

Worshipping God in the Psalms



WORSHIPPING GOD IN THE PSALMS

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Worshipping God in the Psalms

Course Introduction

Welcome to *Worshipping God in the Psalms*!

You are about to begin a study of one of the richest books of the Bible—one that is totally unique in comparison to all other biblical books. Here in the Psalms we come the closest to discovering what intimate fellowship with the living God really means and what it is to truly worship Him. We trust that your life will be significantly impacted by what you learn and experience through this study, for there is nothing more important that you will ever do than learning to worship the Lord God, our Creator and our Redeemer.

Description of the Course

God's design for us is that we would do His will and walk in His ways, but He also made us emotional creatures with a great complexity of feelings, desires, and aspirations. Here on earth we are made to struggle in a sin-filled world where right is often twisted and where wicked men often seem to prosper more than the righteous. Compounding the dilemma for those who sincerely desire to seek after God is that He often seems to be silent, not heeding our cries for help and deliverance in our bleakest moments. Yet at other times He is remarkably near and awesome to rescue us. The psalmist knew this tension, despairing on the one hand but rising to the heights of praise and adoration on the other.

In the Psalms we enter more fully than anywhere else into the world of worship. For the psalmist this meant pouring out his lament to God in which he told God exactly how he felt and how much he longed for God's intervention. As dark and painful as these moments might be, however, the psalmist ultimately realized that God was faithful, righteous, loyal, and good in dealing with him. Then his heart turned to songs of praise.

This course is designed to help you read and understand the book of Psalms in a deeper way. While many of the psalms will be explained, the primary purpose is to give you the insight and skills for reading and interpreting the psalms yourself. This means that you will need to know some things about Hebrew poetry and how the psalmist conveyed his thoughts and emotions. Ultimately, however, this course is intended to help you enter into what it means to truly worship the Lord God, so that your heart will be full of praise for the God who loves you so much.

About the Author

This course was written by Dr. J. Paul Tanner, who holds both a ThM and a PhD degree in Hebrew Language and Old Testament studies. He has been teaching the Psalms for over twenty-five years in various theological seminaries around the world, and has authored a number of articles in professional Christian journals.

Reasons for Taking This Course

- We all know that our emotions can easily play tricks on us, and in our desperate moments we can easily lose sight of what we know to be true...even of God Himself. This course will help us rise above our emotions to lay hold of great theological truths that will strengthen our lives.
- How do we choose to deal with sin in our lives? God knows that we are weak and prone to sin, yet our human tendency is to hide our sin from God and act deceitfully about it. The psalmist helps us understand the importance of being honest about our sin and experiencing God's forgiveness and cleansing.

- Intellectually we may be able to describe the character of God. However, we do not really know God until we come to experience His attributes firsthand, especially His loyalty to those in covenant relationship with Him. Only when we come to see for ourselves that God is good in all His dealings with us are we finally able to recapture our love relationship with Him.
- In almost every culture, poetry is used to convey the deepest feelings of the soul. Nevertheless each culture has its own techniques of poetic expression, and we must become sensitive to Hebrew techniques of poetry if we are to fully comprehend the message within a psalm.
- The Psalms are composed of smaller units of thought. These may be laments, cries for God's intervention, praise, vows to God, or expressions of thanksgiving. Learning to become sensitive to these motifs within a psalm helps us understand what the psalmist was trying to express.
- Ultimately the psalmist wants us to come to a point of seeing God for who He truly is, and then in response to give Him all our praise and adoration. When we enter into this realm of praise, we are at last experiencing the highest purpose for which we were created.
- The Psalms—often written from the vantage point of the nation's king—ultimately point us to the King par excellence, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Psalms frequently speak of Him, whether *typically* through David's experiences or *prophetically* in anticipation of the One who will rule over the kingdom of God.

Course Organization

The lessons are grouped into five units:

Unit 1: Cultivating the Heart of a Worshipper

- Lesson 1: Accepting God's Invitation to Pursue Wisdom and Worship (Ps 1; 95)
- Lesson 2: Allowing God to Take Off Our Blinders to Sin (Ps 32)
- Lesson 3: Recapturing Our Love Relationship With God (Ps 31)

Unit 2: Preparing to Study the Psalms

- Lesson 4: Understanding the Nature of Hebrew Poetry: Imagery and Rhyming Ideas
- Lesson 5: Recognizing and Working With Figures of Speech
- Lesson 6: Grasping the Composition and Themes of the Psalter as a Whole

Unit 3: Learning to Recognize Psalm Categories—Part 1

- Lesson 7: An Introduction to Psalm Categories and Individual Lament (Ps 142)
- Lesson 8: Penitential Lament (Ps 51)
- Lesson 9: Psalms of Trust or Confidence (Ps 27)

Unit 4: Learning to Recognize Psalm Categories—Part 2

- Lesson 10: Declarative Praise—Praising God for His Personal Intervention (Ps 34)
- Lesson 11: Descriptive Praise—Praising God for Who He Is and His Role in History (Ps 33)
- Lesson 12: An Introduction to Royal or Messianic Psalms (Ps 2)

Unit 5: Envisioning Messiah Jesus in the Psalms

Lesson 13: The Sufferings of the Messiah in the Psalms (Ps 22)

Lesson 14: The Exaltation of the Messiah in the Psalms (Ps 16; 110)

Lesson 15: The Glorious Future Reign of the Messiah in the Psalms (Ps 72)

As you plan your study schedule, decide on what dates you want to finish each unit. You can then divide this time into study periods for each lesson.

We suggest that you try to do one lesson each week or three lessons per month. The lessons vary in length but you should allocate about three to five hours per lesson. You can do this if you study about one hour each day. At this rate, it will take you approximately four or five months to complete the course. Or you may want to speed this up and do two or three lessons per week.

Lesson Organization

Please give careful attention to each part of the lesson:

1. Title
2. Lesson introduction
3. Lesson outline
4. Preparing for the lesson
5. Lesson assignments
6. Lesson development

The title, introduction, outline, and preparation story provide a preview of the lesson. Your mind will be more alert and receptive and you will learn better because of this preview.

The lesson assignments instruct you in any reading material or any exercises that need to be completed.

The lesson development follows the lesson outline. Its comments, suggestions, and questions all help you understand the material and apply God's Word to your life. Be sure to check your answers with the ones given for the study questions. These will fix your attention once more on the main points of the lesson. This procedure is designed to make your learning more effective and long-lasting.

Make special note of the maps, charts, and other illustrations that accompany each lesson.

Recommended for Further Reading

"Bibliography of Sources Cited" in the Appendix lists resources that were cited in the course notes. In addition to this, an annotated bibliography for the book of Psalms is provided on the IBS site (English only).

Using This Course

Glossary

Throughout this course you may see terms with which you are not familiar. If you do not know the meaning of the word or term please consult with the glossary provided at the end of this course.

Overview

- To get the most benefit from your study of this material, you should plan to work through the units and lessons in the order they are presented.
- You will need the foundational information given in Unit 1 before beginning Unit 2, and so on.
- The course is divided into five units. Each unit includes questions and self check quizzes to help you understand and apply the various practical truths.
- You should allow yourself a minimum of three hours of study time to complete each lesson (about forty-five minutes each day). This would include doing the required reading, answering the questions, and preparing to participate in your weekly seminar.

Interactive Questions

Interactive questions are included in each lesson to help you review, evaluate, and apply what you are reading. There are many different interaction types: short answers, essay, multiple choice, matching, and true/false. A very important interaction type is what is called your *Life Notebook*.

Life Notebook

Throughout the course you will see references to what we call a Life Notebook.

This Notebook has two purposes. First, this is a personal spiritual life journal that you will maintain and add to as you go through various BEE World courses. In this Life Notebook you should enter what you are learning, how it is impacting your life, and perhaps questions you have that you would like help in answering.

Second, the Life Notebook is a place where you will record essay type questions that are more deeply reflective in nature. These questions will relate to practical application issues such as your walk with God, teaching this material to others by leading your own group, and practical character lessons you learn through studying the lesson.

Grading System

In a facilitated class your final grade for the course is based on a number of factors. Your facilitator will probably modify the specific requirements to fit the class. However, you will be graded on lesson completion, self checks, class participation, and completed projects.

Unit 1: Cultivating the Heart of a Worshipper

What is it in our spiritual development that is so important for each one of us, that everything else is secondary in comparison? If there is any key word that comes to mind, it ought to be the word “heart.” What goes on at the level of our heart is absolutely critical in regard to who we are and what we are becoming. Consider the following verses:

Guard your heart with all vigilance, for from it are the sources of life. (Prov 4:23)

Oh, that today you would listen as He speaks! Do not harden your hearts. (Heb 3:7-8)

These two verses emphatically remind us of the importance of our heart, not the physical organ that pumps the blood, but our innermost being out of which stems our true character and where all important decisions are made. Furthermore it is at this level of our being that our relationship with God is seen for what it really is. We are either softening our heart toward God—becoming more sensitive and yielded toward Him—or we are hardening our heart toward God—failing to truly know Him as He really is (perfectly holy and perfectly good) and consequently responding to Him in unbelief. If our heart is hardened toward God, we cannot be His worshippers!

Unit 1, Cultivating the Heart of a Worshipper, is designed to address this need of our lives—the need for a right heart toward God—from the perspective of the Psalms. This is preliminary preparation that is essential to studying the Psalter as a whole. The Psalms offer great theology wrapped in delightful poetic words, yet entrance to these chambers of learning require us first to allow God to deal with us at the innermost level of our heart.

Unit Outline

Lesson 1: Accepting God’s Invitation to Pursue Wisdom and Worship (Ps 1; 95)

Lesson 2: Allowing God to Take Off Our Blinders to Sin (Ps 32)

Lesson 3: Recapturing Our Love Relationship with God (Ps 31)

Lesson 1: Accepting God's Invitation to Pursue Wisdom and Worship (Ps 1; 95)

Lesson Introduction

Several years ago I was watching an old war movie about some soldiers who were engaged in battle during World War II. One regiment of men was given a mission to destroy an enemy fortress that was heavily armed with long-range cannons. Unless they could silence the enemy's canons, thousands of soldiers would probably be killed in the battle. The mission was particularly dangerous, because the land around the fortress was littered with landmines for several miles in every direction.

At first the regiment tried an open-field assault to charge the fortress, which proved to be a disaster. As the men rushed across the fields, one man after another would trigger a mine. The movie graphically depicted men being hurled upside down by the resulting explosions, losing limbs in the process and often meeting their death. Finally, the soldiers realized that they had no hope of charging across the battlefield, because they did not know the location of the mines that lay hidden just beneath the surface of the ground. So they changed their tactic. A team of eight men was chosen to crawl across the fields, carefully locate the mines, and disarm them as they went. When they came close enough to the enemy camp, they were able to set off explosives that took out the cannons.

Life is often like a booby-trapped minefield that we are trying to maneuver across. Many dangers can easily maim and destroy us. Fortunately the God who made us knows these dangers that lurk about us and has provided help for us in the form of wisdom that can help us live life successfully and experience His blessings.

The Psalms are part of the Old Testament wisdom literature, and by studying them we can gain powerful insights for living life skillfully. The Psalms also presume that the wise man will cultivate a relationship with God Himself, learning to worship Him and drawing near to receive His grace for life.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: An Introduction to the Hebrew Psalter

- The Psalms as a Collection of Theological Poems and Songs

- How the Psalms Are Organized

- Authorship and Dating of the Psalms

Topic 2: An Invitation to Pursue the Path of Wisdom (Ps 1)

- Introduction to Psalm 1

- The Life That Is Blessed (vv 1-3)

- The Folly of Rejecting God's Offer of Wisdom (vv 4-6)

- Reflecting on the Message of Psalm 1

Topic 3: The Importance of Worship for Our Spiritual Growth (Ps 95)

- Introduction to Psalm 95

- The Invitation to Worship God (vv 1-7a)

- The Danger of Hardening Our Hearts (vv 7b-11)

- Reflecting on the Message of Psalm 95

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Understand who wrote the psalms, when they were written, and how they came to be compiled in a single collection for use in the temple worship.
- Understand how Psalm 1 serves as an introduction to the Psalter as a whole, inviting us to pursue a life of wisdom based on God's Word, which leads to true happiness in life.
- Realize the importance of worship in relation to your spiritual growth as a result of reflection on Psalm 95.

Preparing for the Lesson

Tom Blanchard and Kate Kutlow had both come to Bible college to learn more about God and His Word. One of their requirements was to take a course on some book of the Old Testament. That particular semester, a course on the book of Psalms was being offered, and they both signed up. Tom made the remark to Kate as they walked in the door that he really did not know very much about the Psalms, though like most people he was familiar with a few, especially Psalm 23.

As Professor Perkins began his introduction, he really caught their attention when he said, "This could be the most important course you will ever take in your college career. Some of you know about God, but you have not yet come to know Him intimately. You have sat through worship services time after time, but that does not mean you really know how to worship God. You cannot worship a God so alive and active in human affairs, if you have not first cultivated a relationship with Him. And if you have not cultivated a relationship with Him, it is probably because you have not realized how desperately you need Him in all you do in life!"

With that, the wise old professor began to explain what they would be covering in Lesson 1. They would begin by introducing the Hebrew Psalter as a collection of Old Testament poems and hymns, most of which were sung in communal worship. They would also be learning some important introductory matters like who wrote the Psalms, when they were written, and how the book was composed. Then they would take a look at Psalm 1 and consider the two approaches to life—one wise and one foolish—and the benefits of pursuing the life of wisdom. This, after all, was why the Psalms were written. Finally, the class would consider Psalm 95, for it is in that particular psalm that one realizes the importance of pursuing true heart worship of the living God and the alternative of a hardened heart against Him.

Kate leaned over and whispered to Tom, "Now this is a class that I'm sure I am going to like. I know I need this. I feel that my heart has been growing cold against God for a long time, and I don't want to go through life that way."

Topic 1: An Introduction to the Hebrew Psalter

Perhaps you previously thought the Psalms were just a random collection of poems—often dealing with the psalmist's struggle to get God's attention, frequently making some declaration of who God is, and occasionally calling us to worship and praise Him—but really having very little message otherwise or deep theological significance. Yet in the Psalms we find some of the deepest theology of the Bible and are challenged more profoundly than anywhere else to enter into a deep relationship with God. Let's get started with some orientation to basic things that all of us need to know about the Psalter and how it is composed.



Assignment

- Read “Introduction to the Psalms.”

Introduction to the Psalms

I. Titles Used for the Collection of Psalms

A. The English Title—Psalms

The title “Psalms” is a transliteration of the Greek word *psalmoi*, which is the title given to the collection of psalms by the Greek manuscript, Codex Vaticanus (a Greek translation of the Old Testament). The term actually means “a twanging of bow strings or harp strings” (Euripedes, *Ion*, 176). Hence the term reflects that these were originally songs meant to be sung to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument (they were not meant simply to be read). The Hebrew term *mizmôr*, usually taken to mean “a (religious) song accompanied by stringed instrument(s),” occurs some fifty-seven times in the titles to individual psalms. This may provide an acceptable reason why the Greek translators chose the title “Psalms,” having taken the translation of the most common Hebrew term for a particular kind of song. The term “Psalter” is sometimes used to refer to the entire collection of psalms. (The word “Psalter” is derived from the title *Psalterion*, which was a term used by another Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Codex Alexandrinus.)

In their original setting many of these psalms were sung in the ritual observances of the Old Testament temple. The faithful Old Testament worshipper was required to gather three times a year in Jerusalem, and he or she would have known these songs from such gatherings, as they were often sung in accompaniment with the sacrifices. This is significant: great theology plus great music equals a great impact on our total person. Other psalms would have been originally written for private use but were subsequently adapted for public worship.

B. The Hebrew Title: Tehillîm

The title in the Hebrew text is “*tehillîm*,” based on the Hebrew root *hālal* meaning “to praise.” Though the psalms vary in their theme and content, they almost always contain some note of praise (except Ps 88). Hence the term is appropriate. Even the psalms expressing lament progress beyond petition and lament to an element of praise. Basically we can say, then, that these psalms are a hymnbook of praise.

II. The Place of the Psalms in the Canon of Scripture

In most Bibles today the book of Psalms appears in the section we usually call “wisdom literature.” In the Hebrew Scriptures, however, the Old Testament books were divided into three major sections known as the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The Psalms were placed in the third section, the Writings. Furthermore in most Hebrew manuscripts the Psalms were placed first in the Writings. This probably explains why that whole section is sometimes simply called “the Psalms,” since the Psalms occur first. Observe the comment of Jesus in Luke 24:44, “Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.’”

III. The Organization and Numbering of the Psalms

A. Division into Five Books

There are 150 psalms that comprise the Psalter. A careful study also reveals that there has been some deliberate placement and arrangement of these psalms in the Psalter. (See Lesson 6 for elaboration.) Furthermore these 150 psalms are organized into five main divisions, or books:

Division of the Psalms	
Book I	Psalms 1—41
Book II	Psalms 42—72
Book III	Psalms 73—89
Book IV	Psalms 90—106
Book V	Psalms 107—150

Although the psalms were written by quite a few authors over a long period of time, we have evidence that a final editing of the collection was made sometime after the Babylonian exile (which ended in 539 BC). This final editing was made by one or more editors. Many scholars have also concluded that Psalm 1 is deliberately placed first in the Psalter as a fitting introduction to the entire collection. [More accurately, Psalm 1 and 2 serve together as a double introduction to the Psalter, while psalms 146–150 serve as a final grand doxology].

B. Numbering of the Psalms

The numbering of the psalms needs some clarification, because there are differences between the system used in English Bibles today and that found in the Hebrew Bible, as well as differences with the Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint.

Within any given psalm, the verse numbers may be different between the English Bible and the Hebrew Bible. Quite often the superscription (a note at the beginning of a psalm) is actually assigned a verse number in the Hebrew Bible since it was regarded as part of the inspired biblical text, whereas it has no number in our English Bibles. Thus, what may be verse 1 in an English Bible may actually be verse 2 in the Hebrew Bible. It is important to know this when studying commentaries, as some authors will refer to the Hebrew verse numbering.

When it comes to the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), the number of the psalm itself may be different from the Hebrew and English Bibles.

Hebrew/English	Septuagint
1—8	1—8
9—10	9 (i.e., psalms 9--10 are one psalm in the Greek)
11—113	10--112
114—115	113
116:1-9	114
116:10-19	115
117—146	116—145
147:1-11	146
147:12-20	147
148—150	148—150

The Latin Vulgate and modern Roman Catholic versions base their numbering on the Greek Septuagint, and one must keep this in mind when researching Catholic literature and articles by Catholic scholars.

IV. Headings to the Psalms and Authorship

A. Various Types of Headings

1. To indicate the author or perhaps a collection to which the psalm belongs (e.g., psalms of David)
2. To indicate the historical occasion for which the psalm was written or which it illustrates
3. To indicate the character or nature of the poem (e.g., Ps 32; 120; 145)
4. To indicate matter related to the psalm's musical setting (e.g., Ps 4; 5)
5. To indicate the liturgical use of the psalm (e.g., Ps 38; 100)

B. Headings Ascribed to Various Authors

1. David—73 psalms
2. Solomon—Psalm 72 and Psalm 127
3. Heman, the wise man—Psalm 88
4. Ethan, the wise man—Psalm 89
5. Moses—Psalm 90
6. Levitical singing clans of Asaph—twelve (Ps 50; 73-83)
7. Levitical singing clans of Korah—eleven (Ps 42-49; 84-85; 87)
8. Anonymous—49 psalms (many of these are probably Davidic; note, for example, Ps 2 and compare Acts 4:25).

C. The Question of Davidic Authorship

The superscriptions of many of the psalms have the name David, but there is debate whether this means David was the author of the psalm or that the psalm stems from a collection ascribed to his name (perhaps dedicated to him or inspired by him as king). In the Hebrew text the name “David” is prefixed with a preposition known as “lamed.” This preposition could be translated “by, for, to (or dedicated to), of, concerning, or associated with.” Many conservative scholars prefer to regard this as a “lamed of authorship,” implying that David actually authored the psalm himself. Critical scholars (who do not accept the inspiration of the Bible) reject this notion, which allows them to date many of the psalms very late. Some (e.g., Pfeiffer) would even date many of these psalms in the Maccabean period of the second century BC.

While we cannot prove that every psalm prefaced with “lamed” on David's name means that David actually authored the psalm himself, there is good reason to believe that this is the case. Consider the following:

1. 2 Samuel 23:1—David is called “Israel's sweet singer of songs.” The historical books attribute poetry to David (cf. 2 Sam 1:17-27; 23:1-7).
2. Scripture testifies to David being a skillful musician (1 Sam 16:16-18) and a composer of songs (Amos 6:5). Also, Scripture attests that David was a singer of songs and the primary organizer of the musical guilds for the sanctuary (2 Sam 6:5; 1 Chr 15:3-28; 16:4-43; 23:1-5, 25; see also 1 Chr 13:8).
3. Psalm 18 explicitly denotes Davidic authorship. Other psalms are specifically attributed to

incidents in David's life (e.g., Ps 7 and Ps 51).

4. David testified in 2 Samuel 23:2 that "the LORD's spirit spoke through me," which strongly suggests that he authored Scripture.
5. In one of the Qumran manuscripts found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (11QPsa Dav. Comp.), it is said that David composed 3,600 psalms plus many other songs.
6. New Testament writers (both Jesus and His apostles) built arguments on superscriptions implying Davidic authorship (Mk 12:35-37; Lk 20:42; Acts 2:29-35.).
7. A tradition is preserved in the Jewish writing, *Aboth* 6:9, that David was the author of the book of Psalms.

The following chart is adapted from C. Hassell Bullock (*Encountering the Book of Psalms*, 26).

Author Titles in the Psalms					
	Book 1 (1-41)	Book 2 (42-72)	Book 3 (73-89)	Book 4 (90-106)	Book 5 (107-50)
Moses				Psalms 90	
David	Psalms 3-32 (taking 9 and 10 as a single psalm, 34-41)	Psalms 51-65, 68-71 (taking 70 and 71 as a single psalm)	Psalms 86	Psalms 101, 103	Psalms 108-110, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138-45
Solomon		Psalms 72			Psalms 127
Asaph		Psalms 50	Psalms 73-83		
Sons of Korah		Psalms 42-49 (taking 42 and 43 as a single psalm)	Psalms 42-49 (taking 42 and 43 as a single psalm)		
Heman			Psalms 88 (both "sons of Korah" and "Heman" are noted)		
Ethan			Psalms 89		
Anonymous	Psalms 1-2, 33 (but see Acts 4:25 in regard to Ps 2)	Psalms 66-67		Psalms 91-100, 102, 104-6	Psalms 107, 111-21, 123, 125-26, 128-30, 132, 134-37, 146-150

Other than the Davidic psalms, the two largest collections are the psalms by Asaph (Ps 50, 73-83) and the psalms by the sons of Korah (Ps 42-49 and 84-85, 87-88). Asaph was from the tribe of Levi and helped with the ministry of the tabernacle in the days of King David. According to 1 Chronicles 6:31-32, David appointed many of the Levites to help in the musical service that took place at the tabernacle:

These are the men David put in charge of music in the Lord's sanctuary, after the ark was placed there. They performed music before the sanctuary of the meeting tent until Solomon built the Lord's temple in Jerusalem. They carried out their tasks according to regulations.

Verse 39 states that Asaph, brother of Heman, participated. Further details are stated in 1 Chronicles 15:16-17.

David told the leaders of the Levites to appoint some of their relatives as musicians; they were to play various instruments, including stringed instruments and cymbals, and to sing loudly and joyfully. So the Levites appointed Heman son

of Joel; one of his relatives, Asaph son of Berechiah; one of the descendants of Merari, Ethan son of Kushaiah.

This Asaph must have written at least a few psalms, in light of 2 Chronicles 29:30. Yet some of the psalms in the Asaph collection seem to have been written by his descendants. According to Ezra 2:41, the “singers, the descendants of Asaph” who returned from the Babylonian exile in the sixth century BC numbered 128. Psalm 74 is part of the Asaph collection, but verse 7 refers to those that “set your sanctuary on fire.” This is apparently a reference to the destruction of the temple in 586 BC by the Babylonians. From this we conclude that the “Asaph collection” may include psalms written by Asaph himself, but also psalms written by his descendants who continued to be identified with him while serving in the musical ministry of the temple.

The “sons of Korah” were another priestly family group descended from Levi. Korah was the great-grandson of Levi who led a rebellion against Moses and Aaron (Num 16). Yet his descendants became important supporters of David (1 Chr 12:6). So David gave two families of the Korahites the responsibility of keeping the temple gates (1 Chr 26:1-10; 26:19). Psalm 84:10, a psalm of the sons of Korah, proclaims the honor of standing at the threshold (or entrance ways) of the house of God. Like the psalms of Asaph, we cannot be certain of the author or date of any individual psalm of the sons of Korah.

V. Dating of the Psalms

The psalms cover a wide range of dates. Psalm 90 comes from the time of Moses (*ca.* 1446 BC). Others are Davidic (*ca.* 1000 BC). Psalm 137 reflects the Babylonian exile (after 586 BC), and Psalm 126:1 stems from the return to Judah in 538 BC. Since we have no solid evidence that any of the psalms were written after this date, we can probably assume that the final editing of the Psalter took place in the post-exilic period.

The Psalms as a Collection of Theological Poems and Songs

QUESTION 1

We need to be familiar with several terms. In the following table, match the term on the left with the appropriate description on the right.

<i>Term</i>	<i>Description</i>
Psalms (from Greek <i>psalmoi</i>)	The title in the Hebrew Bible for the book of Psalms, meaning praises.
<i>Tehillîm</i>	A Hebrew term found in over fifty of the psalms that indicated a religious song sung to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument.
<i>mizmôr</i>	A term sometimes used for the entire collection of psalms.
Psalter (from Greek <i>psalterion</i>)	A term applied by the Codex Vaticanus (a translation of the Old Testament into Greek) that associated the poem with the plucking of strings on a musical instrument.

QUESTION 2

In the Hebrew Bible, the book of Psalms is located in the third major section known as “the Writings.” *True or False?*

How the Psalms Are Organized

QUESTION 3

The book of Psalms is composed of 150 individual psalms, and these are divided up into _____ smaller books or divisions. (Hint: a number)

QUESTION 4

Which of the following statements about the book of Psalms are correct? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. A final editing of the Psalter took place after the return from the Babylonian exile.
- B. The numbering of the Psalms in the Greek Septuagint translation is exactly the same as in the Hebrew Bible.
- C. Psalm 1 has been deliberately placed at the beginning of the Psalter as a fitting introduction to all the psalms.
- D. A superscription is an extra verse added at the end of a psalm with details about musical instruments to be used.

Authorship and Dating of the Psalms

The earliest psalm we know of is Psalm 90, written by Moses over 1400 years before Christ. The latest psalm that we can clearly identify is Psalm 126, which was written after the return from the Babylonian exile (i.e., after 538 BC). Hence the psalms span a period of roughly nine hundred years, and several different authors were involved in writing them. Nevertheless about half of the psalms were written by King David who reigned around 1000 BC.

Many of the psalms have a superscription at the beginning, which provides important information about the psalm. These should be regarded as part of the original text, and thus are inspired. Often the superscription indicates the author of the psalm or the name of a collection to which it belonged (e.g., a psalm of the sons of Korah). Other times the superscription may provide notes regarding the historical background that gave rise to the psalm (e.g., Ps 34 when David acted like a madman before Abimelech), or provide relevant information regarding the musical nature of the psalm. Psalm 6, for example, should be accompanied with stringed instruments, especially an eight-string lyre. Psalm 46 was to be set to “Alamoth,” though we cannot be certain today what this term indicated. (Numerous suggestions have been made. For example, the term could be translated “young women,” as though it was to be sung or played by young women; see 1 Chr 15:20.)

QUESTION 5

Many of the psalms have the name David written in the superscription. There are a number of reasons why this should be interpreted to mean that David actually wrote the psalm. Of the following, which one is **not** an argument in favor of Davidic authorship?

- A. In 2 Samuel 23 David is called “the sweet psalmist of Israel.”
- B. In the Hebrew manuscripts, when David is mentioned in the superscription, this can only be interpreted as meaning that he himself authored the psalm.
- C. Passages like 1 Samuel 16 indicate that David was a skilled musician (and thus competent to have written many psalms).
- D. Both Jesus and the apostles made statements in the New Testament based on their belief in Davidic authorship.

Topic 2: An Invitation to Pursue the Path of Wisdom (Ps 1)

Psalm 1 stands unique at the beginning of the Psalter. It is unique in that it is neither a song of praise nor a prayer (plea for help). Rather, it is a brief but straightforward wisdom teaching in which two ways of approaching life are contrasted—one of which a person must choose to pursue. One is the path that leads to God's blessing and results in successful living, while the other is like a treacherous path that ultimately leads one over a cliff.

Introduction to Psalm 1

Biblical scholars have concluded that Psalm 1 has been deliberately placed at the beginning of the Psalter, because it is meant to serve as an introduction to the entire book. (We shall see in later studies that Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 actually function together as a double introduction.) As one studies the Psalms, he cannot help but notice the frequent struggles and moments of desperation the psalmist must contend with. Out of these, he cried out to the Lord for deliverance, and eventually praised God for His faithfulness to intervene and deliver him. Psalm 1, however, sets the stage for this drama, for one has no right to appeal to God for deliverance, if he has not first entered into covenant relationship with the Lord and committed himself to pursue His teaching. Hence Psalm 1 beckons those who would read the Psalms to first make a choice, either a choice to follow the Lord and His teachings (which lead to blessedness) or to follow the way of the wicked and unfaithful (which leads to ruin and ultimate destruction).

The Life That is Blessed (vv 1-3)

QUESTION 6

Let's begin our study by first trying to visualize the overall structure of this psalm. Take a few moments to read over the six verses of Psalm 1. Then see if you can place the correct labels on the following chart. (The captions in bold type should be placed at the top of the three major divisions.)

LITERARY STRUCTURE OF PSALM ONE							
The Wicked Man The Blessed Man Conclusion Excluded from the assembly of the righteous Positive: What he is careful to do Illustration: Like a tree Negative: What he avoids in life None: No chance of God's blessing Illustration: Like chaff Blessings and success in life	Major headings				Major headings		Instructions
							Major headings
	His Commitment		His Outcome		His Commitment	His Outcome	
	1	2	3a	3b,c	4a	4b	5
	Verses 1-3				Verses 4-5		Verse 6

The chart helps us visualize how the author of Psalm 1 organized his thoughts. Obviously the main intent of the psalm is to depict the contrast between two very different ways of life. In many ways, Psalm 1 is similar to the book of Proverbs. The first three verses of Psalm 1 depict the man (or woman) who is blessed of the Lord.

Verse 1-2. The word translated “blessed” is not the normal word for Old Testament blessing (that would be *bārak*). Rather, this word (*’ašrê*) denotes a person who is fortunate or happy as a result of the choice he has made. He is fortunate in that he experiences God-given security and receives a certain prosperity in life from the Lord. His choice, however, is both negative and positive. By negative, we mean that he chooses not to participate in certain things, and this is described in the remainder of verse 1.

First, he chooses not to “follow the advice of the wicked.” The advice of the wicked is to reject the ways of God and to live life independently of Him (see Job 21:7; 21:14-16). Second, he chooses not to “stand in the pathway with sinners.” This refers to those who are deliberately disobedient to God’s moral will. They enjoy sin (so they think), and they want others to join them in doing so. But they are deceived, because sin never pays off or brings lasting satisfaction. Third, he chooses not to “sit in the assembly of scoffers.” A scoffer is controlled by pride, thinking he has life all figured out and does not need any direction from God (see Prov 14:9; 21:24). He has no fear of sin and assumes there are no consequences that he will suffer.

QUESTION 7

As you read over the paragraph above and the three negative attitudes to be avoided, can you think of any examples of people like this in your own culture? Do you face any of these types in your day-to-day life? Open your Life Notebook and write down what comes to your mind. How do you deal with people like this, so that you do not join in with them?

Verse 3. This verse gives us the positive side of the man who is blessed or fortunate, that is, what he does do that is good in the eyes of God. “Instead he finds pleasure in obeying the Lord’s commands; he meditates on his commands day and night.” To meditate on something is to bring it to mind and carefully contemplate it (see Ps 77:12). In this case the psalmist not only makes it his habit to read God’s Word, but he also reflects on it in his mind. He allows the Word of God to saturate his mind, so that it sinks in deeply. Then, as he goes about his daily life, he is relating what God has said to what he is doing and encountering. This is not burdensome to him; rather he delights in God’s Word and enjoys spending time in it.

QUESTION 8

In the following chart, match the correct reference in the left column with the corresponding verse in the right column.

	Reference	Verse
Joshua 1:8	<input type="text"/>	O how I love your law! All day long I meditate on it. Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for I am always aware of them.
Hebrews 4:12	<input type="text"/>	As your words came to me I drank them in, and they filled my heart with joy and happiness because I belong to you.
Jeremiah 15:16	<input type="text"/>	This law scroll must not leave your lips! You must memorize it day and night so you can carefully obey all that is written in it. Then you will prosper and be successful.
Psalms 119:97-98	<input type="text"/>	For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

As we continue studying the Psalms, we will see that the psalmist will often employ figures of speech and mental images to help enhance his communication of important ideas. (We will learn more about figures of speech in Lesson 5.) In verse 3 we have a figure of speech known as a simile (one thing is compared to another). The man who delights in God’s Word is compared to a tree planted by streams of water. This mental image would be particularly relevant to those who lived in the dry climate of the Middle East where long seasons without rain were common.

QUESTION 9

The psalmist was using the image of a tree to convey a spiritual point. Which of the following statements accurately reflects what the psalmist was trying to convey? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Just as water is the vitality that sustains the tree, so the Word of God does for the man.
- B. The purpose of the tree is to bring forth fruit, but this is conditioned on both sufficient water and time. Likewise, for us to bear spiritual fruit, both the Word and time are needed.
- C. If you spend regular time in the Word of God, you will not grow old and wrinkled.
- D. If you want to grow delicious fruit in the Middle East, you need lots of water.

The final line of verse 3 speaks of success: “He succeeds in everything he attempts.” This verse could be easily misunderstood, because someone might think that God is making a blanket promise to make him financially rich. But this is not really the point. To correctly interpret the verse, it would be helpful to look up all the verses where this particular verb is used and see what kind of situations are in view.

QUESTION 10

Let’s do a short study of the verb translated “be successful or prosperous” (Hebrew *šālah*). Although we do not have time to look up all occurrences, look up and read the following verses: Genesis 24:21; 1 Chronicles 22:11; and Nehemiah 2:20 (read vv 17-20). Which of the following statements most accurately reflects the kind of success that the psalmist is thinking of?

- A. If we read God’s Word every day, we can expect to become financially wealthy.
- B. If we drink spiritual water, we can expect to become a strong, successful athlete.
- C. If we read books every day, we will become a good student and succeed in school.
- D. If we delight ourselves in the Word of God on a daily basis, we can expect God to faithfully oversee what we do, especially to grant us success in doing His will and accomplishing a mission that He has given us to do.

Material success is certainly possible, if that is how God has chosen to bless one of His children. Yet this should not be seen as the mark of spirituality or as the expected outcome. The apostle Paul knew both material blessing and what it was to be in need (Phil 4:11-12). More important is learning to be content with what one has.

The Folly of Rejecting God’s Offer of Wisdom (vv 4-6)

In Psalm 1:4-5 the psalmist turns to consider the wicked man by way of contrast. When the psalmist described the fortunate (or happy) man, he devoted two verses to doing so (vv 1-2). But when he described the wicked man, he simply said, “Not so with the wicked!” He does not guard his steps, nor does he see the benefit or taste the delight of abiding in God’s Word. Rather he has chosen to live life his own way, apart from God’s direction or help. He may experience worldly success, but he does not experience true and lasting success from God’s hand.

QUESTION 11

Sometimes the wicked may experience prosperity in this life, and we can wrongly conclude that following God and obeying Him are not worth the effort. Read Psalm 73. For a moment, the psalmist was envious of the wicked who prospered, and he questioned God's justice. Finally, however, he came to see things in a different light. Match the issue on the left with the correct statement on the right.

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Verse</i>
The psalmist's initial attitude toward the wicked	He began to see what the final outcome would be for the wicked, and that they were on a sure path to destruction (vv 17-20).
The psalmist's initial attitude about trying to live obediently	He was envious of the prosperity that the wicked experienced in life and that they did not seem to suffer the consequences of what they did (vv 3-5).
The psalmist's attitude toward the wicked after meditating in God's sanctuary	He felt that he had guarded his heart in vain. Living a life of obedience did not seem to be worth it, especially when he often suffered (vv 13-14).
The psalmist's final attitude about following and obeying God in life (after being in the sanctuary)	He realized that he had something worthwhile in this life—a relationship with God—and this was more desirable than anything else on earth (vv 25-28).

Verse 4. Again the psalmist employed a figure of speech and a vivid image to convey a point. He says, "Instead they are like wind-driven chaff." This was also an image that would have been easily understandable to people of the Middle East. Wheat was commonly grown in the land of the Bible and usually harvested in May or June. Then came the task of separating the valuable wheat kernel from the chaff around it. One common method was to take a large pitchfork and toss the grain into the air, allowing the wind to blow the chaff away and the wheat kernels to fall back to the ground. Since the chaff was worthless, it was blown away by the wind. It did not last, and it had no future.

QUESTION 12

The wicked (the chaff) may appear prosperous at times in life, even though they live sinful lives and scoff at God and His Word. What does this verse say about their future? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Just as harvest time eventually comes, so the wicked will eventually face God's judgment.
- B. The wind blowing the chaff indicates that the wicked will sail along easily in life.
- C. Since the wind is powerful, this image tells us that the wicked will be powerful.
- D. In the final analysis the wicked will be shown for what they really are—as worthless as chaff.

Verse 5. This verse paints a bleak future that awaits the wicked. They cannot withstand judgment. This could look at God's temporal judgment against the wicked of the land (see Ps 7:6; 76:8-9), or it may look at their eternal judgment following resurrection. Furthermore sinners cannot stand in the assembly of the godly. They are excluded and have no part with them.

Verse 6. From a human perspective, the wicked often seem to get by with their sin (and even prosper), while the righteous are often afflicted. While this illusion could cause the righteous to be discouraged and lose hope, we should keep perspective. The truth is that "the Lord guards the way of the godly, but the way of the wicked ends in destruction." God does guard the way of the righteous and looks over them, even though at times He may chastise His own. Yet He is carefully guiding their way through life and leading them ultimately to a life of resurrection in His presence. The wicked do not have this promise at all, for they are on a path leading to destruction. They have nothing to look forward to after death. Absolutely nothing!

Reflecting on the Message of Psalm 1

Psalm 1 is aptly placed at the very beginning of the Psalter, thereby encouraging us to make a choice of how we plan to proceed through life. Either we are going to follow the way of the Lord, or we are going to side with the wicked and pursue our own course in life. We cannot follow the way of the Lord apart from following His Word. That is why the blessed man meditates on His law or teachings continually. They are part of his daily sustenance. The wicked, on the other hand, scoff at the need to rely on God's Word and live by it. Both of these options in life lead to their own results, which strongly contrast with one another. One ultimately leads to disaster, but the man who acts wisely and lives by God's Word reaps the blessing of having God's hand on him. In the long run he will be fruitful and succeed in life.

QUESTION 13

Open your Life Notebook. Whether you are young or old, you should have some life ambition for yourself. If you are younger, try to write out what you hope to achieve in life, and then write down how you think Psalm 1 relates to your life ambition. If you are older (and depending at what stage in life you came to know the Lord), you might want to reflect on what you have done with your life and how you see Psalm 1 proving true in your life experience. Nearly everyone has some regrets about their life, but God's grace is greater than all our sin. Even if we have failed to heed the counsel of Psalm 1 and have suffered the consequences of our disobedience, the good news is that God in His grace can still redeem the time we have left on earth.

Topic 3: The Importance of Worship for Our Spiritual Growth (Ps 95)

Of all the activities that we do in life, what is the most important? For those of us who are Christians, the most important thing we can do is to worship the Lord. Yet the fast-paced world we live in hardly permits us the luxury of stopping everything else we are doing to simply focus on the Lord and worship Him. What we must realize, however, is that taking the time to worship the Lord not only gives glory to Him, but causes something extremely important to happen within our hearts as we do. Furthermore, there is a very direct correlation between worship and obedience. Obedience does not take place in our lives merely because we read and study the Bible; rather, obedience comes about as we worship in response to what we have read and studied in the Bible. Thus worship is where obedience takes root in our hearts!

Worship is where
obedience takes
root in our
hearts!

As we shall see in our study of Psalm 95, if we fail to truly worship God, we stand in danger of our hearts becoming hardened against God. When this happens, we lose our spiritual sensitivity to Him. Rather than becoming yielded and more surrendered to the Lord, we can actually find ourselves becoming more distant to Him. If left unchecked, this ultimately leads to failure and disaster in the Christian life.



Assignment

- Take time now to carefully read Psalm 95.

Introduction to Psalm 95

Psalm 95 is an example of what we will call a descriptive praise psalm. (We will learn more about this type of psalm in Lesson 11.) Here the psalmist is calling us to praise the Lord on account of who He is (rather than on account of something specific He has done in answer to our prayers or cries for help). The psalmist calls us to praise the Lord, and then he provides reasons why we should. This technique (limited to vv 1-7a) is developed in two cycles, each having a call to praise and a cause for praise. Observe the following chart:

PSALM 95			
1 st Cycle		2 nd Cycle	
"O come, let us . . ."	"For"	"Come, let us . . ."	"For"
Call to praise and worship (joyfully)	Cause for praise	Call to praise and worship (humbly)	Cause for praise
1-2	3-5	6	7a
Verses 1-5		Verses 6-7a	

So we see that the psalm has structure, and this reveals to us that the psalmist was very careful and deliberate in how he composed his words. The remainder of the psalm, namely, verses 7b-11, is a unique addition to this type of psalm. Furthermore the mood of the psalm shifts at verse 7b, becoming more somber. This closing to the psalm is a warning to God's people, the ones who were called to worship Him in verses 1-7a.

QUESTION 14

Psalm 95 is a psalm consisting of two major sections, the first giving us a call to worship God—the Creator of all things—and the second giving a warning to God's people. *True or False?*

The Invitation to Worship God (vv 1-7a)

This portion of the psalm is a call to praise and worship, having two cycles. (See chart above.) The first cycle is verses 1-5, and falls into two parts. Part one (vv 1-2) is a call to worship, and part two (vv 3-5) is a cause for worship.

Verses 1-2. The psalmist was not trying to say everything that could be said about worship, nor was he saying that our worship must always be like this. (There is a variety to biblical worship.) Yet these verses do teach us what God delights in and what ought to characterize our worship of Him.

QUESTION 15

Which of the following statements are true about the first call to worship in verses 1-2? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. God delights in worship that is joyful, that is, when we are finding joy in Him.
- B. God delights in worship that comes from a thankful spirit.
- C. God delights in worship that is done on a certain day of the week.
- D. God delights in worship that is expressed in joyful singing.
- E. God delights in memorized prayers that we pray repeatedly.

Verse 3-5. The psalmist gave us a reason why we should worship God with joyful enthusiasm. Notice the word “for” at the beginning of verse 3 that signals a reason. The God of the Bible (whose name is Yahweh) is a great God who is superior to all other gods. Of course in reality there are no other gods, but this is a way of saying that the Lord is superior to all the gods worshipped by other nations. Then verses 4-5 indicate why this is so, and the answer has to do with His power in creation. By creating everything that exists, He has done what no other so-called god has done.

Yahweh

The word “LORD” that appears at the beginning of Psalm 95:3 is a translation of the Hebrew word *Yahweh*. This is the personal name of God rather than a title or status. The significance of the name *Yahweh* is indicated in Exodus 3:13-15, when God revealed Himself to Moses: “I AM that I AM.” (In the Hebrew text, the word “Yahweh” is derived lexically from the verb meaning to be, which explains the play on “I AM.”) As *Yahweh*, He is the God who enters into covenant with His people, but who yet remains sovereign in all His dealings with mankind.

These two verses employ a figure of speech called a merism, in which two extremes or boundaries are mentioned with the implication that everything in between is also included. From the depths of the earth to the mountain peaks (lowest to highest), and from the sea to the dry land (the whole horizontal surface of the earth), He is its Creator. Hence He is the Creator of every single thing we see. As man examines and discovers the details of this creation, He should glorify the one God who made all this. The false teaching of evolution is thus a tactic of Satan to rob God of the glory He deserves as Creator.

QUESTION 16

What are some of the implications that arise from verses 3-5? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. These verses provide a reason why Christians should joyfully worship the Lord.
- B. God’s greatness is directly related to His work in creation, and His creation attests that He is a great God.
- C. Every aspect of the physical realm in which we live is a result of His careful planning and creation.
- D. The Bible teaches that there are other gods, and some are greater than others.

Verse 6. Beginning here, we embark on a second cycle of a call to praise and worship. As in verses 1-2 we are called to worship God, but now our worship takes on a different manner. The joyful praise that characterized the worship in verses 1-2 now gives way to a spirit of humility before God.

QUESTION 17

What words in verse 6 reflect the fact that our worship of God ought to be characterized by humility?

Verse 7. The word “for” at the beginning of the verse indicates that a reason is being given as to why our worship of God ought to be characterized by humility (parallel with the “for” in verse 3 that marked the transition from a call to worship to the reason for doing so). In giving the reason, the psalmist employs the imagery of sheep being fed in a pasture. Yet the psalmist was not concerned about physical sheep, but rather God’s own people. They are likened to sheep grazing in the pasture. Just as a shepherd cares for and provides for the needs of his sheep, so this Creator God cares for His people. As great as He is as Creator (see verse 3), the more marvelous truth is that He personally cares for those of us who are His own. God’s creation is huge, and this may tend to make us feel like we are a very minuscule part of His creation. Nevertheless He cares for His people, and as a result we can speak of Him not simply as “God” but as “our God.” We are blessed to be in a personal relationship with Him.

The imagery of sheep and shepherd is a prominent theme in Scripture. This is used to speak of those who have entered into a personal relationship with God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact Jesus Himself used this same imagery to teach important truths about those who believed in Him.

John 10:11, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

John 10:27-28, “My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish; no one will snatch them from my hand.”

For those of us who have put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are now privileged to be His sheep. He personally cares and provides for us, and the thought that the great Creator God would do this for us ought to produce in us an overwhelming sense of humility.

QUESTION 18

Open your Life Notebook. As you reflect back over the past two years of your life, are you able to discern how God has been tending to you as one of His very own sheep? Do you see His hand of blessing and His protective care? Do you recognize the ways in which He has been working in your life to make you more like Christ? Take a few moments to write down the things that come to your mind. Then describe how this makes you feel.

The Danger of Hardening Our Hearts (vv 7b-11)

Verse 7. The last line of verse 7 (beginning with the word “today”) introduces the final major section of the psalm. The tone now changes to one of somber warning. In light of Hebrews 4:7, this psalm was apparently written by David. Therefore when he said “today,” he was speaking to the people of his generation. In the following verses, however, he wrote about the earlier experiences of the Hebrews during the wilderness period in the days of Moses. The mention of Meribah and Massah in Psalm 95:8 is an allusion to what happened in Exodus 17:1-7 when the Hebrews grumbled against Moses and tested the Lord on account of the shortage of water. In His grace, the Lord had Moses strike the rock, and water gushed forth from it. Yet their attitude in this situation continued to manifest itself time and time again.

David drew on this earlier story from the nation’s history to warn the people of His generation, lest they repeat the same mistake. David wrote, “Do not be stubborn like they were at Meribah.” Literally, the Hebrew text says, “Do not harden your hearts!” This is a dangerous sin that David warned them to carefully avoid. Yet his concern was not for unbelievers, but rather for the redeemed people of God. Notice carefully what he says in verse 7c, “Today, if only you would obey him!” The pronoun “you” is very important, and the antecedent of this pronoun is seen in the earlier part of the same verse. Those whom David was warning (the “you” in 7c) are “the people of his pasture, the sheep he owns.”

They are the ones who are capable of hardening their hearts against God. The point is that the warning is for believers!

Verse 8-10. What does it mean for a person to harden his heart against God? The term “harden” (Hebrew *qāšāh*) stems from the idea of oxen under a yoke who rebelliously resist. They do not want to cooperate with the one driving them. When used in regard to God’s people, the term has in mind their stubbornness and resistance against the Lord’s wishes and leading. At Meribah and Massah, the Hebrews grumbled and complained (Ex 17). Later, at Kadesh Barnea, the people utterly rebelled and refused to go in and take the land of promise.

The word “heart” is repeated in this final section of the psalm (v 8 and again in v 10). A good Bible student knows to pay attention to the use of repetition in a passage. The repetition of the word “heart” underscores the point that God is concerned with our inner person. If we begin hardening our hearts against the LORD, we lose our sensitivity to His Holy Spirit and are more prone to disobey Him. This hardening of heart can show up in our lives in the form of grumbling and unbelief (just as it did for the Hebrews in the wilderness), and this is like a deadly cancer to our spiritual life. If the cancer is not stopped early, it continues growing and eventually takes its toll.

Verse 11. The final verse of the psalm speaks of God’s judgment on those who rebelled in the wilderness (at Kadesh Barnea; Num 14). God, in His righteous anger, said, “They will never enter into the resting place I had set aside for them.” For the ancient Hebrews of the wilderness generation, this resting place was the promised land of Canaan, the inheritance God had offered them. Their hardening of heart led to outright rebellion at Kadesh Barnea, and as a result they forfeited their inheritance of Canaan. God let that generation die off in the wilderness. The author of Hebrews (see Heb 3-4) highlights this story to warn his Christian audience of repeating a similar mistake, with the danger that they might forfeit a much greater inheritance awaiting them in God’s kingdom following Christ’s second coming. (For further study, see the BEE course *The Epistle to the Hebrews*.)

QUESTION 19

Which of the following truths are taught in Psalm 95:7c-11? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Christians today have the potential to develop a hardened heart against God.
- B. If a Christian rebels against God as a result of his hardened heart, God will be so angry with him that He will not allow him to enter heaven and rest eternally.
- C. The reason God is concerned about what happens in our hearts is that this is the place where we either respond in faith to God or we respond with unbelief.
- D. Just as hardness of heart resulted in judgment on God’s people in the past, so God’s people today should be aware that this can lead to rebellion in our lives and possibly a severe judgment from God in the future.

Reflecting on the Message of Psalm 95

Psalm 95 speaks about two very important ideas. The first half of the psalm speaks about worship, and the second half warns us against having a hardened heart. At first these may seem like two unrelated topics, but that is not the case at all. There is a very important connection between the two. If we do not want to have a hardened heart (which can result in God’s severe judgment), then we must learn to worship in the way that is depicted in verses 1-7.

Worship is where obedience takes root, and this worship must be one of joyful praise as well as humble dependence and appreciation of the God who has loved and cared for us. A Christian who learns to worship in this way is a Christian who is safe-guarding himself from a hardened heart that can eventually lead to outright rebellion.

QUESTION 20

Open your Life Notebook. If you were asked to make an honest assessment of your heart right now in relation to God, what would you say? Is there stubborn resistance against God, or is there a soft spirit of humility before Him that wants more than anything else to worship Him? Describe in your Life Notebook what you feel. As you look at your life over the past year, are there numerous times when you found yourself getting alone with God to sing to Him, pray, and worship Him in joyful adoration? When was the last time you did this? Do you sense a need for this in your life?

David loved the Lord. Listen to his heartbeat in Psalm 86:10-12:

10 For you are great and do amazing things.

You alone are God.

11 O Lord, teach me how you want me to live!

Then I will obey your commands.

Make me wholeheartedly committed to you!

12 O Lord, my God, I will give you thanks with my whole heart!

I will honor your name continually!

Lesson 1 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Of the following terms and definitions, which one is **not** correct?

- A. The term Psalter (from Greek *psalterion*) is a term used for the person who directed the music at the Jewish temple.
- B. The term “Psalms” (from Greek *psalmoi*) is a term applied by the Codex Vaticanus (a translation of the Old Testament into Greek) that associated the poem with the plucking of strings on a musical instrument.
- C. The term *mizmôr* is a Hebrew term found in over fifty of the psalms that indicated a religious song sung to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument.
- D. The term *Tehillîm* is the title in the Hebrew Bible for the book of Psalms, meaning praises.

QUESTION 2

Which of the following statements about the book of Psalms is **not** correct?

- A. A final editing of the Psalter took place after the return from the Babylonian exile.
- B. The numbering of the Psalms in the Greek Septuagint translation is exactly the same as in the Hebrew Bible.
- C. Psalm 1 has been deliberately placed at the beginning of the Psalter as a fitting introduction to all the psalms.
- D. A superscription is a note at the beginning of a Psalm.

QUESTION 3

Although the earliest known psalm (Ps 90) was written by Moses, the majority of the psalms were written by David who reigned as king about 1000 BC. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Which of the following is a correct statement in regard to Psalm 1?

- A. There is no particular reason why Psalm 1 was placed at the beginning of the Psalter.
- B. Psalm 1 is the earliest known psalm, having been written by Moses.
- C. Psalm 1 is a lament psalm, in which the psalmist bemoans God’s judgment on the wicked.
- D. Psalm 1 calls the reader to make a choice, either to follow the Lord and His teachings (which lead to blessedness) or to follow the way of the wicked and unfaithful (which leads to ruin and ultimate destruction).

QUESTION 5

In Psalm 1, what is the advice given by the wicked?

- A. To realize that life is short and one should seek as much happiness as possible.
- B. To discern that evil is present in this world, and therefore one should seek God’s wisdom.
- C. To reject the ways of God and to live life independently of Him.
- D. To delay making any spiritual commitment while one is still young and able to enjoy life.

QUESTION 6

The blessed man in Psalm 1 is likened to a tree planted by streams of water, because his life will bring forth fruit when given sufficient nourishment (the Word) and time. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

Psalm 1 paints a bleak picture of the future that awaits the wicked by comparing them to chaff, the worthless part of the head of wheat. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

In the literary structure of Psalm 95, the psalmist gives a cause to praise and worship followed by a call for praise. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

A study of Psalm 95 shows that if we fail to truly worship God, we stand in danger of our hearts becoming hardened against God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

Which of the following is **not** taught in Psalm 95:7c-11?

- A. Christians today have the potential to develop a hardened heart against God.
- B. If a Christian rebels against God as a result of his hardened heart, God will be so angry with him that He will not allow him to enter heaven to rest eternally.
- C. The reason that God is concerned about what happens in our hearts is that this is the place where we either respond in faith to God or we respond with unbelief.
- D. Just as hardness of heart resulted in judgment on God's people in the past, so God's people today should be aware that this can lead to rebellion in our lives and possibly a severe judgment from God in the future.

Lesson 1 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1

Term	Description
Psalms (from Greek <i>psalmoi</i>)	A term applied by the Codex Vaticanus (a translation of the Old Testament into Greek) that associated the poem with the plucking of strings on a musical instrument.
<i>Tehillîm</i> <i>mizmôr</i>	The title in the Hebrew Bible for the book of Psalms, meaning praises. A Hebrew term found in over fifty of the psalms that indicated a religious song sung to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument.
Psalter (from Greek <i>psalterion</i>)	A term sometimes used for the entire collection of psalms.

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3: Your answer should be one of the following:

5, Five

QUESTION 4

- A. A final editing of the Psalter took place after the return from the Babylonian exile.
- C. Psalm 1 has been deliberately placed at the beginning of the Psalter as a fitting introduction to all the psalms.

QUESTION 5

- B. In the Hebrew manuscripts, when David is mentioned in the superscription, this can only be interpreted as meaning that he himself authored the psalm. [B is not a proof of Davidic authorship. Although the Hebrew text (with the preposition “*l*” before David’s name) can be interpreted as meaning that David was the author, it is possible to interpret it in other ways. For example, it could be interpreted “for David” (that is, a collection of psalms written in his memory or in his honor).]

QUESTION 6

LITERARY STRUCTURE OF PSALM ONE							
Major headings				Major headings			Instructions
The Blessed Man				The Wicked Man			Major headings
His Commitment		His Outcome		His Commitment	His Outcome		Conclusion
Negative: What he avoids in life	Positive: What he is careful to do	Illustration: Like a tree	Blessings and success in life	None: No chance of God’s blessing	Illustration: Like chaff	Excluded from the assembly of the righteous	
1	2	3a	3b,c	4a	4b	5	6
Verses 1-3				Verses 4-5			Verse 6

QUESTION 7: Your answer

QUESTION 8

Reference	Verse
Psalm 119:97-98	O how I love your law! All day long I meditate on it. Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for I am always aware of them.
Jeremiah 15:16	As your words came to me I drank them in, and they filled my heart with joy and happiness because I belong to you.
Joshua 1:8	This law scroll must not leave your lips! You must memorize it day and night so you can carefully obey all that is written in it. Then you will prosper and be successful.
Hebrews 4:12	For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

QUESTION 9

- A. Just as water is the vitality that sustains the tree, so the Word of God does for the man.
- B. The purpose of the tree is to bring forth fruit, but this is conditioned on both sufficient water and time. Likewise, for us to bear spiritual fruit, both the Word and time are needed.

QUESTION 10

- D. If we delight ourselves in the Word of God on a daily basis, we can expect God to faithfully oversee what we do, especially to grant us success in doing His will and accomplishing a mission that He has given us to do.

QUESTION 11

Issue	Verse
The psalmist's initial attitude toward the wicked	He was envious of the prosperity that the wicked experienced in life and that they did not seem to suffer the consequences of what they did (vv 3-5).
The psalmist's initial attitude about trying to live obediently	He felt that he had guarded his heart in vain. Living a life of obedience did not seem to be worth it, especially when he often suffered (vv 13-14).
The psalmist's attitude toward the wicked after meditating in God's sanctuary	He began to see what the final outcome would be for the wicked, and that they were on a sure path to destruction (vv 17-20).
The psalmist's final attitude about following and obeying God in life (after being in the sanctuary)	He realized that he had something worthwhile in this life—a relationship with God—and this was more desirable than anything else on earth (vv 25-28).

QUESTION 12

- A. Just as harvest time eventually comes, so the wicked will eventually face God's judgment.
- D. In the final analysis the wicked will be shown for what they really are—as worthless as chaff.

QUESTION 13: Your answer

QUESTION 14: True

QUESTION 15

- A. God delights in worship that is joyful, that is, when we are finding joy in Him.
- B. God delights in worship that comes from a thankful spirit.
- D. God delights in worship that is expressed in joyful singing.

QUESTION 16

- A. These verses provide a reason why Christians should joyfully worship the Lord.
- B. God's greatness is directly related to His work in creation, and His creation attests that He is a great God.
- C. Every aspect of the physical realm in which we live is a result of His careful planning and creation.

QUESTION 17: *Your answer should be similar to the following:*

Kneel, bow down, bow, kneeling, or bowing

QUESTION 18: *Your answer***QUESTION 19**

- A. Christians today have the potential to develop a hardened heart against God.
- C. The reason God is concerned about what happens in our hearts is that this is the place where we either respond in faith to God or we respond with unbelief.
- D. Just as hardness of heart resulted in judgment on God's people in the past, so God's people today should be aware that this can lead to rebellion in our lives and possibly a severe judgment from God in the future.

QUESTION 20: *Your answer*

Lesson 1 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1

- A. The term Psalter (from Greek *psalterion*) is a term used for the person who directed the music at the Jewish temple.

QUESTION 2

- B. The numbering of the Psalms in the Greek Septuagint translation is exactly the same as in the Hebrew Bible.

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4

- D. Psalm 1 calls the reader to make a choice, either to follow the Lord and His teachings (which lead to blessedness) or to follow the way of the wicked and unfaithful (which leads to ruin and ultimate destruction).

QUESTION 5

- C. To reject the ways of God and to live life independently of Him.

QUESTION 6: True

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8: False

QUESTION 9: True

QUESTION 10

- B. If a Christian rebels against God as a result of his hardened heart, God will be so angry with him that He will not allow him to enter heaven to rest eternally.

Lesson 2: Allowing God to Take Off Our Blinders to Sin (Ps 32)

Lesson Introduction

The Christian life is one of victory! Right? Well, we as Christians often sing as though it is. At the moment we place our faith in Christ alone as Savior, He changes us from being an unsaved sinner to being a saint of God. We are now His child, saved forever, and bound for an eternity in God's presence. Surely that is victory!

Yet as every Christian knows, parting with our sin does not come easily. In some areas of our lives, we may experience wonderful liberation. Yet in other areas we find sin to be worse than garden weeds. Just when we think we have the weed conquered, it pops up again. Struggling in sin, we can easily be discouraged and wonder if we will ever experience victory (even though God has a plan for our victory over sin as we learn to walk according to the Spirit—see Rom 6–8).

As we live our Christian life, we have to learn how to deal with sin. The Spirit of God is there to patiently help us, often putting His flashlight on areas of our lives that need changing. The danger, however, is when we start to play games with God, being deceitful about our sin and refusing to cooperate when He is prompting us to deal with our sin. When we do that, we become blinded to the danger that sin is doing in our lives, and we may even cause God to have to deal sternly with us. If we want to walk wisely in life and become worshippers of God (as we learned in Lesson 1), then we must allow God to take off our blinders to sin. When we do, the result is forgiveness, freedom, and deeper joy!

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: The Christian's Struggle With Sin

- Understanding the Process of Sanctification

- The Renewal Into Christ's Image

- The Role of Confession and Repentance

Topic 2: Psalm 32:1-5—God Deals With David's Unrepentant Heart

- Introduction to Psalm 32

- The Blessing of God's Forgiveness (vv 1-2)

- God's Chastisement That Brought Confession (vv 3-5)

Topic 3: Psalm 32:6-11—David Advises Others Regarding Sin

- Encouragement to Submit to God (vv 6-7)

- The Promise of Insight and Instruction (vv 8)

- The Choice: Rebellion or Trusting God (vv 9-11)

Topic 4: Reflecting on the Message of Psalm 32

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Understand how the process of sanctification works in the life of a Christian and how our response to the Word of God relates to sanctification
- Be motivated to confess and repent of any known sin in your life
- Recognize the danger of being deceitful with the Lord about your sin, namely, that by doing so you invite God's discipline upon your life

Preparing for the Lesson

Just before the next class, Tom Blanchard and Kate Kutlow met early at a nearby coffee shop. With a hot coffee latte in hand, they sat back in the comfortable lounge chairs and let the aroma of freshly brewed coffee give them a momentary respite from the rigors of school. That's when Tom opened up the conversation. "Kate," he admitted rather hesitantly, "I was not expecting this course on the book of Psalms to be so personal. The first session really grabbed my attention when I realized that God was actually inviting me to walk with Him in life, guided by wisdom from His Word and cultivating a heart of worship for Him. Of course that sounds right to me, but I have to confess there is something gnawing away inside me, a feeling that I won't be able to live up to this. I mean—well, let's face it—there are things in my life that I know are wrong, and I'm not sure I'm ready to give them up."

Kate, taking another sip of coffee to allow more time for reflection, finally responded, "Tom, I know that God loves you, and He wants the best for your life. You can trust Him." "Sure," Tom answered, and then quickly shifted subjects to describe the new cell phone he recently purchased.

Once they were in class, the professor described Lesson 2 for the students. With a gentle voice he challenged the students, "I hope you took our first lesson seriously and have decided that you want to pursue the path of wisdom and become a sincere worshipper of the Lord. However, there is something you must learn to face up to, that is, if you are really sincere about this pursuit. This has to do with sin in your life. Now don't get me wrong. I have lived for over sixty years, and I realize that none of us is perfect as long as we are in these earthly bodies. We will sin, every one of us in this room. Yet my concern is more specific than that. I want to address the issue of how we respond when the Lord is exposing our sin. The problem is that many of us know that there are some deep issues of sin in our lives, and we know that the Lord wants us to confess these to Him in true repentance and be rid of them. Yet if we knowingly try to hide our sin from the Lord or refuse to deal with it when we know He is convicting us of it, then we are headed for trouble. This is when we start living a lie, pretending to be one thing on the outside but inwardly someone different. What we must realize, however, is that the Lord will not allow us to go on like this. He will intervene, even if it means taking us through a time of pain to do so.

This, then, is the key issue we are going to look at in today's lesson. Our study focuses on Psalm 32. We will see how David acted deceitfully with the Lord by hiding his sin and refusing to confess it. This brought about God's chastisement, until the pain became so intense that David came to a point of genuine repentance and confession. To his great delight, this proved to be a moment of great happiness and emotional relief as he experienced the richness of God's forgiveness. Because he trusted God in this moment rather than continuing to run, the Lord brought him to a higher level of spiritual maturity.

Tom glanced over at Kate with an astonished look on his face. "Did he know what I was thinking when we were in the coffee shop earlier? Maybe the Lord is trying to teach me something. I better pay close attention."

Topic 1: The Christian's Struggle With Sin

In our study of Psalm 1 the psalmist presented us with a choice between two ways of life. The first was the blessed way, which is the way of the righteous. This man resists the counsel of the wicked, continually meditates on the Word of God and prospers in life.

The purpose of the psalm is to help us make the correct choice of what we should pursue in life. However, in its intentional simplicity, the psalm does not elaborate all the details and complications that attend our choice. For instance, it does not discuss the fact that even after we have come to faith in Christ and been redeemed, we still have a sinful nature within us with its propensity to sin. The Bible calls this sinful nature “the flesh,” and we will always have this until the day we die. The flesh does not want to please God. Rather, it wants to do its own thing and to sin. Yet as Christians we also have the indwelling Holy Spirit. These two, the flesh and the Holy Spirit, remain in constant conflict, and we feel the struggle within. So to pursue “the way of the righteous” does not mean that we will be free from all desire to sin. Quite the contrary! We will still feel a desire to sin, and at times we will sin. There are two important things we must learn: (1) we cannot afford to ignore sin in our lives; and (2) we must not try to hide our sin from God when He is speaking to us about it and prompting us to deal with it.

Understanding the Process of Sanctification

As a prelude to talking about how God cleanses our lives from sin, it may be helpful to review what happens at the moment of salvation when we believe in Christ and to distinguish that from God's work of sanctification in us.

Salvation from the penalty of sin occurs the moment we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Realizing that we are sinners before God and unworthy in ourselves, we turn instead to the cross on which Jesus died and realize that He—by the sheer grace of God—has already paid the penalty for every sin we will ever commit. As a result, then, of our faith in Him and His work for us on the cross, God is free to forgive us and pronounce us justified in His sight. We did nothing to deserve this, and it is not by cleaning ourselves up or promising that we will stop sinning that we receive His gift of eternal life. This is a free gift, totally based on God's grace (meaning that we did nothing to deserve it!). You may find it helpful to review the following verses:

Romans 4:5, “But to the one who does not work, but believes in the one who declares the ungodly righteous, his faith is credited as righteousness.”

Ephesians 2:8-9, “For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so that no one can boast.”

QUESTION 1

Which of the following statements are true about our salvation in Christ? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Before God can save me, I have to first get rid of all my sins.
- B. I cannot work for my salvation, because Christ did all the work there is to do when He died for all my sins on the cross.
- C. God declared me righteous, when I placed my trust in Christ as Savior.
- D. In order for me to be saved, it is first necessary for me to confess all my sins.
- E. Salvation from sin is based solely on the grace of God, meaning that I in no way deserve the gift He has given me.

The term “sanctification” refers to the work God does in the life of a believer—primarily through the ministry of the Holy Spirit—to change him and make him more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Since this is a lengthy process (not an immediate transformation), we sometimes speak of this as “progressive sanctification.”



Assignment

- Read the article by Dr. Ryrie entitled “Progressive Sanctification.”

Progressive Sanctification

Excerpts from Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 442-43

I. The Concept of Sanctification

The word *sanctify* basically means to set apart. It has the same root as the words saint and *holy*. For the Christian, sanctification includes three aspects. The first is called positional or definitive sanctification, which relates to the position every believer enjoys by virtue of being set apart as a member of God’s family through faith in Christ.

The second aspect of sanctification concerns the present experiential or progressive work of continuing to be set apart during the whole of our Christian lives. Every command and exhortation to holy living concerns progressive sanctification (1 Pet 1:16).

The third aspect is usually called ultimate sanctification, which we will attain in heaven when we shall be completely and eternally set apart to our God (Eph 5:26–27; Jude 24–25).

II. The Agents in Sanctification

In the process of progressive sanctification several agents are involved. Our Lord prayed to the Father that He would sanctify us through the truth (Jn 17:17 and 1 Thess 5:23). Thus the Bible becomes an indispensable foundation for our sanctification. How else could we know for sure what pleases a holy God except through His Word? Christ’s death (to which He sanctified or set Himself apart) serves as the basis for our being able to progress in sanctification (Jn 17:19; Rom 6:1-13). However, the Holy Spirit is the prominent agent in the outworking of our progressive sanctification. It is by the Spirit that we put to death the deeds of the body (Rom 8:13). The Spirit ignites love in our hearts (Rom 5:5). By the Spirit we are changed from glory to glory to become more and more like Christ (2 Cor 3:18). And it is the fruit of the Spirit that produces in us Christlikeness, which is the goal of sanctification (Gal 5:22-23).

Yet the believer must faithfully discharge his or her responsibilities in sanctification. When we present ourselves as slaves to righteousness, sanctification results (Rom 6:19; see also Rom 6:13; 2 Cor 7:1; 1 Pet 2:11). We must obey the commands and exhortations of the Christian life in order to progress in holiness.

To withhold or withdraw areas of our lives from God’s desired sanctification for us will result in our being controlled by the flesh rather than by the Spirit. This will result in the believer’s being carnal in those unyielded or rebellious areas (1 Cor 3:1-5). Carnality exhibits the characteristics of the unsaved life because of being controlled by the flesh (Gal 5:16-21). Thus yieldedness, Spirit filling, and the sanctifying process are involved in setting us apart more and more to the image of Christ.

QUESTION 2

After reading Dr. Ryrie’s article, fill in the blank with the correct word. “To withhold or withdraw areas of our lives from God’s desired sanctification for us will result in our being controlled by the _____ rather than by the Spirit.”

The desire of every Christian ought to be for him or her to be more like Jesus Christ. Our transformation into His image (progressive sanctification) involves our part and God's part. This is explained in more detail in the course, *The Christian Life*.

The Renewal Into Christ's Image

When the first man and woman were created, they were created perfect. They were created in the image of God, and this included the attribute of being without sin. Unfortunately Adam and Eve sinned, and their disobedience resulted in the fall of man. They became sinners. This means they now had a sin nature, and this sin nature was passed on to all mankind (see Rom 5:12). (We inherit it from our parents.) When we become a Christian, we retain this sin nature that we were born with, but God begins a process by which we are renewed into the image of Christ. Primarily, this is a transformation of character inwardly.



Assignment

- Read Colossians 3:5-11.

Part of the process of sanctification is in laying aside “the old man” (or old self) with its evil practices. (The parallel passage in Eph 4:20-24 suggests that this is an ongoing affair, not an accomplished fact.)

QUESTION 3

In the following list which one of the following is **not** an evil practice of the old man?

- A. Sexual immorality
- B. Not getting physical exercise
- C. Greed
- D. Anger
- E. Slander

Colossians 3:10 indicates that “the new man” is being renewed in knowledge. It is important that we understand how this takes place.

QUESTION 4

Look up and read Ephesians 4:23 and Romans 12:1-2. Then choose the best answer from the following statements that best describes this renewal.

- A. Once we have put off the old man and have been renewed, we should expect to reach a state of sinless perfection in this life in which we have no more desire to sin.
- B. When we receive Jesus Christ into our life, we are in His image and need no more renewal.
- C. Since the renewal takes place within us, it does not matter what sins we do outwardly.
- D. True renewal involves a transformation of our minds (learning to think about things as God thinks), and for this we need to constantly read and respond in faith to the Word of God.

If you leave your Bible on the bookshelf and let it get dusty, you simply do not understand God's plan to transform you and renew you into the image of Christ. It is by reading the Bible frequently (daily!) that we are transformed.

This does not mean that reading alone will change us. However, if we are reading the Bible with a real hunger in our heart and responding in faith to what we read, then the Holy Spirit does His work of changing our thinking. He quickens our minds, that is, He causes us to look at things the way God does. Sin begins to look sinful and repulsive to us, and the things that bring God pleasure begin to appeal to us. While it is true that the process of sanctification includes much more than this (for instance, being tempted and having our faith put to the test), we must remember that our relationship with God's Word is fundamental to growing in Christlikeness.

The Role of Confession and Repentance

While we will always struggle with sin as long as we are in this body (because we have a sin nature), this does not mean that we can simply have a careless attitude about sin. If we ever say to ourselves, "it does not really matter what I do—the Lord loves me just as I am," we are deceiving ourselves and will never learn to worship God deeply this way. Note this verse from Psalm 66:18: "If I had harbored sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." So, our attitude concerning sin in our life does matter. The proper way of dealing with sin is to confess and repent of it.

To confess our sin means that we go to the Lord in prayer and acknowledge the sin we have done, and then ask his forgiveness. In doing so, we agree with God about our sin, and we look at it as He (the holy and righteous God) looks at it. This truth is reflected in 1 John 1:9: "But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness."

In one sense as Christians we already have God's forgiveness the moment we put our faith in Christ as Savior (see Col 1:14; Rev 1:5). Confession, then, is not for our eternal forgiveness (which we already possess), but for the sake of our relationship with God. By confessing our sin to God, we restore the fellowship with Him that had been broken by sin. When we practice confession, the New Testament never teaches us that we have to go to a priest in order for this to be effective. Every Christian is a "believer-priest" (see 1 Pet 2:4-5; 2:9), and therefore has direct access to God and His throne of grace (Heb 4:16). Confession should be directly to God, because it is He who has been offended by our sin.

QUESTION 5

If a Christian commits a sin but wishes to be restored to fellowship with God, he should go directly in prayer to God, acknowledge that what he has done is sin that has offended the Lord, and ask for God's forgiveness. *True or False?*

Reminder #1—Confession of sin should also be accompanied by repentance. This means that we have a true change of mind or attitude about the sin we have committed. To acknowledge one's sin to God but have no intention of changing amounts to nothing more than self-deception. This is not acceptable to God. Repentance—when used of one who is already a Christian—means to turn from one's sin because of a new outlook on it. The apostle Paul, in writing to the church at Corinth about some who were continuing in their sin, wrote, "I am afraid that when I come again, my God may humiliate me before you, and I will grieve for many of those who previously sinned and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and licentiousness that they have practiced" (2 Cor 12:21; see Rev 2:16). This repentance is prompted by a change of heart—at times even a sorrow—over what one has done (see 2 Cor 7:9).

Reminder #2—Repentance does not mean instant perfection or a promise that one will not fail again. Sometimes we are truly repentant of our sin, but because of deeply embedded habits, we have great difficulty in breaking out of our bondage. If you feel that you are in bondage to some sin and truly want to be free but are having trouble in overcoming some temptation, we recommend that you seek

the counsel of an older more mature Christian who can help you, pray for you, and provide accountability.

Reminder #3—Even though our confession is to God, there may be a need to ask the forgiveness of others, if our sin has offended someone else. Furthermore, if our sin has in some way caused damage or financial loss to others, the Bible teaches us that we should make restitution for what we have done.

QUESTION 6

In your own words describe what you believe are the benefits of confession and repentance. How does this relate to one's personal experience of God's presence? (You may wish to meditate on the following verses: Gen 3:8; Ps 21:6; 31:19-20; 51:11.) Record your thoughts in your Life Notebook.

Topic 2: Psalm 32:1-5—God Deals With David's Unrepentant Heart

The Bible says that David was a man after God's own heart, yet even such a saint as David had his struggles with temptation and sin. What made David a great man was not that he was sinless, but that he was so desperate for God's fellowship and closeness that he could not stand to be distant from God for very long. David learned that when he sinned, he needed to confess and repent of his sin. This was the path back to the blessing of communion with God and being near Him and the blessing of a life of worship and praise. That is not to say, however, that it always came easy for David. There were times when he, too, was rather reluctant to deal with his sin and seek God's forgiveness. Psalm 32 conveys the story of one such time in David's life, and how God dealt with him until he was restored to God and recovered his joy.

Introduction to Psalm 32

The superscription to Psalm 32 indicates that this is a psalm written by David as a *maskil*. Because it deals with the issues of sin and confession, Psalm 32 has often been labeled as one of the seven penitential lament psalms (see Ps 6; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143), a tradition that goes back to the early history of Christianity. The superscription does not indicate the historical background for the psalm or what particular sin may have given rise to this psalm. Some scholars feel that the probable background for the psalm is 2 Samuel 11, David's sin with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah. Although we cannot be certain of this, it is possible that this psalm is a companion to Psalm 51. If so, then Psalm 51 shows us David's prayer for pardon, and Psalm 32 stresses God's forgiveness and the lesson that David learned from this.

The psalm is not arranged in what we would consider chronological order. Verses 1-2 open the psalm by applauding the blessing of forgiveness. Yet this is really how David came to feel *after* his experience with the Lord. Before he came to this realization, he was being deceitful before the Lord, hiding his sin as it were. Consequently, the Lord had to discipline David, which proved to be quite painful. In the midst of this David came to realize the folly of his ways, and he turned to confess his sin to the Lord. As a result of all this, he learned a great lesson. Having experienced his renewed joy in the Lord, he was even able to instruct others among God's people from what he learned. Thus the psalm can be analyzed in three major sections:

- The Blessing of God's Forgiveness (vv 1-2)
- God's Chastisement That Brought Confession (vv 3-5)

- David's Advice for Others Regarding Sin (vv 6-11)

The Blessing of God's Forgiveness (vv 1-2)

Verse 1-2. David began the psalm by talking about how wonderful it is to experience God's forgiveness and be restored to fellowship with God. He wrote,

How blessed is the one whose rebellious acts are forgiven, whose sin is pardoned!
How blessed is the one whose wrongdoing the Lord does not punish.

Note: The last line of this verse is better translated, "How blessed is the one whose wrongdoing the LORD does not charge against him." There is no word for "punish" in the original text.

All sin is ultimately disobedience to God, and David used three different words to speak of his disobedience: rebellious act, sin, and wrongdoing. (All three words are also used in Ps 51:1-2.) This does not mean that he committed three different types of sin. Rather, each word helps to depict his sin from a slightly different angle. The first (Hebrew *peša'*) speaks of the rebellious attitude that lies behind his sin. The second, translated "sin" (Hebrew *ḥāṭ'āh*), has the idea of missing the mark or falling short, that is, not living up to God's standard of righteousness. The third word, translated "wrongdoing" (Hebrew *āvōn*), has the idea of twisting or distorting something. When David sinned, he distorted what God had intended for his life.

QUESTION 7

Match the following words for sin from Psalm 32:1-2 with the implication each one conveys:

<i>Word for "sin" used</i>	<i>Implication Involved</i>
Rebellious act	Done with an attitude of rebellion against God
Sin	Failing to live up to God's standard
Wrongdoing	Distorting what God has intended

These three lines from Psalm 32:1-2a are quoted by the apostle Paul in Romans 4:7-8. Even though Paul's concern was for the justification of an ungodly person through faith in Christ, he quoted Psalm 32 because it speaks of the blessedness of God's forgiveness. Furthermore, there is a relationship between the truth taught in Psalm 32:1-2 and what had been revealed earlier in Genesis 15:6 (both of which are quoted in Rom 4). Both passages use the same verb *ḥāšab*, which means to reckon, charge, or credit to one's account. In the Genesis passage, God credits to Abraham's account righteousness as a result of his faith. In the Psalm 32 passage, we see the flip side of the coin: God does not credit or reckon iniquity to the guilty one. So, God provides a double-blessing. One who is a guilty sinner gains righteousness by faith, while at the same time his iniquity is not charged against him.

Finally, we should note that the word "blessed" in Psalm 32:1-2 (Hebrew *'ašrē*) means to be happy or fortunate. (This is a different word than *bārak*, which focuses on what God graciously does for or gives to someone.) The word "blessed" in Psalm 32:1-2 emphasizes how fortunate the man is who has come to experience afresh God's forgiveness of his sin. He is happy or fortunate, because the burden of his sin has been lifted, and now he can experience the freedom and joy of being restored to God.

The final line of Psalm 32:2 mentions how blessed it is for there to be no deceit in one's spirit. The word translated "deceit" in this verse is crucial to understanding the problem addressed by this psalm. As the remainder of the psalm will clarify, before David came to experience the blessedness of God's forgiveness, for a time he was deceitful with God about his sin.

QUESTION 8

The word translated “deceit” in Psalm 32:2b (Hebrew *remîyāh*) is also used in the last line of Micah 6:12. This line in Micah could be literally translated, “and their tongue is (full of) deceit in their mouth.” Look up Micah 6:12, and study the line immediately preceding the one just quoted. This preceding line expresses a parallel idea and helps us understand the idea of deceit. Which of the following expresses this parallel idea?

- A. To speak lies
- B. To look at another with anger
- C. To desire to steal from
- D. To judge another wrongly

What we learn from observing these parallel lines in Micah is that there is a close proximity between having deceit in one’s spirit and speaking lies. The point is that David was not being truthful with God. That is, he was playing games with God and acting as if everything was OK, when it was not. He was living a lie by keeping silent about his sin rather than confessing and repenting of it. Verse 3 makes this clear.

God’s Chastisement That Brought Confession (vv 3-5)



Assignment

- Read Psalm 32:3-5.

Verse 3. Initially David kept silent about his sin and refused to confess it to God. We are not told why he did so, but we are told how he suffered as a result. David stated, “my whole body wasted away, while I groaned in pain all day long.” Literally, David said, “my bones became worn out.” This is a figure of speech in which the word “bones” denotes one’s whole physical structure, that is, the person himself. (We will learn more about figures of speech in Lesson 5.) Allen Ross notes, “To say that one’s bones are in agony is to say emphatically that his body is wracked with pain. This is often mentioned in the Psalms (Ps 31:10; 32:3; 38:3; 42:10; 102:3; 102:5)” (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, p 795). This could be a reflection of a psychosomatic illness, or poetic of the growing weakness of his spiritual life and stifled conscience. In either case, David was grieved inwardly and in much emotional pain.

Verse 4. There was a reason for the agonizing pain that David experienced. In Psalm 32:4 David wrote,

For day and night you tormented me;
you tried to destroy me in the intense heat of summer.

Literally the first line says, “For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me.” Here “hand” is a figure of speech for power, and this line conveys that God severely afflicted David (see 1 Sam 5:6; 5:11; Job 23:2). In the second line of verse 4, David described his experience poetically: it was like an intense summer heat had engulfed him and sapped all the vitality out of him.

Verses 3-4 prompt us to consider the subject of God’s discipline. What does this mean, and what is involved?



Assignment

- Read Hebrews 12:5-11.
- Optional: Read the excerpt of “Commentary on Hebrews 12.”

Commentary on Hebrews 12

By Dr. J. Paul Tanner

B. The Benefit of Discipline in the Quest to Endure (Heb 12:1-13)

Because the readers of the epistle to the Hebrews had experienced difficulties in their Christian pilgrimage, they were tempted to turn away from the faith. The author was concerned that a retreat in unbelief could jeopardize their future and the rewards in store for them at Christ’s return. So in Hebrews 10:36 he reminded them that they needed endurance in order to receive God’s rewards. Having considered the role of faith for Christian endurance in chapter 11, the author then turned to highlight another benefit of enduring trials. Though painful at times, the Christian who sees this as being from God and submits to it will grow in holiness.

1. The call to endurance (Heb 12:1-3)

Hebrews 12:1. The author likens the Christian pilgrimage to an endurance race. The threefold repetition of “endure” emphasizes this theme. As we run, a great cloud of witnesses watch us, as though we are running before them in a stadium. These are the Old Testament heroes of chapter 11 whose victorious lives inspire us on. Because this race is so important, any unnecessary weight and hindrance must be eliminated. In antiquity, runners in the Greco-Roman world often removed their clothing before running so that nothing would impede them. This metaphor teaches us to discard everything that might interfere with a total commitment to Jesus Christ, especially any distracting sin.

Hebrews 12:2. As inspiring as these Old Testament heroes are, the author carefully points the readers to the supreme example of persevering faith, Jesus Christ. Our eyes must stay fixed on Him in our Christian pilgrimage, for He is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. The word “pioneer” (Greek *archēgos*) was used earlier in Hebrews 2:10, and carries the idea of one who is a “leader” or who “pioneers” the way. He has blazed the trail before us, pointing us in the right way and to the right goal. The Greek word for “perfecter” (*teleiōtēs*) occurs only here, but is related to the verb *teleiōō*, “to perfect or bring to completion.” This suggests that Christ is the perfect example of enduring faith we are called to live out, and the One who “perfects” it in us.

Christians feeling shame should remember that the shame of the Cross did not deter Jesus from His mission. Also He was eventually victorious, for He has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God (a reference to Ps 110:1; see also Heb 1:3). Likewise eschatological victory and joy await the believer who endures in faith.

Hebrews 12:3. The author (with great pastoral concern) yearned that his readers not grow weary and give up—before completing their race. He urged them therefore to contemplate the opposition—by sinners that Jesus Himself had to endure. They may face hostile opposition to their faith, but so did our Lord.

2. Instruction about the positive value of discipline (Heb 12:4-11)

“Rough” experiences in the Christian life do not necessarily mean that their New Covenant commitment had been a mistake. Such experiences are a normal part of the Christian life and are actually beneficial for growth in Christlikeness.

a. Trials must be put in perspective (Heb 12:4-6)

The readers had indeed suffered for their faith (Heb 10:32-34), but their sufferings needed to be put into perspective lest they overreact or draw the wrong conclusions.

Hebrews 12:4. “Resisted to the point of bloodshed” probably speaks of martyrdom, but the author reminds them that they had not suffered to this extent (as their Lord did). Every believer is engaged in a struggle against sin, and ultimately it is this battle that is connected with our sufferings. (Some think that “sin” in this verse looks at sinful men who oppose believers, but the following context dealing with holiness suggests that personal sin is in view). None of us has fought this battle as vigorously as we should, and we need God’s intervention in our lives (in the form of discipline) to help us overcome the sin that impedes our running the race.

Hebrews 12:5-6. God’s love for His children includes not only the forgiveness of our sins, but also His efforts to free us from sin’s bondage. The author quoted Proverbs 3:11-12 (from the Septuagint [see glossary for definition]) to reinforce this point. Though discipline may sometimes reflect God’s displeasure, it is primarily a mark of sonship.

The word “disciplines” (Greek *paideia*) has the sense of child training. Proverbs 3:11-12 reminds us that troubles should be seen as a training ground, providing lessons that help us to move ahead and mature in the Christian life. Submitting to them not only leads to maturity, but (since faith and obedience are involved) to eventual reward as well.

b. Discipline is a good sign (Heb 12:7-8)

Hebrews 12:7. The word “endure” can be understood as an imperative (so NET Bible: “Endure your suffering as discipline”) or as a simple statement of fact (so NASB: “It is for discipline that you endure”). In either case, the end result is the same. There is a relationship between endurance and discipline, for in the process of enduring, we receive discipline, that is, we are trained. By giving up prematurely, we miss out on the discipline-training that God intends for us and which we so desperately need. On the other hand by enduring, we get the full benefit of the training God wants us to have.

Hebrews 12:8. Discipline should not be viewed negatively, since all true sons partake of this. The words translated “shared in” are actually not a verb but a noun in the Greek text, which could be translated “participants” (Greek *metochoi*)—“of which all have become participants.” Earlier the author used the word to speak of our participation in the heavenly calling (see Heb 1:9; 3:1). If we are to be *metochoi* with Jesus on the pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem, then we must also willingly become *metochoi* of God’s discipline that helps us successfully arrive there.

c. Appreciation of the benefits of discipline (Heb 12:9-11)

Hebrews 12:9. Earthly fathers correct us with discipline without our losing respect for them. How much more we should respect our heavenly Father and welcome His discipline. In this context the words “submit ourselves” (from the Greek verb *hypotassō*) convey the idea of voluntarily submitting oneself to what God has chosen to bring into one’s life in order to train him. This implies a right attitude toward discipline and cooperation with God’s Spirit in the process. As James 1:2-4 suggests, we need to count God-given trials with joy in light of the positive things God will accomplish in us as we endure them.

Hebrews 12:10. In the relatively short time (“a little while”) that our earthly fathers disciplined us, they did so as seemed best to them—though they were not perfect and made many mistakes. In contrast, God’s discipline is always perfectly administered, without mistakes. Furthermore our earthly fathers may have disciplined us at times with impure motives or wrong attitudes (e.g., uncontrolled anger). Yet our heavenly Father always acts with the purest of motives, doing what is for our benefit. This benefits us because ultimately it is designed that

we may share his holiness. Though holiness is one of the greatest possessions in life, it does not come easy. Money certainly cannot buy holiness. This comes only as we endure God's discipline and subject ourselves to Him, seeking to learn what He wants to teach us.

Hebrews 12:11. The author acknowledged that God's discipline seems at the time to be more painful than joyful. Yet by cooperating with God, we are trained by it and experience the resulting benefits. The word "trained" is from the Greek verb *gymnazō*, from which we get the word "gymnasium," a place of training. Like any athlete who has learned that the pain of grueling workouts eventually pays off, so God's sons must focus on the long-term benefit rather than the immediate pain. This benefit is not larger biceps, but the fruit of peace and righteousness. This righteousness conforms us to be more like the Lord Jesus, who loves righteousness and will rule over His kingdom with a scepter of righteousness (Heb 1:8-9).

3. The call to render mutual help and encouragement (Heb 12:12-13)

The word "therefore" signals an inference from the preceding discussion. Since God's discipline is good for all, we should be concerned for one another's successful participation in it. These two verses look at the mutual care and concern that New Covenant believers should give one another (see Heb 3:13; 10:24-25). The temptation to give up under discipline can be offset by helping others (especially those who are weak and struggling).

Hebrews 12:12. The mention of "listless hands" and "weak knees" should be understood in light of the opening metaphor of the chapter depicting the Christian pilgrimage as an athletic race. The proper response is commitment to enduring the struggles of the race, being ready with flexed arms and strong knees. Yet some in the community of faith are already struggling and "sluggish" in their readiness (see Heb 5:11; 6:12). Those who are stronger spiritually need to strengthen these weaker members. Verse 12 is an allusion to Isaiah 35:3. In that context, Isaiah 35:3-4 offer words of encouragement in light of the coming "eschatological salvation" that follows the Lord's "day of vengeance."

Hebrews 12:13. The terms "feet," "lame" and "healed" in this verse are simply metaphorical, helping paint a word picture for the readers. Making straight paths is an allusion to Proverbs 4:26. The context of Proverbs 4:25-27 deals with single-mindedness of purpose in remaining committed to the will and way of the Lord. Likewise, we must not swerve from the track of faithfulness, if we are to finish our race well! As we do, we must remember those around us who are weaker (lame) and in danger of falling out of the race altogether (put out of joint). By our example of rightly responding to hardship and discipline and by our helping them, they might even be "healed," that is, made spiritually well again and moving on to maturity and endurance.

Discipline is what God does in the life of a believer to bring about positive change, because He loves the believer so much. Pain is involved, but God intends the end result to be for the believer's good, helping him to be more Christlike.

QUESTION 9

Which of the following are true regarding God's discipline in the life of a Christian? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. God's discipline is motivated by His love for us, not His desire to hurt us.
- B. God's discipline is His way of getting even with us for being disobedient.
- C. God's discipline is for all Christians, not just some.
- D. God's discipline is designed so that we might share in His holiness.
- E. God's discipline only occurs when He is extremely angry at us.
- F. God's discipline is painful—not joyful—at the time we are going through it.

David was experiencing God's discipline in his life as a result of his sin. Keeping silent about it was not the right way to respond. God loved David enough to want to help him change, because sin is always destructive to one's life. Since David was not taking the initiative to do something about his sin, God applied a little pressure. Probably David sensed his estrangement from God—a distancing from His Lord—and it left him feeling lonely, guilty, and miserable. The good thing, however, is that God's hand on David prompted him to do what he would not have done on his own. Now he saw that he needed to take responsibility for his sin, confess it and repent of it. Verse 5 states what David did: he confessed his sin.

Then I confessed my sin;

I no longer covered up my wrongdoing.

I said, 'I will confess my rebellious acts to the Lord.'

And then you forgave my sins.

Verse 5. David not only confessed his sin; he also admitted that he had been covering up his wrongdoing. Why do we cover up our wrongdoing? Do we think that if we just keep silent and give it some time that the whole problem will disappear on its own? Apparently David thought so. The words "covered up" in verse 5 are the same as in verse 1. (Unfortunately the NET Bible translated verse 1 as "pardoned," thereby obscuring this observation.) Here is what we learn from this: If we try to cover up our own sin by keeping silent about it, God will force it into the open so that we deal with it. If we do the right thing in God's sight and confess it, He will cover up our sin for us, meaning that He puts it out of sight. It is forgiven, and we can continue to walk on with God, knowing that we are not in rebellion against Him.

QUESTION 10

Open your Life Notebook. Can you recall a time in your Christian life when you covered up your wrongdoing? (This means that you went for a time after sinning before you came to the Lord in humility to ask His forgiveness and be restored to Him in fellowship.) Try to describe the situation in words, and then describe the emotional experience you had as a result. What caused you to finally stop covering up and to confess your sin? Was there joy in your heart afterwards?

A parallel passage dealing with the importance of confession is Proverbs 28:13-14:

13 The one who covers his transgressions will not prosper,
but whoever confesses them and forsakes them will find mercy.

14 Blessed is the one who is always cautious [literally, *in dread of*],
but whoever hardens his heart will fall into evil.

QUESTION 11

According to this passage in Proverbs, the danger for the person who covers over his transgressions is that he will not prosper. Which one of the following statements do you think best reflects what this means?

- A. This type of person will not become wealthy, but will be poor.
- B. This type of person will not have enough food to eat, and will thus grow thin.
- C. This type of person will not have very many friends in his community.
- D. This type of person will experience God's hand against him, and even if he experiences success momentarily, in the long run he will not.

The word translated “cover” is the same one that appears in Psalm 32:5. The one who does this knows that he has done wrong (his conscience bears witness against him!), but he does not want to face up to it. His own pride works against him. Yet in keeping silent about his sin, he robs himself of the opportunity to experience God’s mercy.

Bruce Waltke remarks, “People may smash their consciences to avoid humbling themselves, but they cannot avoid the reality that God knows and will punish sin. How much better to give him glory by acknowledging this and to experience his mercy” (*The Book of Proverbs*, 418). To find mercy (Prov 28:13b) probably means that one experiences the mercy of God’s forgiveness. But this is conditioned on the fact that the guilty one first confess and forsake his sin. True confession must be accompanied by the forsaking of the sin!

If a believer persists in covering his sin (refusing to confess and forsake it), he stands in danger of developing a hardened heart against God (recall Ps 95). Proverbs 28:14 addresses this issue. The believer is blessed who is cautious, which literally means to be in dread of and so to tremble. This is a healthy fear that he has of the Lord, knowing that the Lord holds him accountable and that he will suffer consequences for his disobedience. Yet the other option is to defy the Lord by refusing to confess and forsake one’s sin. This is very dangerous, because it can result in one having a hardened heart against the Lord. This means that he is callous and insensitive to God’s Spirit. If this happens, the Lord will allow His disobedient child to fall into evil. That is, he will descend further into the realm of evil and thus bring much calamity to his own life.

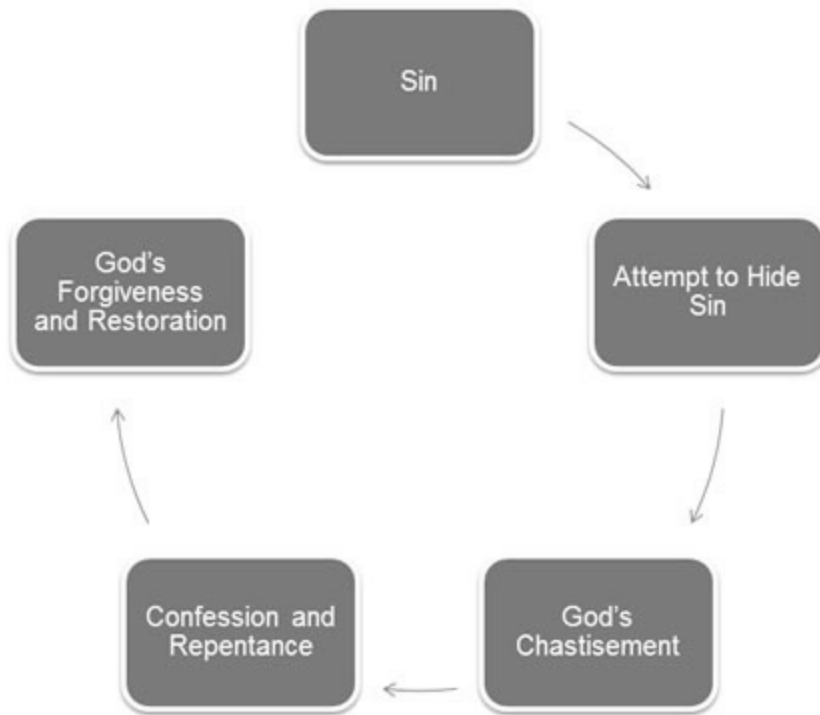
QUESTION 12

Match the following verse references for Proverbs 28:13-14 with the best interpretation or implication for each line.

<i>Verse Reference</i>	<i>Proper Interpretation or Implication of the Verse</i>
Proverbs 28:13a	There is a great danger in store for the man who continues to resist God.
Proverbs 28:13b	True success in life will not result from hiding our sin and refusing to deal with it before God.
Proverbs 28:14a	The person who wishes to experience God’s forgiveness must do more than just verbally acknowledge that he has sinned.
Proverbs 28:14b	The man who knows that the Lord will hold him accountable for his sin (and so acts) will be a man who is truly happy or fortunate.

Topic 3: Psalm 32:6-11—David Advises Others Regarding Sin

The words “therefore” or “for this reason” at the beginning of verse 6 marks a transition to the final major section of the psalm. David had gone through this experience of sinning, hiding his sin from God, experiencing God’s chastisement, confessing and repenting of his sin, and finally experiencing God’s forgiveness and restoration afresh. Now he wanted to share with others the lessons he had learned so that they might benefit from his experience.



Encouragement to Submit to God (vv 6-7)



Assignment

- Read Psalm 32:6-7.

Verse 6. Since David was king over the nation of God’s people, it was appropriate for him to address the people of the land and offer them advice. He began by addressing them as “everyone who is godly” (NASB). The word “godly” is the Hebrew word *hāsîd*, which carries the fundamental notion of loyalty or faithfulness, especially in the context of a covenant relationship. The NET Bible translation, “every one of your faithful followers,” captures the point well. David is saying that if you care to be one of God’s faithful followers, then you need to pray to Him. But in this context he was not talking about prayer in general, but specifically about a prayer of confession and repentance. He says this should be done at a moment he calls “a time that is found” (literal translation). God does not always guarantee that time will be provided for resorting to confession, meaning that God’s judgment may fall swiftly. Therefore if time is found for confessing one’s sin (before greater judgment falls on him), then one should not procrastinate but act wisely by turning to God while he can. The NET Bible translation “while there is a window of opportunity” is excellent, for we have no guarantee from God that He will continue to provide the opportunity for confession and repentance. The longer we put it off, the longer we will continue to experience the pain of God’s chastisement and the greater the risk we take that God will bring a more devastating judgment upon us.

QUESTION 13

Which of the following statements are **true** concerning Psalm 32:6a? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. David, as king, turned to address the people of the land with advice for them.
- B. The kind of prayer that David called for is God's favor on the nation as they go out to war.
- C. David was hoping that non-Christians will pray a sinner's prayer to be saved, while there is time for doing so.
- D. David was suggesting that God may take away the opportunity for confession and repentance, if one delays too long.

The remainder of verse 6 and both lines of verse 7 focus on the blessing that the repentant one can expect to receive from God. (This also implies that the unrepentant one has no right to expect these promises.) David stated, "Certainly when the surging water rises, it will not reach them." Was David concerned about a flood coming on the land and people drowning? No, rather he was employing a word-picture. The surging water is representative of something else, namely, the calamities that can potentially come on a child of God. This interpretation is supported by the next verse (7a), "You are my hiding place; you protect me from distress."



Verse 7. This is not an absolute promise that no harm will ever befall a believer who is living faithfully. Rather, David was saying that the believer who has sinned and (because of pride) refuses to humble himself and seek God's favor through confession and repentance, is putting himself in jeopardy. As long as he continues this way, He is taking a risk concerning God's umbrella of protection over his life. Prolonged refusal to confess the sin in his life amounts to rebellion against God, and God in His wisdom may allow even greater calamity to come his way (in the hope that such chastisement will wake the sinner up before it is too late and greater consequences befall him).

Furthermore, these promises of God's protection and preservation from trouble do not mean that one will escape all consequences for his sin, even when he has properly confessed and repented of it. David committed sin with Bathsheba, but later he confessed his wrongdoing. Yet he still suffered some serious consequences for what he had done. God said to him in 2 Samuel 12:10, "So now the sword will never depart from your house. For you have despised me by taking the wife of Uriah the Hittite as your own!"

In the immediate future, David suffered the death of the son born to their union. In the long run, he had to endure the agony of Absalom's rebellion. Yet his confession and repentance did bring God's protecting grace back to his life. He was allowed to continue as king (contrast Saul), and God protected his life and his realm in many ways.

In a world with so many potential calamities that could come on any of us, the wise man will certainly not want to distance himself from God's protecting grace. Far better is it to let God be our hiding place—the One we can draw close to for protection in all life's troubles (see Ps 27:5).

QUESTION 14

Which of the following statements most accurately summarizes the teaching of Psalm 32:6b-7?

- A. If a person is a Christian, he can be assured that nothing bad will happen to him.
- B. For the believer who humbly seeks to confess and repent of his sin, the Lord promises deliverance from further divine chastisement (but not necessarily from all consequences of the sin).
- C. Whenever a Christian sins, God will send a flood of calamities on his life, and the only thing he can do is to find a hiding place.
- D. True Christians will never rebel against God, so they do not have to worry about being disciplined by God

QUESTION 15

Open your Life Notebook. Can you think of a time in your life when God brought discipline upon you because of sin, and you longed for His deliverance from the pain of the ordeal? Did you humble yourself before Him, confess, and repent of your sin? Did He then, in response to your humility, deliver you from your trouble? Write a short paragraph describing God's deliverance and the joy and relief you felt after praying to Him.

The Promise of Insight and Instruction (v 8)

I will instruct and teach you about how you should live.

I will advise you as I look you in the eye.

Verse 8. The repentant child of God receives a double blessing. On the one hand, God delivers him from distress, probably meaning further divine chastisement (vv 6-7). On the other hand, he instructs him to walk in the way of the Lord so that he avoids sin and God's resulting discipline (v 8). (None of us will ever do this perfectly, but to the extent we do, we will be blessed.) God instructs and teaches His child precisely because he has a teachable spirit and is not trying to rebel against God. Bible students debate whether David or God Himself is speaking in verse 8. Although David was the speaker in verses 6-7, it seems that the speaker is now God, in light of the second line of verse 8. In either case it makes little difference. Whatever David learned from God, he passed on to those in the believing community who will listen.

The NET Bible translation, "I will advise you as I look you in the eye," tends to obscure the point of the verse. Literally the line states, "I will advise you [with] My eye upon you." This reflects God's intimate care for the humble child of God and His vigilance to look after him and bestow His favor upon him (see Ps 101:6; Jer 24: 6). The promised instruction and advice are from God, and although the text does not explicitly state how this takes place, we can make reasonable assumptions. First, God's Word is our instruction manual for life, warning us of the dangers of sin and instructing us in the right way to walk. Yet there is a second mode of instruction, and that is the lesson(s) we learn from the experience of being corrected by God (as David learned in Ps 32:1-5). When such a lesson is successfully learned (meaning that we confessed and repented of the sin), this powerfully instructs us for our future walk with God. One typically does not want to make the same mistake again!

QUESTION 16

The metaphor of God putting His eye on someone in verse 8 is meant to teach that God is watching every move they make, so that He can punish them the moment they disobey. *True or False?*

The Choice: Rebellion or Trusting God (vv 9-11)

The final three verses of the psalm are intended to prompt us to make a choice: Will we walk through life by putting our trust in God who loves us, or will we rebel against Him and thereby experience sorrows for sin?



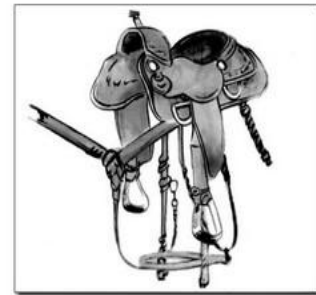
Assignment

- Read Psalm 32:9-11.

Verse 9. One thing the Bible clearly teaches us is that the living God wants a *personal relationship* with us. He does not want us to live as robots (obeying Him mechanically), nor does He want us to live by fear alone (so that we obey Him only because we know we will be punished if we do not). Yes, He desires our obedience, but He desires that this come from a heart of love for Him and with great appreciation for His truth and commandments that bless and protect our lives. To illustrate this point, the psalmist painted another word-picture of a horse or mule that obeys only because it is being forced to with special equipment (bit and bridle).



Such an animal may stubbornly resist his owner, and only the pressure of the bit and bridle causes him to comply. The child of God who stubbornly resists His leadership, not wanting to confess and repent of his sin, behaves in much the same way.



QUESTION 17

The Bible teaches us a number of reasons for obeying God. After examining the following, state which one best expresses your motivation for obedience. Write this in your Life Notebook, and then explain why you chose the one you did.

- I know that obeying God is always better, because disobedience will bring His discipline.
- In my heart I love God more than anything else, and I want to please Him in everything I do.
- My hope is for God to use me in a great way to serve Him, and therefore I need to show myself faithful, so that He will raise me up as a leader.
- I believe that obeying God will result in His hand of blessing on my life.
- I am so amazed that God chose me for Himself and has already blessed me—not because I deserve it but because of His grace—that I want to respond by obeying Him.

Verse 10. The psalmist sets before his audience two contrasting alternatives. The first is to resist God by continuing to hide one's sin from Him. The other is to put one's trust in God's way—to confess and repent of sin when corrected, and then to walk in His ways. Each alternative has its own outcome. By "evil person" (as in NET), the psalmist was probably thinking of one who is being unfaithful toward God and failing to deal with sin in his life (compare the use of this term in Ps 106:6). This is a term that can be applied to believers as well as to unbelievers. The point is that when one chooses the pathway of sin, he chooses for himself a path that leads to a painful outcome (he "suffers much pain"). By way of contrast, the one who trusts in God's way and cooperates with God when corrected will be overwhelmed by the Lord's faithfulness.

The word translated "faithfulness" in verse 10b is the Hebrew word *hesed*, which speaks of the loving actions of God that stem from His loyalty to the one in covenant relationship with Him. We might

translate this as God’s loving loyalty. Why would anyone choose painful suffering when they have the option of having God’s loving loyalty? When David chose to confess and repent of his sin, he was basically choosing the option to experience God’s loving loyalty rather than further chastisement.

QUESTION 18

What does the Hebrew word *hesed* mean in verse 10b?

- A. This is the most common Old Testament word for love.
- B. This word is synonymous with mercy, meaning that God feels for His children.
- C. This word means a covenant, meaning that God brings a believer into His covenant of grace.
- D. This word fundamentally means loyalty, and stems from the love that God has for those in covenant relationship with Him.

Verse 11. David admonished his audience to make the right decision (as he learned to do). Notice the repetition of terms for joy: “Rejoice,” “be happy,” and “Shout for joy.” These admonitions relate back to the opening two verses of the psalm, for the word translated “blessed” in verses 1-2 really means be happy, fortunate (see comments above following Question 7).

The happiness that David had in mind is the joy of knowing one’s sins are forgiven by God, and one is not hiding his sin or rebelling against Him. When we do that, then God refers to us as godly and morally upright. The point is not that we are perfect or better than other people, but that we are sincerely seeking to walk after the Lord. We listen when God speaks to us about sin in our life, and when He does, we confess and repent of it. Then we experience afresh His forgiveness, and we can rejoice because of the freedom we feel from the guilt of our sin and the bondage it so easily brings on our lives.

QUESTION 19

To help you visualize the final section of Psalm 32 more clearly, complete the following chart by matching the appropriate labels to the proper place on the chart. First, place the title for each of the three major sections on the chart. Second, place the key verse for each section on the chart.

David’s Advice for Others Regarding Sin (The Final Major Section of Psalm 32)				Instructions
<p>The Choice: Rebellion or Trusting God</p> <p>Encouragement to Submit to God</p> <p>God’s Promise of Insight and Instruction</p> <p>“the Lord’s faithfulness overwhelms the one who trusts in him”</p> <p>“your faithful followers should pray to you while there is a window of opportunity”</p> <p>“I will instruct and teach you about how you should live”</p>				
	Verses 6-7	Verse 8	Verses 9-11	

Topic 4: Reflecting on the Message of Psalm 32

If you have worked through all the previous material in Lesson 2, then you ought to realize by now that God wants to do a miraculous work of freeing us from sin and its deadly effects in our lives. At the moment we became a child of God by believing in the gospel and placing our faith in Christ to save us, God forgave us and justified us. (Justification means He pronounced us righteous in His sight.) At that moment, we were freed from the power that sin held over our lives (Rom 6).

However, we were not freed from the presence of sin in our lives. Our sin nature can no longer make us sin, but it is still present in our lives to prompt us to sin, and many of us have sinful habits in our lives that we are not willing to part with easily. Yet God is now present in our lives in the person of the Holy Spirit, and He is teaching us and causing us to grow in Christ, especially as we feed on the Word of God and respond in faith and obedience.

As we walk in this world, we inevitably sin—sometimes in small ways; sometimes in major ways. God’s will for us, however, is to confess our sin to Him and repent of it, so that we can walk close to Him and be filled with His Holy Spirit. Yet we often have a tendency to want to cling to our sin and hide it from God, so that we do not have to deal with it or give it up. We often lose sight of the fact that sin is destructive to our lives. Fortunately God loves us enough that He does not want to see us remain as we are. He wants us to be free from our sin, so that we can experience the fullness of His blessings. Therefore if we are reluctant to confess and repent of our sin, God will apply pressure to our lives. This may come in the form of feeling an estrangement from His presence, or He may bring painful circumstances into our lives to get our attention. We speak of this as God’s discipline. He does it with a motive of love (for our good and that we might share in His holiness), but for us it is painful. It is a good thing that He does this, because some of us might otherwise never change.

For a moment David hid his sin from God, thinking perhaps that God would just overlook it. God applied some painful pressure to David’s life—it drained his vitality!—and as a result David yielded to God, confessed his sin, and was restored. The good news is that he then felt blessed. God’s forgiveness had a healing effect in his life, and the joy of the Lord returned to him. David had allowed God to take off his blinders to sin!

QUESTION 20

Open your Life Notebook. Now that you have completed your study of Psalm 32, what has been the most beneficial thing you have learned from this study? What insight or new understanding stands out more than anything else for you?

Notes for Lesson 2

Maskil

The superscription to Psalm 32 indicates that this psalm is a *maskîl*. This Hebrew word is from the root *śākal*, meaning to be prudent, or wise. This might suggest that a *maskîl* is a didactic poem which causes consideration or gives insight. On the other hand, the word *maskîl* is used in Psalm 47:7 with the meaning a skillful psalm, which could imply that it is to be artistic. Perhaps we could say that this is intended as a contemplative poem with elements of the other qualities (giving insight and being artistic). The word *maskîl* appears in the title of a number of the psalms (see Ps 42; 44; 45; 52-55; 74; 78; 88; 89; 142).

Lesson 2 Self Check

QUESTION 1

At what point does God declare us righteous in His sight?

- A. At the moment we realize we are a sinner.
- B. At the moment we confess our sins and tell God that we want to obey His commands.
- C. At the moment we place our faith in Jesus Christ alone to save us from our sins and we receive eternal life as a free gift by the sheer grace of God.
- D. When we become mature in Christ and reach a point where we stop sinning.

QUESTION 2

Progressive _____ refers to the work that God does in the life of a believer—primarily through the ministry of the Holy Spirit—to change him and make him more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

QUESTION 3

Just as Adam's disobedience resulted in his having a sin nature, so we too obtain a sin nature at the moment that we commit our first sin. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

One of the key steps to laying aside the old man with its evil practices is to allow God to renew our body by frequent reading of His Word and responding in faith to what we have read. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

Even though every Christian receives eternal forgiveness from God at the moment of trusting Christ as Savior, what must we do to be restored to fellowship with God when we sin?

- A. We need to trust Christ as our Savior again and try to do better this time.
- B. We need to punish ourselves for what we have done, so we will learn to hate sin.
- C. We need to go to a priest and ask him to intercede on our behalf.
- D. We need to confess our sin to God (acknowledging that what we have done is sin and offensive to God), and ask Him to forgive us so that we can experience daily cleansing.

QUESTION 6

The fundamental problem in Psalm 32 was that:

- A. David did not believe that God could really forgive him.
- B. David was being deceitful, thinking he could hide his sin from God.
- C. David realized that he had lost his salvation by committing adultery with Bathsheba.
- D. David did not know what he had done wrong and felt he was innocent of sin.

QUESTION 7

Which statement is **not** true regarding God's discipline in the life of a Christian?

- A. God's discipline is motivated by His love for us, not His desire to hurt us.
- B. God's discipline is His way of getting even with us for being disobedient.
- C. God's discipline is designed so that we might share in His holiness.
- D. God's discipline is painful—not joyful—at the time we are going through it.

QUESTION 8

Here is what we learn from Psalm 32:3-5: If we try to cover up our own sin by keeping silent about it, God will force it into the open so that we deal with it. If we do the right thing in God's sight and confess it, He will cover up our sin for us, meaning that He puts it out of sight. It is forgiven, and we can move on. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

What did David mean in Psalm 32:6 when he said, "every one of your faithful followers should pray to you while there is a window of opportunity"?

- A. Non-Christians should pray a sinner's prayer, so that they can find God.
- B. Christians should always pray to God, if they want to live godly lives.
- C. If God gives a window of opportunity to Christians who have sinned, they should confess and repent of their sin before God has to bring greater judgment on them.
- D. If Christians want to be closer to God, they need to pray that God will give them times for finding Him.

QUESTION 10

What does the Hebrew word *hesed* mean in verse 10b?

- A. This is the most common Old Testament word for love.
- B. This word is synonymous with mercy, meaning that God *feels* for His children.
- C. This word means a covenant, meaning that God brings a believer into His covenant of grace.
- D. This word fundamentally means loyalty, and stems from the love that God has for those in covenant relationship with Him.

Lesson 2 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1

- B. I cannot work for my salvation, because Christ did all the work there is to do when He died for all my sins on the cross.
- C. God declared me righteous, when I placed my trust in Christ as Savior.
- E. Salvation from sin is based solely on the grace of God, meaning that I in no way deserve the gift He has given me.

QUESTION 2: Flesh

QUESTION 3

- B. Not getting physical exercise

QUESTION 4

- D. True renewal involves a transformation of our minds (learning to think about things as God thinks), and for this we need to constantly read and respond in faith to the Word of God.

QUESTION 5: True

QUESTION 6: Your answer

QUESTION 7

<i>Word for "sin" used</i>	<i>Implication Involved</i>
Rebellious act	Done with an attitude of rebellion against God
Sin	Failing to live up to God's standard
Wrongdoing	Distorting what God has intended

QUESTION 8

- A. To speak lies

QUESTION 9

- A. God's discipline is motivated by His love for us, not His desire to hurt us.
- C. God's discipline is for all Christians, not just some.
- D. God's discipline is designed so that we might share in His holiness.
- F. God's discipline is painful—not joyful—at the time we are going through it.

QUESTION 10: Your answer

QUESTION 11

- D. This type of person will experience God's hand against him, and even if he experiences success momentarily, in the long run he will not.

QUESTION 12

<i>Verse Reference</i>	<i>Proper Interpretation or Implication of the Verse</i>
Proverbs 28:13a	True success in life will not result from hiding our sin and refusing to deal with it before God.
Proverbs 28:13b	The person who wishes to experience God's forgiveness must do more than just verbally acknowledge that he has sinned.
Proverbs 28:14a	The man who knows that the Lord will hold him accountable for his sin (and so acts) will be a man who is truly happy or fortunate.
Proverbs 28:14b	There is a great danger in store for the man who continues to resist God.

QUESTION 13

- A. David, as king, turned to address the people of the land with advice for them.
- D. David was suggesting that God may take away the opportunity for confession and repentance, if one delays too long.

QUESTION 14

- B. For the believer who humbly seeks to confess and repent of his sin, the Lord promises deliverance from further divine chastisement (but not necessarily from all consequences of the sin).

QUESTION 15: *Your answer*

QUESTION 16: False [The metaphor emphasizes God's protecting grace, and is not intended to depict Him as a cosmic policeman.]

QUESTION 17: *Your answer*

QUESTION 18

D. This word fundamentally means loyalty, and stems from the love that God has for those in covenant relationship with Him.

QUESTION 19

David's Advice for Others Regarding Sin (The Final Major Section of Psalm 32)			Instructions
Encouragement to Submit to God	God's Promise of Insight and Instruction	The Choice: Rebellion or Trusting God	
"your faithful followers should pray to you while there is a window of opportunity"	"I will instruct and teach you about how you should live"	"the Lord's faithfulness overwhelms the one who trusts in him"	
Verses 6-7	Verse 8	Verses 9-11	

QUESTION 20: *Your answer*

Lesson 2 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1

- C. At the moment we place our faith in Jesus Christ alone to save us from our sins and we receive eternal life as a free gift by the sheer grace of God.

QUESTION 2: Sanctification

QUESTION 3: False

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5

- D. We need to confess our sin to God (acknowledging that what we have done is sin and offensive to God), and ask Him to forgive us so that we can experience daily cleansing.

QUESTION 6

- B. David was being deceitful, thinking he could hide his sin from God.

QUESTION 7

- B. God's discipline is His way of getting even with us for being disobedient.

QUESTION 8: True

QUESTION 9

- C. If God gives a window of opportunity to Christians who have sinned, they should confess and repent of their sin before God has to bring greater judgment on them.

QUESTION 10

- D. This word fundamentally means loyalty, and stems from the love that God has for those in covenant relationship with Him.

Lesson 3: Recapturing Our Love Relationship With God (Ps 31)

Lesson Introduction

One thing we can say about times of trial is that they bring out what we are really made of. Yet trials also serve another purpose, for they expose how we really feel about God.

Would it startle you if I suggested that one of the most crippling things to the spiritual life of far too many Christians is the fact that we are not convinced of God's goodness? Theoretically we know that God is good, but inwardly—or in some cases subconsciously—we actually doubt that. We all come with certain expectations of how we think God should be and act, and how our circumstances ought to work out. Yet our reality is often something far different from what we had expected or hoped for.

Let me uncover for a moment what is behind these doubts we sometimes have of God. I think that it is all rather intrinsically related to the fact that we all go through trials in life, and as we do so we respond in one way or another. If we respond to trials with faith and endurance, the result will be proven character and maturity. On the other hand, the very trials that were God-ordained for our lives and intended as something good for us, can easily become the very thing that make us bitter at God. When this happens, our Christian life can easily take a plunge.

This is all quite serious, because if there is some gnawing doubt in our minds about God's goodness, it will seriously undermine our relationship with Him. This relationship I speak of is not a mere formal or mechanical one, but one that was meant to be alive, thriving and most of all overflowing with love. Bluntly stated, our relationship with God is one that should be an intimate love affair. Of course we all go through ups and downs in our Christian life, what we might call normal growth pains. We will have times of trials and testing that will be somberly painful. Yet overall we ought to have a growing love relationship with God. If we don't have this, then we need to realize that we are missing something we were designed to have, and we need to do what it takes to recapture this. This lesson is designed to help you come to grips with the truth that God is good in all His dealings with you, so that your relationship with Him will be characterized by deep appreciation and love.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: Psalm 31:1-8 — Finding Shelter in God in Times of Trouble

A Cry to Be Rescued (vv 1-2)

Affirmation of Trust (vv 3-5)

Anticipation of God's Loving Loyalty (vv 6-8)

Topic 2: Psalm 31:9-13 — Sharing Our Grief With God

Depletion of Strength by Sorrows (vv 9-10)

Forsaken and Slandered by Others (vv 11-13)

Topic 3: Psalm 31:14-18 — Calling on God to Deliver Us

Renewal of Trust (vv 14-15a)

Request for God's Deliverance (vv 15b-16)

Allowing God to Shame Our Attackers (vv 17-18)

Topic 4: Psalm 31:19-24 — Rediscovering God’s Goodness and Love

The Joy of God’s Goodness (vv 19-20)

The Delight of God’s Loving Loyalty (vv 21-22)

The Encouragement for Other Believers (vv 23-24)

Topic 5: Reflecting on the Message of Psalm 31

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this less, you will be able to:

- Realize afresh that God is faithful and loyal to you even when you go through times of trial
- Recognize through David’s example that our proper response to God in times of trial is not to become bitter at God, but to rely on Him for our strength and to trust in Him for deliverance
- Understand two important ways in which we can say God is “good” as we go through trials

Preparing for the Lesson

The last leaves of the trees were falling off their branches as Tom Blanchard and Kate Kutlow walked across campus on their way to class. Winter was near, and already there was enough chill in the air to make one wish for gloves and a scarf around the neck. This was not Kate’s favorite time of the year, and Tom could sense that she seemed to be particularly austere this day. Not stopping to think if his question might make her uncomfortable, Tom blurted out, “Kate, you just don’t seem yourself lately. Can’t you handle a little cold wind and a few months of winter?” Kate’s eyes began to tear up, and Tom suddenly realized this was not the time for jokes. “No, it’s not the winter season itself,” Kate finally muttered. “I guess I’m reminded about something each year about this time that I just can’t seem to get over.” “What is it?” Tom prompted, trying to express a bit more tenderness.

After a few moments of silence, Kate worked up the courage to respond: “Eight years ago in early December, we lost my Dad to cancer. I was only eleven at the time, and I could not understand why he was so sick. After the funeral, I had to watch as my Mom tried to raise me and my two younger brothers by herself. I guess I have just never been able to accept the fact of losing my father. It just does not seem right, and I do not understand why God allowed this to happen to me. Sometimes I find it so hard to pray to a God who took my Dad when I most needed him. How could a God who is supposed to be good have allowed this? I know this is terrible to be questioning God, and I know that we are supposed to live by faith, but sometimes I just cannot help my emotions. Sometimes it is just too painful for me to even pray to God.”

About that point Tom and Kate reached the door to the classroom, and they entered just as the professor began a new session of the Psalms course. “Today,” he softly announced, “we are going to probe into one of the psalms of David that describes for us one of the more emotionally painful moments in his life. Although David was a very brave man, there were times when he hurt deeply inside. His circumstances were bitter and difficult for him, and he asked the age-old question ‘why?’ David was put in a situation where he had to come to grips as to whether God was really good or not. ‘If God is sovereign and in control of everything,’ David reasoned, ‘how is it that I have such sorrow and distress?’ The wise old professor then brought the underlying issue to the fore: the problem that David had is one that we all have to deal with, and that is the matter of God’s goodness. Because if I don’t believe that He is good in all His ways with me, I won’t be able to trust Him, and in the final

analysis I won't be able to love Him. So the big question is this: Do I or do I not believe in His goodness?"

Tom sensed that Kate's emotions were on edge. So he leaned over and whispered, "Hang in there, Kate. It sounds like the Lord already knew what we needed to hear today."

Topic 1: Psalm 31:1-8—Finding Shelter in God in Times of Trouble

When we come to Lesson 7 we will learn about classifying psalms according to their type or form. In the meantime, we will label Psalm 31 as an individual lament psalm. In this psalm David (as an individual) poured out his lament to the Lord concerning the distress that he was experiencing. He was confronted by a very powerful conspiracy against him, which even many of his friends participated in. Even though he was the king, he was slandered by his subjects, and some were even scheming to put him to death (note v 13). Out of the intense emotional pain that he had to endure, he turned to the Lord and cried out for deliverance. In the midst of this he experienced a newfound trust in the Lord and a fresh rediscovery of God's goodness.

When analyzed, Psalm 31 is seen to consist of several distinct paragraphs, each of which is built around a common motif. Verses 1-8 are basically an introduction to the psalm, in which we get a brief glimpse of David's petition and an affirmation of his trust in the Lord. Verses 9-13 record the lament that David poured out to God in which he expressed his pain and sorrow. In verses 14-18 David laid his petition before the Lord, describing exactly what he wanted God to do for him (i.e., his prayer request). Finally in verses 19-24 David, anticipating that God was not going to fail him but would answer his prayer, praised the Lord for His goodness and encouraged other believers to take courage.



Assignment

- Read all of Psalm 31 twice. If possible, try to read from two different translations.

QUESTION 1

Based on what you know from your reading so far, place the following section titles on the following chart at the top of the appropriate column.

PSALM 31

PETITION										
PRAISE AND ENCOURAGEMENT	<i>Sharing Our Grief with God</i>			<i>Calling Upon God to Deliver Us</i>		<i>Calling Upon God to Deliver Us</i>		<i>Rediscovering God's Goodness and Love</i>		
INTRODUCTION										
LAMENT	A Cry to be Rescued	An Affirmation of Trust	Anticipation of God's Loving Loyalty	Depletion of Strength in Sorrows	Forsaken and Slandered by Others	Renewal of Trust	Request for Deliverance and Shaming Attackers	The Joy of God's Goodness	The Delight of God's Loving Loyalty	Encouragement for Other Believers
	1-2	3-5	6-8	9-10	11-13	14-15a	5b-18	19-20	21-22	23-24
	Verses 1 - 8			Verses 9-13		Verse 14-18		Verse 19-24		

A Cry to Be Rescued (vv 1-2)

PSALM 31										
<i>Finding Shelter in God in Times of Trouble</i>			<i>Sharing Our Grief with God</i>			<i>Calling On God to Deliver Us</i>			<i>Rediscovering God's Goodness and Love</i>	
A Cry to be Rescued	An Affirmation of Trust	Anticipation of God's Loving Loyalty	Depletion of Strength in Sorrows	Forsaken and Slandered by Others	Renewal of Trust	Request for Deliverance and Shaming Attackers	The Joy of God's Goodness	The Delight of God's Loving Loyalty	Encouragement for Other Believers	
1-2	3-5	6-8	9-10	11-13	14-15a	15b-18	19-20	21-22	23-24	
Verses 1-8			Verses 9-13			Verses 14-18	Verses 19-24			

The introduction to Psalm 31:1-8 consists of three subparagraphs. In the first two verses, David made a brief introductory cry for help to God.

1 In You, O LORD, I have taken shelter! Never let me be humiliated!

Vindicate me by rescuing me!

2 Listen to me! Quickly deliver me!

Be my protector and refuge,

a stronghold where I can be safe!

Verses 1-2. Later in the psalm David will make a more extensive petition to God (see Ps 31:14-18), asking God what He specifically wants him to do. These verses, then, comprise a brief introductory petition, but they need to be distinguished from the petition proper, which will come later. In this

brief introductory petition David was basically saying that because he took refuge in the Lord, he wanted God to deliver him from his trial, and thus to spare him the shame his enemies were seeking to bring on him. It will also become clearer later in the psalm exactly what his trial is.

The idea of taking shelter or refuge in the Lord is very common in the psalms. This conveys the thought of finding our security and protection in the Lord. Psalm 18:30, for instance, states, “He is a shield to all who take shelter in him.” (This is a figure of speech in which the Lord is compared to a warrior’s shield.) Just as a shield serves to protect a warrior in battle, so the Lord (in an even greater way) is a protector of His people. Certainly our God is a delivering God and One in whom we can take shelter, but His deliverance is not an automatic process. We first need to turn to Him in faith. When trials come, God does not always rush to deliver us but often gives opportunity first for us to turn to Him in faith by crying out to Him. Every time we go through a trial and turn to Him for shelter, the relationship deepens, and this is what bonds us to Him.



QUESTION 2

Consider what it means for God to be our protector and refuge. Which one of the following statements do you think is *most correct* in light of verses 1-2?

- A. Because I am a Christian, I know that God will always protect me from every disease and sickness.
- B. Whenever I am persecuted for my faith, I can be confident that God will deliver me.
- C. When I am going through a time of trial, I have no right to expect God’s deliverance before I have first expressed that my trust is in Him.
- D. When I am going through a time of trial and have prayed to God for deliverance, I can expect that He will come to my rescue immediately.

In Psalm 31:1, David cried out, “Never let me be humiliated.” The word “humiliated” (Hebrew *bōš*) is a common Old Testament word that means to be ashamed or put to shame. In what sense did David plead not to be humiliated or put to shame?



In many cultures (e.g., the Arab culture of the Middle East), the concepts of honor and shame are extremely important, and shame may carry the stigma that one has violated a cultural norm. Furthermore this shame on one’s name or reputation needs to be cleansed. But in this psalm David was not pleading with God to be protected from public shame. Psalm 31:11-13 shows that his reputation has already been attacked and dishonored. David’s plea to not be humiliated, then, must be seen in light of his relationship with the Lord, a relationship built on trust and belief.

In the psalms we encounter the idea that God does not disgrace those whose trust is in Him (Ps 22:5; 25:3; 31:17; 109:28). Yet to be removed from or forgotten by God is *bōš*, shame. In these opening verses of Psalm 31, David used three verbs (“rescue,” “deliver,” “be safe”) to underscore his urgent plea for God’s intervention. By such divine intervention, then, David was not humiliated, for he obviously was vindicated by God’s favorable answer to his plea for help. He may have been humiliated by man, but not by God, and this was ultimately his consolation.

QUESTION 3

David prayed, “Never let me be humiliated.” Which one of the following statements correctly describes what he had in mind by this plea?

- A. David did not want to see his reputation tarnished before his subjects, because this would be an attack on his honor.
- B. David was more concerned about his relationship with the Lord than his honor before men, and David’s hope was that his trust in God would lead to deliverance.
- C. David was concerned that defeat in battle before his enemies would bring great humiliation on him as king.
- D. David did not want the warriors in his country to know that inwardly he was afraid of going into battle.

An Affirmation of Trust (vv 3-5)



Assignment

- Read Psalm 31:3-5.

David continued his prayer in Psalm 31:3-5, but the emphasis shifts from crying out for deliverance to expressing his trust and confidence in the Lord. He began by calling God his high ridge and stronghold. Both of these expressions are reflective of the times David spent on the run from Saul when he had to hide out in the wilderness in caves and high rocky terrain. During these times a high rock crag gave David the advantage of being able to watch for his enemies from a distance as well as having a defensible position from which to fight. David knew the advantages of such a high rocky stronghold, and he thought of God in similar terms. God was his strong defender.



Verse 3. David declared, “for the sake of your own reputation [literally, your name] you lead me and guide me.” The Hebrew word translated “guide” (Hebrew *nāhal*) does not mean divine guidance in terms of knowing and discerning the will of God. Rather, this unique word speaks of God’s concern for the helpless and how He guides them to provide for them.

The idea behind this word is of guiding someone to a watering place and encouraging them to rest there. What a beautiful picture of God’s gracious sustenance and loving care! Yet David was quick to acknowledge that this tender care from the sovereign of the universe was for the sake of God’s name or reputation. David wanted to be delivered from the evil plans of men who conspired against him, but not for his sake alone. Rather, his concern was for the sake of God’s name, that is, that God would do it in such a way as to bring honor and glory to Himself.

Though our hearts may anxiously long to be delivered speedily, we must keep in mind that ending the trial is not the only goal. In fact it is not even the most important goal. There are two more important goals that must be considered: (1) what we learn from the trials we face, and (2) how God is glorified. Let us then be patient, so that all God’s objectives will be accomplished by what we are asked to endure.

QUESTION 4

In verse 3 David was expecting God to sovereignly guide him in his decision of how best to deal with his enemies. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

Perhaps you are going through a trial right now in which you are longing for God's deliverance. Have you stopped to consider how God might be glorified in this? How could God act to resolve your trial but do it in such a way that He is glorified? Open your Life Notebook and write down the best answer you can to this question (even though you do not know for sure how God will deliver you). Begin by briefly describing your trial.

Verse 4. David referred to a net that others have laid for him. Again we have a figure of speech, for no one had laid a literal net for him. The people David referred to are his adversaries mentioned in verses 11-13. They wanted to entrap him and bring down David's rule. Yet David had faith that God would prove to be his refuge and that ultimately their plans to sabotage his reign would fail. Though his circumstances appear bleak, he cried out, "Into your hand I entrust my life" (v 5). David's faith was such that he could entrust his welfare and outcome into God's hands.

Verse 5. Interestingly these same words from Psalm 31:5 are quoted by the Lord Jesus on the cross (see Lk 23:46). Faced with the greatest trial of His earthly life in which His enemies sought to prevent His reign, Jesus' attitude was one of utter confidence in the Father to control the situation and act in such a way as to deliver Him. For Jesus, deliverance was not in the Father preventing the crucifixion but in resurrecting Him and subsequently causing Him to ascend to the Father's right hand.

QUESTION 6

What does David mean by the statement "You will free me from the net they hid for me"?

- A. While fishing on the Sea of Galilee, David became tangled in a fishing net and had to be set free.
- B. While David was king, there was a conspiracy against him by those who hated David and wanted to remove him as king, but God rescued David from their plans.
- C. While on the run from Saul, David was trapped by some of the king's soldiers who were lying in wait for him.
- D. When Saul sent David against the Philistines, hoping to have him killed, God protected David's life.

Anticipation of God's Loving Loyalty (vv 6-8)



Assignment

- Read Psalm 31:6-8.

A reading of this psalm reveals that David had not yet experienced God's deliverance. He did not make his full lament until Psalm 31:9-13 and his primary petition for God's help in Psalm 31:14-18. Yet in this paragraph (vv 6-8), he seems to speak as though God had already heard his prayer and delivered him. This type of phenomenon in the psalms is not unusual. Since David had just expressed his trust in God's care for him (vv 3-5), he sensed that God's help must be so near that he could speak

of it as almost certain. Or we can say it this way: David felt so certain of God's intervention and help that he spoke of it as though it had already happened. Hence he anticipated the praise that he would be offering the Lord once it actually occurred.

Verse 6-7. In contrast to those who regard worthless idols, David declared that he looked forward to the time when he could praise God for answering his cry for help. In verse 7 David said that he would rejoice and be glad in God's faithfulness. (The same word is rendered by the NIV as "love" and by the NASB as "lovingkindness.")

The word translated "faithfulness" needs clarification. The Hebrew word is *hesed*, which encompasses both the ideas of love and loyalty, for it describes God's loyalty to His own. (See comments in Lesson 2 on Ps 32:9-11.)

Verse 8. David knows that in this time of trial when men are undermining his rule and speaking evil of him, he can count on God's *hesed*, God's loving loyalty, to be true. David could even praise God in advance, because He knew that the Lord would act consistently with His character and not just ignore his affliction. As David meditated on God's *hesed*, his spirit was lifted. He realized that such a loving and faithful God is fully aware of the pain and distress against which he had struggled.

QUESTION 7

One of the benefits of knowing the Lord for many years is that you have the advantage of looking back over your past and seeing the many times when God's loving loyalty has been evident. Open your Life Notebook and record at least three key moments in your life when God's loving loyalty for you was manifested. Can you say with David that you rejoice in God's faithfulness?

Topic 2: Psalm 31:9-13—Sharing Our Grief With God



Assignment

- Read Psalm 31:9-13.

The fact that David is still in the midst of his trials (despite his display of trust and praise in the preceding verses) becomes very apparent upon reading verses 9-13. He is still waiting for God's rescue, and in this section of the psalm he poured out his heart to God, lamenting the pain he was feeling. Biblical scholars speak of this paragraph as the lament section proper.



Depletion of Strength in Sorrows (vv 9-10)

Verse 9. Pouring out our heart of pain to God is not unspiritual; in fact, it is a healthy thing to do. As David began his lament, he first admitted that he needed God's grace and mercy: "Have **mercy** on me" (Ps 31:9, emphasis added). The Hebrew verb *hānan* (translated "have mercy" by the NET Bible) is the Old Testament word that speaks of God's grace. In fact, the NASB translates the phrase, "Be gracious to me." Hence with these words David is saying, "Deal with me in grace, not according to what I deserve." Of course, none of us deserve God's favor or intervention on our behalf. If it were not for the grace of God, we would never receive any good from Him. Though we are so undeserving, He is exceedingly gracious!

QUESTION 8

Which of the following statements correctly reflect the idea of God being gracious to us? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. God has provided a plan of salvation that is according to grace, not works.
- B. Ultimately God will allow everyone who has ever lived to go to heaven, no matter what they believe.
- C. Even though I do not deserve to be rescued when I am in distress, God may graciously rescue me when I put my trust in Him.
- D. Because God is gracious, we know that it is always His will for someone to be healed.

In this particular instance David needed grace because he was in distress (v 9). This is a Hebrew way of saying that he was completely stressed out. Having said that, he then turned to describe his emotional pain in figurative terms: “my eyes grow dim from suffering.” More literally, the text reads, “my eye is wasted away from grief.” This of course looks at the tears he had shed over his grief. When a person cries so much that his eyes waste away or grow dim, he is obviously in a lot of emotional pain. Yet what is the cause of David’s intense emotional pain? *Verse 10*. The NET Bible translates verse 10, “my strength fails me because of my sin.” The NIV translates the same verse, “my strength fails because of my affliction.” This raises an important point: Was David’s sin or his affliction by others causing his grief? In the Hebrew language the two words are similar, and the text could be read either way—as “sin” or “affliction.” The Greek translators of this verse apparently understood the word as “affliction.”

Indeed the translation “because of my affliction” is the more probable idea for two reasons: (1) David had just mentioned “his affliction” in verse 7 (same word); and (2) the whole context of verses 9-13 reflects the fact that he was being mistreated by his adversaries. As David clarified in the remainder of verse 10, this intense emotional pain was due to his trial. This is what was depleting his strength, a thought conveyed by the figure of speech “my bones become brittle.”

QUESTION 9

In Psalm 31:10, which arguments could be used to support the translation “my strength fails because of my affliction”? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. David had spoken of his affliction earlier in verse 7 (using the same word).
- B. For someone to experience the kind of pain that David felt, the root cause would have to be sin.
- C. The original Hebrew text can only be translated “affliction.”
- D. More than one Greek translator understood the text to read “affliction.”

A lot of men have grown up being taught that it is not a manly thing to cry. A real man should be strong and brave, whereas crying is associated with weakness. This may be a popular or cultural notion, but it is not necessarily a biblical one. David was a man’s man, and yet he was not ashamed to speak about his tears. Of all the men of Israel, youthful David dared to stand up to Goliath, the Philistine bully. Although men are not as prone to tears as women (generally speaking), there is nothing wrong with a man shedding tears. It can be psychologically damaging for a man who stuffs a lot of hurts deep down inside and denies his emotions.

When was the last time you hurt so much you were brought to the point of tears? Are you hurting now? Is there something going on in your life that overwhelms you, a burden that seems too hard to bear? You can be sure you are not alone; most of us have had our fair share of days like that. Some of us handle it better than others, but we all have them. David was going through a real crisis time in his

life too. But what we should observe here is how that would affect his relationship with God. Did he become bitter at God, or did he find God to be his source of strength and his gracious deliverer?

Forsaken and Slandered by Others (vv 11-13)

Verse 11. Also David's tears did not flow just because of his enemies. Verse 11 reads, "Because of all my enemies, people disdain me; my neighbors are appalled by my suffering—those who know me are horrified by my condition; those who see me in the street run away from me." When a coup is on, the one thing a leader needs most is the support of his loyal friends. People who normally would have been among David's circle of friends were falling away, and some were even starting to avoid him. Perhaps they followed the philosophy, "Be careful with whom you are seen." How could this happen? How could friends turn against him? Apparently David's enemies were not only criticizing him, but were also misrepresenting him so badly that even some of his friends and acquaintances had begun to turn their backs on him. Some felt they should not be seen in public with David. Needless to say, this only compounded his problem and added to the intensity of his grief.

QUESTION 10

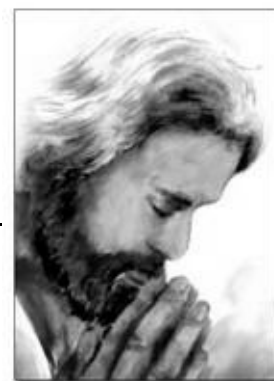
Open your Life Notebook. One of the most painful things we will have to deal with in our Christian life and ministry is the betrayal of a friend or loss of friendship. This may happen for very clear reasons (understood by all) or it may happen on account of a misunderstanding (when each person perceives things differently). If this has happened to you, write a short paragraph describing what happened, when it took place, and what the results were.

Verses 12-13. Poetically David continued describing his grief in verse 12: "I am forgotten, like a dead man no one thinks about; I am regarded as worthless, like a broken jar." What is David getting at by this figure of speech? Here he used a figure of speech called a simile, in which he likened himself to a broken jar. To understand the point, we need to see this in light of his cultural perspective. In ancient Israel baked clay pots were commonly used for water jugs and cooking vessels. In the days when plastic kitchen vessels would have been unheard of and precious metals far too expensive, baked clay pottery was useful and practical. But once broken, they were good for nothing and quickly discarded. David lamented that he was being viewed this way. Rather than honoring him as king, people were ready to discard him.

Not many people I know enjoy being made to feel that they are no longer needed. Most of us want to feel that we are a valuable part of the team (whether it is at work, in our church, or even within our family). For someone to tell you that they would be better off without you is quite deflating. But in God's family none of us is a broken jar. Rather, we have great potential for useful service. This is so because He has given His Spirit to indwell us, and He is capable of doing wonderful things through us—even when we are weak—in fact maybe even more so as we recognize just how weak we really are. Remember, you are not broken pottery so far as God is concerned. No matter what your age, physical condition or education, God is not limited by that! Rather, He specializes in using those who are weak or seemingly inadequate for His glory!

Topic 3: Psalm 31:14-18—Calling on God to Deliver Us

Certainly David did not enjoy being regarded as broken pottery and discarded by those who once esteemed him. That hurt him just as it



would you or me. But having lamented his grief in verses 9-13, David did not remain wallowing in self-pity. If all we do is tell God our heartaches, we have not really taken any step of faith. So in verses 14-18 David used this as an occasion to ask God in faith for His divine help. There had been a brief introductory petition in Psalm 31:1-2, but verses 14-18 give us the main petition. So, we can refer to this as the petition proper section.



Assignment

- Read Psalm 31:14-18.

Renewal of Trust (vv 14-15a)

Perhaps at this point it would be helpful to stop and reflect for a moment. How then could David have responded in this situation? Consider these alternatives:

1. He could have stopped at the end of his lament and said nothing more. In other words, he could have used his prayer time to just dump his problems before God and then walk away with nothing more being said.
2. He could have taken matters into his own hands and brutally punished anyone who dared to offend the king (i.e., he could be his own defense).
3. He could have blamed God for the whole situation and grown bitter toward the Lord.

Verses 14-15. Had he pursued these options and especially the latter, slowly (but surely) his spiritual life would have begun to erode. In this case, however, the Word gives us an example of a man who makes the right choice. This was a time to hold to his faith in God and call on the Lord for a divine solution. David did at least four wise things:

1. He continued to trust God with this situation (v 14 “But I trust in you”).
2. He specifically asked God for help and deliverance.
3. He recognized the sinful motives behind those who wanted to bring him down (hence, this assault against him could not be coming from God, because his critics were relying on lies, pride, and arrogance).
4. By faith he left the outcome up to God.

This last point is particularly important. David said in verse 15, “You determine my destiny” (literally, “My times are in your hand”). The moment had come when David must wait for God to do what He is going to do. No taking matters into his own hands, no fleshly retaliation, no running away from the situation. Rather our quiet submissive spirit says, “Lord, it is all up to you at this point, and whatever is to become of me in this situation now rests with you.” We can ask God specifically what we would like Him to do, but “our times are in His hand,” that is, He determines the outcome and ultimately our destiny.

QUESTION 11

Match the following verses from Psalm 31 with the wise things David did in his petition.

<i>Verse</i>	<i>Summary of What David Did</i>
V 14	Recognized the sinful motives of his adversaries
V 15a	Continued to trust God with this situation (under attack)
V 15b-16	Left the outcome up to God
V 18	Specifically asked God for help and deliverance

When we are under the lordship of Christ, He has the right to decide what we should go through, as well as if, when, and how we are to be delivered. That may sound radical, but that is what the Christian life is all about. That is part of what it means to die to self. If we are to become mature in Christ, then we must relinquish the title deed to our lives; we must die to personal ambitions and what we would want for ourselves. Rarely would we want pain for ourselves, but we must be willing to accept painful situations in which God may place us. We are to live for His sake, not ours. The apostle Paul said something very similar in Philippians 1:20-21,

My confident hope is that I will in no way be ashamed but that with complete boldness, even now as always, Christ will be exalted in my body, whether I live or die. For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain.

I have found in my own Christian life that whenever I have had to go through a valley of pain, there is almost always some good reason for having to do so. The reason may not have been apparent to me at the time, but in retrospect I can often see good in the situation. In some cases we may not even see the good until we are with the Lord. But because there is God's intended good inherent in the trial, we can praise Him even when we do not know or understand. You may be saying in your mind, "But I just cannot do that. You just do not understand how painful my situation is." And you are right: we do not just naturally want to respond this way. This is not the natural, human way to respond. But we can do it by faith, and that is the key! Can you also say, "My times are in your hand"?

QUESTION 12

Which of the following statements most accurately reflects the truth of Psalm 31:15a?

- A. God determines the time when I will be born in history.
- B. God has a right as my Lord to sovereignly take me through the experiences He knows are best for me, and I can trust Him to use this ultimately for good in shaping my life.
- C. God has already determined my destiny of where I will spend eternity (in heaven or hell).
- D. God has already determined the person whom I will marry, the one who will be my destiny.

Request for God's Deliverance (vv 15b-16)

Verses 15-16. David had used the words "rescue," "deliver" and "save" earlier in Psalm 31:1-2. Now he uses them again, but he makes his request more specific: He asked for deliverance from those who were persecuting him. These were the ones he had previously lamented in Psalms 31:11-13. Some of them were even plotting to take David's life! Notice how in verse 16 he also related his request for deliverance with God's attribute of faithfulness. This is the same word used earlier in verse 7, the Hebrew word *hesed*.

QUESTION 13

What are the differences between the petition in Psalm 31:1-2 and that in Psalms 31:14-18? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. There are no essential differences between the two.
- B. The first is very brief, while the latter is more developed.
- C. The latter petition specifically relates the request for deliverance to the problem he was facing (i.e., persecution by enemies).
- D. The first petition uses a figure of speech, but the latter one does not.
- E. Only the latter petition specifically relates the request to the character of God.

Allowing God to Shame our Attackers (vv 17-18)

Verse 17-18. To “be humiliated” (NET) or “put to shame” (NASB) should be seen in light of the very important ancient Near Eastern concepts of shame and honor. The key thing to observe here is that David did not feel compelled to retaliate against those who had brought shame on him. He did not take revenge for the disdain or reproach he had experienced (see v 11). Rather, he called on God to deal with his adversaries and he left the avenging in God’s hands. As Christians, we must remember the principle in Romans 12:19, “Do not avenge yourselves, dear friends, but give place to God’s wrath, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.”

QUESTION 14

As I go through life, it is my right to take revenge against those who insult me or hurt me. *True or False?*

Topic 4: Psalm 31:19-24—Rediscovering God’s Goodness and Love

The Bible does not tell us how or when God answered David’s prayer of petition. We can only assume that He did in light of the praise David offered in verses 19-22. Eventually God delivered David, and praise flowed from his lips.



Assignment

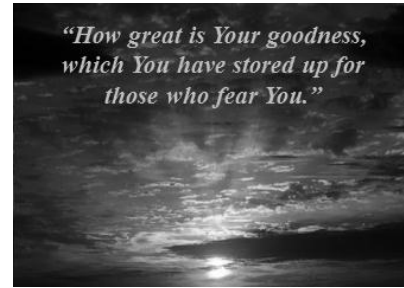
- Read Psalm 31:19-22.

The Joy of God’s Goodness (vv 19-20)

Verse 19. David would have been tempted to question God’s goodness in his time of trial. And yet we find him exclaiming, “How great is Your goodness!” (v 19, NASB). This is not a mere casual acknowledgment; it is an exclamation from the heart of a man totally convinced of this truth. Based on the Hebrew text, the translation, “How immense is your goodness!” is preferred. That is, the

supply is plentiful. It is not only marvelous; it is also abundant. God's goodness is more plentiful—more engulfing—than all the oceans put together. His supply never runs out; it is never exhausted. Hence the psalmist wrote in Psalm 34:8, "Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes shelter in him."

Because the Lord in His character is good, He pours forth His goodness. Whether it is the unexpected loss of one's job or the loss of one's own life (as in the case of John and Betty Stam, missionaries beheaded for their faith in China), God is good and bestows His goodness on us. The cross continually reminds us that God did not withhold His only Son in showing His unsurpassed love for us.



Verse 20. The Lord is good! Yes, the Lord is good. But do we really believe that? The psalmist did not proclaim God's goodness simply because God kept him from every trial, but because he had come to discover this precious truth for himself in his trials. God was good because He never forsook the psalmist in his trials, and in due time God caused good to come out of the situation. If we only say that God is good because He does what we want Him to and exactly when we want Him to do it, then we will end up with a man-centered view of God. We will conclude that God exists to serve our needs. When we have reduced God to that level, we will find ourselves buying into Satan's deception that God is not really good.

QUESTION 15

Has there ever been a time in your life since becoming a Christian when you have questioned the goodness of God? Open your Life Notebook and describe the circumstances that gave occasion to this. As you reflect back on this situation, have you been able to see how God was bringing good out of this? Record your thoughts.

The Delight of God's Loving Loyalty (vv 21-22)

Verse 21. As for David, however, he was able to pull through this low time in his life with his heart fully convinced that God was indeed good. Hence, for the third time in this psalm he exalted the *hesed* of God. "The LORD deserves praise for he demonstrated his amazing **faithfulness** to me when I was besieged by enemies" (v 21, emphasis added; see also vv 7, 16). David realized afresh how wonderful it was to experience the faithfulness or loving loyalty of God. The picture that David painted for us here by his words is that of an ancient city under siege by a foreign army. The inhabitants are trapped inside, and their food and water supplies are cut off. The enemy will wait for them to weaken and then assault the city walls to break through and crush the people. Yet before that can happen, there is a marvelous rescue by a loyal friend of the city. In the nick of time the Lord delivered the besieged David.

QUESTION 16

The Hebrew word *hesed* is translated by the NET Bible as "faithfulness," and in other translations as "lovingkindness" or "mercy." In which three verses does this word occur in Psalm 31?

Verse 22. As stated earlier one alternative for David was to have blamed God for the whole situation and to have become bitter toward Him. Although David did not stumble to that level, neither did he

go through this trial as though it were easy to do. In fact he was pushing the alarm button for a while. In verse 22 we hear David confessing, “I jumped to conclusions and said, ‘I am cut off from your presence.’” In other words there was a moment there—right in the middle of the trial—when David felt all alone. God seemed far away, and David felt that God had abandoned him.

QUESTION 17

Which one of the following statements best summarizes David’s experience as described in Psalm 31:22?

- A. After his prayer of petition in verses 14-18, David felt that he was cut off from God’s presence.
- B. This is a reflection back to an earlier moment when David initially panicked and felt God had forsaken him.
- C. David realized that he had lost his salvation and would not see God’s presence.
- D. David concluded that he needed to get out of the presence of his enemies.

Maybe you have been there too, a moment when you feel terribly cold and alone, your emotions telling you that God wants nothing more to do with you. Or worse yet, you find yourself saying, “Where are you, God, when I really needed you?” Suddenly, you are not so sure if God is really good or not. By this confession, we are reminded that David was just as human as the rest of us. God thought it wise to allow David’s faith to be put to the test. For a moment David panicked and thought God had abandoned him. But the reality was that his faint cries for help had not fallen on deaf ears. God heard and answered!

Encouragement for Other Believers (vv 23-24)

Though David’s story came to a happy conclusion, the psalm does not simply end at this point. There is a short homily that David provided for the benefit of others.



Assignment

- Read Psalm 31:23-24.

Verse 23. The initial words of this paragraph grab our attention: “Love the LORD!” That is what we are supposed to do—to be totally in love with God. Not bitter toward him, not second-guessing Him, not regretting the life we have, but rather responding to Him with love and deep appreciation.

Loving the Lord is imperative, but if we are to fully glean the message of the psalmist, we must be careful to notice the relationship of the previous section to his call for us to love the Lord.

Verses 19-22

“How great is your
goodness”
(vs 19)

Verses 23-24

“Love the LORD,
all his saints!”
(vs 23)

Verse 24. In comparing these two final sections, the psalmist's point becomes clear: if we are not convinced of His goodness to us, we will not be able to love Him as we should. But that is what He wants—for us to love Him—and therefore we must be certain of His goodness!

QUESTION 18

When David exhorted the other believers to love the LORD in Psalm 31:23, what truth does this need to be connected with in the context of this psalm?

- A. Believers should love the LORD, because Jesus died on the cross for them.
- B. Even if our enemies attack us, we can be thankful that the LORD loves us.
- C. If we want God to answer our petitions for deliverance, we first have to love Him.
- D. Our ability to love the LORD is directly related to our perception that He is good.

Topic 5: Reflecting on the Message of Psalm 31

How great it would be if all of us were totally convinced of God's goodness, and consequently very much in love with the Lord. But there may be some who are reading these pages who have grown cold in their relationship with the Lord. Perhaps you have difficulty relating to David's exhortation when he tells us, "Love the LORD." There may be various reasons for this. But possibly Satan could subtly be attempting to influence your thinking in regard to the character of God (particularly in regard to His goodness).

Perhaps you have come to feel that God has not kept His part of the relationship. Though outwardly you might not admit it, you may have difficulty affirming that God really is good. This is what it means to lose sight of the goodness of God. Satan rejoices if God's children come to this point; then he can move in to attack the character of God (and even have us believe his lie). If we buy into his lie, our spiritual life will certainly be crippled. What it all boils down to is a matter of perspective, our perspective about the character of God. The point is that our perspective can be totally wrong. We can be led to believe one thing about God's character, when in reality the very opposite is true.

Our notions about God (as sincere as they may be) can be totally wrong. You may think you have God all sized up, only to discover that you are off the mark. We do that with other people, and we can do it just as easily with God. Chuck Swindoll shares a story in his book *Grace Awakening* (p 65-66) that illustrates this very point:

I will never forget what happened to me several years ago that illustrated how wrong I could be in judging another. I was speaking at a summer Bible conference for a week. Attending the same conference was a couple I had not seen before. We met briefly the first night. Both were friendly and seemed especially glad to be there. I began to notice as the week wore on that the man fell asleep in every one of the meetings. I mean every one. Normally, that doesn't bother me... I often talk in other people's sleep! But this time, for some strange reason, it began to bug me. By Wednesday I felt feelings of irritation. As I mentioned, that has happened to me numerous times... but this guy was out within ten minutes after I started to speak. It made no difference if I spoke in the morning or evening—he slept. By the



last meeting of Friday evening (through which he slept, of course) I had become convinced it was she who wanted to be there, not her husband. I sized him up as a fella who talked one way but lived another, “probably a carnal Christian,” I mused.

She stayed after the crowd and her husband had left. She asked if she could speak with me for a few minutes. I figured she wanted to talk about how unhappy she was living with a man who didn’t have the same interest in spiritual things as she. How wrong I was. She said their being there was his idea. It had been his “final wish.” I didn’t understand. She informed me he had terminal cancer and had only weeks to live. At his request they attended the conference where I was speaking even though the medication he was taking for pain made him sleepy—something that greatly embarrassed him. “He loves the Lord,” she said, “and you are his favorite Bible teacher. He wanted to be here to meet you and to hear you, no matter what.” I was sincerely stunned. She thanked me for the week and left. I stood there, all alone, as deeply rebuked as I have ever been. I had judged my brother, and I was as wrong as I could possibly have been.

Chuck’s illustration pertains to falsely judging others, but the same principle could be true of our appraisal of God’s goodness. We could be as wrong as we possibly could be, and for spiritual renewal to take place in our lives, we need to get back to holding tightly to the goodness of God. Psalm 31 has a tremendous lesson for all Christians who have experienced difficult times of trial, and that is this: we will not come out of trials loving the Lord if we lose sight of His goodness to us.

How about you? Are you looking for spiritual renewal in your life? Don’t settle for some quick (but short-lived) emotional charge. Dig deep and take a look inside for a moment to think about your attitude toward the Lord and His character. For Him, it is a relationship, one that should involve our full appreciation of His flawless character and actions. If we turn from that, we will find ourselves running on the track of religiosity, going through the religious motions but missing the main point. That is distorted Christianity, not the real thing. The real thing is a relationship of love—you and God, in love with each other!

QUESTION 19

As you reflect back over this lesson from Psalm 31, what has been the most helpful insight you have gained? What has benefited you the most? Write down your ideas in your Life Notebook.

Lesson 3 Self Check

QUESTION 1

In Psalm 31:1, David prayed, “Never let me be humiliated” (or “ashamed,” Hebrew *bôš*). In light of the following lines where he used three different verbs (rescue, deliver, be safe) to underscore his urgent plea for God’s intervention, which one of the following statements correctly describes what David had in mind by this plea?

- A. David did not want to see his reputation tarnished before his subjects, because this would be an attack on his honor and cause him to suffer shame.
- B. David’s concern was primarily with what the Lord was going to do in response to his pleas for help, for God’s silence and withholding of deliverance would be the greatest shame to him.
- C. David was concerned that defeat in battle before his enemies would bring great humiliation upon him as king.
- D. David did not want the warriors in his country to know that inwardly he was afraid of going into battle.

QUESTION 2

In Psalm 31:3, David wrote that God would lead and *guide* him. What does the Hebrew word (Hebrew *nāhal*) translated “guide” imply?

- A. This word speaks of God’s guidance to David for knowing and discerning His will.
- B. This word speaks of God appearing to David in a vision to tell him what direction to travel.
- C. This word speaks of God’s care and concern for the helpless and how He guides them and provides for them.
- D. This word speaks of the one who acts as a guide—making a trail for others who are following behind him.

QUESTION 3

The words in verse 9, “my eyes grow dim from suffering” (more literally, “my eye is wasted away from grief”) is a poetic way of describing the tears the psalmist had shed over his grief, and thus the intense emotional pain he had suffered. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

In verse 12 David used a figure of speech to describe himself, saying that he was “like a broken jar.” What was he trying to communicate?

- A. His heart was broken, because his life no longer had any purpose.
- B. Like clay pottery that had been broken, other people viewed his life as good for nothing and therefore ready to be discarded.
- C. David was thankful that he could give his life for his country, even if it meant he would be hurt in the process.
- D. David had felt like he was trapped in a jar, but God liberated him as though breaking the jar.

QUESTION 5

Based on what David said in verse 15, “You determine my destiny” (literally, “My times are in your hand”), we can draw the principle that when we are under the lordship of Christ, He has the right to decide what we should go through, as well as if, when, and how we are to be delivered. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

Psalms 31 has a brief petition at the beginning of the psalm (vv 1-2) and a more developed petition in verses 14-18, but in both cases the psalmist asked for God's help without clearly identifying the problem he was facing. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

One of the great lessons we learn from Psalm 31 is that David did not take revenge for himself but called on God to deal with those who had brought shame on him. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

In Psalm 31:19 David exclaimed, "How great is Your goodness" (NASB). What did David mean by this in light of the context of Psalm 31?

- A. If God's children would just be obedient, God would be good to them.
- B. God was good because He never forsook the psalmist in his trials, and in due time God caused good to come out of the situation.
- C. The psalmist knew that if he had enough faith, God would be good to him, making him healthy and prosperous.
- D. God's goodness is seen in light of what He has done in creation for all mankind.

QUESTION 9

According to David's testimony in Psalm 31:19-22 there was never a moment during his trial when he started to panic and feel that God had abandoned him. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

When David exhorted the other believers to love the LORD in verse 23, what truth does this need to be connected with in the context of this psalm?

- A. Our ability to love the LORD is directly related to our perception that He is good.
- B. If we want God to answer our petitions for deliverance, we must first love Him.
- C. Even if our enemies attack us, we can be thankful that the LORD loves us.
- D. Believers should love the LORD, because Jesus died on the cross for them.

Unit 1 Project: Lessons 1-3

A. Introduction

Unit 1 began by talking about the importance of the heart. If we want to truly be a worshipper of God, we must approach him with the right heart. In this unit, we studied several important psalms related to how we cultivate a heart of a worshipper. Psalm 1 invited us to pursue the way of wisdom (a general invitation to the Psalter as a whole). Psalm 95 warned us of the danger of hardening our hearts against God. Psalm 32 alerted us to the danger of being deceitful with God by failing to repent of sin in our lives. Finally Psalm 31 gave us a fresh look at the goodness of God and His love and faithfulness to us.

B. Instructions

As a final project for Unit 1, you are to do your own study of Psalm 36. Here are some specific questions you should answer and things for you to do:

1. What do you learn from the superscription of the psalm?
2. Develop your own outline of the psalm.
3. Make a one-sentence summary for each of the main sections of this psalm.
4. Make a list of three key things you learn about God from this psalm.
5. In regard to the final section of the psalm, what application can you draw in regard to the importance of having a right heart before God?

Lesson 3 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1

PSALM 31									
INTRODUCTION			LAMENT		PETITION		PRAISE AND ENCOURAGEMENT		
<i>Sharing Our Grief with God</i>			<i>Calling Upon God to Deliver Us</i>		<i>Calling Upon God to Deliver Us</i>		<i>Rediscovering God's Goodness and Love</i>		
A Cry to be Rescued	An Affirmation of Trust	Anticipation of God's Loving Loyalty	Depletion of Strength in Sorrows	For-saken and Slandered by Others	Renewal of Trust	Request for Deliverance and Shaming Attackers	The Joy of God's Goodness	The Delight of God's Loving Loyalty	Encouragement for Other Believers
1-2	3-5	6-8	9-10	11-13	14-15a	5b-18	19-20	21-22	23-24
Verses 1 - 8			Verses 9-13		Verse 14-18		Verse 19-24		

QUESTION 2

- C. When I am going through a time of trial, I have no right to expect God's deliverance before I have first expressed that my trust is in Him.

QUESTION 3

- B. David was more concerned about his relationship with the Lord than his honor before men, and David's hope was that his trust in God would lead to deliverance.

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5: Your answer

QUESTION 6

- B. While David was king, there was a conspiracy against him by those who hated David and wanted to remove him as king, but God rescued David from their plans.

QUESTION 7: Your answer

QUESTION 8

- A. God has provided a plan of salvation that is according to grace, not works.
C. Even though I do not deserve to be rescued when I am in distress, God may graciously rescue me when I put my trust in Him.

QUESTION 9

- A. David had spoken of his affliction earlier in verse 7 (using the same word).
D. More than one Greek translator understood the text to read "affliction."

QUESTION 10: Your answer

QUESTION 11

Verse	Summary of What David Did
V 14	Continued to trust God with this situation (under attack)
V 15a	Left the outcome up to God
V 15b-16	Specifically asked God for help and deliverance
V 18	Recognized the sinful motives of his adversaries

QUESTION 12

- B. God has a right as my Lord to sovereignly take me through the experiences He knows are best for me, and I can trust Him to use this ultimately for good in shaping my life.

QUESTION 13

- B. The first is very brief, while the latter is more developed.
- C. The latter petition specifically relates the request for deliverance to the problem he was facing (i.e., persecution by enemies).

QUESTION 14: False [When I become a child of God through faith in Christ, I give up all my personal rights. I am now 'His servant,' and what matters is how my Lord wants me to respond to those who do me wrong.]

QUESTION 15: *Your answer*

QUESTION 16: *Your answer should be similar to the following:*

This unique word occurs in verses 7, 16, and 21. The repetition underscores the importance of this crucial term.

QUESTION 17

- B. This is a reflection back to an earlier moment when David initially panicked and felt God had forsaken him.

QUESTION 18

- D. Our ability to love the LORD is directly related to our perception that He is good.

QUESTION 19: *Your answer*

Lesson 3 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1

- B. David's concern was primarily with what the Lord was going to do in response to his pleas for help, for God's silence and withholding of deliverance would be the greatest shame to him.

QUESTION 2

- C. This word speaks of God's care and concern for the helpless and how He guides them and provides for them.

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4

- B. Like clay pottery that had been broken, other people viewed his life as good for nothing and therefore ready to be discarded.

QUESTION 5: True

QUESTION 6: False

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8

- B. God was good because He never forsook the psalmist in his trials, and in due time God caused good to come out of the situation.

QUESTION 9: False

QUESTION 10

- A. Our ability to love the LORD is directly related to our perception that He is good.

Unit 2: Preparing to Study the Psalms

One need not be a scholar to quickly recognize that the book we call Psalms is significantly different from all other books of the Bible. The book of Psalms is obviously different than the great narrative stories of the Old Testament, as well as being different from the carefully reasoned epistles of Paul found in the New Testament.

In Lesson 1, we learned that the book of Psalms was a collection of songs that were originally sung in the worship ceremonies at the temple. Although they were written as songs, they are very theological in what they say. So each of the psalms has a message to communicate, a message that is often emotional and quite theological, and this message is enhanced by its musical accompaniment.

Yet if we are to grow in our skills for understanding the book of Psalms and the fullness of its message, we must also recognize something about the way these psalms are composed, both internally and as a whole. Internally, the psalms are by nature Hebrew poetry, and thus we must learn how Hebrew poetry is expressed. We must also learn something about how the Psalms as a whole were composed, that is, how they were collected and organized, and what themes were given prominence and that interlace the individual psalms together.

All this requires a reorientation of our thinking and approach to the Psalms. We will need to learn something of the nature of Hebrew poetry, for instance, how lines of poetry are composed, how the author used rhyming ideas in parallel lines, and especially how figures of speech and imagery are used to enhance the communication process. If we take the time to learn the poetic nature of the Psalms, then we can better appreciate their unique nature and how the Holy Spirit communicates truth through them.

Those who penned the psalms certainly thought in poetic and artistic terms, and this is what we must understand in order to enter their world of thinking. They were masters of poetic expression! Notice how the psalmist's opening line in Psalm 45:1,

My heart is stirred by a beautiful song. I say, "I have composed this special song for the king; my tongue is as skilled as the stylus of an experienced scribe."

Unit 2: Preparing to Study the Psalms, is designed to address how the psalms were written and composed. Without this sensitivity, we will miss much of what this book is intended to communicate to us. Yet by being better informed of these matters, we will be far better prepared to read and understand what the Holy Spirit is saying to us through these beautiful and elegant ancient poems.

Unit Outline

Lesson 4: Understanding the Nature of Hebrew Poetry: Imagery and Rhyming Ideas

Lesson 5: Recognizing and Working With Figures of Speech

Lesson 6: Grasping the Composition and Themes of the Psalter as a Whole

Lesson 4: Understanding the Nature of Hebrew Poetry: Imagery and Rhyming Ideas

Lesson Introduction

Almost every language has its techniques for communicating more powerfully, more emotionally, and more vividly. In most languages, this is accomplished by writing poetically, in a way that obviously differs from ordinary writing. Intuitively we recognize poetry when we come to it, though we may struggle to define what exactly makes for poetry. Yet how poetry is accomplished in one language and culture can differ significantly from another.

Not surprisingly, the biblical authors of old who wrote in Hebrew had the artistic ability to write Hebrew poetry. The Psalms are a classic expression of Hebrew poetry. Nevertheless the *way* in which these authors formulated their words into poetry certainly differs from the way poetry is composed in other languages and cultures. Hebrew poetry employs a technique of paralleling thoughts from one sentence to the next in such a way as to play one off the other and thereby create a more full-orbed expression. This use of parallelism constitutes the unique nature of Hebrew poetry. (On the one hand, Hebrew poetry is not entirely different from all other poetry, since, for instance, it utilizes imagery and figures of speech.)

This lesson highlights parallelism and imagery, while figures of speech will be treated in Lesson 5.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: An Introduction to Hebrew Poetry

Why Have Poetry?

Hebrew Lines and Colons

The Strophe and the Stanza

Topic 2: Hebrew Parallelism: Rhyming Ideas

Introduction to Parallelism

How Parallelism Works

Unique Cases of Parallelism

Topic 3: The Use of Imagery in Hebrew Poetry

The Effect of Images on Our Mind and Emotions

Images Work to Create Associations

Topic 4: Other Poetic Devices

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Identify and recognize the three main components of Hebrew poetry: imagery, figures of speech, and parallelism

- State several different types of Hebrew parallelism
- Appreciate how Hebrew authors conveyed emotion in their writing through the use of imagery

Preparing for the Lesson

Sitting in a warm afternoon class studying ancient history was not exactly Tom Blanchard's idea of a fun time. Throughout the class period, he kept one eye fixed on the professor while the other was constantly glancing out the window. It was springtime, and there was no doubt that Tom would rather be outside enjoying the beautiful weather that had recently transformed the plants and flowers into living works of art.

After class Kate Kutlow caught up with Tom as he made his way outside. The campus was beautiful this time of the year, as though a thousand angels had suddenly descended from heaven to personally beautify nature after a long cold winter (note the use of imagery!). Kate managed to make Tom a bit uneasy when she asked, "Tom, what did you think about that assignment for tomorrow in our class on the Psalms?" "What assignment," Tom muttered, not exactly happy at being reminded he had tomorrow's homework to finish this afternoon. Kate popped back, "Tom, the assignment on Hebrew poetry in the Psalms!" "Sounds over my head," Tom said, as he made his way over to a park bench next to the campus fountain.

Kate, however, was enthusiastic. "I know what you might be thinking, Tom, but after reading the homework on Hebrew poetry, I am totally excited. I mean, the men who wrote the psalms so long ago were not stone-age dummies. They were very sophisticated, carefully writing lines in harmony. I mean, one sentence states a thought and the following sentence echoes it in some way while adding something more. Since the thoughts parallel one another, scholars today refer to this as parallelism. Not only are we getting to study how they wrote poetry in this way, but we also learn about writing with vivid word imagery. Imagery means that they use words to paint pictures in our minds."

Suddenly Tom's mind seemed to click in gear. "You know," he said, "that sounds really cool. I have to admit: you've got my curiosity up. I think I'm going to enjoy Hebrew poetry."

Topic 1: An Introduction to Hebrew Poetry

In this first topic we will take a few moments to consider why God would use poetry in the formation of His Word and then make a few definitions and clarifications that will be essential for understanding Hebrew poetry.

Why Have Poetry?

Poetry—in contrast to prose and other forms of writing—is more appropriate for the expression of man's deepest thoughts and emotions. Hence it is better suited for reflective thinking. Laurence Perrine suggests that poetry is a special use of language. He writes, "poetry might be defined as a kind of language that says more and says it more intensely than does ordinary language" (*Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry*, 4).

We should not be surprised to find, then, that poetry is used abundantly in Scripture. The Psalms, in fact, are completely written as poetry, and this should alert us to the fact that the Bible is much more than factual information, a mere textbook as it were.

The Bible represents the work of the Holy Spirit to communicate with man, yet so as to get through to him at every level of his being—intellectually, emotionally and volitionally—that God might have His way in our lives. In doing so God has made use of the emotional experiences of some men, like David, with whom we can relate. Yet to express their emotional experience requires a choice of words that imitates the sensation for the reader. Since man thinks in terms of images, symbols, and pictures in communicating emotions, the Holy Spirit utilizes poetry that best expresses these. Yet He also makes it more pleasurable and aesthetically satisfying to man by writing in rich ways. Hebrew poetry is excellent for this, employing not so much rhyming words as rhyming ideas...playing one sentence off another so as to capture a more full-orbed thought (a technique known as “parallelism”).

QUESTION 1

Based on our study of Hebrew poetry, we can see that the Holy Spirit takes pleasure in communicating with man at an emotional level and in composing His revelation to him in ways that man finds aesthetically pleasing from a literary perspective. *True or False?*

Note David’s lament in Psalm 6:6-7. Notice how he causes you to feel his grief by exaggerating the extent of his tears:

6 I am weary with my sighing;

Every night I make my bed swim,

I dissolve my couch with my tears.

7 My eye has wasted away with grief;

It has become old because of all my adversaries. (NASB)

So, by ample use of imagery, figures of speech, symbols, and parallelism, the Hebrew writers of old were able to communicate in a heightened and more powerful way, thereby helping us identify with their experiences. In particular, the Hebrew poetry of the Psalms is rich in imagery and parallelism. Mark Futato offers the following brief definition of Hebrew poetry: “Hebrew poetry is a type of literature that communicates with terse lines employing parallelism and imagery in high frequency” (*Interpreting the Psalms*, 24). Although these same elements are found in Hebrew prose, Futato adds, “it is the consistent and sustained use of these features that characterize Hebrew poetry and distinguish it from prose” (25).

QUESTION 2

We can easily distinguish prose from poetry, because parallelism and imagery will be entirely absent in prose literature. *True or False?*

While the Hebrew writers utilized these elements of poetry to better communicate their struggles and experiences, they also brought the attributes of God into the picture, for ultimately they learned to rise above their challenging circumstances by laying hold of some great theological truth about God and responding to Him in faith.

In concluding this section we must remind ourselves that although the psalms are some of the richest and most satisfying portions of God’s Word by virtue of being Hebrew poetry, they also require more effort to properly study and interpret than do most prose portions of the Bible.

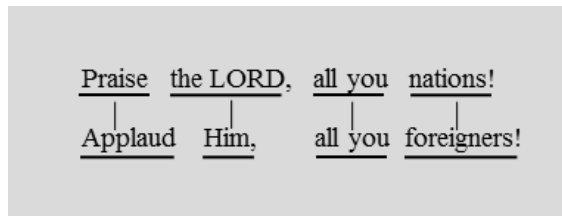
Hebrew Lines and Colons

In order to be able to talk about parallelism and how the Hebrew writers rhymed their thoughts, we must first make some definitions. We begin, then, by considering the most basic unit of Hebrew poetry, the line. This must not be confused with a sentence, as we think of it in English. Notice the following line from Psalm 117:1, which actually consists of two sentences:

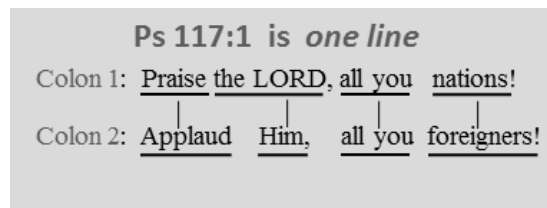
Praise the LORD, all you nations!

Applaud Him, all you foreigners!

Rather than a line indicating a complete sentence, a “line” in Hebrew poetry indicates one complete paralleling expression of thought. Perhaps you can see the paralleling better if we diagram it this way:



Notice the paralleling that takes place between the various parts of each sentence. The initial verb “praise” is parallel with the verb “applaud,” and both are similar in meaning. Likewise the object of the verb, “the LORD,” is parallel with “Him,” and so forth. Yet, together these two sentences constitute what we call one line. In this case, the line is made up of two halves, and each half is called a “colon” (plural=cola).



QUESTION 3

Which of the following statements are true regarding a line in Hebrew poetry? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. A line consists of one complete sentence, having a subject and a verb.
- B. A line typically has two halves, each referred to as a colon.
- C. A correspondence of words or phrases between each colon is called parallelism.
- D. Two lines that are parallel to one another are called a colon.

Psalm 117:1, has two cola to the line. When a line is made up of two cola, we call the line a “bicolon.” Each half of the line is called a colon. Not every line will have two cola. Sometimes we will see the presence of three cola, and so we call this a tricolon (see Ps 112:9-10 for examples). In summary, the basic unit of a poem is the line, and this is usually made up of two cola; yet sometimes the line may have one, three, or four cola.

The Strophe and Stanza

The Strophe. Several lines can combine to form a strophe. A “strophe” is to poetry what a paragraph is to prose. A strophe, then, is basically a grouping of related lines that focus on a common theme. We could say that one key idea holds the verses in the strophe together.

How do we determine which lines constitute a strophe? Primarily this is ascertained by observing the unifying idea or theme of the lines. That is, they must have some common motif that unites them. Sometimes we can discern this on the basis of repetition of certain words or phrases. At other times, it may be the object being addressed (e.g., adversaries). At still other times, it may simply be the thematic nature of the lines (e.g., when the psalmist laments his situation).

Let's consider the case of Psalm 13:

1 How long, Lord, will you continue to ignore me?

How long will you pay no attention to me?

2 How long must I worry,

and suffer in broad daylight?

How long will my enemy gloat over me?

3 Look at me! Answer me, O Lord my God!

Revive me, or else I will die!

4 Then my enemy will say, "I have defeated him!"

Then my foes will rejoice because I am upended.

5 But I trust in your faithfulness.

May I rejoice because of your deliverance!

6 I will sing praises to the Lord

when he vindicates me.

As you read over Psalm 13, can you discern how the lines might be grouped into strophes? There are three of them. In Psalm 13:1-2, we have the repetition of the words "How long?" as the psalmist lamented his adversaries. In Psalm 13:3-4, the psalmist turned to address God directly, as he cried out for God's intervention. In doing so, he stated what the consequences would be for him if God failed to rescue him. Then in Psalm 13:5-6 the tone becomes more upbeat and positive. The psalmist acknowledged his trusting reliance on God, using the words "trust," "rejoice," and "sing praises." Why does he do this? Because God is known for His faithfulness, deliverance, and vindication of the one who trusts in Him.

Now that we have identified the strophes of Psalm 13, let's depict them graphically:

Psalm 13: From Lament to Praise

The Psalmist Laments the Seeming Reluctance of God to Hear His Cry

13:1 How long, LORD, will you continue to ignore me?
How long will you pay no attention to me?

13:2 How long must I worry,
and suffer in broad daylight?
How long will my enemy gloat over me?

The Psalmist Reminds God of the Consequences that Await Him

13:3 Look at me! Answer me, O LORD my God!
Revive me, or else I will die!

13:4 Then my enemy will say, "I have defeated him!"
Then my foes will rejoice because I am upended.

The Psalmist Renews His Trust in God's Faithfulness to Deliver

13:5 But I trust in your faithfulness.
May I rejoice because of your deliverance!

13:6 I will sing praises to the LORD
when he vindicates me.

What is the value of identifying the strophes of the psalm? There are at least two important values in this. First, it helps us to be able to follow the author's flow of thought and to see more clearly what is going on in the psalm. Second, we can use this to form the outline of the psalm, and then ultimately to construct a sermon or teaching outline based on this. In the case of Psalm 13, then, we have a very natural three-point outline for teaching this passage to others.

QUESTION 4

Take a few moments to read and contemplate Psalm 141. Try to discern five basic strophes to this psalm, and then match the following:

<i>Strophes</i>	<i>Description</i>
Verses 1-2	The psalmist values being corrected by righteous men.
Verses 3-4	The psalmist prays for protection from evil men.
Verses 5a-c	The psalmist anticipates the ultimate destruction of the wicked.
Verses 5d-7	The psalmist pleads for self-restraint against evil.
Verses 8-10	The psalmist pleads for the LORD to hear his prayer.

The Stanza. In the case of longer psalms, we may feel the need to group closely related strophes together into a larger unit called a "stanza." We will not illustrate this in detail now, but an example would be Psalm 139. The first three strophes (vv 1-6, 7-12, 13-18) could be viewed as one stanza that focuses on the nature of God and His intimate knowledge of the psalmist. The final stanza would be verses 19-24, consisting of two strophes. In verses 19-22 the psalmist disassociated himself from evil. In the final two verses, verses 23-24, he welcomed God to eliminate any evil—anything that would be grievous to God—from his life. So, the final stanza reflects the psalmist's response to God to be closer to Him by turning from all evil.

QUESTION 5

Open your Life Notebook. Take time first to read and meditate on Psalm 139:23-24. The final verse is very difficult to translate. According to the NET Bible, the psalmist asked God to see if there is any idolatrous tendency in him. However, this is probably not the best translation of this verse (since there is no mention of idolatry in the context). More likely the psalmist was asking God to see if there might be any grievous way in his life. That is, the psalmist wanted to know if God saw anything in his life that He would view as sin, a sinful attitude, or an attitude of unbelief. Has there been a time recently when you have asked God to search you like this? Psalm 139 teaches us that God knows us perfectly and intimately. Nothing about our life is hidden from him, and yet He still loves us. Write down in your life notebook what you feel God is speaking to you about in Psalm 139:23-24.

Topic 2: Hebrew Parallelism: Rhyming Ideas

We mentioned parallelism earlier when we considered the concepts of lines and colons. Now we examine the concept of parallelism in more detail.

Introduction to Parallelism

As we saw earlier, a line of Hebrew poetry consists of one or more cola. Furthermore there is a relationship that exists between these cola. That is, the words in one colon correspond in some way to the words in a following colon. This correspondence or relationship is what we call parallelism. Normally this correspondence between cola occurs at the level of meaning. That is, certain words in one colon are related by meaning to words in a subsequent colon. Or a concept in one phrase is related to a concept in a subsequent phrase.

We can see an example of correspondence of both words and phrases in Psalm 2:1 (NASB):

Why are the nations in an uproar

And the peoples devising a vain thing?

We have a correspondence of words of similar meaning with “nations” and “peoples.” We also have a correspondence of phrases of similar meaning: being “in an uproar” in the first colon corresponds to “devising a vain thing” in the second colon. Both phrases suggest the idea of plotting rebellion against God.

8 He judges the world fairly;

He makes just legal decisions for the nations.

9 Consequently the LORD provides safety for the oppressed;

He provides safety in times of trouble.

QUESTION 6

Read the following verses from Psalm 9:8-9, and then match the parallel words or phrases from the first colon of each line with the corresponding ones in the second colon.

<i>Colon One of Each Verse</i>	<i>Colon Two of Each Verse</i>
He judges	He provides safety
The world	He makes...legal decisions
Fairly (literally, in righteousness)	(For) times of trouble
The LORD provides safety	Just (literally, in uprightness)
For the oppressed	The nations

In certain cases, the correspondence existing between the words or phrases may be virtually synonymous, with no appreciable difference in meaning. Other times there is a correspondence, but the relationship is not one of synonymous meaning. Rather, one word or phrase is a development or enhancement of another. Psalm 19:1 has both cases:

The heavens declare the glory of God;

The sky displays His handiwork.

In this verse, the opening subject in each colon is virtually synonymous in meaning (“heavens” and “sky”), even though the words are different. Likewise, the verbs in the middle of each colon (“declare” and “display”) represent essentially the same idea—they communicate or tell us something. Finally, the objects at the end of each colon correspond with one another, even though they are different in meaning. What then is the correspondence between “the glory of God” and “his handiwork”? They are not the same in meaning. Rather, God’s handiwork in the heavens (i.e., the stars, planets, and galaxies) reflects His glory. They bear witness to His glory. We might say, then, that the word “handiwork” in the second colon clarifies the way God’s “glory” is manifested.

Consider the following verse from Psalm 105:23—

Israel moved to Egypt;

Jacob lived for a time in the land of Ham.

QUESTION 7

Which of the following statements is true of the above verse?

- A. These cola are not really parallel, since they are talking about two different tribes.
- B. These cola are not really parallel, since they are talking about two different places.
- C. The point of this line is to list the different places that Abraham lived.
- D. These cola are saying essentially the same thing; they are essentially synonymous.

How Parallelism Works

The Older Approach. The study of Hebrew parallelism is not recent, having been popularized by Robert Lowth of England as early as 1753. Lowth attempted to classify the various ways in which parallelism occurred, and though he should be commended for his pioneering efforts, most scholars today do not fully agree with his conclusions. One of his categories was “synonymous parallelism,” which he applied to those lines where almost no discernible difference existed between the corresponding parts. Yet it was his category of “synthetic parallelism” that has been more challenged

in recent years. Lowth used this category to describe those situations where there was some more noticeable difference between the corresponding parts or where the latter colon added new information to the first colon. The problem is that this category tended to become a catch-all whenever synonymous parallelism could not be justified. There were simply too many cases where this was true, so much so that it became obvious that the purpose of parallelism was not to say the same thing twice. Thus a fresh approach for describing parallelism was needed.

A Newer Approach. Mark Futato has suggested the following descriptive principle: “Parallelism is the art of saying something similar in both cola but with a difference added in the second colon. Usually there is some kind of movement from the first to the second colon, some kind of addition” (*Interpreting the Psalms*, 38). The advantage of Futato’s definition is that it puts the emphasis on the matter of differences rather than expecting synonymous terms and phrases.

Consider the following example from Psalm 29:1,

Acknowledge the LORD, you heavenly beings,
Acknowledge the LORD’s majesty and power.

Obviously there is correspondence between these two cola, yet they are not saying the same thing. The second adds something different. While the first colon tells us who it is that must acknowledge the LORD (namely, the angels), the second colon tells us what they are to acknowledge (His majesty and power).

Another example is Psalm 95:3,

For the LORD is a great God,
a great king who is superior to all gods.

Now we want to look for how the second colon may stress, intensify, or refine the thought in some way. We should immediately notice that the second colon in this case does not even have a subject or verb to it. The words “the LORD is” in the first colon must be understood in the second colon. Scholars say that the subject and verb are doing double duty. So the difference, then, between the cola is not with the subject (we assume the same subject for both lines), but rather in what the subject is being equated to. In the first colon, we are told that He is “a great God.” Yet this is not quite the same thing as saying, as the second colon does, that He is a king “superior to all gods.”

People in the ancient Near East typically were polytheistic and believed in multiple deities. Yet the Hebrew people were taught that there was only one god. What, then, is this God of the Hebrews like? Is He a mighty or weak ruler? Can the Hebrew people believe that their God can lead them in victory against the gods of other nations? Psalm 95:3 then asserts that the LORD is not simply a deity; He is also great. So what does the second colon contribute? It goes one step further to speak about His kingly rule. The LORD is the rightful ruler and king of the universe, and as such, He is superior to all the other pagan deities. (Of course this verse is not teaching that there really are other deities. The Bible is very clear that there is only one God, namely, the LORD. The point is simply to compare the LORD with the gods that are imagined by the pagan nations, and to remind the Hebrew people that they have nothing to fear.)

Read the following verse from Psalm 27:1 (NASB).

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread?

QUESTION 8

In Psalm 27:1, we have two cola with three paralleling components. The first (the LORD) and the last (fear/dread) are rather easy to identify. The challenge is to understand the relationship between “my light and my salvation” and “the defense of my life.” Which of the following statements best expresses the relationship of these middle components?

- A. These components are saying very different things: the first colon speaks of the spiritual blessings that the Lord brings, while the second speaks of physical protection.
- B. This line is making the point that the Lord will be the defender of those who respond to the light of the gospel and accept His salvation from sin.
- C. These cola are saying essentially the same thing, once we recognize that “light” does not have to signify spiritual enlightenment, and “salvation” does not have to mean spiritual salvation from sin.
- D. The cola are intended to express two different alternatives: either the Lord will help the psalmist spiritually or He will defend him militarily.

Consider the following two cola from Psalm 2:4 (the context concerns those who are trying to rebel against the Lord and His anointed one):

The one enthroned in heaven laughs in disgust;

The LORD taunts them.

QUESTION 9

Which of the following statements are correct in light of the verse above? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. There is no parallelism present in this verse.
- B. The words “the one enthroned in heaven” in the first colon are parallel to “the LORD” in the second colon.
- C. There is no relationship between the words “laughs in disgust” and “taunts” them.
- D. Rather than giving a name for God in the first colon, the words “The one enthroned in heaven” remind the rebels of two important things about the LORD: (1) He is enthroned, that is, He rules as king; and (2) His throne is not a mere earthly one, but a heavenly one.

Consider Psalm 10:1.

Why, LORD, do you stand far off?

Why do you pay no attention during times of trouble?

QUESTION 10

The two cola given above are parallel, but the second colon adds an element not clearly present in the first. What is it?

- A. The LORD seems to be distant in respect to the psalmist.
- B. The subject shifts from “LORD” in the first colon to “you” in the second colon.
- C. The psalmist feels that the Lord pays no attention to him.
- D. The second colon specifies that it is explicitly in “times of trouble” that he senses God’s absence.

Incomplete Parallelism. It is not unusual in Hebrew parallelism for one of the grammatical components of a colon (e.g., the subject, verb or object) to be absent in the corresponding colon. We

saw this above in the case of Psalm 95:3. Sometimes this can be even more sophisticated, with each colon making its own unique contribution. Observe the case of Psalm 12:1 (author's translation):

Deliver, O LORD, for the godly man has disappeared,
for those who are faithful have vanished from among the sons of men.

In the first colon, we have the words, “Deliver, O LORD,” which are absent in the second colon. However, the second colon makes its own contribution with the addition of the words, “from among the sons of men.” Thus each colon contributes something unique, so that the colons complement one another to harmoniously create the desired effect.

As a result of our brief introduction to Hebrew parallelism, one of the lessons to be learned is that these poets of old would have us read slowly to observe the details. Whether the differences are small or great, we should be looking for some difference between the cola.

In Psalm 37:11 we have incomplete parallelism:

But the oppressed [or the humble] will possess the land
and enjoy great prosperity.

QUESTION 11

As you compare these two cola, what word is absent that makes this an incomplete parallelism?

QUESTION 12

In regard to Psalm 37:11 (see question 11 above), the paralleling elements are “possess the land” and “enjoy great prosperity.” Yet we have to discern the relationship between them. Which statement most accurately reflects the relationship?

- A. There is no relationship at all; these are unrelated statements.
- B. The first colon conveys the truth that the humble will ultimately inherit the land, while the second colon extends this further by focusing on the result of the inheritance: one of delight and prosperity.
- C. This line denounces those who think they will be prosperous because they purchase land.
- D. This line is a warning that those who possess land will have only momentary prosperity.

Unique Cases of Parallelism

Some cases of Hebrew parallelism call for special labels.

Antithetical. In this case the second colon expresses the opposite statement of the first. This type of parallelism is very common in the book of Proverbs, but can also be found at times in the Psalms. Often the word “but” introduces the second colon. Psalm 1:6 is a good example:

Certainly the LORD guards the way of the godly,
but the way of the wicked ends in destruction.

Emblematic. This occurs when one of the lines is a metaphorical illumination of the other(s). That is, one of the lines will present a picture (often using a simile or metaphor), while the other tells the point of the illustration. Psalm 103:13 is an example of this:

As a father has compassion on his children,
So the LORD has compassion on his faithful followers.

Climactic. This applies to situations where a thought or phrase is stated over and over again to come to the point. There can be some development between each colon, but the main idea is that the author builds up the intensity in the process. This can be observed in Psalm 29:1-2:

1 Acknowledge the LORD, you heavenly beings,
Acknowledge the LORD's majesty and power!
2 Acknowledge the majesty of the LORD's reputation!
Worship the LORD in holy attire!

Psalm 37:9

Wicked men will be wiped out,
but those who rely on the LORD are the ones who will possess the land

QUESTION 13

Is Psalm 37:9 a case of antithetical, emblematic, or climactic parallelism?

Psalm 42:1

As a deer longs for streams of water,
so I long for you, O God!



QUESTION 14

Is Psalm 42:1 (provided above) a case of antithetical, emblematic or climactic parallelism?

QUESTION 15

Open your Bible and read all of Psalm 42 slowly and meditatively. When we look at the psalm as a whole, we realize that this was written in a very sad and lonely moment of the psalmist's life. To "appear in God's presence" in verse 2 is a reference to joining in with the community of worshippers at the temple. The psalmist recalled those joyful moments from his past, but now they stood in strong contrast to his present situation. Now he was saddened to the point of tears, because he missed those delightful times of worship with other believers. Like a thirsting deer longing for the refreshing streams of water, the psalmist longed to have these times of worship again and have close communion with God. What is your soul like right now? Do you feel dry and thirsty? Have you experienced close communion with God lately? Write down your thoughts in your Life Notebook.

Topic 3: The Use of Imagery

While Hebrew parallelism is the most basic *style* utilized by the ancient Hebrew poets, the power of their writing is more to be found in their creative use of images. Alonso Schökel remarks, “Images are the glory, perhaps the essence of poetry, the enchanted planet of imagination, a limitless galaxy, ever alive and ever changing” (*Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, 95).

The Effect of Images on Our Mind and Emotions

One of the reasons the psalms have such a tremendous effect on our lives is that they powerfully touch our emotions. The key reason for this is that the author paints an image that can be visualized in our mind and which radiates to our emotions. Our emotional response may be one of delight, but at other times one of fear or disgust. Often these images are drawn from ordinary life, but what constitutes the ordinary life of the psalmist in ancient times may require more contemplation by those of us in the modern period to fully understand their imagery. We live in a different culture today, and while some images will immediately be identifiable to us, others will not be so clearly seen.

In Psalm 23:1-2 most of us can envision the idyllic scene conveyed by the psalmist based on the nomadic life of tending sheep:

1 The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

2 He takes me to lush pastures, he leads me to refreshing water.



We are humans, not sheep, and yet we immediately recognize the imagery and its application to us. We may never have been a shepherd or cared for sheep, but we know enough from other sources to recognize what is being conveyed. The imagery powerfully impacts us as we sense God’s loving care for us who are His children and His delight in meeting our needs.

Just as imagery can be delightful, so it can also be unpleasant and even disgusting. Observe in Psalm 58:6-8 how David heaped up image on image in calling upon God to judge the wicked:

6 O God, break the teeth in their mouths!

Smash the jawbones of the lions, O LORD!

7 Let them disappear like water that flows away!

Let them wither like grass!

8 Let them be like a snail that melts away as it moves along!

Let them be like stillborn babies [miscarriages] that never see the sun!

Images Work to Create Associations

Most images can be interpreted easily enough. However, some may prove more challenging. The key to proper interpretation is first to, recognize the presence of an image, and then second, to try to discern the association between what the author has depicted and what he really wants to communicate. Consider this image from Psalm 131:2 (NASB):

Surely I have composed and quieted my soul;

like a weaned child rests against his mother,

my soul is like a weaned child within me.



The image involves a young child that has completed the nursing stage. Up until the point of weaning, the infant could cry and have its demands quickly met by its loving mother. Yet there must come a time when the nursing has to stop, even though this may bring about a temporary struggle in the relationship. The child must now learn to view the mother in a different way, no longer as provider on demand. Now the child must learn to love the mother as a person and simply enjoy the delight of being in her presence and near her. Once they have bridged this gap, the child enters into a new phase of the relationship...one of the sweetest...having a simple childlike trust in the mother. What then is the author trying to convey? His concern is not to teach how wonderful it is to be a mother who raises children. Rather, his concern is to convey something about the state of his soul. When he took the time to draw near to God and to quiet his soul, to simply enjoy spending time with God for the delight of who He is and not for the purpose of getting things from Him, then the psalmist experienced a true serenity. Too often life is racing at one hundred kilometers an hour, as we are caught up in the frantic pace of the daily grind. How we need the quiet moments when we can simply be alone with God—with a childlike faith—enjoying Him for no other reason than the fact that He is enjoyable. In fact, He is our highest joy.

QUESTION 16

Psalms 103 is a beautiful psalm exalting four key attributes of God. They are listed in verse 8:

The LORD is compassionate and merciful;

He is patient [literally, slow to anger] and demonstrates great loyal love.

The attribute of His “great loyal love” (Hebrew *hesed*) is given particular emphasis in verses 15-18. Read these verses in your Bible. Then open your Life Notebook. First write down the image that the psalmist uses in these verses? Describe it and then explain how he uses this in order to make a point about God’s great loyal love. Do you see a contrast being made? How does the use of this contrast exalt God’s great loyal love? What is one thing you can learn from verses 15-18 that encourages you today?

After completing Question 16, please read the “Note on Question 16” in the Answers section at the end of this lesson.



Other Terms and Concepts

Before concluding this lesson on Hebrew poetry, it is helpful for the student to become familiar with a few other terms and concepts related to the study of the Psalms. The following concepts are often encountered in the study of Hebrew poetry and have to do with the stylistic arrangement of the text.

Chiasm. A “chiasm” essentially means an X-shaped configuration, that results in an inverted parallelism of the words or phrases in the line. Consider the following example from Isaiah 11:13:

Ephraim will no longer be jealous of Judah,
and Judah will no longer be hostile toward Ephraim.

The first colon begins by mentioning Ephraim and ends with the mention of Judah. The second colon does just the opposite. A chiasm results in the following pattern: a b b’ a’

A classic example of a chiastic verse in the Psalms is seen in Psalm 1:6:

a	b
"Certainly <u>the LORD guards</u>	<u>the way of the godly,</u>
b'	a'
but <u>the way of the wicked</u>	<u>ends in destruction."</u>

In this case the paralleling elements are actually opposites. So, we have the idea of divine guarding in the first colon that pairs with divine destruction in the second colon. Likewise, the way of the godly is in contrast to the way of the wicked. The point to be observed, however, is that the paralleling components are in reverse order. The author probably did this deliberately to highlight how the Lord will reverse the outcome of each way of life.

Ellipsis. This refers to the omission of one or more words that are obviously understood (they are mentally supplied) for the thought to be complete. Observe the case of Psalm 24:1:

The LORD owns the earth and all it contains,
the world and all who live in it.

By purposely indenting the second colon, we can readily see that there is no explicit subject for the colon. Rather, the subject of the first colon is understood as the subject of the second colon also. The words "The LORD owns" constitute an ellipsis. Such omission of words between cola is quite common in the Psalms.

Inclusio. This is a literary technique in which a word or phrase (or a whole sentence) occurs twice, once at the beginning of a section and then again at the end. In this way it brackets or sandwiches the intervening material. This could occur at the beginning and ending of a paragraph. Sometimes a whole psalm will begin and end with the same words, as for example Psalm 147, "Praise the LORD!" Psalms 8 begins and ends with the line, "O LORD, our Lord, how magnificent is your reputation throughout the earth!"

Lesson 4 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Which of the following is **not** likely to be found in Hebrew poetry?

- A. Imagery
- B. Parallelism
- C. Figures of speech
- D. Legal pronouncements from God (laws)

Praise the LORD, all you nations!

Applaud Him, all you foreigners! (Ps 117:1)

QUESTION 2

According to the definition of a line in Hebrew poetry, there are two lines to the verse above (Ps 117:1). *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

A strophe is basically a grouping of related lines that focus on a common theme, in which one key idea holds the verses in the strophe together. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Which one of the following statements is **not** correct?

- A. A colon is one part of a line that needs another to complete the parallelism.
- B. A line is a complete paralleling expression of thought, consisting of two or more cola.
- C. A strophe is a group of related lines focusing on a common theme.
- D. A stanza is two or more lines that end in rhyming words.

QUESTION 5

When the words in one colon correspond in some way to the words in a following colon, this correspondence or relationship is what is known as _____. Normally this correspondence between cola occurs at the level of meaning. That is, certain words in one colon are related in meaning to words in a subsequent colon.

QUESTION 6

Psalm 19:1: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the sky displays his handiwork.” In this verse the term “glory of God” in the first colon is parallel with “sky” in the second colon. *True or False?*

Consider the case of Psalm 10:1.

Why, LORD, do you stand far off?

Why do you pay no attention during times of trouble?

QUESTION 7

These two cola are parallel, but the second colon adds an element not clearly present in the first. What is it?

- A. The LORD seems to be distant in respect to the psalmist.
- B. The subject shifts from “LORD” in the first colon to “you” in the second.
- C. The psalmist feels that the LORD pays no attention to him.
- D. The second colon specifies that it is explicitly in “times of trouble” that he sensed God’s absence.

QUESTION 8

The verse from Psalm 1:6, “Certainly the LORD guards the way of the godly, but the way of the wicked ends in destruction” is a case of emblematic parallelism. *True or False?*

Consider the following verses from Psalm 103:

15 A person’s life is like grass.

Like a flower in the field it flourishes,

16 but when the hot wind blows by, it disappears,

and one can no longer even spot the place where it once grew.

17 But the Lord continually shows loyal love to his faithful followers,

and is faithful to their descendants.

QUESTION 9

In these verses the psalmist highlights the loyal love of the LORD by means of contrasting imagery. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

In certain cases, we have an inverted parallelism of words or phrases in the pattern a b b’ a’, as in Isaiah 11:13: “Ephraim will no longer be jealous of Judah, and Judah will no longer be hostile toward Ephraim.” We describe this particular situation as a chiasm. *True or False?*

Lesson 4 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2: False [Literary techniques like parallelism and imagery are also found in prose literature. It is the more consistent and abundant use of them that characterizes Hebrew poetry and distinguishes it from prose.]

QUESTION 3

- B. A line typically has two halves, each referred to as a colon.
- C. A correspondence of words or phrases between each colon is called parallelism.

QUESTION 4

<i>Strophes</i>	<i>Description</i>
Verses 1-2	The psalmist pleads for the LORD to hear his prayer.
Verses 3-4	The psalmist pleads for self-restraint against evil.
Verses 5a-c	The psalmist values being corrected by righteous men.
Verses 5d-7	The psalmist anticipates the ultimate destruction of the wicked.
Verses 8-10	The psalmist prays for protection from evil men.

QUESTION 5: *Your answer*

QUESTION 6

<i>Colon One of Each Verse</i>	<i>Colon Two of Each Verse</i>
He judges	He makes...legal decisions
The world	The nations
Fairly (literally, in righteousness)	Just (literally, in uprightness)
The LORD provides safety	He provides safety
For the oppressed	(For) times of trouble

QUESTION 7

- D. These cola are saying essentially the same thing; they are essentially synonymous.

QUESTION 8

- C. These cola are saying essentially the same thing, once we recognize that “light” does not have to signify spiritual enlightenment, and “salvation” does not have to mean spiritual salvation from sin.

QUESTION 9

- B. The words “the one enthroned in heaven” in the first colon are parallel to “the LORD” in the second colon.
- D. Rather than giving a name for God in the first colon, the words “The one enthroned in heaven” remind the rebels of two important things about the LORD: (1) He is enthroned, that is, He rules as king; and (2) His throne is not a mere earthly one, but a heavenly one.

[From this verse, we see that parallelism does not have to mean that we have synonymous terms involved or even similar terms. In Psalm 2:4, the words “the one enthroned in heaven” stand in parallel with “the LORD,” to give us insight about who this LORD is and His exalted state. He is the heavenly ruler, and therefore any rebellion against Him by earthly kings is futile.]

QUESTION 10

- D. The second colon specifies that it is explicitly in “times of trouble” that he senses God’s absence. [The words “stand far off” in the first colon are essentially equivalent to “pay no attention” in the second. The point is that the LORD distances Himself from the psalmist and is not available. (Of course, God is not really distant, but the psalmist is feeling that way.) But the second colon adds an element not present in the first by the words “during times of trouble.” It is in those moments that the psalmist felt the way he did.]

QUESTION 11: *Your answer should be similar to the following:*

Oppressed, the oppressed [The subject in the first colon is not repeated in the second; it is understood.]

QUESTION 12

- B. The first colon conveys the truth that the humble will ultimately inherit the land, while the second colon extends this further by focusing on the result of the inheritance: one of delight and prosperity.

QUESTION 13: *Your answer should be one of the following:*

Antithetical, anti-thetical [Two opposite states are depicted: wicked men and ‘those who rely on the LORD.’ The first will be wiped out (or cut off), while the second will be allowed to inherit the land.]

QUESTION 14: *Your answer should be one of the following:*

emblematic, Emblematic [A picture is painted in the first line (a deer thirsting for water), and the literal point is stated in the second line (David’s intense desire for God’s nearness).]

QUESTION 15: *Your answer*

QUESTION 16: *Your answer*

Note on Question 16

The imagery has to do with a field having grass and flowers. They flourish just fine until a hot wind blows across them and causes them to die. Soon, the very spot where they stood can no longer even be detected. How transient they are! They exist, but only for a moment. This depicts man’s brief time on earth. In contrast, God’s attribute of *hesed* is everlasting, and thus always available. For those who fear Him, they can always count on God’s loving loyalty.

Lesson 4 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1

D. Legal pronouncements from God (laws)

QUESTION 2: False

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4

D. A stanza is two or more lines that end in rhyming words.

QUESTION 5: parallelism

QUESTION 6: False

QUESTION 7

D. The second colon specifies that it is explicitly in “times of trouble” that he sensed God’s absence.

QUESTION 8: False

QUESTION 9: True

QUESTION 10: True

Lesson 5: Recognizing and Working With Figures of Speech

Lesson Introduction

Psalms 98:8 beckons to nature, “Let the rivers clap their hands; let the mountains sing in unison.” I have spent a lot of time outdoors in nature while hiking and camping, but I have never seen rivers or mountains doing such things as these. Of course this verse was not meant to be taken so literally. Most of us would immediately recognize that these are figures of speech in this verse.

Figures of speech permeate the psalms. In fact they are so prominent in the book of Psalms that it would be safe to say we must know how to recognize and interpret them if we are to rightly understand what the Holy Spirit is saying through God’s Word. Those who penned the psalms were very expressive in their writing, and thus chose to use figures abundantly. Figures of speech add vividness of expression, and they make the words of the text come alive. Figures also serve to touch our emotions and make us feel what the author wanted to convey.

There are a great many types of figures of speech, far more than we could possibly study in one short lesson. The purpose of this lesson, therefore, will be to acquaint us with some of the more common figures that you are apt to encounter in your reading of the psalms, and to help you better understand how figures are to be interpreted.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: Introduction and Figures of Comparison

- Simile and Metaphor

- Hypocatastasis

- Personification

- Anthropomorphism and Zoomorphism

Topic 2: Figures of Substitution

- Metonymy

- Synecdoche

Topic 3: Other Significant Figures

- Merism

- Hyperbole

- Idiom

- Irony

- Symbol

Topic 4: Figures in Psalm 91

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Understand how to recognize and identify figures of speech that are commonly used in the Psalms
- Better interpret the intended meaning of a figure of speech that you might encounter when studying the Psalms
- Be familiar with a resource tool to use in the future when working with figures of speech

Preparing for the Lesson

Kate Kutlow was sitting in the student lounge waiting for Tom to show up for their appointment. They had agreed to meet just before the next session of the Psalms course. Tom, who was rarely on time for anything, seemed to be particularly running late today. In fact Kate was nearly finished with her first cup of coffee when Tom suddenly rounded the corner and came bounding up to the table. Kate was not entirely pleased that Tom had nearly missed their appointment completely, but she was at least happy to know that someone else had developed a fascination for studying the Psalms as she had.

Tom had no sooner sat down before he blurted out, “Kate, do you think that God has wings?” Kate gave Tom one of those strange looks, and cautiously replied, “I don’t think so. Why would you be asking the question?” Tom, hoping to justify himself, fired back, “Last night I was meditating on Psalm 57. Right there in the first verse, David said, ‘In the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge until destruction passes by.’”

Kate now understood where Tom was coming from. Hoping not to sound too condescending, she calmly spoke, “Tom, that’s a figure of speech. It doesn’t mean that God really has wings like birds do. The psalmist is simply trying to convey to us that by drawing close to God, we can find protection with Him.” Sensing a teachable moment with Tom, she continued, “There are figures of speech all through the psalms. Furthermore, there are many different types of figures. Some are used for purposes of comparison, while others are used as substitutes for other words or phrases. We can discern the presence of a figure whenever words are used in a way that violates their normal meaning or context. Then we must ask ourselves what the literal reality is that the author wished to convey by this figure. By studying the different types of figures found in the psalms and knowing how they are used, we can develop a sensitivity for this mode of communication.” Kate concluded by reminding him, “Tom, if we are to correctly interpret the psalms, we must first learn to correctly interpret figures of speech.”

Hoping that Kate would give him a little credit regarding the use of figures, Tom answered her, “Your tongue is like a sharp sword, and you have dug a pit in which to lower me among the lions.” Kate grimaced, “Tom, stop trying to sound so poetic. It’s just not you! Let’s go to class.”

Topic 1: Introduction and Figures of Comparison

One of the contributions of the Protestant Reformation was a renewed emphasis on a proper interpretation of Scripture, or what is called the literal-historical-grammatical hermeneutic. On the one hand, we want to interpret the Scriptures in a literal way (taking into account historical facts and the proper grammar of words and sentences), rather than trying to read a meaning into the text or interpreting the text allegorically. Yet even a literal interpretation of Scripture must make allowance

for the use of figures of speech. These two ideas are not really in conflict with one another. Behind every figure of speech, there is a literal idea that the writer wishes to convey, and that is what we are seeking to understand.

When God says through the prophet Isaiah, “All people are like grass” (Isa 40:6), He is not making a biological statement about man. The reader intuitively understands this. Rather, God is making a point about how transitory man’s life is. Like grass that quickly comes and quickly goes, so is man’s time here on earth—from God’s eternal perspective. Since figures of speech are part of our everyday normal way of conversing, we could say that the goal of interpretation is to identify the plain or normal meaning. This takes into account such things as figures of speech, symbols, and divinely intended types. So we should strive to interpret the Bible literally, but literal interpretation should be defined as the normal meaning of words, giving due recognition to figures of speech.

A crucial question then is this: How do we recognize figures of speech? Most of the time (as in the case of Isa 40:6), this is quite apparent. At other times, however, it may not be so evident. In general, however, two conditions should be met:

- (1) There must be some ascertainable point of deviation from ordinary usage of a word or phrase. That is, the word or phrase is being used in an abnormal way.
- (2) There must be a literal rendering available for the expression in question. That is, behind the word or phrase used as a figure, there must be some literal idea that the author wished to convey, and that is discernible to the reader.

The following discussion will introduce us to some of the more common figures of speech that one is likely to encounter in reading the Psalms. An appendix that offers a more detailed treatment is provided for those wishing to do further study. At the conclusion of this lesson, we will identify some of the figures in Psalm 91 and observe how they contribute to the author’s message.

Simile and Metaphor

Two of the more common figures that you will encounter are the simile and metaphor. Both are figures of comparison. The simile will use the word “like” or “as” to make the comparison between two unlike things that have something in common. A good example of this can be seen in Psalm 1:3: “he is **like** a tree planted by flowing streams” (emphasis added). This figure is used to describe the blessed man who walks uprightly and delights in God’s Word.

To properly understand the point of the figure, we need to do three things. We need to identify the subject, identify the thing compared, and discern the common element. In regard to Psalm 1:3, we have the following:

- **Subject:** He (i.e., the blessed man)
- **Thing compared:** A tree planted by flowing streams
- **Common element:** Position close to a source of life and nourishment
- **Point of the figure:** The man who walks uprightly and meditates regularly in God’s Word is drawing on a source of spiritual strength from God (which explains why he bears fruit and prospers).

Remember, the key to recognizing a simile is the word “like” or “as.”

Before answering Question 1, carefully read the following words from Psalm 42:1-2:

As a deer longs for streams of water,

so I long for you, O God!

I thirst for God, for the living God.

I say, “When will I be able to go and appear in God’s presence?”

QUESTION 1

Did you notice the simile in the first colon of verse 1? Match the following:

<i>Analysis</i>	<i>Identification</i>
Subject	Experiencing the agony of not having one’s desire met
Thing compared	The psalmist (being oppressed by enemies and cut off from the temple worship), expresses his intense longing for communion with God.
Common element	A deer thirsting for streams of water
Point of the figure	I (i.e., the psalmist)

The figure of a metaphor is very similar to a simile. Once again we have an explicit comparison of two unlike things that have something in common, yet a metaphor does not use the words “like” or “as.” Rather, the two things compared are joined by an equative verb (for example, “is” or “was”). We can see a clear example of this in Psalm 23:1: “The LORD is my shepherd.” Rather than saying He is like a shepherd, the text makes the comparison by simply equating him with a shepherd. Of course, the end result is the same. Once again, we need to analyze the figure:

- **Subject:** The LORD
- **Thing compared:** A shepherd
- **Common element:** Attributes of caring, protecting, and providing for
- **Point of the figure:** The psalmist is comforted by his relationship to the LORD, who cares, protects, and provides for him.

QUESTION 2

Carefully read the following words from Psalm 84:11: “For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD gives grace and glory; no good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly” (NASB). The initial clause of this verse has a double metaphor. The LORD is both a sun and a shield. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. In comparing the LORD to a shield, the point is that He is a protector.
- B. In comparing the LORD to a shield, the point is that God’s children should be prepared to fight.
- C. In comparing the LORD to a sun, the point is that He energizes us for spiritual service.
- D. In comparing the LORD to a sun, the point is that He is the source of blessing.

Hypocatastasis

Another type of figure implying a comparison is called “hypocatastasis.” Here, only one of the elements of the comparison is mentioned. This element is simply declared to be something else, thus implying the comparison. Notice the following example from Psalm 22:16 (emphasis added):

Yes, **wild dogs** surround me—a gang of evil men crowd around me.

Here we have to ask the question, Does David, the psalmist, want us to understand that a literal pack of wild dogs has encircled and threatened him? The context makes it clear that we are not to understand his words literally. Notice the following colon that mentions “a gang of evil men.” Therefore this is a figure comparing his enemies to “wild dogs.” Also note that the words “like” or “as” are not used (as in a simile). Also, two things are not equated, using a word like “is” or “was” (as in a metaphor). Now let’s analyze the figure:

- **Subject:** Unstated (but identified from the context as his enemies)
- **Thing compared:** Wild dogs
- **Common element:** Attacking, ferocious, dangerous
- **Point of the figure:** The psalmist feels threatened by his enemies who ferociously harass and attack him.

A word of caution: The figure of hypocatastasis will sometimes be difficult to differentiate from a metonymy and synecdoche (see discussion to follow). A hypocatastasis does involve the substitution of one word (or words) for something else—as do metonymy and synecdoche. However, with a hypocatastasis, the emphasis is on the comparison that is implied.

QUESTION 3

In Matthew 16:6 we read, “‘Watch out,’ Jesus said to them, ‘beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.’” What type of figure do we have in this verse?

QUESTION 4

What is the point of the figure in Matthew 16:6?

- A. Jesus is comparing the Pharisees to yeast, because they were multiplying so rapidly.
- B. Since yeast is found in every home, Jesus was making the point that the religious leaders were commonly found everywhere.
- C. Jesus was comparing the sacrifices offered by the religious leaders to yeast, as a way of warning people not to participate in them.
- D. Jesus was comparing the teaching of the religious leaders to yeast, in order to make the point that their teaching quickly spread and influenced others. But its powerful influence must be resisted.

Personification

Sometimes an inanimate object may be given human characteristics (or actions) or be described in human-like ways. This can apply not only to inanimate objects, but also to abstract ideas, concepts, and animals. Psalm 35:10 is a good example of a personification:

All my bones shall say, “O LORD, who is like You?” (literal translation)

Obviously the bones of our body do not speak; they do not make words. Rather, bones provide a frame for our flesh, organs, and other body parts. Yet here they are portrayed as speaking, as being personified. In this particular example we have a double figure. Some would view the phrase “all my bones” as constituting a figure of substitution (a synecdoche), representing the whole person. Others might see an implied comparison. Because bones are hard and strong (at least in our youth), they easily represent strength. Hence the psalmist was saying, “with all my strength (or with all my being), I declare that there is no one like the LORD.” (Although he states it as a question, this is really a

rhetoical question that implies a confession.) In fact the NET Bible interprets the figure for us rather than rendering the words literally: “With all my strength I will say, ‘O LORD, who can compare to You?’”

Another example of personification is in Psalm 137:5:

If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget. (literal translation)

This psalm was written during the period of exile when the Hebrew people were in Babylonia. In this verse the author spoke about his right hand forgetting. In reality our minds may forget, but not our hands. The author is speaking about his right hand losing its skill.

Anthropomorphism and Zoomorphism

The Scriptures sometimes speak of God in ways we would not expect. At times God may be represented in the form of man, or with human attributes. In such cases we have a figure known as “anthropomorphism” (from the Greek word *anthrōpos* meaning man). Notice Psalm 33:18:

Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him. (literal translation)

In this verse, God is depicted as having human features, namely, an eye. The point is not that the LORD has an eye, but that He takes notice of us. The NET Bible translated the verse, “The LORD takes notice of his loyal followers.” The following list may be helpful in discerning these anthropomorphisms in Scripture:

- His face denotes His presence
- His eyes denote His awareness
- His ears denote His attentiveness
- His nostrils denote His anger
- His heart denotes His moral intentions

A similar figure of speech is one called a “zoomorphism.” In this case God (and sometimes man) is represented in the form of or with the attributes of the lower animals. Psalm 63:7 provides a classic example:

For You have been my help, and in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy. (literal translation)

In this verse God is depicted with wings, although in reality He does not have wings. If we think of a large bird that protects its young under its wings, we can begin to grasp the author’s point. There is protective care for the one who seeks the nearness of God.

QUESTION 5

Read the following verses and try to match the verse with the appropriate figure of speech. (Italics are used to clarify which words you should focus on.)

<i>Verse (author's own literal translations)</i>	<i>Figure</i>
Psalm 31:2 – “Incline <i>Your ear</i> to me; rescue me quickly.”	Metaphor
Psalm 18:2 – “The LORD is <i>my rock</i> and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge.”	Simile
Psalm 114: 3-4 – “The sea looked and fled; the Jordan (river) turned back. <i>The mountains skipped</i> like rams, the hills like lambs.”	Hypocatastasis
Psalm 17:8 – “Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me in the shadow of <i>Your wings</i> .”	Zoomorphism
Psalm 1:4 – “The wicked are not so, but they are <i>like the chaff</i> which the wind drives away.”	Personification
Psalm 57:4 – “My soul is among <i>lions</i> ; I must lie among those who breathe forth fire, the sons of men whose teeth are spears and arrows.”	Anthropomorphism

Topic 2: Figures of Substitution

The figure of hypocatastasis involves a substitution of one word for another (e.g., lions for enemies in the example above). In that case, however, the emphasis is more on comparison. Many times we have a substitution of one word or phrase for another, but without emphasis on comparison. This topic will introduce you to two common figures of substitution: metonymy and synecdoche. They can be easily confused, so they must be studied carefully.

Metonymy

A metonymy involves the substitution of one word for another closely associated with it. Usually this will involve a noun, but sometimes it can also be a verbal action. The word that is the figure will be an attribute of another word, or it will suggest another word (e.g., crown for royalty). Notice the following example from Leviticus 26:6:

...and no sword will pass through your land. (literal translation)

In this case the word “sword” is an intended substitute for another word. The author is really trying to say that war will not come upon the land as a result of an invading army. More exactly this is a metonymy of cause for effect. That is, the word “sword” is the cause, and “war” is the effect. The figure of metonymy is a broad category of which there are four basic subgroups.

Metonymy of cause for effect. In this type of metonymy, the cause is stated but the effect is intended (as in the example above). Here is another example from Psalm 5:9:

There is nothing reliable in what they say; . . . their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue. (NASB)

The author uses the word “throat,” but he intends something else, namely, their speech. David is talking about the wicked and the evil things they speak about. Their speech is destructive, just as

destruction is associated with a grave. So, “throat” is put for speech, the throat being the organ that causes or enables speech.

Metonymy of effect for cause. In this case the effect is stated but the cause is intended (the reverse of the above). Psalm 51:8 is a good example:

Make me to hear joy and gladness. (literal translation)

Joy and gladness are emotions. One cannot hear them, although one can hear sounds coming from a person who is joyful. Yet in this verse in Psalm 51, David is hoping to hear God’s assurance of forgiveness that will bring him joy and gladness. So, joy and gladness are the effect that is put in place of the cause (forgiveness).

Metonymy of subject for attribute/adjunct. In this type of metonymy, a word (subject) is put in place of another that is an attribute or adjunct of it. Psalm 23:5 is an example:

You prepare a table in my presence, before my enemies. (literal translation)

Is David really speaking about a table and that’s all? No! The word “table” is substituted for something associated with it, namely, a feast. The words table and feast are associated, since a feast would be set on the table. So the word “table” (the subject) is substituted for the word “feast” (an adjunct of it).

Metonymy of attribute/adjunct for subject. This is the opposite of the preceding example. Now the attribute or adjunct that pertains to some subject is put for the subject itself. Genesis 49:10 serves as a good example:



The scepter will not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet.

A scepter, of course, is a staff or baton borne by a sovereign as an emblem of authority. Yet this verse is not really making a prophecy about any literal scepter. Rather, the verse is speaking about the ruling authority within the covenant nation that will remain with the tribe of Judah. So this is a metonymy in which an item that is an adjunct (in this case, a scepter) is put in place of the subject itself (namely, the ruling authority). Genesis 49:10 is a prophecy that is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Being a descendant of David, Jesus was born of the tribe of Judah. He will one day inherit a kingdom and rule over all.

In Psalm 72:9 we see another example of a metonymy of attribute/adjunct for subject. In this case, however, we have a verbal action put in place of another:

Before him the coastlands will bow down, and his enemies will lick the dust.

In this case, the appearance of a thing is put for the thing itself. That is, the real subject is being prostrated and humbled. The idea “to lick the dust” signifies this. We could analyze the figure in this way:

- **Subject:** Being made prostrate in humility
- **Words substituted:** “Lick the dust”
- **Common element:** Made low and humbled; subject to
- **Point of the figure:** The psalmist predicts that the king will completely triumph over his enemies—those who oppose his rule. They will be completely humbled and made subject to him.

Psalm 72:9 is also a prophecy that finds fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as the book of Revelation predicts, He will one day return in glory, and all those who oppose Him will be humbled and subjected to Him.

QUESTION 6

The following verse, Psalm 20:1, contains a metonymy in which an attribute or adjunct is substituted for the actual subject. What is the actual subject for the words in italics? “May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble; may *the name of the God of Jacob* set you (securely) on high” (literal translation).

- A. An angel of God
- B. The name “I AM”
- C. Yahweh (His personal name)
- D. God Himself

QUESTION 7

Read the following verse from Psalm 7:3. Then choose the best answer that describes the subject. “O LORD my God, if I had done this; if there were *iniquity* in my hands” (literal translation).

- A. This is a metaphor, and David is comparing what he has done to iniquity.
- B. This is a metonymy of attribute for subject: David is speaking about some deed he might have done that would be regarded by God as iniquity.
- C. This is a metonymy of cause for effect: David’s iniquity has caused him to do wrong.
- D. This is a personification: David’s iniquity is personified as being in his hands.

A more extensive presentation on “Figures of Speech” is placed in the Appendix at the end of the course. You can use this in the future when you need help analyzing figures of speech.

Synecdoche

A synecdoche is similar to a metonymy in that it involves a substitution of one word (or concept or phrase) for another. With synecdoche, however, the words involved have a closer association. We can say that they are related generically; they are of the same genus. This happens, for example, when a part of something is specified but the greater whole is intended. Psalm 24:3-4 is an example.

3 Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place?

4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart. (NASB)

The psalmist has raised the question about who is qualified to appear at the Lord’s holy place (i.e., in Jerusalem). The requirement (he answers) is to have clean hands and a pure heart. In this verse, two parts of the body are mentioned, hands and heart. Yet the psalmist is not limiting the cleanness to these only. He really means the purity of the whole person. So in this example we have the part of

something put for the whole. Yet the hands, heart, and whole person are all of the same genus, namely, a human being. So this is a synecdoche rather than a metonymy.

Distinguishing metonymy and synecdoche. The key thing to look for in trying to distinguish these two figures is to observe whether or not the words are related generically. Let me illustrate.

With metonymy, the words/concepts are of different genera.

Psalm 23:5 You prepare a **table** before me in the presence of my enemies. (NASB, emphasis added)

By a “table,” the psalmist means a feast. Yet “table” and “feast” are not of the same genus. One is edible, while the other is not.

With synecdoche, the words/concepts are of the same genus. Matthew 6:11 illustrates this

Give us this day our daily **bread**. (NASB, emphasis added)

The Lord does not mean bread only; rather He means our daily food (of all sorts). But in this case, “bread” and “food” are of the same genus, namely, that which is edible.

There are four broad categories of synecdoche:

Synecdoche of general for specific. In this case a more general word is substituted for a more specific word. We have an example in Psalm 145:21:

And **all flesh** will bless His holy name. (NASB, emphasis added)

The psalmist means a specific kind of flesh, namely, that of human beings. So the point is that all mankind is to bless (or praise) God’s name.

Synecdoche of specific for general. This is just the reverse of the preceding. A more general word/concept is intended than the one expressed in the text. Psalm 44:6 is an example:

For I will not trust in my **bow**; nor will my **sword** deliver me. (literal translation)

The point that the psalmist is making is that he will not rely on human weapons—not just a bow or sword, but any weapon of human making. So here we have a specific type of weapon put in the place of the more general category of weapons.

Synecdoche of the whole for the part. In this case, a word/concept representing the entirety of something is put in the place of a portion of it. An example is 1 Samuel 1:22:

But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, “I will not go up until the child is weaned; then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD and stay there **forever**.” (NASB, emphasis added)

In this verse Hannah was referring to her son serving in the LORD’s tabernacle. Yet there is no way he could literally do this forever. At some point he would die. So what she really means is Samuel’s whole life. Hence, we have a word representing the whole of time (forever) put in place of a word/concept that is a lesser part of it (his lifespan).

Synecdoche of the part for the whole. This is the reverse of the preceding. Notice this example from Psalm 87:2:

The LORD loves **the gates of Zion** more than all the other dwelling places of Jacob.

The psalmist is not trying to restrict the LORD’s love merely to the city gates. He means the whole city of Zion. Thus God has a special love for Jerusalem above all the other cities of the country. So a part of the city (the gates) is put for the entire city.

QUESTION 8

Study the following verses, each of which contains a synecdoche (take note of the words in italics). Then match the verse with its proper category.

<i>Verse (author's own literal translation)</i>	<i>Figure and Category</i>
Psalm 143:2 – “Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for there is not righteous before You any living .”	Synecdoche of the whole for the part
Psalm 106:6 – “We have sinned with our fathers ; we have committed iniquity; we have behaved wickedly.”	Synecdoche of general for the specific
2 Samuel 12:10 – “And now a sword shall not depart from your house forever .”	Synecdoche of specific for general
Psalm 102:11 – “ My days are like a lengthened shadow; and I wither away like grass.”	Synecdoche of the part for the whole

Topic 3: Other Significant Figures

There are many more types of figures of speech than space allows for in this brief study. However, there are a few more common ones that we ought to be acquainted with.

Merism

A merism involves two words or concepts that are used together to express the totality of something. These two words will typically be contrasting parts or two extremities. A classic example is seen in Psalm 139:2:

You know when I **sit down** and when I **get up**;
even from far away you understand my motives.

Here the psalmist referred to the time when he sat down and then to the time when he got up. These words represent the extremities of time for the day. But the psalmist is not saying that God knows him only at those particular moments of the day. Rather he is saying that God knows him at these times and at all times in between these two. In other words God knows his every action at every moment of the day.

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a deliberately exaggerated statement for the purpose of emphasis or heightened effect. With hyperbole, more is said than is literally meant. Notice this example from Psalm 40:12:

My sins overtake me so I am unable to see;
they **outnumber the hairs of my head** so my strength fails me. (emphasis added)

The psalmist seems to feel overwhelmed by his own sins. Although they may be very numerous, he is exaggerating their extent when he says that they outnumber the hairs of his head. But even though he exaggerates their number, he still has a literal point to make, namely, that he senses how numerous his sins are. Because of his multiplied sins, even his strength is weakened.

Idiom

Sometimes figurative words become a standard or common expression of a culture that we call an idiom. This usually involves a phrase in which the collective meaning of the words is strikingly different from their individual meaning. An example would be “sons of God,” an idiom for angels (e.g., Job 1:6). Another example would be “breaking of bread” as an idiom for eating a meal. Idioms are usually peculiar to a given culture, and hence may require cultural sensitivity to discern. To “lift up the head” is an Old Testament idiom for honoring or extending favor to someone.

Irony

A writer uses irony when he says one thing but really intends something different, often intending the very opposite of what he literally says. Notice this example from Amos 4:4:

Go to Bethel and rebel! At Gilgal rebel some more! Bring your sacrifices in the morning, your tithes on the third day!

Bethel and Gilgal were illegitimate worship centers. Bethel, for example, was established by King Jeroboam as a place for the people in the northern kingdom of Israel to worship so they would not go to Jerusalem. The prophet was chiding the people when he urged them to go to these places to present their sacrifices. In effect, he was saying, “Go ahead and go to places like Bethel, but know that as you sacrifice there, you are really doing so in rebellion against God.”

Symbol

We have a symbol in the text when a material object is substituted for another reality (often implying some characteristic or moral truth about the latter). Zechariah 4:7 is an example:

Who are you, you **great mountain**? Because of Zerubbabel you will become a level plain.

In this verse, the great mountain is a symbol for the obstacles that stood in the way of rebuilding the fallen temple. The governor Zerubbabel would succeed in rebuilding the temple.

We must be very careful not to label something a symbol which was not meant to be so. Oftentimes the Bible will specifically identify the presence of a symbol (see Zech 3:8). At other times, careful observance of the context will be essential to determine this. There is a great danger in treating something as a symbol that was not intended as such, and we must always be careful not to interpret the Bible symbolically. That is, we must be sure that God intended for something to be understood as a symbol before we assume it to be one.

A horn is often a symbol in Scripture for power, especially military power. At times the horn can refer to the king himself, since he was responsible for military success and the defense of the nation. Notice Psalm 89:17-18:

17 You are the glory of their strength, and by Your favor **our horn** is exalted.

18 For our shield belongs to the LORD, and our king to the Holy One of Israel. (NASB, emphasis added)

QUESTION 9

Match the following verses with the correct figure of speech. Focus on the words in bold. You may, if you feel the need, look up the verses in your Bible to understand the context.

<i>Verse (author's own literal translations)</i>	<i>Figure</i>
Psalm 3:3 – “You, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the one who lifts my head. ”	Hyperbole
Psalm 148:14 – “He has lifted up a horn for his people.”	Irony
Psalm 139:3 – “You carefully observe my journeying and my lying down. You are familiar with all my ways.”	Symbol
Psalm 22:8 – “Entrust yourself to the LORD; let Him rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he trusted in him.” (spoken by the psalmist's enemies)	Merism
Psalm 6:6 – “Every night I make my bed swim ; with my tears I dissolve my couch. ”	Idiom

Topic 4: Figures in Psalm 91

At this point you have been introduced to quite a few of the figures of speech that you are likely to encounter in the book of Psalms. The final topic to this lesson is meant to be applicational, giving you an opportunity to practice what you have learned with one particular psalm, namely, Psalm 91. One of the benefits of working through a lesson like this is that it helps you become more sensitive to the presence of figures in the text. Having recognized the presence of a figure, we then need to discern what the author was seeking to convey by the use of this figure. What does the figure mean and how does this add to the author's message?

Psalm 91 is a psalm about the believer taking refuge in the Lord God and experiencing His protection and deliverance. Therefore it is a psalm of comfort and encouragement for those who put their trust in the Lord in the face of great danger. The psalm is composed of three general sections: verses 1-2, verses 3-13, and verses 14-16. In the first section (vv 1-2), we are introduced to the principle of seeking refuge in the Lord. In the second section (vv 3-13), we are given several examples of how the Lord protects the one who trusts in Him. In the third and final section (vv 14-16), the Lord Himself speaks with words of encouragement and promise for the one who loves Him and puts his trust in Him.

Psalm 91:1-2—The Principle of Security

The first two verses introduce us to an important principle of security: There is security and protection for the believer who trusts in the Lord. The first colon speaks about the man who dwells in the shelter (or hiding place) of the Most High. This expression for God Most High occurs first in Genesis 14:8, which introduces us to Melchizedek, priest of the Most High God. This stresses His exalted position above all else, thus emphasizing His qualification to protect others and to be a shelter for them. The second colon (v 1) amplifies the same thought: “will abide in the shadow of the Almighty” (NASB).

QUESTION 10

What kind of figure is the word “shadow”?

QUESTION 11

Now we have to decide what the figure of shadow is meant to depict. Choose the best answer from the following options:

- A. Refreshment (cool and refreshing)
- B. Mysterious (dark and uncertain)
- C. Unreliable (cannot be grasped)
- D. Protection (shielding from scorching sun)

QUESTION 12

In Psalm 91:2, the psalmist said to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress” (NASB). The words “You are” should be supplied, that is, “You are My refuge, etc.” What kind of figure are the words “refuge” and “fortress”?

QUESTION 13

What are the points of these figures in which the psalmist calls the LORD “my refuge” and “my fortress”? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Protection and safety
- B. Strong defense
- C. Cold and impersonal
- D. High and unattainable

QUESTION 14

Open your Life Notebook. As you reflect back on verses 1-2, what comes to your mind when you think of the LORD being your refuge and fortress? Are there times in your life when you find yourself fleeing to Him and finding shelter from trials or the attacks on your life? Having described the LORD and His comforting protection, the psalmist responds by saying “My God, in whom I trust.” It is not enough to know that the LORD is a protecting refuge. This benefit is for those who trust in Him. Write down how you think you can apply this principle in verses 1-2 to your life.

Psalm 91:3-13—The Lord’s Protecting Grace Illustrated

Having laid out the principle in verses 1-2 (that the God who is above all else is able to protect those who place their trust in Him), the psalmist now turned to present various illustrations of God’s protecting care. Several of these have to do with battlefield imagery, including disease that often accompanies warfare.



Assignment

- Read Psalm 91:3-13.

QUESTION 15

Verse 3 begins by assuring the trusting believer of God's deliverance from the snare of the hunter. Consider the following options for identifying this figure of speech and choose the best answer.

- A. This is a metaphor in which the psalmist compares one's enemies to a hunter.
- B. This is a symbol, in which the snare of the hunter symbolizes the attacks of the enemy.
- C. This is a synecdoche, in which a snare represents attacks against him.
- D. This is a hypocatastasis, in which the snare of the hunter implies a comparison (he is comparing the plots and insidious attempts against his life to the way a hunter lays his trap).

QUESTION 16

Psalm 91:4 promises that the Lord will cover the psalmist with His pinions, and refuge can be found "under His wings" (NASB). What kind of figure are these?

- A. A merism
- B. A metonymy
- C. A zoomorphism
- D. A synecdoche

QUESTION 17

The end of Psalm 91:4 states, "His faithfulness is a shield" (NASB). Since faithfulness is a character quality and a shield is a physical defensive item, we must have a figure of speech here. What is it?

QUESTION 18

Verses 5-10 seem to make several allusions to experiences on the battlefield. Do the promises pertain only to being in physical battle, or do we have a number of figures that ultimately speak of more general threats? For example, is the promise of protection from the arrow in verse 5 limited only to arrows, or is the word "arrow" a figure for weapons in general? In the following chart, match the following words and phrases in bold with the appropriate figure.

<i>Verse (author's own literal translations)</i>	<i>Figure</i>
Verse 5 – "You will not be afraid ... of the arrow that flies by day."	Synecdoche of species (specific for general)
Verse 6 – "Of the pestilence that stalks in the darkness."	Metonymy of subject for attribute (the container is put for the contents)
Verse 7 – " A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at your fight hand, but it shall not approach you. "	Personification
Verse 10 – "No evil will befall you, nor will a plague come near your tent."	Hyperbole

QUESTION 19

Psalms 91:11-13 introduces the subject of angelic help. There are thousands of holy angels whom God can call into service to help those who seek refuge in Him. One should not foolishly apply this truth, however, to put God to the test. Satan used these verses when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness (see Mt 4:6-7). The final verse (v 13) mentions several dangerous creatures that the trusting believer will tread on. This is probably intended to be understood figuratively. What kind of figure of speech do these creatures represent?

QUESTION 20

Regarding question 19, if these creatures are a figure of speech, what do they represent and what is the psalmist trying to convey? Choose the best answer from the following:

- A. The psalmist is promising that believers can literally walk on lions and snakes.
- B. The dangerous creatures are figurative of hostile powers (the wicked), and the psalmist is promising victory over such threats.
- C. Since this is a merism for all creatures (the bravest to the lowest), the psalmist is promising that mankind will have dominion over the entire animal realm.
- D. These animals can produce death, and therefore the psalmist is promising believers that they will have victory over death through resurrection.

Psalms 91:14-16—The Lord’s Promises and Words of Encouragement

In the final strophe the Lord Himself speaks as He promises His protection and offers words of encouragement for the child of God seeking refuge in Him.



Assignment

- Reading Psalm 91:14-16.

The first thing that the LORD reveals is the cause for delivering the one who trusts in Him. Many translations begin verse 14 by stating “Because he has **loved** Me” (NASB, emphasis added). Yet this is not the normal word meaning to love. Rather this word (Hebrew *hāshaq*) has the basic meaning of being attached to something. When emotions are involved, this can take on the meaning to desire or take pleasure in. (See the use of *hāshaq* in Deut 21:11, and compare 1 Kgs 9:19.) In fact the corresponding noun form (*hēsheq*) means a desire; a thing desired. Therefore the point of verse 14a is probably something like this: “Because he has desired Me, I will deliver him.”

QUESTION 21

The second colon in Psalm 91:14 talks about God setting the psalmist securely on high (i.e., protecting him), because “he has known My name.” This latter word “name” is a figure of speech. The psalmist does not have merely cognitive knowledge of God’s name. The word “name” stands for the complete character and reputation of God. To know (have intimate knowledge of) God’s character implies intimacy in the relationship (see Ex 33:17) and that one is trusting in and seeking Him (Ps 9:10). In light of this, what kind of figure is the word “name”?

- A. Metonymy
- B. Hypocatastasis
- C. Metaphor
- D. Synecdoche

In verse 15 we probably have another metonymy. The verse begins by stating, “He will call upon Me, and I will answer him.” The words “answer him” are a metonymy. What the LORD really means is that He will answer him by doing something on his behalf. That is, He will act favorably for him.

QUESTION 22

In the final verse (Ps 91:16), the Lord concludes by promising that the one who trusts in Him will be shown “My salvation.” The word “salvation” in the Old Testament commonly means deliverance, and the context clarifies what kind of deliverance is in view. Yet with the phrase “see My salvation,” the word “see” is a figure of speech. Of the following options which one is the best answer?

- A. Symbol - The believer will have a vision of Jesus dying on the cross.
- B. Hyperbole - The believer will not really see the deliverance, but he will be rescued.
- C. Simile - When God rescues him, it will be like seeing His salvation.
- D. Metonymy (effect for cause) - The believer will experience God’s deliverance.

QUESTION 23

Take some time now to reflect on the last three verses from Psalm 91. What truth stands out to you more than anything else? Perhaps it is about desiring God, or perhaps it is about knowing Him in a more intimate way. Or maybe you are impressed with the fact that He promises to be with you in trouble. Now see if you can write this down in your Life Notebook in the form of a principle. Here is an example of a principle in regard to desiring God: “If God is my refuge and I hope for His protection, I need to desire Him above all else.” After you have developed and written down your own principle, try to write down at least one specific way you can apply this principle in your life. In regard to the example above about desiring God, you could write, “I need to think of a specific way that I can express the fact that I desire God more than anything else.”

Lesson 5 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Which of the following verses uses a simile?

- A. Psalm 84:11: “For the LORD God is a sun and shield” (NASB).
- B. Isaiah 40:6: “All flesh is grass” (NASB).
- C. Psalm 42:1: “As a deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God!”
- D. Psalm 31:2: “Incline **Your ear** to me; rescue me quickly” (NASB).

QUESTION 2

In Matthew 16:6 Jesus’ reference to yeast (“beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees”) involves a figure known as a hypocatastasis that makes an implied comparison of the teachings of the religious leaders to yeast. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

When inanimate objects are given human attributes or portrayed as making human actions, as in the verse “All my bones shall say, ‘O LORD, who is like You?’” the figure is known as a personification. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

In Psalm 17:8 the psalmist prayed, “Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me in the shadow of **Your wings**” (NASB, emphasis added). The words “Your wings” are a figure known as an anthropomorphism. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

In Psalm 23:5 the word “table” in the verse “You prepare a table in my presence, before my enemies” (NASB) is an example of a metonymy, the word “table” being substituted for a feast that is associated with a table. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

Psalm 44:6 states, “For I will not trust in my *bow*; nor will my *sword* deliver me” (literal translation). In this case a specific type of weapon is substituted for the more general category of human weapons. Because the words “bow” and “sword” are of the same genus (they are generically related), this figure of speech is known as:

- A. Hypocatastasis
- B. Metaphor
- C. Synecdoche
- D. Metonymy

QUESTION 7

Psalm 95:3-4 reads, “The LORD is a great God and a great King above all gods, in whose hand are the depths of the earth, the peaks of the mountains are His also” (NASB). Verse 4 (the second line) is an example of a figure known as merism. *True or False?*

The psalmist described the conditions that will exist in the time of Messiah's rule in the following words (found in Ps 72:16):

May there be an abundance of grain in the earth;
on the tops of the mountains may it sway!
May its fruit trees flourish like the forests of Lebanon!

QUESTION 8

What kind of figure of speech is the psalmist using here? (Hint: We are **not** referring to the simile in the last line, "like the forests of Lebanon.")

- A. Merism
- B. Hyperbole
- C. Zoomorphism
- D. Hypocatastasis

Psalm 8 is a psalm of praise for God's graciousness to man in granting him an esteemed role in God's creation. Observe the following words:

When I consider Your heavens, the work of your fingers, The moon and the stars,
which You have ordained; What is man that You take thought of him, And the **son of man** that You care for him? (NASB, emphasis added)

QUESTION 9

In the verses above, the phrase "son of man" is

- A. A symbol for the king of the nation.
- B. An idiom for mankind in general.
- C. A personification of the heavenly planets.
- D. A metonymy for the person who will inherit his father's fortune.

QUESTION 10

In Psalm 44:6 we read, "For I will not trust in my **bow**; nor will my sword deliver me" (emphasis added). In this verse, what kind of figure is the word "bow"?

- A. A symbol of military weapons.
- B. This is an example of irony.
- C. This is a simile.
- D. This is a synecdoche (specific weapons are substituted for weapons in general).

Lesson 5 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1

<i>Analysis</i>	<i>Identification</i>
Subject	I (i.e., the psalmist)
Thing compared	A deer thirsting for streams of water
Common element	Experiencing the agony of not having one's desire met
Point of the figure	The psalmist (being oppressed by enemies and cut off from the temple worship), expresses his intense longing for communion with God.

QUESTION 2

A. In comparing the LORD to a shield, the point is that He is a protector.

D. In comparing the LORD to a sun, the point is that He is the source of blessing.

[The metaphor of the sun, probably alludes to God as a source of blessing. The second half of verse 11 supports this, when it speaks about what God gives and blesses people with. Although the sun can sometimes be seen as a threat because of its fierce rays and heat, in other contexts it is a positive thing. The sunshine causes the growth of fruits and vegetables for eating, and also provides warmth in frigid regions.]

QUESTION 3: Hypocatastasis

QUESTION 4

D. Jesus was comparing the teaching of the religious leaders to yeast, in order to make the point that their teaching quickly spread and influenced others. But its powerful influence must be resisted.

QUESTION 5

<i>Verse (author's own literal translations)</i>	<i>Figure</i>
Psalm 31:2 – “Incline <i>Your ear</i> to me; rescue me quickly.”	Anthropomorphism Metaphor
Psalm 18:2 – “The LORD is <i>my rock</i> and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge.”	
Psalm 114: 3-4 – “The sea looked and fled; the Jordan (river) turned back. <i>The mountains skipped</i> like rams, the hills like lambs.”	Personification
Psalm 17:8 – “Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me in the shadow of <i>Your wings</i> .”	Zoomorphism
Psalm 1:4 – “The wicked are not so, but they are <i>like the chaff</i> which the wind drives away.”	Simile
Psalm 57:4 – “My soul is among <i>lions</i> ; I must lie among those who breathe forth fire, the sons of men whose teeth are spears and arrows.”	Hypocatastasis

QUESTION 6

D. God Himself [In this case the word “name” is put in the place of God Himself. It is not the name that brings security but rather God Himself. In this metonymy, the name of a person is put for the person himself.]

QUESTION 7

B. This is a metonymy of attribute for subject: David is speaking about some deed he might have done that would be regarded by God as iniquity. [Primarily, this is a substitution of one word for another. David really had in mind some specific deed that would be evil in nature. Notice that he listed some possibilities in verse 4. While this is clearly a metonymy, some might argue that this is a metonymy of effect for cause. That is, the effect of what he has done was iniquity.]

QUESTION 8

<i>Verse (author's own literal translation)</i>	<i>Figure and Category</i>
Psalm 143:2 – “Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for there is not righteous before You any living. ”	Synecdoche of general for the specific
Psalm 106:6 – “We have sinned with our fathers ; we have committed iniquity; we have behaved wickedly.”	Synecdoche of specific for general
2 Samuel 12:10 – “And now a sword shall not depart from your house forever. ”	Synecdoche of the whole for the part
Psalm 102:11 – “ My days are like a lengthened shadow; and I wither away like grass.”	Synecdoche of the part for the whole

QUESTION 9

<i>Verse (author's own literal translations)</i>	<i>Figure</i>
Psalm 3:3 – “You, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the one who lifts my head. ”	Idiom
Psalm 148:14 – “He has lifted up a horn for his people.”	Symbol
Psalm 139:3 – “You carefully observe my journeying and my lying down. You are familiar with all my ways.”	Merism
Psalm 22:8 – “Entrust yourself to the LORD; let Him rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he trusted in him.” (spoken by the psalmist's enemies)	Irony
Psalm 6:6 – “Every night I make my bed swim; with my tears I dissolve my couch.”	Hyperbole

QUESTION 10: Metonymy [The word ‘shadow’ is a metonymy, and could be classified as a metonymy of subject for attribute.]

QUESTION 11

- D. Protection (shielding from scorching sun) [While a shadow could suggest several things, in this context the idea of ‘protection’ is the most appropriate. The first colon as well as all of vs 2 supports this idea.]

QUESTION 12: *Your answer should be one of the following:*

Metaphors, Metaphor [Both the words “refuge” and “fortress” are metaphors.]

QUESTION 13

- A. Protection and safety
B. Strong defense

[While the other characteristics in answers #3 and #4 may be true of a fortress in general, they do not fit the context of Psalm 91.]

QUESTION 14: *Your answer*

QUESTION 15

- D. This is a hypocatastasis, in which the snare of the hunter implies a comparison (he is comparing the plots and insidious attempts against his life to the way a hunter lays his trap). [The words “the snare of the hunter” are best understood as a hypocatastasis, since a comparison is in view.]

QUESTION 16

- C. A zoomorphism [The pinions/wings are a figure of safety and comfort.]

QUESTION 17: *Your answer should be one of the following:*

Metaphor, A metaphor

QUESTION 18

<i>Verse (author's own literal translations)</i>	<i>Figure</i>
Verse 5 – “You will not be afraid ... of the arrow that flies by day.”	Synechdoche of species (specific for general)
Verse 6 – “Of the pestilence that stalks in the darkness.”	Personification
Verse 7 – “A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at your fight hand, but it shall not approach you.” (whole verse)	Hyperbole
Verse 10 – “No evil will befall you, nor will a plague come near your tent.”	Metonymy of subject for attribute (the container is put for the contents)

QUESTION 19: Hypocatastasis [We have an implied comparison here.]

QUESTION 20

- B. The dangerous creatures are figurative of hostile powers (the wicked), and the psalmist is promising victory over such threats. [In Ps 58:3-5, the lies of the wicked are related to the actions of wild creatures.]

QUESTION 21

- A. Metonymy [The correct answer is metonymy. More specifically, this might be classified as a metonymy of attribute/adjunct for subject. See Bullinger, “Figures of Speech”, 608.]

QUESTION 22

- D. Metonymy (effect for cause) - The believer will experience God’s deliverance. [Since this is a figure of substitution (the word “see”—effect—is substituted for another action), a metonymy is the best choice.]

QUESTION 23: *Your answer*

Lesson 5 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1

C. Psalm 42:1: “As a deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God!”

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5: True

QUESTION 6

C. Synecdoche

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8

B. Hyperbole

QUESTION 9

B. An idiom for mankind in general.

QUESTION 10

D. This is a synecdoche (specific weapons are substituted for weapons in general).

Lesson 6: Grasping the Composition and Themes of the Psalter as a Whole

Lesson Introduction

You have probably heard the story of the five blind men who came across an elephant one day. Each of them felt a different part of the huge creature's body, and they each came to a different conclusion as to what they had found. One felt the trunk of the elephant, another its ivory tusk, another its rough hide, another its enormous floppy ears, and still another its tail. Because they could not *see* the creature as a whole, they failed to realize what they had found and argued incessantly with one another as to what it was.

One could encounter a similar challenge in approaching the book of Psalms. Anyone who has read much of the Bible at all realizes that the book of Psalms is characteristically different from any other book of the Bible. One's first impression is that these are simply a random collection of unrelated poems. If one reads a book like Galatians, he can readily see that the book has a very distinctive design. The six chapters are arranged in three major sections: (1) Paul's personal experience with the gospel, (2) a defense of the doctrine of justification by faith (all of grace), and (3) the practical implications of grace for the Christian life. Does the book of Psalms, however, have any intentional structure?

In this lesson we will see that there is some overall design to the book of Psalms, though not like what we find in a narrative book like Genesis or in a theological epistle like Galatians. Yet the way the Psalter is organized serves to highlight several important overarching themes.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: The Overall Arrangement
- Topic 2: Psalms 1 and 2 as a Double Introduction
- Topic 3: Books 1-3 and the Royal Psalms at the Seams
- Topic 4: Books 4-5 and the Tension of the Davidic Covenant Promises
- Topic 5: The Dominant Themes of the Psalter

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Be familiar with evidence that supports the theory that the current collection of psalms went through an editing process to arrive at the present arrangement
- Identify the five major divisions of the Psalter and explain the basis for these divisions
- Explain the connections between Psalm 1 and Psalm 2, and how this points to the conclusion these form a double introduction to the entire Psalter
- State three key themes that are interwoven throughout the Psalter

Preparing for the Lesson

A bitter cold wind howled across the campus as the last remnant of fall leaves dropped from the trees. A layer of ice had already started forming on the fountains and ponds. Winter had definitely arrived, and so had the colds and viruses that so typically come with it. Tom noticed that Kate had not been in class for several days now. As soon as he arrived back at his college apartment, Tom called her up on the phone to check and see how she was doing. After all, Kate rarely missed class.

“Oh, hi, Tom,” Kate muttered, clearing her throat as she struggled to speak. “Yes, I have been sick, but I think I’m about to pull out of this horrible flu that’s had me down the past four days.” Tom, hoping to sound sympathetic to her plight, responded, “Hey, Kate, I’m so sorry to hear you’ve been sick. The Psalms class just isn’t the same without you.” Kate appreciated the moment of compassion—even elated that Tom had even noticed her absence. “Well,” she said, “I miss being there. Each one of the psalms is a delight, like getting lost in a beautiful forest.”

“Speaking of a forest,” Tom quickly replied, “what do you think about the Psalms as a whole, you know, being able to discern the forest from the trees? Someone obviously put some thought into how the whole thing is laid out.” There was silence for a moment before Kate finally answered. “Tom, I don’t think there is any grand design for the Psalms; they are just individual poems, that’s all.” “Kate,” Tom retorted, trying not to sound too know-it-all, “you obviously missed something important when you were sick from class. There is credible evidence that someone has edited the final collection of psalms in a careful and deliberate way. Furthermore, as we observe the overall design, we can see how the author builds an overall message and interweaves important themes. Give me just five minutes, and I’ll email you over a copy of my class notes. You’re really going to love this.” “OK, Tom,” Kate sighed, “Sounds like I’m in for something new! I can tell you’re obviously excited about this.”

Topic 1: The Overall Arrangement

An important clue regarding the composition of the Psalms is found in Psalm 72:20 which states, “This collection of the prayers of David son of Jesse ends here.” At first this may seem to be a strange comment, since many Davidic psalms follow Psalm 72. This, then, is evidence that at one time there was a certain collection of Davidic psalms to which this note was appended at the end. Scholars propose different theories as to how the present collection of psalms came to be, but most are agreed that there must have been earlier shorter collections that eventually were combined and perhaps combined again (or rearranged again) until we have the collection of 150 psalms. One plausible theory is that the individual psalms were entrusted to the Levitical priests at the Old Testament temple, and they would have placed them into collections of psalms. Early on there may have been multiple collections, but these were eventually merged into one single collection, with the whole process being completed during the postexilic period (i.e., after 539 BC). This theory of collections does not take away from the doctrine of inspiration. We can confidently affirm that each psalm was written by a human author who was carefully guided by the Holy Spirit as he wrote, so that what was written was exactly what God wanted to say. Yet there was a process of making collections of psalms that took place over a long period of time until the Psalter finally came to be in its final shape. Somewhere along the way, the editorial comment we find in Psalm 72:20 was inserted.

QUESTION 1

Psalm 72:20 (“This collection of the prayers of David son of Jesse ends here”) marks the end of the psalms that were written by David. *True or False?*

With this observation about Psalm 72 in mind, scholars have also noticed that there are similarly worded doxologies at certain junctures in the Psalter that seem to be independent of the psalm to which they are appended. These doxologies always contain the words “Blessed be the LORD,” and they always end with the word “Amen.” (The word “amen” occurs only in four verses in the Psalms, and always in one of these doxologies.) For instance, at the conclusion to Psalm 72 (and immediately before v 20) we find the following doxology:

18 **“Blessed be the LORD** God, the God of Israel,
Who alone works wonders.
19 And blessed be His glorious name forever;
And may the whole earth be filled with His glory.”
Amen, and Amen.” (Psalm 72:18-19, NASB, emphasis added)

Similar doxologies appear throughout the Psalter:

Concluding Doxologies in the Psalter			
Psalm 41:13 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen.	Psalm 72:18-19 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone works wonders. And blessed be His glorious name forever; and may the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen.	Psalm 89:52 Blessed be the LORD forever! Amen and Amen.	Psalm 106:48 Blessed Be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting even to everlasting. And let all the people say, “Amen.” Praise the LORD!

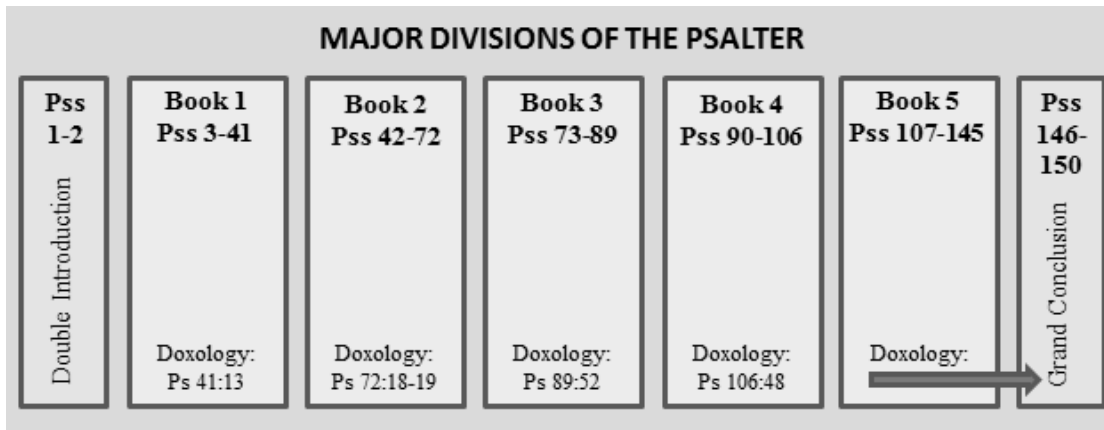
At the very end of the Psalter we find five “Hallelujah” psalms, namely, Psalms 146-150 (each of which begins and ends with the Hebrew word “Hallelujah,” that is, “Praise the LORD”). Together these final five psalms seem to form one grand conclusion to the entire Psalter. There is also reason to believe that Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 form a double introduction at the beginning of the Psalter.

QUESTION 2

Of the following words or phrases, which ones will be found in a concluding doxology in the book of Psalms? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Salvation belongs to the Lord
- B. Blessed be the Lord
- C. Praise the Lord
- D. His lovingkindness is everlasting
- E. Amen

On the basis of these observations, scholars then deduce that the entire Psalter is divided into five collections (or books), preceded by a double introduction at the beginning (Ps 1–2) and a grand conclusion at the end (Ps 146–150).



QUESTION 3

Of the following statements, which one is true?

- A. The book of Psalms is divided into six major divisions or books.
- B. Psalm 146–150 (all hallelujah psalms) are considered a single grand conclusion.
- C. Psalm 1–3 form an introduction to the book of Psalms.
- D. There are seven doxologies throughout the book of Psalms.

Within each individual book, we can observe smaller collections and obvious efforts at organization. For example, Book 3 begins with a collection of Asaph psalms (Ps 73–83). Each of these has a superscription that reads, “A Psalm of Asaph.” Yet all of Book 1 contains “Psalms of David” (all but two of them [Ps 10 and 33] have the superscription “A Psalm of David,” but probably these two are also Davidic).

We have another clue that smaller collections once existed on the basis of what is stated in 2 Chronicles 29:30: “King Hezekiah and the officials told the Levites to praise the Lord, using the psalms of David and Asaph the prophet.”

Topic 2: Psalms 1 and 2 as a Double Introduction

It is not accidental that Psalms 1 and 2 happen to be the first two psalms of the Psalter. A careful study of these two psalms suggests that they have been deliberately chosen to head up the Psalter. Furthermore, there are some key links between these two psalms that closely associate them together as a sort of double introduction, as the following observations demonstrate:

1. The word “blessed” (Hebrew *ʾašrê*) is the first word of Psalm 1 and also concludes the last line of Psalm 2, like bookends binding these two psalms as a literary unity.

Psalm 1:1, “How **blessed** is the one who does not follow the advice of the wicked.”

Psalm 2:12, “How **blessed** are all who take shelter in him.”

2. Both psalms utilize the Hebrew verb *hāgāh* (to meditate) but with different connotations. In fact a contrast is formed between the person who lives in submission to God and the person who lives in rebellion against Him.

Psalm 1:2, We see the person who **meditates** (*hāgāh*) on the Word of God—a paragon of faith: “He **meditates** on His commands day and night.”

Psalm 2:1, We see the kings and pagan peoples who reject God’s lordship over their lives: “Why do the nations rebel? Why are the countries **devising plots** (Hebrew *hāgāh*) that will fail?”

3. Both psalms present two paths of life from which the reader must choose—either walking in submission to God or in going one’s own way and rebelling against Him. In Psalm 1 one must choose the way of the righteous or choose the way of the wicked. In Psalm 2 one must choose between worshipping the LORD and honoring His anointed Son, or in taking one’s stand against them.

4. Both psalms conclude with the thought that there is a wrong *way* (Hebrew *derek*) in which one may walk that ultimately leads to *perishing* (Hebrew *’ābad*).

Psalm 1:6, “But the *way* of the wicked will *perish*” (NASB).

Psalm 2:12, “. . . that He not become angry, and you *perish* in the *way*” (NASB).

QUESTION 4

All the following statements are true except one. Which one is **not** true?

- A. The word “blessed” occurs at the beginning of Psalm 1 and at the end of Psalm 2.
- B. Both Psalms 1 and 2 indicate that the wicked or rebellious will perish.
- C. Both Psalms 1 and 2 present a choice that must be made, either to side with the LORD or against Him.
- D. Both Psalms 1 and 2 make a play on the Hebrew word *hāgāh*, normally meaning to meditate.
- E. The primary theme of both psalms is the kingly rule to be given to God’s Son.

Many scholars have concluded that Psalm 1 serves as an introduction to the entire Psalter and gives us the true purpose of it. Psalm 1 points us in the direction of how one is to have a blessed or happy life. One must first choose the way of the righteous above the way of the wicked. This involves a rejection of the advice given by the wicked, and (to the contrary) learning to meditate and find one’s delight in God’s Word, that is, the commands and direction He gives. Life will certainly have its sorrows (as the lament psalms bear witness), but the righteous man will bear fruit and prosper, unlike the wicked whose life amounts to nothing more than chaff.

QUESTION 5

Take a moment to reflect on Psalm 1 again. In this study we have suggested that this psalm is an introductory psalm to the entire Psalter. Try to state in your own words why this psalm makes for a good introduction to the whole collection. How does it challenge your own life, and what personal implications do you see for yourself?

Psalm 2 introduces us to the theme of the great messianic hope that often surfaces throughout the Psalter. God had promised to David that one of his descendants would eventually have an eternal throne and kingdom (see 2 Sam 7:12-16). Since David is the author of so much of the Psalter, it is not surprising that he would reflect on this wonderful promise of God in many of the psalms he wrote. Yet for those who came later—especially for those who lived after the nation’s defeat by Assyria (ca. 722 BC) and later still by the Babylonians beginning in 605 BC—they may have been tempted to question God’s promises for the Davidic monarchy. So Psalm 2 is used as an introduction to the first collection of psalms to assure the nation (and God’s people throughout the ages) that the Lord’s anointed ruler has not really been defeated nor is He even threatened by those who would attempt to usurp His throne.



Assignment

- Read 2 Samuel 7:12-16 and then read Psalm 2:7-9.

QUESTION 6

What is actually promised to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-16? Check all that are true. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. God promised David's descendant that He would establish the throne of His kingdom forever.
- B. God promised that David's descendant would lead the nation in victory over Assyria.
- C. God promised that David's descendant would have a father/son relationship with God.
- D. God promised that David's descendant would be the wisest king to ever live.

QUESTION 7

If 2 Samuel 7 promises David's descendant an eternal throne and kingdom, Psalm 2 gives us a hint at the extent of that kingdom. As you read Psalm 2:7-9, what is the extent of this kingdom?

- A. It is the same size as David's kingdom in 1000 BC.
- B. Since David's son was Solomon, the extent of the kingdom would be the same as Solomon's kingdom.
- C. The kingdom of David's descendant will be the same as the land promised to Abraham.
- D. David's descendant will have a much larger kingdom than David; it will be to the ends of the earth.



Assignment

- Read the following verses from Psalm 89: verses 1-4, 19-29, 30-37, 38-40, 46-51.

As history plays itself out, there remains a certain tension between the Lord's promise to David's seed of an eternal throne/kingdom and what the nation actually experiences. The Babylonian exile in the sixth century BC left the bulk of the nation scattered outside the land of promise and without a king in the line of David. Thus when we come to Psalm 89, the author affirmed God's promises to David of a king and kingdom—the Davidic covenant—(note vv 3-4, 19-37), but he questioned why the Lord had seemingly breached His promises to David (vv 38-45). (Not all scholars agree that Psalm 89 was written after the Babylonian invasion of 605 BC, but that is probably the predominant view. Marvin Tate, for example, concludes, "All in all, the fixing of a specific historical context is an uncertain business, but the present psalm is probably either exilic or postexilic [i.e., after 597 B.C.E., but more probably after 500 B.C.E.]" [*Psalms 51—100*, Word Biblical Commentary, 417].)

QUESTION 8

Which covenant is primarily in view in Psalm 89?

Perplexed, the psalmist wrote in Psalm 89:38-40,

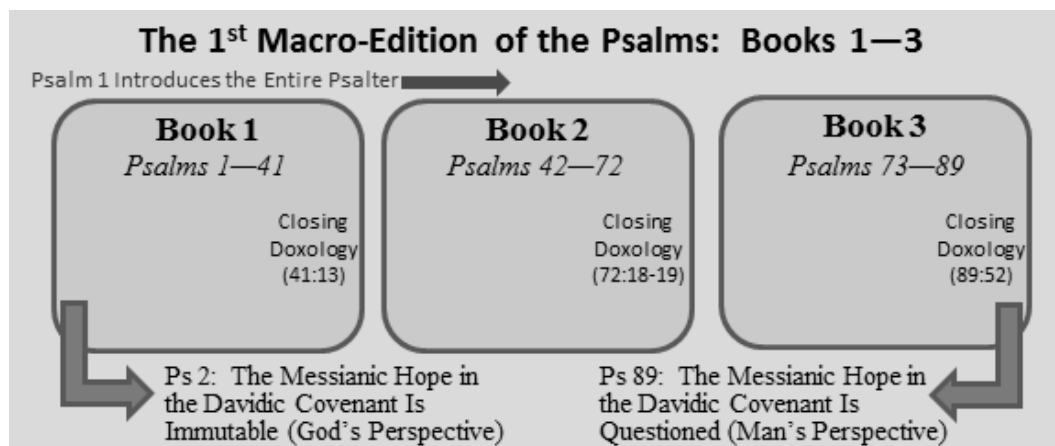
- 38 But you have spurned and rejected him;
you are angry with your chosen king [literally, your anointed].
- 39 You have repudiated your covenant with your servant;
you have thrown his crown to the ground.
- 40 You have broken down all his walls;
you have made his strongholds a heap of ruins.

Hence to the author of Psalm 89, God's promises to David seem contradictory to the nation's experience in history. How long will this last? From God's perspective, however, His promises have not failed; there is another explanation for the delay in fulfillment.

QUESTION 9

Take a moment to read Psalm 89:1-4 again. In the remainder of the psalm, the psalmist seems to have had questions about God's faithfulness, yet in the opening two verses he affirmed God's faithfulness. Possibly he was experiencing an inner struggle over this, but as he wrote the psalm he began by affirming by faith what he knows to be true. What about you? Do you have times when there is an emotional struggle going on inside of you, so that you question God's faithfulness? Are there any promises you feel God has made to you that you are not seeing fulfilled at this time? Take a moment to write down the thoughts that come to your mind, and then state what you know to be true about God's promises and His faithfulness to them.

Interestingly Psalm 2 and Psalm 89 are like bookends to the first major portion of the Psalter (Ps 1–89). (Some scholars refer to Books 1-3 as the first macro-edition.) Psalm 1–2 stand at the head of Book 1, while Psalm 89 concludes Book 3, in what is probably an intentional arrangement.



Topic 3: Books 1–3 and the Royal Psalms at the Seams

The theme of the messianic hope through the Davidic covenant—so prominent in both Psalms 2 and 89—is not just to be found at the bookends of this first macro-edition. Interestingly the messianic hope can be observed at the *seams* of these three books as well (the seams being Ps 41–42 and Ps 72–73). For that Psalm 41 begins with the familiar word “blessed” (Hebrew *’ašrê*)—thus linking it back to Psalms 1 and 2—and applauds the man who has compassion on the helpless: “How blessed is the

one who treats the poor properly! When trouble comes, the LORD delivers him” (Ps 41:1). Although this principle is applicable to all, it finds its highest fulfillment in the Messiah Himself.

In the middle section of the psalm (vv 4-9), we are introduced to the enemies of this blessed man who is compassionate on the poor and helpless. He is even betrayed by a close friend: “Even my close friend whom I trusted, he who shares meals with me, has turned against me.” This verse is quoted in John 13:18 in reference to Judas, the disciple who betrayed Jesus. In the psalm the psalmist’s enemies mocked him, in that he would lie down and not rise again (v 8).

The final paragraph then looks at his triumph over his enemies. This begins with a prayer, “As for you, O LORD, have mercy on me and raise me up, so I can pay them back.” The ultimate fulfillment of this psalm applies to the Messiah, the Lord Jesus. God will literally raise him up, and He will repay His enemies, which affirms what was said of Him already in Psalm 2. Finally, Psalm 41:12 states, “As for me, you uphold me because of my integrity; you allow me permanent access to your presence.” In its application to the Lord Jesus, we can certainly think of His ascension to the right hand of the Father’s presence. Psalm 41 thus reinforces what we first learned in Psalm 2: the messianic king will prevail over His enemies.

QUESTION 10

The first seam that we come to in the Psalter is found at which location?

- A. Psalms 2–3
- B. Psalms 41–42
- C. Psalms 72–73
- D. Psalms 99–100

Psalm 41—with its messianic emphasis—concludes Book 1 of the Psalter, but we should be careful to observe the relationship that Psalms 42 and 43 (that open Book 2) have with Psalm 41. Scholars believe that Psalm 43 was at one time a part of Psalm 42. Notice the repeated refrain in Psalm 42:5; 42:11; and Psalm 43:5. In addition the rhetorical question in Psalm 42:9, “I will pray to God, my high ridge: ‘Why do you ignore me? Why must I walk around mourning because my enemies oppress me?’” is repeated in almost the same language at Psalm 43:2: “For you are the God who shelters me. Why do you reject me? Why must I walk around mourning because my enemies oppress me?” For purposes of analysis, we should view Psalms 42 and 43 as one literary piece; together they head up the “Korah collection” (Ps 42–49).

We should notice the commonality between Psalm 41 and Psalms 42–43, namely, the taunting of the enemy in contrast to the psalmist’s trust. Yet there is another contrast: Psalm 41 emphasizes confidence and vindication, whereas Psalms 42 and 43 emphasize despair and rejection.

At the conclusion of Book 2, we meet with Psalm 72, a psalm written either by Solomon or for him (some scholars think David may have written the psalm as a prayer and hope for his son Solomon). In either case, with Psalm 72 we get a glimpse of the kingship with its Davidic covenant promises being effectively transferred to Solomon in keeping with 2 Samuel 7:12-16. At the same time, however, Psalm 72 envisions a righteous ruler who far exceeds Solomon.

This is a messianic psalm having its ultimate fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 8 asserts that His rule will be from sea to sea, and verse 11 predicts that all nations will serve him, that is, He will rule the whole world and be worshipped by all its inhabitants. It is no accident that Psalm 72—one of the grandest portraits of Messiah’s glorious reign over the world—was chosen to conclude Book 2. We also observe that Psalm 41 (which concluded Book 1) began by noting his concern for the helpless. This is picked up again in the opening paragraph of Psalm 72. As the Messiah judges the world in righteousness, “He will defend the oppressed among the people; he will deliver the children of the poor and crush the oppressor” (Ps 72:4).

QUESTION 11

Both Psalm 41 and Psalm 72 find their ultimate fulfillment in the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. What do these two psalms have in common? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. In both psalms the main figure is burdened to help the helpless and needy in society.
- B. In both psalms the main figure is called blessed (Hebrew *'ašrē*) by others.
- C. Both psalms emphasize the universal nature of His kingdom (to the ends of the earth).
- D. Both psalms emphasize the king's righteous rule on the earth.

Following Psalm 72 we encounter another seam between Books 2 and 3. As Book 3 opens, we find eleven psalms of Asaph, the first of which is Psalm 73. Immediately there is a strong change of mood as we transition from Psalm 72 to Psalm 73. In the former, the nation's king and his righteous rule over the world are idealized, whereas the latter considers the injustice of this world and the seeming prosperity of the wicked. This sets the stage for what follows. Throughout the remainder of Book 3, the exile comes into focus in the community laments (see especially Ps 74; 79; 80; 83; 85:1-8; 89:39-52).

At the national level, Book 3 begins to ponder the nation's dismay at not finding Psalm 72 realized in her history. With the Babylonian exile of the sixth century BC, hope seems to be lost that God will fulfill His promises to David. This theme reaches its climax in Psalm 89. Bullock concludes, "When we look at the seams where the first macro-collection (Ps 2–89) was pieced together, we see the tension and hopes of Israel's history written into the collection. On the editorial level, Psalms 2 and 89 ponder the fate of Israel's national enemies, Assyria and Babylonia, who had wrought havoc on God's people" (*Encountering the Book of Psalms*, 65).

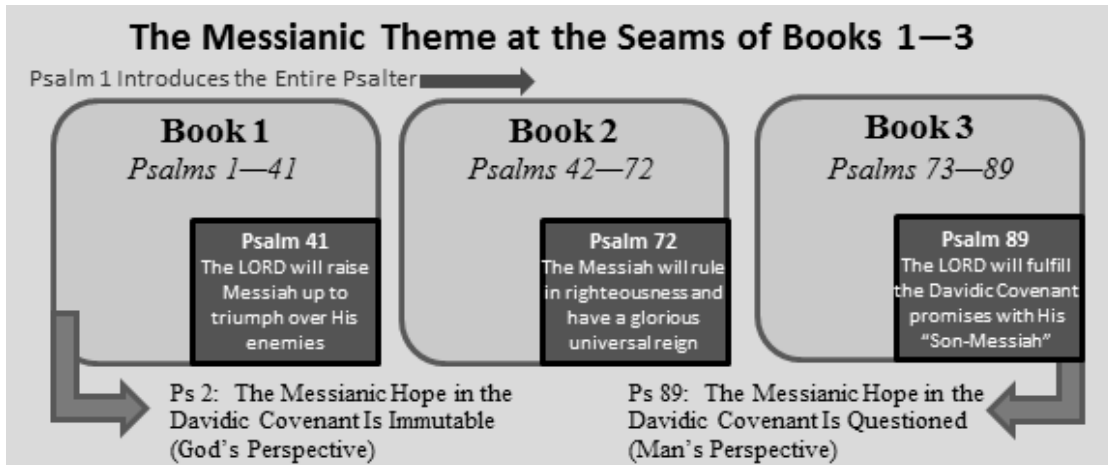
QUESTION 12

Another seam in the Psalter occurs with Psalm 72 and Psalm 73. In Psalm 72, we see the glorious King bringing in a kingdom in which justice prevails. In Psalm 73, we see the psalmist's discouragement over the injustice of this world and the seeming prosperity of the wicked. This is a good reminder to us that we will never see justice completely realized in this realm, though we live with the hope that one day the Lord Jesus will return to set things right and rule righteously. What did the psalmist learn in Psalm 73 that helped him to keep perspective about the wicked in this age? (You might want to read Ps 73:15-28.) Describe one situation that you observe in your culture where this truth is helpful to you. Record your response in your Life Notebook.

So where does the nation's failure and the fallen monarchy stand in light of Jerusalem's destruction in 586 BC? The nation's hope of revival and restoration are bound up in the Messiah. Despite the bewilderment of the psalmist who wrote Psalm 89, the LORD God assures us that the Davidic covenant promises will be realized one day in a ruler who experiences a unique Father/son relationship with Him:

He will call out to me, "You are my father, my God, and the protector who delivers me." I will appoint him to be my firstborn son, the most exalted of the earth's kings. I will always extend my loyal love to him, and my covenant with him is secure. I will give him an eternal dynasty, and make his throne as enduring as the skies above. (Ps 89:26-29)

The chart on the next page depicts the role these messianic psalms play at the seams of Books 1-3:



Topic 4: Books 4–5 and the Tension of the Davidic Covenant Promises

Despite the certainty with which God reaffirmed the Davidic covenant promises in Psalm 89, the psalmist was perplexed. The enemies of the nation and the devastations they had wrought blurred the vision of the psalmist. To him, it seemed that God had hidden Himself and had forgotten His promises. How long was God's wrath against the nation going to continue? In his dismay he concluded Psalm 89 by writing,

- 49 Where are your earlier faithful deeds, O Lord,
 the ones performed in accordance with your reliable oath to David?
- 50 Take note, O Lord, of the way your servants are taunted,
 and of how I must bear so many insults from people!
- 51 Your enemies, O LORD, hurl insults;
 they insult your chosen king as they dog his footsteps.

QUESTION 13

The tension in Psalm 89 is not that God was unfaithful to His promises. The tension (for the psalmist) was that God was not doing things in the way the psalmist thought He should and in the timing he thought God should do it. We, too, often react the same way to God's promises by putting expectations on God of how we think He should do things. Yet in being faithful to us and honoring His promises, God may choose to do things differently than we might expect or in a timing different from what we prefer. Can you think of a situation in your life where you have acted in a way similar to the way the psalmist did? How did it turn out, and what did you learn about God's faithfulness?

As Book 4 opens, Psalm 90 provides a partial answer for the psalmist's questioning. The answer comes from no less a stalwart of the nation than Moses, the author of Psalm 90, the very one through whom God had given the Law before Israel's entry into the promised land. The first part of the answer is that God has always been a secure refuge for His covenant people throughout the years, and thus the problem does not lie with God:

- 1 O Lord, you have been our protector through all generations!

2 Even before the mountains came into existence,
or you brought the world into being,
you were the eternal God.

The second part of the answer is that the real problem is not the fault of God, but rather the nation's unfaithfulness to God and His Law:

7 Yes, we are consumed by your anger;
we are terrified by your wrath.

8 You are aware of our sins;
you even know about our hidden sins.

QUESTION 14

Why is Psalm 90 an appropriate psalm to initiate Book 4 of the Psalter?

- A. Since Moses is the earliest author of any psalm, it is appropriate to begin with a psalm written by him.
- B. Psalm 90 is another messianic psalm, and these always occur at the seams of the Psalter.
- C. Since it was to Moses that God first gave the Davidic covenant, it is appropriate to have Psalm 90 following Psalm 89—both of them are concerned about the Davidic covenant.
- D. Psalm 90 answers the question about God's faithfulness that was raised in Psalm 89, by going back to Moses (through whom the Law came) to show that the real problem for the nation was their sin of breaking God's Law.

In light of this, Psalm 90 concludes with a prayer for God's merciful dealings with the nation (vv 13-17). The remainder of Book 4 does not focus on the messianic hope, nor does it end with a messianic psalm as was the case in Books 1-3. Rather a series of psalms highlight the kingship of Yahweh theme, beginning with Psalm 93.

Psalm 93, Psalm 97, and Psalm 99 all begin by proclaiming, "The LORD reigns!" (also note Ps 96:10, and see Ps 95:3; 98:6; 99:4). There may be no Davidic king on the throne following the Babylonian exile, but the nation must never forget that God is always ruling—their heavenly King is securely on His heavenly throne. Psalm 103:19 declares,

The Lord has established his throne in heaven;
his kingdom extends over everything.

Furthermore there is the hope that He will come as the divine King to set things right:

8 Let the rivers clap their hands!
Let the mountains sing in unison before the LORD!

9 For he comes to judge the earth!
He judges the world fairly,
and the nations in a just manner. (Ps 98:8-9)

His just rule as King is not merely for Israel but for all nations:

Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns!
The world is established, it cannot be moved.
He judges the nations fairly." (Ps 96:10)

Furthermore, He has not forgotten His covenant promises that He originally made to Abraham and later reaffirmed to the patriarchs: “He always remembers his covenantal decree, the promise he made to a thousand generations—the promise he made to Abraham, the promise he made by oath to Isaac!” (Ps 105:8-9). So God continues to exercise His universal rule over the nations from heaven, and though He has not broken His covenant promises to Israel, He has withheld His blessings from her on account of the nation’s disloyalty. It is not by accident that Book 4 ends with Psalm 106, which is nothing less than a national confession and a plea for deliverance and regathering.

Psalm 106:6 states, “We have sinned like our ancestors; we have done wrong, we have done evil.” The psalm appears to have been written from the perspective of the Babylonian exile in light of the final verse (v 47): “Deliver us, O LORD, our God! Gather us from among the nations!” Its significance is reflected in the fact that this is the longest recorded confession in the whole Bible. The psalm surveys the waywardness of the nation from the time of the Exodus under Moses all the way to the time of the Babylonian exile in the sixth century BC. Through all these years they had learned that whenever there was a genuine confession of sin and seeking of God’s compassion, He heard their cry and delivered them on account of His covenant with them:

44 Yet he took notice of their distress, when he heard their cry for help.

45 He remembered his covenant with them, and relented because of his great loyal love.

46 He caused all their conquerors to have pity on them. (Ps 106:44-46)

This, then, was the way back to God and His blessings ... through humbling themselves before Him, confessing their sin, and crying out for His deliverance. Book 4 began by pointing the nation back to Moses, the giver of the Law, the Law they broke. Book 4 ends with a review of the nation’s unfaithfulness, culminating in their humility and confession of disobedience to that Law.

QUESTION 15

Like all the previous books in the Psalter, Book 4 also ends with a messianic psalm. *True or False?*

QUESTION 16

What is the relationship between the first psalm of Book 4 (Ps 90) and the final psalm of Book 4 (Ps 106)? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Psalm 90 pointed out that the nation had been disobedient to the Mosaic Law and ended with a plea for His favor to return; Psalm 106 records their national confession of sin, so that God’s favor might be restored and the nation regathered.
- B. Psalm 90 was given through Moses at the time of the Law; Psalm 106 was given through David at the time of his sin with Bathsheba.
- C. Psalm 90 shows the unchangeableness of God (He is eternal); Psalm 106 shows that He will eventually fulfill His promises to one of David’s descendants to have an eternal throne/kingdom.
- D. Psalm 90 was written by Moses, who led the Hebrews at the time of the Exodus and brought them to Mount Sinai to receive the Law; Psalm 106 is a record of the nation’s history, starting with the Exodus under Moses, to show their continual disobedience to the Law.

Book 5 (Ps 107–145) was also probably compiled late in the nation’s history (though many individual psalms in it were written much earlier). Psalm 137 reflects the period of exile after Jerusalem’s destruction in 586 BC: “By the rivers of Babylon we sit down and weep when we remember Zion ... How can we sing a song to the LORD in a foreign land?” (Ps 137: 1; 137:4).

The opening psalm to Book 5, Psalm 107, has a clear connection to the closing of Book 4. In the conclusion to Psalm 106, the psalmist declared, “He remembered his covenant with them, and relented because of his great loyal love” (Ps 106:45). Since God’s *hesed*—His loyal love—is the basis for His forgiveness and compassion of the nation (Ps 106:45), Psalm 107 that opens Book 5 is a psalm giving thanks to the LORD for His *hesed*. Notice Psalm 107:1, “Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, and his loyal love endures!” Furthermore, these exact words in Psalm 107:1 also begin Psalm 106:1. This call to give thanks for God’s *hesed* is repeated throughout Psalm 107 (note vv 8, 15, 21, and 31). Finally the psalm ends (Ps 107:43) by stating, “Whoever is wise, let him take note of these things! Let them consider the Lord’s acts of loyal love!” This demonstrates that Psalm 106 and Psalm 107 have been intentionally placed together at the seam of Books 4 and 5.

In Book 5, the last major section of the Psalter, the hope for the Davidic king is still alive (note esp. Ps 132:11; 132:17-18). This is given special treatment in Psalm 118, a psalm interestingly that begins (and ends) with the same words as Psalm 106 and Psalm 107 exalting the LORD’s loyal love. Yet now we see that the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant promises must first await a rejection by the nation’s leadership:

The stone which the builders **discarded** [rejected, despised] has become the cornerstone. This is the LORD’s work. We consider it amazing! (Ps 118:22-23, emphasis added)

The psalm then predicts the nation’s welcoming blessing on this rejected One who will ultimately save them: “Please LORD, deliver! Please LORD, grant us success! May the one who comes in the name of the LORD be blessed! We will pronounce blessings on you in the LORD’s temple” (Ps 118:25-26). Ironically, the One who is rejected is later given a blessed welcome. These are the words that the crowds greeted Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem for the last time before His crucifixion (Mt 21:9). The people knew them as the words for greeting their Messiah. Yet in light of Jesus’ rejection by the religious leaders, He predicted that these words would not find their ultimate fulfillment until a time in the far distant future when He would finally be welcomed as Messiah: “Look, your house is left to you desolate! For I tell you, you will not see me from now until you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!’” (Mt 23:38-39)

Mark Futato (*Interpreting the Psalms*, 94) draws the following conclusion:

So from Psalms 96, 98, 132, and 118 we discern that Books 4 and 5 teach how Israel is to respond to the apparent decline in the fortunes of the Davidic throne. These books contain clear hope that both the divine King and the messianic King would one day come to fulfill the promises made to David that Israel and the nations might experience the truly happy life that God held out in Psalm 2:12 when he said, “What joy for all who take refuge in him!” (NLT).

QUESTION 17

Although Book 5 does not begin or end with a messianic psalm, we do see an emphasis on the loyal love (*hesed*) of God, and this is all the more demonstrated in light of the rejection that God’s Anointed One must first experience. *True or False?*

The final psalm to Book 5, Psalm 145, concludes by exalting the glory of the Lord’s kingdom (vv 10-13) and anticipating that all nations will eventually bless His name: “My mouth will praise the LORD. Let all who live [literally, ‘all flesh’] praise his holy name forever!” Psalms 146–150 then form a grand conclusion to the entire Psalter with a symphony of praise to God. Worship is the ultimate goal that the entire universe might come to bow before our awesome God in total praise and adoration: “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!” (Ps 150:6).

Topic 5: The Dominant Themes of the Psalter

A number of themes are interwoven throughout the Psalter.

The Kingship of God. One of the more dominant themes is that of the kingship of God. As early as Psalm 2 we are introduced to the One who “sits in the heavens.” He is securely ruling on His throne, not in the least intimidated by those who think they can usurp His authority. He rules over creation—not passively but actively—and directs the course of history. Psalm 47:8 declares, “God reigns over the nations! God sits on His holy throne!”

His ultimate plan is to establish His kingdom on earth through His Son, the Anointed One, thus fulfilling His promise in Psalm 2:8-9. “I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the ends of the earth as your personal property. You will break them with an iron scepter; you will smash them like a potter’s jar!” In doing so, God will fulfill His covenant promises to David (2 Sam 7:12-16) that one of his descendants will have an eternal throne and kingdom. In the far distant future, God will exercise His wrath to establish His rule and overthrow all human kingdoms that oppose Him. The nations are warned to avoid God’s wrath by taking refuge in His Son and worshipping Him (Ps 2:11-12). When God does finally exercise His wrath and break into history to establish His rule, His Son will then have a kingdom in which righteousness, truth and justice prevail (Ps 72).

QUESTION 18

God is not exercising His rule as King now, and will only begin to do so when Jesus Christ returns to earth. *True or False?*

The LORD as refuge. Yet there is this interim period of time (before the Son’s kingdom is established on earth) in which God (though sovereignly ruling over creation) allows evil to exist and wicked men to seemingly prosper and even oppose the righteous (Ps 73). There is suffering and affliction of God’s people, and there is abuse of the poor and needy in society by those who seek power and wealth for themselves. This leads to a second dominant theme within the Psalter of “the LORD as refuge.” The psalms are full of the sufferings, afflictions and laments of the righteous. In such situations, they learn that God is good, His faithfulness never changes, and He delivers those who cry out to Him. Experiencing God’s faithfulness and deliverance in answer to our cries leads to renewed praise and worship. God is not only king; He is also the Shepherd of His sheep.

Blessing for the nations. Although God will exercise His wrath against those who oppose His rule, the Lord’s desire is to bless all nations in keeping with His promise in Genesis 12:3.

9 He brings an end to wars throughout the earth;

he shatters the bow and breaks the spear;

he burns the shields with fire.

10 He says, “Stop your striving and recognize that I am God!

I will be exalted over the nations! I will be exalted over the earth!” (Ps 46:9-10)

Although in history He made a covenant with one nation, namely, Israel, He has no intention of limiting His blessings to just one nation. Psalm 47 opens with this exhortation, “All you nations, clap your hands! Shout out to God in celebration! For the sovereign LORD is awe-inspiring; he is the great king who rules the whole earth!” (Ps 47:1-2).

This longing for all the nations of the world to experience God’s grace and blessing is elegantly set forth in the opening verses of Psalm 67:

1 May God show us his favor and bless us! May he smile on us! (Selah)

2 Then those living on earth will know what you are like;

all nations will know how you deliver your people.

3 Let the nations thank you, O God! Let all the nations thank you! (Ps 67:1-3)

QUESTION 19

If God were to bless your nation, in what ways can you envision Him doing that? What would you like to see happen in your country? Write down your ideas, and then spend a few moments praying over the things you wish God would do for your country.

The theme of God's kingship and His desire to bless all nations are beautifully woven together in Psalm 96. The Lord is coming to judge the earth—to rule over it—and then His blessings will be poured out on the peoples of the world, resulting in songs of praise among the nations. "Sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth! Sing to the LORD! Praise his name! Announce every day how he delivers! Tell the nations about his splendor! Tell all the nations about his amazing deeds!" (Ps 96:1-3). He will then be worshipped by all peoples (Ps 96:7-9). We have a taste of that now, as the gospel continues to spread among the nations while more and more people come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and worship Him. However, this psalm goes beyond this present age, for it looks forward to the time when He will come to judge the earth in righteousness (Ps 96:13). Mark Futato states,

Psalms 93-100 "are among the most exalted in the Psalter; they proclaim YHWH as King in sustained, joyful outbursts of praise." As such, Psalms 93-100 are arguably the theological heart of the book of Psalms with their sustained emphasis on God's kingship. At the heart of the book of Psalms is the passion of the King of the universe to bless the nations. (*Interpreting the Psalms*, 112-113).

When the LORD establishes His reign over all the earth (following the second coming of Christ), then we will see a reversal of Psalm 2. In Psalm 2 the nations are pictured as rebelling against God's rule. Psalm 138:4-5, however, looks to the future when the opposite will be true. Not only will they be in submission to the Lord, but also they will sing to Him in worship: "Let all the kings of the earth give thanks to you, O LORD, when they hear the words you speak. Let them sing about the LORD's deeds, for the LORD's splendor is magnificent."

The final doxology of the Psalter (Ps 146–150) depicts the universe in united praise, adoration and worship of the LORD God. He was the world's Creator. He became her Redeemer. And in the final analysis He will break into history to deliver the world from the evil one and establish His glorious kingdom of righteousness, justice, and peace. Futato concludes,

Thus, from beginning to end, the book of Psalms has a sustained focus on the heart of God that encompasses the nations. God desires that all peoples on earth take refuge in him and in so doing experience blessing from him, to the end that they, along with the whole cosmic order, might give glory to him (*Interpreting the Psalms*, 116).

Lesson 6 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Psalms 119:1-2 (‘‘This collection of the prayers of David son of Jesse ends here’’) is good evidence that Psalm 119 must have once stood as the final psalm of an earlier collection. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

How do the four doxologies in the Psalter (Ps 41:13; 72:18-19; 89:52; 106:48) help us discern an overall design for the Psalter?

- A. They confirm that blessing is the key theme of the Psalter.
- B. As a concluding statement to each major section, they help us discern the major divisions of the Psalter (and that the Psalter is composed of five books).
- C. Each doxology concerns a different theological subject.
- D. Each doxology reveals something new about the kingdom of God.

QUESTION 3

Scholars have concluded that Psalms 1 and 2 form a double introduction to the Psalter. All the following statements are true except one. Which one is **not** true?

- A. The word ‘‘blessed’’ occurs at the beginning of Psalm 1 and at the end of Psalm 2.
- B. Both Psalm 1 and 2 indicate that the wicked or rebellious will perish.
- C. Both Psalm 1 and 2 present a choice that must be made, either to side with the LORD or against Him.
- D. Both Psalm 1 and 2 make a play on the Hebrew word *hāgāh*, normally meaning to meditate.
- E. The primary theme of both psalms is the kingly rule to be given to God’s Son.

QUESTION 4

Because the great messianic hope is such a prevalent theme in the Psalter, Psalm 2 is used as an introduction to the first collection of psalms to assure the nation (and God’s people throughout the ages) that the Lord’s anointed ruler has not really been defeated nor is He even threatened by those who would pretend to usurp His throne. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

The first seam of the Psalter falls between Psalm 71 and Psalm 72, with both psalms having strong messianic overtones. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

Each of the first three books of the Psalter concludes with a psalm that teaches an important truth concerning the Messiah in whom God will eventually fulfill the Davidic covenant promises. Which of the following is **not** one of these concluding psalms:

- A. Psalm 41 - The LORD will raise up Messiah to triumph over His enemies.
- B. Psalm 72 - The Messiah will rule in righteousness and have a glorious reign.
- C. Psalm 89 - The LORD will fulfill the Davidic covenant promises with His Son-Messiah.
- D. Psalm 91 - The LORD will commission the angels to guard the way of Messiah.

QUESTION 7

Psalm 89 reflects that the psalmist is perplexed, unable to understand why God has allowed the nation to suffer defeat by her enemies, and thus confused about the promises God made to His anointed one in the Davidic covenant. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

Why is Psalm 90 an appropriate psalm to initiate Book 4 of the Psalter?

- A. Since Moses is the earliest author of any psalm, it is appropriate to begin with a psalm written by him.
- B. Psalm 90 answers the question about God's faithfulness that was raised in Psalm 89, by going back to Moses (through whom the Law came) to show that the real problem for the nation was their sin of breaking God's Law.
- C. Psalm 90 is another messianic psalm, and these always occur at the seams of the Psalter.
- D. Since it was to Moses that God first gave the Davidic covenant, it is appropriate to have Psalm 90 following Psalm 89—both of them are concerned about the Davidic covenant.

QUESTION 9

What is the relationship between the first psalm of Book 4 (Ps 90) and the final psalm of Book 4 (Ps 106)?

- A. Psalm 90 was given through Moses at the time of the Law; Psalm 106 was given through David at the time of his sin with Bathsheba.
- B. Psalm 90 was written by Moses, who led the Hebrews at the time of the Exodus and brought them to Mount Sinai to receive the Law; Psalm 106 is a record of the nation's faithfulness during the time of Joshua.
- C. Psalm 90 shows the unchangeableness of God (He is eternal); Psalm 106 shows that He will eventually fulfill His promises to one of David's descendants to have an eternal throne/kingdom.
- D. Psalm 90 pointed out that the nation had been disobedient to the Mosaic Law and ended with a plea for His favor to return; Psalm 106 records their national confession of sin, so that God's favor might be restored and the nation regathered.

QUESTION 10

Which of the following is **not** a dominant theme in the Psalter?

- A. The Lord is our refuge.
- B. The kingship of God.
- C. Release from the Babylonian exile.
- D. Blessing for the nations.

Unit 2 Project: Lessons 4-6

A. Introduction

In Unit 2 we focused on learning some skills and gaining insight into the composition of the Psalter as a whole. We learned several important things about Hebrew poetry, especially how the psalm writers would employ parallelism and use imagery and figures of speech to convey their deepest feelings and describe spiritual truths for which words alone were not always adequate.

B. Instructions

As a final project for Unit 2, you are to do your own study of Psalm 57. Record your work in your Life Notebook.

1. Identify the author of the psalm. What do you learn from the remainder of the superscription that helps you to understand the psalm?
2. For each verse of this psalm, try to discern if the author has clearly used parallelism. If so, state what kind of parallelism you think it is. If the colons are not clearly synonymous, what is the relationship between them? Is something more added in the second colon?
3. Identify as many figures of speech as possible in this psalm.
4. Describe the kind of imagery conveyed in verse 4.
5. Where do you see repetition being utilized in this psalm?
6. In this psalm, David's life felt threatened. What do you learn from this psalm that might help you in times of feeling threatened, intimidated, or afraid?

Lesson 6 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1: False [At one time this verse marked the end of a smaller collection of Davidic psalms.]

QUESTION 2

B. Blessed be the Lord

E. Amen

QUESTION 3

B. Psalms 146–150 (all hallelujah psalms) are considered a single grand conclusion.

QUESTION 4

E. The primary theme of both psalms is the kingly rule to be given to God's Son.

QUESTION 5: *Your answer*

QUESTION 6

A. God promised David's descendant that He would establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

C. God promised that David's descendant would have a father/son relationship with God.

QUESTION 7

D. David's descendant will have a much larger kingdom than David; it will be to the ends of the earth.

QUESTION 8: *Your answer should be one of the following:*

Davidic, Covenant of David, David

QUESTION 9: *Your answer*

QUESTION 10

B. Psalms 41–42

QUESTION 11

A. In both psalms the main figure is burdened to help the helpless and needy in society.

B. In both psalms the main figure is called blessed (Hebrew *'ašrē*) by others.

[Regarding the burden for the helpless and needy, we see this in Ps 41:1 and in Ps 72:2, 4, and 12–14. He is called “blessed” in Ps 41:2 and “favored” in Ps 72:17.]

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13: *Your answer*

QUESTION 14

D. Psalm 90 answers the question about God's faithfulness that was raised in Psalm 89, by going back to Moses (through whom the Law came) to show that the real problem for the nation was their sin of breaking God's Law. [In Psalm 89 the psalmist questioned God's dealings with the nation and whether or not He was being faithful to fulfill the Davidic covenant. Psalm 90 is basically God's response. He has always been faithful to His people—He has been their dwelling place in all generations (90:1). The nation's bitter experience is not because of any fault with God, but rather their failure to keep the Law given through Moses (see 90:7–8).]

QUESTION 15: False

QUESTION 16

A. Psalm 90 pointed out that the nation had been disobedient to the Mosaic Law and ended with a plea for His favor to return; Psalm 106 records their national confession of sin, so that God's favor might be restored and the nation regathered.

D. Psalm 90 was written by Moses, who led the Hebrews at the time of the Exodus and brought them to Mount Sinai to receive the Law; Psalm 106 is a record of the nation's history, starting with the Exodus under Moses, to show their continual disobedience to the Law.

QUESTION 17: True

QUESTION 18: False

QUESTION 19: *Your answer*

Lesson 6 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2

- B. As a concluding statement to each major section, they help us discern the major divisions of the Psalter (and that the Psalter is composed of five books).

QUESTION 3

- E. The primary theme of both psalms is the kingly rule to be given to God's Son.

QUESTION 4: True

QUESTION 5: False

QUESTION 6

- D. Psalm 91 - The LORD will commission the angels to guard the way of Messiah.

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8

- B. Psalm 90 answers the question about God's faithfulness that was raised in Psalm 89, by going back to Moses (through whom the Law came) to show that the real problem for the nation was their sin of breaking God's Law.

QUESTION 9

- D. Psalm 90 pointed out that the nation had been disobedient to the Mosaic Law and ended with a plea for His favor to return; Psalm 106 records their national confession of sin, so that God's favor might be restored and the nation regathered

QUESTION 10

- C. Release from the Babylonian exile.

Unit 3: Learning to Recognize Psalm Categories—Part 1

Whenever we listen to music or read literature, we do so with certain expectations. That is, we intuitively expect certain things to be present that affect the way we listen and how we respond. If, for example, we read that “the tree leaned over and whispered a clue in the little girl’s ear about the buried treasure chest,” our reaction would depend entirely on the type of literature we have in our hands. Such a statement would be completely out of place if we were reading the weather information in the daily newspaper or something from a history book. However, if we were reading a make-believe story for little children, we would not think it odd at all. Therefore if we pick up a book that begins with the words “Once upon a time,” we instinctively know that we are reading a fairy tale, and our mind has certain expectations of what it may encounter.

If we pick up the book of Psalms and begin to read, we are immediately aware that we are reading Hebrew poetry and not one of several other literary genres in the Bible. The psalms are distinctively not historical narrative (as Genesis), not legal literature (as Leviticus), not prophetic literature (as Isaiah), and not epistolary literature (as Romans). Knowing that we have Hebrew poetry before us, we read the material in a different way.

Yet we can take this a step further, for even the psalms differ from each other. In some psalms the dominant theme is the pouring out of one’s lament before God. In others, the psalmist is primarily expressing his trust or confidence in God. In still others, the psalmist is engaged in praising the LORD. Scholars who have studied the psalms have observed that there are different categories of psalms, and each category typically has its own characteristics.

In Unit 3 you will be introduced to the psalm categories. By understanding these categories, you will gain a greater sensitivity for analyzing a psalm and recognizing what the psalmist was trying to convey. There may be as many as ten different psalm categories, depending on what scholar you were to consult. In the remainder of this course we will focus on six of the more important categories. We will examine three of them in Unit 3 and then another three in Unit 4.

Unit Outline

Lesson 7: An Introduction to Psalm Categories and Individual Lament (Ps 142)

Lesson 8: Penitential Lament (Ps 51)

Lesson 9: Psalms of Trust or Confidence (Ps 27)

Lesson 7: An Introduction to Psalm Categories and Individual Lament (Ps 142)

Lesson Introduction

Lesson 7 begins with an introduction to the whole idea of psalm categories. We will study what is meant by a category and then learn the general characteristics of each one. The first category to be considered is that of lament psalms. This category—the largest type—applies to those psalms in which the psalmist pours out his heart of grief to the Lord. This is usually accompanied by a cry for help.

Believers over the centuries have taken much comfort in meditating on the lament psalms. Although the general mood of these psalms is typically gloomy, they appeal to many of us as we go through struggles and face the hardships of life, because we can easily identify with the emotional struggles of the psalmist.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: Psalm Categories

Background and Importance

Clarification of Motifs

Suggested Categories

Topic 2: Motifs of Individual Lament

Topic 3: Psalm 142: A Case Study

Topic 4: The Message of Psalm 142

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Recognize the value of studying the literary nature of the psalms, and be able to state the primary categories by which the psalms may be classified
- Identify the primary motifs that might be found in a psalm of lament
- Grasp lament psalms as a result of an inductive study of Psalm 142

Preparing for the Lesson

The traffic must have been unusually light this morning, because Tom Blanchard was surprised that he had arrived on campus so much earlier than usual. “Hey, I might as well grab a cup at the student café before heading to class,” he mused to himself. No sooner had he walked into the main seating area than he noticed Kate Kutlow purchasing a Coke from the machine. Thinking he would have some fun this morning, Tom snuck up behind her and tried to surprise her before she had a chance to notice his presence. But what happened next was not what he had intended. Whatever he said next—

and he said it loud, way too loud for this early in the morning—well, this was just not the day for playing games with Kate.

As Kate, startled by the sudden loud voice, spun around, Tom quickly noticed the tears that filled her eyes. Filling more like a fool than a friend, Tom started to apologize that once again he had acted first before thinking. “Kate, I’m really sorry; believe me. I had no idea that you were having a bad day. Seriously, I didn’t mean to upset you.” Kate gulped, trying to fight back the tears that seemed to just flow down her puffy cheeks. “It’s not your fault, Tom. I’m just very upset this morning. A moment ago I opened an envelope with the results about my application for grad school. I thought for sure I would score high enough to meet the entrance requirements, but I guess I was wrong.”

A moment later they were both sitting at a table in the corner. After gaining her composure, Kate confided, “I think I understand what the professor was saying in the Psalms course when he described the psalms about lament. There are times when our hearts get broken, when we feel that God is strangely silent, and when the way ahead is completely dismal.” “That’s right,” Tom chimed back, “but the psalmist also knew how to take his raw emotions directly to God.” Tom added, “I’ve been studying many of these psalms of lament, and I have also noticed that they tend to have certain recurring motifs. For instance, there will always be a section spelling out the primary lament, but yet they usually anticipate God’s intervention and end with some kind of praise to God.” “That’s true,” Kate acknowledged, “I’m sure I will find something to praise God about, even regarding my application to grad school.” “*From Lament to Praise . . .* sounds like a great title for your next book, Kate,” Tom replied, hoping to cheer her up. Kate grinned. “OK, Tom, let’s go to class!”

Topic 1: Psalm Categories

In the nineteenth century, biblical research on psalmic literature tended to go in one of two directions. Conservative scholars relied heavily on the traditional-historical approach of associating the psalms with the historical events behind them, but to the neglect of literary considerations. On the other hand, critical scholars denied the validity of the superscriptions and tended to date much of the material late—even to the Maccabean period of the second century BC. With the rise of a new trend in studies known as “form-criticism,” scholars began a more intensive examination of the literary nature of the psalms. Although this type of study has tended to be associated with critical scholars who have attacked the authority of the Bible, some profitable insights have come out of this trend that are beneficial to evangelical Christians. At the very least, this has prompted a greater attention on the literary nature of the psalms.

Background and Importance

The scholar most responsible for this new trend in literary analysis of the psalms was the German scholar Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932). He wrote an important work entitled *An Introduction to the Psalms*. In this work, Gunkel called attention to the importance of identifying categories for the psalms. He proposed that the psalms have a distinct literary form, that is, they have structure that is based on various motifs (or subthemes) comprising each psalm. By comparing the psalms in light of their respective motifs, it became apparent that certain psalms fall into similar categories. Another way of stating this is to say that the psalms can be classified according to their literary components. These literary components are common features such as vocabulary, ideas, and moods, and forms of expression. Psalms with similar literary features can then be identified as belonging to a certain type or category.

QUESTION 1

The German scholar, Hermann Gunkel, pioneered the application of form criticism to the Psalms. By analyzing the literary structure of each psalm, he discovered that the psalms can be grouped into similar categories based on common features. What are examples of common features? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Vocabulary
- B. Rhyme and meter
- C. Ideas and moods
- D. Type of literature (e.g., narrative and legal literature)
- E. Forms of expression

Following Gunkel, another scholar named Claus Westermann made a more refined study of the psalm categories in an important work entitled *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (1961). Westermann concluded that the Psalter is composed of two dominant categories, the psalms of praise and the psalms of lament. Furthermore, Westermann argued that the psalms of praise can be further divided into two groups. He labeled these the “hymn” and the “song of thanks.” He wrote,

The difference between the two groups lies in the fact that the so-called hymn praises God for his actions and his being as a whole (descriptive praise), while the so-called song of thanks praises God for a specific deed, while the one who has been delivered recounts or reports in his song (declarative praise; it could also be called confessional praise). (reprint ed., Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981, 31)

To clarify, Westermann distinguished between declarative praise (the psalm of thanks) and descriptive praise (the hymn). Declarative praise is praise to God in response to a unique act of God that has just occurred. It looks at a specific unique occasion, that is, something God has done personally for the psalmist. Descriptive praise, on the other hand, summarizes God’s activity in its fullness and praises God in the totality of His dealings with men (and praising Him for who He is in His being). Along with the psalms of lament, then, we have three dominant categories. In addition, certain minor categories have also been identified.

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
I. Praise II. Lament A. Hymns B. Songs of Thanks	I. Lament II. Praise A. Hymns B. Songs of Thanks	I. Lament II. Praise A. Hymns B. Descriptive Praise	I. Lament II. Praise A. Declarative Praise B. Songs of Thanks

QUESTION 2

Which of the boxes in the previous chart best represents Westermann’s dominant categories?

- A. Option 1
- B. Option 2
- C. Option 3
- D. Option 4

Why is it important to know and recognize psalm categories? The basic answer is that this observation is part of understanding the context of a psalm. We all recognize that it is important to know the historical and cultural context of a passage. It is also important to know the literary context of a passage, taking careful note of what occurs before and after any given passage. Likewise it helps us identify the category of the psalm we are trying to understand, and knowing the category helps to guide our expectations. If we know that we are dealing with a psalm of lament, then we have certain expectations of the types of content material that we are likely to encounter, and we can be on the lookout for this.

Clarification of Motifs (or subthemes)

Mark Futato explains the meaning of category in this way: “From a literary point of view, a category is a group of writings that have characteristics in common with each other” (*Interpreting the Psalms*, 140). These characteristics that Futato speaks about are what we refer to as motifs. These motifs are the different types of content material referred to in the previous paragraph. If I am reading an individual lament psalm, I know to expect a certain section of that psalm to be devoted to the main lament. This would normally consist of several verses in which the psalmist described his lamentable situation to the Lord. So one of the motifs within a lament psalm will be the lament itself. Another motif will typically be the petition, in which the psalmist (in one or more verses) will directly ask God what he wants Him to do.

QUESTION 3

Psalms belonging to the same category have similar sections of material called motifs. *True or False?*

Psalms categories are helpful, because they enable us to read with more insight. By knowing a given psalm category, we can also know what motifs are likely to be present. Then as we read the psalm, we read with the expectation of encountering these motifs. Knowing and understanding categories and motifs helps us do a better job of analyzing a psalm. This also helps us see the author’s flow of thought. Furthermore if we can analyze a psalm according to its motifs, then we have essentially discovered its most natural outline. Then we can use this outline for teaching or preaching this material.

Having explained the meaning of category, and pointed out that each category has its own typical motifs, a few words of caution are in order. We have to be careful not to push the theory too far. Quite honestly, there are some psalms that do not seem to fit our categories. Furthermore we must be sensitive to what might be called psalm individuality. Categories help us know what we should typically expect, but the reality is that every psalm has its own distinctiveness. Some motifs that we might expect to be there are simply absent. At other times, some features will be present that we might not have expected. And for sure, the expected motifs (even when present) will not always appear in the same order. For this reason, we must not be too rigid in trying to force psalms into a preconceived mold. Knowing the categories and their respective motifs can help us analyze a psalm more accurately, but we must allow each psalm to stand on its own and not force our expectations on it. The main point is that we must allow plenty of room for flexibility.

QUESTION 4

Read the following statements, and check all that are true. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. By understanding psalm categories we know what motifs we are likely to be present.
- B. All psalms fall into carefully defined categories having the same motifs, and there is no deviation from this rule.
- C. Having identified the motifs of a psalm, we can more clearly see the author's flow of thought, which also gives us a natural outline of the psalm.
- D. The principle of psalm individuality means that some psalms will simply not fit into our preconceived expectations of categories and motifs.

Suggested Categories

In light of Gunkel's attempts at a literary analysis of the psalms, many scholars have subsequently worked to refine this approach. Although the results are not always acceptable to conservative evangelicals, some beneficial insights have emerged. Furthermore there have been numerous attempts to form a more complete list of the psalm categories (and even subcategories). The following list is representative of the research findings, starting with the three primary categories but also including certain minor types:

- A. Psalms of Lament
 - 1. Individual Lament
 - 2. Community Lament
 - 3. Penitential Lament
- B. Declarative Praise Psalms (or songs of thanksgiving)
 - 1. Individual Thanksgiving
 - 2. Communal Thanksgiving
- C. Descriptive Praise Psalms (or hymns)
 - 1. Hymns Proper
 - 2. Hymns to the Creator as Lord of History
 - 3. Salvation-History Psalms (they recite the history of God's people)
 - 4. Praise for the God of Creation who Righteously Establishes His Kingdom
 - 5. Praise to God who Created and Chose Israel
- D. Combination: Lament/Thanksgiving (or acknowledgment)
- E. Psalms of Trust (or Confidence)
- F. Enthronement Psalms (or divine kingship psalms)
- G. Psalms of Zion and Pilgrim Songs
- H. Royal or Messianic Psalms
- I. Wisdom Psalms
- J. Torah Psalms

List 1	Individual Lament	Wisdom Psalm	Torah Psalm	Psalms of Zion	Psalms of Trust
List 2	Descriptive Praise	Penitential Lament	Royal Psalm	Wisdom Psalm	Individual Thanksgiving
List 3	Individual Lament	Prophetic Exile Psalm	Psalm of Trust	Hymn Proper	Wisdom Psalm

QUESTION 5

Examine the previous lists of psalm categories (none is complete). Which one has an illegitimate category included?

- A. List 1
- B. List 2
- C. List 3
- D. All the lists consist of legitimate categories.

Topic 2: Motifs of Individual Lament

As the psalmists penned their psalms, they moved from one motif to another. These may be short, perhaps only one verse, or they may comprise as many as six or seven verses. These motifs are the common features that a lament psalm will have. They are not necessarily present in every psalm of this category, and they may not always occur in the same order.

In general, the lament psalm transitions from a low point to a high point. Within, the psalmist will seek to move God to act on his behalf. He will move God to act and also seek to relieve his own burden of heart. Quite often, three distinguishable subjects can be found: the psalmist himself, his foes, and God. His state will be deplorable; his foes are oppressing him; and God seems to have forgotten him (at least that is the way the psalmist feels emotionally).

Here are the common motifs that are typical of psalms of lament:

1. A Direct Address to God

Sometimes the address will have an introductory cry for help and/or a turning to God. Lament psalms are characterized by their address: “O LORD” or “My God,” etc. They turn immediately to God for help.

Frequently the lament psalm has an introductory petition and lament. It is extremely helpful in analyzing this type of psalm to distinguish this introductory petition and lament from the petition proper and the lament proper.

QUESTION 6

Lament psalms typically begin with a statement in which the psalmist turns immediately to God and directly addresses Him or states that he is addressing God. *True or False?*

2. Lament Proper

The psalmist describes his lamentable state and condition. Three distinct subjects can be identified in the expression of the distress: I, you, and they.

- a. I - “how my adversaries have increased.” (Ps 3:1, NASB)
- b. You - “why do You stand afar off, O LORD?” (Ps 10:1, NASB)

Often the pronoun “You” is accompanied by the words “how long?” Ronald B. Allen remarks, “It is as though, in picture language, the psalmist describes God not merely with His attention elsewhere, but deliberately avoiding the believer” (*And I Will Praise Him*, 154).

- c. They (i.e., the enemies) - “they speak falsehood to one another” (Ps 12:2)

QUESTION 7

Lament psalms typically make reference to three distinct characters within the psalm. In addition to referring to himself and to God, the psalmist will also refer to which of the following?

- A. The high priest
- B. One of the Levitical singers
- C. The choir director
- D. Enemies who were afflicting him

3. Confession of Trust (or Confidence)

The psalmist suddenly asserts confidence in God in spite of his lament. At times this may focus on God’s attributes or the psalmist’s covenant relationship with God. Sometimes he may even assert his innocence.

The abrupt switch to confession of trust will often be signaled by a contrastive conjunction (e.g., “but”). In Psalm 3:3, for example, we read, “But You, O LORD, are a shield about me.”

But you, O LORD, laugh in disgust at them;

you taunt all the nations.

You are my source of strength! I will wait for you!

For God is my refuge.

The God who loves me will help me;

God will enable me to triumph over my enemies. (Ps 59:8-10)

QUESTION 8

Psalm 59 is a lament psalm having a confession of trust in verses 8-10. What grammatical element do we find at the beginning of this unit that is typical of this motif?

4. Petition Proper

This will often be signaled by one or more imperatives, such as “Listen!” “Save!” “Answer!” or “Punish!” The thrust of the petition may be:

- a. For God to be favorable to the psalmist.

b. For God to intervene.

In this case the psalmist states precisely what he wants God to do for him.

c. Accompanied by motivational motifs.

Frequently some reason is given to motivate God to intervene. A good example of this is seen in Psalm 6:4-5.

Relent, LORD, rescue me!

Deliver me because of your faithfulness!

For no one remembers you in the realm of death,

In Sheol who gives you thanks?

Why does the psalmist present motivations? Is God incapable of thinking out the implications or repercussions of His actions? No! Rather, this reflects that he, the psalmist, has. This is an opportunity for faith . . . to indicate that he knows or has learned something about God.

Westermann has observed that the lament psalms always progress beyond lament and petition. They do not just stop at that point (*Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 74).

QUESTION 9

Psalm 54 is an example of a lament psalm. In the following chart, try to match the appropriate motifs with the corresponding verses (only vv 1-5):

<i>Verses</i>	<i>Motifs</i>
Verses 1-2: O God, deliver me by your name! Vindicate me by your power! O God, listen to my prayer! Pay attention to what I say!	Confession of trust
Verse 3: For foreigners attack me; ruthless men, who do not respect God, seek my life (selah).	Lament (or motivation for God to intervene)
Verses 4-5: Look, God is my deliverer! The Lord is among those who support me. May those who wait to ambush me be repaid for their evil! As a demonstration of your faithfulness, destroy them!	Petition proper

5. Assurance of Being Heard

This motif is an expression of confidence that the psalmist's lament and petition have not fallen on deaf ears. This motif often comes after the petition but may be placed earlier in the psalm. A good example is in Psalm 28:6, "Blessed be the LORD, because He has heard the voice of my supplication" (NASB). Like the confession of trust, the assurance may sometimes be signaled by a contrastive conjunction (e.g., "but"). In some cases the assurance may be intertwined with another motif. It may also follow the vow of praise or blend with it (see the following section).

QUESTION 10

Psalm 3 is a short individual lament psalm of eight verses. In the middle of the psalm is a small unit (vv 3-6) that is essentially a confession of trust or confidence. Also an assurance of being heard is intertwined within this confession of trust. Study the following verses from Psalm 3, and select all the verses that could be considered an assurance of being heard. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Verse 3—"But you, LORD, are a shield that protects me; you are my glory and the one who restores me."
- B. Verse 4—"To the LORD I cried out, and he answered me from his holy hill. (Selah)"
- C. Verse 5—"I rested and slept; I awoke, for the LORD protects me."
- D. Verse 6—"I am not afraid of the multitude of people who attack me from all directions."

6. Vow of Praise or Declarative Praise of God

The psalmist will either make a vow to praise God in anticipation of His answer, or he will spontaneously break out in praise to God (in essence thanking Him for hearing his cry for help). Yet the vow and declarative praise will not both be present (it will be one or the other). Sometimes the declarative praise will be marked by an abrupt change in the mood of the psalm.

At this point in the psalm, the psalmist renders the acknowledgment that he will offer in the tabernacle/temple when the petition has actually been granted. Thus he will mention what he will do before the congregation. This is often found with the vow to offer sacrifice (in Ps 66:13-16 both praise and sacrifice are vowed).

Even when the sought-after miracle has not already transpired, the psalmist is confident that God has heard. Westermann writes, "That which is yet to come, the turning point in the situation, must of necessity follow. Therefore it can now already be regarded as realized" (*Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 80).

As previously mentioned, the placement of motifs may vary, but the vow (if there is one) always follows the petition.

QUESTION 11

Psalm 13 is a short lament psalm with four primary motifs. After reading the psalm, match the following motifs with the appropriate verses.

Verses	Motifs
Verses 1-2: How long, Lord, will you continue to ignore me? How long will you pay no attention to me? How long must I worry, and suffer in broad daylight? How long will my enemy gloat over me?	Petition (with motivations)
Verses 3-4: Look at me! Answer me, O Lord my God! Revive me, or else I will die! Then my enemy will say, "I have defeated him!" Then my foes will rejoice because I am upended.	Confession of trust
Verse 5: But I trust in your faithfulness. May I rejoice because of your deliverance!	Vow of praise
Verse 6: I will sing praises to the LORD when he vindicates me!	Lament

Topic 3: Psalm 142: A Case Study



Assignment

- Read Psalm 142:1-7 using the following translation by the author:

A maskil of David when he was in the cave. A prayer.

1 With my voice I cry out to the LORD;

With my voice I appeal for grace to the LORD.

2 Before Him, I pour out my lament;

Before Him, I make known my distress.

3 When my spirit faints within me, You know my path.

In the way in which I walk, they have hidden a trap for me.

4 Look to the right (of me) and see! There is no one who has regard for me.

There is no escape for me. There is no one who cares for my soul.

5 I cry to You, O LORD;

I say, “You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.”

6 Give heed to my supplication, for I have been brought very low.

Deliver me from those who pursue me, for they are stronger than I.

7 Bring out my soul from the dungeon, that I might praise Your name.

The righteous will gather round me, when You deal well with me.

QUESTION 12

Using the translation above, try to match the verses from Psalm 142 with the appropriate motif (without looking ahead). Remember, the psalm may not necessarily use all the motifs we studied.

<i>Verses</i>	<i>Motifs for Psalm 142</i>
Psalm 142:1-2	Petition proper
Psalm 142:3-4	Assurance of being heard (or motivation for God to hear him)
Psalm 142:5	Direct address to God
Psalm 142:6-7a	Confession of trust or confidence
Psalm 142:7b	Lament proper

Superscription

In the superscription we are told that the setting for this psalm is in the cave. This cave could either be that of Adullam or En Gedi (see 1 Sam 22:1; 24:1-3). The mention in Psalm 42:6 about “those who pursue me” suggests that David was hiding in this cave because of his persecutors.

Direct Address to God (vv 1-2)

As David began the psalm he told the readers that his cry was directly to the LORD. Each colon in verses 1-2 mentions the One whom he addresses (“to the LORD” twice in verse 1 and “before Him” twice in verse 2). This is very instructive for the community of worshippers at Jerusalem for whom this was originally written. Although David was in great distress, he could take his concerns directly to the LORD. In that day and time, there was a priesthood made up of Levites who served at the tabernacle. Yet David did not have to go through a Levitical priest, in order to bring his lament before God. David was able to take his lament directly to the LORD.

Furthermore David was not merely complaining about his life. There is a difference between lamenting and complaining. The Hebrew word *śîaḥ* in verse 2a means lament, that is, “to express one’s worries and pain” (*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1321). To complain can imply that God is to be blamed for one’s distresses. To lament, however, implies that one can share his deepest hurts and griefs with God, with the hope that God will be moved to intercede. Steven Lawson writes, “David is voicing this plea to God, who alone can help. I lift up my voice pictures an inferior stooping before a superior, looking up to him, beseeching, requesting, and seeking help. He cries to the LORD . . . who alone can help” (*Psalms 76-150*, 347).

QUESTION 13

Open your Life Notebook. When you encounter a crisis situation, what kind of prayer experience do you have with the Lord? Do you have a tendency to complain or to lament? Look up 1 Peter 5:6-7. Do you see a connection between these verses and Psalm 142:1-2? How can we use prayer to turn our difficult moments into positive experiences with God?

Lament Proper (vv 3-4)

Having stated in verses 1-2 that he wished to cry directly to the Lord about his distress, David now began to elaborate his deplorable state in verses 3-4. In light of the fact that he now spoke directly to the Lord of the universe, David introduced his lament with a statement of confidence. He said (v 3a), “When my spirit faints within me, You know my path” (author’s translation). This fainting is not a literal fainting. Instead it reflects his inner experience (in his human spirit). The idea is that he was so weak emotionally that he felt completely overwhelmed and unable to bear any more (on account of his enemies—see Ps 143:3-4). Yet he acknowledged that in this dire moment when it was almost more than he could bear, the LORD knew his path. That is, the LORD was completely aware of what David was going through, and He felt his every pain. God was not unaware of his agonizing pain nor was he deliberately overlooking it.

The Hebrew word for “know” in this verse means intimate knowledge. In the dark moments of David’s life the LORD was with him, right at his side, and perfectly aware of what His child was going through. David may not have felt this way at the time of his distress, but at least at the time he composed the psalm he was able to acknowledge this truth. In this sense it is a statement of faith on David’s part.

The “way in which he walks” refers to his circumstances—what he was having to go through. In contrast to the LORD who knows his path, David now indicates the hostility of his enemies. The pronoun “they” refers to those who were against David. Notice, then, that all three subjects are in the lament—I (David), You (the LORD), and they (his enemies). The psalmist’s enemies have hidden a trap for him, that is, they hope to bring him down and plot against him to that end. David had to face persecution by those who opposed him. In light of the superscription, this apparently refers to Saul’s soldiers who were trying to track David down. David—having to hide out in caves—felt that no matter which way he might turn, he was entrapped.

In verse 4a, David spoke quite boldly to the LORD: “Look to the right and see!” (author’s translation). The right refers to one’s right hand, and in light of Psalm 109:31 this was the place where one’s defender would stand on his behalf. William VanGemen writes, “The ‘right’ signifies the place where one’s witness or legal council stood (see Ps 16:8; 109:31; 110:5; 121:5). He has no one to defend him against his adversaries” (“Psalms,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 850). David was implying that although the LORD should be his defender, he sensed His absence.

In the remainder of verse 4 David sought to validate his feeling of estrangement. “There is no one who takes regard of me,” he moans. To take regard for means to take notice of and thus regard as important (see Ruth 2:10). The same word is used in Daniel 11:39—those who will acknowledge the coming evil king will be given great honor. David already had the promise from God that he would become king (1 Sam 16:13), but he was struggling to reconcile that promise with his present experiences. He was certainly not getting the proper honor and recognition that the king-designate should get. David continued, “There is no escape for me.” He had feelings of total doom, that there was no way out for him. He also lamented, “There is no one who cares for my soul.” This reflects his extreme loneliness in which he felt all abandoned.

QUESTION 14

As you look over the following list, which issues did David lament before God?

- A. He was not being regarded in an honorable way.
- B. He felt there was no solution to his problems.
- C. He felt extremely lonely and abandoned by his friends.
- D. He was troubled by his enemies who were plotting against him.

Confession of Trust or Confidence (v 5)

Suddenly the mood of the psalm shifts at verse 5. David ceased from his lament and rose up to lay hold—by faith—of two great truths concerning his relationship with the LORD.

In the first he said, “You are my refuge” (vs 5a). The words for “my refuge” (Hebrew *maḥsî*) is a common expression in the Psalms to speak of the security that one has in drawing near to the LORD and the resulting feeling of safety from external threats (see Ps 46:1-3; 73:28; 91:2).

Second, David says, “You are my portion in the land of the living.” David now uses a metaphor in which he described the LORD as his portion. This term was used of the portion of land given to each tribe, whereby they could earn their living and be sustained. However, for the tribe of Levi the LORD was their portion. In place of having a physical allotment of land, they had the privilege of serving Him. This thought was meant to be instructive to all the tribes who were given land. As wonderful as it might be to have land on which to dwell and be sustained, there is something better—the LORD Himself. Everything else that one has can be taken from him, but the one thing that cannot be taken away is one’s relationship with God. He is far better!

Even though David’s emotional feelings were telling him one thing (even that God had forsaken him), he was able to exercise faith and believe that the LORD was his refuge and portion.

QUESTION 15

When David spoke of “my portion” in verse 5 (NASB), he was talking about his portion of trials and tribulations that were assigned to him by the Lord to help him grow spiritually. *True or False?*

Petition Proper (vv 6-7a)

David's exercise of faith in Psalm 142:5 paves the way for him now to bring his petition to the LORD. David's prayer is threefold (note the three imperatives in the text). First, he asked God to "give heed to my cry." This is a request for God to be favorable to him and grant what he was asking. He couples this with a reason for God to move on his behalf, "for I am brought very low."

Just because David gave a reason for God to grant his request does not imply that God must be convinced before He will act. Not at all! The LORD is very gracious and wants to help and bless His children. He does not have to be begged to do so. When David provided a motivation for God to grant his request, it reflects what David understood about the situation—that he had thought it through. In this case David was brought to a point of feeling depressed, that is, he realized how weak he was and how much he needed God's help. God allowed him to come to this point so that he would not trust in himself.

Second, David asked, "Deliver me from those who pursue me." Those pursuing him were the forces of Saul who sought his life (= "they" in v 3). These are the ones who had been trying to trap David. Once again, David provided a motivation for God to heed his request: "for they are stronger than I." In saying this, David was confessing that the battle was bigger than he was, that he could not handle this on his own. He realized his inadequacies.

QUESTION 16

Open your Life Notebook again. Has God taken you through an experience in the past year or two in which you came to a point of realizing that your battle was stronger than you? Describe the situation and try to explain how you were meant to feel inadequate. Were you able to turn this situation over to God, and how did it turn out? What did you learn about God through this experience?

Third, David pled, "Bring out my soul from the dungeon." As David sat in this dark and gloomy cave, he viewed it as his prison. He felt hemmed in in every way, like there was a cage all around him. He longed to be free from his oppressing situation. David followed his petition with a motivation for God to act: "that I might praise Your name." If David were able to make it through this life-threatening situation by God's help, then he would be in a position to give thanks to God. In light of the final line of the psalm, he was probably thinking of public praise to God. Hence verse 7b is a vow of praise, in which David vows to give a public thank offering to the LORD after God heeded his petition and delivered him. To say that he would "praise Your name," means more than he would refer to God's name when praising Him. God's name means His character and all He is known for. This could mean that David would praise God's graciousness, His faithfulness, and His compassion (among other things).

QUESTION 17

Is David literally in a prison (v 7)? If not, what kind of figure of speech do we have?

- A. This is a simile: the cave in which he is hiding is likened to a dungeon.
- B. This is a metaphor: the cave is said to be a dungeon.
- C. This is a metonymy: the word "dungeon" has been substituted for the word "cave."
- D. This is a hypocatastasis: there is an implied comparison here; by using the word "dungeon," the psalmist is comparing his cave (where he is entrapped) to a dungeon.

Assurance of Being Heard (v 7b)

Lament psalms almost always end on a positive note. Following the petition, it is very common for the psalmist to express his assurance that God has heard his cry for help and will indeed come to his rescue. Thus the psalmist began to envision that the vow of praise that was expressed at the end of verse 7a will indeed come to pass. This gives another glimpse of the psalmist's faith! He gained

confidence that he would live to see the day that he could gather with other godly members of the nation and share his testimony of how God heard his cry for help and rescued him. Hence he declares, “The righteous will gather round me, when you deal well with me” (author’s translation). In that future moment, he would be able to fulfill his vow by offering a sacrifice of thanksgiving publicly. For similar imagery see Psalm 116:12-14; 116:17-18. Of course it is not surprising that God would deal well with David, for the Bible teaches that God is good. Psalm 34:8 reminds us, “O taste and see that the LORD is good! How blessed is the one who takes shelter in him!” (NASB)

QUESTION 18

When David spoke in verse 7 about the righteous surrounding him, what did he have in mind?

- A. He was continuing to speak about Saul’s soldiers who were pursuing him and trying to trap him.
- B. He was looking forward to going to heaven when all the righteous saints will be around him, and evil men will no longer be present to threaten him.
- C. He was looking forward to a time on earth after this current trial when he could testify before other godly people how God delivered him in a time of crisis.
- D. He was hoping that God would bring many other righteous people to gather round him in order to protect him from his enemies.

Topic 4: The Message of Psalm 142

To read a sad story that ends on a happy note can be heartwarming, but to read a sad story without any happy ending can be depressing. Lament psalms resemble the former situation. For a short time, the psalmist takes us by the hand to lead us into the world of his pain and agony. He is transparent with us, allowing us to see his weaknesses and know his struggles. As in the case of Psalm 142 the psalmist was under attack by enemies who were determined to bring him down, crush him, and ridicule his hope in God. The psalmist was fully human and suffered from their unrelenting attack. At times he also struggled on account of his own sin against the LORD.

Yet psalms of lament inevitably depict glorious moments when the psalmist lifted his eyes heavenward and uttered a word of faith. He grasped hold of some great theological truth that he had known, and he seized it, believing what is true in the face of doubt and discouragement. Then, realizing his own human weakness and inability to deliver himself, he called out to the LORD for His salvation, that is, deliverance from his overwhelming plight. The beautiful thing about psalms of lament is that they almost always end on a note of praise. In some cases the psalmist had already experienced God’s deliverance. In other cases he was still waiting, but he had this God-given assurance in his heart that his prayer had been heard, and the deliverance was about to be realized. In this latter case he made a vow of praise ... declaring that he looked forward to being in the assembly of fellow worshippers where he could share his testimony and publicly thank God for hearing his cry. This is what we find in Psalm 142.

Many lessons could be drawn from our study of Psalm 142. Perhaps one of the main lessons is how David came to realize the importance of his relationship to the LORD. He learned how much fellowship with God meant to him in the midst of his troubles. When everything else in his life had been seemingly stripped away, he came to understand what was most important to him. Being king and having others hold you in high regard as king feels nice, but life has to be more than that. In light of the pain he went through (especially being rejected by others), he came to appreciate what could never be taken from him, namely, his relationship with the living God of the universe. This is the One

who would always stand by him, would always be loyal to him, and would always be there to deliver him in times of trouble. Had his faith not been tested by the pain of this ordeal, he would not have truly appreciated just how important that relationship with the LORD really meant. Yet David did come to appreciate this. He exclaimed, “My refuge . . . my portion.” In saying this he was indicating that he desired this close relationship with the LORD above all other earthly benefits.

QUESTION 19

Open your Life Notebook. Make a list of the five things that you value the most in life, and write these down. Now imagine that all these were suddenly taken away from you. Would you be able to live without them? Can you honestly say that your relationship with the Lord is so meaningful to you, that even if you were to lose these five things, you would be content in having your relationship with Him? Why or why not?

A second great lesson to draw from this psalm is the power of a testimony. At the end of the psalm David declared, “The righteous will gather round me, when You deal well with me.” When the trial was finally over, he had a testimony to share with God’s people, a testimony about God’s goodness and faithfulness. This was based on real life experience, not just talk. His testimony was powerful, because it came at the expense of great pain in his life. He would not easily forget what he went through and how God delivered him. Others would appreciate what David had to go through to be able to stand before them publicly and share his story. In sharing this testimony God was glorified. God was made to look good in the eyes of all who watched and heard David speak. The glory went to God, not David.

Lesson 7 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Which of the following statements are **not** correct regarding the study of psalm categories?

- A. Claus Westermann made a helpful distinction between declarative praise (praise to God in response to a unique act God had done for the psalmist) and descriptive praise (praise for who God is and His dealings with men in general).
- B. The study of psalm categories is of interest only to critical scholars.
- C. Knowing the category to which a psalm belongs helps us read it with more understanding, since we will have certain expectations of the types of content material that we are likely to encounter.
- D. Most scholars since the time of Gunkel have refined and expanded his list of categories, so that today we can recognize as many as ten different categories.

QUESTION 2

Each psalm category will have its own characteristics or motifs. These are the common units of a particular psalm category that are recognizable and distinctive (for example, lament and petition). *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

In the following list of psalm categories, which one is **not** one of the commonly recognized types?

- A. Declarative Praise Psalm
- B. Prophetic Exile Psalm
- C. Psalm of Trust (or Confidence)
- D. Wisdom Psalm

QUESTION 4

Lament psalms typically begin with a statement in which the psalmist turned immediately to God and directly addressed Him or stated that he is addressing God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

In the lament proper section of an individual lament psalm, it is common for the psalmist to refer to several different subjects. Which of the following would we expect the psalmist to refer to?

- A. The high priest, the choir director, and God
- B. God, the musicians, and the Levitical priests
- C. The psalmist's enemies, himself, and God
- D. The choir director, the musicians, and the Levitical priests

QUESTION 6

In an individual lament psalm we can recognize the motif of petition proper because this will often be signaled by one or more imperatives, such as "Listen!" "Save!" "Answer!" or "Punish!" *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

In David's lament in Psalm 142, which of the following issues was not one of his laments before God?

- A. He felt there was no solution to his problems.
- B. He was troubled by his enemies who were plotting against him.
- C. He was saddened by the nation's recent defeat by the Philistines.
- D. He was not being regarded in an honorable way.

QUESTION 8

In David's confession of trust in Psalm 142, what did he mean when he described the LORD as his refuge?

- A. David meant that God had provided the walls of Jerusalem to protect him from invasion.
- B. David anticipated that after death, he would be resurrected to enjoy God's presence forever.
- C. David was thinking that God would always provide for his financial needs.
- D. David was thinking of the security he had in drawing near to the LORD and the resulting feeling of safety from external threats.

QUESTION 9

In the petition proper of Psalm 142, David made only one request, namely, that God would deliver him from Saul's soldiers. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

What great lessons can be learned from Psalm 142?

- A. The importance of having a relationship with the LORD (in the midst of his troubles, David learned how much God's fellowship meant to him).
- B. God always protects His children from troubles, so they do not have to experience pain.
- C. God prefers that we not share with others how He delivered us from trials, since they may expect God to do the same for them.
- D. David learned the importance of being self-reliant and to depend on his own wisdom.

Lesson 7 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1

- A. Vocabulary
- C. Ideas and moods
- E. Forms of expression

QUESTION 2

- B. Option 2

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4

- A. By understanding psalm categories we know what motifs we are likely to be present.
- C. Having identified the motifs of a psalm, we can more clearly see the author's flow of thought, which also gives us a natural outline of the psalm.
- D. The principle of psalm individuality means that some psalms will simply not fit into our preconceived expectations of categories and motifs.

QUESTION 5

- C. List 3

QUESTION 6: True

QUESTION 7

- D. Enemies who were afflicting him

QUESTION 8: *Your answer should be similar to the following:*

contrastive conjunction, disjunctive, but, or contrast.

QUESTION 9

<i>Verses</i>	<i>Motifs</i>
Verses 1-2: O God, deliver me by your name! Vindicate me by your power! O God, listen to my prayer! Pay attention to what I say! Verse 3: For foreigners attack me; ruthless men, who do not respect God, seek my life (selah).	Petition proper
Verses 4-5: Look, God is my deliverer! The Lord is among those who support me. May those who wait to ambush me be repaid for their evil! As a demonstration of your faithfulness, destroy them!	Lament (or motivation for God to intervene) Confession of trust

QUESTION 10

- B. Verse 4—"To the LORD I cried out, and he answered me from his holy hill. (Selah)"

- C. Verse 5—"I rested and slept; I awoke, for the LORD protects me."

[Verses 4 and 5 are the assurance of being heard. These are bracketed by two verses that represent a confession of trust, one in verse 3 and another in verse 6. Perhaps verse 5 is not as clear as verse 4, but the words "I awoke" are what gave him the assurance that his prayer had been heard.]

QUESTION 11

<i>Verses</i>	<i>Motifs</i>
Verses 1-2: How long, Lord, will you continue to ignore me? How long will you pay no attention to me? How long must I worry, and suffer in broad daylight? How long will my enemy gloat over me?	Lament
Verses 3-4: Look at me! Answer me, O Lord my God! Revive me, or else I will die! Then my enemy will say, "I have defeated him!" Then my foes will rejoice because I am upended.	Petition (with motivations)
Verse 5: But I trust in your faithfulness. May I rejoice because of your deliverance!	Confession of trust
Verse 6: I will sing praises to the LORD when he vindicates me!	Vow of praise

QUESTION 12

<i>Verses</i>	<i>Motifs for Psalm 142</i>
Psalm 142:1-2	Direct address to God
Psalm 142:3-4	Lament proper
Psalm 142:5	Confession of trust or confidence
Psalm 142:6-7a	Petition proper
Psalm 142:7b	Assurance of being heard (or motivation for God to hear him)

QUESTION 13: *Your answer***QUESTION 14**

D. He was troubled by his enemies who were plotting against him.

QUESTION 15: False**QUESTION 16:** *Your answer***QUESTION 17**

D. This is a hypocatastasis: there is an implied comparison here; by using the word “dungeon,” the psalmist is comparing his cave (where is in entrapped) to a dungeon.

QUESTION 18

C. He was looking forward to a time on earth after this current trial when he could testify before other godly people how God delivered him in a time of crisis.

QUESTION 19: *Your answer*

Lesson 7 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1

- B. The study of psalm categories is of interest only to critical scholars.

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3

- B. Prophetic Exile Psalm

QUESTION 4: True

QUESTION 5

- C. The psalmist's enemies, himself, and God

QUESTION 6: True

QUESTION 7

- C. He was saddened by the nation's recent defeat by the Philistines.

QUESTION 8

- D. David was thinking of the security he had in drawing near to the LORD and the resulting feeling of safety from external threats.

QUESTION 9: False

QUESTION 10

- A. The importance of having a relationship with the LORD (in the midst of his troubles, David learned how much God's fellowship meant to him).

Lesson 8: Penitential Lament (Ps 51)

Lesson Introduction

In Lesson 7 we learned about psalm categories and motifs. The first category we examined was that of individual lament. In addition to the individual lament, the category of lament psalms has two other minor types, namely, community lament and penitential lament.

Community lament psalms are those in which the entire community is viewed as lamenting before God. These may reflect oppression by enemy nations, national disaster such as defeat in battle (e.g., Ps 44), or hardship from exile (Ps 126). The motifs of community lament are very similar to individual lament psalms. Psalm 12 is a good example of community lament.

We will not examine community lament in detail, in order that we may devote our time to the category of penitential lament. Though this type of psalm certainly involves lament, the focus is on lament for one's own sin. Hence these are psalms involving confession . . . true confession of God's people who are grieved about their sin and who feel crushed inside as a result of sin. For a case study, we will look at Psalm 51 in detail. This is the well-known psalm in which David laments his sin of adultery with Bathsheba and cries out to God to be forgiven and cleansed.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: Expected Features With Penitential Lament Psalms

Topic 2: Psalm 51—A Case Study

 Introductory Petition (vv 1-2)

 Confession: Lament of His Sin and Sinful Condition (vv 3-6)

 Petition: David's Prayer (vv 7-12)

Topic 3: The Message of Psalm 51

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Understand the ways in which penitential lament psalms resemble ordinary lament psalms and the ways in which they differ
- Grasp penitential lament psalms as a result of an inductive study of Psalm 51
- Learn and apply the three great lessons that David learned from his experience recorded in Psalm 51 regarding (1) the grace of God; (2) not being presumptive about forgiveness; and (3) the value of genuine confession

Preparing for the Lesson

As Kate Kutlow looked across campus, she noticed the flakes of snow starting to fall from the sky and settle gently on the ground. Soon there would be a blanket of snow covering the plants and trees. Winter was definitely here. From a distance she thought she could see Tom walking near the soccer field. That's when she remembered that he had told her the day before about an important game the

soccer team was to have had today. Tom was one of the star players on the school soccer team. Kate suddenly felt bad she had forgotten about the game, hoping Tom would forgive her oversight.

Rushing across campus, hoping she would not slip on the freshly fallen snow, she quickly caught up with Tom. She could tell, however, just before she got near him that something appeared to be wrong. Tom's usual smile was missing, and his head was hanging down as he walked all so slowly. Kate wasn't sure whether to postpone the encounter or to take the risk of interrupting him. After a moment of hesitating, she called out to Tom.

"Tom, do you have a moment? I was hoping I could ask you about tomorrow's homework assignment." That seemed to Kate like something neutral enough to say. Tom paused and turned toward her, but the look on his face sent a clear message that he was really down about something. "Hey, are you OK?" Kate inquired. "Not really," Tom muttered, knowing he might as well be honest about his feelings, since he couldn't hide them anyway. "Want to talk?" Kate offered. Thanks to Kate's soft-spoken voice, Tom opened up. "Today has got to be the worst day since I came here to college. The game today was very competitive, and in the midst of all the excitement, I got into a scuffle with a player on the other team and even pushed him down on the ground. To make matters worse, the referee gave a free kick to the other team which led to them scoring the winning goal. So, not only was I a terrible witness for Christ today, but I caused our team to lose the game. I'll never be able to show my face again with the team."

Sensing Tom's need for some encouragement, Kate tried to offer a few words of consolation. "Tom, I know you didn't mean to do what you did. But don't be too hard on yourself; after all, you are just human like the rest of us. It's probably no accident that we are going to be studying penitential lament psalms in class tomorrow. We all blow it sometime or other, and when we do we have to learn how to take our sin to the Lord, confess it, and ask for His forgiveness and grace to rebound. I mean, even King David had to learn how to do that." As it dawned on Tom how right Kate was, he softly replied, "You know, you're right. That will surely make tomorrow's class relevant for me!"

Topic 1: Expected Features With Penitential Lament Psalms

In the Psalter, seven psalms fall into the category of penitential lament: Psalms 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130 and Psalm 143 (though there is some debate about Ps 102). Of these seven, two of them (Ps 38 and 51) involve confession on the part of the erring sinner.

Since penitential lament psalms are a subcategory of lament psalms in general, it is not surprising that they have similar motifs. Certainly the three primary motifs of lament, petition, and a vow are likely to be encountered. In the case of the penitential lament, however, the focus is on the lament of one's sinfulness and possibly repercussions that have ensnarled the psalmist.

QUESTION 1

In penitential lament psalms the lament section will typically focus on which of the following?

- A. Blaming God for allowing sin into the world.
- B. Lamenting one's own sinfulness and the repercussions that followed the act of sin.
- C. Attributing one's sin to Satan, in order to shift the blame to him.
- D. Excusing oneself from responsibility on account of one's circumstances in life.

The following represent some of the general features that appear in this type of psalm. However, they are not necessarily all found in every penitential psalm.

A. A Crying Out to God for Him to Hear

Penitential lament psalms include a crying out to God that He will hear. The psalmist deeply sensed an estrangement from God, an unbearable silence on God's part.

B. Confession

Not all penitential lament psalms involve confession, but some do (e.g., Ps 51). The confession may be general or specific. What is noticeable is what is absent. Gone is the questioning of the psalmist asking, "Why?" In the case of penitential lament, the psalmist knows why he was suffering. He was aware of his sin and that he had offended a holy God.

C. Appeal to God's Grace

An appeal is often made to God's grace and mercy, or mention is made of His loyal love. (See comments in Lesson 2 on Ps 32:9-11.) The point is that the psalmist wanted God to deal with him on the basis of grace, not on the basis of what he deserved.

Have mercy on me, O God, because of your loyal love! (Ps 51:1)

May I hear about your loyal love in the morning (Ps 143:8)

QUESTION 2

From the following list choose all the words that might be associated with the Hebrew word *hesed*.
(Select all that apply.)

- A. Love
- B. Righteousness
- C. Loyalty
- D. Justice

D. Description of the Bodily Anguish Felt

The psalmist almost always described the results of his sin in terms of the anguish experienced within his body. For example Psalm 102:3-5 states:

3 For my days go up in smoke, and my bones are charred like a fireplace.

4 My heart is parched and withered like grass, for I am unable to eat food.

5 Because of the anxiety that makes me groan, my bones protrude from my skin.

E. A Plea for Power or Enablement

Sometimes a plea is made for God to give moral and spiritual enablement to the psalmist. This is especially true as he sensed his own depravity and moral weakness. If he was to obey God and live uprightly, he would need divine help. This has to come from God's Spirit and enabling. Psalm 143:10-11 provides a good example:

10 Teach me to do what pleases you, for you are my God.

May your kind presence lead me into a level land.

11 O LORD, for the sake of your reputation, revive me!

Because of your justice, rescue me from trouble!

QUESTION 3

In Psalm 143:10 the psalmist asked God to teach him “what pleases you.” If we are walking in the flesh we cannot please God. To please God we need the Spirit’s help. Now take a moment to read 1 Corinthians 5:9-10. Why is it important that we have as our ambition to be pleasing to God?

- A. We will not be allowed to enter heaven if we are not found pleasing to God.
- B. We will never be able to please God, since we are all sinful creatures.
- C. If we can learn to do what pleases God, He will love us more.
- D. One day after this life we will have to appear at the judgment seat of Christ to be rewarded for what we have done while in the body (so the life we live now does matter!).

After completing Question 3, please read the “Insight Regarding Question 3” in the Answers section at the end of this lesson.

QUESTION 4

As new covenant believers today, God has richly provided for us to live in a godly way. Read Galatians 5:13-24. What help does God offer to keep us from carrying out the desire of the flesh?

F. A Vow or Intention to Praise God Before the Congregation

One reason the psalmist requests a favorable answer from God is that this will give him the opportunity to publicly proclaim God’s praise before the worshipping community. We see this, for example, in Psalm 51:14:

Rescue me from the guilt of murder, O God, the God who delivers me!

Then my tongue will shout for joy because of your deliverance.

This “shout of joy” that David mentioned in Psalm 51 is actually a praise that he anticipated offering before the whole assembly of God’s people, the ones who would gather to worship at the tabernacle. Although this might not be so obvious from this verse, we know from a study of other similar passages in the Psalms that this is what he had in mind. In Psalm 22:25, for example, David exclaimed, “You are the reason I offer praise in the great assembly; I will fulfill my promises before the LORD’s loyal followers.”

QUESTION 5

When the psalmist spoke about giving praise to the LORD as a future act, he probably had in mind being able to give his praise publicly before fellow worshippers. *True or False?*

G. Mention of Enemies who Exasperate the Situation

Mention may be made of the enemies of the psalmist who rejoiced over his weakened estate. Note, for example, Psalm 102:8:

All day long my enemies taunt me;

those who mock me use my name in their curses.

QUESTION 6

Look over the following list and then check all the items that would be considered general features of penitential lament psalms. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Appeal to God's grace
- B. Confession
- C. Trustworthiness of God's Word
- D. Vow to praise God
- E. Glorification of God for creation
- F. Description of bodily anguish felt

Topic 2: Psalm 51—A Case Study

The superscription to Psalm 51 provides the historical setting behind the psalm. This is a psalm that David wrote after Nathan had confronted him about his sin of adultery with Bathsheba. (For the story see 2 Sam 11-12.)

How long after his sin with Bathsheba did David write Psalm 51? This is a very relevant question. A careful study of 2 Samuel 12:7-14 reveals that Nathan's confrontation was not immediately after the sin, but rather quite some time later. At the time that Nathan confronted David, a child had already been born to the couple. Although we do not know the age of the child at the time of Nathan's confrontation, the fact that the child had already been born would imply that at least nine months had gone by and probably more like a year. Since David did not confess and repent of his sin until after Nathan's confrontation, this shows us that he went for a long time without dealing with his sin. This also implies that David bore the emotional burden of his sin for a very long time (note Ps 51:8). For a year or so, David lived with a great deal of grief as he ignored his sin and remained unrepentant.

QUESTION 7

What can we learn about the timing of David's repentance from a study of the historical material recorded in 2 Samuel?

- A. Because David was so sensitive about his sin, he repented immediately after he learned of Bathsheba's pregnancy.
- B. Since Nathan did not confront David until after the child was born, David obviously waited a very long time before he fully repented.
- C. Shortly after Uriah's death, David repented of his sins.
- D. David repented of his sins at the time of the next Jewish feast, the Day of Atonement.

We should also be careful to observe the words in the superscription, "For the Music Director." This implies that after writing the psalm, David handed it over to one of the Levites who was in charge of the singers and musicians at the tabernacle. This was going to be made public, put out in the open for all to hear and consider. I find it rather astonishing that a king could be so humble as to do this. Perhaps this deed bears witness to the fact that David had truly been convicted of his sin and was truly repentant. Yet the fact that David offered this very personal psalm for the whole nation to see (as well as to sing and worship) would bless many others, and David probably sensed that. The psalm was handed over to the music director to be used for all God's people. After all, it would be for their benefit, so that when they found themselves in a similar situation, they would know how to find their way back to God in the midst of their sin.

Finally a remark about Nathan himself is in order. The superscription says, “when Nathan the prophet confronted him.” I wonder if we truly appreciate the courage that it would have taken for Nathan to take the step of confronting the king? Granted, he went to David at the instruction of the Lord (2 Sam 12:1)—he was being faithful to God—but still it must have been a step of faith for him. If the king had been offended and responded in a carnal way (as most kings would!), Nathan could have lost his life. The story Nathan told would have softened the blow, but still he had to look David in the eye and tell him, “You are that man!”

Introductory Petition (vv 1-2)

1 Have mercy on me, O God, because of your loyal love!

Because of your great compassion, wipe away my rebellious acts!

2 Wash away my wrongdoing! Cleanse me of my sin!

We call this an introductory petition, because the main petition comes later in the psalm. An interesting observation to make about these two verses is how the author made use of several three-fold statements: about God, about his sin against God, and about his need for cleansing. The following chart illustrates this unique use of threes.

Three Great Attributes of God	Three Terms Describing His Sin	Three Pleas for Cleansing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have mercy (grace) • Your loyal love • Your great compassion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My rebellious acts • My wrongdoing • My sin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wipe away • Wash away • Cleanse me

Three Great Attributes of God

Verse 1. The words “Have mercy on me,” might better be translated “Be gracious to me” (*hānnēnī*). David was guilty of adultery with Bathsheba, and he was responsible for the death of Uriah. He deserved death! Under the Old Covenant Law, adulterers were to be put to death (Lev 20:10). If God were to give him what he deserved, then he should get the death penalty. There is no sacrifice that David can bring to avert the appropriate punishment of death (the Law made no sacrificial provision for such sin). Therefore his only recourse is to appeal to the sheer grace of God.

What does it mean for God to deal with us in grace? It basically means for God to do for us what we do not deserve, knowing that we cannot possibly do anything to earn or merit His favor. Consider the following illustration. Suppose a man was caught stealing something and was brought before a judge to be sentenced and punished for his crime. There is no doubt in the minds of everyone that he is guilty, and he certainly deserves whatever punishment the judge sees fit to prescribe according to the law. After hearing the case and examining the evidence, the judge decides to fine the thief the equivalent of four month’s salary. The thief knows that the judge is right and that he deserves this. However, he suddenly looks up at the judge and asks for grace. The judge has no obligation to change anything. Yet the judge gets up from behind his desk and walks around to stand beside the thief. He reaches into his own wallet and takes out enough money to pay the man’s entire debt. The people in the courtroom gasp in astonishment, amazed that the judge would do such a thing for this man who did not deserve such kindness. The very judge who had the power to condemn the thief and make him pay chose to bestow grace on him.

This illustration teaches us what God has done for us in Christ. He is the just judge who has paid the guilt of our sin. Grace is probably the most beautiful word in the Bible. Thanks to grace, we have the opportunity to be saved from our sin and become a child of God. Ephesians 2:8-9 instructs us, “For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so that no one can boast.” We enter the Christian life by grace! There is no other way to come to God. Yet just as true is the fact that God means for us to live the Christian life by grace. Indeed God can be gracious with us because of who He is.

When David appealed for grace in Psalm 51:1, he acknowledged that such grace was in accord with God’s loyal love, His *hesed*. Because of His love for us which is rooted in His covenant loyalty to us, He delights to extend grace to us. He does not have to be arm-twisted to do this, for it is His natural character to act in grace, even giving us what we do not deserve. What blocks grace, however, is when we live self-righteously and start to think that we have to earn His favor. Then the Christian life becomes a performance test, whereby we get caught up in the vicious cycle of trying to perform for God so that He will be good to us.

QUESTION 8

When was the last time you stopped to think about God dealing with you in grace? That is something we must never lose sight of. Take your Life Notebook and write out your own definition of what grace means. Then make a list of at least five ways that God has dealt with you in grace. How has He been gracious to you? What has He done for you that you know you did not deserve?

Not only did David request grace and seek God’s loyal love. He also appealed to God on the basis of His great compassion. God’s compassion means that He can see us in our weakest state and take pity on us.

In the opening verse of the psalm, David called attention to three great words that define God: grace, loyal love, and compassion. This is how David wanted to be related to God, and because of which he hoped to be forgiven and restored to God. Alexander Maclaren, a great commentator on the Psalms, wrote, “The psalm begins at once grasping the character of God as the sole ground of hope. That character has been revealed in an infinite number of acts of love. The very number of the psalmist’s sins drove him to contemplate the yet greater number of God’s mercies” (*The Psalms*, 2:128).

Three Terms Describing His Sin

The verse has a very deliberate balance to it, in that the three aspects of God’s character are balanced by three terms for David’s sin and three appeals for cleansing. The first term David used for the sin he had done is the Hebrew term *peša’*, translated “rebellious acts.” This word means to rebel or revolt against God’s standard. David knew the will of God (not to commit adultery), but he rebelled against God’s will and chose to go his own independent way. For this, David asked God to “wipe these away” (or blot them out). This word for “wipe away” has its background in the Old Testament laws concerning adultery (see Num 5:11-31). When a woman was taken in adultery, they were to write out the curses against this sin on parchment. Then they would take the parchment, dip it in water and wash off the curses that had been written on the parchment. The woman would drink this water, and it would reveal whether she had been guilty. If she were innocent, the curse that had been washed off in the water would not hurt her. The word that was used for “wash off” in Numbers 5:23 is the same word that David used in Psalm 51:2 concerning his sin. He hoped his rebellious acts could be wiped away, no longer to be seen.

Verse 2. Second, David spoke of his wrongdoing (Hebrew *’āwōn*), asking that God might wash it away. This particular word means to twist, to take the standard and twist it. David, in his role as king, was responsible to establish and uphold God’s Law. Yet he bent the rules (we might say) to suit his

own purposes. Now he acknowledged that he needed God to wash away this wrongdoing he had done.

QUESTION 9

As king of the nation, David had a responsibility to be faithful to God's laws. He was to set an example for others. Instead he twisted the standard, as though the law against adultery did not apply to him. What can we learn from his experience that is important for all of us who aspire to be leaders? *(Select all that apply.)*

- A. Satan particularly likes to target leaders with temptation, hoping they will fail.
- B. When we commit sin, we may think we can hide this from other people, but we cannot hide it from God.
- C. People realize that leaders are human like everyone else, and therefore they easily overlook their sin and failures.
- D. If we want to be a leader in God's work, we need to realize that our sin can discredit our ministry and can even become an excuse for others to dishonor the name of Christ.

Three Pleas for Cleansing

Third, David asks God to cleanse him of his sin (Hebrew *ḥāṭā*). This word has a basic nuance of falling short of the standard or missing the mark. When we sin, we are falling short of God's standard of righteousness. Needless to say, we are all guilty of this. None of us can live up to the holy righteous standards of God. This is why we need His compassion.

The opening two verses of Psalm 51 provide us with an insightful comparison between God's character and man's sinfulness. Observe the following chart:

The Character of God	The Sinfulness of Man
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extends grace• Acts with loving loyalty• Bestows compassion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rebels against the Lord• Perverts God's standard• Falls short of God's righteousness

What David had done caused him to see the hideousness of his sin against the Lord. Without doubt, it was ugly, unfitting, an affront to all the goodness God had given him, and left him a miserable wreck. The beautiful thing, however, is that God forgave and cleansed David. True heartfelt confession and repentance opens the floodgates of God's love, forgiveness, and restoration. We also learn from this that what God did for David, He is able and willing to do for all of us who humble ourselves as David did.

QUESTION 10

Sometimes we make erroneous assumptions about sin, in order to rationalize what we do. For instance, we can tell ourselves that it is okay to sin, because all we have to do is confess later what we have done and God will forgive us. What is wrong with this view? Write down your answer to this question in your Life Notebook.

Confession: Lament of His Sin and Sinful Condition (vv 3-6)

3 For I am aware of my rebellious acts; I am forever conscious of my sin.

4 Against you—you above all—I have sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight.

So you are just when you confront me; you are right when you condemn me.

5 Look, I was guilty of sin from birth, a sinner the moment my mother conceived me.

6 Look, you desire integrity in the inner man; you want me to possess wisdom.

Verse 3. The confession motif consists of four verses that are artfully balanced. In Psalm 51:3-4 David lamented his moral guilt, while in Psalm 51:5-6 he lamented his moral impotence arising from his sinful nature. He began in verse 3 by labeling his act sin. He did not try to soften the offense; rather he called it what it is. What he did was not merely an error, a careless mistake, a bad judgment call, or a lapse in his thinking. It was sin, pure and simple. For confession to move God to forgive and restore us, we must first be clear in our minds that what we have done is sin, an offense against a holy God.

Then in Psalm 51:3, David lamented, “I am forever conscious of my sin.” He was trying to say that his sin was taking a toll on him emotionally. It plagued his mind and kept him awake at night (recall Ps 32:3-4). As long as he refused to deal with his sin before God, he paid a heavy price. In short, David was a miserable creature!

QUESTION 11

We may think that sin will bring us some pleasure or benefit, but the truth is that sin always comes with a price. We will pay a price for our sin! If we could just stop and think about this truth beforehand, it would help us in our battle with temptation. Read over the following statements, and check all that are correct. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Sin may provide a thrill or pleasure for a moment, but it usually brings grief and misery afterward.
- B. As long as I am not hurting anyone else, sin is not anything to worry about.
- C. God loves me just the way I am, so I do not need to be concerned about refraining from sin.
- D. God may need to convict me of my sin, and this may be very painful.

Verse 4. The initial words of verse 4 have perplexed many readers: “Against you—you above all—I have sinned.” Some translations say, “Against You only.” David had certainly hurt others by his sin. He had taken away the purity of Bathsheba, and he was responsible for Uriah’s death. So what is his point? He was not denying that he had not hurt others. Yet sin can only be defined by God; ultimately sin is everything that violates the character of God and is contrary to His will. God is the standard, and therefore it is to God that we must give account. The Bible teaches that restitution for hurting others has its place (e.g., Lev 5:14-19.), but the sin itself is against God because it is His standard that has been broken and His holiness that has been offended.

Because David’s sin was against God, God is perfectly just to take action against David. Even if God decided to take David’s life, He would be perfectly right in doing so. By acknowledging this, David in essence was expressing his willingness to submit to God’s chastisement. When we come to God confessing our sin, we must also be prepared to accept His verdict. The Bible is very clear that God disciplines His own sons whom He loves (see Heb 12:5-11). It is a faulty confession that only wants God to wave any corrective action; true confession recognizes that God is both loving and wise, and will not take revenge but will choose the right discipline to help further holiness in the life of His child.

Verse 5. Beginning in Psalm 51:5, David changed the emphasis of his confession. Having confessed his immoral act, David now confesses his moral impotence that arises from his sinful nature. He laments, “I was guilty of sin from birth, a sinner the moment my mother conceived me.” That is, David is tracing the root of his problem back to his human birth. David’s fundamental problem is the fact that he inherited a sin nature from his parents—a sin nature that has been passed down from generation to generation since the first parents, Adam and Eve. What was David’s tactic at this point? He was not trying to shift the blame for his sin, but in light of the fact that he was plagued with having a sin nature (a propensity to want to sin), he would need God’s enabling strength and empowerment if he was to live a godly life. David was lamenting his moral impotence, and in doing so he confessed his need for God’s help to live and walk in obedience.

QUESTION 12

Look up and read the following verses: Romans 5:18-19; 7:18; Galatians 5:13-17; and Ephesians 2:3. Which of the following statements best represents the biblical teaching about man’s sin nature?

- A. Each of us is basically good, and when we sin we are doing what is contrary to our nature.
- B. Even those of us who are Christians have what the Bible calls the flesh, a nature that does not want to obey God and do what is right.
- C. Our fundamental problem is not that we have a sin nature, but that we have not learned we are happier if we do what is right.
- D. The real reason we sin is that Satan makes us to sin.

After completing Question 12, please read the “Insight Regarding Question 12” in the Answers section at the end of this lesson.

Verse 6. In the final verse of his confession (v 6), David exclaimed, “you desire integrity in the inner man; you want me to possess wisdom.” Outward obedience—that which others see—is not sufficient. God wants us to be holy inwardly, even when others are not looking. This is about inner transformation.

Our fundamental problem—our sin nature—is at the inner level of our being, and it is precisely at our inner level that God wants to work and transform us. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus brought out this very thing. For example, Jesus addressed the way the religious leaders of His day viewed adultery. Jesus clarified that the sin of adultery was not limited to the physical act itself, but actually began with the mental attitude of looking on a woman for the purpose of lusting after her (Mt 5:27-30). God is not satisfied with mere external obedience; He wants true inner obedience. Therefore it is not sufficient that we avoid murder of another human being; God desires that we deal with the very root problem, namely, hate. If we solve the problem at the heart level, we will not have to worry about the outer level. Maclaren wisely observed, “The discovery of inherent and inherited sinfulness brings with it another discovery—that of the penetrating depth of the requirements of God’s law. He cannot be satisfied with outside conformity indeed” (*The Psalms*, 2:134). Yet David did not have the resources in himself for this. He needed God to transform him. Though it may be painful, it is the path to true wisdom.

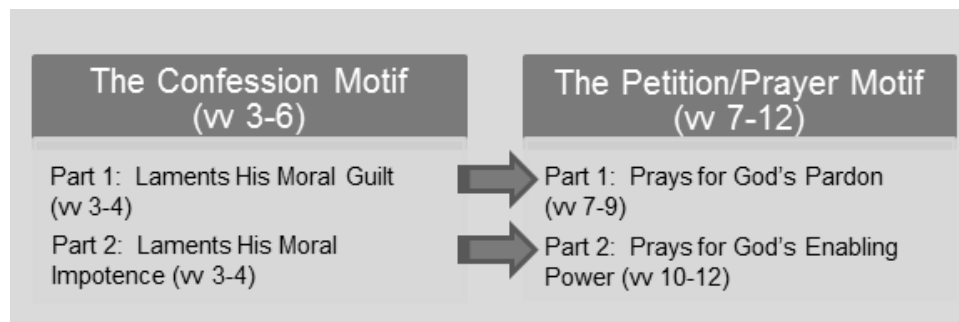
QUESTION 13

In Psalm 51:6 David declared, “You desire integrity in the inner man.” We read these words, but do we really believe that God is serious about this? Does God really expect that we will change inwardly and have inner integrity, even to the point that we will desire holiness and hate sin? Look up and read Hebrews 12:9-11. What do we learn from this passage? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Growth in holiness does not just happen; it takes God applying discipline to us.
- B. When God is mad at us, He will discipline us.
- C. The purpose of God’s discipline in our life is that we may share in His holiness.
- D. Discipline is God’s way of getting even with us for violating His holiness.
- E. The process by which God takes us through discipline may be painful for us, but in the end it is good for us.

Petition: David’s Prayer (vv 7-12)

In the previous motif (confession/lament), the text fell into two subsections, one in which David spoke about his act of sin and the other about his sin condition. In a similar manner, the petition/prayer motif falls into two distinct subsections (each consisting of three verses). In the first (vv 7-9), David prayed for God’s pardon. In the second (vv 10-12), he prayed for power and divine enablement. Notice how the components of the petition motif correspond to those of the previous confession motif:



David’s Prayer for God’s Pardon (vv 7-9).

7 Sprinkle me with water and I will be pure; wash me and I will be whiter than snow.

8 Grant me the ultimate joy of being forgiven! May the bones you crushed rejoice!

9 Hide your face from my sins! Wipe away all my guilt!

Verse 7. In the Hebrew text, the first clause of verse 7 is literally “Purify me with hyssop.” Hyssop was a small plant that often grew on stone walls (see 1 Kgs 4:33). It was used to apply water or blood in certain purification rites, including that of a leper (see Ex 12:22; Lev 14:4-6; 14:49-52; Num 19:6-18). By using this Old Testament imagery, perhaps David was conveying that his sin had rendered him as defiled and unacceptable as a leper, but like the defiled one he desired God’s cleansing through forgiveness. Of course God does not literally use hyssop to cleanse us. He forgives us by His Word based on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and when we are forgiven by God we are whiter than snow—perfectly clean.

King David was already what we would call an Old Testament believer. This means that he had already put his faith in the Lord God. Like Abraham, he had “believed in the LORD, and He reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Gen 15:6, NASB). He would still need the Messiah to die for his sins, but

God had forgiven him. David had what we call positional righteousness and was eternally forgiven. Nevertheless because of his sin he needed God's forgiveness to be restored to fellowship with God. For this to happen, he had to confess and repent of his sins. The same principle is true today. Even after we become a believer and receive eternal life, we still need to practice repentance and confession, if we want to be restored to God and enjoy fellowship with Him.

QUESTION 14

Look up and read 2 Corinthians 12:21 and 1 John 1:9. From the reading, select the correct answers from the following options. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. It is possible that a Christian may have sinned in the past and not repented of his sin.
- B. Confession of our sin is essential if we want to walk in fellowship with God.
- C. If we fail to repent and confess our sins, we may lose our salvation.
- D. If we sincerely confess our sins, God promises to forgive us and to cleanse us completely.

After completing Question 14, please read the "Insight Regarding Question 14" in the Answers section at the end of this lesson.

Verses 8. This verse literally says, "Make me to hear joy and gladness." This is a figure of speech, namely, a metonymy. Joy and gladness are inner emotional feelings—one does not hear them. So, David was asking for the word of forgiveness that would produce joy and gladness in him. The latter part of verse 8 says, "May the bones you crushed rejoice!" This is a double figure of speech. First, this is a hyperbole (a deliberate exaggeration)—his bones were not literally crushed. Second, this is a personification—inanimate objects like bones do not rejoice. Allen Ross writes, "Bones denotes one's whole physical structure, the person himself. To say that one's bones are in agony is to say emphatically that his body is wracked with pain" ("Psalms," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 715). David may be describing in a figurative way how painful and piercing was his guilt after Nathan's confrontation. His whole being had been ground to powder, as it were, by the weight of God's hand. Only the assurance of God's forgiveness could turn his agonizing pain into rejoicing!

Verse 9. In verse 9 he asked for a pure heart and a resolute spirit. David recognized that he did not have the power to do God's will. Therefore he looked to God for strength in the inner man. He was in need of a work by God that would help him be pure and stay pure (recall v 6).

David's Prayer for God's Enabling Power (vv 10-12).

10 Create for me a pure heart, O God! Renew a resolute spirit within me!

11 Do not reject me! Do not take your Holy Spirit away from me!

12 Let me again experience the joy of your deliverance! Sustain me by giving me the desire to obey!

Verse 10. David's prayer in verses 10-12 is threefold: (1) for inner renewal of his heart attitude, (2) for preservation in serving God, and (3) for restoration of joy.

QUESTION 15

In contrast to his sins of adultery and murder, David now desires a pure heart. Purity of heart does not seem to be a very important issue with many Christians these days, but do you know what God has to say about purity? Look up and read the following verses. Then match each verse with the appropriate summarizing statement.

<i>Verse References</i>	<i>Summarizing Statement</i>
Matthew 5:8	Purity involves leaving behind youthful lusts.
1 Timothy 1:5	God promises that those who are pure in heart are blessed.
1 Timothy 4:12	Purity of heart goes along with a good conscience and a sincere faith.
2 Timothy 2:22	Spiritual leaders are to be examples of purity.
James 1:27	To be pure, one must keep himself unstained by the world.
1 John 3:3	Those who focus on the return of Christ (when we will be made like Him) will want to purify themselves.

Verse 11. Probably the most controversial verse in this psalm, this verse raises several theological questions. Did Old Testament saints have the indwelling Holy Spirit? Could they lose the Holy Spirit? Was David fearful of losing his salvation? Does this verse imply that believers today can lose their salvation?

Let us begin our discussion by first contrasting the ministry of the Holy Spirit before and after the coming of Christ. Believers under the old covenant were not indwelt by the Holy Spirit as are new covenant believers today. This did not become a reality until the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Looking forward to that moment, Jesus told the disciples that after His departure, He would send the Holy Spirit (Jn 15:26; 16:7), implying that something new and more dramatic was about to happen. Up until that time the disciples had experienced the Holy Spirit with them, but not in them (Jn 14:16-17).

God's plan was that the Holy Spirit would not be given until after Jesus had been glorified (Jn 7:39)—that is, in the sense of believers being sealed by the Holy Spirit and having the Spirit in their hearts (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13-14). That does not mean, however, that the Holy Spirit was not in the world before this time or that He was not actively working. Indeed, He was working and empowering believers prior to Pentecost, but beginning with Pentecost the Holy Spirit would permanently indwell every believer at the moment of faith in Christ and regeneration. Prior to that day (and even throughout the old covenant period), the Holy Spirit empowered individual believers for special tasks. An example of this is Samson. Judges 15:14 indicates that the Spirit of the Lord came on him mightily, so that he broke his bonds. Yet later the Spirit departed from him (Jud 16:20), but eventually He empowered him one final time to pull down the Philistine temple. The Spirit would also come on prophets, enabling them to prophesy (Num 11:17-30), and on kings to perform deeds for God (1 Sam 11:6). Furthermore the psalmist in Psalm 139:7 was aware of God's Holy Spirit being continually with him.

QUESTION 16

What was so special about the day of Pentecost in regard to the Holy Spirit?

- A. Beginning with the day of Pentecost, all believers would be permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
- B. Every year on the day of Pentecost, Christians can expect to speak in tongues.
- C. This proves that believers today will speak in tongues if they are filled by the Holy Spirit.
- D. Prior to Pentecost, all believers were indwelt by the Holy Spirit but now they could also speak in tongues.

To properly understand David's request for God not to take away the Holy Spirit, we need to see his request in its historical context. This request was not from an average Israelite citizen but from the king, and this is an important observation. The king of the nation had an important relationship to the Holy Spirit that others did not. Immediately after Saul's disobedience regarding the Amalekites (1 Sam 15), God regretted that He had made Saul king. At that point, God had Samuel anoint young David. Then in 1 Samuel 16:13-14, we gain insight into the ministry of the Holy Spirit in regard to these two kings:

So Samuel took the horn full of olive oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers. The Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day onward. Then Samuel got up and went to Ramah. Now the Spirit of the LORD had turned away from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him.

David was aware that God had disciplined Saul severely on account of his disobedience. When the Lord decided to remove Saul as king, the Spirit (which had been on him for his role as king) was removed and came on David. This had to do with the theocratic and administrative function of the Spirit. Thus David was saying in effect, "Don't reject me like You had to deal with Saul." His request was to be preserved in serving God as king. Once we see David's plea in this light, we realize that the issue had nothing to do with losing his salvation but with his role as the Spirit-endowed king.

Believers today living under the new covenant receive the Holy Spirit the moment they place their faith in Christ to save them from their sins, and all true believers have the Spirit (Rom 8:8-9). Since we cannot lose Christ (Jn 10:27-30), we cannot lose the Spirit. Of course we can sin, grieve the Spirit, and even walk in the flesh. When we do this, we will not be filled with the Spirit, and we will also lose the joy of the Spirit. It is also possible that we can disqualify ourselves from rewards on account of continued disobedience (1 Cor 9:27).

QUESTION 17

Psalm 51:11 proves that God may remove the Holy Spirit from believers today, if they choose to continue in disobedience to God. *True or False?*

Verse 12. David prayed for restoration of joy in his life. No doubt he spent most of a year after his sin with Bathsheba with a heavy heart, robbed of all joy. These were dark days in his life, and he hoped to recapture the joy of walking in fellowship with God again. He also prayed that God would give him the desire to obey.

QUESTION 18

Let's review the verses from the preceding two motifs, each of which has two subsections. Match the following primary ideas with the appropriate verses.

	Primary Idea	Verse from Psalm 51
Prays for God's pardon	<input type="text"/>	³ For I am aware of my rebellious acts; I am forever conscious of my sin. ⁴ Against you--you above all--I have sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. So you are just when you confront me; you are right when you condemn me.
Prays for God's enabling power	<input type="text"/>	⁵ Look, I was guilty of sin from birth, a sinner the moment my mother conceived me. ⁶ Look, you desire integrity in the inner man; you want me to possess wisdom.
Laments his moral guilt	<input type="text"/>	⁷ "Sprinkle me with water and I will be pure; wash me and I will be whiter than snow. ⁸ Grant me the ultimate joy of being forgiven! May the bones you crushed rejoice! ⁹ Hide your face from my sins! Wipe away all my guilt!"
Laments his moral impotence	<input type="text"/>	¹⁰ "Create for me a pure heart, O God! Renew a resolute spirit within me! ¹¹ Do not reject me! Do not take your Holy Spirit away from me! ¹² Let me again experience the joy of your deliverance! Sustain me by giving me the desire to obey!"

Vow of Praise (vv 13-15)

13 Then I will teach rebels your merciful ways, and sinners will turn to you.

14 Rescue me from the guilt of murder, O God, the God who delivers me!

Then my tongue will shout for joy because of your deliverance.

15 O Lord, give me the words! Then my mouth will praise you.

In this section David made a vow to the Lord which has two primary aims. The first is that he would be able to teach others, and the second is that he would be able to render public praise to the Lord.

Verse 13. David spoke of teaching rebels and sinners. In this context this refers to others in the kingdom who have sinned against God as David had (though not necessarily the same specific sin). David was burdened with guilt, even the guilt of murder. However, through repentance and God's cleansing, David knew that he could be delivered from this guilt. When God grants forgiveness, cleansing, and renewal, then David would be able to testify publicly of his experience before others. This public testimony would be heard by others who had rebelled and sinned against God, and as a result some of them would be convicted and feel led to seek God's grace as David did. They would learn through David's example how God deals with penitent sinners. John Goldingay writes, "the suppliant hopes soon to get some very real experience of the generous ways God acts toward people such as rebellious failures (see 103:7; 145:17) and thus to be in a position to 'teach' about these in the way one does in a testimony (see 34:11)" (*Psalms 42-89*, 136).

Verses 14-15. David anticipated the joyful praise that he would be able to give publicly before the congregation. He would shout for joy and praise the Lord as a result of God's assurance of divine forgiveness. Though it may be humbling for the king to share this testimony before others, nevertheless God would be glorified because His grace would be magnified.

QUESTION 19

David concluded verse 15 by proclaiming, “Then my mouth will praise you.” What did he have in mind?

- A. After David has died and gone to be with the Lord, he would stand before the Lord giving him praise.
- B. On receiving the assurance of God’s forgiveness, David anticipated that he would publicly appear before other worshippers to praise God for his deliverance.
- C. David was thinking that he would praise God with his mouth, and as a result God would be pleased and would pronounce him forgiven.
- D. Whether God chose to forgive him or not, David promised that he would praise God.

Reflections Concerning True Worship (vv 16-19)

The final section of Psalm 51 has two short paragraphs. In the first (vv 16-17), David acknowledged a key lesson learned from his experience. In the second (vv 18-19), David made a prayer on behalf of the nation over whom he reigned as king. The two paragraphs are united by the theme of sacrifice.

The Superior Sacrifice for True Worship (vv 16-17)

16 Certainly you do not want a sacrifice, or else I would offer it;
you do not desire a burnt sacrifice.

17 The sacrifices God desires are a humble spirit

O God, a humble and repentant heart you will not reject.

Verses 16-17. David was not saying in these verses that God did not want animal sacrifices. During the era of the old covenant, He did. His point, rather, is that God does not want hollow sacrifices when the heart is not truly with it. If a person is guilty of sin and unrepentant toward God (as David himself was for a long time after his sin), then God is not in the least appeased by the sacrifice of an animal. Humility and brokenness over sin must come first, for this is the superior sacrifice in God’s eyes. Otherwise, all we have is externalism—doing the outward things without any inward change of heart.

The first colon of verse 17 might better be translated, “By Your favor do good to Zion” (NASB). The word “favor” (Hebrew *rātsôn*) means the good will that God does in His compassion. In Isaiah 60:10 this word is used in contrast to the noun “wrath.” The point here is that David was praying for God to extend favor (good will) toward Zion, not wrath. This He would do, if His people worshipped Him with the superior sacrifice of a humble spirit and broken heart. This is what would bring God’s favor on the nation, and the king must set the example for his subjects.

A Final Prayer for the Nation (vv 18-19)

18 Because you favor Zion, do what is good for her! Fortify the walls of Jerusalem!

19 Then you will accept the proper sacrifices, burnt sacrifices and whole offerings;
then bulls will be sacrificed on your altar.

Verses 18-19. When David prayed, “Fortify the walls of Jerusalem,” he was praying that God would be the nation’s defender against enemy invasions. David realized it was useless to put confidence in defensive walls built by human hands, if God was not sovereignly watching over them. If His people worship Him rightly—with a humble spirit and broken heart—then He would fortify the walls of Jerusalem (defend the city), and then their animal sacrifices would be acceptable and meaningful.

What David had learned in his personal experience is what the nation itself must realize and put into practice. Otherwise God would withhold His favor from them.

Topic 3: The Message of Psalm 51

A number of important lessons come out of our study of Psalm 51. The first and foremost lesson is that there is no sin that the grace of God is not greater than. David had committed a very grievous sin before God by lusting after and then committing adultery with Bathsheba. To make matters worse, he was responsible for the death of her husband, Uriah. This was a tragic moment in David's life, and he very easily could have been severely chastised by God. In fact he deserved to be put to death. Yet he approached God by appealing to grace: "Be gracious to me, O God." God showed him that there was grace that would help David recover from the sin he had committed.

A second lesson is that we must never be presumptive about forgiveness. Yes, God was willing and able to forgive David, but this did not come without a great deal of pain and suffering. This can be seen in several ways. First, the child of their illicit union died, which brought grief to both David and Bathsheba. Second, David went a long time (perhaps over a year) before he repented, and during this time he was a miserable man. He felt that his bones were crushed (v 8), which suggests that he was an emotional and physical wreck. Third, David had to go through the embarrassment and humiliation of being confronted by Nathan, as well as the conviction from God that would have followed. Fourth, David's life would never be the same again. Anyone who has read the story of the remainder of David's life knows that David suffered time and again for his sin. This sin had a tragic effect on his whole family that ultimately led to the estrangement and betrayal by his own son, Absalom. Yes, David had to suffer the consequences of his sin—suffering that was painful and devastating to himself, his family, and his nation. We should always ask ourselves the question if the sin we contemplate is worth the price we will probably pay.

A third lesson has to do with genuine confession. In verse 10 David prayed, "Create for me a pure heart, O God! Renew a resolute spirit within me!" Alexander Maclaren wrote, "A desire for pardon which does not unfold into such longing for deliverance from the misery of the old self is not the offspring of genuine penitence, but only of base fear" (*The Psalms*, 2:136). So often our confession of sin is shallow, and our main concern easily becomes that of averting God's displeasure with us or avoiding further pain. How often does it go further to earnestly desire transformed character and a heart that wants to obey God and do His will?

A fourth lesson concerns the nature of true worship (see vv 16-17). We can easily allow our relationship with God to slip into externalism. That means we are outwardly going through the motions of being religious, but our heart is not properly engaged in true worship. Like those who showed up at the temple with an animal sacrifice but were really living lives of sin and indifference, we can easily imitate their way of relating to God. We can even go to church and sing along with the crowd as though we were really seeking God, but our heart may be far from Him. The truth is that God desires to see in us a genuinely humble and repentant heart.

QUESTION 20

Take a moment to review the four lessons from Psalm 51 described above. Which one of these seems to speak to your heart the most? Open your Life Notebook and write down in your own words what you have learned from our study about this particular lesson. How has our study of Psalm 51 helped you to better understand how to deal with confessing sin and being restored to God?

Lesson 8 Self Check

QUESTION 1

In penitential lament psalms the lament section will typically focus on which of the following?

- A. Blaming God for allowing sin into the world.
- B. Excusing oneself from responsibility on account of one's circumstances in life.
- C. Lamenting one's own sinfulness and the repercussions that followed the act of sin.
- D. Attributing one's sin to Satan, in order to shift the blame to him.

QUESTION 2

Look over the following list and then select which item would **not** be considered part of the general features of penitential lament psalms.

- A. Description of the bodily anguish felt
- B. Prayer to God to send angels to defend the psalmist
- C. Confession
- D. Vow to praise God
- E. Appeal to God's grace

QUESTION 3

From a study of the superscription for Psalm 51 we learned that David voluntarily gave this poem to the choir director, which implies that he allowed the account of his sin and repentance to be shared publicly. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

In David's introductory petition (Ps 51:1-2) he called attention to three great attributes of God that are relevant to his need of forgiveness. Which one of the following did he **not** mention?

- A. God's mercy (or grace)
- B. God's great compassion
- C. God's loyal love (*hesed*)
- D. God's righteousness

QUESTION 5

In David's confession or lament of his sin (Ps 51:3-6), what issue did he lament?

- A. He lamented that his parents did not do a better job in training him when he was a young boy.
- B. He lamented the fact that Bathsheba was immodest and tempted him to sin.
- C. He lamented the fact that he did not know what God's Word had to say about adultery.
- D. He lamented his moral impotence (or weakness) on account of his sinful nature.

QUESTION 6

When David exclaimed to God, "you desire integrity in the inner man," he was acknowledging that God is not satisfied with mere outward obedience, but desires our inner transformation of holy character. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

In David's petition he pleaded with God, "May the bones you crushed rejoice!" This involves two figures of speech: (1) Hyperbole (deliberate exaggeration), since God had not literally crushed his bones, and (2) Personification (having bones rejoice). *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

When David prayed, "Do not take your Holy Spirit away from me!" he meant . . .

- A. That he was afraid of being rejected by God and losing his salvation.
- B. That like Samson, his supernatural strength would be gone.
- C. That he dreaded losing his ability to worship God and write beautiful psalms.
- D. That he was afraid God would remove him as king, just as God did with Saul.

QUESTION 9

In David's vow of praise (Ps 51:13-15), he anticipated that he would teach rebels God's merciful ways. In what way did David think he would do this?

- A. David would go to the prison and find rebels with whom he could start a Bible study.
- B. David would start a new seminary and recruit rebels to be his students.
- C. David would give a public testimony of how God dealt with him, and others who had rebelled against God (like David had) would be convicted and plead for God to deal with them in grace.
- D. David would lead his army among the pagan nations around Israel, and they would hold evangelistic meetings to proclaim God's holiness and mercy.

QUESTION 10

Which of the following is **not** a lesson to be learned from a study of Psalm 51?

- A. God is very gracious, and even our deepest sins can be forgiven when we truly repent.
- B. If we are not careful, we can go too far in sinning and consequently lose the Holy Spirit.
- C. Sin is very costly, and can often bring great pain into our lives.
- D. The kind of worship God really wants from us is more than the external acts of worship; He desires that we have a heart that is genuinely humble and repentant.

Lesson 8 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1

- B. Lamenting one's own sinfulness and the repercussions that followed the act of sin.

QUESTION 2

- A. Love
- C. Loyalty

QUESTION 3

- D. One day after this life we will have to appear at the judgment seat of Christ to be rewarded for what we have done while in the body (so the life we live now does matter!).

Insight Regarding Question 3

The judgment seat of Christ is not for unbelievers, but only for Christians. (Non-Christians will be judged at the Great White Throne judgment described in Rev 20:11-15.) Romans 14:10-12 teaches us that all Christians will stand before the judgment seat in order to give an account of themselves to God. This is not for the purpose of determining their eternal destiny, since that matter depends solely on the exercise of faith in Christ and His work for us on the cross. The judgment seat of Christ is for the purpose of evaluating the life we lived, to determine if the works we did should be rewarded. See 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. The Lord Jesus will also determine whether we are to be praised (1 Cor 4:4-5). So there is a correlation between pleasing the Lord and the kind of life we live that will be praised and rewarded for eternity.

QUESTION 4: *Your answer should be similar to the following:*

walk in the Spirit, or simply the Holy Spirit

QUESTION 5: True

QUESTION 6

- A. Appeal to God's grace
- B. Confession
- D. Vow to praise God
- F. Description of bodily anguish felt

QUESTION 7

- B. Since Nathan did not confront David until after the child was born, David obviously waited a very long time before he fully repented.

QUESTION 8: *Your answer*

QUESTION 9

- A. Satan particularly likes to target leaders with temptation, hoping they will fail.
- B. When we commit sin, we may think we can hide this from other people, but we cannot hide it from God.
- D. If we want to be a leader in God's work, we need to realize that our sin can discredit our ministry and can even become an excuse for others to dishonor the name of Christ.

QUESTION 10: *Your answer*

QUESTION 11

- A. Sin may provide a thrill or pleasure for a moment, but it usually brings grief and misery afterward.
- D. God may need to convict me of my sin, and this may be very painful.

QUESTION 12

- B. Even those of us who are Christians have what the Bible calls the flesh, a nature that does not want to obey God and do what is right.

Insight Regarding Question 12

Charles Ryrie provides the following Scriptural evidence about man's corrupt nature: "The Bible clearly states that all aspects of man's being are corrupt. By nature we are children of wrath—that is, objects of wrath (Eph 2:3). By actions we are also objects of God's wrath, but this verse refers to

something innate. Psalm 51:5 indicates that this is something we have from conception, not something acquired by actions during our lifetimes.

“Every facet of man’s being is affected by this sin nature. (1) His intellect is blinded (2 Cor 4:4). His mind is reprobate or disapproved (Rom 1:28). His understanding is darkened, separated from the life of God (Eph 4:18). (2) His emotions are degraded and defiled (Rom 1:21; 1:24; 1:26; Tit 1:15). (3) His will is enslaved to sin and therefore stands in opposition to God (Rom. 6:20; 7:20).” (*Basic Theology*, p 252)

QUESTION 13

- A. Growth in holiness does not just happen; it takes God applying discipline to us.
- C. The purpose of God’s discipline in our life is that we may share in His holiness.
- E. The process by which God takes us through discipline may be painful for us, but in the end it is good for us.

QUESTION 14

- A. It is possible that a Christian may have sinned in the past and not repented of his sin.
- B. Confession of our sin is essential if we want to walk in fellowship with God.
- D. If we sincerely confess our sins, God promises to forgive us and to cleanse us completely.

Insight Regarding Question 14

The Bible never says that a failure to repent and confess sins will result in loss of salvation. In fact elsewhere believers are assured that they will not lose their salvation (see esp. Jn 10:27-29). *Eternal Life* means that it is eternal, not something temporary. However, if a believer sins and fails to repent and confess, other significant repercussions will occur. First, he will lose his sense of joy. Second, he will have no close fellowship with the Lord. Third, he endangers his own spiritual life, because he may persist in his sin and make it more difficult to break from it. Fourth, by continuing in a state of sin, the believer is hardening his heart against God. Fifth, he is potentially setting himself up for being severely disciplined by God (which may prove to be very painful). Sixth, living in a state of continual carnality will mean no spiritual fruit, and thus the potential loss of reward at the judgment seat of Christ. Seventh, continued carnality and hardening of one’s heart against God can have other eternal consequences. (Note the warning in Heb 4:1 about coming short of the rest of God—which can mean the loss of one’s privilege to reign with Christ and possible other kingdom consequences.)

QUESTION 15

<i>Verse References</i>	<i>Summarizing Statement</i>
Matthew 5:8	God promises that those who are pure in heart are blessed.
1 Timothy 1:5	Purity of heart goes along with a good conscience and a sincere faith.
1 Timothy 4:12	Spiritual leaders are to be examples of purity.
2 Timothy 2:22	Purity involves leaving behind youthful lusts.
James 1:27	To be pure, one must keep himself unstained by the world.
1 John 3:3	Those who focus on the return of Christ (when we will be made like Him) will want to purify themselves.

QUESTION 16

- A. Beginning with the day of Pentecost, all believers would be permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

QUESTION 17: False

QUESTION 18

Primary Idea	Verse from Psalm 51
Laments his moral guilt	³ For I am aware of my rebellious acts; I am forever conscious of my sin. ⁴ Against you--you above all--I have sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. So you are just when you confront me; you are right when you condemn me.
Laments his moral impotence	⁵ Look, I was guilty of sin from birth, a sinner the moment my mother conceived me. ⁶ Look, you desire integrity in the inner man; you want me to possess wisdom.
Prays for God's pardon	⁷ "Sprinkle me with water and I will be pure; wash me and I will be whiter than snow. ⁸ Grant me the ultimate joy of being forgiven! May the bones you crushed rejoice! ⁹ Hide your face from my sins! Wipe away all my guilt!"
Prays for God's enabling power	¹⁰ "Create for me a pure heart, O God! Renew a resolute spirit within me! ¹¹ Do not reject me! Do not take your Holy Spirit away from me! ¹² Let me again experience the joy of your deliverance! Sustain me by giving me the desire to obey!"

QUESTION 19

- B. On receiving the assurance of God's forgiveness, David anticipated that he would publicly appear before other worshippers to praise God for his deliverance.

QUESTION 20: *Your answer*

Lesson 8 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1

- C. Lamenting one's own sinfulness and the repercussions that followed the act of sin.

QUESTION 2

- B. Prayer to God to send angels to defend the psalmist

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4

- D. God's righteousness

QUESTION 5

- D. He lamented his moral impotence (or weakness) on account of his sinful nature.

QUESTION 6: True

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8

- D. That he was afraid God would remove him as king, just as God did with Saul.

QUESTION 9

- C. David would give a public testimony of how God dealt with him, and others who had rebelled against God (like David had) would be convicted and plead for God to deal with them in grace.

QUESTION 10

- B. If we are not careful, we can go too far in sinning and consequently lose the Holy Spirit.

Lesson 9: Psalms of Trust or Confidence (Ps 27)

Lesson Introduction

Closely related to the lament psalms is a category called psalms of trust or confidence. They are similar to lament psalms in that there is a distressing situation in view that has caused the psalmist to turn to God for help. However, the psalmist has moved beyond the crisis moment. Whatever lamentable situation he mentioned is not as specific or as detailed as in lament psalms, and the focus is more on the confidence and trust the psalmist has in God. So the emphasis is on the psalmist's faith in God, and he confidently proclaims how great God is, how good He is, and how utterly trustworthy His promises are. As a result, psalms of trust or confidence are far more positive in nature than psalms of lament. In this lesson we will consider the general characteristics of this psalm motif, and then we will make a careful case study of Psalm 27.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: Expected Features With Psalms of Trust or Confidence

Topic 2: Psalm 27—A Case Study

Background to Psalm 27

David's Declaration of Trust or Confidence: Part 1 (vv 1-3)

David's Declaration of Trust or Confidence: Part 2 (vv 4-6)

David's Petition (vv 7-12)

David's Re-expression of Confidence (vv 13-14)

Topic 3: The Message of Psalm 27

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- Identify the crucial motifs that characterize psalms of trust (or confidence) and that distinguish them from lament psalms
- Grasp psalms of confidence or trust as a result of an inductive study of Psalm 27
- See the need to develop personal intimacy with God in order to be better prepared for spiritual battles you face

Preparing for the Lesson

"I'm glad to see you with a smile on your face today," Kate chirped on seeing Tom strolling into the student lounge for a cup of early morning coffee before the Psalms class. She figured he must have gotten over blaming himself for the loss of the soccer game three days ago. "Hey, life must go on," Tom harked back, "the loss of one soccer game does not mean the world is coming to an end." "Well, you definitely sound like a new man today," Kate gleefully acknowledged.

The two of them were on a second cup of coffee when Tom asked a thought-provoking question. “Have you ever been afraid, I mean really fearful, scared to your bones?” Tom asked. “Tom, that’s a rather heavy question,” Kate responded. “I mean, everyone gets scared at one time or another. I remember a campout I went on with a group of girls several years ago. In the middle of the night, we heard an animal outside our tent. We were so scared, thinking it might be a bear. As it turned out, the ferocious animal turned out to be the lovable Labrador retriever that belonged to the camp director.” Tom and Kate had a good chuckle over that.

“Tom, why are you asking about *fear* anyway? What’s that got to do with our Psalms class this morning?” Suddenly sounding more serious, Tom remarked, “There is a good side to being fearful, Kate. It gives us an opportunity to see how confident we really feel about God. We need situations that challenge us to the point of actually being afraid, so that we can come to grips with whether we really trust God. I mean, the psalmist had his low moments, sure, but there were also times when he was enraptured with how mighty his God was and utterly confident of God’s help.” Kate jumped in at this point. “OK, I see where you are going with this. We may face fearful moments, but that is precisely when we can bank on God’s help.” “That’s right,” Tom echoed. Kate continued, “I think Psalm 121:1-2 illustrates what we are talking about. ‘I will lift up my eyes to the mountains. From where shall my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.’” “Exactly,” Tom confirmed, “We can stare fear in the face, when we are confident that the God of heaven is our deliverer.”

Topic 1: Expected Features With Psalms of Trust or Confidence

On first reading you might not detect much difference between a lament psalm and a psalm of trust or confidence. Many of the same motifs are involved. The primary difference is that with a psalm of trust or confidence we do not find a detailed or sustained development of the lament itself. This is not to say, however, that no traces of lament are in the psalm of confidence. Indeed there are. As C. Hassell Bullock states it, “Somewhere in the shadows of the psalms of trust trouble is lurking” (*Encountering the Book of Psalms*, 166). The psalmist refers to his enemies or he refers to some distressing situation. However, references to any lament are more in the background. He does not dwell on his pain, his agony, or his desperation. Whenever he refers to his lamentable situation, it is only briefly. Furthermore whatever references the psalmist might make in regard to lament are just enough to help us appreciate the fact that he has faced a serious challenge. In psalms of trust or confidence, the faith of the psalmist far overshadows his lamentable situation. When he describes his crisis, it is not so explicit. Yet it is enough to help us discern the circumstances that gave occasion to the psalmist’s trust in God.

QUESTION 1

What is the primary difference between a psalm of lament and a psalm of trust or confidence?

- A. The psalm of trust or confidence has no reference to lament of any kind.
- B. The psalm of trust or confidence has a minor reference to lament, but this is not as developed or emphasized as much as in psalms of lament.
- C. The psalm of lament has no reference to any confession of trust or confidence.
- D. The psalm of lament has more emphasis on a declaration of trust than a psalm of confidence.

Scholars are not in total agreement about which psalms should be included in this category, but the following are generally agreed on. Most are psalms reflecting the individual, although a couple have the community in view:

Individual: Psalm 4; 11; 16; 23; 27; 62; 91; 121; 131

Community: Psalm 115; 125

More debated are Psalm 63 (of mixed type) and Psalm 73 (which many would consider a wisdom psalm).

Not surprisingly, psalms of trust or confidence frequently utilize words like “trust,” “have faith,” and “be courageous or strong.” Bullock wisely adds, “In addition to the language of faith, the psalmists use many metaphors and expressions to represent their sense of trusting, like lying down to rest (Ps 23:2) and to sleep (Ps 4:8), and enjoying safety in the presence of one’s enemies (Ps 23:5). Metaphors depicting the Lord as light (Ps 27:1), as rock (Ps 62:2; 62:6), and fortress or refuge (Ps 16:1; 27:1; 62:8), and the metaphor of walking in a straight path (Ps 27:11), are taken from the landscape of the psalmist’s world” (*Encountering the Book of Psalms*, 168).

In the psalms of trust or confidence, we can expect to find about six common features. Not surprisingly these will not all be present in every psalm of this type, but these are what we should be looking for.

Declaration of Trust

The declaration of trust is one of the two most prominent elements of this psalm category (the other being the interior lament—see below). The declaration of trust may be found at the beginning of the psalm, or in some cases near the end. It may even punctuate the poem at various points within. However, it will always be present at some position in the psalm. This element more than any other is what defines a psalm of trust or confidence.

The following are excellent examples of the declaration of trust:

Psalm 4:3, 8

3 Realize that the LORD shows the godly special favor;

the LORD responds when I cry out to him.

8 I will lie down and sleep peacefully, for you, LORD, make me safe and secure.

Psalm 16:2, 8-10

2 I say to the LORD, “You are the Lord, my only source of well-being.”

8 I constantly trust in the LORD; because he is at my right hand, I will not be upended.

9 So my heart rejoices and I am happy; my life is safe.

10 You will not abandon me to Sheol;

you will not allow your faithful follower to see the Pit.

Psalm 23:1-3

1 The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

2 He takes me to lush pastures, he leads me to refreshing water.

3 He restores my strength. He leads me down the right paths for the sake of his reputation.

Finally, we should make one last clarification. Having some positive expression of trust or confidence in a psalm does not automatically qualify it as a psalm of trust or confidence. The declaration of trust must be very strong, and the lament must be very subdued. Both conditions need to be fulfilled.

QUESTION 2

When the psalmist said something like “the LORD responds when I cry out to him,” this is a good example of

- A. A lament about crying out to God.
- B. A praise for God’s attributes.
- C. A declaration of trust.
- D. A petition for God to respond.

Invitation to Trust

A second element that may be present is an invitation to trust. For the psalmist it was not enough for him to express his own trust or confidence in the Lord. He wanted others in the community of faith to join him. So he will often issue a call to others to have faith or be strong and courageous. In some cases this invitation to trust may be accompanied by an exhortation to repent of any sin and wrongdoing as a prelude to trusting.

A good example of the invitation to trust is in Psalm 4:4-5:

4 Tremble with fear and do not sin!

Meditate as you lie in bed, and repent of your ways! (Selah)

5 Offer the prescribed sacrifices and trust in the LORD!

In some cases the invitation to trust may have an auxiliary element regarding the folly of trusting in anything other than the Lord. For example it is folly to trust in one’s self, in men in general, in earthly riches (or power or fame), and especially in idols. One’s trust is properly placed only when it is placed in the LORD alone.

Psalm 62:8-10 is a good example of this very thing. Immediately after the invitation to trust, the psalmist warned the readers of trusting in man or in ill-gotten riches.

8 Trust in him at all times, you people!

Pour out your hearts before him! God is our shelter! (Selah)

9 Men are nothing but a mere breath; human beings are unreliable.

When they are weighed in the scales, all of them together are lighter than air.

10 Do not trust in what you can gain by oppression!

Do not put false confidence in what you can gain by robbery!

If wealth increases, do not become attached to it!

QUESTION 3

In your culture what kinds of things do people often put their trust in rather than in the Lord? Open your Life Notebook and record your thoughts. Also answer this question: If the Lord asked you to give up one thing in your life, what would be the most difficult thing for you to give up? (Sometimes—but not always—the things we cherish the most are the things we tend to trust in the most.)

Basis for Trust

Frequently in psalms of trust or confidence the psalmist expanded on the invitation to trust by stating why trusting is important and appropriate. That is, he clarified the basis for trust. This could be from a personal experience that had taught him a lesson in trusting the Lord. This could also be a spiritual principle he had observed or a point of knowledge worth noting.

If the psalmist recounted a personal experience from which he learned a lesson in trusting, it may be positive in origin (on account of God's blessings to him) or negative in origin (resulting from a trial he passed through).

In Psalm 4:7 the psalmist recounted his positive experience of being blessed by God. In fact he expressed this in reply to those who mocked the idea of God blessing His people.

Many say, "Who can show us anything good?" Smile upon us, LORD!

You make me happier than those who have abundant grain and wine.

This lays the foundation in the final verse, verse 8, for his crowning *declaration of trust*: "I will lie down and sleep peacefully, for you, LORD, make me safe and secure."

Another example of the basis of trust is reflected in Psalm 16:11:

You lead me in the path of life;

I experience absolute joy in your presence; you always give me sheer delight.

Still another example is Psalm 62:11-12a:

11 God has declared one principle; two principles I have heard:

12 God is strong, and you, O Lord, demonstrate loyal love.

QUESTION 4

If someone were to walk up to you and ask you why you feel confident in the Lord as your defender and provider, what would you tell them? What is your personal basis for trust in the Lord? Write your thoughts in your Life Notebook.

Petition

Like lament psalms, the psalmist will frequently present a petition to God. This may or may not be linked to a distressing situation in his life. At times the petition may be brief and simple, while at other times it may be more developed. Not all psalms of trust or confidence will have a petition. Psalm 23, for example, does not.

In Psalm 16 the psalm opens with a brief petition that is linked to the psalmist's trust in God:

Protect me, O God, for I have taken shelter in you.

Not only is this petition in Psalm 16:1 brief, but there is no sustained development of his lamentable situation. The request for protection may imply that he is under attack (whether physically or verbally), but he does not dwell on his distress. Most of the remainder of the psalm focuses on his delight in the Lord and the fact that his trust or confidence is in the Lord.

In several cases the petition has no direct connection to lament at all. Rather the psalmist asked the Lord to bless him or the nation as a whole. This, after all, is what is to be expected of those whose trust is in the Lord. Notice how Psalm 115:13-15 flows from a principle for blessing (by fearing the Lord) to a petition for blessing.

13 He will bless his loyal followers [literally, those who fear the LORD], both young and old.

14 May he increase your numbers, yours and your children's!

15 May you be blessed by the LORD, the creator of heaven and earth!

In the case of Psalm 4 the opening petition is linked to a distressing situation for the psalmist, and the petition does pertain to help or deliverance that he needs from God. (Verse 2 clarifies that the distress is that of reproach coming from the psalmist's enemies.) Yet the lament does not receive major attention, and the dominant mood of the psalm is on faith and confidence. The petition, then, is primarily a prayer of faith.

When I call out, answer me, O God who vindicates me!

Though I am hemmed in, you will lead me into a wide, open place.

Have mercy on me and respond to my prayer! (Ps 4:1)

QUESTION 5

In psalms of trust or confidence, the petition section will always relate in some way to the psalmist's distressing situation. *True or False?*

Vow to Praise

Several of the psalm categories have a vow to praise, and we will sometimes (but not often) encounter this in the psalms of trust or confidence. If a vow of praise is in the psalm, there will almost certainly be a petition as well.

The vow of praise is entirely appropriate in light of the psalmist's confident trust in the Lord. A vow of praise presumes that a petition has been granted. Because he expected God to be faithful and to hear his cry for help or deliverance, the psalmist also anticipated that God's faithful response would lead to his opportunity to publicly give a testimony of praise to the Lord.

In the case of Psalm 16 we have one colon that might be considered a vow to praise, namely, verse 7a: "I will praise the LORD who guides me." We cannot be certain that David was thinking of a public time of testimony and praise, but there was a mild cry for help in verse 1 that implies he was under attack ("Protect me, O God"). This could support that he intended to give his praise at some future time after he had been delivered. On the other hand he may simply have been saying that he was doing this (praising the Lord) and would continue to do so.

In some cases rather than a vow to praise, a psalm has more of a reaffirmation to bless the Lord. This differs slightly from a vow, in that the psalmist did not necessarily need to wait for God's answer to his cry for help before he could commence the blessing. The end of Psalm 115 has such a reaffirmation to bless. This is appropriate, because the God we bless is the God who inhabits the heavens. Notice the development of this thought that leads to his reaffirmation to bless the Lord:

16 The heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth he has given to mankind.

17 The dead do not praise the LORD,

nor do any of those who descend into the silence of death.

18 But we will praise the LORD now and forevermore. Praise the LORD!

QUESTION 6

When we have a vow of praise in a psalm of trust, we will typically also find a _____ as well. (What other element is likely to be in the psalm?)

Interior Lament (Implied or Expressed)

As indicated at the beginning of this topic, the declaration of trust and the interior lament are the two most essential elements of psalms of trust or confidence. These will always be present. We use the label “interior lament” because this is not really a lament as such, but rather the remnant of one. This means that any reference to a distressing situation or threat is vague, not explicit. The psalmist did not bemoan his plight, as in lament psalms. He said enough to let us know that his faith is (or had been) put to the test, but he did not make this a focus or predominant part of the psalm. Bullock explains it this way: “The language suggests some crisis that the psalmist has endured that taught him to trust in the Lord. It was an experience that shaped the faith of the psalmist, and out of it grew a faith that could help him stand against the adversities of life” (*Encountering the Book of Psalms*, 170).

In Psalm 4 the psalmist had intertwined the elements of declaration of trust, petition, and interior lament. He began with a brief petition for God to answer him, but he also referred to his distress. In the following verses from Psalm 4, the interior lament is highlighted in bold letters:

1 When I call out, answer me, O God who vindicates me!

Though I am hemmed in, you will lead me into a wide, open place.

Have mercy on me and respond to my prayer!

2 **You men, how long will you try to turn my honor into shame?**

How long will you love what is worthless and search for what is deceptive? (Selah)

3 Realize that the LORD shows the godly special favor; the LORD responds when I cry out to him.

Psalm 23 provides a good example of a lament that is very subdued, almost in the background:

4 Even when I must walk through **the darkest valley**,

I fear no danger, for you are with me; your rod and your staff reassure me.

5 You prepare a feast before me in plain sight of **my enemies**.

These verses from Psalm 23 are primarily the psalmist’s declaration of trust. But in the midst of declaring his confidence in God, the psalmist casually referred to “the darkest valley” and his “enemies.” This is an example of interior lament. He referred to these threats against him, but did not elaborate on them.

The lamentable situation need not be a personal threat against the psalmist. In Psalm 115, a community psalm of confidence, the psalmist referred to the disdain God’s people as a whole have to bear (as a way of prompting God to intervene and act):

Why should the nations say, “Where is their God?”

QUESTION 7

Match each verse with the appropriate element of a psalm of confidence.

<i>Element</i>	<i>Verses</i>
Declaration of trust	“Have mercy on me and respond to my prayer!” Psalm 4:1
Invitation to trust	“You are the Lord, my only source of well-being.” Psalm 16:2
Basis for trust	“Trust in him at all times, you people!” Psalm 62:8
Petition	“You, O Lord, demonstrate loyal love.” Psalm 62:12
Interior lament	“I am hemmed in.” Psalm 4:1

Topic 2: Psalm 27—A Case Study

Psalm 27 is perhaps the most splendid example of a psalm of trust or confidence. In this psalm—which has long been a favorite of many—all the expected features are present. The one element that might be questioned (the invitation to trust) is at least implied.

Background to Psalm 27

In this psalm David needed the Lord's help to face a new crisis in his life. The superscription does not provide any details that might give us hints about the historical background. From clues that surface in the psalm itself, some scholars feel that David may have been facing a military threat or invasion. His mention in verse 3 of an army encamping against him and of war arising might suggest this. Yet we do not know whether he was actually facing an enemy invasion or if this is simply part of an illustration that helps convey his confidence in the Lord. Another possibility is that the crisis was from a vocal constituency who opposed David. David was king of the nation, and we can well imagine that he faced political foes. Though he was king of a unique nation with a constitution directly from God, political squabbles and power struggles characterized this nation as any other. In verses 11 and 12 he mentioned foes, adversaries, and false witnesses. This might support the notion of an internal threat within the empire. Certainly some attacked David vigorously and even sought to bring him down, to topple him from power.

Regardless of which particular situation may have given rise to the psalm, Psalm 27 focuses on a crisis moment in David's life when he needed God's deliverance. In the midst of this he affirmed his confidence that God is his defender, and his trust was firmly fixed on the Lord to deliver him.

Like David, we too need courage for trying times when our natural fears seem to overwhelm us. We need to feel completely confident in God. But the question is How? How do you get that? Where does it come from? Psalm 27 has the answer!

QUESTION 8

Which of the following are possible situations for the crisis that David faced in Psalm 27? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. David was overwhelmed with guilt on account of his sin with Bathsheba.
- B. David was under pressure because of an invading army.
- C. David felt that the Lord would remove him from "the land of the living."
- D. David was being tormented by false witnesses who attacked him verbally.

David's Declaration of Trust or Confidence: Part 1 (vv 1-3)

Psalm 27:1-3

- 1 The LORD delivers and vindicates me! I fear no one!
The LORD protects my life! I am afraid of no one!
- 2 When evil men attack me to devour my flesh,
when my adversaries and enemies attack me, they stumble and fall.
- 3 Even when an army is deployed against me, I do not fear.
Even when war is imminent, I remain confident.

Psalm 27 begins on a very positive note. David did not open with a lament or a petition. Rather he expressed his confidence in the Lord, a confidence greater than any fear. This psalm is quite unique as a psalm of trust or confidence, for it has an extended elaboration of the psalmist's confidence in God (the first six verses!). Yet the psalmist draws on two very distinctive mental images to express his trust: the battlefield (vv 1-3) and the tabernacle of the Lord (vv 4-6). For this reason, we will call these Part 1 and Part 2.

Verse 1. The opening colon of verse 1 is more literally translated, "The LORD is my light and my salvation [or deliverance]." What exactly did David have in mind when he proclaimed, "The LORD is my light"? Sometimes the word "light" is used in Scripture as a metaphor of God's truth or of His righteousness, but this does not seem to be what David had in mind in Psalm 27. I would tend to interpret this in light of the context of Psalm 27 and the notions of fear. Let me explain: the opposite of light is darkness, which easily conjures up feelings of fear. What child has not felt afraid in the dark? But God is light, that is, He dispels the darkness and all associated fears. The point is clear: When we walk closely with the Lord, fears subside. As the New Testament reminds us, "perfect love casts out fear" (1 Jn 4:18).

David adds in verse 1 that the Lord was his salvation. Often in the Old Testament the word "salvation" does not refer to that moment of faith when a person became a child of God (i.e., new birth), but rather to deliverance in general. When David said, "The LORD is my salvation," he meant that the Lord is the One who delivers him from situations that threaten him. The psalmist asked "Whom shall I fear?" (a rhetorical question), to which we understand the appropriate answer is "No one!"

The second colon of verse 1 is literally translated, "The LORD is the stronghold of my life." The word translated "stronghold" (Hebrew *māōz*) is a military term referring to a very well-fortified place that could withstand an enemy invasion. In other words the Lord was David's protection and security. He did not have to feel dread or be afraid of anyone.

QUESTION 9

In the opening declaration of trust, what things did David say about the Lord? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. He acknowledged that the Lord was his light.
- B. He acknowledged that the Lord was his comforter.
- C. He acknowledged that the Lord was his stronghold.
- D. He acknowledged that the Lord was his treasure.

Verses 2-3. David provided two illustrations to amplify his point, one looking backward to his past and the other forward to his future. The first illustration, in verse 2, seems to look back to a specific incident in his life when the Lord had defended and delivered him. At least three aspects in this verse (attack, devour my flesh, and fall) have a striking similarity to the passage in 1 Samuel 17 when David faced Goliath. David, probably a teenager at the time, put his trust in the Lord alone and experienced victory over this Philistine giant of a man. Perhaps in Psalm 27, David had that situation in mind. What a lesson this must have been in young David's life. How could he ever forget the way the Lord had given him victory on that day? As my pastor friend Jim Rose has so eloquently expressed in one of his classic sermons, "Those of us who see life from God's level, like David, are ignited into action by the giants that block the path of God."

Triumphant moments of faith from the past should be carefully etched in the lining of our memory banks. We need to think back on these from time to time, allowing them to spur us on to new exploits. Probably in some experiences in your past, too, when the Lord gave you a great spiritual victory over what seemed like an impossible challenge. Maybe something comes to mind, perhaps a

time when you felt overwhelmed, up against incredible odds, but yet you trusted the Lord and He delivered you.

QUESTION 10

Try to recall such an incident in your life when you know the outcome had to be of the Lord. Can you think of one? Reflect for a moment. That is a positive memory you certainly should dwell upon. As you face a new challenge, it will help you meditate on past victories just as David did. As we face new challenges, these are reminders to us of what faith accomplishes. Write down your reflections in your Life Notebook.

Having recalled a moment from his past, David then thought about the future in verse 3. Following his victory over Goliath, David went on in life to become a great military leader for the nation. He had gone into battle on many occasions and knew what it was to face war. Foreign armies had besieged him, and foreign nations had declared war on him. When he said that even in this situation he could be confident, this was the voice of experience speaking. But this is not merely self-confidence. The word “confident” in our translations is a Hebrew word (*bôṭēah*) that means to trust. His was one of trust in God and hence a confidence in the Lord (not in himself). Even in these kinds of situations, we do not have to become unglued. We can say with the apostle Paul, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31).

QUESTION 11

When David spoke of being confident, what did he mean?

- A. That his army would protect him against any enemy invaders
- B. That the walls of Jerusalem would withstand any assault by a foreign army
- C. That he was wiser than any enemy and could outsmart them in a battle
- D. That the Lord would be the one to defend and protect him against his enemies

Verses 1-3 give us a beautiful picture of faith and confidence in the Lord, even in the most intimidating situations. Furthermore what was true for David is meant to be true of us as well. As part of our spiritual birthright we are men and women of faith!

David’s Declaration of Trust or Confidence: Part 2 (vv 4-6)

The declaration of trust or confidence continues in verses 4-6, but the imagery changes. David has shifted from thoughts of the battlefield to the pleasantness of God’s tabernacle. This was special to him as a place where he experienced intimate fellowship with God. From this we learn that personal fellowship with the Lord must be the top priority in our lives.

4 I have asked the LORD for one thing—this is what I desire!

I want to live in the LORD’s house all the days of my life,
so I can gaze at the splendor of the LORD and contemplate in his temple.

5 He will surely give me shelter in the day of danger; he will hide me in his home;
he will place me on an inaccessible rocky summit.

6 Now I will triumph over my enemies who surround me!

I will offer sacrifices in his dwelling place and shout for joy!

I will sing praises to the LORD! (Ps 27:4-6)

Verse 4. When David said, “I have asked the LORD for one thing,” he obviously did not mean that this was the only thing he ever asked of the Lord. Rather, this was his top priority. In effect David was saying, “If I could only ask for one thing, this would be it ... to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.” To spend time at God’s place of worship (the tabernacle) was more satisfying to David than anything else, for it was there that he could enjoy the deepest moments of fellowship with God. David wanted the Lord’s fellowship, and he wanted to continue experiencing that all the way to the finish line of his life. As far as he was concerned, nothing could be a substitute for personal intimacy with God. In Psalm 73 (a psalm of Asaph), the yearning of the psalmist for God is expressed in these words: “Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth” (v 25, NASB).

QUESTION 12

How would you rate your own desire for fellowship with the Lord on a scale of one to five? (We should all realize that time alone doing things like reading the Bible or praying does not always reflect true fellowship, especially if we continue to walk in sin. However, there can be a general correlation.)

Level	Description
Level One	I spend almost no time alone with the Lord outside of going to church
Level Two	A couple of times a week I spend 10-15 minutes with the Lord, either reading the Bible or praying
Level Three	Maybe two days a week I spend 30 minutes or more studying the Bible and spending time in prayer with the Lord.
Level Four	At least five days a week I spend 30 minutes or more studying the Bible and spending time in prayer with the Lord.
Level Five	I spend at least 30 minutes every day studying the Bible and spending time in prayer with the Lord.

Reflecting on Psalm 27:4, the words “all the days of my life” are so very important. In my years of walking with the Lord, I have seen many Christians fall by the wayside. I have seen some put their faith on the back burner. I have seen some who have set aside the Lord as priority number one in order to pursue more earthly ambitions. I have even seen some go all the way through seminary and then abandon their desire to follow the Lord. David was not like that! David was a man after God’s heart, and nothing but the sweetness of God’s fellowship could satisfy him. Alexander Maclaren wrote,

What the psalmist wants is what the devout soul in all ages and stages has wanted: the abiding consciousness of the Divine presence; and the prime good which makes that presence so infinitely and exclusively desirable to him is the good which draws all such souls in yearning, namely the vision of God. The lifelong persistence and exclusiveness of the desire are such as all must cherish if they are to receive its fruition (*The Psalms*, 1:264).

The reason dwelling at the tabernacle meant so much to David is given further elaboration at the end of verse 4: “to gaze at the splendor of the LORD and contemplate in his temple.” David said he

enjoyed the times he spent at the tabernacle, because there he could *behold* the splendor of the Lord. Yet the Hebrew word translated “gaze at” or “look” (NASB) is not limited to what one is able to see visually. The idea of this Hebrew word (*hāzāh*) is better rendered by the English word “perceive” in the case of Psalm 27:4. This is the sense that *hāzāh* has in Psalm 63:2: “Yes, in the sanctuary I have **seen** you, and witnessed your power and splendor” (emphasis added). When David said “in the sanctuary I have seen you,” he did not mean that he visibly saw the Lord. The Scriptures tell us quite plainly, “No one has ever seen God. The only one, himself God, who is in closest fellowship with the Father, has made God known” (Jn 1:18). Though David did not see God Himself in the sanctuary, he could perceive such divine attributes as the power and glory of God.

Hence in Psalm 27:4 David spoke about perceiving the splendor of the Lord. Yet we could take this one step further, for the word translated “splendor” (Hebrew *nō’am*) has in mind something that is delightful or pleasant. While lingering in the tabernacle, David was able to perceive the delightfulness of the Lord. That is, he was able to perceive just how delightful the Lord was. This was David’s joy!

In the last line of Psalm 27:4, David expressed a further purpose of dwelling at the tabernacle, namely, to contemplate in his temple. This particular translation might suggest that the words “in his temple” are simply giving us the location where David contemplated. However, (in the Hebrew text) the same preposition could also indicate the object of his contemplation, that is, David was thinking on the temple itself. Obviously this does take place at the temple, but the focus is on what David is doing there. I would suggest translating the last line of verse 4 in this way: “to reflect on His tabernacle.” (Although some translations use the word “temple,” it is better to translate this as “tabernacle” since the first temple [a permanent structure] was not built until the time of Solomon. The Hebrew word can refer to either one. See 1 Sam 1:9; 3:3.)

In summary David gave two reasons in verse 4 why he enjoyed going to the tabernacle: (1) this gave him a more enhanced opportunity to perceive just how delightful the Lord is, and (2) he enjoyed being able to contemplate or reflect on the tabernacle itself. This latter activity of reflecting on the tabernacle is probably to be understood in light of the tabernacle’s corresponding heavenly reality. The earthly tabernacle is a reflection of the greater heavenly tabernacle in which God’s presence dwells (see Heb 8:1-5). Every aspect of the earthly tabernacle pointed to a greater spiritual reality. Hence David enjoyed going to the tabernacle, because it reflected so much about God and the greater heavenly tabernacle.

QUESTION 13

Which of the following reflect David’s reasons for going to the tabernacle? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. At the tabernacle he could put on a priestly robe and enter the holy place.
- B. This was an appropriate place to think about the Lord and how delightful He is.
- C. David enjoyed thinking about the tabernacle itself and contemplating its spiritual significance.
- D. As the nation’s king, he was responsible to present the sacrificial blood before the mercy seat.

Verse 5. In troublesome times David could always find refuge by getting alone with the Lord. He wrote in Psalm 27:5, “He will surely give me shelter in the day of danger; he will hide me in his home [literally, tent]; he will place me on an inaccessible rocky summit.” I imagine that David not only came to the tabernacle at the required times of public worship, but he also went there many times on his own just to be alone with the Lord. Because David spent time alone with God “all the days of his life” seeking His fellowship, it was natural for him to do so when trouble came along. It would be unrealistic to say that David was unaffected by trouble that came his way. Trouble affected him, but because he regularly partook of God’s fellowship, he was not drowned by such trouble. He knew how to find shelter from trouble by seeking the shelter of God’s fellowship. That became a habit in David’s life.

There is certainly a lesson in all this for us. If we are not having regular and hearty doses of fellowship with God when trouble is not on us, we will certainly have difficulty finding that fellowship when trouble comes our way. His fellowship will be a foreign thing to us. We will not feel at home there; it will not seem to us like familiar territory!

Is that truth beginning to sink in? Is it making its way down to your heart where convictions are rooted? Fellowship with God must be a daily part of our lives! If we are not having regular meaningful times of fellowship with God now, why would we think we can suddenly put this in gear in times of trouble? It will not be our natural instinct. For David, fellowship with God was his natural instinct! When a person regularly spends time in God's presence, he learns that God can be counted on!

Verse 6. A literal translation of verse 6a is, "And now my head will be raised above my enemies." In this verse David had an expectant attitude that God would hear his cry for help. For one's head to be lifted up above his enemies is a figure of speech depicting triumph. David believed he would be triumphant over his foes who sought to attack him and bring him down. Hence he anticipated joining with others to praise God for answered prayer: "at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the LORD" (literal translation). Some Old Testament sacrifices were offered as confession of sin, but others were given as a means of expressing thanksgiving to God. This involved a meal that would be shared with others and an occasion for public testimony of what God had done. David was looking forward to that time of praise in which he could testify before others how God answered his prayer.

QUESTION 14

What word or phrase best describes the statement, "at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy"?

- A. This is a petition that David will be able to sacrifice again at the tabernacle.
- B. This is a vow of praise in which David envisioned what he will do after God's deliverance or answer to his prayer.
- C. This is a ritual ceremony that David anticipated, hoping that his sacrifice would move God to act.
- D. This is an act of confession in which David would confess his sins and offer animal sacrifices on account of his iniquities.

David's Petition (vv 7-12)

Having stated his confidence in the Lord (in vv 1-3) and the priority of his life to spend personal time with the Lord (in vv 4-6), David now shifted to making his petition before the Lord in verses 7-12. He is going to petition God, that is, ask God to intervene for him. This petition will be stated in general terms in verses 7-10, and then in specific terms in verses 11-12.

A. General Petition Before the Lord (vv 7-10)

David begins his petition by imploring God to hear and answer him.

7 Hear me, O LORD, when I cry out! Have mercy on me and answer me!

8 My heart tells me to pray to you, and I do pray to you, O LORD.

9 Do not reject me! Do not push your servant away in anger!

You are my deliverer! Do not forsake or abandon me, O God who vindicates me!

10 Even if my father and mother abandoned me, the LORD would take me in.

Verse 7. Beginning here, we encounter a definite change of tone. In the previous verses the psalmist had been so confident and so set on contemplating the Lord. Now he implored God to hear him, and he cried out for help. But this prayer for deliverance is no less the voice of faith than was his previous assurance of God as his defense. Maclaren writes,

But the very brightness of the prospect recalls the stern reality of present need, and the firmest faith cannot keep on the wing continually. In the first part of the psalm it sings and soars; in the second the note is less jubilant, and it sings and sinks; but in both it is faith. Prayer for deliverance is as really the voice of faith as triumph in the assurance of deliverance is, and he who sees his foes and yet ‘believes to see the goodness of Jehovah’ is not far below him who gazes only on the beauty of the Lord (*The Psalms*, 1:264).

Verse 8. We should not miss the connection of verse 8 with verse 4, as signaled by the word “seek” (shown in bold). Observe the following literal translation of these verses:

4 One thing I have asked of the LORD, this I shall **seek**—

that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life.

8 For You my heart has said, “**Seek** my face!”

Your face, O LORD, I shall **seek**.

In verse 4 David proclaimed his life priority as seeking the Lord at His tabernacle. Now in verse 8 David reminded God that he had been seeking His face, that is, craving His fellowship and times of prayer. Hence God should not hide His face (that is, remain silent and withhold deliverance).

QUESTION 15

The words “seek My face” constitute a figure of speech. The word “face” is an anthropomorphism for God’s presence. Yet the whole phrase “seek My face” forms an idiom meaning to draw close to God’s presence and especially to implore Him through prayer. Rather than saying “pray to Me,” however, the Lord says, “seek My face.” Do you feel that the words “seek My face” convey more than simply saying, “pray to Me”? Why? Describe in your Life Notebook what this idiom implies to you.

Verse 9. David implied a second motivation for God to answer when he called himself your servant. Though David was king before men, he correctly appraised himself as a servant before the Lord. This reminds us that God does not forget those who have been faithful to serve Him. Likewise the author of Hebrews reminded his audience who wrestled with the temptation of abandoning their Christian walk that God would not be forgetful of their acts of faith.

For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love you have demonstrated for his name, in having served and continuing to serve the saints. But we passionately want each of you to demonstrate the same eagerness for the fulfillment of your hope until the end. (Heb 6:10-11)

Verse 10. Although David implored God not to forsake or abandon him (v 9), this should not be taken to mean that he had actually come to the point where he felt as though God had forsaken him. This is clear from verse 10: “Even if my father and mother abandoned me, the LORD would take me in.” The translation of the NASB mistakenly implies that David’s father and mother had indeed forsaken him when it renders verse 10, “For my father and my mother have forsaken me” (implying that this had actually taken place). The NET Bible has rendered this correctly and implies not that this had happened but only that this was hypothetically possible. If his own parents were to forsake him (among humans, those who cared for his life more than any other), God would still be faithful to him.

God is like that for you, too. He is more faithful than any other human will ever be to you. No one will love you and commit himself to you, as the Lord will. He is so committed to you, that even when you try to turn your back on Him, He will not give up on you. Your salvation from sin began with Him loving you this way, and your Christian pilgrimage continues this way. Romans 8:38-39 instructs us, “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor heavenly rulers, nor things that are present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

David also knew this truth, though he never read a line of Romans. God does not forsake His children! With that reaffirmation of his faith in God, David then made some specific requests in verses 11-12.

QUESTION 16

If David knew that the Lord would not forsake him (as v 10 implies), why did he pray in verse 9, “Do not forsake or abandon me”? Choose the best answer from the following.

- A. David was worried that he had done something that would cause him to lose his salvation.
- B. Since the Lord had forsaken Saul as king, David knew that the Lord might also forsake him as king.
- C. Because of his sin with Bathsheba, David was worried that God might forsake him.
- D. David was not speaking about God abandoning him in an ultimate sense, but only that God might not rescue him from the immediate danger and distress he was under.

After completing Question 16, please read the “Insight Regarding Question 16” in the Answers section at the end of this lesson.

B. Specific Petition Before the Lord (vv 11-12)

Teach me how you want me to live;
lead me along a level path because of those who wait to ambush me!
Do not turn me over to my enemies,
for false witnesses who want to destroy me testify against me.

Verse 11. In these verses David made two specific requests of the Lord. The first is in verse 11 where he wrote, “Teach me your way.” In this verse David obviously had a teachable spirit, which is a good thing to have when one is under attack by oppressors. David’s desire was to be walking with the Lord, that is, walking in accord with God’s Word and character. We should observe that this request preceded his own personal need of the moment.

Verse 12. A second request is given: “Do not turn me over to my enemies.” Now David specifically requested that God intervene, so that he would not fall into the hands of his enemies. This, of course, was the more pressing issue at hand. But notice the order of his requests. First comes the request to learn how to walk in the way of the Lord, and then comes the request for deliverance. This teaches us a principle: Any request we have for God’s intervention should be preceded by a desire to obey Him.

That is a rather profound observation, and the order of David’s requests certainly speaks well of him. I wonder how many of us follow this example? When you feel a desperate need for God’s intervention or help in your life, do you just barge into His presence with your request without first expressing your desire to be taught of Him and learn His ways? Is your request more important than your need to be taught by the Lord and to learn how to walk obediently with Him? We probably all need to be reminded that God often uses those tough times and crisis situations to draw us to Him. This is when we need to be teachable, listening carefully to what God may want to show us. In fact God may even want to use the crisis to teach us something more about Himself or about our walk

with Him. Therefore we should seek a higher view of God. We should honor Him by acknowledging our need for obedience as being more important than our need for deliverance. Next time you feel an urgent need to ask for God's help or intervention, why not try using this as an opportunity to ask Him to teach you His ways? That is your greater need!

QUESTION 17

What two things did David specifically pray for in the final part of the Petition Section (vv 11-12)?
(Select all that apply.)

- A. Deliverance from his adversaries, especially false witnesses.
- B. Courage to lead his army in battle.
- C. That he would be teachable and learn more of God's ways through his trial.
- D. That God would not be angry with him.

QUESTION 18

Open your Life Notebook again. Think of a time when God was taking you through a trial in which you wanted him to quickly deliver you, but God seemed to delay. Our focus tends to be on getting to the end of the trial, but God may be more concerned about what we learn in the process. Can you think of some important lessons you were able to learn as you went through this trial? Write down the things that come to your mind in your Life Notebook.

David's Re-expression of Confidence (vv 13-14)

In the final section of the psalm (vv 13-14), David returned to expressing his confidence and trust in the Lord.

13 Where would I be

if I did not believe I would experience the Lord's favor in the land of the living?

14 Rely on the LORD! Be strong and confident! Rely on the LORD!

Verse 13. What did David mean by the phrase "the land of the living"? A clue is provided in Isaiah 38:10-11 where Hezekiah used the same phrase: "I thought, 'In the middle of my life I must walk through the gates of Sheol, I am deprived of the rest of my years.' I thought, 'I will no longer see the LORD in the land of the living, I will no longer look on humankind with the inhabitants of the world.'" What is clear from the Isaiah passage is that the phrase "the land of the living" is a reference to this life before the grave and not the afterlife.

When David spoke of being confident to see the Lord's goodness in the land of the living, he was talking about an expectancy of seeing God manifest His good favor on David while he was still alive. Hence David was saying in verse 13 that what kept him going through this ordeal was faith; faith that God would in some way act on his behalf to manifest His goodness while David was still alive.

QUESTION 19

What does the phrase "the land of the living" mean?

- A. A reference to heaven where people are eternally alive
- B. A spiritual realm where believers are able to enter in by prayer
- C. This present life here on earth before going to the grave
- D. A reference to Jerusalem where people worshipped the living God

Verse 14. In the last verse of the psalm the verbs are in the singular which suggests that David was admonishing his own heart. He recognized that even though the Lord is faithful, he must patiently wait for God's intervention. His heart should stay strong and confident as he waited for God to deliver him. This reminds us that one of the primary ingredients for spiritual maturity is the time factor. Quite often God is not hasty to answer our prayers, but that should not cause us to lose heart or abandon our hope in Him. Waiting for the Lord to manifest His goodness is never easy. Our natural tendency is to want God to respond immediately. But waiting has its purposes, and this becomes an opportunity for faith to be tested as well as to grow. Because He is the potter and we are the clay, it is never appropriate to approach the Lord with an attitude of "hurry up and do it." As we saw from our study of Psalm 31 in Lesson 3, the Lord is a God of goodness. He is not stingy with His goodness. Trials and tragedies may come our way, but the child of God who is walking by faith can be confident that God's goodness will follow, and though delayed, it will come.

Difficult as it may be to accept at times, the process of waiting is good for us. Endurance is developed, character is formed, and there is increased joy when God does at last answer. From God's perspective, waiting is not wasted time! That is often when we grow the most.

QUESTION 20

What are some of the positive things about having to wait for God's rescue when we are going through difficult trials? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. This gives God opportunity to calm down and cease being angry at us.
- B. By having to wait, our faith grows stronger as we keep relying on God.
- C. Our prayer life can be developed.
- D. We grow more bitter when we do not get what we want.
- E. We learn the value of endurance and not giving up.
- F. We may spend more time in God's Word, as we seek answers from Him.

Topic 3: The Message of Psalm 27

As we reflect on this psalm, David's confident faith in the Lord is very evident. The psalm began this way: "The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?" (literal translation). At the end of the psalm David encouraged his heart to be patient and steadfast: "Rely on the LORD! Be strong and confident! Rely on the LORD!" Of course what David admonished his own heart to do is meant as an admonishment for us as well. Like David, we too are to be strong in faith, waiting through difficult times and confident that God will act at just the right time. The more crucial issue is the question of how. How did David come to have such a confident faith in the Lord? How could he say in verse 3 that in the midst of battle he could confidently trust the Lord and not be fearful? That is certainly not the natural human outlook.

Perhaps you feel under attack by an army, and you are struggling to stay in the battle for the Lord. Perhaps you are wrestling with whether to stay with the present ministry you have. Maybe you are tired or discouraged. Maybe others do not seem to appreciate the service and sacrifices you have made in serving Christ. A number of things may be vying for your time, so you could certainly excuse yourself. But what does the Lord want you to do? You may feel the heat of battle, but the real question is whether He wants you there.

Battles, especially mighty spiritual battles, require a certain strength and confidence. Yet we dare not fight these battles in our own strength. If our confidence lies in ourselves, we will fall victim in the battle. We need the kind of fearless confident trust that David had three thousand years ago. Where did he get that? What was his secret? Do you have it too? If not, why not? Where's the problem?

That brings us to the bottom line of this psalm. How do we get the courage—the faith—to face the battle? The secret is found in verse 4:

One thing I have asked from the LORD, this I shall seek:
that I may abide in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
to perceive just how delightful the LORD is,
and to reflect upon His temple (author's translation).

The kind of courage we need stems from our walk with God when we have made it a priority in our lives to know Him intimately. But the reverse is also true: If we are not cultivating personal intimacy with God, our hearts may fail in battle. What does that mean for us? That means we need a daily commitment to be alone with the Lord, taking time to think about Him, read His Word, and pray to Him. There simply is no substitute for this. There is no getting around this, if we want what David had, and if we want to be men and women who have a confident faith in the Lord. That was the secret to David's life. In fact this was the secret for our Lord Jesus Christ as well: "Then Jesus got up early in the morning when it was still very dark, departed, and went out to a deserted place, and there He spent time in prayer" (Mk 1:35).

We have to make a choice to seek God's presence, like David did. We have to want that more than we want anything else. This has to be our top priority. When we do that, however, we will find that we also become like David in faith. That is where we get the right confidence for a mighty battle!

QUESTION 21

Think about these words again that you just read: "The kind of courage we need stems from our walk with God when we have made it a priority in our lives to know Him intimately. But the reverse is also true: If we are not cultivating personal intimacy with God, our hearts may fail in battle." Now the crucial question is this: How will you apply this lesson in your own life. In your Life Notebook write down how you plan to put this truth into practice in your life. What will you do differently, now that you have studied Psalm 27?

Lesson 9 Self Check

QUESTION 1

The primary difference between a psalm of lament and a psalm of trust or confidence is that

- A. The psalm of trust or confidence has no reference to lament of any kind.
- B. The psalm of lament has more emphasis on a declaration of trust than a psalm of trust or confidence.
- C. The psalm of lament has no reference to any confession of trust or confidence.
- D. The psalm of trust or confidence has a minor reference to lament, but this is not as developed or emphasized as much as in the psalm of lament.

QUESTION 2

In the declaration of trust, the psalmist expressed his own trust or confidence in the LORD, while in the invitation to trust he issued a call to others in the community to have faith or take courage in the Lord. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

Which motif of a psalm of trust does the following verse illustrate: “God has declared one principle; two principles I have heard: God is strong, and you, O Lord, demonstrate loyal love” (Ps 62:11-12a).

- A. Invitation to trust
- B. Basis for trust
- C. Petition
- D. Vow to praise

QUESTION 4

In a psalm of trust or confidence which two motifs will nearly always be present in the psalm?

- A. The declaration of trust and the basis for trust.
- B. The declaration of trust and the interior lament.
- C. The declaration of trust and the vow to praise.
- D. The declaration of trust and the invitation to trust.

QUESTION 5

Of the following, which one is **incorrectly** labeled?

- A. Declaration of Trust: “You are the Lord, my only source of well-being” (Ps 16:2).
- B. Invitation to Trust: “Trust in him at all times, you people!” (Ps 62:8).
- C. Basis for Trust: “You, O Lord, demonstrate loyal love” (Ps 62:12).
- D. Petition: “Shout out praises to the LORD, all the earth” (Ps 100:1).
- E. Interior Lament: “I am hemmed in” (Ps 4:1).

QUESTION 6

In David’s opening declaration of trust in Psalm 27, he stated “Even when an army is deployed against me, I do not fear. Even when war is imminent, I remain confident” (v 3). David’s determination to remain confident was not a misplaced confidence in himself but rather a confidence or trust that the Lord would defend and protect him against his enemies. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

From David's declaration of trust in Psalm 27:4-6, which of the following reflect David's reasons for going to the tabernacle?

- A. At the tabernacle he could put on a priestly robe and enter the holy place.
- B. As the nation's king, he was responsible to present the sacrificial blood before the mercy seat.
- C. David enjoyed talking with the priests in order to learn more about God's Word.
- D. This was an appropriate place to think about the Lord and how delightful He is.

QUESTION 8

What did David mean when he said, "Even if my father and mother abandoned me, the LORD would take me in" (Ps 27:10)?

- A. Even if his own parents were to forsake him (among humans, those who cared for his life more than any other), God would still be faithful to him.
- B. Because David's parents had forsaken him when Saul pursued him as a criminal, David was fearful that God also might forsake him.
- C. Even if his own parents were to forsake him, the Lord would give David another family.
- D. Even though David's parents would eventually die and be unable to provide for him forever, the Lord would meet all David's needs.

QUESTION 9

In David's specific petition in Psalm 27:11-12, what does he request before asking God to deliver him from his adversaries (especially the false witnesses against him)?

- A. He asked God to allow him to spend time in the tabernacle where he could praise God.
- B. He asked God to give him courage and make him a strong leader before others.
- C. He asked God to help him be teachable and learn more of God's ways through his trial.
- D. He asked God to remember the Davidic covenant and the kingdom promises.

QUESTION 10

From the "Message of Psalm 27," what was the secret for the kind of fearless confident trust that David had in God?

- A. This trust is the natural result of going to God's house of worship every week.
- B. This trust is a result of getting up each morning and telling yourself that you are a wonderful person and able to face anything that comes your way.
- C. This trust simply comes in time, and as we get older we are sure to be more reliant on God.
- D. This trust stems from our walk with God when we have made it a priority in our lives to seek His face and know Him intimately.

Unit 3 Project: Lessons 7-9

A. Introduction

In Unit 3 we were introduced to psalm categories, with a specific focus on lament psalms, penitential lament, and psalms of trust or confidence. We learned in each of these cases what kind of motifs to expect. Since the category of individual lament is one of the most predominant categories to be found in the Psalter, our unit project will focus on this type.

B. Instructions

As a final project for Unit 3, you are to do your own study of Psalm 31. You should review Lesson 7 first, taking special note of the motifs commonly found in lament psalms. Record your work in your Life Notebook.

1. Identify the figures of speech found in verse 3a and 12.
2. After carefully reading over the psalm, try to identify the motifs that are found in this psalm. (Hint: some scholars would tend to see five main motifs, although others would tend to see seven.)
3. Spend several moments meditating on verses 19-22. Write out in 2-3 sentences what you think the Lord might want you to understand from these verses.

Lesson 9 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1

- B. The psalm of trust or confidence have a minor reference to lament, but this is not as developed or emphasized as much as in psalms of lament.

QUESTION 2

- C. A declaration of trust.

QUESTION 3: *Your answer*

QUESTION 4: *Your answer*

QUESTION 5: False

QUESTION 6: Petition

QUESTION 7

<i>Element</i>	<i>Verses</i>
Declaration of trust	"You are the Lord, my only source of well-being." Psalm 16:2
Invitation to trust	"Trust in him at all times, you people!" Psalm 62:8
Basis for trust	"You, O Lord, demonstrate loyal love." Psalm 62:12
Petition	"Have mercy on me and respond to my prayer!" Psalm 4:1
Interior lament	"I am hemmed in." Psalm 4:1

QUESTION 8

- B. David was under pressure because of an invading army.
D. David was being tormented by false witnesses who attacked him verbally.

QUESTION 9

- A. He acknowledged that the Lord was his light.
C. He acknowledged that the Lord was his stronghold.

QUESTION 10: *Your answer*

QUESTION 11

- D. That the Lord would be the one to defend and protect him against his enemies

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13

- B. This was an appropriate place to think about the Lord and how delightful He is.
C. David enjoyed thinking about the tabernacle itself and contemplating its spiritual significance.

QUESTION 14

- B. This is a vow of praise in which David envisioned what he will do after God's deliverance or answer to his prayer.

QUESTION 15: *Your answer*

QUESTION 16

- D. David was not speaking about God abandoning him in an ultimate sense, but only that God might not rescue him from the immediate danger and distress he was under.

Explanation of Question 16

Notice that the petition section begins with the words, "Hear me, O LORD, when I cry out! Have mercy on me and answer me!" David was wanting the Lord to answer him, that is, to come to his rescue and deliver him. If God were to choose not to deliver him in this situation, it would be tantamount to forsaking him. Of course, even if this were to happen, it would not mean that God had forsaken him altogether. It would only mean that He had chosen not to deliver him in this specific instance.

QUESTION 17

- A. Deliverance from his adversaries, especially false witnesses.
C. That he would be teachable and learn more of God's ways through his trial.

QUESTION 18: *Your answer*

QUESTION 19

- C. This present life here on earth before going to the grave

QUESTION 20

- B. By having to wait, our faith grows stronger as we keep relying on God.
- C. Our prayer life can be developed.
- E. We learn the value of endurance and not giving up.
- F. We may spend more time in God's Word, as we seek answers from Him.

QUESTION 21: *Your answer*

Lesson 9 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1

- D. The psalm of trust or confidence has a minor reference to lament, but this is not as developed or emphasized as much as in the psalm of lament.

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3

- B. Basis for trust

QUESTION 4

- B. The declaration of trust and the interior lament.

QUESTION 5

- D. Petition: "Shout out praises to the LORD, all the earth" (Ps 100:1).

QUESTION 6: True

QUESTION 7

- D. This was an appropriate place to think about the Lord and how delightful He is.

QUESTION 8

- A. Even if his own parents were to forsake him (among humans, those who cared for his life more than any other), God would still be faithful to him.

QUESTION 9

- C. He asked God to help him be teachable and learn more of God's ways through his trial.

QUESTION 10

- D. This trust stems from our walk with God when we have made it a priority in our lives to seek His face and know Him intimately.

Unit 4: Learning to Recognize Psalm Categories—Part 2

In Unit 3 we began our quest to understand psalm categories. This is based on the observation that many psalms share similar features (or what we call motifs). By comparing the psalms with each other, we can begin to group them into similar categories. For example in many psalms the dominant feature or motif is that of pouring out one's lament to the Lord and crying out to him for deliverance. We identify this type of psalm as the category of lament. We also learned in Unit 3 that lament psalms (the largest category) can be further subdivided into one of three basic groups: individual lament, community lament, and penitential lament. In the final lesson of Unit 3 we were introduced to the category of psalms of trust or confidence. In psalms of this type the primary emphasis is on the psalmist's declaration of his trust and confidence in the Lord.

In Unit 4 we will continue our consideration of psalm categories by looking at three more prominent types. These are declarative praise (also called psalms of thanksgiving), descriptive praise, and the royal or messianic psalms. In each case we will follow our general study of each category with a particular case study.

Unit Outline

Lesson 10: Declarative Praise—Praising God for His Personal Intervention (Ps 34)

Lesson 11: Descriptive Praise—Praising God for Who He Is and His Role in History (Ps 33)

Lesson 12: An Introduction to Royal or Messianic Psalms (Ps 2)

Lesson 10: Declarative Praise—Praising God for His Personal Intervention (Ps 34)

Lesson Introduction

Standing at the other end of the spectrum from lament psalms are the psalms of declarative praise. In the former, the psalmist lamented his grief and pain over some distressing trouble in which he has found himself, following which he petitioned the Lord for deliverance in hope that relief would soon be coming. In the psalm of declarative praise, however, the psalmist moved beyond lament, having experienced God's gracious answer and deliverance. As a result, the psalmist was now concerned with rendering his praise and thanksgiving to God. He may have mentioned his distress in passing, but only as a way of declaring how thankful he was for God's intervention. Because of the focus on thanksgiving, some scholars label these psalms as "songs of thanksgiving" or "acknowledgment psalms."

Our approach in this lesson will be similar to lessons 7-9. We will first discuss the category in general terms, and then we will consider Psalm 34 as an appropriate case study.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: Introduction to Declarative Praise

Distinguishing Declarative Praise From Descriptive Praise

Comparing Declarative Praise With Lament Psalms

Topic 2: Motifs of Declarative Praise Psalms

The Opening Section

The Central Section

The Concluding Section

Topic 3: Psalm 34—A Case Study

Introduction

The Opening Section—A Proclamation to Praise the Lord (vv 1-3)

The Central Section—A Report of Deliverance (vv 4-7)

The Concluding Section—Instruction for the Faithful (vv 8-22)

A. Exhortations for Obtaining God's Favor (vv 8-14)

B. Consolations for the Righteous in Their Troubles (vv 15-22)

Topic 4: The Message of Psalm 34

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Know how to distinguish declarative praise psalms from descriptive praise psalms

- List the three main sections of a declarative praise psalms and discern the types of motifs that might be found in each of these
- Grasp declarative praise psalms as a result of an inductive study of Psalm 34, and be able to state three important spiritual lessons that derive from a study of Psalm 34

Preparing for the Lesson

Tom Blanchard was back at his college apartment after a long morning of classes. After gulping down two rather large turkey sandwiches, he felt he was entitled to a well-deserved afternoon nap. Just as he was slipping into dreamland, a thundering knock came at the front door that all but tossed him out of bed and onto the floor. After a difficult struggle to drag his still-sleepy body to the door, he opened it to find Kate Kutlow all aglow with smiles.

“Let me guess,” Tom muttered in a rather sarcastic tone on account of being robbed of his nap, “you just won the state lottery and your prize is \$2 million.” “Very funny, Tom,” Kate blurted back. “Actually I do have something very exciting to share, and I thought you ought to be one of the first to know.” “OK, what’s up?” Tom responded, trying to sound a bit more friendly this time. Kate seemed to bubble as she spoke, “Tom, do you remember a few weeks ago in the student café when I shared with you my disappointment at being turned down for grad school?” “Yeah, I remember,” Tom said, vividly recalling her previous disappointment and tears. “Well, I have some great news,” Kate chirped. “After we studied about lament psalms in class that day, I felt convicted that I had only lamented about my disappointment without really going to God in prayer to cry out for His help. So when I got home that day, I spent some time alone with the Lord and asked Him for His help. Then today I received this letter in the mail. Here, you have to read it for yourself, Tom.”

After fumbling with the envelope, Tom opened the letter to read these words, “Dear Ms. Kutlow. Upon further review, we are very pleased to inform you that your application to graduate school has been accepted. Congratulations. We look forward to having you in our program.” Tom, a little flabbergasted at the turn of events, smiled as he said, “OK, scholar, what are you going to do to celebrate?” Kate, not missing a beat, made her intentions clear. “Tom, I want us to gather our Christian friends from the Psalms class for a special party. The Lord deserves all the praise, and I want to be sure and make that known to everyone.” “Great idea,” Tom replied, “sounds like you just made a vow of praise. Let’s do it!”

Topic 1: Introduction to Declarative Praise

Praise is one of the dominant themes of the book of Psalms. Almost all the psalms have some note of praise. At times the praise may simply be the psalmist’s intention to praise the Lord following his deliverance, or maybe there is only implied praise as in Psalm 1 (the righteous man is knowingly blessed). Yet in a great many of the psalms the theme of praise is quite profound. In some cases the praise may be in response to answered prayer and God’s deliverance. At other times the praise may have nothing to do with a particular situation or answered prayer; rather the psalmist simply praised God for who He is and how He has worked in history. Our study begins by distinguishing these two fundamental types of praise.

Distinguishing Declarative Praise From Descriptive Praise

In our study of lament psalms we encountered the situation in which the psalmist was in grave distress and cried out to God for His help and deliverance. Such experiences presume that God does answer the prayers of His people and delivers them. For such situations the psalmist rightly praised God and thanked Him for intervening on his behalf. This type of praise is what we call “declarative praise.” This is praise to God in response to a unique act of God that has just occurred whereby God has intervened to help or deliver. Psalm 30:1-5 is a beautiful illustration of declarative praise (a psalm of thanksgiving):

- 1 I will praise you, O LORD, for you lifted me up,
and did not allow my enemies to gloat over me.
- 2 O LORD my God, I cried out to you and you healed me.
- 3 O LORD, you pulled me up from Sheol;
you rescued me from among those descending into the grave.
- 4 Sing to the LORD, you faithful followers of his; give thanks to his holy name.
- 5 For his anger lasts only a brief moment, and his good favor restores one’s life.

One may experience sorrow during the night, but joy arrives in the morning.

In this psalm the psalmist had been under serious attack from his enemies. But then he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord answered him favorably. As a result the psalmist can now declare his praise for what God did for him and thank Him. Declarative praise, then, basically expresses joy and gratitude to God for His deliverance.

In contrast to this type of praise is “descriptive praise.” This is praise to God—not for a specific deliverance—but summarizing His activity in its fullness, or praising God for His being as well as for the totality of His dealings with men. Psalm 135 is an example of this more general type of praise, as can be seen even in the opening three verses:

- 1 Praise the LORD! Praise the name of the LORD!
Offer praise, you servants of the LORD,
- 2 who serve in the LORD’s temple, in the courts of the temple of our God.
- 3 Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good! Sing praises to his name, for it is pleasant!

Here the psalmist was not calling for praise on account of any specific deliverance or answer to prayer. Rather God is to be praised, because He is good and His name is pleasant. That is, the reason for praise is on account of who He is. This, then, is descriptive praise (it describes Him and His ways). We will look at psalms of descriptive praise in more detail in Lesson 11.

QUESTION 1

What is the fundamental difference between declarative praise and descriptive praise?

- A. With declarative praise psalms, the psalmist will declare his praise loudly so that everyone can hear, but descriptive praise psalms are only for private use.
- B. Declarative praise psalms are for declaring one's lament to others, but descriptive praise psalms are for telling others about God's answer to their prayers.
- C. In declarative praise psalms the psalmist acknowledges publicly that God has answered his cry for help in a specific situation, but descriptive praise is for times when the psalmist wanted to praise God for who He is or for how He has uniquely worked in history in general.
- D. Declarative praise psalms are made by the high priest publicly in the temple, whereas descriptive praise psalms are given by individual worshippers in any place.

Comparing Declarative Praise With Lament Psalms

Even many psalms of lament will have a touch of praise to them. As agonizing as his distress may be, the psalmist will rarely remain in his lament. There is a tendency to move beyond the lament to thanksgiving and praise. So how are declarative praise psalms to be distinguished from psalms of lament? B.W. Anderson gives the following insight:

Indeed, the 'song of thanksgiving' is an expanded form of the thanksgiving already present in many of the laments ... However, it is one thing to praise God in **anticipation** of his deliverance or on the basis of an assurance given in worship; it is another thing to praise God in **response** to an event of deliverance already experienced. It is the latter accent which characterizes the songs of thanksgiving (*Out of the Depths*, 79).

QUESTION 2

Psalms of lament will never have an element of praise in them. *True or False?*

In psalms of declarative praise (thanksgiving), the deliverance is an accomplished fact. It is the petition that has been heard that leads to declarative praise!

The following are some of the psalms that are generally recognized as declarative praise:

Psalm 18; 30; 34; 40 (vv 2-12?); 66; 92; 107; 116; 118; 124; 138.

Some would include Psalm 65 in this list, though others would argue that it is a descriptive praise psalm. Psalm 107 and Psalm 124 are community psalms of declarative praise, but most are individual.

Topic 2: Motifs of Declarative Praise Psalms

There are three general movements to declarative praise psalms: the opening section, the central section, and the concluding section. Within these, we will encounter some combination of motifs that are germane to declarative praise.

The Opening Section

The opening section of a declarative praise psalm in some way introduces the psalmist's intention to thank the Lord or to enter into worship. The following motifs may be present:

A Proclamation to Praise God. The most frequent introduction in the declarative psalms of praise is an expression of resolve or intention to praise. The wording may appear as "I will praise" or "I will extol Thee," or something similar.

Appropriately this is a public proclamation. The essential feature of this type of psalm is that the psalmist would tell others what God had done for him. If the psalmist had made an earlier vow of praise in private, the payment of the vow must be in public. Now that he had received his answer to prayer, the psalmist would declare in the tabernacle (or temple) what God had done for him in conjunction with paying his vows and offering up his gifts. He declared before the community what God had done for him.

An Introductory Summary Statement. This is a brief summary telling why God is to be praised, with the tendency to be concentrated in a single sentence. This reflects the nature of the psalm as confessional. Westermann explains,

The tendency of the declarative Psalm of praise to concentrate itself into one sentence, or the comprehension of the declarative Psalm of praise in a single sentence, is due to its being confession. In it God is lauded, praised, exalted by my acknowledging, confessing before men that he has helped me (*Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 29).

The psalm, then, will basically be a development of this one sentence. This summary statement includes the reason God is to be praised, either for what He has done (note Ps 92:4) or for who He is (note Ps 118:1).

Observe the opening section of Psalm 92:

- 1 It is fitting to thank the LORD, and to sing praises to your name, O sovereign One!
- 2 It is fitting to proclaim your loyal love in the morning,
and your faithfulness during the night,
- 3 to the accompaniment of a ten-stringed instrument and a lyre,
to the accompaniment of the meditative tone of the harp.
- 4 For you, O LORD, have made me happy by your work.
I will sing for joy because of what you have done.

The proclamation to praise God is seen in the first two verses with phrases like, "It is fitting to thank the LORD." That is, worshipping God is fitting, the most reasonable thing for God's people to do. Then notice the word "For" at the beginning of verse 4. This introduces the reason for the praise, and with this we have the introductory summary statement. The psalmist is praising the LORD on account of His work and what He has done. What work of God the psalmist had in mind is not clear at this point, but the remainder of the psalm clarifies this (it is both His works in history as well as His acts of deliverance; note vv 10-11).

QUESTION 3

Which one of the following items might you find in the Introductory Section of a declarative praise psalm? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. A proclamation to praise God, such as “I will praise...”
- B. A lament for an invading army that has besieged the city
- C. A summary statement explaining why God is to be praised
- D. A description of the sacrifice that the psalmist will bring to offer in the temple

The Central Section

The central section of the declarative praise psalm is typically a backward look to the crisis the psalmist once faced and a report of God’s deliverance. Two motifs may be encountered here.

Reflection on the time of need. This may be brief or long, but it records the nature of the crisis. In Psalm 30, for example, David recorded in verses 6-10 a moment in his life when he encountered the displeasure of the Lord on account of his arrogance, and was consequently disciplined.

- 6 In my self-confidence I said, “I will never be upended.”
7 O LORD, in your good favor you made me secure.
Then you rejected me and I was terrified.
8 To you, O LORD, I cried out; I begged the Lord for mercy:
9 “What profit is there in taking my life, in my descending into the Pit?
Can the dust of the grave praise you? Can it declare your loyalty?
Hear, O LORD, and have mercy on me! O LORD, deliver me!”

We cannot clearly discern the problem that David faced, but his words make it sound as if it was life threatening. In the midst of this, he begged the Lord for mercy.

Report of deliverance. This is the key motif that distinguishes the psalm of declarative praise from a lament psalm. The deliverance was now an accomplished fact, and the psalmist clearly indicated that. He may use such expressions as “I cried,” “He heard,” and/or “He delivered.” The emphasis is not on the details of what happened to him but on the testimony of what God had done for him. Turning again to Psalm 30 we see a good example of this in verse 11.

- Then you turned my lament into dancing;
you removed my sackcloth and covered me with joy.

Although David did not explicitly say, “He delivered me,” his words essentially communicate that God did. David simply conveyed this in a more poetic way.

QUESTION 4

What is the primary way you can distinguish a declarative praise psalm from a lament psalm?

- A. A declarative praise psalm will have no reference to lament or the troubles that the psalmist faced.
- B. A lament psalm will have no reference to praise.
- C. Only psalms of declarative praise will have reference to a vow of praise.
- D. The psalm of declarative praise will report God's deliverance as an accomplished fact, whereas in the lament psalm the psalmist will cry out for God to hear and deliver.

The Concluding Section

The concluding section of the declarative praise psalm can take various forms. One or more of the following motifs may be present:

Renewed vow of praise. The psalm may give us the impression that the psalmist is already praising the Lord for what He has done. However, the psalmist may still express his intentions to render his vow publicly at the tabernacle or temple. Along with this vow of praise, the psalmist may also anticipate the offering of a sacrifice. Psalm 116:17-19 illustrates this renewed vow of praise:

17 I will present a thank offering to you, and call on the name of the LORD.

18 I will fulfill my vows to the LORD before all his people,

19 in the courts of the LORD's temple, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!

Descriptive praise. A statement may be found which—though the specific deliverance is still in focus—looks beyond this saving deed to the total activity of God for which He should be praised. A good example of this is in Psalm 30:4-5:

4 Sing to the LORD, you faithful followers of his; give thanks to his holy name.

5 For his anger lasts only a brief moment, and his good favor restores one's life.

One may experience sorrow during the night, but joy arrives in the morning.

This descriptive praise may also focus on the character of God, such as His faithfulness and loyal love. We see this, for example, in Psalm 18:49-50:

49 So I will give you thanks before the nations, O LORD! I will sing praises to you!

50 He gives his chosen king magnificent victories; he is faithful to his chosen ruler,
to David and his descendants forever.

Instruction for God's people. As though envisioning the people of God gathered around to hear his praise, the psalmist frequently gave some homily with his praise. He said in effect, "Join with me in trusting God and finding His salvation as I found with God." Then a small lesson will be presented. Notice in Psalm 92:5-7 how the praise transitions to instruction:

5 How great are your works, O LORD! Your plans are very intricate!

6 The spiritually insensitive do not recognize this; the fool does not understand this.

7 When the wicked sprout up like grass, and all the evildoers glisten,
it is so that they may be annihilated.

His instruction resurfaced again in verses 12-15 when the psalmist brought out the benefit of pursuing a godly life:

12 The godly grow like a palm tree; they grow high like a cedar in Lebanon.

13 Planted in the LORD's house, they grow in the courts of our God.

14 They bear fruit even when they are old;

they are filled with vitality and have many leaves.

15 So they proclaim that the LORD, my protector, is just and never unfair.

QUESTION 5

Which of the following motifs may be found in the Concluding Section of declarative praise? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. A description of the psalmist's lament and a report of deliverance
- B. A section providing instruction for others based on what the psalmist has learned
- C. A renewed vow of praise to appear publicly in the tabernacle or temple
- D. A section containing descriptive praise for the Lord

Topic 3: Psalm 34—A Case Study

Psalm 34 presents an interesting case study of a declarative praise psalm. Not everyone would agree, however, that this really is a declarative praise psalm. It certainly begins that way, as David praised God for a specific deliverance. Yet the psalm quickly moved away from its initial emphasis on praise to a lengthy instruction for God's people. Since the

initial seven verses of declarative praise are followed by fifteen verses of instruction, it is obviously the latter that receives the emphasis. For this reason, some consider this a wisdom psalm. Nevertheless since declarative praise gave rise to the instruction, I would prefer to treat the whole psalm as declarative praise, though recognizing its prolonged emphasis on instruction.

The highest point of all worship and prayer is adoration and praise and thanksgiving.
- D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Introduction

Psalm 34 is an acrostic psalm. This means that each line of the psalm begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, starting with the first letter (*aleph*), although there are a couple of minor exceptions. This psalm also has an interesting relationship with Psalm 56. Both of these psalms are concerned with the same historical background, when David fled from Saul and sought refuge with the Philistine king. Psalm 56 is his lament in the midst of that situation, whereas Psalm 34 looks at his praise for God's deliverance.

The superscription to Psalm 34 indicates that this was "written by David, when he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, causing the king to send him away." The historical background for this psalm comes from 1 Samuel 21:10-15. In that incident David was on the run from Saul and fled for protection to Achish, king of Gath. However, those who served Achish made comments against David that suddenly made him fearful. Verses 12-13 of that chapter state, "David thought about what they said and was very afraid of King Achish of Gath. He altered his behavior in their presence. Since he was in their power, he pretended to be insane, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting

his saliva run down his beard.” This certainly explains the dilemma experienced by David. Yet there is one minor problem that needs to be addressed. In 1 Samuel 21, we are told that David went to Achish, while in Psalm 34 we are told that he went to Abimelech. A number of scholars have suggested that the solution to this tension is found in the fact that Achish is the king’s personal name, whereas Abimelech is his official title. The name Abimelech means the father of the king, and appears to have been a title used by the Philistines for their king, comparable to the word pharaoh used by the Egyptians (see Gen 20; 21:22-34; 26).

QUESTION 6

Match the following passages with the correct contribution they make to our study.

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Contribution to our study</i>
1 Samuel 21:10-15	David’s lament of his fear before Achish of Gath.
Psalm 34	David’s praise for deliverance from Achish of Gath.
Psalm 56	Provides an account of the historical background.

The Opening Section—A Proclamation to Praise the LORD (vv 1-3)

1 I will praise the LORD at all times; my mouth will continually praise him.

2 I will boast in the LORD; let the oppressed hear and rejoice!

3 Magnify the LORD with me! Let’s praise his name together!

Verses 1-2. Psalm 34 opens with David giving praise to the Lord. Rather than boasting in his own accomplishments, he wanted to boast about what God had done on his behalf. When he said in verse 2, “let the oppressed hear and rejoice,” David was speaking in light of his own experience. Oppressed, he poured out his heart in lament to the Lord and cried out for His help (see Ps 56). The Lord heard his cry and rescued him, and this is why David was now praising the Lord. As he did so, he hoped that others who are oppressed would hear his praise and testimony, so that they too would turn to the Lord, be delivered, and ultimately rejoice. Some translations may render verse 2 in the future tense (the oppressed will hear and rejoice), but the Hebrew verb can be—and probably should be—translated as a wish or hope. Thus the translation “let the oppressed hear and rejoice” accurately captures the point. This reflects what we would expect of the declarative praise psalm. It is aimed for use at the tabernacle or temple where God’s people gather. The psalmist hoped that others of God’s people who are oppressed (like himself) would profit from his experience.

QUESTION 7

When David referred to the oppressed in verse 2, he was specifically referring to his comrades who had gone with him to find refuge with the Philistines at Gath. *True or False?*

After completing Question 7, please read the “Explanation of Question 7” in the Answer section at the end of this lesson.

Verse 3. For those who heed David’s message and rejoice, he invites them to magnify the LORD with him. The word “magnify” (Hebrew *gādal*) comes from a verb meaning to be great. Of course we do not make Him great; we first perceive that He is great and then present Him as such to others. Peter Craigie remarks, “Yet the essence of praise is the acknowledgment and public declaration of God’s greatness; such praise does not change the divine essence, but creates awareness of God’s greatness in the perception of others” (*Psalms 1-50*, 279). We should also notice that the outcome of praise is not

on how good we feel, but rather that the greatness of our God is acknowledged in a public and communal way.

QUESTION 8

Open your Life Notebook. In light of the description in the paragraph above of what it means to magnify the Lord, can you think of one example of how you can personally illustrate this from your own life? That is, try to write of an example of your own praise that would cause God to look great in the eyes of others. You may need to relate this to a situation in which you were desperate for God's intervention and help.

The Central Section—A Report of Deliverance (vv 4-7)

- 4 I sought the LORD's help and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears.
5 Those who look to him for help are happy; their faces are not ashamed.
6 This oppressed man cried out and the LORD heard; he saved him from all his troubles.
7 The LORD's angel camps around the LORD's loyal followers and delivers them.

In this particular psalm the report of deliverance has an interesting literary structure in which a statement about his experience alternates with a statement of principle applicable for all. Observe the following chart:

Verse	Type of Statement	Summary of Each Verse
4	David's experience	"I sought... he answered... he delivered"
5	Principle for all	For "those who look to him for help" ⇒ happy, not ashamed
6	David's experience	"This oppressed man cried out... the Lord heard... he saved"
7	Principle for all	For "the LORD's loyal followers" ⇒ he camps around; delivers

Verse 4. David said he sought the Lord's help, and as a result the Lord delivered him from all his fears. This summarizes what the psalm is all about. He was in a situation gripped with fear and only God could do something about his heart condition. The word used for "fear" in this verse (Hebrew *megôrâ*) is a very rare word. This particular word means to be intimidated before a stranger or superior being or thing (*TWOT*, 156). This is very appropriate, given the historical circumstances in which David stood before Achish, king of Gath.

QUESTION 9

What exactly made David fearful? To help you answer this question, first read 1 Samuel 21:10-15. Then choose the best answer from the following.

- A. Achish was a very large man (like Goliath), and David was fearful of being beaten.
- B. Those who advised Achish called attention to David's previous exploits against the Philistines, and David realized they might want to take their revenge against him.
- C. The Philistines might want to kill a man who was an enemy of King Saul.
- D. The Philistines might want to hold David for ransom to see if Saul would pay money for his capture.

The report of deliverance in Psalm 37:4 should be understood in light of the confessional nature of the psalm. That is, David was continually aware of the fact that he was publicly testifying of what God had done for him, and therefore he was concerned about all who heard his report, especially others who (like him) were afflicted or oppressed. (Recall David's reference to the oppressed in verse 2).

Verse 5. So, he declared, "Those who look to him for help are happy" (or radiant; see Isa 60:5). If those who hear will look to the Lord for help, they will also find the joy of God's deliverance. This is a principle that readers/hearers should take careful note of and act on. To look to Him means that they turn to the Lord in faith, cry out for His help, and rely on Him. The Lord will be faithful to answer and deliver them.

QUESTION 10

In verse 5 what does it mean to look to the LORD?

- A. David was suggesting that his fellow Israelites should pray to see the Lord in a dream.
- B. David was suggesting that they read God's Word to discover what God wanted them to do.
- C. David was suggesting that they do the same thing he did, namely, turn to the Lord in faith, cry out for His help, and rely on Him.
- D. David was suggesting that his fellow Israelites should literally look upward to heaven.

Verse 6. David referred to himself as "this oppressed man." This translation by the NET Bible is a good rendering. Some translations (e.g., NASB and NIV) have "poor man." The Hebrew word (*ānī*) can mean either oppressed or poor, but the former is better in this context. The word "poor" can imply a financial condition, which is obviously not the case here. The same Hebrew word was used in verse 2 when David referred to others who were oppressed.

Verse 7. In verse 7 David wrote, "The LORD's angel camps around the LORD's loyal followers and delivers them." The phrase "The LORD's angel" (or the angel of the LORD) occurs repeatedly in the Old Testament (about fifty-six times). Identifying this figure is not easy. In some cases (e.g., Gen 16:10 and Ex 3:2) the angel of the Lord refers to the Lord Himself, or at least the angel spoke officially for the Lord (note especially Judg 2:1). Some say the angel is a visible expression of the Lord (a theophany), or perhaps a preincarnate appearance of Christ Himself (a Christophany). Yet other times, he seems to be distinct from the Lord. F. Duane Lindsey is probably correct, however, in his assessment of the evidence:

The Angel of the Lord was not merely an angel; He was a theophany—an appearance of the second Person of the Trinity in visible and bodily form before the Incarnation. Prominent during the time of Moses (Ex. 3:2-15; Num. 22:22-35) and Joshua (Josh. 5:13-15), this divine manifestation also appeared during the period of the Judges to Gideon (Judg. 6:11-24) and to the parents of Samson (Judg. 13:3-21). The Angel of the Lord was Deity for He was called Yahweh (e.g., Josh. 5:13-15; Judg. 6:11-24; Zech. 3) and God (e.g., Gen. 32:24-32; Ex. 3:4), and had divine attributes and prerogatives (see Gen. 16:13; 18:25; 48:16). Yet this Messenger of the Lord was also distinct from Yahweh, thus indicating a plurality of Persons within the Godhead (see Num. 20:16; Zech. 1:12-13) (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament*, 381).

In studying all the examples where "angel of the LORD" is used, we can safely say that he is a mighty warrior and well able to defend anyone (note Isa 37:36). Psalm 34:7 states that he camps around the Lord's loyal followers. The latter expression is literally "those who fear Him." So this promise is not for everyone, but for those who fear the Lord. Verses 8-14 tell more about what it means to fear the Lord.

QUESTION 11

In the preceding discussion what suggestion is made for the identity of the angel of the LORD?

- A. He is the highest angelic being, right next to God Himself.
- B. He is one of the angels known as the Cherubim.
- C. He is assigned as the personal representative of the Lord.
- D. He is probably the Lord Himself in visible appearance (although His full glory seems to have been shielded from human view).

The Concluding Section—Instruction for the Faithful (vv 8-22)

The remainder of the psalm constitutes a lengthy discourse of instruction for those who desire the Lord to be their deliverer and who want to experience His goodness. The psalmist learned something of great spiritual value that he wanted to pass on to the rest of God's people. This falls into two major sections. The first section (vv 8-14) abounds with imperatives, whereas the second section (vv 15-22) is characterized by statements of consolation.

A. Exhortations for Obtaining God's Favor (vv 8-14)

This section consists of two smaller units, verses 8-10 and verses 11-14. The first is a general invitation to turn to the Lord, and the second consists of detailed instruction for right living.

An Invitation to Take Refuge in the Lord and Fear Him (vv 8-10). Several phrases are used in these three verses to describe how one should properly relate to the Lord: take shelter in Him, fear the Lord, and seek Him.

8 Taste and see that the LORD is good! How blessed is the one who takes shelter in him!

9 Remain loyal to [literally, "Fear"] the LORD, you chosen people of his,
for his loyal followers [literally, "those who fear Him"] lack nothing!

10 Even young lions sometimes lack food and are hungry,
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

Verse 8. One should be motivated to seek the Lord and fear Him, because He is good. The Lord is not malicious, deceitful, or tainted with evil in any way. Because He is inherently good, He delights to extend His goodness to His children. David therefore invited those who hear (and read) to taste and see that the LORD is good. How does one do this? He must take shelter in the Lord and exercise the fear of the LORD. This is not a casual invitation to merely check it out. This involves the submission of one's life to Him, submitting to His will, and living a godly life.

Verse 9. What then does it mean to fear the Lord? First, this does not mean to hide in cowardice from Him. Of the twenty-three times this phrase is used in the Old Testament, the majority are found in the book of Proverbs. In fact this is the theme of Proverbs as seen in the opening chapter: "Fearing the LORD is the beginning of moral knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov 1:7). A survey of the usage of this phrase reveals that fearing the Lord means to recognize one's accountability to Him. Because He is the Lord and holds people accountable for what they do and say, one should realize that God does rule His universe. The one who fears the Lord senses that to go against His moral will means placing oneself in a position of incurring His displeasure and discipline. Yet the Lord is not a ruthless tyrant beating his slaves into submission. He is a loving God, and therefore those who fear the Lord realize the importance of learning from Him (His wisdom and

instruction) and want to please Him by having faith in Him and by obeying Him. The person who is marked by pride and self-sufficiency fails to see the value of fearing the Lord. He is convinced in his mind that he does not need the Lord's help as he navigates through life, and so he lives as though he is not accountable to Him. In doing so, he is a fool. As Goldingay comments, "People are always tempted to reckon that they have to take control of their own destinies and needs and/or to look to resources other than YHWH" (*Psalms 1-41*, 482).

QUESTION 12

Examine the following statements. Which ones help clarify what it means to fear the LORD? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. A person should try to hide from the Lord to escape His anger.
- B. A person should sense his accountability to the Lord.
- C. A person should be humble and realize he needs to learn from the Lord.
- D. A person should be determined to go through life fighting for himself and relying on his own strength.

Verse 10. David wrote in verse 9 of the benefit for those who fear the Lord: they lack nothing. This, of course, is not a promise of unlimited earthly possessions (as though one is promised anything he might wish to have). As verse 10 clarifies, they lack no good thing. The point is that God cares for their needs, and they are able to find contentment in what is truly good. They know—because they have been in the Word of God—that acquiring earthly temporal resources does not bring true happiness. What truly satisfies is a life spent walking in the power of the Spirit and experiencing the joy of the Lord. David used an illustration about young lions to drive home his point. Despite their power (they are the least likely to lack prey and go hungry), sometimes they may not find food and thus will be hungry. Their power does not always guarantee that they will be satisfied. By contrast, those who fear the Lord and seek Him lack no good thing. Not that they have everything they want, but they have what they need of what is good and with this they have contentment. (The "young lion" may be a figure of speech [a hypocatastasis] for the proud man who does not seek the Lord but rather depends on his own wits and strength to get through life.)

Yet why are those who fear the Lord content? The answer is that they have what is of eternal value. Consider this: (1) they are forgiven—relieved of guilt; (2) they are secure—because He has promised He will never leave them; (3) they have hope—they know their destiny; (4) that have a satisfying provision—nourished on the Word of God; and (5) they experience true love—being loved by God, and through Christlike love they are able to have meaningful relationships with others. Also, as this psalm teaches, they have the benefit of God's intervention as their Deliverer.

QUESTION 13

Say the following words to yourself: "As I practice the fear of the Lord in my life, God promises that I will not be lacking anything that He considers good." As you consider the following questions, write down your answers in your Life Notebook. Do you feel truly content as a Christian? Why or why not? Is there anything lacking in your life that you wish you had? Is this something God would consider good? Have you asked Him for it by faith?

Detailed Instruction for Right Living in the Fear of the Lord (vv 11-14). For those who might want more information on what it means to fear the Lord, David provided it in these verses.

- 11 Come children! Listen to me! I will teach you what it means to fear the LORD.
- 12 Do you want to really live? Would you love to live a long, happy life?
- 13 Then make sure you don't speak evil words or use deceptive speech!
- 14 Turn away from evil and do what is right! Strive for peace and promote it!

Verses 11-12. By “children” David does not mean only small boys and girls. This is a common way in wisdom literature addressing students willing to learn from the Lord (see Prov 1:8; 4:1). Psalm 34:12 is a good reminder that we should not scoff at this, if we want to experience the best in life. Furthermore the man or woman who chooses to live in the fear of the LORD should never think he is thereby consigned to a boring life. The fear of the Lord does not result in limiting human love for life and its good things. Rather it is the key to them! Craigie wisely writes, “The lesson concerns the most fundamental of all issues—the meaning of human life! To ‘take pleasure in life,’ to ‘love days’ (v 13b), and to ‘see goodness,’ are expressions which designate a person who has found the fulfillment of human existence by discerning its divine purpose and by living appropriately and properly” (*Psalms 1-50*, 280).

Verses 13-14. David pointed to three examples where the fear of the LORD must show up in our lives. This is obviously not a complete list, but it is useful for testing oneself. First, one must speak truthfully. Not only must the tongue not be used for evil purposes, but one should also take care to avoid being deceitful with others. Second, one must learn to discern between good and evil, and then choose to do that which is good in the sight of the Lord. Third, in a world of selfish ambition and bitter strife one must choose to be a person of peace. This means, first, being a peacemaker (see Mt 5:9). The Hebrew word for peace is *shālôm*, which means more than peace. This often emphasizes one’s welfare. Thus we must care about the complete welfare of others (wanting the best for others from God’s point of view).

QUESTION 14

According to verses 13-14, which of the following are tests that David gave to see if we are practicing the fear of the LORD in our lives? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. A person with the fear of the LORD should guard how he uses his tongue.
- B. A person with the fear of the LORD should help care for widows and orphans.
- C. A person with the fear of the LORD should choose the right thing to do when confronted by the temptation to do evil.
- D. A person with the fear of the LORD should sing songs of praise to the Lord.

B. Consolation for the Righteous in Their Troubles (Ps 34:15-22)

Psalm 34:8-14 instructs the believer in how to live life in the fear of the Lord, and now the remaining verses of the psalm (Ps 34:15-22) provide the encouragement for doing so, especially as one faces troubles. The Lord is close at hand to hear their cries for help. Although believers who seek the LORD are told they will lack no good thing (v 10), this should not be interpreted to mean that they are immune from distress and trouble in life. No, God will allow trials to come our way, and there will still be occasions when we find ourselves brokenhearted. Yet even in those moments, we are offered a consoling hope. The Lord promises to be near and to deliver.

15 The LORD pays attention to the godly and hears their cry for help.

16 But the LORD opposes evildoers and wipes out all memory of them from the earth.

17 The godly cry out and the LORD hears; he saves them from all their troubles.

18 The LORD is near the brokenhearted; he delivers those who are discouraged.

Verse 15. Literally, it says, “The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and His ears [are] toward their cries for help.” The references to eyes, ears, and face are anthropomorphisms in which God is represented in terms of human attributes. The point is that He hears and sees all that we experience, and He certainly hears our cries for help. Evildoers, on the other hand, cannot claim this promise.

Verse 16. In fact the LORD opposes them (v 16). Literally, this verse says, “the face of the LORD is against doers of evil.” This expression “setting one’s face against” is an idiom meaning that the Lord will bring calamity on them (see Lev 20:3; 20:5; 20:6; 26:17). Psalm 34:16 states that the Lord “wipes out all memory of them from the earth.”

Human beings like to be remembered for something, to know that they made some mark in history. Yet the memory of these evildoers is forgotten, almost as if they had never lived. They are soon forgotten and have no lasting legacy. (This is not to say that evil people are not remembered in human history. Indeed our history books affirm they often are [for example Pontius Pilate and Hitler]. But in the context of the psalms this may mean that God nullifies any hope they may have had of being remembered for their personal greatness.)

Verses 17-18. These verses emphasize God’s ready availability to help and deliver the righteous when they cry to Him.

QUESTION 15

The expression in verse 16 “to set one’s face against” is an idiom meaning:

- A. That God will cause the evildoer to be shamed in the eyes of the community
- B. That evildoers will always be determined to persecute the true believers
- C. That God will oppose evildoers and bring calamity on them
- D. That evildoers will resist the Lord’s grace and turn away from Him

Verses 19-21 continue the theme of consolation for the righteous:

19 The godly face many dangers, but the LORD saves them from each one of them.

20 He protects all his bones; not one of them is broken.

21 Evil people self-destruct; those who hate the godly are punished.

Verse 19. David began this unit by acknowledging that the godly face many dangers. This could also be translated, “Many are the distresses [or afflictions] of the righteous.” Some may question why God would allow these things to come on His children. Yet by faith we know there are good reasons why God gives afflictions to His children. First, these are opportunities to experience deliverance, which in turn lead to overflowing heartfelt praise and thanksgiving. Second, we must not simply be told that the Lord is good; we must learn this for ourselves experientially. That is precisely why David was so eager to share his whole experience with the worshipping community, that he might encourage them to learn what he had learned.

John 19:36 quotes Psalm 34:20 to explain why the Roman soldiers at the crucifixion did not break the legs of Jesus. They did not need to, since He had already died by the time they inspected His body.

Verses 20-21. For the reader of this psalm, this verse (which is promising protection of one’s bones) is probably a figurative expression to note the Lord’s care of His own (hyperbole). Yet it takes on a literal fulfillment in the case of the Lord Jesus Christ. A.F. Kirkpatrick writes, “The promise to the righteous man found an unexpectedly literal realization in the passion of the perfectly Righteous One” (*The Book of Psalms*, 175).

QUESTION 16

The expression “He protects all his bones” was probably meant figuratively for God’s general protection of the righteous, yet this had a deeper fulfillment with Jesus in a very literal way. *True or False?*

The final verse of the psalm (v 22) stands as a summary of the entire psalm.

The LORD rescues his servants; all who take shelter in him escape punishment.

Verse 22. Recalling that Psalm 34 is an acrostic psalm, we should note that verse 21 began with the final letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and thus verse 22 stands distinct. Verse 22 begins with the Hebrew letter *peh*, because the first word of this verse (*pôdeh*) begins with the letter *peh*. This word means to gain one's release by payment of a ransom, though the emphasis may sometimes just be on the release. In verse 22, where the word is translated "shelter," it means to rescue or gain one's release. This, then, is the essential message of Psalm 34: the Lord rescues His children from their distresses. Those who take shelter in Him may be afflicted at times, but they are not punished in the way evil people are who hate the godly (compare the end of v 21).

QUESTION 17

Of the following, what are valid reasons for understanding verse 22 as a summary verse for the entire psalm? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Although Psalm 34 is an acrostic psalm, verse 22 stands separate and distinct from this pattern, indicating its uniqueness.
- B. Since this is the final verse in the psalm, it is not surprising to have a summary at this point.
- C. Verse 22 essentially repeats what we were told at the beginning of Psalm 34.
- D. Verse 22 emphasizes the main theme of Psalm 34 concerning the Lord's rescue of His servants who take shelter in Him.

Topic 4: The Message of Psalm 34

Psalm 34 is a beautiful message of praise to the Lord, because He rescues His children who cry out to Him and seek shelter in Him. David experienced that for himself, and that is why he could write this declarative praise psalm. Perhaps, however, we should go back and consider the historical account in 1 Samuel 21:10-15 one final time. These verses do not state that David cried to the Lord or sought shelter in Him. In fact no act of faith on David's part is evident at all. So how are we to reconcile this with Psalm 34?

When we read Psalm 56 (the counterpart to Ps 34), we are told that David did trust God in the midst of his experience of fear as he stood before the Philistines. In Psalm 56:3-4 he wrote: "When I am afraid, I trust in you. In God—I boast in his promise—in God I trust, I am not afraid. What can mere men do to me?" The account in 1 Samuel 21 does not give us the whole story. However, when we read Psalm 56, we see that though David began in fear, in the midst of the threatening situation he rose up as a man of faith. David experienced a spiritual transformation as he moved from fear to being a man of confident faith. He sought shelter in the Lord, and he trusted in Him! Thus by comparing all three passages we gain a better understanding of the humanity of David, which helps us to identify with him.

QUESTION 18

To gain a full understanding of what David experienced and how he reacted, we need to read and compare all three passages from 1 Samuel 21, Psalm 34, and Psalm 56. *True or False?*

Lesson 1: Fear can cripple our faith. From this historical background we learn a very valuable lesson. Fear can keep us from acting in faith. David confessed in verse 4 that the Lord delivered him from all

his fears. However, for a time David was overwhelmed by fear and failed to act in faith. He even went to the extent of acting insane in an effort to save his own life. He was being driven by external fears rather than by the fear of the LORD. When one is walking in the fear of the Lord, the fears of life are put in perspective. They suddenly seem small by comparison.

QUESTION 19

As you reflect on Lesson 1 above, have you faced any situation in the past two years in which you felt overwhelmed by fear. How did you handle the situation? What did you learn about yourself and your relationship with God as a result of this? What was the outcome? Record your thoughts in your Life Notebook.

Lesson 2: Troubles can be good for us. This study of Psalm 34 reminds us that troubles serve a valuable role in our spiritual development. Because of them, we are prompted to turn to the Lord and seek shelter in Him. Our natural tendency is to be spiritually lazy, but when distressing circumstances come our way we sense our desperation for God's help and we cry out to Him. We apply faith in those desperate moments. The fresh discovery of God as our Deliverer leads to a renewed sense of love and adoration for Him.

QUESTION 20

Most of us would not volunteer to receive more troubles. Yet we must remember the words of Psalm 34:19, "The godly face many dangers, but the LORD saves them from each one of them." Inevitably we will face troubles and dangers. Try to think of one such situation you have experienced in recent times, after which you could see how God was using it for good in your life. In what way was this beneficial to you or for the development of your faith? Write your thoughts in your Life Notebook.

Lesson 3: The Lord is undeniably good. Another valuable lesson we learn from Psalm 34 is that God truly is good. In Psalm 34:8 we are invited to taste and see that the LORD is good. That is His essence, and therefore all that He does stems from His inherent desire to do for us what is good. We should not interpret that to mean that He is some sort of heavenly genie we call on to give us all the things we want. We often want things that are ultimately not good for us. And even when the things we want are not morally bad in and of themselves, the Lord may choose not to give them to us for very good reasons. For instance He may choose not to give us a newer car that we have prayed for, in order to develop contentment in us. The point is, however, that God is good, and every decision He makes for us and every answer to prayer is filtered through His attribute of goodness. He cannot do otherwise! Something He gives us may not seem good to us at first, but in the long run we will probably see that it actually was. And even if we cannot see it as being good in this lifetime, we will certainly see it as such when we are with Him in heaven.

Lesson 10 Self Check

QUESTION 1

In declarative praise psalms the psalmist will acknowledge publicly that God has answered his cry for help in a specific situation, but descriptive praise is for times when the psalmist wants to praise God for who He is or for how He has uniquely worked in history in general. *True or False?*

Observe the following verses from the opening section of Psalm 92, a declarative praise psalm.

1 It is fitting to thank the LORD, and to sing praises to your name, O sovereign One!

4 For you, O LORD, have made me happy by your work.

I will sing for joy because of what you have done.

QUESTION 2

Which of the following statements is correct?

- A. Verse 1 is an introductory summary statement, and verse 4 is a proclamation to praise God.
- B. Verse 1 is a proclamation to praise God, and verse 4 is an introductory summary statement.
- C. Verse 1 is a proclamation to praise God, and verse 4 is an introductory lament.
- D. Verse 1 is an introductory summary statement, and verse 4 is a descriptive praise.

QUESTION 3

In the central section of a declarative praise psalm, there is typically a report of deliverance, and it is this motif that helps distinguish the psalm of declarative praise from a lament psalm. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Which of the following motifs would we **not** expect to find in the concluding section of declarative praise?

- A. A renewed vow of praise to appear publicly in the tabernacle or temple.
- B. A section providing instruction for others based on what the psalmist has learned.
- C. A section with descriptive praise for the Lord.
- D. A description of the psalmist's lament and a report of deliverance.

QUESTION 5

Psalm 34 and Psalm 56 both concern the time when David fled from Saul and sought refuge with the Philistine king, and both psalms focus on David's praise for deliverance. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

In the central section of Psalm 34, David gave a report of deliverance and stated in verse 5, "Those who look to him for help are happy." What does it mean to look to the LORD?

- A. David was suggesting that his fellow Israelites should literally look upward to heaven.
- B. David was suggesting that his fellow Israelites should pray to see the Lord in a dream.
- C. David was suggesting that they read God's Word to discover what God wants them to do.
- D. David was suggesting that they do the same thing he did, namely, turn to the Lord in faith, cry out for His help, and rely on Him.

QUESTION 7

The person who fears the LORD is humble (realizing he needs to learn from the Lord) and senses his accountability to the Lord. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

In the concluding section to Psalm 34, David gave instruction for his readers on what it means to fear the Lord. One of the examples he gave is that believers must be careful in what they do with their tongues, not speaking evil words or using deceptive speech. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

Because the Lord is good, all men—whether righteous or evildoers—can count on God’s promise of protection from calamity. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

Of the following, which one is **not** one of the key lessons we learn from Psalm 34?

- A. Fear can cripple our faith.
- B. When a person fears the LORD, he will not encounter any afflictions.
- C. Troubles can be good for us.
- D. The Lord is undeniably good.

Lesson 10 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1

- C. In declarative praise psalms the psalmist acknowledges publicly that God has answered his cry for help in a specific situation, but descriptive praise is for times when the psalmist wanted to praise God for who He is or for how He has uniquely worked in history in general.

QUESTION 2: False

QUESTION 3

- A. A proclamation to praise God, such as “I will praise...”
C. A summary statement explaining why God is to be praised

QUESTION 4

- D. The psalm of declarative praise will report God’s deliverance as an accomplished fact, whereas in the lament psalm the psalmist will cry out for God to hear and deliver.

QUESTION 5

- B. A section providing instruction for others based on what the psalmist has learned
C. A renewed vow of praise to appear publicly in the tabernacle or temple
D. A section containing descriptive praise for the Lord

QUESTION 6

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Contribution to our study</i>
1 Samuel 21:10-15	Provides an account of the historical background.
Psalms 34	David’s praise for deliverance from Achish of Gath.
Psalms 56	David’s lament of his fear before Achish of Gath.

QUESTION 7: False

Explanation of Question 7

There is no reason to think that when David referred to the oppressed that he had in mind those who had gone with him to seek refuge with the Philistines. True, David was oppressed when he went to Gath, and other Hebrew comrades probably went with him. But in this psalm David was speaking to any and all who are oppressed and who need God’s help and deliverance. What David learned through this experience can be applied by others who find themselves oppressed (regardless of what form their oppression takes).

QUESTION 8: *Your answer*

QUESTION 9

- B. Those who advised Achish called attention to David’s previous exploits against the Philistines, and David realized they might want to take their revenge against him. [The song that the Philistines refer to is the one sung by the women of Judea in 1 Samuel 18:7 on David’s killing of the Philistine. Not only had David killed Goliath, but 1 Samuel 18:27 mentions that he had killed many more Philistines. So it is easy to understand why David may have been unpopular among the Philistines, and why the leaders would want him killed.]

QUESTION 10

- C. David was suggesting that they do the same thing he did, namely, turn to the Lord in faith, cry out for His help, and rely on Him.

QUESTION 11

- D. He is probably the Lord Himself in visible appearance (although His full glory seems to have been shielded from human view). [He does appear to be deity. Whether He is the first or the second Person of the Trinity cannot be determined with certainty.]

QUESTION 12

- B. A person should sense his accountability to the Lord.
C. A person should be humble and realize he needs to learn from the Lord.

QUESTION 13: *Your answer*

QUESTION 14

- A. A person with the fear of the LORD should guard how he uses his tongue.
- C. A person with the fear of the LORD should choose the right thing to do when confronted by the temptation to do evil.

[The other answers are good things, but are not the particular examples David gave.]

QUESTION 15

- C. That God will oppose evildoers and bring calamity on them

QUESTION 16: True**QUESTION 17**

- A. Although Psalm 34 is an acrostic psalm, verse 22 stands separate and distinct from this pattern, indicating its uniqueness.
- B. Since this is the final verse in the psalm, it is not surprising to have a summary at this point.
- D. Verse 22 emphasizes the main theme of Psalm 34 concerning the Lord's rescue of His servants who take shelter in Him.

QUESTION 18: True**QUESTION 19:** *Your answer***QUESTION 20:** *Your answer*

Lesson 10 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2

B. Verse 1 is a proclamation to praise God, and verse 4 is an introductory summary statement.

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4

D. A description of the psalmist's lament and a report of deliverance.

QUESTION 5: False

QUESTION 6

D. David was suggesting that they do the same thing he did, namely, turn to the Lord in faith, cry out for His help, and rely on Him.

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8: True

QUESTION 9: False

QUESTION 10

B. When a person fears the LORD, he will not encounter any afflictions.

Lesson 11: Descriptive Praise—Praising God for Who He Is and His Role in History (Ps 33)

Lesson Introduction

In the previous lesson we began our consideration of those psalms whose dominant theme is that of praise. The praise of God is obviously the emphasis of the book of Psalms. This is even reflected in the name for the book in the Hebrew Bible, the *Tehillim*, which simply means praises. Also in the previous lesson we studied the difference between psalms of declarative praise and psalms of descriptive praise. The former is for those occasions when the psalmist wanted to praise God for a specific answer to prayer such as God's deliverance from trouble.

In contrast to psalms of declarative praise are the psalms of descriptive praise. Here the psalmist was describing how praiseworthy God is, not because of a specific answer to prayer, but because of who He is and what He has done in history. For instance, the psalmist may describe how awesome the Lord is as Creator, or He may praise Him for His redemptive work. In this lesson we will study some of the general characteristics of descriptive praise, and then examine Psalm 33 as a representative example.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: An Introduction to Descriptive Praise

- Insights About Praise

- The Themes of Praise

Topic 2: Motifs of Descriptive Praise Psalms

- The Opening Invitation to Praise God

- The Central Section Delineating the Praiseworthy Character and Actions of God

- The Concluding Section: A Renewed Call to Praise or Response of Faith

Topic 3: Psalm 33—A Case Study

- Introduction

- The Opening Section—An Invitation to Praise the LORD (vv 1-3)

- The Central Section—God's Praiseworthy Character and Actions (vv 4-19)

 - A. The Reasons for Praise Summarized (vv 4-5)

 - B. The Development of the Reasons for Praise (vv 6-19)

- The Concluding Section—Reflections of Praise and Trust (vv 20-22)

Topic 4: The Message of Psalm 33

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Recognize the essential features of psalms of descriptive praise, especially the kinds of things that God is praised for in this type of psalm (namely, His character and actions)
- Grasp descriptive praise psalms as a result of an inductive study of Psalm 33
- State four important spiritual lessons that derive from a study of Psalm 33

Preparing for the Lesson

Kate Kutlow had probably been asleep for almost an hour when the phone rang. Grabbing her cell phone off the night stand, she barely managed a feeble hello. “Kate, it’s me, Tom. I hope you don’t mind me calling so late, but I’ve just got to talk to you.” By this time Kate had turned the light on and was sitting up in bed. “Tom, do you know what time it is? It’s nearly 1:30 in the morning. Couldn’t this wait until tomorrow?” “Hey, Kate, I’m sorry, but sometimes my mind is racing so fast, it just won’t shut down.” Kate, suddenly remembering that she had inconvenienced Tom more than once, decided that it was her turn to provide a listening ear. “OK, Tom, what’s up? Did you suddenly discover a new scientific formula to replace Einstein’s $E=mc^2$?”

Tom laughed for a moment, realizing it probably had been a bad idea to awaken Kate this late at night. “Kate, I wished you could have been with me tonight. Dave Matthews and I drove over to the State University this evening to hear two men debate the topic of Intelligent Design. The man advocating Intelligent Design was a PhD scholar from M.I.T., and let me tell you, he was able to answer and refute every argument put forward by the Darwinist professor from Cal Tech.” Kate had to interrupt him at this point, “Tom, hold on, I can barely read the clock at this hour, much less comprehend your scientific jargon. Can you just tell me the main thing you got out of this?” “Sure, Kate,” Tom apologized. “Sorry to get carried away.”

After a moment of silence Tom offered his assessment of the evening. “Kate, if there is one thing that I got out of tonight’s presentation, it’s this. This world we live in could not have just happened by chance, as Darwin and his bedfellows would have us believe. There really is a Creator God whose intelligence and power are light years beyond ours, and He designed and created this universe as a perfectly prepared site on which to place mankind.” Kate jumped in at that point, “Tom, I couldn’t agree more. Earlier today I was reading in our class notes about descriptive praise psalms, and the psalmist was often exhilarated by the thought of God as Creator. I think of Psalm 148 for instance. After calling on everything that exists to praise the Lord, the psalmist proclaimed, ‘Let them praise the name of the LORD, for He commanded and they were created.’” “That’s cool,” Tom responded. “Way cool! The more I fathom what God did to create our universe, the more I feel like praising Him. He is awesome!”

Topic 1: An Introduction to Descriptive Praise

There are times—and they are frequent—when the psalmist wanted to praise God for who He is or for the great things He has done in history. In contrast to declarative praise in which the psalmist praised God for a specific answer to prayer or a specific deliverance from danger, psalms of descriptive praise are not based on answered prayer or a rescue in times of trouble. Rather the psalmist simply wanted to applaud the greatness of God.

Insights About Praise

Because these psalms acclaim the greatness of God in a more general way than psalms of declarative praise, some scholars prefer to refer to them as “hymns.” These hymns (or psalms of descriptive praise) help bring us to the full realization of how praise worthy God is. To enter into His praise touches the core purpose of our existence. The self-centered man egotistically thinks that the purpose of life is his own achievement and success. No, that is far too feeble and short sighted. The One who is truly praise worthy is the Lord God, and it is our role—indeed our privilege—to offer Him our praise. The sacrificial system of the Old Testament was not an end in itself (as though it were the height of worship), but was meant to be eclipsed by the believer’s praise of God. Consider the following words from Psalm 69:30-31:

30 I will sing praises to God’s name! I will magnify him as I give him thanks!

31 That will please the LORD more than an ox or a bull with horns and hooves.

Animal sacrifices, though commanded by God, were never meant to replace our praises of Him. What does it mean, then, to praise the LORD? Simply mouthing these words or similar refrains is not enough. Undoubtedly praise must come from the heart to have validity. Nor is it sufficient to render praise simply because we are told to. To qualify as praise and not merely be hollow words, our praise must be expressed voluntarily. In fact true praise is what we want to do, what we even feel compelled to do. It reflects what we truly care about. C. S. Lewis provided the following insight about praise:

I had not noticed either that just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it: “Isn’t she lovely? Wasn’t it glorious? Don’t you think that magnificent?” The Psalmists in telling everyone to praise God are doing what all men do when they speak of what they care about (*Reflections on the Psalms*, 96).

The Themes of Praise

The hymns or psalms of descriptive praise are far from monolithic. Several themes dominate these psalms. The following are some of the more distinctive ones scholars have identified:

- Praise for the Lord as Creator
- Praise for the Lord who chose and created Israel as a covenant nation
- Praise for the Lord as Redeemer
- Praise for the Lord who is faithful and compassionate on His children
- Praise for the Lord as the righteous ruler over mankind

Praise for the Lord as Creator is one of the strongest themes in the psalms of descriptive praise. For those living in Old Testament times, the fact that their God, Yahweh Elohim, was the Creator God had enormous implications. Throughout the pagan nations, Gentiles worshipped false deities and idols. In contrast to those in darkness, the Hebrews possessed the knowledge that there was only one God, and He created everything in the heavens and on earth. Therefore their God was supreme and all-powerful. They need have no fear of those nations that came against them in the name of some false deity. Furthermore the splendor of creation reflected that the Lord God is infinitely wise, creative, and without limit in His understanding. Since He could create by His mere word or command, He was obviously sovereign and in full control. Psalm 104 is a beautiful descriptive praise psalm that highlights the LORD as Creator and Sustainer of His creation. It begins with the words, “Praise the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, you are magnificent.” Then in Psalm 104:5-9 God’s creative work in Genesis 1 is praised:

- 5 He established the earth on its foundations; it will never be upended.
- 6 The watery deep covered it like a garment; the waters reached above the mountains.
- 7 Your shout made the waters retreat;
at the sound of your thunderous voice they hurried off—
- 8 as the mountains rose up, and the valleys went down—
to the place you appointed for them.
- 9 You set up a boundary for them that they could not cross,
so that they would not cover the earth again.

Psalm 104 then describes other works of God as He created the earth's creatures, cared for the earth and provided for its needs. In verse 24 the psalmist exclaimed, "How many living things you have made, O LORD! You have exhibited great skill in making all of them; the earth is full of the living things you have made." The psalmist wanted to remind all God's people that they did not live in a world of happenstance. The Lord God carefully planned it, amazingly created it, and subsequently has actively overseen the course of its history.

QUESTION 1

The fact that the Lord is Creator has enormous implications. Which of the following are true? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Since the Lord is all-powerful, His people need have no fear of nations that may come against them in the name of some false deity.
- B. The fact that the Lord could create by a mere spoken word implies that He has great authority.
- C. The fact that the Lord put so much thought and planning into His creation implies that He will act justly and righteously as its ruler.
- D. The splendor of His creation shows that the Lord is infinitely wise, creative, and without limit in His understanding.

In addition to being the all-powerful God of creation, the Lord has also been instrumental in carrying out His plan of salvation history; He is our Redeemer. That is, He has interceded as Redeemer. Mark Futato writes, "When the hymns extol God as Redeemer, they are typically celebrating what God has done for us in *the history of his redemptive work*, rather than what God has done for us in our own *personal history*" (*Interpreting the Psalms*, 146, italics his).

Particularly to be highlighted in this regard is His redemption of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. By a mighty hand He demonstrated His power and authority over the pharaoh of Egypt. Pharaoh—then the mightiest ruler on the planet—could not resist the Lord or thwart His will. The Lord further demonstrated His power at the Red Sea when the waters were pushed back for the people to cross on dry land.



QUESTION 2

A classic example of God's redemptive work in the Old Testament is His parting of the Red Sea for the Hebrews to cross in their escape from the pharaoh of Egypt. *True or False?*

Psalm 105 celebrates God's work in salvation history. The psalmist began by saying, "Give thanks to the LORD! Call on his name! Make known his accomplishments among the nations!" The psalmist then proceeded to survey several of the important developments found in Genesis and Exodus. In Psalm 105:36-38, 42-43 the psalmist recalled the Exodus event and God's faithfulness in giving them the land of promise. Observe the following verses

36 He struck down all the firstborn in their land,
the firstfruits of their reproductive power.

37 He brought his people out enriched with silver and gold; none of his tribes stumbled.

38 Egypt was happy when they left, for they were afraid of them...

42 Yes, he remembered the sacred promise he made to Abraham his servant.

43 When he led his people out, they rejoiced; his chosen ones shouted with joy.

In some of the psalms of descriptive praise, the psalmist focused on the attributes of the LORD by which we are blessed. Psalm 103, for example, begins with the following call to praise:

1 Praise the LORD, O my soul! With all that is within me, praise his holy name!

2 Praise the LORD, O my soul! Do not forget all his kind deeds!

Although several of the LORD's benefits or kind deeds are mentioned, the psalmist gave particular attention to His loyal love and compassion. Observe verses 4, 8, 11-13:

4 who crowns you with his loyal love and compassion,

8 The LORD is compassionate and merciful;
he is patient and demonstrates great loyal love.

11 For as the skies are high above the earth,
so his loyal love towers over his faithful followers.

12 As far as the eastern horizon is from the west,
so he removes the guilt of our rebellious actions from us.

13 As a father has compassion on his children,
so the LORD has compassion on his faithful followers.

QUESTION 3

In addition to God's loyal love, the verses quoted above from Psalm 103 name at least four other attributes of the LORD. Identify at least three of them.

In the case study that we will look at in this lesson, Psalm 33, we will have opportunity to study another important theme, namely, praise to the LORD as the righteous Ruler over mankind.

Topic 2: Motifs of Descriptive Praise Psalms

Psalms of descriptive praise can vary greatly in length and theme, but in general they will have three principle sections (Futato, *Interpreting the Psalms*, 146):

- An opening invitation to praise God
- A central delineation of the praiseworthy character and actions of God
- A concluding affirmation of faith or a renewed invitation to praise and worship

The Opening Invitation to Praise God

The opening section of the descriptive praise psalm consists of an invitation from the psalmist to join him in praising the LORD. The invitation may be made to other worshippers of Israel, or it may be made to all the nations, or even to the angels of heaven (see Ps 29:1-2 for the latter). Psalm 117:1 includes an invitation to praise God to all the nations:

Praise the LORD, all you nations! Applaud him, all you foreigners!

This is a reminder that God desires people from all nations to be His worshippers and to join in praising Him. Therefore, we can be sure He will bring the gospel to them and in His grace He will draw both men and women of all nations to Himself in fulfillment of Genesis 12:3.

All the psalms of descriptive praise begin with a call to praise expressed in the imperative mood. This confirms that the imperative call to praise is an integral part of descriptive praise. The most frequent verb employed is the Hebrew verb *hālal* meaning praise. From this, we get the word “hallelujah,” meaning praise the LORD (the “-jah” ending is an abbreviated form for God’s personal name, Jahweh (or Yahweh)).

QUESTION 4

Whenever we encounter an invitation to praise in a psalm of descriptive praise, the invitation to praise the Lord will only be extended to worshippers of Israel or to angels. *True or False?*

The Central Section: Delineating the Praiseworthy Character and Actions of God

Most of the psalms of descriptive praise include one or more reason for praise. In some cases this may also serve as an introductory summary. That is, there may be a statement (usually in one sentence) about who God is, or what He is like, or what He has done. In longer descriptive praise psalms, the remainder of the central section develops this statement. This development not only comprises the bulk of the material, but it may be quite flexible in its makeup. That is, each descriptive praise psalm may develop the reason for praise in its own unique way.

The summary statement following the invitation to praise may be introduced in various ways. The most common way is by a causal word such as “for” or “since.” At other times the invitation to praise may be introduced by a relative pronoun (e.g., “who”), or a participle. As noted earlier, this summary statement will then be followed by specific illustrations that elaborate the statement.

Even though psalms of descriptive praise do not focus on an immediate specific act that God has done in answer to the psalmist’s cry for help (as do declarative praise psalms), we should not conclude from this that descriptive praise is for a God who is far off. The praise of these psalms is stimulated by the God who intervenes in human history. As Westermann notes, “Even in descriptive praise we

are dealing with a God who comes down into our history, and not with one who is contemplated in a speculative manner” (Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 125).

QUESTION 5

In the central section of a declarative praise psalm, which of the following might you expect to encounter? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. A lament of the troubles facing the nation
- B. A brief summary statement giving the reasons for praise
- C. A list of the instruments that should be used in praising the Lord
- D. A causal word introducing the reasons, such as “for” or “since”

The Concluding Section: A Renewed Call to Praise or Response of Faith

This concluding section (usually brief) typically consists of a renewed call to praise and worship, and may be accompanied by some kind of response to the psalm such as an affirmation of faith, confidence in the Lord, or even a new petition to the Lord. An exhortation to other worshippers may even be included. The conclusion of the psalm will be on a positive note.

Psalm 103 ends with a repeated call to praise in verses 20-22:

- 20 Praise the LORD, you angels of his,
you powerful warriors who carry out his decrees and obey his orders!
- 21 Praise the LORD, all you warriors of his,
you servants of his who carry out his desires!
- 22 Praise the LORD, all that he has made, in all the regions of his kingdom!
Praise the LORD, O my soul!

Psalm 29, on the other hand, ends (in vv 10-11) by affirming the Lord’s control of the world that results in great blessing:

- 10 The LORD sits enthroned over the engulfing waters,
the LORD sits enthroned as the eternal king.
- 11 The LORD gives his people strength; the LORD grants his people security.

QUESTION 6

In the concluding section of a descriptive praise psalm, which of the following might be present? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. A renewed call to praise and worship
- B. A thanksgiving for God’s deliverance in response to prayer
- C. An expression of faith or confidence in the Lord
- D. A fresh petition to the Lord
- E. A penitential lament seeking forgiveness

Introduction

Psalm 33 is composed of twenty-two verses (one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet), although this is not an acrostic psalm like Psalm 34. There is no superscription prefixed to it, although the Greek Septuagint translation and one manuscript found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (4QPs) ascribe the psalm to David. It is not surprising that these other manuscripts would ascribe Psalm 33 to David, since virtually all the psalms in Book 1 (Psalms 1–41) are Davidic, especially if one takes into account that Psalm 9 and Psalm 10 form one acrostic psalm and that Psalm 9 is said to be Davidic.

The basic thrust of Psalm 33 is a call to praise the Lord as He governs the affairs of men in the world He created, ensuring that His sovereign will is carried out and that His loving loyalty is manifested to those whose trust is in Him. In doing this, the psalm states four reasons why the Lord is praiseworthy and then carefully develops each one. This leads to the conclusion that one should put his trust in the Lord—not himself—that he might be the recipient of the Lord’s loving loyalty. The psalm falls into three primary sections:

- I. An Opening Section—An Invitation to Praise the LORD (Ps 33:1-3)
- II. The Central Section—God’s Praiseworthy Character and Actions (Ps 33:4-19)
- III. The Concluding Section—Reflections of Praise and Trust (Ps 33:20-22)

QUESTION 7

Psalm 33 is composed of three primary sections, and the central section of the psalm gives four basic reasons why the Lord is praiseworthy. *True or False?*

The Opening Section: An Invitation to Praise the LORD (vv 1-3)

The psalm begins with a call for the righteous or godly ones to sing for joy in giving praise to the LORD:

1 You godly ones, shout for joy because of the LORD!

It is appropriate for the morally upright to offer him praise.

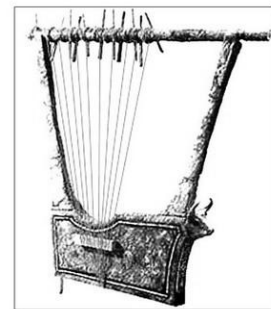
2 Give thanks to the LORD with the harp!

Sing to him to the accompaniment of a ten-stringed instrument!

3 Sing to him a new song! Play skillfully as you shout out your praise to him!

Verse 1. The call to praise is addressed to the godly ones. This implies that they know the Lord, that they are submitting themselves to His righteous demands, and that they trust in Him as their defender and hope through times of trouble. Why should they sing for joy? Because it is appropriate to do so! That is, it is a fitting thing to do. To have a heart full of praise is a beautiful thing, and this is how God’s people should be.

Verses 2-3. The remainder of the opening section tells believers how the praise is to be rendered. Three things should be observed. First, our praise should be with musical accompaniment. At least two ancient instruments are mentioned: the harp (or lyre), and a ten-stringed instrument. Psalm 150 mentions several instruments used in worship in addition to these. Second, our praise should be with enthusiasm. This does not mean that it should be overly emotional, but that our heart must truly be in it. Third, our praise is to be done skillfully, with God-given talents being used with the greatest endeavor. One important implication of verses 1-3 is that worship is meant



to be a joyous occasion in which we celebrate the Lord, not simply amuse or entertain ourselves. Worship is primarily for His glory and benefit.

The idea of singing a new song has to do with a fresh response of our heart to a recent act of God's intervention (see Ps 40:1-3). So if we are in distress and subsequently experience a fresh deliverance by God, it is appropriate to give Him our praise publicly as a new song.

QUESTION 8

Which of the following statements best reflects the correct meaning of a new song?

- A. Christians should stop singing older songs, because they no longer sound good.
- B. Christians need to write songs that younger people will enjoy.
- C. A new song is a fresh response of praise to a recent act of God's deliverance.
- D. A new song is a lament that one makes to God on account of a new trial or trouble.

The Central Section: God's Praiseworthy Character and Actions (vv 4-19)

The central section of Psalm 33 comprises sixteen verses, the bulk of the psalm. Verses 4-5 summarize the reasons for praise. Then in verses 6-19 these are each developed in more detail.

The Reasons for Praise Summarized (vv 4-5). The word "for" at the beginning of verse 4 introduces the reasons the psalmist beckoned us to sing for joy to the Lord. The psalmist mentioned four reasons in these two verses.

4 For the LORD's decrees are just,
and everything he does is fair.

5 The LORD promotes equity and justice;
the LORD's faithfulness extends throughout the earth.

Verse 4. The first reason for praise is in verse 4a. This could literally be translated, "For the word of the LORD is upright." The word "upright" (Hebrew *yāšār*) has the fundamental notion of being straight or level, without swerving off course. The Lord's word is reliable, and thus we can count on it. Every promise God has ever made is certain, and we can fully trust what He has said.

The second reason for praise is given in verse 4b: "everything he does is fair." More literally, the verse says that God's work (what He does in this world) is in faithfulness. That is, all He does is consistent with His character and purposes. He has full authority, but He does not abuse His power. Rather, He is dedicated to the faithful exercise of His authority. God took the initiative in the beginning to create our world and prepare it for us. What He has begun, He is faithful in seeing it through. Nothing can interfere with His plans or intentions.

Verse 5. The third reason for praise is that He promotes equity (literally, righteousness) and justice. The Lord has a moral concern for both righteousness and justice. Because He Himself is righteous and just, He naturally expects us to promote righteousness and justice. Quite obviously these virtues are frequently abused and ignored by ungodly rulers on earth, but the Lord looks to see who will manifest them.

The fourth reason for praise is for the Lord's faithfulness that extends throughout the earth. The word translated "faithfulness" is the Hebrew word *hesed* that we have seen several times in our studies. Because of His *hesed*, the Lord extends grace to His own, ever loving them and remaining faithful and loyal to them.

QUESTION 9

Which of the following are reasons for praise that the psalmist introduces in verses 4-5? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The LORD esteems and promotes moral values, of which righteousness and justice are key examples.
- B. That which the Lord has spoken is reliable and can be counted on.
- C. The Lord grants His Holy Spirit to those who worship Him.
- D. The Lord forgives the sin of His people when they confess their iniquities to Him.
- E. The Lord remains faithful and loyal to those in covenant relationship with Him.

The Development of the Reasons for Praise (vv 6-19). Each of the four reasons for praise that was introduced in verses 4-5 is now taken up and developed further. If the reader will see these as the psalmist does, he will also fear the Lord and praise Him. The following chart reflects the overall structure of verses 6-19:



1. The Authority of God's Creative Word (Ps 33:6-9)

6 By the LORD's decree the heavens were made;

by a mere word from his mouth all the stars in the sky were created.

7 He piles up the water of the sea; he puts the oceans in storehouses.

8 Let the whole earth fear the LORD! Let all who live in the world stand in awe of him!

9 For he spoke, and it came into existence, he issued the decree, and it stood firm.

Verse 6-7. These verses recall the Lord's role as Creator. By a mere spoken word, everything from the heavens above to the depths of the sea came into existence. That's power! That's authority! The reference to heavens and oceans indicates a merism, the use of two extremes to express the totality of God's creation. The oceans—so immense, powerful and chaotic—are not unbridled or out of God's control. Rather He puts them (as it were) in storehouses (Hebrew *'ōṣārôt*). This term is often used of a treasure room in a temple in the ancient world (e.g., 1 Kgs 7:51). Who but the Lord could take the ocean depths and deposit them for storage in a treasure room? How mighty is the Lord!



QUESTION 10

The two spatial references (heavens and ocean) constitute a figure of speech called a _____, in which two extremes are mentioned as a way of including everything between them. That is, they refer to the totality of everything from one to the other.

Verses 8-9. Speaking of the implications of the Lord as Creator: All mankind ought to fear and stand in awe of Him. We ought to carefully heed all that He has spoken. The same word that ushered forth from God to bring creation into existence is the same word that is recorded in Scripture. All that God has spoken and recorded for us is reliable, and we can count on it. If God's word is powerful enough to call forth creation, we can be assured that what He has written for us will also prove true. Every promise is reliable!

QUESTION 11

Open your Life Notebook. Think of a promise God has made to you in His Word (one that is particularly meaningful to you), and then write this in your Life Notebook. Then underneath this promise, write the following words in your own hand: "Just as certain as what God spoke at creation came to be, so this promise to me will prove just as certain."

2. The Faithfulness of God as Sovereign Ruler of the Nations (Ps 33:10-12)

10 The LORD frustrates the decisions of the nations; he nullifies the plans of the peoples.

11 The LORD's decisions stand forever; his plans abide throughout the ages.

12 How happy is the nation whose God is the LORD,

the people whom he has chosen to be his special possession.

Verse 10-11. Verses 6-9 looked back to God as Creator, and the next section (vv 10-12) considered the subsequent role that He plays in regard to this creation and how it operates. Did God create it all, only to then step back and let history run its own course without interference from Him? Absolutely not! He does not acquiesce for even one moment from His responsibility as Ruler over what He created. No sooner had God created the earth than His creative work came under attack from Satan who has been instrumental ever since in continuing to lead an insidious attack against God's plan. Satan has actively sought to deceive the nations and their rulers in his attempt to defeat God's plan. But this is all to no avail. The Lord God is absolutely sovereign, and will not be defeated as He actively rules over the nations. For those rulers who attempt decisions and plans that are contrary to His purposes, He will frustrate and nullify them so that they do not succeed. In contrast, His decisions will prevail and succeed. So verses 10-12 look at God's work—what He does in ruling over His creation—and how He is faithful to guide that which He has created.

QUESTION 12

Memorize Psalm 33:11. After you have practiced saying it several times, write it from memory in your Life Notebook.

Verse 12. If God is the sovereign Ruler whose will cannot be thwarted, should this not be a great consolation for those who seek to obey Him? Indeed it should! Thus verse 12 is aimed at the nation of Israel in particular (see Ex 19:5-6; Isa 47:6). If they would commit themselves to obeying Him and following His Law, they need never be afraid of any foreign invader, no matter how big or fierce. Through obedience to Him, they could enjoy His blessings. Unfortunately for most of Israel's history throughout the Old Testament, they failed to grasp this principle and forfeited so much of the blessing they could have had. Yet God never intended to restrict His blessing to only one nation. Even Psalm 33:8 anticipates God's desire to bring His hand of blessing to all nations (see Gen 12:3). Furthermore for those who want the Lord to be their God, this same principle extends to individuals as well. For those who seek refuge in the Lord (regardless of what the nation or society at large may choose to do), they will be blessed by Him.

3. The Moral Concerns of God on the Earth (Ps 33:13-15)

13 The LORD watches from heaven; he sees all people.

14 From the place where he lives he looks carefully at all the earth's inhabitants.

15 He is the one who forms every human heart, and takes note of all their actions.

Verses 13-15. From the earlier summary statement (recall v 5a), we learned of the Lord's passion for righteousness and justice. Because of this, He actively looks on the earth to see who promotes His standards of righteousness and justice, as well as those who abuse them. Verses 13-15 emphatically teach that nothing escapes His notice. Every single human heart is carefully scrutinized by Him. This truth is reflected in 2 Chronicles 16:9, "Certainly the LORD watches the whole earth carefully and is ready to strengthen those who are devoted to him."

QUESTION 13

The fact that the LORD has formed every human being implies that He is capable of seeing and understanding every person. (He can understand that which He has created.) According to verse 15, He observes all the actions and deeds of each human heart. *True or False?*

The fact that man is created in God's image has important implications. God is a God of ethics (of which righteousness and justice are key examples), and therefore He looks from heaven on all the sons of men to see who furthers His will and His ethical concerns. How He chooses to respond to the deeds of men is not clearly understood from our vantage point. At times He allows (for His own good reasons) evil rulers to rise to power and carry out their wicked agendas on society. Yet ultimately He promises to bring in a kingdom on earth in which righteousness and justice will prevail (Isa 9:6-7; 11:1-10). This will be the kingdom of our Lord Jesus that God will establish following Christ's second coming. As Isaiah 9:7 states, "He will rule on David's throne and over David's kingdom, establishing it and strengthening it by promoting justice and fairness [literally, righteousness], from this time forward and forevermore."

QUESTION 14

Look up and meditate on Isaiah 11:4. Who in particular will benefit when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to rule over the earth in righteousness and justice?

Up to this point in the psalm everything has exalted the majesty of God. Even His character is the pattern and ideal for our character. But this can be overwhelming to people who are sinful in nature and prone to fall short. Descriptive praise psalms are often characterized by the praise of both the LORD's majesty and His grace. It is now the latter which takes center stage as the psalm transitions from its praise for the LORD of history to its praise for His grace.

4. The Availability of God's Loving Loyalty for Those Who Trust in Him (Ps 33:16-19)

16 No king is delivered by his vast army; a warrior is not saved by his great might.

17 A horse disappoints those who trust in it for victory;

despite its great strength, it cannot deliver.

18 Look, the LORD takes notice of his loyal followers,

those who wait for him to demonstrate his faithfulness [literally, loving loyalty]

19 by saving their lives from death and sustaining them during times of famine.

Verses 16-17. The fourth and final reason for praise (recall v 5b) is based on the fact that the Lord bestows His loving loyalty on those who trust in Him. This ultimately is what matters: to know that the Lord in His covenant love will manifest His loyalty to us. This is true security. By himself, man is a weak vessel, though he may proudly think more of himself than he ought. He may boast in his human accomplishments or feel self-confident in human resources, but these are ultimately futile. What people really need is the Lord's help and for the Lord to be their defender. So verses 16-17 show the folly of what man in his independence of God looks to for security. For a king, it may be the size of his army. For a warrior, it might be in his physical strength, or in being mounted on a powerful horse. Apart from God, these tactical advantages represent nothing more than humanism, a dependence on man and the things of earth. Yet as good as these may seem, there is something far better, namely, to know that the Lord God is with us and for us.



QUESTION 15

Observe again these words from verse 17: “A horse disappoints those who trust in it for victory.” These words strike at the heart of what the psalmist was communicating in verses 16-17. People tend to put their trust in things, other than in the Lord Himself. Sometimes the very things that are strengths in our lives (e.g., being a good singer or a great athlete, or being financially successful) can become the very things that hinder our spiritual growth (if we are not careful). We can easily rely on these strengths and put our trust in them, rather than in the One who gave them to us. Open your Life Notebook now and think about your own personal life. Write down two particular strengths in your life. Then write down how you might feel, if the Lord were to suddenly take these away. Now think about your weaknesses, and write down at least two weaknesses in your life. Look up 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 and write some thoughts on how the Lord could use the weaknesses in your life in a healthy way.

Verses 18-19. The infinitely better advantage is that the Lord saves and preserves those who trust in Him. Goldingay puts it this way: “On the human side, the key to rescue thus lies not in the accumulation of those resources but in an attitude of revering (see v. 8) and waiting” (*Psalms*, 1:471). According to Exodus 15:3, “The LORD is a warrior, the LORD is his name.” No matter what the odds might be in battle, it is better to be on His side and for Him to be our champion (see Isa 37:33-37). As exalted as He is (Ps 33:6-15), His majesty has not made Him inaccessible. Rather He is very accessible to the person who is willing to fear Him and who seeks to be related to Him through grace.

Verse 18 literally says, “The eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who wait for (or put their hope in) His loving loyalty.” The latter is the Hebrew word *hesed* that we saw earlier in verse 5b. But God's loving loyalty is not something we deserve; it flows from His grace. Of course the word “eye” is a figure of speech (anthropomorphism) for God's watching protective care (see Ps 34:15; 32:8-9). Although He looks down on everyone (v 13), His eye is especially attune to the righteous who fear Him. As they hope in God's gracious loving-loyalty, He very willingly becomes their defender.

QUESTION 16

According to verses 18-19, we should not rely on horses or even our own strength to deliver us, but we should rely on the Lord to be our deliverer in the face of danger and threatening circumstances. Verse 18 mentions two action-steps we need to take, if we want the Lord to intervene and deliver us. What are they? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. We need to practice the fear of the Lord.
- B. We need to memorize Scripture passages.
- C. We need to share our burdens with other mature believers.
- D. We need to place our hope in (or wait for) the Lord's loving loyalty.

The Concluding Section: Reflections of Praise and Trust (vv 20-22)

The final section of Psalm 33 is an opportunity for the whole community (note the plural pronouns) to express its trust in the LORD, the sovereign and faithful ruler of history. The psalm has awakened God's people to praise and renewed faith.

1. A Confession of Confidence (Ps 33:20-21)

20 We wait for the LORD; he is our deliverer and shield.

21 For our hearts rejoice in him, for we trust in his holy name.

Verses 20-21. The believing community now confessed that they were able to wait, that is, to endure times of trouble, because they knew the LORD is their deliverer and shield. The word "shield" is used as a metaphor in this verse to speak of the LORD as their defender. This may suggest that the psalmist originally composed this psalm in a time of national threat, when the people needed God to defend them. Verse 21 gives the reason why they could expect God to deliver and defend them. Their hearts rejoiced in Him, and their trust was in His holy name, that is, in all that He was known to be. Of interest is the connection between praise and trust. Praise comes when one is renewed to the point of trust in (reliance on) the Lord. With a heart of praise, trouble can be endured as one waits on God to intervene. This also reminds us that one is to wait on the Lord rather than to plow ahead in self-confidence (recall vv 16-19). This also means waiting for His counsel (Ps 106:13).

QUESTION 17

Many times in the Christian life we find it easier to take actions to defend ourselves rather than waiting to allow the Lord to be our defender. According to verse 20 the Lord is to be our shield. This is a figure of speech known as a _____ for the word "defender."

2. A Petition for God's Loving Loyalty (Ps 33:22)

May we experience your faithfulness, O LORD, for we wait for you.

Verse 22. In the final verse of the psalm the worshippers turn in faith to the LORD asking for His faithfulness (again *hesed*). Compare verse 18 above with its promise that the eye of the LORD is on those who wait for (or hope in) His loving loyalty. Now the worshipping community is applying that truth and banking on God's promise. Their desire is to be related to Him on the basis of *hesed*, implying they want to have a grace-based relationship with the Lord. As they do so, they can have the calm assurance that the God of history, the One who created everything and faithfully rules over the affairs of people, will act on their behalf to defend and deliver them. This, far more than a misplaced self-confidence in a vast army or powerful horse, was the one thing that could give them the inner peace they longed for.

QUESTION 18

The word translated “faithfulness” in verse 22 is the Hebrew word *hesed*. Which of the following statements best reflects the meaning of this word in Psalm 33?

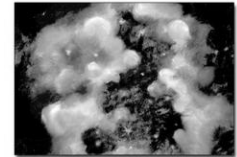
- A. The Lord will be faithful to take His children to heaven after they die.
- B. The Lord will be loyal to those with whom He is in covenant relationship and will act on their behalf because of His love for them.
- C. The Lord will have pity on those who cannot help themselves.
- D. The Lord will be kind to everyone regardless of how they feel about Him.

Topic 4: The Message of Psalm 33

Psalm 33 is a call to praise the Lord based on four specific reasons that are summarized in verses 4-5. These are:

1. The Authority of God’s Creative Word (vv 6-9)
2. The Faithfulness of God as Sovereign Ruler of the Nations (vv 10-12)
3. The Moral Concerns of God on the Earth (vv 13-15)
4. The Availability of God’s Loving Loyalty for Those Who Trust in Him (vv 16-19)

While each of these is a message in and of itself, we should take care not to miss the connection that they have with one another. The psalmist began by focusing on the Lord as Creator of the heavens and the earth. By merely saying the word (uttering a command), He was able to create the universe out of nothing. That speaks of the authority His word has and also of His power. By considering the immensity and complexity of creation, the authority and power of His word is mind-boggling to consider.



In His act of creation the Lord planned everything with the intention that man would dwell on earth. Obviously the Lord foresaw that man would multiply and that nations would eventually form. The Lord did not withdraw after creating man to let history randomly run its course. Rather, the Lord is an active ruler over His creation who has a deliberate plan and purpose for history. For this reason, He will not allow any nation to defeat His purposes or thwart His plans. For those who attempt to do so, the Lord will nullify their efforts and not allow them to succeed. Yet His plan does allow for evil to exist and for ungodly men to rise up as rulers. At the same time, the Lord sovereignly rules, only allowing evil to go so far as His will permits. In contrast, the nation that recognizes the Lord as God will discover His blessing. We can deduce from this that a nation will be blessed to the extent that it recognizes the Lord as God and submits itself to His righteous will.

The third reason for praise (vv 13-15) relates to the will of God and develops it further. A key part of God’s will is His love of righteousness and justice. Therefore He looks closely to see which nations (and individuals) will promote these godly virtues. As Creator He has the capability to look right to the very heart of man, to understand all he does. He knows who promotes righteousness and justice, and who does not.

In the fourth reason for praise (vv 16-19), the Lord is to be praised because He makes His loving loyalty manifest to men. This refers to the loving acts that God does for those who are in covenant relationship with Him. He is utterly loyal to them, which reflects His grace (for no one deserves this commitment He makes to them). In His loving loyalty, the Lord provides protective care for those

who fear Him and who place their hope in His loving loyalty (v 18). So, if one is wanting security and a good hope for deliverance, he will not find this at the human level, that is, in a large army, in physical strength, or in tactical advantages like a powerful horse. He will find this in the Lord's loving loyalty.

QUESTION 19

In the following chart, place the summary reasons for praise in the proper order in which they are presented in Psalm 33.

<i>Verses</i>	<i>Summary Reason for Praise</i>
Verses 6-9	The Faithfulness of God as Sovereign Ruler of the Nations
Verses 10-12	The Availability of God's Loving Loyalty for Those Who Trust in Him
Verses 13-15	The Authority of God's Creative Word
Verses 16-19	The Moral Concerns of God Upon the Earth (especially for justice and righteousness)

When we see the relationship of these reasons for praise, the main message of the psalm becomes clear. We experience threats to life here on earth, because evil is allowed to exist, and righteousness and justice are abused. Peace is not enduring, and countries as well as individuals are threatened by one another. Where can one turn for help? Where can one find security and deliverance? The message of Psalm 33 is that it is futile to seek security and deliverance in mere human resources that we think might give us an advantage. Rather, we should seek security and deliverance in the Lord God. After all, He is all-powerful as reflected in the exercise of His power to create the universe (and He did this by merely uttering His word). He is also sovereign over the nations, and can (and does) nullify the counsel of nations as He so chooses. One can have the benefit of the Lord as his deliverer, and thus the benefit of His power and authority over all nations, provided one fears Him, trusts in Him, and relies on His loving loyalty. But if one is self-confident and chooses to rely on some other hope, the Lord will not be there for him as his deliverer and shield.

QUESTION 20

Take a moment now to think about your own life. Is there any circumstance(s) you are facing at this time in which you feel intimidated and threatened? What have you done to try to overcome this? Can you discern any way in which you might have resorted to putting your hope in some human deliverance when you should have been trusting in the Lord alone? If so, what do you plan to do about this, now that you have studied Psalm 33? Record all your thoughts in your Life Notebook.

Lesson 11 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Which of the following is a theme of praise commonly found in a descriptive praise psalm?

- A. Praise for the Lord as Creator
- B. Praise for the Lord who sent His Son to die for sins
- C. Praise for the Lord who revealed the tabernacle plans to Moses.
- D. Praise for the Lord who delivered David from Philistine kings

QUESTION 2

Descriptive praise psalms typically have four major sections: an opening invitation to praise God, a lament of the nation's distress on account of war or catastrophe, a description of God's praiseworthy character and actions, and a concluding affirmation of faith. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

The central section of a psalm of descriptive praise presents the reason for praise and may include an introductory summary about who God is or what He is like, or what He has done. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

The opening section of Psalm 33 with its invitation to praise the Lord—enthusiastically and with instruments—teaches us that worship is meant to be a joyous occasion for godly people, and is primarily for their refreshment and pleasure. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

Of the following statements, which one is **not** a reason for praise stated in the summary in verses 4-5?

- A. The Lord esteems and promotes moral values, of which righteousness and justice are key examples.
- B. What the Lord has spoken is reliable and can be counted on.
- C. The Lord forgives the sins of His people when they confess their iniquities to Him.
- D. The Lord remains faithful and loyal to those in covenant relationship with Him.

QUESTION 6

The first reason the psalmist gave for our praising God is seen in the power of His word that brought forth creation. What is the implication of this?

- A. The whole world should appreciate the creativity of God.
- B. People ought to fear the Lord, because all He says is reliable.
- C. People in all nations should know that they will be judged by God.
- D. People should bow before God in worship since He is so generous.

QUESTION 7

Psalm 33:10-12 teaches us about God's role in regard to the world He created, namely, that He allows kings and rulers to make decisions for the nations without interfering in any way with what they do. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

What is the connection between the Lord's passion for righteousness and justice (mentioned in v 5) and His watching all people as described in verses 13-15?

- A. Because God is righteous and concerned for justice, He promptly removes evil rulers so they are not allowed to continue ruling over the nations on earth.
- B. God actively looks on the earth to see who promotes His standards of righteousness and justice, as well as those who abuse them.
- C. God does not care if evil rulers commit atrocities in this age, because He will eventually establish Jesus Christ as King over the world following the second coming.
- D. Because Satan is the god of this world, we can expect that all kings and rulers will be evil men who care only about their own interests.

QUESTION 9

A literal translation of Psalm 33:18 is: "The eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who wait for [or put their hope in] His loving-loyalty." Which of the following descriptions of the eye of the LORD is true?

- A. A figure of speech to indicate God's certainty to bring justice to all evildoers.
- B. A reference to the earthly king who has responsibility to uphold justice for all people.
- C. A reference to God's remembrance of the deeds of man (which He will record in His book for the final day of judgment).
- D. A figure of speech for God's watching protective care.

QUESTION 10

In the concluding section to Psalm 33, we see a confession of confidence in verses 20-21. Verse 20 states, "We wait for the LORD; he is our deliverer and shield." What is the lesson to be learned from this?

- A. Our security comes from trusting in the Lord rather than relying on human resources.
- B. Before we go into battle, we must always be sure to carry a shield.
- C. Nations should never defend themselves when they are attacked by enemies.
- D. If a person waits long enough, the Lord will eventually deliver him.

Lesson 11 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1

- A. Since the Lord is all-powerful, His people need have no fear of nations that may come against them in the name of some false deity.
- B. The fact that the Lord could create by a mere spoken word implies that He has great authority.
- D. The splendor of His creation shows that the Lord is infinitely wise, creative, and without limit in His understanding.

[The fact that a creator would put time, planning and effort into his creation does not necessarily mean that this creator is holy, righteous and just. Theoretically he could be a marvelously awesome creator, but not be righteous and holy. Of course it is true that the God of the Bible is both an awesome Creator (carefully planning His creation) as well as being a holy and righteous God.]

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3: *Your answer should be similar to the following:*

He is compassionate, merciful, patient, and forgiving. Other options that are correct can consist of: compassion, mercy, patience, and forgiveness.

QUESTION 4: False [Sometimes the invitation to praise will be extended to people from Gentile nations.]

QUESTION 5

- B. A brief summary statement giving the reasons for praise
- D. A causal word introducing the reasons, such as “for” or “since”

QUESTION 6

- A. A renewed call to praise and worship
- C. An expression of faith or confidence in the Lord
- D. A fresh petition to the Lord

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8

- C. A new song is a fresh response of praise to a recent act of God’s deliverance. [The idea of a new song does not have anything to do with the type of music that might be involved, or even the newness of a song. It refers to a new occasion in which one praises God for His intervention. In response, we have a fresh opportunity to thank Him and give Him our praise.]

QUESTION 9

- A. The LORD esteems and promotes moral values, of which righteousness and justice are key examples.
- B. That which the Lord has spoken is reliable and can be counted on.
- E. The Lord remains faithful and loyal to those in covenant relationship with Him.

QUESTION 10: Merism

QUESTION 11: *Your answer*

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13: True

QUESTION 14: *Your answer should be similar to the following:*

The poor, afflicted, downtrodden, or unfortunate

QUESTION 15: *Your answer*

QUESTION 16

- A. We need to practice the fear of the Lord.
- D. We need to place our hope in (or wait for) the Lord’s loving loyalty.

QUESTION 17: Metaphor

QUESTION 18

- B. The Lord will be loyal to those with whom He is in covenant relationship and will act on their behalf because of His love for them.

QUESTION 19

<i>Verses</i>	<i>Summary Reason for Praise</i>
Verses 6-9	The Authority of God's Creative Word
Verses 10-12	The Faithfulness of God as Sovereign Ruler of the Nations
Verses 13-15	The Moral Concerns of God Upon the Earth (especially for justice and righteousness)
Verses 16-19	The Availability of God's Loving Loyalty for Those Who Trust in Him

QUESTION 20: *Your answer*

Lesson 11 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1

A. Praise for the Lord as Creator

QUESTION 2: False

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5

C. The Lord forgives the sins of His people when they confess their iniquities to Him.

QUESTION 6

B. People ought to fear the Lord, because all He says is reliable.

QUESTION 7: False

QUESTION 8

B. God actively looks on the earth to see who promotes His standards of righteousness and justice, as well as those who abuse them.

QUESTION 9

D. A figure of speech for God's watching protective care.

QUESTION 10

A. Our security comes from trusting in the Lord rather than relying on human resources.

Lesson 12: An Introduction to Royal or Messianic Psalms (Ps 2)

Lesson Introduction

In the Psalms numerous verses find their fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not surprising, since most of the psalms were written by David, and it was to David that God made the promise that one of his descendants would have an eternal throne and kingdom (2 Sam 7:12-16). David was very preoccupied with this thought that God's promise would one day be fulfilled in one of his descendants. Hence we find reference to this special descendant (the Messiah) in many of the psalms authored by David.

Although we have many prophecies of Messiah Jesus in the Psalms, the way in which the fulfillment comes about varies. In some cases the psalmist made a direct prophecy of the Messiah. This means that as the psalmist writes of the Messiah, he did so directly, without reference to any other. More frequently, however, the psalmist made a statement that applies in its initial fulfillment to the king (usually David), but which in turn goes beyond that king of old to its ultimate realization in Messiah Jesus. We will discuss how these verses find fulfillment when we come to the final unit of this course. In Unit 5 we will study three crucial messianic psalms.

This lesson focuses on Psalm 2. This is a messianic psalm quoted frequently by Jesus in the New Testament. Yet it is important to observe as discussed earlier that this psalm is also—along with Psalm 1—part of the introduction to the entire Psalter. As part of the Psalter's double introduction, Psalm 2 teaches that God's plan to exalt His Son will succeed, and cannot be thwarted by any earthly power rebelling against Him. Those who attempt to do so will be crushed, but those who seek refuge in the LORD will be blessed.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: An Introduction to Psalm 2

Psalm 2 and the Davidic Covenant in the Book of Psalms

The Structure of Psalm 2

Topic 2: The Rebellion of the Nations Against the Lord (vv 1-3)

Topic 3: The Divine Reaction to the Rebellious Nations (vv 4-6)

Topic 4: The Lord's Decree for His Son's Rule Over the Nations (vv 7-9)

Topic 5: An Exhortation to the Nations to Submit and Avert Judgment (vv 10-12)

Topic 6: The Promises of Psalm 2 and Jesus' Resurrection (New Testament Fulfillment)

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Have a detailed understanding of Psalm 2 as a messianic psalm that finds its fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ
- Understand the relationship of Psalm 2 to God's promises to David in 2 Samuel 7 known as the Davidic covenant

- Explain the meaning of a key statement, “You are My Son; Today I have begotten You,” since this is quoted repeatedly in the New Testament
- Understand how and when God will overturn the rebellion of the nations against His rule, and give His Son authority over the nations

Preparing for the Lesson

Since classes were off for the holiday, Tom Blanchard and Kate Kutlow had decided to join a group of college students at the local coffee shop for a stimulating chat about the direction the world seemed to be headed. It was raining outside, and this made it all the more compelling to stay inside, keep warm, and enjoy each other’s friendship. As the conversation deepened, one of the guys (George) made the remark that the whole world seemed as if it were becoming more and more anti-Christian. “What do you mean by that?” Kate chimed in. “Well,” George replied, “I have observed just this very week that another government in Southeast Asia has passed a law prohibiting anyone from changing their faith. Everyone knows this was aimed at the Christians in the country, since over two thousand people have come to faith in Christ in just the past five years.” Tom, unable to keep silent, remarked, “Sounds almost like a broken record. I mean, haven’t we heard this type of thing happening again and again in the past few years?”

One of the new guys on campus by the name of Ken (not yet a Christian) entered the conversation at this point. “Have you ever wondered what it would be like if every country made Christianity illegal, and in fifty years there were no more Christians? After all, there are other religions that have appeared in history only to eventually fade into obscurity.” After several moments of silence, Kate responded. “Ken, I grant your point that there have been other religions that have come and gone in the course of history. But Christianity is not like that. It is not simply a religion—what people may choose to worship—and what could be defeated by those hostile to it. Rather Christianity is about the living God who not only created everything but also has a plan for history. His plan is that, though nations may rebel against Him, He will ultimately judge those who oppose Him and place the rule of the entire world into the hands of His Son, the Lord Jesus.” “Wait a minute,” Ken suddenly burst in, “I thought Jesus died about two thousand years ago, so how can He have anything to do with the future of our planet?” Kate wisely tried to be patient and gentle in responding to Ken’s objections. “Ken, I understand how you might think that, but because Jesus was resurrected, He is still very much alive. Psalm 2—written hundreds of years before Jesus was born on earth—records the fact that God’s Son will one day return in judgment, after which all nations will be given to Him to rule over.”

Tom decided this was a good moment for him to jump back in. “Hey, I have an idea. How about us all gathering at my place next Saturday night, and we can study Psalm 2 together?” Everyone seemed to applaud the idea, and George sweetened the deal by offering to grill hamburgers for everyone to get the evening off to a good start. Tom added one final thought, “As Christians we are not opposed to any government. In fact, we want to be good citizens of the government under which we reside. We know that our real battle is not with our government, but rather with Satan. So no matter what attitude our government may take about Christians, God has called us to obey our government and to pray for our leaders.” George affirmed Tom’s clarification, “Yeah, that’s radical, but true. I’ll see everybody Saturday night!”

Topic 1: An Introduction to Psalm 2

Psalm 2 is a beautiful psalm of twelve verses composed of four carefully balanced strophes of three verses each. Not only is the psalm textually balanced, but it is thematically balanced as well. The psalm opens with the nations in an uproar and plotting a conspiracy against the Lord, and it closes with a warning to the nations to act wisely and submit to the Lord. The two central strophes (vv 4-6 and vv 7-9) focus on the Lord's reaction to the rebellion—He is not threatened in the least—and the Lord's declaration of ultimate victory through His Son.

There is no superscription provided for the psalm, but Acts 4:25 indicates that Psalm 2 was a psalm of David. Hence David himself is the author of the psalm, the very one to whom God made the covenant promises in 2 Samuel 7 concerning his dynasty and the son who would ultimately come forth from his line to have an eternal throne/kingdom.

Attention has already been given to the relationship of Psalm 2 with Psalm 1 (recall Lesson 6, Topic 2). Together these psalms form a double introduction to the Psalter. In a nutshell we could say that Psalm 1 introduces the importance of the way of the righteous, for one is blessed as he delights himself in God's Word and walks according to it. Psalm 2 introduces the great cosmic battle played out among the nations, in which one is blessed for taking refuge in the Lord and His son rather than joining in the rebellion doomed to failure.

QUESTION 1

On what basis do we know that Psalm 2 was authored by King David?

- A. The superscription to Psalm 2 indicates that this was a Davidic psalm.
- B. We are told in 2 Samuel 7 that this psalm was written by David.
- C. This must be a Davidic psalm on account of its close association with Psalm 1.
- D. We are told in Acts 4:25 that Psalm 2 was authored by David.

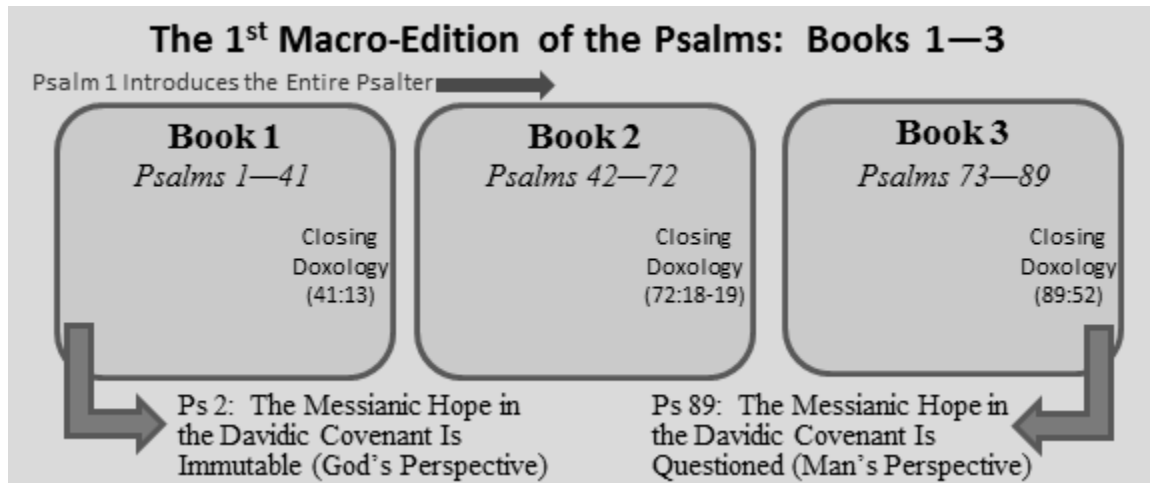
Psalm 2 and the Davidic Covenant in the Book of Psalms

In Lesson 6 we considered the composition and themes of the Psalter as a whole. We saw that the Psalter was divided into five primary books in light of the doxologies found at the seams of the Psalter. We also saw that one of the great tensions in the Psalter was the difficulty in reconciling God's promises regarding the Davidic monarchy with the nation's experience of defeat and exile at the hands of the Assyrians and later the Babylonians.

In 2 Samuel 7:12-16 God promised David that one of his descendants would have an eternal throne and kingdom, which might have given the impression to some that they could expect a future of triumph and growing national strength. The reality, however, was that the nation's history was far more complex than that. God would indeed fulfill His covenant promises to David (and David's descendant), but He would also take into account the nation's faithfulness (or lack thereof) in regard to His Law. In fact God even warned the nation in Deuteronomy 28–29 that unfaithfulness to the Mosaic Law would result in God's discipline and eventually even exile from the land. So both dynamics—a glorious future for the Davidic monarchy and accountability to the Mosaic Law—were at work in how the nation's history developed.

In light of this major theme of the Psalter (the struggle to understand God's faithfulness to the Davidic covenant of 2 Sam 7), the editor of the Psalter rightly placed Psalm 2 up front. Psalm 2 paves the way for these concerns within the Psalter by affirming from the beginning that God is in firm control of history, and His promises to David will be absolutely fulfilled in the One He calls "My Son." The nations who oppose God will not defeat Him or thwart His plans. Rather, God's Son will

be given all nations as His inheritance and will rule over them. The following chart from Lesson 6 should be reviewed:

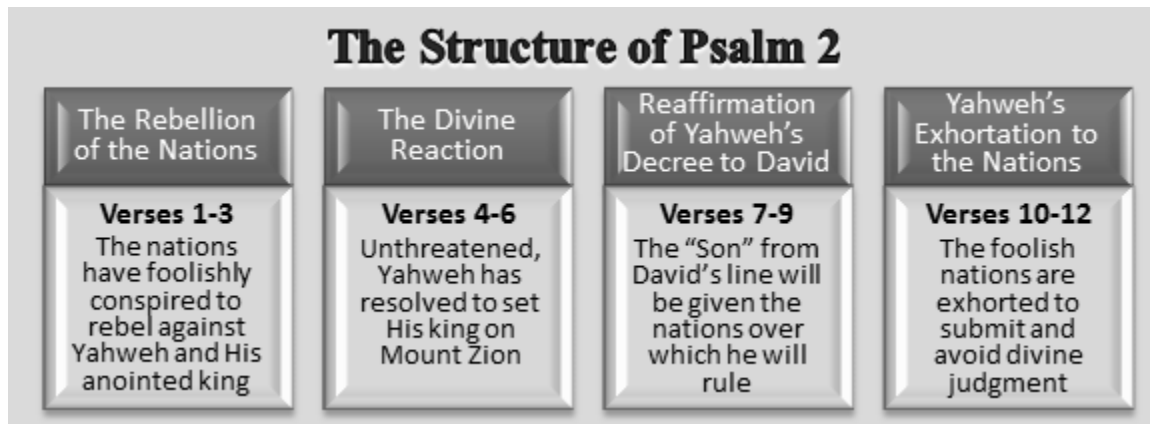


QUESTION 2

Because the Davidic covenant is a major theme in the Psalms (especially in the first three books), the editor of the Psalter seems to have deliberately placed Psalm 2 near the beginning as part of the introduction. *True or False?*

The Structure of Psalm 2

As stated previously, Psalm 2 comprises four strophes, each having three verses. The following chart reflects the structure of the passage and the primary thematic concerns:



QUESTION 3

Without looking back to the previous chart, try to match each strophe of Psalm 2 with the appropriate label:

<i>Strophe</i>	<i>Correct Label</i>
One (vv 1-3)	Reaffirmation of Yahweh's decree to David
Two (vv 4-6)	Yahweh's exhortation to the nations
Three (vv 7-9)	The divine reaction
Four (10-12)	The rebellion of the nations

Topic 2: The Rebellion of the Nations Against the LORD (vv 1-3)

Psalm 2 begins with a question, though it is clearly a rhetorical question. The psalmist was not asking for information. Rather he was amazed that the nations would dare to think they could successfully rebel against the Lord. Read Psalm 2:1-3 before continuing with this topic.

1 Why do the nations cause a commotion? Why are the countries devising plots that will fail?

2 The kings of the earth form a united front;

the rulers collaborate against the LORD and his anointed king.

3 They say, "Let's tear off the shackles they've put on us!

Let's free ourselves from their ropes!"

Verse 1. The very first colon of Psalm 2 raises the question of the relationship of the Gentile nations to the Lord. Psalm 1 had much more of an individual perspective with its pronouncement of blessing (or happiness) for the man who shunned the counsel of the wicked in preference for delighting in Yahweh's word. The wicked on the other hand will not stand in judgment; their way will perish (they are on a path that leads to ruin). Psalm 2 suddenly shifts to viewing things on a larger scale, from the perspective of nations and rulers on the earth. Psalm 2 is not stating that all nations and their rulers are in rebellion against the Lord, but only that it is remarkable that any would do so.

The idea that nations and rulers would rise up in rebellion seems strange. After all, the Lord is the Creator God. Who could possibly think he could oppose Him? God has the power to create untold thousands of galaxies and stars. Human power against Him would be useless. Yet more perplexing is why nations and rulers might want to rebel. If the Lord were not a good God or if He wanted to bless only one nation to the exclusion of all others, then we might possibly understand their motive. Yet that is not the case. From early on, we see that the Lord's love and compassion is extended to all peoples and all nations. This was clearly revealed in Genesis 12:3 when the Lord called Abram out of his original homeland: "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (NASB). This promise would find its fulfillment in Abram through the one who would ultimately come forth from his line, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ. He would bring universal blessing, for He would die for the sins of all mankind, so that those who place their faith in Him will have forgiveness of sins and eternal life (and much more!).

Before going further, we should examine the word translated "rebel" (Ps 2:1) in greater detail. The Hebrew verb is *rāgaš*. The verb form occurs only here in this verse, although a derived noun form

occurs in Psalm 55:14 and Psalm 64:2. An older Hebrew Lexicon suggests that the verb means to be in tumult or commotion and that the noun forms mean a tumult. (For this reason, the NASB translated Psalm 2:1 “to be in an uproar.”) However, closer inspection reveals that in the case of both Psalm 55:14 and Psalm 64:2, the noun *regeš* (or fem *rigšah*) is used in parallel with the noun *sôd* which means secret counsel. Thus Psalm 64:2 is translated, “Hide me from the plots [or conspiracy, Hebrew *missôd*] of evil men.” This observation suggests that the proper meaning for *rāgaš* in Psalm 2:1 is to plot or conspire against (as the NIV translated this). That this is the correct idea is confirmed by the Hebrew parallelism in the second colon of Psalm 2:1: “Why are the countries **devising plots** that will fail?” (emphasis added). Thus rebellion is involved, but the main idea is that of the nations conspiring together in an attempt to rebel.

QUESTION 4

What is the main point of verse 1?

- A. The nations are causing too much commotion.
- B. The nations are guilty of participating in a grand conspiracy against the Lord.
- C. The nations are at warfare with one another.
- D. The nations have united together.

Verse 2. Verse 2 moves from the general to the specific, that is, from the nations participating in this conspiracy to the kings and rulers over these nations. Together they form a united front against the Lord. They think that by standing together they can defy Him. How do they do this? By opposing his anointed king. In the Hebrew text this is simply one word: *mešîah*, meaning an anointed one. In the Old Testament this word was used of a priest or a king. That is, he would be anointed and thereby commissioned for God’s special service. David, for example, was the anointed of the Lord (2 Sam 23:1). Given the context of Psalm 2 (note the reference to God’s king in verse 6), we would presume that a king is in view as God’s anointed, and thus the translation “anointed king” is warranted.

The point of verse 2 is that earthly rulers have united in conspiracy against the Lord by opposing His earthly representative, His anointed king. At first reading, we might presume that this anointed king is David himself. But as we shall see in Topic 6, the ultimate fulfillment goes beyond the historical person of David.

Verse 3. This verse concludes the opening strophe with a quotation from the lips of the conspirators. They oppose the authority structure that the Lord has established, and they want to be freed from any submission to His rule. They want complete independence from God. Sadly they do not realize that such independence also means a severance from the blessings that He could shower on them.

QUESTION 5

The rebels who conspire against the Lord cry out, “Let’s tear off the shackles they’ve put on us!” They do not want any constraints on what they can do. Rather, they want to be free and independent to do whatever they feel like doing. They do not want to live in submission to the Lord and His ways (in contrast to the blessed man of Psalm 1). As Christians, we also may struggle at times to live in submission to the Lord. Are there any areas of your life in which you currently struggle to live in submission to the Lord? Open your Life Notebook and write down your answer to this question. Choose one of the following three options as a follow-up: (1) to seek the counsel of an older mature Christian with whom to share my struggle; (2) to find a fellow Christian to pray with me about this, or (3) to do a Bible study on the issue with which I am struggling. Record the results of your action step in your Life Notebook.

Topic 3: The Divine Reaction to the Rebellious Nations (vv 4-6)

In the second strophe (Ps 2:4-6) the scene shifts from earth to heaven. Now we see the divine perspective of this earthly rebellion.

4 The one enthroned in heaven laughs in disgust; the sovereign master taunts them.

5 Then he angrily speaks to them, and terrifies them in his rage.

6 He says, “I myself have installed my king on Zion, my holy hill.”

Verse 4. God’s initial response is one of laughter, not because the situation depicted in verses 1-3 is not serious, but because such defiance is surely doomed to failure. The Lord God, the One so powerful and intelligent that He could create all that exists—whether in the heights of the heavens or in the microscopic world on earth—is surely not going to be defeated or overthrown by such mortal ambitions of conspiracy against Him. Not even a remote chance exists that the rebels will succeed! In Lamentations 5:19 we are told, “But you, O LORD, reign forever; your throne endures from generation to generation.” The Lord will never abdicate His throne nor can His will and purposes ever be thwarted.

Verse 5-6. The initial divine laughter, however, is only momentary. Very quickly this shifts to divine anger. The Lord will intervene to disrupt the plots of the rebels in a way that will utterly terrify them.

Verse 6 parallels verse 3. In the earlier verse we saw the defiant words of the rebels, and now in verse 6 it is God’s time to speak. His attitude and intention is now contrasted with theirs. He points out that He has installed His king on Mount Zion, His holy mountain. Mount Zion, of course, is an alternative designation for Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:7; See Ps 48:1-2). This reference to the establishment of His king on Mount Zion is meant to recall God’s promises to David given in 2 Samuel 7:11b-16. These promises are what are known as the Davidic covenant:

The LORD declares to you that he himself will build a dynastic house for you. When the time comes for you to die, I will raise up your descendant, one of your own sons, to succeed you, and I will establish his kingdom. He will build a house for my name, and I will make his dynasty permanent. I will become his father and he will become my son. When he sins, I will correct him with the rod of men and with wounds inflicted by human beings. But my loyal love will not be removed from him as I removed it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will stand before me permanently; your dynasty will be permanent.

QUESTION 6

Which of the following are promised in the Davidic covenant of 2 Samuel 7:11b-16? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. God promised David that He would build him a house (i.e., a long dynasty of kings).
- B. One of David’s descendants would build a house (i.e., a temple) for God’s name.
- C. With every Davidic king, God would be a father to him, and the king would be God’s son.
- D. God promised David that none of his descendants would ever be defeated by a foreign army.
- E. The Davidic dynasty of kings and their kingdom would be everlasting (in contrast to the line of Saul which was short lived).

Initially this prophecy was fulfilled in Solomon, for he built a literal house (a temple) for God’s name. The promises, however, went beyond Solomon, as each successive Davidic king took the throne. As God’s earthly ruler, each king was considered to be God’s son. When the Davidic king-son was

disobedient, he had to be corrected. Even the best of these Davidic kings failed to live up to the divine expectation.

Bruce Waltke has compared the expectation for each king to a royal mantle that was too broad to fit the shoulders of any Davidic descendant, except for the One who would be the Messiah. He remarks, “Now it is important to note that each living successor to David’s throne was clothed in the large, magnificent, purple mantle of the messianic vision attached to the House of David. Each king became the son of God through his anointing with Yahweh’s Spirit” (“A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms,” p 14).

Though each of David’s descendants that came to the throne failed to live up to God’s standard for the king, this did not nullify God’s covenant to David. In the course of time there would come forth a descendant from David with whom God would fulfill His promise of an eternal throne-kingdom. This, of course, was Jesus of Nazareth, who was descended from the line of David. In His case He was God’s “Son” in a far greater way than any previous Davidic king, for He would be conceived by the Holy Spirit. Furthermore in contrast to the other Davidic kings, He would never sin and thus there would be no need of God’s correction for His sins. The Davidic covenant would find its ultimate and complete fulfillment in Jesus Christ, and thus His reign would be forever and ever. David’s placement on the throne at Mount Zion set in motion a chain of events that will culminate with the Lord Jesus Christ being installed as God’s King. Nothing could defeat this plan, which is exactly why it receives focus at this point in Psalm 2.

S. Lewis Johnson has captured the thought of Psalm 2:4-6 in these words, “It is as if God were saying, ‘You kings of the earth may revolt, if you stupidly will, but I... have determined that my king shall reign from Zion, and I will have the last word!’” (*The Old Testament in the New*, 16).

QUESTION 7

The Davidic covenant has a partial fulfillment in David’s son, Solomon, but an ultimate fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

Which of the following options best explains the statement, “When he sins, I will correct him with the rod of men and with wounds inflicted by human beings” (2 Sam 7:14)?

- A. This is only a hypothetical statement, since Jesus never had any personal sin.
- B. The statement applied to each successive Davidic king, that God would discipline them for their disobedience to the Mosaic Law (primarily through foreign invasion).
- C. This statement applied only to Solomon, when God sent Jeroboam against him and his kingdom was divided.
- D. This statement applied to each king during the time when they were little boys and had to be corrected by their parents.

Topic 4: The Lord’s Decree for His Son’s Rule Over the Nations (vv 7-9)

In the previous strophe (vv 4-6), we learned that any conspiracy by ungodly kings and rulers to usurp God’s authority or displace His anointed king was utterly futile and doomed to failure. God has already set in place His program for history and how His rule over the nations will be realized. He did

this when He established His covenant with David, a covenant that assured David (and those of us who read His Word) that His Son will reign forevermore from Mount Zion. This is why any plot against God's rule will not succeed. Now in the third strophe (Ps 2:7-9), the reign of God's ultimate Son is brought into clearer focus. He will be Ruler over all nations, even if it means using divine force.

7 The king says, "I will tell you what the LORD decreed.

He said to me: 'You are my son! This very day I have become your father!

8 You just have to ask me,

and I will give you the nations as your inheritance,

the ends of the earth as your personal property.

9 You will break them with an iron scepter,

you will smash them as if they were a potter's jar.'"

Verse 7. Who is the king who speaks in verse 7? This is not David, but rather the One in whom the Davidic covenant is ultimately fulfilled, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is confirmed by verse 8 where the Lord invited the royal son to ask for His inheritance of the nations. There is no indication from the historical books that such an offer was ever made to David nor that he had made such a request.

Hence the ultimate Davidic Son (Jesus) now comes to center stage to claim what is rightfully His. He begins by recounting the Lord's decree. (Author's note: I prefer the translation "recount" rather than "announce," as the Hebrew verb *sāpar* more naturally refers to recounting something that had already happened or been experienced, or had previously been said. See, for example, Gen 24:66 and Judg 7:13.) The decree referred to is the Davidic covenant.

QUESTION 9

Who is the king mentioned in verse 7, and what is the decree that he refers to?

- A. The king is David, and the decree is the new covenant.
- B. The king is Solomon, and the decree is the Davidic covenant.
- C. The king could be any Davidic descendant, and the decree is the Abrahamic covenant.
- D. The king is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the decree is the Davidic covenant.

S.L. Johnson concurs that this portion of the psalm speaks directly of Jesus Christ: "The psalm, in my opinion, speaks directly of Jesus Christ by predictive prophecy. The psalmist, perhaps against the background of the accession of a king, is speaking of the ideal king, calling Him Son on the basis of 2 Samuel 7:14 in the Davidic covenant" (*The Old Covenant in the New*, 15).

The expressions "my son" and "your father" certainly raise questions about the nature of the Godhead, even about the deity of Christ. The statement in the latter part of verse 7, "This very day I have become your father!" is rendered in some translations, "Today I have begotten You" (NASB). At first glance, this might be understood to mean that Jesus had an origin at a point in time (rather than being eternal). The statement, however, has nothing to do with human birth. Rather this pertains to His elevation to kingship. In the Ancient Near East, this type of language (an adoption formula) was used to express a king's right to rule by virtue of a covenant of grant. Michael Grisanti explains,

The clause "I will be His father and he will be My son" serves as an adoption formula and represents the judicial basis for this divine grant of an eternal dynasty (See Ps 2:7-8; 89:20-29). The background of the sonship imagery (and the form of the Davidic covenant, see above) is the ancient Near Eastern covenant of grant, 'whereby

a king would reward a faithful servant by elevating him to the position of 'sonship' and granting him special gifts, usually related to land and dynasty" ("The Davidic Covenant," 241).

Moshe Weinfeld gives an excellent illustration of this very practice of adoption/sonship from an ancient Hittite treaty: "(The great king) grasped me with his hand... and said, 'When I conquer the land of Mitanni I shall not reject you, I shall make you my son [using an Akkadian expression for adopting a son], I will stand by (to help in war) and will make you sit on the throne of your father'" ("The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East," 191).

Yet we are not forced to rely on extrabiblical documents to support our thesis. We have a splendid illustration from Psalm 89, a psalm whose specific focus is the Davidic covenant (note vv 3-4). Observe carefully the Hebrew parallelism in Psalm 89:26-27:

26 He will call out to me, "You are my father,
my God, and the protector who delivers me."
27 I will appoint him to be my firstborn son,
the most exalted of the earth's kings.

In verse 27 the words "I will appoint him" serve both colons. Then "my firstborn son" is paralleled by "the most exalted of the earth's kings."

What, then, do we conclude from these observations? Psalm 2:7 utilizes the ancient Near Eastern adoption formula language to express the elevation of David's descendant to His kingly office. This is not about His birth or origin in time, but rather His elevation to His role as King. Jesus was recounting the promises that were made in the Davidic covenant and that find fulfillment in Him, David's greater son. This verse speaks of the time of His enthronement as the Davidic king who will enjoy an eternal throne-kingdom. Notice carefully the word "Today." Although the time is vague from the standpoint of Psalm 2, the New Testament clarifies the time more precisely. We will attempt to identify this time in Topic 6 of this lesson.

QUESTION 10

In light of ancient Near Eastern treaties and custom, the idea of being begotten and becoming one's son referred to:

- A. The physical birth of a king's son, when a new heir is born
- B. The day of circumcision for a newborn male son following his physical birth
- C. One's honorary adoption as son, whereby he is given the position of king by a higher ruler
- D. The celebrations in honor of a royal son at age thirteen when he entered manhood and became the next in line to rule

Verse 8. If verse 7 pertains to His elevation to kingship, verse 8 takes up the question of the extent of His rule. Under the reign of David and Solomon, the ancient nation of Israel reached its greatest domain as one enemy after another was subdued. In 1 Kings 4:21 we read, "Solomon ruled all the kingdoms from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. These kingdoms paid tribute as Solomon's subjects throughout his lifetime." This approximated the land promise originally given to Abraham in Genesis 15:18-21 (compare Josh 1:4). Yet Psalm 2:8 envisions a rule that is vastly more far-reaching than anything experienced by Solomon: "Ask me, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the ends of the earth as your personal property" (Ps 2:8). The Lord Jesus, David's greater Son, is destined not just to have a kingdom consisting of a portion of the Middle East, but rather one that extends to the ends of the earth. This is reaffirmed in Psalm 72:8, "May he rule from sea to sea, and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth!"

QUESTION 11

What does Psalm 2:8 anticipate regarding the extent of the king's domain?

- A. His domain will be universal over all the nations of the earth.
- B. His domain will be that promised to Abraham, from the Euphrates to the border of Egypt.
- C. His domain will be a spiritual one as he rules over the hearts of men.
- D. His domain will be Mount Zion, the holy mountain.

Verse 9. The Lord Jesus will be elevated to kingly rule with a worldwide domain, but this will not come about peaceably. Psalm 2:9 predicts, “You will break them with an iron scepter; you will smash them like a potter’s jar!” The opening three verses of Psalm 2 alerted us to the fact that the nations and their rulers were united in a conspiracy against the Lord’s anointed ruler. Not surprisingly, warfare must ensue. This warfare, however, is founded in Satan’s rebellion against God and is based on his determination to oppose God’s plan for mankind. This has been going on since the Garden of Eden, and it continues today. Ultimately Satan is the culprit who seeks to deceive the nations and lead them astray. This great cosmic battle will reach its climax in the future Tribulation on earth as described in the book of Revelation. Three times in this book we find a reference to Christ ruling with a rod of iron (Rev 2:27; 12:5; and Rev 19:15).

In this Tribulation period Satan will be forcibly expelled from heaven as a result of a mighty angelic battle. Although this will cause Satan in his anger to unleash his fury against those on earth, it will lead to the full establishment of Christ’s kingdom and rule. This is carefully described in Revelation 12:7-10:

Then war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But the dragon was not strong enough to prevail, so there was no longer any place left in heaven for him and his angels. So that huge dragon—the ancient serpent, the one called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world—was thrown down to the earth, and his angels along with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, “The salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the ruling authority of his Christ, have now come, because the accuser of our brothers and sisters, the one who accuses them day and night before our God, has been thrown down.”

For three and a half years, the earth will experience its darkest hour as Satan carries out his diabolical plan to seek to rule the earth through his representative, the Antichrist. This is finally stopped by the personal return of the Lord Jesus to earth (the second coming), described in Revelation 19:11-16. Verses 15-16 of that paragraph include a clear allusion to Psalm 2:9, which confirms that Psalm 2:9 is fulfilled in the second coming of Christ.

From his mouth extends a sharp sword, so that with it he can strike the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod, and he stomps the winepress of the furious wrath of God, the All-Powerful. He has a name written on his clothing and on his thigh: “King of kings and Lord of lords.”

Goldingay has succinctly summarized the intent of Psalm 2:9: “Yhwh insists on the nations’ submission and is prepared to use violence to put down nations that seek their independence” (*Psalms 1-41*, 104). Those who side with Satan in his rebellion must be prepared to face the wrath of the Lamb of God.

QUESTION 12

To what does “breaking them with an iron scepter” refer?

- A. This refers to David’s defeat of the Ammonites in 2 Samuel 11.
- B. This refers to Christ’s ultimate triumph over those nations and rulers who will oppose Him at the end of the Tribulation.
- C. This refers to Christ’s defeat of the unholy angels when they are banished to Hell.
- D. This refers to Christ’s triumph over the nations with the gospel in the present church age.

Topic 5: An Exhortation to the Nations to Submit and Avert Judgment (vv 10-12)

The preceding two strophes (vv 4-9) make it absolutely clear that God’s plan to entrust the rule of the nations to David’s greater Son (the Lord Jesus) will prevail. Nations and rulers may join in the satanic conspiracy against the Lord and His anointed King, but they will not succeed. Furthermore the Lord Jesus will not appear meekly in His second coming, but rather He will break those opposing Him with an iron scepter. In light of this, the final strophe of Psalm 2 seeks to provide counsel to kings and rulers. Submission to God’s anointed king is the way to avert judgment.

Psalm 2:10-12:

- 10 So now, you kings, do what is wise;
you rulers of the earth, submit to correction!
- 11 Serve the LORD in fear!
Repent in terror! [literally, “rejoice with trembling”]
- 12 Give sincere homage!
Otherwise he will be angry, and you will die because of your behavior,
when his anger quickly ignites.
How happy are all who take shelter in him!

Verse 10-11. God’s counsel for kings and rulers is to take the wise course of action by submitting to His correction. Verse 11 then commends the specific reaction that is appropriate for them. They should serve the Lord in godly fear. The words “serve the LORD” in the Old Testament often mean worship, especially in the context of choosing to serve/worship the Lord alone rather than other pagan deities (see Ps 100:2; 1 Sam 7:4). Their worship of Him should be accompanied by the fear of the LORD. (Recall the discussion of this concept in Topic 3 of Lesson 10.)

Verse 12. The NET Bible translates the first clause of Psalm 2:12, “Give sincere homage!” Other translations, however, understand this in reference to God’s Son. For example, the NIV translates this, “Kiss the Son,” and the NASB has “Do homage to the Son.” On the one hand it would certainly be appropriate to refer again to God’s Son, since He is the primary subject in verses 6-9. Nevertheless, the translation “Son” in verse 12 is highly questionable. The word in the Hebrew Bible is *bar*. In Aramaic *bar* means son, but it is doubtful that we should understand this as an Aramaic word. First, it would be odd to have the entire psalm in Hebrew except for this one word. Second, the reference to Son in verse 7 was the Hebrew word *ben*, not the Aramaic word *bar*. Third, those who translated the Old Testament into Greek (the Septuagint) rendered this *draxasthe paideias*, which means something

like accept correction or lay hold of correction. The point is that they did not understand this to be the Aramaic word for son.

QUESTION 13

Which of the following reasons argue against the translation “Son” in verse 12? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. To be translated “Son,” this would have to be an Aramaic word, but this seems doubtful since the whole psalm was written in Hebrew.
- B. It would be inconsistent if the word “son” in verse 7 was the Hebrew word *ben*, while the word “son” in verse 12 was the Aramaic word *bar*.
- C. If the word “Son” were intended, we would expect the author to have written “My Son,” not “the Son.”
- D. The Greek Septuagint translators did not translate this as “Son,” but as “accept correction.”

If this is not the Aramaic word *bar* meaning son, then what is it? There is a Hebrew word *bar* that means pure, clean, innocent (see the idea of a pure heart in Ps 24:4; 73:1). Then we should observe that the imperatival verb at the beginning of Psalm 2:12 (kiss) is preceded in verse 11 by two other imperatives (serve and rejoice). The two imperatives in verse 11 are each followed by a descriptive telling how the action is to be done, that is, they are adverbial. If we understand the imperatival clause initiating verse 12 in this way, the idea is “kiss in purity,” that is, with sincerity. Next we need to understand the intention of the word translated “kiss” (Hebrew *nāšaq*). As might be expected, the word is often used in an affectionate or romantic sense. However, it can also be used metaphorically as an expression of “submission” or “doing homage” (note the usage in 1 Sam 10:1 and Gen 41:40). The word is used in a similar way in the context of false worship (1 Kgs 19:18; Hos 13:2). To kiss the idolatrous calves in Hosea 13:2 meant to worship and submit to them.

Based on these insights, Psalm 2:12a could be translated “kiss [i.e., do homage to] purely or sincerely,” which explains the NET Bible translation “Give sincere homage.” In the context of Psalm 2 this makes perfect sense. Rather than rebelling and conspiring against God’s anointed king, these earthly kings and rulers ought to submit and do homage to the Lord, not pretentiously but with sincerity.

QUESTION 14

Of the following statements, which ones are true? (There is more than one correct answer.) (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The word “kiss” can be used literally for a romantic gesture as an expression of affection.
- B. The word “kiss” can be used metaphorically as an expression of submission or doing homage.
- C. The word “kiss” is never used in the Old Testament in the context of false worship.
- D. The exhortation “kiss with purity” can be understood to mean give sincere homage.

Verse 12 explains the result for the rulers who do not submit to the Lord. God’s anger awaits them. For some, this will occur in time (as in the Great Tribulation), whereas all such rebels will certainly face God’s wrath in eternity. (Recall v 9 above and its association with the Tribulation period.) The word “perish” in Psalm 2:12 (NASB)—translated “die” in the NET Bible—echoes the closing of Psalm 1, “the way of the wicked will perish” (NASB). Psalm 2 concludes by reminding everyone that there is a way to be blessed of God rather than facing His wrath. It is by taking shelter in Him, that is, seeking His protection. This is the first of some twenty-five occurrences of this phrase in the Psalms. The NET Bible study note for this verse indicates, “In the psalms those who ‘take shelter’ in the Lord are contrasted with the wicked and equated with those who love, fear and serve the Lord” (Ps 5:11-12; 31:17-20; 34:21-22). To take shelter in the Lord is likened in Psalm 61:4 to finding a secure place

of hiding under the protecting care of God's wings. Being near to God means one is safe from threatening dangers. Those taking shelter in the Lord are not only blessed and protected, but as a result they are able to sing for joy in the Lord (Ps 5:11) and in position to experience His goodness (Ps 31:19).

QUESTION 15

In Psalm 2:10-12 God warned the kings and rulers that they need to submit to the Lord and worship Him. If they fail to heed His warning, they are in danger of His wrath. From this psalm we see that God is not a passive God who sits idly by while the world does what it pleases, even sinning and rebelling against Him. There is a time and place for His anger, when His wrath will be unleashed. Verse 12 concludes by saying, "How blessed are all who take shelter in Him." Think for a moment how this applies to you. Open your Life Notebook and write down how you feel you are blessed as a result of taking shelter in the Lord.

Topic 6: The Promises of Psalm 2 and Jesus' Resurrection (New Testament Fulfillment)

The fact that Psalm 2 finds fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ is not surprising, in light of the numerous quotations and allusions to this psalm in the New Testament. The following chart summarizes these references (taken from the indexes in the UBS of *The Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. ed).

NT Quotations of Psalm 2	NT Allusions to Psalm 2
Psalm 2:1-2 — Acts 4:25-26	Psalm 2:1 — Revelation 11:18
	Psalm 2:2 — Revelation 19:19
Psalm 2:7 — Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5	Psalm 2:7 — Matthew 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35; John 1:49
	Psalm 2:8 — Hebrews 1:2
	Psalm 2:8-9 — Revelation 2:26-27
	Psalm 2:9 — Revelation 12:5; 19:15
	Psalm 2:11 — Philippians 2:12

Not long after the day of Pentecost, the early Christians quickly came under persecution and harassment by the Jewish religious leaders at Jerusalem (the priests, elders, and scribes). As Peter and the other apostles attempted to proclaim the gospel and announce the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (see Acts 4:1-4), they were put in jail and later questioned before the official Sanhedrin. According to Acts 4:18, the religious leaders "called them in and ordered them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus." Peter and John firmly stood their ground and refused to obey these instructions, declaring that they must obey God rather than man. After their release they returned to their companions, who then joined them in a time of prayer for boldness in their witness. In their prayer they quoted Psalm 2:1-2 (from the Septuagint), seeing this fulfilled in their own day by those who participated in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus:

[You] said by the Holy Spirit through your servant David our forefather, “Why do the nations rage, and the peoples plot foolish things? The kings of the earth stood together, and the rulers assembled together, against the Lord and against **his Christ**.” For indeed both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, assembled together in this city against your holy servant Jesus, **whom you anointed**, to do as much as your power and your plan had decided beforehand would happen (Acts 4:25-28, emphasis added).

In using the words “whom you anointed” (Greek *chriō*) in reference to Jesus, the apostles clearly identified Jesus as God’s anointed one in Psalm 2. (The word “Christ” [*christos*] means anointed one in Greek). By quoting Psalm 2:1-2 in this way, they did not mean to limit the fulfillment to this one historic instance. The events of AD 33 certainly fulfilled Psalm 2, but did not exhaust its fulfillment. The numerous allusions in Revelation suggest that these verses continue to have fulfillment—building toward a climactic fulfillment—in the events of the Tribulation period that lead up to the second coming of Christ.

QUESTION 16

What is the significance of the apostles referring to Jesus as the One whom you anointed in Acts 4?

- A. By using this expression, they were identifying Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of Psalm 2.
- B. They were acknowledging that the Father anointed Jesus for burial, thus allowing Him to be put to death.
- C. They were merely saying that Jesus is a prophet (God anointed Him to the office of prophet).
- D. They were saying that although the high priest in the Sanhedrin had condemned Jesus, the Father had anointed Jesus to be the true high priest.

Verse 7 is the most quoted verse from Psalm 2, as well as being the one most alluded to in the New Testament. In his opening defense of the Son’s superiority to angels, the author of Hebrews began (Heb 1:5) by quoting Psalm 2:7 in reference to Jesus and then immediately he equated the son of this verse with the son mentioned in 2 Samuel 7:14 (the Davidic covenant passage). This confirms that Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of both.

For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my son! Today I have fathered you”? And in another place he says, “I will be his father and he will be my son.” (Heb 1:5)

His point is that no angel ever received such an honor as having the name Son. Since Jesus did, He is obviously superior to angels. In Hebrews 5:5 the author reaffirms that the Son of Psalm 2:7 is the Lord Jesus Christ.

QUESTION 17

Which of the following statements are true about the author of the book of Hebrews? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The author believed that Jesus is equal in authority with the highest angels.
- B. The author believed that the reference to son in Psalm 2:7 found its true fulfillment in Jesus.
- C. The author believed that the word son in 2 Samuel 7:14 referred only to Solomon.
- D. The author believed that both Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14 referred ultimately to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The fact that Jesus fulfills Psalm 2:7 as God’s Son is the clear testimony of the New Testament. What is not so apparent, however, is the implication of the words, “This very day I have become your

father!” (In some translations this reads “Today I have begotten You.”) What day is in view? What implications does this have for God’s Son?

To answer these questions, we need to observe carefully the apostle Paul’s sermon recorded in Acts 13:16-41. This sermon was delivered in a Jewish synagogue at Pisidian Antioch (in the larger Roman province of Galatia) on Paul’s first missionary journey. Paul began by reviewing Israel’s history, but he quickly turned to consider King David. In verse 23 Paul noted, “From the descendants of this man God brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, just as he promised” (literally, “according to promise”). What promise did Paul have in mind? The promise is the Davidic covenant of 2 Samuel 7 that God would raise up from David’s line a son who would have an eternal throne/kingdom.

QUESTION 18

When Paul referred to the promise given to David in Acts 13:23, what did this promise refer to?

- A. This referred to the promise that the sword would never depart from the house of David.
- B. This referred to the promise that his flesh would not undergo decay.
- C. This referred to the promise that his descendant would build a house for God.
- D. This referred to the promise that one of David’s descendants would reign as king on his throne.

The fact that Paul would suggest that the promise to David had its fulfillment in Jesus is not surprising. What is perhaps more enlightening is the way Paul related the promise to Jesus’ resurrection. After rehearsing the details of Jesus’ crucifixion rather cursorily in Acts 13:27-29, Paul devoted a lengthy discussion to Jesus’ resurrection (Acts 13:30-37). Verses 32-33 are key to our investigation:

And we proclaim to you the good news about the promise to our ancestors, that this promise God has fulfilled to us, their children, by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second psalm, “You are my Son; today I have fathered you.”

By the words “the promise to our ancestors” Paul clearly meant the promise he had introduced verses earlier in Acts 13:23, namely, the promise to David (the Davidic covenant). But Paul’s point was not merely to suggest that Jesus is David’s greater Son. Paul rather remarkably declared that God had fulfilled this promise by raising Jesus, and then he quoted Psalm 2:7 in support of his point. In other words the resurrection of Jesus fulfills Psalm 2:7! The word “today” looks at the resurrection (and ascension) of Jesus to the Father’s right hand. It is in this event that Jesus is begotten of the Father, not in His birth. Yet the promise entails His elevation to kingship. (Recall our discussion above in Topic 4.)

Against the background of the ancient Near Eastern adoption formula whereby a person is elevated to a position of son to serve as king, Jesus’ resurrection and ascension to the Father’s right hand sets His kingly reign in motion. This is very much in keeping with what Peter argued in the conclusion of his sermon on the day of Pentecost. After quoting Psalm 110:1 to show that Jesus had ascended to the right hand of God the Father, Peter immediately concluded, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know beyond a doubt that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). In His resurrected and ascended state of exaltation, He sits as Lord, as God’s anointed King. This helps us understand why Jesus prefaced the words of the Great Commission with the bold declaration, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Mt 28:18).

QUESTION 19

When Paul quoted Psalm 2 in his sermon in Acts 13, what conclusion did he draw from this?

- A. Paul believed that the promise made to David was fulfilled in the virgin birth of Jesus, when He was begotten and became God's son.
- B. Paul believed that at the baptism of Jesus, He was formally begotten by God the Father and became God's beloved son with whom He was well pleased.
- C. Paul believed that the Davidic covenant promise is fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus, and that the reference to "today" (when Jesus was begotten) refers to Jesus' resurrection/ascension.
- D. Paul believed that the Davidic covenant promise has no relationship to the resurrection, but rather awaits the second coming of Christ.

If the word "today" in Psalm 2:7 refers to the time of His resurrection/ascension, and if this event fulfills the promise to David regarding the eternal throne/kingdom for His greater Son, what does this imply about the kingdom of Christ? In my opinion the fulfillment is partial. That is, Jesus has ascended to the right hand of the Father as King and has all authority (note Acts 2:32-36). But that does not mean that Jesus is exercising the full extent of His kingship. Hebrews 10:12-13 states that He must wait for all His enemies to be subdued. This is the significance of the divine warfare depicted in the book of Revelation.

The wrath of the Father and the Son will be unleashed in the Tribulation period, bringing complete defeat of all the earthly kings positioned against Him (note particularly Rev 19:11-21) and the binding of Satan himself (Rev 20:1-3). With this accomplished, His kingdom will be formally established. As the chronological sequence advances in the Tribulation period and the seventh trumpet judgment is sounded, you can sense that Christ's victory will be drawing very near, and the establishment of His kingdom will be about to emerge. Notice the words of Revelation 11:15-18:

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever." Then the twenty-four elders who are seated on their thrones before God threw themselves down with their faces to the ground and worshiped God with these words: "We give you thanks, Lord God, the All-Powerful, the one who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and begun to reign. The nations were enraged, but your wrath has come, and the time has come for the dead to be judged, and the time has come to give to your servants, the prophets, their reward, as well as to the saints and to those who revere your name, both small and great, and the time has come to destroy those who destroy the earth."

In summary, the David covenant promise has begun to be fulfilled with Jesus in His resurrection and ascension to the Father's right hand. Already He has all authority, but He is primarily using this authority to build His church as the gospel goes forth. Only later (in the Tribulation) will He use His authority to subdue the nations and rulers who oppose Him in preparation for the formal inauguration of His kingdom that will follow His second coming. This will necessitate the exercise of His wrath (fulfilling Ps 2:9).

QUESTION 20

Most Christians are familiar with the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19, "Go and make disciples of all nations." Sometimes, however, we forget that this is immediately preceded by Christ's promise in verse 18, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." Open your Life Notebook. How does this promise affect your perspective regarding evangelism and discipleship in your country?

The kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to Psalm 2:8, the Father has promised the Son an inheritance composed of the nations. With the establishment of His kingdom here on earth, all nations will be brought under His rule and authority. As this happens, God's original intention for man will also be fulfilled. According to Genesis 1:26, man (made in the image of God) was to rule over all God's creation. At the second coming, this will finally be realized in Jesus' kingdom when all nations will be brought under His rule and authority. For this reason, the author of the book of Hebrews says that Jesus was appointed heir of all things (Heb 1:2). Yet Jesus is willing to allow others to share in the inheritance promised Him in Psalm 2:8. He is willing to share it with the faithful ones among His disciples, those who are called the overcomers in Revelation 2–3. Notice how Psalm 2:8-9 is extended to Jesus' faithful disciples in Revelation 2:25-27:

Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father. (NASB)

From this we understand that the privilege of reigning with Christ is not given to every Christian but to those who hold fast, overcome, and are obedient (see 2 Tim 2:12). What a powerful motivation this is for us to walk with the Lord and remain faithful, so that Psalm 2:8 might even be fulfilled in us!

QUESTION 21

Do you believe Christ's words, "to him I will give authority over the nations"? What do you think it means to experience this privilege? What are the preconditions that Jesus stipulates for those who are so honored? In light of this, are there any changes you need to make in your life to receive this honor? Write your answers to these questions in your Life Notebook.

Lesson 12 Self Check

QUESTION 1

The editor placed Psalm 2 near the beginning because it set the stage for the theme found in Books 1-3 of the Psalter regarding the struggle to understand God's faithfulness to the Davidic covenant. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

A study of the Hebrew verb *rāgaš* in Psalm 2:1 helps clarify that the main point of verse 1 is

- A. The nations of the world should not go to war with one another.
- B. There was too much commotion going on in the countries around Israel.
- C. The nations were guilty of participating in a grand conspiracy against the Lord.
- D. The nations of the world needed to unite together for the sake of world peace.

QUESTION 3

Which of the following promises was **not** given in the Davidic covenant of 2 Samuel 7:11b-16?

- A. With every Davidic king, God would be a father to him, and the king would be God's son.
- B. God promised David that He would build him a house (i.e., a long dynasty of kings).
- C. The Davidic dynasty of kings ended when the nation was exiled to Babylon.
- D. One of David's descendants would build a house (i.e., a temple) for God's name.

QUESTION 4

Who is the king mentioned in Psalm 2:7, and what is the decree he refers to?

- A. The king could be any Davidic descendant, and the decree is the Abrahamic covenant.
- B. The king is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the decree is the Davidic covenant.
- C. The king is Solomon, and the decree is the Davidic covenant.
- D. The king is David, and the decree is the new covenant.

QUESTION 5

When Psalm 2:7 is translated, "Today I have begotten You" (so NASB), how should we interpret this verse in regard to Jesus Christ?

- A. This verse has nothing to do with physical birth, but rather pertains to Jesus' elevation to kingship.
- B. The word "today" refers to the first day of creation in Genesis 1, and Jesus was the first thing God created.
- C. Jesus is a special and unique creation of God, whose existence began at Bethlehem.
- D. This verse looks at the day of Jesus' baptism when He received the Holy Spirit and was born again.

QUESTION 6

How can we know that the decree referred to in Psalm 2:7 (“You are My son”) pertains to Jesus Christ and **not** to David or Solomon?

- A. The promise of being God’s son in His promise known as the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7) could be true of only Jesus Christ.
- B. Only a person born to a virgin could ever be referred to as God’s son.
- C. Because they were sinners, David and Solomon could never be considered a son to God.
- D. The following verse (Ps 2:8) promises that the son mentioned in verse 7 will receive the nations as His inheritance, a promise that could be true only of Jesus.

QUESTION 7

One of the reasons for rejecting the translation “Son” in Psalm 2:12 is that this would imply that the author used two different words for son in the psalm (the Hebrew word *ben* in verse 7 but the Aramaic word *bar* in verse 12). *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

The apostles understood Psalm 2:1-2 as having a fulfillment in their day with those who participated in the crucifixion of Jesus in light of the fact they quoted it in Acts 4. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

Because of the way the apostle Paul quoted Psalm 2:6 in Acts 13:33, we can understand that the day that Jesus is begotten is the day of His resurrection and ascension to the Father’s right hand. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

In light of the apostle Paul’s reference in Acts 13 to God fulfilling the promise to David, we can conclude that the David covenant promise has begun to be fulfilled with Jesus in His resurrection and ascension to the Father’s right hand, but that the complete exercise of his kingly rule awaits the second coming. *True or False?*

Unit 4 Project: Lessons 10-12

A. Introduction

In Unit 4, we continued our study of psalm categories, but the focus shifted to psalms of declarative praise and descriptive praise. The unit also included an introduction to messianic psalms. Remember the difference between declarative and descriptive praise. Declarative praise psalms involve praise to God for His specific answer to prayer, usually in delivering the psalmist from a trial he was facing. Descriptive praise does not have a unique act of deliverance in mind as an answer to the psalmist's prayer, but has a more general situation in view.

B. Instructions

As a final project for Unit 4, you are to do your own study of Psalm 116. You should review Lesson 10 first, taking special note of the motifs commonly found in declarative praise psalms. Record your work in your Life Notebook.

1. After carefully reading over the psalm, try to identify the motifs that are found in this psalm.
2. For each motif, write a 2-3 sentence summary describing how the psalmist develops that particular motif.
3. Meditate on verses 17-19. What lesson for your life can you draw from these verses, and how could you practice this truth?

Lesson 12 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1

D. We are told in Acts 4:25 that Psalm 2 was authored by David.

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3

<i>Strophe</i>	<i>Correct Label</i>
One (vv 1-3)	The rebellion of the nations
Two (vv 4-6)	The divine reaction
Three (vv 7-9)	Reaffirmation of Yahweh's decree to David
Four (10-12)	Yahweh's exhortation to the nations

QUESTION 4

B. The nations are guilty of participating in a grand conspiracy against the Lord. [The verb *rāgaš* in the first colon of verse 1 means to plot or conspire against.]

QUESTION 5: Your answer

QUESTION 6

- A. God promised David that He would build him a house (i.e., a long dynasty of kings).
- B. One of David's descendants would build a house (i.e., a temple) for God's name.
- C. With every Davidic king, God would be a father to him, and the king would be God's son.
- E. The Davidic dynasty of kings and their kingdom would be everlasting (in contrast to the line of Saul which was short lived).

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8

B. The statement applied to each successive Davidic king, that God would discipline them for their disobedience to the Mosaic Law (primarily through foreign invasion).

QUESTION 9

D. The king is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the decree is the Davidic covenant.

QUESTION 10

C. One's honorary adoption as son, whereby he is given the position of king by a higher ruler

QUESTION 11

A. His domain will be universal over all the nations of the earth.

QUESTION 12

B. This refers to Christ's ultimate triumph over those nations and rulers who will oppose Him at the end of the Tribulation.

QUESTION 13

- A. To be translated "Son," this would have to be an Aramaic word, but this seems doubtful since the whole psalm was written in Hebrew.
- B. It would be inconsistent if the word "son" in verse 7 was the Hebrew word *ben*, while the word "son" in verse 12 was the Aramaic word *bar*.
- D. The Greek Septuagint translators did not translate this as "Son," but as "accept correction."

QUESTION 14

- A. The word "kiss" can be used literally for a romantic gesture as an expression of affection.
- B. The word "kiss" can be used metaphorically as an expression of submission or doing homage.
- D. The exhortation "kiss with purity" can be understood to mean give sincere homage.

QUESTION 15: Your answer

QUESTION 16

A. By using this expression, they were identifying Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of Psalm 2.

QUESTION 17

- B. The author believed that the reference to son in Psalm 2:7 found its true fulfillment in Jesus.
- D. The author believed that both Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14 referred ultimately to the Lord Jesus Christ.

QUESTION 18

- D. This referred to the promise that one of David's descendants would reign as king on his throne.

QUESTION 19

- C. Paul believed that the Davidic covenant promise is fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus, and that the reference to "today" (when Jesus was begotten) refers to Jesus' resurrection/ascension.

QUESTION 20: *Your answer***QUESTION 21:** *Your answer*

Lesson 12 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2

C. The nations were guilty of participating in a grand conspiracy against the Lord.

QUESTION 3

C. The Davidic dynasty of kings ended when the nation was exiled to Babylon.

QUESTION 4

B. The king is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the decree is the Davidic covenant.

QUESTION 5

A. This verse has nothing to do with physical birth, but rather pertains to Jesus' elevation to kingship.

QUESTION 6

D. The following verse (Ps 2:8) promises that the son mentioned in verse 7 will receive the nations as His inheritance, a promise that could be true only of Jesus.

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8: True

QUESTION 9: True

QUESTION 10: True

Unit 5: Envisioning Messiah Jesus in the Psalms

The book of Psalms is quoted in the New Testament more than any other Old Testament book. Many—though not all—of these quotations are in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. For instance when Jesus began teaching with parables in Matthew 13, this was said to fulfill one of the psalms (taken from Ps 78:2).

Jesus spoke all these things in parables to the crowds; he did not speak to them without a parable. This fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet: “I will open my mouth in parables, I will announce what has been hidden from the foundation of the world.” (Mt 13:34-35)

Many of the most important details of Jesus’ life and ministry were inscribed in the Psalter long before His time on earth. As we saw in Lesson 12, the resurrection of Jesus to His kingly position was a fulfillment of Psalm 2:7. Other psalms are quoted in reference to His crucifixion, His present priestly ministry, His glorious reign in the millennial kingdom, and even His betrayal by Judas.

Jesus, as God, participated in the original creation along with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Colossians 1:16-17 states, “All things in heaven and on earth were created by him—all things, whether visible or invisible, whether thrones or dominions, whether principalities or powers—all things were created through him and for him. He himself is before all things and all things are held together in him.” All the events of His earthly life were known beforehand in the mind of God. Peter reminded the Jewish audience on the day of Pentecost, “This man, who was handed over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you executed by nailing him to a cross at the hands of Gentiles” (Acts 2:23). Because Jesus is the eternal Creator God and because His life was predetermined, the Holy Spirit could move those who wrote the Psalms to write in such a way that they actually spoke of the Lord Jesus (whether or not they were conscious of doing so).

How these psalms find their fulfillment in the Lord Jesus requires careful consideration. In some cases they are direct prophecy. That is, these verses were spoken directly of Jesus and are prophetic of Him alone. Such cases, however, are actually rare. Psalm 110:1 is an example. In most instances, there is something written in the text that has an initial fulfillment in a historical figure like David or Solomon, but which has a more ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

In our survey of messianic fulfillment in the Psalms, we obviously must limit the scope of our study. The remaining three lessons of our course (all of Unit 5) focus on this aspect of the Psalms. The psalms that have been selected for our study represent the past, present, and future of our Lord’s life and ministry. We will study Psalm 22 and its fulfillment in the crucifixion of Christ (the past), Psalms 16 and 110 with their fulfillment in Christ’s resurrection and high-priestly ministry (the present), and Psalm 72 and its fulfillment in the millennial kingdom of Christ (the future).

Unit Outline

Lesson 13: The Sufferings of the Messiah in the Psalms (Ps 22)

Lesson 14: The Exaltation of the Messiah in the Psalms (Ps 16; 110)

Lesson 15: The Glorious Future Reign of the Messiah in the Psalms (Ps 72)

Lesson 13: The Sufferings of Messiah in the Psalms (Ps 22)

Lesson Introduction

The apostle Paul declared, “For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. . . . For since in the wisdom of God the world by its wisdom did not know God, God was pleased to save those who believe by the foolishness of preaching” (1 Cor 1:18, 21). Perhaps none of us will ever fully understand all that was involved in Jesus going to the cross. We do understand, of course, that this is what it took for God to forgive us, as our sin was laid on the innocent Lamb of God while He died in our place. The crucifixion is certainly described for us in the Gospel accounts, enabling us to grasp the historical situation and how the events unfolded. Yet the Old Testament also brims with rich details of our Lord’s death. Of special interest is the prophetic glimpse we get about the cross from such Old Testament passages as Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22. This latter passage, Psalm 22, is the focus of this lesson. In this psalm we are taken into a special sanctuary, as it were, to behold the Lord Jesus Christ and the agonies He suffered on our behalf. Amazingly this was written some thousand years before Christ’s earthly ministry. Yet there are details in this psalm that allow us to more fully comprehend the experience of our Lord Jesus Christ, apart from which we might not fathom the agony He went through.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: Introduction to Psalm 22

Topic 2: The Psalmist’s Lament in Contrast to God’s Loving Faithfulness (vv 1-10)

First Cycle: God’s Estrangement in Contrast to His Past Faithfulness (vv 1-5)

Second Cycle: The Enemy Mockery in Contrast to God’s Lifelong Love (vv 6-10)

Topic 3: The Psalmist’s Lament of the Cruelty of His Enemies (vv 11-18)

A Brief Petition for God’s Help (v 11)

Lament of the Ferociousness of His Enemies (vv 12-13)

Lament of the Psychosomatic Effects on Himself (vv 14-15)

Lament of the Destructive Intention of Their Attack (vv 16-18)

Topic 4: The Psalmist’s Prayer for God’s Deliverance (vv 19-21)

Topic 5: The Psalmist’s Praise and Worship of God (vv 22-31)

His Testimony of Praise Before the Assembly of Worshippers (vv 22-26)

His Anticipation of the Resulting Universal Praise (vv 27-31)

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Have a detailed understanding of Psalm 22 as a messianic psalm that finds its fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ

- Understand how Psalm 22 (originally written of David's experiences) can find ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ through what is called typico-prophetic fulfillment
- Have a greater appreciation of the sufferings that the Lord Jesus Christ had to go through on the cross to provide for our redemption

Preparing for the Lesson

Kate Kutlow had been looking forward to Friday all week. After all, this Friday was a holiday which meant no classes and a free day. She had agreed to meet Tom Blanchard at 10:00 am that morning for coffee and a late breakfast. Kate arrived early at the agreed on restaurant and found a nice table near the window with a beautiful view of the mountains in the distance. As Kate waited for Tom to arrive, she couldn't help overhearing the two guys sitting next to her talking about Old Testament prophecy. Kate wondered if they were also students at the local college and whether they were Christians.

Her curiosity getting the best of her, Kate could not resist the temptation to interrupt them to find out more exactly what they were talking about. One of the guys, a tall fellow named Jeff, immediately welcomed Kate to join them. As it turned out, Jeff was a Christian and was trying to explain to his non-Christian friend Robert that the Bible had many prophecies about Jesus Christ that were written in the Old Testament long before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. As an example, Jeff was trying to explain to Robert about the suffering of Christ on the cross foretold in Psalm 22. "Look, Robert, Psalm 22:18 even tells exactly what the Roman soldiers did with Jesus' clothing while he was dying on the cross, 'They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.' Robert, do you know when this was written? King David wrote this about one thousand years before Bethlehem."

Robert sat there trying to fathom what Jeff had just shared. How could anyone living so long before Jesus was born write such detailed things about Him? That implied that Jesus had to be more than just a mere man, and the Bible had to be more than just an ancient tale. Robert asked to have some more time to think about what Jeff had shared, and he quietly excused himself and left the restaurant. Before leaving, however, he agreed to meet with Jeff again to talk more.

About that time Tom walked in, and Kate introduced him to Jeff. After sharing what had just happened moments earlier with Robert, Tom asked a rather perceptive question. "Some verses clearly sound like they are describing the experience of Jesus, but on the other hand David seems to have been writing about his own experience. How can both be true?" Jeff and Kate looked at each other rather puzzled. No one seemed to have a good answer to the question, but they all three agreed to meet again in a week to discuss it again over a cup of coffee.

Topic 1: Introduction to Psalm 22

Psalm 22 begins with words uttered by Jesus as He hung on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" The mood of the psalm is one of deep despair as the psalmist bemoaned his sense of estrangement from God. Nevertheless this is one of the most theologically rich psalms in the whole Psalter. Eventually the agonizing pain gave way to hope that something eternally good would come out of the psalmist's trial that would result in universal blessing.

Psalm 22 belongs to the category of individual lament (recall Lesson 7). Psalms of this type will typically have some or all of the following motifs: (1) a direct address to God; (2) a lament proper; (3) confession of trust or confidence; (4) petition proper; (5) assurance of being heard; and (6) a vow of praise or declarative praise of God. All of these can be found in Psalm 22.

QUESTION 1

Which of the following motifs might be found in a psalm of individual lament? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. A section expressing lament
- B. An opening invitation to praise God
- C. A confession of trust or confidence
- D. A petition for God's help or deliverance
- E. A vow to give praise to God for hearing the psalmist's prayer

Structurally the psalm has four major sections:

The Overall Structure of Psalm 22	
I.	Introductory Lament and Motives for Hearing (vv 1-10) <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. First Cycle (vv 1-5)B. Second Cycle (vv 6-10)
II.	The Lament Over His Enemies (vv 11-18)
III.	The Petition for God's Deliverance (vv 19-21)
IV.	Praise and Worship of God (vv 22-31)

The first major section (vv 1-10) has an introductory lament, and this is developed in two cycles. Although the dominant motif in this first section is lament, we also find a direct address to God as well as elements of trust in God interspersed within these verses. The second major section (vv 11-18) is the primary lament section, with the focus being on the enemies of the psalmist and the distress they caused him. The third major section (vv 19-21) gives the petition for God's deliverance. The fourth section is more positive in tone, as the psalmist anticipated God's deliverance. This in turn caused him to think of the praise he would be able to render for God's gracious intervention. This fourth section contains both a vow of praise and assurance of being heard.

The superscription to Psalm 22 indicates that this is a psalm of David. Although scholars debate whether this means David authored the psalm himself, there is good reason to believe he did. He was, after all, called the "sweet psalmist of Israel" (2 Sam 23:1, NASB). Furthermore, the same construction "psalm of David" (in the Hebrew text) is found in the superscription of Psalm 18. However, Psalm 18 is also recorded in 2 Samuel 22, and the latter passage begins with the statement, "David sang to the LORD the words of this song when the LORD rescued him from the power of all his enemies, including Saul." Thus, there is no reason to doubt the Davidic authorship of Psalm 22.

Assuming, then, that Psalm 22 was authored by king David (who reigned 1011-971 BC), we have to ask the question, "Was David writing of his own experience, or was he prophesying of Christ?" The answer is both (although we need to qualify our answer). This does not necessarily mean that David was conscious that he was writing of Christ. It may simply be that the Holy Spirit led David to write what he did without his fully realizing that his words went further than his own experience. Yet if David was writing of his own experience, are we to understand that all the things written in the psalm actually happened to him? In a literal sense, no they did not. Based on what we know of David from the rest of Scripture, he never experienced many of the details recorded in Psalm 22. It seems, rather, that as David wrote of himself and his experiences, he at times used figures of speech (including hyperbole) to describe what he was going through and how he felt. But what he wrote of himself in figurative terms often turned out to be literally true in Jesus' experience. Hence what David wrote of himself served to prophesy of Christ, but with the understanding that much of what he wrote of himself using figurative language turned out to be literally true in regard to Christ. Some scholars describe this kind of fulfillment as "typico-prophetic."

QUESTION 2

Of the following, which best explains how Psalm 22 is fulfilled?

- A. Psalm 22 has no relationship to the Lord Jesus; it is strictly about David's experiences.
- B. Psalm 22 does not refer to David or his experiences, but is purely prophetic of Jesus Christ.
- C. Because God gave David a vision of what would happen to the Lord Jesus in the future, he could write Psalm 22 as a description of the experiences of Christ.
- D. In Psalm 22 David wrote of his own experiences (often using figures of speech), but many of the things that are written of David in figurative language became literally true in regard to the Lord Jesus. Thus the psalm was fulfilled in both men, but in different ways.

Topic 2: The Psalmist's Lament in Contrast to God's Loving Faithfulness (vv 1-10)

The opening section is what we might call an "introductory lament." This is not the lament section proper, because it is mixed with elements of trust. The statements reflecting trust serve (in the mind of the psalmist) as motives for hearing. That is, he hoped to motivate God to act on his behalf by reminding God of the faithfulness He is known for. Furthermore we should observe that it begins with a direct address to God with the words, "My God, my God." The whole section is developed in two cycles, with each cycle having both a brief lament followed by a reminder to God of His faithfulness and love.

The First Cycle: God's Estrangement in Contrast to His Past Faithfulness (vv 1-5)

Verses 1-2. In verses 1-2 we have a brief lament of God's seeming estrangement. Apparently David was going through a deep trial in his life, and in the distress of the moment he felt that God was not hearing his plea for rescue.

1 My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

I groan in prayer, but help seems far away.

2 My God, I cry out during the day, but you do not answer,

and during the night my prayers do not let up.

These words of desperation from the lips of David, however, foreshadowed a similar yet far more intense spiritual battle within the soul of the Lord Jesus as He faced the agony of the cross. Verse 1 is quoted in Matthew 27:46 as the fourth saying of Jesus from the cross. Matthew, in fact, called attention to when Jesus made this cry. It was about the ninth hour (i.e., 3:00 p.m.). From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness fell on all the land. The literal darkness was a reflection of the spiritual darkness that Jesus had to endure, for it was during these three hours that Jesus bore the sin of all mankind in His own person. Isaiah, writing some seven hundred years before the time of Jesus, accurately foretold what would happen to Jesus, the Suffering Servant:

But he lifted up our illnesses, he carried our pain;

even though we thought he was being punished,

attacked by God, and afflicted for something he had done.

He was wounded because of our rebellious deeds,
crushed because of our sins;
he endured punishment that made us well;
because of his wounds we have been healed.
All of us had wandered off like sheep;
each of us had strayed off on his own path,
but the LORD caused the sin of all of us to attack him. (Isa 53:4-6)

The New Testament expresses it this way, “God made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we would become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21). Why did the Father not come to the rescue of Jesus? Perhaps if the Father were simply moved by pity alone in knowing that the Son was suffering, He might have done so. Yet the Father and the Son had agreed in eternity past that the Son would go to the cross for mankind. Therefore there could be no rescue; the Father had to refrain from delivering the Son as He was in the act of atoning for sin.

QUESTION 3

Which of the following best explains why Jesus quoted Psalm 22:1 while on the cross?

- A. Jesus was angry at the Father, because He felt that God was failing to answer His prayers.
- B. God may have abandoned David, a sinner, but He would never abandon the Son of God.
- C. Jesus was in the process of taking our sin on Himself, and during this time God the Father had to turn away from the Son and allow Him to bear our punishment, so that forgiveness would be possible.
- D. By quoting Psalm 22:1 and reminding God that He had once intervened on behalf of David, Jesus hoped to motivate the Father to intervene and stop His suffering on the cross.

Although the NET Bible translates the second colon “I groan in prayer,” the words “in prayer” are not in the original Hebrew text. The word is actually a noun in this verse (groaning). Yet both the Hebrew noun (*šē’āgā*) and its corresponding verb form (*šā’ag*) typically refer to a loud cry, often used for the roaring of a lion (e.g., Amos 3:4). When used of a human, it speaks of a very distressful cry made in agonizing pain (see Ps 32:3; 38:8). Matthew 27:46 notes that when Jesus uttered the words from Psalm 22:1, He “cried out with a loud voice.” This reflected the agony He was experiencing in having to take on Himself our sin and bear the pain of broken fellowship with the Father. The words “during the day ... and during the night” in Psalm 22:2 form a merism that indicates the continual nature of crying out without experiencing God’s intervention. This was not a light momentary pain of only five or ten minutes’ duration, but a long agonizing pain. The author of Hebrews wrote, “By God’s grace he would experience death on behalf of everyone” (Heb 2:9). This was a death that was both spiritual and physical.

QUESTION 4

As you think about Jesus’ loud cries on the cross and the long agonizing pain that He had to bear to purchase your salvation, how does that make you feel? How do you respond to that? What kind of impact does this make on your relationship with God? Open your Life Notebook and write down the thoughts that come to your mind.

Verses 3-5. The psalmist suddenly turned from his cry for deliverance to remind God of His past faithfulness to deliver His people. Despite what he was feeling emotionally, he knew that God is really One who can be trusted, One who has always been faithful to answer prayer.

3 You are holy; you sit as king receiving the praises of Israel.

4 In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted in you and you rescued them.

5 To you they cried out, and they were saved;

in you they trusted and they were not disappointed.

God is certainly not to be faulted for any negligence or failure on His part to deliver the psalmist. After all, He is holy, as even the psalmist acknowledged. He is separate from humanity, and does not sin or betray trust. He acts in such a way that His people praise Him. In fact He sits, as it were, on their praises (this is His customary position). The psalmist may be thinking of the Shekinah glory of God which dwelt above the mercy seat of the ark, for it was here that the people directed their prayers and praise.

In verses 4-5 the psalmist paused to reflect on the past history of the nation. God had called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees and had made a great nation out of him (more than one thousand years before David's time). Throughout their long history, the Hebrews on many occasions needed God to rescue them. This was a good thing in the sense that these moments served to develop their faith in God. (Observe how repetition is used to underscore the importance of a concept—the word “trust” [a synonym for faith] appears three times in vv 4-5.) Repeatedly the people experienced God's deliverance in response to faith. As a result, they were not disappointed. By saying this, the psalmist was expressing his yearning to be delivered.

QUESTION 5

We all face times when we need God to rescue us from a trial or difficult situation. In those kinds of moments, God desires that we cry out to Him (in prayer) and place our faith in Him to deliver us. Throughout history, He has repeatedly shown Himself to be faithful. *True or False?*

The final colon of verse 5 states, “in you they trusted and they were not disappointed.” The word translated “disappointed,” is from the Hebrew verb *bōš*, which means shame. The *Theological Wordbook of the OT* provides the following lexical insights:

The primary meaning of this root is “to fall into disgrace, normally through failure, either of self or of an object of trust.” ... The word is often paralleled with *kālam* “to be humiliated,” and less frequently with *hātāt* “to be shattered, dismayed.” As these parallels suggest, the force of *bōš* is somewhat in contrast to the primary meaning of the English “to be ashamed” in that the English stresses the inner attitude, the state of mind, while the Hebrew means “to come to shame” and stresses the sense of public disgrace, a physical state. (97)

QUESTION 6

The Hebrew word *bōš* (translated “disappointed” by the NET Bible) can best be defined as

- A. A sense of regret in not getting what one hoped for.
- B. A sense of shame, even public disgrace, as a result of a humiliating experience.
- C. A sense of disillusionment in what one trusted in for deliverance.
- D. A sense of failure and discouragement that one had not attained to a goal he sought to achieve.

The psalmist was not thinking merely of personal disappointment he would experience, if God were not to come to his rescue. There is also the concern for the shame and sense of public disgrace that he must bear. In the case of Jesus we see that although God the Father allowed the Son to be momentarily disgraced before the eyes of the world, He did honor the Son's faith by raising Him from the dead to the position of highest honor at the right hand of God (see Acts 2:32-36). This is

described in Philippians 2:9-11: “As a result God exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.”

The Second Cycle: The Enemy Mockery in Contrast to God’s Lifelong Love (vv 6-10)

Verses 6-10 comprise a second cycle of lament followed by an expression of trust.

Verses 6-8. These verses record the psalmist’s brief lament at being ridiculed by the enemies who mocked him.

6 But I am a worm, not a man; people insult me and despise me.

7 All who see me taunt me; they mock me and shake their heads.

8 They say, “Commit yourself to the LORD! Let the LORD rescue him!

Let the LORD deliver him, for he delights in him.”

In saying “I am a worm,” the psalmist was obviously using a figure of speech (a metaphor). In light of the second colon (being insulted and despised), this probably reflects not his own view of himself but how he saw himself viewed by others. He felt that in the eyes of others he was seen as nothing more than a worm. This would suggest how low he had been brought; he was given no regard. Furthermore he was the object of their insults, taunting, and mockery. Such treatment was literally experienced by Jesus at the time of His crucifixion. Matthew points out how this was fulfilled in Jesus (see Mt 27:39-44):

Those who passed by defamed him, shaking their heads and saying, “You who can destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are God’s Son, come down from the cross!” In the same way even the chief priests—together with the experts in the law and elders—were mocking him: “He saved others, but he cannot save himself! He is the king of Israel! If he comes down now from the cross, we will believe in him! He trusts in God—let God, if he wants to, deliver him now because he said, ‘I am God’s Son’!” The robbers who were crucified with him also spoke abusively to him.

Notice that Matthew 27:43 is drawn directly from Psalm 22:8. In their mockery they insinuated that God had no interest in delivering Him. In their minds, He was a deluded imposter in claiming to be the Son of God.

QUESTION 7

One of Satan’s favorite tactics to use against Christians is to heap mockery and insults at them. As Christians, we are frequently the targets of mockery, insults, and ridicule. This often happens through the news media, movies, and television. Open your Life Notebook. Describe one such experience that you have personally had in which you were mocked or insulted as a Christian. As you reflect on Jesus’ own experience at being mocked while on the cross, what can you learn from this that helps you cope with your own experiences?

Verses 9-10. Suddenly the psalmist turned from his lament to reflect on God’s love. His purpose seems to be to remind God of the lifelong care and security He had given the psalmist.

9 Yes, you are the one who brought me out from the womb
and made me feel secure on my mother’s breasts.

10 I have been dependent on you since birth;

from the time I came out of my mother's womb you have been my God.

David was able to look back in time and recognize God's involvement at the very outset of his earthly pilgrimage when God drew him forth from his mother's womb. As a helpless baby, he was tenderly cared for and nursed at his mother's breasts. In these initial moments of his life when he was unable to defend his own life or even care for his needs, God provided him with the security of his mother so he could learn dependency. Yet his dependency on his mother was really a dependency on God, for it was God who gave him the loving care of his mother. Although he was now older, he could take comfort in reflecting on how God had cared for him and protected him from the beginning of his life. This served to offset the mockery of his enemies who called into question God's delight in him (recall v 8).

QUESTION 8

When does God's loving and protecting care for us begin?

- A. At the moment we put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to save us.
- B. At the moment we are baptized and publicly acknowledge Him as our Savior and Lord.
- C. At the moment we make a decision to forsake everything and follow Jesus.
- D. At the earliest moments of our life, while we are still in our mother's womb.

Similarly the Lord Jesus was brought into the world as a helpless baby, although in His case it was by means of the virgin birth. Here was the Creator God clinging to the breasts of His mother, Mary, utterly dependent on the Father's protecting care for Him. This protecting care was soon reaffirmed as God spoke in a dream to Joseph to flee to Egypt in order to escape the evil plot of King Herod to kill the baby Jesus (Mt 2:13). Later the Father verbalized His delight in the Son at the time of His baptism: "And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my one dear Son; in you I take great delight'" (Lk 3:22).

Topic 3: The Psalmist's Lament of the Cruelty of His Enemies (vv 11-18)

Verse 11 brings us to the lament proper of the psalm. The lament will be developed in three stages, each emphasizing a different aspect of the attack by his enemies. Verse 11 introduces the entire section with a brief petition for God's help.

A Brief Petition for God's Help (v 11)

Verse 11. The theme of God's abandonment, first mentioned in verse 1, is picked up again in this verse. Yet now the psalmist had the faith to pray for God's help. "Do not remain far away from me, for trouble is near and I have no one to help me."

In verse 1 the psalmist had declared that help seemed far away so long as God refrained from rescuing him. He felt alone in his distress, as there was no one to help him. In the case of Jesus, the latter proved to be literally true. In the garden the disciples failed to stay awake and pray with Him. Jesus had earlier predicted, "This night you will all fall away because of me" (Mt 26:31). Then later "All the disciples left him and fled" (Mt 26:56).

QUESTION 9

Psalm 22:11 finds a higher fulfillment with the Lord Jesus Christ on the night before His crucifixion when all His disciples fell away and deserted Him. *True or False?*

Lament of the Ferociousness of His Enemies (vv 12-13)

Verses 12-13. In these verses the ferociousness of his enemies is described, using figures of wild animals.

12 Many bulls surround me; powerful bulls of Bashan hem me in.

13 They open their mouths to devour me like a roaring lion that rips its prey.

Bashan was a region on the east side of the Jordan River extending from Gilead in the south to Mount Hermon in the north. This was a fertile area that became famous for the powerful bulls that grazed its pastures. David, of course, was not surrounded by literal bulls. He used this term figuratively (a hypocatastasis) as a way of describing his enemies. He depicted the fierceness of his mockers by comparing them to strong bulls when they surround a helpless victim.



QUESTION 10

An area on the east side of the Jordan River that was famous for the powerful bulls that grazed its fertile pastures was known as _____.

He also used a simile—"like a roaring lion that rips its prey"—to further describe his enemies. By this figure he conveyed how merciless his antagonists were. If allowed to, they would rip him to shreds. Those gathered on the day of Christ's crucifixion behaved like ferocious wild animals anxious to devour Him. Matthew 27:22-23 recorded their anxiousness to see Him put to death: Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?" They all said, "Crucify him!" He asked, "Why? What wrong has he done?" But they shouted more insistently, "Crucify him!"



Lament of the Psychosomatic Effects on Himself (vv 14-15)

Verses 14-15. The attack of the enemies exacted both a physical and psychological toll upon the psalmist—hence psychosomatic—which drained away his strength.

14 My strength drains away like water; all my bones are dislocated;

my courage is like wax; it melts away inside me.

15 The roof of my mouth is as dry as a piece of pottery;

my tongue sticks to my gums. You set me in the dust of death.

David used a simile (like water) to describe his draining strength. As water has no inherent strength or form of its own but simply flows along, so David felt drained of inner fortitude and unable to

retaliate. For David the acknowledgment “all my bones are dislocated” was spoken as a hyperbole to indicate how depleted his body strength was.

Using another simile (like wax) David described his heart. As wax is unable to hold its composure when subjected to heat, so David felt his heart drained of courage before his enemies. David also felt an intense dehydration in his mouth, comparing it to the dryness of clay pottery. Finally he exclaimed, “You set me in the dust of death.” Although it was the actions of his enemies that brought on the psychosomatic effects, David charged God with the responsibility of the outcome. By failing to intervene, God was in effect consigning him to the grave (the dust of death is a metonymy for the grave). Goldingay offers the following insight: “The psalm began with God distressingly absent and inactive; worse, it continues with God distressingly present but active in a death-bringing way” (*The Psalms*, 1:333).

QUESTION 11

Match the following statements from verses 14-15 with the appropriate figure of speech.

<i>Figure of Speech</i>	<i>Figurative Statement from Psalm 22:14-15</i>
Simile	“You set me in the dust of death”
Hyperbole	“All my bones are dislocated”
Metonymy	“My strength drains away like water”

In the case of Jesus the agony He suffered on the cross was not merely figurative, but was excruciatingly painful and literal. The following description of the physical effects of a person undergoing crucifixion will help us appreciate what Jesus had to undergo to provide our eternal salvation:



Everything about a crucifixion is painful starting from the moment of the victim carrying one of the beams to the crucifixion site. The person is thrown against the cross, and a nail is then driven through the wrists pressed together, and likewise for the feet. Movement is limited in this position as the body is stretched from hand to hand. The weight of the body hanging from the nails causes great agony. When he moves upward all the pressure and pain transfers to the one nail in his feet and sends searing pain as the tissues are torn. The effort expended in breathing alone on the cross causes fatigue, not to mention the effort of actually speaking from the cross. Exhausted, the person will stop breathing and die from the lack of oxygen.

QUESTION 12

Crucifixion, as a form of torture, could include which of the following effects? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The victim would typically experience a minimal loss of blood.
- B. The victim would typically experience a loss of memory.
- C. The victim would typically experience dehydration.
- D. The victim would typically experience asphyxiation.
- E. The victim would typically experience broken bones.

In addition to asphyxiation, the dislocation of the body limbs contributes to the death of the victim. Dr. Mark Eastman, a medical doctor, explains:

As the strength of the legs gives out, the weight of the body must now be borne by the arms and shoulders. The result is that within a few minutes of being placed on the cross, the shoulders will become dislocated. Minutes later the elbows and wrists

become dislocated. The result of these dislocations is that the arms are as much as 6-9 inches longer than normal.

With the arms dislocated, considerable body weight is transferred to the chest, causing the rib cage to be elevated in a state of perpetual inhalation. Consequently, in order to exhale the victim must push down on his feet to allow the rib muscles to relax. The problem is that the victim cannot push very long because the legs are extremely fatigued. As time goes on, the victim is less and less able to bear weight on the legs, causing further dislocation of the arms and further raising of the chest wall, making breathing more and more difficult (Dr. Mark Eastman from a message entitled “The Agony of Love” at <www.khouse.org>).

The apostle John recorded the fifth and sixth sayings of Jesus on the cross, both of which are related to His thirst and severe dehydration:

After this Jesus, realizing that by this time everything was completed, said (in order to fulfill the scripture), “I am thirsty!” A jar full of sour wine was there, so they put a sponge soaked in sour wine on a branch of hyssop and lifted it to his mouth. When he had received the sour wine, Jesus said, “It is completed!” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (Jn 19:28-30)

Ironically the One who offered the living water without cost was Himself thirsty and this for our sake, that we who have believed in Jesus might live forever and never thirst.

Lament of the Destructive Intention of Their Attack (vv 16-18)

The psalmist now described the viciousness with which his enemies attacked him:

16 Yes, wild dogs surround me—a gang of evil men crowd around me;

like a lion they pin my hands and feet.

17 I can count all my bones; my enemies are gloating over me in triumph.

18 They are dividing up my clothes among themselves;

they are rolling dice for my garments.

Verse 16. David was not trying to say that animals (wild dogs) were attacking him. This is a hypocatastasis for the evil men who had surrounded him, as the second colon clarifies. Their attack on him could be likened to something wild dogs would do.



QUESTION 13

The expression “wild dogs” is a figure of speech known as a hypocatastasis (a type of comparison). What is the real object being compared to wild dogs?

- A. The Ammonites and Moabites who were attacking David’s kingdom.
- B. The enemies of David in general who despised and mocked him.
- C. Those who participated in the rebellion led by Absalom.
- D. The soldiers of Saul who were trying to capture David.

The final colon, in verse 16, “like a lion they pin my hands and feet,” reflects a very difficult translation. The more traditional translation is “they pierced my hands and feet.” The crucial question is: should this be translated as a noun (lion) or a verb (such as pierce)? Without going into too much

technical discussion, suffice it to say that scholars are uncertain as to which Hebrew word is intended and how it should be understood.

Some Hebrew manuscripts have a verb meaning to dig or bore, which reflects a verb in the text, not a noun such as “lion.” Furthermore the Greek Septuagint translators understood this to be a verb (they translated this by the Greek verb *orussō*, meaning to dig). In other Greek translations, the clause was translated “they have bound my hands and feet” or “as those seeking to bind my hands and feet.” If we rely on the Greek translations to be our guide, it would be fair to say that the translation “like a lion they pin my hands and feet” is very unlikely. Some Hebrew manuscripts and all the Greek translations suggest that a verb is in the text, although we cannot be sure what David meant in regard to himself. Crucifixion was not practiced in his day, and David was certainly not crucified. (In all fairness, we should observe that the New Testament never quotes this verse in regard to Christ’s crucifixion.) Perhaps David was trying to say that his enemies had constrained his hands and feet in some way, but not necessarily by piercing them.

Although the word “pierced” may not be the original intention nor did David have crucifixion in mind, the statement certainly could find fulfillment in the crucifixion of Christ. David may have described himself using hyperbole as bound or pinned down so that he was immobilized and unable to free himself, but the Lord Jesus had His hands and feet immobilized in a much more serious way—being literally nailed to the cross.

QUESTION 14

The Greek versions of Psalm 22:16 support the translation “like a lion they pin my hands and feet.” *True or False?*

Verse 17. Scholars also debate the meaning of the clause, “I can count all my bones.” If we interpret this in light of the following colons (people stare at him; they gamble for his garments), then a plausible interpretation is that he was exposed to public view (his clothing having been removed) and possibly his flesh was emaciated so that his bones noticeably stood out.

Verse 18. All three verses from Psalm 22:16-18 depict one who is close to death. As his enemies watched him dying, they divided up his clothing, for in their minds his death was imminent. The reference to clothing in verse 18 is specifically quoted in John’s account of the crucifixion, describing precisely what the Roman soldiers did with Jesus. (Jn 19:23-24).

Now when the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and made four shares, one for each soldier, and the tunic remained. (Now the tunic was seamless, woven from top to bottom as a single piece.) So the soldiers said to one another, “Let’s not tear it, but throw dice to see who will get it.” This took place to fulfill the scripture that says, “They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they threw dice.” So the soldiers did these things.

If this verse fulfills Psalm 22, it would not be surprising that other verses would also. In David’s case verse 18 is probably spoken figuratively (using hyperbole). His enemies were treating him as though dead, so that all that remained was for them to divide his clothing among themselves. Yet for Christ this became literally true. Thus this is a case of typico-prophetic fulfillment. David’s experience—though not literally true—was a type of Christ and prophetic of what He would literally undergo.

Topic 4: The Psalmist's Prayer for God's Deliverance (vv 19-21)

Verses 19-21. This, the shortest section in the psalm, constitutes the petition proper of the lament psalm. Although we encountered a brief petition in verse 11, this is the psalmist's primary petition. Having demonstrated the trouble around him (by his lament in vv 12-18), he can now ask God (by faith) for what he wanted God to do.

19 But you, O LORD, do not remain far away! You are my source of strength!

Hurry and help me!

20 Deliver me from the sword!

Save my life from the claws of the wild dogs!

21 Rescue me from the mouth of the lion, and from the horns of the wild oxen!

You have answered me!

Earlier in the psalm, the psalmist had twice used the words "far away" (vv 1, 11) to express the pain he felt over the sense of estrangement from God. Here he asked the Lord to alleviate that by hastening to help him. The word "sword" is a metonymy for a violent death, from which the psalmist asked to be delivered. "Wild dogs" in verse 20 is a hypocatastasis—his enemies are compared to ferocious dogs anxious to kill him (recall vs 16). Verse 21 echoes the thought of verses 12-13 in which he had spoken earlier of the bulls of Bashan and the roaring lions. Here, "the lion" and "wild oxen" were used as a hypocatastasis to depict his enemies. David pleaded to be rescued from their vicious attack on him.

QUESTION 15

There are several figures of speech in verses 19-21. Which figure of speech applies to "the sword"?

- A. A simile in which the psalmist was comparing his pain to a sword that pierced him.
- B. A hypocatastasis in which all his bitter experiences are compared to death by the sword.
- C. A synecdoche in which the psalmist substituted the word "sword" for weapons of battle.
- D. A metonymy in which the psalmist substituted the word "sword" for a violent death.

In a sudden shift in tone the psalmist made a triumphant declaration, "you have answered me!" This does not mean he had actually been delivered at this point. Rather this reflects his confidence that God had heard his prayer and would assuredly deliver him.

During His crucifixion, Jesus never prayed for God to deliver Him from the cross. He did momentarily (in the garden of Gethsemane) express His wish not to have to undergo the ordeal, but He immediately submitted Himself to doing the Father's will. As He hung on the cross, we do see expressions of His confidence and faith in the Father. He told one of the criminals, "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Lk 23:43). Finally—drawing upon words from Psalm 31:5—Jesus cried out, "Father into your hands I commit my spirit" (Lk 23:46).

Topic 5: The Psalmist's Praise and Worship of God (vv 22-31)

The positive note at the end of verse 21 (that God had answered him) marks a turning point in the psalm. From this point forward the psalmist focused on his deliverance and the chorus of praise that God's people will offer up.

His Testimony of Praise Before the Assembly of Worshippers (vv 22-26)

Verses 22-24. In this section the psalmist made a vow of praise that he would offer before the congregation of worshippers at the tabernacle, with verses 23-24 reflecting his words of exhortation to them.

22 I will declare your name to my countrymen!

In the middle of the assembly I will praise you!

23 You loyal followers of the LORD, praise him!

All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!

All you descendants of Israel, stand in awe of him!

24 For he did not despise or detest the suffering of the oppressed;

he did not ignore him; when he cried out to him, he responded.

Verse 22 is quoted in Hebrews 2:12 in reference to the Lord Jesus. (The Hebrew text of Ps 22:22 has “my brethren,” although the translation “my countrymen” is understandable—these are not his biological brothers.) For the author of Hebrews, Jesus’ brethren were those for whom He had died and who had become sons of God as a result of being sanctified (i.e., saved from the penalty of sin—positional sanctification). Jesus is thus the One in the midst of the assembly of sanctified sons who proclaims the Father to them. David served as a type for the role that Jesus ultimately played.

QUESTION 16

The author of Hebrews quoted Psalm 22:22 to indicate that the ultimate fulfillment of this verse is found in the Lord Jesus Christ and those who have become His brothers through faith in Him. *True or False?*

In Hebrew thought, the term “name” represents more than a word used to identify someone; it represents the person’s character. Hence to declare His name means to disclose all that He is in His holiness and truth. In light of the following verses, the psalmist proclaimed God’s mercy in response to the cries of His afflicted children and His faithfulness to deliver them. David was affirming how God dealt mercifully with him in his time of suffering.

In the typology we see that Jesus is the One who experienced the suffering of death, but who was subsequently crowned with glory and honor. The fact that David suffered in his role as king, helps us understand the ultimate fulfillment with Jesus. The greater King (Jesus), God’s chief theocratic leader, was perfected through sufferings but yet He is allowed to live and share with God’s people whom He regards as His brothers. He is thus perfectly suited to exhort them to revere and praise God, declaring to His brothers that the Father is worthy of their admiration and trust.

QUESTION 17

What did the psalmist mean when he wrote, “I will declare your name”?

- A. When all the worshippers came to the tabernacle area, he would shout God’s name with a loud voice.
- B. He was going to reveal to everyone that the secret name for God is Yahweh.
- C. When he testified before the other worshippers, he would glorify God’s character, especially how God was merciful and faithful to rescue him.
- D. After defeating the nation’s enemies, he would teach these pagans the name of the true God.

Verses 25-26. The preceding verses record what David intended to do, but it had not actually taken place yet. David made a vow to do this, once he experienced God’s deliverance. Beginning in verse 25, David returned to addressing the Lord directly.

25 You are the reason I offer praise in the great assembly;

I will fulfill my promises [literally, “my vows”] before the LORD’s loyal followers.

26 Let the oppressed eat and be filled!

Let those who seek his help praise the LORD! May you experience lasting encouragement!

The great assembly refers to those who congregated at the tabernacle in worship. There David envisioned offering up His praise on account of what the Lord had done for him. Confident of God’s deliverance, David has made a vow to appear before the LORD’s loyal followers (literally, “those who fear Him”). The vow he has in mind is the act itself of giving a public testimony of praise, telling others what God has done for Him in answer to prayer (see Ps 50:14; 61:8; 66:13; 116:14; 116:18). In bearing a public witness before others, God is glorified!

In verse 26 we suddenly encounter a reference to eating. This must be understood in light of communal offerings that were voluntarily offered by the worshippers. A peace offering, for example, concluded with a communal meal. After the priest received his portion, the worshipper was free to eat of the offering himself and to share it with others in his family or acquaintances. Yet David had in mind something more beneficial than the blessing of eating. Those who are oppressed among the great assembly will not only be filled by the food; they will be encouraged by David’s testimony. After all, David is not the only one among God’s people who has been afflicted and oppressed. Among those who are oppressed, there are those who seek his help. David’s hope was that these will also be delivered and as a result will praise the Lord. The words “May you live forever!” are literally “May your heart live forever.” The use of the word “heart” recalls what David had said in verse 14: “my heart is like wax; it melts away.” His heart had grown faint in the midst of his suffering, and he desperately needed encouragement and reviving. Having been revived himself, David now sought to encourage others who faced oppression at the hands of their antagonists.

QUESTION 18

Match each statement from verses 25-26 on the left with the correct interpretation on the right.

<i>Statement from Verses 25-26</i>	<i>Correct Interpretation</i>
“The great assembly”	A wish that the hearts of God’s people who are oppressed will be revived.
“I will fulfill my promises (vows)”	Those who congregate at the tabernacle for worship.
“Let the oppressed eat”	David would keep his promises (vows).
“May you live forever”	David’s hope that other worshippers who might be discouraged and in need of God’s deliverance will listen to his testimony and be encouraged.

His Anticipation of the Resulting Universal Praise (vv 27-31)

In the final strophe of the psalm, the local scene at the tabernacle fades and gives way to a glimpse beyond the borders of ancient Israel. The Lord is the God of all nations and peoples, and they are also entitled to His deliverance. They can also worship Him.

27 Let all the people of the earth acknowledge the LORD and turn to him!

Let all the nations worship you!

28 For the LORD is king and rules over the nations.

29 All of the thriving people of the earth will join the celebration and worship;

all those who are descending into the grave will bow before him,

including those who cannot preserve their lives.

30 A whole generation will serve him;

they will tell the next generation about the sovereign Lord.

31 They will come and tell about his saving deeds;

they will tell a future generation what he has accomplished.

Verses 27-28. The point in giving a public testimony is for others to learn from David’s experience and apply the lesson to their own lives. Out of the depths of his suffering and affliction, David cried to the Lord and was delivered. Others can have the same experience, and this hope extends to all peoples and nations. This is in keeping with God’s promise in Genesis 12:3, “In you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” This promise reassures us that God has always been a God of the nations, a God who blesses all people groups, not just one. As a result of David’s distress and deliverance, others—even from among the Gentiles—will acknowledge the Lord and turn to Him. In this way God will have worshippers from all nations. This is only fitting, since He rules over the nations. David’s experience typifies that of the Lord Jesus Christ. In an even greater way His distress (crucifixion) and deliverance (resurrection) became a basis for a worldwide turning to the Lord.

QUESTION 19

The psalmist’s hope that people from all nations will turn to the Lord and worship Him will ultimately be realized as a result of what the Lord Jesus Christ will go through (that is, His death and resurrection). *True or False?*

Verse 29. In this verse we have a merism (opposites to express the totality). The universal celebration and worship will be made up of those who are thriving as well as those who are near unto death (close to the grave, as David himself was—recall David’s reference to the dust of death in verse 15). From one extreme to the other, all can benefit and join the chorus of worshippers.

The final colon of verse 29 is difficult to translate. The NET Bible has rendered this, “including those who cannot preserve their lives.” However, in the Hebrew text both the verb and its object are in the singular. Furthermore, the clause can be understood as causal, and thus translated, “because he has not spared (preserved alive) his life.” This may look initially at David (whom God did not spare from suffering but used as an illustration before others), but ultimately it looks at Messiah Jesus. Because God did not preserve Him alive (literally), but allowed Him to die for the sins of all mankind, He was able to bring about a universal salvation for people from every nation and thus a great chorus of worshippers.

Verses 30-31. What happened in one generation will be passed on to the next generation. God will ensure that in every generation, there will be a seed (a spiritual posterity of those who have been saved and know the Lord) that will serve Him, that is, worship Him. They will bear witness of what God has done for them. The Lord answers prayer and rescues His people, and therefore He can be trusted. He rescued His king from the clutches of death, and more importantly He rescued His King of the nations after death by resurrection.

QUESTION 20

Open your Life Notebook. Try to think for a moment about the role you play in helping to prepare the spiritual seed that comes after you. Are you helping to ensure that the next generation knows and understands the LORD? What role do you feel God has given you personally in regard to the next generation of your country? What about other countries? Try to write down your thoughts as specifically and as completely as you can.

These witnesses of God will tell about his saving deeds. Literally the text says, “they will make known His righteousness.” The word “righteousness” is often used in the Psalms to speak of God’s mighty deeds of salvation (or deliverance). See Psalm 40:11; 51:16; 71:15; 71:16; 71:24; 98:2; 145:7. What God did on David’s behalf (delivering him from oppression) was just a small token of the great saving act that God would do later in history in regard to the Lord Jesus Christ. God acted in history to deliver the Lord Jesus by resurrection. Yet because He first suffered and died for sins, people from every nation and tribe can find spiritual salvation in Him. Those who do so will join the great celebration as His worshippers forever. We get a taste of this as we read the new song to the Lamb recorded in Revelation 5:9-12:

They were singing a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals because you were killed, and at the cost of your own blood you have purchased for God persons from every tribe, language, people, and nation. You have appointed them as a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.” Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels in a circle around the throne, as well as the living creatures and the elders. Their number was ten thousand times ten thousand—thousands times thousands—all of whom were singing in a loud voice: “Worthy is the lamb who was killed to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and praise!”

Psalm 22 which began with words of utter despair—“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”—ultimately brings forth a chorus of universal praise and worship.

The following paragraph provides a helpful summary of the key lessons from Psalm 22:

Despite his feelings of being forsaken by God and man, David *drew encouragement from God's past record of faithfulness*. And despite his terrible sufferings at the hands of his enemies, he *kept praying*, and he ultimately found that God had heard his cries for help. As David's antitype, Jesus is the prime example of this kind of persevering faith. The lesson comes through clearly that *God hears the prayers of the faithful and answers according to His own perfect plan*. In Jesus' case, God's answer took a totally unexpected form; instead of being *rescued*, He was *resurrected*. Instead of sparing Jesus' single life, God purchased through Jesus' death a glorious resurrection to new life for all who trust in Him (Mark Heinemann, "An Exposition of Psalm 22," p 308).

Lesson 13 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Psalm 22 is sometimes described as a typico-prophetic psalm, meaning that what David wrote of himself in figurative terms often turned out to be literally true regarding the experience of Christ, and in this way prophesied of Christ. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

Psalm 22 opens with a brief lament by David in which he exclaimed, “My God, I cry out during the day, but you do not answer, and during the night my prayers do not let up.” The words “by day” and “during the night” are used together as

- A. A figure known as hyperbole which expresses that he never gets any response from God.
- B. A figure known as a merism which conveys his continual and desperate plea for help.
- C. A figure known as metonymy which is used to convey the notion of eternity.
- D. A figure known as hypocatastasis which expresses the spiritual period of lament.

QUESTION 3

In verses 3-5 David reminded God of His past faithfulness to the fathers and stated, “in you they trusted and they were not disappointed.” The word translated “disappointed” (Hebrew *bôš*) can best be defined as

- A. A sense of disillusionment in what one trusted in for deliverance.
- B. A sense of regret in not getting what one hoped for.
- C. A sense of shame—even public disgrace—as a result of a humiliating experience.
- D. A sense of failure and discouragement that one had not attained to a goal he sought to achieve.

QUESTION 4

In Psalm 22:9-10 David reflected on his mother’s care for him as he came forth from the womb, because he was angry at God and felt that his mother cared for him more than God did. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

In verses 12-13 David indicated that he was surrounded by powerful bulls of Bashan. What did he mean to communicate by this?

- A. David was concerned that if he had to flee from his enemies into the wilderness, he might be attacked by wild bulls.
- B. David was using a figure of speech (hyperbole) to exaggerate the number of enemies that he had in order to gain God’s sympathy.
- C. David was confident that if he were to attack the country of Bashan, his soldiers would fight for him like wild bulls.
- D. David was using a figure of speech (hypocatastasis) to describe the ferociousness of his enemies.

QUESTION 6

As David lamented the psychosomatic effects that his enemies' attacks had on him, he exclaimed in verse 15 "You set me in the dust of death"? What was he trying to communicate?

- A. David was lamenting how his enemies wanted to throw him off a cliff where he would die in the dust below.
- B. David was suggesting that God—by failing to intervene—was in effect consigning him to the grave (the dust of death being a metonymy for the grave).
- C. David was using hyperbole to describe the actions of his enemies: their verbal attacks on him were meant to weaken him to the point of death.
- D. David did not fear his enemies, knowing he would eventually die and return to dust anyway.

QUESTION 7

The Greek versions of Psalm 22:16 testify that the translation "like a lion they pin my hands and feet" is not the best translation. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

When David petitioned God, "Deliver me from the sword!" (v 20), he was using the word "sword" figuratively—as a metonymy for a violent death. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

What did David mean in verse 22 when he said, "I will declare your name"?

- A. When he testifies before the other worshippers, he will glorify God's character, especially how God was merciful and faithful to rescue him.
- B. He is going to reveal to everyone that the secret name for God is Yahweh.
- C. After defeating the nation's enemies, he will teach these pagans the name of the true God.
- D. When all the worshippers come to the tabernacle area, he will shout God's name with a loud voice.

QUESTION 10

In light of the final section of Psalm 22 anticipating universal praise and blessing, we can say that David's experience and testimony typifies the Lord Jesus Christ whose distress (crucifixion) and deliverance (resurrection) become a basis for a worldwide turning to the Lord. *True or False?*

Lesson 13 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1

- A. A section expressing lament
- C. A confession of trust or confidence
- D. A petition for God's help or deliverance
- E. A vow to give praise to God for hearing the psalmist's prayer

QUESTION 2

- D. In Psalm 22 David wrote of his own experiences (often using figures of speech), but many of the things that are written of David in figurative language became literally true in regard to the Lord Jesus. Thus the psalm was fulfilled in both men, but in different ways.

QUESTION 3

- C. Jesus was in the process of taking our sin on Himself, and during this time God the Father had to turn away from the Son and allow Him to bear our punishment, so that forgiveness would be possible.

QUESTION 4: *Your answer*

QUESTION 5: True

QUESTION 6

- B. A sense of shame, even public disgrace, as a result of a humiliating experience.

QUESTION 7: *Your answer*

QUESTION 8

- D. At the earliest moments of our life, while we are still in our mother's womb.

QUESTION 9: True

QUESTION 10: Bashan

QUESTION 11

<i>Figure of Speech</i>	<i>Figurative Statement from Psalm 22:14-15</i>
Simile	"My strength drains away like water"
Hyperbole	"All my bones are dislocated"
Metonymy	"You set me in the dust of death"

QUESTION 12

- C. The victim would typically experience dehydration.
- D. The victim would typically experience asphyxiation.

QUESTION 13

- B. The enemies of David in general who despised and mocked him.

QUESTION 14: False [Both the Greek Septuagint and other Greek versions do not have the word "lion" in their translation. Instead they understand the original Hebrew word to be a verb, such as dug or bound.]

QUESTION 15

- D. A metonymy in which the psalmist substituted the word "sword" for a violent death.

QUESTION 16: True

QUESTION 17

- C. When he testified before the other worshippers, he would glorify God's character, especially how God was merciful and faithful to rescue him.

QUESTION 18

<i>Statement from Verses 25-26</i>	<i>Correct Interpretation</i>
“The great assembly”	Those who congregate at the tabernacle for worship.
“I will fulfill my promises (vows)”	David would keep his promises (vows).
“Let the oppressed eat”	David’s hope that other worshippers who might be discouraged and in need of God’s deliverance will listen to his testimony and be encouraged.
“May you live forever”	A wish that the hearts of God’s people who are oppressed will be revived.

QUESTION 19: True**QUESTION 20:** *Your answer*

Lesson 13 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2

B. A figure known as a merism which conveys his continual and desperate plea for help.

QUESTION 3

C. A sense of shame—even public disgrace—as a result of a humiliating experience.

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5

D. David was using a figure of speech (hypocatastasis) to describe the ferociousness of his enemies.

QUESTION 6

B. David was suggesting that God—by failing to intervene—was in effect consigning him to the grave (the dust of death being a metonymy for the grave).

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8: True

QUESTION 9

A. When he testifies before the other worshippers, he will glorify God's character, especially how God was merciful and faithful to rescue him.

QUESTION 10: True

Lesson 14: The Exaltation of the Messiah in the Psalms (Ps 16; 110)

Lesson Introduction

In the previous lesson we learned how the sufferings of Messiah Jesus were anticipated by Psalm 22, particularly His crucifixion and death on the cross. In this lesson we will consider two psalms that focus on the resurrection and present exalted state of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is now the resurrected Lord who sits at the right hand of God the Father, and in His present ministry He serves as a high priest interceding for the saints of God.

Our lesson begins with a study of Psalm 16, a psalm that finds its fulfillment in the resurrection of Christ. Then we will move on to consider Psalm 110 that predicts Christ's ascension to the Father's right hand and His dual role as a high priest and valiant warrior.

These two psalms share something in common: they find their fulfillment in Christ's resurrection and exaltation following His atoning work for sins. Furthermore, both psalms are explicitly quoted in the New Testament as being fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: Psalm 16—Making a Lordship Decision (Ps 16:1-4)

David's Acknowledgment of Surrender (Ps 16:1-2)

Reflections of Surrender in David's Life (Ps 16:2-4)

Topic 2: Psalm 16—Finding Fulfillment in the Lord (Ps 16:5-6)

Topic 3: Psalm 16—Developing a Commitment to His Will (Ps 16:7-8)

Topic 4: Psalm 16—Experiencing Security from the Threat of Death (Ps 16:9-11)

Topic 5: Psalm 110—The Messiah at God's Right Hand (Ps 110:1-7)

Messiah's Exaltation to Yahweh's Right Hand (Ps 110:1)

Messiah's Dominion over His Enemies (Ps 110:2-3)

Messiah's Qualification to Be Priest (Ps 110:4)

Messiah's Victory in Battle (Ps 110:5-7)

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Discuss in detail Psalm 16 as a messianic psalm that finds its fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ
- Understand how Psalm 16, originally speaking of David's experience, finds fulfillment in Christ
- Appreciate God's plan to resurrect Jesus Christ from the dead in fulfillment of Psalm 16
- Have a detailed understanding of Psalm 110 as a messianic psalm that finds its fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ

- Understand how Psalm 110 is uniquely fulfilled in Jesus Christ
- Appreciate the priestly ministry of Jesus Christ in fulfillment of Psalm 110

Preparing for the Lesson

The ringing of the phone nearly jolted Kate out of bed. Her head seemed to spin as she stumbled to the phone. Just before picking up the receiver, she glanced at the clock by her bed. Was someone really calling her at 1:30 am? The phone probably rang six or seven times before she finally answered. “Kate, it’s Sharon.” (Sharon had been one of Kate Kutlow’s best friends since their freshman English class.) “I know it’s horribly late to be calling,” Sharon continued, “but something has happened, and I’m sure you would want to know.” “What?” Kate barely managed to mutter in return. “Kate, I hate to tell you this, but Tom Blanchard was involved in a bad car accident late tonight. Right now he’s in the ER at Overland General Hospital. A bunch of us are driving over there in just a few minutes. Do you want us to come by for you, too?” Kate, bursting into tears, responded, “Oh, yes, I’ll get dressed immediately and be ready.”

Combing her hair in front of the mirror, Kate could not believe this was really happening. Tom? Tom Blanchard? The curly haired guy in the Psalms class that she had enjoyed getting to know all semester long? Surely not Tom! He had been growing so much in his faith and loved studying the Psalms. At that very moment, the words of Psalm 55:4-6 came to her mind, “My heart beats violently within me; the horrors of death overcome me. Fear and panic overpower me; terror overwhelms me. I say, ‘I wish I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and settle in a safe place.’” Any longing to escape the ugly reality of the moment, however, was not to be. The knock at the door reminded her that Tom’s life was hanging in the balance.

The next several hours crept by ever so slowly. Sharon and the other students picked Kate up and took her along with them to the hospital. Once there, they huddled in prayer throughout the night. By 5am Tom was being rushed into emergency surgery. One of his lungs had been punctured, his right arm was broken in two places, and he had suffered a large gash on his forehead and had lost a lot of blood. The waiting seemed to last for eternity, as everyone kept up their prayers for Tom. When the doctor finally came out to tell them that Tom was going to make it, you could feel the sense of relief as the room was suddenly engulfed in cheers and amens.

After another three hours, Kate was allowed to go in and sit with Tom in his recovery room. Despite the pain and the discomfort of all the equipment they had him hooked up to, when he saw Kate he looked over and feebly grinned. Then he managed a few words. “Kate, just before they were about to operate on me, the words from our homework lesson this week flashed in my mind, ‘You will make known to me the path of life. In Your presence is a satisfying abundance of joy. There is pleasure at Your right hand forevermore.’ Psalm 16:11. I knew right then, Kate, that God was in complete control and that no matter what happened, everything was going to be alright.” Kate, trying her best to hide her frazzled emotions, replied, “Well, Tom, that’s a homework lesson you’re probably never going to forget, but what a way to learn the lesson!”

Topic 1: Psalm 16—Making a Lordship Decision (Ps 16:1-4)

Psalm 16 is a short psalm of only eleven verses written by David. The brief superscription does not provide any information that would help us understand the historical background to the psalm. However, from a brief reading we can easily discern that the psalm presupposes a time of insecurity

in David's life. For instance, he immediately asks God to watch over him and confesses that he has sought refuge in Him. Since (in the Psalms) one seeks refuge in God when faced by some danger or threatening situation, we can deduce that something was intimidating David and arousing insecurity in his life. There are clues in the psalm as to what this might be. In verse 4, for instance, he mentions those who pursued other gods. Perhaps these individuals were putting pressure on David to forsake the LORD and turn to other gods to gain blessing and prosperity in life. Another clue stems from verses 9-11, where David speaks of the grave and the possible decay of his body. Perhaps he felt physically threatened by his opponents, as though his own death might be imminent, or perhaps he simply felt intimidated by the thought of death itself and having to go to the grave. Whatever the threats were that prompted David to plead for God to watch over him, the more important thing is that he rose up in faith and found his security in the LORD—a security in knowing that he had surrendered himself completely to God and His will.

QUESTION 1

Which of the following represent possible causes of insecurity that prompted David to write Psalm 16? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. David was afraid that Saul and his forces were going to find him in the wilderness and kill him.
- B. The mention of those who worship other gods (v 4) may suggest that they were pressuring David to forsake the true God, the Lord.
- C. The reference to the grave and possible bodily decay (v 10) may suggest that David felt physically threatened by his enemies.
- D. The reference to the grave and possible bodily decay (v 10) may suggest that it was Absalom's revolt against David that caused him to think he might be killed.

David's Acknowledgment of Surrender (vv 1-2)

In the face of threats against him, David sought refuge in God and acknowledged his submission to God and a surrender to His will. (Note: The translation of Psalm 16 used in this lesson is that of the author.)

1 Watch over me, O God, for I have taken refuge in You.

2 I said to the LORD, "You are my (sovereign) Lord."

Verse 1. The verb translated "Watch over me" means to watch over in a protecting sense, that is, to guard him and keep him safe. David felt that he could ask for God's protecting care, because he had taken refuge in God. Rather than looking to idols or even to man for his security, David told God that it was in Him that he had sought refuge (for God to keep him safe). Psalm 18:30 declares, "He is a shield to all who take shelter in him."

QUESTION 2

The words "watch over me" imply that David wanted God to protect him from some kind of threatening situation. *True or False?*

Then David goes on to tell us, the readers, what he had told the Lord, "You are my (sovereign) Lord." In our English Bibles, there are two different words translated as "Lord." One is spelled with all capital letters (LORD), representing the personal name of God. In Hebrew this is the word Yahweh. The second is spelled in lower case letters, representing the Hebrew word *'ādôn*, meaning lord or master, one's superior. The essence of the verse could be expressed this way: "I said to the God

whose name is Yahweh, ‘You are my sovereign lord and master.’” Although David was the king, the highest person in the kingdom, He willingly acknowledged that he was subject to the LORD and submitted himself accordingly. This reflected David’s decision to surrender his life to the lordship of Yahweh, his God.

QUESTION 3

The Hebrew word *‘ādōn* is the personal name of God. *True or False?*

The greatest decision that you and I will ever face is the decision to accept Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. After all, that decision determines where we spend eternity. Following that decision, however, the greatest decision we will face as a believer is the decision to allow Jesus Christ to be the Lord of our life, to surrender our life to Him and allow Him to reign over us.

In this decision, we are basically saying to God, “All I am belongs to You, and I yield myself completely to Your will, to follow Your Word and obey what You have said.” This is a decision that many believers are reluctant to make, because they want to remain in control of their own life—to call the shots and to decide for themselves what is best. They may also be afraid of surrendering themselves to God and His will; falsely thinking He may take away all fun in life or ask them to do something they do not want to do. The truth is, however, that being in God’s will is the most freeing place to be. Sin enslaves; yielding to God and His will frees us to really live!

This idea of surrendering (allowing God to be our Lord) is crucial to living the Christian life. God’s plan for our fulfillment—our experiencing the most in life—comes from being filled with the Holy Spirit. (See Gal 5:13-26.) Surrendering to Him as Lord is a prerequisite for being filled with the Holy Spirit.

QUESTION 4

Take a few moments to meditate upon Romans 12:1-2. Memorize these verses. When you are sure that you have these memorized, then open your Life Notebook and write down what you think it means to surrender your will to Jesus Christ and allow Him to be the Lord of your life. (Please keep in mind that we are talking about a decision for Christians to make, not non-Christians.) Have you done this? If so, when?

The ultimate fulfillment of this psalm is in the Lord Jesus Christ. He, far more than David, models what it means to surrender and yield oneself to doing the will of God. In John 4:34, Jesus said, “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to complete his work.” Later in John 8:29 He said, “I always do those things that please him.” This was epitomized during His trial in the garden of Gethsemane when He exclaimed, “Yet not my will but yours be done” (Lk 22:42).

Reflections of Surrender in David’s Life (vv 2-4)

Having stated his commitment to surrender (that Yahweh God is his Lord), David went on in the next few verses to explicate what that meant in his life. If Yahweh is his Lord, how does that impact his life? David gives us three depictions of what lordship means for him.

2 I have no good apart from You.

3 As for the holy (truly spiritual) people in the land,
they are the majestic ones (the true nobles).

All my delight is in them.

4 Those who have quickly pursued another (god), their sorrows will increase.

I will not pour out their blood libations; nor will I (even) take up their names on my lips.

Verse 2. The first depiction of lordship that David gives us has to do with what one considers to be truly valuable in life. He says, “I have no good apart from You.” David is not really saying that there is nothing else good in life other than the Lord. Rather, he is making a comparison. If you took everything else that one might value in life and stacked that up against the Lord, everything else would be as nothing. David’s point is that the Lord meant infinitely more to him than anything else.

Likewise, for the Christian today who is surrendered to the Lord, Jesus must mean more to him than anything else (whether this be material things such as money and possessions or immaterial things like power and prestige). When Jesus is our Lord, there is no other competition for our affections. The things of this world are not rivals of our loyalty to Him. When we come to that point in our spiritual progress, we are able to see through the temporal appeal of the things of this world, and we are more concerned about pleasing Him than enjoying the pleasures and things of this world. The man or woman who is living under the lordship of Christ may have things of this life, but he or she is not in bondage to those things. They can live with them or without them, and their contentment does not depend on those things (Phil 4:11-12).

QUESTION 5

Do you feel that you truly have contentment in life? Open your Life Notebook and record your thoughts. In the time that you have been a Christian, what has the Lord taught you about contentment? List several reasons why (or why not) you have learned to experience contentment in your walk with Christ.

What is the greatest good in life? That in which we are truly satisfied? Is it not in a personal relationship with the living God? When David said, “I have no good apart from You,” he was telling the Lord that his relationship with Him was top priority. This is what David found most satisfying in life! Once again we see this illustrated so perfectly in the Lord Jesus Himself. When the devil took Him to a high mountain and offered Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory if Jesus would just fall down and worship him, Jesus said to him, “Go away, Satan! For it is written: ‘You are to worship the Lord your God and serve only him’” (Mt 4:8-10).

Verse 3. The second depiction of lordship that David gives us is in the area of our personal associations. Who is it that we enjoy keeping company with? David said that his delight was in those whom he called holy (some translations read “saints”). By this he meant those who were the truly spiritual people of the land. (The Hebrew term is often used in the Old Testament of priests, prophets, and Levites—those who had been set apart for serving the Lord.) These are the spiritually minded people in the land who wanted to be faithful to the Lord. David enjoyed and sought their company, and recognized the value of fellowshiping with them. Then in verse 3, David called them the majestic ones (Hebrew *‘adîrê*). David was surrounded by a lot of people who were wealthy or influential, and who would be considered the nobles of the land. But in his mind the truly majestic or noble were the spiritual people who sought the Lord (regardless of their earthly position). These are the people he esteemed and whose company he enjoyed.

David’s preference for spiritually minded people was a great virtue in his life. Being king of the nation, he could easily have embraced the world’s preference for socially appropriate people. For example he could have chosen to be in the company of people who were in his socioeconomic class. After all, the way of the world dictates that one associate with those in one’s own socioeconomic class (or higher), to choose one’s company based on race, financial standing, or esteem in the community. For some, that gives them a sense of power and self-worth; they want to be seen with the right people. Mature believers, however, those who are submitting to the lordship of Christ, have a different value system. They esteem the company of those who are spiritually minded.

Verse 4. In contrast to David's attitude toward the spiritually minded of the land, verse 4 depicts his attitude toward the unfaithful: "Those who have quickly pursued another (god), their sorrows will increase." Even among the people of David's own nation, there were those who deliberately disobeyed and pursued other gods. David said that their sorrows will increase! When we make a decision not to surrender to the lordship of God, we will have sorrow, not joy.

Sometimes we may waver in our lordship decision, because we see people acting wickedly and who seem to get away with it. Mistakenly, we may even envy them. We say to ourselves, "Why should I make such sacrifices for Christ, when that person over there is not living for the Lord but is doing just fine? Things seem to be going his way. He is having all the fun in life without having to pay the price." The psalmist (in Ps 73:3) confessed that he too struggled with this issue, "For I was envious of the arrogant as I saw the prosperity of the wicked" (NASB). He even lamented, "Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure; and washed my hands in innocence" (73:13). Fortunately he was able to take a step back and see the broader perspective, and realized who the true winners in life are. He wrote, "When I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight until I came into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end" (Ps 73:16-17, NASB). When the psalmist stood there at the earthly house of God and saw things from an eternal perspective, he realized that so many had sold out for a cheap price. Rather than treasuring the Lord, they had treasured the pleasures of this world. When we take into account the fact that there is life beyond the grave, then choosing the riches of this life over the Lord is not such a tempting prospect. With this realization, the psalmist went on to say, "Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides you, I desire nothing on earth" (73:25, NASB). For those who have rejected the Lord's salvation, not only do sorrows await them but ultimately something even worse: an eternity separated from God's presence! When we surrender our lives to the Lord, we do so based on what pays off in the long run, not the short run!

In the latter part of verse 4, David declared, "I will not pour out their blood libations; nor will I (even) take up their names on my lips." Here he was speaking about those who would participate in pagan worship ceremonies, in which drink offerings of blood would be poured out around an altar. David was saying, in effect, "I won't insult my God by doing such a disloyal act; I won't even allow the names of those pagan deities to be uttered by my lips."

Here David saw the issue of surrender clearly: there must be no compromise! Others may be tempted to participate in pagan ceremonies and idolatry, but David drew a clear line. There can be no surrender to Christ if we cannot make up our minds which way we will go.

The surrendered life is not for those who want to straddle the fence, but for those who are clear in their thinking that they are here on earth to serve and represent Jesus Christ (and Him alone!). (A surrendered life does not mean that a Christian will never sin. Rather it means that sin does not have a stronghold in one's life, and that when a believer does sin, he quickly confesses it and then forsakes it.)

QUESTION 6

In the preceding section David gave three depictions of what lordship meant to him. Match the following verses with the correct depiction of lordship.

<i>Verses from Psalm 16</i>	<i>Depiction of what lordship meant to David</i>
Verse 2 - "I have no good apart from You."	Believers must not compromise with those who have no desire to be faithful to the Lord, and they must not envy those who seemingly prosper in this life while living in disobedience.
Verse 3 - "As for the holy (truly spiritual) people in the land, they are the majestic ones (the true nobles). All my delight is in them."	What satisfies most in life is a close personal relationship with the Lord (not things, power, or prestige).
Verse 4 - "Those who have quickly pursued another (god), their sorrows will increase. I will not pour out their blood libations; nor will I (even) take up their names on my lips."	Those human relationships we value most among those around us are spiritually-minded believers who want to be faithful in walking with and serving the Lord.

Topic 2: Psalm 16—Finding Fulfillment in the Lord (Ps 16:5-6)

Having acknowledged his submission and loyalty to the Lord in verses 1-4, David then described in verses 5-6 how much the Lord meant to him:

5 The LORD is my allotted portion and my cup.

—"You secure my allotted share."

6 The portions for an inheritance have fallen to me in delightful places.

Indeed my inheritance is pleasing.

To the modern reader these verses may not seem to make much sense at first glance. Therefore we need to carefully observe such words as "allotted portion," "allotted share," "portions" and "inheritance." David was alluding to the territorial inheritance of the tribes that was determined by lot. This is explained in Joshua 14:1-3:

The following is a record of the territory assigned to the Israelites in the land of Canaan by Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the Israelite tribal leaders. The land assignments to the nine-and-a-half tribes were made by drawing lots, as the LORD had instructed Moses. Now Moses had assigned land to the two-and-a-half tribes east of the Jordan, but he assigned no land to the Levites.

Verse 5-6. The Hebrews (to whom David originally penned the words of Ps 16) would have easily understood what David was referring to. They were quite aware that the land of promise had been portioned out by lot to the various tribes. However, not everyone was included in the distribution of land. The Levites were excluded, according to Joshua 13:14, "However, Moses did not assign land as an inheritance to the Levites; their inheritance is the sacrificial offerings made to the LORD God of Israel, as he instructed them." Again in Joshua 13:33 we read, "However, Moses did not assign land as an inheritance to the Levites; their inheritance is the LORD God of Israel, as he instructed them" (see Num 18:20; Deut 10:9).

Although most of the tribes were apportioned a certain specified territory, the tribe of Levi was not. They did not get land, because they were given a higher privilege—the privilege of tending to the tabernacle and temple and carrying out the sacrifices. Hence the Lord was their portion, and to serve Him and to be near Him was a better reward! By this arrangement a spiritual lesson is provided for all. Given the choice of land or the privilege of serving in nearness to the Lord, the latter was more preferable.

The fact that the priests received no territorial inheritance pointed to a greater inheritance found in the Lord Himself. Nearness to Him and the privilege of serving Him were the best inheritance a person could receive. Having submitted himself to the Lord (Ps 16:1-4), David sensed that he had received the better inheritance—the beauty and fulfillment of fellowship with the Lord. This can be true for us as well: the Lord and all His blessings are the best inheritance anyone could have. Nothing on this earth will satisfy us more than Him! Material things certainly cannot do that; neither can human achievements. What really satisfies and makes all the difference is fellowship with Him—for His Spirit to touch our souls deeply. Everything else pales in comparison with that. That truth is what makes the difference when we might be tempted to turn away from serving Him and doing His will. It is that truth that keeps us from forsaking the Great Commission. We know that there is nothing else that will ever satisfy us more than Him.

QUESTION 7

Which of the following accurately represents the principle that emerges from Psalm 16:5-6?

- A. Believers will not be satisfied by anything on earth and will find no spiritual satisfaction until they are taken to heaven.
- B. Based on the analogy of the Levites, who were not given a land portion as their inheritance, the best inheritance for any of us is found in being satisfied by the nearness of the Lord and in serving Him.
- C. Just as the Levites did not receive an allocation of land, so unfaithful believers may find themselves missing out on the Lord's blessings and rewards.
- D. Since all believers today are priests (unlike those in the Old Testament), we do not have to worry about receiving an inheritance.

Topic 3: Ps 16—Developing a Commitment to His Will (16:7-8)

A lordship decision of surrender is like a coin with two sides. It begins with a decision, but must be followed by an obedient heart. There can be no surrender to God without a commitment to obeying His will. Verses 7-8 address this important aspect:

7 I will bless the LORD who has counseled me;

even at night my heart admonishes me.

8 I have set the LORD before me continually.

Because He is at my right hand, I will not be overthrown.

Verse 7. David reflected on the counsel he had received from the Lord and the value in knowing God's will. God's counsel may have come by means of a prophet or perhaps directly, but primarily it was through His Word. The word translated "heart" in verse 7 is the Hebrew word *kilyôt*, which literally means kidneys. When David said, "Even at night my kidneys admonish me," he had

something in mind besides the literal organs. The kidneys are the twin organs in one's lower back. But in the sacrificial system when an animal was dismembered by the priest, the kidneys were the last organ to be reached. Hence, this became a figurative word for one's innermost being. The word "heart" is also used this way in the Bible (in fact, the word "kidneys" and "heart" are often used in parallel lines), and hence most translations simply use the word "heart" in verse 7.

Verse 8. In verse 7 David pointed out that the Lord had given him divine counsel (primarily through His Word). This divine counsel had made its way into the innermost part of David's being, and even at night the Spirit used this to admonish and instruct him. In an obedient response David said in verse 8, "I have set the LORD before me continually." By this statement we can see that David is focused; he was focused on the Lord and doing His will. That was David's target, and it was at the forefront of his thinking. Though David never lived up to this perfectly, the Lord Jesus did, and hence the highest fulfillment of this psalm comes with Him. Jesus could say without any hedging, "For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me" (Jn 6:38). At the end of His earthly ministry He could declare, "I glorified you on earth by completing the work you gave me to do" (Jn 17:4).

QUESTION 8

Which of the following verses best expresses David's commitment to doing God's will?

- A. Psalm 16:7a - "I will bless the LORD who has counseled me."
- B. Psalm 16:7b - "Even at night my heart admonishes me."
- C. Psalm 16:8a - "I have set the LORD before me continually."
- D. Psalm 16:8b - "Because He is at my right hand, I will not be overthrown."

Topic 4: Psalm 16—Experiencing Security from the Threat of Death (Ps 16:9-11)

As a man after God's own heart, David wanted to live a surrendered life before the Lord, that is, he wanted to live under the lordship of Yahweh his God. He set the Lord before him continually, seeking to obey the Lord. Did such a life of surrender and obedience rob David of all pleasure in life? Obviously not. The effect that it had on him is described in verses 9-11:

9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory (i.e., my tongue) rejoices.

Even my bodily flesh will dwell securely.

10 Because You will not abandon me to Sheol.

You will not allow Your faithful (godly) one to see the pit.

11 You will make known to me the path of life.

In Your presence is satisfying abundance of joy.

There is pleasure at Your right hand forevermore.

Verse 9. What is the result of a life surrendered to the lordship of God and coupled with obedience? The result is not despair and anxiety; the result is joy. The inner man has joy (note the words "my heart is glad" in v 9)! David added the thought, "my glory rejoices." Here the word "glory" is a metonymy for what caused or enabled his rejoicing, namely, his tongue. The Greek Septuagint, in fact, translated the verse using the word "tongue" in the place of "glory." The point of verse 9 is that David inwardly experienced joy (in his heart), and he outwardly expressed it (with his tongue). This

was David's experience, because he had surrendered his life to God and was set on obeying Him. This can be our experience as well.

David was so saturated with joy (inwardly and outwardly), that he even felt a sense of security or confidence in regard to his bodily flesh. In the latter part of verse 9 he said, "even my bodily flesh will dwell securely." Whatever threat he may have felt earlier concerning his life (recall v 1) had now been replaced by a sense of security that God had (or would) intervene on his behalf, so that he would not be cut off at this time. David did not mean he would never die; he well knew that in the course of time he would be laid in a grave, and his flesh would decay. Yet he was confident that God would protect him from a premature death.

Did David have some overzealous or unfounded expectation that bad things would not happen to him—that tragedy could not touch him as it touches other people? No. Rather it seems that in this case he had a sense of reassurance from God that everything was going to be alright at that time (see Acts 27:21-26). When we are walking in submission and obedience to the Father, no one can hinder God's plan for our life. We may suffer from the hands of ungodly people (as the apostle Paul often did!), but God has us here on earth for a purpose. If we are cooperating with Him in that purpose, we need not be afraid of anyone. Jesus walked in perfect obedience, and He never had to fear what man might do to Him. On one occasion He declared to those who threatened Him, "No one takes it [my life] away from me, but I lay it down of my own free will. I have the authority to lay it down, and I have the authority to take it back again. This commandment I received from my Father" (Jn 10:18). Eventually He suffered to the point of death, but this was part of God's will for Him. No one, however, cut His mission short. He did not get killed before the time came for Him to go to the cross.

QUESTION 9

When David spoke of his bodily flesh dwelling securely, what did he probably have in mind?

- A. That his resurrection body would be secure and live eternally.
- B. That nothing bad could happen to him as a believer.
- C. That as long as he took delight in the Lord, he would not die.
- D. That his life would not be cut off prematurely before the Lord's intended time for him to die.

Verse 10. David now stated the reason for this sense of security he felt: "because You will not abandon me to Sheol. You will not allow Your faithful (godly) one to see the pit." "Sheol" was a word used in the Old Testament for the realm of the dead (Ps 89:48), a lower world for the bodies of those who had died (Job 11:8; Ps 86:13; Isa 5:14). Notably both the righteous and the unrighteous would go to Sheol (Gen 37:35; Num 16:30). Essentially, then, Sheol was the grave where the body would be placed at death and where it would subsequently decompose (Job 21:23-26; Isa 14:11). David referred to it in the parallel colon of verse 10b as the pit. (The LXX translators rendered 10b: "You will not allow Your holy one to see corruption.") Unfortunately some translations have rendered "Sheol" in Psalm 16:10 as "hell" (so KJV), a regrettable error as Sheol is not the same as hell. Sheol is the grave, the place of the dead.

QUESTION 10

What is the meaning of Sheol in the Old Testament?

- A. Sheol is a synonym for hell, the place of eternal punishment for unbelievers.
- B. Sheol is another name for heaven, and is only for true believers.
- C. Sheol refers to the grave, where the bodies of all people (believers and unbelievers) will be placed at death.
- D. Sheol is a place where unbelievers go to decay, since they cannot be resurrected.

Yet Old Testament saints were not left to face a hopeless eternity, for the grave did not mean the end of existence. The bodies of everyone went to the grave, but that is not to say what became of their souls or that all souls went to the same place. Although the Old Testament offers little by way of detailed information regarding life after death, presumably the souls of the righteous were kept separate from the wicked.

As seen in Jesus' story about Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31, the souls of the righteous departed to what was called Abraham's bosom, whereas the wicked departed to Hades, a place of torment. Abraham, of course, was the father of the Hebrew people. So Abraham's bosom represents the patriarch's reception of the faithful to a place of comfort after their earthly life. (As Jesus promised in Lk 23:43 to one of the criminals crucified beside Him, "Today you will be with me in paradise.") The human body, however, was left to decompose in Sheol, the grave. The righteous (those, like Abraham, who believed God and had righteousness credited to them) had the expectation that they would ultimately be resurrected to everlasting life in the presence of God (Job 19:26; Ps 17:15; Dan 12:2). They knew the fact of resurrection, but not necessarily the precise time it would take place. They had a hint from Daniel 12:1-3 that their resurrection would be after a future time of unprecedented tribulation for the Jewish nation. Jesus taught that on the last day He would resurrect those who believed in Him (Jn 6:39-40; 6:44; 6:54)—a truth that Martha later acknowledged in John 11:24 (see also Jn 5:28-29).

In light of these verses and further New Testament revelation, we know that Old Testament saints will be resurrected at the end of the age (Mt 13:40-43), at the time of Christ's second coming in order to enjoy the kingdom He will usher in. They will take part in what is called the "first resurrection" described in Revelation 20:4-6, prior to Christ's reign on earth for a thousand years.

In Psalm 16:10 David was expressing his confidence that his present trial would not result in his going to the grave at that time. God's intervention in response to David's cry for help would prevent his premature death (see Ps 30:1-3). David reminded God that he was His faithful (godly) one. In the Hebrew text, this is one word, *ḥāsîd*. This word was used as a synonym for the faithful among God's people (Ps 12:1; 31:23). They were loyal to God's covenant, and thus were considered trustworthy (Ps 18:25). As a result, God's protecting grace rested on them (Ps 37:28), and His ears were open to their cry (Ps 4:3).

The words of Psalm 16:10 go far beyond the person of David. David was God's *ḥāsîd*, His loyal and faithful subject, and Jesus was infinitely more so. Jesus was the Faithful One. In Revelation 3:14 Jesus is called "the Amen, the faithful and true witness," and Revelation 19:11 describes Him in His second coming on a white horse and calls Him faithful and true. Ultimately, then, Psalm 16:10 finds its fulfillment in the resurrection of Christ Jesus. For this reason, the apostle Peter quoted Psalm 16:8-11 on the day of Pentecost in defense of Jesus' resurrection from the dead (see Acts 2:25-28).

So Psalm 16:10 has a partial fulfillment in regard to David, and a more ultimate fulfillment in regard to the Lord Jesus. In regard to David, his life would not be snuffed out early (though he would go to the grave). Thus he was probably thinking of an untimely death. He was confident that God would not allow him to die and decay in the grave at that time. In this sense God would preserve him from the decaying grave. In regard to Jesus, however, God would preserve Him from the decaying grave by way of resurrection. He would die, He would go to the grave, but He could not be held there. Both men experienced bodily security, but in slightly different ways. Allen Ross concludes, "Preservation from the decaying grave is the idea behind both David's and Jesus' experience, but with David it came through a *deliverance* from death, whereas with Jesus it came through a *resurrection* from death" ("Psalms," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 804, italics his).

QUESTION 11

Psalm 16:10 has a partial fulfillment in David, as God protected him from a premature death. How does this verse have a greater fulfillment in the Lord Jesus?

- A. God the Father protected Jesus from being killed by Herod the Great after His birth in Bethlehem.
- B. God the Father protected Jesus from Satan's efforts to kill Him in the wilderness.
- C. God the Father protected Jesus from being killed prematurely before He entered Jerusalem.
- D. God the Father allowed the Lord Jesus to be put to death on the cross, but He resurrected Him from the grave before His body began to decay.

Verse 11. David's joy had both a negative and a positive aspect. The negative aspect is what would not happen to him (being abandoned to the decaying grave). The positive aspect of his joy, however, is what he could anticipate happening to him. This is described in verse 11: "You will make known to me the path of life. In Your presence is satisfying abundance of joy." As a result of surrendering his life to the Lord and seeking to be obedient, David could look forward to experiencing the path of life. But what is this path of life? This Hebrew expression (*ōrah hayyîm*) occurs two other times in the Old Testament, both in the book of Proverbs (5:6; 15:24). A closely related phrase (the path of the righteous) occurs in Proverbs 4:18-19:

But the path of the righteous is like the bright morning light,
growing brighter and brighter until full day.

The way of the wicked is like gloomy darkness;
they do not know what causes them to stumble.

The path of the righteous stands in contrast to the way of the wicked. The path of life in wisdom literature, then, is that way of life in which one chooses to live by God's wisdom (revealed in His Word), and as a result experiences fullness of life while avoiding those things that would be destructive to life. Thus it speaks of the quality of life in the present. David could look forward to this kind of life as he continued in submission and obedience to the Lord. God had certainly done this already in David's life, and he could continue to look forward to this richness of life instead of an untimely death.

QUESTION 12

What is the path of life David spoke of in Psalm 16:11?

- A. Remaining physically alive rather than having to go to the grave.
- B. Continuing to live a good life and doing good deeds, so that God would give him eternal life when he died.
- C. Experiencing a full and rich life from God in the present age as a result of living in submission to the wisdom of God revealed in His Word.
- D. Receiving eternal life after one's life on earth in order to enjoy the delights of heaven.

David's positive anticipation, however, would go even beyond this life. Although David had confidence that he would not be subject to an untimely death at the present moment, he knew that eventually his body would have to give way to death. But joy would not end there; in fact his joy would make a quantum leap at the moment of physical death. The greatest joy of all would await the moment of being in God's presence: "In Your presence is satisfying abundance of joy. There is pleasure at Your right hand forevermore." There is wonderful joy now (v 9, "my heart is glad"), but there will be greater joy then (v 11b – "In Your presence is satisfying abundance of joy").

I am so glad that God has saved the best for last. Christians are the only people in the entire world who can actually look forward to death. If we have experienced joy at all in this life, we can be assured that this in no way compares to the joy that awaits us. “For the kingdom of God does not consist of food and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17). No wonder the apostle Paul could say, “For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain” (Phil 1:21). One day we will see God face to face and then spend eternity with Him. What could be more joyous than that? In that day, we will be dancing on the heights of joy. There will be joy unbounded, and there will be no sorrow. That is the finish line for us, brothers and sisters. That is where we are headed—to the ultimate experience of joy. It is that splendid thought that prompted the gospel song writer, Albert Brumley, to pen the line, “Some glad morning, when my life is over, I’ll fly away.” Yes, that will be a glad morning!



Assignment

- Read Mark 8:34-38. (This gives us a hint what radical discipleship means.)

QUESTION 13

Over the past two thousand years since Christ was here on earth, literally thousands of Christians have been put to death because of their faith in Christ. They became martyrs for the faith. No one of us know if we will be called on to lay down our life for Christ’s sake. However we should all be willing to do that (this is what it means to take up one’s cross and follow Christ). Open your Life Notebook. First, write down two things that, if you were to be killed today for being a Christian, you would regret having to leave behind. Second, write down two things you would be joyful about or would have to look forward to.

Psalm 16 closes with the affirmation, “There is pleasure at Your right hand forevermore.” The thought of being at God’s right hand is a spectacular thought. In fact this sets the stage for what we will consider in the remainder of Lesson 14, because in Psalm 110 David’s Lord (the Messiah) is invited to sit at God’s right hand. Having accomplished the work on earth the Father had given Him to do and having been resurrected from the grave, Jesus ascended to the right hand of God the Father. So the promise of being at God’s right hand finds its ultimate fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the place of honor and exaltation, which He so perfectly deserves!

Topic 5: Psalm 110—The Messiah at God’s Right Hand (Ps 110:1-7)

Psalm 110 is quoted or alluded to in the New Testament more than any other psalm, and in each case it refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. We can safely say that this is the most Messianic psalm in the entire Psalter.

Quotations and Allusions to Psalm 110 in the New Testament		
VERSE	QUOTATIONS	ALLUSIONS
Ps 110:1	Mt 22:44; 26:64; Mk 12:36; 14:62; Lk 20:42-43; 22:69; Acts 2:34-35; Heb 1:13	Mk 16:19; Acts 5:31; 7:55-56; Rom 8:34; 1 Cor 15:25; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12, 13; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22
Ps 110:4	Heb 5:6; 7:17, 21	Jn 12:34; Heb 5:10; 6:20; 7:3;

The superscription to Psalm 110 states, “A psalm of David.” Although some scholars debate the authorship of this psalm, the time when it was written, and the situation in view, there should be no hesitation in accepting the fact that David himself authored this psalm. This is the explicit teaching of the New Testament (Acts 2:34) and the basis for Jesus’ teaching on Psalm 110:1 (see Mt 22:43-44). Although the psalm is noteworthy for its revelation about the exaltation of the Messiah and His priestly ministry, the thrust of the psalm concerns His engaging enemies in battle and His victory over them. Regarding this latter theme, Psalm 110 has close affinities with Psalm 2. What the rebellious earthly kings are warned of in Psalm 2 (the Son’s anger), we see them experiencing in Psalm 110.

QUESTION 14

Of the following passages, which two have a close association with Psalm 110? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. 1 Corinthians 13
- B. Acts 2:34
- C. Matthew 5-7
- D. Psalm 2

Messiah’s Exaltation to Yahweh’s Right Hand (v 1)

Verse 1. Psalm 110 begins with David stating what Yahweh has declared about David’s lord.

Here is the Lord’s [Yahweh’s] proclamation to my lord:

“Sit down at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool!”

In the English text the word “Lord” occurs twice in this verse. In the Hebrew text, however, these are different words. The first is God’s personal name, Yahweh, and the second is the word *‘ādôn*, meaning lord or master, that is, one’s superior. (This is the same situation we saw in Psalm 16:2 involving two different words translated “lord.”) So, this is Yahweh’s proclamation to the one who is superior to David. Of course this immediately raises an important question: Who other than Yahweh God could be David’s lord? When he lived on earth, David was the king of the nation and subject to no other human. Yet David was conscious that God would do something special in the line of his descendants. This had been revealed to him when God made the Davidic covenant with him (2 Sam 7:8-17). With one of David’s descendants, God would establish an eternal throne and kingdom. As we saw previously in Lesson 12, this is the One that David spoke of in Psalm 2, the One whom the Lord would install on Zion and to whom He would give the nations as an inheritance. Solomon, of course, was called the “son of David” (for example 2 Chr 1:1), but although he typified the ultimate Messiah, it became obvious that the Davidic covenant would not find its proper fulfillment with him. In the course of time, then, the expression “son of David” became a way of referring to the Messiah, the one who will receive an eternal throne/kingdom and in whom Psalm 2 will be fulfilled. By the time of the first century AD, “son of David” had become a commonly understood reference for the

expected Messiah, as Matthew 12:23 reflects, “All the crowds were amazed and said, ‘Could this one be the Son of David?’”

QUESTION 15

Why would the phrase “the Son of David” be used as a way of referring to the Messiah?

- A. David was one of the most famous kings of Israel, and the people expected the Messiah to be another great king like David.
- B. Since God had made a special promise to David (with the Davidic Covenant), the people knew that one of David’s descendants would one day receive an eternal throne and kingdom.
- C. David was considered a man after God’s own heart, and the people hoped that the Messiah would also be like this.
- D. David was famous for his conquest of the nation’s enemies, and therefore the people hoped that Messiah would also defeat their enemies.

Against this background the Lord Jesus used Psalm 110:1 in challenging the authority of the Jewish religious leaders of His day. Following His entry into Jerusalem for the final week of His life, the religious leaders had sought to question him and discredit him in the eyes of the populace. Finally, after answering their questions, he put a question to them (Mt 22:41-46):

While the Pharisees were assembled, Jesus asked them a question: “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?” They said, “The son of David.” He said to them, “How then does David by the Spirit call him ‘Lord,’ saying, ‘The Lord said to my lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet’? If David then calls him ‘Lord,’ how can he be his son?” No one was able to answer him a word, and from that day on no one dared to question him any longer.

The Pharisees were trapped by their own words. They believed Messiah to be the son of David, and of course they acknowledged the Psalms as Scripture. Yet Jesus, in a brilliant tactical move (and because of His perfect understanding of Scripture), had forced them to consider something they were not prepared for. If David was speaking of Messiah in Psalm 110:1 (and they agreed he was), then it stands to reason that Messiah is somehow David’s lord, something that could only be true if He were more than a mere man. Although the Lord Jesus did not come right out and say it, His question to the Pharisees had brought them face to face with the reality of His deity. The Messiah (the Lord Jesus) was David’s lord precisely because He was God in the flesh. This would make His statements they had found so controversial to be perfectly plausible—such as “The Father and I are one” (Jn 10:30) or “The person who has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9).

QUESTION 16

Why did the Lord Jesus use Psalm 110:1 in His confrontation with the religious leaders?

- A. He wanted them to understand that the only way that David’s son could also be David’s lord was by being more than merely a man.
- B. He hoped that the religious leaders would honor Him by asking Him to be seated at their right hand, the place of honor and respect.
- C. He was trying to remind the religious leaders that there was nothing shameful in being born in the line of David, as He Himself was.
- D. He wanted the religious leaders to know that He had no intentions of harming them, since He only wanted to sit with them rather than argue and fight with them.

Psalm 110:1 was not only an important clue to Messiah’s real nature it also prophesied of His exaltation. Yahweh proclaimed, “Sit down at my right hand until I make your enemies your

footstool!” In the Old Testament to sit at one’s right hand meant to be given honor, authority, and prestige (see 1 Kgs 2:19). To be invited to sit at God’s right hand was certainly an honor too lofty for even the greatest of angelic beings to attain to (see Heb 1:13). One would not have guessed from a casual reading of this verse all that God intended in this statement, for its full intended meaning could only be understood in light of Jesus’ incarnation and suffering, followed by His resurrection and ascension. But Peter on the day of Pentecost quoted Psalm 110:1 as he unpacked its full-orbed meaning for those listening to him (see Acts 2:32-36):

This Jesus God raised up, and we are all witnesses of it. So then, exalted to the right hand of God, and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, he has poured out what you both see and hear. For David did not ascend into heaven, but he himself says, “The Lord said to my lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’” Therefore let all the house of Israel know beyond a doubt that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ.

So, in order to sit at the Father’s right hand, the incarnate Christ was resurrected and ascended to the very presence of the Father in heaven. Furthermore the honor and authority that awaited Him at the Father’s right hand was not merely a token reward but the magnificent honor of being declared Lord and Christ. Everything was thus made subject to Him. In Ephesians 1:19-23 the apostle Paul (alluding to Ps 110:1) spoke of:

... the exercise of his immense strength. This power he exercised in Christ when he raised him from the dead and **seated him at his right hand** in the heavenly realms far above every rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And God put all things under Christ’s feet, and he gave him to the church as head over all things. (emphasis added)

For this very reason, Jesus (in commissioning the disciples to their grand mission) told them, “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Mt 28:18). Yet despite His position of exaltation and authority, He is not using that to the fullest extent at this time. Psalm 110:1 also implies that there is an intermediate state to be considered: “**Sit down** at my right hand **until** I make your enemies your footstool” (emphasis added).

First, the words “Sit down” carry important implications. From the perspective of the Old Testament priesthood, the priests were constantly on their feet, not sitting. That is, there was no cessation to the sacrifices they offered as representatives of the Levitical priesthood. Year after year they offered the same sacrifices, which implied the offering of these animals never accomplished anything of enduring value—especially something so magnanimous as the permanent forgiveness of sins (even though the Old Testament sacrifices had their place and importance in time, since God had commanded them).

By way of contrast, the Lord Jesus Christ made a sacrifice that only had to be done one time, namely, the sacrifice of Himself on the cross for the sins of all mankind. Had it not been a perfect sacrifice, it would need to be offered again. Furthermore, as He was resurrected and ascended to the Father’s right hand, He brought His very own blood in payment of our sins. Notice carefully Hebrews 9:24-26:

For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with hands—the representation of the true sanctuary—but into heaven itself, and he appears now in God’s presence for us. And he did not enter to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the sanctuary year after year with blood that is not his own, for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the consummation of the ages to put away sin by his sacrifice.

Thus being invited to sit at the right hand of the Father (as Ps 110:1 announced would happen) has implications not only for honor and authority, but also for priestly ministry functions as well. This observation helps explain why David then proceeded in Psalm 110:4 to disclose Messiah’s priestly

qualifications. Jesus' sacrifice of Himself and bringing His own blood into the heavenly tabernacle would not need to be repeated. It was perfect, and therefore needed to be done only once. For this reason He could sit down at the Father's right hand, not merely go to heaven. In contrast to the Levitical priests He could sit down, because His sacrifice was perfect and did not need to be done again. A permanent forgiveness of sins was now possible. This is the very point the author of Hebrews made in Hebrews 10:11-14:

And every priest stands day after day serving and offering the same sacrifices again and again—sacrifices that can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, he **sat down at the right hand of God**, where he is now **waiting until his enemies are made a footstool for his feet**. For by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are made holy. (emphasis added)

We might say that His sitting assures us that our sins are forgiven—completely and forever—assuming we have done what God asked us to do, namely, to believe upon His beloved Son.

Yet there is a second implication for the intermediate period in the words “Sit down at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool!” The Son is asked to wait. This does not mean that He is inactive; rather the Father has determined that the Son's enemies are not ready to be engaged and conquered. But their time is coming. Now the idea of conquering enemies enters the picture, and this will occupy much of the remainder of Psalm 110. In considering this facet of Messiah's future, it would be helpful to keep the lessons from Psalm 2 in mind. In Psalm 2 the rebellious nations and kings were forewarned. Any plotting on their behalf against God's rule was doomed to failure. God, after all, had already determined to install His King on Zion, His holy mountain. Then, echoing the words of the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7:14, “You are My son,” God promised David's greater Son that He would “break them [the nations in rebellion] with an iron scepter” and “smash them like a potter's jar!” At the end of Psalm 2 they were exhorted to submit, and they were warned that His anger might “quickly ignite” (Ps 2:12).

QUESTION 17

Which of the following statements are true based on Psalm 110:1? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The Lord's invitation to “sit at My right hand” is accomplished by the resurrection of Jesus and His ascension to the Father's presence.
- B. The fact that the Messiah “sits” has important implications regarding His atoning sacrifice, namely, that He can sit because His sacrifice was perfect and complete.
- C. Since the Messiah “sits at God's right hand,” He is inactive in this present age and leaves everything for the Holy Spirit to do.
- D. The word “until” implies that the Messiah is presently waiting for the right time when He is to go forth and conquer His enemies.

Messiah's Dominion Over His Enemies (vv 2-3)

Verses 2-3. The anger that the kings and nations are warned of in Psalm 2 now becomes the subject of discussion in Psalm 110.

2 The LORD extends your dominion from Zion. Rule in the midst of your enemies!

3 Your people willingly follow you when you go into battle.

On the holy hills at sunrise the dew of your youth belongs to you.

The Hebrew text of these verses is difficult to translate, but one thing is clear: This pictures David's greater Son going forth in battle. The word translated “rule” in verse 2 (Hebrew *redēh*) could be

rendered “have dominion” (see 1 Kgs 4:24). This is a rule that is imposed by virtue of conquest that results in the Messiah having dominion. This is the same word found in Genesis 1:28 when God first commanded man to “exercise dominion” over creation. In Jesus we see God’s intention ultimately realized.

The words “when you go into battle” are literally “in the day of your strength.” The Hebrew word for “strength” in verse 3 (*hayil*) is a term often associated with military might. Psalm 18:39 states, “You give me strength (*hayil*) for battle; you make my foes kneel before me.” So the NET Bible translation “when you go into battle” is perfectly appropriate. But what battle is being referred to and when? Since the Lord Jesus is presently waiting, it is not a battle that can be equated with anything in church history up until the present time. Just as Psalm 2 finds its fulfillment in the time of the Great Tribulation, so does Psalm 110.

During the Great Tribulation (the 3 and a half years immediately preceding the second coming of Christ), God will pour out His wrath on a world that has rejected Him and has martyred His saints. The book of Revelation teaches that the beast (the Antichrist) and those in league with him will attempt to defeat the Lord Jesus as part of Satan’s effort to overthrow God. Regarding the kings aligned with the Antichrist, Revelation 17:14 states, “They will make war with the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them, because he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those accompanying the Lamb are the called, chosen, and faithful.” A description of the final showdown is given in Revelation 19:17-21. In the midst of this scene, the Lord Jesus Christ will return to earth to defeat all those who participate in the rebellion. The apostle John describes Jesus’ entrance with these words:

Then I saw heaven opened and here came a white horse! The one riding it was called ‘Faithful’ and ‘True,’ and with justice he judges and goes to war ... The armies that are in heaven, dressed in white, clean, fine linen, were following him on white horses. From his mouth extends a sharp sword, so that with it he can strike the nations. **He will rule them with an iron rod**, and he stomps the winepress of the furious wrath of God, the All-Powerful. He has a name written on his clothing and on his thigh: ‘King of kings and Lord of lords.’ (Rev 19:11, 14, emphasis added)

With this, Satan’s inflated scheme to overthrow God will fail. Multitudes will be killed in the battle, the beast and false prophet will be thrown into the lake of fire, and Satan will be bound and imprisoned (Rev 19:20—20:3). With this great victory over the satanic forces—liberating the world from the clutches of evil—the Lord Jesus will then proceed to inaugurate His millennial reign on earth of one thousand years (see Rev 20:4-6).

QUESTION 18

Based on our study of Psalm 110:2-3, we can conclude that the original mandate in Genesis 1 for mankind to exercise dominion will be fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ when He returns at the end of the Tribulation to defeat His enemies and establish His rule. *True or False?*

Messiah’s Qualification to Be Priest (v 4)

Verse 4. Suddenly the psalmist interrupted his description of Messiah’s day of battle to interject an important word about His priestly qualification.

The LORD makes this promise on oath and will not revoke it:

“You are an eternal priest after the pattern of Melchizedek.”

Here is a case where the Lord not only made a promise, but He reaffirmed it with an oath. (For a similar situation, see Gen 22:15-18 when God makes a promise by oath to Abraham.) The oath serves the purpose of affirming to everyone how certain this promise is and how unique it is. The author of Hebrews used this verse to show the surpassing greatness of the priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ in contrast to the priests of the Levitical priesthood. The New Testament is very explicit that the promise in Psalm 110:4 is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Quoting both Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110:4, the author of Hebrews (in Heb 5:5-6) explains,

So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming high priest, but the one who glorified him was God, who said to him, “You are my Son! Today I have fathered you,” as also in another place God says, “You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.”

The very fact that Jesus would be a high priest at all is rather startling. Scripture emphasizes that Jesus was born of the tribe of Judah and the line of David, a requirement for the One who would be the messianic king (Gen 49:8-12; 2 Sam 7). But in the Old Testament, the kingly line (at least for the southern kingdom) came through the tribe of Judah, whereas the priestly line was through the tribe of Levi. Thus, during the old covenant period, one could never be both king and priest.

Ultimately, however, the role of king and the role of high priest find their fulfillment in Messiah. In order for this to be, the Messiah would have to belong to a different priesthood, a priesthood that would still allow him to be a king from the tribe of Judah and the line of David. Psalm 110:4 shows us God’s plan that makes it possible for Messiah to be both king and priest. His priestly qualification is not on account of any association with the tribe of Levi, but rather in accord with the order of Melchizedek. This Melchizedek is a rather subdued figure in the Old Testament, referred to only here in Psalm 110 and in Genesis 14:17-24. Back before the Levitical priesthood was ever instituted, there was a man named Melchizedek, a priest of the God Most High. His very name (in Hebrew) means king of righteousness, and Genesis 14:18 states that he was also “king of *Shālēm*.” (This was an early place-name for Zion, i.e., Jerusalem.) So there is precedent in the Old Testament for someone being both king and priest, with his ministry based in Zion. The author of Hebrews went to great lengths to point out the significance of Melchizedek and Jesus’ relationship to him (see Heb 5:1-10 and Heb 7:1-28). He is obviously greater than any priest of the tribe of Levi.

QUESTION 19

The Lord Jesus Christ is both king and priest—a king by virtue of His descent from David and the tribe of Judah, and a priest by virtue of the fact He belonged to the tribe of Levi. *True or False?*

A careful observation of Psalm 110:4 reveals at least two important ways in which this promise marks Messiah as a greater high priest. First, the word “forever” (translated in the NET Bible as “eternal”) indicates that this priest—in contrast to Levitical priests—is superior. The Messiah is a priest forever (an eternal priest), whereas the Levitical priests only held their office as long as they remained alive. The author of Hebrews makes this point in Hebrews 7:15-17:

And this is even clearer if another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest not by a legal regulation about physical descent but by the power of an indestructible life. For here is the testimony about him: “**You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.**”

The word “forever” affirms that Messiah is a superior high priest, and so does the word “oath” (or sworn affirmation). Even though God cannot lie, He put Himself under oath in appointing the Messiah as a high priest. The author of Hebrews made this point in Hebrews 7:20-22:

And since this was not done without a sworn affirmation—for the others have become priests without a sworn affirmation, but Jesus did so with a sworn affirmation by the one who said to him, “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever’”—accordingly Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

What is clear from the discussion thus far about Psalm 110:4 is that Messiah is a high priest and of a better priesthood than those descended from Levi. From this the author of Hebrews makes his argument that the new covenant is superior to that of the old covenant originally made at Mount Sinai. If Jesus Christ is a superior high priest (being in the order of Melchizedek), then the covenant which He has inaugurated by His blood is superior to a covenant associated with the Levitical priests (and based on the offering of animal blood).

QUESTION 20

Of the following statements, which are arguments used by the author of Hebrews to prove the superiority of Christ’s priestly ministry? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The fact that Messiah is said to be a priest forever marks Him as superior, since the old covenant priests had a limited ministry (death prevented them from continuing).
- B. Since the Messiah is also the Creator God, He is obviously more powerful than any of the old covenant priests.
- C. Because the Lord Jesus had a forerunner (John the Baptist) to announce His ministry, He must be a superior priest.
- D. The words “the LORD makes this promise or oath” in Psalm 110:4 indicates that Messiah’s appointment to priestly ministry is underscored with an oath, in contrast to the Levitical priests who simply inherited their position based on family descent.

What then has this superior priest of Psalm 110:4 accomplished in His priestly ministry? First and foremost, He has presented a perfect sacrifice on our behalf, namely, His own precious blood. The author of Hebrews calls this “the hope set before us” (Heb 6:18) and then adds in verses 19-20, “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, sure and steadfast, which reaches inside behind the curtain, where Jesus our forerunner entered on our behalf, since he became **a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek**” (emphasis added).

Because of this aspect of Messiah’s priestly ministry, we who have believed can have the assurance that our sins are eternally forgiven.

Yet there is more to Messiah’s priestly ministry that needs to be considered. Another aspect is His ministry of intercession for the saved, helping true believers persevere (see Heb 7:25). Furthermore He dispenses blessings to those who participate in the new covenant, and in particular the blessing of the Holy Spirit. Looking again at Acts 2:33-35 we observe that Peter on the day of Pentecost linked Jesus’ exaltation to the Father’s right hand with the dispensing of the Holy Spirit:

So then, exalted to the right hand of God, and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, he has poured out what you both see and hear. For David did not ascend into heaven, but he himself says, “The Lord said to my lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’”

Messiah’s Victory in Battle (vv 5-7)

Verses 5-7. Returning now to Psalm 110, the remainder of the psalm returns to the theme of Messiah going into battle.

5 O sovereign LORD, at your right hand
 he strikes down kings in the day he unleashes his anger.
6 He executes judgment against the nations;
 he fills the valleys with corpses;
 he shatters their heads over the vast battlefield.
7 From the stream along the road he drinks;
 then he lifts up his head.

Verses 1-3 revealed that Messiah has enemies, that He will have His day of battle, and that He will assert His dominion over them. Now verses 5-7 depict Him in battle action. As previously pointed out, the fulfillment of this is found in the great end-times scenario as the Lord Jesus returns to earth to defeat Satan and those in league with him at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation. In verse 1 Messiah was exalted to Yahweh's right hand, but now in verse 5 Yahweh is at Messiah's right hand. The Psalms include several examples of the Lord being at someone's right hand (note Ps 16:8; 109:31; 121:5). This depicts the Lord's commitment to defend and be a source of strength. The day of His anger is what the kings were forewarned of in Psalm 2:5; 2:12.

Verse 6 graphically depicts the outcome of His unleashed anger. This is an extensive and decisive victory, just as Revelation 19:19-21 reveals. The final verse of Psalm 110 reflects His triumph. The imagery is that of a great warrior who has routed the enemy and pursued them in chase (a common scene in the Old Testament). With the victory won, there is finally a moment to pause for a refreshing drink by a water stream. Psalm 110:7 is not suggesting that the Lord Jesus will be literally thirsty after doing battle. Rather this is using common Old Testament imagery to reflect the fact that He will be the victor. The final colon of verse 7 confirms this interpretation: "he lifts up his head." This is a common Old Testament expression for one who is helped and thus made to be victorious or who is given dignity (rather than being put to shame). Psalm 3:3 states, "You, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the One who lifts my head" (NASB). In Psalm 27:6 the psalmist proclaims (in his confidence that the Lord would defend him), "And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me, and I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy" (NASB). Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ will indeed be the victor in that day!

Psalm 110 has much to teach us about Messiah Jesus. On the one hand He is a benevolent high priest to those who turn to Him in faith. On the other hand He can be to those who choose to be His enemies a mighty warrior unleashing His anger. Yet we must remember that the unleashing of this divine anger is because of His love for righteousness and hatred of sin that has invaded the realm of His creation. He will do what He has to do to put down the rebellion as a prelude to ushering in His kingdom of righteousness and peace on earth.

QUESTION 21

The last verse of Psalm 110 ends on the positive note, “he lifts up his head.” Our study indicated that this in an Old Testament expression that speaks of the Messiah being honored and made to triumph. Sometimes we who are Christians may feel that we are up against insurmountable odds in today’s society. An enormous amount of opposition is against Christianity all over the world. In some countries Christianity has even been declared illegal. In other places those who put their faith in the Lord Jesus and become Christians are subject to intense persecution. Even in many places where Christianity is legal and people have the freedom to come to Christ, those who do so may face ridicule and intimidation in many ways. Yet the truth is that Jesus Christ is the Lord, following Him is right, and those who serve Him are doing what they should be doing. In the final analysis, everyone will see that the Lord Jesus Christ is the true way. Open your Life Notebook. In light of this truth on how things will ultimately end with Jesus Christ returning in triumph, what practical implications does this have for how you should live today and for how you should carry out your faith?

Lesson 14 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Surrendering to God and allowing Jesus Christ to be the Lord of one's life is one of the most important decisions a believer can make (and is a prerequisite for being filled with the Holy Spirit). Of the following possible reasons why Christians might be reluctant to do this, which one is **not** correct?

- A. They want to remain in control of their own life, to decide for themselves what is best.
- B. They fear that if they surrender their life to God, He may ask them to do something they don't want to do.
- C. They know that surrender goes hand in hand with obedience, but they don't want to give up certain sin(s) in their life.
- D. Their government will not allow them to do this.

QUESTION 2

As David reflected on what surrender to God meant for him, he stated, "I have no good apart from You." By saying this, David did not mean that there was nothing else good in life but that (comparatively speaking) his relationship with the Lord meant infinitely more to him than anything else? *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

What did David mean when he declared, "I will not pour out their blood libations; nor will I (even) take up their names on my lips"?

- A. David refused to go to the tabernacle and participate in the animal sacrifices.
- B. David was referring to those who participated in pagan worship ceremonies (where drink offerings of blood would be poured out around an altar), and refusing to join with them.
- C. David refused to participate in the annual hunting games in which animals would be hunted down and killed for sport.
- D. David had a conviction that it was wrong to offer blood when making a sacrifice, and that only animals that had been roasted with fire should be offered as sacrifices.

QUESTION 4

When David said, "The LORD is my allotted portion" in verse 5, he was affirming a principle based on the tradition that Levites were not given a land portion as their inheritance, namely, that the best inheritance for any of us is found in being satisfied by the nearness of the Lord and in serving Him. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

When David spoke in verse 9 of his bodily flesh dwelling securely, what did he probably have in mind?

- A. That nothing bad could happen to him as a believer.
- B. That as long as he took delight in the Lord, he would not die.
- C. That his life would not be cut off prematurely before the Lord's intended time for him to die.
- D. That his resurrection body would be secure and live eternally.

QUESTION 6

In the Old Testament, Sheol is a synonym for hell, the place of eternal punishment for unbelievers. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

When Jesus confronted the religious leaders with the question about the son of David he quoted Psalm 110:1 to them, because if David was speaking of the Messiah in Psalm 110:1 (and they agreed he was), then it stood to reason that the Messiah is somehow David's lord, something that could only be true if He were more than a mere man. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

Which of the following statements is true based on Psalm 110:1?

- A. Since the Messiah sits at God's right hand, He is inactive in this present age and leaves everything for the Holy Spirit to do.
- B. The fact that the Messiah sits has important implications regarding His atoning sacrifice, namely, that He can sit because His sacrifice was perfect and complete.
- C. The word "until" implies that the Messiah will be allowed to reign as king only until the second coming; then He has to let the Father rule.
- D. The time when Jesus will begin to sit at the Father's right hand is at His second coming.

QUESTION 9

The suggestion in Psalm 110:2-3 that the Messiah is to "rule in the midst of your enemies!" and that "your people willingly follow you when you go into battle," had its complete fulfillment with the victory of Jesus Christ over Satan at Calvary. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

The Lord Jesus Christ is both king and priest—a king by virtue of His descent from David and the tribe of Judah, and a priest by virtue of the fact that God the Father appointed Him in Psalm 110:4 as a priest of the order of Melchizedek (a different priesthood altogether from the Levitical priesthood). *True or False?*

Lesson 14 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1

- B. The mention of those who worship other gods (v 4) may suggest that they were pressuring David to forsake the true God, the Lord.
- C. The reference to the grave and possible bodily decay (v 10) may suggest that David felt physically threatened by his enemies.

QUESTION 2: True [Furthermore the fact that David mentions a need for refuge suggests that he needed God's protecting help.]

QUESTION 3: False [God's personal name is Yahweh. The word 'ādōn is a word meaning lord, master.]

QUESTION 4: *Your answer*

QUESTION 5: *Your answer*

QUESTION 6

<i>Verses from Psalm 16</i>	<i>Depiction of what lordship meant to David</i>
Verse 2 - "I have no good apart from You."	What satisfies most in life is a close personal relationship with the Lord (not things, power, or prestige).
Verse 3 - "As for the holy (truly spiritual) people in the land, they are the majestic ones (the true nobles). All my delight is in them."	Those human relationships we value most among those around us are spiritually-minded believers who want to be faithful in walking with and serving the Lord.
Verse 4 - "Those who have quickly pursued another (god), their sorrows will increase. I will not pour out their blood libations; nor will I (even) take up their names on my lips."	Believers must not compromise with those who have no desire to be faithful to the Lord, and they must not envy those who seemingly prosper in this life while living in disobedience.

QUESTION 7

- B. Based on the analogy of the Levites, who were not given a land portion as their inheritance, the best inheritance for any of us is found in being satisfied by the nearness of the Lord and in serving Him.

QUESTION 8

- C. Psalm 16:8a - "I have set the LORD before me continually."

QUESTION 9

- D. That his life would not be cut off prematurely before the Lord's intended time for him to die.

QUESTION 10

- C. Sheol refers to the grave, where the bodies of believers (believers and unbelievers) will be placed at death.

QUESTION 11

- D. God the Father allowed the Lord Jesus to be put to death on the cross, but He resurrected Him from the grave before His body began to decay.

QUESTION 12

- C. Experiencing a full and rich life from God in the present age as a result of living in submission to the wisdom of God revealed in His Word.

QUESTION 13: *Your answer*

QUESTION 14

- B. Acts 2:34
- D. Psalm 2

QUESTION 15

- B. Since God had made a special promise to David (with the Davidic covenant), the people knew that one of David's descendants would one day receive an eternal throne and kingdom. [Messiah was called the "Son of David," because the people expected the Davidic covenant promise to be fulfilled in Him.]

QUESTION 16

- A. He wanted them to understand that the only way that David's son could also be David's lord was by being more than merely a man.

QUESTION 17

- A. The Lord's invitation to "sit at My right hand" is accomplished by the resurrection of Jesus and His ascension to the Father's presence.
- B. The fact that the Messiah "sits" has important implications regarding His atoning sacrifice, namely, that He can sit because His sacrifice was perfect and complete.
- D. The word "until" implies that the Messiah is presently waiting for the right time when He is to go forth and conquer His enemies.

QUESTION 18: True

QUESTION 19: False

QUESTION 20

- A. The fact that Messiah is said to be a priest forever marks Him as superior, since the Old covenant priests had a limited ministry (death prevented them from continuing).
- D. The words "the LORD makes this promise or oath" in Psalm 110:4 indicates that Messiah's appointment to priestly ministry is underscored with an oath, in contrast to the Levitical priests who simply inherited their position based on family descent.

[The other two statements may be true, but they were not used as arguments by the author of Hebrews to prove Jesus' superiority as priest.]

QUESTION 21: *Your answer*

Lesson 14 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1

D. Their government will not allow them to do this.

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3

B. David was referring to those who participated in pagan worship ceremonies (where drink offerings of blood would be poured out around an altar), and refusing to join with them.

QUESTION 4: True

QUESTION 5

C. That his life would not be cut off prematurely before the Lord's intended time for him to die.

QUESTION 6: False

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8

B. The fact that the Messiah sits has important implications regarding His atoning sacrifice, namely, that He can sit because His sacrifice was perfect and complete.

QUESTION 9: False

QUESTION 10: True

Lesson 15: The Glorious Future Reign of the Messiah in the Psalms (Ps 72)

Lesson Introduction

A number of years ago my wife and I drove our car up into the mountains of Colorado to backpack in the wilderness for several days away from the hectic grind of daily life. We hiked in the mountains until we found a small lake to camp beside. The scenery was extraordinary, with snow still to be seen on some mountain tops.

Not too far from our campsite was one of the highest peaks in the area. One afternoon I decided that I would try to hike to the very summit just to see what the view would be from that point. The climb was so steep and the elevation so high that I could go up only about six steps at a time before having to stop and catch my breath. I was struggling to get enough oxygen. Finally, however, I reached the summit, and looking back down I could see my wife far below. She now seemed the size of an ant. I realized that our perspective was radically different. From where she stood, she saw mostly steep mountain cliffs. But from where I stood, I beheld one of the most breathtaking scenes I have ever witnessed. Not only could I see for miles in every direction, but I could see over the mountaintop to the beautiful valley on the other side. This valley had no roads leading into it; one could only get there by hiking over the top of the mountain. Dotted with small lakes unhampered by human presence, it was certainly an earthly paradise. I had taken a look over the mountaintop, and in doing so, I had gained a vision of what lay on the other side.

Embarking on a study of Psalm 72 is like exploring a paradisiacal valley over the mountaintop. It depicts a vision of the far distant future when God will transform this world and bring everything under the rule of the most righteous and compassionate king that history has ever known. Psalm 72 offers us a glimpse to that future era when Christ will return to earth and rule over God's creation. In this, our final lesson and our final study of the Messiah in the Psalms, we will consider the future that Messiah Jesus will bring. Such is a fitting conclusion to our study of the wonderful Psalter of the Old Testament. As Christians, we have a hope that is undeniably certain for a future that is unmistakably bright!

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: An Introduction to Psalm 72

- The Background of the Davidic Covenant
- The Question of Solomon as Author and Key Subject
- The Placement of Psalm 72 in the Psalter
- The Structure and Outline of the Psalm

Topic 2: Prayer for the King to Render Just Decisions (Ps 72:1-7)

- The Opening Prayer for the King's Righteous Rule (v 1)
- The King's Defense of the Oppressed and Needy (vv 2-4)
- The Longevity and Blessedness of the King's Reign (vv 5-7)

Topic 3: Prayer for the King's Worldwide Dominion (Ps 72:8-14)

- The King's Universal Rule Envisioned (vv 8-11)

The Reason the King Is Worthy of Universal Rule (vv 12-14)

Topic 4: Closing Prayer for the King's Glory and Blessing (Ps 72:15-17)

A Prayer for the King's Welfare and Blessing (v 15)

The Anticipated Results of His Glory and the World's Blessing (vv 16-17)

Topic 5: Fathoming God's Vision for the World

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Gain a detailed understanding of Psalm 72 as a messianic psalm that finds its fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ
- Understand how Psalm 72 relates to both King Solomon and Messiah Jesus in fulfillment of the Davidic covenant
- Appreciate the sensitivity and concern that the Lord Jesus has for the poor, needy and afflicted of this world
- Look forward with great eagerness to the blessings that will be experienced in the future kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ

Preparing for the Lesson

Walking out the doors of the classroom for the last time, Kate Kutlow and Tom Blanchard headed for the Stardust Restaurant. All the students had agreed to meet there to celebrate their completion of the Psalms course. They had even invited Professor Perkins to join them. As everyone was finishing up the last few bites of food, Tom stood up and shared how much he had gained from his study of the psalms. His right arm was still in a cast from the car accident a few weeks earlier, but otherwise he was starting to feel his normal cheerful self. His eyes grew moist as he shared with the others how much this course had impacted his life.

"Before I took this course," he said, "I thought the book of Psalms was just some ancient poetry to console ourselves with when going through tough times. Now I see that it is far more than that. It is more about God who cares what goes on in my heart and how He wants my heart to appreciate Him and worship Him with all my being. But the book of Psalms is also packed with some of the richest theology in God's Word. Although the nations foolishly rebel against God and His plan, the Lord is sovereign over the affairs of mankind and has a plan to ultimately entrust the rule of the world to His beloved Son. When I saw how Psalm 2 found its realization with Christ's kingdom as portrayed in Psalm 72, I was just awestruck. Professor Perkins, we are really indebted to you. I remember what you said on the very first day of class when you told us, "This could be the most important course you will ever take in your college career. Some of you know about God, but you have not yet come to know Him intimately. You have sat through worship services time after time, but that does not mean you really know how to worship God. You cannot worship God who is so alive and active in human affairs, if you have not first cultivated a relationship with Him. And if you have not cultivated a relationship with Him, it is probably because you have not realized how desperately you need Him in all you do in life!" Wow, now I realize what you were getting at. I never want to harden my heart against the Lord. I want my heart to be sensitive to all He has to teach and show me. I want more than anything else in the world to be a faithful disciple, growing in the knowledge of Christ and faithfully serving Him. I can hardly wait until He returns to establish His kingdom."

After the lunch Tom asked Kate if she would like to take a walk along the river that ran adjacent to the college campus. After a few awkward moments of silence, Tom suddenly brought out a small package that he asked Kate to open. Kate stood there, stunned, struggling to find any words. “Tom, this is a diamond.” “Yeah, I know, Kate. There is just one more thing I would like to take away from this course. I’d give anything if you would be my wife. I want to be married to a woman who loves God and His Word as I do. Will you marry me, Kate?” Trying to steady her voice, Kate responded, “Tom, just this very morning I was memorizing the words of Psalm 84:11, “The Lord ... withholds no good thing from those who have integrity.” I’ve been praying ever since that day I saw you in the hospital that one day I could be your wife. Yes, Tom, I will marry you, and we will share the joy of the psalms all the days of our lives.”

Topic 1: An Introduction to Psalm 72

Before looking at the details of Psalm 72, we need to first consider some important things by way of introduction. First, since this is a psalm of kingly rule (that of Solomon), we need to consider how this relates to the promises of kingly rule for David’s descendants given in the Davidic covenant. Second, we need to consider the matter of authorship. Is Solomon the author of the psalm? Third, we must notice the strategic placement of Psalm 72 within the Psalter as a whole, coming as it does at the end of Book 2. Fourth, we need to consider the structure of Psalm 72 that provides us with the natural outline of the psalm.

The Background of the Davidic Covenant

Biblical scholars typically regard Psalm 72 as belonging to the category of royal psalms found in the Psalter. In these psalms the king receives the focus of attention. Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 also belong to this category. Not surprisingly these psalms often transcend the human king of the nation (whether David or Solomon) to find their highest fulfillment in David’s greater son, that is, the Lord Jesus. In light of the Davidic covenant, this is what we might expect. In this covenant (recall 2 Sam 7:12-16), God made a promise to David that one of his descendants would eventually sit on his throne and rule eternally. Based on this revelation from God, David—and others too—could anticipate that one of his descendants would have a very unique role to play in the history of the nation. Neither David nor any who followed him, however, knew exactly when and in whom this promise would be realized. What they did know was that David would be the head of a great dynasty (in contrast to Saul), and his line would continue forever.

QUESTION 1

Match each biblical covenant with the appropriate chapter from the Old Testament:

<i>Reference</i>	<i>Biblical Covenant</i>
Genesis 15	The Davidic covenant
Exodus 19-24	The new covenant
2 Samuel 7	The Mosaic covenant (the Law)
Jeremiah 31	The Abrahamic covenant

This covenant with David, though ultimately finding its complete fulfillment in Jesus, would nevertheless have a partial fulfillment with each Davidic descendant, beginning with Solomon. Solomon would be God’s son—being God’s representative ruler of the Davidic dynasty—and would

be disciplined when he committed iniquity (“When he sins, I will correct him with the rod of men and with wounds inflicted by human beings,” 2 Sam 7:14). As Solomon came to take his place on the throne as David’s successor, the people had high hopes for him as king. Even though there were some bright moments to his royal career, the course of history revealed that Solomon was not the one in whom the Davidic covenant would find its ultimate realization. In fact the latter years of Solomon’s life showed him to be a dismal failure. It is against this background that we need to see the significance of Psalm 72.

QUESTION 2

Circle all the following statements that are true about the Davidic covenant: (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The promise of the Davidic covenant was that David would be king after Saul.
- B. The Davidic covenant had a partial realization with Solomon.
- C. The Davidic covenant promised David that one of his descendants would eventually have an eternal throne and kingdom.
- D. All the Davidic kings were disciplined when they committed iniquity, including the king in whom the covenant found its ultimate realization.
- E. The Davidic covenant has its ultimate realization in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God in a much greater way than any previous Davidic king.

The Question of Solomon as Author and Key Subject

Scholars debate whether Solomon is the author of this psalm or whether he is the one to whom the psalm is dedicated. The Hebrew text simply has *lišlōmōh*, which is the preposition *lamed* (meaning to, for, concerning, or by) plus the name Solomon. This is the same construction we find in many of the psalms of David. (See the article “Introduction to the Psalms,” section IV C for a discussion and defense of this heading to indicate the author of the psalm.)

IV. Headings to the Psalms and Authorship

C. The Question of Davidic Authorship

The superscriptions of many of the psalms has the name David, but there is debate whether this means David was the author of the psalm or that the psalm stems from a collection ascribed to his name (perhaps dedicated to him or inspired by him as king). In the Hebrew text the name “David” is prefixed with a preposition known as “lamed.” This preposition could be translated “by, for, to (or dedicated to), of, concerning, or associated with.” Many conservative scholars prefer to regard this as a “lamed of authorship,” implying that David actually authored the psalm himself. Critical scholars (who do not accept the inspiration of the Bible) reject this notion, which allows them to date many of the psalms very late. Some (e.g., Pfeiffer) would even date many of these psalms in the Maccabean period of the second century BC.

While we cannot prove that every psalm prefaced with “lamed” on David’s name means that David actually authored the psalm himself, there is good reason to believe that this is the case. Consider the following:

1. 2 Samuel 23:1—David is called “Israel’s sweet singer of songs.” The historical books attribute poetry to David (cf. 2 Sam 1:17-27; 23:1-7).
2. Scripture testifies to David being a skillful musician (1 Sam 16:16-18) and a composer of songs (Amos 6:5). Also, Scripture attests that David was a singer of songs and the primary organizer of the musical guilds for the sanctuary (2 Sam 6:5; 1 Chr 15:3-28; 16:4-43; 23:1-5, 25; see also 1 Chr 13:8).

3. Psalm 18 explicitly denotes Davidic authorship. Other psalms are specifically attributed to incidents in David's life (e.g., Ps 7 and Ps 51).
4. David testified in 2 Samuel 23:2 that "the LORD's spirit spoke through me," which strongly suggests that he authored Scripture.
5. In one of the Qumran manuscripts found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (11QPsa Dav. Comp.), it is said that David composed 3,600 psalms plus many other songs.
6. New Testament writers (both Jesus and His apostles) built arguments on superscriptions implying Davidic authorship (Mk 12:35-37; Lk 20:42; Acts 2:29-35.).
7. A tradition is preserved in the Jewish writing, *Aboth* 6:9, that David was the author of the book of Psalms.

See the chart adapted from C. Hassell Bullock (*Encountering the Book of Psalms*, 26) on the next page.

Author Titles in the Psalms					
	Book 1 (1-41)	Book 2 (42-72)	Book 3 (73-89)	Book 4 (90-106)	Book 5 (107-50)
Moses				Psalm 90	
David	Psalms 3-32 (taking 9 and 10 as a single psalm, 34-41)	Psalms 51-65, 68-71 (taking 70 and 71 as a single psalm)	Psalm 86	Psalms 101, 103	Psalms 108-10, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138-45
Solomon		Psalm 72			Psalm 127
Asaph		Psalm 50	Psalms 73-83		
Sons of Korah		Psalms 42-49 (taking 42 and 43 as a single psalm)	Psalms 42-49 (taking 42 and 43 as a single psalm)		
Heman			Ps 88 (both "sons of Korah" and "Heman" are noted)		
Ethan			Psalm 89		
Anonymous	Psalms 1-2, 33 (but see Acts 4:25 in regard to Ps 2)	Psalms 66-67		Pss 91-100, 102, 104-6	Psalms 107, 111-21, 123, 125-26, 128-30, 132, 134-37, 146-150

Other than the Davidic psalms, the two largest collections are the psalms by Asaph (Ps 50, 73-83) and the psalms by the sons of Korah (Ps 42-49 and 84-85, 87-88). Asaph was from the tribe of Levi and helped with the ministry of the tabernacle in the days of King David. According to 1 Chronicles 6:31-32, David appointed many of the Levites to help in the musical service that took place at the tabernacle:

"These are the men David put in charge of music in the Lord's sanctuary, after the ark was placed there. They performed music before the sanctuary of the meeting tent until Solomon built the Lord's temple in Jerusalem. They carried out their tasks according to regulations."

Verse 39 states that Asaph, brother of Heman, participated. Further details are stated in 1 Chronicles 15:16-17.

David told the leaders of the Levites to appoint some of their relatives as musicians; they were to play various instruments, including stringed instruments

and cymbals, and to sing loudly and joyfully. So the Levites appointed Heman son of Joel; one of his relatives, Asaph son of Berechiah; one of the descendants of Merari, Ethan son of Kushaiah.

This Asaph must have written at least a few psalms, in light of 2 Chronicles 29:30. Yet some the psalms in the Asaph collection seem to have been written by his descendants. According to Ezra 2:41, the “singers, the descendants of Asaph” who returned from the Babylonian exile in the sixth century BC numbered 128. Psalm 74 is part of the Asaph collection, but verse 7 refers to those that “set your sanctuary on fire.” This is apparently a reference to the destruction of the temple in 586 BC by the Babylonians. From this we conclude that the “Asaph collection” may include psalms written by Asaph himself, but also psalms written by his descendants who continued to be identified with him while serving in the musical ministry of the temple.

The “sons of Korah” were another priestly family group descended from Levi. Korah was the great-grandson of Levi who led a rebellion against Moses and Aaron (Num 16). Yet his descendants became important supporters of David (1 Chr 12:6). So David gave two families of the Korahites the responsibility of keeping the temple gates (1 Chr 26:1-10; 26:19). Psalm 84:10, a psalm of the sons of Korah, proclaims the honor of standing at the threshold (or entrance ways) of the house of God. Like the psalms of Asaph, we cannot be certain of the author or date of any individual psalm of the sons of Korah.

Personally, I find it quite plausible that Solomon wrote Psalm 72, but if someone wants to translate this superscription as “For Solomon,” it is certainly legitimate to do so. (The NET Bible translates this “For Solomon,” in contrast to the NASB’s “A Psalm of Solomon.”) In either case, the psalm is essentially a prayer for Solomon and the rule that he will have over the nation. Some scholars even believe that the psalm was actually penned by David near the time of his death as it became apparent that Solomon would be his successor, and that the psalm was used for Solomon’s coronation. Of that we cannot be certain, but it does seem realistic in light of the positive sentiments expressed in this psalm that it would have been composed no later than the earlier part of Solomon’s reign before his heart was turned away from the Lord.

The psalm, with all its high hopes and aspirations for Solomon, could conceivably have been used for each successive Davidic king. Marvin Tate makes this insightful comment: “However, in its present canonical context, the psalm is a prayer for the future realization of the idealized hopes of monarchy, especially reflecting the hope of Israelites in exilic and post-exilic communities for the restoration of the Davidic dynasty and the fulfillment of the promises attendant to the Davidic kingship” (*Psalms 51-100*, p 222).

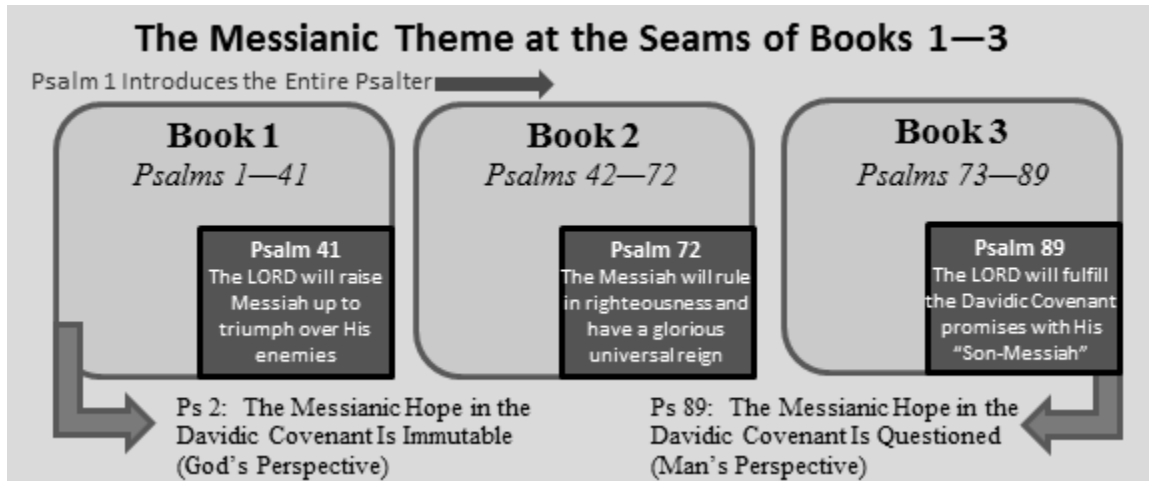
The longings for a righteous ruler and a righteous rule, however, would never be satisfied in any of the historic kings from the line of David. Furthermore, the expectations of the psalm—especially verses 8-11 depicting the extension of his rule to the ends of the earth—far exceeded the kings of Israel’s past. Only in Christ Jesus can they truly be met.

QUESTION 3

The superscription to Psalm 72, *lišlōmōh*, could be translated either “by Solomon” or “for Solomon,” but in either case it seems logical that the psalm would have been written before Solomon’s heart turned away from the Lord. *True or False?*

The Placement of Psalm 72 in the Psalter

In Lesson 6 of this course we considered the strategic role that Psalm 72 had in the overall structure of the Psalter. Psalm 72 is deliberately placed at one of the seams of the Psalter, and concludes Book 2. The following chart from Lesson 6 provides a helpful review:



In an earlier collection of psalms, Psalm 72 stood as the final and concluding psalm of what was essentially a collection of psalms by David. For this reason, verse 20 was apparently inserted by an earlier editor: "This collection of the prayers of David son of Jesse ends here." Yet as we have pointed out previously, the current Psalter has more Davidic psalms that follow Psalm 72. We mention this to clarify that verse 20 is not an inherent part of Psalm 72 itself. Rather it served a purpose in the history of the formation of the Psalter and was retained in the final editing.

From our studies in Lesson 6, we also concluded that Psalm 72:18-19 was a doxology placed at the end of Book 2, similar to the doxologies found at the end of Book 1 (see Ps 41:13) and at the end of Book 3 (see Ps 89:52). Although Psalm 72:18-19 is appropriate to the message of Psalm 72, it is not an inherent part of the psalm. With these observations in mind, our study of Psalm 72 focuses on verses 1-17.

QUESTION 4

Which of the following statements are true about Psalm 72? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. At an earlier time in the Psalter's history Psalm 72 stood as the final psalm in a collection of Davidic psalms.
- B. There are no more psalms authored by David following Psalm 72.
- C. Verses 18-19 of Psalm 72 are probably a doxology intended as a conclusion to Book 2 of the Psalter.
- D. Verse 20 ("This collection of the prayers of David son of Jesse ends here") proves that David was the author of Psalm 72.
- E. Verse 20 ("This collection of the prayers of David son of Jesse ends here") is a clue that the Psalter has gone through an editing process in which psalms were gathered into collections and merged together.

The Structure and Outline of the Psalm

The first observation that we should make is that Psalm 72 commences with an imperative in verse 1, and is balanced by a jussive (a prayer-wish) in verses 8 and 15. (Both the imperative and jussives are regarded as volitive verb forms.) For those who are interested in a more technical discussion about Hebrew verbs, you can read the following information. Otherwise you can skip this and continue reading.

Technical Explanation of Jussives

In Hebrew literature, the term “volitive” is used to refer to certain types of verbs. This would include the imperative form (a command or request). Yet it also refers to “jussive” verbs. The latter means a verb that expresses a prayer or wish, such as we find in verse 8: “**May he rule** from sea to sea.” A jussive verb sometimes will have a distinctive form, but at other times will be identical in form to verbs that we would think of as expressing the future tense, or what is usually referred to as “imperfect” verbs. (Strictly speaking, there is no future tense in Hebrew, but depending on the context a verb in the imperfect can be translated that way.) Hence, we must rely on the context in order to know if certain verbs should be understood as an imperfect (and translated in the future tense) or as a jussive (and translated as a prayer or wish). This explains why some Bible translations will render many of the verbs in Psalm 72 as jussives, while others will render them as imperfects (using the future tense). What is clear, however, is that we have a definite case of a jussive at verse 8 and at verse 15. These, then, seem to mark the beginning of new sections.

In light of this some scholars have concluded that Psalm 72 is composed of three major movements, one beginning at verse 1, another at verse 8, and the final one at verse 15. In each case the verses that follow seem to support or develop the lead statement of the respective section. The causal indicator at the beginning of verse 12 (“for”) signals that verses 12-14 are a subsection of Psalm 72:8-14, giving the reason why the king is worthy of universal worship. These structural observations are helpful for discerning the natural outline of the psalm:

- I. A Prayer for the King to Render Just Decisions (vv 1-7)
 - a. An Opening Prayer for the King’s Righteous Rule (v 1)
 - b. The Anticipated Results As The Prayer is Answered (vv 2-7)
- II. A Prayer for the King’s Worldwide Dominion (vv 8-14)
 - a. An Opening Prayer for the King’s Universal Rule (v 8)
 - b. The Anticipated Results As the Prayer is Answered (vv 9-11)
 - c. The Reason Why the King is Worthy of Worldwide Dominion (vv 12-14)
- III. A Closing Prayer for the King’s Blessing and Glory (vv 15-17)
 - a. A Prayer for the King’s Welfare and Blessing (v 15)
 - b. The Anticipated Results of His Glory and the World’s Blessing (vv 16-17)

Topic 2: Prayer for the King to Render Just Decisions (Ps 72:1-7)

The psalm begins by immediately turning to God and asking His blessing on the rule of the nation's king.

The Opening Prayer for the King's Righteous Rule (v 1)

O God, grant the king the ability to make just decisions!

Grant the king's son the ability to make fair decisions!

Verse 1. Although the first colon makes reference to the king and the second to the king's son, this is probably a poetic way of referring to the same person. If Solomon is in view—and I believe he is—he is the nation's king, and yet at the same time he is the famous son of King David. John Goldingay concurs, “‘The king’ and ‘the king's son’ are two ways of describing one person; the second may draw attention to the legitimacy of this king as the son of his predecessor” (*Psalms* 42-89, 384).

Being David's son, there is great hope for him in light of the Davidic covenant. As pointed out earlier, the initial verb (here translated “grant”) is an imperative. Yet the psalmist was not commanding God to do something, instead he was expressing his plea that God would act. Literally the first colon is translated, “O God, give your judgments to the king.” The NET Bible has translated this quite appropriately. The psalmist was asking God to work through the king, giving him the ability to rule and render decisions for the nation in accord with God's justice and righteousness that have been carefully spelled out in God's Word (see Deut 17:18-20).

Simply put, the king was expected to rule over the nation wisely—according to God's principles and without showing partiality in judgment. We see this demonstrated in the early course of Solomon's rule, as his fame for remarkable wisdom grew (note 1 Kgs 4:29-34). Solomon had prayed for wisdom and “a discerning mind [literally]” and “an understanding heart” (1 Kgs 3:9), and God answered his prayer (1 Kgs 3:12-13). This was soon illustrated when Solomon had to render a decision concerning the two women who came before him, each claiming that the living baby was her son (see 1 Kgs 3:16-28).

QUESTION 5

According to the view taken above, Psalm 72:1 is a prayer that both King Solomon and his son, Rehoboam, will rule wisely over the nation. *True or False?*

Although there is a partial realization of this prayer from Psalm 72:1 in the person of Solomon, the greater fulfillment will certainly be found in the Lord Jesus Christ. The prophets of the Old Testament, like Isaiah, predicted how Messiah's reign would be characterized by justice and righteousness. In Isaiah 9:7, for instance, we read, “His dominion will be vast and he will bring immeasurable prosperity. He will rule on David's throne and over David's kingdom, establishing it and strengthening it by promoting justice and fairness, from this time forward and forevermore.” The prophet Jeremiah later wrote, “I, the LORD, promise that a new time will certainly come when I will raise up for them a righteous branch, a descendant of David. He will rule over them with wisdom and understanding and will do what is just and right in the land” (Jer 23:5).

QUESTION 6

Which of the following Old Testament passages predict that the Messiah will rule righteously and with justice? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Jeremiah 23:5
- B. Psalm 23:1-3
- C. Daniel 7:13-14
- D. Isaiah 9:6-7

The King's Defense of the Oppressed and Needy (vv 2-4)

2 Then he will judge your people fairly,
and your oppressed ones equitably.

3 The mountains will bring news of peace to the people,
and the hills will announce justice.

4 He will defend the oppressed among the people;
he will deliver the children of the poor and crush the oppressor.

Verse 2. Because the king desired to establish justice and righteousness by God's help, the subjects of the king were blessed. To be a truly righteous king, his heart would have to be set on God's standards and God's interests, not man's. Human kings typically gratify themselves and favor those who can support them in power. Yet a righteous king does not show partiality, and thus he is concerned for all his subjects, especially those victimized by the ruthless and powerful. Earlier in the nation's history, Moses had admonished the judges of the people: "They must not discriminate in judgment, but hear the lowly and the great alike. Nor should they be intimidated by human beings, for judgment belongs to God" (Deut 1:17).

Verse 3. Psalm 72:3 uses a figure of speech known as personification. The mountains and hills are personified as bringing peace and justice to the people. Perhaps the intended idea is that runners would carry the good news over the mountains and hills that there was peace (Hebrew *šālôm*) and righteousness in the land on account of the king's godly rule (see Isa 52:7; Nah 1:15). Such news will be especially joyful in the day Messiah rules. The Hebrew word *šālôm* means more than peace; it means prosperity and one's overall well-being. The prophet Micah spoke of Messiah's coming and declared, "This one will be our peace" (Mic 5:5, NASB). He will not only bring true and lasting peace to our troubled world, but He will also make all things well and bring all facets of life into harmony with God's will.

Verse 4. This verse picks up again the concern for the oppressed that was previously stated in verse 2. The godly king is the king who is their defender. He will also deliver the children of the poor. The word translated "poor" (*'ebyôn*) means one who is needy, and is often used as a synonym for people who lacked food and adequate resources (Ex 23:11; Deut 15:11; Ps 113:7). This word is used fifty-two times in the Old Testament, underscoring God's concern for those who are poor and desperately needing help.

The Lord Jesus Christ will be an exemplary ruler. Far too often, people have been subjected to cruel and ruthless tyrants such as Herod, Stalin, or Hitler. The vision of Psalm 72 is for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to rule righteously over this world. The rich will not be able to buy His favor, and the downtrodden of life will be defended and treated justly. Justice will not be for sale, and favoritism will have no place.

QUESTION 7

The example that the Messiah sets for us in regard to the poor and needy is a reflection of the burden that God has for all those who are disadvantaged in life. Take a few moments to read and meditate on Deuteronomy 24:10-22. Try to extract a principle from these verses that would be applicable for Christians today. Write this principle in your Life Notebook. What is one practical thing you could do in the next couple of days to practice this principle you have discovered? Write your plan in your Life Notebook. After you carry out your plan, write down how it went and what you learned from this. (This is intended to help you become a doer of the Word [James 1:22, NASB].).

The Longevity and Blessedness of the King's Reign (vv 5-7)

5 People will fear you as long as the sun and moon remain in the sky
for generation after generation.

6 He will descend like rain on the mown grass,
like showers that drench the earth.

7 During his days the godly will flourish;
peace will prevail as long as the moon remains in the sky.

Verse 5. This verse begins by declaring that people will fear you. Who is meant by the pronoun “you.” Is this the king? Probably not. Recall that verse 1 was addressed to God. Also notice that verses 6 and 7 refer to the king in the third person. So verse 5 is talking about how the people will fear God because of the king upholding His justice and righteousness.

In the Old Testament, the concept of fearing God (or fearing the Lord) is very prevalent. We would encourage you to review the discussion of fearing the Lord in Lesson 10 and Topic 3 of this course. The person who fears the Lord is the person who faithfully worships Him, remains true to Him, and has a sense of accountability for being obedient to His ways (see Deut 6:24; 10:12; 1 Sam 12:14; Prov 14:2).

Psalms 72:1-4 records a prayer to God that the king will uphold justice and righteousness. As the king is faithful in doing that, his subjects see the blessing of living according to God's will and are motivated to fear the Lord and walk obediently.

QUESTION 8

Which of the following describe what it means to fear the Lord? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. To faithfully worship Him from the heart.
- B. To run away from the Lord because one is afraid to be near His presence.
- C. To have a sense of accountability for being obedient to the ways of the Lord.
- D. To be present in the church service every week and perform all the rituals.

Verse 6. The imagery of freshly fallen rain depicts how refreshing the reign of the righteous king will be. (For similar imagery, see Hos 6:3.) Although this could be partially true for any of the Davidic kings including Solomon, it will find its ultimate fulfillment at the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. At that time He will establish His kingdom on earth for one thousand years (see Rev 20:1-6). During this time the earth will be transformed and will experience a peace and blessedness unlike anything previously known. Writing centuries later than Psalm 72, the prophet Isaiah described the kingdom conditions in this way:

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious. (Isa 11:6-10, author's translation)

Verse 7. Psalm 72:7 informs us that in his day, the godly will flourish, and peace will prevail. The worshippers of the Lord Jesus Christ will not be a minority nor will they be persecuted. Instead they will have full freedom to worship the Lord openly and without any fear of repercussion, because the Lord Jesus will be king over the whole world. He Himself will teach the people, and they will willingly obey Him. Once again, Isaiah described this unique time that is coming:

In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law [or "instruction"] will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. (Isa 2:2-4, NIV84)

Oh, how the world needs this peace that only Jesus can bring!

QUESTION 9

After reading these passages on the blessed future that Jesus will bring, how does this help you cope with your present circumstances? Are you suffering discrimination or persecution for being a Christian? Are you ridiculed for being a Christian? Write down your thoughts about how you are being mistreated (or how you have been mistreated in the past). Knowing that we have a future that is glorious can give us hope for the present. What thoughts of hope do you gain from these passages? Write these in your Life Notebook.

Topic 3: Prayer for the King's Worldwide Dominion (Ps 72:8-14)

The initial prayer of Psalm 72 focused on the righteous character of the king's rule. That will now shift to a prayer for the extension of his rule to the ends of the earth.

The King's Universal Rule Envisioned (vv 8-11)

8 May he rule from sea to sea, and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth!

9 Before him the coastlands will bow down, and his enemies will lick the dust.

10 The kings of Tarshish and the coastlands will offer gifts;

the kings of Sheba and Seba will bring tribute.

11 All kings will bow down to him; all nations will serve him.

This king who is envisioned in Psalm 72 is so wonderful (because he rules righteously) that his domain must not be limited to that of a mere local ruler or national king. In the Hebrew text of verse 8, the word “Euphrates” is not present. Literally, the verse says his rule will be from the river to the ends of the earth. However, the translators of the NET Bible have justifiably added the word “Euphrates.” Several times in the Old Testament, reference was made to the river in a context in which the Euphrates River was clearly understood (see Josh 24:2). By comparing the verses describing the land originally promised to Abraham by covenant, we observe that the boundaries extended to the Mediterranean Sea on the west and to the Euphrates River on the north (Gen 15:18; Deut 11:24; Josh 1:4). But the king of Psalm 72 will rule not merely over a kingdom stretching to the Mediterranean Sea; rather it will be from sea to sea (Ps 72:1). His kingdom will not end at the Euphrates River; it will extend to the ends of the earth.



QUESTION 10

The area of rule promised to the king in Psalm 72 is identical to the boundaries of the land once promised to Abraham. *True or False?*

Quite obviously neither David, Solomon nor any other ancient king was privileged to rule over a kingdom that even began to approach such vast worldwide dimensions. Verse 8 can be fulfilled only in the Lord Jesus. David, who authored Psalm 2, understood that his greater Son (in whom the Davidic covenant would be fulfilled) would indeed have universal dominion. Recall from Lesson 12 what David proclaimed in Psalm 2:7-9:

7 The king says, “I will announce the LORD’s decree.

He said to me: ‘You are my son! This very day I have become your father!’

8 Ask me, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance,
the ends of the earth as your personal property.

9 You will break them with an iron scepter;
you will smash them like a potter’s jar!”

Verse 7. What is promised to David’s greater Son in Psalm 2 is anticipated in Psalm 72! To achieve this, a mighty act of judgment will be necessary, just as Psalm 2:9 foretold (see Rev 19:15). Yet God does this with the best of intentions: that wickedness may be removed from the earth and His salvation be extended to all nations. The following verses amplify this:

He [the LORD] says: “It is too small a thing for you [the Messiah] to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.” (Isa 49:6, author’s translation)

The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God. (Isa 52:10, author’s translation)

Verse 8. The prayer of Psalm 72:8, “May he rule from sea to sea,” has a deeper implication that needs to be noted. The word translated “rule” is the Hebrew word *rādāh*. The same word was used in Genesis 1:28 when God created the first couple: “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it! **Rule over** the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that moves on the ground’” (emphasis added).

God’s original intention for man was for him to rule over everything that God had created on earth (see Ps 8:3-8). We might even go so far to say that man was created to be a king, though a king operating in submission to God and His perfect will. That original plan was disrupted by the fall of man in the garden. As a consequence not all things are subject to man today. The good news is that Jesus will regain this right to rule for man (see Heb 2:5-9). To do this, He first had to suffer for the sins of all mankind on the cross. Later, He will defeat Satan at the time of His second coming, and then establish His kingdom on earth. The right to rule in this new order will then be given as a reward to those who faithfully endure in being His disciples during this interim period (between His two comings).

You might wish to study 2 Timothy 2:12, and then compare 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 and Revelation 2:25-28. Because He humbled Himself to become a man and go to the cross, Jesus will regain the right for man to rule over God’s creation. This right will not be entrusted to everyone, but to those who have been faithful to Him in the present age. What a powerful motivation this is to be a faithful disciple of Jesus! If we are faithful, we will be made co-rulers with Him in His future kingdom.

QUESTION 11

In what way will God’s original intention for man to rule over creation be fulfilled?

- A. God’s intention for man to rule has already been fulfilled in history through kings and rulers who have governed the nations of the world; no other fulfillment is necessary.
- B. All who have accepted Jesus as their Savior will be given the privilege of ruling.
- C. Jesus Christ will be the only one to rule over God’s creation, and the mandate in Genesis 1:28 applies only to Him.
- D. Jesus Christ will be the supreme king and ruler of the world on His return in glory, but He will reward faithful disciples—those who have endured for His sake—with the privilege of reigning with Him.

Verse 9-11. These verses amplify the prayer for universal dominion expressed in verse 8. The NET Bible translates verse 9a, “Before him the coastlands will bow down.” Most other translations have something like “desert nomads” or “desert tribes” rather than “coastlands.” The Hebrew text has the word *šyyîm*, which means a desert dweller. The NET Bible, however, has opted for a reading in another early translation known as the Syriac Peshitta, which apparently understands the Hebrew original as *’iyyîm*, meaning “coastlands” (i.e., regions of the Mediterranean). Either word would fit the context (note that “coastlands” does appear in v 10). The idea of the king’s enemies licking the dust in verse 9b is a way of expressing how they will bow before him in submission (see Isa 49:23).



This submission by the nations to God’s righteous king is expressed in Psalm 72:10 by their act of bringing gifts and tribute. Representative nations include Tarshish, Sheba, and Seba. These place names are difficult to identify today. Many suggestions, for example, have been made for Tarshish. Some think it may be an area of Arabia, based on its association in Ezekiel 38:13 with Arabian peoples (see 2 Chr 20:36), yet others link it with Greece and the Mediterranean world on the basis of Genesis 10:4. Marvin Tate notes that Tarshish is usually identified as Phoenician Tartessus in southern Spain (*Psalms 51-100*, 221). Others, however, locate it on the island of Sardinia in the Mediterranean, or with ancient Carthage, or even with Tarsus in Turkey. We simply cannot be certain

today. Sheba, on the other hand, is almost certainly one of the more prominent Arab territories, often equated with modern-day Yemen. Seba appears to be a location in either Arabia or Ethiopia (see Gen 10:7; Job 1:15 Isa 43:3; 45:14; Joel 3:8).

There is, of course, a partial fulfillment of verse 10 with Solomon. Among those who brought tribute to Solomon was the queen of Sheba (1 Kgs 4:21; 4:34; 10:1-29). She praised his wisdom and gave him many gifts, including gold. In the greater fulfillment of Psalm 72:10 with the Lord Jesus, we see (a) a prelude to this gift-giving by the Magi in Matthew 2:11, (b) a presenting of wealth by the nations when Jesus will establish the millennial kingdom (Zech 14:14), and (c) a climactic scene in Revelation 21:24-26 in which the kings of the earth bring their glory (i.e., their wealth) into the New Jerusalem of the eternal state.

Psalm 72:11 adds the thought that all kings will bow down to him, and all nations will serve him. Places like Tarshish and Sheba are only examples of what all kings and nations will do. The entire world will honor Jesus, the King of kings, and rightfully so!

The Reason the King is Worthy of Universal Rule (vv 12-14)

12 For he will rescue the needy when they cry out for help,

And the oppressed who have no defender.

13 He will take pity on the poor and needy;

the lives of the needy he will save.

14 From harm and violence he will defend them;

He will value their lives.

Verse 12-13. The word “for” at the beginning of verse 12 indicates that this paragraph gives the reason why the kings and nations of the preceding paragraph will bow before Him and honor Him. Although it is true that the Lord Jesus will return in power and judgment at His second coming to conquer the Antichrist and those nations in league with him, we should not think that the remaining nations at that time will bow before Him simply because He is a conquering king. That would not make Him much different from hundreds of other tyrants that have ruled throughout history. A. F. Kirkpatrick wrote, “His claim to this universal homage rests not on the strength of his armies but on the justice and mercifulness of his rule” (*The Book of Psalms*, 421). Verses 12-14 inform us that He is indeed worthy of being king, because He has a heart of compassion for the oppressed, the needy, and the poor. This theme is similar to what we have already seen in verses 2-4. In that earlier paragraph, the psalmist prayed that God would raise up a king concerned for righteousness. In verses 12-14 this theme is presented as a confident statement of what this king will be and do. Was this accurately fulfilled in Solomon? Not if the testimony of his subjects is taken into account. When it came time for Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, to rule in his father’s place, the people declared, “Your father made our yoke hard; now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you” (1 Kgs 12:4, NASB). They felt that Solomon was oppressive.

QUESTION 12

Which of the following statements best reflects the relationship of verses 12-14 with the preceding paragraph in verses 8-11?

- A. There is no relationship between these paragraphs: the first discusses the extensive domain of the king and the second his power.
- B. The word “for” at the beginning of verse 12 indicates that the second paragraph gives the reason all the nations will submit to this king and serve him, namely, because they recognize he is worthy (he is compassionate and a deliverer of the needy).
- C. The word “for” at the beginning of verse 12 signals that because the king rules over all the nations, he is obligated to take care of all his subjects (including the needy).
- D. The relationship between the paragraphs is reflected in the gifts: in the first paragraph the king receives gifts, and in the second paragraph he gives these gifts to the poor.

Even a cursory reading of the Gospel accounts is enough to sense how accurately these verses are fulfilled in the Lord Jesus. Mark 6:34 gives one such example, “As Jesus came ashore he saw the large crowd and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he taught them many things.” Following this moment, He then performed the miracle of feeding the five thousand. On many other occasions He helped the poor, delivered people in peril, healed the sick, freed those who were indwelt by demons, and exercised compassion on those who were needy.

Verse 14. Many of these people referred to in Psalm 72 are not poor and needy simply because of bad breaks they have had in life. They have been the victims of oppression and violence. Others have taken advantage of them and made themselves rich at their expense. They have been exploited and bullied by the powerful and ruthless in society. This is a situation that God hates. Yet verse 14 indicates that this king will defend them. The word translated “defend” is the Hebrew word normally translated “redeem” (*gā'al*), and from this we derive the idea of the kinsman-redeemer (like Boaz in the story of Ruth) who has the role of protecting the family interests (see Ps 69:18). Even so, Jesus is the ultimate Redeemer who defends the lives of His subjects. The final colon of verse 14 states, “he will value their lives.” Literally, the Hebrew reads, “Their blood is precious [or highly valued] in his sight.” The word “blood” is a figure of speech that represents the life of the person (a metonymy—the blood that is responsible for the life).

QUESTION 13

The word translated “defend” in verse 14 is the Hebrew word *gā'al*, which normally means to redeem and from which we get the idea of the kinsman-redeemer who has responsibility for protecting those under his care. *True or False?*

Messiah Jesus is undeniably the perfect defender of the poor, needy and oppressed mentioned in this paragraph. As such He models what God had called for over and over throughout the pages of the Old Testament, that is, compassion and mercy on the helpless—especially widows and orphans.

In Exodus 22:22-23 God declared, “Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry.” In similar fashion Psalm 68:5 instructs us, “A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling” (author’s translation). To this could be added Psalm 35:10, “My whole being will exclaim, ‘Who is like you, O LORD? You rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who rob them.’” Hundreds of similar verses could be cited that show God’s special concern for the poor, needy and oppressed. As king, Jesus will rule over the world without showing partiality. Those who might wish to exploit the poor and helpless will find no sympathy or place in His courts.

What makes for a great leader? Naturally, many things could be mentioned. A leader must be an intelligent person. He needs to be able to see problems and come up with creative and effective solutions. He needs to be a charismatic person who can rally others to a cause. He needs to be eloquent in his speech and motivating. The list could go on and on. Yet of all the qualities that make a leader great, perhaps the aspect of being other-centered ought to be near the top of the list. Men who use their positions of power to serve others rather than their own selfish interests are great leaders. Even the non-Christian world recognizes this; they admire such noble leaders. We could, however, take this one step further: leaders who use their positions of power to serve others and who are particularly looking after the needy and afflicted are not only great; they are rare!

QUESTION 14

Now it is time to think through the practicality of being other-centered. Consider the case of a politician, a shop owner of building supplies, and a pastor. What is something practical that each of these could do to practice being other-centered? Now think about yourself for a moment. Make a plan for one thing you will do in the next week as an act of being other-centered. After you have done this, record the results of your experience.

Jesus certainly set the benchmark in this area. In Mark 10:45 Jesus said, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Here we have the God of glory who humbled Himself to become a man, but does He demand all the respect and dignity that such a person deserves? No, He was here to serve others. In doing so, He allowed Himself to be ridiculed, spat on and even crucified for the sins of mankind. He took time to heal a blind person, not for the sake of gaining money, but because He was compassionate. He could have restricted His ministry to the wealthy class of the Jews of His day (those who could have supported and launched His political career), but He did not choose to do that. He even shocked the people of means by challenging them to break out of their social norms—not only to reach out to the less fortunate but even to associate with them. Luke 14:1-14 records the behavior of Jesus while dining in the home of a prominent Pharisee. In verses 12-14 we read,

He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you host a dinner or a banquet, don’t invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors so you can be invited by them in return and get repaid. But when you host an elaborate meal, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. Then you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Jesus was a different kind of leader. He did not have the kind of prejudices that tarnish the character of other leaders. Not only did He Himself associate with the downtrodden and needy, but He was also constantly caring for them. He did not topple the establishment in an effort to revolutionize the social strata, but He consistently exemplified a compassion, respect, and concern for the needy. One day He will come back, and then He will right the social wrongs of our world. Positions in society will even be reversed. “But many who are first will be last, and the last first” (Mk 10:31).

Money. Influence. Power. Position. These are the things the world says you must have to be somebody important, even if other people get run over in the process. Can the poor get access to the same justice as the rich in our present world order? Most often, no. But this shall not be characteristic of Christ’s kingdom. He recognizes who the truly great people are, and some who do not have the credentials of the world are highly esteemed in God’s eyes. They may be abused now, but not always.

QUESTION 15

Match the following Scripture references with the correct verse.

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Verse</i>
Mark 6:34	But when you host an elaborate meal, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. Then you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.
Mark 10:45	As Jesus came ashore he saw the large crowd and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.
Luke 14:13-14	For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.
Mark 10:31	But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

Topic 4: Closing Prayer for the King's Glory and Blessing (Ps 72:15-17)

Since verses 18-20 are part of the closing to Book 2 at the seam of the Psalter (a doxology and editorial comment), verses 15-17 form the finale to Psalm 72. This is a praise section for the king wondrously described in the preceding verses. He is righteous, ensures justice to all, rules eternally, has a universal kingdom and delivers those who are needy and oppressed. Hence, he deserves the highest praise.

15 May he live! May they offer him gold from Sheba!

May they continually pray for him!

May they pronounce blessings on him all day long!

16 May there be an abundance of grain in the earth;

on the tops of the mountains may it sway!

May its fruit trees flourish like the forests of Lebanon!

May its crops be as abundant as the grass of the earth!

17 May his fame endure!

May his dynasty last as long as the sun remains in the sky!

May they use his name when they formulate their blessings!

May all nations consider him to be favored by God!

A Prayer for the King's Welfare and Blessing (v 15)

Verse 15. The first line “May he live!” is actually only one word in the Hebrew text. This is probably equivalent to the expression “Long live the king,” that one offers in celebration of a new king’s reign. The expression conjures up memories of the coronation of the first king of Israel recorded in 1 Samuel 10:17-27. When Samuel gathered the people at Mizpah and presented Saul as the king for the nation, the majority of the people shouted, “Long live the king!” Except for the addition of the word “king,” the expression is identical in the Hebrew text to what we have in Psalm 72:15.

We can see from the context of 1 Samuel 10 that this was a response of loyalty and an affirmation that the people were supportive of the choice of this man as king. Although the people of Saul's day would live to regret their first king, how much more fitting are the words "Long may he live" for the nation's final king! The whole world will rejoice on His coronation, affirming His right to be the worldwide king and expressing their support for Him.

One may wonder about the relevance of the expression "May they offer him gold from Sheba" for the messianic King. The answer is probably to be found in recognizing the allusion this has to an incident in the life of Solomon. According to 1 Kings 10:10 the Queen of Sheba gave a massive amount of gold to Solomon on her visit to meet him and examine his wisdom for herself. In the verse just before that, she exclaimed to Solomon, "May the LORD your God be praised because he favored you by placing you on the throne of Israel! Because of the LORD's eternal love for Israel, he made you king so you could make just and right decisions." Just as Solomon was honored with gold from Sheba and was praised as God's chosen and blessed king, the Messiah will be honored all the more when He takes up His throne.

QUESTION 16

While it is certainly possible that literal gold will be given to the messianic King, Psalm 72:15 may be thinking of the honor that will be given Him in light of its allusion to an event in Solomon's life.
True or False?

The Anticipated Results of His Glory and the World's Blessing (vv 16-17)

Verse 16. Under His righteous rule (when warfare and oppression of people have ceased), the earth will experience a time of unparalleled abundance and prosperity. The author used a figure of speech known as hyperbole (deliberate exaggeration) to bring this out. Even the hilltops are said to be flourishing with grain. Lebanon was famous in antiquity for its towering cedar trees, and the earth will be so productive at the time of the Messiah's reign that the standing grain in the fields may be likened to the tall cedars of Lebanon. The ripened grain stalks will not literally wave as tall as these cedar trees. This is just a poetic way of expressing how abundant the agricultural harvests will be at that time (see Gen 49:10-12; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13-15). Furthermore the earth's blessed conditions will extend to areas other than agricultural.

QUESTION 17

In light of verse 16 we can anticipate that agricultural crops in the time of the Messiah's reign will literally grow to be as tall as the cedars of Lebanon. *True or False?*

Verse 17. The first half of verse 17 is concerned for the king's name. Literally, this could be translated: "May his name endure forever; may his name continue as long as the sun (shall shine)." This has to do with the exaltation of his name throughout the entire earth. Part of God's promises to Abraham had to do with his name. God said to him, "Then I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great" (Gen 12:2). As we think of the fulfillment of Psalm 72 in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are made to think of His name being made great, that is, exalted in the time of His glorious kingdom on earth. Right now in history, the name of the Lord Jesus is not exalted as it should be. Men worship other so-called deities, follow other religions, and most do not give their worship and allegiance to the Lord Jesus. One day this will change, for Philippians 2:9-11 teaches:

As a result God exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

The second coming of Jesus Christ will certainly change the way people think of Him. This was accurately foretold by the prophet Zechariah over 500 years before His birth in Bethlehem. Following His return to deliver His people from tribulation, we are told, “And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be *the only* one, and His name *the only* one” (Zech 14:9, NASB). He will have no rival in that day! No one but Jesus will be worshipped. No one but Jesus will be recognized as the legitimate ruler and king of the earth.

QUESTION 18

What does the wish in verse 17 that His name might endure forever anticipate?

- A. The name of Jesus will always be remembered in history books.
- B. The name of Abraham will be remembered in many religious faiths.
- C. The name of Jesus will eventually be exalted throughout the entire earth.
- D. The name of Solomon will always be remembered as the wisest man who ever lived.

The latter half of verse 17 reflects the remainder of the Abrahamic promise in Genesis 12:3, teaching us that the Abrahamic covenant will ultimately be fulfilled in the Davidic king (that is, Jesus). In Genesis 12:3 God had promised, “and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (NASB). This could be translated as a reflexive rather than in the passive voice: “and all the families of the earth will bless one another by your name” (so NET Bible). In either case, Psalm 72:17 certainly has Genesis 12:3 in mind. The following chart compares a literal translation of Psalm 72:17b with that of the NET Bible:

Translation	First Colon of vs 17b	Second Colon of vs 17b
Literal	“Let them bless themselves in (or by) him” Or “let them be blessed in him”	“Let all nations call him blessed”
NET Bible	“May they use his name when they formulate their blessings!”	“May all nations consider him to be favored by God!”

With the possible exception of John 3:16, Genesis 12:3 captures more of the essence of the Bible than almost any other verse. God’s desire from the very beginning was to create man to experience His blessing, for after the creation of the first man and woman we are told, “God blessed them” (Gen 1:28). Yet in the chapters that follow, man sinned and went his own way, so that the nations of the world were scattered in chaos across the face of the earth, deluded by idolatry rather than partaking of God’s blessing. Hence God began again, as it were, by creating a new nation from the stock of Abram.

The purpose of this new nation is epitomized in the words of Genesis 12:3, “And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (NASB). The rest of the Bible is about how God achieves the fulfillment of this promise to bless all peoples on earth through Abram’s seed. For out of the seed of Abram came the nation of Israel (which gave us the Scriptures), and ultimately the Messiah. The Messiah would take on Himself the sin of the world, send forth the Holy Spirit and ultimately establish His kingdom on earth under His righteous rule. Therefore when we read in Psalm 72:17,

“All nations will be blessed by him, and they will call him blessed,” (author’s translation) we should realize that God has fulfilled that promise made to Abram through the rule of Messiah Jesus as King of the world.

God’s promises and purposes will be achieved, and man will partake of the richness of God’s blessing that He has long desired to bestow on man. This full bestowal of blessing will not be limited to one nation, however. This will be for all nations and all peoples, whether they be Jew, German, Chinese, Arab, or American.

QUESTION 19

The latter half of Psalm 72:17 reflects God’s desire to bless the world (which He will do through King Jesus). This fulfills the promise originally made to Abraham in Genesis 12. *True or False?*

Topic 5: Fathoming God’s Vision for the World

What a vision God has for the world, a vision that will receive its ultimate realization in the kingdom of our Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot see it from our present vantage point, but the Scriptures assure us that it is just ahead.

At the beginning of this lesson, I shared my experience of climbing to the top of a mountain from which I could see for miles in every direction. I could see the beautiful valley on the other side that looked like a paradise on earth. I suppose that experience is somewhat analogous to Psalm 72. None of us has directly seen the beauty of Jesus’ reign as king over the world—that is the other side of the mountaintop. God can tell us about it in His Word, but I am sure that the reality will far exceed the written description. But that is God’s vision, the grand vision for history. I get excited just thinking about that vision. Furthermore I find myself asking, “Where do I fit into that vision?”

You and I fit into that vision, because through faith in Jesus Christ we have become citizens of His kingdom and will eventually be there to experience the blessing of it. Furthermore, if we introduce others to Jesus Christ, they gain the right to be there as well. If we live as faithful disciples now, we will even be highly rewarded in the kingdom. If we seek to make disciples of others and build them up in the faith, their inheritance in the kingdom will be multiplied all the more. When we perceive how significant all this is, our lives ought to be affected. We ought to see that we have a limited amount of time here on earth to make an impact, and we ought to have a vision of how we will use that time and how we will contribute to the grand vision. In that way, when we stand before Him, we can hear the words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

What is your personal vision for the time you have left here on earth? Have you looked by faith over the mountaintop and seen the other side? Do you understand how you can personally contribute within the body of Christ? You need that personal ministry vision. It will put zeal into your spiritual life when you know you have a goal to achieve and you are faithfully pursuing that goal.

I realize that some of you reading this lesson may not be able to identify your vision. This is not necessarily a problem. I think there are times God will sovereignly work to redirect us, and the vision will change. There are times when God will shift us out of one vision and over to another. There are also transition times we go through when God may need to teach us some things in preparation for the vision He wants us to have. At times we will need to wait on the Lord and patiently allow Him to bring us His vision in His own time.

Yes sometimes God may purposely have us wait to gain the vision or a part of the vision, but we should all desire to have a personal ministry vision. What God does not want us to do is to drift aimlessly over an extensive time with no concern for a vision. To do so will leave us unfulfilled

personally and unproductive in our service to the Lord. Having a clearly defined vision and pursuing that vision gives fire to our spiritual lives. This is crucial for spiritual renewal to come to full bloom.

If you do not feel that you already have a personal ministry vision, this may be because of one of the following three reasons:

1. You do not wish to have such a vision, and your heart is not fully set on serving Jesus Christ.
2. You sincerely want to have such a vision, but God's timing is not ready (perhaps He wants to teach you some things first).
3. You sincerely want to have such a vision, but you are not sure how to go about gaining this vision.

If Option 1 is the case, then you are not ready for such a vision anyway. You have a heart problem with the Lord, and this must be taken care of before asking God for His vision for you. However, let me gently remind you that to continue on in this state will mean loss of joy and fulfillment in your life. If Option 2 is the case, then you must patiently wait. However, you can use the wait time profitably by allocating abundant time to prayer and the study of God's Word. This would also be a good opportunity to read some good Christian literature that might be of help to you on this subject. If Option 3 is the case, do not feel lonely; you are probably in the company of many others. If your heart is sincere before the Lord, then you are teachable (and God can work with that!). I would recommend that you begin by reading "Developing Your Vision." I think you will find the questions and suggestions practical and helpful.

Developing Your Vision

Note: The following material is taken from the book by Aubrey Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry in the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992). Used by permission.

Introduction

This worksheet is designed to help you develop your vision. Write down any thoughts or ideas you have at this point. Next work them through the following steps.

Envisioning Prayer

1. Do you have a daily quiet time for prayer and the study of God's Word?
2. Set aside a portion of that time to pray about your vision.
3. Ask God to give you His vision for your people.
4. Be alert to what comes into your mind during these times.
5. Also be alert to the people and events He brings into your life.
6. Pray specifically for such things as:

Wisdom and insight concerning the vision

The people under your ministry

Your leadership and that of others on your team

The potential of your vision

Thinking Big

1. Make sure your vision goes far beyond your own talents and abilities. What aspect of your vision can you reasonably accomplish on your own, and what is beyond your abilities to accomplish?

2. Observe your people's response to your vision as you begin to communicate it. Do you sense that they are challenged or discouraged?
3. Double or triple the size of your present vision. Should this be the size of your dream?
4. Does the size of your vision reflect the size of your God? Based on the size of your dream, how big is your God?
5. What exposure do you have to other people who think big? Name them.

Written Brainstorming

1. Keep some kind of writing material available so that you can write down ideas as God places them on your heart. (Consider a vision notebook, a pad, or a 3" x 5" card file.)
2. Write down anything related to the vision that comes to mind, even if it seems foolish. Reserve judgment until later.
3. Collect other visions, vision slogans, and any information that might be helpful to your vision.

Organizing the Material

1. What is the purpose of your vision? How does it relate to the Great Commission?
2. What are the values of your ministry? List them. Are any unique?
3. What is your strategy? Can you write it out?
4. Who is on your team? Who makes up the target group?
5. What is the site of your ministry?
6. How will this ministry be financed?
7. Which of the above items should be included in the vision statement?

Questioning the Dream

1. Is the dream clear? Have you asked anyone else to articulate it back to you?
2. Is it challenging? Do people appear excited when they hear your dream?
3. Is it visual? What do you and others "see" when the vision is communicated?
4. Is it future oriented?
5. Is it realistic yet stretching?
6. Is it culturally relevant?

Demonstrating Patience

1. Do you consider yourself to be a patient person?
2. Are you under any time constraints for the vision? If so, is this reasonable?
3. Are you willing to give the vision whatever time is necessary for its development?

QUESTION 20

If you already feel that you have a clearly defined vision for personal ministry, write a description of that vision in your Life Notebook. Then state why you feel this vision is worth pursuing. If, however, you do not have a personal ministry vision, which of the three reasons listed above describes your case? If your answer is option #2 or option #3, write out your personal prayer to God, imploring Him to give you a personal vision for ministry.

From time to time, we need to look over the mountaintop and take a look at God's grand vision such as that depicted in Psalm 72. Important for our own spiritual renewal, we also need to look over the hilltop and take a look at God's personal ministry vision for us. I hope you find that, and I hope that this vision drives you onward in fervent service to the King. Who knows, God may use you to break new ground for the rest of us to build on.

I close with an illustration concerning the world-famous amusement park known as Disney World that was the personal vision of a man by the name of Walt Disney. Walt was one of the most visionary men of his day, a creative genius in producing music and films for children. His crowning achievement was to build Disney World in Florida, possibly the most remarkable amusement park for families ever attempted. Disney World did become a reality, opening its doors for the first visitors in 1971. Unfortunately Walt never lived to see the opening ceremonies, for he died in December 1966.



Soon after the completion of Disney World someone said, "Isn't it too bad that Walt Disney didn't live to see this!" Mike Vance, creative director of Disney Studios replied, "He did see it—that's why it's here" (Haddon W. Robinson, foreword to *Developing a Vision for Ministry in the 21st Century*, by Aubrey Malphurs, 11.)

You and I have been given a vision more noble than even Walt Disney conceived. Hopefully your study of Psalm 72 has cast a grand and glorious vision before you, a vision of the future when Messiah Jesus returns and establishes His kingdom on earth. You and I can have a part in that vision and even participate in seeing it become a reality. We can join hands with Christ in a life of walking with Him by faith and training up other disciples who will worship and serve Him. Psalm 1 pointed us in the direction of the path of wisdom, and now we realize where that path leads: participation in the Son's glorious kingdom. God the Father said to His Son, "Ask me, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance" (Ps 2:8). As a result of this promise, Jesus, our Lord and Savior, will one day be "heir of all things" (Heb 1:2), and those of us who are wise (and faithful) can share in the inheritance that He receives! We can even co-reign with Christ!

Lesson 15 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Which one of the following statements is **not** true about the Davidic covenant?

- A. The Davidic covenant promised David that one of his descendants would eventually have an eternal throne and kingdom.
- B. The promise of the Davidic covenant was that David would be king after Saul.
- C. The Davidic covenant had a partial realization with Solomon.
- D. The Davidic covenant has its ultimate realization in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the Son of God in a much greater way than any previous Davidic king.

QUESTION 2

In light of verse 20 of Psalm 72 (“This collection of the prayers of David son of Jesse ends here”), most scholars have concluded that Psalm 72 once comprised the final psalm of an earlier collection of Davidic psalms. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

Psalm 72:1 reads, “God, grant the king the ability to make just decisions! Grant the king’s son the ability to make fair decisions!” The king and the king’s son are used to refer to the dual reign of David and his son Solomon, both of whom prayed to rule justly. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

When Psalm 72:3 states, “The mountains will bring news of peace to the people, and the hills will announce justice,” this involves a figure of speech known as personification in which the mountains and hills are personified as bringing peace and justice—like runners carrying good news over the mountains of the king’s righteous rule. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

In the notes the suggestion was made that the words from verse 6 (“He will descend like rain on the mown grass”) find their ultimate fulfillment in the millennial kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Which one of the following passages is thought to depict Christ’s kingdom?

- A. Psalm 1:1-3
- B. Psalm 22:1-11
- C. Psalm 51:1-6
- D. Isaiah 11:6-10

QUESTION 6

The words of Psalm 72:8 (“May he rule from sea to sea, and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth!”) were fulfilled in the reign of King Solomon whose domain was the largest of any of the kings of Judah. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

Which of the following statements best reflects the relationship of verses 12-14 with the preceding paragraph in verses 8-11?

- A. There is no relationship between these paragraphs: the first discusses the extensive domain of the king and the second his power.
- B. The relationship between the paragraphs is reflected in the gifts: in the first paragraph the king receives gifts, and in the second paragraph he gives these gifts to the poor.
- C. The word “for” at the beginning of verse 12 signals that because the king rules over all the nations, he is obligated to take care of all His subjects (including the needy).
- D. The word “for” at the beginning of verse 12 indicates that the second paragraph gives the reason all the nations will submit to this king and serve Him, namely, because they recognize he is worthy (he is compassionate and a deliverer of the needy).

QUESTION 8

Part of the reason Jesus is worthy of universal rule is found in verse 14: “From harm and violence he will defend them; he will value their lives.” The word translated “defend” is a Hebrew word normally translated “redeem,” and from this we derive the idea of the kinsman-redeemer who had the role of protecting the family interests (see Ps 69:18). *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

Just as the Queen of Sheba gave gold to Solomon when she visited him, verse 15 (“May they offer him gold from Sheba”) anticipates the honor that will be given to Jesus when He comes again to reign. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

The latter half of Psalm 72:17 (with its mention of the king’s name and the blessing of the nations) reflects God’s intention to ultimately bless the world through King Jesus. This fulfills the promise originally made to

- A. Adam in Genesis 3
- B. Abram in Genesis 12
- C. Moses in Exodus 19
- D. David in 2 Samuel 7

Unit 5 Project: Lessons 13-15

A. Introduction

In Unit 5, the culmination of our study of the book of Psalms, attention was given to several important messianic psalms. These were psalms that, although they may have a partial fulfillment in some historical figure (like David or Solomon), find their ultimate fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have already studied Psalms 2; 22; 16; 110; and 72.

B. Instructions

As a final project for Unit 5, you are to do your own study of Psalm 45. The type of messianic fulfillment in the case of Psalm 45 is probably typological rather than typico-prophetic. Allen Ross introduces the psalm this way: “This is a royal psalm celebrating the wedding of the mighty king. The psalm begins with lavish praise to the royal groom for all his splendor, majesty, and righteousness. This is followed by a report of the counsel given to the bride before she was brought to the king’s palace in all her glory. Then the psalmist predicted universal and eternal remembrance of the king’s name through his progeny” (*Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Vol 1, p 827). Record your work in your Life Notebook.

1. Carefully read the entire psalm.
2. What verses are quoted in the New Testament? How does the New Testament author understand the fulfillment of these verses?
3. Try to develop an outline of the psalm, and give a title to each section.
4. Make a list of ways you see this psalm possibly having a fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lesson 15 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1

<i>Reference</i>	<i>Biblical Covenant</i>
Genesis 15	The Abrahamic covenant
Exodus 19-24	The Mosaic covenant (the Law)
2 Samuel 7	The Davidic covenant
Jeremiah 31	The new covenant

QUESTION 2

- B. The Davidic covenant had a partial realization with Solomon.
- C. The Davidic covenant promised David that one of his descendants would eventually have an eternal throne and kingdom.
- E. The Davidic covenant has its ultimate realization in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God in a much greater way than any previous Davidic king.

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4

- A. At an earlier time in the Psalter's history Psalm 72 stood as the final psalm in a collection of Davidic psalms.
- C. Verses 18-19 of Psalm 72 are probably a doxology intended as a conclusion to Book 2 of the Psalter.
- E. Verse 20 ("This collection of the prayers of David son of Jesse ends here") is a clue that the Psalter has gone through an editing process in which psalms were gathered into collections and merged together.

QUESTION 5: False

QUESTION 6

- A. Jeremiah 23:5
- D. Isaiah 9:6-7

QUESTION 7: Your answer

QUESTION 8

- A. To faithfully worship Him from the heart.
- C. To have a sense of accountability for being obedient to the ways of the Lord.

QUESTION 9: Your answer

QUESTION 10: False

QUESTION 11

- D. Jesus Christ will be the supreme king and ruler of the world on His return in glory, but He will reward faithful disciples—those who have endured for His sake—with the privilege of reigning with Him.

QUESTION 12

- B. The word "for" at the beginning of verse 12 indicates that the second paragraph gives the reason all the nations will submit to this king and serve him, namely, because they recognize he is worthy (he is compassionate and a deliverer of the needy).

QUESTION 13: True

QUESTION 14: Your answer

QUESTION 15

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Verse</i>
Mark 6:34	As Jesus came ashore he saw the large crowd and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.
Mark 10:45	For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.
Luke 14:13-14	But when you host an elaborate meal, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. Then you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.
Mark 10:31	But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

QUESTION 16: True**QUESTION 17:** False [This is figurative language meant to express how abundant the earth's produce will be at that time.]**QUESTION 18**

C. The name of Jesus will eventually be exalted throughout the entire earth.

QUESTION 19: True**QUESTION 20:** *Your answer*

Lesson 15 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1

B. The promise of the Davidic covenant was that David would be king after Saul.

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3: False

QUESTION 4: True

QUESTION 5

D. Isaiah 11:6-10

QUESTION 6: False

QUESTION 7

D. The word “for” at the beginning of verse 12 indicates that the second paragraph gives the reason all the nations will submit to this king and serve him, namely, because they recognize he is worthy (he is compassionate and a deliverer of the needy).

QUESTION 8: True

QUESTION 9: True

QUESTION 10

B. Abram in Genesis 12

Appendix

Figures of Speech

Dr. J. Paul Tanner

I. Figures Expressing Comparison

The following figures involve some sort of comparison between one thing (or person) and another.

A. Simile

(cf. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, p 726)

An explicit comparison of two unlike things that have something in common, by the use of words such as “like” or “as.”

Psalms 1:3 “he will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water” (NASB, emphasis added).

Psalms 42:1 “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God” (NASB).

B. Metaphor

(Bullinger, 735)

A declaration that one thing is or represents another (without using “like” or “as”).

Psalms 23:1 “The LORD is my shepherd” (NASB).

Psalms 119:105 “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (NASB).

C. Hypocatastasis

(Bullinger, 744)

A declaration that *implies* the comparison, in which only one of the elements of the comparison is mentioned. [This differs from a metaphor in that an equative verb is not used to express the comparison.]

Psalms 22:16 “For **dogs** have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me” (NASB, emphasis added).

Point: The evil men harassing the psalmist are compared to dogs

Matthew 16:6 “Watch out and beware of the **leaven** of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (NASB, emphasis added).

Point: Their teaching is compared to leaven.

Note: The hypocatastasis, however, can be confused with metonymy or synecdoche, since it actually involves the substitution of one term for another. The hypocatastasis will involve a substitution, but the stress will be on the comparison that is implied.

Note: Even verbs can be used to express the comparison, as seen in the following example:

Proverbs 20:26 “A wise king **winnows** the wicked, and drives the threshing wheel over them” (NASB, emphasis added).

Point: “The point of the proverb is to be sought in the comparison. Even as harvested grain contains valuable and worthless material which needs to be separated, so the words, thoughts and deeds of the wicked man contain both worthless and valuable things which it is the business of a king to discern and separate.” (William E. Mouser Jr., *Walking in Wisdom; Studying the Proverbs of Solomon*, 95).

The following three figures involve a comparison, in which unnatural characteristics are assigned to God, man or animals.

D. Personification

(Bullinger, 861)

The giving of human characteristics to inanimate objects, ideas, or animals.

Genesis 4:10 “The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to Me from the ground” (NASB).

Psalms 35:10 “All my bones will say, ‘LORD, who is like You?’” (NASB).

E. Anthropomorphism

(Bullinger, 871)

The representation of God in the form of, or with the attributes of man.

Psalms 33:18 “Behold, the **eye** of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness” (NASB, emphasis added).

Psalms 130:2 “Lord, hear my voice! Let Your **ears** be attentive to the voice of my supplications” (NASB, emphasis added).

Note: The following suggestions may be helpful for discerning the intention of the figure:

His face denotes His presence

His eyes denote His awareness

His ears denote His attentiveness

His nostrils denote His anger

His heart denotes His moral intentions

F. Zoomorphism

(Bullinger, 894)

The representation of God (or man) in the form of, or with the attributes of, the lower animals.

Psalms 63:7 “For You have been my help, and in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy.”

II. Figures Involving Substitution

The following figures involve a substitution of one term, concept, or action for another. Because Metonymy and Synecdoche are sometimes confused, I have attempted to provide some notes clarifying the basic difference under the discussion of Synecdoche.

A. Metonymy

(Bullinger, 538)

This involves the substitution of one word (usually a noun, but sometimes a verbal action) for another word closely associated with it. This could be the substitution of some attribute or suggestive word for what is meant (e.g., crown for royalty).

Genesis 11:1 “Now the whole earth used the same **lip** and the same words” (literal translation).

Point: “lip” stands for *language*. Note that the NASB actually translates the Hebrew word *šāphāh* as “language.”

Metonymies can be categorized into four basic groups:

1. Metonymy of Cause for Effect (Bullinger, 539)

When the cause is stated but the effect is intended.

Psalms 5:9 “Their **throat** is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue” (NASB, emphasis added).

Point: “Throat” is put for *speech*, the throat being that which causes (enables) speech.

a. The person acting for the thing done, that is, Agent/Actor for effect.

Luke 16:29 “But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them’” (NASB, emphasis added).

Point: The Jews have the writings (the effects) which were given by (caused by) Moses and the prophets.

b. The instrument for the thing effected.

(see example of Gen 11:1 above)

c. The thing or action for that which is effected or produced.

Deuteronomy 28:33 “A people whom you do not know shall eat up the produce of your ground and all your **labors**” (NASB, emphasis added).

Point: They will eat up the *fruits* of your labor.

d. The material is put for the thing made from it.

Jeremiah 2:27 “Who said to a **tree**, ‘You are my father,’ and to a **stone**, ‘You gave me birth’” (NASB, emphasis added).

Point: “Tree” is put for *wooden idol*, and “stone” for *an image*.

2. Metonymy of Effect for Cause (Bullinger, 560)

When the effect is stated but the cause is intended (opposite of #1).

Psalms 51:8 “Make me to hear **joy and gladness**” (NASB, emphasis added).

Point: The cause is forgiveness, but the effect is stated (i.e., the psalmist is asking for an assurance of forgiveness that will result in joy and gladness).

a. The action or effect is put for the person or agent producing it.

Luke 2:30 “For my eyes have seen Your **salvation**” (NASB, emphasis added).

Point: He has seen the Savior who brings about salvation.

b. The thing effected is put for the instrument or organic cause.

Psalms 57:8 “Awake, my **glory**; awake, harp and lyre” (NASB, emphasis added).

Point: “Glory” stands for the *tongue* or *soul* that causes it.

c. The effect is put for the thing or action causing or producing it.

Exodus 10:17 “Make supplication to the LORD your God, that He would only remove this **death** from me” (NASB, emphasis added).

Point: He is asking for the removal of the deadly plague that brings about death to the Egyptians.

d. The thing made is put for the material from which it is made.

Isaiah 28:28 “**Bread** is crushed, indeed, he does not continue to thresh it forever.”

Point: “Bread” is put for the grain from which bread is made.

3. Metonymy of Subject for Attribute (Bullinger, 567)

When the subject is put for an attribute or adjunct of it.

Psalm 23:5 “You prepare a **table** before me in the presence of my enemies” (NASB, emphasis added).

Point: “Table” is put for a feast (which would be set on the table).

a. The subject (whether thing or action) is put for something connected with it (i.e., the adjunct).

(1) Nouns

Common expressions: *soul* for desires, appetites

heart for thoughts, understanding

kidneys for affections, passions

Jeremiah 12:2 “You are near to their lips [literally, *in their mouth*; i.e., in regard to their words - a metonymy of cause]

but far from their **mind**” (i.e., their affections - a metonymy of subject for adjunct)

(2) Verbs

For example, what is **said** to be done is put for what is **declared** to be done.

Acts 10:15 “What God **has cleansed**, no *longer* consider unholy” [i.e., what God has *declared to be clean*] (NASB, emphasis added).

b. The container is put for the contents.

Isaiah 38:18 “For **Sheol** cannot thank You, death cannot praise You” (emphasis added).

Point: “Sheol” is the grave, that is, the place of the dead. So the grave is put for that which it contains, namely, dead people.

c. The possessor is put for that which is possessed.

Acts 9:4 “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting **Me**?” (i.e., My church) (NASB, emphasis added).

d. The object is put for that which relates to it.

Psalm 8:2 “From the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have established **strength**” (i.e., **praise** for the manifestation of Your strength) (NASB, emphasis added).

e. The thing signified is put for the sign.

Numbers 6:7 “He shall not make himself unclean for his father or for his mother, for his brother or for his sister, when they die, because his **separation** to God is on his head” [i.e., his *hair*, which is the symbol of his separation] (NASB, emphasis added).

4. Metonymy of Attribute/Adjunct for Subject (Bullinger, 587)

When the attribute or adjunct that pertains to the subject is put for the subject (opposite of #3).

Genesis 49:10 “The **scepter** shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet” (NASB, emphasis added).

Point: The ruling authority will remain with the tribe of Judah.

- a. The adjunct or attribute is put for the thing/object.

1 Samuel 15:29 “Also the **Glory** of Israel [i.e., the God who is their glory] will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind” (NASB, emphasis added).

- b. The contents are put for the container.

Acts 16:13 “And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a **place of prayer**” (NASB, emphasis added).

(literally, “supposing there would be prayer.” Thus **prayer** is put for the place where prayers are offered.)

- c. The time is put for the things done during it.

Proverbs 5:9 “Or you will give your vigor to others, and your **years** to the cruel one” (NASB, emphasis added).

[i.e., the strength and fruits of the labors of your years]

- d. The appearance of a thing is put for the thing itself.

Psalms 72:9 “Let the nomads of the desert bow before him; and his enemies **lick the dust**” (NASB, emphasis added).

[i.e., they shall be so humbled and prostrated that they shall appear to lick the dust]

- e. An action or affection is put for the object of it.

Ezekiel 24:16 “Son of man, behold, I am about to take from you the **desire of your eyes** [i.e., your wife] with a blow; but you shall not mourn” (NASB, emphasis added).

- f. The sign is put for the thing signified.

(1) Nouns (“scepter”--see the example of Gen 49:10 under #4 above)

(2) Verbs

Psalms 2:12 “**Do homage to** [literally, kiss] the Son, lest He not become angry, and you perish in the way” (NASB, emphasis added).

(“kiss” is a sign of one’s homage to another; notice that the NASB does not translate this literally but rather renders the point of the figure.)

- g. The name of a person is put for the person himself.

Psalms 20:1 “May **the name of the God of Jacob** [i.e., God Himself] set you securely on high!” (NASB, emphasis added).

B. Synecdoche

(Bullinger, 613)

Like metonymy, the figure of synecdoche also involves a substitution of one word (or concept or phrase) for another. With synecdoche, however, the relationship of the two components is closer. They either belong to the same genus, or one is a component of the other. Often, a part of something is put for the whole, or the whole is put for a specific part.

Example: Psalms 102:11 “**My days** are like a lengthened shadow, and I wither away like grass” (NASB, emphasis added).

Point: The psalmist is saying that his life is like a lengthened shadow (a “part of time” is put for the “whole time”).

Distinguishing Metonymy and Synecdoche:

In both metonymy and synecdoche, the figure is based on relationship. The difference (at times there is little) has to do with whether or not the terms/concepts involved are related generically. In metonymy, the exchange is made between two related terms/concepts belonging to different genera. Synecdoche, on the other hand, involves an exchange of two terms/concepts related generically.

Metonymy (of different genera)

Psalm 23:5 “You prepare a **table** before me” (NASB, emphasis added).

Clarification: In this example “table” stands in the place of food and drink. But table is not of the same genus as food; the one merely suggests the other.

Synecdoche (related generically; or involves a part/whole relationship)

Matthew 6:11 “Give us this day our daily **bread**” (NASB, emphasis added).

Clarification: Here, “bread” stands for *food*. In this case bread and food are of the same genus (namely, that which is edible).

1. Synecdoche of genus for species (general for specific) (Bullinger, 614)

The genus is put for the species (or, the general is put for the more specific).

Genesis 6:12 “God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for **all flesh** had corrupted their way upon the earth” (NASB, emphasis added).

Point: “All flesh” stands for all mankind (the latter being more specific).

a. “All” is put for the greater part.

Jeremiah 26:9 “And **all the people** (i.e., a great many of the people) gathered about Jeremiah in the house of the LORD” (NASB, emphasis added).

b. “All” (or every) is put for all kinds.

Acts 10:12 “And there were in it all [i.e., all kinds of; so NASB] four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air” (NASB, emphasis added).

c. A “universal negative” is made, but is not intended to be taken absolutely.

1 Samuel 20:26 (context: David’s failure to appear at Saul’s table)

“Nevertheless Saul did not speak **anything** that day [i.e., anything about David], for he thought, ‘It is an accident, he is not clean, surely he is not clean.’” (NASB, emphasis added).

d. A “universal” statement is made, but is not intended to be taken absolutely.

Acts 28:22 “But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is spoken against **everywhere**.” (i.e., everywhere it is known and spoken about) (NASB, emphasis added).

e. Words of wider meaning are used when a narrower sense is intended (e.g., flesh for man; house for temple).

Mark 16:15 “And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all **creation**” (i.e., to all people) (NASB, emphasis added).

2. Synecdoche of species for genus (specific for general) (Bullinger, 623)

The species is put for the genus (or, the more specific is put for the general).

Psalm 44:6 “For I will not trust in my **bow**; nor will my **sword** save me” (emphasis added).

Point: “bow” and “sword” stand for weapons in general (i.e., he is not going to rely on human weapons).

- a. Words of a narrow sense are put for words of a wider meaning.

Psalm 22:4 “In You our **fathers** [i.e., forefathers] trusted” (emphasis added).

- b. Species is put for genus (“our daily **bread**,” i.e., food. See Mt 6:11 under the discussion above distinguishing synecdoche from metonymy)

Bullinger has other subcategories, but not all are convincing (see his pp 623-635).

3. Synecdoche of whole for part (Bullinger, 635)

The whole is put for the part.

John 12:19 “So the Pharisees therefore said to one another, ‘You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world [i.e., people of all sorts] has gone after him’” (NASB).

1 Samuel 5:4 “But when they arose . . . Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground . . . And the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off on the threshold; only **Dagon** [i.e., the trunk of Dagon] remained” (NASB, emphasis added)

4. Synecdoche of part for whole (Bullinger, 640)

A part of something (or someone) is put for the whole.

Proverbs 1:16 “For their **feet** run to evil, and they hasten to shed blood” (NASB, emphasis added).

Point: “their feet” stands for the evil men themselves.

- a. An integral part of man may be put for the whole man.

The example from Proverbs 1:16 above fits this category. Other examples include:

{i-Graphic{ps0205_ca.jpg align=center height=159 width=525 Examples of Synecdoches}i}

- b. A part of the thing may be put for the whole thing (e.g., field for country, wall or gate for city).

Psalm 87:2 “The LORD loves the **gates of Zion** more than all the *other* dwelling places of Jacob.” [i.e., He loves the city of Zion] (NASB, emphasis added).

- c. A part of time may be put for the whole time.

Psalm 102:11 “My **days** are like a lengthened shadow; and I wither away like grass.” (i.e., My life) (NASB, emphasis added).

C. Merism

The totality is expressed by two contrasting parts (or, two extremities).

Psalm 139:2 “You know when I sit down and when I rise up.”

Point: God knows everything he does (from the moment he rises until the moment he sits, and everything in between).

D. Hendiadys

(Bullinger, 657)

Two terms or concepts (formally coordinated) are used to express a single concept (one of the components defines the other).

Genesis 3:16 “I will greatly multiply your **pain** and your **childbearing**” (literal translation).

Point: God will multiply her pain in “childbearing” (notice the next clause which substantiates this). So, this is really one matter, i.e., a painful childbirth. The NASB translates this verse, “I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth.”

E. Euphemism

(Bullinger, 684)

The substitution of an inoffensive or mild expression for an offensive one.

Job 2:9 “Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? **Bless** [*bārēk*] God and die!” (NASB, emphasis added).

Point: Really she means “Curse God and die!”, which is how the NASB translates the verse.

III. Figures Involving Addition or Amplification

The following figures involve an amplification of a thing, concept or effect, often through some additional element.

A. Anabasis (Gradual Ascent)

(Bullinger, 429)

This involves an increase of sense in successive lines.

Psalms 1:1 “How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,

Nor stand in the path of sinners,

Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!”

(This assumes that the latter is considered the most intensive involvement.)

B. Catabasis (Gradual Descent)

(Bullinger, 432)

This involves a decrease of sense in successive lines (opposite of anabasis).

Isaiah 40:31 “They will mount up with wings like eagles,

They will run and not get tired,

They will walk and not become weary” (NASB).

C. Hyperbole

(Bullinger, 423)

An exaggerated expression for the purpose of emphasis or heightened effect (more is said than literally meant).

Deuteronomy 1:28 “The people are bigger and taller than we; the cities are large and **fortified to heaven**” (NASB, emphasis added).

Psalms 40:12 “My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to see; They are **more numerous than the hairs of my head**” (NASB, 1995, emphasis added).

D. Paronomasia

(Bullinger, 307)

This involves the repetition of words similar in sound (often used to call attention to something significant that the reader should notice).

Genesis 11:9 “Therefore its name was called Babel (*bābel*), because there the LORD confused (*bālal*) the language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth” (NASB).

E. Repetition

(Bullinger, 263)

This involves the repetition of the same word (or words) in a passage.

Numbers 9:20 “If sometimes the cloud remained a few days over the tabernacle, **according to the command of the LORD** they remained camped. Then **according to the command of the LORD** they set out” (NASB, emphasis added).

IV. Figures Involving Omission or Suppression

The following figures involve a diminishing of a thing, concept or effect, often through some omitted element.

A. Ellipsis (or Omission)

(Bullinger, 1)

This involves the omission of a word (or words) in a sentence.

Psalms 103:8-9 “The LORD is compassionate and gracious,

slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.

He will not always strive *with us*;

Nor will He keep [*His anger*] forever.” (emphasis added)

Note: The words “His anger” are not in the Hebrew text, but are understood from the context.

B. Meiosis (or Belittling)

(Bullinger, 155)

This involves a belittling of one thing in order to magnify another. “In meiosis there is an omission therefore, not of words, but of sense. One thing is lowered in order to magnify and intensify something else by way of contrast” (Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 155).

Genesis 18:27 “And Abraham replied, ‘Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord, although I am *but* dust and ashes’” (NASB, emphasis added).

C. Tapeinosis (or Demeaning)

(Bullinger, 159)

In this figure, a person or matter is lessened when the intent is really to increase, enhance or intensify it. (This differs from meiosis, because meiosis involves the lessening of one thing in order to magnify another. With tapeinosis, the very thing lessened is that which is meant to be magnified.)

Psalms 51:17 “A broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise” (NASB).

Point: Not only will the Lord not despise it; He will gladly receive it.

Proverbs 17:21 “The father of a fool has no joy” (i.e., he has plenty of sorrow) (NASB).

VI. Special Forms of Communication

I have listed the following figures as “special forms of communication” (e.g., parables, types, and symbols). Some of these could actually be included in the preceding categories. Bullinger, for example, regards a “parable” in the same category as the simile, because a parable is actually a continued resemblance. Unfortunately I can only treat these subjects briefly, though some of them (especially typology) deserve a very in-depth treatment to fully comprehend their role in Scripture.

A. Parable

(Bullinger, 751)

A parable involves comparison by continued resemblance (something of an extended simile). One thing is likened to another. This may be for the purpose of clarifying the meaning or role of something, but parables can also be used to talk about things in a veiled way (e.g., the parables of the kingdom in Mt 13). Care must be taken when interpreting and applying parables that we do not attempt to push every detail for meaning (in some cases, they may have only one primary lesson).

Matthew 25:1-10 “Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins”

B. Allegory

An allegory is similar to a parable, but an allegory involves a story in which one thing is being represented by something else without an intended likeness between them. The symbolic or hidden meaning of the story is meant to convey a lesson or explain ideas or moral principles. Care must be taken to distinguish an allegory from allegorical interpretation (the former is intended by the author as a literary means of making a point, whereas the latter is illegitimately imposed on the text).

Judges 9:7-15 A story is told about trees that went forth to anoint a king over them. The point is not to compare how humans choose a king to the way trees choose a king. The trees are merely symbolic devices to relate a story that ends with a lesson.

C. Idiom

(Bullinger, 819)

This involves the use of frozen or dead metaphors as standard or common expressions. These expressions are often unique to one culture without having the same meaning to others (even though they may share the same language).

Examples: “sons of God” is an idiom for angels

“breaking bread” is an idiom for eating food

D. Irony

(Bullinger, 807)

This involves the expression of thought in a form that conveys its opposite.

1 Kings 18:27 “Elijah mocked them and said, ‘Cry out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened.’”

Amos 4:4 “Enter Bethel and transgress; in Gilgal multiply transgression! Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days.”

E. Proverb

(Bullinger, 755)

A widely used saying in the marketplace or roadside which illustrates (or communicates) a fundamental truth or lesson about life.

Proverbs 27:6 “Faithful are the wounds of a friend.”

Point: Some people will tell you what they think you want them to say (just to gain an advantage with you), but a true friend is not afraid to tell you the truth even though it may momentarily hurt you.

1 Samuel 24:13 “As the proverb of the ancients says, ‘Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness’; but my hand shall not be against you.”

Point: David uses this proverb to reason with Saul. Although wicked people can be expected to do wicked things, David's innocence and integrity is shown by the fact that he did not hurt Saul when he had the opportunity to do so.

F. Symbol

(Bullinger, 769)

A material object is substituted for another reality (often implying some characteristic or moral truth about the latter). Although the Bible extensively uses symbols, care must be taken not to claim something as a symbol for which there is no warrant. Often, the Bible specifically identifies the presence of symbols (e.g., Zech 3:8). Otherwise we should not label something a symbol unless there is a clear departure of normal meaning in the given context.

Zechariah 4:7 “What are you, **O great mountain**? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’” (emphasis added).

Note: In this verse the “great mountain” is a symbol for the obstacles that the Jewish governor Zerubbabel faced in the process of rebuilding the temple. In the context there is nothing to suggest that the concern was one of displacing a literal mountain in order to make a plain.

G. Type

(Bullinger, 768)

A type is a divinely prefigured illustration of a corresponding reality (the latter being known as the antitype). The type can prefigure a person, an institution, an action, an event, or a situation.

Example: The ministry of the high priest on the annual Day of Atonement is a type of Christ's high priestly ministry in which He went into the heavenly holy of holies. The relationship between type and antitype often involves important differences which must not be overlooked. For example the fact that the high priest brought the blood of animals reflects the fact that the old covenant is inferior to the new covenant, for in the latter Christ presented His own blood.

Glossary of Terms

Explanation: In the following list of terms, the number following the term refers to the location in the course where this term is explained or introduced. For example, “4.2” would indicate that this term is introduced in Lesson 4 and Topic 2.

acrostic psalm [10.3]

This refers to a psalm in which each line begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, starting with the first letter *aleph*.

Akkadian [12.4]

An ancient Semitic language used in Mesopotamia (Assyria and Babylonia), employing the cuneiform system of writing.

allegorical [5.1]

The practice of interpreting the text in a non-literal fashion by assuming persons or places mentioned mean something other than their literal meaning, without any hint or validation from the text that the author intended such an interpretation.

anthropomorphism [5.1]

A figure of speech in which God is represented in the form of or with the attributes of man (e.g., the eyes of the Lord).

antithetical parallelism [4.2]

This refers to two cola, in which the second expresses the opposite of the first.

Asaph [“Introduction to the Psalms”]

A collection of psalms (50 and 73–83) that are attributed to Asaph, a minister of the tabernacle in the days of King David. Some may have been written by Asaph himself (see 2 Chr 29:30) but others were probably written by his descendants.

asphyxiation [13.3]

Death or the loss of consciousness as a result of lack of oxygen.

Babylonian exile [1]

A reference to the exile of the Jewish people by the Babylonians (led by King Nebuchadnezzar) beginning in 605 BC and lasting to 538 BC.

bicolon [4.1]

A term describing a line of Hebrew poetry consisting of two cola (i.e., there are two halves to the line).

chiasm [4.4]

This is a term to refer to an inverted parallelism of the cola, that is, the words or phrases in the first half of the line are paralleled by a reverse order in the second half.

climactic parallelism [4.2]

In this type of parallelism, a word or phrase is repeated in two or more cola, and builds up “intensity” in the process of doing so.

Codex Vaticanus [1]

A manuscript of the Old Testament scriptures that was translated into Greek in the fourth century AD (kept in the Vatican in Rome; also includes most of the NT).

colon / cola [4.1]

A colon (plural, cola) refers to “part” of a line of Hebrew poetry. Ordinarily a line of poetry has two halves (each half termed a colon), but a line may have more.

Critical scholars [“Introduction to the Psalms”]

Scholars who study the Bible but do not have a conviction that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God. While some are more radical than others, in general they deny the trustworthiness of the Bible and work with assumptions that are unacceptable to most evangelical scholars. For example, they would deny the Mosaic authorship of the first five books of the OT, and they would regard the book of Daniel as mostly a forgery written in the second century BC (rather than by a sixth century BC Daniel).

Davidic covenant [12.2]

A covenant made by God with King David (recorded in 2 Sam 7:8-16) in which God promised to raise up from one of David's descendants a king who would have an eternal throne and kingdom. This promise is fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah.

Dead Sea Scrolls ["Introduction to the Psalms"]

The name generally given to the manuscripts and fragments discovered in caves near the northwestern end of the Dead Sea in the period between 1946 and 1956. Most of these are written in Hebrew or Aramaic, and the majority of them are of biblical texts. Also known as the Qumran scrolls.

declarative praise psalm [10.1]

A type of psalm in which the dominant theme is praise to God in response to His unique intervention to help or deliver the psalmist. Some scholars prefer the label "psalms of thanksgiving" or "acknowledgment psalms."

descriptive praise psalm [11.1]

A type of psalm in which the dominant theme is praise to God—not for some unique act of deliverance or rescue—but simply to praise God for who He is, for His work of creation, or for the great things He has done in history.

doxology [6.1]

A verse (or verses) that glorify God (from the Greek word *doxa* meaning "glory"). In the Psalms, these are often statements pronouncing Him blessed.

ellipsis [4.4]

An omission of one or more words. In the Psalms, this usually pertains to parallel cola in which some words are missing from the second colon (e.g., the subject, verb, or object), but understood in light of the parallel colon.

emblematic parallelism [4.2]

A type of parallelism of cola in which one colon presents an illustration or verbal picture (often using simile or metaphor), while the second colon tells you the point of the illustration.

figure of speech [5.1]

A general term for an expression used in writing that is understood by both author and reader to not be taken literally, but used to add vividness to what is said. There are many types of figures of speech.

genus/genera [5.2]

A class, group, etc., with common characteristics (plural is genera). For example, bread and potatoes belong to the genus of "food."

Gethsemane [13.3]

A garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem and famous as the place where, according to the gospels, Jesus and his disciples are said to have prayed the night before Jesus' crucifixion.

hermeneutics [5.1]

A term used for the principles of interpretation that one follows for understanding the meaning of a text.

Hittite [12.4]

An ancient Anatolian people who established an empire at Hattusa in north-central Anatolia around the eighteenth century BC, which reached its height during the mid-fourteenth century BC. [The heart of this kingdom corresponds to modern-day Turkey].

homily [10.2]

A short admonition or sermon of a practical nature given by way of application from a teaching.

hyperbole [5.3]

A deliberate exaggeration for the purposes of making a point (more is said than is literally meant). Example: “walled up to heaven.”

hypocatastasis [5.1]

A declaration that implies a comparison, without using the words “like” or “as.” Example: “dogs have surrounded me.”

idiom [5.3]

Usually several words unique to a culture and that have some non-literal meaning understood by the members of that culture.

imperatives [10.3]

A grammatical term for a verb that expresses a command.

inclusio [4.4]

A word, phrase, or thought that is repeated in a text, and found at (or near) the beginning and end of a unit, so as to mark the boundaries of the literary unit.

irony [5.3]

A type of figure of speech in which an expression of thought is used, but which the speaker intends to convey the opposite meaning. Example from Mk 2:17: Jesus said, “I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (ironically calling the unbelieving religious leaders “the righteous”).

justification [2.1]

The act of God declaring a man righteous in His sight based on faith in Christ.

Kadesh Barnea [1.3]

A place mentioned in Numbers 13–14 where the Israelites rebelled against God’s command to enter the promised land, and as a result had to wander in the wilderness for forty years.

Korah [“Introduction to the Psalms”]

A great-grandson of Levi and the head of a priestly family, whose descendants became strong supporters of King David. The “sons of Korah” are responsible for a number of the psalms (42–49, 84–85, and 87–88).

libation [14.1]

A ritual offering of a liquid to God in a religious ceremony. The liquid may be wine or olive oil, or even water.

Maccabean period [“Introduction to the Psalms”; 7.1]

About the year 171 BC, Judea was occupied by Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the Seleucid empire (present-day Syria). A family known as the Maccabees led a successful revolt to overthrow Antiochus, which led to rule by various descendants of the Maccabee family. They were the founders of the Hasmonean dynasty, which ruled Judea from 164 BC to 63 BC.

maškil [2.2]

A word used in some superscriptions, apparently to indicate that the psalm is intended as a contemplative poem, or perhaps meant to give insight or be artistic.

Massah [1.3]

A place mentioned in Exodus 17 where the Hebrews grumbled against God. The word is from a Hebrew verb meaning “to test” (they tested the LORD).

Meribah [1.3] - See Massah.

The place was also called “Meribah,” from a Hebrew verb meaning “to contest” or “have a case against.”

merism [5.3]

A figure of speech in which two opposite elements are referred to, but which is meant to include everything between as well.

messianic psalms [12.2]

Psalms that find significant fulfillment in Jesus Christ (such as Ps 22).

metaphor [5.1]

A figure of speech used for comparison, but without using the words “like” or “as.” One thing is simply declared to be another. Example: “The LORD is my shepherd.”

metonymy [5.2]

A figure of speech involving the substitution of one term, action, or concept for another, in which the two are not generically related. See further detail in the appendix “Figures of Speech” (II.A).

Millennium or millennial kingdom [15.3]

A reference to Christ’s kingdom being established on earth for one thousand years **after** His Second Coming. [Millennium means one thousand].

mizmôr [1.1]

A Hebrew term found in over fifty of the psalms that indicated a religious song sung to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument.

Mosaic Law [12.1]

The Law code (also known as the old covenant) given to Moses at Mount Sinai (see Ex 19). Believers today are not under the Law but under the new covenant.

motifs [7.1]

A section of a psalm having a particular common characteristic, such as lament, petition, vow of praise, confession of trust, etc.

Mount Zion [12.3]

An alternative designation for Jerusalem.

parallelism [4.1-2]

A term used to describe the relationship between two or more cola in a line of Hebrew poetry. One colon may essentially repeat the first, or (more often) it will tend to add some additional information.

penitential lament [8.1]

A type of lament psalm in which the psalmist laments the guilt of his sin or the consequences he has suffered due to his sin.

personification [5.1]

A figure of speech in which human parts or characteristics are used with inanimate objects, ideas, or animals. Ex: “let the rivers clap their hands.”

preincarnate [10.3]

A term normally used of Jesus Christ to describe His life or appearance on earth **before** He was born in the flesh at Bethlehem.

Psalter [1]

A term used to refer to the collection of 150 psalms found in the Bible.

post-exilic period [“Introduction to the Psalms” and 6.1]

The period of the Old Testament following the Babylonian exile, commencing about 538 BC when Cyrus permitted the Jews to return to their land.

psychosomatic [13.3]

A physical disorder that is caused by or notably influenced by emotional factors.

Qumran [“Introduction to the Psalms”]

A site near the northwest shore of the Dead Sea where many of the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered.

sanctification, progressive [“Progressive Sanctification”]

Progressive sanctification refers to that process whereby the Holy Spirit progressively sets apart a Christian from sin and worldliness and conforms him into the image of Jesus Christ, as that Christian yields himself to the Lordship of Christ and walks by the Spirit.

Sanhedrin [12.6]

A Jewish religious body of 70-73 religious “elders” (both Pharisees and Sadducees) that met in Jerusalem and ruled on important matters for the Jewish people. The high priest presided over the Sanhedrin. Jesus was brought before the Sanhedrin, charged with blasphemy and condemned to die (see Mt 26:57-68).

Septuagint [“Introduction to the Psalms”]

A general term to refer to the translation of the Hebrew/Aramaic Old Testament into Greek, beginning around 275 BC. Since there were multiple attempts at this, the Septuagint is not just one manuscript but a translation tradition.

Shekinah glory [13.1]

The glory of God that dwelt above the mercy seat in the Tabernacle and Temple. See Exodus 40:34-35.

simile [3.2]

A figure of speech used for comparison of two unlike things that have something in common (using words such as “like” or “as”).

stanza [4.1]

A larger unit of material consisting of several related strophes. Normally this is limited to longer psalms such as Psalm 139.

strophe [4.1]

A group of related lines of Hebrew poetry that focus on a common theme (such as lament). A strophe is similar to how a paragraph functions in a document.

superscription [1.1, 7.3 and “Introduction to the Psalms”]

Comments placed at the beginning of a psalm by the author himself, and which provide important information concerning the historical background, musical style, mood, and authorship. This is part of the inspired text.

synecdoche [5.2]

A figure of speech involving the substitution of one term, action, or concept for another, in which the two are closely (generically) related. See the article “Figures of Speech” (II.B) for more help.

Syriac Peshitta [15.3]

A translation of the Bible into Syriac, a dialect of Eastern Aramaic. Peshitta simply means “simple,” hence the simple or commonly used translation. The OT books are thought to have been translated into Syriac during the second century AD.

tehillîm [1.1]

The Hebrew name for the book of Psalms (meaning “praises”).

theophany [10.3]

A manifestation of God’s presence on earth, such that he “appears” to mortal humans in some unique way (examples: Ex 3:1-2; 19:16-25).

Tribulation, Great [12.4]

An expression used to describe that very troublesome time on earth during the years immediately preceding the second coming of Christ. Some scholars regard this as a period of seven years but others as three and a half years. In either case, it is a time when the Antichrist will rule the world and persecute both Jews and Christians.

tricolon [4.1]

A term describing a line of Hebrew poetry consisting of three cola. See colon.

typico-prophetic [13.1]

A term used to describe how some OT verses are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. In this case, verses that speak of an earthly person in figurative terms are found to also refer to Jesus in a more literal way. Psalm 22 is a good example.

typology [13.3]

A term used to describe how some person, thing or event in the Old Testament prefigures the person, work, or experiences of Jesus Christ. Example: Joseph was a type of Christ. He was rejected by his brethren but became their deliverer.

Vulgate, Latin [“Introduction to the Psalms”]

A late fourth-century AD Latin translation of the Bible carried out (mostly) by Jerome. The word *vulgate* means “common,” and this was used to designate the commonly used and official Latin translation for the Roman Catholic church.

zoomorphism [5.1]

A figure of speech involving the representation of God (or man) in the form of, or with the attributes of, the lower animals. Example: the wings of God.

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