God judges the sinful and unrepentant, but is merciful to those with a repentant heart like David. The Psalms are filled with calls for the judgment of God on the wicked or sinners. Psalm 86 gives a stark contrast to that, with God as one who is ready to forgive. Both are true of God and with no contradiction. God will judge sinners, but when they come to Him in humility and repentance, He is ready to forgive. This is the contrast and complement David gives to Moses.

*86:5 For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive,
And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.*

Psalm 87 — The Lord Loves Zion

Theme: *The LORD loves ... Zion* (subject) *More than all the other dwelling places ...* (complement).

Author: *A Psalm of the sons of Korah*

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 2

Structure: There are no subdivisions in this Psalm.

*87:2 The LORD loves the gates of Zion
More than all the other dwelling places of Jacob.*

Psalm 88 — The Painful Life of Heman

Theme: Suffering (subject) may not be relieved by God (complement).

Author: *Heman the Ezrahite*, apparently the leader of the Korahite choir (1 Chronicles 6:33)

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 14

Structure: Clearly, the saddest and most pessimistic Psalm in the Psalter, Psalm 88 has no clear divisions.

Thoughts and Applications: Heman is a man who has suffered a long time, perhaps most of his life. His physical agony has led to his friends leaving him as well. So now he is both sick and alone. He has prayed daily to God for relief and has received no relief, and he expresses no hope of receiving any. Even though he clearly sees God as having *afflicted me with all Your waves*, he does not seem to be bitter toward God but confused, tired, and depressed. This is testimony to the fact that, for reasons all His own, God does not always answer prayer affirmatively. To think He does is naive.

*88:14 O LORD, why do You reject my soul?
Why do You hide Your face from me?*

Psalm 89 — Remember the Davidic Covenant

Theme: The promises of God (subject) are not defeated by our defeats (complement).

Author: *Ethan* (a Levite, 1 Chronicles 15:17-18, and a wise person, 1 Kings 4:31)

Historical Setting: unknown, but after a defeat, possibly by Shishak of Egypt (1 Kings 14:25) or the Babylonian Exile

Key Passage: verses 27-30

Structure: Verses 1-4 praise the Lord for the Davidic Covenant. Verses 5-18 praise God for His own character. Verses 19-37 repeat the promises of the Davidic Covenant.

Verses 38-45 lament Israel's present defeats. Verses 38-51 ask God again to remember His covenant with David.

*89:27 I also shall make him My firstborn,
The highest of the kings of the earth.
89:28 My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever,
And My covenant shall be confirmed to him.
89:29 So I will establish his descendants forever
And his throne as the days of heaven.
89:30 If his sons forsake My law
And do not walk in My judgments*

Thoughts and Applications: The Psalm is a prayer that God would honor the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:5-16). Allen Ross says of this Psalm: “Faced with the perplexing problem of the affliction and defeat of the anointed Davidic king, the psalmist implored the Lord to remember His oath and end this disaster. Ethan sought to motivate the Lord to answer his prayer by rehearsing the covenant promises and the divine attributes on which they rest. So the psalm is a study in the age-old apparent conflict between the promises of a faithful, loving God, and the catastrophes that often occur” (“Bible Knowledge Commentary”).

Psalm 90 — God Is Eternal, Man Is Temporary

Theme: The temporary nature of life (subject) should teach us to number our days (complement).

Author: Moses

Historical Setting: not listed, but from the context, it is during or after the wilderness wanderings

Key Passage: verse 12

Structure: Verses 1-2 declare the eternity of God. Verses 3-11 declare the temporary nature of man. Verses 12-17 declare the hope for man, which is to number his days so that he will have a heart of wisdom so that God will confirm the work of his hand.

Thoughts and Applications: This is the oldest Psalm and possibly the greatest single chapter in the Bible about the contrast between an eternal nature of God and the temporary nature of man on earth. Moses recognized this and said: *So teach us to number our days, That we may present to You a heart of wisdom* (verse 12). I had a professor in seminary who took this to heart. Assuming that he would live to be 70, he calculated the number of days he had left to live and marked that number on that day of his calendar. Then each day he would write one day less on the calendar. He claimed it changed his life in terms of how he valued each day and the wisest way to use that day. The Psalm has several other significant points to ponder:

- (1) The eternity of God – verses 1 and 2
- (2) How God views time – verse 4
- (3) The anger of God – verses 7 and 11
- (4) The average 70-to-80-year longevity of man – verse 10
- (5) The wisdom to number our days – verse 12
- (6) The hope that God may *confirm the work of our hands* – verse 17

*90:12 So teach us to number our days,
That we may present to You a heart of wisdom.*

Psalm 91 — Trust

Theme: Trust God (subject) at all times (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 2

Structure: Verses 1-13 are a call to trust God. Verses 14-16 are written as if God is responding to the one who trusts Him.

Thoughts and Applications: Verses 11-12 are special in that they declare that angels minister to people (as in Hebrews 1:14). This is the passage Satan quoted to Christ in Matthew 4:6.

*91:2 I will say to the LORD, “My refuge
and my fortress”
My God, in whom I trust!”*

Psalm 92 — Temporary Prosperity

Theme: The wicked may prosper (subject), but not forever (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: for Sabbath worship

Key Passage: verse 7

Structure: Verses 1-5 are a call to sing for joy on the Sabbath. Verses 6-15 are about the ultimate righteous judgment of God upon the senseless/stupid wicked, and His ultimate delivery of the righteous.

*92:7 That when the wicked sprouted up like grass
And all who did iniquity flourished,
It was only that they might be destroyed forevermore.*

Psalm 93 — The Floods Establish God’s Throne

Theme: God’s throne (subject) *is established ... from everlasting* (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 2

Structure: There are no subdivisions in this Psalm.

*93:2 Your throne is established from of old
You are from everlasting*

Psalm 94 — God of Vengeance

Theme: The God of vengeance (subject) will judge the earth (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verses 1-2

Structure: Verses 1-2 are a general call for God to judge the whole earth.

Verses 3-11 specifically call upon God to judge the wicked. Verses 12-23 express confidence that God will do that.

Thoughts and Applications: One interesting fact given in the Psalm is *The LORD knows the thoughts of man, That they are a mere breath* (verse 11).

*94:1 O LORD, God of vengeance,
God of vengeance, shine forth!
94:2 Rise up, O Judge of the earth,
Render recompense to the proud.*

Psalm 95 — Come Let Us Worship and Bow Down

Theme: Worship God (subject) because He is our Maker (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: The Psalm is a call to worship, usable at any assembly of the congregation.

Key Passage: verse 6

Structure: Verses 1-8 are a call to worship. Verses 9-11 are written as a response by God concerning His wrath over the past generations.

*95:6 Come, let us worship and bow down,
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.*

Questions for Discussion

True or False?

1. In Psalm 84, *Your dwelling places, O LORD of hosts*, refers to all the earth.
2. In Psalm 85:11, *Truth springs from the earth* refers to the truth of what is taking place on the earth.
3. The *city of God*, in Psalm 87:3, is our eternal dwelling place.
4. In Psalm 88, the author's expectation is that God will finally relieve his suffering.
5. Psalm 89:27-29 refers to both David and the Messiah.
6. Psalm 90 is the oldest Psalm.
7. Psalm 91:11-12 teaches that angels are guardians of believers.
8. Psalm 92:7 says that the reason there are wicked people is so that God can destroy them.
9. In Psalm 93, floods prove the power of God.
10. In Psalm 94, the Lord is the God of vengeance because He pays back the proud.

Answers: (1) False (It refers to Zion and the Temple courts.) (2) False (It refers to the truth of God which can be learned from what He is doing on the earth.) (3) False (It's Zion/Jerusalem.) (4) False (The author gives no hope of his suffering coming to an end.) (5) False (They just refer to David and his physical descendants.) (6) True. (7) True (like Hebrews 1:14). (8) True. (9) True (verses 3-4). (10) True (verse 2).

Psalm 96 — The God of All the Earth Judges

Theme: The God of all the earth (subject) will come and judge all the earth (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 10

Structure: Verses 1-6 are a call for all the earth to worship Israel's God (*Sing to the Lord a new song*) because God is: *great, and greatly to be praised, to be feared above all gods*, the creator, the God of *splendor, majesty, strength and beauty*. Verses 7-10 are a call for all nations to worship Israel's God (and to do it in *holy attire* – verse 9). Verses 11-13 are a call for all of nature to worship Israel's God. The last verse declares the coming of the Lord to judge. Interestingly, He will judge two ways: *He will judge the world in*

*96:10 Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns;
Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved;
He will judge the peoples with equity."*

righteousness. And the peoples in His faithfulness. The psalmist probably does not have in mind the Second Coming of Christ per se, but he sees God coming to judge all the earth, as in the Millennial Kingdom.

Thoughts and Applications: This is one of the most positive Psalms. It is similar to 1 Chronicles 16:23-33. It is a strong declaration that the God of Israel is the only God, the God of all nature, the God of all the nations, the God of all the people (believers and unbelievers), and the God who will come to judge the whole earth. Also notice that God is to be worshiped in *holy attire*. The word can mean *adornment, glory, array or attire*. The emphasis is on holiness, but it does seem to apply to the way we dress when we worship God. Also, notice in verse 6 the word תִּפְאֵרֶת (*tiferet*) means *beauty or glory*. But glory would be in the sense of beauty, since there are other words (like the word translated *attire*) for glory. So it would appear *beauty* may be considered an attribute of God. Generally speaking, everyone in the world recognizes the difference between something beautiful and something ugly.

Psalm 97 — The Lord Reigns as King

Theme: The Lord is the King (subject) of all the earth (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 1

Structure: Verse one declares the theme of the Psalm, namely that the Lord reigns, meaning that He is King, meaning that He is sovereign, over all the earth. Verses 1-6 are a declaration of the reign of God with powerful metaphors (*clouds, thick darkness, fire, lightning, mountains melted like wax*). Verses 7-12 address the people, both believers and unbelievers. Unbelievers are to *be ashamed who serve graven images*. Believers are to *hate evil, be glad ... and give thanks to His holy name*.

*97:1 The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice;
Let the many islands be glad.*

Psalm 98 — He Has Done Wonderful Things

Theme: Sing praises to the Lord (subject) because of what He has done (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 1

Structure: Verses 1-3 are a call to *sing to the Lord a new song* because of His works, specifically: (1) *The LORD has made known His salvation*, (2) *He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations*, (3) *He has remembered His lovingkindness*, and (4) *His faithfulness to the house of Israel*. Verses 4-6 say to sing all this with musical instruments. Verses 8-9 return to the theme that God will come to judge the earth.

Thoughts and Applications: Many Psalms, like 98, declare one of the major themes in Psalms—justice. The psalmists declare the human awareness of justice, the lack of justice on the earth, the existence of a just God, and therefore, the inevitable coming of God to judge the earth.

*98:1 O sing to the LORD a new song,
For He has done wonderful things,*

Psalm 99 — The Lord Reigns over Israel

Theme: The primary illustration of the reign of the Lord (subject) is over Israel (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 2

Structure: There are two basic paragraphs in the Psalm, although the last verse stands apart as a call to worship God. Verses 1-5 emphasize God's reign over Zion and the Israelites. Verses 6-9 illustrate that with Moses, Aaron, and Samuel.

*99:2 The LORD is great in Zion,
And He is exalted above all the peoples.*

Psalm 100 — Shout Joyfully to the Lord

Theme: *Shout joyfully to the Lord* (subject), *for the Lord is good* (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 5

Structure: There are no subdivisions in Psalm 100, except that the last verse gives the reason for the worship.

Thoughts and Applications: The Psalm calls for God's people to *Shout, Serve, Come, Know, and Enter His gates with thanksgiving*. Then verse 5 tells us the reason: *For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting, And His faithfulness to all generations.*

*100:5 For the LORD is good;
His lovingkindness is everlasting
And His faithfulness to all generations.*

Psalm 101 — David *will destroy the wicked of the land*

Theme: To walk with integrity of heart (subject) is to get rid of the evil around us (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: not given, but the context favors David's earlier years

Key Passage: verse 3

Structure: Other than verse 1 being a general statement of praise, the Psalm has no subdivisions.

Thoughts and Applications: We are a bit amazed at David's list of things that he will do to walk in integrity. The emphasis is avoiding evil by avoiding evil people, not trying to convert them. He said:

- (1) *I will set no worthless thing before my eyes*
- (2) *I hate the work of those who fall away*
- (3) *It shall not fasten its grip on me*
- (4) *A perverse heart shall depart from me*
- (5) *I will know no evil*
- (6) *Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy*
- (7) *No one who has a haughty look and an arrogant heart will I endure*
- (8) *My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me*
- (9) *He who walks in a blameless way is the one who will minister to me*
- (10) *He who practices deceit shall not dwell within my house*
- (11) *He who speaks falsehood shall not maintain his position before me*
- (12) *Every morning I will destroy all the wicked of the land, So as to cut off from the city of the LORD all those who do iniquity.*

*101:3 I will set no worthless thing before my eyes;
I hate the work of those who fall away;
It shall not fasten its grip on me.*

Psalm 102 — I am *afflicted ... but You Are the Same*

Theme: Comfort from affliction (subject) is in the immutability of God (complement).

Author: unknown, but he calls himself *the Afflicted when he is faint and pours out his complaint before the LORD*

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verses 26-27

Structure: Verses 1-11 are a prayer of the psalmist in the midst of physical and emotional distress. Verses 12-22 speak of several attributes of God (eternality, compassion, graciousness, sovereignty). Verses 23-28, in contrast with the psalmist's suffering, emphasize the immutability of God: *You will change them and they will be changed. But You are the same.*

*102:26 "Even they will perish, but You endure;
And all of them will wear out like a garment;
Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.
102:27 "But You are the same,
And Your years will not come to an end.*

Psalm 103 — *The Lord Is ... Slow to Anger and Abounding in Lovingkindness*

Theme: The compassion of God (subject) comes to those who fear God (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 11

Structure: Verses 1-7 praise God for His *righteous deeds*. Verses 8-18 focus on God's compassion concerning the sins of His people. Verses 19-22 speak of God's sovereignty over angels.

Thoughts and Applications: The Psalm has several significant verses for memorizing. Notice in verse 7 the difference between God's relationship with Moses and that of the Israelites. Israel knew the *acts* of God but Moses knew the *ways* of God.

*103:11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
So great is His lovingkindness toward those
who fear Him.*

Psalm 104 — *Creation and the Creator*

Theme: The Creator (subject) sustains His creation (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 5

*104:5 He established the earth upon its foundations,
So that it will not totter forever and ever.*

Structure: Even though this is a rather long Psalm, the main body seems to have no divisions. Verse 1 is a call to bless the Lord for His majesty. The conclusion, in verses 33-35, is commitment to praise the Lord. Other than that, the whole Psalm is about God as creator and sustainer of His creation.

Psalm 105 — Remember His Wonders which He Has Done

Theme: What God has done in history (subject) should be remembered (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: none given, but it covers much of the early history of Israel

Key Passage: verses 5 and 8

Structure: Verses 1-7 are a call to remember God's wonders and the *marvels and the judgments uttered by His*

mouth. Verse 8-45 rehearse various elements of Israel's history to be remembered: from the Abrahamic Covenant through the Egyptian Bondage, the Exodus, and on into the Promised Land.

*105:5 Remember His wonders which He has done,
105:8 He has remembered His covenant forever,
The word which He commanded to a thousand
generations,
His marvels and the judgments uttered by His mouth,*

Psalm 106 — A History of Sin

Theme: Any history, like our own personal history (subject), is a history of sin (complement).

Author: unknown, but likely the same author as Psalm 105 because of the similar style

Historical Setting: none given, but the Psalm rehearses many of Israel's historical sins

Key Passage: verse 6

Structure: Verses 1-5 are an introductory prayer. Verses 6-46 review a litany of Israel's historical sins. This includes their unbelief and murmuring at the Red Sea (verses 6-12), demanding flesh to eat (verses 13-15), envy over the authority of Moses and Aaron (verses 16-18), worship of the golden calf (verses 19-23), disobedience concerning the report of the spies (verses 24-27), participation in pagan worship (verses 28-31), the provocation at the waters of Meribah (verses 32-33), and continued idolatry after entering Canaan (verses 34-46). Verses 47-48 are a concluding comment of praise.

Thoughts and Applications: In this Psalm, there are two interesting examples of individuals influencing the mind of God. Verse 23 deals with the sovereignty of God and the free will of man as Moses prayed for God to not destroy the Israelites. Verse 30 also shows the significance of one man among the nation when *Phinehas stood up and interposed, And so the plague was stayed*.

*106:6 We have sinned like our fathers,
We have committed iniquity, we have
behaved wickedly.*

Psalm 107 — The Lord Delivers the Oppressed

Theme: Let the redeemed of the Lord (subject) declare the deliverance of the Lord (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: the context would indicate it was soon after the return from the Babylonian Captivity

Key Passage: verse 2

Structure: Verses 1-3 are a call to *Let the redeemed of the LORD say so*. Verses 4-32 present the nation's return from captivity with four pictures:

1. In verses 4-9, travelers are being led to a city they could not find.
2. In verses 10-16, prisoners are being released from a prison.
3. In verses 17-22, sick fools are delivered from the gates of death.
4. In verses 23-32, sailors are delivered from a storm.

Verses 33-43 conclude with how God changes things for the oppressed.

*107:2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,
Whom He has redeemed from the hand of
the adversary*

Questions for Discussion

True or False?

1. Psalm 96:10 says: *He will judge the peoples with equity.* That means God will judge the whole earth from the same standard.
2. Psalms 97 and 99 are about the sovereignty of God.
3. In Psalm 101, the reason David wants to destroy the wicked is because they are destroying the city of God.
4. In Psalm 102, the author is comforted because God will judge his enemies.
5. Psalm 103 says that God's love for us comes when we fear God.
6. The reason for the historical review in Psalm 105 is to remember God's judgments.

Answers: (1) True (He will judge everyone by His own character. Specifically, those without the Law are judged by their conscience—Romans 2:15.) (2) True (That's the meaning of *The Lord reigns.*) (3) False (It is because David wants to walk with integrity.) (4) False (He is comforted because *they will perish, but You endure.* His enemies will die off, but God is eternal.) (5) True (verse 11). (6) True (verse 5).

Psalm 108 — *Be Exalted, Oh God, Above the Heavens*

Theme: God is to be exalted (subject) because He delivers/saves (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 5

Structure: This Psalm is really strange in that none of it is new material. Verses 1-5 are David exalting God, but the passage is basically identical to Psalm 57:7-11. Verses 6-13 are about the deliverance of God, but these verses are identical to Psalm 60:5-12.

Thoughts and Applications: There is no way to know why these passages are re-used to create this independent Psalm. Speculations would include they were put to different music, they were put together for a specific occasion, or the two sections were the favorite of some later musician who put them together.

*108:5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens,
And Your glory above all the earth.*

Psalm 109 — *Let His Children Be Fatherless*

Theme: A personal enemy (subject) should be brought before God (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 12

Structure: In verses 1-5, David called upon God to *not be silent* concerning those who are lying about him. But in verses 6-20, David zeroed in on one unnamed person who he asked God to devastate, along with his wife and children. In verses 21-29, David focused on help for himself. In verses 30-31, he declared that he *will give thanks abundantly to the Lord.*

Thoughts and Applications: What a fascinating Psalm! It is truly amazing that anyone would put this to music. No one has ever put this to music in all history that I am aware of. No one even dares mention it. David's requests for God to totally devastate his enemies are nothing short of ruthless. Read this: *Let his children be fatherless, And his wife a widow. Let his children wander about and beg; And let them seek sustenance far from their ruined homes. Let the creditor seize all that he has, And let strangers plunder the product of his labor. Let there be none to extend lovingkindness to him* (verses 9-12). Here's the point: If you are ever this angry with someone, go ahead and vent it, but do it before God in a prayer asking God to handle it. Don't take it upon yourself to do something judgmental concerning your enemy.

*109:12 Let there be none to extend lovingkindness to him,
Nor any to be gracious to his fatherless children.*

Psalm 110 — *You Are a Priest Forever According to the Order of Melchizedek*

Theme: A (Messianic) priestly king (subject) is coming to Zion (complement).

Author: David

110:4 The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

Historical Setting: unknown, but it refers to the future reign of the Messiah

Key Passage: verse 4

Structure: There are no subdivisions in the Psalm. A future messianic Lord will be both king (verses 1-3) and priest (verse 4), and He will rule the nations of the earth (verses 5-7).

Thoughts and Applications: Jesus quoted Psalm 110:1 to show that He was the Messiah, and therefore, David's Lord, not just David's descendant (Mark 12:36; Matthew 22:44; Luke 20:42). Psalm 110:1 is also quoted in Acts 2:34-35 and Hebrews 1:13. The Melchizedek priesthood of verse 4 comes from Genesis 14 and is referred to in Hebrews 7. The phrase in verse 1, *נְאֻם יְהוָה לַאֲדֹנָי* (*neum yehwah la adonai*) thus says the LORD to my Lord is *Yehwah* (one of the words for "God") says to my *Adoni* (the word for "lord/master," sometimes used of "God"). So David recognized a future master (Christ) who will be set up by God over David and at the right hand of God the Father. This answers the question as to how the Messiah can be a priest (without being from the tribe of Levi), yet be a king from the line of David (from the tribe of Judah).

Psalm 111 — The Beginning of Wisdom

Theme: Fearing God because of His works (subject) leads to wisdom (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 7

Structure: The Psalm is a Hebrew-letter acrostic, where the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet each begin a new line.

*111:7 The works of His hands are truth and justice;
All His precepts are sure.*

Psalm 112 — Who Greatly Delights in His Commandments

Theme: Those who fear the Lord (subject) keep His commandments and are generous (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 1

Structure: Verses 1-4 express blessing for the one *who greatly delights in His commandments*. Verses 5-9 declare well-being for the *man who is gracious and lends*. Verse 10 contrasts this with the wicked.

*112:1 Praise the LORD!
How blessed is the man who fears the LORD,
Who greatly delights in His commandments.*

Psalm 113 — The Lord humbles Himself

Theme: The Lord, enthroned on high (subject), humbles Himself to behold heaven and earth (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown, but used at the time of the Passover

Key Passage: verses 5-6

Structure: Verses 1-3 are a call to praise. Verses 4-9 tell us that God enthroned on high humbles Himself in the sense that He becomes involved in the life of His creation. God is both transcendent and immanent.

Thoughts and Applications: Psalms 113–118 are known as the Egyptian Praises because they were sung in connection with the Passover, celebrating the Exodus from Egypt. The Psalm begins and ends with *הַלְלוּ יְהוָה* (*halelu yah*) *praise the Lord*. Verses 5-6 ask the question: *Who is like the LORD our God, Who is enthroned on high, Who humbles Himself to behold, The things that are in heaven and in the earth?* This reminds us of the emptying Christ did when He came to earth, mentioned in Philippians 2:5-7.

*113:5 Who is like the LORD our God,
Who is enthroned on high,
113:6 Who humbles Himself to behold
The things that are in heaven and in the earth?*

Psalm 114 — When Israel Went Forth from Egypt

Theme: When God led Israel out of Egypt (subject), He prepared the land of Judah to receive them (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: *when Israel went forth from Egypt*

Key Passage: Verses 1-2

Structure: Verses 1-2 announce the theme. Verses 3-8 ask questions about the geography of the land, indicating that God prepared the land for the people.

*114:1 When Israel went forth from Egypt,
The house of Jacob from a people of strange language,
114:2 Judah became His sanctuary,
Israel, His dominion.*

Psalm 115 — *Our God Is in the Heavens*

Theme: The God *in the heavens* (subject) *does whatever He pleases* (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 3

Structure: Verses 1-8 declare God as the God of the heavens in contrast to the silly idea of the idols people make for themselves. Verses 9-15 call upon the people of Israel to trust the God they fear. Verses 16-18 contrast the heavens with the earth and the living with the dead.

Thoughts and Applications: There are some interesting verses in this Psalm. Verse 11 tells those who fear God to trust Him. For most things I fear in life, I would not trust—the police, a bear in the woods, a criminal with a gun. I can only trust a God I fear if I have confidence in His character. Verse 16 says the heavens, meaning the galaxies of stars and planets and moons, belong to God. We don't get to see them or go there or rule over them, *But the earth he has given to the sons of men*. It sure does not sound like there is life like ours out there or that we will ever interact with those heavens. Verse 17 is fascinating. It says: *the dead do not praise the Lord* rather they *go down to silence*. The psalmist is not commenting on life after death, he is saying that the dead do not participate in earthly activities.

115:3 *But our God is in the heavens;
He does whatever He pleases.*

Psalm 116 — *God Is Compassionate*

Theme: Love the Lord (subject) because He is gracious and merciful (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 5

Structure: There are no clear subdivisions in this Psalm.

Thoughts and Applications: The significant emphasis is on the grace and mercy of God. God never offers this to the individual in the Old Testament, but the psalmist declares that these are part of God. They are not what we would call attributes of God because they come to an end (for example, at the Flood, Israel's Diaspora, and the Tribulation *day of the Lord*). But God clearly deals with the repentant in terms of grace (unmerited favor) and mercy (unmerited non-punishment).

116:5 *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;
Yes, our God is compassionate.*

Psalm 117 — *Hallelujah*

Theme: Praise the Lord (subject) all the (Gentile) nations (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown, but this is the shortest chapter and the middle chapter of the Bible

Key Passage: verses 1-2

Structure: Verse 1 is a call to praise for all גוים (*goyim*) *nations* or better *Gentiles*, in other words, not just the Jews. Verse 2, lines one and two, give the cause or reason for all people to praise Israel's God: because of His lovingkindness toward Israel, and His truth is everlasting. The last line is the conclusion. הללו יה (*halelu yah*), *hallelujah*, praise the Lord.

117:1 *Praise the LORD, all nations;
Laud Him, all peoples!*
117:2 *For His lovingkindness is great toward us,
And the truth of the LORD is everlasting.
Praise the LORD!*

Psalm 118 — *Open the Gates of Righteousness*

Theme: The gates of the Lord (subject) will be entered by the righteous (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: at the time of a festival (verse 27)

Key Passage: verses 26-27

Structure: Verses 1-4 are a call to praise, repeating (four times): *His lovingkindness is everlasting*. This phrase is also the final concluding statement of the

Psalm. Verses 5-21 look to the past deliverance of God, when all nations (or Gentiles) *surrounded me* (repeated four times). Verses 22-29 focus on the festival at hand, declaring *Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD*. Verse 22 is possibly a reference to some king of Israel who reigned after the Temple was complete, using the cornerstone example from the Temple construction. Verse 24, *the day which the Lord has made*, is probably a reference to the festival day.

Thoughts and Applications: Christ applied these words to His own rejection (in Matthew 21:42-44). Peter also used this in Acts 4:11 and 1 Peter 2:7.

118:26 *Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD;
We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.*
118:27 *The LORD is God, and He has given us light;
Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.*

Questions for Discussion

True or False?

1. In Psalm 109, David expected God to kill his enemy and devastate his enemy's family.
2. In Psalm 110:1, the second *Lord* is inferior to the first *LORD* but greater than the psalmist.
3. In Psalm 111, God gives food to the poor.
4. The righteous man of Psalm 112 lends money to the poor.
5. In Psalm 112, the fear of God is coupled with the love of God.
6. In Psalm 113, the phrase, *Who humbles Himself*, means God is involved in His creation.
7. Psalm 115:1-3 tells us that God always does the best good for Israel.
8. The point of Psalm 116 is that God is always compassionate.
9. Psalm 117 calls for all people everywhere in the world to praise Israel's God.
10. Psalm 118:24 refers to every day.

Answers: (1) True. (2) True. (3) False (*He has given food to those who fear Him*—verse 5.) (4) True. (5) False (It is tied to keeping His commandments.) (6) True (He is immanent as well as transcendent.) (7) False (It says *He does whatever He pleases*.) (8) False (God is compassionate to those who call upon Him for rescue.) (9) True. (10) False (It refers to a festival.)

Psalm 119 — The Law of the Lord

Theme: The Word of God (subject) is all man needs to know (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verses 97-105

Structure: Psalm 119 is an alphabetic acrostic. There are 22 stanzas for the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each of them has 8 verses. So the first 8 verses begin with first letter מ (aleph-silent), the next 8 verses begin with the second letter נ (Bet-B), and so forth. The psalmist used 10 different terms for the Word of God: *law, testimonies, ways, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgments, word, path, and word* (as in *promise or utterance*). This is perhaps the most dynamic chapter in the Bible concerning the written Word of God. The heart of it is the 8 verses in stanza מ (Mem-M), verses 97-104. Some other notable verses include: 10, 11, 68, 71, 89, 120, 140, and 164.

Thoughts and Applications: The magnificence of Psalm 119 cannot be overstated. It is no accident that the biggest Psalm is about the significance of the written Word of God. Notice that the author did not keep the Word of God out of some legalistic structure, demanding obedience or punishment, but out of a heart for God which created a love for His *commandments, precepts, testimonies*..., etc. From the “Key Passage,” מ (Mem-M) verses 97-105, we learn that the author got wisdom, insight, and understanding from the written Word of God. He saw the written Word as a personal revelation from God. He said, referring to the written Word: *For You Yourself have taught me*.

מ (Mem-M)

119:97 *O how I love Your law!*

It is my meditation all the day.

119:98 *Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies,*

For they are ever mine.

119:99 *I have more insight than all my teachers,*

For Your testimonies are my meditation.

119:100 *I understand more than the aged,*

Because I have observed Your precepts.

119:101 *I have restrained my feet from every evil way,*

That I may keep Your word.

119:102 *I have not turned aside from Your ordinances,*

For You Yourself have taught me.

119:103 *How sweet are Your words to my taste!*

Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

119:104 *From Your precepts I get understanding;*

Therefore I hate every false way.

נ (Nun-N)

119:105 *Your word is a lamp to my feet*

And a light to my path.

Psalm 120 — The Deceitful Tongue

Theme: Lying lips (subject) prevent peace (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: *A Song of Ascents*. “Pss. [Psalms] 120–134 formed a hymn book used by pilgrims going up to Jerusalem for the annual feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Booths” (“Ryrie Study Bible,” p. 948).

Key Passage: Verse 2

120:2 *Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips,
From a deceitful tongue.*

Structure: The Psalm seems to be in two totally disconnected paragraphs. One can only assume they go together because they are part of the same Psalm. Verses 1-4 are a call for deliverance from a someone's lying tongue. Verses 5-7 are a quest for peace.

Thoughts and Applications: We can conclude that the lying tongue prevents peace.

Psalm 121 — *The Lord Is Your Keeper*

Theme: The God you worship (subject) is also your keeper (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: *A Song of Ascents*

Key Verse: Verse 4

Structure: There are no subdivisions in this Psalm.

*121:4 Behold, He who keeps Israel
Will neither slumber nor sleep.*

Psalm 122 — *Peace for Jerusalem*

Theme: Pray for peace (subject) for Jerusalem (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: *A Song of Ascents*

Key Verse: verse 6

Structure: Verses 1-5 picture an ascent into Jerusalem. Verses 6-9 pray for peace for Jerusalem.

*122:6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
"May they prosper who love you."*

Psalm 123 — *The Contempt of the Proud Confessed*

Theme: Pride (subject) is a sin of contempt for God, which must be confessed, if we want God to *be gracious to us* (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: *A Song of Ascents*

Key Passage: verse 3

Structure: There are no subdivisions in this Psalm.

*123:3 Be gracious to us, O LORD, be
gracious to us,
For we are greatly filled with contempt.*

Psalm 124 — *The Lord Who Was on Our Side*

Theme: If the Lord is not on our side (subject), our enemies will swallow us alive (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: *A Song of Ascents*

Key Passage: verse 8

Structure: There are no subdivisions in this Psalm.

*124:8 Our help is in the name of the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.*

Psalm 125 — *The Lord Surrounds His People*

Theme: Mount Zion (subject) abides forever (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: *A Song of Ascents*

Key Passage: verse 2

Structure: Verses 1-2 are about Jerusalem abiding forever. Verses 3-5 are about the people of God doing good.

*125:2 As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
So the LORD surrounds His people
From this time forth and forever.*

Psalm 126 — *The Returning Exiles*

Theme: The land of Israel (subject) will be rebuilt (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: *A Song of Ascents*, rejoicing and praying for exiles to return

Key Passage: verse 4

Structure: There are no subdivisions in this Psalm.

Thoughts and Applications: The author rejoiced over those who have returned from the Babylonian Captivity and prayed for a stream of people to return from captivity like the rain fills the wadis in the south.

*126:4 Restore our captivity, O LORD,
As the streams in the South.*

Psalm 127 — The Lord Builds the House

Theme: *Unless the Lord builds the house (subject), they labor in vain who build it (complement).*

Author: The second Psalm of Solomon

Historical Setting: building the Temple

Key Passage: verse 1

Structure: Verses 1-2 are the general principles about the Lord building the house. Verses 3-5 apply that idea to God building an individual's family.

Thoughts and Applications: This Psalm is one of the most significant statements about the sovereignty of God. *Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it.* Also in this Psalm, children are presented as a blessing from God. So, even though the context is probably Solomon building the Temple, the house God is building also includes our physical children. This would be true in both testaments, but in the Old Testament, children were a blessing in the sense of being a reward. In the New Testament, children are presented as a stewardship, and we are responsible to God for how we manage them.

*127:1 Unless the LORD builds the house,
They labor in vain who build it;
Unless the LORD guards the city,
The watchman keeps awake in vain.*

Psalm 128 — Family Blessings

Theme: Family blessings (subject) come from the fear of the Lord (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: *A Song of Ascents*

Key Passage: verses 1-3

Structure: There are no subdivisions in this Psalm.

*128:1 How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, Who walks in His ways.
128:2 When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, You will be happy and it will be well with you.
128:3 Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine Within your house, Your children like olive plants Around your table.*

Psalm 129 — Those Who Hate Zion

Theme: May those who hate Israel (subject) be put to shame (complement).

Author: unknown, but the context fits the life of David

Historical Setting: *A Song of Ascents*

Key Passage: verse 5

Structure: Verses 1-4 are about the psalmist being persecuted. Verses 5-8 are about those who hate Israel. The idea seems to be they are one and the same.

*129:5 May all who hate Zion
Be put to shame and turned backward*

Psalm 130 — Hope

Theme: Hope for redemption (subject) is in the forgiveness of the Lord (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: *A Song of Ascents*

Key Passage: verse 7

Structure: Verses 1-4 are a prayer addressed to God. Verses 5-8 are a statement of hope addressed to the people of Israel.

Thoughts and Applications: This Psalm is the heart of the Christian gospel message. Of course, the psalmist was not aware of the sacrifice of Christ that would make this forgiveness possible and available to all mankind. But he knew that our only hope had to come from God somehow forgiving our sins.

*130:7 O Israel, hope in the LORD;
For with the LORD there is lovingkindness,
And with Him is abundant redemption.*

Psalm 131 — Humility

Theme: Humility before the Lord (subject) creates hope (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: *A Song of Ascents*

Key Passage: verse 1

Structure: There are no subdivisions in this Psalm.

Thoughts and Applications: Notice how David, in his poetic metaphor of a weaned child resting on his mother, pictures the dependent satisfaction of a humble believer. Psalms 123 and 131 condemn pride. This is a major theme throughout Scripture. One of the best metaphors of humility is the weaned child resting on his mother in Psalm 131. Remember: PRIDE IS VALUE INDEPENDENT FROM GOD. HUMILITY IS VALUE DEPENDENT UPON GOD. Pride is never ever a

*131:1 O LORD, my heart is not proud,
nor my eyes haughty;
Nor do I involve myself in great matters,
Or in things too difficult for me.*

good thing for anybody about anything. Never be proud of your children, your country, your school ... or anything. That says they have value independent from God. Be thankful, not proud.

Psalm 132 — Remember David

Theme: The Davidic Covenant (subject) will be remembered by God (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: *A Song of Ascents*

Key Passage: verse 10

Structure: Verses 1-10 are a prayer request for God to remember His covenant with David. Verses 10-18, although they are not meant to be an actual verbal answer, are written as if they were a response from God.

*132:10 For the sake of David Your servant,
Do not turn away the face of Your anointed.*

Questions for Discussion

True or False?

1. In Psalm 119:102, the psalmist said: *You Yourself have taught me*. He meant that God had taught him by answers to his prayers.
2. Psalms 120–134 are each called *A Song of Ascents*. That means they are songs which are prayers that ascend up to God.
3. In Psalm 121, *The Lord is your keeper* means the Lord will keep your soul.
4. Psalm 126:4 is a prayer for the Lord to restore Israel like the wadis fill up with water.
5. The *house*, in Psalm 127, is both the Temple in Jerusalem and the children of the Israelites.
6. The difference between Psalms 127–128 and the New Testament is that, in the New Testament, children are not a blessing from the Lord.
7. The only difference between Psalm 130 and the New Testament gospel message is that the psalmist did not know Christ would pay for our sins.

Answers: (1) False (He meant the written Word of God is like God Himself taught him.) (2) False (They are songs sung while ascending up Mount Moriah toward the Temple in Jerusalem at the time of the festivals.) (3) True (verse 7). (4) True (The restoration is from the Babylonian captivity.) (5) True. (6) True (They are a stewardship from the Lord. The New Testament never says they are a blessing.) (7) True.

Psalm 133 — Fellowship

Theme: Fellowship, *For brothers to dwell together in unity* (subject) is *good and pleasant* (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: *A Song of Ascents*

Key Passage: verse 1

Structure: There are no subdivisions in this Psalm.

Thoughts and Applications: This is a unique expression of fellowship, uncommon in the Psalms and even in the Old Testament.

*133:1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brothers to dwell together in unity!*

Psalm 134 — Those Who Serve by Night

Theme: Those who serve the Lord (subject) should bless the Lord, and we should pray that they will be blessed by the Lord (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: *A Song of Ascents*

Key Passage: verse 1

Structure: There are no subdivisions in this Psalm.

Thoughts and Applications: The real focus here is not on the night servants but on the Temple in Jerusalem.

*134:1 Behold, bless the LORD, all servants of the LORD,
Who serve by night in the house of the LORD!*

Psalm 135 — The Lord Is Good, All the Time

Theme: *Praise the LORD* (subject), *for the LORD is good* (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 3

Structure: Verses 1-4 are a call for Israel (those *who stand in the house of the Lord*, not the Gentiles) to praise the Lord. Verses 5-7

call Israel to praise the Lord for what He does in nature (*Whatever the Lord Pleases, He does*). Verses 8-14 demonstrate the word of the Lord in delivering Israel from Egypt and establishing them in the land. Verses 15-18 criticize those who worship idols. The comments are similar to those in Psalm 115:4-8 and Isaiah 44:9-20. Verses 19-21 call upon various houses of Israel to bless the Lord.

Thoughts and Applications: The phrase *Whatever the Lord pleases, He does* in verse 6 is in the context of His sovereignty over nature. This is interesting in terms of natural disasters. We should not conclude that natural disasters are a specific judgment of God on a specific group of people or locality. But we can conclude that they are controlled by God and are part of His sovereign plan. The theme of the Psalm is *the Lord is good*. And “good” is described by *Whatever the Lord Pleases, He does*. So there is some sense in which all acts of nature are good. Of course, we understand nature to be cursed, because of the Fall of Adam and Eve, and awaiting redemption (Romans 8:19-22). So one element involved in the violent acts of nature is the judgment on sin which pleased the justice of God.

135:3 *Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good;
Sing praises to His name, for it is lovely.*

Psalm 136 — His Lovingkindness Is Everlasting

Theme: The lovingkindness of God (subject) is everlasting (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 26

Structure: Although the evidence of God’s lovingkindness changes, it seems that the author does not intend any paragraph divisions in the 26 verses of this Psalm.

Thoughts and Applications: The phrase לְעוֹלָם הַסֶּדֶד (*le-olam hasedu*) *For His livingkindness is everlasting* is the dominant idea repeated at the end of each verse of this Psalm. The subject is the word הֶסֶד (*hesed*) which, besides *lovingkindness*, can mean *loyal love* or *loyalty*. It is the strongest Hebrew word for love (like *agape love* in the New Testament).

136:26 *Give thanks to the God of heaven,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.*

Psalm 137 — Remember Jerusalem

Theme: Jerusalem, and its enemies (subject), should be remembered (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 8

Structure: In verses 1-4, the psalmist wept over being in Babylon, exiled from Jerusalem. In verses 5-6, he committed himself to not forget Jerusalem. In verse 7, he called upon God to destroy those who destroyed Jerusalem. In verses 8-9, he ended with a severe curse upon Babylon.

Thoughts and Applications: Verse 9 says: *How blessed will be the one who seizes and dashes your little ones against the rock*. Applying this verse is challenging. The interpretation is that the psalmist was calling for God to severely punish Babylon for destroying Jerusalem. God used Babylon to destroy Jerusalem because of its sin, and He will destroy Babylon for the same reason. The judgment of God is good because it honors His justice. Here, the one who is blessed is not just used by God but intends to do what God intends to do. So the application is: the one is blessed (for us that’s heavenly rewards) who intends to do what God intends to do.

137:8 *O daughter of Babylon, you devastated one,
How blessed will be the one who repays you
With the recompense with which you have repaid us.*

Psalm 138 — The Varied Evidence of the Glory of God

Theme: The glory of God (subject) is seen in many ways (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 5

Structure: This Psalm is hard to subdivide because each verse seems to make a different point, and often a very significant point, which seems unrelated to the next significant point. Verse 1 praises God *before the gods*. Verse 2 tells us God magnifies His word according to His name. Verse 3 says

138:5 *And they will sing of the ways of the LORD,
For great is the glory of the LORD.*

answered prayer strengthens the soul. Verse 4 says all the kings will give thanks to the Lord (that would be in the Millennium). Verse 5 speaks of God's glory. Verse 6 says God regards the lowly. Verse 7 says God saves us from our enemies. Verse 8 says God accomplishes His plan for our lives.

Thoughts and Applications: The only umbrella-like subject covering all of these is the glory of God (verse 5).

Psalm 139 — The Omnipresence of God

Theme: Omnipresence (subject) is an attribute of God (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 17

Structure: Verses 1-4 are about the omnipresence of God. Verses 5-6 extend that to God being sovereign over individual lives. Verses 7-12 go back to the omnipresence of God. Verses 13-16 declare God as the one who forms us in the womb. Verses 17-18 marvel at all the thoughts of God. Verses 19-22 seem to be a different Psalm condemning and declaring hatred for the enemies of God. Verses 23-24 return to the subject of God's omnipresence and applies it personally with a magnificent benediction *Search me and know my heart ...*

Thoughts and Applications: This is one of the most magnificent Psalms ever written. David takes the omnipresence of God and develops it so that we also must conclude God is omniscient, omnipotent, and sovereign. Verse 13 says: *For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb.* The question is: does this prove that abortion kills human beings? Well, not exactly. If we who are born and living were aborted, it would. But that's because we know that we are a living soul created by God to be born. That is not to say that every fertilized egg is someone who God intended to be born as a human, or someone who will be in eternity forever. Women's bodies discard fertilized eggs on a regular basis. Nothing in Scripture tells us that all those discarded, fertilized eggs were intended by God to be born as humans who would be eternally somewhere forever. Abortion is sinful because it intentionally destroys a fetus who will become a born human being if left alone. But that is not the same as a fetus of those of us who, like David in Psalm 139, are born living human beings.

*139:17 How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!*

Psalm 140 — Evil Men

Theme: There are always evil men (subject) from whom God must deliver us (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 1

Structure: There are no paragraph divisions in this Psalm except the last two verses, which turn our attention to God's protection of the afflicted and the upright. Notice here the wicked are described as: stirring up war (verse 2), having poisonous tongues (verse 3), violent (verse 4), scheming (verses 4-5), and proud (verse 5).

Thoughts and Applications: Compare verse 10, *May burning coals fall upon them*, to Proverbs 25:22 and Romans 12:20.

*140:1 Rescue me, O LORD, from evil men;
Preserve me from violent men*

Psalm 141 — Let the Righteous Smite Me In Kindness

Theme: The blows of the righteous (subject) should replace the blows of the wicked (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 5

Structure: Verses 1-5 are about David being reproved by God and the righteous. Verses 6-10 are about God judging the wicked.

Thoughts and Applications: There are several fascinating statements in the first section:

- (1) In verse 2, David mentioned raising his hands in prayer, as Paul does in 1 Timothy 2:8.
- (2) In verse 4, David asked God to *not incline my heart to any evil thing.*
- (3) In verse 5, David asked God to have righteous people correct him. He said: *It is oil upon the head; Do not let my head refuse it.*

*141:5 Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me;
It is oil upon the head;
Do not let my head refuse it,
For still my prayer is against their wicked deeds.*

Psalm 142 — When Our Spirit Is Overwhelmed

Theme: When our spirit is overwhelmed (subject), depend upon God (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: *when he was in the cave.* This could be the cave of Adullam (1 Samuel 22) or En-gedi (1 Samuel 24). This is the last of eight Psalms (Psalms 34, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 63, 142) that deal with the time when David was fleeing from Saul.

Key Passage: verse 3, see also verse 7

Structure: There are no subdivisions in this Psalm, except the last phrase of the last verse changes focus to: *The righteous will surround me, For You will deal bountifully with me.*

142:3 *When my spirit was overwhelmed within me,
You knew my path.
In the way where I walk
They have hidden a trap for me.*

Psalm 143 — Teach Me to Do Your Will

Theme: The teaching from God (subject) comes through the *good Spirit* of God (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verses 10-12

Structure: Verses 1-7 are David's usual cry for God's deliverance. Verses 8-12 are a request for teaching from God and leading from the Spirit of God.

Thoughts and Applications: Verse 2 is theologically interesting. David said: *And do not enter into judgment with Your servant, For in Your sight no man living is righteous.* The last paragraph is the uniqueness of the Psalm. Verse 12 is significant because David defined the love of God, not as universal (as in John 3:16) but selective (as in Romans 9:13).

143:10 *Teach me to do Your will,
For You are my God;
Let Your good Spirit lead me on level ground.*
143:11 *For the sake of Your name, O LORD, revive me.
In Your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble.*
143:12 *And in Your lovingkindness, cut off my enemies
And destroy all those who afflict my soul,
For I am Your servant.*

Questions for Discussion

True or False?

1. In Psalm 133, the oil on Aaron's beard is fellowship.
2. The servants in Psalm 134 are blessed because they are servants of the Lord.
3. The Hebrew phrase *לְעוֹלָם חַסְדֶּךָ* (*le-olam hasedu*), *For His livingkindness is everlasting.* is repeated at the end of all 26 verses of Psalm 136.
4. Psalm 138 seems to have a different subject for each verse. What ties them all together is the phrase in verse 5, *For great is the glory of the LORD.*
5. Psalm 139 is primarily about the sovereignty of God.
6. Psalm 139:13-15 proves that, if we had been aborted, it would be killing a human being.
7. In Psalm 141:5, the psalmist wants God to punish those who *smite me*.

Answers: (1) True. (2) False (Not exactly. They are blessed because they are keepers of the Temple, *the house of the LORD*.) (3) True. (4) True. (5) False (It is primarily about the omnipresence of God, which is developed into other characteristics of God, including His sovereignty.) (6) True. (7) False (These are the righteous who *smite me in kindness and reprove me*.)

Psalm 144 — Prosperity

Theme: Prosperity (subject) is a gift from God (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: Not given, but twice (verses 7 and 11), David said his trouble came from the hand of aliens (literally, *sons of foreigners*).

Key Passage: verses 12-14

Structure: Verses 1-6 contrast the sovereignty of God with the frailty of man. Verses 7-11 call upon God to rescue David from aliens (*sons of foreigners*). Verses 12-15 call for prosperity in terms of strong children, healthy gardens, flocks, and cattle. Verse 12 is a key verse since it poetically pictures the difference between a healthy son and a healthy daughter.

144:12 *Let our sons in their youth be as
grown-up plants,
And our daughters as corner pillars
fashioned as for a palace;*
144:13 *Let our garners be full, furnishing
every kind of produce,
And our flocks bring forth thousands and
ten thousands in our fields;*
144:14 *Let our cattle bear
Without mishap and without loss,
Let there be no outcry in our streets!*

Thoughts and Applications: Prosperity is always a gift from God in both Testaments, but the nature of Psalm 144 and the goal of David for Israel is just the opposite of that of Christ and the apostles. Where David prayed for prosperity on earth, the apostles prayed for endurance of suffering as a normal life for the church, with rewards (blessings) being in heaven.

Psalm 145 — Each Generation Praises God

Theme: The praise of God (subject) will be continued from one generation to another (complement).

Author: David

Historical Setting: unknown. This is the only Psalm with the title: *David's* [Psalm of] *Praise*.

Key Passage: verse 4

Structure: Verses 1-7 announce the theme of one generation praising God to the next generation. Verses 8-16 praise God for His attributes and His kingdom. Verses 17-21 praise God for His righteous acts.

Thoughts and Applications: Psalms 145–150 are praise Psalms, but 146–150 focus on joy, and Psalm 145 is more about the character of God. The Psalm is another alphabetic acrostic Psalm, each verse beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. [In the Hebrew text, the letter *nun* is missing between verses 13 and 14, but it is included in the LXX and in a text from Qumran (and included in the NIV).] The Psalm has many fantastic verses. It says much about the nature of God (verses 8-9 give five of His attributes), yet verse 3 says *His greatness is unsearchable*. There are also some great prayer principles in verses 18-20.

145:4 One generation shall praise Your works to another, And shall declare Your mighty acts.

Verse 3 includes the sentence: *Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised, And His greatness is unsearchable*. The psalmist is not saying God cannot be known. That's a Muslim view of God. The Psalms are full of things we can, and should, know about God. But God is unsearchable in at least four areas:

- (1) He is infinite and eternal.
- (2) His ways are not our ways.
- (3) We cannot know anything about Him that He does not want us to know.
- (4) We cannot just decide we will go search for or search out God. We cannot get to God. God must come to us.

Psalm 146 — Trust God, Not Princes

Theme: The righteous will trust God (subject), not human leaders, like princes, noblemen, or rulers, (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 3

Structure: Verses 1-4 are a call to trust God not princes or noblemen. Verses 5-10 tell us about the gracious works of God, with an emphasis on His protection of the lowly.

*146:3 Do not trust in princes,
In mortal man. in whom there is no salvation.*

Psalm 147 — Why Israel Should Praise God

Theme: Praise God for what He has done for Israel (subject) because *He has not dealt thus with any [other] nation* (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verses 19-20

Structure: Verses 1-6, verses 7-11, and verses 12-20 all make the same point. Each have a call to praise followed by a cause or reason for praise.

Thoughts and Applications: The unique emphasis here is that God has given His verbal revelation to Israel, not to any other nation.

*147:19 He declares His words to Jacob,
His statutes and His ordinances to Israel.
147:20 He has not dealt thus with any nation;
And as for His ordinances, they have not known them.
Praise the LORD!*

Psalm 148 — The Praise of Heaven and Earth

Theme: Everyone and everything in heaven and on earth (subject) should praise the Lord (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 13

*148:13 Let them praise the name of the LORD,
For His name alone is exalted;
His glory is above earth and heaven.*

Structure: Verses 1-6 call upon angels and everything in the heavens to praise God. Verses 7-14 call upon man and everything on earth to praise God.

Psalm 149 — Praise God with Your Mouth and With a Sword In Your Hand

Theme: Be ready and prepared (subject) to praise God and to be used by God against His enemies (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: unknown

Key Passage: verse 6

Structure: Verses 1-5 are a call for Israel to praise God with music. Verses 6-9 are a call to carry out the vengeance of God upon Israel's enemies.

149:6 *Let the high praises of God be in their mouth,
And a two-edged sword in their hand*

Thoughts and Applications: Verses 6-7 read: *Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand, To execute vengeance on the nations, And punishment on the peoples.* This sounds like an exception to the repeated command in the Bible not to take vengeance but to leave it to God. Actually, it is a command to be ready to be used by God when He takes vengeance. Verse 9 says it's to *execute on them the judgment written.* So it is about God's written judgment, not their personal vengeance. An application might be: I should be ready with the Scripture to defeat the false teaching of today's secular humanists (*the sword of the Spirit is the word of God*—Ephesians 6:17).

Psalm 150 — תְּלִלְיָהּ הַלְלוּ יְהוָה Halelu yah (Praise the Lord)

Theme: *Let everything that has breath* (subject) *praise the Lord* (complement).

Author: unknown

Historical Setting: Unknown, but this seems to be written as a benediction to the Psalms

Key Passage: verse 6

Structure: Verses 1-2 are a call to praise God in two places: *His sanctuary* and *His mighty expanse*. And for two reasons: *His mighty deeds* and *His excellent greatness*. Verses 3-5 say to praise God with music and dancing. Verse 6 concludes the Psalm with the theme of the whole Psalter: *Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.*

150:6 *Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.
Praise the LORD!*

Thoughts and Applications: The Psalter ends with a benediction Psalm which seems to be written as a conclusion, or possibly whoever finally collected the Psalms together [possibly Ezra] put this Psalm at the end because it was a fitting benediction. At any rate, it calls us to praise God with music and dancing. This would indicate that just any music was not fitting. It should be music that would be normally played by those instruments and incline one toward dancing. This is not couples dancing on a dance floor, but people so excited that they are tempted to move about to the tune of the music (as King David did in 2 Samuel 6:14).

Questions for Discussion

True or False?

1. The phrase in Psalm 144:12 *And our daughters as corner pillars fashioned as for a palace* means, ideally, daughters become the foundation of the home.
2. Five works of God mentioned in Psalm 145 are: grace, mercy, slow to anger, great in lovingkindness, and goodness.
3. In Psalm 146:4, *His spirit* refers to the spirit of a believer.
4. From Psalm 147, we can conclude that the Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims have the wrong God.
5. Psalm 148 tells us that the elements of nature praise God by being a perfect creation.
6. Psalm 149:4 says that God takes pleasure in afflicted people because He can *beautify* them.
7. *Let everything that has breath praise the Lord* (Psalm 150:6) refers to all humans.

Answers: (1) True. (2) True (verses 8-9). (3) False (It refers to the spirit of *princes ... in whom there is no salvation.*) (4) True (verses 19-20). (5) False (The elements of nature are poetically personified and told to praise God as if they were living creatures.) (6) False (They are two separate statements. The Lord takes pleasure in His people [the *godly ones ... in Israel*], and He will *beautify the afflicted one with salvation.*) (7) True (Most likely. Although it could be a general figure of speech referring to all creation, it is unlikely any but humans would praise God in His sanctuary and with musical instruments.)