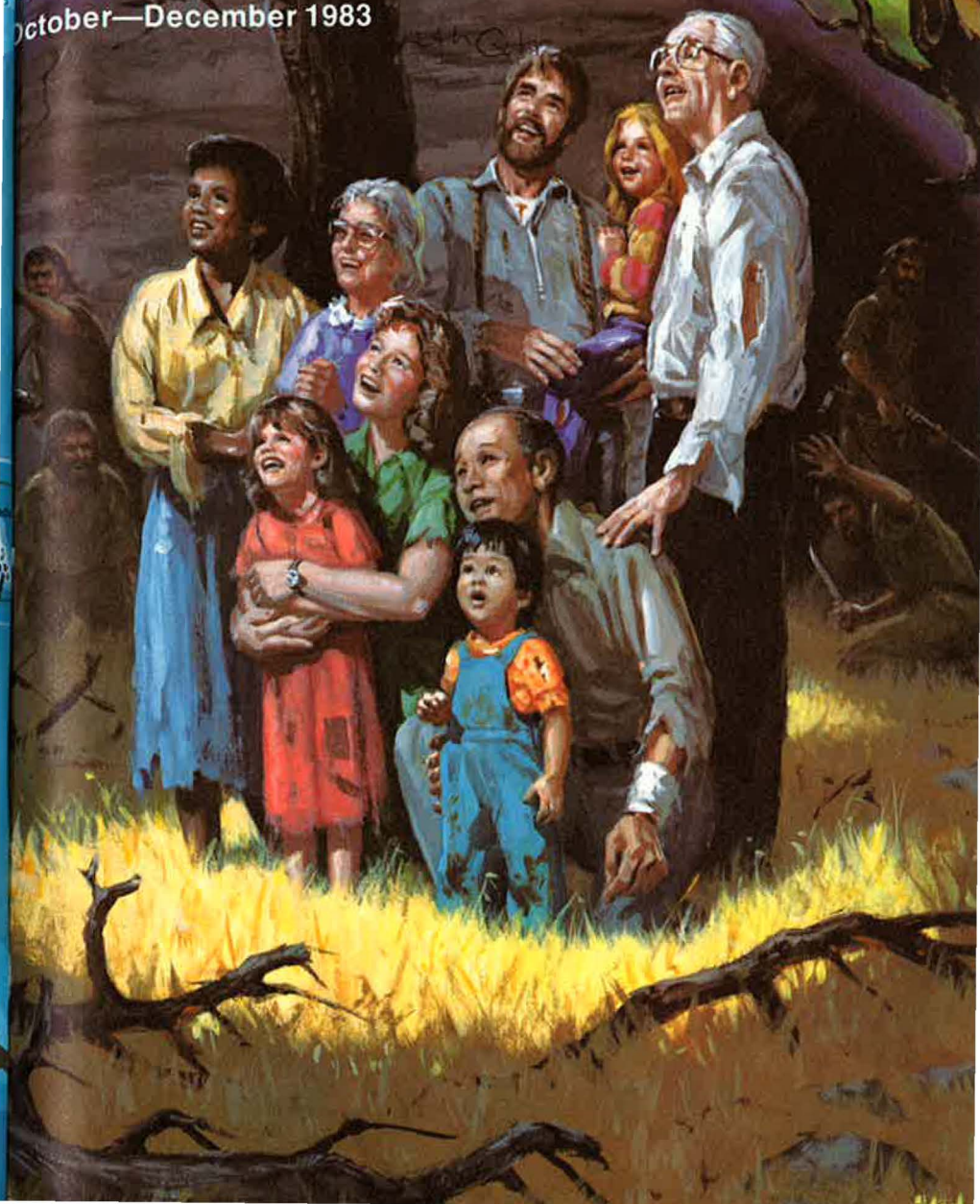


Adult Sabbath School Lessons



# SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

October—December 1983





This Could Be a Most Important

# PAGE FROM YOUR FUTURE

Available First Quarter, 1984

Actual Type Size

and. Since Jesus' death on the cross, the Christian church is spiritual Israel. Jews are not saved as a nation, but as individual Christians.

**QUESTION FOR THOUGHT:**  
Is it important to know that Jesus died for the church today, and not a

"It Is Finished"

Part 1—Israel's End

"They cried out, 'Away with him, away with him, crucify him.' Pilate said unto them, 'Shall I crucify your King?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but Caesar.'" John 19:15

It is not important to know who was responsible for the death of Jesus Christ (See Matt. 26:24) for the sins of the whole world. Every Christian confesses that he or she betrayed and denied Christ. Christ was betrayed and denied by "Christians" that the Romans and Jews were responsible for Christ's death. But Jesus really died of a broken heart—broken by the sins of all people. Jesus came to earth to die.

When Pilate washed his hands and was innocent, what did he scream? Matt.

One of the things Jesus died for (Mark 15:38, and (3) Matt.

For more than a thousand years, Christ was Israel's King, Protector, and Guide. When Israel refused to accept Jesus, they became

unprotected

1. When Jesus said, "It is finished," a hidden hand ripped open the temple veil. And so your Temple will be abandoned and empty. (Matt. 23:38 TEV)

2. When Christ was resurrected (returned to life), other people were called Jesus their King (Eph. 4:8). They were shocked and speechless. What if they were to meet the risen Christ? Never again could they sleep peacefully. —The Desire of Ages, p. 785, paraphrased

3. Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70. What happened to Israel after the cross? Rom. 11:11-26.

The cry, "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15), and the death of Jesus brought the mission of Israel to an end. Since Jesus' death on the cross, the Christian church is spiritual Israel. Jews are not saved as a nation, but as individual Christians.

**A QUESTION FOR THOUGHT:**  
Why is it important to know that Israel is the church today, and not a nation?

**FURTHER STUDY:** Romans 9 and 10

## THE NEW EASY ENGLISH EDITION OF THE ADULT SABBATH SCHOOL LESSON QUARTERLY

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# We Thought You Ought to Know

With Sabbath School offerings now amounting to about US \$35 million each year, one wonders, Where do all those dollars go? They come from the 46,431 Sabbath Schools and flow through the local missions and conferences to the unions and divisions and, finally, to the General Conference Treasury.

There are four categories of offerings:

## 1. INVESTMENT



Twenty-five percent of the annual world total is appropriated to projects in each division for frontier outreach and/or large city evangelism. Divisions select their own projects. The remaining 75% goes into the World Mission Fund.

## 2. 13TH SABBATH



Twenty-five percent of the quarterly Thirteenth Sabbath offering is appropriated to designated projects in world divisions according to a schedule voted by the General Conference. Each division selects its own projects. The remaining 75% is added to the World Mission Fund.

## 3. BIRTHDAY-THANK



The entire Birthday-Thank Offering and the Twelve Sabbaths Offering flow into the World Mission Fund which also benefits from other mission offerings such as the Annual Week of Sacrifice Offering and Mission Extension Offering.

## 4. 12 SABBATHS

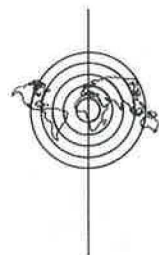


The World Mission Fund is divided among all eleven divisions each year at the Annual Council and used according to policies established by each division and the General Conference.

Projects in the Eastern Africa Division to benefit from the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering on December 24, 1983 are:

1. Picture rolls in the Kiswahili language.
2. New printing press for Africa Herald Publishing House, Kenya.
3. New men's dormitory for Kamagambo Teachers' College, Kenya.
4. New administration building, West Uganda Field.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT  
OF OUR WORLD MISSION PROGRAM**



## General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

CHURCH WORLD HEADQUARTERS: 6840 EASTERN AVENUE NW, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20012 USA  
TELEPHONE (202) 722-6640 CABLE ADVENTIST, WASHINGTON TELEX 89-580

Dear Sabbath School Members:

During the Thousand Days of Reaping, Sabbath School members, in addition to their many outreach projects, are endeavoring to raise \$100 million to support the broad global mission of the church and to provide extra funds for outreach into unentered territories. The World Mission Fund, which is divided and appropriated to the divisions each year at the time of the Annual Council, largely depends on the Sabbath School offerings for its support.

Presenting a weekly report on missions in each Sabbath School, and in each division of the Sabbath School, has far wider implications than fund raising, as important as that is. It is a regular reminder that we are members of a world church with close family ties. What affects one part of the family affects all. Each of us forms a part and supports the church of which Jesus Christ is Head.

Regular weekly emphasis on world mission also inspires active participation in world outreach. Fly-in-and-build programs by active laymen are just one example of such participation. The large force of student missionaries serving in many countries is another positive reaction to world needs. Many physicians, nurses, evangelists and administrators in regular mission service freely admit that their desire to serve overseas developed as a result of the mission emphasis period in Sabbath School.

The officers of the General Conference would like to take this opportunity of expressing their appreciation for your regular and continued support of world missions. Many are giving two percent or more of their income each month as a love offering to God. Others are offering their lives in service wherever the Lord calls.

Truly the harvest is ripe. Thank you for your participation in and generous support of others engaged in the Thousand Days of Reaping.

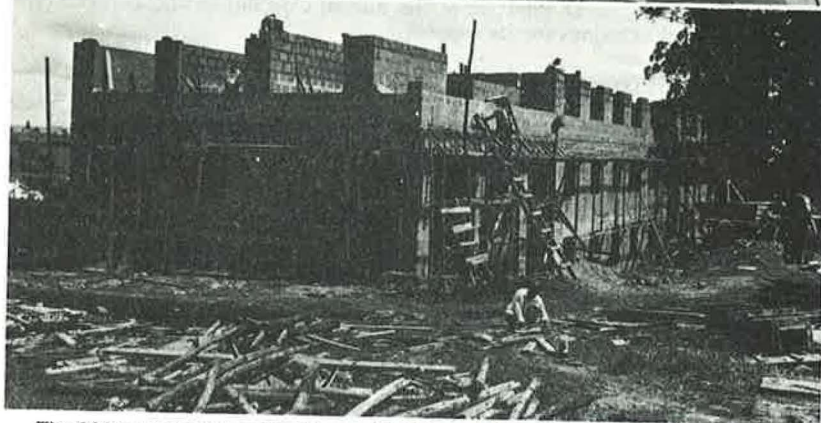
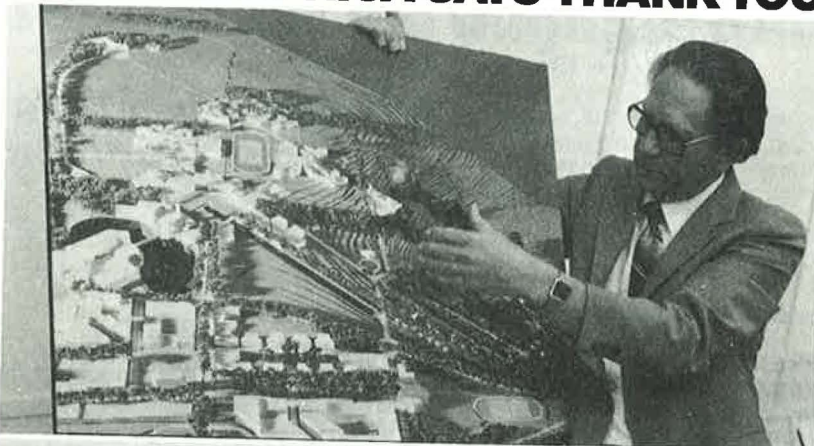
Sincerely,

*G. Ralph Thompson*  
G. Ralph Thompson  
Secretary





## EASTERN AFRICA SAYS THANK YOU



The 339-acre campus of the University College of Eastern Africa has taken on a new appearance as the three-storied men's residence nears completion. Each floor contains washrooms and simple laundry facilities. The building will house up to 208 men, as well as provide a roomy apartment for their dean. Several wings may be added to this structure when required in the future.

Pictured above, Dr. Ralph Bailey, Eastern Africa Division education director, shows the master plan for the development of the university. Below, stage one of the men's dormitory nears completion.

The Special Projects portion of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering you gave on March 28, 1981, contributed \$343,522.73 toward the establishment of this college. We thank you for your generous interest in our needs.

This quarter we present four projects for your further support: Sabbath School Picture Rolls developed in a three-year cycle for our division, a new headquarters for the Western Uganda Field, a men's dormitory for Kamagambo College, and a two-color Heidelberg printing press for the Africa Herald Publishing House in Kenya. Thank you for remembering your East African brothers and sisters on December 24.

Sincerely yours,

*Bekele Heye*

Bekele Heye  
President

## EDITOR'S FOREWORD

### *New Format Sabbath School Lessons to Feature In-depth Bible Study*

Changes in Adult Sabbath School lesson format cannot be accomplished overnight. For one thing, curriculum is planned years ahead and lessons generally are assigned to writers three to four years in advance. Thus any drastic change forces writers already well into their material to have to spend time going back and redoing that which they have written. A major change in format was recommended at our World Sabbath School Lesson Curriculum meetings at Loma Linda in June of 1982 that currently is being implemented. This change in format has made us acutely aware of the problems such changes cause some of our lesson writers.

The world field has indicated a strong desire to keep the world church united in studying the same lessons. This fact makes a long lead time in producing the lessons mandatory as the lessons must be ready to be sent to translators and publishers in the world divisions 18 months before they are published. Prior to that, of course, they must be planned, written, edited, submitted to the world reading committee and revised. As a result of the careful preparation of the quarterlies and the input from world lesson committee members, who take time out of busy schedules to read lesson manuscripts, published Sabbath School lesson represent the thinking of the worldwide church rather than the ideas of a lone writer or a few editors.

Another factor that impinges on any change in format is the natural resistance to change of any kind. However, Sabbath School lesson format has been changed frequently during the years since lessons were first distributed as separate publications in 1888. The current format was introduced in 1970. However, even our latest format has undergone rather significant change on a gradual basis. Interestingly, most changes engendered protests of one kind or another from those who use the lessons. It fascinates me that there is so much interest and attention on the part of the Adventist Sabbath School members as to what happens in and to the lesson quarterlies. It is sobering to those preparing the lessons to realize how seriously what we are doing affects church members.

One of the changes now being programmed into the 1984 lessons is a set of application exercises that will come at the end of each lesson. These are being prepared by Lester Bennett of the Northern California Conference. Those involved in what they see as an exciting improvement in format believe that these changes will make the Sabbath School lessons more challenging and interesting.

Two major proposals surfaced at Loma Linda for the adult lesson curriculum. One was a challenge to do something that had never been attempted in Sabbath School before—studying every book of the Bible in a given period of time. Another proposal resulted from a survey to which 2,118 Sabbath School members from the world responded. A list of felt and observed needs was drawn up by the adult lesson subcommittee and a strong interest was manifested in developing the curriculum around these needs. The subcommittee decided to accept both challenges and came up with a combined curriculum designed to meet the list of needs while at the same time studying all the books of the Bible. Some of these Bible studies will be approached in an exegetical fashion whereas others will be more topical. There also will be room in the curriculum for the historical-narrative method of study.

How this will be accomplished is illustrated in the lessons planned for 1985. The new curriculum will be introduced in the *first quarter* with the study of the Gospel of Mark. These lessons will concentrate on how Christ meets human needs. The *second quarter's* lessons are based on the needs of the Christian in the contemporary age to deal with religious life as he finds it today. In a time when cults and the occult as well as many new religious movements are being introduced, the lessons will focus on the contributions the book of Second Timothy makes in helping Adventists understand what is happening in the religious world. The *third quarter* lessons will develop a topical approach to marriage and the Christian home, turning to the book of Ephesians and its



theme of unity in order to help Christians sense the importance of security in home relationships. Because of the need of each Christian to discover his personal identity, purpose of existence, and the power God has given each of us over our own destiny, the *fourth quarter's* lessons will concentrate on what the book of Genesis has to teach concerning who we are and the purpose for our existence.

In the meantime more in-depth Bible study is being worked into the 1983 and 1984 quarterlies. You will note this particularly in this quarter's lessons on the book of Psalms. These lessons and the new curriculum come at an appropriate time, for, in North America at least, a resurgence of interest in Bible study is becoming evident, not only among adults but among teenagers. In some countries this interest has been manifested on a continual and growing basis. Certainly, if Seventh-day Adventists ever needed to become better acquainted with the Bible it is now.

One means of becoming better fitted to participate in this new emphasis on in-depth Bible study is to take advantage of the "You Can Understand the Bible" course now available through conference and mission Sabbath School directors. This material has been field tested thoroughly, upgraded, and is proving to be an effective means of helping members become involved in personal Bible study. Not only are instructor's manuals, syllabi, and textbooks available for group seminars but the course has now been put on tape cassettes for individual study.

What diligent Bible study in the Sabbath School class, and through the week in the home, can accomplish is outlined in this spectacular promise:

"If the people of God would appreciate His word, we should have a heaven in the church here below. Christians would be eager, hungry, to search the word. They would be more eager for the light of the word than for the morning paper, magazines, or novels. Their greatest desire would be to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God. And as a result their lives would be to them as the leaves of the tree of life. It would be in them a well of water, springing up into everlasting life. Refreshing showers of grace would refresh and revive the soul, causing them to forget all toil and weariness. They would be strengthened and encouraged by the words of inspiration."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 193. Please do all you can to help make this promise a reality.

Leo R. Van Dolson, Ph.D.  
Editor, Adult Lessons.

## Introduction for the Quarter

# SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

How relevant is the book of Psalms to God's people today? Are the psalms simply inspiring poems to be read on special occasions? Or do they serve as "filler" when we do not wish to study more deeply the "meat" of the Word? Do we enjoy our favorite psalms while ignoring others that we do not understand or that offend our esthetic tastes? Why should we study Psalms?

Luther referred to Psalms as a little Bible, and Jesus quoted from this book more than from most of the other books of Sacred Scripture. He could often be heard singing the beautiful songs He had inspired its authors to write, and He died with the words of Psalms 22 on His lips. The apostles frequently used the psalms to support their preaching of Jesus. They did so because some of the greatest Messianic prophecies are found there. Reformers such as Luther and Calvin prized the book of Psalms, especially in time of distress and trouble.

In the psalms we find comfort for the lonely and brokenhearted and encouragement for the troubled and oppressed. These songs that come from the personal experiences of fellow humans present model prayers that meet every felt need and experience of the human heart. They not only teach us how to praise God but reveal divine principles of true worship.

God is revealed in a special way in Psalms. Nowhere else does the Bible more majestically and gloriously set forth Israel's Yahweh as the Lord of creation and the Lord of history than in the psalms. Where else are we more frequently reminded of the great covenant-keeping God, His faithfulness, His mercy and loving-kindness, His justice and equity?

The psalms not only serve as the interpreter of Israel's worship—their sacrificial system, their sanctuary, their liturgy—but touch on virtually every major Christian doctrine, as we shall discover in our study this quarter. In a unique way the psalms reveal the issues of the great controversy between good and evil and the final outcome—the eventual triumph of Christ over His enemies. In the book of Psalms we, as members of God's remnant church, will find much-needed messages of warning and instruction as well as rich promises of consolation and hope that will help us through the final crisis of the ages.

After the overview in the first lesson we will approach our study of these songs of experience by first taking a brief look at the way God is presented as the Creator and Sustainer of all living things. In harmony with the Covenant Series, of which these lessons are a part, we will then note in lessons three and four how the psalms present our covenant relationship to God. Lessons five and six deal with how God plans to fulfill His covenant promise through the gift of His Son, and lessons seven through nine set forth briefly how we should respond. The lessons in the last group focus on promises that bring courage and hope to the church today and point toward the time when the covenant will be fulfilled in the eternal Zion.

### 1

## The Time Has Come

**AD ADDED TEXT:** "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Jesus Christ, the Son and servant of God, has brought the good news to mankind. He is the Son of God, and He is the Son of Man.

OVERVIEW: Mark 1:1-18	
<p>Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has brought the good news to mankind. He is the Son of God, and He is the Son of Man.</p>	<p>Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has brought the good news to mankind. He is the Son of God, and He is the Son of Man.</p>

**INTROIT CHORUS:** The kingdom according to Mark introduces us to a new Son of God who is able to take us from the kingdom of this world and make us citizens of the kingdom of God. In His Gospel Mark reveals Jesus' Son of God, authority for proclaiming the kingdom, pointing to the power which He revealed in moving the minds of mankind—come by one or in groups. Mark adds the powerful authority of the Testament, prophesies fulfilled when Jesus began His ministry, as the ministry of the Son of God. Placing by the spirit of God and the Son of God, Mark plunges his readers into the dynamic, action of Jesus the Baptist at the Jordan. His mission and message lead to the introduction and baptism of Jesus. The canon had been broken of Jesus next had Christ into the temptation where He meets, in advance, every struggle of every human heart—and emerges, almost dead.

With this great triumph behind Him, even the fact of Jesus' baptism cannot deter the Lord. "The night after he came" (Mark 1:25, 26), and the Carpenter turned Teacher calls four fishermen to follow Him.

### 2

## The Ministry of Jesus

**1. THE MINISTRY OF JESUS (verses 1-18).**

To introduce the good news about Jesus Christ the Son of God, Mark teaches back briefly to the Old Testament prophets to authenticate the strange appearance of Jesus the Baptist in the wilderness of the desert region of the Jordan.

**In some Greek manuscripts and modern versions, verse 2 reads: "John the Baptist came, and he was in the wilderness of the Jordan" (Mark 1:22).**

**Note where people came from to hear John. (See Mark 1:5.) What does the location of John's ministry and the phrase "in the river of Jordan" indicate about the mode of baptism?**

New format to be introduced in 1985



# Overview of the Psalms

**MEMORY TEXT:** “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations” (Ps. 89:1).

When we think of the psalms that continue to “sing of the mercies of the Lord,” we automatically think of David, the author of nearly half of them and the compiler of many more. David’s career in music began during his boyhood as he watched his father’s grazing flocks near Bethlehem. God had chosen him for a high destiny, and his solitary life with the flocks did much to prepare him for the important work that was before him. The beauties of nature—the rugged landscape, the green of forests and fields that characterized Palestine in David’s day, even the stark but spectacular sweep of desert and wilderness—spoke to him of the Creator. They provided new depths of thought and fresh themes to inspire songs of praise and experience that still touch our hearts and hopes today.

Later in his youth another course of instruction was added to David’s education, this one in the court of a jealous king who fluctuated between love and hate for the sweet singer of Israel. Many of his most touching laments and prayers were composed as the fruit of these trying times.

Later, as Israel’s king, David experienced the heights of joy, the sweetness of communion with God and complete trust in Him. But he also knew the bitterness of guilt and remorse, the depths of despair and sorrow.

In this first lesson we consider not only the authorship of the psalms but also their original function as the hymnbook of ancient Israel, the form and style of their poetry, the various types of psalms, and an overview of their subject matter—their theme and theology. As we view their original setting we can understand better the message and purpose of this unique book: “Through the psalms of Israel’s sweet singer . . . [the experiences of David’s life] were in all coming ages to kindle love and faith in the hearts of God’s people, bringing them nearer to the ever-loving heart of Him in whom all His creatures live.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 642.

## Overview of the Psalms

1 Sunday  
September 25

### Part 1—Authorship

“He [Jesus] said unto them [the disciples] . . . all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me” (Luke 24:44).

The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings formed the three divisions of the Old Testament. Among the Writings four books are entirely poetry—Psalms, Proverbs, Lamentations, and Song of Solomon.

“The psalms are the quintessence [purest expression] of lyric poetry. In their depth of emotion and height of aspiration, in the complete revealing of the inmost thoughts and questionings of the human soul, in the beauty and delicacy, and sometimes strength and majesty, of their expression, they are unrivaled by the loftiest expressions of merely human lyric poetry.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 19.

Seventy-three of the psalms carry in their superscription (introductory notations) the phrase “of David.” Most likely David wrote nearly all of these. With some exceptions (a few were written after the exile) the rest probably were collected by David with the help of Asaph (one of David’s choir leaders, 1 Chron. 15:17, 19; 16:5) and others. Psalm 90 was authored by Moses and probably is the oldest of the psalms. The collecting of psalms continued until after the exile.

“Eight names of persons occurring in the superscriptions to the psalms appear to be the name of authors, contributors, compilers, musicians, or others associated with the composition, compilation, and use of the sacred lyrics. The names are David, Asaph, Korah, Moses, Heman, Ethan, Solomon, and Jeduthun. . . .

“About one third of the psalms bear no superscription whatsoever, and therefore are entirely anonymous (they are called orphan psalms). It has been conjectured that among the composers of the psalms were such other OT worthies as Ezra, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Haggai.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, pp. 616, 617.

### SEARCH AND LEARN

**For background:** Read the sections on “Authorship” and “Historical Setting” from the *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, pp. 615-619 or do such background reading in comparable source material.

**Discovery:** Study the superscriptions (introductory notations) of Psalms 65 through 94. (Do not confuse the superscriptions with chapter titles used in some Bibles.) Then answer the following:

1. How many psalms are said to have been written by David? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many do not have an author listed or are anonymous? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many appear to have been written by other writers? \_\_\_\_\_

**What have you learned about the authorship of these psalms as a result of studying their superscriptions?**



## Part 2—An Ancient Hymnbook

“Sing aloud unto God our strength:  
make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.  
Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel,  
the pleasant harp with the psaltery” (Ps. 81:1, 2).

The word *psalm* is the English form of the title of the book in the Greek version (the Septuagint) which means a song to be sung to the musical accompaniment of stringed instruments.

The Hebrew title of this book is *Tehillim*, “Praises.” Thus we might consider the book we call Psalms as being Israel’s hymnbook.

The psalms have, in fact, been called the hymnbook of the ages. In the early days of Protestantism they formed the mainstay of congregational singing. Isaac Watts was one of the first hymn writers to paraphrase the psalms into the language of the people. He is said to have written a hymn for every psalm. Others, like Charles Wesley, based many of their hymns on the psalms.

For those who may be concerned about phrases such as *sheminith*, *gittith*, and *mahalath*, used in the superscriptions of some psalms, all that can be said is that they are of uncertain meaning, but probably had musical significance.

Other phrases, such as *neginoth*, seem to indicate what kind of musical instruments were to be used for accompaniment. Some superscriptions are addressed to the chief musician (choirmaster). The word *selah* appears 71 times in the Psalter but is of uncertain meaning. Most likely it was a musical term, possibly suggesting an interlude for the musical instruments.

**Background Study:** Read *Education*, pp. 159-168 if available. Particularly note the following:

“There are few means more effective for fixing . . . [God’s] words in the memory than repeating them in song. . . .

“It is one of the most effective means of impressing the heart with spiritual truth. How often to the soul hard-pressed and ready to despair, memory recalls some word of God’s,—the long-forgotten burden of a childhood song,—and temptations lose their power, life takes on new meaning and new purpose, and courage and gladness are imparted to other souls!

“The value of song as a means of education should never be lost sight of. Let there be singing in the home, songs that are sweet and pure, and there will be fewer words of censure and more of cheerfulness and hope and joy.”—*Education*, pp. 167, 168.

If you have access to a hymnal, check it to see if you can find hymns that correlate with such portions of psalms as Psalms 5:3; 46:1; 96:7, 8; 104:1, 2; and 148:1-4, and consider their meaning to you.

## Part 3—Poetic Form

“My heart is stirred by a noble theme  
as I recite my verses for the king;  
my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer” (Ps. 45:1, NIV).

The poet’s heart is full to overflowing (literally, “actively astir”). The mark of a genuine poet is that he *must* write that which stirs his soul.

**What characteristic of Hebrew poetry gives the psalms a universal quality?**

Although Hebrew poetry had other characteristics, “The significant feature of Hebrew poetry is the rhythm of thought called parallelism, or balanced structure, the setting of line against line in a variety of patterns. This peculiar structure has been likened to the ebb and flow of the tide, and, in the language of a German writer, to ‘the heaving and sinking of the troubled heart.’ There is something about it that transcends nationality. It seems to be indigenous to the human heart.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 622.

The effectiveness of parallelism is that it does not lose its poetic form when translated into other languages as would be the case with our metric style.

## SEARCH AND LEARN

**For background:** Read *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, pp. 20-28 or some available source that describes Hebrew poetry. The three primary forms of parallelism are as follows: (1) *synonymous parallelism* that repeats the thought in different words and images in the second line of the couplet (example, Ps. 71:9), (2) *contrasted parallelism* that further explains the first line of the couplet by contrast or reversal in the second line (example, Ps. 71:7), and (3) *constructive parallelism* that adds a thought to or completes the first line (example, Ps. 18:3).

**Matching:** To enhance your understanding of Hebrew poetic forms, match the form of parallelism listed on the left with the selections from the psalms on the right.

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| a. Synonymous   | 1. ____ Ps. 23:6 |
| b. Contrasted   | 2. ____ Ps. 19:8 |
| c. Constructive | 3. ____ Ps. 9:10 |
|                 | 4. ____ Ps. 25:4 |
|                 | 5. ____ Ps. 1:6  |
|                 | 6. ____ Ps. 91:7 |

## Part 4—Divisions and Types

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen” (Ps. 41:13).

There are actually five books that make up the book of Psalms: Book I, Psalms 1 through 41; Book II, Psalms 42 through 72; Book III, Psalms 73 through 89; Book IV, Psalms 90 through 106; Book V, Psalms 107 through 150. Each of the books closes with a doxology—Psalm 41:13 being the doxology for Book I. Read the following and notice the similarities: Psalms 72:18-20; 89:52; 106:48; 150:6.

“The great historical facts of creation and the fall, of the flood, of God’s covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of Israel’s redemption from Egypt, the lawgiving and theophany at Sinai, and their eventful journey through the wilderness, which are recorded in the Pentateuch, all receive a loyal response in Israel’s worship songs, as can be seen in Psalms 8, 19, 78, 95, 104-106, 148. Thus the words of God through Moses were fixed in Israel’s memory by way of their repetition in song, one of the most effective means to impress the heart with spiritual truth.”—Hans LaRondelle, *Preaching From the Psalms*, Mimeographed, Andrews University.

**For background:** Read *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, pp. 623-626.

**Think of some of the psalms you are most familiar with. What classification or categories would you put them in? (Note the following systems of classification.)**

The psalms have been classified many ways by commentators. For example, H. Gunkel lists five types: (1) hymns, including Zion songs, (2) congregational laments, (3) royal psalms, (4) individual laments, (5) individual thanksgiving and mixed psalms. The *S.D.A. Bible Commentary* classifies the psalms as follows: (see pp. 623-625.)

1. Nature. Psalms 8; 19; 29; 104.
2. Historical and national. Psalms 46; 68; 79; 105; 106; 114.
3. Didactic (teaching or instructional). Psalms 1; 15; 35; 71.
4. Messianic. Psalms 2; 22; 69; 72; 110.
5. Penitential (repentance). Psalms 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143.
6. Imprecatory (denunciations and curses against enemies). Psalms 35; 52; 69; 83; 109.
7. Prayer, praise, and adoration. Psalms 16; 55; 65; 86; 89; 90; 95-100; 103; 104; 107; 142; 143; 145-150.
8. Pilgrim (essentially folk songs—called “A Song of Degrees”). Psalms 120-134.
9. Acrostic (stanzas beginning with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet). Psalms 9; 10; 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; 119; 145.

(These last two categories can be included in some of those mentioned earlier.)

## Part 5—Theme and Theology

“Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee. Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily” (Ps. 102:1, 2).

**These thoughts are typical of a dominant theme in the psalms. Put their meaning into your own words.**

The psalms have been called the mirror of life, for they reflect almost every known emotion, mood, need, and experience of the human spirit. Many of the psalms are prayers. They are a pattern for our prayers. They give us subject matter for our prayer life.

“Man is in trouble—God gives relief. This is the theme—universal in its appeal—of the book of Psalms. In these sacred poems we hear the cry, not only of the Hebrew, but of universal man, ascending to God for help, and see the hand of Omnipotence reaching down to bring relief.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 619.

The songs of a society reflect its culture, its philosophy, its moral values, and its religious life or lack of it. It should not be surprising, then, that the hymns and poetry of Israel tell us much about the Israelites’ beliefs, attitudes, and religious customs. More important, of course, is the fact that the writers of the psalms were prophets. The songs that they wrote under inspiration show God revealing Himself to us.

The psalms are written against the backdrop of Israel as a nation living among enemies—enemies who worshiped pagan deities and hated Israel’s God. The psalms reflect in poetry the great themes of the Old Testament prophets: denunciations of sin, calls to repentance and revival, and messages of hope and comfort. Above all, they reveal a personal God relating to the individual sinner—hearing him, helping him, and saving him.

## SEARCH AND LEARN

Some of the other great themes found in the book of Psalms are these:

1. The reality of a personal God and God’s character.
2. God’s covenant relationship with His people.
3. Praise, thanksgiving, and worship connected with the sanctuary.
4. The setting up of Messiah’s kingdom.
5. The great conflict between good and evil.

**Read Psalm 102. How many of the themes listed above can you identify in this psalm?**

**For background:** *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 754, 755; *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, pp. 619-621.





## Part 6—Application to Our Needs

“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Ps. 119:18).

The Hebrew word for *open* here means “to uncover,” “to reveal.” The psalmist is asking God to remove whatever might blind him from seeing the “wondrous things” of divine revelation. We need the eyesalve of the Holy Spirit to enable us to get the most we can out of our study of these ancient but timely songs and poems.

How should the study of this book affect our lives? Ps. 119:33-35.

Such words as *law* and *commandments* encompass all of divine revelation. (See the *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, on the introduction to Psalms 119, vol. 3, p. 896.)

As we come to the study of the book of Psalms, it is vital that we come with understanding. It will not be enough to gain factual knowledge about the book. We need guidance and wisdom from above to apply what we learn to our experience and needs.

**PERSONAL APPLICATION:** What are some practical ways that I can gain the most from my study of this book? How can I use what I have learned to witness to others?

1. Read the psalm you are studying several times, using various reliable translations.
2. Begin making a list of references that use certain key words or phrases that are meaningful to you. Example: “Hear my prayer,” “In thee do I trust,” “Have mercy on me,” “Save me.”
3. Keep a record of psalms that are especially appropriate for certain situations or occasions.
4. Memorize as many gems from the psalms as you can. One helpful way is to print the text on a 3 x 5 card which may be carried in a small ringed notebook and kept handy in purse or pocket. (You may memorize while you walk, while you drive, or even while you work at the kitchen sink.)
5. Watch for these items:
  - Promises you can claim
  - Revelations about God
  - Actions you can follow
  - Injunctions you can obey
  - Significant words to you
  - Examples you can follow
6. As the Holy Spirit brings applications to your mind, pray that the Lord will help you put to work what you have learned both in your life and in your community.

# Nature and Revelation Testify of God

**MEMORY TEXT:** “O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens” (Ps. 8:1).

Some of the most loved praise hymns of the Psalter are the nature psalms and the hymns of God’s providence. Of these we shall study the following in this week’s lesson:

- Psalm 8, a model hymn of praise to God that enriches our worship greatly.
- Psalm 19, a beautiful portrayal of God’s revelation in nature and in His law.
- Psalm 104, a song of praise to the Creator that contains an interesting description of Creation week.

We will study these psalms for their literary beauty, style, and inspiration, but more importantly we will discover in them the great truth of God as the source of all things—Creator, Provider, and Sustainer.

The psalms demonstrate that the Israelites not only experienced God through the world within but through the world without. “In physical nature they saw His glory. In their national history they felt His presence. In their law they heard His voice.”—E. A. Leslie, *The Psalms* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), p. 131.



ROBERTS



## Part 1—"What Is Man?"

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Ps. 8:4).

What led the psalmist to ask this question, and what was his conclusion? Ps. 8:3, 5.

Psalm 8 is the first of the nature psalms. Human beings always have been awed by the majesty of the starry heavens. As the psalmist beholds the greatness of God's creation he muses on the weakness and smallness of humanity. Then he is reminded that the human race came from the Creator's hand crowned "with glory and honor" and made in His own image (Ps. 8:5, NIV).

In order to better understand the structure of Psalm 8, study carefully the chart that follows:

PSALM 8—A SONG OF GLORY AND DIGNITY			
Verse 1 God's Glory and Majesty Are Greatly Evident on Earth			
GOD'S GLORY		HUMAN DIGNITY	
Verses 1b-2 Extolled	Heavenly beings, human children, and God's enemies extoll His glory.	God shared His glory with humans by giving them dominion and control on earth.	Verses 5-6a Bestowed
3, 4 Amplified	The awesomeness of the night sky makes humans look puny in comparison. But God's amazing care and concern for us amplifies His glory even more.	All created things on earth rightfully belong under the control God has given to humans.	6b-8 Extent Detailed
Verse 9 God's Glory and Majesty Are Greatly Evident on Earth			

Note the following in the chart:

1. The similarity of verses 1 and 9. Psalms that begin and end with the same words are known as "envelope psalms."
2. The two distinct divisions and their subject matter (verses 2-4; 5-8).
3. The meaning of verse 2 is clarified by Jesus' use in Matthew 21:16.

## Part 2—The Great Creator

"Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. . . . Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain: . . . who laid the foundations of the earth" (Ps. 104:1-5).

"As Ps. 103, its companion psalm, celebrates God's wonders in His compassion and tenderness, so Ps. 104 celebrates God's wonders in creation. Similar to Ps. 103 in exuberance, Ps. 104 is the song of the poet's spontaneous delight in the works of God's creation. In the language and manner of the poet, not of the scientist, the psalm discusses the works of creation, always discerning in creation her Creator. The psalm is remarkable for the movement and vividness of the images that crowd into the picture of creation. In this respect it is probably unsurpassed in literature."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 863.

Note what the psalmist tells us about how our earth originated. Ps. 33:6, 9.

Psalm 33 is a festive hymn in honor of God as Creator. He is identified as Yahweh throughout this psalm, as in Psalm 104. Many of the heathen peoples in Israel's day extolled and worshiped nature (Ps. 33:10). By contrast, Israel's God is set forth as the only true God and Creator (Ps. 33:12).

## SEARCH AND LEARN

**For background:** Read Genesis 1 and *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 44-47.

**Discovery:** Psalm 104 begins and ends on a note of praise in celebration of the wonders of God's creation. In a very colorful and vivid way the drama of Creation week is portrayed in this psalm. While there is some overlapping and mingling of days, notice the sequence as you study this chapter.

Match the days of Creation Week with the references given:

**Genesis 1**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Day 1—Light  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Day 2—Firmament  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Day 3—Dividing of land and water; vegetation  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Day 4—Heavenly bodies  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Day 5—Sea life and birds  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Day 6—Animals and humans

**Psalm 104**  
 a. verses 2b, 3  
 b. verse 2a  
 c. verses 18, 21, 23  
 d. verses 5-9; 14-17  
 e. verses 17, 25, 26  
 f. verses 19-23

What does this psalm teach us about God? What can we do to help others understand better the truth about Creation?



## Part 3—Power That Sustains

“These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good” (Ps. 104:27, 28).

“It is through His power that vegetation flourishes, that the leaves appear and the flowers bloom. He ‘maketh grass to grow upon the mountains’ (Ps. 147:8), and by Him the valleys are made fruitful. ‘All the beasts of the forest . . . seek their meat from God’ [Psalm 104:21], and every living creature, from the smallest insect up to man, is daily dependent upon His providential care.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 115.

**What can we learn from the illustrations Jesus used in Matthew 6:25-30?**

We keep several bird feeding stations in our yard. On occasion, if we fail to supply the feeders for several days, our feathered friends seem to desert us rather quickly. It has occurred to us that it is not we who feed the birds. Rather it is God who directs them to the source of supply.

“Jesus pointed His hearers to the birds as they warbled their carols of praise, unencumbered with thoughts of care, . . . yet the great Father provides for their needs. . . .

“ . . . Every wayside blossom owes its being to the same power that set the starry worlds on high. . . .

“ . . . How simple and beautiful and how sweet its [a flower’s] life!”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 95-97.

## SEARCH AND LEARN

Psalm 104 portrays God’s interaction with this world in the past, the present, and the future. Verses 1-9 outline His greatness as the Creator of the heavens and of the foundations of the earth (the *past*). Verses 10-26 demonstrate His control of His creation, and verses 27-30 portray Him as the Sustainer of life (the *present*). Verses 31-35 indicate that God is in charge of *future* happiness.

**Study carefully the following outline of verses 27-35:**

1. God as Sustainer of life.
  - a. verses 27, 28—Giver of food.
  - b. verses 29, 30—Giver of the breath of life.
2. God as the Source of eternal joy.
  - a. verses 31, 32—God rejoices forever in His work of creation.
  - b. verses 33-35—The righteous will be glad in the Lord, but sinners will be consumed.

**What have you discovered about God as a result of studying Psalm 104?**

## Part 4—“The Heavens Are Telling”

“The heavens are telling of the glory of God;  
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.  
Day to day pours forth speech,  
And night to night reveals knowledge” (Ps. 19:1, 2, NASB).

“The psalm is perhaps the best known and most popular of the nature psalms. It is a grateful meditation on God’s revelation of Himself in the world of nature and in His law. In the first six verses of the psalm David (see 4T 15) speaks of God’s glory as seen in His created works; in vs. 7-10 he speaks of God’s glory as shown in the law; in vs. 11-13 he discusses the bearing of these truths on character and conduct; and in v. 14 he prays to be kept free from sin. One can almost see the author standing under the open sky at sunrise, praising Jehovah in the exalted strains of this psalm.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 675.

Verses 1 through the first part of verse 4 indicate that people everywhere are given the message of the heavens that there is a great Designer. This is so whether or not they have heard of God. But to be understood properly the message of the heavens needs to be interpreted by the Word of God.

**Read carefully the psalmist’s description of the sun in verses 4-6. Note that the small word *as* is especially significant to the theology of this psalm.**

In verse 1 the psalmist uses personification (a figure of speech which attributes a personal quality to an inanimate object: the *heavens* declare). But in verses 4-6 he makes sure he does not use the same figure of speech because it could be misunderstood. He does not say that the sun *is* a bridegroom, which is what a pagan poet would have said. Rather he says that it is *like* a bridegroom. (The significant word used is *as*.) Most of the surrounding nations in Israel’s day worshiped the sun. Israel worshiped Yahweh who made the sun.

**Paul quotes Psalm 19:4 in his Epistle to the Romans. What is he saying in the context of this reference? Rom. 10:18. (See also Rom. 1:18-21.)**

Paul repeats the basic message of Psalm 19. Though no words, no audible voice is heard, yet the testimony of the heavenly bodies to their Creator is evident throughout the world.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** What are specific ways I can “declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people” (Ps. 96:3)?



## Part 5—The Written Revelation

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes” (Ps. 19:7, 8).

At first glance the break between verses 6 and 7 of Psalm 19 may seem abrupt. But closer examination reveals that in spite of the break there is a glorious harmony. While the greatness and majesty of God are declared by the things He has created, they are largely ignored by many who refuse to acknowledge the existence of the Creator. “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Ps. 53:1).

The psalmist turns to another form of revelation—the Written Word; from the law of the starry heavens to the law revealed in the Inspired Word. The word *law* here refers to the Torah—most likely to all the instruction God gives.

Psalm 19:7-11 lists six things the Written Word will do for us. What are they?

## SEARCH AND LEARN

**Comparison:** Observe the different terms used in Psalm 19:7-9 to describe the varied aspects of divine revelation and compare these with Psalm 119.

**Completion:** Read Psalm 19:7-9 carefully; then use this passage to fill in the blanks on the following chart:

Verse	Name for revelation	Nature of revelation	Effects of revelation
7	law testimonies	perfect _____	_____ the soul making wise the simple
8	_____ commandments	right pure	rejoicing the heart _____ the eyes
9	fear _____	_____ true righteous	enduring forever

## Part 6—Application to Character and Conduct

“More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward” (Ps. 19:10, 11).

The advantages to those who accept the instruction God gives in His Word include the following: (1) it becomes more valuable than gold, (2) it warns God’s servants, and (3) it brings a tremendous reward when heeded.

The psalmist does not seek to promote selfish observance of the law for the sake of reward. Rather he offers reward as another of the manifold benefits of keeping the law.

“By constantly contemplating heavenly themes, our faith and love will grow stronger. Our prayers will be more and more acceptable to God, because they will be more and more mixed with faith and love. They will be more intelligent and fervent. There will be more constant confidence in Jesus, and you will have a daily living experience in the willingness and power of Christ to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1145.

From what two kinds of sins does the psalmist pray to be delivered? Ps. 19:12, 13.

“Acquit me of hidden faults” (verse 12, NASB). It has been suggested that the faults we see most readily in others are often subconscious reflections of our own weaknesses—the things we most dislike in ourselves. Certainly we need to pray daily for cleansing from our hidden faults.

And then there are sins of presumption—those that will “rule” us if we do not overcome them. Sin is never static. Either we are overcoming our sins or they are taking deeper roots in the soil of our lives.

Alexander Pope once said:

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,  
As to be hated needs but to be seen;  
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

—*Essay on Man*, Epistle II, Lines 217-220.

**MEDITATION:** May my daily prayer be “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer” (Ps. 19:14).

**PERSONAL APPLICATIONS:**



# Living as God's Chosen People

**MEMORY TEXT:** "Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth; O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen" (Ps. 105:5, 6).

Israel's religion was firmly founded on the great historical facts of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, the giving of the law and covenant at Sinai, the wilderness wanderings, and their establishment in Caanan. Nowhere in Scripture is this foundation more profoundly portrayed than in the psalms we study this week—105 and 106. These great accounts of God's acts in behalf of His covenant people offer an explanation of their history in the light of divine revelation. They present God's perspective of history.

These festive hymns retold and relived the past as relevant and vital to the individual and the nation in the here and now.

The New Testament writers understood the significance of Israel's history to Christianity: "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come" (1 Cor. 10:11, NIV).

God's modern-day messenger applies the same principle to the remnant: "In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history."—*Life Sketches*, p. 196.

God's covenant people today may learn much from the mistakes and failures of ancient Israel. But in order to do so we will have to approach the study of this lesson with a spirit of humility and a sincere desire to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit as He speaks to us through these psalms.

## Part 1—Responding to the Covenant

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea."

"But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness" (1 Cor. 10:1, 5).

"The experience of Israel, referred to in the above words by the apostle, and as recorded in the one hundred fifth and one hundred sixth psalms, contains lessons of warning that the people of God in these last days especially need to study."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 98.

CONTRASTING RESPONSES TO THE COVENANT			
Ps. 105—GOD'S FAITHFULNESS		Ps. 106—ISRAEL'S DISLOYALTY	
<b>Verses</b> 1-6	<b>Summons to remember God's miraculous works in Israel's behalf.</b>	<b>Verses</b> 1-5	<b>Praise for God's mercy and favor manifested to those who seek His salvation.</b>
7-45	<b>How God kept His covenant promises:</b>	6-46	<b>How Israel proved disloyal to the covenant:</b>
7-15	It was made when His people were few in number.	6	They sinned (and we continue to sin).
16-24	God's purpose in bringing Israel to Egypt in Joseph's day.	7-12	They forgot His leading at the Red Sea.
25-43	Deliverance of His people from Egypt under Moses.	13-18	They forgot His providence in the wilderness.
44-45	God gave His people the Promised Land that they might find peace and happiness in obedience to His law.	19-23	They forgot Him when they made the golden calf.
		24-27	They forgot He was leading when they sent spies into Canaan.
		28-31	They forgot God's commandments at Baal-peor.
		32, 33	They even provoked Moses at Meribah.
		34-39	They failed to exterminate the Canaanites after entering the Promised Land.
		40-46	They had to be punished by captivity.
		47, 48	<b>Appeal to God to save His erring people</b>



## Part 2—The Chosen Nation

"He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations" (Ps. 105:8).

What is significant about whom God made His covenant with, and what were the terms? Ps. 105:9-11. (Compare Deut. 28:1, 2, 12, 13, 15, 37.)

The promise of the covenant—to inherit the land of Canaan (Ex. 6:3, 4)—encompassed the blessings of a material prosperity—a "land flowing with milk and honey," intellectual greatness—to be "the head and not the tail," and spiritual superiority—"an holy people" to be a praise and an honor.

The terms—simply put: "If ye will obey my voice" (Ex. 19:5). "If ye will hearken to these judgments, and keep and do them" (Deut. 7:12). This presumes an acceptance of redemption. The proper response to salvation is obedience. The Old Testament does *not* teach salvation by works.

What was God's purpose in calling a special people to enter into covenant relationship with Himself? Ps. 67:1, 2, 7; 105:42-45.

God delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage that He might make them His "peculiar treasure . . . above all people: . . . a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Ex. 19:5, 6). Theirs was a unique mission to demonstrate to the world a way of life that would reveal the holiness of their God. "For then the earth will acknowledge your ways and all the nations will know of your power to save" (Ps. 67:2, Jerusalem Bible).

What can "all nations" know through His people? Psalm 105.

Verse 1— \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 3— \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 5— \_\_\_\_\_

The covenant is not limited to the benefit it brings His people. It has a missionary purpose. Through God's people the entire world is to be benefited.

NOTE: God's purpose for His covenant people today in 1 Peter 2:9.

**FURTHER STUDY:** Study the conditions and promises of the covenant found in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26:42, 44-46.

## Part 3—Miracles of the Covenant

"He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children" (Ps. 78:5, 6).

How was the knowledge of God's covenant to be kept alive? Deut. 6:7.

What great events of their history, recounted in the psalms, were to be kept fresh in Israel's memory? Ps. 78:12-16, 23-25, 42-55.

Every event mentioned here was a miracle of God in behalf of Israel: (1) the plagues of Egypt effecting their deliverance (Exodus 7 through 12), (2) the crossing of the Red Sea—the miraculous escape from the Egyptian armies (Exodus 14), (3) the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night to lead them (Exodus 13:21), (4) the bread from heaven to supply their daily needs (Exodus 16), and (5) the water from the smitten rock to quench their thirst (Exodus 17:5-7).

**REVIEW:** Study once again the first column of the chart in part 1, particularly noticing the miraculous events through which God made it plain to Israel that He was keeping faith with His covenant promises.

## SEARCH AND LEARN

Psalms 105 and 106 are commentaries on the history of Israel as seen from *God's perspective*. His loving-kindness and mercy were revealed over and over again in spite of Israel's ingratitude and rebellion. This in itself was perhaps the greatest miracle of all.

Notice a recurring pattern in Psalm 106. The recital of Israel's disloyalty is followed by evidences of the Lord's mercy. Study especially the following:

Verses 7-12 \_\_\_\_\_

Verses 19-23 \_\_\_\_\_

Verses 28-31 \_\_\_\_\_

Verses 43-46 \_\_\_\_\_

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Why do you think that Ellen White has counseled: "I urge that these chapters be read at least once every week" (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 98)?

## Part 4—Israel's Failure

"They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel."  
"They forgot God their saviour" (Ps. 106:13, 21).

Underline the key word in the texts indicated above that describes the reason for Israel's failure.

No wonder Moses punctuated his last counsel to his people with words like these: "Thou shalt remember" (Deut. 8:2, 18; 15:15). "Beware that thou forget not" (Deut. 8:11). "Remember, and forget not" (Deut. 9:7).

What were the tragic consequences of Israel's forgetting so quickly the miracle of the manna? Ps. 106:13-15.

It is easy in retrospect to see Israel's folly and shortsightedness and wonder how they could forget so quickly. What we forget is how much like ourselves the people of Israel were. When not brought under the control of the regenerating power of the new birth, human nature still lusts for the fleshpots and yields to the clamorings of the carnal nature. Now, as then, the result is leanness of soul to those who indulge their appetites.

On what other occasions did the people of Israel demonstrate their short memory? Ps. 106:16-46.

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

Ellen White, in commenting on the sin at Horeb, observes that as soon as the visible presence of Moses was withdrawn, "the old habits of thought and feeling began to assert their power."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 99. Apparently their belief was superficial—not deep enough to effect any real changes in their behavior. "They believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation" (Ps. 78:22). (See also Ps. 106:24, 25.) As a result they were easily influenced by the revolting practices of the surrounding nations (see Ps. 106:28, 34-39), even to sacrificing their own children at times. Instead of conquering the nations around them as God had purposed, "they settled down to enjoy the fruit of their victories. In their unbelief and love of ease, they congregated in the portions already conquered instead of pushing forward to occupy new territory. Thus they began to depart from God."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 303.

## Part 5—God's Patience

"But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath" (Ps. 78:38).

As a means of helping His people after they entered the Promised Land the Lord allowed them to become the prey of their enemies. But when they cried to Him He sent judges to deliver them from their oppressors.

The book of Judges reads like a stuck record that repeats itself again and again: "The children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord" (Judges 4:1). (See also 6:1; 10:6; 13:1.) "The children of Israel cried unto the Lord" (Judges 4:3). (See also 6:6; 10:10.) "The Lord raised up a deliverer" (Judges 3:15). "The Lord sent a prophet" (Judges 6:8). "He could bear Israel's misery no longer" (Judges 10:16, NIV).

What a compassionate God, for "time and again . . . he took pity on their distress each time he heard them calling" (Ps. 106:43, 44, Jerusalem Bible).

Why did God continue to hear, deliver, and take back His people? Ps. 106:44, 45.

God remembered His covenant! Not that He had forgotten, but in spite of their being undeserving, His covenant of love and mercy was greater than His wrath at their sin.

The eighty-fifth psalm provides a classic illustration of God's eagerness to turn His people back to the fullness of the privileges inherent in the covenant relationship. Read the psalm; then study carefully the following outline:

- I. Portrayal of past beneficence—verses 1-3
  - a. To the land (restored from captivity—material).
  - b. To the people (forgiveness—moral).
  - c. To their relationship with God (restored fellowship—spiritual).
- II. Plea for present salvation—verses 4-7
  - a. God had a right to be angry with His rebellious people.
  - b. If they will allow Him to restore them from their defections, God will show them His mercy.
- III. Assurance of future deliverance—verses 8-13
  - a. Their restoration depends on these factors (verse 8):
    1. Acknowledging that they are God's people.
    2. Bringing their lives into conformity with His will.
    3. Turning from their foolish trust in themselves.
  - b. The certainty that God will respond abundantly to their plea (verses 9-13).



Part 1—"My Shepherd"

"The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want" (Ps. 23:1).

Imagine a well-fed, well-cared-for sheep, looking at a sheep in a neighboring flock, hungry and ill-cared for, whose shepherd is a hireling (working for pay, not because of concern for the sheep). It is as if the psalmist assumes the voice of the first sheep in making a humble and grateful boast: "My shepherd cares for me, for he owns me. He supplies all my needs. I wish you had a good shepherd like mine."

Study these Old Testament prophecies that picture the Lord as the Shepherd of His people: Isa. 40:10, 11; Eze. 34:22-25.

What evidence did Jesus give that He indeed was the promised Good Shepherd? John 10:11-14.

The divine Shepherd knows every one of His sheep. He calls them each by name. He keeps a constant vigil for them in danger, attack, or storm. But the supreme evidence of His great love is the laying down of His life for His sheep.

SEARCH AND LEARN

Study each word used in verse 1 to learn what particular contribution it makes to this passage and why it is being used (complete the remaining blanks):

Ps. 23:1—Our Shepherd Cares	
The	A definite article that denotes a specific individual.
Lord	God. Which member of the Trinity? (See John 10:11.)
is	Certainty, assurance.
my	David (see superscription)—but applies to us personally.
shepherd	
I	
shall not	
want	

Part 2—Rest and Security

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters" (Ps. 23:2).

Only contented sheep will lie down to rest. They must be free of fear, free of friction among themselves, free of tormenting pests and parasites, and, finally, free from hunger and thirst. The shepherd must search for green pastures to ensure good grazing. The sheep must be diverted from parasite-filled mudholes to fresh, pure water.

Likewise, in the spiritual sense, the Good Shepherd desires to lead us away from the unsatisfying mudholes of life to the water of life; away from the dry, barren plains to the green pastures of rich spiritual food. (See Isa. 55:1-3.) Our Shepherd knows our needs, knows how they can best be filled, and leads us accordingly.

Suggest some of the basic human needs to which the following descriptions speak: Ps. 4:8; 16:5, 6; 63:3-6; 65:9-13.

David's life was filled with causes for insecurity—hunted by a mad king in his earthly life, troubled in his home, an insurrection led by his own son, to mention a few. Yet, through it all, he found security in the Lord, his "goodly heritage," that was more satisfying than physical life itself.

What application do you draw from the biblical portrayal of the Good Shepherd's concern for all levels of human need? Matt. 6:30-33; John 6:35, 51, 54; 7:37, 38.

The need for security is a driving motivation in the human mind. Some seek it through greed, violence, and vice. Others believe that affluence, power, and materialism will provide it. Yet, for all their searching, humans remain largely unsettled and unsatisfied. Meanwhile Jesus offers to take care of our physical needs and the deeper hunger and thirst of the soul that He alone can satisfy. The Christian who has found the answer to all his needs in Christ can say with the psalmist, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."

**THINK IT THROUGH:** What kind of contentment should be a hallmark of the Christian's life and character? Phil. 4:11; 1 Tim. 6:6-11.

**FURTHER STUDY:** Ps. 65:4; 107:8, 9; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 476-484.

### Part 3—Restoration and Guidance

“He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake” (Ps. 23:3).

Sometimes a heavy sheep—especially a ewe with lamb or one with heavy wool—becomes “cast,” that is, as it is lying down the center of gravity shifts and it is unable to get to its feet by itself. Because cast sheep eventually will die if left to themselves, the shepherd watches carefully for such unfortunate sheep and *restores* them to their feet.

**What is the only remedy for a soul that is “cast down”? Ps. 42:5, 11.**

As the tender shepherd carefully and slowly helps the cast sheep to its feet and supports it until it can walk by itself, so the divine Shepherd restores (the root word is the same one for “converts,” “renews,” or “turns”) the soul cast down by discouragement, defeat, doubt, or depression.

“Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence” (Ps. 42:5, NASB). The presence of God brings help to the despairing soul. Our faith should be built on the surety of His presence rather than on how we feel at any given time. Emotions are not a safe guide. God’s presence is.

**According to the psalmist why do we need to be led in paths of righteousness? Ps. 5:8; 25:4, 5; 27:11; 32:8, 9.**

Sheep left to themselves without a shepherd’s guidance are their own worst enemies, following the same paths day after day. This results in poor feeding, ruined land, and—when they are present—exposure to harmful pests. The careful shepherd leads the sheep continually to good pastures and in new paths. His reputation as a shepherd is at stake in the welfare of the sheep and in the condition of the land that they graze.

The paths of our own making—selfishness, pride, indulgence, evil thinking, bad habits—become the ruts that lead to destruction and death. Left to ourselves, we are our own worst enemies (Isa. 53:6).

“If we take Christ for our guide, He will lead us safely along the narrow way. The road may be rough and thorny, the ascent may be steep and dangerous; there may be pitfalls upon the right hand and upon the left; . . . but with Christ as our Guide we shall not lose the path to immortal life.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 253.

**FURTHER STUDY:** Read thoughtfully Psalm 25 and *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 478, 479.

### Part 4—Comfort and Defense

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” (Ps. 23:4).

With the coming of summer, shepherds in various parts of the world, including Palestine, move their flocks to the high country, working their way slowly up the mountain ranges, often through dark and dangerous valleys. On these treks the sheep are alone with the shepherd and under his close and constant supervision they develop a special closeness to him. David knew how frightening these steep, rocky valleys could be to sheep, particularly when a storm raged around them. At this point in the Shepherd Psalm the psalmist turns from the third person to the second, addressing his Shepherd directly with intimate and deep affection.

**What promise can you find in Psalm 23:4 that gives us courage to walk through the dark valleys of life without fear?**

Is any promise in Scripture more wonderful? This is the very essence of the covenant: “I will be with thee.” (See Deut. 31:23.) (See also Deut. 31:6, 8; Joshua 1:7-9.)

“The presence of God is guaranteed to the Christian.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 77.

“Jesus knows us individually, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows us all by name. He knows the very house in which we live, the name of each occupant. He has at times given directions to His servants to go to a certain street in a certain city, to such a house, to find one of His sheep.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 479.

**Consider carefully the purpose and significance of the shepherd’s rod and staff.**

The eastern shepherd’s rod is an extension of his right hand, his weapon of defense against enemies, the mark of his power and authority to protect and discipline his flock. In the same way the Word of God is an extension of Himself. It bears the mark of His authority. It is a sure weapon against evil (Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17). With it God disciplines His children (2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 12:5, 6). The staff is an instrument unique to the shepherd and is used for control of the sheep, for guidance, and for comfort. Our divine Shepherd gently convicts, leads, and comforts us through all the vicissitudes of life.

**FURTHER STUDY:** For a review of how God helped David through some of *his* dark valleys, read Psalms 54; 55:1-8, 22; 56; 57.



## Part 5—Physical and Spiritual Food and Healing

**“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou annointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over” (Ps. 23:5).**

The high tablelands which shepherds often choose for lush summer range are also fraught with dangers. The wise sheep owner goes ahead in the spring to plan grazing patterns and to check for poisonous weeds that can be fatal to sheep. Lurking in the dark shadows of these high ranges are predators that attack stealthily and quickly, bringing panic and sometimes disaster to the flock.

Equally devastating to sheep, though not as imposing, are flies and other pests which bore into the sheep's sensitive skin, especially the nasal area, causing agony, frustration, panic, and, in some extreme cases, even death. The shepherd's remedy is to smear or dip the sheep's head in a mixture containing oil.

**What has the divine Shepherd done to prepare a “table” for His followers?**

He who left His home in glory to come to this world to live as a man among men (Heb. 2:17) is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” For He “was in all points tempted like as we are” (Heb. 4:15). By His death He made it possible for us to gain spiritual sustenance from His Word. Without the sacrifice of Christ the Bible would have no power or lasting effect.

*The “oil” with which we are annointed:* In a world of frustration, irritation, and confusion, our chafed spirits need the daily anointing of God's Holy Spirit (the oil), to keep our minds at peace, to bring joy and contentment to our hearts, and to ensure healing and wholeness for our fragmented lives.

**Where and how may the true source of joy and blessing be found? Ps. 16:8, 11.**

The more we come to know God the more will our cup of joy and blessing contain. The more time we spend in His presence the greater will be our enjoyment of His pleasures. “To comprehend and enjoy God is the highest exercise of the powers of man.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 61.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** If my cup of blessing is “running over,” what can I do to help others benefit by its overflow?

**FURTHER STUDY:** For a descriptive pastoral scene, by way of contrast to the good shepherd's care, read Ezekiel 34:1-16.

## Part 6—Lasting Satisfaction

**“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever” (Ps. 23:6).**

Picture once again the healthy sheep of the good shepherd: With the coming of autumn the flock has returned safely to the home farm under the watchful eye of the shepherd. He notices again his sickly neighbor sheep, worse off than ever. He tells him about the summer's good grazing in the high country, about the shepherd's constant care and protection in times of danger. He is more than satisfied to belong to his shepherd's household and wants to remain there forever.

**Study these examples in David's life of the truth that “goodness and mercy shall follow me”: Ps. 3:1-6; 17:1-9; 28; 35:1-9; 40:1-5.**

David's life was not an idyllic bed of roses. He knew the enemy's cruel blow, the false accusations, the alienation of friends and loved ones, the keen edge of disappointed hopes, the bitter cup of sorrow, the nagging fears of guilt, and the depths of despair. But through all of these troubles his confidence in the Good Shepherd remained unshaken. He knew that no matter how dangerous and difficult his path, the goodness and mercy of God would follow him, and he could declare, “My soul shall be joyful in the Lord” (Ps. 35:9).

**What is the ultimate satisfaction, according to the psalmist? Ps. 23:6; 17:15.**

If the psalmist finds such joy in the presence of his Shepherd whom he cannot now see, how much greater and lasting will be his satisfaction when he awakens in His likeness—to enjoy His visible presence throughout eternity! This is the supreme satisfaction for which we were created and without which none of us ever can find genuine happiness.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Do you know “neighbor sheep” who would give anything they have to possess what you possess? What are you doing to help them find what you have found?

• List below some practical things you can do this week to help those about you sense how loving and merciful the Divine Shepherd is:

**FURTHER STUDY:** Ps. 34:8-14.

# God's Saving Action

**MEMORY TEXT:** "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Ps. 103:13, 14).

As the artist sweeps his paints across the canvas in broad outline strokes before filling in the details, so the Old Testament portrays God as the source of salvation, while the New Testament fills in the details of how it was wrought out in Christ.

The stately ninetieth psalm, written by Moses, presents the Eternal God as One to whom transitory and sinful humans can appeal for mercy.

Psalm 103, a much-loved hymn of praise, contains the personal testimony of David, who knew well the joy of forgiveness and salvation. Someone has suggested that if a sinner never heard another portion of Scripture this psalm would be enough to lead him to salvation.

The two psalms blend into a clear portrayal of our great need and God's great provision for salvation, as seen in the outline that follows:

1. God's eternity contrasted with our mortality—Ps. 90:1-6
  - a. Our continual refuge—verse 1.
  - b. God's eternal existence—verse 2.
  - c. God's timelessness—verses 3, 4.
  - d. Our transitory nature—verses 5, 6.
2. Sin—the reason for our changeableness—Ps. 90:7-12
  - a. God's displeasure with sin—verses 7, 8, 11.
  - b. Sin shortens our lives—verses 9, 10.
  - c. Our time should be used to gain wisdom—verse 12.
3. Our dependence upon God's mercy—Ps. 103:15-18
  - a. Our transience and frailty reemphasized—verses 15, 16.
  - b. But His mercy is abundant toward those who trust Him—verses 17, 18.
4. Prayer for mercy and redemption—Ps. 90:13-17
  - a. For renewal of God's compassion—verse 13.
  - b. For gladness in God's mercy—verses 14, 15.
- c. For recognition of God's providences—verse 16.
- d. For the reflection of God's character and His blessing on our work—verse 17.
5. Praise to God for His loving-kindness—Ps. 103:1-14
  - a. Psalmist's testimony of what God has done for him—verses 1-5.
  - b. Revelation of God's loving-kindness—verses 6-14.
    1. His justice—verse 6.
    2. His dealings with Israel—verse 7.
    3. His character—verses 8, 9.
    4. His forgiveness—verses 10-12.
    5. His compassion—verses 13, 14.
6. Universal invitation to praise and worship God—Ps. 103:19-22
  - a. God's universal reign—verse 19.
  - b. Invitation to angels—verses 20, 21.
  - c. Invitation to the whole creation—verse 22, first clause.
  - d. Final personal invitation—verse 22, second clause.

## Part 1—The Eternal God Our Refuge

"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Ps. 90:1, 2).

Psalm 90 has been referred to as the masterpiece of the ages. In majestic language it portrays the greatness and grandeur of the Eternal God in contrast to human frailty. His unchangeableness is the answer to our rootlessness.

The superscription ascribes this psalm to Moses. Some of the last recorded words of Moses to Israel reminded them that although earthly dwelling places might be temporary and changing, "the eternal God is a dwelling place" (Deut. 33:27, NASB). Moses spent 40 years leading his people through the howling wilderness. Before that he spent 40 years as a nomadic shepherd. During these 80 years he did not know the security of having a permanent dwelling place. He was a stranger and a pilgrim. Like his ancestor Abraham, he went out not knowing whither he went. No wonder he uttered these majestic words with such deep feeling: "Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations."

### SEARCH AND LEARN

Study the following chart to sharpen your understanding of the contrasts found in Psalm 90:1-6:

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Illustrated by	God's eternity	Our mortality
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Time	Yesterday (a single nightwatch)	1000 years (longer than any human lived.)

**THINK IT THROUGH:** What would happen to the quality of my spiritual life if I spent 15 minutes every day meditating on the greatness of God? (See Ps. 90:12.)

**FURTHER STUDY:** Ps. 93:1-5; John 1:1-5, 14; Isa. 57:15-21; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 23.



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**FURTHER STUDY:** Ps. 93:1-5; John 1:1-5, 14; Isa. 57:15-21; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 23.

## Part 2—The Human Predicament

"Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy contenance. For all our days pass away under thy wrath, our years come to an end like a sigh" (Ps. 90:7, 8, RSV).

To what does Psalm 90 attribute our short existence? Ps. 90:8, 9; 14:2, 3.

In view of the Fall the human race is doomed to death. By ourselves we cannot escape the "wrath of God"—His justice. Thus we are "consumed" by His anger. The original word literally means "spent," "finished," or "overwhelmed."

In Romans 3:10-12 Paul quotes the words of the psalmist (Ps. 14:1-3) to describe our sinful nature and hopelessness apart from the justifying grace of God. Martin Luther commented on Psalm 90: "When a monk, it often happened to me when I read the Psalm, that I was compelled to lay the book out of my hand. But I knew not that these terrors were not addressed to an awakened mind. I knew not that Moses was speaking to a more obdurate and proud multitude, which neither understood nor cared for the anger of God, nor were humbled by their calamities, or even in prospect of death."—Charles H. Spurgeon, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, n.d.), p. 376.

What makes it urgent for us to "number our days"? Ps. 90:11, 12.

"This aspect of the subject is brought to a very practical conclusion by reducing the issue to a brief prayer to the effect that God may help us so to take note of the brevity of human life and of the few days that are ours that we may consider what the deep causes are and so get a 'wise heart.' According to this statement wisdom seems to consist in a full awareness of what is wrong with mankind and a full retreat to God as the only dwelling in this stormy existence where man can be safe."—H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1970), p. 647.

"All are weighed down with burdens that only Christ can remove. The heaviest burden that we bear is the burden of sin. If we were left to bear this burden, it would crush us. But the Sinless One has taken our place. . . . He invites us to cast all our care upon Him; for He carries us upon His heart."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 328, 329.

**FURTHER STUDY:** Ps. 6:1-10; 33:9-22; *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 71.

## Part 3—The God of Mercy

"He hath not dealt with us after our sins: nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him" (Ps. 103:10, 11).

One of the most beautiful of all the psalms, Psalm 103 contains "thanksgiving for God's mercy." God's anger against sin is intense, and "he will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever" (verse 9). Yet, He is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy" (verse 8).

"He never treats us, never punishes us, as our guilt and our sins deserve" (verse 10, Jerusalem Bible). Who can fathom the great mercy and "steadfast love" (verse 11, RSV) of our God? Who knows the extent of space? Astronauts have reached the moon, but that is an insignificant distance in comparison to space. Scientists measure space by light-years (the distance light travels in a year, at a speed of 186,000 miles a second). But who can measure the breadth or the depth of God's love?

Why are those that remember God's commandments particularly said to be recipients of His mercy? Ps. 103:17, 18.

"For the third time [see verses 11, 13] God's mercy and loving-kindness is said to be upon 'them that fear Him,' . . . as if to remind us that there is a love within a love, a love which they only know who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, who fear Him and walk in His ways, as well as a love which 'maketh the sun to shine, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust,' "—J. J. Stewart Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, 1868 ed., vol. 2, p. 196.

God's mercy is assured to those who love Him and keep His commandments (Ex. 20:6).

What should be our response to God's mercy and forgiveness? Ps. 32:5. (Compare Ps. 51:3, 4; 38:18.)

A true understanding of what our salvation has cost will give us a new sense of the sinfulness of sin. It will bring into sharp focus the specific sins which we need to confess.

**FURTHER STUDY:** Meditate on the following: Ps. 36:6-10; 30:1-12; 39:1-13.



## Part 4—Prayer for Redemption

"Return, O Lord! How Long?  
Have pity on thy servants!  
Satisfy us in the morning with thy steadfast love,  
that we may rejoice and be glad all our days"  
(Ps. 90:13, 14, RSV).

For what evidence of God's love does the psalmist plead and why does he expect it? Verses 14, 15.

"That new happiness, which consists in the certainty of being loved by God, is also thought of as the only factor that can outweigh or counterbalance the days of affliction or the years wherein evil has been the order of the day."—H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, p. 648.

Note the development in the closing verses. First, for what insight does the psalmist pray? Verse 16.

For what experience does the psalmist next pray? Verse 17, first clause.

The word translated *beauty* means "kindness," "favor"; it is apparently a synonym for "steadfast love." "When we see the loveliness of the character of God, we are 'transfigured by His grace' (See Ed 80; MB 95), and 'the beauty of the Lord our God' is 'upon us.'"—S.D.A. *Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 842.

"The last lingering traces of the curse of sin will be removed, and Christ's faithful ones will appear in 'the beauty of the Lord our God,' in mind and soul and body reflecting the perfect image of their Lord."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 645.

What is the import of the practical desire expressed in the conclusion of the prayer? Verse 17, second and third clauses.

"The work of our hand" means simply our everyday tasks. The professional and vocational duties by which we earn our livelihood, the common, ordinary tasks of the home, the farm, the shop, humdrum though they may seem, should be performed with a sincerity, devotion, and perfection that will merit God's approval. Let us not belittle life's commonplaces. Though life is transitory, whatever our hands find to do we should do with our might (Eccl. 9:10). God's plan allows for nothing cheap or shoddy in the Christian's work.

## Part 5—Blessings of Forgiveness

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile" (Ps. 32:1, 2).

Consider some of the blessings of forgiveness suggested by the psalmist. Ps. 103:3-5.

1. **He heals our diseases.** Healing of the physical body is often associated with the restoration of the spiritual life. (See Isa. 1:5, 6, 16; Matt. 9:2-6.) Not only are many diseases the result of sin, but guilt itself causes as well as aggravates sickness. Jesus forgave sin, cleansed from guilt, and told the sufferers to "go, and sin no more" (John 8:11).

2. **Redeems from destruction.** Sin is self-destructive. Sinners left to their own ways will ultimately destroy themselves. God forgives and restores. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 311.)

3. **Crowns with loving-kindness and tender mercies.** That is, He favors us with tokens of His love and tenderness. (Compare Ps. 5:12.)

4. **Satisfies with good things.** Human beings are constantly striving to find satisfaction. Some seek it in material things, others in power. Some seek to fill their lustful cravings. But all such endeavors end in emptiness. Only the pardoned sinner can find true satisfaction in the good things God provides for him.

5. **Renews youth.** Youthfulness is an idol vainly sought after by millions. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, . . . but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength" (Isa. 40:30, 31).

6. **Preserves from trouble.** Ps. 32:7. This does not mean that the forgiven sinner will never have troubles, but rather that he has a sure hiding place. Deliverance is promised.

7. **Leads in right paths.** Ps. 32:8. Counsel and instruction are promised to those who trust in His mercy. (Compare Ps. 33:18; 25:12.)

8. **Hears the prayers of the destitute.** Ps. 102:17. Forgiveness is not just a one-time thing. We will often have to fall at the feet of Jesus confessing our sinfulness and pleading for forgiveness. But the promise is sure that He will hear our prayer and forgive.

9. **Gives hope to the hopeless.** Ps. 130:5-7. Sin leads to hopelessness. And hopelessness breeds despair. But God's mercy is full of hope. The forgiven sinner will share that hope.

10. **Brings joy and gladness.** Ps. 32:11; 35:9. The great composer Haydn was once asked why his church music was so cheerful. His reply: "I cannot make it otherwise. I write according to the thoughts I feel: when I think upon God, my heart is so full of joy that the notes dance and leap, as it were, from my pen: and, since God has given me a cheerful heart, it will be pardoned me that I serve Him with a cheerful spirit."

**FURTHER STUDY:** Ps. 90:14; 27:6; 51:12; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 266-271.



## Part 6—The Beauty of Worship

“Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us: yea, the work of our hands establish thou it” (Ps. 90:17).

In this final benediction of Moses' outstanding prayer he asks for the beauty (“favor,” NIV) of the Lord our God to be upon us. The Hebrew word translated “beauty” in the King James Version is the word for “kindness.” Certainly, when we reflect His kindness, His beauty will “be upon us.”

What guidance does the psalmist give us in seeking for the beauty of the Lord? Ps. 27:4; 63:1, 2.

Both these psalms were written while David was a fugitive in the wilderness of Judah. (See 1 Samuel 22 and 23; *Education*, p. 164.) While hiding in the wilderness amid the rocks and caves, deprived of the blessings and comfort of public worship, the psalmist's heart and soul reached out in intense longing for the presence of God as he had experienced it in the sanctuary. There he had seen God's power and glory. And he thirsted with the intensity of physical thirst to again enjoy His presence, behold His beauty, and inquire in His sanctuary.

The worship hour is a time for us to rejoice in the God of mercy who has forgiven our sins, a time for thanksgiving and praise, a time for us to meditate on His greatness and majesty and to enter into deeper fellowship and communion with Him.

What is the import of the universal invitation to praise and worship God with which Psalm 103 closes? Verses 19-22.

What personal invitation follows and how can we respond to it in our lives and work? Ps. 103:22, second clause.

“After the universal paean [song] of praise there is an infinite pathos in David's repetition of the phrase with which the psalm began. Conscious that the universe is now vocal with the praise of God he would also have his own voice heard.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 862.

“The final note reminds us of the psalmist's original intent. As the sound of brass, woodwinds, and strings is subdued in a swift decrescendo, the world fades out, and the immense perspectives are focused once more on the secret sanctuary of a single, serene, forgiven man, who then calls as he initially did, *sotto voce*, ‘Bless Yahweh, O my soul!’”—Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms and Their Meaning for Today* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1952), p. 208.

## Christ's Suffering Foreshadowed

MEMORY TEXT: “Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication” (Ps. 55:1).

The psalms of personal lament, with their moving and sometimes painful cries, comprise the larger portion of the book of Psalms. They range in subject matter from distress in sickness and suffering, laments of the accused and oppressed, and sorrows of the penitent, to denunciations on the sufferer's enemies. Many were written as David fled from his enemies—some were written when he was a victim of his own frailties and blunders.

Among the songs of lament especially prophetic we find glimpses of the suffering Messiah. New Testament writers referred to these as proof that Jesus was the Messiah. This week's lesson studies those psalms that deal with Christ's experience on the cross. They can be tabulated as follows:

Psalm	Prophecy	N.T. Fulfillment
22:1	“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”	Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34
22:7; 109:25	Derision and Contempt	Matt. 27:39-42; Mark 15:29-32
22:8	“He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him.”	Matt. 27:43
22:16	They pierced His hands and feet.	John 19:37; 20:25-27
22:17	They looked and stared at Him.	Luke 23:35
22:18	Casting lots and parting His garments	Matt. 27:35; Mark 15:24; John 19:23, 24
31:5	“Into thine hand I commit my spirit.”	Luke 23:46
34:20	Not one of His bones was broken.	John 19:36
69:21	Gave Him vinegar to drink.	Matt. 27:34; John 19:29



## Part 1—A Look at Laments

"Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! Many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God" (Ps. 3:1, 2).

In the dark hours of that night when David and his company fled from his traitor-son, Absalom, he sang the sublime hymn of trust in God found in Psalm 3. The four stanzas follow a pattern found in laments:

1. He described the danger.
2. He recalled God's help in the past.
3. He expressed confidence: "I laid me down and slept; . . . for the Lord sustained me" (verse 5).
4. He uttered a prayer for triumph over his enemies.

The triumphant note of confidence with which this psalm ends is typical of the prayers of lament.

## SEARCH AND LEARN

Study the basic pattern of the laments and notice some examples:

1. They begin with an address to God, a brief statement of appeal, or a short confession of confidence (Ps. 4:1; 5:1; 6:1).
2. The distress or complaint is described (Ps. 13:1, 2; 4:2; 6:2).
3. The lamenter appeals for help, deliverance, and sometimes cries out against his enemies (Ps. 5:2, 3; 6:4; 17:6-9).
4. He expresses confidence and assurance that God will hear or help (Ps. 3:4-6).
5. A confession of sin or affirmation of innocence is frequent in the psalms of lament (Ps. 25:11, 16-18; 17:3-5; 7:3-5).
6. Often the laments include a pledge or vow to perform certain acts such as worship and praise. (Ps. 22:22; 35:28; 56:12).
7. Usually the conclusion is a hymn of praise to God, or a blessing, and sometimes a restatement of the plea (Ps. 3:8; 5:12; 7:17).

**APPLICATION:** The prayers of lament are for our comfort and encouragement. Here is where to turn:

When sick or in distress .....	Psalm 6
When falsely accused .....	Psalm 7
When the "bottom drops out" .....	Psalm 11
When a victim of deception .....	Psalm 12
When God seems far away .....	Psalm 13
When tempted .....	Psalm 28
When overwhelmed by guilt .....	Psalm 38
When lonely .....	Psalm 42
When depressed .....	Psalm 55
When afraid .....	Psalm 56
When in an impossible situation .....	Psalm 57
When faced with the problems of old age .....	Psalm 71
When sleepless with anxiety .....	Psalm 77

## Part 2—Despised and Rejected

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" (Ps. 22:1).

Even Christ's disciples had failed Him in the hour of His greatest need. One had betrayed Him (Matt. 26:47-49); another had denied Him (verses 69-75); all had forsaken Him and fled (Mark 14:50; see also *The Desire of Ages*, p. 697).

So great was our Saviour's agony as He hung on the cross that He could only cry out, Why? "Why hast thou forsaken me?" It is sin that separates from God (Isa. 59:2). Because He bore *our sins* the One who had been with the Father from eternity now found Himself completely shut out from His Father's presence. It was almost more than He could bear. "The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. . . . He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 753.

**What is significant about the fact that even though Christ felt separated from the Father He appealed to Him for help? Ps. 22:19, 20; Luke 23:46.**

"My darling" in verse 20 is literally, "my only one." It is rendered "my precious life" in the New International Version or "my only life" in the New American Standard Bible. The word the Septuagint uses to translate this Hebrew word is the same one used in John 3:16 and rendered as "only begotten son." (See *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 684.)

"Amid the awful darkness, apparently forsaken of God, Christ had drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe. In those dreadful hours He had relied upon the evidence of His Father's acceptance heretofore given Him. . . . By faith He rested in Him whom it had ever been His joy to obey. And as in submission He committed Himself to God, the sense of the loss of His Father's favor was withdrawn. By faith, Christ was victor."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 756.

## SEARCH AND LEARN

In the light of what Jesus experienced at Calvary the ordinances that commemorate Jesus' humiliation, suffering, and death should take on special significance. Read again in the references below the record of their institution and note any new appreciations that impress you as you study:

1. John 13:3-17 (compare Phil. 2:5-8).
2. Matt. 26:26-30 (compare 1 Cor. 11:23-29).

## Part 3—Oppressed and Afflicted

"All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him" (Ps. 22:7, 8). (Compare Matt. 27:41:43.)

What events surrounding the crucifixion are foretold in Psalm 22:12-18? (Compare Matt. 27:27-40; John 19:16-30.)

Verses 12, 13 \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 16 \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 18 \_\_\_\_\_

Can you picture those rough, irreligious soldiers placing a crown of thorns on His head, spitting on Him one moment and bowing in blasphemous mockery the next? Can you imagine the angry rabble in Herod's court? "Like wild beasts, the crowd darted upon their prey. Jesus was dragged this way and that. Had not the Roman soldiers interposed, and forced back the maddened throng, the Saviour would have been torn in pieces."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 731.

The Gospel writers veil the tragic details of the crucifixion—the nails driven through the hands and feet, the nakedness that must have torn his sensitive soul. No wonder the psalmist has the divine Sufferer saying, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within me" (verse 14, NASB). (See also Ps. 69:19.)

## SEARCH AND LEARN

Read Isaiah 53. This prophecy and Psalm 22 are among the clearest Old Testament prophecies that point to the suffering and death of the Messiah.

Indicate how the following verses in Isaiah 53 apply particularly to the crucifixion:

Verse 4 \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 5 \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 6 \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 8 \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 10 \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 11 \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 12 \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 4—Suffering Triumphantly

"I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee" (Ps. 22:22).

Notice how the apostle applied this verse to Jesus. Heb. 2:9-12.

After describing the intense suffering of the Messiah and picturing in detail the events of the cross, the psalm suddenly changes from verse 22 onward to a song of praise. The words of verse 22 indicate the wonderful truth that through Christ our Elder Brother, we now become His brethren (Heb. 2:12).

The expression "I will pay my vows" (Ps. 22:25) has reference to the Levitical law regarding thanksgiving or votive (vow) offerings. The one bringing the offering was not to keep his happiness to himself but to share his offering with the Levites and others. And he was to tell the congregation what the Lord had done for him.

What would be the ultimate result of the Messiah's suffering? Ps. 22:27, 30, 31.

As Jesus uttered His dying cry on the cross, another voice was heard saying, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matt. 27:54). "Thus again evidence was given that our Redeemer was to see of the travail of His soul. Upon the very day of His death, three men . . . had declared their faith,—he who commanded the Roman guard, he who bore the cross of the Saviour, and he who died upon the cross at His side."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 770.

As the Saviour faced that cruel cross He must have looked down the corridors of time and thought of the men and women from every nation and race who would be saved through His suffering. Perhaps He thought of each of us. And "for the joy that was set before him [He] endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2).

**APPLICATION:** How do people react to the cross? Consider the following possibilities and circle two that best describe your personal reaction:

anger	guilt
disgust	understanding
embarrassment	appreciation
resentment	sympathy
tenderness	neglect
perplexity	love



## Part 5—"Saint Under Stress"

"In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed; deliver me in thy righteousness. Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defense to save me. For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me" (Ps. 31:1-3).

What are some of the stresses that prompted the psalmist's cry to God for deliverance? Ps. 31:4, 6, 10-13.

The exact circumstances in David's life that led to this psalm are uncertain. (They probably center on the experience recorded in 1 Samuel 23:19-26.) But its theme is universal. His enemies had laid a snare for him. Their lies had caused him grief and anxiety. He felt alone and forsaken, rejected and slandered even by his neighbors. Jeremiah frequently uses the term "fear . . . on every side," probably borrowed from verse 13. (See Jer. 49:29.) Fear is an unrelenting enemy often more threatening than the enemy himself. In Psalm 64:1 David prayed to be preserved "from fear of the enemy." But no matter how troubled or fearful he may have been, he turned to his God for refuge and defense.

In this psalm David repeatedly declared his confidence in God. What reasons does he give for trusting his "Rock"? Ps. 31:7, 8, 19-21.

At what point in the crucifixion experience did Jesus quote Psalm 31:5 and why? Luke 23:46.

Perfect submission to the will of His Father marked the life of Jesus at every step (John 6:38; Matt. 26:39). He died with the words of complete submission on His lips.

Stephen, the first Christian martyr, breathed his last with this commitment (Acts 7:59). It is said that these words were the last spoken by Huss, Luther, Melancthon, and many others.

In harmony with Jesus' example what appeal does the psalmist bring to the children of God? Ps. 31:23, 24.

This beautiful psalm closes with an appeal to devotion to God in time of adversity. He who can keep our souls will strengthen our hearts and give us courage as we wait on Him and hope in Him. Our lives, like Jesus', are safe only when they are yielded completely into the hands of God.

## Part 6—The Broken Heart

"Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none" (Ps. 69:20).

Read thoroughly Jesus' Gethsemane experience in Matthew 26:36-45.

The earthly life of Jesus was a lonely one, and He depended on His Father, who had not left Him alone (John 8:29). But on the night of agony as He made His way to Gethsemane, the awful weight of the burden of sin crushed His sinless soul, and He felt the separation from God that sin causes. He cried out, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful." The psalmist had pictured this moment: "I sink in deep mire. . . : I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me" (Ps. 69:2). In His supreme agony Jesus longed for sympathy and comfort. Surely His closest friends and disciples who were nearby would understand and "take pity," but they were sleeping! He "looked . . . for comforters, but . . . found none" (Ps. 69:20). "The Saviour trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with Him."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 693. In those terrible hours "He had borne that which no human being could ever bear; for He had tasted the sufferings of death for every man."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 694.

What other earthly sorrows that He bore are suggested by this psalm? Ps. 69:4, 8, 9, 21.

"This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance" was the decision of the keepers of the Jewish vineyard (Matt. 21:38.) Then they slew Him.

His own nation rejected Him. His own brothers constantly criticized Him, and even His disciples forsook Him.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** "It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. . . . If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 83.

**APPLICATION:** What have you learned from this lesson that

1. makes you appreciate God more?
2. you should pray about during the next few days?
3. will enable you to be a more effective witness during the 1000 days of reaping?

# How Love Responds

**MEMORY TEXT:** "I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people" (Ps. 116:17, 18).

"The sacrificial system was inaugurated when sin entered the world . . . and served in subsequent centuries as a reminder that the wages of sin is death and that eternal life can be regained only as a divine gift."—*S.D.A. Bible Dictionary*, p. 963.

Unfortunately, the pagan contemporaries of Israel used counterfeit systems of sacrifice that often influenced adversely the minds of God's people. These heathen worshipers believed that sacrifices appeased their gods or somehow obligated the god to look with favor on them. They also believed that their gods were to some extent dependent on their sacrifices for food and sustenance.

This perversion of the sacrificial system became a major concern of God's prophets. Psalm 50 speaks to this issue.

Probably used on occasions of covenant renewal and dedication, it begins with a majestic description of God's appearing and the judgment scene. In authoritative tones the people are reminded that He will not accept their insincere compliance expressed in mere rounds and ceremonies. Better sacrifices, the kind God desires most, are broken and contrite hearts, the sacrifice of righteous obedience, and the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving.

With that as our setting we will go on to examine some of the penitential psalms, especially Psalm 51 with its message of cleansing and renewal. Jesus, the perfect Sacrifice of Psalm 40, offered the sacrifice of obedience in our behalf and challenges us to offer the "sacrifice of righteousness" (Ps. 4:5). The sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving is presented in the Psalms and elsewhere in Scripture as a most pleasing sacrifice that honors and delights our God. When His people sincerely repent and begin to live in accord with their profession of salvation, a precious relationship with the Lord is established that continues into the new earth.

## Part 1—Heart Worship

**"Gather my saints together unto me: those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (Ps. 50:5). (Read Psalm 50.)**

"This psalm is a prophetic liturgy which emphasizes the theme of the Lord as Judge of His people. He is not Judge in the sense that He pronounces the sentence of destruction upon the congregation, but rather in the sense of sifting and disciplining His people. He distinguishes their superficial worship by animal sacrifice from the profounder worship of the heart, and separates for blessing those in the worshiping congregation who are truly obedient to the ethical demands of the law from those who know the law but do not observe it. . . .

" . . . The psalmist pictures God's presence as being preceded by devouring fire and encompassed by tempest. Just as the prophet Micah portrays God as calling the mountains to be witnesses to His charges against Judah (Mic. 6:1), so the psalmist represents Him as summoning heaven and earth to be witnesses as He judges His people. He calls unto Himself His godly ones, the congregation of His covenant people, who have consistently renewed their covenant with Him by the sacrifices as stipulated in the law. The witnessing heavens proclaim the righteousness of the Judge and thus guarantee the justice of His decisions as He opens His case against them."—Elmer A. Leslie, *The Psalms* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1959), pp. 204, 205.

**Why did God call His people to task about their sacrifices? Ps. 50:7-13.**

God is not happy with Israel's sacrifices. "Listen, my people, I am speaking; Israel, I am giving evidence against you!" (Ps. 50:7, Jerusalem Bible). Because Israel was tainted with some of the ideas their contemporaries believed, God had to tell them: "I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. . . . If I were hungry I would not tell you. . . . Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?" (Ps. 50:9-13, NIV).

**How is God's covenant bond with His people to be renewed, and what does God require of His worshipers? Ps. 50:14, 15, 23.**

"The psalm is timeless in its application. We may participate in all the ordinances of the church, be constant attendants at divine service, give freely to help the poor, engage in much missionary activity, and yet be reprobate if we fail to serve God in spirit, or if we cherish sin in our hearts."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 754.



## Part 2—A Contrite Heart

“You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Ps. 51:16, 17, NIV).

“God is not rejecting His own appointed offerings, still less saying that we can be self-atoning. What He is emphasizing is that the best of gifts is hateful to Him without a contrite heart. And the reference is not simply to atonement (for which only the blood of another can suffice; Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22) but to the whole range of worship. . . . In all this, God is looking for the heart that knows how little it deserves, how much it owes.”—Derek Kidner, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), pp. 193, 194.

**How does the contrite heart relate to sin? Ps. 51:3, 9, 14; 32:5.**

Psalms 32 and 51 are penitential psalms written after David had committed his grievous sin with Bathsheba. When Nathan, the prophet, confronted him (2 Sam. 12:1-14) and delivered the fateful message about the consequences of his sin, David did not become defensive or try to rationalize or excuse his sin. He simply acknowledged it, confessing his own sinful weakness and need for forgiveness (Ps. 51:5-7).

The heart encased in self-defense, pride, and selfish fear of consequences continues to be hardened by sin. In contrast, the broken spirit deplores sin for the ugly thing it is. “The heart must be yielded to God—must be subdued by divine grace—before man’s repentance can be accepted.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 587.

**As a step beyond forgiveness, for what did David pray? Ps. 51:10. (Compare Eze. 11:19; 36:26.)**

Through forgiveness God cleanses the heart; through sanctification He brings forth a new life. The sincerely penitent sinner always accompanies his prayer for forgiveness with a prayer for sanctification.

“David’s prayer is for a spirit that is steadfast in its faith, and therefore constant in its obedience. The psalmist desires an entirely new mental and moral nature.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 756.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Only the heart that feels its brokenness is ready to pray, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Ps. 51:10). This is the sacrifice that God desires.

## Part 3—The Sacrifice of Righteousness

**“Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord” (Ps. 4:5).**

The Jerusalem Bible reads, “Offer sacrifice in a right spirit.” The Christian must put his trust in the Lord and in what the sacrifice represents, not in the sacrifice itself. The New Testament makes it clear that these sacrifices could never remove sins or make the offerer perfect (Heb. 10:1-4). But the great Antitype of the sacrificial system was still a thousand years away from David’s time. Meanwhile, God made clear to His people just what kind of sacrifices He expected. These sacrifices were intended to teach them to look forward by faith to the coming Lamb of God.

In Psalm 51:12, the psalmist prays to be kept in a proper frame of mind. “‘Free spirit’ is better translated, ‘willing spirit.’ David prays to be kept in a frame of mind willing and ready to obey God and to serve Him.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 756.

**In the light of God’s forgiveness and restoration, what resolution did David make? Ps. 51:13.**

The Christian has a responsibility to instruct others concerning the sinfulness of sin so that, like David, they may turn from their sins and realize God’s loving-kindness.

**Whom do you think David intended to include in his closing prayer? Ps. 51:18, 19.**

Sacrifices of righteousness are those offered in a right spirit with a right motive. It is characteristic of the psalmists to include others in their prayers. True religion is never selfish.

“‘**With burnt offering.**’ External forms of religion have their place. . . . We should take care that the most formal parts of public worship preserve the spirit of humble worship. There is nothing wrong in following certain forms of worship, but rather in a lack of sincere religion motivating the forms.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 757.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** “The religion that comes from God is the only religion that will lead to God. . . . We must be born of the divine Spirit. . . . [This] will give us a willing obedience to all His requirements.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 189.

**FURTHER STUDY:** Prov. 15:8, 9; Matt. 21:28-31; *Christ’s Object Lessons*, “Saying and Doing,” pp. 278-283.

## Part 4—The Sacrifice of Praise

“O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.”

“I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O Lord; for it is good” (Ps. 51:15; 54:6).

Suggest the various circumstances that prompted the psalmist’s offerings of praise as found in the references below:

Ps. 54:6, 7 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 27:6 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 32:10, 11 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 51:9, 14 \_\_\_\_\_

“The Lord desires us to make mention of His goodness and tell of His power. He is honored by the expression of praise and thanksgiving.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 298. “Whoever makes thanksgiving his sacrifice honours me” (Ps. 50:23, Jerusalem Bible).

How often are we to offer the sacrifice of praise? Ps. 92:1, 2. (Compare Heb. 13:15; 1 Thess. 5:16, 18.)

To offer the sacrifice of praise—the fruit of our lips—is to acknowledge by our lives as well as by our words that we owe everything to our Maker. The lips reveal what is in the heart. If praise and gratitude to God abide there, the lips will bear the fruit of praise. “So will we render the calves [offerings] of our lips” (Hosea 14:2). Even when reviewing the dark chapters of our experience we will dwell on His great mercy and unfailing love, His power revealed in our deliverance. Ellen White states, “We will praise far more than complain.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 273. Paul admonishes us to “pray without ceasing,” but we often forget that his counsel is sandwiched between “Rejoice evermore” and “In everything give thanks” (1 Thess. 5:16-18). Sometime analyze your prayers to see how much time you spend asking God for things in comparison to how much time you spend praising Him. The psalmist says, “My tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long” (Ps. 35:28). Just as our need of Christ’s intercession is constant, so is our need to offer our gratitude to Him for his salvation.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** “Let the fresh blessings of each new day awaken praise in our hearts for these tokens of His loving care. When you open your eyes in the morning, thank God that He has kept you through the night. Thank Him for His peace in your heart. Morning, noon, and night, let gratitude as a sweet perfume ascend to heaven.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 253.

## Part 5—The Perfect Sacrifice

“Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required” (Ps. 40:6).

Notice how Hebrews 10:5, 6 applies these words to the Messiah.

The words of Psalm 40:6 introduce one of the most thought-provoking Messianic prophecies in the book of Psalms. Instead of “mine ears hast thou opened,” Hebrews 10:5 quotes the Septuagint: “A body hast thou prepared for me.”

Other New Testament writers concentrate on this thought as follows: “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24). He who “humbled himself, and became obedient to death” (Phil. 2:8), He “who knew no sin” was “made . . . sin for us” (2 Cor. 5:21). It is only because of “the offering of the body of Jesus Christ” (Heb. 10:10) that we have “boldness” to enter a “new and living way, . . . having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (verses 19, 20, 22). How else can we respond to such a sacrifice than to bring to Him a broken and contrite heart?

What was to be the Messiah’s relationship to the Father’s will? Ps. 40:7, 8; Heb. 10:7-10. (See also John 5:30; 6:38.)

The Messiah gloriously fulfilled the long-awaited promise of the new covenant: “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts” (Jer. 31:33). The same Jesus who delighted in doing His Father’s will delights in writing His character upon the fiber of our being.

**APPLICATION:** What must we do to cooperate with God in allowing Him to write His law upon our hearts? Ps. 119:10, 11.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** “All incense from earthly tabernacles must be moist with the cleansing drops of the blood of Christ. He holds before the Father the censer of His own merits, in which there is no taint of earthly corruption. He gathers into this censer the prayers, the praise, and the confessions of His people, and with these He puts His own spotless righteousness. Then . . . the incense comes up before God wholly and entirely acceptable. . . . Oh, that all may see that everything in obedience, in penitence, in praise and thanksgiving, must be placed upon the glowing fire of the righteousness of Christ.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 344.

**FURTHER STUDY:** Read the entire fortieth Psalm. Also study Psalm 141; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 370-373.



# A CARING CHURCH IS A CARING PERSON

Vacation Bible School  
Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking  
Natural Foods Cooking Seminar  
Weight Control Seminar  
Stress Control Seminar  
Daniel Seminar  
Revelation Seminar  
and other

## Entry Events



High-rise cities and small country townships. Both hold people we need to reach.

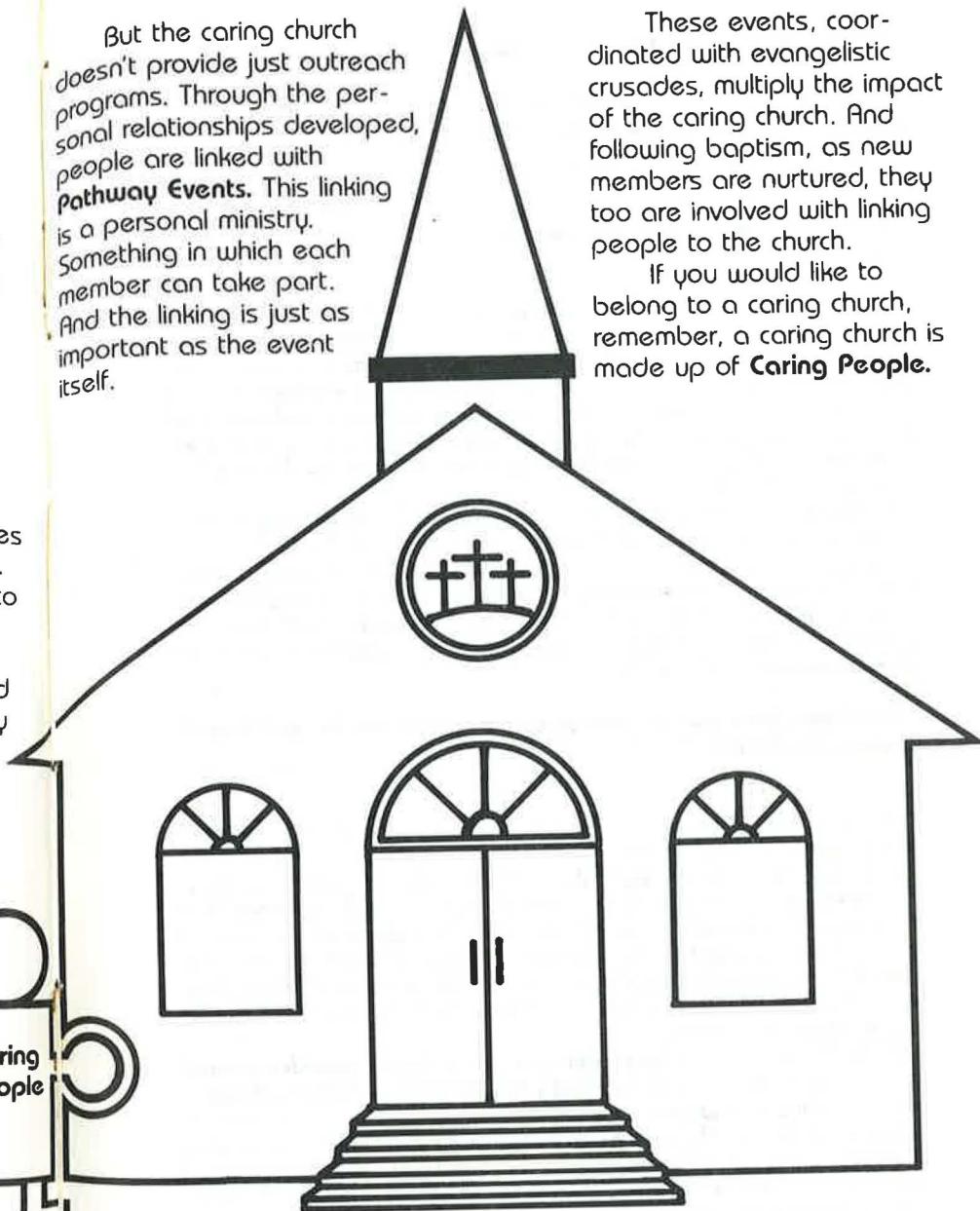
But how we contact those people should depend on who they are, where they live, and how they live!

And that's where the caring church comes in. Through **Entry Events** the needs of people are addressed.

But the caring church doesn't provide just outreach programs. Through the personal relationships developed, people are linked with **Pathway Events**. This linking is a personal ministry. Something in which each member can take part. And the linking is just as important as the event itself.

These events, coordinated with evangelistic crusades, multiply the impact of the caring church. And following baptism, as new members are nurtured, they too are involved with linking people to the church.

If you would like to belong to a caring church, remember, a caring church is made up of **Caring People**.



## Part 6—Application to the Church Today

“Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence. . . . He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people” (Ps. 50:3, 4).

Notice how the Laodicean message in the book of Revelation is addressed to Christians living in God’s final judgment hour. (Compare Rev. 3:14-17 with Ps. 50:2, 22.)

Laodicea means “judging the people” or “a people adjudged.” In the same way that God called to account His ancient people, Israel, and reproof and warning to those who bear His name and message in these last days. Those who feel that they are rich in spiritual knowledge, who have an abundance of religious goods, and who have need of nothing know not that they are “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:17).

No matter how much missionary zeal we may manifest, if our work is tainted with selfishness, “it is nought in the sight of God, for it is a tainted, corrupted offering. Unless the door of the heart is open to Jesus, unless He occupies the soul temple, unless the heart is imbued with His divine attributes, human actions when weighed in the heavenly balances, will be pronounced ‘wanting.’ ”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 961.

What does Jesus offer as a remedy for our spiritual needs? Rev. 3:18-20. (Compare Ps. 50:15.)

We need the divine eyesalve to see ourselves as we really are—then we will cry out with the psalmist, “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin” (Ps. 51:2). We need the costly wares of heaven—faith that works by love and purifies the soul. “Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts” (Ps. 51:6). And above all, we need the white raiment—the righteousness of Jesus Christ—wrought into the character. Christ’s appeal to Laodicea, “Be earnest, and repent” (Rev. 3:19, NIV), is a plea for heart religion. “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock” (Rev. 3:20, NIV).

Psalm 50 challenges us to repentance, and Psalm 51 provides a model of repentance. They call us to heart religion, to the sacrifices of repentance, obedience, and praise—sacrifices that honor God. To those who respond in this way He will show His salvation (Ps. 50:23). Christ says, “I will go in and eat with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne” (Rev. 3:20, 21, NIV). What a promise of intimate fellowship! Have you claimed it as your own?



## Choosing God’s Way

**MEMORY TEXT:** “Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it” (Ps. 37:34).

Not only does the Bible teach that there are two ways—and only two—but this is one of the underlying themes of the book of Psalms. These two ways become apparent early in the history of the human family. “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous” (Heb. 11:4). But “Cain went out from the presence of the Lord” (Gen. 4:16).

Because of this distinction we are faced with a universal problem that concerned many Bible writers, including the psalmists. How can the godly survive in an ungodly world? How can they cope with the obvious conflicts that are bound to come to them as members of a minority facing a hostile majority?

In our effort to resolve this problem, we will study three outstanding psalms on the godly and ungodly. In a few terse verses Psalm 1 sets forth the contrast between the two classes and then clarifies their ultimate rewards. In the end righteousness succeeds and wickedness fails.

In Psalm 37 the psalmist counsels us not to fret and worry over the ungodly or the question of God’s justice. In addition he gives the reasons why and puts into sharp perspective the ultimate end of each.

Psalm 73 is perhaps the most poignant of all. Here the psalmist bares his soul and reveals his own terrible conflict over the apparent prosperity of the wicked while the righteous suffer. Who of us has not at some time or another shared his pangs of envy and wondered if it was worth the struggle? But, as is typical in many of the psalms, he moves from his abject depression to the heights of faith and confidence and a new nearness to God.





# Part 1—Where Is Justice?

"Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity" (Ps. 37:1).

What caused the psalmist to be envious of the wicked? Ps. 73:2-5.

It is bad enough that the wicked seem to prosper. To make matters worse those who are arrogant and proud of their wickedness taunt God: "How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?" (Ps. 73:11, NIV). But what troubles the psalmist most is that in contrast to the wicked the righteous seem to suffer constantly. "All day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning" (Ps. 73:14).

What attitude do you see echoed in the psalmist's outcry against this injustice? Ps. 73:13, 14.

The psalmist says in effect, I have lived a decent life; I have tried to be pure before God, but what do I get for it? I have lived in vain. But then his envious words shock him.

What experience gave him a new perspective on the problem he had raised? Ps. 73: 16, 17.

His problem seemed inexplicable *until* he went into the sanctuary to commune with the Lord. There he caught a glimpse of reality—the ultimate end of the wicked. He recognized that he had been concerned about that which was not his concern and that he should trust God to work out that which was best.

Study carefully the outline of Psalm 73 that follows:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>I. Introduction</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Surety of God's goodness (Ps. 73:1).</li> <li>2. Psalmist's previous doubt (verse 2).</li> </ol> <p><b>II. Apparent Prosperity of the Wicked</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reason for doubt (verse 3).</li> <li>2. Description of prosperity of the wicked (Verses 4-9).</li> <li>3. Influence of the wicked on others (verses 10, 11).</li> <li>4. Psalmist's honest reflection (verses 12-14).</li> </ol> | <p><b>III. The Solution of the Problem</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Place of the solution (verses 15-17).</li> <li>2. Real outcome of wicked (verses 18-20).</li> <li>3. Reason for psalmist's doubt (verses 21, 22).</li> <li>4. Psalmist's recognition of God's presence (verses 23, 24).</li> <li>5. Ultimate solution and realization (verses 24-26).</li> </ol> <p><b>IV. Conclusion</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ultimate end of the wicked (verse 27).</li> <li>2. Psalmist's personal resolution (verse 28).</li> </ol> |
|---|---|

# Part 2—The Way of the Godly

"How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night" (Ps. 1:1, 2, NASB).

The righteous man refuses to be squeezed into the mold of worldly thinking. Instead he does this:

1. He ignores the advice of the wicked, whether it is flashed on the television screen or found in the most sophisticated philosophy or so-called science texts of the day.

2. He deliberately avoids standing in the path of sinners—his transactions are transparent, whether filing his income-tax report or in business dealings with strangers.

3. He refuses to conform his thinking to the level of the ungodly in that most deadly of all attitudes, scoffing.

## SEARCH AND LEARN

Ps. 1:1-3—CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RIGHTEOUS PERSON			
DOES NOT	Walk Stand Sit	in the	counsel of the ungodly way of sinners seat of the scornful
DOES	Delight Meditate (day and night)	in the law of God	
IS LIKE	A tree		planted by the rivers of water brings forth fruit in season the leaves do not wither
WHATEVER HE DOES SHALL PROSPER			

- Notice the following in the chart: The progressive involvement indicated in walking, standing, sitting.
- Meditation on God's laws springs from an attitude of delight.
- This kind of tree has to be "planted" by the Lord in a place favorable for cultivation.
- Three blessings are evident:
  1. Good fruit *in season* (compare Gal. 5:22, 23).
  2. Does not wither (contrast with Isa. 1:30).
  3. Shall prosper (compare Ps. 37:4-7).

### Part 3—The Way of the Ungodly

**"The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away" (Ps. 1:4).**

What a contrast! A tree planted by waters has deep roots, stability. Immovable, it appears to have little freedom. The chaff, on the other hand, appears to have unlimited freedom. Rootless, weightless, useless—there is nothing to stop it from being blown everywhere. But in the end that very freedom produces its destruction.

"'Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner.' Matt. 3:12. . . . By the words of truth, the chaff was being separated from the wheat. Because they were too vain and self-righteous to receive reproof, too world-loving to accept a life of humility, many turned away from Jesus. Many are still doing the same thing."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 392.

**How do the ungodly relate to the godly? Ps. 37:12, 14, 32.**

The ungodly or wicked are described in many ways in the psalms. (See, for example, Ps. 5:9; 10:2-11; 52:2-4.)

Perhaps the most common characteristic attributed to them is their disdain of the godly. This fact made our Saviour's life on earth extremely painful. Even the religious leaders of the day were so condemned by His holy life that they sought constantly to rid their guilt-laden consciences of His presence.

"The prejudice of the Pharisees . . . had its roots in the perversity of their hearts. Every word and act of Jesus aroused antagonism in them."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 387.

Those who follow their Master's example can expect the same opposition from the ungodly in our day. (See 2 Tim. 3:12.)

#### SEARCH AND LEARN

In order to better understand what constitutes godliness observe the virtues with which it is associated in the following texts:

- |                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. 1 Tim. 2:2 _____  | 5. 1 Tim. 6:11 _____ |
| 2. 1 Tim. 2:10 _____ | _____                |
| 3. 1 Tim. 6:3 _____  | 6. 2 Peter 1:6 _____ |
| 4. 1 Tim. 6:6 _____  | 7. 2 Peter 1:7 _____ |

### Part 4—The Inheritance of the Righteous

**"The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Ps. 37:11).**

Jesus set forth the requirements of His kingdom in the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-12). The meek, not the proud and haughty, will inherit the earth. The peacemakers, not those who seek to rule by force, are the children of God. Those who seek His guidance, who hunger and thirst for righteousness, not the self-sufficient, will be with Him in glory.

**What is noteworthy about the other characteristics of the godly that are listed? Ps. 37:21-23, 25, 26, 30.**

"Blessed are the merciful," said Jesus. In the final judgment, mercy is the determining factor in the separation of the sheep and the goats. (See Matt. 25:31-40.) The compassionate heart is a generous heart.

The godly man is dependable because his steps are established by the Lord. He delights in the Lord, and the Lord delights in him. Therefore, said Jesus, the righteous can rejoice even when he is persecuted, reviled, or slandered.

**What does the psalmist mean when he states: "For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous" (Ps. 1:6)?**

"God concerns Himself with the righteous. Therefore they prosper. The last verse of the psalm gives the final reason for the different ending of the two ways. Since God knows, He discriminates, and He approves or condemns according to the eternal standards."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 632.

**What ultimate blessing of the covenant relationship is the godly man's only hope? Ps. 37:39, 40.**

His salvation comes from Yahweh, for He saved those who trust in Him. The psalmist never doubts for a moment that all goodness, all righteousness, all hope of escape from evil and evildoers have their source in Him who alone can save. The book of Psalms contains no less than 60 verses that express trust in the Lord. Here, for example, is one: "Thou . . . savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee" (Ps. 17:7).

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Can I know with certainty that I am one of the "godly"? What guidelines found in Psalm 37 can prevent that certainty from becoming presumption?



## Part 5—The End of the Wicked

"Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish" (Ps. 1:5, 6).

A recurring theme in Psalms as well as in the rest of the Scriptures is the final end of the wicked.

**What is the implication of Jesus' description of the tares that are to be burned up at the end of the world? Matt. 13:40-42.**

"Everything that causes sin and all who do evil" (verse 41, NIV) will be weeded out of His kingdom. God's dealing with sin is not arbitrary. Just as the pollution problem on our planet must be dealt with if we are to survive, so the pollution of sin must be eradicated for the safety of the universe.

**Compare Isaiah's description of sinners at the Lord's coming with John the revelator's. Isa. 2:10-21; Rev. 6:15-17.**

The haughty who have exalted themselves against God will see that they have been fighting against Christ.

**What are some of the illustrations from nature used by the psalmist to teach the final and complete destruction of the wicked? Ps. 37:2, 20, 35, 36.**

Some of the newer versions such as the NIV render Psalm 37:20 "like the beauty of the fields (instead of "fat of lambs") they will vanish . . . like smoke." On May 18, 1980, Mount St. Helens, in Washington State "blew its top," and in moments of time a beautiful, snowcapped mountain—noted for its forests, lakes, and wildlife—became a desolate waste of barren, ugly rocks and debris, as hot, molten lava and ash gushed from the eruption. One eyewitness reporter commented that he "felt a growing apprehension for all of us living on a planetary crust so precariously afloat atop such heats and pressures. Never again would I regain my former complacency about this world we live on."—Rowe Findley, *National Geographic*, January 1981, p. 42.

The wicked may be complacent about their final end. They may jeer at or ignore the warnings God gives them, but the certainty of their fate is nonetheless ominous.

**When we are tempted to be angry at the prosperity of the wicked or give in to evil because it seems the easier way, what two great facts should influence our thinking? Ps. 37:8-11.**

## Part 6—Counsel and Promises

"Trust in the Lord and do good. . . . Delight yourself in the Lord. . . . Commit your way to the Lord. . . . Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him" (Ps. 37:3-7, NIV).

Derek Kidner suggests that an alternate to the word *trust* in verse 3 could be "enjoy security." The wicked may appear to enjoy security, but it is so fragile it can be blown away in a moment of time. The godly, on the other hand, may not have much of earthly security, but their trust in the Lord provides eternal security.

As Spurgeon suggests, in a certain sense we can imitate the wicked; they delight in their portion—we should delight in ours.

**Notice the promises that accompany these counsels in Psalm 37:3-6, 9-11.**

These promises cover two areas of need—temporal and spiritual blessings.

1. *Safety*—"dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture" (verse 3, NIV). God will be their "stronghold in time of trouble" (verse 39, NIV).
2. *Food*—"verily thou shalt be fed" (verse 3). The psalmist could declare that in all his long life he had never "seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (verse 25). (See also verses 16, 19.)
3. *Spiritual prosperity*—righteousness and judgment (see verse 6).
4. *Guidance*—spiritual security (see verses 5, 23, 24, 31, 33, 37).
5. *Eternal life*—to inherit the earth (see verses 9, 11, 18, 22, 29, 34).

**After his perplexity over the prosperity of the wicked, and his new insight gained in the sanctuary, how does the psalmist resolve the matter? (Read Psalm 73:23-28.)**

In the final analysis, after all else had been said about the godly and ungodly, the psalmist is satisfied that nearness to God can alone bring delight. The wicked will perish because they turn away from God. The ultimate blessing for the psalmist is to draw nigh to God.

"Nestle in the sheltering arms of Jesus, and do not wrestle yourself out of His arms. Bear your whole weight on the promises of God."—*This Day With God*, p. 9.

**PERSONAL APPLICATION: How can I develop a greater sense of God's presence in my life? How will doing so affect my witness?**

**FURTHER STUDY:** Heb. 10:22; James 4:8.

# Loving God's Law

**MEMORY TEXT:** "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day."  
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:97, 105).

The God who is mighty to save is portrayed in the psalms not only as One who forgives sin but also as One who delivers from sin. The God of mercy is also the Author of righteousness and law. The One who cleanses from sin also enables His children to walk in right paths.

Psalms 15 and 24 ask the question, "Who shall abide in thy tabernacle?" Both psalms spell out in unmistakable, practical terms the fitness necessary for admission to the Lord's temple. The religion of the Bible is realistic—it deals with human problems on the level of actual day-to-day living. The plan of salvation includes God's directions on how to live in the here and now. Not that we can *earn* a right to heaven by doing certain things; but rather, as we shall see in this week's lesson, knowing God and experiencing salvation produce an obedient life.

Most of this week's lesson will be a study of that great psalm which Spurgeon referred to as the "little Bible"—Psalm 119. This giant among the psalms is noted for being the longest chapter in the Bible. An acrostic poem, it consists of 22 stanzas (the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet), each of which contains eight verses beginning with the given letter of the Hebrew alphabet. As a result it has been called the "alphabet of divine love."

The psalm is meditative. Its overall theme focuses on the psalmist's love for God's law and Word. Ten different words are used to designate God's law and will: law, testimonies, way, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgments, ordinances, word, and promise (RSV).

The Hebrew word for *law* is *torah* meaning "teaching," "instruction," "direction." It may be used in the sense of a single command, of a body of law, of the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses), or of the Old Testament Scriptures as a whole.

The tables of stone on which God's Ten Commandments were engraved were to be kept in the ark as a "witness against thee" (Deut. 31:26), thus they are spoken of as "the testimony." The word *statutes* implies the permanence of Scripture—they were engraved or inscribed "for the time to come for ever and ever" (Isa. 30:8).

Whatever word is used, God reveals Himself in such a way as to show His creatures how they may walk the pathway of obedience.

## Part 1—The Way of Righteousness

"Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart" (Ps. 15:1, 2).

Psalm 15 might be entitled "The Guest of Yahweh." The pilgrim approaching Zion seeks to learn the entrance requirements. Instead of describing some ritual, as might be expected, the priest answers with moral descriptions that search the conscience:

"He whose walk is blameless  
and who does what is righteous,  
who speaks the truth from his heart  
and has no slander on his tongue,  
who does his neighbor no wrong  
and casts no slur on his fellow man,  
who despises a vile man  
but honors those who fear the Lord,  
who keeps his oath  
even when it hurts,  
who lends his money without usury  
and does not accept a bribe against the innocent.  
He who does these things  
will never be shaken" (Ps. 15:2-5, NIV).

These qualities do not *earn* the Christian his right to enter. This is provided by Christ's salvation alone. But they do attest to the effectiveness of God's saving power in his life and conduct.

### SEARCH AND LEARN

Psalm 119 indicates that having studied God's law we respond as follows (indicate how the texts listed support the response given).

1. **We choose to follow the better way:**  
Verse 173— \_\_\_\_\_
2. **We react emotionally:**  
Verse 16— \_\_\_\_\_  
Verse 48— \_\_\_\_\_  
Verse 161— \_\_\_\_\_
3. **The laws change our behavior:**  
Verse 44— \_\_\_\_\_  
Verse 133— \_\_\_\_\_  
Verse 157— \_\_\_\_\_
4. **We witness to others concerning our commitment:**  
Verse 13— \_\_\_\_\_  
Verse 46— \_\_\_\_\_  
Verse 172— \_\_\_\_\_



## Part 2—The Way of Happiness

"Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart" (Ps. 119:1, 2).

In a world obsessed with the search for happiness there are few truly happy people. Yet God's Word has made plain how genuine happiness may be found. Note the psalmist's description of the happy person: "Ah, how happy those of blameless life who walk in the Law of Yahweh! How happy those who repect his decrees, . . . and, doing no evil, walk in his ways!" (Ps. 119:1-3, Jerusalem Bible).

True holiness inevitably leads to true happiness. There is no other way to find true happiness than the way God has shown us in His Word. To walk in His way (Col. 2:6) is to walk with God. It is the path of Christian growth and progress.

Sin breeds guilt, and guilt robs the human spirit of happiness. To live with a conscience void of offense indicates a love for rightdoing. When the general tenor of the life is upward and onward (see 1 John 3:9; Eph. 4:13) we can say with the psalmist, "Then shall I not be ashamed" (Ps. 119:6).

Consider the psalmist's attitude toward the law as evidenced in Psalm 119:14-16, 24.

He does not see the law as burdensome and restrictive. Rather he delights that the testimonies serve as his counselors. God's Word is to him a rich treasure which he delights to search for and meditate upon. The word *delight* is frequently used in the Bible to express deep emotional feeling and satisfaction. The more we meditate on God's Word the more we will see in it to delight our souls. The Holy Spirit takes these principles and etches them on the very fiber of our being. Then and only then may we say, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40:8). An illustration of this principle comes to light in Isaiah 58:13, 14: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, . . . and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, . . . then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord." When we enter wholeheartedly into the keeping of the Sabbath, which is something more than correct outward conduct, we will find the rich blessings that God wants us to delight in.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Psalm 119:5 says, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" Can I personally pray this prayer?

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** Read Psalm 119 at one sitting. Watch for how many times the psalmist uses the word *delight*. List other words similar in meaning that are used to express his love for the law.

## Part 3—The Way of Willing Compliance

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments" (Ps. 119:9, 10).

Childhood is a time of innocence, but the approach of adolescence brings many temptations. "How can a youth remain pure? By behaving as your word prescribes" (verse 9, Jerusalem Bible).

There is no time when it is inappropriate to turn to the Lord. But the sooner the better. To find the right way before sin has a chance to leave additional permanent and ugly scars is to our advantage. Solomon learned this lesson through painful and disappointing mistakes. And his counsel to the young was this: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth" (Eccl. 12:1). All that had at one time seemed so alluring to him he now classified as vanity. He concluded, "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (verse 13).

What three essentials must we follow as we seek to obey God's will? Ps. 119:10, 11, 18.

"I seek you with all my heart" (verse 10, NIV). The Hebrew word for *seek* here means "to seek with care." It carries a connotation of inquiry after knowledge. (See 1 Sam. 9:9 and Jer. 21:2, which use the same Hebrew word.)

Our seeking for God's will must be wholehearted. No mere casual approach to the study of His Word will do. (See Ps. 119:32.) "I have hidden your word in my heart" (verse 11, NIV). After we seek His will we must then "hide" His precious words in our hearts.

As a youth Jesus hid the Word in His heart by memorizing large portions of Scripture. He met every temptation and question with "It is written," often quoting from the psalms. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 89.)

Finally, as we come to the Word we should pray, "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law" (verse 18, NIV). The word for *open* as used here means "uncover." The psalmist was asking God to remove whatever blinded his eyes to understanding what God wanted to say to him. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. (See 1 Cor. 2:10, 14.)

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** What other verses in Psalm 119 emphasize willingness to follow God's command?

Verse 35— \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 47— \_\_\_\_\_

List others you can find: \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 4—The Way of Purity

**“Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me” (Ps. 119:133).**

This prayer reminds us of Paul's counsel: “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (Rom. 6:12). This is possible, of course, only when the “old man is crucified with him [Christ]” (verse 6). Having died to sin, the converted Christian then “liveth unto God” (verse 10).

So David prays on another occasion, “Create in me a clean heart, O God” (Ps. 51:10). Frequently in Psalm 119 the psalmist prays to be “quickened”—that is, revived. (See verses 37, 40, 88, 93, 149.) Although he loves the law and longs for the commandments (verse 47, 131), he admits, “I have gone astray like a lost sheep” (verse 176; see also Rom. 7:19, 24). His only hope is this: “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually” (Ps. 119:117; see also Rom. 7:25).

**In what way did the psalmist imply that behavior is involved in walking the way of purity? Ps. 119:59, 60, 101.**

An English prelate was once asked by a scoffer to delineate the way to heaven. “First turn to the right, and keep straight on,” he replied. While we are powerless to change ourselves and in need of God's reviving Spirit to walk the right way, yet God does not force the will. We must choose to turn our feet into right paths and refrain from following evil. (See Prov. 1:15, 16; 4:26.) We need to pray with the psalmist to have our eyes turned away from vanity. (See Ps. 119:37.) But it remains our choice to do our part in answering that prayer. (See Isa. 33:15; Prov. 4:25.) It is our responsibility to guard our hearts (see Prov. 4:23, NIV) by what we read, what we watch, what we hear, and what we see. Purity of heart is no accident; it is not automatic. It must be cultivated as we “yield our members” to God rather than as “instruments of unrighteousness” (Rom. 6:13).

**Read thoughtfully David's resolve not to behold evil or allow it in his house. Ps. 101:3-5, 7.**

“I will set before my eyes no vile thing. . . . Men of perverse heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with evil. . . . No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house” (verses 3-7, NIV).

**FURTHER STUDY:** Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:1-10; *The Adventist Home*, pp. 401-405.

## part 5—The Way of Liberty and Peace

**“So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever. And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts” (Ps. 119:44, 45).**

**In what way can liberty be associated with law keeping?**

“Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (John 8:34).

“To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are” (Rom. 6:16). The worst kind of bondage is the slavery of sin. Malice, revenge, hatred, and prejudice are hard taskmasters. “Every soul that refuses to give himself to God is under the control of another power. . . . He may talk of freedom, but he is in the most abject slavery.

“ . . . In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself.

“ . . . Sin can triumph only by enfeebling the mind, and destroying the liberty of the soul. Subjection to God is restoration to one's self,—to the true glory and dignity of man.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 466.

“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). To the renewed heart the perfect “law of liberty” (James 2:12) becomes a liberator.

**As you contemplate the implication of the above to peace of mind, note what the psalmist suggests as the way to peace. Ps. 119:165.**

To love God's law is to experience the deep heart searching work of the Holy Spirit in our inner lives. It may be painful at times to have the deformities of the soul laid bare in the light of His holy law. It requires honesty and a willingness to change. But the rewards are rich—a peace of heart and mind that virtually nothing can disturb. This is true freedom!

“If the law of God is obeyed, the demon of strife will be kept out of the family, and no separation of interests will take place, no alienation of affection will be permitted.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 106. No Christ—no peace!

**REACT:** What are some of the petty problems of daily life that mar our personal relationships and rob us of peace?

**Suggestions:** hostility, guilt, bitterness. Add some suggestions of your own:

**MEDITATION:** Meditate on Jesus' promise of peace. John 14:27; 16:33.

**FURTHER STUDY:** John 15:10-12; Ps. 119:18-100, 156-159.



## Part 6—The Way of Truth

"Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it."

"Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth" (Ps. 119:140, 142).

In a world that seems to have thrown away "the absolutes," where may we find certainty?

Notice that Psalm 119 does not teach that the law contains the truth but that it *is* truth. "All thy commandments are truth" (verse 151). The Hebrew word for *truth* carries with it the idea of certainty and dependability. The same word is frequently used to describe God's character and nature.

"The great storehouse of truth is the word of God—the written word, the book of nature, and the book of experience in God's dealing with human life. . . .

"But it is in the written word that a knowledge of God is most clearly revealed to fallen man."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 125, 126.

"Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Jesus confirmed the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures as the basis of His claim that He was the promised Messiah. (See John 5:39; Luke 24:25-27.)

What should be our reaction to the widespread iniquity of our day and the contempt shown for God's law? Ps. 119:126.

The tide of unrestrained evil that engulfs our society can affect the Christian in one of two ways: It can make us less sensitive to sin, thus bringing about a spirit of compromise with evil. Or it can lead us to appreciate God's law even more as we recognize the despicable character of sin.

"Those who make the Word of God the man of their counsel will esteem the law of God, and their appreciation of it will rise in proportion as it is set aside and despised."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1152.

## PERSONAL APPLICATIONS:

- What should be my attitude toward God's law? How can I change negative attitudes?
- What changes need to be made in my actions as a result of this week's study?
- How can I apply what I have learned in my home? At work? With friends? With others?
- What promises in Psalm 119 can I claim for my own? What should I pray for?
- How can I share my new insights with those about me?



# Preparing for the Judgment

**MEMORY TEXT:** "The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen."

"For he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity" (Ps. 98:2, 9).

The thought of the day of judgment brings fear and trembling to many minds, as it did to Felix in Paul's day. (See Acts 24:25.) But, surprisingly, in the psalms, the idea of judgment is often associated with rejoicing and gladness. (See Ps. 67:4; 96:12, 13.)

The Hebrew word for *judge* or *judgment* basically means "exercising the processes of government." Similarly, the term *throne* often is used figuratively for royal power, authority, or government. The psalms proclaim that God's government is based on righteousness, equity, and truth. God is the supreme and only rightful ruler.

When Lucifer rebelled against God's government, his aim was to usurp God's throne. (See Isa. 14:13, 14.) To that end he has bent his evil mind for six thousand years, working through unseen agencies, ungodly nations, and wicked people.

God's government has been challenged by Satan. Judgment, in the psalms, focuses on God's vindication of truth, of righteousness, and of His loyal subjects. They portray God dealing with rebellion for the safety of the universe. The psalmists look forward to the time when the Lord's throne will once more bear universal sway and evil will have been eradicated once and for all time. Then it can be truly said, "Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O Lord" (Ps. 97:8).

The unfolding of these issues of the great controversy in the psalms is our theme of study this week. We will consider the "Psalms of Imprecation" (curses or denunciations of the enemy) in the setting of the conflict between good and evil. The psalms teach us that punishment is God's right and the defense of His righteous ones (with overtones of the gospel) His privilege. We also will notice the similarities between the final judgment hour message of Revelation 14 and the descriptions of coming judgment in the psalms, particularly in Psalms 96 and 98.

"Christ's coming to judgment will result in the establishment of moral order in the earth and the inauguration of eternal peace and happiness."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 851.

## Part 1—His Righteous Judgment

“The Lord shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment. And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness” (Ps. 9:7, 8).

How do the psalms illuminate the great principle upon which God’s government is established? Ps. 33:4, 5; 36:5, 6; 89:14.

As the sovereign Ruler of the universe, God has established His government on the principles of truth and righteousness. A recurring theme in the psalms is the faithfulness and mercy of God in contrast to the injustice and violence of the heathen nations. The certainty of judgment—the vindication of right and the retribution of wrong—is never questioned. Although there are times when it seems to the psalmist that God has forgotten (see Ps. 10:1; 94:1-3), yet he knows that ultimately “judgment shall return unto righteousness” (Ps. 94:15).

When will the final demonstration of God’s righteous judgments take place? Ps. 96:11-13; 98:7-9.

The right blend of justice and mercy are hard to come by in earthly governments. Often it seems that “justice standeth afar off” and “equity cannot enter” (Isa. 59:14). Yet, in glowing and inspired words, the psalmist pictures a time when “Yahweh . . . comes to judge the earth . . . with justice and the nations with his truth” (Ps. 96:13, Jerusalem Bible). He calls on the heavens, the sea, the fields, and the woodlands to shout for joy. The very earth that has groaned and travailed under the terrible burden of sin now finds release and deliverance. God’s righteous throne is established forever.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Think of some of the inequities in our society. Then try to imagine what it will be like to live in a world where justice, truth, and righteousness control the inhabitants.

**PERSONAL REACTION:** As you read the various descriptions of God’s judgment in the psalms, what feelings best indicate your reaction? (Circle the appropriate responses in the list that follows.)

Anger	Hysteria
Disgust	Joy
Happiness	Peace
Understanding	Guilt

**FURTHER STUDY:** Ps. 9:1-20; 82:8; Rev. 20:4, 12; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 300, 586.

## Part 2—“The Wicked Say”

“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Ps. 14:1).

When men forget God, they tend to deny His very existence. Paul quotes from this psalm in describing man’s lost condition. “They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy [corrupt]: there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Ps. 14:3). (See also Rom. 3:10-12.)

The psalmist often quotes the wicked. Note some of the things they are saying:

“Who is going to see us?” (Ps. 64:5, Jerusalem Bible).

“Our lips are our own: who is lord over us?” (Ps. 12:4).

“‘Jahweh sees nothing,’ they say ‘the God of Jacob takes no notice’ ” (Ps. 94:7, Jerusalem Bible).

In other words, We can do as we please; what difference does it make? Their rebellious attitude carries over into a defiant dealing with God and His people:

“We have swallowed him up” (Ps. 35:25).

“Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation” (Ps. 83:4).

“Where is their God?” (Ps. 79:10).

How often when truth has been dishonored or God’s people have been defeated or put to shame have God’s enemies delighted in echoing that cry: “Now, where is your God?” In the light of this defiance the psalmist pleads for God to pour out His wrath against the heathen (Ps. 79:6, 11, 12) and to help His people “for the glory of thy name” (verse 9). Without Christ and salvation the human family would completely alienate themselves from God.

**Although the wicked choose to defy God now, what will be their attitude when God’s judgments fall on them? Isa. 45:23; Phil. 2:9, 10. (See also Rev. 6:17; 16:9.)**

In that final great judgment when God’s “judgments are made manifest” (Rev. 15:4) the wicked will understand at last what they refused to admit or believe during their earthly probation. The results of rebellion and the fruits of setting aside divine statutes will have been laid open to the view of all created intelligences. “With all the facts of the great controversy in view, the whole universe, both loyal and rebellious, with one accord declare: ‘Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints.’ ”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 670, 671.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Place yourself in the position of a person who has just suffered a great tragedy, then someone says to you, “Well, where is your God now?” How would you answer?

**FURTHER STUDY:** Do you recognize the attitude expressed in the following? Ps. 3:2; 10:6, 11; 21:8-13; 42:3; 74:22; 115:2.



## Part 3—Imprecations on the Wicked

“Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth; break out the great teeth of the young lions, O Lord” (Ps. 58:6).

How would you explain this apparently ferocious cry for vengeance on the part of the psalmist?

“God, break their teeth in their mouths, Yahweh, wrench out the fangs of these savage lions” (Ps. 58:6, Jerusalem Bible). The wicked are pictured as violent, devouring beasts. Peter calls the devil a roaring lion who goes about seeking whom he may devour. (See 1 Peter 5:8.) In poetic imagery the psalmist prays for God to break the cruel power of the enemy “‘so’ people will say ‘the virtuous do have their harvest; so there is a God who dispenses justice on earth!’” (Ps. 58:11, Jerusalem Bible).

Imprecations (to invoke evil, as by prayer) such as this one in the psalms have troubled many people. They seem out of harmony with the gospel command to love our enemies. (See Matt. 5:44.) But we must understand these statements more for their theological implications than as human calls for vengeance. In the light of the judgment, righteousness must be vindicated and sin ultimately destroyed. The wicked must repent or perish. (See Ps. 83:16.)

Psalm 83 is another “Imprecatory Psalm.” Against whom is the effort of the enemy said to be directed? Ps. 83:1-5.

To fight against God’s people is to fight against God Himself. The psalmist is jealous for the honor of God’s name and wishes for His vindication. Another imprecation against the wicked is found in Psalm 69:22-27, following one of the Messianic prophecies of Christ’s sufferings. That wish will be realized at the coming of Jesus when “every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him” (Rev. 1:7).

How can such prayers as that recorded in Psalm 69:28 be harmonized with Christ’s plea at His crucifixion that His tormentors be forgiven?

Paul quotes verses 22 and 23 of this psalm to describe the hardened sinners of his day. The day will come when God will have to deal with hardened sinners in the way they deserve.

“God has a controversy with the world. When the judgment shall sit, . . . He has an awful account to settle, which would now make the world fear and tremble were men not blinded and bewitched by satanic delusions and deceptions.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 39.

## Part 4—Retribution, God’s Right

“O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself” (Ps. 94:1).

Why does the psalmist call for God’s vengeance on the wicked? Ps. 94:2, 5-8.

God is not arbitrary. He is willing to forgive all who come to Him. But He cannot tolerate evil indefinitely. Its very nature is destructive and against life itself. “The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: . . . the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands” (Ps. 9:15, 16). He who lives by hate and violence will likely die by the same. It is said that during the horrors of the French Revolution, everyone implicated in the gruesome death of Queen Marie Antionette—judges, jury, prosecutors, and witnesses—died by the guillotine within nine months of her execution.

God’s vengeance not only is just but merciful. Sin perpetuated would mar the happiness of the universe and ultimately destroy it. No person will be lost solely because of great wickedness. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). But according to Jesus Himself condemnation is come because “men loved darkness rather than light” (John 3:19). These people refused the only means of escape from the consequences and condemnation of sin; they refused to believe in the One who could deliver them from that condemnation. For this reason the vengeance of God will be on those who tread “under foot the Son of God” and who do “despite unto the Spirit of grace” (Heb. 10:29). “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (verse 31).

What is the purpose of the “executive” phase of the judgment during the millennium? Rev. 20:4, 12, 13; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3.

God’s dealing with sin is to be vindicated before the entire universe. Angels, inhabitants of other worlds, and the saved and lost of all ages will see and acknowledge that God’s judgments are just and fair. There will be no question in any mind as to why God appears to take vengeance upon the sinner. “Affliction shall not rise up the second time” (Nahum 1:9). The final judgment against sin and sinners will provide an insurance policy against a repetition of the sin problem.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Someone has said that revenge is an act of passion; vengeance of justice. (Injuries are revenged; crimes avenged.) Do we have a right to either? In view of the judgment of God how should we relate to injustice done to us?

## Part 5—God's Privilege

"My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart" (Ps. 7:10).

Defense of the righteous is emphasized as much in the psalms as is vengeance on the wicked. Notice whom God defends in the judgment.

1. The righteous (those who trust in Him)—Ps. 7:8-11.
2. The fatherless and widows—Ps. 10:18; 68:5.
3. The poor and needy—Ps. 72:2; 109:31.
4. The oppressed—Ps. 10:18; 9:9.

"His [the Messiah's] subjects are the poor in spirit, the meek, the persecuted for righteousness' sake. The kingdom of heaven is theirs. Though not yet fully accomplished, the work is begun in them which will make them 'meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' Colossians 1:12.

"All who have a sense of their deep soul poverty, who feel that they have nothing good in themselves, may find righteousness and strength by looking unto Jesus."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 8.

What was the significance of the position of the "breastplate of judgment" as worn by the high priest? Ex. 28:29, 30.

The breastplate containing the names of the twelve tribes was to be worn over the high priest's heart, signifying that he carried his people on his heart. He was to bear them "continually," a type of our High Priest who "ever liveth to make intercession" for us (Heb. 7:25). In the investigative judgment taking place in the heavenly sanctuary, Jesus, our great High Priest, appears "in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:24) to confess our names before the Father and His angels (see Rev. 3:5; Matt. 10:32). The prophet Daniel beheld as "the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High" (Dan. 7:22, NIV). Jesus Christ is both our Judge and our Advocate (John 5:22; 1 John 2:1). If we have placed our case in His hands, His role is to certify that we deserve to be with Him in His kingdom because He died for our sins.

Where did the psalmist's search for justice inevitably lead him? Ps. 43:1, 3, 4.

At the altar of God in the sanctuary the psalmist found assurance that God had heard his pleas. Today at the altar of the heavenly sanctuary we find our assurance and confidence.

**FURTHER STUDY:** Ps. 11:1-7; 35:23-28; Isa. 3:12-15; 11:4; Jer. 5:25-29.

## Part 6—Application

"Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name. . . . O worship the Lord . . . : fear before him, all the earth. . . . He shall judge the people righteously" (Ps. 96:8-10).

Study the three universal calls that are included in God's last great judgment-hour message. Rev. 14:7.

To *fear* God is to honor and reverence Him as the Creator and Ruler of the universe. (See Ps. 33:8, 9.) If we "fear" God, we need not fear any human. If, on the other hand, we fear our fellow humans rather than God, we ultimately will experience the terror of God's wrath in His judgment against sin. (See Matt. 10:28; 2 Peter 3:12; Rev. 20:9, 14, 15.) To *give* glory to God means to reflect His character and, by His grace and power, be conformed to the image of His Son. (See Matt. 5:16; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 341.) To *worship* God is a dominant theme in the psalms. Worship is based on a recognition of God's creatorship and ownership of all things. The Sabbath of the fourth commandment in a special way memorializes Creation. It has been set aside to worship our Creator. Because God's holy law is the standard of judgment (James 2:12), the worship of the Creator on His day becomes an outward sign of identity for those living in the judgment hour who fully submit their way of life to Him.

How does the gospel form the basis of the judgment-hour message that is to reach the entire world? Ps. 98:2, 3, 9; Rev. 14:6.

The everlasting gospel is the message of God's forgiving mercy that He extends to all. We will be judged on the basis of how we respond to our opportunity to receive the salvation God has provided. Therefore the hour of God's judgment is good news to those who accept salvation and have Jesus Christ as their Advocate. It means deliverance from the condemnation and power of sin. Ultimately it brings deliverance from the presence of sin. (See Dan. 12:1.)

What does the sad cry of those who are not prepared for judgment indicate? Jer. 8:20.

"At the day of judgment there comes to the lost a full realization of the meaning of the sacrifice made on Calvary. They see what they have lost. . . . But it is too late. The last call has been made. The wail is heard: 'The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.'"—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 16.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** In the light of the impending judgment, what is my responsibility as a Christian to those about me?



# Promises for the Time of Trouble

**MEMORY TEXT:** "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy" (Ps. 61:2, 3).

David and the other psalmists knew much about trouble and persecution. They spoke often about their trust in God as a refuge in trouble. But nowhere in the psalms is there a loftier or more beautiful expression of this truth than in the ninety-first psalm. There is a universal appeal in the psalmist's skillful use of images—sometimes combining figures like the tender and delicate care of a mother bird with implements of warfare—all in one verse. (See verses 3 and 4.) The psalmist's descriptions of the dangers are vivid. But the overriding theme of this psalm is the message that in God is a sure abiding place, a safe refuge from all trouble.

This psalm possesses a timeliness that is especially appropriate for those living in these last days of earth's history. The inspired pen of Ellen White frequently quotes this psalm as particularly applying in the time of trouble that is to come upon the world in the last days before Jesus' return. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 120; *Education*, p. 181; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 110; *Prophets and Kings*, p. 538; Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1150.)

In order to enjoy His protecting care and shelter we must first know Him, next love Him, and then trust Him fully.

Psalm 91 can be outlined as follows:

## Psalm 91:1-13—The Psalmist's Testimony of God's Care and Protection.

Verses 1, 2—God is our refuge.

Verses 3, 4—What God does to protect us.

Verses 5-8—We need not be afraid of: terror and pestilence at night; arrows and destruction during the day.

Verses 9, 10—The promises apply to those who dwell in the Lord.

Verses 11-13—Means of protection: angels.

## Verses 14-16—God Seals the Testimony With His Promise.

Verse 14—Because we love and trust Him He will deliver us.

Verse 15—When we call He will answer.

Verse 16—He promises *satisfaction*.

## part 1—Safe Hiding Place

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Ps. 91:1).

What does dwelling "in the secret place" mean?

"The two figurative phrases which speak of the 'dwelling in the hiding place (shelter) of the Most High' and of 'staying overnight' (abiding) in the shadow of the Almighty' . . . are intended to depict the peace and security of having found refuge in God's shelter. But further than that, dwelling in the hiding-place of God is meant to express the safety and peace of mind that come from a sense of protection against persecution, whereas staying overnight in the shadow of the Almighty is meant to express that feeling of being out of danger which springs from the knowledge that someone else keeps guard."—Arthur Weiser, *The Psalms* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 606.

What are the implications of the vivid titles that the psalmist gives to the One who is his refuge and fortress? Ps. 91:1, 2.

"If you live in the shelter of Elyon and make your home in the shadow of Shaddai, you can say to Yahweh, 'My refuge, my fortress, my God in whom I trust!' " (Ps. 91:1, 2, Jerusalem Bible). "Elyon" or "Most High" depicts God's exalted nature. "Shaddai" or "Almighty" portrays His power and might. "Yahweh" or "Lord" indicates His eternal presence.

The psalms speak of God as a refuge, fortress, or rock. Match the following references to the correct alphabetic designation(s) by writing the letter in the blanks after the texts:

- |             |                 |       |
|-------------|-----------------|-------|
| A. Refuge   | 1. Ps. 18:1, 2  | _____ |
| B. Fortress | 2. Ps. 31:2, 3  | _____ |
| C. Rock     | 3. Ps. 48:3     | _____ |
|             | 4. Ps. 61:1-3   | _____ |
|             | 5. Ps. 62:2, 8  | _____ |
|             | 6. Ps. 144:1, 2 | _____ |

Early in David's experience he learned to appreciate the rocky fastness of the wilderness as a refuge from the insane King Saul. (See 1 Sam. 23:25.) But it is evident that in these life-and-death crises there was no question in his mind but that God Himself was his real Rock and Refuge. (See 2 Sam. 22:1-3.)

**FURTHER STUDY:** For further discussion on the titles applied to God see *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 170-173 or other appropriate commentary you may have available.

## Part 2—Protection From Snares and Plagues

"Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence" (Ps. 91:3).

The Hebrew word for "snare" is literally a "bird trap." The fowler is the trapper. The noisome pestilence is any kind of calamity that results in death. Thus the Jerusalem Bible translates this verse: "He rescues you from the snares of fowlers hoping to destroy you."

Jesus warned of false christs and false prophets in the last days who will seek to deceive the very elect (Matt. 24:23-26). The apostle Paul warns that Satan is clever enough to disguise his agents as ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

Study the following list of the snares Satan sets for followers of Christ; then add some of your own:

1. Preoccupation with business, life as usual, and indulgence of appetite that leads to spiritual death (Matt. 13:22; Luke 21:34; 2 Tim. 2:4).
2. Neglect of prayer and Bible study that lead, among the other things, to focusing on the faults of others instead of on Christ (Matt. 26:41; 2 Tim. 3:14-16).
3. Insincere and unconverted church members who encourage doubt and unbelief and hinder the work of God (Matt. 13:24-30).
4. Liberal attitudes toward the truth—placing science and philosophy above the Word and seeking worldly approval above God's approval (1 Tim. 1:4; 6:20, 21; 2 Tim. 4:3, 4).
5. Error—deception and twisting the truth, taking truth out of context, conjecturing on subjects God has not revealed, tampering with the "landmarks" of truth (1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 Thess. 2:9-12).

What is it that provides our only safety from these and other snares? Ps. 91:4.

Feathers may appear as weak protection at first glance. But consider that bird feathers are complex creations and, when joined into a wing, are capable of carrying even small birds thousands of miles across stormy oceans. A mother bird protects her brood with her wings—thus with her life. So our God promises to protect His own in every kind of danger. "His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark" (Ps. 91:4, NASB).

**REACT TO THIS THOUGHT:** "It is impossible for him [Satan] to hold under his power one soul who honestly desires, at whatever cost, to know the truth. . . . The followers of Christ know little of the plots which Satan and his hosts are forming against them."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 528.

## Part 3—We Need Not Be Afraid

"Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday" (Ps. 91:5, 6).

**The terror by night:** During the last of the plagues on Egypt the death angel passed over the land at night, slaying the firstborn in every home except those where blood had been placed on the doorpost. (See Exodus 11 and 12.) Under the fifth plague in Revelation 16 the kingdom of the beast becomes a midnight darkness so that men gnaw their tongues for pain (verse 10).

**The arrow by day:** Arrows are used figuratively in the Bible to represent the hateful and violent words hurled at the godly. (See Ps. 57:4; 58:7; 64:3.) Paul reminds us that by "taking the shield of faith, . . . [we] shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph. 6:16). The "arrow by day" is linked by parallelism to "the destruction that wasteth at noonday." This phrase might be applied particularly to the fourth plague of Revelation 16. Many will then fall at our side, but the promise is this: "It shall not come nigh thee" (Ps. 91:7).

Verse 10 makes this promise even more specific. Ellen White comments, "The people of God will not be free from suffering [during the seven last plagues]; but while persecuted and distressed, while they endure privation and suffer for want of food, they will not be left to perish."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 629.

Aside from confidence in God's protection from danger what else is implied in such passages as Psalm 64:1?

Fear itself is probably the worst enemy of all. Fear devastates our physical and emotional well-being, to say nothing of what it does to our spiritual life. The psalmist confidently declares, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. . . . In God have I put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me" (Ps. 56:3, 4). On another occasion when surrounded by enemies, David testifies, "I laid me down and slept; I awakened; for the Lord sustained me" (Ps. 3:5).

God's prescription for getting rid of fear:

1. Eph. 6:11 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Eph. 6:18 \_\_\_\_\_
3. God's Gifts: 2 Tim. 1:7 \_\_\_\_\_
4. 1 John 4:18 \_\_\_\_\_



## Part 4—Escape From Plagues

“There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling” (Ps. 91:10).

Note how the plagues on Egypt (Exodus 7-12) can be compared with the plagues of Revelation 16.

*Some similarities:*

- Both are literal events.
- Both are designed to demonstrate the futility of reliance on false religion.
- Both result in the decisive defeat of God’s enemies and the deliverance of His people.
- Both testify to the superior authority and power of God.
- Both demonstrate the justice of God and glorify His name.

*Some differences:*

- Ten plagues on Egypt, seven last plagues.
- Egypt only partially destroyed, universal destruction when Christ returns.

A careful study of the plagues on Egypt reveals that God’s judgments fell on the objects of their worship such as the Nile River, frogs, animals, and the sun and moon. But in spite of these wondrous signs, evidences of the superiority of the true God, Pharaoh hardened his heart. Similarly in the last days the plagues will fall on people “which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image” (Rev. 16:2). As the plagues increase in intensity, sinful humans will blaspheme “the name of God, which hath power over these plagues” and will not repent or “give him glory” (verse 9).

The issue in Egypt was worship. Moses led his people out of Egypt that they might worship the true God. When the vials of God’s wrath finally are full, they fall on those who insist on worshipping the god of their own making. But those who remain loyal to the worship of the true God will celebrate their deliverance with the song of victory: “Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints” (Rev. 15:3).

When do the promises in Psalm 91:8, 9 apply: now, during the seven last plagues, or both? Be able to support your answer from the Bible and Ellen White’s writings.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** How may I make the Lord my refuge and habitation today?

**FURTHER STUDY:** Isa. 26:20, 21; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 265-272.

## part 5—Angel Protection

“He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways” (Ps. 91:11).

Notice the similar promise to this one given in Psalm 34:7.

The Jerusalem Bible renders Psalm 34:7: “The Angel of Yahweh pitches camp round those who fear him; and he keeps them safe.”

One time the Syrian hosts with their horses and chariots had surrounded the city of Dothan in hopes of capturing the prophet Elisha. They believed him to be an informant to the king of Israel. When Elisha’s servant looked out the window the next morning, he was frantic with fear. But the prophet calmly replied, “Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them” (2 Kings 6:16). When Elisha had prayed for the young man’s eyes to be opened, “behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” (verse 17).

“The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels” (Ps. 68:17). “Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire” (Ps. 104:4).

**Review the story of angel ministry in the life of Daniel and his friends. What lessons apply to those living in the time of trouble? Dan. 3:13-28; 6:10-28; Ps. 91:13.**

“He who walked with the Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace will be with His followers wherever they are. His abiding presence will comfort and sustain. In the midst of the time of trouble—trouble such as has not been seen since there was a nation—His chosen ones will stand unmoved. Satan with all the hosts of evil cannot destroy the weakest of God’s saints. Angels that excel in strength will protect them.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 513.

**Satan quoted Psalm 91:11, 12 in the wilderness of temptation. What lessons may be drawn from Jesus’ answer to him? Matt. 4:6, 7.**

The path of presumption often appears to lie close to the path of faith, especially when Scripture is used for support. But “when Satan quoted the promise, ‘He shall give His angels charge over Thee,’ he omitted the words, ‘to keep thee in all thy ways;’ that is, in all the ways of God’s choosing. Jesus refused to go outside the path of obedience.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 125.

**FURTHER STUDY:** For more on angel ministry read *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 512, 513, 544, 545; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 630-632; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 152-154.

## Part 6—God's Presence and Promises

**"He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him" (Ps. 91:15).**

At this point in Psalm 91 (verse 14) God begins to speak. As you read verses 14-16 assimilate some of the richness of his promises.

God's personal invitation to us is, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things" (Jer. 33:3). (See also Isa. 65:24.) And Jesus said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Luke 11:9).

"Our heavenly Father waits to bestow upon us the fullness of His blessing. It is our privilege to drink largely at the fountain of boundless love. What a wonder it is that we pray so little!"—*Steps to Christ*, p. 94.

God has not promised to keep us from trouble, but He has promised to be with us and deliver us: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isa. 41:10). "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isa. 43:2).

**What kind of relationship exists between God and those to whom He fulfills His promises? Ps. 91:14.**

In Hebrew, the expression "to know" implies terms of intimacy. To know Him as it is our privilege to know Him through prayer and communion, and in His Word, is to cleave to Him in love. It is this "knowing" and "cleaving" that develops trust in His faithfulness and care.

To those who thus trust and love Him, the final promise in this beautiful psalm is, "With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation" (verse 16).

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Aren't we asking the wrong question when we ask, Will I have trouble? (See 2 Tim. 3:12.) Should we not instead ask ourselves how we may maintain our faith in the Lord during times of trouble?

**PERSONAL APPLICATION:** Read the ninety-first Psalm in a different translation if possible. Then answer the following:

- What are my expectations as far as the future is concerned?
- What can I do to help those I know realize the need now for making the Lord their refuge in the days of trouble soon to come?



## Triumphing With Our King

**MEMORY TEXT:** "His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things" (Ps. 72:17, 18).

In poetic imagery the psalms portray the life and death issues of the great controversy. In Psalm 1 we saw the contrast between the two classes of people—the godly and the ungodly. This tension between good and evil, between the forces of righteousness and the powers of darkness, runs like a thread throughout the psalms.

In this study we will consider the ultimate triumph of Christ, the Messiah of the psalms. His subsequent ministry as Priest-King, His glorious coming as the King of glory, His righteous reign—all were foreshadowed in the psalms, including the thrilling climax of the great controversy.

Among the most majestic and elegant of the psalms, the "Coronation Hymns" originally were written for the coronation of Judah's kings—David, Solomon, and those to follow. They portray ideals that no earthly son of David ever was able to achieve. The Messiah, the coming King, alone could fit the descriptions of these prophetic poems.

The apostles appealed to these psalms for proof of their claim that Jesus truly was the Messiah of the Old Testament. The power of their message—the Christian gospel—stands or falls on the authority of these prophecies.

In this lesson we will sketch briefly the exciting parallel between Psalms 149 and 150 and the description of the triumphant Messiah in Revelation 19. It is an event to which all creation still looks forward. It is not enough to study about it. Let us determine by God's grace to be there.



## Part 1—The Lord's Anointed

"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed" (Ps. 2:2).

This psalm has been called the "Song of the Lord's Anointed." The Hebrew word used here for "anointed" is the word from which we get the term "Messiah." (See Dan. 9:25, 26.)

To what circumstances was this prophecy (Psalm 2) applied by the early church? Acts 4:25-27. (Read the entire chapter for the setting.)

When Peter and John were released by the Jewish authorities, who had arrested them for preaching Jesus, the church in Jerusalem responded by using these words from Psalm 2. From the time Jesus was born and Herod tried to destroy Him to the time of His trial before Pilate and His crucifixion at the hands of the Roman authorities, the path of Jesus was dogged by those who conspired against God's "holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed" (Acts 4:27, NIV).

How does God view the "raging" of the heathen and their "counsel" against His Son? Ps. 2:1-4; Prov. 1:15, 16.

He laughs, that is, "He derides them" (Jerusalem Bible). Men and nations may think themselves successful in defying God. They may think that they have broken the bands of restraint and cut the cords that demonstrate God's love, but God says of His Son, "I will give you the nations for your heritage. . . . With iron scepter you will break them." "This is my king, installed by me on Zion, my holy mountain" (Ps. 2:6, 8, 9, Jerusalem Bible).

How will the wise among nations and individuals respond to the Lord? Ps. 2:12.

The day is coming when "the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men" will hide themselves and pray to be sheltered "from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. 6:15, 16). In that day it will be too late to seek repentance. Now is the time for people and nations to "kiss the Son" that they may be reconciled to Him. This psalm closes with this beautiful gospel truth: "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him" (Ps. 2:12). What fear and pride interpret as bondage (Ps. 2:3) is in fact security and bliss. There can be no refuge from Him, only in Him.

## Part 2—The Righteous King

"The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Ps. 110:1).

Psalm 110—Eternal King and Priest	
Verses 1-4—GOD SPEAKS	Verses 5-7—PSALMIST SPEAKS
1—To the King: "Sit at my right hand until the conflict is ended." 2, 3—"Rule in the midst of your enemies, then your people will rally for the final victory." 4—"In you the kingship and priesthood are united as they were with Melchizedek."	5, 6—In the day of wrath and judgment the King will triumph over all. 7—Renewed vigor will possess Him after the weary task is completed successfully.

How did Jesus use this prophecy to verify His own identity to the Jews? Matt. 22:41-46.

The Jews believed that the Messiah would be the Son of David. On the occasion mentioned in Matthew 22 they had tried three times to trap Jesus. But He turned the tables and asked them this profound question: How could the Messiah be David's Lord and at the same time his Son? The obvious answer was that if Jesus preexisted with the Father, as He claimed, He would be David's Lord. And when He came as the Son of man through the lineage of David He would be his Son. "Many who called Jesus the Son of David did not recognize His divinity. They did not understand that the Son of David was also the Son of God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 609.

According to the book of Hebrews, when did God have the right to pronounce the words of Psalm 110:1-4 to Jesus? Heb. 1:6-9, 13. (See also Ps. 45:6, 7.)

"Here [in Ps. 110:1] the Father addresses the Son reverently, calling Him God. . . . There can be no higher testimony to the deity of Christ than this apostrophe of the Father to the Son. In the most solemn manner Christ's Godhood is affirmed, and this by the Father Himself."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 399.

When will the reign of the righteous King, as pictured by David, find ultimate and complete fulfillment? Ps. 72:1-17; 110:3, 5.

## Part 3—Priest-King

“The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Ps. 110:4).

Why was the Messiah’s priestly work said to be after the order of Melchizedek rather than the Levitical order? Heb. 6:20; 7:1-4, 15-21.

The emphasis by the apostle is not on who Melchizedek was, but who he typified and the union of priesthood and kingship in one Person. “In Christ the priesthood and the kingship are united as they were in Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 880.

It should be noted that *both* the Levitical and Melchizedek priesthoods have typical significance in pointing to the role of Christ as High Priest.

What, in practical terms, does His unchanging priesthood (Heb. 7:24) enable Christ to do for the believer? Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1.

When Adam and Eve sinned and came under “the curse of the law” (the law of sin and death), Satan exulted that he had alienated them from God and brought the human race under his control. He challenged God with the position that humanity could not be reinstated to a sinless condition or meet God’s perfect and holy standard of obedience.

Jesus hung on the cross, apparently conquered. But there He was Conqueror! Satan, through evil men, could humiliate Him, pierce His brow with thorns, and His hands and feet with nails, but he could not rob Him of His power to forgive sins. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 751.)

Now, through His high-priestly ministry—as our Priest-King—He asserts the right to justify us and to “save completely” (Heb. 7:25, NIV). “It is His royal right to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 751.

Where does our Priest-King carry on His ministry? Heb. 9:24; Ps. 110:1, 5.

His position as Priest-King in the heavenly sanctuary enables the Messiah to minister the results of His complete triumph in the great controversy between Christ and Satan.

**FURTHER STUDY:** Rev. 7:9, 10; 12:11; Dan. 7:9, 10, 14; *The Great Controversy*, p. 502.

## Part 4—The King of Glory

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle” (Ps. 24:7, 8).

Psalm 24 can be outlined as follows:

- I. **The Sovereignty of God**
  1. Sovereign of the earth (verse 1).
  2. God’s right to sovereignty (verse 2).
- II. **Conditions of Coming Into God’s Presence**
  1. The question (verse 3).
  2. The fourfold answer (verse 4).
  3. The source of man’s righteousness (verse 5).
  4. Man’s part in finding righteousness (verse 6).
- III. **God’s Entrance Into His Holy Place**
  1. The summons (verse 7).
  2. The question in the response (verse 8, first part).
  3. The answer (verse 8, second part).
  4. The summons repeated (verse 9).
  5. The question repeated (verse 10, first part).
  6. The final answer (verse 10, second part).

Although the last part of this psalm was sung in David’s day as an antiphonal (responsive song), it also describes Jesus’ ascension into heaven after His ministry here on earth. Who were the singers? Ps. 68:17, 18; Eph. 4:8-10.

Picture the moment of Jesus’ arrival in heaven after more than 30 years of absence: Angel hosts anxiously await the arrival of their loved Commander. The escorting company of angels approach the gates. They cry out, “Gates, raise your arches, rise, you ancient doors, let the king of glory in!” (Ps. 24:7, Jerusalem Bible).

Then the antiphonal choir responds: “Who is this King of glory?” “This they say, not because they know not who He is, but because they would hear the answer of exalted praise.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 833.

The escorting angels answer in triumph: “Yahweh the strong, the valiant, Yahweh valiant in battle!” (verse 8, Jerusalem Bible).

Then the heavenly host surround their majestic Commander and with deepest adoration bow before Him and worship. (See *Early Writings*, pp. 190, 191.)

In connection with His final triumph at the second advent how is Christ revealed as the King of Glory? Matt. 24:30; Rev. 19:11-16.



## Part 5—Songs of Triumph

**"Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens: praise him in the heights. Praise ye him, all his angels: Praise ye him, all his hosts."**

**"Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: let them praise the name of the Lord: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven" (Ps. 148:1, 2, 11-13).**

Psalms 146-150 are joyous songs of praise known as the "Hallelujah Psalms" with which the book closes. Their particular themes are as follows:

*Psalm 146*—A eulogy on God as a helper. We cannot trust even the most powerful human agents but always can trust God.

*Psalm 147*—God is praised for His goodness to His people and for the blessings He showers on them.

*Psalm 148*—Heavenly beings, heavenly bodies are invited to join the animals and people of the earth in a universal song of praise to our Creator and Sustainer.

*Psalm 149*—A jubilant and joyful song of praise to God for bringing salvation to His people and an acknowledgment of His justice in bringing judgment upon the wicked.

*Psalm 150*—This great closing doxology of the book of Psalms calls for everything that has breath to join in this anthem of praise and adoration.

"In the great audience chamber of the psalms, where our hearts have thrilled with many soul-stirring choruses, we rise and stand in reverence as the great symphony reaches its climax."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 941.

**What keynote word might be thought of as the battle cry of the triumphant Messiah? Who joins in this victory chorus? Rev. 19:1-6; Ps. 149:1-9; 150:1.**

The last five psalms begin and end with "Hallelujah" (translated in the KJV as "praise ye the Lord"). The Greek transliteration *alleluia*, found nowhere else in the New Testament, is used four times in Revelation 19 in connection with the triumph of Christ over His enemies. Graphically portrayed as clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, riding on a white horse, with a sharp sword coming out of His mouth, He executes judgment and vengeance on His enemies. (See Ps. 149:7-9; Rev. 19:13-15.) The triumphant redeemed join with the angelic chorus: "Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" (Rev. 19:6). (See Ps. 145:10-12; 150:2.) Their voices "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many thunderings" (Rev. 19:6) fulfill the closing prayer of the book of Psalms: "Let everything that breathes praise Yahweh! Alleluia!" (Ps. 150:6, Jerusalem Bible).

## part 6—The Chief Cornerstone

**"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes" (Ps. 118:22, 23).**

In the midst of Psalm 118, a national hymn of thanksgiving and triumph, is found a most interesting Messianic prophecy.

**In calling attention to this prophecy what sad pronouncement did Jesus make concerning the Jewish nation? Matt. 21:42-45.**

The prophecy of the rejection of the corner stone was based on an actual occurrence in Israel's history. "This prophecy the Jews had often repeated in the synagogues, applying it to the coming Messiah. Christ was the cornerstone of the Jewish economy, and of the whole plan of salvation. This foundation stone the Jewish builders, the priest and rulers of Israel, were now rejecting. The Saviour called their attention to the prophecies that would show them their danger."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 597.

**According to Peter, what choices do we have in relating to this Stone? 1 Peter 2:6-8.**

Peter quotes Isaiah 28:16: "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation." He repeats Jesus' teaching that either we accept Him as the chief Cornerstone or He will become a stone of stumbling to us. There is no neutral ground. Either He is "precious" to us, or He is a "rock of offence."

**What is God's purpose for the church, which is built upon the chief Cornerstone? Eph. 1:22; 2:19-22; 4:13, 15; 5:27.**

**When and how will the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy of Psalm 118:22 take place? Dan. 2:44, 45; Matt. 25:31-33, 41; 26:64.**

The great image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream represented some of the greatest empires of ancient times. Yet for all their glory they would be brought to nothing, broken to pieces by the Stone cut out without hands. Christ's kingdom will be established upon the Living Rock.

**PERSONAL APPLICATION:** What must we do as members of God's church to keep from repeating the sad mistake of rejecting the chief Cornerstone? What can we do to help others honor Christ?

# Singing the Songs of Zion

**MEMORY TEXT:** "If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore. For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation" (Ps. 132:12, 13).

This promise, made to David and his descendants, was conditional upon their obedience to the terms of the covenant. Unfortunately, the history of Judah's kings, by and large, provides a miserable account of their failure to live up to the covenant terms. Doing so would have brought prosperity and national greatness. As a consequence, it remained for the promised seed of David, the Messiah, to demonstrate the viability of the covenant promises and blessings.

Both Christians and Jews often have misapplied the Old Testament prophecies regarding Israel, including the Zion predictions. Conditional prophecy must be understood in the light of the covenant conditions. The frequent references to Zion in the psalms furnish us with helpful insights into the true meaning and significance of Zion in the Scriptures.

The psalmists recognize Zion as the dwelling place of God (Psalms 48, 74, 76, 87). The "Songs of Ascent" or "Pilgrim Psalms" (120-134), several of which we will refer to in this week's study, celebrate the joy and blessing that come from going up to Zion. These songs probably were sung by the pilgrims on their journeys to the yearly feasts at Jerusalem.

Psalm 48, one of the most beautiful songs of Zion, reminds us of the heavenly Zion to which God's remnant pilgrims are journeying, still singing the songs of Zion.

## Part 1—Where Is Zion?

"In Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion" (Ps. 76:1, 2).

What was it that made Zion special? Was there something sacred about the place itself? 2 Sam. 5:7; 6:1-15.

The origin of the word *Zion* is uncertain, but some scholars see a relation to the Arabic root word meaning "to protect," "defend," thus a place of defense or a fortress.

The original Zion was on a small hill, the ancient Jebusite stronghold that David captured and made his capital. It was located in the southeastern portion of the later-expanded Jerusalem between the Tyropoeon and Kidron valleys, and south of the site where Solomon's temple would be built. From the time that David transferred the ark to his new capital, the name Zion became synonymous with the dwelling place of God. When Solomon later built the temple on Mount Moriah and moved the ark there (see 1 Kings 8), it too was referred to as Zion. (See Isa. 2:3; 8:18.) Since the Middle Ages the name *Zion* has been attributed erroneously to the southwestern hill of Jerusalem. (See *S.D.A. Bible Dictionary*, p. 1213.)

**The name *Zion* frequently is used metaphorically or figuratively in the Bible. Notice some of the ideas it represents:**

1. It may represent the whole city of Jerusalem, not just the temple. (See Ps. 51:18; 69:35; Isa. 33:20; 60:14.)
2. Often the entire nation of Israel is referred to as Zion. (See Ps. 74:2; 78:68; Isa. 40:9; Zech. 9:13.)
3. The inhabitants of Jerusalem are called the "daughters of Zion." (See Ps. 9:14; Isa. 1:8; 10:32.)
4. The church in the New Testament is described as having come to Mount Zion. (See Heb. 12:22, 23.)
5. Mount Zion is used to describe the heavenly city whose Builder and Maker is God and where the saved saints will finally be gathered. (See Heb. 12:22; Rev. 14:1.)

"Looking beyond the smoke and din of the battle, he [John] beheld a company upon Mount Zion with the Lamb, having, instead of the mark of the beast, the 'Father's name written in their foreheads.' And again he saw 'them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God' and singing the song of Moses and the Lamb."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 752, 753.

Whether referring to Israel in Jerusalem, the church of the new covenant through Jesus Christ, or the saints gathered on the sea of glass, Zion is symbolic of God's presence revealed to His covenant people as they worship Him.



## Part 2—Foundation of Zion

“His foundation is in the holy mountains. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God” (Ps. 87:1-3).

“The gates of a city were the places where business was transacted, where courts were held, where the pulse of human activity was felt (see Ps. 9:14; 122:2; Isa. 29:21). By figure, ‘gates’ represent the entire city. God beheld with great pleasure the multitudes pressing through the gates on their way to Zion.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 833.

**How was the prophecy concerning laying the foundation of Zion used in the New Testament? Isa. 28:16. (Compare 1 Peter 2:6-8; 1 Cor. 3:11.)**

The New Testament writers make it clear that the church is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20). “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love” has called us out of darkness “and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (verses 4, 6). Therefore we are “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (verse 19). Not only is Christ the foundation, but He is the “head of the body, the church” (Col. 1:18). For God has “set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places” (Eph. 1:20).

**How could “strangers” or “Gentiles” become part of Zion? Ps. 87:4-6.**

“I will count Egypt and Babylon among my friends; Philistine, Tyrian and Nubian shall be there; and Zion shall be called a mother in whom men of every race are born. The Lord shall write against each in the roll of nations: ‘This one was born in her’ ” (Ps. 87:4-6, NEB). “For Zion’s sake” God would not be satisfied until “the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness” (Isa. 62:1, 2). Because of His great mercy, He would “say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people” (Hosea 2:1, 23). (Compare Rom. 9:25, 26.)

**List some Bible examples of non-Israelites who were converted to the Jewish faith in Old Testament times or became Christians in New Testament times.**

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**FURTHER STUDY:** *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 9-16; Isa. 43:4-10.

## Part 3—Pilgrims to Zion

“I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together” (Ps. 122:1-3).

Pilgrims on their way to the annual feasts in Jerusalem sang this psalm, one of the 15 “Songs of Ascents” (Psalms 120-134). Imagine hundreds of people from all walks of life banding together in groups, turning their steps toward the place where God reveals His presence. Inspired by the beauty of nature around them, the people join their voices in praise to God. Then as they near the city they suddenly catch sight of the wall, its light-beige stones gleaming in the sun. A shout goes up: Jerusalem! After the long, weary journey they are within sight of their goal. It is as though they have already arrived. “And now our feet are standing in your gateways, Jerusalem” (Ps. 122:2, Jerusalem Bible).

The word *compact* in verse 3 means “to be united,” “to be joined with.” The idea of unity and fellowship also is expressed in Psalm 133: “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (verse 1).

God’s desire for His church today is that they “come into unity of the faith,” and that they “grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, . . . maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:13, 15, 16).

**Why are the pilgrims admonished to pray for the peace of Jerusalem? Ps. 122:6-9.**

The Hebrew word *shalom* (a derivative of which forms the last part of the name *Jerusalem*) carries with it the idea of completeness, wholeness, harmony, and fulfillment. “*Shalom* is the result of God’s activity in covenant, and is the result of righteousness (Isa. 32:17). In nearly two-thirds of its occurrences, *shalom* describes the state of fulfillment which is the result of God’s presence.”—R. L. Harris, ed., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), vol. 2, p. 931.

Peace comes only from trusting in the covenant-keeping God. (See Isa. 48:18, 22; 54:10; 57:20, 21.) The Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6) has purchased our peace (Eph. 2:14; Col. 1:20). Therefore He is the King of Peace (Heb. 7:2). The New Testament counterpart of Psalm 122:6 is found in the Lord’s Prayer: “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10).

**THINK IT THROUGH:** How can I have this kind of peace in my heart? (See Isa. 26:3.)

## Part 4—Keeper of Zion

“They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever” (Ps. 125:1, 2).

As the pilgrims approached Jerusalem they could not help but be impressed by the mountain ramparts that characterized the city. Jerusalem appeared impregnable. But the Psalmist did not stop with praising the city. Rather, he saw in it a symbol of those who trust in Jehovah. The mountains reminded him of God’s great care for His people. This thought is made clear in Psalm 121. “I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth” (verses 1, 2, NIV).

Commentators are divided on whether the psalmist means the hills of Jerusalem with its sanctuary or the hills of Palestine with their idolatrous worship. But the Psalmist makes it clear in this text that Israel is to look to God alone for help. There were times in Israel’s history when, as did the nations around them, they placed their trust in sacred objects rather than in God. At such times the prophets reproved them: “Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord” (Jer. 7:4).

Centuries later the One who had given Israel its temple stood gazing at its beauty. The Jewish leaders had placed their trust in the city and temple. In doing so they rejected the One who alone could make Zion immovable. In that awful moment of “separation struggle” (see *The Desire of Ages*, p. 620) Jesus cried out, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing” (Matt. 23:37, NIV).

**Study Psalm 127.** This “Pilgrim Song” describes the only sure way that Zion could survive. Ps. 127:1, 2.

“Building activity is frequently associated with God’s saving activity. . . . Though He chastens the house of David and Zion by tearing them down for a time, yet His purpose to bring salvation cannot be thwarted forever.”—R. L. Harris, ed., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, p. 117.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** What are the implications of Psalm 127:1 to the Christian church? To God’s remnant people? To the family? To the individual Christian?

**FURTHER STUDY:** Read thoughtfully Ps. 121:1-8; 127:1-5; 132:13-16.

## Part 5—King of Zion

“Let Israel rejoice in him that made him; let the children of Zion be joyful in their King” (Ps. 149:2).

“The Lord shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the Lord” (Ps. 146:10).

While the “Zion Psalms” picture God’s purpose for His people, Israel, they are prophetic of the final setting up of His eternal kingdom. He will come “with a shout, . . . with the sound of a trumpet” (Ps. 47:5). (Compare 1 Thess. 4:16.) “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him” (Ps. 50:3). (Compare 2 Thess. 1:7, 8.) “For the Lord most high is terrible. . . . God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness” (Ps. 47:2, 8). John the Revelator pictures the final great judgment when all the lost will stand before God’s throne to receive their reward—the second death in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-14). Then truly it can be said, “God is the King of all the earth” (Ps. 47:7) and “Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom” (Ps. 145:13).

**Of what was the “city of the great King” (Psalm 48:2) a figure?**

John was invited by one of the seven angels to “come higher. . . . And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God” (Rev. 21:9-11). He beheld its great high walls, its foundations, and its gates. The angel measured the city with a golden reed, perhaps to impress the prophet with the reality of the place. For this is the ultimate Mount Zion, “beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth” (Ps. 48:2). The prophet sees no temple there “for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” (Rev. 21:22). As always, His presence makes Zion great. “The Lord is great in Zion; and he is high above all the people” (Ps. 99:2). Only in the future will it be said that His praise reaches “unto the ends of the earth” (Ps. 48:10) and “the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it” (Rev. 21:24). The real beauty of the heavenly Zion is the spotless character of our God that will be reflected in the characters of those who have been redeemed from sinful earth.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Am I learning to sing the songs of Zion now in anticipation of that great day when I will join in the anthem on the sea of glass?

**FURTHER STUDY:** Rev. 21:1-5; Ps. 147:1-20; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 542.



## Part 6—The Beauty of Zion

"In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; we have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in" (Isa. 26: 1, 2).

Isaiah 24 and 25 have portrayed the great day of the Lord—the day of final destruction and salvation. Isaiah's use of the phrase "in that day" ties in these verses quoted above with the eternal city of God that will be inhabited only by the holy righteous. (See Rev. 22:14.)

Psalms 48 adds the concept of God's care of Jerusalem and the deliverance of His people. This glorious "song of deliverance" can be divided as follows:

- 1-3— Zion's physical glory.
- 4-8— Zion's deliverance from her enemies.
- 9-11— Zion's spiritual glory.
- 12-14—An inspection of Zion assures of God's presence and guidance forever.

The time is yet to come when Zion will be "the joy of the whole earth" (verse 2) and "God will establish it for ever" (verse 8). That fulfillment will follow the final deliverance of God's people.

Psalms 29:2 and 96:9 speak of "the beauty of holiness." No external beauty can compare with the beauty of a holy character, and the true beauty of the Holy City in the earth made new will be the beauty of holiness found in its inhabitants.

#### What is included in the beauty of holiness? 1 Peter 3:3, 4.

"The term may be regarded as including a spirit of quiet reverence, inward devotion and outward piety, devout earnestness and joyous gratitude. Neither heaven nor earth can know any greater beauty than the beauty of true holiness."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 172.

**PERSONAL APPLICATION:** Complete the following as you reflect on this week's study:

Promises I can claim \_\_\_\_\_

Revelation about God \_\_\_\_\_

Actions I can follow \_\_\_\_\_

Injunctions I should obey \_\_\_\_\_

Significant words for me \_\_\_\_\_

Examples I can follow \_\_\_\_\_



## Holiness to the Lord

**MEMORY TEXT:** "Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name" (Ps. 100:2, 4).

The thought that "the focus of much contemporary Christian worship is almost entirely on man and his needs, with no hint that God wants us to praise Him," had been attributed to Dr. Robert Webber of Wheaton College.

While liturgical religion has almost suffocated itself in forms and ceremonies, evangelical Christianity has tended to the other extreme in audience participation and informality.

God's last call to the world is a call to worship. In the last several lessons we have considered the climax of the great controversy and the triumph of our King as foretold in the psalms. But if we are to worship the Lord ultimately in the "beauty of holiness" we need to begin doing so here and now.

What is worship? What are the elements that make it acceptable to God? Why do we attend a worship service? Is it mainly to hear good preaching? Or to listen to inspiring music? Or to enjoy social fellowship?

The book of Psalms presents us with models par excellence for praise and worship, both in content and in spiritual vitality so essential to acceptable worship. The theme emphasized throughout these hymns is that God alone is worthy of our adoration and praise. These songs of worship experience impress us with the reverence and awe that should characterize our approach to God, the place of worship, and all that is connected with it.

The "Praise Psalms" can be divided into two types. *Descriptive* praise psalms give the reasons why the Lord is worthy to be praised—His mighty acts, His position as Creator and King of the universe. *Declarative* praise psalms do just that—declare His greatness.

The psalms are both songs and prayers. Martin Luther, a great student of the psalms, considered music second only to theology. And Ellen White observed, "As a part of religious service, singing is as much an act of worship as is prayer."—*Education*, p. 168.

It is fitting to conclude our review of the book of Psalms with studies that outline how precious and joyful acceptable worship can be.

## Part 1—The Place of Worship

"I . . . will come into your house; in reverence will I bow down toward your holy temple."

"How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty!"

"Praise God in his sanctuary" (Ps. 5:7; 84:1; 150:1, NIV).

In Israel the sanctuary was considered primarily as the dwelling place of God and secondarily as a place of worship. The services that took place in the sanctuary typified God's work of salvation in behalf of the worshiper. The court where the assembly met typified the worshiper's response to God's acts of salvation.

Wherever the location of the sanctuary, it was made sacred by God's presence. Whether the ark (the symbol of God's presence) was in the house of Obed-edom (2 Sam. 6:11, 12) or in the city of David (2 Sam. 6:16) or in Solomon's elaborate temple (1 Kings 8:1-4), the Scriptures refer to it by terms such as the "temple," "house of God," "holy place," "courts of the Lord," "Zion," or "sanctuary."

What do we learn in the Psalms about the psalmist's attitude toward the house of God? Ps. 84:2, 3, 10; 122:1.

At least four of the psalms express David's poignant longing for the house of God when he was in exile. In Psalms 84 he envies the fortunate birds who build their nests within its shadows.

In Psalm 84:10 the psalmist declares that "one day in your courts" (NIV) is better than a thousand elsewhere. And he would gladly be a temple servant just for the privilege of constantly abiding in God's house.

With what attitude should the worshiper come into God's house? Ps. 89:7; 99:1-3, 5, 9.

There is a danger in this age of familiarity and "come as you are" philosophy that we lose our sense of God's greatness and majesty. Too often today sacred fire and common fire are mingled, and many seem not to know the difference.

"True reverence for God is inspired by a sense of His infinite greatness and a realization of His presence. With this sense of the Unseen, every heart should be deeply impressed. The hour and place of prayer are sacred, because God is there. And as reverence is manifested in attitude and demeanor, the feeling that inspires it will be deepened."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 48, 49.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Does the size or the cost of the house of worship have anything to do with the sacredness attached to it?

## part 2—Proper Attitudes in Prayer

"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker" (Ps. 95:6).

The psalmist indicates that kneeling is the preferred mode in prayer. On one occasion Ellen White was about to address the congregation in Battle Creek. Noticing that the one who was to lead in prayer failed to kneel, she called him by name and said, "Get down upon your knees."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 311.

Although it is proper to offer personal petitions "as we walk by the way" without kneeling, "in public and private worship it is our duty to bow down upon our knees before God. . . . This act shows our dependence upon God."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 312.

What significance do you attach to King Solomon's attitude when praying at the dedication of the temple? 2 Chron. 6:13.

One of the most beautiful and soul-stirring public prayers recorded in Scripture is that of Solomon at the dedication of the temple. Standing on a special scaffold built for the occasion, he blessed the people, and then "knelt on his knees in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven" (2 Chron. 6:13, NASB).

Notice the following examples of those who knelt in public prayer:

1. Acts 9:40—Peter
2. Acts 7:59, 60—Stephen
3. Acts 20:36; 21:5—Paul (See also Eph. 3:14.)
4. Ezra 9:5, 6—Ezra

An example of people standing while engaged in private prayer is found in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18:11, 13).

We need to develop an increased awareness of God's presence in our worship. There may be cultural differences in the way we do so, but reverence for God should be evidenced by our attitude in worship, particularly in prayer. Note the following instruction:

"It is not always necessary to bow upon your knees in order to pray. Cultivate the habit of talking with the Saviour when you are alone, when you are walking, and when you are busy with your daily labor."—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 510, 511.

The inspired prayers of the book of Psalms present a spiritual challenge to inspired praying on our part. The psalms can serve as God-given models for our prayer today. Particularly do we need to observe and practice the pattern of praise found in so many of the psalms. The greatest challenge is not to our physical posture but to our spiritual posture in prayer.



## Part 3—Worship in Song

**“O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory” (Ps. 98:1).**

Notice the reasons given for singing praises to God listed in Psalm 98: 1-3.

The song of Miriam and Moses at the crossing of the Red Sea, the first recorded song in the Bible, “made an impression never to be effaced from the memory of the Hebrew people. From age to age it was echoed by the prophets and singers of Israel, testifying that Jehovah is the strength and deliverance of those who trust in Him. That song does not belong to the Jewish people alone. It points forward to the destruction of all the foes of righteousness and the final victory of the Israel of God. The prophet of Patmos beholds the white-robed multitude that have ‘gotten the victory.’ . . . ‘And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.’ ”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 289.

**In what other appropriate ways can the Lord be praised? Ps. 33:2, 3; 98:4-6; 144:9.**

Music, whether vocal or instrumental, is as much a part of worship as is prayer. Musical instruments can be used to praise the greatness of our God and create a sense of reverence and awe as truly as can singing with the voice. Any discordant form of music that does not honor God but appeals instead to the emotions of the lower nature is not worthy as praise and should have no part in our worship services.

**What insights does John the revelator give as to the music and worship of the redeemed? Rev. 5:9; 14:2-4; 15:2-4.**

The song of Moses is a song of deliverance—a song of personal experience. Those who are in Christ will not consider their salvation as “the same old song.” Their experience will be constantly fresh and new, thus their song is a “new song.”

“The daily blessings that we receive from the hand of God, and above all else the death of Jesus to bring happiness and heaven within our reach, should be a theme for constant gratitude. . . .

“All the inhabitants of heaven unite in praising God. Let us learn the song of the angels now, that we may sing it when we join their shining ranks.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 289.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Is the music used in my church elevating, ennobling, and appropriate to the greatness and majesty of our God? How can we improve our music to God’s glory? Is the music I listen to during the week the kind that will develop my taste for heavenly music?

## part 4—“Bring an Offering”

**“Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts” (Ps. 96:8).**

The word used here for offerings reflects the ancient custom of bringing gifts to a king as a token of honor and servitude. The Queen of Sheba brought gifts to King Solomon. (See 2 Chron. 9:1, 9.) The Philistines brought presents to Jehoshaphat. (See 2 Chron. 17:11.)

God gave His ancient people the system of offerings outlined in the book of Leviticus. Although the system became perverted, God gave this to them as a tangible means of honoring and worshiping Him.

**List the kinds of offerings and gifts God’s people are to make today:**

1. Lev. 22:29 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Lev. 27:30 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Deut. 16:17 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Luke 19:8 \_\_\_\_\_

**In what way is the art of giving a part of worship? How should we give? 1 Chron. 29:11-14; 2 Cor. 9:6, 7; 8:12.**

A dominant theme in the psalms is that God is worthy of honor and praise with our tangible gifts. “Praise waiteth for thee, O God in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed” (Ps. 65:1). “I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people” (Ps. 116:14).

“We are to bring our offerings with joy and gratitude. . . .

“ . . . If we have given our hearts to Jesus, we also shall bring our gifts to Him. Our gold and silver, our most precious earthly possessions, . . . will be freely devoted to Him. . . .

“Come to the Lord with hearts overflowing with thankfulness for past and present mercies, and manifest your appreciation of God’s bounties by bringing to Him your thank offerings, your freewill offerings, and your trespass offerings.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 198.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Is the giving of my offering on Sabbath a matter of duty, or do I see it as an act of divine worship?

**FURTHER STUDY:** Num. 18:6, 21, 26-28; Deut. 8:11-18; Matt. 23:23; 1 Cor. 9:1-14; Heb. 13:16.

## Part 5—The Holiness of God's Name

"Holy and reverend is his name" (Ps. 111:9).

"Let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy" (Ps. 99:3).

"Blessed be the name of Yahweh" (Ps. 113:2, Jerusalem Bible).

Yahweh, the one and only true God, the God of Israel, is holy. His very name is holy. He alone is worthy of adoration and homage.

"Angels, when they speak that name, veil their faces. With what reverence, then, should we, who are fallen and sinful, take it upon our lips."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 49.

What is another way that the attitude of holiness to God's name can be expressed? Ps. 99:9.

"God gave rules of order, perfect and exact to His ancient people. . . . Would it not be well for us often to read the directions given by God Himself to the Hebrews, that we who have the light of the glorious truth shining upon us may imitate their reverence for the house of God? We have abundant reason to maintain a fervent, devoted spirit in the worship of God."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 496.

Repeatedly God commanded His ancient people: "Be holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 11:45; see also chaps. 19:2; 20:7). The apostles referred to these words in the New Testament.

The high priest, when ministering in the sanctuary, wore on his head a mitre (a kind of turban) on which was attached a gold plate with these words engraved: "Holiness to the Lord." (See Ex. 28:36, 37.) "This engraving gave the people the highest conception of religion and pointed to its supreme objective. . . . It was a constant reminder that, without this essential, all the exercises of worship would in God's sight be mockery."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 650.

Jesus stated this same principle to the woman of Samaria. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23, 24).

Two psalms have this idea as their theme—the entrance requirements for worshiping in the Lord's holy hill (Psalm 15 and Psalm 24:4-6).

**THINK IT THROUGH:** How does my life measure up to these requirements for worshiping the Lord? Do I worship in spirit and in truth, or do I just go through the routine of worship because it is a habit?

**FURTHER STUDY:** Ex. 3:5; Gen. 28:16, 17; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 498, 499.

## part 6—Call to Praise

"Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely" (Ps. 147:1).

Some of the newer translations render *comely* as "becoming" or "fitting." It is appropriate for the creature to praise the Creator. It is pleasant because in no experience in human life does the spirit soar to greater heights than when praising the Living God.

## SEARCH AND LEARN:

Two major themes run through Psalm 147, God as Creator and God as Sustainer. It can be divided into three parts, each of which begins with a call to praise:

**Verses 1-6.** Summons to praise the good God who is (1) the rebuilder of Jerusalem, (2) the healer of His people, (3) the mighty Creator, (4) the reliever of the oppressed, and (5) the punisher of the wicked.

**Verses 7-11.** Summons to praise the Sustainer of all creatures who takes delight when they learn to trust in His kindness and love.

**Verses 12-20.** Specific summons to Zion to praise God for His solicitude to Israel in both material and spiritual blessing.

Restate in your own words the basic message of this psalm.

John the revelator was given a glimpse of the praise and thanksgiving that surrounds the throne of God. (Read Rev. 4:6-11; 5:11-13.) Study these verses and refer to the following list in order to gain a complete picture regarding those who join in praise to the Lord:

"*The four living creatures . . . day and night . . . do not cease to say, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty' "* (Rev. 4:8, NASB).

"*The twenty-four elders . . . they fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and . . . worship Him . . . , saying, 'Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created' "* (Rev. 4:10, 11, NASB).

"*Many angels . . . saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing' "* (Rev. 5:11, 12 NASB).

"*Every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, . . . I heard saying, 'To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever' "* (Rev. 5:13, NASB).

**PERSONAL APPLICATION:** Am I learning to praise God now so that my life radiates a cheerful influence to my associates and eventually I will be able to join the heavenly hosts in praising Him? What has my study of the psalms contributed to my understanding of God? How has it sharpened my ability to better witness to His glory?



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BY WHAT AUTHORITY?

Memory Text, Rev. 14:7

1. *The Authority of God (Rom. 11:36)*
2. *The Authority of Jesus (Luke 4:36)*
3. *The Authority of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8)*
4. *The Authority of the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16)*
5. *The "Authority" of the Devil (Eph. 6:10-12)*
6. *Divine Authority, Not Coercion (Isa. 1:19)*

### Second Lesson

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

Memory Text, Isa. 53:6

1. *Man's Problem—God's Solution (Rom. 5:19)*
2. *As One of Us (Phil. 2:6-8)*
3. *Approval and Temptation (Matt. 3:16, 17)*
4. *Gift of Everything (Matt. 4:9)*
5. *"Not as I Will" (Matt. 26:39)*
6. *Obedient Unto Death (Matt. 27:46)*

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● Addis Ababa

ETHIOPIAN UNION

Moqadishu

SOMALIA

UGANDA

Kampala

KENYA

Kendu Bay

Kisii

● Nairobi

EAST AFRICAN UNION

TANZANIA

● Dar es Salaam

TANZANIA UNION