

1. Psalm 1

Aim: To encourage us to walk in the way of the Lord.

Discuss: Why do you think the Psalms have been such a blessing to countless Christians? What's so attractive about them? **Discuss.** How have they been a blessing to you? **Discuss.** Today we shall consider the first psalm. It stands as head of all the psalms, and for good reason. **Why?** [For one, it summarises that there are only two ways to live, and encourages you to live God's way]. Read Psalm 1.

The Blessed Person (vv. 1-3)

What does it mean to be "blessed"? (verse 1)

It means a state of happiness and joy in our life resulting from the kindness of God.

The man who is blessed by God is described both by what he does as well as what he doesn't do.

What doesn't he do? (v1) He does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand with sinners or sit with scoffers. *What does this mean? Discuss.*

What does he do instead? (v2) He seeks the wiser counsel from the Lord. He walks and delights in the instruction of the Lord – it is a joy to meditate on it day and night. He orders his life by God's Word. He relies on the Lord for help, not evil men. His life is changed as he removes himself from evil actions.

What does the Psalmist compare the "blessed" person to? (verse 3)

He is like a flourishing, healthy tree, planted by streams of water, bearing its fruit and enjoying the gift of life. His life is nourished and strengthened by the Lord's blessing.

- *What does the word "planted" imply?* Someone planted it, owns it, cultivates it and looks after it (see Matt 15:13). *Who owns this tree?*
- This person produces fruit in their lives that others will enjoy. *What is this fruit?* Gal 5:22-23
- His leaf does not wither: those things he says and does will be remembered, for they speak of Christ.
- He prospers in what he does, for he walks in God's will. His life counts for eternity (Rom 8:28).

The Wicked/Ungodly Person (vv. 4-6)

What are the wicked/ungodly compared to? (v4)

They are like chaff – of no use, dead, without substance or lasting value. The wind drives it away – death comes quickly and unexpectedly, leaving nothing of value (Psa 37:35-36).

Why won't the wicked stand in the judgement? (see Rev 20:11-15)

They have rejected and opposed God's ways in this life, and will therefore face His judgement in the next. Fear will grip them on that day, for they will know they are guilty and condemned to eternal punishment.

When will the wicked be separated from the righteous? (verse 5)

At present, the unsaved sinner still lives among the righteous. God currently permits the tares to grow amongst the wheat (Matt 13:30). But in glory, this will not be so. Unsaved sinners cannot live in heaven.

The Two Ways

What assurance does verse 6 give the righteous (ie those who walk in the way of the Lord)?

The Lord knows (literally, "is knowing") the way of the righteous. He constantly looks upon them and directs their steps, even when they go through dark stormy nights. Consider Matt 10:29-31; Job 23:10.

What warning does verse 6 give to the ungodly (ie those who reject God's ways)?

Not only will the wicked perish, but also the path he takes (Psa 37:20, 38). His memory will soon fade away and be forgotten as though he never existed. And what they do in this life counts for nothing in eternity.

Why might this contrast between the "righteous" and the "ungodly" stand at the head of the psalms?

Sometimes life appears to be the other way around - the ungodly prosper while the righteous suffer (Psa 73:1-3). To choose wisely, we must view life from God's perspective.

Application

God wants you to choose the way of the "righteous" man - ie one who trusts in the Lord and walks in His ways, has been washed in the blood of Jesus and made alive by the Holy Spirit. The righteous man has a new heart that longs for God and His Word, and loves to meet with God's people. His delight is in the law of the Lord, and he loves to meditate upon it, think about what it is saying and then to obey it.

Summary: The Lord blesses the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

2. Psalm 2

- Aim:** To give us assurance that the Lord will ultimately triumph over everything that opposes Him.
- Discuss:** Why do we see such wickedness and rebellion in our society today? **Discuss.**
In this study, we will consider how God views this rebellion and what He will do about it.

The nations rebel (vv. 1-3)

We have vv1-3 a description of the hatred of man against the Lord and His Anointed One (His King/Christ).

In what way are the nations in "uproar" or "rage"? What vain thing are the peoples devising?

- The word “uproar”/“rage” (“conspire” in NIV) has the sense of agitation, like a sea churning in a storm, or a horse snorting before rushing into battle.
- The world’s leaders are gathering together to arrogantly set themselves in opposition to God and His Anointed (v2). They are conspiring/plotting together to rid themselves of God’s rule and constraints (v3).
- There is a oneness between the Lord and His Anointed (v2). To stand against one is to stand against both.

What partial fulfilment did the Apostles see in these verses? See Luke 23:9-12 & Acts 4:25-27.

Herod and Pilate put aside their enmity to stand against the Lord’s King. *How does this still occur today?*

The Lord responds (vv. 4-6)

How does God view this rebellion and rage of mankind? (v4)

He sits in the heavens and laughs at them. He knows how absurd and futile their plotting is against Him and His Anointed. Their efforts to stand against the omnipotent power and might of God who rules over all will ultimately be in vain. Thus, those who stand with the Lord’s Anointed have nothing to fear (Luke 12:4-7).

What action does God take against the revolt by the world’s leaders? (v5-6)

- God speaks (v5). His anger is aroused, and just the sound of His word instils terror in those He addresses.
- God announces that He has already appointed His Anointed (v6). The immediate context was probably an Israelite King, but the fulfilment is Jesus who now reigns over everything at God’s right hand (Acts 2:32-36; Eph 1:18-23).

The King announces His role (v7-9)

What is the relationship of the Anointed One to the Lord? (v7)

He is declared to be God’s Son. Their relationship is like a father who brings forth (or begets) a son (2 Sam 7:14). The ultimate fulfilment is in God’s perfect Son (Matt 17:5; Rom 1:4; Heb 1:5).

What is the scope of the Anointed One’s rule and possession (v8)?

The Lord’s Anointed has been given the right to rule the whole world. He only needs to ask, and God will give everything into His hand. The nations will be His inheritance, and the whole earth His possession.

Some people only think of Jesus as “gentle, meek and mild”. What picture does v9 give us about how Jesus will ultimately respond to the world’s rebellion?

God has given His King the power to conquer. Although the nations combine their power and take their stand against the Lord, it will amount to no more than a brittle clay pot being struck by an iron bar - their rebellion will be shattered. No wonder the Lord laughs at their arrogance. (Rev 2:26-27, 19:15-16)

The warning to submit to the Lord’s Anointed (v10-12)

What counsel is given to those rebelling against God?

- To show discernment (v10) – act wisely by embracing God’s King and submitting to Him (Phil 2:9-11).
- Serve the Lord’s King and bow to His authority. Serve Him with both joy and fear (reverence). If you remove fear from joy, our service becomes “flippant”. If you remove joy from fear (reverence), fear becomes slavish. **Discuss.**
- “Kiss the Son” – both a sign of submission and love/worship (Luke 10:27). The invitation is to come under the Lordship of the Son and stand with Him, not against Him. Otherwise, His wrath can “flare up in a moment” (NIV) and you will perish. Those who take refuge under His rule will be blessed.

Concluding thoughts:

In a world which stands opposed to God, His King and His people, the psalm reassures those who serve and “kiss” the Son that the Lord will triumph over them – all rebellion against the Lord will be shattered.

We should also take every opportunity to warn others of the wrath to come.

Summary: We need not fear those who oppose God - for ultimately the Son will triumph.

3. Psalm 3 & 4

Aim: To help us put our confidence in the Lord, even when we are surrounded by troubles or enemies.

Discuss: When you are surrounded by troubles, or perhaps people who give you a hard time, how does it affect you? **Discuss.** In this study, we will consider how David responded when he was up against it.

Many rise up against me (vv. 1-2)

What does David express in these verses?

David wrote this psalm when Absalom his son sought to take the kingship from him. As a result, David had to flee. Many turned on David, and Shimei even cursed him (2 Samuel 15:13-14; 16:5-8).

What taunt did David's enemies express to him? What did they want to do? (v. 2)

They expressed that God would not deliver him, and by this, they hoped to shake his confidence in God so that he might drop his head, take his eyes off the Lord, and be left discouraged and crushed in spirit.

We may experience taunts from those around us because of how we trust in God. Has this happened to you and how has it made you feel? [Discuss]

Note: The word "selah" is believed to be a pause to reflect on what has just been said. Here, we are invited to reflect on how our enemies rise up against us, and surround us, and seek to undermine our confidence in God.

You lift up my head (vv. 3-4)

David could have felt shattered, but what does David express instead? (v. 3)

He expresses confidence in the Lord who is his shield (his protector), his glory (his delight); and the one who lifts up his head if he should ever become downcast.

With confidence in the Lord, what did this result in David doing? (v. 4)

He cried to the Lord for help. He didn't rely on his own plans or strength to resist his enemies, but instead he turned to the Lord. He even expresses how God had answered him. Such was his confidence.

With the "selah" after verse 4, what should we reflect on?

Although we often feel surrounded by our troubles and enemies, the reality is that God surrounds us; he is a shield about us. He is also our glory, our delight, for He is a faithful friend who will never abandon us.

I will not be afraid (vv. 5-6)

When we put our confidence (trust) in the Lord, what blessings do we enjoy?

We enjoy peace from the Lord because of how He sustains us. As a result, we can sleep peacefully, we can have the confidence to see a new day, and not live in fear even if the enemy seems to be so overwhelming.

What promises do we have in 1 John 5:18 and Philippians 4:7?

It is the Lord Jesus who keeps us (sustains and protects us) even from the evil one himself. As a result, we can enjoy God's peace that surpasses all comprehension.

What things cause you to be fearful and anxious, and to lay awake at night? [share]

What does Psalm 3 tell us to do instead?

We must remember who God is and we must call out to Him and put our full confidence and trust in Him. Our lack of peace directly relates to our lack of trust. (cf. 1 Peter 5:6-7).

Salvation belongs to the Lord (vv. 7-8)

In these concluding verses, what is David expressing?

David calls to the Lord for deliverance knowing that salvation belongs to the Lord alone. Just as God had delivered him in the past (v. 7b), he now again calls on the Lord to help him (v. 7a). David's confidence was in the Lord's salvation, and His blessing on His people; ie, those who take refuge in Him (Psalm 2:12).

Psalm 4 (vv. 1-8)

What similarities do you see between Psalm 3 and 4?

The psalmist calls to God in his distress, and is answered (v. 1,3); he has enemies who are trying to undermine his confidence in the Lord (v. 2); he is able to enjoy a peace as he trusts in the Lord (v. 8).

What special verses do you find in this psalm that helps you put your confidence in the Lord?

v. 3 – God has set us apart for Himself, and therefore He will hear us.

vv. 6-7 – From the Lord comes goodness and gladness (for those who trust in Him).

v. 8 – The Lord makes us dwell in safety; He is our shield, our keeper, and protector. Whom shall we fear?

Summary: Salvation belongs to the Lord – let us trust and not be afraid.

4. Psalm 6

Aim: To help us call out for the Lord's mercy when we sin and have adversaries rise up against us.

Read Psalm 6

What is this psalm about? [discuss]

Can you relate to anything in it? [discuss]

Appeal for mercy (read vv. 1-5)

Who does David attribute his present affliction to? (v.1)

David doesn't blame Satan or someone else, but has the wisdom to know that the Lord was the One bringing about his present affliction.

Why was the Lord causing David to suffer? (v.1)

The Lord was rebuking and chastening (disciplining) David over something. We are not sure what it was. It was probably over some sin he had committed.

Does it surprise you that the Lord can cause us to suffer? What do we learn from Job 5:17-18 and Hebrews 12:4-11?

The Lord does discipline us, and it can be painful, but He does it for our good; that we may share in His holiness, and that we may bear the fruit of righteousness. The Lord's disciplines us because He loves us, and it's only for a time, before He restores us.

Note: Not all suffering is the result of discipline (eg, of Job), but the Lord can use suffering to discipline us.

How does David describe his suffering? What picture does it give? (vv.2-3)

David's suffering is intense and prolonged. He seems to be suffering from an illness where he's wasting away and may even die. Not only is he suffering physically, but he's also suffering spiritually (his soul is greatly dismayed). Can you relate to his cry at the end of verse 3?

In the midst of his suffering, what is David's appeal to the Lord? (vv. 2-5)

David doesn't seek to justify himself before the Lord, and question God as to why he is suffering. Instead, he pleads for God's mercy (grace) and lovingkindness, and that God would rescue him from his present ordeal. He even appeals to God that he might be spared so that he may continue to praise Him and give Him thanks.

How do you react when you suffer? [discuss]

David's anguish increased (read vv. 6-7)

How does David describe his condition each night? (vv. 6-7)

He is deeply distressed, crying night after night, with no comfort or relief. Have you ever experienced this?

Why is David so weary with sighing?

Not only is David being disciplined by the Lord, but his enemies are trying to take advantage of the situation. This compounds his present distress, bringing greater sorrow and sadness.

Note: When we publicly sin, those about us can often give us a hard time too, making us feel even worse. What's some of the things people have said to you? (eg, "So you call yourself a Christian?")

Read Psalm 3:5-6. Why did David experience peaceful sleep in Psalm 3, but not in Psalm 6?

In Psalm 3, David is right with the Lord and experiences the Lord keeping him, even with many enemies about, but in Psalm 6, David has appeared to have sinned and is being disciplined for it. God seems distant to him (v. 4), and he does not have the same peace as he sleeps.

Confidence in the Lord (read vv. 8-10)

What gives David the confidence over his enemies? (vv. 8-9)

David's confidence is that the Lord has heard and received his prayer for His mercy and deliverance.

David prayed with faith. How did he expect the Lord to respond? (v. 10)

Even though David's enemies were hoping to profit from his distress, he believed that they would be put to shame and be greatly dismayed for they would witness the Lord restoring him and showing mercy to him.

What parallels do you see between David's situation and our life as a Christian?

We have an enemy, Satan, who is known as the "accuser of the brethren" (Rev 12:10). Not all suffering comes from Satan, but he will use every opportunity to accuse us and compound our distress. Our only way to silence him is to put our confidence in God's mercy and Christ's salvation.

Summary: In times of distress, we need to seek the Lord for His mercy and deliverance.

5. Psalm 8

Aim: To help us glory in our mighty Maker and consider how He is mindful of puny man.

Read Psalm 8

What are your initial thoughts on this psalm? [discuss]

The Lord's glory (vv. 1-2)

What does the psalmist (David) say about God's name? (v. 1)

God's name is majestic (glorious, excellent, great, mighty). There is no other who has such a great and high name. Indeed, David uses at the start of this psalm the two great Hebrew names for God; Jehovah (YHWH) which is God's personal name and is derived from "I AM" (Exod 3:14), and Adonai which means sovereign.

Where has the glory (or splendour) of God been especially set for us to see? (v. 1)

God's glory has been set "above the heavens"; that is, above our atmosphere. The universe above declares to us the glory of God (Psalm 19:1-3) and it helps us appreciate how great He truly is (Romans 1:20).

Although the mighty universe declares God's glory, who else does God use to do this? (v. 2)

The Lord raises up lowly children and infants to declare His glory. For example, in Matthew 21:14-16, the children were praising Jesus, although the religious leaders despised Him.

What does God accomplish through the praises of children and infants? (v. 2)

He causes those who oppose Him and mock Him, and His Christ (Psalm 2:1-3), to be silenced by the lowliest ones on the earth (children and infants). God's glory in the heavens should silence them, but God specialises in using the lowly to confound the wise (1 Corinthians 1:18-21); eg, little children often have no trouble praising God for His creation, but many learned people refuse to acknowledge His existence.

The dignity of man (vv. 3-9)

What is emphasised in Psalm 8:3?

The whole universe has been made by God. It has not come about by chance, but by the mighty working of God. Also, the word "finger" emphasises that God has crafted everything carefully and intricately.

What contrast is made in Psalm 8:3-4?

When we consider how great God is, especially as seen in the expanse of the universe that He has set in place, and how puny we are in comparison, what is man that God should be mindful of us. Consider Isaiah 40:12-17. Even the nations are but a drop from a bucket to God, and the nations are nothing before Him.

Are we then nothing to God? Is this the point David is making?

No! What is beyond comprehension is that the awesome and majestic God is mindful of us, and not only that, takes an interest in us. We are especially valued to God (Luke 12:7).

Not only is God mindful of us, but what else do we learn in Psalm 8:4?

God cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). Of course, the pinnacle of God's care has been in the way He gave us His Son so that if we believe in Him, we shall not perish but have eternal life with Him (John 3:16).

Not only is God mindful of us, but what status is given to mankind in Psalm 8:5?

We have been made a little lower than "elohim". This Hebrew word is normally translated as God, but it can also mean "divine beings" or "angels" (as it is in Heb 2:7, where this verse is quoted). So, we have been made a little lower than angels, and we have been crowned with glory and majesty. This goes back to how God made us in His image (Gen 1:26-27). Indeed, through Jesus we are now sons of God and higher than angels (Heb 1:14).

What else do we learn about mankind in Psalm 8:6-8?

God has given to man the rule of His earth (as also declared in Genesis 1:28). We may be puny compared to God and His vast universe, but to God, man is special and stands as ruler over His creation.

How should these truths affect us in our attitude toward ourselves and others?

We should view ourselves as being precious and valued to God, and we should view others in a similar way.

Psalm 8:4-8 is quoted in Hebrews 2:6-8. Who is the Hebrew passage speaking of? (Read Heb 2:5-9)

It is speaking of Jesus, for when He came to earth, He humbled Himself (Phil 2:5-8) and took on a lower position (for a time) in order to save us.

Why does the psalm end in praise of God's majestic name? (v. 9)

Not only is the Lord so great as our mighty Maker, but it is He who has given man such status and dignity. Though we are so small compared to God and His universe, we are loved and cared for.

Summary: God is to be worshipped and adored. He is our Creator and He cares for us.

6. Psalm 10

Aim: To help us not lose heart when we see the wicked afflicting the humble and helpless.

Read Psalm 10

What are your initial thoughts on this psalm? Is there anything you can relate to? [discuss]

The complaint of the righteous (vv. 1-2)

What is the psalmist's complaint? (v. 1)

He complains that the Lord is turning a blind eye to those who are afflicted; that when the afflicted are especially in need, the Lord is nowhere to be found.

What does the psalmist identify as the trouble that the afflicted are going through? (v. 2)

The wicked (the ungodly) actively pursue and seek to harm the helpless. They desire to take advantage of them, and to crush them, using any means possible.

In what way can you relate to the cry of the psalmist? Do you ever personally feel the Lord being "far-off"? Why was that?

We can feel the Lord is far-off when we pray about things, perhaps the sickness of a loved one, or financial trouble, or being put-down by others, because the Lord doesn't seem to be doing anything.

When we think of our present world can we relate to the psalmist's cry?

We have many parts of the world where there are terrible injustices, such as in Zimbabwe. We also live in a society where the wicked seem to get away with things, and the innocent seem to suffer. These things can cause us to cry out and wonder what God is doing, and why doesn't He act.

The boast of the wicked (vv. 3-11)

In verses 3 and 4 what do we learn about the heart of the wicked?

The wicked are full of pride, arrogance and greed, and they have no fear of God; indeed, they even convince themselves that "there is no God". Atheism is not a recent phenomenon.

In what way is this true today?

We have many, fuelled by evolution and so-called knowledge and the religion of science, who openly spurn God and deny Him. But many others spurn God also by the way they live for themselves, pursuing their desires with no thought of God.

What are some of the marks of the wicked man in verse 5-11?

They get away with things and prosper and then they boast about it; they speak arrogantly, cursing and deceiving and oppressing those about them; they go out of their way to take advantage of those who are weak for their own gain; they convince themselves that God does not see and that they are accountable to no one.

The plea of the righteous (vv. 12-15)

Even though the psalmist felt that God was distant, what did he do? (v. 12, 15)

He called on the Lord to break the power ("break the arm") of the wicked, and to help the afflicted.

What does the psalmist remind us in verses 13 and 14?

The boast of the wicked (that God doesn't see) is empty, because the Lord sees everything. He sees the wickedness of the wicked and the injustices they commit, as well as the affliction of those who look to Him.

In Luke 18:1-8 what does Jesus teach us in this parable?

We, like the psalmist, are to continue to appeal to the Lord for justice, even when we feel like giving up. We must never forget that God will bring about justice, but we need to be patient and pray until the Lord returns.

The confidence of the righteous (vv. 16-18)

What is the confidence of the righteous in the Lord? (vv. 16-18)

- That the Lord reigns as the sovereign king forever, and will cause the wicked to perish
- That the Lord does care; He hears the humble, He strengthens them and He executes justice for them

What triumphant cry will arise from the heart of the righteous? (Revelation 15:2-4, 19:1-6)

One day in heaven we will rejoice in our God who will execute His righteous judgment upon the wicked, and vindicate His servants. Even though we may feel the Lord is distant, and doesn't act at times, let us assure our hearts that He will act. Let us then persevere, confidently looking to the time when God will judge.

Summary: Persevere and pray, for the Lord sees and hears, and will act to vindicate the righteous.

7. Psalm 13

Aim: To encourage us to trust in the Lord even in times of great trouble.

Read Psalm 13

How would you summarise what this psalm is about? In what ways can you relate to it? [discuss]

The psalmist's pain (vv. 1-2)

Read vv1-2. What question does the psalmist keep asking God and why?

The question "How long...?" occurs four times. It is not a request for information, but a cry of anguish and distress. He longs for relief from this time of pain and trouble, and is desperate for it.

What is causing the pain being experienced by the psalmist? (Hint: there are three areas of pain)

- Firstly, there is pain with God. God is not responding to his distress. He feels that God has forgotten him and hidden His face (v.1) from him, in his time of need.
- Secondly, there is pain within himself. He has sorrow in his heart (v.2). He is plagued by the painful thought that God may have turned away and no longer cares, as well as the burden of facing his predicament alone and relying on his own counsel (v.2).
- Thirdly, there is pain from an enemy, who has gained the upper hand over him (v.2).

What do you think is the psalmist's greatest concern?

All three areas of pain are of concern, and they're all connected, but the possibility that God has forgotten him is surely the most painful. This is what he mentions first with great emphasis ("will you forget me forever?").

Can the Lord forsake someone? (1 Samuel 16:14; Psalm 51:11)

Under the old covenant, God could choose to leave a person (ie, king Saul), when a person failed to repent of their sins. But David, who had a heart after God, and who repented of his sins, always had the Lord with him. Even though he felt that the Lord had left him, the truth is, He hadn't.

Can God forsake us? (Hebrew 13:5; John 14:16)

We, who are in Jesus and who live under the new covenant, have been given the Holy Spirit, and God has promised to never leave us or forsake us. How blessed we are! Although we may *feel* at times that the Lord does forget us, our feelings betray us. The truth is, He never will – not ever. Even when we sin and grieve God's Spirit, the Lord doesn't leave us, but we won't be enjoying perfect fellowship until we put things right.

Why then does God allow trouble to come upon us so that we feel abandoned? (1 Peter 1:6-7)

God allows pain and trouble so that our trust in Him may be strengthened and purified. In such times, we have no option but to hang on to Him with everything we have.

The psalmist's plea (vv. 3-4)

Although God feels distant, what does the psalmist do? (v.3)

He doesn't give up in praying to the Lord. The Lord is still His God. But he longs for God to show him His presence ("enlighten my eyes") by delivering him from his enemies and death.

What else does David plead in v. 4?

David does not want his enemies, who are also enemies of God, to rejoice. He pleads for the Lord to rescue him so that his enemies may be silenced and that God may be glorified. Note: If David should be overcome, then the enemy would not only rejoice over David, but over God as well.

The psalmist's trust and praise (vv. 5-6)

In verse 5 what does David express to the Lord?

David expresses how He trusts in the Lord's lovingkindness (mercy). He knows that deliverance (salvation) from the Lord is not dependent on his own goodness, but on God's mercy. David had such confidence in the Lord's mercy, that he rejoices, even in the midst of trials, in how the Lord would deliver him.

Compare verse 6 with the opening verse of the psalm. What has happened?

Initially, David felt abandoned and overwhelmed with pain and trouble. But now he ends with praise. As he prays, he reminds himself of who the Lord is and His great mercy. David praises God because of what he has done in the past ("has dealt bountifully"), giving hope and confidence for the future.

Are you able to have confidence in the Lord from the way He has dealt with you in the past?

Do you fully trust and depend on His great mercy toward you?

Summary: The Lord will never abandon His children, even though we may feel He has left us at times. He is also merciful and will not allow the enemy to overcome you with despair.

8. Psalm 14 & 15

Aim: To encourage us to live a righteous life rather than a foolish one.

Intro: In Psalm 1 we read of two types of people, the blessed (or righteous) person and the wicked person. According to this psalm, what distinguishes the way they live? [discuss] In Psalm 14 and 15 the psalmist David further describes how different these two types of people are in the way they live.

Read Psalm 14 (Note: This psalm is repeated in Psalm 53)

The way the wicked live

What do the wicked believe? (v. 1)

They believe that there is no God. This is the premise upon which they build their whole life on.

What does this premise lead to? (v. 1)

It leads to a life of corruption and wickedness. It's impossible to live a moral life (according to God's standards) without knowing the Lord.

How would you compare what we read in verse 1 to our present world?

Things have only got worse. We have many people who openly declare that there is no God, and who, as a result, lead a life of wickedness. Such things as evolution have given many people an excuse not to believe.

How does God view those who do not believe in Him? (vv. 1-3)

- They are fools, for they deny the clear reality of God (Romans 1:20; Psalm 19:1-3)
- They have turned aside from the giver of life and our Creator, instead of seeking Him.
- They do no good, but evil; they are corrupt and do detestable deeds.

The apostle Paul quotes these verses in Romans 3:9-12. He applies these verses to all. Why?

Though the psalmist speaks of the wicked in Psalm 14, the reality is, we are all like this until we come to faith in Jesus. This is because we have a sinful nature that is in rebellion to God (Romans 8:6-8). It's only when we come to faith in the Lord that we are declared righteous and given a heart to be righteous.

What else do the wicked do? (vv. 4-6)

They not only oppose God, but they attack God's people, and shame those who take refuge in the Lord.

Though the wicked seek to destroy God's people, what will come upon them? (v. 5)

They will be overwhelmed with dread because the Lord is with the righteous and is their refuge (v. 6). In this life they may experience God's dread, but more so when they face God's judgment (Rev 6:15-17).

What is the cry of the psalmist on behalf of the righteous? (v. 7)

His cry is that the Lord will deliver them from the wicked who seek to "eat up" or destroy God's people.

Read Psalm 15

The way the righteous live

What desire of the righteous is implicit in verse 1?

They have a desire to be in the presence of the Lord and to have fellowship with Him. They are in direct contrast to the wicked who turn their back on God (Psalm 14:3).

What is the key difference between the wicked and the righteous? (Psalm 14:1 and 15:2)

The wicked deny God and exchange the truth for a lie (Romans 1:25), but the righteous believe in God and desire Him, and choose to walk with integrity according to His truth and righteousness.

What characteristics depict the one who trusts in God and lives by His truth? (vv. 3-5a)

- They don't injure people with their tongue (v. 3), but speak gracious words (Eph 4:29; Col 4:6).
- They do not honour and associate with the wicked (Psalm 1:1), but honour those who fear the Lord (v. 4).
- They keep their promises ("swears to his own hurt"), and put others before themselves (v. 4).
- They don't take advantage of others, but help others, and they love to see justice executed (v. 5).

What is the outcome for those who live in righteousness by the truth? (v. 5)

They will never be shaken, for the Lord is their rock and refuge; unlike the wicked who will end up being in great dread. The righteous are like a stable mighty tree (Psalm 1:3), but the wicked are like chaff (Psalm 1:4).

What is the key for those who are blessed of the Lord and who dwell with Him? (Hab 2:4; Heb 11:6)

They first believe there is a God, and they seek and trust in Him. From this then flows a godly and righteous life that pleases the Lord. But does it; in our lives? Without holiness no one will see the Lord (Heb 12:14).

Summary: The fool says there is no God and lives corruptly; the one who trusts in God must live holy.

9. Psalm 16

Aim: To encourage us to put our confidence and trust in the Lord until we finally face death.

Read Psalm 16

What are your initial thoughts on this psalm? [discuss]

The psalmist's plea and defence (vv. 1-4)

What is the psalmist's petition or request? (v. 1)

The psalmist David is seeking the Lord's protection against the possibility of death. We are not sure what the situation was when this psalm was penned, but many times David's life was in jeopardy (1 Sam 23:24-28).

How did David describe his relationship with the Lord? (vv. 1-2)

The Lord was his refuge; the one he trusted and hoped in for protection. The Lord was his personal Master and King (Hebrew: Adonai); the one he followed. Also, the Lord was the only "good thing" in David's life (cf. Psalm 73:25-26); the Lord was most precious to him.

What contrast is given in verses 3 and 4?

David takes delight in fellow believers (saints, or holy ones), and speaks highly of them. He not only loves the Lord, but also God's people (John 13:34; 1 John 4:20-21). But David despises the practices of those who do not believe (who follow other gods); he will not speak of them or honour them, or their gods.

How highly do we view fellow believers? Do we treat them any better than unbelievers?

David calls his fellow believers "majestic" or "glorious" ones – the same word he uses when speaking of the Lord in Psalm 8:1 and 8:9. He doesn't just "put up" with them or try to get along with them – he values and treasures them, because they belong to the Lord; they are the Lord's children.

The Psalmist's delight (vv. 5-6)

What does David consider to be his greatest inheritance and treasure? (v. 5)

The "promised land" was often spoken of as Israel's inheritance (Deut 3:28). But for David, his greatest inheritance and treasure was the Lord, not just the land or anything else; it was the Giver, not the gift. The Lord Himself was David's inheritance and cup (a symbol of life and its blessings).

How does David speak of the Lord's dealings with Him? (vv. 5b-6)

David testifies of the Lord's goodness and kindness in his life, despite his current predicament. He uses the language of Israel's physical inheritance (lots, lines, portions – eg Joshua 17:14) to speak of God's presence and blessing in his life. The Lord is the One who supports his lot and blesses him abundantly (James 1:17).

What do you treasure most? The Lord and your relationship with Him, or what you get from Him?

The Psalmist's confidence and hope (vv. 7-11)

What does David praise the Lord for? (v. 7)

In his time of crisis, David praises the Lord for His counsel and guidance. David didn't depend on his own understanding, but on the Lord's guidance (Prov 3:5-6), and now he praises God for it. Do we?

What gives David confidence to face his current crisis? (v. 8)

David knows he doesn't face this crisis alone – the Lord is right there by his side. He will not be shaken, because he knows the Lord is with him, and will direct him.

What is David able to do now as a result of his confidence in the Lord? (v. 9)

His trust and confidence in the Lord enable him to be glad and rejoice, even in the face of possible death.

What is David's confidence in the Lord, even if he should die? (vv. 10-11)

David has confidence that God will not abandon him to Sheol (the place of the dead), but bring him into new life ("the path of life"), where he will enjoy God's presence and pleasures forever. Although all go to Sheol, David knew that those who trust in the Lord will not be abandoned there.

Who fulfilled, and made possible, what David hoped for in vv. 10 - 11 of this psalm? (Acts 2:25-32)

God's Son, Jesus, completely fulfilled these verses. Though He died, his flesh did not suffer decay, but His body was mightily raised up by God on the third day, and He now lives forever more.

Because of Jesus' resurrection from the dead, what hope do we have in the face of death?

(John 11:25-26; 1 Thess 4:13-18, 1 Cor 15:51-57)

If we trust in Jesus, then we will not be abandoned to Sheol (Hades). Instead, at death, we shall go to be in the presence of the Lord (2 Cor 5:8), and on the Last Day, the Lord will also raise up our earthly bodies as well.

Summary: Because of Jesus' death and resurrection believers have nothing to fear; in life or in death

10. Psalm 18

Aim: To encourage us to take refuge in and to praise our Almighty God who saves His people.

David's Praise: Introduction (Read introduction and vv. 1-3)

What's the background to this psalm and the basis for the rest of the psalm?

This is a psalm of David when he rejoices in the Lord and praises Him for delivering him from all his enemies; including Saul. It occurs in 2 Samuel 22 near the end of David's life.

What is David's heart like toward the Lord and why? (vv. 1-3)

David so loves the Lord; he sees the Lord as his strength, refuge and protector. Throughout David's life he experienced the wonderful blessing of God answering his prayers and delivering him again and again.

The Lord's deliverance (Read vv. 4-19)

What is David recounting and what did he experience? (vv. 4-6)

David recounts times in his life when he felt that he was going to die at the hands of his enemies but he cried to the Lord who always hears him. (cf. how Saul and his army tried to kill David again and again).

How does David describe the Lord's action in vv. 7-15 after He had heard his prayer?

He speaks of the Lord coming down and displaying His great and awesome power over His creation in order to shake and shatter the enemies of David. Consider God's great power: "the earth shook and quaked" (v.7), "fire from His mouth devoured" (v.8), "the blast of the breath of Your nostrils" (v.15). Our God is to be feared.

What did the great and awesome God do for David? (vv. 16-19)

The Lord, in love and mercy, reached down and rescued David from his enemies. With a tender hand the Lord took hold of him. If you like, the Lord caused David to enjoy the calm and peace at the eye of the storm, while the enemies received the full fury of His power.

HEART OF THE PSALM: The Lord's favour towards the blameless (Read vv. 20-36)

What characterises the person on whom the Lord's favour rests? (vv. 20-24)

The Lord rewards those who walk in His ways. This is what gave David confidence that the Lord would hear Him and look favourably upon him (Acts 13:22). Note: God's favour is not obtained by outward actions, but from having a heart that loves and trusts Him. From such a heart will flow a desire to please Him (Jam 2:26).

What does the Lord do for those who look to Him? (vv. 25-36)

The Lord deals righteously with us (vv. 25-26); He saves us (v. 27); He gives hope and strength (vv. 28-29, 32); He gives ability for victory (vv. 33-34, 36); and He shields and upholds us (v. 35).

In the midst of this section, what does David express about the Lord? (vv. 30-31)

There is no one like the Lord – not only is He the only God, but He is righteous in all His ways (Rev 15:3), His word is faithful and true (Isaiah 40:8), and He protects and strengthens those who take refuge in Him. The Lord will never disappoint (Isaiah 28:16; Romans 10:11).

The Lord's deliverance (Read vv. 37-45)

With confidence that the Lord heard his cry, how did David face his enemies? (vv. 37-42)

He faced his enemies with boldness and confidence, although previously he had felt overwhelmed and terrified (v. 4) by his enemies. Because of the Lord who goes with him and before him, he was able to pursue, overtake and shatter his enemies.

Who does David credit his success to and what did his victories result in? (vv. 43-45)

He gives all credit to the Lord for his victories; without Him he couldn't do anything. The victories the Lord gave also caused people to submit to David because of the One who fought for David.

What do we learn from this psalm about the Lord's role and our role in having victory over enemies?

The Lord didn't need David's help (vv. 16-19) to bring about victory, yet He was pleased to make room for him (vv. 37-42), and to use him as His instrument. It's the same with us – God wants to work through us.

David's Praise: Conclusion (Read vv. 46-50)

What is David's testimony of the Lord, as he looks back over all the Lord's victories?

He declares that the Lord lives (He's alive and real and acts); that He is such a great rock and shelter; that He saves and rescues those who take refuge in Him; and that He is merciful and gracious to them.

What does David's experience of the Lord cause him to do?

It causes him to praise the Lord before all people. How much more we should! Why? (cf. 1 Pet 2:9-10)

Summary: The Lord is to be praised for He is a rock and shield to all who take refuge in Him.

11. Psalm 19

Aim: To show that God's glory is revealed in creation and His Word and how we should respond to Him.

Read Psalm 19

What are your initial thoughts on this psalm? [discuss]

The heaven's declare God's glory (vv. 1-6)

In what ways do you think the heaven's declare God's glory? (vv 1-2)

The vastness and beauty of the heavens, stars and planets speak of our great Creator and testify to His glory, His mighty power and His divine nature. There is a constant and joyful stream of praise from the creation, pouring forth to testify and reveal our great God. (Rom 1:20, Psa 33:6, Isa 40:25-26)

Verse 3 literally says "There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard." So what does the psalmist mean in verse 4 when he says "their line/voice has gone out to the ends of the earth" (v4)?

Although there is no audible word to the human ear, it is like the creation is shouting forth the praise of its Creator, if only we would stop, look up and observe the One the creation is revealing to us (eg think about a beautiful sunset). What other things in creation have spoken to you about the Lord?

Why does the psalmist now choose to speak of the sun in vv. 4b-6?

For us here on earth, the sun is the most important creation in the heavens. Without the sun, there would be no life on earth. The sun itself displays God's faithfulness, love and care for us. Despite its importance, the psalmist speaks of the sun rejoicing and declaring to all the One who created it.

The Word declares God's nature (vv. 7-11)

How highly does the psalmist view the law or instruction of the Lord?

The sun is essential for physical life and nothing is hidden from its reach (v6), but the law or instruction of the Lord is essential for all of one's life – especially for spiritual life. (Psa 1:1-3).

Just as the heavens declare the glory of God, what does the law reveal about God?

Because God Himself gave us His law (instruction), it reveals to us the very nature of God. What God says and does reflects who He is. What qualities of God's Word (and thus God's character) does the psalmist speak of in vv7-9?

- Perfect (v7): God's Word is perfect and complete - nothing is better (Matt 5:48).
- True (v7): His Word is true and completely trustworthy and dependable.
- Right (v8): Everything God says (and does) is right and without error.
- Pure (v8): His commandments are morally excellent and without sin.
- Just (v9): There is no injustice in any of God's dealings with mankind (Rev 19: 1-2).

As we respond to what God reveals through His Word, what does God do for us through that Word?

The effect of God's law on those who respond to the Lord includes:

- Restoring the soul: He gives life and rest to our souls (Psa 23:3, Matt 4:4) and restores us to Himself.
- Giving wisdom to the simple: He helps us to be wise and avoid foolishness (1 Cor 1:18-21, James 1:5)
- Rejoicing the heart: He gives us an inner joy as we meditate on His Word and walk with Him.
- Enlightening the eyes: He reveals Himself and the truth about life even more clearly through His Word.
- Revering the Lord and enduring forever: He teaches us to revere and fear Him.

What is the psalmist's attitude towards God's law/instruction (v10-11)?

God's law is more desirable and valuable than any treasure that this world could offer. The psalmist finds great delight in God's law (Psa 119:47-48) and through it sees the Lord even more clearly. God's Word also helps to warn him of dangers and direct his footsteps in the right paths (Psa 119:9, 119:105).

Our response to God's glory and His Word (vv. 12-14)

What effect does God's law have on the psalmist (v12-13)?

In light of God's glory and beauty, the psalmist becomes more aware of his own heart and the errors or sins which can so easily take over his life. He calls out to the Lord to be merciful and forgive him.

What is the prayer of the Psalmist's heart in v 14?

The psalmist desires that the words of his mouth and the meditations of his heart are acceptable and right in the sight of God. Just as creation declares God's praise, so the psalmist wants to declare it in his life too.

Summary: Creation and the Word of God declares His glory and nature – our lives should too.

12. Psalm 22

Aim: Firstly: to encourage us to trust in the Lord even in the midst of suffering; and
Secondly: to comprehend the depths of Christ's suffering for us and to love Him even more.

Introduction

David faced many difficult times in his life, especially when Saul and Absalom were pursuing him and desired to take his life. At one level, the psalm appears to speak of David's experience, but it is undoubtedly fulfilled completely in Christ. We will never comprehend its depth and richness apart from Christ.

The speaker's anguish and the plea: Read Psalm 22:1-21

What is the speaker's great anguish and concern of his heart? (vv 1-2)

The speaker, in the midst of great agony and conflict, feels that God has deserted him and left him at the hands of his enemies. He cries out, but God doesn't answer. In what way are these verses fulfilled in Christ? (Matt 27:46). Why did Jesus feel like this?

From vv3-5, what makes this anguish even more painful?

In past days, those who trusted in God were not disappointed – He rescued them when they called on Him for help. But where is God now? It feels like God has abandoned him. Discuss how this was true of Jesus.

What are those around the speaker also doing? (vv6-8)

They despise him and speak maliciously ("separate with the lip"), sneering and taunting him. They seek to shake His confidence in God and drive him to utter despair. The way they treat him is less than human - like a filthy worm for which no-one cares. Discuss Matt 27:39-43, Isa 52:14, Isa 53:3.

What is the speaker's plea in vv9-11?

He expresses his total dependence on God, even from his mother's womb. Now in great suffering and despair for his life, he pleads for God to draw near and not stand afar – for he has no-one but the Lord.

What trouble confronts the speaker and how is this seen in Jesus' suffering (v12-18)?

- He is oppressed by those stronger than he, ready to tear him apart like a lion devouring its prey (vv12-13).
- He has great anguish within (vv14-15). He is utterly spent ("poured out"), completely powerless, and his energy and life almost completely drained out. Death is near. cf Matt 26:36-38, John 19:28.
- Those who seek to destroy him have surrounded him like a pack of wild dogs and pierce his hands and his feet (v16). cf John 19:37.
- He is ostracised and treated as already dead and without hope, dividing his clothing among themselves (v17-18). cf John 19:23-24.

What does the speaker do again in vv19-21?

He continues to look to the Lord and cry out to Him for deliverance from those seeking to destroy him.

The answer and praise: Read Psalm 22:22-31

Why does the speaker now turn to praising God in these verses?

It appears that God has now answered his cry for help – the last part of v21 literally reads, "From the horns of the wild oxen, you have answered me". The Lord has heard his cry (v24). How do we see this fulfilled in Jesus? cf Heb 5:7. Although Jesus suffered death, He was ultimately raised and delivered from death itself.

What comes about as a result of this mighty deliverance?

- The Lord's name and salvation is proclaimed among the people (v22, v25).
- Those who hear will glorify the Lord and stand in awe of Him (v23).
- Those who are afflicted can look to the Lord with confidence that they will be satisfied (v24, 26)
- This news will be proclaimed to the ends of the earth, and worship will be given to the Lord because He is the true King and ruler of the nations (v27-29). How does this speak of Christ? (Rev 11:15).
- The effect of God's mighty deliverance will be declared and passed on from generation to generation, and will be remembered forever (vv30-31). Rev 5:12-13.

Application:

When we consider the agony that Christ suffered for us, should we not love Him even more and make our whole life available to Him by serving Him and speaking of Him and His great sacrifice for us.

Summary: Let us, with God's help, seek to share our glorious Saviour with others.

12. Psalm 22 – Additional Leaders Guide

Due to space, we have kept the study notes as brief as we can.

This additional sheet is to assist you as the leader to bring out the depths of certain parts of the Psalm more fully.

Do not distribute this sheet to the group – this is just to help you in your preparation.

vv1-2

Jesus was forsaken by His heavenly Father because He was bearing the filth and ugliness of our sin. Because of God's holiness, He was forced to turn His face away because He could not look upon our sin. Due to His intimate fellowship with His Father, the experience of complete abandonment and desertion would have been even more painful for Him, and something which neither the psalmist or us will ever experience to the same degree that Jesus did.

vv3-5

From a human viewpoint, God had consistently rescued His stiff-necked and rebellious people, but on the cross, He not only seemed to have abandoned His perfectly obedient Son, but even poured out His wrath upon Him. Although Jesus willingly gave His life for us, this in no way lessens the intense anguish of being cut-off and separated from His Father because of our sin. No wonder He cried out – "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?"

vv12-18

Although it was part of the Father's plan, the religious leaders hunted Jesus down seeking to devour and destroy Him (sending soldiers to the Garden, dragging Jesus before the Sanhedrin with the intent of condemning Him to death, etc). It is also not hard to see the Roman soldiers surrounding Jesus like a pack of wild dogs tearing at their prey, and Satan being like a roaring lion opening wide his mouth to strike the death blow.

v16 "*They pierced my hands and my feet*". Some people have argued that this phrase alone means that the psalm cannot possibly refer to David's experience and can only be speaking of Jesus. Although the fulfilment of this phrase is clearly seen in Jesus' crucifixion, it may also have applied to David in some way that we are unaware of (not crucifixion, but perhaps to inflict pain or immobilise him).

13. Psalm 23

Aim: To show that our God is a wonderful shepherd to His people.

Read Psalm 23

This psalm is regularly read at funerals and has been of great comfort to many Christians during times of grief. Has this psalm been of comfort to you, and why?

The Shepherd's provision (vv1-3)

What metaphor does David use to speak of the Lord? (v1)

David describes the Lord as his “shepherd”. David himself was a shepherd at one time. The primary duty of a shepherd was to lead his sheep so that they would not wander aimlessly; to provide and care for their needs; and to protect them from predators and danger, and even from themselves. A bad shepherd has little regard for his sheep, but a good shepherd cares for and loves his sheep almost like his own children (Luke 15:4-7).

What does David affirm in the second half of v1, and what does this mean?

With the Lord as his shepherd, David lacks nothing. The Lord provides and fulfils all of his needs (Phil 4:19) so that he is satisfied and utterly content and doesn't crave or desire any other thing (cf. John 7:37).

In what way does David experience the Lord's care and provision (v2)?

David pictures himself like a sheep that is totally dependent on his shepherd to lead him to food and water, and to provide rest and protection. David testifies of the Lord's goodness.

- The Lord leads him to “green pastures” and quiet waters so that he is continually nourished and his thirst satisfied; he does not need to go off and satisfy his hunger or thirst elsewhere. (John 4:13-14)
- David finds refreshment and rest under the care and watchful eye of his shepherd; he lies down without fear (Psalm 3:5-6) and is led beside quiet and peaceful waters (ie, he enjoys peace); (Phil 4:7).

What else does David experience in v3?

- The Lord “restores my soul” – David experienced the Lord's restoration not just physically (eg Psa 3:1-4) but also spiritually through the Lord's forgiveness and fellowship. Even when David wandered away, the Lord drew him back and restored him (Psa 51:10-12, Psa 32:1-7).
- The Lord guides him in paths of righteousness - rather than leaving him to wander aimlessly like a sheep without a shepherd, the Lord constantly guided David in his daily life (Exod 15:13).

The Shepherd's protection and presence (vv4-6)

What confidence does David express in the Lord's protection and care (v4)?

Even when the shadow of death encroaches, or some terrible enemy approaches, or some horrific trial comes, he fears no evil because He knows that the Lord Almighty is with him (Isa 43:1, Heb 13:5-6, 1 John 4:4).

What comforts David? (v4b)

The Lord's rod and staff comfort him. Metaphorically, this speaks of the great Shepherd's power and might. The Lord can smash to pieces any enemy and can deliver us from any situation. No one can resist Him or overpower Him. What a great Shepherd we have who keeps us; even from the evil one (1 John 5:18).

In the midst of trials, and even at the point of death, what did David experience from the Lord? (v5)

He experienced the Lord's overflowing goodness. He describes it in the sense of being at a banquet, with an overflowing cup, and having one's head anointed with oil. Metaphorically, the Lord causes His people to enjoy His rich blessings. He pours into their lives His love, joy and peace. Their soul is well satisfied, and those about cannot help but see that the Lord's anointing and blessing rest on them.

Though David endured many trials in his life, what two things was he certain of? (v6)

- That the Lord's goodness and mercy would be upon him and surround him every day of his life
- That one day he would dwell in the Lord's presence (the Lord's heavenly home) forever and ever

Are we certain of these two things? If the Lord is our shepherd, then we can be.

Jesus the Good Shepherd

In the New Testament, we are introduced to the wonderful truth that Jesus, like the Father, is our shepherd, if we put our trust in Him. What do we learn from these verses? (John 10:11-18; 1 Peter 2:25, 5:4; Rev 7:17)

Jesus is the good shepherd who laid down His life for us; He's the shepherd and guardian of our souls; He's coming back for us; and in glory, He will continue to be our shepherd. Like the Father, He shepherds us.

Summary: **The Lord is a most wonderful shepherd for all those, who like David, have put themselves into His care. His love and mercy will be upon us every day, and He will bring us to glory one day.**

14. Psalm 24

Aim: To show who the Lord is, who can come into His presence, and how we should receive Him.

Read Psalm 24

Note: This psalm was probably composed when the ark of the covenant entered Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:12-15).

The Lord is Creator (vv1-2)

What does the psalmist seek to do in the opening of this psalm?

He seeks to show how the Lord is so great and majestic, so that we may have a right and high view of Him.

What specifically do we learn about the Lord in verses 1 and 2?

It was the Lord who created the earth; He founded it and established it. This shows us how powerful and how wise God is (Psalm 104:24). Also, because He is Creator, all things including every person, belong to the Lord, for He has made us all. We are owned by Him, and are answerable to Him.

What attitude should we have toward the Lord? (Revelation 4:11)

We should be filled with praise and worship of Him for He alone created everything; including us.

Who may approach the Lord? (vv3-6)

In verse 3 what important question is asked?

The psalmist asks who may approach this great Creator. This question needs to be asked because of how the Lord is so holy and majestic. We should not expect just to enter into His presence in our natural state.

Who then can enter into the Lord's presence? (v4)

Only those who are pure and without sin can enter the Lord's presence. This includes having a pure heart; that is, it is free from sinful thoughts and attitudes, and deception. Jesus reiterated this in Matthew 5:8.

We have all sinned (Rom 3:23) and are disqualified from entering God's presence, but what allows us to still enter? (Rev 7:14-15)

We may enter the Lord's presence if we have been made clean. For the Old Testament believers, this was through faith and the offering of sacrifices. For us, it is through faith in Jesus, and being washed clean of our sins through His shed blood.

For those who have been cleansed and who can enter the Lord's presence, what do they receive? (v5)

They receive from the Lord a blessing (His favour) as well as righteousness (which is, having a right standing before the Lord). Note that righteousness is something we receive from the Lord as a gift (see Gen 15:6); it cannot be earned by good works, for no one can meet God's standard.

What characterises those who have been cleansed and who can enter the Lord's presence? (v6)

They seek the Lord and long to see His face (Jeremiah 29:13). Does this characterise our lives? If we have been washed in Jesus' blood, do we now seek the Lord with all our heart?

The Lord entering His sanctuary (vv7-10)

Assuming this psalm was composed when the ark of the covenant entered Jerusalem, what do we learn?

The psalmist was delighted in the Lord (as symbolised by the ark of the covenant) entering Jerusalem. He was conscious of who the Lord truly is, the King of glory, and that it was a great honour for the King to dwell with them.

Because it was such an honour, what does the psalmist make sure of? (vv 7,9)

He wants to make sure that there's nothing to hinder the King from entering Jerusalem (ie, "lift up the gates").

How was the Lord to be received?

He was to be received as the King of glory; the One who has the right to rule and reign over us.

These verses (vv7-10) also allude to another great event. What is that? (Acts 2:32-35)

These verses point to the ascension of Jesus. Heaven's gates were opened wide for the One who alone could ascend to "the hill of the Lord" because he had clean hands and a pure heart. After His battle on the cross to atone for our sins, He rose and entered heaven and is at the right hand of the Father as the King (Phil 2:9-11).

From heaven Jesus desires to enter the sanctuary of our heart. How should we receive Him?

We should receive Jesus gladly, like the psalmist, knowing it is such an honour to have Jesus live in us (for he saves us and cleanses us). We are also to receive Him as the King to rule over us, and we should do everything we can to not hinder His entrance and rule in us. Do we open wide our heart to Him?

Summary: The Lord our Creator seeks to dwell with us if we would cleanse ourselves of our sins through Christ's shed blood, and if we would welcome Him as the King.

15. Psalm 27

Aim: To show that we are to put our confidence in the Lord, rather than to fear the things about.

Read Psalm 27

This psalm of David has been a real source of encouragement for many Christians. Why? [discuss]

Confidence in the Lord (vv1-3)

With enemies all about, who or what did David rely upon for deliverance and victory? (vv1-3)

David relied solely upon the Lord. He did not depend on his military prowess (though he was a great warrior), nor on his mighty men. David's confidence was in the Lord (Psa 33:13-17).

What does David say about the Lord? What is significant about the words he uses? (vv1-2)

- The Lord was David's light – who shone and made the way clear, when darkness and chaos surrounded him
- The Lord was David's salvation – who delivered him again and again from his enemies (Psa 18:17)
- The Lord was David's stronghold – his strength to help him cope through every situation (Psa 28:7)

The key was how David knew the Lord personally – **my** light, **my** salvation, **my** strength.

What was the result of David's reliance upon the Lord? (vv1-3)

It caused David not to fear. We live in a world where we have much fear, but if we would put our trust in the Lord and pray to Him, our fears will vaporise, and we will enjoy His perfect peace (Phil 4:6-7). Because of the Lord, we are not to fear any enemy; not even Satan or death (Heb 2:14-15, 13:5-6; Rom 8:31-32).

Love of communion with the Lord (vv4-6)

With enemies all about, what was David's sole desire? (v4)

David's sole desire could have been deliverance from his enemies, or victories over them, or any other number of good things. But instead, his sole desire was having communion with the Lord. This should be the same in our lives too; not seeking the Lord's benefits and blessings; but the Lord Himself. Is it?

What did David particularly seek in regard to having communion with the Lord? (v4)?

It wasn't to carry out religious ritual before the Lord, or to bring his needs to the Lord. Instead, it was to behold and meditate on the glorious character of the Lord, so that he might love and appreciate the Lord so much more. God wants us to have the same heart too. What "beautiful" things do you see in the Lord?

What blessing comes to those who would seek the Lord first? (vv5-6)

As David communed with the Lord in the Lord's house, he was protected from his enemies. So for us, when we commune with the Lord, He will hide His loved ones from trouble, and cause them to exalt over their enemies with joy.

David's request of the Lord (vv7-12)

After seeking the Lord first and glorying in His holy character, what did David do next? (vv7-12)

David brought his requests to the Lord in prayer. He specifically asked the Lord to answer him (v7), to not abandon him (v9), to teach him the Lord's ways, and to deliver him from his enemies (v12).

What confidence did David have that the Lord would not abandon him? (v9-10)

David knew that others might and had abandoned him (even his father and mother), but that the Lord "will take me up". Do we have the confidence that though all may forsake us, the Lord will not forsake us (Heb 13:5)? The Lord has promised to always be with us; even to the end (Matthew 28:20).

In David's prayer request in v12, what came first? Why?

Before David asked for deliverance from his enemies, he prayed that the Lord would teach him and lead him in the right way. It was important to David that he live in such a way that the Lord would be glorified (cf. Psalm 139:23-24; Matthew 5:16). Is this our desire too? More than our self-interests?

Conclusion (vv13-14)

After making his request in prayer, what was David confident in? (v13)

He was confident that he would see the Lord's goodness in this life. Let us also rest in the truth that the Lord is good, and He delights to pour His abundant goodness on us (Psa 36:5-9). May this comfort our soul.

Until the Lord's goodness comes, what are we to do when we are undergoing trials? (v14)

We are to wait on the Lord. Although we can be impatient and become despondent, let us remind ourselves that the Lord is good and His lovingkindness is everlasting. Therefore, be strong and courageous and wait.

Summary: The Lord is our light and salvation – seek Him first, depend on Him, and wait for Him.

16. Psalm 32

Aim: To show that the godly person confesses his sin and enjoys the blessing of God's forgiveness.

Read Psalm 32

What blessing does David share in this psalm? What's your greatest blessing as a believer? [discuss]

The blessedness of being forgiven (vv1-2)

Both Psalm 1 & 32 begin with the phrase about the blessed person. What is needed to be blessed?

To be blessed we must meditate on God's Word (Psalm 1), and we must confess our sins to the Lord (Psalm 32). God blesses the life of the one who does these things; He leads them in His ways, and when they sin, He graciously forgives them. Both are tremendous blessings in the life of the believer. Do you experience these?

The basis of this psalm is how David had sinned against the Lord. What three particular words does David use to describe his disobedience? What do they mean? (cf. also Psalm 51:1-2)

Transgression, sin, and iniquity are the words used. *Transgression* means doing something prohibitive (cutting across) or rebellious; *sin* means missing the mark (falling short); and *iniquity* means doing something perverted that causes corruption. All three words help us understand what disobedience really is.

What three words does David use to describe what God does with our sins when we confess them?

God *forgives* our sin – literally, He carries away our sin (Psalm 103:12). God *covers* our sin – this means that they are buried out of sight as they have been fully atoned for (Micah 7:19); God does *not impute* sin to us – this means we are pardoned and have no record against our name. This blessing, for David and us, was all based on Jesus carrying our sins, and atoning for them, and cancelling the debt we had. (cf. Col 2:13-14)

For the one who experiences forgiveness from the Lord, what else characterises their life? (v3)

They are without deceit; they are honest and open in their dealings with the Lord. Unless we are, we will never truly own up and confess our sins to the Lord, and experience the blessings of His forgiveness.

The testimony of David (vv3-5)

How does David describe what happened to him when he did not confess his sin ("kept silent")?

David speaks of suffering physically and psychologically. Physically, he was wasting away and becoming weak, and psychologically, he was groaning from his guilt and shame. Does sin affect you like this? It should!

Who does David attribute his suffering to? (v4)

David knew it was God who was making him suffer for his sin. God's hand was constantly on him ("day and night"), so that David might confess his sin to Him. This is part of the Lord's loving discipline (Heb 12:4-6).

A "selah" marks the end of verse 4. We are therefore meant to pause! Can you relate to David?

The moment David confessed his sin, what happened? (v5)

David immediately experienced forgiveness. It wasn't delayed, or held back until David made restitution for his sin. Instead, after acknowledging and confessing his sin, he was instantly forgiven. Such is the grace of God.

What do verses 3 to 5 encourage you to do?

They encourage us to be quick to acknowledge and confess our sins to the Lord. The Lord is gracious and will forgive, if only we would not hide our sins (cf. Isaiah 55:6-7; 1 John 1:9).

Lessons from David's experience (vv6-9)

What does David urge us believers in the Lord to do? (vv6-7)

He urges us to seek the Lord and confess our sins, and then know His blessing on our life. This includes having the Lord to protect us and keep us when we are going through difficult times.

What does the Lord promise to those who seek Him and confess their sins to Him? (v8)

The Lord promises to personally help us walk in His ways. Not only will the Lord forgive us of our sins, but He desires to help us not sin. Such is the heart of our shepherd (cf. Psalm 23:3). What a blessing!

What does the Lord Himself urge us to do?

We are not to be stubborn and resistant like a horse or mule, who won't obey their rider unless they have bits of metal in their mouth to keep them in check. God wants us to willingly obey and yield to Him.

The Psalmist's closing words? (vv10-11)

How would you summarise this last section?

When we trust in the Lord (which is characterised by seeking to live a godly life, and confessing our sins), then we will enjoy God's lovingkindness, rather than sorrow, and be full of joy.

Summary: God graciously blesses all those who confess their sins, and He grants them forgiveness.

17. Psalm 51

Aim: To urge us to seek the Lord in true repentance for cleansing and renewal.

Read Psalm 51 (including the heading)

Why did David have an earnest desire to seek the Lord with all His heart? [discuss]

The psalm is David's cry of repentance and mercy to the Lord, after being convicted through Nathan the prophet of his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah. (2 Sam 12:1-7, v13)

David's plea for God's mercy and cleansing (vv1-2)

Upon what basis does David cry out to God for mercy in v1?

David calls out for God's mercy on the basis of God's lovingkindness and great compassion. David calls upon God's gracious character, for he knows there is no other basis for forgiveness.

What does David specifically ask God to do? (v1-2)

He calls out for God not only to "blot" out his transgressions like erasing ink from a page, but to be thoroughly "washed" and "cleansed" from the defilement and filthiness of his sin.

David's confession (vv3-6)

Who does David acknowledge that He has sinned against? (v4)

David had committed multiple "transgressions" (v3) – he sinned against Bathsheba, Uriah, Joab (his commander) – but ultimately, David acknowledges his sin is first and foremost against God. He broke God's laws and did what was evil in God's sight – and God would be justified to judge him. But true repentance also involves confession of all sin, seeking forgiveness from others, and even restitution. (Luke 19:5-10)

What is David really saying in v5-6?

David's core problem is not just a particular action or situation, but a sinful nature he inherited at conception. What God requires in v6, David cannot produce on his own.

David's plea for cleansing and renewal (vv7-12)

How did David's sin affect him and what is David's plea? (vv7-9)

David was completely "broken" before the Lord (v8), lost the joy of the Lord's presence because his sin is now before the Lord's "face". David pleads for the Lord to "purify" and "wash" him, and in effect, forgive him by blotting out his sins and restore the joy of His presence and salvation.

What does David see as his real need? (v10)

What David needs, as all of us do, is not for the Lord to change our situation, but to change us. We need a new heart, a clean heart from the Lord. It is not something we can "fix-up" – it is something the Lord must create anew. (John 3:3, Ezek 36:22-27, 2 Cor 5:17)

What does David fear as a result of his sin? (v11)

David pleads not to be cast away from the Lord's presence, or His Holy Spirit to be removed from him. David knows that holiness and sin cannot dwell together, and his sin places a barrier between God and himself. (Psa 66:18, Isa 59:2)

Can our sin cause God to remove His Spirit from us?

Under the old covenant, God's Spirit could be given to an individual and removed from an individual (eg Saul: 1 Sam 10:6, 1 Sam 16:14). However, under the new covenant, God has promised that His Spirit will remain with us forever (John 14:16). We can grieve the Holy Spirit and hinder His work in and through us, but God, in His mercy, will never abandon us.

The results of David's God's cleansing (vv13-19)

What will God's cleansing allow David to do? (v13-15, v19)

David wants to teach people God's ways so that they will turn to God (v13), he wants to sing joyfully of God's righteousness (v14), declare God's praises to others (v15) and to bring acceptable worship to the Lord (v19). Just as David's sin affected the community, so God's forgiveness will bring blessing for Jerusalem (v18).

What must we bring to God before we can expect to receive His cleansing? (v16-17)

What pleases God is a broken spirit and a contrite ("crushed") heart that comes to Him in sorrow and humility. He wants us to lay ourselves open before Him, cry out for His mercy and allow Him to cleanse and renew us. (Psa 32:5, Luke 18: 9-14)

Summary: When we sin, God calls us to lay ourselves before Him for mercy, cleansing and renewal.

18. Psalm 73

Aim: To show the goodness of God to His people, even though the wicked appear to prosper.

Read Psalm 73

Has there been an experience in your life that caused you to question God's goodness? [discuss]

The Psalmist's struggle – why do the wicked prosper? (vv1-12)

What did the psalmist know to be true about God? (v1)

The psalmist knew that God is good to His people - to those who are pure in heart – ie those who live faithfully and rightly before Him. God's goodness is a fundamental attribute of His character, and He had promised to bless His people through the covenant. (Deut 7:12-15)

What causes the Psalmist to doubt God's goodness? (v2-3)

When he looked around, he “saw” the wicked prosper – he thought he saw them experiencing God’s blessing (“shalom”). And the psalmist became envious, and questioned why he should live a holy life before God.

What does the psalmist see (or think he sees) in the life of the wicked? (v4-12)

- They have no struggles in death or life (vv4-5)
- Those who turn to them share in the prosperity (v10)
- They profit from pride and violence (vv6-7)
- They boast God doesn't see their actions (v11)
- They are arrogant and oppress others (vv8-9)
- They are free of the worries of this life (v12).

Can you relate to the way the psalmist feels at this point? [discuss]

The Psalmist's struggle – do the righteous live in vain? (vv13-17)

What does the Psalmist's envy lead to? (v13-14)

It leads to a crisis of faith – he questions whether there is anything to be gained in living righteously before the Lord. In fact, living a godly life seems to bring only pain, while the wicked enjoy prosperity.

What restrains the Psalmist from publicly denouncing God's goodness in v15?

His love for God's people guards what comes out of his mouth so that he doesn't shipwreck the faith of those around him. *What lesson is there for us here? [discuss]* Matt 18:6.

What caused the Psalmist's faith in God's goodness to be restored? (vv16-17)

Trying to reason out his experience with human logic brought him to a dead end – it only brought pain and oppression. Only when he came into God's presence was the true plight of the wicked revealed from God's perspective. God revealed what human reasoning could not. Prov 14:12. Consider Matt 24:37-39.

The Psalmist's answer is revealed by God (v18-20)

What did God reveal to the Psalmist concerning the wicked? (v18-20)

God revealed that despite their apparent “prosperity”, they are on their slippery way to destruction. Their end will come upon them suddenly, and they will experience the terrors of hell. They will leave all their prosperity behind. Matt 7:13-14, Luke 16:19-31. The life of the wicked is to be grieved over, not envied.

The Psalmist's faith restored (vv21-28)

What does the psalmist begin to realise about himself and about God in vv21-24?

He realises that when he was angry (embittered) against God in envying the wicked, he was acting like an ignorant beast. God had been (and still is) in charge all along, caring for His people. God was (and is) with him, holding his right hand (v23), guiding the course of his life (v24) and will ultimately receive him into His presence (v24) God's guidance and presence is a blessing the wicked will never experience.

What does the psalmist now appreciate is the most precious thing he can have? (vv25-26)

It is not anything that God can give him (eg prosperity or blessing), but to enjoy and commune with God Himself. There is nothing in heaven or on earth that he desires besides God. *Can you say the same? [discuss]*

The psalmist began by questioning God's goodness in light of the prosperity of the wicked. What does he now realise is truly good? (vv27-28)

The goodness of God is not defined by the prosperity of the wicked, or the suffering of the righteous. The ultimate misery is to be far from God. The ultimate good is to be near God. The goodness of God is found in God Himself and in His presence with us. God is good to us because He chooses to be our God and draw near to us. And God has done this through His Son, the Lord Jesus, who reconciles us back to God. Rom 5:9-11

Summary: God's goodness is not defined by outward prosperity, but in the way He chooses to be our God and draw near to us.

19. Psalm 90

Aim: To show the state of man before the eternal and holy God.

Read Psalm 90

The psalm was written by Moses. What do you think his earnest request was? [discuss]

The Contrast between God and Us (vv1-11)

What does Moses acknowledge about God in the opening of his prayer? (vv1-2)

The Lord is eternal; He has always been, even before there was a Creation, and throughout eternity He has always been God. He has also been, throughout all human history, always there, and the One who is our dwelling place; that is, if we seek Him and trust Him.

What does Moses mean by God being our "dwelling place"?

To those who look to Him, the Lord is One that we can find rest, comfort, and safety in (our refuge).

In contrast to God, how does Moses describe the state of man? (vv3-4)

We are not eternal, for unlike God, we are temporary here on earth. To God a thousand years is nothing; it's like a watch of the night. But for us, it's a huge amount of time that no man will ever see. We shall only barely see out one generation.

Why is man temporary? (Gen 3:17-19)

Our time on earth is temporary because we live under the sentence of death. God has decreed that we shall return back to dust, from which we came (Gen 3:19), due to the punishment that fell upon all mankind after Adam and Eve sinned against God.

How does the Bible liken man's temporary state? (Psa 90:5-6; 39:5-6; Isaiah 40:6-8; James 4:14)

We are like grass that grows and then withers in a day, we are like flowers that blossom and then fade; we are like a mere breath; we are like a vapour or fog that disappears quickly when the sun arises. Again and again, the Bible emphasises how our time is short on earth. It won't be long before we are no more.

What does Moses mean by his words in verses 7 to 10?

He rightly comprehends that we fade through ageing and end up dying all because of God's righteous anger towards our sin. Death is not something natural; it's a punishment for sin (Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 15:56).

How does this sentence of death affect you?

Moses describes it as being something that terrifies us, or leaves us dismayed (v7); it causes us to moan and sigh (v9); and we have trouble and sorrow (v10), for under this sentence of death, we suffer from sickness, disease, and other things. Moses was well acquainted with this in the wilderness, where he saw a whole generation perish because of their sin (Numbers 14:26-30).

According to verse 11, why do you think we are unable to comprehend God's anger?

We are unable to comprehend His anger toward us because we barely can comprehend God's absolute purity and holiness, and what sin has done to His perfect Creation, and to God's own heart.

Moses' request for God's wisdom and mercy (vv12-17)

In spite of our plight, what does Moses request the Lord for in verses 12 to 14?

- He requests the Lord for wisdom. It pleases the Lord when we ask for wisdom (cf Solomon in 1 Kings 3:10-12, and James 1:5). Part of wisdom is to remember we are mortal and that we will one day have to give an account of our life to the Lord (Eccles 11:13-14).
- He pleads for mercy. Moses, well knew, that God was not only just and righteous, but He is gracious and compassionate (Exod 34:5-6). Though we be under the sentence of death, there is mercy with the Lord.

Because the Lord is merciful, what else does Moses request from Him? (vv14b-17)

He requests the Lord give them joy and gladness, that He would reveal His work and glory, that He would show them favour (grace), and that He would establish the work of their hands. Instead of being dismayed at our state, Moses looked to the Lord to be His all in all (His dwelling place). Only in Him is their hope.

How would you view this psalm of Moses in the light of the New Testament?

Through God's great mercy and through Jesus' death and resurrection, the wrath of God has been averted and the sentence of death has been lifted, for our sins have been forgiven, if we have trusted in Jesus. We have victory over death (John 5:24; John 11:25-26;; Heb 2:14-15); even our body will be raised to life one day (1 Cor 15:51-57) Truly, in Jesus, we have a refuge (a dwelling place), and we have fullness of life (John 10:10).

Summary: Through God's great mercy in Christ we can live forever and be spared the wrath of God.

20. Psalm 103

Aim: To show the glorious character of God and how all Creation should praise Him.

Read Psalm 103

What is at the heart of this psalm of David? [discuss] NB: It is one of the well-known psalms of praise

Praise to the Lord from our soul (vv1-5)

What does David instruct himself to do? (v1)

He instructs his soul, his whole being, to praise the Lord. How we need to do the same in order to rouse ourselves to praise the Lord. The word for “praise” actually means to bless, salute, or kneel before.

What are the two things that David blesses the Lord for? (vv1-2)

Firstly, He blesses the Lord for His holy name. The Lord is so holy, for there is none like Him (Psa 89:6-8).

Secondly, He wants to bless the Lord for all His benefits (blessings). True worship is balanced by praising the Lord for who He is, and what He does for us (not just the latter).

In verses 3 to 5 David lists some of the blessings of the Lord. What are they?

He praises the Lord for His forgiveness, for healing, for deliverance, for His love and goodness, and for His strength. What do you count as His greatest blessings? Do you bless the Lord for them?

What do the phrases “heals all your diseases” and “redeems your life from the pit” mean?

Some argue from the first phrase that believers should never be sick. However, we know that sometimes we are (eg, 2 Tim 4:20). Perhaps it’s better to understand this phrase like this: when we are healed, it is God who does it. The other phrase refers to the Lord delivering us from death, and ultimately from the grave through the resurrection (1 Cor 15:54-57).

Praise to the Lord for His compassion (vv6-18)

What compassionate act of God is mentioned in v6?

God is compassionate in the way He cares for the oppressed and afflicted, by acting for them in His justice and righteousness (Psalm 10:17-18). Though He is so great, He has compassion for the weak and helpless.

God has made known the way He acts toward us humans. How is it best summarised? (vv7-8; Ex 34:6)

Although God is holy and pure, mighty and powerful, righteous and just, He has first and foremost revealed Himself to us as being full of compassion (mercy) and grace, even though we so often sin and rebel against Him. He does not treat us in anger, but in love. Our God is compassionate (Deut 4:31; Psalm 78:38).

Specifically, in regard to our sins, how does the Lord compassionately deal with us? (vv9-12)

Once we have sought His forgiveness, the Lord will not continue to contend with us and be angry with us over our sin. Indeed, **He will not** recall them nor punish us for them; He fully forgives us and removes our sins from us (“as far as the east is from the west”); no longer does God see our sins (cf. Micah 7:19).

What does God’s compassion tell us about Him?

God’s compassion shows us the greatness of His love for us. It is beyond measure. Ultimately, out of great love for us (John 3:16) God sent Jesus to save us.

In verses 13-15 why also is God compassionate toward us?

He is compassionate for He knows that we are frail mortals. We are temporary and will soon be no more.

This arouses God’s compassion toward us; like how a father has compassion for a helpless young child.

In contrast to our mortality, what is eternal? (v17)

God’s love (mercy) and His righteousness are forever. They span infinitely over man’s little time (cf Psa 23:6).

On whom is God’s infinite and eternal love, mercy, compassion and righteousness? (vv11, 13, 17-18)

Repeatedly we are told that it is only on those who fear the Lord; that is, who revere, respect and honour Him. This causes them to keep His covenant and follow Him. Are you a recipient of God’s love? Do you fear Him?

Praise to the Lord from all creation (vv19-22)

In the light of the One who rules over us all, what does David command? (vv19-22)

He commands that all creation praise (bless, salute, kneel before) God for he is so compassionate and great.

Even angels and heavenly hosts are summoned to praise Him, as well as all God’s works, but also our own soul.

From our knowledge of God and our experience of Him do we have the same heart of David? Are we especially filled with praise for His great compassion and mercy? Do we desire to bless His holy name?

Summary: All God’s people ought to praise and bless the Lord for both who He is (holy, sovereign, righteous and compassionate), and for all His benefits toward us (cf. Eph 1:3).

21. Psalm 110

Aim: To show that God our Father has made His Son Jesus both King and Priest.

Read Psalm 110

Who is this psalm referring to? [discuss]

Our King (vv1-3)

Although this psalm was penned by David, whose words are recorded in verses 1 and 4?

This psalm records the very words of the Lord Himself. David, as a prophet, wrote the words of God.

In our English translations we have the word "Lord" mentioned twice in v1, yet in the Hebrew they are not the same word. Who is the first "Lord" referring to? (v1)

In the Hebrew the first word for "Lord" is *Jehovah* (or *Yahweh*). This is the proper name for God; the name that the Hebrew people feared and revered. We would associate this name with God the Father.

Who is the second "Lord" mentioned, that Jehovah actually speaks to?

The second word for "Lord" in the Hebrew is *Adon*. It means sovereign, master, ruler, or king. This One rules for Jehovah, and is the One David himself came under ("my Lord"). When we consider the words of this psalm, it is clear that this is Jesus the Messiah; the Son of God. He is the King who rules for Jehovah.

How do the New Testament writers interpret the opening of this psalm? (Acts 2:33-36; Hebrews 1:13)

They clearly see that this psalm is speaking of Jesus – He is the One being spoken of in this psalm.

Consider what Jesus said in Matthew 22:41-46. How does Jesus use verse 1 of Psalm 110?

Jesus uses it to get the religious leaders to realise that the Messiah, David's son, would be more than just a natural descendant of David. He would be the Lord, and even the Lord of David. This understanding stumped them. Of course, Jesus was trying to get them to see that He, the Messiah, is Lord and God (John 1:1).

What does Jehovah declare about Jesus in verse 1? (cf. Psalm 2:4-9)

Jesus is the King that He has appointed to rule for Him. He sits at the place of power and honour; at God's right hand. In the New Testament there are many references to Jesus' exaltation to the right hand of the Father, after His resurrection (cf. Phil 2:9-11; Heb 1:3, 12:2). This is what this verse is referring to.

What do we know about Jesus' rule? (Psalm 110:1-2; 1 Cor 15:24-28)

His rule will spread from Zion to be over all the nations, and He will rule until all enemies are defeated. The last enemy to be defeated is death. Then Jesus will hand the kingdom over to His Father and submit to Him.

How are we to understand verse 3?

When God establishes Jesus to be the King (after the resurrection), those who trust in Jesus and follow Him will serve Him willingly. In holiness they will serve Him, being used by the King to extend His kingdom.

Our Priest (vv4-7)

Besides being King, what else does Jehovah declare concerning what Jesus would be? (v4)

He is declared to be priest. No Davidic king ever had the twofold office of priest and king. Besides that, priests were of the tribe of Levi, and kings were of the tribe of Judah. But in Jesus, both offices were to come together. Jesus, and He alone, would be our King and Priest. As a priest, He would be our Saviour from sin.

What type of priest would Jesus be? (Psalm 110:4; Heb 7:1-3, 17-25)

He would be a priest of the order of Melchizedek (which means "king of righteousness"). This title was very appropriate for Jesus, because through His sacrifice and death, we are able to receive God's righteousness as a free gift through faith in Him (Rom 3:21-22). Also, the priesthood of Melchizedek stood for a perpetual priesthood, and because Jesus arose and lives forevermore, He is able to be our priest forever.

What are we to make of Jehovah's declaration that Jesus is our priest? (Psalm 110:4; Heb 6:17-20)

Jehovah will always ensure that Jesus is our priest. Therefore, our salvation is eternally secure (Heb 7:25).

In verses 5 and 6 what do we learn of Jesus' reign?

All kings and nations will fall before Him one day – this will especially coincide with His return, when He will execute the wrath of God (Rev 6:12-17). With the help of the Father, Jesus will destroy all enemies.

What is the meaning of verse 7?

Jesus' victory will be so swift; like a mighty king who only needs a quick refreshing drink to finish off the job. Even the anti-Christ will be overthrown effortlessly (2 Thess 2:8). Therefore, we ought to submit to Him.

Summary: **Jesus is the One God our Father has made as King and Priest; we are to come under His rule (Psalm 2:12), and to make Him our Priest (Saviour), who saves us from our sins.**

22. Psalm 137

Aim: To encourage us to entrust ourselves to God, even when we are treated unjustly.

Read Psalm 137

Portions of this psalm are often omitted from the public reading of Scripture. Is there anything in the psalm that you would find difficult sharing with someone? [discuss]

Sorrow & torment in a foreign land (vv1-4)

What event is the psalmist reflecting on in his life as he pens this psalm? (v1)

The psalmist is reflecting on the time in his life (and that of his fellow Israelites) when they were defeated by their enemies, and taken away to the foreign land of Babylon as slaves and captives. 2 Chron 36:11-21.

How does he describe this time in his life? (v1-4)

It is a time of great sorrow and weeping. They can no longer sing songs of joy to God because of their pain, and so have hung up their harps. They have lost everything – their homes, land, possessions, loved ones, freedom, but most of all, the presence of God in their midst as symbolised by the temple at which they worshipped, sacrificed and met with God. *Reflect on Ezekiel 5:14-17.*

What did their captors do that made the experience of exile even more painful? (v3)

In the ancient world, the Babylonians/Chaldeans believed that to defeat Israel/Judah was to defeat Israel's God, because victory was evidence that their god was stronger than Israel's God. To rub salt into the wound, their captors tormented and taunted them by demanding they sing songs of praise to the God the Babylonians believed they had defeated. The issue was not about music, but about faith. Where is your God?

When things appear not to be going well for you, do others taunt you about your faith? [discuss]

What did the Babylonians/Chaldeans fail to realise about Israel's God?

God had not been defeated, but was using them as His instrument to punish and discipline Israel for their unfaithfulness and idolatry. (Habakkuk 1:5-6, Jeremiah 32:26-28)

The pledge not to forget (vv5-6)

What is the psalmist pledging in verses 5-6?

The psalmist is pledging not to forget Jerusalem. He is pledging his faithfulness to God. Jerusalem was the place of the Lord's temple, where God dwelt among His people and ruled over them. The psalmist's desire is to worship the true God. If he can't, he wants his right hand to forget how to play the harp and his tongue to cling to his mouth so that he will never find pleasure in praising any other god.

The cry for justice (vv7-9)

Who were the sons of Edom? What did they do to Israel? (v7)

The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob. They were an old enemy, who were really brothers of Israel. But they gloated over and "cheered on" Israel's downfall (v7, Obadiah 8-15).

What does the Psalmist ask the Lord to do to Edom?

The call to "remember" Edom is a call for God to justly repay them for their cruelty to Israel. (Ezek 25:12-14).

What is the cry of the psalmist's heart concerning his captors, the "daughter of Babylon"? (v8-9)

The cry of the psalmist's heart is for justice to be meted out against those who destroyed Jerusalem. The Babylonians/Chaldeans were a proud and wicked people (Isa 47:5-11, Hab 1:6-11). Although it sounds gruesome, destroying all the little ones would eliminate the next generation and permanently wipe out Babylon as a nation. This echoes what God had already announced concerning Babylon & Edom (Jer 25:12, 49:7-11).

Have you ever wished in your heart for God to repay those who oppress you? [discuss]

Does this psalm give us permission to call down God's wrath on those who mistreat and torment us?

No! The overwhelming emphasis of the New Testament is that we are to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matt 5:43-48, Luke 6:27-28). Under the new covenant, the standard has been raised and more is expected of us. Like the psalmist, we too are exiles living in a foreign land – our citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20). But through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we see the end of the wicked more clearly and our salvation and vindication is even more certain. (Acts 17:31, 2 Thess 1:6-10, Rev 20:11-15)

What should be our attitude towards those who mistreat us and torment us?

We must love them, pray for them, forgive them (Luke 23:33-34) and entrust ourselves to God who will judge justly (1 Peter 2:21-23). Remember: but for God's mercy and grace, we would be just like them.

Summary: We too are exiles in a foreign land. Entrust yourself to God who will judge justly.

23. Psalm 139

Aim: To help us appreciate God's knowledge and love of us, and what our response should be to this.

Read Psalm 139

What do you treasure in this psalm? [discuss]

God's Perfect Knowledge of Us (vv. 1-6)

What does the Psalmist say in regard to what God takes interest in? (v. 1)

God takes an interest in *me*. He knows everyone, but especially *me*.

How does God find out about us? (v. 1)

God "searches" us; implied, is that God spends time examining us. It's a deliberate act of God so that He might know us intimately and perfectly. How amazing that the almighty God should want to do that!

What things does God know about us? (vv. 2-4)

Everything! He knows all my mundane acts of getting up and lying down; He knows and understands all my thoughts, more than any other. He knows all my paths. He knows and hears every word I speak, even before I say it. The Lord is "intimately acquainted" with all my ways; I am totally transparent to Him (cf. Matt 10:30).

What response should we have to all this? (vv. 5-6)

We should feel so overwhelmed and privileged that God goes out of His way to personally know us. God does this so that He can have an intimate fellowship with us, and personally care for us.

What does all this imply in regard to how we live?

God sees everything, so we shouldn't try and hide things from Him; including our sin.

God's Presence all Around Us (vv. 7-12)

What do we learn in verses 7 to 10?

There is nowhere we can go, where God is not present (except hell). God, by His Spirit, is everywhere on the earth, including in heaven and in sheol (place of the dead). Even if we should try and flee from God (like Jonah did), there is no place where God isn't (He was even in the belly of the great fish to meet Jonah).

What comfort does this bring to the psalmist? (v.10)

Because God is everywhere, it means that God is always there to lead us and to take hold of our hand when we are in trouble, or need God's comfort and strength (cf. Hebrews 13:5-5-6).

What do we find emphasised in verses 11 and 12?

Even when we pass through the darkest hour of our life, God is still with us, and will never abandon us. Even our darkest hour is light to the Lord. He sees, He understands, He knows, and He's there with us.

God's Creation of Us (vv. 13-18)

In what way does God know us according to these verses? (vv. 13-18)

God knows us because He made us. He knows all about our character, our make-up, our personality, etc.

So often we can think negatively about ourselves. In the light of these words, how should we think?

We need to appreciate that we are unique and special. As a result, we have no right to put ourselves down. Indeed, our self-worth comes from knowing that we are no accident, but a marvel created by God's love.

What else do we learn, especially in verse 16?

Our life has already been planned out by God before we were conceived. Even the number of days we would live were pre-determined. Consider also what Paul says in Acts 17:26.

What should our response be to these truths? (vv.17-18)

There should be a sense of awe and wonder for ourselves and others, since we are God's masterpiece. We should also be so overwhelmed, because God is even constantly thinking precious thoughts about us.

David's Response and His Passionate Desire (vv. 19-24)

Why couldn't David tolerate the "wicked"? (vv. 19-22)

The "wicked" hate God. But, as we have seen in this psalm, God is so good and loving toward us; He made us with care, he lovingly knows us and is near us. David was angered that the wicked had no time for God.

David concludes by asking God to deal with Him. In what way? (vv. 23-24)

David wanted God to search his heart and try him, to see if there was anything in his life that may bring sorrow, hurt or grief to God's heart (like the wicked do). David so desired to please God (Eph 5:7-10).

Summary: Every Christian ought to have a heart like David that seeks to please God (not hurt Him).

24. Psalm 145

Aim: To help us appreciate who the Lord is, and to praise Him for His wonderful character.

Read Psalm 145

What is David doing in this psalm? (clue: see the Psalm heading) What causes you to praise the Lord?

The Lord is Great (vv. 1-7)

What does David commit himself to do for every day of his life and forever and ever? (vv.1-2)

He commits himself ("I will") to praise, to bless, to exalt, and to extol the Lord. This means that through difficult times, he would still praise the Lord. Do we have such a resolve?

How does David refer to the Lord? Who does he acknowledge the Lord to be? (v1)

David declares the Lord to be His God and King. He is God and King, but until we make Him our God and King, we cannot have that personal relationship with Him as David did (cf. Thomas: John 20:28).

What is the first thing that David praises the Lord for? (v.3)

David starts by adoring God for who He is (ie His nature), not for the benefits received. What firstly evokes David's praise is God's greatness. It's beyond comprehension! (cf. Isaiah 40:12-18, 21-26).

In what ways do we see the greatness of God? (v5-6)

God's greatness is seen in the splendour of His majesty (v5) – that is, His glory, holiness and sovereign rule over all – He is God and there is no other. His greatness is also seen in His awesome acts (v6) – acts of creation (Psa 95:3-7, Rom 1:20) and acts of salvation (eg from Egypt and other enemies – Deut 10:17, 21).

The Lord is Gracious (vv. 8-13)

What other qualities of God's character does David adore in v8?

God is not just great, but also gracious, showing favour to those who don't deserve it. Not just mighty, but also merciful – giving help to those who cannot help themselves. Instead of treating us as our sins deserve, He instead shows great patience and love. (Exod 34:5-7, John 1:14)

How does David summarise the way the Lord deals with us in v9?

The Lord is good to all. He is such a good God in the way He deals with us, blesses us, draws near to us, sustains us, and even in disciplining us when we go astray. (Psa 84:11-12, Acts 14:16-17, Psa 25:8)

In what ways can you testify of the Lord's grace and goodness in your life? [discuss]

What should our response be to God's grace and goodness? (v10-12)

We should: (i) bless/worship Him for who He is – our gracious and good God (v10); (ii) give thanks for all He has done for us (v10); and (iii) speak of Him and His Kingdom to others so they can know, enjoy and praise Him too. He is our loving King who rules over us and saves us. 1 Peter 2:9. *Is this your response?*

The Lord is Faithful (vv. 13b-16)

NB: Some English Bibles omit the second half of verse 13, but the NIV and NRSV are probably correct in including the following: "*The Lord is faithful to all his promises, and loving toward all that he has made.*"

What then, does David declare about the Lord in the second half of v13?

Firstly, the Lord is faithful - He can be depended on to keep His promises, because He is true to His Word, and has the power to bring it to pass (Isa 37:26). Secondly, His disposition towards all of His creation is one of love. Everything He says and does is out of love for us (Eph 1:4-6, John 3:16, 1 John 4:16).

In what ways does God display His faithfulness and love to us? (v14-16)

He is our help in times of danger, upholding us when we fall. He raises us up when we are burdened down (1 Peter 5:7). Like a mother bird at a nest, He feeds all who look to Him . He satisfies the desires of all who depend on Him (Psa 37:4, Matt 6:25-33). *In what ways have you experienced God's faithfulness? [discuss]*

The Lord is Righteous (vv. 17-21)

What else does David praise God for in v17?

The Lord is righteous – He acts justly and uprightly in everything He does (v17). He does not turn a blind eye to injustice, or leave the wicked unpunished. He will vindicate His people in His time. (Rev 19:1-2)

What does the Lord do for those who call upon Him with a true heart? (v18-20)

He loves to draw near to His people. He hears their cry when they are in trouble, and He acts to save them. The wicked, however, will be destroyed. (Luke 18:6-8, Matt 13:47-50).

Summary: Adore your God and King, who is so great and gracious, so faithful and righteous.