



**THRU** the **BIBLE**

with *J. Vernon McFee*

# PSALMS

BIBLE COMPANION

**PREVIEW**

POETRY

# READ THIS FIRST

This Bible Companion is a summary of Dr. J. Vernon McGee's teaching of the book of Psalms heard on THRU the BIBLE. These summarized lessons get to the heart of Bible passages and are intended to stir your own thinking, prayer, and study.



**Begin with prayer.** Dr. McGee said, "We are living in the day of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the day of grace, when the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us." Before you start each lesson, ask the Lord to use it to grow you up in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as He is revealed in that section. Dr. McGee said, "This is the secret of life and of Christian living."



**As you study, read the Bible passage first.** Invite God to open your eyes and deepen your understanding of His Word. That's a request God loves to answer!



**If you want to listen to Dr. McGee's complete teaching on any specific passage, go to [TTB.org/Psalms](http://TTB.org/Psalms)** (or any book of the Bible). The corresponding audio messages are listed at the top of the summaries. You can also use this Bible Companion to follow along and take notes while you listen to Dr. McGee teach a book of the Bible on the radio or online.



**After every lesson, several questions are listed for your personal consideration or, if you're reading this as a group, for your discussion.** Ask the Spirit to help you take to heart what He wants to show you.

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LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU  
RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM AND TEACHING...

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COLOSSIANS 3:16<sup>A</sup>

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Look for the complete *Psalms Bible Companion* coming soon.

**Get your heart ready.**

## LESSON 1

# THE SONGS BEGIN



Begin with prayer



Read **Psalm 1:1**



Listen at [TTB.org/Psalms](https://www.TTB.org/Psalms) to *Psalms Intro—1:1*

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The keyword in the book of Psalms is “Hallelujah,” that is, “Praise the Lord.” This phrase has become a Christian cliché, but it is one that should cause a swelling of great emotion in our souls. The Psalms model what it means for us to connect with God—in praise, thanksgiving, and sorrow.

The Psalms record deep devotion, intense feeling, exalted emotion, and dark dejection. They play upon the keyboard of the human soul with all the stops pulled out. It’s natural to feel overwhelmed when you come to this marvelous book. This book has blessed the hearts of multitudes down through the ages. When some problem presses upon our minds and hearts, it’s natural to turn to the Psalms. They always bless our hearts and lives. Apparently down through the ages it has been that way. Ambrose, one of the great saints of the church, said, “The Psalms are the voices of the church.” Augustine said, “They are the epitome of the whole Scripture.” Martin Luther said, “They are a little book for all saints.” John Calvin said, “They are the anatomy of all parts of the soul.”

Someone has said there are 126 human experiences recorded in the Psalms. It is the *only* book which contains every experience of a human being. Every thought, every impulse, every emotion that sweeps over the soul is recorded here. Perhaps that’s why it always speaks to our hearts and finds a responsive chord wherever we turn. They express the deep feelings of all believing hearts in all generations.

## MANY PSALMS ARE ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

The Psalms are also full of references to Jesus Christ. Did you know that? We get a more complete picture of Him in the Psalms than in the Gospels. The Gospels tell us that He went to the mountain to pray, but the Psalms give us His prayer. The Gospels tell us that He was crucified, but the Psalms tell us what went on in His own heart during the crucifixion. The Gospels tell us He went back to heaven, but the Psalms begin where the Gospels leave off and show us Christ seated in heaven.

The most important thing to discover is that Jesus Christ the Messiah is the subject of the Psalms. He is the object of praise in every one of them. The Lord Jesus Himself when He appeared after His resurrection to those who were His own, said in Luke 24:44, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.”

In a more restrictive sense, the Psalms specifically describe how Jesus Christ belongs to Israel and Israel belongs to Christ. There’s no blessing to this earth until Israel and Christ are brought together. The Psalms are Jewish in expectation and hope. The worship in Psalms is Jewish, as they are sung in the temple and tabernacle.

That said, the Psalms still apply to us today—even more than any other portion of the Word of God. But we do need to be a little exact in our interpretation of the Psalms. God is not spoken of as a father in the Psalms. He is called God the Father, but not the Father God. The Psalms know nothing of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. The saints are not called sons. You will not find the blessed hope of the New Testament in the Psalms. But the Psalms are full of references to the second coming of Christ.

## TYPES OF PSALMS

Some psalms are technically called “messianic.” These record the birth, life, death, resurrection, glory, priesthood, kingship, and return of Christ. Sixteen messianic psalms speak specifically about Christ, but all 150 of them are about Him. The book of Psalms is a hymnbook and a HIM book—it is all about Him. As we study it, that fact will become very clear.

In addition to “messianic” psalms, there are pilgrim psalms and penitential psalms, the historic psalms, the nature psalms, the missionary psalms, the puritan psalms, the acrostic psalms, and then praise of God’s Word. Psalm 119

is the longest chapter in the Bible, and you can find it at the very center. Every verse in this Psalm focuses on God's Word.

Imprecatory psalms have caused the most criticism because of their cries for judgment. These psalms were written in a time of war and from a people who were looking for justice and peace on the earth. You can't get peace without putting down unrighteousness and rebellion. God intends to do just that and makes no apology for it. As Christians we're told to love our enemies, but imprecatory psalms ask for justice to be meted out on the earth. These psalms look to a time coming on the earth when the Antichrist will be in power. Living today, we have no basis to say how people should act under these circumstances. There's judgment in the Psalms, but that judgment doesn't apply to Christians under grace or to God's people whom He's redeemed.

Our study will be insightful of these intelligent, magnificent songs. We will look at all 150 spiritual songs, which undoubtedly at one time were all set to music for temple and tabernacle worship services. This book ought to make our hearts sing.

## WHO WROTE THE PSALMS?

Many writers contributed one or more psalms. David, "the sweet psalmist of Israel," has the most, 73 psalms, assigned to him. (Psalm 2 is ascribed to him in Acts 4:25 and Psalm 95 in Hebrews 4:7.) He could also be the author of some of the "orphan" psalms, since it was his pattern to write songs from experience.

Of the 150 total psalms, the other writers are:

- Moses, 1 (Psalm 90)
- Solomon, 2
- Sons of Korah, 11
- Asaph, 12
- Heman, 1 (Psalm 88)
- Ethan, 1 (Psalm 89)
- Hezekiah, 10
- "Orphan psalms," 39

## HOW ARE THE PSALMS ARRANGED?

Contrary to what many think, Psalms is not arranged haphazardly. They weren't dropped in a tub, shaken up, then put together with no arrangement. Often one psalm will state a principle, then there will follow several psalms that explain it. Psalms 1-8 are an example of this. The sections of the Psalms are also arranged orderly, corresponding to the Pentateuch of Moses. There are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy sections.

The first 41 psalms are the Genesis section.

The Exodus section begins with Psalm 42 and goes through 72.

The Leviticus section begins with Psalm 73 and goes through 89.

The Numbers section begins with Psalm 90 and goes through 106.

The Deuteronomy section begins with Psalm 107 and goes through 150.

In the Genesis section you see man in a state of blessedness. That's Psalm 1, the perfect man. And then you have the rebellion and the recovery of man in view, represented in Psalm 2. Psalm 3 shows the perfect man rejected; Psalm 4, the conflict between the seed of the woman and the serpent. Psalm 5, the perfect man in the midst of enemies. Psalm 6, the perfect man in the midst of discipline, the bruising of his heel. And Psalm 7, the perfect man in the midst of false witnesses. In Psalm 8, the repair of man comes through man, the bruising of the head. In Psalms 9-15 we see the enemy and Antichrist conflict and the final deliverance. Then in Psalms 16-41 we see Christ in the midst of His people sanctifying them to God. We'll see all of these play out as we go through the book of Psalms.

Many other things could be said about the Psalms. It's the inspired book of prayer and praise. It's the soul's anatomy, the soul's epitome. It's the garden of Scripture. Of 218 quotations of the Old Testament in the New Testament, 116 are from the Psalms.

God initiates our worship through our life situations, and we respond by acknowledging Him in every situation. In good times, He is all we need. When our soul is laid bare, He is all we need. He is faithful and true in His dealings with us when we worship Him in spirit and in truth—that's what we'll learn in our study of this magnificent book.

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**NEXT: How does a blessed person live?**

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5. As a young Jewish boy, Jesus would have memorized the Psalms. Want to commit God's Word to heart? Start with these in the book of Psalms. First, read the Psalm over several times every day. Then break it into sections. You may want to write them out on cards or in a notebook. Then start committing them to heart. Refresh them often. Perhaps recite them to someone—it will bless you both! (Read Psalm 119:105 right now for an additional benefit.)

Psalm 1 (6 verses)

Psalm 51 (19 verses)

Psalm 8 (9 verses)

Psalm 63 (11 verses)

Psalm 23 (6 verses)

Psalm 90 (17 verses)

Psalm 24 (10 verses)

Psalm 91 (16 verses)

Psalm 34 (22 verses)

Psalm 100 (5 verses)

Psalm 40 (17 verses)

Psalm 139 (24 verses)

Psalm 46 (11 verses)

## LESSON 2

# TWO MEN, TWO WAYS, TWO DESTINIES



Begin with prayer



Read **Psalms 1–2**



Listen at [TTB.org/Psalms](https://www.TTB.org/Psalms) to *Psalm 1* and *Psalm 2*

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How does a blessed person live? Psalm 1 tells us.

This first psalm that opens the Genesis section begins with people instead of the material universe. It talks about the blessed man, or the happy man, contrasted with the ungodly man. Is this Adam in the garden? Instead, it is likely a picture of Jesus Christ, the last Adam, living among ungodly sinners.

We sometimes think of the Lord as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and many pictures painted of Him make Him out to be sad. While it's true Isaiah says Jesus is a man of sorrows (Isaiah 53:4), notice it was our griefs, not His own, that He carried. Jesus is the happy Christ, blessed beyond all men.

### **HOW DOES A BLESSED PERSON LIVE?**

Psalm 1 focuses first on the negative, then the positive. First, the blessed person doesn't listen to the advice of wicked people. They don't go where sinners go. And they don't do what bad people do.

The psalm then gives us a happy person's posture. They don't *walk* with the worldly, they don't *stand* with the sinners openly committing sin, and they don't *sit* with the people who have no use for God. If you leave Him out, you're guaranteed to be miserable.

This is what the happy person doesn't do. In the next verse we see what the happy person *does* do.

***A happy person loves God's Word.***

Can you say, *That's me! I can't wait to study the Bible and get insight into my life and wisdom about who I am and who God is. It's so relevant to my life, sometimes I think the ink is still wet.* If this is you, then you know what it means to "delight." (And if you hesitated, and instead said, *Well, I want to ...* then that's good, too. You're on your way.)

If you love God's Word, you'll find yourself thinking about it long after you've read it. That's the word, "meditate." This is a figurative word—picture a cow chewing her cud. Farmers will tell us that cows have multiple stomachs and will re-chew their breakfast throughout the day. When we meditate, we do the same thing. We go over and over what we have read.

James 1:24 speaks of a person who looks at his face in a mirror, then goes away and forgets what he looks like. When we meditate on the Word of God, God shows us who we really are. When we meditate on His Word, we invite Him to shape our lives. This is how we grow in spiritual maturity. We can be as busy as a bee at church, but we won't grow just by doing good things. However, you will grow by meditating on God's Word. Think on it until it becomes a part of your life. This is the practice of the happy man.

## **WHERE DOES A HAPPY PERSON GET THE POWER?**

The happy person is like a tree planted by a river. This picture is the superlative in the original language of Hebrew, describing abundance. The blessed person is planted, given plenty of water, and becomes a tree. God's trees are "planted" trees, rather wild trees.

The prophet Isaiah gives us two pictures that are echoed here.

Isaiah 61:3 says the one God redeems will be called "*trees* of righteousness, the *planting* of the LORD, that He may be glorified." God sets His people in His garden by the rivers of water.

Isaiah 55:10-11 gives us insight into what “rivers of water” mean, describing it like the weather system on earth. “For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”

God wants His Word to come down like rain and be a blessing everywhere it’s heard. And every place it’s heard, someone will listen and believe. Our job is to get out the Word of God and then God will produce something—it will cause trees to grow.

Each tree “brings forth its fruit in its season” (Psalm 1:3). Isn’t it interesting that God’s trees don’t bring forth fruit all of the time? They produce in their season, and the power is in the Word. This is why our primary business as Christians is not soul-winning, but getting out the Word of God. There is a time to get fruit. But God decides it.

Psalm 1 continues to describe the blessed person: “Whose leaf also shall not wither.” Now the leaf is our outward testimony. God’s trees are evergreens—they never lose their testimony. All God’s children are evergreens.

“And whatever he does shall prosper.” Back in the Old Testament God promised material blessings to His own, but those blessings are not promised to the believer today. If you have them, you can thank Him for more than He has promised. The important thing is to have Christ. All material blessings are zero. If you don’t have One before your zeroes, you have nothing.

## **GOD’S WAYS ARE LASTING**

Notice that the psalmist describes the insecurity of the ungodly person. They are described as “chaff which the wind drives away.” Psalms 1:6 says the ungodly will perish—simply put, they will be lost. That’s a word of finality.

Matthew 7:13-14 describes the way the ungodly go—through a broad gate that leads to destruction. Many will go this way, we read. But the narrow way leads to life, and few find it. The wide, broad way is like a funnel you enter at the big end, and as you continue it becomes more narrow until it finally leads to death. But if you enter the narrow way by Christ—who is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6)—as you continue, the way becomes more

broad and leads to life. Jesus Christ Himself says in John 10:10, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

Two men, two ways, two destinies. One is a dead-end street, leading to death. The other leads to life. We live in a day when people aren’t sure what is right or wrong. But God is sure; His Word doesn’t change with every philosophy of a new generation.

What a glorious picture of the blessed and happy person in this first psalm!

## **PSALM 2: THE FIRST MESSIANIC PSALM**

Psalm 1 describes the blessed person—who is ultimately the Lord Jesus Christ, the last Adam. This psalm could be considered messianic in that it describes Him, but of course as we’ve said, this book is all about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we come to Psalm 2, which is the first among 16 messianic psalms. Seven times Psalm 2 is quoted in the New Testament (Acts 4 and 13, Hebrews 1, Revelation 2, 12, and 19).

As a contrast, Psalm 1 describes the happy person who trusts God, but Psalm 2 describes the rebellious person. This is a great parallel of the book of Genesis. Man was created perfect and placed in the Garden of Eden. Then he became a rebellious man. He ran away from God, no longer seeking Him or having any capacity for Him. This is what we see now in the children of Adam, mankind, in Psalm 2.

Psalm 2 has been called the drama of the ages and answers the question we have about our world today, “Where is all this going?” Like a television show, this psalm has one camera on earth and one in heaven. With the earth-lens, we see and hear the voices of the crowds. Then the camera in heaven switches on, and we hear God the Father speak. After He speaks, the camera shifts to His right hand, and God the Son speaks His part. Then the camera in heaven goes off, the camera on earth comes on again, and God the Holy Spirit has the last word.

## **LET’S WATCH THE SHOW**

First, the camera on earth focuses on mankind. The question on the screen is: “Why are the nations so angry? Why are the people making such foolish plans?” Mankind has been brought together in a great mass protest movement that will never be accomplished. Their anger is an empty, futile thing.

The political rulers and the religious rulers have joined together—against the Lord’s anointed, the Messiah/Christ.

Psalm 2 describes a great worldwide movement that is against God and against Jesus Christ. When did this movement begin? Scripture lets us know.

In Acts 4, when the first persecution broke out against the church, Peter and John, after they had been threatened, reported to the early church—

***So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: “Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: ‘Why did the nations rage, and the people plot vain things?’ -Acts 4:24, 25***

They were quoting Psalm 2. They go on to describe how Pilate and Herod gathered the people together against Jesus Christ in order to put Jesus to death. This is a movement against God and Christ, and it has been snowballing as it has come down through the centuries. Someday it will break out in a worldwide revolution against God and against Jesus Christ.

As for today, there is good that is still being planted and growing in the harvest fields. We are the evidence of that. Did you know that there is more Bible teaching going out today than in any period in the history of the world? But evil is growing, too.

The most subtle campaign against God is the presentation of a liberal Jesus. The world isn’t opposed to that Jesus, but the Jesus of liberalism never lived. He was not virgin-born; he did not perform miracles; he did not die for the sins of the world; he did not rise bodily from the grave. All of this appeals to the people of the world. But the Jesus of the Bible, they’re not prepared to accept Him yet. Now the only Jesus that ever lived is recorded in the Word of God. And He was virgin-born; He performed miracles; He died for the sins of the world and He rose again for our justification. Now that’s the only Jesus that we have any historical documents of.

There is a tremendous build-up, a mighty crescendo of opposition against God and against the real Jesus in our day.

How does it manifest itself? Exactly as God said it would. They say, *“Release us from your handcuffs and throw off these ropes that you use to control us”* (see Psalm 2:3).

What are some of the bands God has put on the human family? Marriage is one—and that has been threatened increasingly more. The Ten Commandments are another. Some wrongly say we don't need to obey the Ten Commandments. We are not saved by keeping them, but God gave them to protect mankind.

Civil law is a cord meant to protect us. When crime isn't punished it takes a terrible toll on our lives. When we break the cords meant to protect us, and instead want to be free to do as we please, God says it won't work. Our old evil natures need to be restrained. But mankind is moving toward getting rid of all restraints today.

And where does it lead us? Confusion in the political world. Corruption in the moral realm. Compromise and indifference in all things spiritual. And in the social sphere, the goal is comfort—how do we make life easier? That's the day we live in.

How does *God* feel about this?

Psalm 2 says He laughs—but not because it is funny. God sees a little guy parading up and down, shaking his puny fist in heaven's face saying, "Come on out and fight me! I'm against you." It's ridiculous! And God looks down and laughs. Little men putting themselves in opposition to God won't be around very long. The most powerful man on earth today will play his brief role on the stage of life, then his part is over. How ridiculous and preposterous for him to stand against God!

Will man's rebellion make any difference to God? Not a bit. What we do down here won't deter Him, detour Him, or defer Him at all. God did not read something in the morning paper that He didn't already know about. Nothing surprises Him at all. He is moving according to His purpose.

His purposes have a two-fold impact. Right now He's working on His heavenly purpose. Hebrews 2:10 says it this way, He's "bringing many sons to glory." Today God is calling out of this world a people to His name. God has another purpose, and that is to put Jesus on the throne, as stated in Psalm 2:6.

God is moving forward today undeviatingly, unhesitatingly, uncompromisingly to the establishment of that throne on which Jesus Christ will sit on this earth. When will this happen? According to God's schedule. Nothing will stop Him, deter Him, or change His plan.



## CAMERA FOCUS: GOD THE SON

Now the camera in heaven shifts to God the Son on His right hand. God says to Him, “You are My Son, today I have begotten You” (Psalm 2:7b).

You want to hear that very carefully because there are those who say this means Jesus is a creature. That He was just born like anybody else. But that’s not what the Word of God says. This reference is not to the *birth* of Jesus. Jesus was not “begotten” in the sense that He had a beginning. Rather, this is in reference to His *resurrection*. Christ was begotten out of the grave. Jesus is the eternal Son of God, and God is the eternal Father. They were this throughout eternity.

God the Father continues in Psalm 2:8 to describe the inheritance of the Son who is yet to rule. The scepter of this universe will be held by a Man with nail-pierced hands. He will rule decisively with a rod of iron. Note this is not about Jesus’ first coming when He came to sacrifice His life to save those who will believe. This is about His second coming, when He comes to this earth to *judge* the rebellion that has broken out. The only way in the world anyone could put down a rebellion in this world is for Him to come and deal with it Himself. And He will break them with the rod of iron.

## CAMERA FOCUS: GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

The camera in heaven goes off. The camera on earth comes on. Now God the Holy Spirit says, “*Be wise, kings of the earth. Be warned. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.*”

Then the Spirit of God speaks to mankind, “*Kiss the Son before it is too late.*” In other words, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ before it is too late. Jesus Christ is coming someday, and He will establish His kingdom here on this earth. He will rule, and He will put down all rebellion. He will bring peace and harmony to this little earth.

You can put your trust in Him. Either come to Him today and receive Him as Savior or someday you’ll be brought before His presence for judgment. He is either your Savior or your Judge. And He can’t be both. He’ll just have to be one.

Psalm 2 ends, as Psalm 1 began, with the solution to what it means to be blessed, to be happy: “Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.”

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**NEXT: Israel’s confidence in God, God’s promises to them,  
and their prayers for deliverance.**

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LESSON 2

 **FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION**

1. Psalm 1: Walk, sit, stand. “Psalm 1 gives us a happy person’s posture: They don’t *walk* with the worldly, they don’t *stand* with the sinners openly committing sin, and they don’t *sit* with the people who have no use for God. If you leave Him out, you’re guaranteed to be miserable.” How have you seen this to be true in your life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Psalm 1 describes a person who delights in God’s Word. Can you say, *I love God’s Word? I can’t wait to study it and get insight into my life and who I am and who God is?* If yes, then you know what it means to “delight.” (And if you hesitated, and instead said, *Well, I want to ...* then that’s good, too. You’re on your way.) What do you love about studying God’s Word? What insight have you gotten about yourself and who God is?

3. When we meditate, we go over and over what we have read. Remember James 1:24 speaks of a person who looks at his face in a mirror, then goes away and forgets what he looks like. When we meditate on the Word of God, God shows us who we really are. When we meditate on His Word, we invite God to shape our lives. This is how we grow in spiritual maturity. We can be as busy as a bee at church, but we won't grow just by being busy doing good things. But you will grow by meditating on God's Word. Think on it until it becomes a part of your life. This is the practice of the happy man. What do you think about this?

4. Does Psalm 2 sound familiar? "Why do the nations rage?" Psalm 2 has been called the drama of the ages and answers, "Where is all this going?" What hope do we have in Christ? What has He promised about evil and rebellion and a world that has forgotten Him?

5. Considering the positive and negative examples in Psalm 1 and 2, describe what it means to be blessed in five or six fresh ways.

## LESSON 3

# STAIRWAY OF PSALMS



Begin with prayer



Read **Psalms 3–7**



Listen at [TTB.org/Psalms](https://www.TTB.org/Psalms) to **Psalms 3, 4** and **Psalms 5–7**

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In Psalm 1, we focused on the blessed person.

In Psalm 2, we saw how Almighty God brings an end to rebellious mankind by Jesus Christ's second coming to the earth. Psalm 2 was the first messianic psalm and the next is Psalm 8, which models Jesus Christ's ultimate victory as a man. In between these two, Psalms 3–7 form a bridge—or better, a stairway connecting the two psalms that describe the Messiah.

These five psalms we'll look at now connect these two messianic psalms together. We read about Israel's trials, sorrows, confusions, problems, and sins. But we also see Israel's confidence in God, God's promises to them, and their prayers asking God to deliver them.

No matter when you may live, God's people know all about sorrow. These psalms comfort His children of every era, but they have three distinct contexts in which to understand them.

- These psalms were first written by David about his personal heartaches.
- They also apply directly to Israel during the Great Tribulation.
- Lastly, they encourage God's people everywhere at any time in the history of the world.

If we look at the psalms from this point of view, they will be meaningful to us.

## **PSALM 3: A PSALM OF DAVID WHEN HE FLED FROM ABSALOM, HIS SON**

Just the title alone of Psalm 3 echoes David's broken heart. Why was he running from his own son? This psalm came directly out of David's personal experience that you can read about in 2 Samuel 15–18.

Absalom, David's son, was usurping his father's throne and wanted to kill him. David became an outcast and ran like a fugitive from his own city, Jerusalem—ironically called “the city of David.” He was driven from the people he loved and ruled. Your heart goes out to David during this heartbreaking experience.

As difficult as this scene is, David had been warned that something like this was coming. Remember that years before, David had sinned against God. When Nathan the prophet confronted him about it, he told David, “Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house” (2 Samuel 12:11). David was forgiven of his sin, but he would endure consequences in his own family. When Absalom raised his rebellious heart and that vicious hand against his father, David reaped heartbreaking consequences.

David's enemies also increased on all sides. It must have felt like a bitter betrayal for the soldiers of Israel to follow Absalom. Absalom, after all, was an attractive young man and a clever politician who promised people many good things he would never have been able to deliver.

It looked like no help was coming for David from anywhere. Psalm 3 traces his steps as he passed over the Kidron Valley on his way out of Jerusalem, barefooted and weeping and in sackcloth and ashes. Obviously, David was grieving. It felt like God had forsaken him. (But He hadn't!)

We know God was with David because of a small and quiet word: *Selah*. We read this beautiful word more than 70 times in the Psalms. What does it mean?

Musicians can tell you. Remember all the psalms were once set to music and were played by an orchestra or sung by a choir. Jerusalem was likely famous throughout the known world for these beautiful worship concerts.

*Selah* was the signal to the musical conductor to rest. Pause. It's come to mean "stop, look, and listen." When we come to the Word of God, we should do the same thing that we do at a train crossing—stop, look, and listen.

Psalm 3 has been called the "morning psalm." It's a good one with which to start the day. In these difficult days for David, he still trusted the Lord. He pillowed his head on the promises of God and went to sleep. David says, "*In the morning, I woke up because the Lord sustained me.*" When it felt as if the whole world was against him, David determined he would trust the Lord and not be afraid. He would fear God and then not fear anyone else. "*Even if there's 10,000 against me, I'm not afraid of them.*" "Salvation belongs to the LORD. Your blessing is upon Your people. Selah" (Psalm 3:8).

David declared the Lord as the author of salvation. It was a gift from Him.

Psalm 3 says some wonderful things about God:

**The Lord is a shield for me (3:3a).** As a warrior, David knew something about how a shield guards and protects. He knew he needed one. He knew God covers His own.

**The Lord is my glory (3:3b).** David describes God's presence over him like the cloud of glory covered Israel on their wilderness trek. It was a visible sign that God was with His people. Today we walk by faith and believe the glory of God is with us. He will make Himself real to those who are His own.

**The Lord is the lifter of my head (3:3c).** How could David say this? God promised to build David a house and bless him and give him glory and a kingdom. Even though he's down today, David believes the Lord will lift up his head. We'll see this same phrase in the next song, too.

## PSALM 4: THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE SEED OF THE WOMAN AND THE SERPENT

Psalm 3 is a great psalm to be read in the morning. Now imagine Psalm 4 being sung and played on a guitar-like instrument (the *Neginoth*) in the evening. The psalm has three parts: a cry (vv. 1-3), a correction (vv. 4-5), and confidence (vv. 6-8).



**Cry (vv. 1-3)**

God's people always find prayer to be a great refuge in time of trouble. Listen to David's cry. *"Hear me when I call on You! Have mercy on me; hear my prayer when I am distressed."*

"Distress" means the pressures of life. Are you facing pressures today? You can call on God for help. David repeatedly asked for help—and he did so with confidence that God heard him.

**Correction (vv. 4-5)**

David sort of warns us next. He says, *"Stand in awe (tremble), and don't sin."* And then always, David calls us to worship and trust in God. In the New Testament book of Ephesians, the apostle Paul translates this verse, "Be angry, and do not sin" (4:26).

**Confidence (vv. 6-8)**

David's heart, like the rest of us, failed in times of trouble. But he found out that God was good to him. Around him were people who mocked him, saying, *"God's not going to do anything for you."* But David said in faith, *"Let the light of your face shine on us, Lord."*

Isn't that beautiful? He goes on, *"You have put more joy in my heart than all the wine and harvest could offer."*

Today, God and God alone can make good for us. That's what you can remember as you lie down in peace and sleep. Only the Lord allows us to sleep in safety. Next time you are having trouble sleeping, try reading Psalm 4. These psalms are wonderful for God's people in every season.

## **PSALM 5: THE PERFECT MAN IN THE MIDST OF ENEMIES**

David, Israel's worship leader, wrote Psalm 4 to be accompanied by *Neginoth*, like guitars. He wrote this psalm to be accompanied by a *nehiloth*, like a flute.

This psalm is a prayer of faith in God, who is the shield and rewarder of all who seek Him. It's a perfect song to be sung in the morning. (The morning is a great time to lift your heart to God in prayer.)

The psalmist feels a deep sense of prevailing evil and ungodliness around him, so he turns to God as he faces the day. He puts his confidence in God who will deliver them because He loves them. This is a magnificent psalm.

Psalm 5 gives comfort to the godly. When we look at the evil that runs rampant in our culture today, we feel sick. How must God feel? He also hates it; He is light and can't dwell in any darkness. He is pure and can't stomach any injustice. Wickedness may grow for a time, but God has promised the day when He will bring destruction and eternal shame to those who practice lies and wickedness. A day of judgment is coming.

In light of this, David asks the Lord to lead him in "righteousness because of my enemies." David knows his enemies are watching him. They want him to stumble and fall, but David wants to glorify God. So, he asks Him for help. He wants to walk through this evil in a way that honors God. Prayer is David's primary resource when he sees the wickedness around him.

This psalm reflects the proper vengeance God will show in the Great Tribulation. Today, we are to walk by faith; God is the one who will take action. This is the first imprecatory psalm—when David asks for justice, for God to intervene and bring judgment. Scripture makes it clear He'll do this in the proper time. We are not to pray these imprecatory prayers or take matters in our own hands; God says to us, "'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord" (Romans 12:19). God says, *"I'll take care of it for you; walk with Me by faith."*

## **PSALM 6: THE PERFECT MAN IN THE MIDST OF CHASTISEMENT**

Some have called this psalm a cry for mercy. In Psalm 5, we looked at all the wickedness in the world, but we also see wickedness in our own hearts. We're not perfect before God. These other psalms had to do with the morning and evening, but this one has to do with the darkest night of our souls. Psalm 5 was an imprecatory prayer. This one is a penitential psalm—a cry of repentance. Only mercy can save us. This is a psalm for all of us.

We're told repeatedly in the New Testament that God is rich in mercy. He's got plenty for each of us. This psalm also calls out phrases that Jesus

Himself identified with as He suffered for us. The great comfort is He's been through it Himself. He can comfort you. Our confidence today is that God will hear and answer our prayer when we're in deep trouble. How wonderful it is to have a Savior like this!

## **PSALM 7: “SHALL NOT THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH DO RIGHT?” (GENESIS 18:25)**

Here's a new word: *shiggaion*. It means “crying aloud.” David sung this psalm loudly. This psalm prophetically points to the persecution and the final suffering of the God-fearing remnant of Israel during the time of the Great Tribulation. It's also the outcry against the man of sin, described here as a lion tearing our souls to pieces. (Sounds like 1 Peter 5:8, doesn't it?)

David is also singing loudly against unjust persecution, injustice, and innocent suffering. We don't understand this kind of suffering, even today. But God will explain it to us someday.

And just when it looks so dark, like in Psalm 6, the morning light shines in. By faith David ends the psalm praising the Lord because He works justice and does all things right. That ought to make all of us get to singing.

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**NEXT: To be continued ...**

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## LESSON 3



## FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. Psalm 3—Read Psalm 3 aloud and notice the three times you read, “Selah.” Dr. McGee said that’s a good signal to “Stop. Look. Listen.” What do you notice about God in these three pauses?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Psalm 4—Need God? Just call on Him. God’s Word is full of examples of what happens when we call on God. Look up these verses, rich with the promises of God, and learn about His character:

Psalm 145:18

Psalm 55:16

Psalm 50:15

Psalm 86:7

Psalm 18:6

Psalm 91:15

3. Psalm 5—We've got psalms for every part of the day! Psalms 3 and 5 are good to read/sing in the morning; Psalm 4 is good to read at the end of the day. Psalm 7 should be read anytime—*loudly*. Why do you think these practical instructions are timeless? What happens when you read/sing psalms in the morning? In the evening? Loudly? Suggest some worship music that you like that is best listened to at a certain time of day.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Psalm 6—Psalm 6 is about suffering. God's people have passed through much suffering, with even more to come for a remnant of the nation Israel that will suffer in the Great Tribulation (what this psalm refers to). The great comfort is that God's been through it. He also suffered and endured. Whatever you are going through today, He's already been through it, and He can comfort you. Ask Him for help now.

5. Psalm 7—In Psalm 7, David cries out against injustice and evil. What does it say about his faith that he ends the psalm praising the Lord for His righteousness and faithfulness? How does his perspective encourage you to live by faith, too?




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