

Psalm 8

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

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 (Psa 19:1-3) and it helps us appreciate how great He truly is (Rom 1:20).

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

The Lord raises up children and infants to declare His glory. Consider Matt 21:14-16 where children were praising Jesus, although the religious leaders despised Him; and He quoted to them the words from Psa 8:2.

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 Cor 1:18-21); eg, little children often have no trouble praising God for His creation, but many academic 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; ie, 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 v. 4? What event is the pinnacle of this?

God cares for us (1 Pet 5:7). Of course, the pinnacle of God’s care has been in the way He gave us His Son who died for us, 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 “God”, but it can also mean “divine beings” or “angels” (as in Heb 2:7, where this verse is quoted). So, we have been made a little lower than angels, and have been crowned with glory and majesty; and this is because God has made us in His image (Gen 1:26-27). Indeed, through Jesus we are 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 Gen 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 8:4-6 is quoted in Heb 2:6-8. Who is the Hebrew passage speaking of? (Read Heb 2:5-9)

It is initially speaking of us, but then it goes on to speak 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 and deliver us from death.

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. Hallelujah!

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

Psalm 16

Aim: To encourage us to put our confidence and trust in the Lord even in the face of 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)

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 (cf. 1 Sam 23:24-28).

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

God was his refuge, whom he trusted and hoped in for protection. He called God both “LORD” (Hebrew: *Yahweh*) and “Lord” (Hebrew: *Adonai*); that is, God was the great “I am” (*Yahweh*), and God was his master and king (*Adonai*). Also, the Lord was the only “good thing” in David’s life (cf. Psalm 73:25-28).

What contrast is given in verses 3 and 4?

David takes delight in fellow believers (saints or holy ones), and speaks highly of them. But he despises the practices of those who don’t believe (who follow other gods); he will not speak of them or honour them, or their gods. As a Christian, we are to despise evil practices too, but we are to love our enemies (Matt 5:43-44).

How highly do you view fellow believers? Are you like David? (cf. John 13:34; 1 John 4:20-21)

David calls 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. How much more we are to do the same, especially for us who are in Christ.

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 inheritance and treasure was the Lord; not the land or anything else. His focus was on the Giver, not the gifts. *What do you treasure most? The Lord and your relationship with Him, or what you get from Him?*

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 situation. He uses the language of Israel’s physical inheritance (lots, lines, portions) to describe God’s presence and blessings to him.

In Christ, God has dealt with us with such grace and generosity. What do we learn in Eph 1:3-12?

We have been blessed beyond measure, because of God’s grace to us in Christ. We have an incredible inheritance and hope (cf. 1 Pet 1:3-5), to the praise of His glory and grace.

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 (cf. Prov 3:5-6), and now he praises God for it.

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 (cf. Psa 62:1-2).

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 knew God would 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 remain there, but be resurrected one day (cf. Job 19:25-26).

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 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 in Sheol (Hades). Instead, at death, we shall 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.

Psalm 19

Aim: To show that God’s glory is revealed in Creation and His Word, and that we should praise God.

Read Psalm 19 *What are your initial thoughts on this psalm? [Discuss]*

The Heaven’s Declare God’s Glory (vv. 1-6)

In what way do 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 Creation, pouring forth to testify and reveal our great God. (cf. also Rom 1:20, Isa 40:25-26)

Verse 3 literally says “There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard.” What does that mean? And what does verse 4 mean: “their line/voice has gone out to the ends of the earth”?

Although there is no audible word to the human ear, Creation is proclaiming the praises of its Creator, to all people groups, no matter what language they speak in. All are able to take in Creation’s declaration of the Creator, if we would stop, look up and observe. *What 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 glorying in the One who created it.

The Word Declares God’s Character (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 (v.6), 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 always reflects who He is.

What qualities of God’s Word (and thus God’s character) does the psalmist speak of in vv.7-9?

- Perfect (v.7): God’s Word is perfect and complete - nothing is better (Matt 5:48).
- Sure (v.7): His Word is sure and completely trustworthy and dependable.
- Right (v.8): Everything God says (and does) is right and without error.
- Pure (v.8): His commandments are morally excellent and without sin.
- Clean (v.9): To take God and His word seriously (to fear Him) is clean and un-polluting (Rom 12:2)
- True (v.9): God’s judgments in His word are true and just; there is no injustice in Him (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 (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 most 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 (vv.10-11)?

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 he 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 (vv.12-13)?

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. (cf. the prayer of the psalmist in Psa 139:23-24)

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

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 sufferings for us.

Introduction

David faced many difficult times in his life, especially when Saul and Absalom pursued 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 his plea: (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 vv. 3-5, 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? (vv. 6-8)

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 worm for which no-one cares. *Discuss its fulfilment in Jesus - Matt 27:39-43, Isa 53:3.*

What is the speaker’s plea in vv. 9-11?

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 (vv. 12-18)?

- He is oppressed by those stronger than he, ready to tear him apart like a lion devouring its prey (vv.12-13).
- He has great anguish within (vv.14-15). 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 (v.16). (Cf. John 19:37)
- He is ostracised and treated as already dead and without hope, dividing his clothing among themselves (vv.17-18). (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.

God’s answer and praise to God: (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 v.21 literally reads, “From the horns of the wild oxen, you have answered me”. The Lord has heard his cry (v.24). *How do we see this fulfilled in Jesus?* (cf. Heb 5:7). Although Jesus suffered death, He was ultimately raised to life (cf. Acts 2:22-24).

What comes about as a result of this mighty deliverance?

- The Lord’s name and salvation is proclaimed among the people (v.22, v.25).
- Those who hear will glorify the Lord and stand in awe of Him (v.23).
- Those who are afflicted can look to the Lord with confidence that they will be satisfied (vv.24, 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 (vv. 27-29). *How does this speak of Christ?* (cf. 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 (vv. 30-31). (cf. Rev 5:12-13)

Application:

Even though David wrote this psalm, it becomes clear as we study it, that what he was describing was so much more than some experience he had. By God’s Spirit, he was writing about the suffering and agony of the Son of God (David’s greater son). This psalm is quoted more than any other psalm in all the NT. May we see in Psalm 22 the anguish and suffering for Jesus for our sake, as well as his triumphant victory.

Summary: What a description we have here of Christ’s death in Psalm 22! May we love Him more.

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? Why?

The Shepherd’s provision (vv.1-3)

David grew up as a shepherd boy and became the great shepherd king of Israel (Psa 78:70-72).

Though David was a shepherd, how does He describe the Lord? Why? (v.1)

David describes the Lord as his “shepherd”. That’s because David knew of the Lord’s leading and guiding in his life, and of His care and protection, which is akin to what a shepherd does for his sheep; ie, the primary duty of a middle-eastern 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.

What does David affirm in the second half of v.1, and what does this mean?

With the Lord as his shepherd, David lacked nothing. The Lord provided and fulfilled all of his needs (Phil 4:19) so that he was satisfied and utterly content and didn’t crave or desire any other thing (cf. John 7:37-38).

In what way did David experience the Lord’s care and provision (v.2)?

David pictured himself like a sheep that is totally dependent on his shepherd to lead him to food and water in an arid environment, and to provide rest and protection from dangers. David testified of the Lord’s goodness.

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

What else did David experience in v.3?

- 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 32:1-5).
- The Lord guided 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 did David express in the Lord’s protection and care (v.4)?

Even when the shadow of death encroached, or some terrible enemy approached, or some horrific trial came, he feared no evil because He knew that the Lord Almighty was with him (Isa 43:1, Heb 13:5-6, 1 John 4:4).

What comforted David according to the second half of v.4?

The Lord’s rod and staff comforted 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? (v.5)

He experienced the Lord’s overflowing goodness. He described 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? (v.6)

- 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 have put our trust in Him. What do we learn from John 10:11-18; 1 Pet 2:25, 5:4; Rev 7:17? Jesus is the good shepherd who lay down His life for us; He’s the shepherd and guardian of our souls; He’s coming back for us; and in glory will eternally shepherd us. The Father has appointed Him to be our shepherd.

Summary: The Lord is our most wonderful shepherd, if we have turned to Him and put our trust in Him. His love and mercy will be upon us every day, and He will bring us to glory one day.

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 (vv.1-2)

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 awesome God is (cf. Psa 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 our Creator? (cf. Rev 4:11)

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

Who may approach the Lord? (vv.3-6)

In verse 3 what important question is asked?

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

Who then can enter into the Lord's presence? (v.4)

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

We have all sinned (Rom 3:23) and are disqualified from entering God's presence, but through God's grace, we are still able to enter. How is this possible?

We may enter the Lord's presence if we have been made clean. For 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 (cf. the powerful picture God gave us the moment Jesus died - Matt 27:50-51).

For those who have been cleansed and who can enter the Lord's presence, what do they receive? (v.5)

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 (cf. Gen 15:6); it cannot be earned by good works, for no one can meet God's standard. It is granted by faith.

What characterises those who have been cleansed and who can enter the Lord's presence? (v.6)

They seek the Lord and long to see His face (cf. Jer 29:13; Phil 3:8-15). *Does this characterise our lives?*

The Lord entering His sanctuary (vv.7-10)

Assuming this psalm was composed when the ark of the covenant entered Jerusalem, what do we learn in vv. 7-10?

The psalmist was delighted for the Lord (symbolised by the ark of the covenant) entering Jerusalem. He was conscious of who the Lord is, the Creator and King of glory, and that it was a great honour for the King to come and 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 (“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 (vv.7-10) 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 sacrifice on the cross to atone for our sins, He rose and sat at the right hand of the Father as King (cf. Dan 7:13-14; Phil 2:9-11).

In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus desires to not enter a city, but what? (John 1:10-13)

He desires to enter into our heart and being, to save us and to make us a child of God.

What should our response be to the Lord's desire to come into our heart? (cf. Rev 3:20)

We should swing our heart's door open. In the words of Psa 24 “lift up your heads, O gates”. We should long for Him to dwell in us in order to save us; and for Him to rule us – for He is the great Saviour King.

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.

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 (vv.1-3)

With enemies all about, who or what did David not rely upon? Who did he rely upon? (vv.1-3)

David 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 (cf. Psa 33:16-20). David relied solely upon the Lord.

How did David see the Lord? What is significant about the words he uses in v.1 about the Lord?

- The Lord was David’s light – who shone and made the way clear in the darkness and chaos
- The Lord was David’s salvation – who delivered him again and again from his enemies (cf. Psa 18:17)
- The Lord was David’s strength – who helped him endure through every situation (cf. Psa 28:7)

Others would have called on God for help, but had no success. What was different for David?

David knew the Lord personally – **my** light, **my** salvation, **my** strength.

What was the result of David’s reliance upon the Lord? (vv.1-3)

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 (cf. Phil 4:6-7). Because of the Lord, we are not to fear any enemy; not even Satan or death (cf. Heb 2:14-15, Rom 8:31-32).

Love of communion with the Lord (vv.4-6)

Having victory over enemies was not David’s primary desire. Nor was it having God’s blessings and benefits. What was David’s primary desire? (v.4)

David’s primary desire was knowing the Lord and worshipping Him. This should be the same in our lives too; not seeking the Lord’s benefits and blessings; but the Lord Himself.

What did David particularly seek in regard to the Lord? (v.4)?

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? (vv.5-6)

As David sought and communed with the Lord, he felt so protected from his enemies and was filled with joy. It’s the same for us. When we commune with the Lord, we feel so at peace and filled with joy, despite what we might be enduring or facing.

David’s request of the Lord (vv.7-12)

After seeking the Lord first and glorying in His holy character, what did David do next? (vv.7-12)

David brought his requests to the Lord in prayer. He specifically asked the Lord to answer him (v.7), to not abandon him (v.9), to teach him the Lord’s ways (v.11), and to deliver him from his enemies (v.12).

What confidence did David have that the Lord would not abandon him? (vv.9-10)

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 (Matt 28:20).

In David’s prayer request in v.12, 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. Psa 139:23-24; Matt 5:16). Is this our desire too? More than our self-interests?

Conclusion (vv.13-14)

After making his request in prayer, what was David confident in seeing? (v.13)

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 out 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? (v.14)

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.

Psalm 32

Aim: To show that the godly person confesses their 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 (vv.1-2)

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 by “cutting across” and being 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 – He takes them far away from us sin (cf. Psa 103:12). God *covers* our sin – this means that they are buried out of sight as they have been fully atoned for (cf. Mic 7:19); God does *not impute* sin to us – this means we are pardoned and have no record against our name; they are blotted out (cf. Psa 51:9).

Why could David be forgiven before our holy God? Why can we be?

David’s forgiveness from the Lord was not because of the offering of OT sacrifices. Both David and us can only be forgiven because of Christ dying on the cross for our sins and shedding His blood (cf. Heb 10:4-10).

David’s Testimony (vv.3-5)

How does David describe what happened to him when he did not confess his sin; “kept silent”? (v.3)

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? (v.4)

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. Why is there? What does it mean?

It’s a musical pause, for us to stop and consider what has been sung (or read). We are encouraged to pause and reflect on what happens when we do not confess our sins to the Lord.

The moment David confessed his sin, what happened? (v.5)

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.

David’s Appeal and God’s Appeal (vv.6-9)

What does David urge believers in the Lord to do in vv.6-7?

He urges us to seek the Lord and 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. Isa 55:6-7; 1 John 1:9). Not only that, once we have confessed our sins and made ourselves right with God, then we will know His blessing. This includes having the Lord 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? (v.8)

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. Psa 23:3). What a blessing!

What does the Lord Himself urge us to do in v.9?

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.

David’s Closing Words (vv.10-11)

What conclusion does David come to at the end of the psalm in vv.10-11?

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 filled with joy (cf. John 15:10-11).

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

Psalm 42

Aim: To encourage us to seek God, even when we are in a state of despair and struggling with trials.

Read Psalm 42

What is the setting of the psalm? Where do we think the psalmist is? (vv.2b-4, 6)

We believe he was in exile - away from the land of Israel, and away from the temple (and presence) of God.

What does it appear he used to be, according to v.4?

It appears he was a worship leader, perhaps a Levite, who had the joyful task of leading worship.

Thirsting for God (vv. 1-4)

Despite the psalmist’s trying situation, being in exile, what was his deepest desire? (vv.1-2a)

He desired God. Like a deer in a dry land that thirsts for water lest it perishes, he thirsted for God. He sensed that, without God, he would perish spiritually and fall into despair.

Can we, as Christians, relate to the psalmist being in exile? In what way? (cf. Phil 3:20; Heb 11:13)

We can relate. We are in exile, away from the full presence of our Lord; away from our true home in heaven.

In exile, what kind of society did the psalmist live in? (v.3)

He lived in a society that mocked and taunted him in regards to God’s existence and God’s care of him.

Like for the psalmist, consider the society we live in. What do we often experience (John 15:18-19)

We experience people hating us because we belong to Jesus, and are taunted about God’s existence & care.

Why is the picture of a deer panting for water so apt, both for the psalmist and us?

We live in a world that is spiritually declining, and that “sucks us dry” of our spiritual vitality. In this fallen world, nothing satisfies, and so we thirst. The question is: “*Like the psalmist, do we thirst and long for God?*”

Jesus used the metaphor of “thirsting”. Read John 4:13-14, 7:37-38. Who can quench our thirst?

Only Jesus can quench our spiritual thirst. He alone can give us “living water” – abundant and eternal life.

In Psa 42:2b, what did the psalmist long for?

He longed for returning from exile, and being at the temple and in the presence of the Lord.

What is the New Testament equivalent to Psa 42:2b? (cf. Acts 2:42; Heb 10:24-25)

We should long for fellowship; being in the presence of God’s people to encourage and build each other up.

We are called to thirst for God in a spiritually dry and weary land. More than that, what do we see through the apostle Paul in Phil 3:7-11?

We should long to know Christ, and to experience the power of His resurrection and share in His sufferings.

When we go through trying times, when our soul is troubled, when our heart is sad, what do we do?

Like the psalmist, we shouldn’t just “put up” with how things are, but we should thirst for and desire God.

Hoping for God (vv. 5-11)

In vv.5-6, we see the psalmist honest with himself and honest with God. What state was he in?

He was in despair, he was disturbed (v.5, v.6, v.11).

In this low state, what did the psalmist do? (v.5)

He instructed his soul to hope in God. He spoke to his own soul to not give up, but to look to the Lord.

Not only did he instruct his soul to hope in God, but what else did he do? (v.6)

He prayed to God: “O my God”. He poured out his heart to God, even his feelings of despair & abandonment.

In v.6b, v.8 and v.4 there was one more thing he did. What was that?

He reminded himself of God’s greatness and goodness; he reminded himself of the good times (v.4).

From vv.5-8 what can we learn for ourselves when dealing with despair and distress?

We need to instruct our soul to hope in God, to pray, and to remember God’s goodness and greatness.

In v.7 and v.9 we see something else. How did the psalmist feel about God?

The Psalmist felt that God had afflicted him – like as if he had been dumped by wave after wave of difficult circumstances. He also felt that God had forgotten him

When we have all sorts of thoughts and feelings, what do we need to do?

We need to remind ourselves of God’s character and His promises eg, He will never forsake us (Heb 13:5b-6).

In v.8 we see hope in the psalmist, despite his despair. What’s the basis for this?

God still ruled, and He is faithful and true to His character; He will shower us with lovingkindness and joy.

V.5 and v.11 are almost the same. What conclusion does the psalmist leave us with?

Hope in God! He is good (cf. Psa 27:13) and His lovingkindness endures forever (Psa 103:17-18).

Summary: In our challenging world, thirst for God – desire Him, and hope in God – don’t despair.

Psalm 51

Aim: To help us learn what our prayer and response to God should look like when we sin against Him.

Read Psalm 51

What is the background of this psalm of David? (refer to the heading of the psalm)

The psalm is David’s cry of repentance and plea for 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, v.13)

David’s cry (vv.1-2)

Upon what basis does David cry out to God for mercy in v.1?

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 before a holy God.

What does David specifically ask God to do? (vv.1-2)

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

David’s plea (vv.3-7)

Who does David acknowledge that He has sinned against? (v.4)

David had committed multiple “transgressions” (v.3). He had sinned against Bathsheba, Uriah, Joab (his commander), but ultimately, David had first and foremost sinned against God. He also acknowledges that it was right for God to judge him; he hadn’t just “slipped” up, or had a “moment of weakness”. He had sinned.

What is David saying in vv.5-6?

David’s core problem is not just the sin he had committed, but a sinful nature he had inherited at conception. What God requires of us humans David had failed to live out – just as we all do (cf. Rom 3:23).

In the light of how grievous his sin was, what does he plead again for in v.7 (similar to vv.1-2)?

David pleads again for the Lord to “purify” and “wash” him thoroughly, for he feels so unclean and dirty from the sins he had committed. NB: This language of being washed clean of our sins is also what we read of in the NT as we trust in our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Cor 6:9-11; Heb 10:22; Rev 7:14).

David’s appeal (vv.8-12)

How did David’s sin affect him and what is David’s appeal? (vv.8-9)

David was sorrowful and “broken” before the Lord. He had lost the joy of the Lord’s presence. Besides appealing again for the Lord to blot out his sins, he appeals that he might have joy and gladness again. David knew that this can only come when we are forgiven of our sins and are made right with God.

What does David see as the real issue after God forgives him, according to v.10?

What David needed, as all of us do, is not for the Lord to change his situation, but to change him. We need a new heart, a clean heart from the Lord, and a heart that is faithful to God. Our heart is not something we can “fix-up” by ourselves – it is something we must humbly ask the Lord to do.

What does David fear as a result of his sin? (v.11)

David fears that God’s Holy Spirit will be removed from him. David knows that holiness and sin cannot dwell together, and his sin places a barrier between God and himself (cf. Psa 66:18, Isa 59:2).

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

Under the old covenant, God’s Spirit could be given 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, but God, in His grace, will never remove His Spirit from us.

David’s desire (vv.13-19)

After being forgiven and restored, what did David desire to do? (vv.13-15)

David wanted to teach people God’s ways so that they would be saved (v.13), to sing joyfully of God’s righteousness (v.14), to declare God’s praises to others (v.15).

What heart are we to have if we want the Lord to forgive us and cleanse us and restore us? (vv.16-17)

God desires for us to have a broken and contrite (“crushed”) heart when we come to Him for cleansing. It’s not through ritual and religion, but through humility and confession (cf. Psa 32:5, Luke 18:9-14)

David’s sin affected his city (he was the king). What would his restoration bring about? (vv.18-19)

David knew it would bring about God blessings on his city and people would even bring right worship to the Lord (v.19). What blessings come to us and those about us when we confess our sins and are right with God.

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

Psalm 73

Aim: To show the goodness of God to His people, even when they stray and almost fall away.

Read Psalm 73 *Has there been an experience in your life that caused you to almost fall away? [discuss]*

What did the psalmist know to be true about God’s goodness (v.1)? What do we end up learning?

The psalmist knew that God is good to those who are pure in heart – ie, to those who live faithfully and rightly before Him. But as we shall see, God is also good and gracious to those who almost lose their way.

The Psalmist’s struggle – why do the wicked prosper? (vv.1-12)

Despite how we may feel, God is good all the time, and all the time God is good. Why is this?

God’s goodness is a fundamental attribute of His character. He cannot be but good.

What caused the Psalmist to doubt God’s goodness? (vv.2-3)

It happened when he looked around and saw the wicked prosper – he felt they were experiencing God’s blessings; 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? (vv.4-12)

- They have no struggles in death or life (vv.4-5)
- They profit from pride and violence (vv.6-7)
- They are arrogant and oppress others (vv.8-9)
- Those who turn to them share in the prosperity (v.10)
- They boast God doesn’t see their actions (v.11)
- They are free of the worries of this life (v.12).

Can you relate to the way the psalmist feels? Do you struggle with the “unfairness”? [discuss]

The Psalmist’s struggle – do the righteous live in vain? (vv.13-15)

What does the Psalmist’s envy lead to? (vv.13-14)

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 v.15?

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]* Cf. Matt 18:6.

The Psalmist’s salvation – God’s intervention (vv.16-20)

What caused the psalmist’s faith in God’s goodness to be restored? (vv.16-17)

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 (cf. Prov 14:12; Matt 24:37-39).

What did God reveal to the psalmist concerning the wicked? (vv.18-20)

God revealed that despite their apparent “prosperity”, they are on the slippery path to destruction (Matt 7:13-14). Their end will come upon them suddenly, and they will experience the terrors of hell. They will leave their prosperity behind (Luke 12:16-21). The life of the wicked is to be grieved over, not to be envied.

The Psalmist’s new sight – God is to be sought and adored (vv.21-28)

What did the psalmist begin to realise about himself and about God in vv.21-24?

He realised that when he was angry (embittered) against God in envying the wicked, he was acting like an ignorant beast. God had been (and still was) in charge all along, caring for His people. God was with him, holding his right hand (v.23), guiding the course of his life (v.24) and will ultimately receive him into His presence (v.24) 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? (vv.25-26)

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 desired besides God. *Can you say the same? [discuss]*

The psalmist began by questioning God’s goodness in the light of the prosperity of the wicked. What does he now realise is truly good? (vv.27-28)

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.

What can we conclude about God’s goodness?

God is good to us because He chooses to be gracious. Ultimately, God revealed the pinnacle of His goodness to us, when He sent His son to save us sinners and to reconcile us back to Himself (Rom 5:6-11).

Summary: God’s goodness is not in outward prosperity, but manifested in how He deals with us in grace.

Psalm 90

Aim: To show the state of mankind before the eternal and holy God, and our right response to Him.

Read Psalm 90

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

The Contrast between God and Us (vv.1-11)

What does Moses acknowledge about God in the opening of his psalm? (vv.1-2)

The Lord is eternal; He has always been, even before there was a Creation. He has always been throughout 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 the One that we can find rest, comfort, and safety in (our refuge).

In contrast to God, how does Moses describe the state of mankind? (vv.3-4)

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.

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; Isa 40:6-8; Jam 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 9?

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).

Read v.10. What does Moses observe about our short life here on earth?

Most live to seventy years of age. Some beyond that (Moses lived to 120). But no matter how long we live, our years are limited, and in this fallen world there is sorrow and struggle (cf. Rom 8:20-23).

How does this sentence of death and the struggles of life affect you? [discuss]

Moses described it as being something that leaves us dismayed (v.7), and causes us to moan and sigh (v.9). Under the 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 (Num 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).

The Right Response to God (vv.12-17)

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

- He requests the Lord for wisdom. It pleases the Lord when we ask for wisdom (cf Solomon in 1 Kings 3:10-12, and Jam 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 (Eccl 12:13-14).
- 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 did Moses request from Him? (vv.14b-17)

He requested that the Lord would give us joy and gladness, that He would reveal His work and glory, that He would show us favour (grace), and that He would establish the work of our hands. Instead of being dismayed at our state, Moses looked to the Lord to be His dwelling place (v.1) and the one he lived for.

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 trust 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), as well as 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.

Psalm 103

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

Read Psalm 103 NB: This is one of the most well-known and loved psalms of praise.

Praise to the Lord from our soul (vv.1-5)

What does David instruct himself to do? (v.1)

He instructs his soul, his whole being, to praise the Lord. He does this in order to rouse himself 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? (vv.1-2)

Firstly, He blesses the Lord for His holy name. The Lord is so holy; 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 regularly 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). 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 (vv.6-18)

What compassionate act of God is mentioned in v.6?

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

How has God made known His ways and His character to us? (v.7)

In terms of the OT, He has done this through His dealings with Israel predominantly, and through special revelations to certain people, such as Moses (cf. Exod 34:1-8). In the NT, it has been through Christ (Jn 1:18).

Although God is holy & pure, mighty & powerful, righteous & just, what does He especially want us to understand about His being and character? (vv.8-9, Exod 34:6)

He has first and foremost revealed Himself to us as being full of compassion (mercy) and grace, even though we have sinned and rebelled against Him. He does not treat us in anger, but in love. Our God is merciful.

Specifically, in regard to our sins, how does the Lord compassionately deal with us? (vv.9-12)

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 God sent Jesus to save us (John 3:16).

In verses 13-17a 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? (v.17)

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

On whom is God’s infinite and eternal love, mercy, compassion and righteousness? (vv.11, 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 (vv.19-22)

In the light of the One who rules over us all, what does David command? (vv.19-22)

He commands that all creation praise (bless, salute, kneel before) God for He is so compassionate and great. Angels and heavenly hosts are summoned to praise Him, as well as all God’s works, and 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 Creation and all people should bless the Lord for both who He is and His benefits.

Psalm 96

Aim: To consider a much loved psalm that calls us to worship the Lord for who He is; great and glorious.

Overview: Declaring God’s Glory (vv.1-6)

We are called to sing to the Lord. Who is the Lord? What does His name signify? (Exod 3:13-14)

In our English Bibles, the capitalised name, “LORD”, is “Yahweh” in the Hebrew. This name declares that God is eternal: He alone is “I was, I am, and I will be” (cf. Rev 4:8).

What does the opening command “to sing” imply about how our heart should be toward the Lord?

We should have joy and delight in the Lord. We “sing” when we are delighted and thankful. In the NT we are encouraged to have this same heart, especially in the light of Christ (Eph 5:18-20; Col 3:16-17).

What do you think the emphasis about singing “a new song” suggests? (v.1)

Our worship of God should be fresh and vibrant – may our worship of God never be stale and formal.

Why should we sing with joy and worship the Lord, according to vv.2-6?

The Lord saves (v.2), He performs wondrous deeds (v.3), He is glorious and great (vv.3-4), He is our Creator (v.5), and in His being and character, there is splendour and majesty, as well as strength and beauty.

How universal is this response to be? Who should do it? (vv.1-3)

The whole earth should worship the Lord (v.1). God’s wonderful deeds (v.2), and His glory (v.3), are to be made known in all the earth, so that all may come and worship the Lord (not just the Jews).

How does this psalm find fulfilment in the New Testament? (cf. Acts 2:1-11, 46-47)

After the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the giving of the Holy Spirit, God’s people declared (miraculously) the mighty deeds of God, and were filled with song and praise, so that others might hear of God’s salvation through Christ, and come to be part of God’s saved and worshipping people.

What is the declaration of God’s glory and salvation leading to? (Rev 7:9-12)

It’s all leading to the glorious day when God’s people and God’s angels will be eternally together, praising and worshipping God for His glory and greatness and goodness.

God’s Glory and our Right Response (vv.7-10)

In vv.7-8a, what should our right response be to the Lord’s glory and greatness?

We should ascribe to the Lord (literally “give to the Lord”) the glory that He is so deserving. In Rev 5:11-14, we see what this looks like, as the angelic host give glory to the Lord Jesus and God the Father.

In the OT, what else was a right response to God? (v.8b)

It was bringing an offering to God, as prescribed by Moses; a peace offering for giving thanks to God.

In the NT, we no longer bring animal sacrifices, but what offering should we bring? (Rom 12:1)

In the light of God’s mercy, we should give ourselves as a living sacrifice; giving ourselves to serve Him.

What else should be part of a right response in the worship of God? (v.9)

We are to worship God in a holy manner; and we ought to revere Him (“tremble” before Him). Note: Heb 12:28-29 instructs Christians to worship God with reverence and awe.

Besides all people hearing about God’s glory, what message is to be proclaimed as well? (v.10)

All are to know that the Lord reigns, that He sustains creation, and one day He will judge all people.

God’s Glorious End-Game (vv.11-13)

Why should creation be jubilant? (vv.11-13)

Creation should be jubilant because of its Creator. He has made all things, He sustains all things, and He is glorious and great and good. He is also coming to judge the earth in righteousness.

For believers, what should make us jubilant about the Lord coming to judge? (cf. Rom 8:18-23)

At present, the creation is subject to futility and ‘groans’ in decay, but it also awaits the glorious time of renewal at the Lord’s coming, when God’s children will be glorified and live in a new creation.

The prospect of God coming to judge us should be frightening. Why isn’t it for Christians?

Even though we have sinned, Christ bore our judgment at the cross, so that we could be saved (Rom 3:19-26, 8:1-2). This has been according to God’s undeserved favour (grace) upon us, and by faith in Christ.

Consider the sobering passages in Rev 20:11-15, 21:5-8. What are the two paths that people can follow, that will affect whether they exult God or not; both here now and in eternity?

They can either respond to Christ and be right with God and live with Him forever in God’s new Creation, or they can refuse to do so and incur the severity of God’s wrath.

Summary: Let us worship the LORD God and revere Him, for who He is and His work to save us.

Psalm 110

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

Read Psalm 110

Our King (vv.1-3)

In our English translations we have the word “Lord” mentioned twice in v.1, yet in the Hebrew they are not the same word. Who is the first “Lord” referring to?

In the Hebrew the first word for “Lord” is *Yahweh*. This is the proper name for God, that God gave to Moses (Exod 3:14). It means “I AM”. We associate this name with God the Father.

Who then is the second “Lord” mentioned, that Yehovah actually speaks to?

The second word for “Lord” in the Hebrew is *Adonai*. It means sovereign master, ruler, or king. This One rules for *Yahweh*, 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 *Yahweh*.

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

They clearly see that this psalm is speaking of Jesus; He’s the One being spoken of in this psalm – not David.

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

Jesus used 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. Jesus was trying to get them to see that He, the Messiah, is both Lord and God (cf. John 1:1; 20:28).

What does Yahweh declare about Jesus (His Son) 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?

This verse was fulfilled when God exalted Jesus to be King (after His resurrection). In the day of Christ’s resurrection and power (cf. Matt 28:18), those who would trust in Jesus and follow Him would serve Him willingly. In holiness they would serve Him, for His kingdom and for His glory – *are you one of these?*

What does the latter part of v.3 mean?

As Christ’s followers, we serve Him “from the womb of the dawn”; ie, our serving Him in this present time is just the beginning. In glory, we will serve Him and His Father forever (cf. Rev 5:10; 7:15). Also, we are referred to as “the dew”; ie, we are precious to Christ.

Our Priest (vv.4-7)

Besides being King, what else does Yahweh declare concerning what Jesus would be? (v.4)

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 would come together. Jesus would be our King and Priest; our King to rule us and our Priest to save us from sin.

What type of priest would Jesus be? (Psa 110:4; Heb 6:17-7:3)

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).

Consider also Psa 110:4 with Heb 7:17-25?

The priesthood of Melchizedek stood for a perpetual priesthood, and because Jesus arose and lives forevermore, He is able to be our priest forever. Therefore, our salvation is eternally secure

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 Father, Jesus will destroy all His 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 our King and Priest; we are to come under His rule and to make Him our Priest (Saviour), so that we might be saved us from our sins.

Psalm 137

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

Read Psalm 137

Sorrow and torment in a foreign land (vv.1-3)

What event is the psalmist reflecting on in his life as he pens this psalm? (v.1)

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. (cf. 2 Chron 36:11-21)

How does he describe this time in his life? (vv.1-3)

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 they have hung up their harps. They have lost everything – their homes, lands, possessions, loved ones, freedom, but most of all, the presence of God in their midst at the temple where they worshipped, sacrificed and met with God.

What did their captors do that made the experience of exile even more painful? (v.3)

In the ancient world, the Babylonians 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. (cf. Hab 1:5-6, Jer 32:26-28)

The pledge not to forget (vv.4-6)

What is the psalmist pledging in vv.4-6?

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 (vv.7-9)

Who were the sons of Edom? What did they do to Israel? (v.7)

The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob. They became Israel’s enemy, and when Israel fell, they gloated over and “cheered on” Israel’s downfall (Obad 1:8-15).

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”? (vv.8-9)

The cry of the psalmist’s heart is for justice against those who destroyed Jerusalem. The Babylonians (or 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 for God to repay those who hurt you or 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, we are to love our enemies and long for them to repent, in the light of the coming judgment of God.

Can we relate to the psalmist’s state? (1 Pet 1:1, 2:11; Phil 3:20)

Like the psalmist, we too are foreigners (aliens) and exiles living away from our homeland – our citizenship is in heaven. But through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we see the end of the wicked more clearly and our salvation and vindication more certain (Acts 17:31, 2 Thess 1:6-10, Rev 20:11-15).

What should be our attitude towards those who mistreat/torment us? (Luke 23:33-34; 1 Pet 2:21-23)

Following Jesus, we are to forgive them and entrust ourselves to God who will judge justly (1 Peter 2:21-23). Remember: were it not for God’s mercy and grace, and God changing us, we would be just like them.

Summary: We too are exiles in a foreign land. Let us entrust ourselves to God, who will judge justly.