

Dickson
Teacher's Bible

PSALMS



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PSALMS

WRITER

The psalms were written by several people. Among the known writers were Moses (Ps 90), David (73 psalms), Solomon (Ps 72 & 127), Asaph (12 psalms), Heman (Ps 88), Ethan (Ps 89), Hezekiah (10 psalms), and the sons of Korah (11 psalms). The remainder were written by unknown writers.

We do not know who collected all the psalms together into the compilation that we presently have in our Bibles today. Jewish tradition gives credit to Nehemiah for doing this. Some have affirmed that Ezra or Hezekiah collected many of the psalms. Since David was the sweet singer of Israel, and a skilled musician, we would assume that he began the compilation of the psalms during his reign as king of Israel (See 1 Sm 16:16,18; 2 Sm 6:5; 1 Ch 16:4-6). He was a poet of Israel (2 Sm 1:19-27), and one who was familiar with music and musical instruments with which many of the psalms were sung (Am 6:5). Being one who was filled with the Holy Spirit (1 Sm 16:13), we would assume that in writing many psalms himself (2 Sm 23:1,2), he would have brought together into some order for posterity those psalms that were written before and during his life.

DATE

Some Bible students have affirmed that the psalms were written late in the history of Israel, anywhere from 520 to 150 B.C. However, late dates for the writing of the psalms are unlikely since the Alexandrian Jewish translators of the Septuagint had difficulty with some of the ancient Hebrew wording with which the psalms were written. The vocabulary and style of Hebrew poetry by which many of the psalms were written would suggest that most of the psalms originated during the times of David and Solomon. With Moses writing the first psalm around 1400 B.C., and some being written during the post Babylonian captivity (586 B.C.), the psalms were written over a period of approximately 1,000 years. They were collected into the book that we refer to as Psalms by the time of the translation of the Septuagint prior to 150 B.C.

BOOK

The Hebrew word for Psalms is *tehillim*, which means “praises.” The English word “psalm” comes from the Greek word *psalmoi*, meaning “songs,” or “sacred songs.” The root meaning of the word is “impulse,” or “touch.”

Jesus stated that there were prophecies of Himself in the Psalms (Lk 24:44), and thus some of the psalms were written in view of the Messiah to come. There are approximately 263 passages of the Old Testament that are quoted in the New Testa-

ment. Almost one-third of these quotations are from the Psalms (93 quotations). Thus the nature of the Psalms is not only praise, but also prophetic.

The Psalms in our present Bible are divided into five groups: Book I (Ps 1-41), Book II (Ps 42-72), Book III (Ps 73-89), Book IV (Ps 90-106), and Book V (Ps 107-150). Though collated into five books, there is no chronological order to the Psalms, either by content or date of writing.

The Psalms were written in the lyrics of Hebrew poetry, many of which were adapted to the music of instruments. The style of composition varies from one psalm to another, some being written as *odes*, that in a figurative manner, narrated the facts of either public or individual histories. Some were written as *ethical* psalms that presented moral principles for living and faith. Some were *elegiac*, that is centered around mourning or sadness. Those that were written as *dramatic odes* were dialogues between the writer and other individuals or peoples. Those that were written in an *enigmatic* style conveyed teachings that were symbolized by figurative speech in order to stimulate the imagination of the readers.

The Psalms were written as Hebrew poetry. The focus of Hebrew poetry was not on the rhyme of words, but the rhythm of meaning. Thus the stanzas of the poetry were stated as recurring statements in different words, commonly referred to as parallelisms. A parallelism is a recurring thought that is expressed in different words for the purpose of emphasis, amplification, contrast or repetition of the message of the stanzas. There are various types of Hebrew parallelisms.

Tautological parallelisms use almost identical words in two lines in order to express a key thought.

Antithetic parallelisms state a contrasted thought in the second line to that which is expressed in the first line.

Synonymous parallelisms are psalms that either repeat or expand in the second line that which is stated in the first line, but with different words.

Analytical parallelisms state something in the second line that is the consequence of what is stated in the first line.

Synthetic parallelisms build a thought as the poem develops. The second line adds additional thought, more information, or a variation of thought to that which was stated in the first line.

Cumulative parallelisms develop intensity of thought through repetition. The conclusion leads to a climax of what was stated in the first line.

CLASSIFICATION

The titles that are listed with several of the psalms were not part of the original autograph of the inspired psalms. However, the titles were ascribed to particular psalms before the translation of the Septuagint that was completed around 150 B.C. Because their meaning was so obscure, the translators of the Septuagint were un-

able to attach a general meaning to many of the titles. It is assumed that the titles referred to the musical setting or the manner by which a particular psalm was to be used in liturgical worship. The titles often ascribe the psalm to a particular writer. Sometimes the title refers to the occasion when the psalm was composed. The titles do not affect the interpretation of any particular psalm, though some seem untrustworthy. Because the titles were not a part of the original autographs, some translations do not include them.

The psalms can be classified according to their content and the nature by which they were written.

1. Psalms of wisdom: 1; 9; 10; 12; 14; 19; 25; 34; 36; 37; 49; 50; 52; 53; 73; 78; 82; 92; 94; 111; 112; 119
2. Messianic psalms: 2; 16; 22; 40; 45; 68; 72; 89; 101; 110; 144
3. Psalms of individual and national lament: 3; 4; 5; 7; 11; 13; 17; 26; 27; 28; 31; 39; 41; 42; 43; 44; 54-57; 59-64; 70; 71; 74; 77; 79; 80; 86; 88; 90; 140-142
4. Penitential psalms: 6; 32; 38; 41; 102; 130; 143
5. Psalms of praise, worship and thanksgiving: 8; 18; 23; 29; 30; 33; 46-48; 65; 67; 74; 76; 81; 84; 87; 91; 93; 103-108; 135; 136; 138; 139; 145-150
6. Liturgical psalms: 15; 20; 21; 24; 84; 95-100; 113-118; 120-134
7. Imprecatory psalms: 35; 58; 69; 83; 109; 137

Throughout the psalms the word “selah” is often used, and included by some translations. It is not known to what this word refers. It has been suggested that the word was placed in the Psalms to indicate a time for a pause. Some translations have chosen to delete this word from the text since it was not a part of the original autographs.

Book I

(1:1 – 41:13)

CONTRAST BETWEEN

CHAPTER 1

THE RIGHTEOUS AND WICKED

The first psalm is an introduction to all the psalms. The foundation of the psalm could be Jeremiah 17:5-8. This is a psalm of wisdom, contrasting the fruits of the righteous and wicked. It sets the stage for the contrast between the righ-

teous and wicked that is continued throughout the Psalms.

1:1-3 Blessed: Happy is the one who does not have a life-style of sin. Happiness comes from doing the will of the Lord (Compare Mt 5:3-11). **Way of sinners:** Reference is to a way of life, not

to the occasional sin of the righteous. The wicked live according to their lusts. **Scornful:** There are those who are indifferent to the way of the believer. But there are those who go beyond indifference by openly launching verbal attacks against the righteous. These are the arrogant who mock the way of righteousness. **Delight:** The righteous are defined by their desire to seek the law of God. Their study of and meditation on the word of God identifies them as the people of God (2 Tm 2:15). **Meditate:** They do not simply read, but they think on the things that are read. They are students of the Bible. They are those whose minds are focused on godly things. **Tree planted:** The metaphor is from a tree that continually receives water because it is planted by a source of water. The faith of the righteous is continually nourished by the word of God (Rm 10:17).

Prosper: The inference is that God is working for the righteous. In the context of most of the psalms, prospering was deliverance from the wicked.

1:4-6 Chaff: The wheat grain was thrown in the air and the chaff was blown away by the wind (Is 5:24). In God's plan in eternity, the wicked will be blown away from the righteous. In the context of David's life, God took his enemies away by delivering them into the hand of David. **Will not stand:** The ungodly will be taken away from the assembly of the righteous. In the final judgment, the ungodly will go away into destruction (Pv 14:12; Mt 25:46; 2 Th 1:6-9). **The Lord knows:** God knows those who are His. Because He knows those who are His, He is a just judge in judgment over the wicked who will be taken from the presence of the righteous.

CHAPTER 2

REIGN OF GOD'S ANOINTED

This psalm is Messianic. Though the psalm may have had immediate historical application to events in the early days of Solomon, the prophetic statements in the psalm focus the interpreter on events surrounding that which would take place in the life of the Messiah (See Mt 3:17; At 4:25,26; 13:33; Hb 1:5; 5:5). Though the psalmist was probably not conscious of writing things that were Messianic (1 Pt 1:10-12), he would have understood what he wrote in the context of his life. The historical context was the raging of the nations against Israel.

2:1-3 Nations rage: These were

the Gentiles of non-Israelite nations. In the Acts 4:25,26 context reference to this passage by Luke interpreted it to refer to the hostility of unbelievers against Christians in the early establishment of the church. **Rage:** Better, "assembly in tumult." They assembled against God's work through His people, both in the existence of Israel, as well as the secondary application to the church among the nations. **Vain thing:** When assembled in rebellion against God's work, then one's efforts are useless. **His anointed:** In the historical context reference would possibly have been to Solomon, and those God-anointed Davidic kings who followed

him. In the context of Acts 4, however, reference was to King Jesus and the church, against which the nations futilely set themselves.

2:4-5 Who sits: This personification of God portrayed Him in a sitting position laughing at the rebellion of men who set themselves against His anointed. He sits in the heavenly realm. Reference was not to a specific location, but to a supernatural realm that is the normal environment of Deity. **He will speak:** When God speaks against the wicked, then bitter consequences follow for the wicked. They are judged for their wicked works. They are consumed in their unrighteousness. **Holy hill of Zion:** God anointed kings in Israel, and placed them on the throne in Jerusalem. While reigning on the throne they represented His authority on earth among the Israelites. Jesus has now been given the authority of this reign (Dn 7:13,14; Ep 1:20-24). He is now reigning in heaven with all authority over all nations (Mt 28:18).

2:6-9 I have set: These are the words of a king who sets forth his decree. **You are my Son:** The fulfillment of these words has been applied to the resurrection of Jesus (At 13:33), the superiority of Jesus over angels (Hb 1:5), and the high priesthood of Jesus (Hb 5:5). **This day:** Reference is probably to the totality of what was required for the in-

carnation of the Son of God. **Begotten:** Only here is this word used in the Old Testament in reference to the Lord. In the context of the coronation of the kings of ancient times, when a subject king was crowned, the reigning king of all the territory became the father of the subject king. The subject king, or regional king, owed all his allegiance to the king of the entire empire. **Your possession:** In the historical context this would refer to Israel's possession of the land of Palestine. **Break them:** Rule over them (Compare Rv 2:27; 12:5). **Dash:** In reference to the reign of Christ, the meaning would be that He would conquer them through the authority of His word (Jn 12:48). Any who would resist would suffer destruction at the time of His coming (2 Th 1:6-9).

2:10-12 Be wise: Rebellion would be fruitless and would only lead to destruction. **Fear... trembling:** Only when there is fear and trembling at the power of God does the individual submit to the will of God. It is through fear and trembling that one is led to obedience of the will of God. And it is through obedience that one enjoys true joy and peace of mind. **Kiss:** Sign of submission (See 1 Sm 10:1; 1 Kg 19:18; Jb 31:27; Hs 13:2). **Blessed:** Only when one brings his life into submission to the will of God is he blessed (See 1 Pt 5:6).

CHAPTER 3

TRUST IN GOD

This is the first psalm of lament. This is also the first time the phrase "Psalm of David" is used as a title. The word

"psalm" (*mizmor*) is used 57 times in reference to different psalms. However, it is never used in the text of the psalms. The historical setting of this psalm was

when David hurriedly fled from the insurrection of his son Absalom (See 2 Sm 15:13,14).

3:1,2 *Increased:* This was a time of distress and danger in the life of David. He lamented the fact that many had joined Absalom in the insurrection. ***No help for him:*** The adversaries of David deceived themselves into believing that few took the side of David. They were emboldened, therefore, to join Absalom in the rebellion.

3:3,4 In distress, David desired the help of the Lord. As a soldier, the metaphorical use of the word “shield” meant that God would ward off the attacks of the enemy. Thus David here cried out for God’s protection. In this case, God heard his cries and delivered him out of the hand of Absalom.

3:5,6 In the midst of danger, David’s faith enabled him to lie down and sleep in peace. His faith made it possible not to fear men, for he knew that God was his shield. By fearing God, he conquered the fear of man.

3:7,8 David was delivered. God had delivered David on several occasions in the past. God’s deliverance of him in the past was his assurance for God’s deliverance in the future. The tense of the verbs here reflect David’s confidence in his future deliverance from Absalom (Compare Mk 11:24). ***Salvation:*** In the context of the Psalms, this word generally referred to deliverance from one’s enemies. In the spiritual realm, the metaphorical meaning would be deliverance from sin.

CHAPTER 4

TRUST IN GOD

While living in the midst of those who sought after that which was worthless, the psalmist put his trust in the Lord. In the evening prayers, the psalmist exhorted that men turn to God, and stop working against God and His anointed.

4:1,2 *You have relieved me:* The psalmist perceived how the Lord had delivered him in the past, and thus he had faith that God would do the same in his present situation. Those who live righteously before God always have the evidence of God’s past work in their lives as evidence of God’s present and future work in their lives. ***Sons of men:*** Those who worked against God in order to bring calamity into the life of the psalmist.

4:3,4 God will hear those He has set apart (sanctified) for Himself. ***Stand in awe and do not sin:*** The Septuagint translates this phrase, “Be angry and do not sin.” This reading is quoted in Ephesians 4:26.

4:5-8 *Sacrifices of righteousness:* The Lord requires the offering of one’s life (Compare Rm 12:1,2). It is through this offering that one reaps the blessing of God. Though the unrighteous are cynical concerning the way of righteousness, the psalmist asked that God prove to them His favor of the righteous by manifesting Himself through the righteous. ***Gladness in my heart:*** The heart was the center of the human spirit. The righteous are glad because they focus on the inner man

in times of distress. Because they focus on the inner man, they can sleep in peace, regardless of the failure of their crops.

Those who walk by faith do not allow the environment in which they live to affect their attitudes or shape their character.

CHAPTER 5

GOD'S PROTECTION

The word "temple" that is used in this psalm is also used in reference to the tabernacle that housed the ark of the covenant in Shiloh (See 1 Sm 1:9; 3:3). This psalm is ascribed to David who lived before the existence of the temple in Jerusalem. It is a psalm of prayer that was uttered during the priests' service in the tabernacle.

5:1-3 Because God reigned over all things as King in heaven, David expressed his desire that his prayer be heard. David uttered his prayers in the morning and asked God to consider him because of his meditation on spiritual things. David's thinking was not carnal, nor was his mind focused on things of this world. On the foundation of his focus on spiritual things, he asked God to consider his plea.

5:4-7 The Lord disdains the way of the wicked. Because God cannot tolerate the way of the wicked, He will turn from them. God cannot work in the life of the wicked, for they do not desire His presence. The wicked are thus headed for destruction because they have foolishly turned from the source of eternal existence. God is the only source of eternal existence, and no one can exist for eternity outside His presence. **Worship:** This is from the Hebrew word that re-

fers to one who bows down. Wherever David was, he would bow down in worship toward the tabernacle of God (Compare Dn 6:10). Bowing down was a posture of humility and his facing the tabernacle was his personal presentation toward what represented the presence of God.

5:8-10 **Make Your way straight:** That is, David sought to be led in the right ways of God. **No faithfulness:** In contrast to what David sought to be in his spiritual nature, the wicked came forth with an odor of death (Compare Nm 19:11; Rm 3:13). Their speech was filled with deceit. **Destroy them:** This imprecatory psalm calls on the judgment of God on the wicked. This is the first imprecatory psalm where David called on God to bring judgment upon his enemies. **Fall by their own counsels:** The wicked often fall into the trap of their own deception. While they devise schemes for their own benefit, they fall victim to their own devices.

5:11,12 The joy of the righteous is based on their recognition that God is working in their lives. Though they may fall on unfortunate times in this life, they can rejoice while enduring trials because all things are working according to the plan of God (Js 1:2,3).

CHAPTER 6

MERCY IN TIMES OF TROUBLE

This is the first of the penitential psalms. These are psalms that express the repentance of the writer (See Ps 6; 32; 38; 41; 102; 130; 143). In this psalm the writer seems to anguish over the pain and sorrow that came as the result of his sin.

6:1-5 The psalmist cried out from sickness and fear of death. He languished over his predicament, lamenting that his body was withering away because of sickness. It is not a principle that God inflicts with sickness those who sin. However, in special situations this may be true (Compare 1 Co 11:30; Js 5:15). ***In death there is no remembrance:*** In the Old Testament there was little hope beyond the grave. In this psalm the writer complained that if he died from his sickness, he would not be able to give glory to God for God's healing hand. Since this is a psalm of David, it may have been that David asked for His healing in order that his recovery from sickness be

evidence of God's grace in his life. ***Soul:*** Throughout the Psalms this word is used to refer to the totality of the human being, including the life, conscience, and personal character of the individual.

6:6-10 ***Weary with my groaning:*** David became so sick that he was in anguish, possibly seeing death as a relief from his suffering. ***Tears:*** The anguish of his sickness was so great that he cried until his bed was dampened with his tears. ***Workers of iniquity:*** At the point of death, the poet felt that his enemies had no mercy on him. They saw his sickness and death for their benefit in the sense that David would be removed from them. Those who despised the authority of God's anointed sought for the death of David. ***The Lord has heard:*** Though the enemies hoped for the death of David, he rejoiced in his recovery from sickness, giving credit to God that he was restored to health. He gave credit to the Lord for restoring his health as a direct answer to his prayer.

CHAPTER 7

DEFENSE AGAINST THE WICKED

This psalm is a lament of David, possibly when he was fleeing from Saul (See also Ps 34; 52; 54; 56; 57; 59; 142). Nothing is known of Cush, the Benjamite. He could have been the one who brought false charges to Saul concerning David.

7:1-10 Either Saul or Cush was in pursuit of David, and thus David put his trust in the Lord. ***If I have done this:***

David confessed some unknown sin that he may have committed that warranted his flight from Saul. As Job, he had lived righteously before God. In this context he thought that he might have done something for which God was chastising him. If he had done something that was worthy of the chastisement he was suffering, then he felt that he deserved the punishment. But in his flight from Saul, he did not reward Saul with the evil that he

had done to him. He spared Saul's life when he could have taken it (See 1 Sm 24:1-22; 26:1-25). **Judge me:** David was confident of his righteousness. He was so confident that he called on God to judge him in time with any punishment that God might seek to render to him. If he were found righteous, then he called on the just Judge to render judgment upon the wicked. **God tries the hearts:** In the KJV the word "reins" refers to the conscience or heart of the individual. The word "heart" refers to the emotional nature of man, which nature would include the conscience. The Israelites used the words "hearts" ("kidneys") and "minds" as synonyms (4:7; compare Jr 11:20; 17:10; 20:12). **My defense:** Or literally, "my shield." David was not arrogant concerning his stand for his righteousness. He was assured before God that God would deal justly with both the wicked and righteous. In this case, he claimed to be right before God, and thus he was assured that God would deal justly in his present predicament.

7:11-17 God judges: God is a just judge of both the righteous and wicked. His wrath is poured out on the wicked,

but His blessings are poured out on the obedient. However, if one does not repent, he will suffer the wrath of God. The rendering of such wrath would be just on the part of God. God cannot justly pour out blessings on the righteous if He does not bring just judgment to the wicked. **His arrows:** The metaphor is from a warrior who has his arrow points dipped in tar and ready to shoot fire toward the defense fortifications of the enemy. **He travails with iniquity:** The wicked reap the consequences of their evil ways. As a careless hunter who falls into the hole that he has dug to trap his prey, so the wicked fall into the snare of their own deception. All that the wicked would do to advance themselves over their fellow man, eventually comes back to haunt them. If the consequences of their wickedness does not reap it's just reward in this life, God will render judgment at the final judgment (Rv 21:8). **I will praise the Lord:** In contrast to the way of the wicked, in the closing doxology of verse 17 David committed himself to the Lord. Making such a commitment meant that David would trust in all the judgments of God, whether in time or at the end of time.

CHAPTER 8

GOD'S MAJESTY AND MAN'S DIGNITY

This psalm portrays the impact of God's magnificent creation on the heart of man (See comments Rm 1:20). The psalmist contrasts the work of God's hand with the insignificance of man. In comparison to the greatness of creation, man seems so insignificant. However, though

the creation is so great, God has honored man above all His creation.

8:1,2 Glory above the heavens: The one who observes the wonders of creation, and yet would deny the existence of God, is a fool according to the psalmist (14:1). The intricacies of life, the order of the universe, and the design of both the physical and biological world

cry out that there is a Designer, a Creator behind everything that exists. The philosophy of evolution is no option for the origin of life. It is only an escape for those who do not seek to have the authority of God in their lives.

8:3,4 By comparison, the existence of the universe minimizes the significance of man. There is no comparison between the two. **Ordained:** The heavenly bodies have been orderly established in space. **You visit him:** Though existing on a small planet of the universe, man is considered and cared for by God. The existence of man on earth alone exemplifies God's consideration for man. Man's very existence is evidence of the fact that he is the most important of all things that God created.

8:5-9 Lower than angels: The Sep-

tuagint translates the Hebrew word here (*elohim*) with the Greek word for angels, which translation is sanctioned by the Holy Spirit when He quoted this verse in Hebrews 2:7. Since angels are spiritual beings, then the translation would be justified by the context. Of all beings that God created through Jesus (Cl 1:16), man was least in comparison to angels. And yet, God exalted man above angels to the point of sending His only begotten Son into the world for the salvation of man (Jn 3:16). **Dominion over the works of Your hands:** See Gn 1:26-28. Man rules over the animals of God's creation. **Paths of the seas:** Ocean currents prevail throughout the oceans of the world. In this one inspired verse, God revealed a scientific fact to man.

CHAPTER 9

THANKSGIVING FOR GOD'S JUSTICE

This and the following psalm were probably originally one psalm, as they were composed in the Septuagint. The two are a contrast between the majesty of God (ch 9) and unbelief that prevailed among God's people (ch 10).

9:1-6 Marvelous works: The confidence of the psalmist was in the marvelous works of God in his past life. This was his confidence for the future. Our hope for the future is based on our perception of God's work in our lives in the past. **Judging right:** Reference is to just judgment. **Put out their name:** The ancients were concerned about the preservation of their names. The preservation of a family name continued the in-

heritance of an Israelite family, as well as guaranteed the posterity of the family throughout history. In this case, the psalmist recognized that the name (posterity) of the wicked should be stricken from history.

9:7-12 Judge ... refuge: Since the Lord renders just judgment without prejudice, then the righteous have a place of refuge in His care. The righteous must never forget that in times of trial and oppression, they will be justly delivered by a just God. **Refuge:** The Hebrew word here would literally be translated "high place." In the culture of Israel at the time this psalm was written, the high places were added by the Israelites to their system of worship of false gods. The people were going to the high places for wor-

ship, and thus the psalmist metaphorically uses the high place to signify a place to which one could go for protection. The irony of the matter was that reverence for the high places was an indication of Israel's apostasy from God. **Know Your name:** Reference is to more than a knowledge of facts about God. The meaning is that one has a relationship with God because of obedience to His will. It is the obedient whom God does not forsake, for they have committed their lives to Him. **Who dwells in Zion:** It was not that God physically resided in Jerusalem. The ark of the covenant, the symbol of the presence of God, was placed there by David. This phrase helps us to understand the metaphorical use of many phrases in the Psalms that speak of God in terms of human existence and behavior. The Bible interpreter would do well to caution himself about literalizing statements that should be understood in a metaphorical manner when reading the Psalms.

9:13,14 In order that he might praise the Lord with peace of mind, the psalmist pleaded for deliverance from those who oppressed him. **Gates of death:** This would be the gates of Sheol, the abode of the dead. Death is often pictured as a fortified city with gates that open only inward. It is a place that receives the dead, but does not give them up.

9:15-18 The unbelievers of the na-

tion were caught in the mire of their own devices. **Judgments:** God is known by His just judgments. If we would conceive of a god who gave unjust judgments, then the god we conceived would be a false god. **Snared:** Those who would devise evil against others are caught in their own traps. **Meditation:** During the quotation or singing of many of the psalms, there was an interlude for meditation (See 92:3). **Sheol:** Those who seek to ensnare the righteous will themselves be ensnared by death. **The poor:** See 7:15,16. Justice comes to the poor, not because of their poverty, but because they have been exploited by the wicked (Compare Lk 16:19-31). We must keep in mind that in the economy of Israel, there were laws for the poor to work in order to survive (Dt 24:21). However, if they did not work, then there was no excuse for their poverty. If they were not allowed to work according to the law, then they were oppressed or exploited, and thus their oppressors would reap the vengeance of God.

9:19,20 In the conclusion of this psalm, the psalmist called on God to condemn those who oppressed the poor by not allowing them to work in the farming economy of Israel. The psalmists added that the nations should fearfully submit in order to understand that they are men and not gods over their own destiny.

CHAPTER 10

DEFEAT OF THE WICKED

In describing the character and behavior of the wicked, the psalmist opened

this psalm with complaint. However, the psalmist concludes with confidence in the work of God to deliver the righteous.

10:1-6 *Afar off:* It is natural for the believer to feel that God has distanced Himself from us when we are in trouble. The fact is that God has not distanced Himself from us. We have moved away from Him. Job wondered why God would allow great calamity to come upon him if He were a God who is transcendent in the affairs of man (Jb 13:24). God is transcendent, but He also allows life and nature to continue their natural courses. The believer must remember that God does not move away from him in the time of trouble. ***Boast:*** In his oppression of others, the wicked person manifests his arrogance. And because the wicked person is proud, he will not submit to the will of God. Since the things of the world are his idols (Cl 3:5), the wicked man does not seek that which is above this world. It is for this reason that God is not a part of his thinking. According to the psalmist, the person who behaves as this is actually an atheist. He lives as if there were no God. ***Not be moved:*** Secure in his secular materialism, the atheist unfortunately assumes that possession of the things of this world will bring security, and thus one will not be moved.

10:7-11 The behavior of the materialistic atheist is against society. He views society as a means by which he can maintain his way of life. Thus in his arrogance he looks down on all those he would use to maintain his way of life. From what the psalmist says in this context in defining the unrighteous materialist, it is evident that the materialist uses society to maintain his existence. He views the poor as an opportunity for ex-

ploitation. This would be the employer who has no consideration for his employees. In the farming economy of Israel, the materialist would actually be the cause of the poverty of others. ***God has forgotten:*** The materialist has no conscience about his oppression of the poor. He has forgotten that all evil will eventually be revealed in a day of judgment (Ec 12:14; 2 Co 5:10).

10:12-15 *Renounce God:* Or, why do the wicked despise God and reject any judgment concerning his evil deeds. The righteous must remember that judgment will eventually come upon the wicked. Though this judgment may not come in the lifetime of the oppressed, or during the existence of this world, it will eventually come. ***You will not require it:*** The self-deception of the oppressor is that he feels he will get away with his oppression. There is no sense of accountability in his thinking. Religious faiths bring a sense of accountability. Accountability is that one recognize he will give an account of his actions before God (2 Co 5:10). Without this sense of accountability, men will deceive themselves into thinking that they can get away with their evil deeds. In the historical setting of the psalm, the wicked were the cause for the existence of the poor. ***Break the arm of the wicked:*** The psalmist called on God to bring immediate judgment on the wicked oppressor. He called for relief from oppression for the sake of the poor.

10:16-18 *The nations are perished out of His land:* The historical context of the psalm seems to be the oppression that prevailed in Palestine by the

Canaanites because the Israelites did not completely drive them from the land. As a result, the Canaanites frequently oppressed the Israelite farmers by raiding their crops. Under the leadership of David, and eventually Solomon, the land was subdued and the oppression of raid-

ing parties both within Palestine and from outside the land, was stopped. The sovereign God answered the prayer of the psalmist. God worked through both David and Solomon to bring peace and security to the land.

CHAPTER 11

GOD IS OUR REFUGE AND DEFENSE

This psalm focuses on the faith that brings courage at a time when one is facing treachery. Faith takes one through great trials, but eventually brings one forth in victory over all adversity and adversaries (See Rm 8:31-39).

11:1-3 *Flee:* The historical setting of the psalm may have been in the final days of David in Saul's court. Saul had become a law unto himself. The legal system had thus broken down, and there was no legal system before whom David could take his plea of being unjustly accused by Saul. Saul determined to kill David, and thus the advice given to David was that he flee to the mountains.

11:4-7 *Lord is in His holy temple:* The temple, or dwelling place of God, is heaven. In this statement the faithful are assured that the sovereign God continues to reign over all things, though justice on earth has been dispelled by the unjust. ***His eyelids test:*** As one would squint to scrutinize in judgment, so God intensely

judges the affairs of man. The righteous are tried in order to prove their faithfulness. God's loving chastisement of the righteous is a judgment of the wicked, for He does not manifest Himself in the lives of the wicked as He does in the lives of the righteous. The chastisement of the righteous is a condemnation of the wicked. ***Fire and brimstone:*** This would be the searing heat of the winds that came off the desert. In later biblical writings, fire and brimstone became a figure of the judgments of God (See Lk 17:29; Rv 9:17; 14:10; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8). ***Portion of their cup:*** This was the portion that was allotted to them. ***The righteous Lord:*** Since the Lord is righteous, He sees the righteous. And since the righteous live after His will, they behold His righteousness. One cannot know the righteousness of God unless he lives according to the will of God. ***See His face:*** This phrase comes from cases where one was granted the opportunity to be in the presence of a king (See 2 Kg 25:19; Et 1:14).

CHAPTER 12

HELP AGAINST THE TREACHEROUS

This is a psalm in which the writer

cries out for help in the midst of a society that is ruled by the ungodly. In the cry for help, the psalmist pleads to God for

condemnation of the wicked. He was confident that God would deliver him from peril by bringing down judgment on the ungodly.

12:1-4 In this psalm David lamented that the ungodly flourished in society. ***One speaks vanity:*** Hypocrisy and deception define the culture of an ungodly society. In such societies suspicion and cynicism prevail. The love of one's neighbor had diminished in this case to the point that it was a burden for the righteous to live in society. ***Cut off flattering lips:*** "Cut off" means to put an end to. Since flattery in this context was an effort of one person to manipulate another for his own evil means, God cut off the hypocritical tongue of the deceptive in order to aid the righteous. ***With our tongue:*** With caution one should consider those

who speak with an abundance of words. The ungodly used unfair and deceptive speech to rule over the innocent.

12:5-8 The oppressed must be patient for the deliverance of God. During their oppression, the righteous may think that God has forsaken them. However, in the historical case of this psalm, God took action to deliver the oppressed. ***You will keep ... preserve:*** Though it may seem that the wicked prevail in society, God reassured the righteous that they would overcome. ***The wicked walk:*** When vile men are honored by society, then the wicked prevail. When known corrupt politicians maintain office, then society has signed its own doom. The example of ungodly leaders encourages societies to digress morally.

CHAPTER 13

HELP IN TIMES OF AFFLICTION

The historical setting of this psalm was probably when David was fleeing from the jealous hand of Saul who sought to kill him (1 Sm 27:1). David expressed his despair, but knew that God had not forsaken him.

13:1-6 In four questions in verses 1 & 2, David expressed his frustration concerning the increase of the ungodly. It seemed that evil prevailed over righteousness throughout the land. He expressed his frustration because he was fleeing from what he believed was a majority of society who had turned against him. ***En-***

lighten my eyes: Seeing God's deliverance was what David sought. ***Sleep of death:*** David cried out for deliverance while he was alive, and before he died. ***Salvation:*** As in many psalms, the word "salvation" is used here to refer to God's deliverance from death. In this case, David trusted that God would deliver him from the hand of Saul. God allowed David to fall into the turmoil of a pursued fugitive in order to manifest His deliverance of His people. In times of trial, therefore, the righteous must be patient in their faith that God will deliver. Though everything may seem to be against them, they will eventually be delivered.

CHAPTER 14

FOOLISHNESS OF WICKED MEN

The first verses of this psalm were quoted by Paul (See Rm 3:10-12). It is a psalm that manifests the foolishness of the wicked in view of the faith of the righteous. Much of the content is also expressed in Psalm 53.

14:1-3 *The fool:* It is not that the fool is intellectually challenged. Emphasis here is on the moral perversity of the one who rejects accountability to the will of God in his life. In saying that there is no God, the foolish one has rejected the eternal moral standard by which all men will be judged (See Jn 12:48; 2 Co 5:10). Thus the fool in this context is the one who lives with no conscience of accountability before an eternal Judge of all things. ***All have gone aside:*** The one who is void of morals will live as if there is no God. God looks for the righteous by discovering their works (Compare Js 2:17-26). ***Filthy:*** Those who do no good are tainted in the eyes of God, for their

faith is dead.

14:4-7 Those who give up on the morals of God establish their own morals. But the morals they establish for themselves lead to corrupt societies in which there is little love of one's neighbor. ***In great fear:*** A society that is controlled by crime is a society in which there is great fear. ***Generation:*** Or, "dwelling," "posterity." ***His refuge:*** Because the oppressed make God their refuge, they are derided by the wicked. ***The captivity of His people:*** Job 42:10 uses this phrase to refer to the restoration of Job's prosperity after his suffering. And before Israel went into Babylonian captivity, the phrase was used by both Hosea (Hs 6:11) and Amos (Am 6:14). Therefore, the phrase here does not mean that the psalm must be dated according to the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities of Israel, but to a time when God's people are restored to prosperity after being disciplined by God for their sin.

CHAPTER 15

CITIZENS OF ZION

This is the first liturgical psalm. It was a psalm that was used in worship. It is a devotional psalm that describes the positive and negative sides of the worshiper of God. In order to be a devoted worshiper of God, the psalmist calls on the worshiper to render obedient service to God. The psalm was possibly used to prepare worshipers when they came to the sanctuary of God to offer their sacrifices, or to serve as priests when they

were assigned temple duty.

15:1-5 *Tabernacle:* The tabernacle was a visible structure that represented the presence of God. In this context, reference was to asking who would be able to stand in the presence of God. The psalmist then defined the character of those who would be in the presence of God. ***Walks uprightly:*** Righteous behavior of life. ***Works:*** Does that which is good in response to faith. ***Speaks truth:*** Does not lie or speak hypocritically.

cally. **Does not backbite:** Does not speak behind the back of someone in order to destroy his reputation. **Nor does evil:** In loving his neighbor as himself he does not work against his neighbor. **Nor makes a reproach:** Does not slander his neighbor. **Vile person is despised:** He is disgusted with those who do wickedly. **He honors:** He aligns himself with those who do good. **He who swears:** Though it may be to his own detriment, he promises to do that which is right and fair to

his neighbor. **Money for interest:** He seeks to help his neighbor by lending money without interest, and thus he does not take advantage of his neighbor when he has fallen into hard times. **Nor takes reward:** He does not take a bribe (Ex 23:7,8; Dt 16:19; 27:25). **Never be moved:** Being a dependable person, the one who lives according to the preceding principles will not be changed by the changing times.

CHAPTER 16

SUSTAINED AND DELIVERED

In view of the quotation of verse 10 of this psalm in Acts 2:25-28,31; 13:35, we must conclude that some statements of this psalm are Messianic. In its immediate historical context, it was a psalm that focused on the posterity of the godly.

16:1-4 The psalmist trusted in God to preserve him. **LORD:** This initial word that is used in verse 2 is from *Yahweh*. This is the personal reference to God that was used in Israel. **Lord:** This word with small letters is *Adonai*, which refers to master or ruler. **Goodness:** This verse indicates the thought of 1 Corinthians 15:58 where it is stated that the believer's works are not useless when done in the Lord. The psalmist affirmed that in God he was empowered to do good, and that his good would be remembered by the Lord. **Their drink offerings:** In contrast to those who offer sacrifice to other gods, the one who serves the one true and living God is reassured that he is offering to One he did not create after his own imagination.

16:5-8 Portion ... lot: As the land of promise was given to Israelite families by lot (Ja 13:7; 14:2), so the psalmist says that his portion or lot is the Lord. As the land maintained the people with physical food, so the Lord will sustain those who have their portion with the Lord. **The lines:** The metaphor would find its meaning in the borders that defined the portion of land that was allotted to each family in the land of promise. One's spiritual portion that was in the Lord was pleasant. It is a spiritual heritage that can be given to generations to come. **My heart also instructs:** In times of quiet solitude one's conscience is instructed by the word of God which is the guide that keeps one on the right way. **Right hand:** The one who stood at the right hand of the king defended the subjects of the kingdom. The Lord was the right hand defender of those who trusted in Him.

16:9-11 My glory: Or, my soul (7:5; 30:12; 57:8). **Not leave my soul in Sheol:** The psalmist was here looking beyond the grave. Though revelation in the Old Tes-

tament is brief concerning the resurrection of the dead, these verses gave some light for those who lived before Jesus. However, a secondary fulfillment of these words is understood from Peter's quotation of them in Acts 2:25-28. Reference by Peter was to the resurrection of Jesus. **Holy One to see corruption:** The appli-

cation to the body of Jesus defines the prophetic application of the psalm. After His crucifixion and burial, Jesus' body did not decay away. It was resurrected (See At 13:35). The psalmist closed this psalm by reaffirming the fact that faith in God is the guarantee for life past the grave.

CHAPTER 17

PROTECTION FROM OPPRESSION

The historical background of this psalm may be David's flight from Saul (See 1 Sm 23:25,26). When David wrote the psalm he and his companions seem to be in imminent danger. Thus the psalm is a lament of David over his predicament. He asks God for deliverance.

17:1-5 Hear the right: David was unjustly accused by Saul. He thus asked God for vindication and justice. **My sentence:** David had received no justice from Saul, and thus asked for just judgment to come from God. **Tested my heart:** David was confident that God knew his heart. He was not an insurrectionist against the reign of Saul, who was at the time God's anointed king of Israel. Though Saul wrongly assumed that David thirsted for the power of the throne, such was not in the heart of David. **Uphold my steps:** David had followed in the instructions of God, and thus here expressed confidence that he would not fall from the way of God.

17:6-12 You will hear me: David's relationship with God reassured him that God would hear his pleas. **Show:** In a time of despair, David wanted a mani-

festation of God's grace. He cried out for deliverance for himself and his companions from Saul who sought his death.

Apple of the eye: This was a term that expressed endearment (See Dt 32:10; Pv 7:2; Zc 2:8). It referred to the pupil of the eye, the delicate part of the eye that needed protection (Dt 32:10; Pv 7:2).

Shadow of Your wings: The metaphor here would symbolize protection from danger (Rt 2:12; Ps 36:7; 57:1; 61:4).

Closed up their fat hearts: In the fatness of their prosperity, they had hardened themselves against the needs of others. We would assume that application here was to Saul and his ruling cronies who became socially disconnected from the needs of the people. Their concern was only to maintain their positions of power in the kingdom. They had been corrupted by absolute power, the curse of those who would seek perpetual rule over a people. **Like a lion:** The ruling class of Saul's companions had set themselves against David and his companions. As a lion lurks in ambush for her prey, so they sought to capture and kill David.

17:13-15 Confront him: This is a prayer of David that God bring down judgment on his oppressors. **Wicked with**

Your sword: God brings judgment on men by the proxy of others. He brought the judgment of captivity on Israel by the proxy of both the Assyrians and Babylonians (Is 10:5). In this case, however, the “sword” of God was directed toward the godly, that is David and his companions. Thus in the prayer, David asked God to take this sword from him in order that he be delivered from the ungodly, for he assumed that He was using Saul to punish him. His plea was based on the

fact that those who would seek to harm the godly identified themselves as the ungodly. **When I awake:** Statements as this clearly affirm that David believed in the bodily resurrection. In this context, he would enjoy God's deliverance in this life, as well as when he would be resurrected from the dead. **See Your face:** See 105:4; Nm 12:8; 2 Ch 7:14. Emphasis is on being in the presence of God, not seeing a literal face, for God is spirit and has no face (Jn 4:24).

CHAPTER 18

VICTORY AND DOMINION

This is a psalm of victory and parallel with the events in 2 Samuel 22. It is a psalm that expresses the psalmist's struggles to accomplish deliverance from those who pursued him. As a psalm of David, he praises God for his deliverance from Saul.

18:1-6 Strength ... rock ... fortress ... deliverer ... shield ... horn ... high tower: This series of words exalts the Lord as the security upon which one should base his life. It is God in whom we flee for refuge. He is the assurance of our faith. He is our tower of defense against all who would seek to destroy us. **Saved from my enemies:** As a praise psalm from David, David is confident that he will be delivered (saved) out of the hand of his enemies. **He heard my voice:** God answers the prayers of those who exalt Him in their lives according to the metaphors of verses 1 & 2. The magnitude of David's praise was manifested by the extreme circumstances in which he was when fleeing from Saul. David

was in such peril that he feared for his life. Death was almost certain (2 Sm 22:5). But God delivered him. He did not offer a ritualistic prayer, but an outcry to God for deliverance. God allowed him to go to the extreme of despair before He delivered him. God will allow us to fall into great calamity before He delivers us. He does this in order that we have evidence of His work in our lives for future reference.

18:7-15 God's deliverance of His people is often expressed in Scripture through the metaphors of natural phenomenon (See Ex 19:16-18; Jg 5:4,5; Jb 38:1; Is 29:6). The occurrence of such natural happenings often brings fear to man, and thus the metaphors are used in order to manifest that God is taking action in order to influence man. The meaning here is an encouragement to the righteous. If God can control the physical world with such power, then certainly He wants us to understand that He can work in the affairs of man in order to deliver the righteous from calamity. He is sov-

ereign over the universe, and thus sovereign over all life of the world.

18:16-19 *Drew me out of many waters:* At a time when David thought that he would drown in the calamities that had befallen him, God came to his rescue. ***Too strong:*** He admitted that the enemy was greater than his army, and thus it was only because of the strength of the Lord that he was delivered. ***Day of my calamity:*** When he was his weakest as a fugitive, his enemies launched their attacks against him. But the Lord stood by him. ***Delighted in me:*** Because God was pleased with the humble and godly character of David, He delivered him in order that others might understand that God stands behind those who are His.

18:20-24 *Reward:* The outcome of David's faithfulness was his deliverance from his enemies. ***Ways of the Lord:*** The reward of David's obedience to the word of God was his salvation (deliverance) from the hand of Saul. David, as Job, was confident of his standing before God. The confidence of such men must not be interpreted as arrogance. They simply obeyed the will of God. We can have the same confidence today if we will obey the will of God. ***Did not put away:*** He did not ignore the will of God. ***Kept myself:*** He made a free-moral choice to stay away from evil. His reward for his obedience was that God delivered him out of the hands of Saul.

18:25-29 God will extend mercy to those who have shown mercy to others (See comments Js 2:13). He will forgive those who forgive their fellow man (Mt

5:7; 6:14,15; 18:23-25). These are the principles upon which God desires that governments rule among men. ***Pure:*** Only one with a pure heart can understand God who is pure (Mt 5:8; 1 Jn 3:3). ***Devious:*** Or, perverse. ***Haughty eyes:*** God will bring down the proud (Lk 18:14). ***Light my candle:*** David's obedience would be a light to those who walked in darkness. In this historical context, God would make it known through David that He was working through him in order that he become the king of Israel. ***By You:*** With the help of God, David was able to be victorious over his enemies.

18:30-45 *Shield:* God is a shield of defense only to those who put their faith in Him to protect them. ***Who is God:*** Since there is no God other than the one true and living God who reveals these words to us through David, we conclude that all other gods are the invention of the imagination of men. Those who believe in these gods are actually trusting in their own skills to be delivered in times of trouble. But those who trust in God are trusting in a force that is outside themselves. One's accomplishments are limited to working things out according to the abilities of men. But when one trusts in God, then he has no fear of being overcome by men who trust in their own imaginations. It was the God of heaven who took David as a shepherd boy and made him the king of Israel. David's use of the metaphors of war in this section confirm that he knew that he could not have done all that brought him to be the king of Israel without the help of God. His kingship was evidence of the fact that

God worked in his life. **Necks of my enemies:** David's conquest was so forceful that his enemies turned their backs and ran from him. **Head of the nations:** David was so militarily dominant over those who opposed him that God extended his influence to nations that were not of Israel. **Foreigners:** During the end of David's reign he had subdued the enemies of Israel. His military strength was so great that the surrounding nations were intimidated by the army of Israel. No nation attempted to attack Israel, and

thus during the reign of Solomon, David's son, peace prevailed.

18:46-50 It is God: Though David had the opportunity to take credit for all his accomplishments, he wanted us to recognize that it was God who must take the glory, for it was God who made everything possible in his life. The reason why David was a man after God's own heart was that he had the heart of God. He knew who he was because of God's work in his life.

CHAPTER 19

THE WORKS AND WORD OF GOD

This great psalm begins with the glory of God's work in creation, and then moves into God's authority in His creation through the power of His word.

19:1-6 The heavens declare: The created universe is a continual witness to the existence of God (Rm 1:20). This statement assumes that the honest beholder will conclude that there is a God, a designer, who is behind all that exists. **The firmament shows:** A design presupposes that there is a designer. In this case, the firmament (design) presupposes that there is a Designer (God). The creation was so intricately designed that it proclaims the existence of its Designer. The more scientists discover the order of that which exists, the greater the evidence that this universe was the product of God. **Their line:** God established limits or boundaries for that which was created in order to establish order in the universe (Compare At 17:26). **All the earth:** Paul quoted

these words in Romans 10:18 in reference to the preaching of the gospel to all the world. Since all the earth is the creation of God, then God is interested in giving everyone on earth an opportunity to hear the gospel (2 Pt 3:9). The purpose for the creation of the world was to populate heaven. And thus it would be fitting for Paul quote from this context in order to reaffirm the reason why the universe was created. **The sun:** Though God established the boundaries of the sun, its radiant influence is felt throughout its dwelling (tent). It shines on both the good and evil (Mt 5:45). In this context, the radiance of the sun is metaphorical of God's glory that is manifested to all mankind. All the earth, and both good and evil among its inhabitants, profit from God's work of creation.

19:7-10 Law of the Lord: It was fitting in the context of a psalm on creation to reveal that which brings order to the inhabitants of the world. There are seven statements in this context that de-

fine the law of God. **Perfect:** The law of God is complete for the conversion of the soul (Jn 17:17; 1 Pt 1:23). **Sure:** The word of God is a trusted witness of God's will among men, and thus it can be trusted to be a true guide for man. The untrained, or uneducated, can trust it to find their way into eternity. **Right:** The commands and directions of God (statutes) are the trusted and true expressions of the will of God for man. They are right because obedience to them brings joy and peace of mind. **Pure:** God's commandments enlighten one to the truth. They bring light to darkness (See 1 Jn 1:7). **Fear:** The fear of the Lord produces within us pure religion as we manifest our faith through expressions of kindness to others (See Jn 1:27). Reverent awe always keeps us close to God, which closeness makes it possible for us to dwell in eternity (Compare 2 Th 1:6-9). **True and righteous:** God's truth is absolute. Obedience to His truth produces right living before God (Jn 4:24).

19:11-14 Warned ... reward: Because one is warned of destruction when he is disobedient, but learns of rewards

for obedience in the word of God, then the word of God must be desired far above gold that will perish. One must desire God's word as he would desire the sweetness of honey. **Understand his errors:** Only through the revealed word of God can one understand how to please God. **Cleanse:** One is cleansed as he obediently walks according to the will of God (51:6,7). **Presumptuous sins:** These would be sins where one would deliberately act contrary to the word of God. Or, they may be the sin of men who think that they are actually doing God's will, but are ignorant of the will of God. They are presuming to be righteous before God in obedience to their own religious traditions, but are actually sinning against the word of God. **Dominion:** When one would continue to walk in a deliberate sin, then that sin becomes a way of life, and thus dominates the individual. **Words ... meditation:** Not only must one's speech testify to the fact that he is seeking God, but also his thoughts must be brought under the control of God's word. One's heart must be seeking God in order that words of praise come forth from his heart.

CHAPTER 20

PRAYER FOR VICTORY

This psalm is closely related to the following psalm because it is a prayer that was uttered on the eve of a great battle. It was a prayer that was answered with victory. As a result, a prayer of thanksgiving for victory was made in Psalm 21.

20:1-5 As a liturgical psalm, it seems that the words of verses 1-5 were spoken to the king by the Levites during the

time of offering. Their prayer that was expressed in these words was that the Lord grant the king his wishes in leading the people of God into battle. Since the king was joining with the required burnt offerings, the Levites called on God to bless the king in order to bring "his salvation" to the people. Salvation in this context was the deliverance or protection of the people from those who would oppress them.

20:6-9 While opposing armies trusted in the power of their instruments of war, the righteous king in this context trusted in the Lord. **Remember the name:** Remembering the name of the Lord is trusting in His help. **Save, Lord:** Both the people and the king trusted in the Lord for deliverance. In the context of this psalm, and in view of what was

stated in verses 1-5, the people were asking that they be saved through the Lord's blessing of the king who trusted in the Lord. We should pray for our leaders that they should depend on the Lord. A godless leadership will not lead the people in the ways of God, and thus preserve the moral integrity of a nation.

CHAPTER 21

DELIVERANCE

The preceding psalm was a request by the Levites during the time of the temple liturgy and burnt offering. It was a request that the king be blessed in his desire to deliver the people of God from an imminent attack. God gave the victory, and thus this psalm is a rejoicing over the victory that was granted by God.

21:1-7 His heart's desire: The king desired to lead the people in victory over Israel's enemies. This desire was granted by the Lord. **Blessing of goodness:** Before the king, God set the blessing of His goodness for the people. **Crown:** A crown of victory was placed on the head of the victorious king. The king had asked to be delivered from the enemies, and that request was granted. The psalm expresses the words of the people, probably the Levites. Their prayer in Psalm 20 was answered, and thus they gave praise to God for preserving the king,

which meant that the people were also preserved through the victory of the king.

Length of days: See 1 Kg 1:31; Ne 2:3.

21:8-13 Will find out: The enemies were driven to retreat, and thus the request here was that the king discover the place of retreat of the enemies in order to complete the victory. **Fiery oven:** This is the language of the judgment of God (See Mt 4:1; Lk 16:24; Rv 20:14). **Their fruit ... seed:** The judgment would be so great that the posterity of the enemies would be destroyed. These enemy nations, therefore, would come to an end. **Intended evil:** The motives of the enemies toward the king were evil. But because of the help of the Lord, the enemies had to retreat. **Be exalted:** In the victory of the king over the enemies, God was given the glory. Both the people and the king recognized that it was God who gave them the victory.

CHAPTER 22

CRY FROM ANGUISH AND JOY IN PRAISE

Psalms 22, 23 & 24 are Messianic psalms. Psalm 22 focuses on the coming

Savior. Psalm 23 pictures the Savior as a shepherd of the people. Psalm 24 proclaims the sovereignty of the Savior. Psalm 22 is quoted seven times in the New

Testament in reference to Jesus (Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34; Hb 2:12). Psalm 22 should also be studied with Psalm 69 and Isaiah 53. The psalm can be divided into two sections, the first dealing with trials (vss 1-21) and the second with triumph over trials (vss 22-31).

22:1-8 My God, my God: See Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34. **Far from helping me:** In times of despair one feels distant from God, or he feels that God is not giving attention to his calamity. **But You are holy:** In contrast to the defilement of man on earth, God is pure and free from all the defilements that beset man. **Inhabit the praises of Israel:** God's presence was made known in Israel because He was on the lips of those who gave Him praise (Mt 3:16,17). **Our fathers trusted:** Our faith must move us to remember the past when God delivered our fathers from calamity. **Despised:** The one suffering in the psalm felt estranged from the people because of the open mockery and reproach that was brought upon him. Derision and scorn distanced him from others, as well as made him feel distant from God.

22:9-21 You ... took me: The psalmist recounted the security that he felt when in the innocence of childhood. He was then totally dependent on God. Now at this time of calamity in his life, he sought to be in the security and care of God that he had in the past. It was a time when the psalmist wanted to depend on God as a dependent newborn babe. **Bulls ... of Bashan:** Bashan was the rich pastureland that was east of the Sea of Galilee. The area was a place of rich

pasturelands and great oak trees (See Dt 32:14; Ez 39:18; Am 4:1). The onslaught of calamity was as strong bulls who launched their attack against him. The persecutors gaped as a lion on a sure prey. The picture of these verses is of the crucified Christ during His trials, and eventually His time on the cross. The Messianic picture here is inescapable. The records of the gospel (Mt, Mk, Lk, Jn) reveal the fulfillment of the metaphorical picture that is here prophesied.

22:22-31 I will declare: The statements in Hebrews 2:11-13 are a reference to the name of Jesus being declared among His disciples. **Assembly:** The quotation of this verse in the New Testament is from the Septuagint translation. The Septuagint used the Greek word *ekklesia*. The proclamation of the prayer was to all the people. The proclamation was an exhortation to fear, praise and glorify God. **Pay my vows:** In times of trouble vows were made to God. When the day of deliverance came, the one delivered remembered what he had promised the Lord, and thus gave his thank offerings to the Lord. **The meek will eat:** After victory over an enemy, Israel ate of the sacrifices that were made to the Lord (See Lv 3:17; 7:16; Nm 15:3). **All the families of the earth:** Not only would Israel worship the Lord, but this psalm speaks of all the nations giving praise to God (Compare Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). This is certainly a Messianic prophecy of what would eventually come in reference to Jesus (See Ph 2:5-11; Rv 11:15). **A seed:** Reference was to succeeding generations, specifically to the

remnant of Israel that would eventually come forth from the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. They would come again

unto the land of promise and give praise to the Lord.

CHAPTER 23

OUR SHEPHERD

This is probably the most quoted of all the psalms simply because in a few words it portrays the life of the righteous. Though the righteous must live in a world that is plagued with suffering and turmoil, they must put their faith in God as they struggle through life. The psalm is a sublime utterance of those who are focused on staying close to God.

23:1-4 My shepherd: As a shepherd boy, David knew the life of a shepherd. He knew the responsibility of guarding the sheep from the perils of life. **Lack nothing:** When one submits to the shepherding of God, he trusts that God will provide all that is necessary for survival. David listed seven specific things that the Lord provided as He watches over His sheep. **Green pastures:** When sheep are filled, they lie down. Because of the Lord's care over us, we are satisfied with the spiritual food that comes from Him, and thus we take our rest in the shadow of His care. **He leads me:** Because the sheep know their shepherd, they are willingly led by Him. We know our Lord, and thus He is able to lead us according to His will to places of security. As calm waters naturally soothe one's mind in times of trouble, so God takes us to places where the turmoil of life can be endured. **Restores my soul:** By the calm waters our inner man is renewed and refreshed (2 Co 4:16; Ep 4:23;

Cl 3:10). **Paths of righteousness:** Because of their trust in the leadership of the shepherd, the sheep will follow the shepherd in going to where he desires that they should go. He thus leads them down paths that take them to that which is good for them. The Lord takes us to His righteousness (See 2 Tm 3:16). The Lord does this in order that His name be glorified among the nations. He is holy, and thus He desires that His people be holy (111:9; Lv 19:2; Mt 6:9; 1 Pt 1:14-16).

Fear no evil: The sheep have confidence in the leadership of the shepherd. Since we have faith that God is head over all things, and that all is under His control, then we are confident that all things will work for our good (Mt 28:19; Rm 8:28; Ep 1:22; Hb 1:3). **You are with me:** In God is our faith. He will not forsake those who are His (See Ex 33:14; Dt 31:6-8; Ja 1:5-9). The assurance of the believer is his faith that God will never turn His back on His people. **Comfort me:** The shepherd's staff (rod) is for the protection of the sheep when they are under attack. The staff is hooked at the end in order to be used to deliver fallen sheep out of pits into which they may stumble. Knowing that the Lord is in our lives for both protection and deliverance reassures us and gives us great comfort.

23:5,6 Prepare a table: Near East kings would prepare a banquet for the ones they favored and sought to honor.

In the case of God's people, by His provision for their needs, He openly manifests to the nations that they are His people. **Anoint my head:** This was the anointing of oil on the heads of the guests. The anointing manifested hospitality. **Cup overflows:** God's provision is not limited. **Goodness and mercy:** Since God

has done so much to and for His people, they are motivated to do good to others and show mercy (Jn 2:13; compare 1 Jn 4:19). **I will dwell:** Not only do the righteous dwell in the house of God on earth, they will also be in the security of this house when it is taken into heaven (1 Tm 3:15).

CHAPTER 24

THE KING ENTERS ZION

The historical setting of this psalm may be when the ark of the covenant was brought to Jerusalem, to the tent that David had prepared for it (2 Sm 6:1-15). The prophetic nature of the psalm seems to point to the victory of Jesus over death (Cl 2:15; Hb 2:14,15), and His resurrection and reign over all things from heaven (Dn 7:13,14; Ph 2:8-11; Rv 5:11-14; 17:14).

24:1-6 True worship begins by understanding the One who is worshiped. Contrary to those who have created gods after their own imaginations, true worshipers know that the God they worship exists beyond the imagination of man. Though no one can ascend unto God, nor fully comprehend His majesty, the fact that we understand that God exists still generates worship from our hearts. **Clean hands:** Only those who do not live in conflict with their neighbors can truly worship God. Those who are burdened with guilt know that their worship is hypocritical. Those who are responding to God with good works can know the God who cares for all men. **Pure heart:** The character of our inner per-

son determines our worship. When one is full of forgiveness and mercy, then he can identify with the One he seeks to worship. **Soul to vanity:** Compare 1 Jn 2:15-17. One cannot worship the true God while at the same time pay homage to that which is false (12:2), or gods that are the invention of man (31:6). God seeks worship from those who will worship Him in spirit and truth (Jn 4:23,24). **Even Jacob:** God seeks for those who would worship Him as Jacob (See Gn 32:22-30).

24:7-10 O you gates: As the procession to bring the ark to Jerusalem neared the gates of the city, the personification of the gates of the city symbolized that the city should reverently receive the ark of God. **Lord mighty in battle:** This procession to bring the ark into the city marked a time when David had defeated the enemies of Israel. He had defeated them because God worked in order to give him victory. Thus the Lord was strong in battle against all the enemies of Israel. **Lord of armies:** Because the Lord had brought victory to the army of David, the Lord was the master of his army.

CHAPTER 25

PROTECTION, GUIDANCE AND PARDON

In the Hebrew text, each verse of this psalm begins with a letter of the 22-letter Hebrew alphabet. It is one of the nine psalms that are written in an acrostic manner. This is a psalm of wisdom that is made up of statements of truth.

25:1-7 Do not let me be ashamed:

Contrary to the one who lifted up his soul in vanity (24:4), the worshiper of this psalm lifted up his soul to praise God. And in doing so, he did not want to be disappointed to have God protect him. He did not want to be disappointed for the sake of all those who worship God. David experienced God's grace and mercy throughout his life, and thus prayed that God extend the same to those who reach out for His salvation. **Sins of my youth:** Though David lived with the guilt of inadequacies and failures of his youth, he asked that God not remember his youthful folly. **Transgressions:** Or, rebellions.

25:8-15 Teach sinners: God will instruct the obedient who have lost their way. **The meek:** Only when one submits to the Lord can the Lord teach him the right way. **Those who keep:** Without submission to the will of God, one cannot be led by God. God does not subjectively lead one against his will. Obe-

dience must be free-morally carried out in the life of the meek. **Covenant:** God made a covenant with Israel at Mt. Sinai. He was faithful in keeping His part of the covenant, and thus expected Israel to do the same. **He who fears the Lord:** If one will reverence God and submit to His will, then God will teach him His way. The obedient will then live in peace of mind. His posterity through his children will continue throughout generations. He will thus benefit from his covenant relationship with God, enjoying the benefits of a spiritual connection with God. **Secret of the Lord:** He will be the friend of God (See Jn 15:13-15). **Out of the net:** David had given himself to the Lord, and thus the response of the Lord was to guard him from his enemies.

25:16-22 Feeling alone and afflicted, the psalmist turned in supplication to God for help. David may have felt some guilt because of his sins, for he called on God for deliverance out of his calamity that may have been caused by his sin. He was threatened by his enemies, and thus he called out for deliverance because of his trust in God. As Job, he felt that his integrity should justify his plea, and thus result in God's positive response. Israel's deliverance depended on his deliverance.

CHAPTER 26

SPIRITUAL INTEGRITY AND PRAYER

In this psalm David called on an examination of his character and behavior. He affirmed his innocence. As Job, he

felt confident that a divine inspection of his life would reveal his innocence.

26:1-7 Judge me: David cried out for protection, knowing that he stood just before God. **Integrity:** He had focused

his life on God (See Gn 17:1; Jb 1:1,8; 2:3,9). In his integrity he had trusted in God without living a hypocritical life (See Ja 1:6,7). **Examine:** David called on God to thoroughly examine his inner being. **Lovingkindness:** David had been merciful to others while walking in the commandments of the Lord. He had kept himself from the company of those who would turn him away from living after the ways of God. He had stayed away from worthless men and those who had created gods and religions after their own desires and behavior. He had remained in the company of those who would influence him for good. **Wash my hands:** This was a symbolic act of proclaiming one's innocence or relinquishing of responsibility (Compare Mt 27:24). **Surround Your altar:** David sought the activity of holy things. He lived in the company of those who were like-minded. He remained a man of faith in a world that

had turned its back on God. **Voice of thanksgiving:** He realized all the good that God had done for him, and thus he declared to all God's work in his life.

26:8-12 I have loved: David aligned himself with those who remained close to God. He thus protested his innocence because he did not associate with the company of the wicked. He cried out that he not be taken away with the wicked in death. David did not keep company with murderers, nor those who dealt unjustly with others. His judgments were not tainted with bribes. **I will walk in integrity:** David made a conscious decision to live a life of integrity. As with all good men, to live after the will of God depends on making a decision to live righteously. Living the godly life continually is trying to maintain one's commitment to his decision to walk with integrity. **My foot stands:** He felt vindicated after a thorough examination of his integrity.

CHAPTER 27

TRUST IN GOD

There is a significant difference between the nature of verses 1-6 and verses 7-14 in this psalm. The first section of verses is a praise of God and the second is a plea. From praise to plea, the mood of the psalm changes significantly between the two sections.

27:1-6 Light: God is light in that He brings truth (4:6; Is 10:17; Mc 7:8; Jn 1:4,9; 8:12; 1 Jn 1:5). **Salvation:** In this context and others, the general meaning of this word in the Psalms is salvation from one's enemies. Since the Lord was both light and salvation to David, David

did not fear his enemies. Thus the Lord was a fortress against those who would oppose David. **Eat up my flesh:** The enemies came to attack and kill. But the Lord brought confusion to the enemies, and thus they did not succeed in their efforts to bring David down. **Confident:** The psalmist was not anxious even though he lived with the threat of war. His confidence was in the fact that God, either in life or death, would deliver the righteous out of the hand of all calamity. One can have this confidence only when he seeks first that which is the Lord's (Mt 6:33). **That I may dwell in the house of the**

Lord: This feeling of David that is expressed throughout the Psalms, enlightens us as to why it was his desire to build a temple to God in Jerusalem. The ark and tabernacle represented the presence of God, and thus David wanted the presence of God close to him in Jerusalem at all times. However, he was not allowed to build the temple, which construction was reserved for his son, Solomon. **He will hide me:** David's assurance rested in the fact that God would protect him from his enemies (Compare comments Rm 8:31-38). **I will offer:** David's appreciation for his deliverance from his enemies was expressed in his thank offerings to the Lord. He did not live without showing appreciation and recognition that it was the Lord who had delivered him from his enemies (Compare 2 Co 4:15).

27:7-14 The mood of the psalm changes with these words. **Hear ... mercy ... answer me:** These are pleading words of complaint. In a time of ca-

lamity, it seems that the psalmist felt distant from the Lord. In his frustration, he was seeking the attention of the Lord. However, the psalmist felt that the Lord had hidden His face from him in that He was not responding to his pleas. **Father ... forsook me:** Though forsaken by father and mother, God will accept those who are orphaned. Though one may feel totally deserted by everyone, God will still be there. **Teach ... lead, deliver:** Once humbled by the calamities of life, one submits to the directions of God. God knows that it is sometimes necessary for one to be discouraged in despair in order to appreciate the adoption of God. **Wait on the Lord:** The conclusion of the psalmist is that though one may experience the extremity of calamities, he must have faith that God is there, waiting to deliver the faithful. This is the legacy of Job who waited on the Lord throughout his calamities. In the end, God came to his rescue. In this case, God came to the rescue of David.

CHAPTER 28

ANSWERED PRAYER

The historical setting of this psalm may be when David was fleeing during the insurrection of Absalom (2 Sm 15:1 – 18:33). The psalm, therefore, was an urgent plea for help from those who had dealt a treacherous blow to David.

28:1-5 The psalmist was in a state of desperation. If the Lord did not answer, he would die at the hands of the wicked. In this case, it was the treacherous insurrectionists who were led by Absalom. **The pit:** This common ex-

pression refers to Sheol, the place to which it was believed that the spirit goes after the death of the body. **Cry out:** This is a strong word in Hebrew. It signifies an urgent cry for help. **Lift up my hands:** This was a natural act of one who was pouring out his heart to the Lord. **Holy sanctuary:** This was the holy of holies of the tabernacle where the ark of the covenant was placed. **Workers of iniquity:** These were the treacherous insurrectionists who had joined themselves to Absalom. Since they had raised their

hand against David, God's anointed, they were aligned with the wicked. **According to the deeds:** This imprecatory plea was a call of David that God bring down judgment on the insurrectionists. They were committing great evil, and thus were deserving of great punishment. Little did David know that his plea in this request would be answered by the death of his son, Absalom, who was killed against the wishes of David. **He will overthrow them:** God overthrew the insurrectionists in order to spare the reign of His anointed, David. David's prayer was answered.

28:6-9 He has heard: These words of the psalm express the strength of faith. The psalmist was so convinced that God would answer the request of

verses 1-5 that these words are written in the past tense as if the request had already been answered (See comments Mk 11:24). In these words, the psalmist broke out in a doxology of praise to God for His deliverance (41:13; 72:18,19; 89:52). **Strength and shield:** Those who trust in the deliverance of the Lord have the inner strength that comes from the Lord, as well as a defensive shield against the attacks of the ungodly. **Save ... bless ... feed ... lift:** When one puts his trust in the deliverance of the Lord, these are the things that the Lord does for His people. They are saved out of calamity, blessed with life, fed with spiritual food, and lifted up among all as a testimony to the work of God in the lives of His people.

CHAPTER 29

MANIFESTATION OF GOD

This psalm is a song of worship expressed to God who revealed Himself out of a great storm. The symbolism is not that God is a storm, but that God joins in with the existence of His created natural laws, which laws are manifested by a storm. The heavenly powers join in to give praise to their Creator. This is thus a psalm that manifests the monotheistic faith of the psalmist, as opposed to the prevailing false religions of the time who assigned a god to various manifestations of nature. Pagans worship nature, but the true worshippers worship the God who created nature.

29:1,2 Mighty ones: These were the mighty forces of nature. A call to worship was made by the mighty ones,

the forces of nature. They were called to join in praise to the Creator. **Beauty of holiness:** The holiness of God is a beautiful thing if it could be visibly seen. For this reason, we must worship in spirit and the truth of His revelation and holiness (Jn 4:24).

29:3-9 The storm approaches (vss 3,4). After unleashing its power (vss 5-7), it passes (vss 8,9). **Voice of the Lord:** The manifestation of the power of the storm gives evidence to the presence of God. But the metaphor of the storm communicates to man the power of the revelation of the word of God. It is a living word that goes forth with great power (Hb 4:12). The voice of God through His word is so powerful that it breaks the cedars of Lebanon. The storm that de-

picts the power of God's voice is strong as a tornado that tears through structures of men and nature. **Lebanon:** The white capped mountain range of northern Palestine. **Sirion:** The older name for Mt. Hermon (Dt 3:9). **Divides the flames:** The forked strikes of lightning. **Kadesh:** The southern part of Palestine. **Hinds to calve:** The disturbance of the storms causes the deer to prematurely give birth. **In His temple:** All those in His heavenly dwelling give Him praise.

29:10,11 The Lord masters His forces of nature and reigns as a king over His creation. Though He reveals Himself with powerful manifestations, He is able to bring peace to those who are His. **Peace:** In contrast to the storm that revealed the power of God, His power is able to bring peace to those who trust in Him. We would conclude that the psalmist wanted us to understand that peace could come only from One who was powerful enough to control all things.

CHAPTER 30

DELIVERANCE FROM DEATH

The deliverance from death that is passionately cried out for in this psalm may have been death from sickness (Compare Is 38:18-20). The title indicates that the psalm was read at the dedication of the house of David.

30:1-3 The psalmist felt delivered from the face of death. The context of the psalm could be that after years of turmoil and possible death, he felt that this was the occasion for thanking God for his deliverance on many occasions when he could have died.

30:4-9 *Sing to the Lord:* This is a psalm of gratitude. The psalmist had been delivered from certain death, but lived to call on all to give praise to God for His deliverance. The psalmist lived through the night of weeping for his life, but the dawn brought joy. In his prosperity he had become arrogant and self-reliant. But he was brought low through illness in or-

der to realize that he must stand strong in the Lord. **Hid Your face:** It was not that God had turned away from the psalmist. In his prosperity, the psalmist had turned from God, and thus had to realize that self-sufficiency leads one away from God. **What profit:** There would have been no profit to the Lord if the psalmist died. On the contrary, his life would result in continual praise of the Lord. His deliverance from certain death would manifest to all the protection that the Lord provides for His anointed.

30:10-12 The prayer for deliverance was turned to praise. In this case, the psalmist looked into the future where he would praise the Lord forever (Rv 7:9-13). **Sackcloth:** Clothing that was used when mourning (35:13; Gn 37:34). **My glory:** This was the inner soul of the individual who gives praise to the Lord (See 16:9).

CHAPTER 31

COMPLAINT AND PRAISE

This is a psalm of lament and praise.

It is a psalm expressing trust in the Lord in times of trouble, with the subsequent

results of living triumphantly. It is an emotional journey of the psalmist from the lament of tears to the triumph of joy.

31:1-8 Trust: Regardless of all trials, one must trust in the Lord. Because of faith, one takes refuge in the Lord. And since the Lord always does right, we can have confidence that He will deliver us. When we listen to the Lord, He will be our rock of stability and house of protection. The metaphors of the psalm were taken from the mountain defenses where Israel won its battles against armies who trusted in horses and chariots that were useless for battle in the mountains. Israel was so effective in winning against the attack of the enemies in the mountains that the Syrians thought they believed in a god of the hills (1 Kg 20:28).

For Your name's sake: Deliverance was for the glory of God. In the historical setting, the nations would know that God was working for Israel in every battle in which they were victorious. Because they were outnumbered in many of their battles, the nations concluded that the God of Israel fought for them. **I commit my spirit:** Jesus quoted these words from the cross, interpreting them as an ultimate commitment of oneself into the care of God, the Father of our spirits. **God of truth:** Or, faithful God. **Lying vanities:** This was a term for the idols of false gods. Since the idolater used his gold and silver to make his idols, the meaning would be placing one's trust in the vanity of one's wealth that was manifested by the Jews through their idols of silver and gold. **Soul in adversities:** God acknowledged his distress. **Feet in a large room:** He was

established in a place where there is room to move.

31:9-13 I am in trouble: The psalmist now turned in his mood to a time of anguish. **My soul and my belly:** Because of trouble, his inner character and body were afflicted. It was as if his life were wasting away because of the turmoil in which he was cast. The reproach of enemies and repulsion by friends had brought him to the depths of despair. As Job in the midst of his suffering, there was no one who would take his side. The psalmist was in the midst of similar suffering that Job had to endure.

31:14-18 Regardless of the suffering that he was enduring, the psalmist trusted in the Lord. He committed his existence to God, thus trusting in the providential hand of God to work in his life. **My times:** He felt that his destiny was in the control of God. **Not be ashamed:** He called on God for deliverance in order that he not be embarrassed before others because he had trusted in God. When God delivered, it would be the wicked who would be ashamed of their faith, because that in which they trusted would not deliver them from calamity. **Let them be silent:** This was an imprecatory request that the enemies of the psalmist meet their judgment at the hand of God.

31:19-24 The psalmist now turns to hope and triumph. This was triumph that comes as a result of trusting in God. God has stored up a wealth of goodness for those who put their trust in Him. Thus God is a refuge for all those who are suffering from the plots of those who would

destroy His people. His kindness is a fortress that cannot be overcome by the foes of His people. Because God preserves the faithful, the psalmist called on

His people to be of good courage. There is great reward for those who put their trust in the Lord.

CHAPTER 32

BLESSED FORGIVENESS AND TRUST

Similar to Psalm 51, this psalm is a penitential psalm. It is a didactic psalm that was written to teach others about the rejoicing of a forgiven heart. This is a psalm that reveals how God leads one through the process of repentance of sin as a means to grow spiritually.

32:1,2 Transgression: This is the strongest Hebrew word for sin. It includes not only the meaning of breaking law, but rebellion against law. The word "sin" refers to missing the standard of moral behavior that is expected by law. Transgression, however, is treason against the one who made the law. In forgiveness for transgression, one is restored to the guidance of God, and subsequently to obedience of the law of God. In forgiveness of sin, God covers the wayward disobedience of the sinner who violates law. **Does not input iniquity:** Being absolved of sin, God does not hold one accountable for what he has done. When God responds with grace, He does not take account of the sinfulness of man (See comments Rm 4:6-8). **No guile:** God considers the repentant transgressor as one who has turned from his rebellion and treason. Through the confession of sin, one lays himself open before God, and thus enjoys the grace of God.

32:3-5 Some have suggested that

reference here was to a physical sickness that the psalmist endured. But another interpretation could be that he was so stricken with the guilt of his sin that he physically wasted away until he was driven to repentance (Compare 2 Sm 12:7-14). Such would have been the result of David's sinning, for as a man after God's own heart, he could not continue living with the knowledge that he had deliberately sinned against God (See comments ch 51). Relief came only when he acknowledged his sin. The feeling of guilt cannot be disregarded by those who seek to be godly. Since in this case pardon came with confession, then we would assume that the unpardonable sin is the sin one will not confess and from which one will not repent.

32:6,7 You can be found: God cannot be found by those who refuse to repent. It is not that God has hidden Himself from the sinner, but that we with an unrepentant heart seek to hide from God. God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to endure, and thus one can always come to Him through repentance (1 Co 10:13).

32:8-11 When one returns to the Lord in full confession and repentance, he has submitted himself to God's instruction (33:18; 34:15). In rebellion, one seeks to live according to his own rules. In repentance, one seeks to return to the rule

of God in his life. **Be glad in the Lord:** One can rejoice in the Lord because he has relinquished his will to the guidance of the Lord. If one constantly struggles

against the will of the Lord, he can have little joy and peace of mind (See Ec 2:26; 8:15; 9:7; Ph 4:4).

CHAPTER 33

PRAISE THE CREATOR

This psalm of praise focuses on the sovereignty of God and the power of His word. God is praised because of His creation and how He has worked in His creation. The psalm concludes by focusing on the redemption that God provides for man.

33:1-9 You righteous: The psalm is directed to believers, to those who have obediently responded to God's revelation through creation and directly through His word. **Becoming of the upright:** Righteous people do not need to be commanded to worship God. It is a natural response for them to worship because they recognize the awesomeness of God. **Harp ... psaltery:** Both of these stringed instruments were introduced by David in order to bring an atmosphere of tranquility during the sacrificial events at the temple. The harp is the oldest known stringed instrument (See Gn 4:21). The psaltery, or lyre, was first mentioned in 1 Samuel 10:5. Some have assumed that it originated with the Phoenicians. **Righteousness and judgment:** God loves just judgment. Since He is a God of truth, then His judgment can only be just. **Goodness of the Lord:** When God created the world in the beginning, it was good. All that He has done throughout history, has been good. The presence of evil in the world, therefore, is the result

of the work of Satan. **By the word of the Lord:** God's spoken word resulted in the creation of the universe. Thus the creation was spoken into existence (Compare Cl 1:16; Hb 1:3). **Waters:** God originally created seas by the dividing of the waters from the land. Waters were gathered above the firmament in the heavens and in underground reservoirs (See comments Gn 1:9,10). **He spoke:** God is to be revered and feared for His power because it was by His spoken word that He created all things.

33:10-17 Nations to nought: The psalmist introduced this next section of the psalm by contrasting the power of God with the power of the nations. The governments of the world may propose plans, but it is God who is running the show. **Nation whose God is the Lord:** When a nation gives up on God, it gives up God's moral standard for society. The nation that has given up on God's moral standards, therefore, has turned in the direction of doom, for it is not within man to determine his own moral standards. **He has chosen:** As it was with the nation of Israel, so it is with the church. God chose the nation of Israel, and thus everyone who was physically born into the nation became a chosen person of God. God chose the church for eternal dwelling (See Ep 1). Everyone who is spiritually born into the church by obedience to the gos-

pel, becomes a member of the chosen body. People were not individually chosen by God to become Israelites. Neither are they individually chosen to become a part of the church. **Not saved by a mighty army:** No great army has been able to stop the disappearance of any nation of history. The great Roman army preserved Rome for five centuries, but eventually Rome fell. Only God transitions through time, and thus preserves those who put their trust in Him. **Horse:** Though great in strength, there is a limit to what a great horse can do to provide safety in battle.

33:18-22 Eye of the Lord: God has no eye, but the metaphor here is significant in reference to His relationship with those who have put their trust in Him. He always “sees” the needs of those who obey Him. He delivers them from death and preserves them through times of drought. He is thus our help in times of need and our shield in times of assault by the wicked. **Because ... according:** There are conditions for the Lord to work in our lives. The conditions are our trust in Him and our faith in the hope that He has set before us (See Rm 8:24,25; Hb 6:17-20).

CHAPTER 34

THE PROVIDER AND DELIVERER

This is a psalm of the deliverance of David when he changed his behavior before Abimeleck in order to spare his own life (1 Sm 21:10-15).

34:1-6 At all times: See 1 Th 5:17. Our worship of God is not confined to a specific time of worship. No one who has given himself to the Lord confines his praise of the Lord to certain times or places. “At all times” assumes that in every place one gives praise to God (See comments Rm 12:1,2). **Delivered me from all my fears:** The fear of the Lord delivers us from the fear of man. **Radiant:** The result of keeping one’s face toward the Lord is that the radiance of the Lord flows from one’s heart and is perceived in one’s life (Compare Js 1:1-3).

34:7-10 The angel of the Lord: The word “angel” that is here preceded

by the article “the” indicates that this was not just any angel. This was the Angel of God’s presence who is one with God (See 35:5,6; Gn 16:7,13; Jg 13:21,22; Hs 12:4,5). We would consider this Angel the preincarnate Christ who existed as one with the triune God. We would assume that the preincarnate Christ would work in some realm before coming into the world in the form of man. In this mention of Him, He worked to protect the righteous and deliver them from calamity. **No lack:** See comments Mt 6:25-34.

34:11-14 I will teach you: God teaches through the instruction of His word (See 2 Tm 2:15). What He teaches are moral principles by which one can cohabit with others in society. **Fear of the Lord:** This would be obedience to the Lord as a result of recognizing His awesomeness. In order to be God’s son, one must have a right attitude toward God that

results in a life-style of obedience to His will. If one would see good in his life, then he must submit to the will of the Lord. The psalmist thus gives moral principles by which one should live. One principle deals with what comes from one's mouth, and the other concerning how he behaves. When one seeks peace with his fellow man, he will be cautious about what he says and how he behaves.

34:15-22 The contrast of the individuals explained in verses 15 & 16 emphasizes the willingness of God to protect and provide for those who seek peace with man as a result of their desire to do God's will. **The Lord ... saves:** This is not a context of salvation from sin. Reference is to salvation from danger and death. In the case of David, God delivered David out of numerous perils in his life. He was delivered because he had given himself to the Lord. His deliverance, therefore, was a testimony of God's

presence and work in his life. **Many ... afflictions:** Simply because one is a child of God does not mean that he will escape hardships in this life. However, knowing that God will not allow His children to be tempted beyond what they are able to endure encourages them to remain true to their faith (See 1 Co 10:13). For this reason, Christians can rejoice in their trials (Js 1:2,3). **His bones:** Bones are the structural framework of the body, and thus God metaphorically provides structure to the life of the righteous. Though the wicked will reap the reward of their evil, God will preserve those who are His. **Redeems:** The Lord continues to deliver His people in order that they not become desolate. In a spiritual sense, the metaphor would apply to the continual cleansing of the sins of the righteous in order that they stand pure before God (See comments 1 Jn 1:7).

CHAPTER 35

PLEA FOR RESCUE

This is an imprecatory psalm wherein the psalmist cried out to the Lord for judgment to come on his enemies because they had treacherously sought to destroy him. It is not that the psalmist asked God to aid him in order that he might personally bring evil upon his enemies. He asked God to avenge him by destroying his enemies (Dt 32:35; Rm 12:19).

35:1-10 Strive with me: The psalmist sought vindication. In strife with his enemies he took his case before the Lord and asked the Lord to go to battle for him. He desired that the Lord step in and de-

fend all those who had taken their stand against him. We must keep in mind that an imprecatory psalm was based on the fact that an attack against God's anointed king was an attack on God and His people. The imprecatory demand of the psalmist was not a call for a personal vendetta. **Salvation:** This is not in a redemptive context. Reference is to deliverance from death (3:8). The imagery of the battle is seated in the desire of the psalmist to be used as God's instrument to defeat His enemies. Thus the psalmist is calling on God to work through him in order to confuse and scatter his enemies. The

basis for the plea of David was that since he was the anointed of God, his enemies were actually fighting against God. ***Destruction ... unawares:*** As a hunter, Saul had planned traps for David. But David asked that Saul be caught in his own traps.

35:11-18 *I humbled my soul:* No greater exhortation could be made to God's leaders. David was slanderously attacked by Saul and his band of deceived companions. But David responded with a humble heart, praying with fasting for those who slandered him. Godly leaders do not unreasonably react to the attacks of their enemies, but go to God in prayer.

My prayer returned: The prayers of David concerning his adversaries were not answered at this time. His enemies were relentless in pursuing him. Thus the benefit of the prayers came back on David, for they manifested his righteousness, as well as the fulfillment of his responsibility to pray for one's enemies. ***In my adversity they rejoiced:*** David received no sympathy from his adversaries. They rejoiced in his calamity. Though stricken with grief because of the relentless attack of those who were against him, David remained faithful to

his calling as the anointed of God. He did not return the slander. He simply maintained his destiny as God's man to stand as the anointed of God in the face of great opposition, assuming that with his anointing to be king came also the attack of envious people. ***Gnashed on me:*** This was an expression of rage, anger and hatred (37:12; 112:10; Jb 16:9). When used in the New Testament, reference was to agony that resulted from extreme disappointment (Mt 8:12; 13:42,50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30).

35:19-28 *Wink with the eye:* In their wicked behavior to persecute him, David did not want his enemies to have the satisfaction of their own self-approval. The enemies crafted plots against those who wanted to live in peace. They had boasted with opened mouths that they had seen the conquest of David. ***Let them be ashamed:*** In the midst of those who shouted for victory over David, David pleaded that the Lord come to his defense to work through him for the downfall of his enemies. By doing this, all would see that God worked for David, and thus the enemies would become ashamed of their attacks against God's anointed.

CHAPTER 36

WICKED MEN AND LOVING GOD

This is a psalm of wisdom. It contrasts the life of the wicked with the life of those who live after the wisdom of God.

36:1-4 *Oracle:* This term was used to refer to a prophetic statement. The word was personified by the psalmist to

make a pronouncement concerning the wicked. In this context, the wicked would be the person who acknowledged the existence of God, but devised iniquity, deceit and mischief. This is the person who is totally consumed with his own life. He uses others for his own means. He abhors what is right. ***Until his iniquity is found:*** The great deception of the wicked

is that they think they will not be found out. Their deceiving of others is based on their own belief that others will not discover their deception. They are thus self-deceived. The wicked have thus forsaken wisdom and followed a course of life in which they have their own delight.

36:5-9 *You preserve man and beast:* Contrary to the lack of wisdom on the part of the self-serving wicked man, the righteous enjoy the preservation of a

merciful God who seeks to care for those who love Him (See 91:4). Those who wisely put their trust in the Lord will enjoy the blessings that come forth from God.

36:10-12 The psalm concludes with a request by the psalmist that God preserve him from the insolent because he put his trust in God. The prayer is that the will of the wicked not overcome those who have wisely trusted in God.

CHAPTER 37

SECURITY AND INSECURITY

This is a wisdom psalm that deals with the prosperity of the wicked. This psalm exhorts the righteous not to fret over the prosperity of the wicked, since such prosperity is only temporary.

37:1-11 The righteous should not fret over the inequities of life, but seek for the contentment that is gained through one's commitment to God. Though life is filled with inequities in reference to wealth, one must be content with the fact that wealth does not determine whether one is in favor with God. Thus one's envy of the wealth of the wicked is a useless expense of one's thinking. *Dwell ... fed:* As long as one has food and shelter, then he must be content to live in righteousness before God (Jn 14:13; 15:7; Ph 4:19). *Wait patiently for Him:* Worry, envy and impatience are tools of the devil to ensnare the righteous. The righteous must keep in mind that the wealth of the wicked is only temporary in the sense that in death the wicked will lose all their wealth. Therefore, one should not sacri-

fice his contentment by envying those things that will eventually pass away, both at the time of death and at the end of the world (See comments 2 Pt 3:10-16).

37:12-22 In the historical context, David reassured the righteous that the plots of evil men will come to an end. The Lord laughs at the wicked in the sense that He knows that their end will come. The weapons of destruction that were aimed against the righteous will destroy those who sought to inflict pain on the righteous. In the end, the little that the righteous have will outlast the wealth of the wicked. This will come about because God supports the righteous, but works against the wicked. What is important, therefore, is one's obedient relationship with God. The evidence of one's obedience should not be based on whether he is blessed with wealth, or lives in poverty.

37:23-31 The righteous must be assured that God is working for them. *The steps of a good man:* The behavior of the righteous is ordered by God in that

the righteous have voluntarily submitted to the will of God. All things will work together for good for those who put their trust in the Lord (Rm 8:28). ***The law of his God is in his heart:*** This would be the secret for the blessings that come from the Lord. The character of the righteous is defined by his obedience to the law of God. In his obedience, God goes to work for him. His spiritual legacy, therefore, will be preserved by his descendants.

37:32-40 This section of the psalm concludes the contrast between the righteous and wicked. The wicked oppress the righteous, but the Lord delivers those who are His. By their knowledge of His

deliverance, the righteous are encouraged to be patient and to wait on the Lord. They will eventually see the deliverance of God from their unjust treatment by the wicked. The Lord is the salvation of the righteous, their strength in times of trial, and their help and deliverance because they have put their trust in Him. If the righteous put their trust in the Lord, ignore the position and prosperity of the wicked, then they will gain contentment and the secret to a happy life. True happiness does not follow wealth, but is discovered in the spirit of one who does not allow the environment in which he lives to determine his attitude or character.

CHAPTER 38

TIMES OF REMORSE

This is a penitential psalm (Compare 6; 32). The psalm, which is attributed to David, is a psalm of great remorse. The psalmist was burdened with guilt for his sin. The psalm is traditionally believed to have been written by David after his sin with Bathsheba. The remorse that is expressed in the psalm was so great that the psalmist was suffering from some physical illness, and thus cried out to God in repentance.

38:1-8 God generally does not inflict sickness for sin (See Jb 2:7-10). However, on some occasions He has (See 1 Ch 11:30; Js 5:15). In the context of this psalm, the psalmist felt that God had chastised him with sickness because of his sin. At least in the despair of his illness, his heart was turned to focus on his sin. ***Iniquities are overwhelming:*** If one is sincere in pleasing God, then when

he does sin his sin bears heavily on his conscience. The psalmist was thus in agony over his sin. His sin had brought great turmoil in his heart, and thus being knowledgeable of his sin, he could have no peace of mind.

38:9-14 The sin of his life had left him vulnerable. Friends and family had forsaken him, which left him vulnerable to the attack of his enemies. He was as one who could not hear or speak out for himself.

38:15-22 ***I am ready to fall:*** When men sink low into the guilt of sin that produces repentance, then it is a time when God goes to work. Only when we mourn over our sins can God redeem us from our despair (See comments Mt 5:1-12). God goes to work when men confess their sin. Though the psalmist had sunk deep into despair because of the guilt of his sin, he had not forgotten where to go to

find forgiveness and peace of mind. He had not turned from God, and thus deep

in the despair of the guilt for his sin, he turned to God.

CHAPTER 39

VANITY OF LIFE

In this sequel to the preceding psalm, the psalmist views sin from the perspective of the brevity of human life. The psalm is penitential, but the penitence is not expressed in the extremity of Psalm 38.

39:1-6 Muzzle: The psalmist felt that his emotions had to be restrained, lest he speak in complaint against the Lord for his brevity of life. It seems that the psalmist relinquished himself to the Lord because life was so short that it should not be consumed with complaint. **Riches:** Because life is so short, there is folly in trying to amass riches. For this reason, the wise see past the temporary futility of riches in order to focus on those things that go beyond life. By the time one realizes the futility of a wasted life in seeking riches, it is often too late to repent

and turn to God.

39:7-13 The psalmist's hope was in the Lord's deliverance from his sin. In deliverance from sin, the psalmist saw healing from his sickness. **Give ear to my cry:** The psalmist's petition was that the Lord hear the remorse of his heart because of his transgression in order that he be delivered from his illness. **Stranger ... sojourner:** This was one who had the benefits of the land, but was only passing through (See Ex 22:21). Thus the psalmist was only passing through life, benefiting from what God had prepared in the world for the habitation of man. In the brevity of one's life on earth, he enjoyed the creation that was owned by God. Before passing from life, the psalmist wanted to be forgiven of his sin, and thus healed of his physical illness before he died.

CHAPTER 40

SACRIFICE FOR HELP

This psalm may be a combination of two different psalms. Verses 12-17 are similar to Psalm 70. It is a psalm where the psalmist gives a sacrifice of praise, and then a prayer for help.

40:1-5 I waited patiently: David had to wait for his answer from the Lord. Simply because a prayer is uttered, does not mean that God must immediately respond. **Pit ... clay ... rock:** When one waits for God's answer to prayer, through faith he will be lifted from the quagmire

of despondency and placed on a solid foundation. Deliverance from the turmoil of life calls for a new song of joy because of answered prayer. **Wonderful works:** Recognizing answered prayer is joy to the believer. Once one is perceptive of the work of God in his life, he cannot count the number of times the Lord has come to his aid. Such is evidence that no person can possibly count how many times God has come to the aid of His people. We cannot count the number of times simply because we are not always percep-

tive to all the times when He has aided us.

40:6-12 *Did not desire sacrifice and offering:* It was not that God set aside the law for sacrifices and offerings. The giving of such manifested one's desire to worship. What God did not accept were sacrifices and offerings that were legalistic, and were given without a sincere heart (See Is 1:11-15; Mc 6:6-8). God does not accept ritualistic worship. Verses 6-8 are also quoted in Hebrews 10:5-7 in reference to the Messiah, thus the secondary fulfillment of these words would apply to Jesus. ***I delight to do Your will:*** God's commandments are not

a burden to those who love the Lord (1 Jn 5:3). They are not a burden because obedience is the natural result of one's recognition of God's love. The righteous, therefore, consider it a great joy to proclaim the grace and mercy of God (See 2 Co 4:15).

40:13-17 These verses are almost parallel to Psalm 70. ***Help me:*** David cried out for deliverance from those who sought to destroy him. He not only cried out for himself, but asked the Lord to deliver all those who cry out for deliverance from their oppressors. He asked that desolation be the reward of those who scorn the righteous.

CHAPTER 41

COMPLAINTS AGAINST ENEMIES

There is no rhythm of thought in this psalm. It focuses on many subjects, and thus is written as a proverbial psalm. The primary focus of the psalm is lament, but it deals with a variety of subjects that touched the life of the psalmist. Throughout the psalm, the psalmist in sickness complains of being oppressed by his enemies and his false friends.

41:1-3 *The poor:* In these verses David possibly reflected on the benefits he received from the Lord as a result of his care for the unfortunate. He received deliverance, blessing, strength and mercy from the Lord because he had shown the same to the poor (Compare Lv 19:9,10; 23:22; Dt 24:19). ***Sustain him on his bed:*** He had faith that the Lord would bring health to him while he was on his sickbed.

41:4-9 As David had shown mercy

to others, the Lord showed mercy to him. ***When will he die:*** David's enemies rejoiced over his sickness, thinking that he would be taken away by death. They plotted evil against him while he was in sickness. ***Familiar friend:*** In the historical context of the psalm this could have been Ahithophel (2 Sm 15:12,31). Ahithophel betrayed David, as Jesus was betrayed by Judas (Jn 13:18).

41:10-13 *I may repay them:* If the historical context of this psalm was the insurrection of Absalom, then as a restored king, David felt that it was his duty to render justice to those who had betrayed him. ***Blessed is the Lord:*** This doxology closes the first book of psalms. ***Everlasting:*** Since God is eternal, His blessing is without beginning and ending. His existence is certain and will not go away simply because men refuse to have Him in their minds.

Book II

(42:1 – 72:20)

The word *Yahweh* (“the Lord”) was used primarily in Book I in reference to Deity. In Book II the word *Elohim* (God) is the primary reference to Deity. For this reason, Book II is referred to as the Elohist Psalms.

CHAPTER 42

SEEKING GOD IN EXILE

Psalms 42 & 43 were probably one psalm originally. Both are psalms of lament. In the titles, reference is made to Korah, from whom came the temple servants (See 1 Ch 9:19; 26:1,19), and Heman, who was a descendant of the temple singers who were originally organized by David (1 Ch 15:17; 16:41,42; 25:4,5). Psalm 42 is the plea of a believer in the midst of unbelievers. The psalmist seems to be in exile among those who have no faith in the God of Israel. While in exile, he recalls the times when he was able to go unto the house of God with all those who worshiped.

42:1-5 *Pants after the water:* This craving for communion with God should define the spiritual character of God's people (See comments Rm 12:1,2). ***The living God:*** This is the contrast between the true God and the pagan idols of man that were represented by carvings in wood and stone, or the forming of an image out of silver or gold. The living God of heaven is active in the lives of men. Pagan gods are only the result of the active imagination of men. ***I remember:***

The psalmist gives no information as to why he was in exile. But his remembrance of former times when he accompanied the worshipers of God to the place of the ark of God, brought back cherished memories of joy. ***Help of His countenance:*** David was confident that his predicament would change once God turned His face toward his needs.

42:6-11 *Mount Mizar:* This mount is in the northern part of Palestine, within sight of Mt. Hermon. It was to this region that David fled during the insurrection of his son, Absalom. ***Deep calls to deep:*** The psalmist's life was as one flood coming after another. He was being overcome with the torrents of those who opposed him. ***Still praise Him:*** Regardless of the turmoil that was in the life of David, he continued to put his trust in God. The calamity that had befallen him never became an occasion for him to complain against God. He maintained his hope even during one of the most trying times of his life, the times during the betrayal and insurrection of his son, Absalom.

CHAPTER 43

PLEA FOR DELIVERANCE

This psalm continues the lament of David over unjust treatment. He seeks to be delivered from the unjust judgment

of men.

43:1-5 *Plead my cause:* The psalmist asked for vindication. ***Deceitful and unjust man:*** This was the gen-

eral character of the people who were against the psalmist, not a particular person. **Light ... truth:** Those who would seek to be led by God must continually look toward His guidance and the truth of His word. **Holy hill:** Possibly the mountain where the tabernacle was located in Jerusalem. **Tabernacle:** The dwelling place of God was represented

by the tabernacle. It was a symbol of His presence in Israel. **Why ... in despair:** Since the psalmist had just reviewed his hope in God, he concluded by questioning why he was in despair. It was a time to count it all joy in his time of trial (Js 1:2,3). If one would live a godly life, he must expect persecution (2 Tm 3:12).

CHAPTER 44

PAST DELIVERANCES AND PRESENT TROUBLES

The historical setting of this psalm was a time of national despair. Though the captivity that is referred to in verse 11 could be understood to be the Babylonian captivity, it could also refer to a time when Israel was subdued by the nations around her, which national subjections took place before the final fall of Judah in 586 B.C. On the other hand, there are indications in the psalm that the immediate historical context is to a specific time in their history when Israel suffered a defeat by her enemies.

44:1-3 The psalmist recalled the time of their obedience when God worked to deliver the nations of the land into their hand. Israel's conquest of Palestine was not by military skill. It was the result of God working with the Israelite army to empower each soldier to rid the land of the Canaanites.

44:4-8 **Jacob:** Reference was to the nation of Israel. The psalmist pleaded that Israel again be delivered from her enemies by the strong arm of God working through them. If God would remember His people, then they would again

humble their enemies in order to boast that God worked for them.

44:9-16 **You have cast off:** This was not without reason. God cast them off because they had cast off God. This was the reality of their situation at the time the psalmist wrote. At a time when they believed in Him alone, God had worked through them to cast the enemies of Israel out of the land of Palestine. But at this time in their history they had put their trust in false gods, and thus God had terminated His work through them in order to lead them to be victorious over their enemies. **Taunt:** They were scorned by the nations around them. **Byword:** See Dt 28:37. **A scorn and a derision:** Because they forsook their God, the nations around them who had believed that their God brought them into possession of the land, now mocked them and their God. Since Israel had broken the conditions of God's covenant, God had broken Himself off from them. He left them as sheep for slaughter. **Dishonor:** They had brought disgrace on themselves and God because of their disobedience.

44:17-22 **We have not forgotten You:** It may have been that they had just

suffered a major defeat in battle. The psalmist expressed his personal faith on behalf of the nation, and thus recalled that the nation sought to keep the covenant that God had established with them at Mt. Sinai. His faithfulness was the reason for his calling on God to deliver the nation from those who had defeated them. **Search this out:** As Job, the psalmist knew that God knew their hearts. He called on God to deliver them according

to their commitment to the covenant that God had made with the nation.

44:23-26 Awake ... arise: The psalmist here spoke of God as a man who should awake and arise on behalf of His people. **Hide ... forget:** When in times of great despair, the psalmist felt that God had forsaken them to the will of their enemies. Thus the call on God to arise and remember was a call that God take action and deliver them from their enemies.

CHAPTER 45

CELEBRATING THE KING'S MARRIAGE

Hebrews 1:8,9 refers to this psalm in reference to the Messiah. There is an immediate historical application of the message of this psalm, which is the marriage of the king. But because the writer of Hebrews refers to it in a Messianic context, there is a secondary application to the Messiah.

45:1-9 The immediate historical context of this psalm is to the king and his marriage. It is a praise of the grandeur of the king and his work among the people. If we understand that this glorious description of an earthly king is a metaphor of King Jesus, then we can appreciate the extent to which the psalmist goes in describing the king. **Your throne ... forever and ever:** This statement would take us to the center of authority of the throne of David and the succeeding kings of Israel that would come from the lineage of David. Since the throne was forever, but each earthly king only reigns temporary, then we would conclude that the authority of the throne

rested in God, not man. The use of the word “forever” does not necessarily refer to time, but to certainty. It was a throne (authority) that permeated time, for its authority originated with God, not man. Verses 6,7 were quoted by the Hebrew writer in order to apply this message to the reign of Jesus (Hb 1:8,9). **Anointed:** This is the word from which the noun “Messiah” is derived. The Greek equivalent is the noun “Christ.” **Worship him:** In the immediate context we would conclude that the queen would reverence the king. But the use of the word “worship” would lead us to conclude that the secondary application is in the mind of the psalmist. It is the church that gives glory to King Jesus. **Gold of Ophir:** See 1 Kg 9:26-28; 22:48.

45:10-17 Verses 10-15 are a description of the bride of the king. The bride of the king is an illustration of the church. We would conclude that the description here is far beyond the queen of an earthly king, and thus a description of the glory of the church as the bride of Christ. Verses 16,17 conclude with a de-

scription of the blessedness of the union between the king and the queen. The glorious union produces a posterity that generates praise from the people. In this

case, the posterity of the king would continue to reign as kings, which reign of kings would end in Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 46

GOD IS OUR REFUGE

Psalms 46-48 focus on the strength of God to aid His people. In view of 2 Peter 3, the psalm could be apocalyptic in reference to God's sovereignty over all things that will eventually lead to the destruction of the present existing worlds. The psalmist seeks to encourage the righteous by revealing to them the awesome power of God to control and destroy all that exists.

46:1-11 *Though the earth is removed:* The courage of God's people rests in the fact that God has control over all things (See comments Hb 1:3). Regardless of immediate disasters, or the

end-of-time destruction of the present world (2 Pt 3:10-13), God is in control of all things. *In the midst of her:* God is omnipresent. He is always present with His creation. Thus His people must be assured that He is always present with them for their help. *Makes wars to cease:* Reference here could be to the Messianic age (See Is 2:2-4; Hs 2:18; Mc 4:1-3). War ceases among those who are His people. Though carnal warfare continues in the environment of the saints, war among the saints terminates. However, at the end of time, war will cease among all men, for the wicked will be taken away from the righteous.

CHAPTER 47

THE SOVEREIGN GOD OF ALL THINGS

The theme of this second psalm of the trilogy of praise to God is the sovereignty of God. It is a psalm that calls on the people of the world to give praise to God for He is king of all things. It concludes with a description of the awesomeness of God in all His glory.

47:1-4 All people of the world are called together to praise the awesome God who subdues the earth. *King over all the earth:* Though God reigns from a heavenly realm, He is king of the earth. God does not have to set foot on this earth in order to reign over the earth. God, the

Father, now reigns without being on this earth (44:4; 48:2; 74:12; 1 Sm 12:12; Is 41:21). Jesus has now assumed this reign. He has now ascended to the throne in heaven and reigns over all things (Dn 7:13,14; Ep 1:20-24; Ph 2:5-11). If we say that Jesus must be on earth in order to reign over the earth, then we have assumed that God, the Father, during the Old Testament era, was not reigning over all the earth. Jesus is now reigning over all the earth as the Father reigned over all the earth before the ascension of Jesus (Mt 28:18).

47:5-9 *Sing praises:* This is the natural response to those who recognize

that God is the king of all things. **God reigns:** At the time this psalm was written, God was reigning over all things. However, He was not reigning on earth. Therefore, God can reign without being on earth. He reigns through the hearts of those who have given themselves to Him. This is how Jesus is now reigning over the obedient (See Lk 17:20,21; see comments Rm 5:17). But as the Father's reign extended beyond the nation of Israel, so the kingdom of Jesus extends

beyond the church. Jesus is head of all things for the sake of the church (Ep 1:20-24). All the church is within the kingdom reign of Jesus, but not all who are under the kingdom reign of Jesus are in the church (See 1 Pt 3:22). Jesus does not have to be on earth in order to reign over earth. This psalm explains a very important aspect of the reign of Jesus. Jesus is now King of kings and Lord of lords, though not all kings and lords of this world are in the church (1 Tm 6:15).

CHAPTER 48

THE GLORY OF ZION

This psalm seems to have a historical setting that pictured a future Messianic fulfillment. The immediate historical setting could be the deliverance of Jerusalem from the attack of Sennacherib who was king of the Assyrians (2 Kg 18; 19; Is 36; 37). The secondary application, however, would be the future Messianic kingdom (See Hb 12:18-24).

48:1-8 City of our God: This would be Jerusalem, the city that was chosen by David and eventually became the capital of the southern kingdom, Judah. **Palaces for a refuge:** The historical setting may be that there was an attack against the city, but the attackers were driven away in fear (See 2 Kg 19:35,36). **Trad-**

ing ships: See 1 Kg 22:48; Jh 1:3-16.

48:9-14 God's protection during times of siege encourages our praise of Him. Through His mercy He delivers us from our adversaries. For this reason, we should rejoice always in His name (Ph 4:4). **Tell it:** The deliverance of Jerusalem from her attackers was a message that should be told to everyone. It should be told because God was the one who delivered the city. In reference to the Zion of God today, the church, it should be told to all that God has delivered His people by the cross of Jesus. Our deliverance from sin by the gospel of Jesus is our message to the nations that God is merciful and willing to extend grace to all.

CHAPTER 49

THE VANITY OF WEALTH

This psalm deals with a problem that made Job question God while he was enduring his calamity. He wondered why the wicked prospered, but at the same time the righteous suffered in their pov-

erty (Compare chs 37 & 73). The answer to the question is that the wealth of the rich is only temporary. Though there may be inequalities in this life, death will take away the riches of the wealthy. Thus the final answer to the question lies in the

fact that in death the righteous poor receive their riches, but the rich are stripped of theirs. As the rich become more entangled in their wealth in this life, they become like beasts who are claimed by death and are no more (See comments Lk 12:16-21).

49:1-4 Wisdom ... understanding:

The psalmist called on the readers to listen to wisdom and consider understanding from the eternal viewpoint of God. **Proverb:** What is revealed here is a wise saying to be understood. **Dark saying:** This was a riddle or parable of some profound thought. What was revealed in the psalm was the folly of the rich who trusted in their wealth.

49:5-12 Trust in their wealth and boast: This is the folly of the rich. No amount of riches can be given to God to redeem one from his predicament of sin. No money can be paid for the redemption of one's dead brother. The folly in thinking such is that one would be attempting to buy God's favor with the riches of this world. The foolishness of such beliefs is that God can create His own gold and silver. **Their soul is costly:** Nothing short of the precious blood of Jesus, the Son of God, can pay the price of redemption for the soul of man (See 1 Pt 1:17-21). **Leave their wealth:** No one takes any wealth with him into the grave. All is left. That for which a person has labored all his life is left behind and often squandered by those who did not work for it (See Ec 2:18,19). The psalmist's proverb was not to the wealthy, but to the poor who would envy the state and status of the wealthy in this world. Their envy

would be folly if based on the belief that wealth in any way gave one a spiritual advantage in reference to redemption.

49:13-15 Their way is their folly:

It would be well for the poor to always remember this truth. Those who consume themselves, both with acquiring and consuming the wealth of the world, often lose their focus on that which permeates death. **Dominion over them in the morning:** In this statement there is the reality of a bodily resurrection. And in the resurrection from the dead, the righteous will be raised to inherit the riches of eternity, whereas those who were wealthy on earth will be raised for destruction (See comments Mt 25:46; 2 Th 1:6-9).

49:16-20 Do not be afraid when one is made rich:

The folly of the poor would be to conclude that the rich are blessed by God. Satan would bless one with material things in order to keep him satisfied with that which will pass away. We assume that riches are always the blessing of God. But we must also assume that Satan would work to make one wealthy in order to keep him away from God. Though wealth in this world may offer temporary pleasures and happiness in this life, we must never forget that all the world offers in riches will be taken away in death. Wealth is never more valuable than piety, and in most cases works against the development of piety. **Carry nothing away:** The rich will not take any riches to the grave. **Will not descend:** Sheol was considered down, and thus when one died he went down into Sheol, into which place the rich will take nothing.

CHAPTER 50

THE JUDGE OF ALL MEN

The legalistic Israelite felt that he could, in his insincerity, worship God according to the ritual of sacrifices. The psalmist in this psalm affirms that insincere ceremonies cannot take the place of obedient faith. Out of obedient faith comes praise and thanksgiving. The problem with a legal offering of sacrifices is that the offerings can be made without praise and thanksgiving. The sin of the legalist is in his keeping of law while forgetting to give glory to God with his heart. He keeps the ceremony of the law, but forgets the spirit of the law.

50:1-6 *Called the earth:* This psalm begins with a call of God to judge all His people of all the world (Compare Gn 6:11; 9:13; Dt 32:1). *Covenant with Me:* These are those who must submit to the judgment of God. *His righteousness:* This is the foundation upon which God has a right to judge His people. In many contexts of the psalms, "righteousness" can be translated justice, for it is the same word as "justice" or "just." Because God is the only just one, He only has a right to call all into a final judgment.

50:7-15 Israel was faithful in legally performing the sacrifices of the law. This

was not God's complaint against them. Neither was God looking to be fed as a man with the meat of the animals of the world, for all the world belonged to Him. What Israel was not offering was obedience (keeping their vows) and thanksgiving in prayer that brought Him glory. His goodness toward them had not motivated thanksgiving (See 2 Co 4:15; compare Mk 12:33,34). They were only performing the rituals of the law.

50:16-23 *To declare my statutes:* The wicked among Israel declared (proclaimed) the statutes of God by legally offering the sacrifices. However, they did not give glory to God in their hearts or offer thanksgiving for His goodness. *Consented with him:* They not only did wrong, the wicked also consented to the wrong of others (Rm 1:32). They kept silent when wrong was done, and thus revealed their own wickedness through their consent. *Now consider:* There was still time to repent. God offered them an opportunity to change (At 17:30,31; 2 Pt 3:9; Rv 2:5). However, after the opportunity was given, it was time for judgment. God stands just because He gives people an opportunity to repent.

CHAPTER 51

PRAYER FOR PARDON

This most intense of all the penitential psalms is a prayer for forgiveness and a confession that comes forth from the heart of a truly repentant person. The psalmist confessed his sin, and then pleaded for forgiveness. His prayer was rewarded be-

cause of his humble spirit. The historical background was the sin of David in his sinful relationship with Bathsheba. Because of his sin with Bathsheba after living a conscientious obedient life, David came to the realization that sin can overcome even the most dedicated.

51:1-4 *Have mercy:* This is the only recourse of man in reference to his sin. No man can legally justify himself by obedience to law or the offering of good works. One can only plead for mercy and grace before the One against whom we have sinned. ***Blot out:*** See Is 43:25; Jr 18:23. ***Against You:*** Others had suffered from the consequences of David's sin. Uriah was dead. Bathsheba was a grieving widow. But David realized that his sin was against God, for God only could grant forgiveness.

51:5-9 *Brought forth in iniquity:* It was not that David was born a sinner. The passage is not speaking of the nature of David at the time of his birth, but the situation surrounding his conception and birth. Thus sin surrounded David's beginning, and sin was the environment into which he was born. But specifically, the sin refers to the mother, not to the one who was born. It is important to first understand that verse 5 is a Hebrew parallelism. In this style of poetry, two lines of poetry express the same thought in two different lines but with different words and phrases. The context is that David was talking about his conception, not his birth. And in discussing his conception, he was talking about the situation of his mother at the time of his conception. If the sin about which he was talking was inherited, therefore, this verse would not apply because the verse is discussing the situation of someone other than the one who is conceived. The context is that David is talking about the sin of his mother, who was a sinner as all men are sinners (Rm 3:23). Thus the two lines of the par-

allelism explain one another. Notice what David is saying in order to make this emphasis: Line 1: *I was brought forth in iniquity.* Line 2: *In sin my mother conceived me.* "Brought forth" of line 1 is explained in line 2 as "conceived." Therefore, conception is under discussion, not birth. "In iniquity" of line 1 is explained as "in sin" in line 2. "My mother" of line 2 refers us to whose sin is under discussion in line 1. Thus, the "iniquity" of line 1 would refer to David's mother. ***Purge me with hyssop:*** This was a sprig of a desert bush that was used to sprinkle blood on a leper by the priest to signify his cleansing (Lv 14:4; compare Hb 9:13,14; 1 Jn 1:7). ***Wash me:*** The Hebrew word for "wash" is the word that was used by those who beat clothes on a solid surface in order to dislodge grime. We often must reap what we sow in order to be brought to repentance. ***Snow:*** See Is 1:18. ***Bones ... broken:*** The imagery here was total submission to allow God to completely humble the psalmist because of his sin. Only from total submission through confession can one be restored to a right relationship with God.

5:10-13 *Clean heart ... right spirit:* This would be the result of forgiveness that resulted from sincere repentance. ***Holy Spirit:*** See Is 63:10,11. ***Joy:*** The result of forgiveness was that David experienced again the inner joy of God's grace. It was that joy that brought him peace of mind. ***I will teach:*** Experiencing God's grace moves one to tell others how God has extended his grace toward us (2 Co 4:15). When we understand how far we were away from God in sin, then

we understand the magnitude of God's grace to go and get us in order to bring us near to Him.

51:14-19 If one does not comprehend the blessedness of his own salvation, he will not be motivated to share it with others. Indifference to what God has done for us, kills our desire to share the praises of God with others. *Not de-*

sire sacrifice: Perfect obedience to law would not cover the sin of David. What God desired was a broken spirit that was manifested through repentance. The broken spirit would offer the sacrifices, but sacrifices without a broken spirit are useless. Sacrifices are accepted when offered by sincere hearts.

CHAPTER 52

THE VANITY OF BOASTING

This psalm is a contrast between the righteous and wicked, revealing the frustration the righteous have toward the wicked and their ungodly ways (See ch 1).

52:1-5 *O mighty man:* The psalmist challenged the arrogant wicked tyrant who boasted in his wickedness. *Destroy you forever:* The destruction of the wicked is certain (See comments 2 Th

1:6-9). Because he has proved in life that he is not fit for eternal dwelling, his destruction is certain.

52:6-9 *See and fear:* When the righteous see how God has destroyed the wicked out of the land of the living, they will fear lest they turn from the will of God. The righteous will taunt the wicked because of the judgment of God. They will declare the goodness of God because He has rendered judgment on the wicked.

CHAPTER 53

FOLLY OF THE WICKED

This psalm is parallel to Psalm 14 (See comments). In this psalm the word *Yahweh* (God) is used instead of *Elohim* (Lord), which word is used in Psalm 14 in reference to Deity.

53:1-6 The historical background of this psalm seems to have been an event when the enemies of God's people had launched an attack against them. However, because God came to the rescue of His people, they were at the time given a

great victory over their enemies. God went to war with Israel because He found no good in Israel's enemies. They were all filled with evil intentions, and thus did not respect God because they had launched an attack against His people. The foolishness of the wicked was revealed in the fact that they dared to attack God's people. When one either persecutes or attacks God's people, he is persecuting or attacking God (See comments At 9:4).

CHAPTER 54

PLEA FOR DEFENSE

This is a psalm of lament. The his-

torical background was possibly the betrayal of David by the men of Ziph (See

1 Sm 23:19-26; 26:1-4).

54:1-7 Judge me: David cried out to God for vindication in reference to those who had risen up against him. These were those who did not believe in the God of Israel, and thus did not honor David as His anointed. David's trust in the deliverance of God was so great, that he sang this song of praise in the midst of danger. Even at the time he sang, he was

not yet delivered from the threat of his enemies (Compare At 16:25). **Eye has seen:** David had experienced God's deliverance in the past, and thus there was no reason to doubt that God would deliver him again. God's people must be perceptive of how God has worked in their past in order to have comfort in His deliverance in the present.

CHAPTER 55

PLEA FOR DESTRUCTION OF THE TREACHEROUS

This is a psalm that expresses the feelings of one who has been betrayed. In this case, a friend turned against the psalmist, David. David laments because he lived in a world of treachery, a world in which wicked men sought to destroy him. Though life is filled with iniquity, he put his faith in God.

55:1-8 My prayer: The psalmist pleaded aloud in agony of spirit. **Hate me:** It seemed that every evil had been cast upon the psalmist by his enemies. The trouble that came his way was so severe that he dreamed of escaping into the wilderness for peace. By escaping he would find relief from the social turmoil that surrounded him. However, the thing that one wants to do under great stress—to flee to some quiet place—is the thing one must not do. We must take a stand and face the enemy with the confidence that God provides.

55:9-15 Destroy, O Lord: This imprecatory plea was for God's judgment to come upon them. David was not asking for vengeance. He was asking that

God protect him as the anointed king. **Divide their tongues:** David asked that they be set against one another, which thing often comes about naturally as slanderous people rise up together to attack the innocent. **Strife in the city:** The city is not identified, but it may be Jerusalem during a time when insurrection prevailed against David from within the city. The social environment of the city was not conducive to peace. Turmoil had been stirred against the king. **A man my equal:** The reason why the city was in turmoil was because a supposed equal of David had gained favor among the people. The social turmoil was the result of treachery and betrayal by a friend. **Wickedness is in their dwellings:** They spoke treachery in their houses. Treachery is defined by secretly speaking and planning behind another's back in order to bring down the one against whom the treacherous speak. Thus one is treacherous when he speaks against those in whose presence he is not when he speaks his slanderous words.

55:16-23 The Lord will save me: Regardless of the great turmoil that the psalmist was enduring, he did not blame

God. In fact, the opposite occurred in his life. He fled to God for help. He prayed and cried aloud to God that God take action to deliver him. **Because they do not change:** They do not change from the error of their way because their motives are evil. **Those who are at peace with him:** The treason of the friend was that he put forth his hand to destroy David, God's anointed. When a brother works against those who are doing the work of God, he is treacherous, carrying out trea-

son against God. **Words were softer than oil:** With flattering speech the insurrectionist made his way into the hearts of the people in order to stir up betrayal against David. But the smooth and fair speech was as drawn swords that would shoot through the heart of the innocent. When men are not straightforward with their words, they often have treachery in their hearts. Treasonous people seek to win the hearts of the people by smooth and fair speech.

CHAPTER 56

PLEA FOR DELIVERANCE

The historical background of this psalm was when David fled to Achish who was the Philistine king of the city of Gath (1 Sm 21:10-15). It was there that David pretended to be insane in order that the Philistines not kill him. The psalm is thus a cry of David who continued to trust in the Lord.

56:1-7 Daily fighting: King Saul had been relentless in pursuing David, even to the point that David fled to Israel's enemy, the Philistines. **Twist my words:** One of the indications of evil people is that they twist the words of those they oppose. **Mark my steps:** Evil men watch every word and action of those they oppose in order to either catch them in a contradiction or set a trap to ensnare them. One has a treacherous attitude when he is on the lookout for flaws in the speech and behavior of others. **Cast down:** This imprecatory request on the part of David manifested his trust in God. He asked that his enemies be cast down because they were scheming against him.

56:8-13 David put his trust in the Lord because the Lord had followed his every step. David knew that he had maintained his integrity before God, and thus he was confident, not arrogant, that he was just before God. **Tears into your bottle:** Reference could be to a practice of the ancients who had put their tears of sorrow in a small flask in order to retain them as symbols of sorrow (Compare Rv 5:8). **God is for me:** Regardless of the trials into which the faithful might fall, they are continually reassured because they know that God is for them (See Rm 8:28-39; 1 Co 10:13). Faith involves assurance, and assurance involves confidence that one is right before God. **Vows:** David had sworn vows, and thus placed himself under laws of faithfulness that he had made to God for himself. His vows became laws to himself that he would remain faithful to the Lord. **Light of the living:** He would walk before God in life, being delivered from death. His faithfulness, therefore, would be a shining example to all who would follow God.

And so it was, for even today we follow the example of David.

CHAPTER 57

PLEA FOR RESCUE

The historical setting was David's flight from Saul. On this occasion he hid in a cave near the camp of Saul (1 Sm 22:1; 24:3-8). Verses 7-11 are identical with ch 108:1-5. In this psalm David lamented his situation, but was confident that God would continue to deliver the righteous and bring judgment on the wicked. His faith continued to take him through the trials that he faced when fleeing from Saul.

57:1-5 The psalmist was fleeing from those who were determined to swallow him up in death. He thus dwelt among the wild lions, fleeing from those who were

flaming with hatred, animosity and envy. Since God is over all things, David was confident that he would be delivered from those who sought to kill him.

57:6-11 The beauty of David's faith was that in such perilous times as he was in fleeing from Saul, he poured out his faith in song (See At 16:25). He not only sang the songs of praise to God, he composed and sang them in a time of great stress. Though he was among those who set traps to ensnare him, he trusted that God would deliver him from all evil. **My glory:** Since we are in the image of God, then our inner soul is glorious.

CHAPTER 58

CALL FOR PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED

Because of the seven curses in verses 6-9, this would be an imprecatory psalm. The rulers of the land had failed to render justice, and thus the psalmist called for the direct judgment of God on them.

58:1-5 *O assembly:* This was the assembly of wicked judges. Because of their unrighteous judgments, evil prevailed throughout the land. They were corrupt, and thus the target of the psalmist's imprecatory pronouncements was against them. *You weigh:* They weighed out the evidence as in crooked scales. They distorted their judgments because of prejudiced hearts and bribes. *Go astray:* This statement is often used to prove the

supposed "sinful nature" of the individual. Since one is supposedly depraved, it is affirmed that his inclination is to turn aside unto evil regardless of his environment. In other words, all of us were supposedly preprogrammed to sin. This theology, is not found in this verse. The Psalmist is not discussing what takes place in the womb. Therefore, that which is under discussion takes place sometime after birth. This would mean that David is not discussing the nature of the soul in this passage. Whatever he is discussing comes about after our physical birth. Psalm 58 is an imprecatory psalm. In other words, it is a call for God to reign down judgment on the wicked. The wicked in the Psalm are those who are working evil against God's servant,

David. Therefore, the wicked who are under discussion here are adults who are working evil against David, God's anointed king. James said that one is drawn away by his own lusts (Js 1:14,15). Therefore, one sins only when he reaches the age in his life when he can be tempted. The enemies of David went astray after they had reached the age of accountability. In verse 2 David said of them, "*No, in heart you work wickedness.*" In other words, they had chosen in their hearts to work wickedness. They had made a conscious decision to sin. Therefore, they were at or beyond the age when one can make a free-moral decision. David is not talking about newly born babies in this passage. He is talking about adults.

58:6-11 The psalmist called on God to render to these wicked judges seven curses. ***Break their teeth:*** God must render them powerless among the people as beasts without teeth (See 17:12; 34:10; 35:17; 57:4). ***Melt away:*** Let them disappear from the people as water sinks into the sand, leaving the riverbed dry. ***Cut in pieces:*** When they seek to give

evil judgments, let their pronouncements fail as the broken shaft of an arrow that is about to be shot. ***As a snail ... pass away:*** As a passing snail that dies from the heat of the sun, let them be terminated from existence. ***Stillborn child:*** As a stillborn baby is disposed in sorrow, let them be taken away. ***Before your pots can feel:*** Before the pots can be warmed for cooking by the heat of burning thorn bushes, they should be taken off the fire. ***With a whirlwind:*** As a tornado takes away property and possessions, let these wicked judges be swept from the presence of the people. ***Righteous will rejoice:*** It is not that the righteous rejoice in the calamity of the wicked, but that the righteous know God's attitude and judgments upon the wicked. The imprecatory nature of this and other psalms was based on the fact that the oppressed knew the will of God. And because they knew the will of God, they called on God to enact His will on the wicked. In this case, the will of God was what the psalmist in poetry portrayed concerning God's will on unrighteous rulers.

CHAPTER 59

PLEA FOR DELIVERANCE

The historical setting of this psalm is as the title indicates. It was a time when David fled from the court of Saul to his own house (1 Sm 19:10-17). The psalm focuses first on the dangers that lurked in the night, and then it turns to faith in God as one's defense against evil doers and one's refuge from wicked attacks.

59:1-5 ***Deliver me:*** This is the fo-

cus of the psalm. The psalmist was in danger of death from the hands of his enemies. His lament was that God arise, not only to deliver him, but to bring judgment on his enemies. His plea was based on the fact that he had not done anything that deserved the onslaught that was coming his way from oppressors. ***All the nations:*** This statement may indicate that there was a threat from those who were

not of Israel. **Spare not:** The imprecatory plea was that not one of those who sought his life be spared. Since their attack was against God's anointed whom He had ordained should lead in preserving the heritage of Israel, then the attack was against God's plan to bring the Savior into the world. Though David was not aware of this eternal plan of God when he wrote those psalms that touched on the eternal plan of God, we must assume that he wondered about some of the things that he wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (See comments 1 Pt 1:10-12).

59:6-8 Like a dog: The metaphor is graphic. They were like a pack of wild dogs roaming in the city, looking for anything they might eat. In this case, they were seeking to eat (kill) David. In their minds, they imagined that God did not know of their doings. The ungodly are rarely aware that their evil intentions are known by God.

59:9-13 God is my defense: The psalmist realized the strength of his enemy. He realized that he could not prevail against his enemy without the strength of God. The word "defense" is literally "high tower." The high tower of a city was the strongest place of security during the siege of a city. Those who take refuge in God, are lifted above the turmoil of battle that prevails among those below. Because the high tower is a place

of safety, those who remain there are in peace. **Do not slay them:** The psalmist desired that the treacherous people who were against him be left alive. The reason was that they would be a living testimony that God worked among the people to deliver David. Even the treacherous would realize that God worked to deliver David from their hands. Being scattered among the people would be God's judgment on them. However, the gathering of the people in loyalty to David would be a sign that God was for David. In the social context of the psalm, the slanderous enemies would be sent from the city back to the farms. They could no longer be spreading treacherous lies against the king throughout the city.

59:14-17 Go around the city: If they returned to the city, the slanderous enemies of David would have no audience. They would growl like dogs, but loyalty would be restored to David. Nevertheless, David reigned while he could hear the growl of his enemies. He could so reign because he was fully assured that God had delivered him from treacherous dogs. He knew his destiny as king of Israel, and thus all resistance to his kingship was determined to be the work of evil men. When one understands that his destiny is from God, then he understands that all opposition to his destiny is the work of Satan.

CHAPTER 60

LAMENT OVER DEFEAT AND PLEA FOR HELP

The historical setting of this psalm was a military defeat that was suffered

by Israel. It is not clear what defeat this may have been during David's wars. Some have suggested that it took place during David's Syrian conflicts (See 2 Sm

8:3-5; 10:16-19; 1 Ch 18:3-12).

60:1-5 The military defeat that was experienced happened because God withdrew from the army of Israel. Since no confession of sin is made in the psalm, we are not given any reason why the Lord did not go with Israel into this particular battle. **The land tremble:** Because of the defeat, Israel was shaken. They no longer felt secure. **Wine of confusion:** They were reeling as one drunk with wine. **Banner:** Israel had been set up before the nations of the world as a nation of those who had committed themselves to the true God. But in this defeat, they were questioning their relationship with God.

60:6-8 God pronounced His judgment that the nations that were involved in the conflict against Israel were subject to His work among the nations. God would reaffirm the dividing and allotting of the land to His people. Moab, Edom

and Philistia would be humiliated before God's people. The defeat was possibly allowed in order to encourage the nations to continue their onslaught against Israel, which onslaught would be crushed by God working through the army of Israel. **Cast out My shoe:** This was possibly a symbolic act of claiming possession (Rt 4:7). In their defeat, the nations would be counted as slaves before Israel. Though the Israelites suffered a defeat, God would eventually come to their aid and the nations would be subjected to their control.

60:9-12 The historical setting may have been a time when Israel became arrogant because of their military victories of the past. They had forgotten that it was God who empowered them to conquer and maintain their possessions. Thus the psalmist concluded that they can be victorious only if they turn to God as the one who gives them victory over their enemies.

CHAPTER 61

CONFIDENCE IN GOD

This brief prayer of lament comes from one who seems to be hindered from going to the tabernacle assembly. It is a psalm of David who laments his plight, but reaffirms his commitment to keep his vows.

61:1-8 **The rock:** God has a reservoir of power that is far above what man can comprehend or accomplish on his own. Knowing this, the psalmist asked that God take him to His source of power. It was there that he sought refuge from the turmoil of his plight. **Strong tower:** This was the great place of strength in a

city, and thus the most secure. It was there that the psalmist knew that he could find security in the shelter of God's wings (17:8). **Heard my vows:** A vow was a self-imposed law that one made for himself. It was a promise to God. Once made, it was binding as the law of God. The making of such vows manifested the dedication of one to commit himself to God, or to do some specific works for God. When God heard the vows, therefore, He saw the commitment of the one who made them. He also held one accountable for keeping the vow. **Heritage:** These were those who had committed

themselves to God, and thus they were given to follow the leadership of David as king of Israel.

CHAPTER 62

GOD IS OUR REFUGE

David lived through many conflicts of battle in his life. As in other psalms, this psalm is also seated in a time of conflict in his life. However, there is reflected in this psalm a sense of calm as the psalmist relinquished his predicament to God.

62:1-4 *Silent before God:* David was silent in complaint. His silence affirmed his confidence that God would come to his aid. ***Rock:*** He was reassured that God would deliver him from all dangers. ***My rock ... salvation ... defense:*** He would not become stressful because of his great faith that God would protect him from all attempts on his life (27:5; 59:9). When the Christian stands on the gospel which he obeyed, he has the same emotional security (See comments 1 Co 15:1,2). ***Leaning wall:*** As a leaning wall is about to fall, so were David's enemies. ***Not be moved:*** He would not be moved from his dedication to God because of the circumstances of his life. Faithful is the person who does not allow the circumstances in which he lives to determine his faithfulness to God.

62:5-8 David expected to be deliv-

ered from his circumstances because he trusted in God. Expectation (hope) is the consequence of trust in God.

62:9-12 *Low ... high degree:* Both positions in society are as a breath. Those of low status in society should not envy those of high status simply because the life of both is brief (Js 1:9-11). The person of low status may envy the one of high status, but if by chance he becomes one of high status, the position for which he aspired in society is discovered to be disappointing. The point is that all distinctions that society may give to people vanish away as a breath with the passing of the people. Riches pass with those who possess them, and thus there is no spiritual opportunity that is presented to the rich by their riches. On the contrary, those who place their confidence in riches are led away from complete trust in God. ***Power belongs to God:*** Satan has no power. All supernatural power belongs to the omnipotent God of all things. The creation cannot possess the power of the Creator, unless the Creator relinquishes power to the created.

CHAPTER 63

THIRSTING AFTER GOD

The psalmist expresses a close relationship with God, and thus seeks after Him at all times. He expresses his trust in God and confidence that God will work in his life.

63:1-8 In the private devotions of

the psalmist, he meditated on God and His work in the morning and at night (1:1,2). In this case, David longed to witness the presence of God at the sanctuary of the tabernacle. The words of this psalm express the deep devotion of one who is totally committed to God and His work in

his life. These are the words of one who has not let the affairs of this world displace his meditation on God. Through meditation, one disconnects from the turmoil of the physical and social life of the world in order to contemplate his relationship with God. He reminds himself of what is most valuable in life and those things that will go beyond the end of the world.

63:9-11 In the king's devotion to God, he pondered those who would seek

to destroy him. Such were the continual thoughts of God's anointed kings. There were always those who manifested their fight against God by fighting against His anointed kings of Israel. David was thus not without his enemies simply because there were always wicked men who had no consideration for the things of God. He was thus constantly aware of those who would remove the authority of God from among the people by killing the God-anointed king.

CHAPTER 64

DELIVERANCE FROM TREACHEROUS ENEMIES

The focus of this psalm is on the workers of evil. It is a psalm of lament where the psalmist made a plea to God concerning his plight in life. He lamented the fact that he had been attacked by slanderous people. Nevertheless, the psalmist placed his trust in God who would defeat evil counselors who worked against His anointed.

64:1-6 *Secret counsel of the wicked:* Ungodly men scheme in secret to destroy those who oppose them. Their counsel is wicked simply because they devise slanderous statements against those they oppose in order to gain a following (See comments 3 Jn). They counsel among themselves in order to develop a united coalition against those they seek to destroy. *Insurrection:* The metaphors of the poem magnify the extent to which the schemers had planned in order to move against the king. Their tongue was a sharpened sword to cut asunder the reputation of God's anointed. They released poisonous words that caused the

people to question the rightful reign of God's king. They devised traps into which they would capture the righteous in supposed contradictions. All such schemes manifested the unrighteous hearts of those who would involve themselves in treacherous behavior

64:7-10 *Their own tongue to fall on themselves:* If the righteous will be patient for the work of God, God will deliver them by making the slanderous speech of the wicked turn on themselves. People eventually identify the unrighteous heart of a slanderous person. As the saying goes, the slanderous person can fool some of the people all the time, but not all the people all the time. *Will flee away:* At first the people may believe the words of a slanderous person. However, people are generally not ignorant, and thus will eventually discover the ungodly heart of the one who attacks another with slander. *Righteous will be glad:* Those who rejoice in the Lord are those who understand the work of God through special people by whom He seeks to lead the people.

CHAPTER 65

GOD'S FAVOR

This is a psalm of adoration that is centered around harvest time, or a time when the harvest was completed. It is thus a psalm of thanksgiving for God's care of His people.

65:1-4 Vow be performed: A vow was made to God by an individual who placed a "law" on himself. It was binding as a law of God until the vow was fulfilled. **Iniquities prevail:** Sin is too much for us to bear, and thus God will cleanse us. One must understand the ability of man to easily slip into sin. He must understand this in order to cling to the help of God to stay away from sin (See comments 1 Co 10:13).

65:5-8 Of all earth and of those ... afar off: Though God had a special covenant with Israel, He was still the king of all the world. He claimed people of faith who were not of Israel (See comments of Jonah). What the Israelites eventu-

ally failed to realize was that God accepted anyone who came to Him through obedient faith. **Clothed with power:** God is not only the God of the inhabitants of the world. He is also the Creator and controller of all the physical world (Hb 1:3). The evidence of His power is clearly manifested in the physical world (See comments Rm 1:20). **Morning and evening:** The sunrise in the east and the sunset in the west.

65:9-13 Since Israel was a rural community of farmers, great emphasis was placed on God's provision for crops at the time of harvest. The nation depended on consistent rainfall. The farmers, therefore, were dependent on God's store of water that was in the clouds. He could either release or retain the water of the clouds. When He released the rain, man, animals and earth all rejoiced over the graciousness of God who showed favor to man.

CHAPTER 66

GOD'S WORK AND PRAYER ANSWERED

As indicated by the pronouns, this psalm of worship focuses first on worship that is given by the people (vss 1-12), and then individually by the psalmist (vss 13-20). The worship flows from hearts that have responded to God's answer to their prayer.

66:1-12 The psalmist used Israel's exodus from Egyptian captivity as the illustration of God's deliverance of His people. **All you lands:** The deliverance

of Israel from captivity was an evidence to all the world that God was working with and for the Israelites in order to bring them forth as a nation. For this reason, the world should rejoice in the fact that God's work among men was manifested in His deliverance of Israel. We should especially rejoice for we understand now that the birth of Israel was for the purpose of giving birth to the Messiah, the Savior of the world. **The sea ... the flood:** Reference was to the parting of the Red Sea and the Jordan River (Ex 14:21; Ja

3:14-17). **Tested us:** Though delivered from Egypt into the land of promise, there was continued testing of Israel when they fell into sin. They were thus refined as gold with fire.

66:13-20 The pronouns in this section change from the plural to the singular. Because God has performed so greatly, the psalmist brought his offerings to the Lord in thanksgiving. When we witness the work of God in our lives, we should be motivated by thanksgiving (See 2 Co 4:15). **Vows:** Vows were made in the time of trouble (See Lv 3:1-17). These vows were kept in thanksgiving for God's

deliverance. **I will declare:** Those who have been delivered by God should proclaim to others how God has worked in their lives. Perception of answered prayer is an opportunity to proclaim that God still works among His people. **If I regard iniquity in my heart:** If we harbor sin in our lives, our channel of prayer to God will be stopped (Compare Jb 27:9; 31:27; Pv 15:29; 28:9; Is 1:15). God responds to those who seek to please Him. If one would chose to turn his back on God, however, God will not answer the prayers of the sinner as He would the prayers of the faithful.

CHAPTER 67

CALL FOR PRAISE OF GOD

This is a psalm of adoration that calls on all the world to give praise to God. It could have been a praise that was offered for the crops, and subsequent harvest.

67:1-7 Your salvation: If the Lord is gracious and brings rain to produce a bountiful harvest, then the surrounding nations looking on the situation of Israel would recognize that God was working for His people. The special blessing of saving them from famine would be an occasion for the nations to give praise to God. When the people praise the Lord, the earth will give an increase in crops

because of God's special blessing. When the other nations saw the special blessing of rain on the crops of the Israelites, they perceived that Israel's God was working for them. We must not forget that Israel was located in the most significant trade route of the ancient world. Traders traversed the land of Palestine from both the countries to the north and south of the land. When there was famine in Palestine, traders could not be supplied while traveling through the land. When crops abounded, the nations rejoiced because the trade routes were open.

CHAPTER 68

GOD OF SINAI AND THE SANCTUARY

This psalm deals with many subjects. It may have been a collection of smaller psalms, possibly being several short psalms that the priests sang as they went

ceremonially to the sanctuary.

68:1-6 Wicked people cannot stand in the presence of God, for if they did, they would melt away as candle wax. Sin can never be in the presence of God, and thus the sinner must find a solution for

his sin. **Name:** The KJV adds “Jah,” or *Yah*, an abbreviated form of the word *Yahweh*. This was Israel’s name for God. **Father of the fatherless:** Orphans and widows are especially defenseless, and thus deserve special attention by God. He is their defender. **The desolate:** God provides a dwelling place for the homeless. He frees those in bondage, but consigns to parched land those who rebel against His will.

68:7-14 The psalm turns in these verses to focus on Israel’s exodus from Egypt, their receiving of the word at Mt. Sinai, and their wandering in the wilderness because of their sin. **You went forth before:** See Ex 19:16-19. **Plentiful rain:** It seems that God caused unusual rain to occur in the wilderness when Israel was wandering there for 40 years. The unusual rain was a sign that God was caring for His people in a desert place. **Inheritance:** The promised land of Palestine was the inheritance that was given to Israel. **The word:** When the nations heard of the wonders of God that He worked through Israel, they fled before them. If they did not willingly flee, they were defeated by God working through the army of Israel. **Spoils:** The women who stayed behind with the sheepfolds when the battles were raging divided the spoils of conquered enemies. **Wings of a dove:** The army of Israel returned to the women victorious, loaded with the spoils of war, gold and silver. **As snow on Zalmon:** The exact location of this mountain in Palestine is not known. However, Israel’s defeat of the armies of the Canaanites was so easy with God’s help,

that it was as natural as the snow fall on Zalmon.

68:15-23 The psalmist now turned to giving glory to God for His daily blessings. **Mountain of Bashan:** Bashan was a mountainous area in northeast Galilee. The psalmist personified these mountains to be as those who were envious of where God dwells. **Led captivity captive:** Verse 18 is significant because it was quoted by Paul in reference to what happened when Jesus ascended. Psalm 68 is a victory psalm. While seated in the historical context of David’s victories over his enemies, the prophecy of verse 18 reached many years into the future. David said that the One of whom he spoke in the psalm led captivity into captivity. This was a prophecy of the coming downfall of Satan. Because Paul quoted the passage in reference to Christ in Ephesians 4:8, there is no question that the psalmist, through the Spirit, was pointing the initial readers to someone in the future. Paul was looking back when he quoted the psalm. When Jesus ascended, He sent the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. The gospel was preached by Peter and the church began when men submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus. In Acts 1 Jesus ascended to the Father, and in Acts 2 the Holy Spirit was given to men. After the coming of the Holy Spirit, Peter stated that the Spirit had been poured out (At 2:33). But Peter also said that the gift of the Holy Spirit was to all who submit to the gospel by immersion (At 2:38,39). In Ephesians 4:11 Paul again referred to Psalm 68 in reference to Jesus setting forth “gifts” of ministries in the church in order to edify and

build up the church. These ministries referred to teaching ministries as apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherd/teachers. Such ministries were set forth by Jesus in the church in order that men no longer be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine (Ep 4:14). Therefore, in the prophecy and fulfillment of Psalm 68:18, God was saying that the time would come when Satan would be led away into captivity by God's empowerment of His people. This would happen when Jesus ascended on high (Ep 4:8). Satan lost his powerful influence over men when God's people were empowered by the Holy Spirit who taught them all things concerning the truth (See Jn 14:26; 16:13,14). Satan could no longer lead people away from God as he so led them before the coming of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. **Received gifts:** When God took nations into captivity, the spoils became gifts to Israel (See comments Ep 4:8). **Daily bears us up:** God continued to provide for Israel throughout their history. When they walked in His commandments, they were blessed. **Hairy scalp:** This may be a reference to the soldiers who allowed their hair to grow when they were in conflict with an enemy. It was shaved when they returned home. In this case, God would inflict punishment on the

wicked who opposed His people.

68:24-29 In the sanctuary: With the procession of the singers and players, the Lord is pictured as going into the sanctuary. Benjamin and Judah (the southern kingdom), with Zebulun and Naphtali (the northern kingdom), represent all Israel. **Your temple:** Neither the capital of Jerusalem, nor the temple were the original plan of God for Israel. Jerusalem and the temple were a concession of God because David wanted to consolidate his reign in Jerusalem, as well as maintain the religious center of reference for Israel in the city. Instead of continuing the movement of the tabernacle among the tribal territories, which had taken place for over 400 years before David, the ark of God was brought to Jerusalem where Solomon eventually built the temple to house it.

68:30-35 Beasts ... bulls: These animals represented the raging nations who were against Israel. **Egypt ... Ethiopia:** From these far countries came those who submitted to Solomon. David conquered the enemies of Israel, but Solomon reigned over them. Through trade, foreign nations came to admire the wisdom of Solomon and the greatness of his kingdom. Solomon increased the wealth of Israel because of his relationship with foreign nations.

CHAPTER 69

CRY FOR DELIVERANCE

The psalmist here pours out his heart because of the great despair he was suffering from the oppression of his enemies. This is a psalm of grief. It is an intense psalm that comes from one who is in deep

sorrow. It is imprecatory in nature in reference to the enemies that surrounded the psalmist. However, there are Messianic statements in the psalm that focus on the final salvation that God would provide in the future.

69:1-4 The circumstances in which the psalmist found himself were overwhelming. As a result, he had cried until he was exhausted. He was hated without cause and his enemies had no reason to stand against him. In all this despair, he confessed his sins, thinking that such might have brought on the opposition he was facing. Some may have taken advantage of his confession, assuming that such was a sign of weakness. However, he knew that God knew he was not guilty of those things of which he was accused. **Hate me without cause:** See Jn 15:25.

69:5-12 Those who wait on You: The psalmist was concerned for those who might suffer as a result of his situation. **A stranger:** His enemies had persecuted him, even those who were closest to him shunned him. **Zeal of Your house:** See Jn 2:17. Because of his zeal for the Lord, others turned away from him. His commitment intimidated others, and thus brought persecution upon him. **Men jeered:** Those who would commit themselves totally to the Lord will be ridiculed by those who are comfortable with indifference. **Proverb:** Or, byword. His life of commitment to the Lord became contemptible to those who were religious, but behaved contrary to the will of God. **Sit in the gate:** The elders sat at the gates of the cities (Rt 4:1; Jb 29:7,8). **Song of the drunkards:** It seemed that all society had rejected the psalmist. He was treated with contempt by the lowest of society.

69:13-18 My prayer: In situations similar to that in which the psalmist found himself, prayer is one's only recourse. As

he was sinking deeper into the social rejection of the people, he reached up to the only One who could help. It was a time when the psalmist had to depend on the mercy of God for deliverance. Since there was no one who would take pity on him, he trusted that God would have mercy.

69:19-28 The statements of these verses are the imprecatory pleas of the psalmist that God severely judged those who rejected and attacked His anointed. **Gall ... vinegar:** See Mt 27:34. The psalmist asked that God bring judgment on his enemies with the curse of seven things in their lives: (1) their food, (2) their eyes, (3) their bodies, (4) the coming wrath of God, (5) their houses, (6) that their guilt increase, and (7) that their names be blotted out of the book of life. When reading such direct imprecatory statements in the psalms we must always understand that the imprecatory statements were from God against those who were fighting against His eternal plan through Israel. At the time the imprecatory psalms were written, Israel was headed for apostasy, which apostasy would take the nation into captivity. The imprecatory statements, therefore, must be understood in view of the fact that God was saying to Israel's enemies that they should not mess with His plan to preserve Israel for the salvation of man through Jesus.

69:29-36 The psalmist first spoke of the gloom of his life. He then called on God to judge his enemies. In these final words there is a message of hope. Regardless of how difficult things had be-

come, there was always hope that God would come to one's aid. **Poor ... prisoners:** God hears the prayers of the poor, and He does not despise those who have been in bondage for Him. The deliverance of the psalmist, and those who re-

mained loyal to him, would be evidence that God had worked in their lives. It would be evidence that God was on their side to establish again the cities of Judah in order that they possess the land.

CHAPTER 70

CRY FOR HELP

See the identical words that are here and Psalm 40:13-17. In this psalm, the psalmist seems to be in a predicament where he needed urgent help from the Lord. He knew that the Lord would deliver him, but he pleaded that He not take His time in responding.

70:1-5 The psalmist expressed no doubt that the Lord would come to his rescue. It was a matter of timing. There

were those who were seeking his demise, and thus, he felt that if the Lord did not come soon, he would be overcome. The situation was whether the help from the Lord would arrive in time. The psalm was written from the perspective of human thought, and thus urgency is always on the minds of those who pray urgent prayers. God will answer, but His answer comes when He knows best.

CHAPTER 71

PRAYER OF AN OLD MAN

These words come from a person who had throughout his life depended on God. It is a picture of one who had spent a lifetime serving the Lord, and in his old age he was a thankful person for God's care throughout his life.

71:1-6 The past deliverances that God had provided for the psalmist were evidence that God would do the same in the future. Those who are perceptive of God's work in their lives in the past have a strong faith that God will work in the future. **Continually resort:** This was not a person who wavered throughout his life. He remained consistently faithful to the Lord. One who falls and is restored suffers scars and guilt from his falling. But one who remains continually faithful

to the Lord throughout his life can speak the words of this Psalm.

71:7-16 I am as a wonder: God's past protection of him was a sign to every one of the wondrous works of God in the lives of faithful believers. **Enemies:** Though God had been faithful to him in the past, in his old age there were still enemies who saw his old age as an opportunity for conspiracy. The enemies had assumed that his age was a sign of weakness and that God was no longer with him. **I will hope continually:** What is revealed in the spiritual character of the psalmist is the fact that regardless of the threat of his enemies, he did not blame God for his predicament. The threatening social environment in which he was did not shake his faith in God to deliver

him. **Do not know their limits:** There is no limit to the mercy of God. **Strength of the Lord:** See 2 Co 12:9. The Lord gives strength to those who continue in His work and word.

71:17-24 From my youth: The psalmist's faithfulness started in his youth (See At 16:1-3). Youth who recognize that God should be the guide of their lives are truly blessed if they continue their faithfulness into old age. They can look back to a blessed life as did the psalmist. **Showed Your strength to this generation:** Faithfulness throughout one's life is a testimony to others. The consistent faithfulness of a believer is one of the

greatest witnesses to the power of God working in one's life. **Great and sore troubles:** Living a life that is faithful to the Lord does not mean that one will live without troubles (2 Tm 3:12). Being faithful does not take away troubles. It helps us to get through them (1 Co 10:13). **Bring me up again:** The psalmist looked beyond death to a time when he would come again from the grave. **All day long:** Evidence of a faithful life to the Lord is daily praise of His name (See Rm 12:1,2). One's life can be a testimony to the Lord when it is consistent with praise of the Lord.

CHAPTER 72

REIGN OF A RIGHTEOUS KING

This psalm has an immediate historical application, but also a Messianic fulfillment. Though the message of the psalm pictures the ideal earthly reign, such ideal social and economic environment did not happen during the reign of Solomon, but such did in the church of Jesus. We must view this kingdom from the viewpoint of the nature of the true kingdom of Jesus, where He now reigns over all things. He now reigns over all things, but only those of the church are the submissive subjects. All those over whom He reigns should submit to His reign, but they do not (See comments Ph 2:5-11).

72:1-7 As a Messianic psalm we must understand that the dominion of the king's son was universal, from sea to sea and to the ends of the earth. However, within this dominion were those whose spiritual needs were filled. There was

peace among those who had fulfilled spiritual needs. We would view these as the church within the kingdom reign of the Son who now reigns from heaven over all things (Ep 1:20-23; 1 Tm 6:15). If we view the fulfillment of this socioeconomic situation yet in the future in reference to us today, then the meaning would be a time when the wicked are cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (Mt 25:46; Rv 21:7-15). However, this interpretation would be questionable on the basis that the duration of the time of this kingdom reign would go as long as the moon endures. There seems to be an in-time existence of the work of the king, which in view of the nature of the church would exist at the time of the existence of the present world (Compare 1 Co 15:26-28 with 2 Pt 3).

72:8-11 The picture presented is that during Solomon's reign there was a pro-

phetic utterance of the kingdom that was to come when the Messiah would sit on the throne of David. We cannot make a strict comparison between the reign of Solomon and the present reign of Jesus. Jesus now reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15). He now reigns over all things (Ep 1:23). He upholds all things by the word of His power (Hb 1:3). None of these things were within the sovereignty of Solomon. Nevertheless, the reign of Solomon is the best historical example there is for a metaphorical picture of the Messianic reign of Jesus. **All nations will serve Him:** In reference to the present reign of Jesus, all nations should serve Him (See comments Ph 2:5-11). However, they do not, for there are insurrections in the present kingdom reign of Jesus. If we understand this to refer to the church, then there are obedient subjects in every nation of the world who serve Him (Mt 28:19,20). We would view this prophecy as a statement that within the realm of the obedient (the church), kings of all nations would bow down and serve Jesus (1 Tm 6:15). However,

within the realm of His kingdom reign (all the world), there would be those who would not bow down. All the present church is within the kingdom reign of the Son, but not all the kingdom reign is limited to the church (See comments 1 Pt 3:22).

72:12-20 Deliver ... save: This is the picture of a redeeming king who would care for the needs of his people. He would not let his people be oppressed (See 1 Sm 26:21; 2 Kg 1:14; Ps 116:15). Because of his benevolence toward those who are under the sovereignty of his reign, he would be praised. As gold from Sheba was brought in order to give honor to Solomon, so the people of the world will bring themselves as gifts for the honor and glory of the redeeming King Jesus (Rm 12:1,2). **All nations will call Him blessed:** All those of every nation who submit to His kingdom reign will call Him blessed. **Prayers of David:** This statement would mark the conclusion of this portion of David's psalms in Books I & II, for there are other psalms of David in the following Books.

Book III

(73:1 – 89:52)

There are 17 psalms in this Book. They were written by Asaph, Korah, David, Heman and Ethan. These are psalms of lament, worship, praise, thanksgiving and repentance.

CHAPTER 73

CONTRASTED ENDS OF THE WICKED AND RIGHTEOUS

The theme of this psalm is a question that was addressed in the book of Job. The psalmist wondered why the wicked prosper while the righteous suffer. Eccle-

siastes approaches the same theme concerning the person who was not considered righteous, but at the same time, had everything (Ec 7:16). The answer to the question is that God has created an environment in which free-moral individuals

can interact and prosper according to their own abilities. It is also an environment wherein the righteous can be taken advantage of by the wicked, and thus the wicked use the environment for their own self-interest. Because the minds of the righteous are on spiritual things, they are often the victims of those who do not think beyond this world.

73:1-3 *God is good to Israel:* God had been good to the nation as a whole. But when he considered certain individuals in society, he began to question why the wicked prosper. ***Prosperity of the wicked:*** There may have been certain individuals with whom the psalmist was acquainted who prospered, while he was oppressed with poverty. ***Envious:*** One may question the prosperity of the wicked, while the righteous suffer, but our questioning should not turn into envy of what the wealthy possess. As in the book of Job, the righteous must content themselves with God is in control and is working all things together for good for His people (Rm 8:28).

73:4-12 The words of these verses portray the nature and life of the wicked who prosper. They are well fed, having a life without trouble. They go unchecked with their oppressive conduct and unscrupulous dealings. They have more than one could desire. They speak with arrogance. And because they are arrogant in their speech, people often turn to them for leadership and counsel. They con-

tinue to prosper, regardless of their unrighteous behavior.

73:13-20 At this point in the psalm, the psalmist wondered why he had sought to walk righteously in his life, because the result was his oppression. He complained until he went to the sanctuary of God. It was there that he understood that the end of the wicked was doom. Though their lives seemed glorious, their end was destruction. Thus the psalmist was willing to sacrifice the seemingly glorious life of the unrighteous in order to avoid their end (See comments Lk 16:19-31).

73:21-28 These last words are a confession. The psalmist realized the folly of envying the prosperity of the wicked because his end was destruction. He felt grieved that he had ventured into a desire of being as the unrighteous wealthy. His envy was based on ignorance of the true life of the wicked, and thus he behaved as a wild beast before God. He renewed his recommitment to the Lord, being assured that God would receive him into glory. He chose to remain close to God on earth in order to eternally remain in the presence of God (2 Th 1:6-9). He did not desire to commit spiritual adultery with the things of the world (Js 4:4). ***Those who are far from you:*** In these words the psalmist revealed his hope of being eternally with God. Since the unrighteous are far from God on earth, they will be destroyed from the presence of God when they die (2 Th 1:6-9).

CHAPTER 74

DEVASTATION OF THE LAND

This psalm may have been written in the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. It is a lamenting psalm that was written as a dirge over the destruction of the city of God. As the book of Lamentations, it is an expression of deep sorrow over the fall of God's people.

74:1-11 Assuming that the destruction that took place was the 586 B.C. destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian army, we would conclude that Israel had reaped the result of her apostasy. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed (2 Kg 25:9). The temple was burned. The people were taken into captivity. The psalm, therefore, could have been written while the psalmist was in exile during the Babylonian captivity. The psalmist called on God to remember His people that He had formerly redeemed from Egyptian captivity. In this case, the psalmist saw the destruction of the enemy as the means by which another redemption could take place. But at this time, he saw only the signs of the destruction of Israel's enemy. And thus, the psalmist called on God to take His hand out of His bosom and destroy their captors.

74:12-17 The psalmist resorted to the great wonders that God did in the past in order to gain strength that He would do the same for Israel in the future. God divided the Red Sea (Ex 14:21). He humbled the powers of Egypt. He opened springs and torrents of water (Ex 17:6; Nm 20:11). He dried up the waters of the Jordan in order that Israel pass into the land of promise (Ja 3:15,16). The omnipotent God of all is able, therefore, to deliver Israel in this time of despair. He is able to deliver all those who are in the bondage of their own sin.

74:18-23 In order to stir hope for the future, the psalmist called on God to remember the ways of the ungodly and their blasphemy of His name. And thus he called on God not to allow His defenseless nation to be consumed by those who had no respect for Him. ***Do not let the oppressed return ashamed:*** The psalmist did not want the righteous to go away with unanswered prayers. Thus the arrogance of those who had reproached God should stir God into action. In the case of Israel's deliverance from captivity, God did take action. He delivered His people from Babylonian captivity (See Er 1:1-6).

CHAPTER 75

PROUD HUMBLED AND RIGHTEOUS EXALTED

In this psalm of praise the psalmist encourages the readers who were suffering in a time of national chaos. His encouragement centered around the fact

that one must be patient for the deliverance of God. God determines the time He will act on behalf of His people.

75:1-3 ***Name is near:*** God's presence is identified by His name (See Is 30:27). ***Appointed time:*** In the context

of our impatient pleas, we must recognize that God determines the time when He will answer. Though the world seems like it is falling apart, we must keep in mind that God is the one who stabilizes everything in order to bring about His purposes.

75:4-8 *Lift up the horn:* One should not flaunt his power. *Stiff neck:* One should not speak with defiant words of rebellion. *Promotion:* Self exaltation will not accomplish what God desires, for

it is He who judges with justice. **Cup:** This is the foaming wine that has fermented, of which the wicked must drink the last bitter drop.

75:9,10 In contrast to the wicked, the righteous will sing the praises of God. The righteous will give glory to Him for His protection of the righteous. In His time, God will cut off the powers of the wicked in order to exalt the power of the righteous. The righteous must, therefore, wait on His deliverance.

CHAPTER 76

GOD OF POWER

In this psalm, the psalmist praises God for giving victory to Israel. The Lord is exalted as the One who delivers Israel from her enemies. There is no certain historical background for this psalm, though some have affirmed that the deliverance was Jerusalem from the attack of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, during the reign of Hezekiah (See 2 Kg 19:35-37; Is 37:36-38).

76:1-3 *Salem:* Jerusalem (Gn 14:18; Hb 7:1,2). The victory over Israel's enemy took place at Jerusalem. The victory that took place was the work of God, and thus God was Israel's defense.

76:4-9 *Slept their sleep ... dead sleep:* These figures point to the result of the angel of God who swept over the army of Sennacherib and brought death to 185,000 men. When the morning came after all the warriors of Sennacherib had died, none of them could raise their hands in battle against Israel. **When once You are angry:** The sweeping death of the Assyrian army by the angel of God proves

what the psalmist here taught. When the anger of God is aroused, there is no strength of man that can stand in His way. God's power is awesome, and thus to be greatly feared by mortal man. **Save all the meek:** In this historical case of God's judgment against Israel's enemies, is illustrated God's deliverance of His people. God's judgment on the wicked in time is often His deliverance of His people.

76:10-12 *Wrath of man will praise You:* God clothes Himself with praise by putting down the wrath of man that is often unleashed against His people. No matter how strong man's efforts may be against God, He will overcome man. The stronger the opposition of man, the more God is glorified when He brings to nothing man's efforts (See Ex 9:16; Is 45:24). **Vows:** In the time of peril, the righteous probably made promises to the Lord. And now that they had been delivered, the psalmist reminded them to fulfill their vows. If they did not fulfill their vows it would be a mockery of God's deliverance (Ec 5:4,5).

CHAPTER 77

THE COMFORT OF GOD'S DEEDS

This psalm begins with a lament, but ends with joy and praise. It is a contrast between times of sorrow and times of song. The theme of the psalm is that if one broods over the calamities of life, he will sink deeper into despair. But if he meditates on the goodness of God, life will be blessed with hope and joy.

77:1-9 The first nine verses express the lament of the psalmist who cried out to the Lord. Because of his despair, the psalmist wondered if God had terminated His mercy. **My hand was stretched out:** The despair of the psalmist was intense. Throughout the night he stretched out his hands to God in supplication. **Call to remembrance:** At the time, the psalmist was in a time of emotional turmoil. He then remembered better times and former blessings that came from God. He remembered times when he sang in the night. But when he wrote this psalm, he was in agony, searching for an answer from God.

77:10-20 The mood of the psalmist changed when he started focusing on the greatness of God and all the good that He had done in the past for His people. The psychology of the psalm is that when one focuses on the negative (vss 1-9), he can think himself into despair. But when one focuses on the positive things of God (vss 10-20), he can at least restore his mental health. **My grief:** There is no indication in the psalm that God had come

to the rescue of the psalmist. Because God had not responded, the psalmist contented himself by recalling the great things that God had already done. **I will remember:** This is the key to restoring joy in one's life. The psalmist reasoned that he must think on the great things that God had done in his past. Though there may be no relief from suffering in the present, one must concentrate on the great things of the past. Because God has worked in our lives in the past does not guarantee that He has to do so in the present. It is sometimes God's will that we endure pain and suffering in order to guide our minds to His past work in our lives. **Redeemed:** This metaphor is significant in reference to salvational contexts in the New Testament. By a strong arm God had physically redeemed His people out of Egyptian captivity (Ex 15:16; see Is 63:12). They were redeemed by God, for they could not redeem themselves. **Waters ... clouds ... lightnings:** God is sovereign over the physical world. The natural world is totally under His control. It is under His control to the point that He uses the natural world to preserve His people. **Hand of Moses and Aaron:** Imprinted on the minds of Israel was a time when God took His people through a divided Red Sea by the hand of Moses and Aaron. It was an everlasting action on the part of God for both Israel and the church. God will lead His people through the torrential trials of this world into a better world to come.

CHAPTER 78

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

This is a poetic history of Israel from the time of their deliverance from Egyptian captivity to the time when the first kings were anointed over the nation, a period of about 400 years. The psalmist rehearses the times when Israel forgot the statutes of God. His primary focus was on the apostasy of the northern ten tribes. But because there is emphasis on both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel, the historical background would possibly be the time when Israel divided into two kingdoms. Thus the psalm could have been written during the early beginnings of the apostasy of the northern kingdom under the leadership of Jeroboam.

78:1-8 Give ear: In order to prevent apostasy in the future, the psalmist called for the attention of the fathers to listen to the failures of Israel in the past. It is the responsibility of the fathers to teach the children. The illustration of what the psalmist revealed in the psalm is an example of the failure of parents to teach their children. **Dark sayings:** This would be a direct or sharp teaching, something as a riddle (See Mt 13:34,35). In this context, that which was to be rehearsed by the psalmist were the wondrous works and commandments of God. **Established a testimony:** See Ex 25:16,21. **Appointed a law:** Since men cannot establish moral laws by which to guard themselves from national degradation, a law from above must be instituted. This law must then be passed from one generation to another (Dt 4:9,10; 6:6,7;

11:18,19). One difference between Israel and the surrounding nations was the fact that Israel's law originated from outside the thinking of the nation. The laws of the nations around Israel came from within, from their own reasoning. In the progression of thought of this psalm, the psalmist identified the apostasy of Israel as their digression from the law of God to the acceptance of the laws of the nations who had created behavior after their own desires. It came to the point in their history that there was no difference between the behavior of the Israelites and the nations. Such was a sign that Israel had fallen from the law of God.

78:9-16 Ephraim: Ephraim was the younger of the two sons of Joseph (Gn 48:8-20). He, as his brother Manasseh, was chosen to be the father of two tribes of Israel. Ephraim became the largest of the northern kingdom of Israel. Because Ephraim was the dominant tribe of the northern kingdom, the kingdom was often referred to as Ephraim. Ephraim eventually led in the apostasy of the northern kingdom, which apostasy eventually led to the exile of the northern tribes in 722/21 B.C. by the conquering army of Assyria. They went into exile because they (1) cowardly turned their backs in battle, (2) did not keep the covenant of God, (3) refused to be obedient to the law of God, and (4) forgot God's works throughout their history. **Marvelous things:** Those faith-building things that they forgot were (1) the miraculous plagues of God that He brought

on Egypt (Ex 5:1 – 12:31), (2) the dividing of the Red Sea in order to free Israel from Egyptian captivity (Ex 14:15-22), (3) their leading by a cloud and fire throughout their wilderness wanderings (Ex 13:21,22), and (4) the water that came from a split rock (Ex 17:1-6; Nm 20:7-11).

78:17-39 This history explains how God was patient with the Israelites from the time they left Egyptian captivity to the time they entered the land of promise. Throughout this time God was changing their culture from the bondage culture that had been developed throughout 400 years of captivity in Egypt to the freedom culture that they needed in order to remain an independent state in the land of promise. Throughout this change in culture, they went through times of apostasy and restoration as God trained them to be dependent on Him, and not the taskmasters of Egypt. During this time of transformation, they complained about their food. God answered with manna and quail (Ex 16:14; Nm 11:31,32). **Years of terror:** They had so many trials as a result of their unbelief throughout the 40 years of wilderness wanderings that they referred to the time in the wilderness as years of terror. **Flattered Him ... lied to Him:** When they were disciplined by the Lord for their unbelief, they were insincere in their confession and repentance. Both kingdoms of the divided Israel were insincere because they eventually fell back again into their sin. Their history of sin and repentance manifested that they were unstable in their faith, and often hypocritical in their repentance. **Their heart was**

not right: This seems to have been a historical problem, not a temporary slip into unfaithfulness. Their culture of rebellion led them to reap continually the discipline of God. **A wind that passes away:** God knew that Israel was composed of men whose lives were but a breath of existence on earth. For this reason, He had compassion on them nationally because individual generations came and went. He did not hold the nation of Israel responsible for the rebellion of any one generation that went into apostasy. Though the children reaped the consequences of their sinful fathers, each generation of the children was responsible for itself.

78:40-53 This poetic history of Israel left them without excuse in reference to faith. Their faith was based on the evidence of God who worked directly in their lives in order to give birth to them as a nation. The plagues that were brought upon Egypt were evidence that God worked in order to deliver the people from their enemies, the Egyptians (See comments Ex 8–12). Thus they had no excuse for their rebellion. As a nation, they had experienced the miraculous revelation of God.

78:54-64 They were brought out of Egyptian captivity and given the land of promise by allotment (Ja 14). It was God who cast out the nations in the land of Canaan. He did so by empowering each Israelite soldier in the battles against the Canaanite armies. There would have been no possible way for Israel to have secured the land if it were not for the aid of God working through the soldiers of

Israel. ***Tempted and provoked the Most High God:*** Their culture of rebellion continued with them even into their possession of the land of promise. They did not allow the direct work of God in their history to be a foundation of faith that would lead them to trust totally in Him. They did not allow the word of their fathers to be the foundation of their faith, as those today who do not allow the written word of God to be the foundation of their faith (Rm 10:17). ***Deceitful bow:*** They were as a malfunctioning bow that could not launch into the future a faithful generation. ***High places:*** They established assemblies on high places that were dedicated to the worship of idol gods. ***Move Him to jealousy:*** They committed spiritual adultery by giving honor to other gods, which gods they had created after their own image. For this reason, God rejected them and gave them up for captivity (See 1 Sm 15:23; Hs 4:6). ***Tabernacle of Shiloh:*** For a period of time throughout the history of the judges, the tabernacle was located in Shiloh, a city of Ephraim (Ja 18:10; Jg 18:31; 1 Sm 4:3). ***Delivered His strength into captivity:*** See 132:8; 1 Sm 4:3,21. God took His presence from the ark of the covenant when it was captured by the Philistines (1 Sm 4). After Israel recovered the ark, it was taken to Nob (1 Sm 21). It was later transferred to Gibeon (1 Kg 3:4).

78:65-72 *The Lord awoke:* This

awakening for the salvation of Israel probably refers to the time of David's victories and Solomon's peace. This was a time when God intervened in order to spare Israel and bring her to her greatest days of glory during the reign of Solomon. ***Mount Zion ... sanctuary ... David:*** God's original plan was that the tabernacle be refurbished throughout the history of Israel. It was not His plan that Israel have a designated capital. Neither was it in His plan that there be an earthly king who would reign over the people. But the people cried out for a king, and the king, specifically David, wanted a capital to centralize the government of Israel. David also wanted a temple in order to centralize religious loyalty. None of these things were in the original plan of God when He gave the law at Mt. Sinai. They were only concessions. God allowed these things to come into the history of Israel in order that He might preserve a remnant of the people for the coming of the Messiah. Though Israel desired these additions to their nationhood and faith, God used them to accomplish His eternal plan. However, we must not forget that Israel was the means by which God would bring the Savior into the world. Israel was not the end of God's eternal purpose. It was for this reason that God continued with Israel, for He had a greater plan for man than the existence of national Israel.

CHAPTER 79

LAMENTING JERUSALEM'S DESTRUCTION

The historical background of this pas-

sage is probably the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian army of Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. It is a psalm

of lament over the destruction of the city and the humbling of the people as a result of their conquest.

79:1-4 *Laid Jerusalem in heaps:* The picture of the destruction is deplorable. The army of Babylon took no time to bury dead bodies. They destroyed the city, tore down the walls of the city, and burned the temple, carrying away all the bronze, silver and gold of both the king's house and temple. It was a total devastation of both city and people.

79:5-13 *Pour out Your wrath:* The major part of the psalm is directed to God that He render vengeance on those who had devastated Israel, Jerusalem and the temple. Since the psalm would have been written by one in exile, the nature of the plea comes from one who seems to be impatient with God's response. A promise from the prophets of a remnant that would return to the land had already been made. With this knowledge of the promise of a remnant, the psalmist was asking how much longer would God wait before

the conquering nations were punished. The Babylonian Empire was eventually overthrown by the Medo-Persian Empire in 538 B.C. The king of the Medo-Persian Empire then allowed the Jews to return and rebuild both the city and temple (See comments Er & Ne). ***Former iniquities:*** The psalmist knew that repentance and forgiveness were necessary on the part of the remnant. He knew that repentance was necessary before all that he requested concerning the judgment of the enemies of Israel could be realized. ***Purge away:*** Literally, "make atonement for." ***Appointed to die:*** Save alive the sons of those who died in the destruction. ***Sevenfold:*** Initiate perfect or complete retribution. ***Show forth Your praise:*** Once the Jews returned from their captivity, they no longer sinned as their forefathers by running after idol gods. They remained true to the one God from the time of the Babylonian captivity unto this day.

CHAPTER 80

RESCUE FROM CALAMITY

In this psalm of lament over the calamity that had befallen God's people, the psalmist was assured that God would once again return and help His people. At the time this psalm was written, God's people were suffering because of their sins, and thus the psalmist knew that God would come again to rescue them as He did in former times.

80:1-7 God was the shepherd of Israel who led His sheep by the authority of His word (ch 23; Is 40:11). ***Turn us***

again: The use of the word "again" infers that this calamity was a series of calamities that Israel endured throughout their history as a result of their unfaithfulness. It also infers that the psalmist assumed that God would act in their present situation as He had responded in the past to deliver them. ***Against Your people who pray:*** The people were in prayer, but the psalmist was asking for answers to their prayers. When in the despair of calamity, it is easy to become impatient with God. But the believer must

always understand that God allows us to suffer the consequences of our sin until we have learned our lesson. **Our enemies laugh:** Because of God's help in the past, Israel became somewhat arrogant, thinking that their victories over their enemies were the result of their efforts alone. But now the enemies of Israel had been victorious over them. Now that the enemies had victory over them, the enemies thus laughed at the former arrogance of Israel.

80:8-12 Vine out of Egypt: See Is 5:1-7; 27:2-6; Jr 2:21; 12:10; Ez 17:5-10. **Sea:** The Mediterranean Sea. **River:** The Euphrates River. God had taken Israel out of Egyptian captivity and brought her into the land of promise. She was planted and nourished. She came to her full strength during the days of Solomon, whose kingdom influence, through trade, reached into other nations. But because of her apostasy to other gods, the vine was uprooted. First, the northern kingdom fell to the Assyrians in 722/21 B.C., and then the southern kingdom to the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

80:13-19 Why have You then broken down her hedges: At the time, the vine of Israel was left unprotected. She had been uprooted by her enemies. There is complaint in the words of the psalmist as he compares the past protection that God offered Israel to their present desolation. His complaint came in a prayer that God return and make the nation strong for Himself. **The son of man:** This could be a Messianic reference to Jesus who is now at the right hand of God (Ep 1:20-23). But the prophets also at times referred to Israel as the son of God, for God had given birth to the nation (See Ex 4:22; Is 1:2; 63:16; 64:8; Jr 31:9). **We will not return from You:** This vow pointed to the promise that Israel made as a nation when in the captivity of Assyria and Babylon. The vow would have been broken if made during a previous captivity, for they returned to idolatrous worship after previous oppressions by foreign powers. But when they returned from Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C., never again did they follow after idolatrous gods. They kept their vow.

CHAPTER 81

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

This psalm was apparently used during many of the annual feasts, as the feast of Trumpets, Tabernacles and the day of atonement. It is a psalm that commemorates the memorials of how God had worked in the history of Israel.

81:1-5 Blow the trumpet: This was a law that God gave to Israel. It was the trumpet announcing freedom for Israel when they were about to leave their cap-

tivity in Egypt. **New moon:** Full moon. **Language:** They would have known the Egyptian language, for they had lived in Egypt for over 400 years. This was the sound (language) from God on Mt. Sinai.

81:6-10 The remaining verses of the psalm speak of Israel's deliverance to freedom from the captivity of Egypt. God removed the burden from their shoulders they bore in captivity (Ex 1:11-14). **Place of thunder:** Mt. Sinai (Ex 19:16-25).

Waters of Meribah: See Ex 17:1-7. **If you will hearken:** If they would have been obedient to His word, then they would not have created gods after their own imaginations which led them to follow after the lusts of the flesh. They became materialistic after the nations around them, and thus created gods of lusts by which they satisfied themselves. God would have supplied all their necessities, but they greedily ran after the material gods of the Canaanites.

81:11-16 They refused to be loyal to God (See Ex 20:3). God thus gave them up because of their disobedience (Rm 1:24). If they had obeyed God, their history would have been completely different. Even those who hated the Lord would have been subjected to them. They would have had no need for food, for God would have supplied their needs from the rocks. Israel's history proves that the urge of man to follow after his own ways is strong.

CHAPTER 82

REBUKE OF UNJUST JUDGMENTS

Affirming that God was the Supreme One who judges without respect of persons, this is a psalm wherein the psalmist cries out for justice against wicked rulers. The existing authorities had perverted justice. They had declared their wickedness by rendering prejudicial judgments.

82:1-4 *The gods:* Bible students must keep in mind that when the word "gods" is used in the Bible, reference is to man determining his own laws that are often contrary to the will of God. The "gods" with which God competed was man who determined to go his own way. Once a religious man determines to go his own way, he will create a concept of a higher deity that condones his behavior. He has thus made a false god, one to whom he is subservient, and thus his conscience is clear according to the judgments of this god. The false gods of the Bible, therefore, were the creation of men. They existed only in the minds of misguided people. In this context, these

were the gods against whom the only true God stood. Thus God was standing against men who had religiously decided to determine their own moral behavior.

Judge unjustly: Compare 1 Sm 8:3; Is 1:17; 3:13-15; Jr 21:12; Am 5:12,15; Zc 8:9,10. The society had collapsed because there were no fair judgments, especially for the poor and orphans. One can know when a society has digressed by its unjust treatment of the unfortunate.

82:5-8 One of the primary purposes for judges was to guarantee the security of the unfortunate of society. At this time in the history of Israel, fair judges had passed from the land. The wickedness of the existing judges was manifested by their indifference to the plight of the defenseless. **Children of the Most High:** The judges had been given a place of respect in society, but they had abused their power. By their corrupt judgments they disqualified themselves. Because they had abused their function, their office would not protect them from dying as common men.

CHAPTER 83

CONFOUND THE ENEMIES

The historical events of this psalm could have taken place at many different times throughout Israel's history. On many occasions a confederation of enemies aligned themselves against Israel. One such confederation took place during the reign of Jehoshaphat (2 Ch 20). Earlier times could have been during the period of the judges (See Jg 7 & 8).

83:1-4 The goal of the alliance of armies was to destroy the nation of Israel. Because they hated Israel, they hated the God of Israel. Any nation, or league of nations, therefore, that set themselves against the existence of Israel was fighting against God. God was working with Israel to bring the Savior into the world, and thus they were fighting against the eternal plan of redemption for mankind.

83:5-8 This alliance of nations was a mixture of different races. Some were descendants from Abraham (Edomites, Ishmaelites, Moabites), and some were aliens, and thus not from the heritage of Abraham. It was an uncommon league of nations that was doomed to fail. It was doomed to fail because, as independent nations, they had different agendas.

83:9-18 Sisera: See Jg 4:1 – 5:1.
Oreb, Zeeb, Zebah: See Jg 7:1 – 8:13.
 The goal for which the psalmist prayed was to make them like those whom God had allowed Israel to conquer throughout their history. Since the confederation of armies manifested their hate of God by opposing God's people, the psalmist called on God to glorify Himself by giving Israel victory. This would be accomplished because the confederation was too great for Israel alone to defeat. But if God came to their aid and helped them to defeat such a great coalition of nations, then the nations would know that Israel had the help of their God. **That they may seek Your name:** In this imprecatory call for judgment on the nations, the psalmist had not forgotten the mission of Israel among the nations. Israel was a nation of priests to the nations of the world, and thus they were to minister the word of God to the nations. In his plea of this psalm, therefore, the psalmist was not simply pleading for the deliverance of Israel, but also that Israel evangelistically reach the nations with a true knowledge of God. **LORD:** This was the personal Israelite name for God, *Yahweh*.

CHAPTER 84

DESIRE FOR WORSHIP

This psalm may be associated with the pilgrimage to the tabernacle during the feast of Tabernacles. It is a psalm that expresses spiritual depth and a yearning for fellowship with God.

84:1-4 Tents: Or, the dwelling

places of God. **My soul longs ... faints:** This is a psalm of deep conviction. The psalmist sought to be in any place where he could feel close to God. **Sparrow ... swallow:** As birds find a home, so the psalmist sought for a residence in the presence of God. Understanding the omni-

presence of God helps one to feel close to God wherever he is. Christians today must understand that the requirement of God that the Jews present themselves before the tabernacle for the annual feast was for the purpose of maintaining unity in the nation. The Israelites knew that God was omnipresent, and thus could worship Him on their farms. But in order to maintain the unity of the nation, God commanded that they come together for national meetings.

84:5-8 *In whose heart is the way:* Those who have God in their hearts know the way to Zion. Because they had made the pilgrimage to Zion before, they knew the way. ***From strength to strength:*** The Israelites made an annual pilgrimage to present themselves before the Lord. This customary journey was a great trip

for those who went. They knew the route to take and where to stay along the way. Though they had to go through waste lands to arrive at the tabernacle, the lands became a place of fountains. As they drew closer to the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle, they became more excited about the journey. It was a wonderful occasion in Jewish life.

84:9-12 *Shield:* Protection. ***Your anointed:*** This probably refers to the psalmist himself, as one of the pilgrims who made his way to the house of God. ***Doorkeeper:*** The most humble place in the house of God was better than a mansion with the wicked. ***Walk uprightly:*** God will provide for those who are His (See Rm 8:28). And for this reason, the one who depends on God will be blessed.

CHAPTER 85

REQUEST FOR MERCY

The historical setting of this psalm was probably when the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity in 536 B.C. (See also 126; Ne 1:3; Hg 1:6-11; 2:15-19; see comments Er & Ne). It is a psalm of adoration in giving praise to God for His deliverance. With the praise of God, there is a prayer for spiritual revival among the people.

85:1-3 *The captivity:* The northern kingdom of Israel was taken into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. and the southern kingdom in 586 B.C. A remnant of all twelve tribes of Israel returned to the promised land when Cyrus of Persia allowed the initial group of captives to return in 536 B.C. ***Forgiven:*** Because

of their apostasy, Israel had been taken into captivity. Because of their repentance while in bondage, they were allowed to return.

85:4-7 The psalm turned from praise to prayer. When the initial captives returned, they were met with great opposition. The opposition was so great that they ceased rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem (See comments of Er & Ne). God allowed them to return. However, though through God's grace they were allowed to return, this did not mean that they would be without trouble in accomplishing the goal of rebuilding the temple and the city.

85:8-13 The psalmist closed with hope that God would answer the petition

to deliver them from the trouble they were experiencing in rebuilding the city. The condition for receiving God's blessing was that they not turn again to the folly of creating their own gods. When God's mercy and truth unite for the ben-

efit of man, and man lives in righteousness and peace, the result is the restoration of joy among the people of God. People live in joy when there is hope for the future.

CHAPTER 86

PRAYER AND TRUST

This psalm of lament is ascribed to David. The lament of the psalm is based on the fact that God is good and ready to forgive all those who repentantly come to Him. He is great and full of compassion, and thus ready to help and comfort.

86:1-5 *Poor and needy:* The psalmist poured out his heart because he was in despair. His poverty was not economic, but spiritual in that he realized he needed the help of God in his life (See comments Mt 5:1-12). ***Committed:*** Because he had given his life to the Lord, he beseeched the Lord to work in his life. ***Daily:*** The believer's prayer and commitment to the Lord is not confined to a place or specific time during the week. It is daily and in every place, for one's life should be consumed for the Lord (Rm 12:1,2; 1 Th 5:17).

86:6-10 The hope of an answered prayer is based on the nature of who God is. Because all other gods are the result of the imagination of men, and thus do not exist outside the minds of men, then only God is able to respond to prayer. It was the psalmist who was crying out for

help, for as a man he had accomplished the maximum that man could do to deliver himself. And since false gods are only the invention of men who use their minds to accomplish the best man can do, then one must seek that which is beyond man, that is, God (Compare 1 Co 8:5,6).

86:11-17 *Unite my heart:* The psalmist sought to focus his attention exclusively on God and His ways. He did not want to be tossed to and fro with the whims of fictitious beliefs that are the invention of men. He desired to dedicate the totality of his mind, heart, soul and strength to God alone (See Hs 10:2; Ph 3:13). ***Depths of Sheol:*** In the historical setting, David had been delivered from death by the ungodly. ***Full of compassion:*** Because of the compassionate nature of God, He is willing to help those who put their trust in Him. ***Turn to me:*** Knowing the nature of God, the psalmist was confident that God would extend His mercy to him. ***Sign:*** Not only does David ask for God to work in his life, he asked that the work be so evident that it would be a signal to his enemies that God was with him, and thus against them.

CHAPTER 87

PRIVILEGES OF NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP

This is an adoration of the spiritual

Zion that is above. The historical setting is probably sometime after the Babylonian captivity. This is a universal psalm

in the sense that peoples of all nations are included as participants in paying homage to God.

87:1-7 Foundation ... gates: Jerusalem is the earthly source of the metaphor that refers to heaven. What Jerusalem was to the Jewish faith, heaven is to all men. The gates of the city signified the strength of its walls against the enemy, as well as the place where the elders met with those who inquired counsel (See comments Mt 16:18,19). **Spoken of you:** Reference is to the praise of Gentile believers who looked to the God of heaven for protection and guidance (See comments Jn 10:16). **Rahab and Babylon:** The Gentiles will be included with those who have given themselves to the Lord. **Rahab:** A name that was used in Hebrew poetry for Egypt (Is 30:7). The names of places in this context are representative of Gentiles who are part of the heavenly Zion. **This one was born there:** The believing Gentiles whose

spiritual heritage came out of God's city also have their citizenship in Zion. **He registers the people:** This psalm reaffirms the purpose and mission of Israel among the nations. They were a nation of priests, and thus had a responsibility to take the name of God to all nations (See comments Jh; see 1 Pt 2:5,9). They were situated in the most important world trade route at the time. They were between the northern people of the world and those of Africa to the south. Being situated in Palestine, they had the responsibility to teach the world about the one true and living God. Unfortunately, they compromised their faith with belief in the gods of the nations around them. They forsook their responsibility, and thus compromised their mission. It was not until after the Babylonian captivity that they assumed their God-ordained mission, which mission was reaffirmed by Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20 (Mk 16:15,16).

CHAPTER 88

DELIVERANCE FROM DEATH

This is probably the greatest lament of all the psalms. It is a psalm similar to the plight of Job who felt that there was no end to his suffering. The psalmist seems to have a disease that he incurred in youth, but now resolved that it would lead to his death.

88:1-7 Full of troubles: The psalmist concluded that he was near death, and thus poured out this final lamentation concerning his plight. He had resigned himself to death. His friends had considered his disease to be fatal. The nature

of the psalm, therefore, is a final lament to God in reference to the darkness of his life. **Your waves:** It would not be that God directly afflicted him with judgments. However, God has allowed him to suffer the plight of living in a world with a physical body that is subject to suffering. God is good, but He allows the natural processes of life to transpire. We live in a fallen world, one from which God will eventually deliver the righteous.

88:8-12 The psalmist's friends had forsaken him because of his disease. He had been shut up as one who was stricken

with leprosy. In his desperate situation, he cried out on a daily basis to ask God for relief. And then, if he died, he questioned whether God would raise the dead. Though God's wonders cannot be made known by the dead, they will be made known when the dead arise in the future (See comments 1 Th 4:13-18).

88:13-18 The malady that he suffered was from his youth. Though he had no friends, he prayed that God not turn from him. At this time in his life he felt that all the agony that came with his malady had not climaxed with his impend-

ing death. What we would learn from the situation of the psalmist is that God will allow one to suffer in a disease throughout his life. We live in a world of pain and suffering. Sin came into the world through Adam, and thus much of our suffering is the result of man's sinful actions toward one another. However, in this case it was disease, not sin, that brought suffering into the life of the psalmist. It is in this imperfect environment for human habitation, therefore, that all men must live until they come into the new heaven and earth.

CHAPTER 89

GOD'S COVENANT AND ISRAEL'S TRIALS

This last psalm of Book III is Messianic. The historical setting probably took place during the reign of Jehoiachin. There is in the background of the psalm a threat against the Davidic kings, a threat that would possibly bring this long dynasty of kings to an end.

89:1-4 The mercy and faithfulness of the Lord is the theme of the psalm. Upon the foundation of David, God built the Davidic dynasty. This fulfilled the promise and covenant that God had made with David. **Your seed:** The promise was that from David's earthly lineage there would be kings who came from the seedline of David (See genealogies of Mt 1; Lk 3). However, there is Messianic inference here in that David's seed would be established forever, which was through Jesus (At 2:30).

89:5-14 Beginning with emphasis on the created world being obedient to the

will of God, the psalmist continued with focus on God's power over the strongest of nations who had succumbed to His power. **The heavens:** See 19:1-6. **Assembly of the saints:** God is feared among the assembly of His holy ones, which in this context would also include angelic beings. **Feared:** God is a God of love. However, because He is God He must be feared. We express reverence toward God in worship, but there must be fear, knowing that God can with a breath sweep the universe back into its nothingness that was before the creation. Approaching God without a sense of fear is arrogance on the part of man. Thus in one's fear of God, it is understood that there is obedience to His word. **Rahab:** Reference to Egypt (87:4). **Tabor and Hermon:** These two mountains are obvious in the range of mountains. God's power is evident in His creation (ch 8; Rm 1:20). **Arm ... right hand:** The metaphors (anthropomorphisms) empha-

size the strength of God among all people of the world. No man is as strong as God. Because God is powerful over all things, He is the finality of justice and judgment among men. He is the final moral standard by which all will be judged.

89:15-18 Trumpet sound: This was the sound of the trumpet that called people to the festivals. It was a joyful sound as the trumpet calls were relayed from one trumpet to another throughout the land that all come to the feasts. **Walk:** Once called, the families would make the joyful journey to where the tabernacle was located in order to celebrate the designated feasts. **Horn:** Power will be increased.

89:19-37 God had made a covenant with David that from his seed there would be kings in Israel. Peter referred to verses 3 & 4 in his address on Pentecost (At 2:30). Paul referred to verse 20 in his address to those in Antioch of Pisidia (At 13:22,23). Therefore, there are Messianic references in this context, though the immediate application was to Jehoiachin in his last days as king of Judah. **David ... will be established:** God anointed the heritage of David to be kings in Israel. No one could rightfully sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem if he were not of the lineage of David. The purpose of the genealogies of Jesus that are recorded in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 were to establish the fact that Jesus was of the lineage of David, and thus had a right to sit on the throne (authority) of David and reign as king, which reign Jesus is presently doing from heaven (See comments At 2:22-36).

Sea: The Mediterranean Sea. **Rivers:** The Tigris and Euphrates. This would be an area that covered all the area to which the Israelites were taken into captivity. The area encompassed the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires. **Firstborn:** See Jn 1:14; Rm 8:29. **My covenant will stand fast:** God established a sure and steadfast covenant with the seed of David. It was "forever" in the sense that Jesus was the last of David's seed who would reign as king. **If his children forsake My law:** The children could be disobedient to the will of God, but God would not forsake His promise to David. **Nor suffer My faithfulness to fail:** Jesus came into a world where the Jews had failed to keep the law of God. However, God still fulfilled His promise to set Jesus on the throne of David (See comments Jn 1:10-14). God established Jesus on the throne of David because He would not break His covenant with David. Because God was faithful to His covenant with David, Jesus is now reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15). Jesus was established as king, not because of the obedient works of Israel, but because of the grace of God. **As the moon:** When God makes a covenant with man, He will not break His covenant (60:6; Hb 6:13-20). Though man may be disobedient to the will of God, God will be true to His promises as the moon is established in the heavens. The fulfillment of God's promises is based on grace, not the works of men.

89:38-45 Cast off and abhorred: This was a time in history when the southern kingdom of Israel, Judah, was being

led into captivity, which captivity began with the initial captivity of Jehoiachin and ended with the final captivity in 586 B.C. Because of their disobedience, they were cast off into captivity. To those Jews who were experiencing these evening hours of the southern kingdom of Israel, it felt as if God had nullified His covenant and terminated the crown of David. Jehoiachin, of the seedline of David, was taken into captivity. The people were taken into captivity. The land was left to be plundered by traders who continually passed through the land. Thus Israel became a nation that was mocked by the world for they were taken out of the land. It was the end of Israel's habitation in the land, and thus, the people of God became a shame to the name of God among the nations.

89:46-52 *How long, Lord:* The people realized that they were being pun-

ished for their apostasy from God. They had evidently been listening to Jeremiah who said that they would go into captivity. Beginning with the captivity of Jehoiachin and ending with the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., Israel would have to wait in Babylonian captivity for seventy years before they would return to the land. They had also been listening to the prophets who had prophesied that a remnant would return to the land. They thus pleaded with God that He fulfill His promise to return them to the land. **Your former mercies:** The psalmist turned from pleading the case of Israel that was based on the brevity of life, to pleading for God's remembrance of His mercy for Israel in the past. God did remember His former mercies, and thus allowed them to return from captivity (See comments Er & Ne).

Book IV

(90:1 – 106:48)

CHAPTER 90

GOD'S ETERNITY AND MAN'S BREVIDITY

This is a magnificent psalm that expresses deep feelings concerning the brevity of man's life. Though the psalm was attributed to Moses, most Bible students have assigned it to a later time. Since the titles were not a part of the original psalms, we would conclude that a later scribe showed respect to Moses by assigning the thoughts of this psalm to the one who was the initial leader of the nation.

90:1-6 *From everlasting:* God has

no beginning or ending. If He had, He would not be God. Since matter is not eternal, then the earth is not eternal as God. Earth is the result of an infinite God. **Return, you children of men:** Man is called again to return to the dust of the earth from which he came (Gn 3:19). **Thousand years ... as yesterday:** Time is not within the realm of God's existence. Only that which has been created is subject to time. As a part of creation, therefore, we cannot judge or conceive of God in reference to time (See 2 Pt 3:8). In contrast to the eternity of God, man is

brief as the four-hour watch. We are cut down and wither away.

90:7-12 Our iniquities: This is the problem of man, for there is no one who does not sin (Rm 3:23). The brevity of our lives is worsened by the fact that we cannot live without sinning (Rm 3:9,10). And because we cannot live without sinning, we live under the judgment of God for our sins. This judgment robs us of any hope of eternity, and thus we are driven to the grace of God to keep us in His eternal presence (Compare 2 Th 1:6-9). **Secret sins:** Both God and man can see the sin that is carried out in behavior. But only God can know all the hidden attitudes of sin that are deep within the heart of man. Thus we pass our days under the judgment of God. **As a tale:** The length of our days is as a sighing breath. **Threescore years and ten:** This would be sixty years as a normal life-span, with an added ten more years by struggle. Re-

gardless of the length of life, however, we are but a breath of wind in comparison to time. Because life is so short, it is necessary that we seek that which is eternal. Knowing, therefore, the judgment of God because of our sin, and the brevity of life, men should seek God to whom all are headed for judgment at the time of death (Hb 9:27).

90:13-17 Because God is eternal and man is finite and sinful, it is only natural that the psalmist would end this psalm with a plea for God's grace. **How long?** Or, how long will God take to return with mercy on man. **Satisfy us early:** The plea of the psalmist was that God return with His compassion early in life in order that life not be spent in vanities. The earlier one commits his life to God, the more he has of his life to give glory to God. **Let Your work appear:** This was a plea that the salvational work of God should be made known.

CHAPTER 91

SECURITY OF THE FAITHFUL

This psalm of adoration brings together a prayer and expression of trust in the Lord. It is a psalm that affirms that God is for His people, and thus His people can find security in Him.

91:1-8 The use of the first and second person pronouns are alternated throughout the psalm. The psalmist proclaimed his own personal faith, and then proclaimed comfort to the people. **Secret place:** This would be a place as a cave in which one would hide from his enemy. **Shadow:** Protection. **Refuge ... fortress:** Taken from the historical set-

ting when there was an invading enemy, these two metaphors refer to those on the farms who took refuge in the fortified cities, and from there stood against the attack of the enemy. **Under His wings:** As chicks flee for safety under the wings of the hen, so we flee for the protection of God. **Truth ... shield:** When error is propagated about by false teachers, the truth of God's word will keep one from being tossed to and fro (See comments Ep 4:11-16). **Terror by night:** Dangers from men who would attack in the night. **Pestilence:** Dangers of disease.

91:9-16 If they put their trust in the Lord, they would be able to do what men normally would not be able to do, that is face lions and trample on snakes. **Set his love on Me:** See Jn 14:15; Rm 5:5; 1 Jn 4:18. Verses 14-16 are God's promise to those who have committed themselves to the Lord through love and obedience.

God promises that He will set one in a place of protection. He will answer prayers. He will deliver the threatened out of trouble. He will be given a long life. These things God will do for those who have a personal acquaintance with God by their obedience to His will.

CHAPTER 92

GOD IS GOOD

This is an answer to the problem Job faced (See chs 37; 49; 74). The wicked may prosper, but they will eventually be brought down. Their final end is eternal destruction. When one realizes the final outcome of the wicked, then he praises God for His justice.

92:1-8 One is to give thanks to the Lord for all the good that He does in our lives. His goodness, therefore, is an occasion for praising Him. By what seems to be an array of stringed instruments, the psalmist brought a pleasant sound to his ears as he poured out his heart in praise to the Lord. **Senseless ... fool:** A senseless person does not think on things that are above this world. He does not perceive the work of God in the lives of righteous men because his mind is on carnal things. The fool is the morally corrupt person who cannot comprehend the work of God because his mind is focused on pleasing the lust of the flesh and following after those things that bring pride in

life. Because the senseless and foolish focus on the things of their world, they will often prosper in life. However, that which they prosper will not take them into eternity and into the presence of God. Thus they are allowed by God to prosper, but in their prosperity they will face the judgment of eternal doom.

92:9-15 This is a brilliant closing to a psalm wherein it is realized by the righteous that God stands for them in any situation. In the midst of any trouble, the righteous must realize that the fame of the wicked is only temporary. But in reference to their fate, the righteous must realize that through the justice of God, they will be made strong. **Horn:** Power (See Jb 39:9-12). **Palm tree:** Prosper. **Cedar:** Strength to endure. **Fruit in old age:** Not only will they live long, but their capacity to bear fruit will continue into their old age. Those who have given their lives to the Lord throughout their lives will live to an old age, being vigorous until the day they die. **Rock:** Stability.

CHAPTER 93

MAJESTY OF GOD

This psalm, and others (chs 47; 96-99), are psalms that magnify the kingdom

reign of God over all things. The sovereignty of God is figuratively portrayed as the physical world unleashing its power.

93:1-5 If this psalm were written after the Babylonian captivity, then the emphasis was on God dressing Himself again with power among the nations. Through the restoration of Israel, God revealed His power over the nations by fulfilling the prophecies that He would restore a remnant of His people to their land. With the return of the remnant from exile, the throne of David was established and in waiting for the fulfillment of the Messiah to come. **The floods:** All the kingdom powers of the world could not defeat the eternal purpose of God through the restoration of Israel in view of the Messiah to come. The threat of the na-

tions was only as the sound of ocean waves. **Testimonies:** God's will was established in that the fulfillment of prophecy concerning His eternal plan came about, regardless of what happened among the nations of the world. One very important truth is taken from this psalm. Regardless of the will of man, or the events that take place among the nations of the world, God carries out His plans. Men did not change His redemptive plan to bring the Savior into the world, nor His plan that the Savior ascend to the right hand of the Father to reign over all things (See comments Jn 1:11; Ep 1:20-22; Ph 2: 5-11).

CHAPTER 94

PLEA FOR VINDICATION

This psalm focuses on the inequities of life in reference to the hardships of the righteous that are the result of the wicked (See chs 37; 49; 72). Though the righteous suffer such inequities at the hands of the wicked, the psalmist concludes that the grace of God is sufficient to calm the anxieties that prevail in a world that is cursed with sin.

94:1-7 Vengeance: The psalmist complained, and thus called on God to render vengeance to those who had persecuted Israel (Dt 32:35; Rm 12:19). **How long:** The wicked will continue to persecute the people of God until Jesus comes. Though the wicked think that they will conceal their evil deeds from God, they will eventually reap the vengeance of God. **Widow ... alien ... fatherless:** The extremity of the wicked deeds of the ungodly is measured by the fact that they

poured out their wickedness on the defenseless of society.

94:8-15 Take heed: After defining the wicked deeds of the ungodly, the psalmist turned to them with penetrating words, proclaiming that they would not accept the knowledge of their Creator. **The Lord knows:** God is omniscient, and thus knows all things. God is omnipresent, and thus is wherever we are. God is omnipotent, and thus able to bring judgment on the wicked wherever they are. **Chasten:** This world is a training ground for believers to prepare themselves for eternal dwelling (See comments Hb 12:5-11). **Teach out of Your law:** In order for one to know if his behavior is according to the will of God, he must know the will of God. And one can know the will of God only through His word. Our conscience can be our guide only if it is trained by the word of God. **Not cast off**

His people: The righteous must find comfort in the fact that God will not forsake His people, though in a time of calamity, it may seem that God has forsaken us. But we must keep in mind that there is a final judgment day when the righteous will be delivered out of the oppression of the wicked, for the wicked will pass away (Mt 25:46; 2 Th 1:6-9).

94:16-23 Lord ... my help: Though no one would stand with the psalmist, he was assured that God was there for him. If the psalmist were a leader, possibly David, he knew that as a leader for God he had to stand alone. Godly leaders know that though they are alone from men, God is there with them. **Anxious thoughts:** In times of inner turmoil, believers must be assured that God is with them. It was not that those of faith had no anxieties. It is that their anxieties are calmed when they come to realize that God is for them (Rm 8:28). **Throne of iniquity:** Sometimes it seems that iniquity

is enthroned in society, and thus righteous people have no chance. But God will bring down the unrighteous. He will deliver the oppressed. **Mischief by law:** The wicked ruler uses the law to carry out his wicked deeds against the people. Such a person cannot claim to be functioning on behalf of God. Only those who are self-deceived believe that they are carrying out the will of God when they are actually oppressing the righteous. This is often characteristic of false religions. **Defense ... rock:** One must find solace in the fact that God comes to the aid of the oppressed. When one realizes that God is the defender of the righteous, then upon the basis of this knowledge one can establish his faith. **Cut them off:** Knowing that the wicked will eventually come to an end gives confidence to the righteous. Though the wicked do not come to an end in this life, all wicked will come to an end at the time of the final judgment in the end (Mt 25:46; 2 Th 1:6-9).

CHAPTER 95

PRAISE OF GOD AND WARNING AGAINST UNBELIEF

In Psalms 95–100 the common theme is adoration of God as the creator of all things. These are psalms of praise for God's covenant with Israel. The purpose of these psalms was to encourage joy on the part of Israel because of their unique relationship with God.

95:1-7 Joyful noise: This was a call to worship. In this case, it was a call to express one's worship through singing. **King above all gods:** It was not that there were other gods. These were

gods that were imagined in the minds of men, and often represented with the making of some idol. In the context of this psalm on worship, therefore, the call to worship means putting out of one's mind concepts of idol gods. We cannot worship the true God with an imagined god in our minds. No polytheist can faithfully worship the God of heaven. **Deep places:** We pour out ourselves in worship because we realize that God is everywhere and in control of all creation. **Let us worship:** These first verses define worship. Worship comes from our

hearts and is offering adoration to God. There is no focus in worship on what man receives as a result of his worship. True worship is not given in order to get something. If there is a feeling of receiving something from worship, then the worship is divided between giving adoration to God while expecting something in return. Nowhere is worship defined in the Bible where the worshiper is to receive something in return for his bowing down to pay homage to the God of creation. Worship is never centered around the entertainment of the worshiper.

95:8-11 As in the rebellion: It is significant that in the context of a psalm on worship that the psalmist brings up a subject where the people thought about themselves. When coming out of Egyptian captivity, Israel experienced the power of God through the plagues on Egypt and the dividing of the Red Sea. They should have worshiped without thinking of themselves. But they did not.

Tempted ... trial: The Hebrew word for “tempted” is Meribah, the place where Israel rebelled because they had no water (Ex 17:1-7; see Nm 20:1-13). The word for “trial” is Massah. Because they thought of themselves, they tempted and tested the patience of God by complaining about their circumstances. They doubted whether God could care for them, and thus were actually putting God on trial. **Forty years:** As a result of Israel’s self-centeredness, they were condemned to wander for 40 years in the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula. **Err in their heart:** If one’s heart is not right with God, then he cannot worship with a pure heart. **They would not enter:** As those who erred against God when they came out of Egypt, and thus were forbidden to enter the land of promise, so those who do not worship God with a pure heart today will not enter heaven (See comments Hb 3 & 4).

CHAPTER 96

THE JUST GOD

The words of this psalm are similar to 1 Chronicles 16:23-33. The psalm focuses on the deity of God and His sovereignty over all things. It is a call to all nations of the world to pay homage to the one true God of heaven.

96:1-6 A new song: See 33:3; 98:1; 149:1; Is 42:10. Emphasis is on the renewal of one’s heart to praise God with a new song of worship. **Declare His glory:** Or, tell of His marvelous works. **Gods ... idols:** If one were to worship the true God, then he must recognize that

man cannot invent gods in his mind to which he would pay homage. In the context of the theme of this psalm, the psalmist called for religious people of the nations to give up their imagined gods in order to come in worship of the true God of heaven (See 115:4-8; Is 40:18-23; 44:9-20). **Lord made the heavens:** Idol gods are made by the minds of men. But the true God made the minds of men.

96:7-13 Families of the people: God was not just the God of Israel. He was the God of all nations. When He chose Israel to be the nation through

whom He would bring the Savior into the world, He did not reject the Gentiles of the world. **Bring an offering:** The bringing of an offering when coming to worship manifested that the worshiper was sincere. One cannot worship the God who gave us all things without giving back to Him in worship. Worship, therefore, is expressed through the giving of sacrifices. Worship is not accomplished by expecting something in return, whether material or spiritual. We do not give in worship in order to get something in return. False worship is offering in expectation of receiving something back from God.

Tremble: God is love, but true worshipers realize that the One they worship created all things, and thus can snuff all things out of existence with the word of His mouth. **Say ... the Lord reigns:** God the Father now reigns over all things. When Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father, He assumed kingdom reign over all things (See comments Ep 1:20-24; Ph 2:5-11). **He is coming to judge:** This verse looks to the end of time when Jesus will come in judgment of all things (See comments At 17:30,31; 1 Th 4:13-18; Rv 20:1-12).

CHAPTER 97

SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

This psalm seems to continue the thought of verse 13 of the preceding psalm. God will have a final judgment. For the righteous, the purpose of the judgment and its certainty is a reason for rejoicing. The righteous, therefore, see any judgment of God in time or at the end of time as a deliverance from the oppression of the wicked.

97:1-6 The Lord reigns: All people should rejoice because God is in control (ch 95; Hb 1:3). God's authority to judge all nations is based on the fact that only God can judge without prejudice. His judgment is always just. In order that God stand just, judgment must come on all people (Hb 9:27). The wicked must be held accountable for their crimes. **The whole earth:** God was not the God of Israel alone, but of all the world. **Fire ... lightnings:** These were signals of the presence of God (See Ex 19:9,16; 20:21;

Dt 4:11; 5:23).

97:7-12 All you gods: Since false gods are simply the imagination of those who create spirit beings after their own thinking, the psalmist called on the minds of men to bow down before the true God. **Rejoiced ... judgments:** The historical setting of this psalm is not revealed. There was possibly a deliverance of Israel from oppression that gave rise to this psalm. God's people were vindicated from the oppression because of the just judgment of God. **Love the Lord, hate evil:** Love of the Lord is defined by one hating evil and obeying the commands of God (1 Jn 5:2). **He preserves:** Because God comes to the aid of His people, His people have an occasion for rejoicing (Compare Rm 8:28; 1 Co 10:13). They are preserved in their righteousness because they have responded positively to the commandments of God.

CHAPTER 98

PRAISE FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

The theme of this psalm is the mercy and salvation of the Lord. Because of the Lord's mercy and salvation, all His people, all nature, and all the nations are called on to sing praises to Him.

98:1-9 Hand ... arm: God's power was manifested through His mercy and deliverance of His people. **Ends of the earth have seen the salvation:** God did not deliver Israel for Israel's sake alone. He delivered them as a witness to other

nations that He was working through Israel. **Make a joyful noise:** Because of what God has done, He should be praised. In every way He should be praised for His work among His people and the world. **Sea ... floods:** These metaphors bring the entire creation into the chorus of praise. **Judge ... with equity:** God judges without respect of persons (1 Pt 1:17). Because God so judges, the righteous can rejoice because they stand within the grace of God.

CHAPTER 99

THE FAITHFUL GOD

This is a psalm that magnifies the holiness of God. He is the sovereign God over all things, and thus inspires worship from those who recognize Him as King. He is faithful to those who worship Him because He alone is sovereign over all creation.

99:1-9 Cherubim: See Ex 25:18-22; 37:7-9. **People tremble:** When the people recognize the awesomeness of God, they tremble. He is a God of love. But since He is God, then men tremble. **High above all:** He is the incomprehensible God. He is not the product of the imagination of men, but men are the creation of His power. Therefore, God the creator is above all that He created. If He were the creation of the minds of men, then men could comprehend Him. **Equity:** He is the God of equality in judg-

ment. He judges without respect of persons, judging the righteous on the foundation of His grace. He renders mercy to those who have obediently responded to His grace. **He is holy:** There is no darkness in God (1 Jn 1:5). **He answered:** Because they were obedient to His commandments, God answered the prayers of Moses, Aaron and Samuel. The prayers of the obedient are answered. **Cloudy pillar:** See Ex 14:19,20; Nm 12:5. **Vengeance:** Because of their disobedient deeds, the Israelites were condemned to forty years of wandering in the wilderness. However, after they as a nation had paid the price for their rebellion, they were allowed to enter into the land of promise. However, those who were twenty years of age and older at the time of the rebellion, were not allowed to enter, but died in the wilderness.

CHAPTER 100

ALL NATIONS PRAISE GOD

This is a psalm of thanksgiving exalt-

ing the true God of Israel. It is a call on all nations to recognize and praise the one

God of heaven.

100:1-5 Joyful ... all you lands:

When studying the history of Israel in the Old Testament, one must not forget that God had a special covenant with Israel for Messianic reasons. However, He did not cease being the God of all nations. Throughout the book of Psalms, therefore, there is a call for all nations to worship God. **Gates:** The strength of His protection. **Courts:** The spiritual realm

of His glory. **Thanksgiving:** Reference to the thank offering. **Everlasting:** Here, as well as in most passages, the word “everlasting” or “forever” is used in reference to surety, not length of time. In this context, reference was to the certainty of God’s mercy, emphasizing the fact that the obedient remain within the security of God’s mercy. **Truth:** We can depend on the faithfulness of God.

CHAPTER 101

SPIRITUAL INTEGRITY

As a psalm of David, David set forth his vision for maintaining his court during his reign. He would conduct himself with dignity, as well as maintain a court that was void of evildoers. This is a beautiful psalm for making a personal comment to live righteously before God.

101:1-8 Mercy and justice: Since God had been merciful and just with him, David in turn wanted to be merciful and just with others (See comments Js 2:13). **Walk within my house:** He promised to live a righteous example before his family. **Wicked thing:** David promised that he would not set before himself that which was wicked. He would not watch that which glorified sin. **Those who turn aside:** He would not allow his loyalty to God to be compromised by friends who fell away from God. He would not associate with apostates. **Not know a wicked person:** He would maintain companions

who were righteous. He would stay away from evil companions. **Whoever secretly slanders:** He would reject those who maliciously spoke to him about others. He knew that his royal court would quickly be destroyed by allowing such people to exist, and thus he committed to God that He would not allow slanderous people to exist within his governing counsel. **Haughty ... arrogant:** He promised that he would associate with humble people, not those who played politics in order to gain his favor as the king of Israel. **Faithful:** He would focus on the righteous, and thus encourage them to be his friends. **Works deceit:** He would reject from his court those who deceive in order to gain favor or promote their agenda. **Destroy all the wicked:** He would first destroy the wicked in order that their influence not pollute the people. This would include purging Jerusalem of those who worked evil.

CHAPTER 102

PRAYER FOR MERCY

The historical setting of this psalm was probably the time when the Jews

were in exile. The psalmist mourned over the plight of his being away from his homeland. He yearned for the land that was

given to the fathers, and was confident that God had not forsaken His people.

102:1-11 *Hear my prayer:* The psalmist cried out to the Lord while in misery. The intensity of his prayer was measured by the depth of his calamity. His misery was so great that he asked God to give a quick answer to his deliverance from the situation in which he lived. ***Consumed like smoke:*** His existence was as smoke that vanished into the sky. ***Burned as a hearth:*** His life was inflamed on the fire of trials. ***Forget to eat my bread:*** It seems that the situation in which he was caused him to have no appetite. His body had given up food, and thus was withering away. Hunger pains had already passed and he was in a state of starvation. ***Bones cleave:*** He was skin and bones. ***Pelican ... Owl:*** He was as lone birds trying to survive. ***Ashes ... tears:*** Ashes were in his food and tears fell into his drink. ***Cast me down:*** He felt that he was not in favor with God. ***Your remembrance:*** The psalmist's plea was that God remember the plight in which he was. Calling on God to remember his situation was a call that God do something about his situation. God had not forgotten. Here, as well as in other texts that call on God to remember, are calls for God to take action.

102:12-22 The psalmist now focused on the bright side of his relationship with God. ***Endure ... remembrance:*** God endures with those with whom He works, and thus He does not forget His relationship with the faithful. ***Mercy on Zion:*** Jerusalem will be re-

membered in that God would fulfill His promise that a remnant return to the city. ***The set time:*** God had condemned them to 70 years of captivity (Jr 29:10; Dn 9:2). That time had been fulfilled by the time this psalm was written. ***The Lord will build up Zion:*** See comments Ezra & Nehemiah. Because Jerusalem was rebuilt by the returned Jews, the nations realized again that God was working with His people. ***Written for future generations:*** When the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity, it was the fulfillment of prophecy that they would return to rebuild. ***Sanctuary ... heaven:*** God does not dwell in buildings and temples made by the hands of men. His dwelling place is the sanctuary of a heavenly realm. If we feel that God dwells in a particular place, then we have created a concept of God that is less than His omnipresence. ***Groaning of the prisoner:*** The psalmist groaned in Babylonian captivity, as Nehemiah wept over the devastation of the city. God listened to the groaning in prayer and responded to allow the Jews to return to the promised land. As a result, His people were again gathered out of the nations in order to serve God. ***The kingdoms:*** Not only Israel, but the time would come when all the kingdoms would be gathered to serve the Lord (See Is 2:1-4; Mc 4:1,2; Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15,16).

102:23-28 The psalmist turned to focus on the brevity of his life in comparison to the longevity of God's creation. He requested that God not allow him to die. He possibly did not want to die until he saw the fulfillment of the prophecies that Israel would return from captivity.

They will perish: Verses 25-27 are quoted in Hebrews 1:10-12 with reference to Jesus who is unchangeable (See Hb 13:8). In this context the meaning is that God would not change from His

promises that He had made concerning the restoration of His people. Thus God's servants would continue throughout many generations to come.

CHAPTER 103

PRAISE GOD FOR HIS MERCY

This is a psalm of praise and adoration of God. It is a psalm of thanksgiving for God's care that was extended beyond the nation of Israel. The praises of the psalm exalt the redemptive work of God that reaches to all people.

103:1-5 All His benefits: As a psalm of adoration, the psalmist poured out his thanksgiving to God for the benefits for those who had committed their lives to Him: (1) God's people are forgiven of their sins. (2) He heals the soul that has been wounded by sin. (3) He saves His people from destruction that comes from sin. (4) He exalts His children by pouring out grace and mercy on them. (5) He satisfies His children with good things. **Your youth:** As an eagle that soars to great heights, so the result of God providing for the youth is that they too will have strength and longevity of life.

103:6-14 His ways: We have an inspired record of God's dealings with the nation of Israel in order to understand how gracious God can be with our rebellion. God was patient with Israel. He was forgiving. He cared for them as a father lovingly cares for his children. **Not always reprimand:** Though there were times when His children had to be disci-

plined, God would not continually do so day after day. Because of His forgiveness and mercy, He does not punish His people with what they deserve for their sins. Their rebellion would justly deserve death, but because of His mercy, He only disciplines. **We are dust:** God knows that we were created out of that to which all men return. Except for the spirit of man that God created, all men of this material world will return in a short time to the dust of the earth.

103:15-18 The life of man is brief, and withers away as the flowers of the field. But God's mercy continues forever. It continues throughout the generations of those who have committed themselves to be obedient to the laws of the covenant that He has established with them.

103:19-22 Rules over all: Israel was under the kingdom reign of the Father, but Israel was not all the kingdom of God. All nations of the world composed the territory of the sovereignty of the Father. **Angels:** Even angels were a part of the kingdom reign of the Father before Jesus assumed this authority when He ascended to the right hand of the Father (See comments Ep 1:20-24; 1 Pt 3:22).

CHAPTER 104

GOD CARES FOR HIS WORKS

As the previous chapter, this is a psalm of adoration and worship. The theme of the psalm is adoration of God for His majestic work in creation.

104:1-9 This psalm begins with praise of God for His majesty, which majesty was manifested in the power by which He created the world. *He lays the beams:* As a builder constructs a building, so the Creator constructed the world out of the materials that He had created from nothing. He first laid the foundations, and then created all living things. *Not be removed forever:* The psalmist used the word “forever” with its common meaning, that is with emphasis on being firmly established, and thus continuing in existence. To be firmly established, or established with certainty, means longevity, but the emphasis is that one not be dispossessed or moved (Compare 2 Pt 3:10-13). *His angels:* Or, his ministering spirits (Hb 1:7). *At Your rebuke:* By the word of God the world was brought into existence and formed (Gn 1:9,10). *To cover the earth:* The face of the earth that we see today is the result of two great works of God. The first was the initial creation of the world where God separated the water from the dry land. The second was during the time of Noah when the earth was again completely resurfaced by a great flood of waters. The waters that went to and fro during the flood of Noah’s day produced multiple layers of strata. The tectonic activity of the waters upon the face of the

whole earth resurfaced the earth, pushing up great mountains and creating the seas that we witness today. God once again set the shorelines of the world in order that the flood waters not cover the face of the earth as they did during the time of the flood.

104:10-23 God created the best of all possible environments in which a truly free-moral individual could dwell. All that was necessary for man to live out his life was provided in the created world. Since the purpose of this world is to prepare believers for eternal dwelling, then we assume that the environment which God created was perfect for the sustenance of humans. Once the world has accomplished its purpose, then there will be no more need for it as it now exists. That which was created to nourish man in his temporal body will then be done away. Though this world has been flawed by the sin of man through the fall of Adam, we must not assume that this world as it now exists was created for the purpose of being the eternal habitation of man (See comments 2 Pt 3).

104:24-30 The work of God in His creation has not ceased (Jn 5:17; Cl 1:17). There is a sustaining influence by the power of God in the creation, which power is now under the control of Jesus (Hb 1:3). Not only does the created life of the world manifest the wisdom of God, it also manifests His presence (See ch 8; Rm 1:20). God left His witness in the created world, and thus those who behold its wonders must conclude that there

was a Designer behind that which was designed. The honest inquirer, therefore, must conclude the existence of something greater than the world. And this One who exists must stand independent from the world that He created (See comments At 17:24-31).

104:31-35 The glory of God has been manifested through the existence of that which He created (ch 8). What He created was good (Gn 1:31). It was good for the existence of both man and animals. God is active in His creation. He did not create the world and then forsake

His creation for some distant existence far removed from the life that He brought into existence. God is transcendent. He participates in the physical world of His creation by maintaining its existence (Hb 1:3). He participates in the life of His creation in that He continually provides for the animals and man who live with the food that is produced by the natural environment that He upholds (Hb 1:3). God is active in His creation, and thus is to be thanked through praise for His abiding care.

CHAPTER 105

GOD WORKS FOR HIS PEOPLE

This is a historical psalm (See also chs 78; 107; 114; 136). The psalm contrasts the failure of the people to live according to the will of God with the faithfulness and longsuffering of God to preserve them as a nation.

105:1-6 See 1 Ch 15:1-22. In the procession to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, David composed this psalm in order to call on all Israel to give glory to God.

105:7-15 This poetical history of Israel begins with Abraham and continues to the time when Israel was delivered from Egyptian captivity. ***Covenant that He made with Abraham:*** Throughout the history of Israel, God's covenant with Abraham was the foundation upon which He preserved Israel (See Gn 12:1-3). Because Abraham was faithful, God promised him that in his seed all the nations of the world would be blessed. This blessing was Jesus, the Savior who

came into the world from the nation of Israel. Throughout their years of rebellion, therefore, God was patient with Israel in order to maintain the covenant He had made with Abraham to bring the Messiah into the world from his seed (See At 13:16-34; Rm 2:28,29; 4:12-17; Gl 3-4; Hb 10:15-22). ***Foreigners:*** The fathers of Israel, Abraham, Isaac & Jacob, were only strangers in the land that would later be given to their descendants. ***Rebuked kings:*** For the sake of the preservation of the fathers, God rebuked the pagan kings of their day who sought to be their enemies (Gn 12:14-20; 20:1-16; 26:6-11). ***My prophets:*** The patriarchs were the spokesmen for God (Hb 1:1,2).

105:16-22 See Gn 37-47. ***Famine in the land:*** God caused a famine in the land of Canaan, the place where Jacob and his family were dwelling. He caused the famine in order to move Jacob and his family into the land of Egypt. It was God's plan to develop the nation of Israel

in the land of Egypt. In order to do this, He sent Joseph before Jacob into the land in order to gain the favor of the Egyptians (Gn 45:5). God used the jealousy of the brothers of Joseph in order to have him sold into Egypt, and subsequently become a powerful leader who later received his father and brothers into Egypt. God often uses the sins of men in order to bring about His purposes.

105:23-36 The historical setting of these verses begins with Jacob and his family going into Egypt. It concludes with the exodus of Israel from Egypt. ***He increased His people:*** The purpose for God sending Jacob into Egypt was to build a nation. They became so large in number as a nation that the Egyptians came to fear them because of their numbers. ***Land of Ham:*** This was a poetical description of Egypt (78:51; Gn 10:6). ***Hate His people:*** The Egyptians hardened their hearts against the Israelites, and subsequently Pharaoh's heart was hardened against them (Ex 8:15,32; 9:34). ***Signs ... wonders:*** See Ex 7-12. ***They did not rebel against His words:*** Once all the plagues had taken place, Pharaoh and the Egyptians obeyed the word of Moses and Aaron and let the people of Israel go free. The miraculous plagues that God unleashed on Egypt manifested that He was the true God, the God who was greater than the imagined gods that the Egyptians had created after their own image. The contest between Moses and Pharaoh, therefore, was a contest be-

tween the God of heaven who was represented by Moses and the strong will of Pharaoh. The more God worked through the plagues, the more stubborn (hardened) Pharaoh became. Thus God hardened Pharaoh by presenting an opportunity for him to become more stubborn in allowing Israel to go free. In the end, however, the last plague, the death of the firstborn, broke Pharaoh and the will of the Egyptians. It was then that they asked the Israelites to leave their land.

105:37-45 ***With silver and gold:*** When they left Egypt, the people of Egypt gave them silver and gold. In receiving the gifts from the Egyptians, the Israelites plundered Egypt. ***Not one feeble person:*** No one was too weak that he could not keep up with the group who left Egypt. ***He remembered His holy promise and Abraham:*** It was not that God had forgotten what He had promised to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). When it is stated that God remembered, it means that God took action to carry out the promises of His covenants. In this case, Israel was delivered from Egyptian captivity because God had made a promise to Abraham. He had promised that He would create of his seed a great nation and give this nation a land of their own. ***Observe His statutes:*** The land was given to Israel in fulfillment of the promise that God made to Abraham. It was also given to them in order that they obey the law of the covenant that He established with the nation at Mt. Sinai.

CHAPTER 106

GOD WORKS REGARDLESS OF REBELLION

In this historical psalm the psalmist focused on Israel's lapses into sin, and God's subsequent mercy to bring them through discipline back to faithfulness. Psalm 105 focused on the goodness of God to bring Israel to the land. This psalm focuses on the sin problem of Israel because of their rebellious nature and the influence of the nations that they failed to drive from the land. The psalm was composed during the Babylonian captivity, and in hope of returning to the land of promise.

106:1-6 The psalm begins, first with thanksgiving to God, and then a confession that their fathers had sinned. ***Mighty acts:*** The confession was based on the miraculous deeds that God had done throughout their history. Because God had worked so wonderfully in their history, they had no excuse for their rebellion.

106:7-12 The psalmist confessed seven sins of Israel that were committed from the time Israel left Egyptian captivity to the time the nation entered the land of promise. The first was that they rebelled at the Red Sea (Ex 14:10-12). They rebelled regardless of God's mercy that He had manifested to them by delivering them out of the hand of Pharaoh (See Ex 14:13 – 15:22).

106:13-15 Their second sin was their complaint to Moses that they did not have water and food (Ex 15:23 – 17:7). Because they had a bondage mentality,

and were spoiled by their good life in the land of Goshen, they would not trust in God, but in their own selves. And because they did not know how to survive in the wilderness, they complained against Moses for leading them into the wilderness. ***Leanness into their soul:*** God gave them the water and food. However, because they had focused so much on the fleshly side of life, their soul starved.

106:16-18 See Nm 16. Their third sin was to question God's appointed authority among the people. This was an insurrection led by Dathan, Abiram and Korah. The leadership of Moses and Aaron led these men to envy their position, and thus they led some of the Israelites against their God-ordained leadership among the people. God destroyed them and their families because of their rebellion against God's men.

106:19-23 See Ex 32; Dt 9:8-29. Their fourth sin in the wilderness was idolatry. When they arrived at Horeb (Mt. Sinai), they sought to manifest the glory of God in a golden calf idol. They had been influenced by the idolatry of Egypt (the land of Ham), and thus turned their thinking to something that they had created after their own imagination. If Moses had not interceded for them on this occasion, God would have destroyed the entire nation of Israel (Ex 32:31-35). He would have then started another nation through the seed of Moses. ***In the breach:*** When a wall was breached, an enemy could then attack the inhabitants

of a city through the breach. In a figurative manner, Moses, as a brave leader, stood in the breach in order to spare Israel from God's destruction.

106:24-27 See Nm 13:1 – 14:45. Their fifth sin was that they failed to go up immediately and take the land of promise. Unfortunately, they devised a plan to send spies into the land, which spies upon their return gave a discouraging report (See comments Dt 1:19-46). Because they did not believe that God would fight for them in order to take the land, they disobeyed His command that they go up immediately and take the land. As a result, they were not allowed to enter in because of unbelief (Hb 3:7-19). Because they did not go up immediately and take the land, all those from twenty years of age and older died during the next 38 years of wilderness wandering. It was a faithless generation that God did not want entering into the land of promise, for they would influence generations to come.

106:28-31 See Nm 25:1-18. The sixth sin of Israel was their idolatry at Baal-peor. **Baal:** This was a generic term for the Canaanite fertility god. **Peor:** This was possibly a hill where the idols of the Moabite god were worshiped (Nm 23:28). Worship of the Canaanite god included fornication by which one would join himself to the god through acts of fornication (See comments 1 Co 6:13-20). It was at Peor that many in Israel gave themselves to the Canaanite god, and thus God sent a plague among the people. The plague was stopped only when Phinehas took action (Nm 25:6-9). **Accounted to him for righteousness:**

See Nm 25:12,13.

106:32,33 See Nm 20:1-13. The seventh sin that Israel committed in the wilderness was their unbelief at Meribah. The mention of this sin here is not in the chronological order in which it occurred in the history of Israel. It is possibly placed last here in order to point out the underlying problem that continually plagued Israel, that is, their lack of trust in God. The incident also resulted in Moses being rejected from entrance into the promised land. Though Moses personally disobeyed God at Meribah, and thus had to live with the consequence for his own disobedient actions, Israel had driven him to strike the rock out of frustration. In his frustration with the unbelief of the people, he struck the rock in order to bring forth water. The psalmist possibly wanted his audience to take some accountability for Moses not being allowed to enter the land. Because of their rebellious unbelief and lack of trust in God they drove Moses to disobey God.

106:34-39 **Mingled among the nations:** God had commanded that Israel destroy the cultures within the promised land because the nations had gone beyond the point of moral repentance. However, they did not eradicate all the cultures of the land, and subsequently, through trade and social interchange, Israelites married Canaanite people. Being led by their kings as Solomon, they married and adopted the religious culture of those they married. Their apostasy went to the point of human sacrifices, which practice was carried out by the Canaanites when Israel first entered the

land (See Dt 12:31; 19:9,10; 2 Ch 33:5,6; Ez 16:20,21; 20:31).

106:40-46 Throughout the history of Israel, especially the history recorded in the book of Judges, Israel went through a cycle of sin and repentance. The nation would sin, God would afflict them, and they would subsequently repent. However, this cycle of sin and repentance came to a conclusion when God finally determined that they were bent on going after idolatrous religious behavior. Israel was then sent into captivity. The northern kingdom first went into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. The southern king-

dom went into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C.

106:47,48 The last two verses are a closing doxology. They are a prayer that God will gather His people who were dispersed among the nations through the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. A remnant of all twelve tribes would eventually come from the nations in order to praise the Lord again in the land of promise. The first exiles to return to the land came upon the authority of King Cyrus of the Medo-Persian Empire who allowed the captives to return to their homelands (See comments Er & Ne).

Book V

(107:1 – 150:6)

CHAPTER 107

GOD DELIVERS FROM TROUBLE

This psalm of adoration and worship describes the many situations of human life and how God delivers from troubling situations. One theme that prevails throughout the psalm is the transcendence of God. When we are in situations of distress, and then pray to God for help, He will come to our aid. This is a psalm that confirms the fact that God answers our prayers.

107:1-9 *Gathered them out of the lands:* We assume that the historical setting of this psalm is the gathering of the remnant of Israel from all nations to which they had been scattered in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. By the ordinance of the Medo-Persian King Cyrus, the first captives were allowed to return to Jerusalem in 536 B.C. It was a

glorious occasion, the fulfillment of prophecy, and a reaffirmation to the Jews that God was still working through them in order to bring the Messiah into the world.

Redeemed of the Lord: The remnant of Israel was rescued out of the lands of their captivity. That which they could not do on their own, God did through Cyrus, the king of the Medo-Persian Empire (See comments Er & Ne). The remnant, therefore, were the redeemed ones of the Lord.

Desert region: Because they were discriminated against while in captivity, the Jews were given the worst of the lands in the region of their captors.

107:10-15 *Because they rebelled:* The Jews found themselves in captivity because they had rebelled against the will of God while in the land of Palestine. ***Labor:*** They were subjected to being laborers in the land of their captors.

Praise the Lord for His goodness: God should be praised because we recognize and have partaken of His grace (See comments 2 Co 4:15).

107:16-21 Broken the gates: In returning the captives from bondage, God freed them from the captivity of social bondage (Is 45:2). **Gates of death:** In a metaphorical sense, their loathing of spiritual food brought them to the brink of spiritual death (See Rm 6:23). Their captivity took them from loathing to longing for spiritual food. **Sent His word:** The power to heal the spirit of the people was the pronouncement that God had set them free. In the broader meaning, it is always the word of God that is able to heal spiritually those who seek God (See comments Hb 4:12). God's word directs those who are longing for spiritual healing. If there is prophecy in verse 20, then the sending of Jesus, the Word, healed the spiritually dead and delivered out of destruction all those who were dead in sin (Jn 1:1-14; 2 Th 1:6-9; compare Ps 105:19; Is 9:8; 55:11).

107:22-31 Because of the Lord's

protection, men should offer thank offerings for His deliverances (Lv 7:11-15; 22:29,30; 2 Co 4:15). **Down to the sea:** The sea was viewed to be at a lower elevation because men had to go down from the land or mountains to board the ships on the sea. **Wit's end:** When men come to the end of delivering themselves by all human resources, then God must come to their aid. In this case, men cannot control the natural forces of nature. Therefore, God must calm the seas.

107:32-43 It was because of the sin of Israel that God brought drought over the land. When they returned from captivity in repentance, God made the land fruitful. **Princes ... poor:** All are subject to the judgments of God. **Observe these things:** Believers must be perceptive to the work of God in the world. Israel had a written record of their history. They could read how God worked with them through blessings and cursings. We have the same record today in order that we might understand how God continues to work in the world (See comments Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11).

CHAPTER 108

PRAISE AND PRAYER FOR VICTORY

What is unique about this psalm is that it seems to be the composition of material from two other psalms, specifically Psalm 57:7-11 and 60:5-12. Because of this, we conclude that the psalms were originally previous collections of various psalms that were later brought together into the one collection that we have in our Bibles today.

108:1-6 See 57:7-11. The psalmist gave adoration to the Lord in order that he be delivered. The conclusion is that God's deliverance in our lives comes only when we pour out ourselves in worship to Him. God works for His people as long as His people identify themselves by their worship of His greatness.

108:7-13 See 60:5-12. God was the one who gave victory to Israel over their enemies. Historically, the enemies of Is-

rael were trained in warfare. Their existence was based on the fact that they were militarily strong. But Israel had come out of Egyptian captivity as a nation of shepherds and farmers. They had no training in warfare. Nevertheless, through the help of God working in each

soldier of Israel, they were able to defeat great armies that were warrior nations. They could do this only because God worked to strengthen each Israelite soldier. God helped them in their time of conflict with nations, and they performed valiantly.

CHAPTER 109

GOD AVENGES HIS ENEMIES

This is a strong imprecatory psalm that was written concerning those who would set themselves against God's anointed king. The psalmist, however, did not view the attacks of his enemies as personal attacks against himself. Because David knew that he was the anointed of God, he viewed the attacks as attacks against God. And thus he calls on God to deal with those who would attack God, the one who anointed him as king over Israel.

109:1-5 *Mouth of the wicked:* The background for this imprecatory psalm were slanderous words against the king, not swords in conflict. The psalmist was being attacked with lies that were propagated by those who sought to destroy the king's credibility. ***Return for my love:*** All God's leaders must accept this fate. Some of those who are led to do that which is right before God, will turn on their leaders with slanderous words. They do this because rebellious men seek to seize power and control. ***Give myself to prayer:*** As Jesus prayed for forgiveness from the cross for those who ignorantly crucified Him, so the true leader of God will pray for those who slanderously attack the king. ***Evil for good:*** When sin-

cere leaders seek to serve because of the goodness of their hearts, they are often rewarded with attacks by those who are moved with envy and a thirst for power. Sometimes people simply have a spirit of rebellion that hinders them from following others who seek to lead people closer to God.

109:6-20 David turned in this psalm to call God to his aid by bringing judgment on those who slanderously attacked him. ***Prayer become sin:*** Because of his slanderous attacks against the righteous leader, the prayers of the slanderous person were sinful in that they were spoken from an ungodly heart. ***Let him be condemned:*** Since the pronoun changes from "they" to "him," it may be that the psalmist turned from the group that was against him, to their specific leader. In this case he was a wicked person who was driven by evil desires. Thus the psalmist requested that one of the same character, a perverse accuser, be his adviser. ***Office:*** See At 1:20. Throughout this section of the text, the psalmist called down the judgment of God on the particular wicked person in mind. He called for harsh indictments against the individual simply because the person in mind had dealt wickedly with the king.

He thus called on the wicked person to receive at least the same judgments that he had launched against the psalmist. No mercy should be shown, either to him or his family. The call was that his family heritage become extinct, which thing was a serious judgment in reference to the Jews who considered one's family heritage of great value. The intensity of this imprecatory psalm should be a warning to those who would use their slanderous mouths to attack God's work through His leaders. Since we consider this psalm inspired by the Spirit of God, then we conclude that God has little regard for those who use slander in order to exalt themselves over others.

109:21-27 For Your name's sake: God blesses those who sincerely work for His glory because He seeks to bring glory to His name. **Fasting:** Because of the ordeal through which the psalmist was going, he had spent much time in fasting. He had spent so much time in fasting that he was physically weak. The intensity of his request for deliverance was manifested by his fasting. **Reproach ... shake their heads:** As Job in the depths of his

calamity, the society saw him as someone to be scorned. As they passed by, they nodded their heads in condoning the fate of the oppressed. **That they may know:** The psalmist's request was that his deliverance be so evident that all would conclude that God delivered him.

109:28-31 The psalmist relinquished his fate to his enemies. They could continue to curse, but he sought the blessings that came from the Lord. He closed the psalm with a plea for vindication by the mercy of God. Though his enemies be left in shame, he would have occasion to rejoice because of God's deliverance. **I will greatly praise the Lord:** The integrity of the psalmist is brought out in these final words. Regardless of the oppression and slander of enemies, he would not curse God and die. The fact that he praised God in a time of calamity manifested that he was righteous before God. It sometimes takes calamity in our lives in order to determine if we have a godly heart. If the calamity involves slander, one should do as the psalmist, that is, turn the matter over to God, and then continue praising God.

CHAPTER 110

SOVEREIGNTY OF THE KING

This is the most comprehensive Messianic psalm of all the psalms. It is quoted 22 times in the New Testament in reference to Jesus and His kingdom reign. We would thus understand the psalm as purely prophetic in reference to the Messiah who was to come. It is a very important psalm concerning the coming King who would sit on David's throne. David proph-

esied that the "Lord" (the Son) should sit at the right hand of the "Lord" (the Father) until all enemies be subjected to His power (vs 1). The Lord to which reference is made in this prophecy would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek (110:4). This Lord would judge among the nations (110:6). This amazing psalm pictures the nature and work of the coming King. Hebrews 1:13 is a quotation of

verse 1. The Hebrew writer, as well as other New Testament writers, applied the prophecy of this psalm to Jesus (See Mt 22:44; Mk 12:36; Lk 20:42). In Acts 2:34,35, Peter stated that the prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus. At the time of Peter's statement in Acts 2, Jesus was at the right hand of God. Paul affirmed that Jesus would reign there until the last enemy, which is death, is destroyed (1 Co 15:25). All emphasis of kingdom reign that is interpreted from Psalm 110 is now characteristic of the present reign of Jesus. He has been exalted to the right hand of the Father. He has been given all kingly reign. David prophesied that the Lord would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek (110:4). Hebrews 7 states that Jesus is now a priest. He is a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Jesus is now a priest and king upon the throne of David.

110:1-7 See Mt 22:44; 26:64; Mk 12:36; 14:62; 16:19; Lk 20:42,43; 22:69; At 2:34; 1 Co 15:25; Ep 1:20; Cl 3:1; Hb 1:3,13; 10:12,13; 12:2. **The Lord:** Hebrew, *Adonai*. **My Lord:** *Yahweh*. **Footstool:** In this prophecy, David said that his Lord would sit at the right hand of the Father until all the enemies of his Lord (Jesus) would be subdued (See comments 1 Co 15:20-28; Hb 2:8). **Rod:** Or, "mighty scepter." **Midst of Your enemies:** Jesus came to Israel, but not ev-

eryone of Israel submitted to Him (Jn 1:11). They should have submitted, but they did not (See comments Ph 2:5-11). Nevertheless, Jesus was seated at the right hand of God to reign over all things. At this time we do not see everything in subjection to Him (Hb 2:8). This does not mean, however, that He is not reigning over all things. The point is that God never intended that Jesus reign over all things on earth as a king seated in Jerusalem. His reign was to be from heaven. Regardless of the rebellious subjects of His present kingdom, He will come again and destroy those who have refused His reign (2 Th 1:6-9). We must also keep in mind that God's promises and plans were never subject to the whims of men. God carried out His eternal plan of redemption through Jesus regardless of the disobedience of men. **Order of Melchizedek:** Gn 14:18-20. See comments Hb 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:11,15,21. **Strike through kings:** The last part of this psalm uses military terms in order to metaphorically portray the work of Jesus in His kingdom reign among the nations of the world. As a kingly priest, Jesus' sovereignty would be over all the nations of the world. Through the power of His word, millions would submit to His authority. Those who found confidence in kings of this world would turn to the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15).

CHAPTER 111

GOD IS GOOD

Psalms 111 and 112 go together, though with different themes. Psalm 111 focuses on the nature and character of God. Psalm 112 focuses on the charac-

ter of the righteous person.

111:1-10 Works of the Lord: This was the reason for the psalmist breaking forth in praise to the Lord. When one perceives the existence of God through

the things that were created, and God's transcendent work in His creation, he is moved to worship (See Ps 8; Rm 1:20). **Studied:** Those who are righteous seek to discover God's design in the creation, and His work in the lives of men. **Given food:** God provides for those who seek and obey Him. **Mindful of His covenant:** God's work in the life of the righteous is evidence that He honors His covenants that He makes with men. **Heritage of the nations:** God took the land of Palestine from the ungodly nations who dwelt in it and gave it to the nation of Israel. Because of their wickedness, the nations

gave up their right to the land. **Fear of the Lord:** This is the beginning of wisdom simply because one can never come to a knowledge of truth unless he recognizes the authority of the word of God and is obedient to that word (Jb 28:28; Pv 1:7). One can never understand the purpose for the existence of both the world and man without believing in and being obedient to God's eternal purpose for the world. And the purpose for the existence of the world was to provide man with an environment wherein he could prepare himself for eternal dwelling.

CHAPTER 112

PROSPERITY OF THE FAITHFUL

See introduction to Psalm 111. This psalm focuses on the character of the righteous, which righteous character led one to prosperity.

112:1-10 Delights greatly in His commandments: The psalmist identified the righteous. These were those people who loved what God said. They loved His word (2 Tm 2:15). Those who do not study the word of God, therefore, are not of those who are God's people. **His seed:** The descendants of the lovers of God's word will be blessed because they have been given a spiritual heritage. **Light in the darkness:** In a world of sin, the righteous show the right way to salvation. They know the right way because they know God's word. **Favor and**

lends: He has mercy on those who have fallen on hard economic times. **Discretion:** He will be a good steward of those things that God has entrusted to his hand. **Not be afraid:** When hard times come, he knows that he is still in the care of God. **Heart is steadfast:** He is consistent in his dedication to the Lord. He is faithful and trustworthy. **Enemies fall:** Since the righteous know that God is working in their lives, they know that they will be delivered from their enemies. **Dispersed abroad:** He is charitable (2 Co 9:9). **Desire of the wicked:** That for which the wicked hoped will vanish away. Since the wicked do not desire that which is good, their desired temporal possessions will eventually vanish with the termination of this world (2 Pt 3).

CHAPTER 113

EXALTATION OF THE HUMBLE

This psalm, as well as Psalms 114—

118, were psalms used during the Jewish festivals of Passover, Tabernacles and

Unleavened Bread. These were psalms of adoration to the Lord.

113:1-9 There is a fervent call by the psalmist for the servants of the Lord to praise the Lord. **The name of the Lord:** Praising the name of the Lord in ancient times meant that one was directing his praise toward the character of the Lord. When praises were made in the name of the Lord, the Lord was identified among the nations who worshiped many false gods. Israel, therefore, was called on to distinguish their God by name from those gods that had been created after the imaginations of the nations around them. This praise was to take place during the waking hours of every

person. **On the earth:** Not only does God dwell in a heavenly realm, He transcends His creation, working among those He created for His glory. **The poor:** God's transcendence is not determined by economic status. He involves Himself in the lives of both the rich and poor. He lifts up the poor to be considered as those whom men would exalt as princes. Every righteous pauper is a prince in the eyes of God (See 1 Sm 2:8). **Barren woman:** He blesses the barren woman with a household of children. The broader application of this would be that He blessed the seed of Israel to be as the stars of the sky and sand of the sea shore (Gn 12:1-3; Is 54:1; 66:8).

CHAPTER 114

DELIVERANCE FROM BONDAGE

See introduction to Psalm 113. The historical setting of this psalm was Israel's crossing of both the Rea Sea and Jordan River. The other miraculous event could have been the shaking of the earth at Mt. Sinai when God came down on it as a cloud. Since God worked these marvelous events, the psalmist personifies the sea, river and mountains to tremble in the presence of God.

114:1-8 *Israel ... Jacob ... Judah:* These names synonymously refer to the people of God, the twelve tribes of Israel who came out of Egyptian captivity. **His**

sanctuary: God dwelt in His people. They were the place of His domain. Verses 5 & 6 are rhetorical questions that end in calling on the earth to tremble in the presence of God, for it is God who has total control over all His creation. In the examples that are given, He controlled the physical world for the benefit of His people. In order to deliver His people from captivity, He divided the Rea Sea. For provision of His people, He brought forth water from rocks (Ex 17:6; Nm 20:8-11). In order to provide a sanctuary for His people, He divided the Jordan River so that they might enter into the promised land.

CHAPTER 115

FOLLY OF IDOLATRY

The theme of this psalm is glorification of God. He is the only true God, and thus must be the center of man's praise.

Because the background of the psalm was the idol gods that were only the result of man's imagination, this psalm seeks to chide those who would worship idol

gods instead of the living God of heaven. The psalm is a mocking attack against those who would create gods after their own image in order to condone their misguided way of life.

115:1,2 Idolaters form an image of their god in order that they might appease the empirical perceptions of man. The true God is spirit (Jn 4:24), and thus cannot be perceived by the senses of man. However, He exists, though His existence cannot be proved by the senses of men. Men can only deduct His existence by perceiving the results of His power (ch 8; Rm 1:20).

115:3-8 These words are the psalmist's mockery of the practices of the idolater (See 135:15-18). Herein is a definition of idol worship. The idolater seeks to behave according to his own desires. He seeks to be a law unto himself. Since man is religious, and must soothe his conscience, he creates a concept of a higher power that is according to his imagination and condones his behavior. The spirit of idolatry, therefore, is man creating in his own mind a concept of a god who approves of his behavior. The idolatrous religion is first created, and then to further appeal to the senses of men, a physical idol is made of stone, wood, silver or gold. Because man cannot conceive of that which is beyond his own empirical experiences, he can only form his idol after that which he sees or experiences.

And since the religion that idolaters create is usually directed to the lusts of the flesh, the idolater creates an idol that is in the form of some distorted human figure, usually with some sexual orientation. Thus the idol has a mouth or ears, but is mute and deaf. It is within the foolishness of man to do such things. All men have a spirit of idolatry that is often fulfilled by worshiping money, power or positions.

115:9-13 *He is our help:* The psalmist contrasted the difference between idolaters and worship of the true God. Idolaters must trust in themselves, since their religions and gods were created after their own desires and image. However, the righteous trust in the God who is not of their invention, but is a God who exists in a heavenly realm. He is the God who can help and protect man.

115:14-18 *Made heaven and earth:* The true God made man, but idol gods were made by men. For this reason, all gods of men are of this world. *Children of men:* God reserves the heavenly realm for His own dwelling. He created the earth for the environment for men. *The dead:* Reference here seems to be to the spiritually dead, since the righteous of verse 18 will continue to bless the name of the Lord. There is life for the righteous after death, not silence (Ph 1:21-23).

CHAPTER 116

THANKSGIVING FOR DELIVERY FROM DEATH

This is a personal psalm of praise from an individual who pours out his heart

to the Lord. The person of the psalm was delivered from some disease or calamity. In thanksgiving for his deliverance, he gives himself totally to the Lord.

By suffering grave diseases, people are brought to the realization that life is short. Because of this realization, people turn their thinking to things that are most important in life, and thus they turn to focusing on eternal things.

116:1-4 In this psalm the psalmist's love of the Lord was renewed because the Lord had answered his prayer by delivering him from sickness. It seems that the psalmist was close to death when the Lord came to spare his life. In some way the Lord worked providentially to restore the health of the psalmist. A miracle is not claimed by the psalmist, but he did give credit to God for his healing. Thus God can restore one to health without working a miracle that is perceived by the senses of men. In such providential work, the righteous see through faith the result of God's work, not the work as it instantly takes place as in the case of a miracle.

116:5-14 In the case of the psalmist, the Lord was gracious, righteous and merciful. All these attributes were poured out on the psalmist because of his prayer for help. *He helped me:* The Lord had

saved him from death, brought joy again to his life, and kept him from falling. As a result, though his faith was shaken, he stood faithful in fulfilling his vows to the Lord. *All men are a lie:* In such situations in which the psalmist found himself, there was no reliable help that could come from men. *Cup of salvation:* This was possibly the drink offering that was made in thanksgiving to God (See Ex 29:40; Lv 23:37; Dt 32:38; Ez 20:28). *Pay my vows:* He would not only carry out his vows that he made in sickness, he would do so publicly in order to proclaim that God had restored him. By paying his vows, he maintained his integrity.

116:15-19 *Precious ... the death of His saints:* The physical death of His people is of great concern to the Lord. He has given them life, and it is not without notice when they pass from this life. *I am your servant:* Given a second chance in life, the psalmist rededicated his life to the Lord. *Loosed my bonds:* He was delivered from the death of sickness. Those who are set free seek to serve those who free them. Freedom thus encourages obedience.

CHAPTER 117

PRAISE GOD

This psalm is a short doxology. Because of its shortness, some have assumed that it is only a fragment of an original psalm that was much longer. It is Messianic in nature (Rm 15:11).

117:1,2 *All you nations:* All Gentiles were called upon to give praise to the Lord, signifying again that God was

the God of all nations throughout the existence of Israel. He did not cease being the God of all nations when He chose Israel from among the nations. *Merciful kindness:* God is gracious in His steadfast love toward us. *Truth:* His faithfulness is sure and steadfast throughout all time. These are sufficient reasons to sing praises to the Lord.

CHAPTER 118

GOD'S GOOD SALVATION

This is one of the greatest psalms of encouragement for the believer because it focuses on the central truths upon which the faithful base their lives. It was a psalm used in times of depression or calamity in order to center one's mind on the strength and salvation that comes from the Lord.

118:1-14 *His mercy:* The mercy that is praised in the context of the first verses was in reference to the Lord's deliverance of the psalmist from those who oppressed him. He gave thanks to the Lord because he was delivered from those who surrounded him like bees. The psalmist placed himself as a representative of the nation, and thus the Lord delivered the nation from all nations who sought to destroy Israel. ***Set me in a large place:*** This was to be set free in a space without limits. ***Lord is on my side:*** When one realizes that the Lord is working for him, then he has great confidence in facing the trials of life. ***I will see my desire:*** One can accomplish his feats in life with the Lord working through and with him. In the context of the psalmist, the psalmist did not fear in the face of his enemies because he understood that God was working for him and Israel in order to carry out the purpose for the existence of Israel. ***Confidence in man:*** Trusting in man and princes will give one limited accomplishments. However, when one puts his confidence in the Lord, the Lord can work exceedingly abundantly above all that we can imagine (60:11; Ep 3:20,21).

We are more than conquerors through Him who works in us (Rm 8:37). ***Fire of thorns:*** These thorn bushes burned hot for a period, but quickly ceased to burn. Because the Lord delivers those who trust in Him, He is their strength, song, and salvation from destruction (Ex 15:2; Is 12:2).

118:15-20 *Right hand of the Lord:*

This was the position from which authority came to work on the part of the king. In the historical setting of the psalm, the Lord had delivered Israel from enemies who had been stirred up to destroy the nation. ***Lord has chastened me:*** God had allowed the nations to rise up against Israel in order that Israel be moved to repent. Now that they had been delivered, there was a national repentance and a renewal for their commitment to Him. ***Gates of righteousness:*** As a metaphor taken from the gates of a city that allowed entrance into the city, the psalmist asked that he, the nation, be allowed into the presence of the righteous God. If the broader context of the psalm was the return of Israel from exile, then the chastisement of captivity was over and Israel was delivered from her bondage. The remnant of the nation would be allowed to return to the city of Jerusalem and rebuild the walls, which rebuilding included rebuilding the gates of the city.

118:21-29 These last words of the psalm are Messianic. Israel had been saved from total annihilation by her return from captivity. In the future, the nation would be saved from the destruc-

tion of sin by the work of the Chief Cornerstone. **Become my salvation:** Verses 22 & 23 are quoted four times in the New Testament (Mt 21:42; Mk 12:10,11; Lk 20:17; 1 Pt 2:7). In the context of each quotation reference is made to Jesus and His work. **The chief cornerstone:** The chief cornerstone was used to set the orientation of the entire building, for from the chief cornerstone the building was erected. Thus Jesus is the One from whom the church is oriented and guided (See comments Mt 16:18,19; 1 Pt 2:7). **This is the day:** Every day is a privilege in the life of frail men. In this context, however, reference is probably to a day of salvation. Emphasis was on the time that the nation was freed from captivity. In a salvational context, our day of salvation was made by the Lord, and thus we rejoice in our salvation. **Send now prosperity:** We can

imagine that when this psalm was sung by the returnees from Babylonian captivity that they asked God to prosper them in their efforts. They had to return to the land, plant their seeds, and begin life anew. **Comes in the name of the Lord:** Jesus came in the authority of the name of God. When Jesus came, Israel had been blessing His coming with their sacrifices. **Bind the sacrifice:** The sacrifices were to be bound with cords. So many sacrifices were to be offered, they were to be laid in the court even to the place of the horns of the altar of burnt offering. **I will praise You:** The psalm concludes as it started, with praise to God for all that He had done in the history of His people. The praise of God overflows in the heart of the one who experiences the tremendous work of God in his life. Worship happens as a result of one's perception of the good that God does in our lives.

CHAPTER 119

GOD'S GOOD WORD

This majestic psalm, that gives glory to the word of God, is divided into 22 sections, each beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, though most translations have not added the Hebrew letters to denote each of the sections. The theme of the psalm is the glorious word, or law of God, and one's obedience to the law. Throughout the psalm there are eight synonyms that refer to the word of God: law (*torah*), testimonies (principles of action), precepts (rules for conduct), word (*dabhar*) (the proclaimed will of God through decrees), word (*imra*) (the spoken word as it comes directly from

God), commandments (statements of law for direction), ordinances (principles for human relationships), and statutes (regulations for social relationships). Because of the many phrases and words that are used in reference to God's communication to man, the central focus of the psalm is to bring to the attention of all that man should do and be must come from the instructions of God.

119:1-8 The introduction to the psalm proclaims that those who are happy are those who keep themselves blameless in reference to their obedience to the law of God. Those who would be blessed must seek God with their whole heart.

These are those who do not transgress the law, but walk in the ways of God. Such people should not be ashamed of their obedience because they totally focus on the will of God. By being totally committed to obedience, the psalmist was confident that the Lord would not forsake him.

119:9-16 It is possible that the psalmist was a young person. He knew that a person can purify his way in life only through dedication to the commandments of God. By staying close to the word of God, one will not wander from God's way. Since men cannot trust in themselves to direct their way, they must be committed to God's word for direction in this life. The righteous can be happy only when they have a knowledge of the word of God, and then follow what they know of the word. Through obedience, therefore, one experiences the joy that comes from following God's will.

119:17-24 It would be the goal of the righteous to live according to the statutes of God. By doing so there is great comfort and strength, knowing that one is following after God. By committing oneself to following the word of God one sources the abundance of life, vision and guidance. The psalmist felt himself a stranger on earth because of his devotion to the word of God. He was an alien among those who cared nothing for God's commandments. And since he was in such a social environment, he needed the direction of God. Only through devotion to the will of God, the psalmist felt that he could endure mockery and contempt by those in society who had no concern

for the instructions of God.

119:25-32 The psalmist cried out for a spiritual revival because of his distress. He was prostrate in the dust seeking revival from God. Being filled with the word of God, he could not help but speak of God and His commandments. However, he was weeping in sorrow, and thus beseeched God that he not be false to God. He thus clung to the testimonies of God in order that God increase his understanding and joy. The result of his commitment to the law of God would be that he would run and not walk a spiritual life.

119:33-40 The heart of the psalmist was manifested in this section because of his plea for God's instruction. He sought God's help. He wanted to understand God's will, not simply have a knowledge of His word. Since the righteous delight in the word of God, the psalmist sought to know God through obedience to His will. He realized that he could do this only by keeping his mind off the things of this world, and keeping it on the testimonies of God. By doing this the insults would be ignored in his life when he no longer considered obedience to God a thing of which to be ashamed.

119:41-48 God's mercy and salvation come through one's obedience to the word of God. When one focuses his life on the testimonies of God, then he can face those who revile him. And when reviled, the psalmist asked that he speak and not be silent. He thus committed himself to keep the law, and by doing so walk in freedom. Without law there is no freedom, for law guarantees that one is free

from the dictates of man and those who are controlled by emotional hysteria. When one is truly free, therefore, he is emboldened to speak before kings without being intimidated. The love of, and meditation on, the commandments of God gives one a sense of security.

119:49-56 “Deride” is a word that explained the social environment the psalmist was experiencing because he had committed himself to the word of God. However, he found hope and comfort in the statutes of God. In spite of the derision he suffered from the arrogant, he maintained his steadfast commitment to obey God. His commitment to the Lord motivated him to have a burning indignation toward those who were disobedient. His commitment to the law of God was manifested by the intensity by which he abhorred evil.

119:57-64 The psalmist had made God his portion in life. He had repented and given himself to the law of God. This was something about which he did not procrastinate. His conversion was immediate. Even though raiding parties had robbed his farm, he did not blame God, but continued to be faithful. Thus in the middle of the night he would arise to give thanks for what he had. What kept him encouraged was that he made friends with those who were like-minded, with those who loved the word of God.

119:65-72 The psalmist reviewed his life and concluded that God had been good to him in a world of evil. He had been chastened, which disciplinary action brought him closer to God (See Hb 12:11). He had learned through chastisement that

obedience to the law of God is more precious than following after rebellion. Though his commitment led to slander against him, he discovered that what came from the mouth of God was more precious than material things of this world. He had learned that possession of things of this world should not possess those who focus on God.

119:73-80 Since one is created by God, then it is natural to desire the continual fashioning of the soul by the word that comes from God. When we manifest to others our obedience to the law of God, those who are also obedient will rejoice in our example. The psalmist prayed for relief from affliction in order that he might survive his distress. His commitment to the Lord had led him to being persecuted by those who were perverse. But it also led to his gaining of friends, friends who were also committed to the word of God. Because of his trust in the word of God, he asked that the arrogant be humiliated as a result of their deceitful behavior toward him.

119:81-88 The psalmist proclaimed that he was in trouble. He was suffering, and thus reached out for aid from God. As a wineskin smoking in flames, his soul had become blackened and wrinkled. His suffering had brought on premature aging in his life. He thus yearned for deliverance from the arrogant who sought to trap him in snares. However, though persecuted, and almost consumed, he turned to the precepts of God for deliverance.

119:89-96 The psalmist had been delivered from his affliction. The reason he did not perish was that he resorted to

the unchanging word of God. Though things around him were continually changing, he took comfort in the unchanging word of God. What the psalmist had learned through his experience was that he had witnessed that there is a limit to that which is considered perfect by man. But there is no limit to the perfection of the word of God.

119:97-104 His love of the word of God was proved because on it he thought throughout the day. Because of his concentration on the word of God, he had greater understanding than those teachers who rejected the word. He did not become arrogant in thinking that he knew everything, but realized that the fear of God was the beginning of wisdom. The precepts of God had greater influence in his life than the traditions that had been handed to him by the fathers who had rejected the word of God. Therefore, he made a conscious decision not to follow after evil ways since the judgments of God took control of his life.

119:105-112 The psalmist realized that it is not within man to direct his own behavior in order to be pleasing to God. Therefore, he made the word of God the map by which he directed his life. He thus gave unto God the freewill offerings of prayer and praise in appreciation for God's directing of his life. He confessed that his life was in his hands, and thus always in danger because of his fallibility. Though surrounded by those who would ensnare him, he committed himself to the end of his life to serve God.

119:113-120 The psalmist realized the danger of following after those who

were double-minded. He found safety only in trusting in the word of God, for in trusting the word of God there was safety from those who work evil. Those who turn from the word of God will come to nothing. They are like the dross, or residue from the processes of refining. They are cast aside. Thus the psalmist chose to act on his fear of God by obeying God's commandments.

119:121-128 The psalmist was oppressed, but not oppressed because he had done something wrong. He affirmed that he had done that which was right. Nevertheless, when one does right, those who are evil will persecute the righteous. By following the word of God, the psalmist received assurance from God that he was right, and his oppressors were wrong. Though the unrighteous had violated the law of God by persecuting those who sought to be obedient to God, the obedient psalmist would continue to love God's commandments. One makes void the law by disobedience. One establishes the law by obedience. Those who choose to be obedient proclaim that they hate false behavior.

119:129-136 When one finds the word of God wonderful, then he will keep the word. When the word of God is opened in the life of a person, it gives light and direction. Innocent, or receptive people, give ear to what God says, and thus follow in His ways. When one realizes that the commandments come from God, then he gasps for them as after air for survival. He thus seeks to be directed in behavior by the instructions of God. Being directed by God's instructions frees

one from being led by sin. In obedience to God's word there is freedom from the oppressing traditions of men. At the same time, the psalmist was in great mourning for those who were still in the bondage of those who did not keep the law of God.

119:137-144 The psalmist was consumed by the will of God, for through the precepts, statutes, commandments and ordinances of God the nature of God was revealed. What was revealed was that God was righteous, upright and faithful. For this reason, the word of God was pure, and thus to be desired in a world of iniquity. What promises were made in the word of God, therefore, could be trusted. Because he was considered with contempt by those who did not trust in the word of God, the psalmist reaffirmed his commitment by stating that he had not forgotten God's word. In fact, one's journey through the persecution of the world enlightens one concerning the strength and comfort that comes from the word of God.

119:145-152 Oppression had come into the life of the psalmist. Because of his anxiety, he was up in the morning crying out to God. He was not able to sleep because of anxiety. Thus being troubled throughout the night, he went to the word of God for hope. Prayer and meditation on the testimonies of God brought hope. He thus asked for a personal revival according to the judgment of God. Those who were oppressing the psalmist were those who had no respect for the word of God.

119:153-160 The psalmist was oppressed by those who had no consideration for the word of God. He was thus discouraged. He asked for a personal

revival in his life. He knew where to go for this revival. It was to the testimonies of God, the instructions of God that would lead him through times of persecution. When enduring persecution, he remained loyal to God's judgments. Since God's word can be trusted, he knew that if he deviated from it, he would not abide forever as the word of God.

119:161-168 Even rulers of the land brought persecution upon the psalmist. Nevertheless, in the turmoil of his life he did not turn from the commandments of God. In reference to the word of God, he was like one who had discovered a great treasure. Using the number "seven" metaphorically, he stated that he was constantly in praise of God. He was thus in great peace of mind because of his focus on the testimonies of God. Those who trust in the word of God are guarded from turning aside from righteousness. Those who trust and obey God will have a great life, a life of peace, strength and comfort.

119:169-176 Because he had given himself to the word of God, the psalmist asked that God stay close. He would use his mouth for the propagation of the commandments of God. In this quest, he asked for help from God. As a lost sheep in the wilderness, the psalmist asked that God continue to direct him through His commandments. In the midst of so many dangers from straying in the wilderness of the world, he would not forget the commandments of God, for only through obedience to these commandments can one find his way to God.

CHAPTER 120

DELIVERANCE FROM THE TREACHEROUS

The psalmist's prayer in the past had encouraged him to trust in answers from God in the present and future. The psalmist was oppressed by enemies, and thus he uttered this psalm wherein he called for God's judgment on his oppressors.

120:1-7 *Lying lips:* The oppression was not physical attacks, but slanderous words that came from the mouth of his enemies. Such verbal attacks caused the psalmist great anxiety. ***Sharp arrows:*** The fruit of a slanderous mouth are piercing arrows of judgment. Even-

tually, people discover the evil heart of the slanderous person. The result will be as a flash of intense heat that comes from burning a broom tree. The retribution on the slanderous person and vindication of the slandered, is that the truth is eventually known by all. The slanderous person will reap the consequences of his evil speech (See comments Mt 7:1,2; Gl 6:7). ***Meshech:*** This may have been a geographical area that was harsh for living (See Gn 10:2; Ez 32:26,27). Or, it may have been a habitation among a people with whom it was difficult to live. ***Kedar:*** See Gn 25:13; 1 Ch 1:29.

CHAPTER 121

GOD GUARDS HIS PEOPLE

This psalm was probably sung during travel to the tabernacle for the Passover, feast of Tabernacles and Unleavened Bread. The psalmist expressed a deep trust in God for protection on the journey. The key word is "keep," emphasizing the care of God for the individual.

121:1-8 *The hills:* This was a psalm of one journeying to one of the hills on which Jerusalem sat. From a distance he could see the hills and rejoice, for he was nearing the end of his journey. Instead of the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle being annually moved throughout the tribal territories of Israel, it was permanently placed in Jerusalem. Thus

the psalmist expressed his joy as he neared the temple that was symbolic of the presence of God. ***My help:*** Throughout the psalm the psalmist expressed his reassurance he received from the Lord. ***He who preserves:*** God would not allow his foot to slip. God is alert to our needs. He keeps the faithful and provides a place of rest where one is shaded from the turmoil of his journey. In keeping His people safe, God preserves them. They are preserved blameless because of His grace (See 1 Th 5:23). If we would assume a metaphorical understanding of this psalm, we can assume that God cares for those who are on their journey to the presence of God in heaven.

CHAPTER 122

PRAYER FOR PEACE

The theme of this psalm is Jerusalem, the city around which faith and gov-

ernment were centered from the time of David. The psalm highlights the festive journey that dedicated Jews annually

made to the city.

122:1,2 *I was glad:* There was excitement in the air when the annual journey to Jerusalem came. The people yearned to go to the temple in Jerusalem for a meeting with other devoted people who would come from throughout the promised land. This was a journey to go to fellowship with like-minded people who also brought their sacrifices to be offered and to eat their meals with family and friends. It was a beautiful time of fellowship and nation building.

122:3-5 After coming into the gates of the city, the country people of Israel took pride in the temple that Solomon had built and the city itself. **Compact:** It was a city that was united together as the center of reference for the nation of Israel. **To which the tribes go up:** It was the gathering place for all tribes of Israel for the Passover feast, feast of Tabernacles

and Unleavened Bread. It was a site that symbolized the reunification of the twelve tribes that had throughout the year been scattered to their farms. **Thrones:** David made Jerusalem the center of government and faith in Israel. **House of David:** This statement assumes that the psalm was written many years after the reign of David, and thus the psalm cannot be ascribed to David as the writer.

122:6-9 *Peace:* The attitude of the psalmist toward Jerusalem reflected the attitude of the nation. Israel took great pride in Jerusalem and the temple. The city brought a sense of security and peace to the people. It gave them national identity among the nations. When there was peace, the people lived in prosperity. For the sake of the temple, the house of God, the Israelites prayed that peace prevail within the walls of the city.

CHAPTER 123

PRAYER FOR HELP

The psalmist writes from an emotional state of depression because he suffered from the scorn of others. He thus cried out for relief from the taunts of those who cared little for righteousness.

123:1-4 When in times of depression, the faithful will look to God. As the eyes of slaves are fixed on those who have control over their lives, so the obedient fix their attention on God in order to find deliverance from the emotional turmoil of the world. **Filled with contempt:**

The arrogant had unleashed their disdain upon the people of God. The scorn had become overbearing. The psalmist did not unleash his frustration on those who scorned the people of God. He simply asked that God deliver them. He turned the matter over to God. No immediate answer was given from God. We only assume that the cry from the psalmist was eventually heard on behalf of the people. The writing of Psalm 124 was probably a reflection on God's answer.

CHAPTER 124

THANKSGIVING FOR RESCUE

This psalm seems to have been writ-

ten in answer to the plea of Psalm 123. When this psalm was written, the Lord

had delivered the people, though we are not told how God delivered them.

124:1-8 What is stated is that the people would have been overcome if it had not been for the deliverance of God. The deliverance, therefore, was noted by the psalmist as evidence that God was for His people. Not only in this deliverance, but in many throughout the history of Israel, the psalmist concluded that the existence of Israel was totally dependent on the work of God. The nation would

have long vanished if it were not for God delivering them from oppressing nations.

Prey to their teeth: They were not devoured by their enemies because God rescued them. They were delivered as frail birds from a snare. Because of their faith in the God of creation, they were delivered to continue as a nation. What they did not fully understand was that God delivered them for the sake of the world, for through Israel would come the Savior of the world.

CHAPTER 125

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

As with previous psalms, this psalm is also an expression of their security that was represented by Jerusalem, Mt. Zion. The presence of God was symbolized through the existence of Jerusalem and the temple, and thus to the Jews, Jerusalem was a holy city. The temple signified the presence of God.

125:1-5 Jerusalem was a symbol of stability. The people found strength in its presence as the capital city of Israel. **Mountains:** Though Jerusalem was built on hills, the city was also surrounded by

hills. The symbolism is that the Lord surrounds His people in order to make them feel safe and secure. **Allotted land:** Because the Lord was the security of Israel, the wicked would not be able to take possession of that which was given to the people. **Do good:** The plea is that God work on behalf of those who have committed themselves to Him. There is no reason why the wicked should expect that God do good to them. Those who are crooked in their ways have only the judgment of God to which to look forward.

CHAPTER 126

RETURN FROM CAPTIVITY

The historical setting of this psalm is the restoration of Israel to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity (See comments Er & Ne). The nation had been taken into captivity because of their apostasy to idolatrous gods (2 Ch 36:6-21). They were allowed to return because of their repentance.

126:1-6 **Those who dream:** They could not believe that God would work in

the lives of pagan kings in order to allow them to return to their land. **Laughter ... joy:** The announcement of their release was a surreal announcement that brought great joy to Israel. Some who heard were the descendants of those who had been in captivity in 722/21 B.C. when the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom. **The South:** The Negev was a desert region south of Palestine. **Sow in tears:** The time of sowing is a time of labor and

toil. **Reap in joy:** Harvest is a time of joy when one receives the reward of his patient labors. The captives had gone

forth from their land in tears, but returned to the land in joy and thanksgiving.

CHAPTER 127

GOD BLESSES

This is a psalm of wisdom. As a wisdom psalm, the focus is on what brings joy to one's daily living. In this case, that which brought joy was the guarantee of a heritage through one's children.

127:1-5 Labor in vain: The point is that security in Israel without the Lord was useless. A strong house and guards for the city are of no avail without the protection that comes from the Lord. **Bread of sorrows:** That is, toiling in labor in order to produce one's food. **Gives to His beloved:** God takes care of those who are His (Mt 6:25-34). Therefore,

they can sleep with peace of mind. **Children:** Children that are born to a young father are his strength when he is old. As arrows are a defense, so the children who take care of their aged parents have assumed responsibility to protect them in their old age. **Speak with the enemies:** Since the elders assembled at the gates of the city for decisions, so the children would stand for their parents against all who would falsely accuse them. Another interpretation may be that the young would guard the city by defending it against the enemy who would attack the gates.

CHAPTER 128

BLESSINGS FROM FEAR

This psalm concludes the last part of Psalm 127, that one is blessed if he fears the Lord. He will be blessed with children, which children will increase God's people in the holy city of Jerusalem.

128:1-6 Feared the Lord: The definition of fearing the Lord is walking in His commandments. When one fears the Lord, he obeys. The benefits from obedience, therefore, were the success of his farming and many children in his family.

His crops would be spared drought. The nation would also experience the population increase of Jerusalem and live to be old in age. Because of his obedient way of life, such would be passed on to his children, and thus peace would prevail in Jerusalem. Since disobedience would lead to God's chastisement of the nation, obedience would lead to God's protection of the nation and prosperity of the people.

CHAPTER 129

OVERTHROW OF GOD'S ENEMIES

In this psalm the psalmist speaks for the nation. Israel had a long history of oppression because of their disobedience

to the word of God. Their oppression, therefore, was allowed by God because of their lack of faithfulness to His covenant. Their obedience would lead to their deliverance by the overthrow of their enemies.

129:1-8 Many times: From the time Israel was a young nation, oppression was brought on the people because of their rebellious apostasy. God had warned them as a young nation that if they did not keep the conditions of the covenant He had made with them at Mt. Sinai, they would be disciplined. They thus had no reason to complain for their history of discipline because God had forewarned them of what would happen if they were disobedient. **Not prevailed:** Though oppressed, God did not allow them to go out of existence. **Plowers plowed:** They were driven into captivity as slaves. When they repented, God cut

the bonds of bondage and they were delivered from their captivity. **The wicked:** Those who persecuted and oppressed Israel were disgraced when God allowed the Israelites to be born again as a nation after the Babylonian captivity. Though Israel was oppressed throughout her history, the wicked who oppressed her had come and gone. Not one nation that oppressed Israel has survived history. They were like grass that would spring up on the roof, but dry up when scorched by the sun. They were temporary nations in history that were of no profit to the reaper.

CHAPTER 130

GOD'S FORGIVENESS

This is a psalm of penitence. It is a cry from one who was deeply repentant for the sins of his life. The plea for forgiveness comes from the heart of one who knew God's grace and forgiveness.

130:1-8 Your ears: It was not that God had physical ears, but that He would give attention to the plea of the psalmist for forgiveness. The personification of God with human features was for the sake of the psalmist, and those who would cry out to God for forgiveness. **If You ... mark iniquities:** If God kept a record of every sin of an individual, without His grace no man could be saved (Rm 3:9,10; 6:23). **Feared:** God is obeyed because He is feared. And because He is obeyed, those who obey are forgiven. Forgiveness continues because there are those who continue to fear the Lord (Compare

comments 1 Jn 1:7). **In His word:** God has promised His forgiveness, and thus we have hope for forgiveness because He has stated that He will remember our sins no more (See comments Hb 10:16,17). **Wait for the Lord:** The psalmist was confident in the forgiveness of God. **Those who watch:** The psalmist's confidence in the mercy of God was more than the watchman who had confidence that the sun would rise. The psalmist trusted in the faithfulness of God to forgive. **Abundant redemption:** God is rich in forgiveness, and thus all must come to Him with a repentant heart. **Redeem Israel:** The psalmist called on all Israel to come to the Lord for forgiveness. God will redeem the repentant from their iniquities. For this reason, one must come out of his iniquities in order to be forgiven.

CHAPTER 131

TRUST IN THE LORD

The psalmist directs this psalm toward a presumptuous heart. It is a psalm that expresses the humility of one who seems to have been arrogant in his knowledge, and now has humbled himself in the calmness of the security that is in the Lord. When he wrote, he was no longer haughty in trying to exalt himself to be someone he was not.

131:1-3 *Things too high for me:* This gem of knowledge would bring contentment to thousands who seek to be recognized. The psalmist seems to have gone this route in life, but found himself always in competition with others. He then found himself, and became content with who he was. He realized his own

destiny and the futility of trying to be considered better than others in a world of competitive spirits. He discovered the secret of not considering himself to be somebody he was not. He ceased placing himself in a situation that was above his abilities to handle. *As a weaned child:* Though it was difficult for him to separate himself from those who craved so much, he found peace of mind only when he found himself. Contentment comes when one realizes that God is pleased with one's use of the gifts that he has received from God. Contentment comes when we are satisfied with who we are and do not compare ourselves with others or with what others have and do.

CHAPTER 132

GOD'S BLESSING OF THE SANCTUARY

Our understanding of this psalm is based on the fact that Israel was a theocracy. The religious ceremonies of Israel were joined with the civil laws that governed the people. By this time in the history of Israel, the centrality of faith and state in Israel was centered in Jerusalem, the king and the temple. Thus this psalm focuses on the centrality of these three aspects of the faith and government of Israel.

132:1-7 *Remember David:* It was David who desired to build a temple for the Lord in Jerusalem (1 Ch 28:1-6). *His afflictions:* These were David's struggles to escape the killing hand of Saul. These afflictions included his ef-

forts to accomplish his desire to find a permanent place for the ark of the covenant. *Habitation for the mighty God:* It was not that God needed a place to live. The ark of the covenant symbolized the presence of God. And thus David wanted to permanently locate the ark in a structure in Jerusalem. By doing this, he focused the minds of the people toward Jerusalem and his kingship in the city. We must keep in mind that God originally intended that the ark be housed in the tabernacle, and thus moved annually throughout the territories of Israel. This movement of the tabernacle had taken place for over 400 hundred years before David sought to permanently locate the ark in Jerusalem (See comments 2 Sm 6:1-19; 7:1-29). *Ephratah:* This

was probably the region of Kirjath-jearim where the ark was located for many years before it was moved to Jerusalem (1 Sm 7:1,2). **His footstool:** The high priest would go once a year into the holy of holies and bow before the ark. The presence of God was symbolized to be above the ark.

132:8-12 See 2 Ch 6:41,42. **Ark of your strength:** The ark of the covenant. **David ... Your anointed:** This statement is significant in reference to the Davidic kings. Not only was David anointed to be king over Israel, but when he was anointed, God was anointing the Davidic dynasty. After David was anointed, no one who was not of David's genealogy could rightfully reign on the throne of God. Peter refers to this promise of God to David after Jesus had ascended to the throne of David in heaven (At 2:30). Thus the perpetuity of the seedline of David reigning on his throne was fulfilled in Christ.

132:13-18 **The Lord has chosen Zion:** Actually, it was David who chose Jerusalem for the central government of Israel. God allowed David's choice, and thus credit is given to God for making the choice. He gave this concession to David because He honored David's desire. The same thought would apply to David as a king in Israel. It was not God's original

intention that a king reign over Israel. His original plan was that He reign over Israel directly from heaven. But the people wanted a king. And thus, God allowed them to have a king. This was a concession of God, not His original plan for Israel. The same was true with Jerusalem. It was a concession to David, for David wanted a central government for the people. The temple was also a concession by God, for David wanted to build a temple for the ark of the covenant. However, once the concessions were given by God, then David was God's anointed, Jerusalem was God's choice, and the temple became the dwelling place of God. **Here I will dwell:** It was not that God lives in buildings that are built with the hands of men. Jerusalem was the symbol of God's habitation in Israel. Neither was it that God ceased to be the God of the nations of the world. God dwelt among the nations of the world throughout the history of Israel. God did not cease being the God of the nations when He chose and used Israel to bring the Savior of the world into the world. **Horn of David to bud:** The authority of the lineage of David would be manifested from the throne of David that was in Jerusalem. David was in authority because he was anointed by God.

CHAPTER 133

UNITY AMONG BROTHERS

The context of this psalm would be the unity of the tribes of Israel as they came together for their national feasts. One of the reasons for the fall of Israel was their autonomous behavior they de-

veloped as they territorially and tribally disconnected from one another. Their tribal independence from one another left them vulnerable to the attack of their enemies. But when unity prevailed, their enemies were intimidated by their united

strength as a nation.

133:1-3 When there is a desire within the hearts of brothers to be together, then unity prevails. Brothers must enjoy one another's company. This type of unity is not organized. It comes forth from the hearts of those who love one another (Jn 13:34,35). **Precious ointment:** This was a reference to the time when Aaron was anointed as the high priest of Israel (Ex 30:22-30). **Dew of Hermon:** The mountain regions of Mt.

Hermon in northern Palestine were at a high altitude. There would be dew on the mountains in the summer, and frost in the winter. Both were refreshing (Compare Gn 27:28; Hs 14:5). There was security in national unity. But beginning with the division of the tribes after the death of Solomon, disunity prevailed in Israel. When the representatives of the tribes came together for the annual feasts, however, at least unity prevailed among those who came.

CHAPTER 134

THE NIGHT GUARDS

This psalm was a blessing that was given to the priests as they began their duties in the temple. They encouraged one another as they prepared to carry out the hundreds of sacrifices that had to be made for the pilgrims who had come to the sanctuary of God in order to celebrate Israel's nationhood.

134:1-3 The duties of the servants in this psalm performed their duties in the

night watch. Their work was in the sanctuary, and thus they lifted up their hands as an outward expression of reverence and praise directed toward God (28:2; 141:2; Lm 2:19; 1 Tm 2:8). **Bless you:** God was called on to bless those who gave their service at the house of God. Since Jerusalem symbolized the abiding presence of God, it was out of Jerusalem that the blessing of God would go (Compare Is 2:1-4).

CHAPTER 135

GOD'S WORKS AND FOOLISH IDOLS

This is a psalm of praise. God's greatness is magnified because of His creative power. Thus the gods that are created in the minds of men, and formed into idols by the hands of men, are nothing. In the eyes of God, such idolatry is foolishness.

135:1-7 God is worthy of praise because of His creative power. Those who served in the temple were to lift their voices in praise to God. **Pleasant:** God's name is gracious, and thus brings peace of mind to those who respond to His ex-

istence. **Own possession:** Israel was a chosen people of God, and thus God's prized possession among men. Israel was chosen for the purpose of bringing the Savior into the world (Gn 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4). **Above all gods:** It is not that there were other gods. False gods are only the imagination of men. Thus the other gods are the minds of men who should worship the only true and living God. Unfortunately, they worshiped that which they had created after their own image. The true God created the universe and man. False gods are created

by man. The psalmist's reasoning is that one should praise God because God's existence is witnessed in the creation (ch 8; Rm 1:20).

135:8-12 God also manifested His power in what He did to deliver Israel from Egyptian captivity. God brought great plagues on Egypt. He killed Sihon and Og who opposed Israel. Because the Amorites, and those of Bashan, rose up against God's chosen possession of people, the territories of these nations were given to Israel.

135:13-21 *Idols of the nations:* In this context, as in others, the idol gods represent the rebellion of men against God.

Since they had created false gods in their minds that would condone their wicked behavior, the God of heaven had no influence over their lives (Is 44:9). They gave up on God in order to follow after their own imaginations (See Rm 1:18-32). The idolaters behaved as their gods because they had imagined their gods in order to walk after their own desires. ***Bless the Lord:*** In the historical environment of idolatry, and after a review of the spirit of idolatry in man, the psalmist called on Israel and her spiritual leaders to focus on the true God. They must fear (obey) God and not the imagined gods of the nations around them.

CHAPTER 136

THANKSGIVING

FOR GOD'S BLESSINGS

The format of this psalm is different than other psalms. Since each verse ends with "for His mercy endures forever," this could possibly have been a psalm that was chanted by the assembly. The focus of the psalm is on the mercy of God, and thus all the assembly responded to the primary statements that were said by the priest. The people would respond, "For His mercy endures forever."

136:1-9 *Mercy endures forever:* All that exists is the result of the mercy of God. God could have existed alone in eternity, but He chose not to. He created the universe and us because He is love. ***God of gods:*** He is the true God above the minds of those He created. He is not, therefore, the invention of the minds of men. ***Lord of lords:*** God is the Master of those who are lords among men

over their servants. He is Lord over all imaginations by which men would bring themselves into bondage. Jesus assumed this position when He ascended to the right hand of God (1 Tm 6:15). Jesus will maintain His position of King of kings and Lord of lords until He comes again (See comments 1 Co 15:26-28). ***Who alone does great wonders:*** Only the One who miraculously created all things has the power to miraculously work. For this reason, Satan has no miraculous power that is indigenous with himself. He was a created being, as all spirit beings (Cl 1:16). But he was not created with inherent miraculous power to be able to do miraculous works apart from God. Only God has the power to command the supernatural. All other supposed miracles are only the imagination of those who seek to be led astray from the miraculous power of God. False gods are created in the minds

of men when men seek for a sign outside the realm of God's supernatural being and power. **Great lights:** If one would be a believer, he must believe that God was the creator of all that exists (See comments Gn 1 & 2). True believers would never believe that either the material or biological world came into existence from matter that had previously existed.

136:10-26 See 135:8-12. **Smote Egypt:** The existence of the nation of Israel was a miracle of God. Israel was the only culture of people in the history of the world who became a free nation in one night by being delivered from one of the most powerful nations of the world. Their birth as a nation was literally generated over night. Such has never happened in the history of the world. The

psalmist wants us to understand that this was a miracle of God. It was not something that happens by natural sociological means. Only God can do such a thing, which thing He also did with the church, by bringing it into existence in only one day (See comments At 2). The psalmist thus presents several of the miraculous events that surrounded the exodus of Israel from Egypt, as well as the strength of this nation that was born out of slavery and then conquered warrior nations in the land that God had given them. The existence of the nation of Israel was truly a historical miracle of God. **God of heaven:** He is the God who exists in a heavenly realm, not originated by the minds of men (2 Ch 36:23; Er 1:2; 5:11,12; Dn 2:18,44; 5:23).

CHAPTER 137

SORROW IN EXILE

This is a strong imprecatory psalm against the captors of the Jews. It is a prayer that Israel be avenged for what they had done to God's people. The historical setting is a time when Israel was in Babylonian captivity. This psalm is thus a picture of an intimidated nation of people who were suffering under the bondage of a foreign people.

137:1-9 **Sat down ... remembered Zion:** The Jews were stuck in captivity and resided in the region of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers of Babylon. This was the first generation of captives because they remembered Jerusalem from which they had been taken. **Hung our harps:** There was no joy in their hearts to sing. **Sing us:** They were taunted by the Baby-

lonians to sing about what was taken from them, that is their glorious city of Jerusalem. **Remember:** Those who taunted these first captives had performed terrible deeds. They had dashed the heads of Israelite babies against rocks during the siege of Jerusalem. When the city fell, they could not nurture babies on the way back to Babylon, and thus the Babylonians killed their little ones. These memories were still fresh on the minds of the ones in this context who were taunted to sing of Jerusalem to their captors. **Edom:** The Edomites did not take part in the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. However, they had rejoiced over its destruction (See comments Ob 10-16). **Day of Jerusalem:** This would be the day when God brought the Babylonian

Empire to a close, which He did when the Medo-Persian Empire brought an end to Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty of reigning kings over Babylon. **Raze it:** In 586 B.C., Jerusalem fell to the Babylonian army of King Nebuchadnezzar. They destroyed the temple and the city, tearing down the stone buildings to the ground. **Repay:** Babylon was repaid that which she had done to Jerusalem. She reaped what she had sown. In the bitterness of

his own feelings, the psalmist made the imprecatory plea that what the Babylonian army had done to their children would be done to them. These words should not be interpreted from the viewpoint of loving one's neighbor as himself, but in the historical context of a metaphorical retribution that would come on the Babylonians. They were eventually punished for their deeds. Their existence was terminated, even to this day.

CHAPTER 138

THANKSGIVING FOR GOD'S GRACE

This psalm was written by one who was distant from the temple, and thus it was composed after the reign of David, for David did not build the temple. It is generally accepted that the psalm was written after the Babylonian exile by one who was still in the land of his captors, and yet to be restored to the presence of the rebuilt temple.

138:1-8 Whole heart: Meaningful worship comes from the heart of one who has totally given himself to the Lord. The totally committed can give themselves in total worship. **Before the gods:** There were no other gods. Reference here would possibly be to those who had created gods after their own image, or to those who had set themselves up as gods among men. Many pharaohs and kings of ancient times assumed to be gods among the people over whom they reigned. **Worship toward ... temple:** The psalmist was not in the presence of the temple, which temple was built by Solomon. In his worship, he would possibly

prostrate himself toward the temple. The psalmist was not commanding any mandate of posture in prayer or direction to which one must pray. He was only expressing his personal feelings that were undoubtedly patterned after Solomon, and carried on with others as Daniel (2 Ch 6:20; Dn 6:10). To the Jews, the temple was the representation of God among His people in their promised land. Thus in their worship, they paid homage to God, as well as maintained their nationalism by praying toward the temple in Jerusalem. **Magnified ... name ... word:** The name and word of God are inseparable. Jesus came in the name of God, but was also the revealed word of God (Jn 1:1-14). With the name of God comes His word, both of which are exalted above all things. **Respect for the lowly:** It is the nature of God, and thus the nature of the godly, to have concern for those of low estate. Arrogance and pride are identified by one's disregard for the poor, and those of humble estate. Godliness is identified by those who do not position people in society by either their money or work. **Middle**

of trouble: This psalm concludes with the psalmist's trust that God would bring him through all troubles. Though troubles might cast one down, the psalmist was confident that God would revive him, and thus bring him through trouble alive.

Destiny for me: God will work in our

lives in order to bring about that for which He gave us gifts to accomplish (Compare comments Ep 4:11-16). We must assume that His gifts for us are given in order that we accomplish our destiny in life for Him. When we work to accomplish our destiny, God will work for us.

CHAPTER 139

OMNIPRESENCE AND OMNISCIENCE OF GOD

This is one of the greatest of all the psalms. It is a spiritual highlight that brings comfort to the people of God. Because it focuses on the omniscience and omnipresence of God, the psalmist was reassured that God was in control of all things. He was not distant from His creation, but transcendent. Knowing this truth reassures the righteous that God is in control of all things.

139:1-6 You know: These first verses define the omniscience of God. God knows our inner thoughts, our motives, our words before they are spoken, and where we are at all times. Neither in thinking nor presence can one escape the omniscience of God. **Thought from afar:** Before we conceive our thoughts, God knows them. **Not a word in my mouth:** When we do utter words, God knows the motives and thoughts behind the words that we speak. **Knowledge is too wonderful:** It is beyond the comprehension of men to understand the omniscience of God. If we did understand, then we would be gods. We must not frustrate ourselves, therefore, by not understanding how God can have such knowledge.

139:7-12 Where will I go: This section of scripture explains the omnipresence of God. He is everywhere at all times. One cannot escape the presence of God by going to the grave (Sheol), or by ascending into heaven. One cannot go to the depths of the sea to find a place that is free from the presence of God. **Darkness:** Darkness cannot hide one from God, for God is not subject to the effects of either darkness or light. Darkness is a result of the creation of light, but God existed before the creation of light, and thus existed in what men call darkness (See Gn 1). Thus God does not exist in His creation, but neither does He separate Himself from His creation. He is not defined by that which was created, nor does His existence depend on that which exists. His existence is throughout creation, and without His existence all that is created would cease (Hb 1:3).

139:13-16 Though omniscient and omnipresent, God is mindful of every individual of His creation. The psalmist was concerned that our understanding of the awesomeness of God might lead us to believe that He is indifferent to the details of His creation, and thus might overlook individuals. But the psalmist reassures us that God even knew each of us while

we were still in our mother's womb, before we were even taking form. ***Fearfully and wonderfully made:*** Because man can never fully understand the process by which a human being is developed from a fertilized egg in the womb of a woman, God is held in wonder. In fact, the wonder should generate fear as to how such a thing could possibly have happened without the existence of God. When contemplating such things, the philosophy of evolution is a mockery to the intelligence of honest men. It is not reasonable to conclude that such things as the development of a man from a microscopic egg of woman could be the result of a process of evolution from matter to the existence of life. ***In Your scroll they were all written:*** God can foresee without predestining something to happen. There are no surprises with God. He can see our lives without establishing our lives to be unchanging fate that is void of the freewill of man. This is certainly beyond the understanding of man. But we must not be frustrated by what God can do that we cannot understand. The fact that God can foreknow without predestining is what defines God to be beyond the invention

of our imagination. If we could understand this ability of God, then we would be sure that we would have created a god after our own image and mental abilities. If we conclude that we fully understand God, then we can be assured that the god we have claimed to understand fully is not the God of heaven.

139:17-24 *I am still with you:* The psalmist has just spoken of the omnipresence of God among humanity, and His omniscience concerning all knowledge. Thus whether one arises from sleep, or from death, he is still in the presence and knowledge of God. ***You will slay the wicked:*** God's protection of the righteous involves their deliverance from the wicked. And God's deliverance of ourselves from the wicked means the destruction of the wicked. Because the psalmist was godly, his attitude toward the wicked was as God's. He hated their evil. His hatred was concerning their actions, not their being. One can hate the sin, but love the sinner. Thus the psalmist closed by asking God to search his own heart, lest there be in it any wicked ways by which he himself could become the enemy of God.

CHAPTER 140

PROTECTION FROM PERSECUTORS

The historical setting of this psalm is division within the kingdom. There were evidently some Gentile influences within Israel that were being antagonistic to those who were Israelites by descent. It may have been that some were Israelites who went into apostasy after false

gods. There is an imprecatory focus of the psalm in that the psalmist asked for God's judgment to be unleashed on those who persecuted those who were faithful to Him.

140:1-5 The psalmist wrote while under the threat of those who were his enemies. These were arrogant people who had plotted to cause him to stumble.

In order to accomplish their attack, they had schemed traps into which they supposed the psalmist would fall. **The arrogant:** An arrogant attitude is a personality that generates sin. The arrogant person exalts himself in comparison to and competition with his fellow man. He devises schemes in order to maintain either his position or status in society. In this context, this person used every means available in order to ensnare the psalmist.

140:6-11 You are my God: Because he had committed himself to God, the psalmist asked that God answer his prayer. Since God had previously protected the psalmist in a time of affliction, he called on God to again bring down judgment on his enemies. **Do not grant:** Do not allow the wicked to go without punishment. **Exalt themselves:** Those who are successful in their wicked schemes often pride themselves because of their accomplishments. They boast about their ability to develop schemes by which they have gained advantage over their neighbors. **Mischief of their own lips:** They must reap what they sow. **Burning coals ... fire:** This is reminis-

cent of the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah. These were cities that suffered total destruction because of their wickedness. **Evil speaker:** If one who has an evil heart is accepted by the people, then it is difficult to turn the people from his influence. Through his smooth and fair speech he deceives the people into following after his wickedness.

140:12,13 God will take the side of the righteous. He will sustain the righteous. Though a misguided society may afflict the righteous, God will come to their aid (9:18; 10:2; 18:27; 22:24). **Dwell in Your presence:** The righteous now dwell in the presence of God. They do so by being obedient to His ways, and by living a life that manifests that they are His children. When they transition by death into the presence of God, they feel comfortable with God, for they have throughout their lives lived according to His will. In reference to the will of God, there will be nothing intimidating for the righteous to be near God when they die. They will be intimidated by His awesomeness, but they will have known His will.

CHAPTER 141

SANCTIFICATION AND PROTECTION

The psalmist felt that his only recourse for spiritual survival was to lament over his sin and voice repentance to God. He thus asked to be preserved from evil by fellowshiping those who were righteous.

141:1-10 Prayer be ... as incense:

As incense is pleasing to the senses, so the psalmist asked that his prayers be accepted by God as pleasing incense (Compare Rv 5:8). **Evening sacrifice:** See Ex 30:7,8; Lv 2:2. **Lifting up of hands:** See 28:1; 63:4; 1 Tm 2:8. **Let not my heart:** The psalmist asked that he not be tempted beyond that which he could endure (1 Co 10:13). **Wicked**

works with men: The first thing to do in order not to be inclined to evil is to separate oneself from those who do wicked things. If one seeks to associate with unrighteous people, then he will be tempted to partake of those things that bring pleasure to wicked people. **Righteous smite me:** Loving correction was welcomed by the psalmist as a sign of true fellowship. In order to be against the wicked, one must be in the presence of the righteous. And in the presence of the righteous, one considers the reproof of fellow servants of God to be refreshing, for such reproof is a sign of love and healing. **When their judges are over-**

thrown: The rulers maintained their position with the people through their lofty words. But the psalmist knew that eventually the people would discover the sweet words of truth that came from him. **Our bones:** Though at the time of writing he was suffering at the hands of those who scattered and damaged his reputation, he would remain confident that the Lord would not leave him destitute. God would deliver him from the verbal snares of the wicked. The wicked would eventually be the victims of their own devices, while he would enjoy the safety that is provided by God.

CHAPTER 142

HELP IN TIMES OF TROUBLE

In this psalm the psalmist finds himself in great distress. He was in a desperate situation where he poured out his plea to God for deliverance. While being persecuted, he cried out to God to vindicate him by bringing vengeance on his enemies.

142:1-7 Poured out my complaint: This is an intimate supplication on the part of the psalmist. He was not apprehensive about making known his complaints to the Lord. He knew that God knew his life. He knew that God knew that his enemies had sought to trap him. **No man who would know me:** This is the common situation in which a leader finds himself. When the wicked seek to ensnare a leader verbally, others will not associate with him. Thus the leader for God must depend, as the psalmist, on God for his help. **You are my refuge:** Those

who would stand for that which is right will often find themselves standing with God alone. For those who seek only to be led, they often do not have the courage to stand for that which is right. They seek only to conform to the masses. But if people need to be led to be close to God, then those who seek to have the approval of others can never lead. The unrighteous people they lead will always keep them from going in the direction to which God wants His people led. **Out of prison:** It was not that the psalmist was literally in prison. His prison was his separation from his companions. These were the multitudes from which he was separated because they needed to be led to God. Once delivered from the onslaught of those who were slanderously persecuting him, he would again be surrounded with companions. That is, once the people realized that the slanderous

leaders were leading them in the wrong direction, then they would accept the righteous leadership of the psalmist.

CHAPTER 143

DELIVERANCE AND GUIDANCE

In this penitential psalm the psalmist asks for mercy, not law. The penitent psalmist made a determined effort to submit to the will of God. However, he knew that he could not keep God's law perfectly. He thus asked for God's deliverance from sin through His grace. Being delivered from his sin, he then committed himself to God's guidance.

143:1-6 The psalmist was pleading to God, knowing that God would be faithful in His answer. *No living man be justified:* He sought justice that was filled with grace and mercy, for he knew that no man stood justified before God. All have sinned (Rm 3:9,10,23; 11:32; 1 Jn 1:10). Neither by efforts to keep law perfectly, nor by meritorious works, could one stand justified before God. Therefore, without God's mercy, the psalmist did not want to be summoned to God for judgment. *Dwell in darkness:* Sheol was a place of darkness in death. *Overwhelmed ... desolate:* In this life the psalmist was suffering as in death. He was faint in his heart and grew numb from the oppression of his enemies.

143:7-12 The psalmist knew that in repentance there must be a commitment to live the repentant life. Repentance demanded God's direction. He knew that

he had to bring forth fruit that manifested repentance (See comments 2 Co 7:10). *Speedily:* Before he died, he wanted a response from God. *In the morning:* In the spiritual morning of reaping the results of God's grace, one understands grace and mercy. It is thus in this morning that one is delivered from the despair that results from sin. *I flee to You:* Such should be the move of all those who would seek the forgiveness of God. God is a refuge to all those who would seek His comfort. But in order to find His comfort, one must come to Him in repentance. *Teach me:* When one seeks to live within the comfort of God, he seeks to be obedient to the word of God. *Revive me:* In order to be revived, one must ask God to "cause me to hear" (vs 8), "cause me to know" (vs 8), "deliver me" (vs 9), and "teach me" (vs 10). This concluding plea is the result of relinquishing oneself to God. One is revived only when he allows God to take control of the totality of his life. Without total submission, there is no revival. *I am Your servant:* This final imprecatory request should be considered in the context of the king being the anointed of God. Those who had set themselves against the anointed king of God had set themselves against God.

CHAPTER 144

RESCUE OF A HAPPY PEOPLE

This is a kingly psalm that focuses on national prosperity. It is a psalm that

speaks of the social foundation upon which a healthy nation rests, and thus the foundation for joy among the people.

144:1,2 *Strength ... goodness ... high tower ... deliverer ... shield:* God should be all this in the life of a godly soldier for national Israel (ch 18). If one depends on God for these things, certainly he has established himself in the trust of God. When the soldiers of Israel went forth to battle, they did not go forth for carnal means. They went forth to defend the purpose of God through Israel. It was through Israel that God would bring the Savior into the world, and thus it was necessary that Israel survive as a nation. Though the Israelites did not know this during the time of their existence, it was enough to know that for some reason God had chosen them from among the nations of the world for a special purpose. They did know that they were the perpetuation of the promise that God made to Abraham, that through his seed all nations of the earth would be blessed (Gn 12:1-4).

144:3-10 *A mere breath:* The life of man is frail and short. We exist for a brief time, and then pass away. Our great grandchildren will forget our names. *Mountains ... smoke:* Volcanic eruptions. *Stretch forth Your hand:* The psalmist sought to be delivered from the oppression of wicked nations who overcame Israel as a flood of waters. *Hand of falsehood:* These were those who worked treachery and deceit. *New song:* The psalmist was confident that God would deliver him out of the hands of those who sought his destruction. For this reason, he would sing a song of victory. *Salvation:* As in the context here and in other psalms, this word is used in reference to being saved from death or op-

pression.

144:11-15 These verses explain the well-being of the nation of Israel. What is portrayed is the well-being of the sons and daughters, which is a sign of the future of the nation. If the youth grow up feeling secure in the care of parents and God, then their future confidence in the nation will guarantee the future existence of the nation. *Daughters as corner stones:* The young daughters became young mothers who trained their children in godliness. Thus the daughters become the corner stones that determined the direction in which the nation would morally go (See comments Ti 2:3-5). *Our barns be full:* Israel was a rural culture of farmers. Their wealth as a nation was not in their cities, but in the rural communities that were scattered throughout the land of Palestine. In this context, the wealth of the nation was based on full barns, not large bank accounts. If the barns were full, then the crops were good and their livestock was breeding. The result was the increase of their flocks. Because Palestine was situated in the major trade route of ancient times, they could sell their produce to passing traders who traveled to and fro between the northern and southern nations of the world. This trading brought in great sums of wealth for the nation of Israel as a whole. *No breaking in:* When everyone is prosperous, there is no need for thievery. *Nor going out:* There would be no need to go to other nations for help or into the captivity of those who would conquer the land. *No complaining:* Knowing their history of complaint, a full barn would leave no rea-

son for the people to complain to God for sustenance. When the physical needs of the people are satisfied, there would be national security, and thus a happy nation. **Whose God is the Lord:** This is the foundation upon which a nation is truly happy (Pv 14:34). In the case of Israel,

their prosperity was evidence that they were serving God, since He had promised them that He would bless them if they continued in His will. However, if they forsook His will, they would suffer God's discipline.

CHAPTER 145

GOODNESS AND POWER OF GOD

This was a psalm that was commonly used in the daily prayers of Jewish liturgy. It was an important psalm because it focused on the greatness of God and His love for those who worshiped Him. The reverence that is given to God not only came from Israel, but from all people. God is to be glorified by all humanity because of His care for His people.

145:1-7 Every day: This psalm portrays the beauty of the daily life of those who worship God (Rm 12:1,2). The devoted saint continually has the praise of God on his mind. The righteous speak of God's miraculous works that He has done throughout history. They will speak of the good that God has done for His people. A song of praise will continually be on the lips of the righteous.

145:8,9 Gracious: The Lord is favorable to His people. **Compassion:** He is sympathetic and kind. In reference to their needs, He provides. God is slow in bringing judgment down on His children who sin. This picture of God is certainly different than the one that is portrayed by those who conceive of gods after their own imagination. The God of the Bible

is one of love, compassion and mercy. This does not mean that God will not bring judgment on those who continue in sin. It does, however, mean that God is not mean or unjust. He is not as those gods of men who seek every opportunity to punish man.

145:10-16 Works ... acts: See comments Psalm 8 (Rm 1:20). **Your kingdom:** The sovereignty of God is manifested through His creation. All that exists manifests the greatness of God and His creative power and majesty. **Everlasting kingdom:** The emphasis here, as in other places where the word "everlasting" is used, emphasizes the permanency of that which is modified by the word "everlasting." In this case it is the sovereignty of God's kingdom reign. It is sure and steadfast. It will not go away. The Son of God ascended to the right hand of God in order to assume this kingdom reign. He is presently reigning over all things (Mt 28:18; Ep 1:20-22). **Upholds all who fall:** God is there for us. Though He is majestic in power and awesome in comparison to His creation, He considers His people and is there when they fall.

145:17-21 Righteous ... holy: God is just in all His work with man. His deal-

ings are not as men who make judgments from preconceived and prejudicial motives. **The Lord is near:** He is not distant. If one feels distant from God, it is not that God has gone away, but that we have gone away from Him. We only go away from Him in our thinking. He is always there. No one can ever physically move away from God. **Fulfill the desire:** He will come to the aid of those

who obey Him. He will save them out of danger and preserve them. It is because of this protective work of God that His servants praise Him. The relationship that this psalmist explained concerning God's closeness with His people brings comfort and encouragement to those who are conscious of His presence. What a great joy it is to feel that in God we live, move and have our being (See comments At 17:28).

CHAPTER 146

GOD IS OUR HELPER

Beginning with this psalm, the remainder of the psalms focus on praise to God. These psalms are a doxology to all the psalms. Throughout these psalms there are no petitions or cries for the fulfillment of personal needs. These are songs of praise. In this psalm, the psalmist praises God as our help because He is able to come to our aid.

146:1-4 As the first of the hallelujah psalms in adoration of God, this psalm begins with a praise of the Lord who helps. The psalmist committed himself to the praise of the Lord because only He is to be our help. In crises that involve our mortality, princes (rulers) of this world cannot help, for they too are mortal. All men of this world are destined to die and return to the dust of the earth. **His thoughts perish:** At death, the thoughts of mortal man cease to be an advantage to those who are alive.

146:5-10 Happy: Those who put their trust in God are assured of His help. Their happiness is based on an undoubting faith in the God who created all things. If God can create, then surely He can take care of those who put their trust in Him. **Keeps truth:** God does not break His covenants with those who are faithful to Him. **Executes judgment:** He vindicates the righteous, and thus frees them from their oppression. **Eyes of the blind:** Through truth, men come to know God. **Bowed down:** Those who are humbled through grief are encouraged. **Preserves the foreigners:** Sojourners are protected. **Way of the wicked:** He turns the wickedness that they would render to others upon their own heads. **Reign forever:** The certainty of His sovereignty guarantees what was stated in this psalm concerning the word of God in the lives of man.

CHAPTER 147

JERUSALEM'S RESTORATION AND PROSPERITY

This psalm focuses on the work of God in His creation, which work is a ben-

efit to all that exists. The theme would be that God is not distant from His creation, but works among His creation for the preservation of that which He brought

into existence (See Hb 1:3). The reason for the praise would be the immediate historical occasion that Israel was returning from captivity in order to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple.

147:1-6 *Praise is the right thing to do:* In view of all that God has done and continues to do in His creation, it is reasonable to give Him praise. ***Builds up Jerusalem:*** In view of the gathering of Israel, the historical setting of this psalm would be the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity after 536 B.C. ***Gathers ... outcasts of Israel:*** See comments Ezra & Nehemiah. The Jews had been taken into Assyrian (722/21 B.C.) and Babylonian (586 B.C.) captivity. They were dispersed among the nations. The psalmist gives credit to God for gathering a remnant of all twelve tribes in order to return the remnant to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and city. ***Casts the wicked down:*** As captives, the Israelites were cast down by the wicked, but in their return from captivity, the wicked were cast down.

147:7-11 The power of God is manifested throughout nature (Compare ch 8; Rm 1:20). God is to be praised for the continuity of vegetation that provides food for the living. Though man may take pride

in the things of this world that exalt his power, the psalmist proclaimed that the righteous should take pride in the power of God that works in the world.

147:12-20 *Bars of your gates:* The security of the nation was in the strength of Jerusalem to withstand the enemy. God strengthened Israel and was able to defend her against all her enemies. They would not be able to break through the gates into the city. ***His word runs:*** For moral development, God's word was proclaimed to His people who readily received it. The fact that they received the word of God is evidence that they are the people of God. ***Snow ... ice ... cold:*** Man succumbs to the cold, but God controls all that controls the cold. He can simply speak a word and the snow and ice melt away. ***Shows His word to Jacob:*** Of all the blessings that Israel received that preserved them throughout their generations, God's revealed word was the greatest. The writing of the Pentateuch (Gn – Dt) by Moses carried Israel through to the time of the Christ. They were blessed with the oracles of God so that they need not to depend on the oral will of God as did the nations (See comments Rm 3:1,2). For this reason alone, Israel should sing praises to God.

CHAPTER 148

GOD PRAISED BY THE CREATION

This psalm is a praise of God from His creation. From angelic beings to every molecule of creation, God is praised for His majesty. This is only a natural response from the creation. The Cre-

ator is greater than the creation, and thus that which originated from the Creator would naturally praise the source of its existence.

148:1-6 Praise is commanded to come from all spiritual beings who dwell in the heavenly realm. Even the physical

sun, moon and stars that dwell in the heavens are to bring forth praise to God. The personification of the sun, moon and stars exemplifies the majesty of God and the fact that it is right that only He be praised, for He was the creator of all. We should not miss the point in these psalms of praise. And the point is that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit worked through God the Son to create the worlds and all life (See comments Cl 1:16). This praise that originates from the created world, therefore, is praise of the preincarnate Christ through whom all things were created. **He commanded:** It was Jesus who commanded and the heavens were

created (Cl 1:16; see comments Gn 1).

148:7-14 All that exists is called on by the psalmist to give praise to the Lord. The psalmist's reason for calling on all creation to praise the Creator is only reasonable. The life and the created world give praise to the One who brought all things into existence. **His name:** The very name of God affirms His existence, and thus His right to be praised by those who recognize His existence. Those who are ignorant of the existence of God are driven to praise Him. It is for this reason that the name of God should be proclaimed among the nations.

CHAPTER 149

PRAISE OF GOD BY HIS PEOPLE

Verses 1-4 are a call to worship God. However, verses 5-9 are a call for God's judgment to come upon those who have dealt wickedly with His people. In continuing a familiar theme throughout the psalms, the psalmist reassures the people of God, and warns their enemies, that one should take great caution in setting themselves against God's people.

149:1-4 *Assembly of the saints:* God's people, whether Israelites scattered throughout Palestine, or His church scattered throughout the world, are the assembly of His saints. The phraseology defines that the word "assembly" ("congregation") does not refer to God's people coming together into a particular location. It is the assembly who have gathered before the Lord by their obedience to His word, regardless of where they are indi-

vidually located. We are thus a part of God's assembly if we are alone on a mountain bowed down in giving praise to Him in His glory, or in some village deep in the jungle. Where we are located does not separate us from either God or His assembly. **In his Maker:** Because God created the nation of Israel, Israel should thus worship her Maker. Because God created all things, therefore, all things should worship the Creator. **Dance ... timbrel:** Praise was released through dance because of the joy that filled the heart of the worshiper. Though God is not influenced by the noise of the innate instruments of man, the use of such in praise to God was an expression of praise by those who sought to worship Him (See comments Ep 5:19; Cl 3:16; compare Am 5:23).

149:5-9 We do not know the historical setting of this psalm, though it is

evident that Israel was delivered from some enemy. Their victory was their vindication, and thus their opportunity to once again give praise to God. Through the proxy of His work in the army of Israel,

God brought vengeance on those who oppressed His people. Those who had put Israel in chains and fetters, were themselves brought down to the same by the army of other nations.

CHAPTER 150

PRAISE GOD

This is a fitting psalm of conclusion for all the psalms. Its total focus on the praise of God manifests the adoration of God's people of His majesty. Because God is the creator of all things, commandments to worship Him are not needed. When one comes to the realization that God exists, and that He created all things, one is humbled in worship of Him.

150:1-6 We would conclude that this was a psalm of David simply because of David's love for instruments of music. Such instrumental music was introduced into the temple sacrifices in order to bring a calming atmosphere to the area while the animals were being slaughtered for sacrifice. David originally brought in the instruments, therefore, not for the purpose of worship of God, but for the purpose of developing a pleasant atmosphere for the priest during the time when sacrifices were being prepared. In the context of this psalm, however, the psalmist desired

that every breath of man be used to either sing or play to the praise of God. The instruments that are mentioned here were wind instruments as the trumpet and flutes, stringed instruments as the psaltery and harp, and the percussion instruments that included the timbrel and cymbals. The noise from such instruments does not appeal to the senses that we suppose God has, for God is spirit and not approached through the senses of man. The instruments, therefore, appealed to men. David introduced the instruments because he was a person who enjoyed them. He did not introduce them because they appealed to God. God on the contrary, seeks the melody of our hearts (See comments Ep 5:19; Cl 3:16). The praise of God should be such on the hearts of His people who cannot contain their worship. Praise of God is the natural expression of those who recognize God as their Creator.