

Jesus and the Psalms



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St John's Home Growth Groups – Spring 2023

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Introduction

The book of Psalms consists of songs, hymns, or poems, each of which is a "Psalm" in and of itself. It can stand alone. These Psalms include a wide variety of themes and styles. Some Psalms focus on praising and worshipping God. Others cry out in anguish over the pain of life. Still other Psalms look forward to the coming of the Messiah. While some Psalms are linked, each has its own historical and biblical context. Probably one of the main writers of Psalms was David.

David was frequently a "godly sufferer"—one who was about God's business but was suffering at the hands of God's enemies. Reading the words of Psalm 22 makes one immediately take notice—David's words were taken, often verbatim, by another "godly sufferer." When Jesus Christ was dying on the cross, He saw in David's suffering a situation like His own and put David's words in His own mouth: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46).

But it was not just the words of David which appear prophetically messianic. Jesus' experience of persecution during his arrest and crucifixion mirrored many aspects of David's: the insults and mocking both endured (Psalm 22:7; Matthew 27:39), the wording of some of the mocking (Psalm 22:8; Matthew 27:43), His bones being out of joint from hanging on the cross (Psalm 22:14), His agonizing thirst (Psalm 22:15; John 19:28), the gambling for His robe (Psalm 22:18; Matthew 27:35), and the prediction that future generations will be told about the Lord (Psalm 22:31; Matthew 28:19-20).

The parallels in David's and Christ's experiences cannot be coincidence. References to words and events in Christ's life throughout the psalms have caused a number of them to be referred to as Messianic psalms—prophetically foreshadowing the Jewish Messiah who was to come.

Significant Messianic psalms are Psalm 2 (the kingship of Christ), Psalm 16 (the resurrection of Christ), and Psalm 110 (the sovereignty of God's Messiah).

Seventeen psalms are regarded as Messianic—various verses speaking of Christ in either the third person (Psalm 8, 72, 89, 109, 118, 132), the second person



(Psalm 45, 68, 102, 110), or the Messiah speaking for Himself (Psalm 2, 16, 22, 40, 41, 69, 78). Like much Old Testament prophetic scripture, these Messianic references had both a present and future application. Christ's life conforming to these Messianic texts supported the growing notion in the first century that He was indeed the Messiah. Our space is limited so this term we will study together **Psalms 2, 8, 40, 91, 98 and 110**.

GROUP BIBLE STUDY

The priority of any Bible study is to seek to understand what the Bible is saying to the people to whom it was first written as well as to understand it for our particular day and generation. So, the top priority is first to understand the text and then to make it meaningful and relevant. Here are some pointers to help you as you study the Bible:

PRAY

Our preparation for any Bible study should begin and end with prayer. We need to ask God, through the help of the Holy Spirit, to guide us as we read the Bible and prepare for a study.

ASK

In order to understand the Bible properly, we need to keep in mind six important questions:

1. **Who is speaking?** Everything in the Bible was written by men who were inspired by God. Though God inspired every writer of the Bible, sometimes the writers record words which come from the hearts of evil men. So, dealing with the question "Who is speaking?" will help us to know whether the words we are reading are words that we should obey today.
2. **Who is spoken to?** We need to realise that not every command that comes in the Bible is a command for us today. For example, the command by God to Noah to build an ark is obviously pertinent and relevant for Noah, but not for us.
3. **When is the Bible writer speaking?** In answering this question, we will need to make a distinction between those who are living under the law and those who live under the guidelines and principles as outlined to us in the New Testament, the way of Christ. Therefore, the principles we see with regards to worship in the Old Testament have a relevance to us, but we need to read them in the light of the New Testament. It is always important to bear in mind that one part of the Bible can often help us to understand another part.

4. **What type of language is the writer using?** The languages used are usually one of two types: either literal or figurative. Sometimes both will be mixed together in one passage – for example, Jesus is spoken of as the Lamb of God, which is clearly a figurative form of speech. However, he is also described as the one who takes away the sin of the world, which is literally true for those who believe. So, Jesus was not an actual lamb, but he was the one who became the offering for our sins.

5. **What are the conditions or circumstances in which this writing is given?** If we can get to grips with the particular circumstances the writer is facing when he writes, it helps us to understand what he is saying.

6. **What is the context of the Bible passage?** Think about what has just been said and what is about to be said in the particular book of the Bible, as well as the context of the Bible passage within the whole of the Bible. The Bible is indeed God's inspired word – it is his revelation to all mankind. So, in order for us to understand the Bible we must seek to study it properly. Only then can we "*correctly handle the word of truth*". And if we keep these six simple questions in mind as we prepare our study, we will find that we can indeed get to grips with God's word.

PLAN

For those who are preparing and leading a study, the following steps should prove helpful:

1. Try to break the passage into parts or sections so that you can clearly divide up the passage you are looking at.

2. Think about what you don't understand in the passage and therefore what others might not understand as well. What parts do you need to gain more background and information about? Be ready to deal with puzzles that people will ask you about. So, for example, when studying John 3, people might ask 'What is the kingdom of God?', 'What is a Pharisee?'. These are obvious things that people might need to have some more information about.

3. Having broken the passage up into sections, we then come to thinking about questions. You can use the questions that are in this book. However, you may want to write your own, which is of course perfectly all right. Questions can be one of three types.

A **Understanding.** The first type of question should be aimed at trying to draw out our understanding of what the passage is saying.

B **Significance.** Only once we have begun to understand the passage can we move on to questions that try to highlight the significance of the passage in the light of the particular book or letter, and of course against the backdrop of the whole Bible.

C **Application.** Then we move on to questions which apply to the situations we are facing today.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- Do make use of clergy and commentaries and other Christians who have a maturity which you can rely upon when you are seeking to tackle Bible passages.
- It will sometimes prove helpful to have more than one translation as this will give you some fresh insights into the verses which you are focusing on.
- As we come to study the Bible we need to keep in mind that all the books of the Bible have one great theme: that is God's plan to save mankind from his sins through Jesus Christ.
- Fundamentally, make sure that whatever you do, you seek to do it to honour and glorify God.

Let us not forget:

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”
2 Timothy 3:16-17.

A Little Background to the Psalms

The Book of Psalms may be regarded as the superb hymn book of the Jewish church. The book itself is made from five books and contains psalms for both public and private worship. Those with the subscript 'to the choirmaster' seem especially to aim for public worship. Others were perhaps originally personal reflections that were taken over for use in the service in the temple, or in family worship at home. There were also some special poems and historical presentations. The book stood at the head of the third section of the Hebrew scriptures to which it is often given its name. This section is followed by the book of the prophets.

The contents of the book were composed at various periods during the whole of Israel's history, beginning with the Exodus and stretching all the way to the Babylonian captivity. One song, Psalm 90, is by Moses. Many are by David, some by Solomon and a few by certain temple singers. Some have a title and others have none. The psalms themselves can be divided into five books. Book 1 (Psalms 1 to 41) Book 2 (Psalms 42 to 72) Book 3 (Psalms 73 to 89) Book 4 (Psalms 90-106) and Book 5 (Psalms 107 to 150). Each of the books except the last one marks its end by the word 'Amen'.

The third section of the Old Testament scriptures at the beginning of which the book of Psalms stands maybe said to strike a more individual note than the preceding books. And while the prophets compose largely though not of course entirely from the point of view of an outward and national life, the psalms deal largely with personal and spiritual matters. Needless to say they look forward to the coming and the work of Jesus Christ.

Why should we still use the Psalms today?

Firstly, they put us in touch with Christ. Many people do not realise that we can hold in our hands in translation a copy of the very hymn book that Jesus himself used. This alone should be reason enough for us to study them as they filled the mind of our Saviour.

Secondly, there is probably no other form of prayer and praise which so exactly meets the needs of all kinds of people living at all periods of time. The Psalms seem to have just the right word for the right occasion and time and again have proved a rich source of devotional life for the individual and the nation.

Thirdly, these Psalms, with their whole range of emotions, put us in touch with God's people and the way that they worshipped their God centuries before Christ came. This is important as it shows the link between the people of God before Christ and the people of God since Christ has come.

Bible Studies on the Psalms

Bible Study 1

Psalm 2

Introduction

This psalm is one of the most quoted by New Testament writers and applied to Jesus. The editor of the psalms decided not say who the writer of this psalm was. In the first century Christians (Acts 4v25) asserted that David wrote the psalm.

Now we need to know that there are two types of Messianic psalms. The first direct Messianic psalms are prophesying of future things, particularly of the Christ. The second, indirect Messianic psalms are those that have a contrast, in which the writer is describing his own situation, while also pointing to the future Christ.

The understanding of Psalm 2 is that this is a direct Messianic psalm in which David is fully prophesying of the Christ. Throughout the psalm we will see many Messianic references. David, as a prophet of God, now writes concerning the coming of the Messiah.

1. Regarding the Nations v1-3

The psalm begins by focusing on the nations of the world. “Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?”. The second question is similar to the first, “Why do the peoples plot in vain?” This psalm begins with questions; the answers come in v2. The rulers of the earth are plotting against God and His anointed. Here is a reference to the Messiah. We even know the outcome with the clue, “in vain.” In v3 we read that they are trying to break free from God’s rule. The nations are always going against God and seeking to break from the Lord.

This part of the psalm is quoted by the disciples in Acts 4v25-26. Here we are told who the ones are who have plotted against God. In v27 we read, “both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles... along with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together.” Notice that the nation of Israel opposes God. All of these, Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles, and the Jews, conspired in the death of Jesus. They are standing against the Lord.

2. God's Reaction v4-6

What is God's reaction? Is God worried? No, God laughs at what they are trying! How foolish to plot against the plans of Lord. This is vain and foolish work. Next God rebukes those who plot against Him. The Nations will face the anger of the Lord. In v6 we learn that God's purpose will still come to pass. In v6 we read, "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill." This is recorded in the past tense. It has already happened. There is a certainty about the Lord's action. Men and women cannot halt God's work. It cannot be changed.

Humankind is foolish when we think we can go against the Lord! Yet it is a lesson we do not learn. Even the people of God can find themselves resisting God. In brief, when we choose not to obey our heavenly Father, then we stand against Him. The Lord laughs at our big plans. He knows what man is doing. Further, the judgement of God stands against those who stand against Him.

3. The Words of the Anointed v7-9

The Apostles saw the psalm fulfilled in Jesus Christ and in no other person. Jesus appears exactly as this Psalm presents Him. No other king has been promised world authority. It is fulfilled only in Christ.

At His Second Coming Jesus Christ will show his sovereign authority and power. At a point in time in the future, he will establish his sovereign control for the entire world. He will return in judgment and will establish righteousness on the earth. This is shown in Revelation 11v15-17 and 19v11-16.

Jesus came the first time as the suffering servant of God, He will return as the sovereign God to reign in triumph over His enemies (Philippians 2:10, 11. The applications in the Psalm go beyond David and Solomon. V7, 8, 12 cannot possibly be fulfilled by an earthly king and must refer to the Messiah King, Jesus Christ. King David looks to one who is greater than himself. Christ is this ruling King.

4. The Warning v10-12

As the psalm concludes, in these last three verses comes a warning to all the people. The psalmist says be wise and be warned. This is the consequence of standing against the Lord: enduring the Lord's anger and receiving a judgement from the Anointed Son. Wisdom would tell us to watch our step and not to disobey. The outcome is clear, and the choice is ours.

Next the psalmist calls us to serve. But notice how we are to serve: with fear and trembling. We must serve with these realities in mind. While we can have great rejoicing in being children of God, we must always remember that the anger of God still exists. We must recall that Christ will crush His enemies. We must become a servant of the King, Jesus Christ.

Finally, the psalmist says to kiss the Son. This is an action of homage. When a Prime Minister begins, they begin by kissing the hand of the monarch. This shows to the nation reverence to the monarch. Recall our position before the king: we are the servant. We do not deserve to be in His court but are in His presence by His grace and mercy. Those who will not pay honour and will not serve, will face the Lord's anger and be destroyed. God will destroy those who go down their own path. v12 reminds us of the fierce anger of the Lord. The psalm then ends with a description of the blessed. The word "blessed" means "a fullness and deep peace and joy in life." Blessed are those who find refuge in the Lord and His anointed.

Psalm 2 Bible Study Questions

Breaking the Ice: What is your favourite Psalm and why?

Have you ever thought about being under the rule of a King? What are the advantages and disadvantages of kings versus Parliamentary democracy? What comes to your mind every time when you hear the word "king"?

Q1. Looking at the Psalm 2 as a whole how would you break it down? What do think are the main points of this psalm?

Q2. Looking at the verses 1-3 what are the kings and rulers saying? And in response what is the reaction of the Lord to their plans and actions? In what ways do you see the world in rebellion against God and His Word?

Q3. Isn't tempting to be like the earthly kings described here as plotting to get rid of the rule of the King of Israel. Can you point to a time in your life when you wanted to get free from God's rule in your life (v3)?

Q4. In v6, God explains that it was He who put the king on his throne, therefore, to reject the king is to reject God. Are we living in a time when our culture is wanting “a spirituality” without reference to God’s word? Do you agree? What has been your experience? (v 4-6)

Q5. God’s wrath/anger seems like an outmoded concept in our day. How does this passage remind us to take it seriously? What reaction(s) does rebellion prompt from the Lord in Psalm 2? How will the Messiah respond? (v7). How does v9 challenge us?

Q6. Since God is sovereign, why doesn’t He just send Christ to crush all rebellion and end all the suffering? What wisdom and instruction does the psalmist give to kings and judges? (v10-12) Can a person accept Christ as Saviour without accepting Him as Lord?

Q7. God’s Invitation (v10-12) in Psalm 2 is a song sung by the people of Israel during a coronation service for a new king. It paints a picture of an ideal king. What is the picture you get when you think of King Jesus? Are you inclined to give yourself to him? Or do you think he is a kill joy? Do you feel like his yoke is heavy and is that the reason why Christians ‘can’t have fun’?

Q8. What have you discovered or remembered from studying of this psalm about Jesus Christ?”

Bible Study 2 The Majesty of God

Psalm 8

Introduction

Here is a psalm that deserves to be read outside. It might even benefit from being read on a night when you can see the stars. This will help you get into David's shoes. It reminds me of walking my daughter home on a star filled night.

1. God the creator v1-2

David begins this psalm by attributing greatness to God. How excellent is God's name in all the earth! How majestic is His name! Later in Israel's history, the Jewish people would not say God's name for fear of taking His name in vain. What a contrast with how we use God's name today. The name of the Lord is majestic, and yet we have turned his name into a swear word. Psalm 8 reminds us that even His name is to be kept holy.

His Glory

Psalm 8 also speaks of the glory of the Lord. The glory of the Lord is above the heavens themselves. Even this creation cannot itself reveal the great glory of the Lord. We are given small glimpses of His glory. (See Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1). We are amazed at the world even with its flaws. The Bible helps us to understand the glory of God. Jesus quotes the Psalm in Matthew 21v16 and links himself to God. In so doing he identified Scribes and Pharisees as God's enemies, and this in turn made them even more determined to destroy Jesus.

2. The link between Man and the Creation v3-4

David next describes the insignificance of man. When we study the work of God, mankind becomes insignificant. What we know today about the size of the universe makes the earth and its people look even less important than they did in the day of the Psalm. Just think about millions of stars and the latest pictures of the universe. We ask questions about life in the universe because we search for significance. We feel small yet God loves us! So, it is good to remind ourselves that we stand before the Lord.

3. The Significance of Mankind v5-8

Amazingly, God has given man a great amount of significance. What is man that God is mindful of him? The answer is that man is nothing. However, God has made man so that we reflect his image. God has created us just a

little lower than Himself. Humankind was made in the image of God and in the likeness of God. Further, men and women have been crowned with glory and honour.

Man's Authority

We see in v6-8 men and women have been placed in charge. This puts humankind in an exclusive position. We have been called to rule the animal world. We have been placed above them and have authority over the created things. Many consider that humankind has developed from animals. Sometimes we act like animals. The Bible says we were made in the likeness of God. So let us look upward towards God. In Hebrews 2:5-9 Psalm 8 is quoted as proof concerning the superiority of Christ. Hebrews 2v5 reminds us that the world to come is in subjection to men and women and the Hebrews writer uses Psalm 8 to demonstrate his point. Then in v8 we learn that the spiritual realm has been placed under our feet.

4. God's Glory and Majesty v9

In v9 with the eye of faith "we see Jesus." who was crowned with glory and honour. He was given a name that is above every name. He was given the throne upon which to rule until every enemy is destroyed. So, 2 Timothy 2:12 is right when it says, "*if we endure, we will also reign with him.*" Do not forget we have been made as kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.

Look at the crowns we are given:

We have a "*crown of righteousness*" (2 Timothy 4v8),

"*A crown that will last forever*" (1 Corinthians 9v25),

A "*crown of life*" (James 1v12),

and a "*crown of glory*" (1 Peter 5v4) awaiting us.

Conclusion:

There is no better way to conclude this Psalm 8 than with the words of David, "***O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.***" We need God and with his help see we have both meaning and significance. God has given us power on the earth, and we rule with him in the heavenly places. He has "raised us up with Christ" to sit with him.

Psalm 8 Bible Study Questions

Breaking the Ice: Have you ever looked up at the night sky on a dark night, away from the lights on a moonless bright and clear evening? What did you see? What impressed you? Did you see beauty of God's creation? Why do some people fail to see God's handy work?

Q1. To you, what is the most valuable truth that this psalm teaches? Why are you encouraged and excited?

Q2. In v3, the Psalmist describes God taking the moon and stars between his fingers and setting them in place. It's a bit like us taking a bowl of chocolate buttons then using our fingers to put them – one by one – onto a cake. What does the picture in v3 suggest to us about God and the way he undertook the creation process?

Q3. Men and women have always been full of questions. In v4 what kind of questions do we find near the centre of this Psalm? What kind of response do they deserve? And what kind of answer would you offer?

Q4. In v5, we are told about our position and role in creation. How does it contrast with worldviews that are on offer currently in the world around us? Then in v6 we see the focus moves to our responsibility over creation. In what ways do you feel responsible for your environment locally?

Q5. In v7-8 the psalmist lists six creatures over which we have God-given responsibility. What are these six creatures and why are they included? And can we name six more aspects of creation for which we have been given responsibility?

Q6. We should be enthralled at God's majesty in creation. Notice again, this is how David begins and ends the Psalm. What is he trying to teach us by this focus on God at the start and end of the Psalm?

Q7 What changes in the light of this Psalm would we wish to make to see ourselves as God sees us?

Q8. "What have you discovered or remembered from studying of this psalm about Jesus Christ?"

Bible Study 3 Ups and Downs of Life

Psalm 40

Introduction

There is truth in the assertion that suffering is a fact of life! We know that things do not always work out the way we planned. We fail exams. Relationships end. We let others down. Families can disappoint us. We fall sick. We get old. I've not even mentioned our daily struggle with selfishness. We face opposition and ridicule, and eventually we die.

There is no 'get out of jail free card'. Sometimes bad news comes by the bus load. Bad things happen because of sin. But there is one thing to remember "God!"

King David was behind Psalm 40. This Psalm was written by David around 3000 years ago. The Psalm divides into three parts. In the first, David looks back to a period of problems and recalls how God rescued him. Next David openly speaks of his faith in God. In the last David looks forward to a time that he knows he will require God's aid.

Even when life is hard and full of issues he will trust in the Lord and seek his blessing. In this psalm are the words of someone who has been through a deep crisis, it does not take much to look a little deeper and see the Lord Jesus Christ. The psalm reminds us that evil does not have the last word.

1. All He's Done v1-5

Verses 1-3a: I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.

Whatever the situation, we know it was bad. There is a pit and a bog. It is a hopeless situation. David cries for help. He waits patiently. Waiting involved accepting God's wisdom and timing. He does not give up. We wait for the Lord. Psalm 27:14.

And the Lord did rescue him. His feet were back on solid ground. He sings again about God. These verses even inspired a U2 song

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3z_LBNF_-xI

The Psalm begins by looking back to what has been done. v4: "*Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust.*" He found that it was good to keep

waiting on God. David wishes his story to help others to trust. It should encourage us to tell others about how good God has been. Maybe this week share your story of waiting on God with others. Past rescues remembered can encourage others to keep trusting. In a hard place today? Allow the words of this Psalm to keep you waiting patiently and trusting in God alone. It may be that God is giving you help through other Christians. I think we often find the stories of others encouraging even in hopeless situations. Psalm 40 now moves to look at how we can live for God today.

2. Living for Him Today v6-10

Having been rescued what next? The next step for David is to trust and obey. God delights in those who trust him. In v6-8: *"In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book, it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."*

An open ear delights and listens out for God's commands. The Old Testament speaks of offerings and sacrifices. However, David knows that such sacrifices don't cut it without true obedience to the Lord. This was King Saul's undoing! He had a disobedient heart.

Following God's rescue, David commits his whole life to serving and obeying God. Verses 6-8 are quoted in Hebrews 10v5-10. Amazingly these words point forward to someone greater than David. The same words were on the lips of Jesus as He declared that he was far greater than David. Not only did Jesus tell his Father that he wanted to obey him, but he actually did so. He lived the perfect life that we were never able to live. Though we are facing destruction and a miry bog. Jesus went on to die the death we deserved in order to rescue us. Jesus exchanged places with us. He was our substituted and got the punishment we deserved. So in response to God's rescue, David commits his life to obeying his creator God.

Those who have been rescued by God will also want to tell others about what he has done.

3. Trust him for the Future v11-17

Even when we have been rescued by Jesus it does not mean a troubled free life. In v11-12 we read, *"As for you, O Lord, you will not restrain your mercy from me; your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve*

me!” We don’t know the trouble he's confronting but it seems to be an assortment of issues. We know how he feels. Ultimately, there is opposition from those who seek to hurt him (v14-15). The language is tough. He cannot see and his heart sinks. Then in v13 comes a prayer. David calls on the Lord to deliver him.

The song closes with a perfect balance: the defeat of those who are happy to see a believer suffering (v13-15) and the joy of those whose heart is set on the Lord and his salvation (v16-17).

Psalm 40 Bible Study Questions

Ice Breaker: Take a moment or two and ask the group to share what has impressed or excited them about the ways the Lord has been at work in their lives? What did you have to wait for when God was at work in your life?

Q1. What does David expect to happen as a result of his testimony, and why is that significant? (v. 3b)

Q2. Who do you know who needs to hear your testimony of God’s goodness to you? Who do you know who needs to “see and fear and put their trust in the Lord”? How can others pray with you in this regard?

Q3. In v9 and 10, David reflects on several of God’s attributes. What are they?

Q4. Which of these divine attributes is especially meaningful to you today? And why?

Q5. Even though David has told us what God has already done for him (v. 1-3, v. 5), what does he pray for in verses 11-17? Make a list of David's prayer requests. (There are many!)

Q6. What is prompting David to cry out to God for help? (v 12, 14, 17)

Q7. What is the relationship between God's past deliverance and David's prayers for future deliverance?

Q8. "What have you discovered or remembered from studying of this psalm about Jesus Christ?"

Bible Study 4

Psalm 91

Many people around Wimborne lack a sense of security and fearful about what may be around the corner. This Psalm offers many assurances about the security given by God. As we study the Psalm look out for the repeating of words. During a time of insecurity this Psalm speaks of God's power, authority, goals, and protection against fear. The psalmist tells us God's comfort is a covering for his people and a wing of security in the midst of times which are both uncertain and painful.

Will God Protect Us?

Psalm 91 was used by the Devil to tempt Jesus (Matt 4v5-7). Satan spoke to Jesus saying that surely he could place himself in the way of destruction in order to show the saving power of God. But Satan, God's enemy, misused God's Word, taking it out of context from the rest of the Bible. Jesus, knowing the scriptures, answered that God is not to be put to the test. Reckless conduct is not ignored by God—and neither is mishandling of scriptures.

Following Jesus' example, we should also deal with Scripture well in our challenging days. Knowing that God is our shelter, comfort and shield in difficult times does not mean that we have a "Free Get Out of Jail" card if we follow and trust in Jesus in hard times.

So, we can see that we are living in times of fear and anxiety. Rich or poor, no one seems totally secure any more. The whole world is seeking security. In times of crisis though, God's people can find reassurance from the promises of God.

Psalm 91 was probably written by one of the temple personnel as a word of assurance to "worshippers". As the author of the Psalm, he was guided by the Holy Spirit. He never dreamt that it would bring great comfort to literally millions of people.

Facing threats v2, 5-6

What are we facing? Verses 3 and 5-6 show us the stark reality of two threats we face in life; the threat from enemies and the threat of ill health. Our prayers can reach out to thousands because the living God still answers prayer!! The Psalm can be broken down into two sections, the first being v1-8, and the second v9-16. The focus is that God's protection rests on his children.

God's Provision v1-8

Verses v1-4 illustrate several powerful ideas of God's protection:

- a) *His Shelter* – we can reflect on God's shelter.
- b) *His Shadow* – the shade that protects us from the blazing sun or torrential rain.
- c) *A Fortress/Refuge* – providing protection to a city
- d) *His Wings* – the tenderness with which a mother bird protects her offspring
- e) *A Shield* – used in times of war when the enemy fires his arrows at us. We are right now in the middle of a very different but dangerous war (Ephesians 6v10-20)
- f) *Rampart/walls* – I am reminded of the walls of the historic castles along the south coast, built hundreds of years ago. They still stand today.

God's Protection v9-16

These verses bring reassurance of God's protection. That protection is further underlined in the psalm in v11-12 through the ministry of his holy angels. Psalm 91 is a Messianic Psalm, partly because Satan quoted v11-12 to Jesus during his temptations (Luke 4v10-11). Jesus however, refused to be led into temptation and rebuked Satan with scripture. Jesus refused because he wanted to fulfil God's will.

God's Blessing v14-16:

In the final part of Psalm 91 God's blessings are declared. Eight such blessings are promised for those who love the Lord (v14), acknowledge His name (v14) and call upon Him. They are:

- a) "I will rescue him" (v14)
- b) "I will protect him" (v4)
- c) "I will answer him" (v15)
- d) "I will be with him in trouble" (v15)
- e) "I will deliver him" (v15)
- f) "(I will) honour him" (v15)
- g) "With long life will I satisfy him" (v16)
- h) "(I will) show him my salvation" (v16)

Finally, this Psalm reminds us how different it is if we have the love of a friend with us! This is especially true if he knows the road we travel and the issues we face. God's presence is all we need. God doesn't need to tell us what he will do; it is enough that he will be there.

Psalm 91 Bible Study Questions

Breaking the Ice: List the big and small things that trigger worry or stress or anxiety at the moment in your life? What are the ways you try to offset or cope with them each day. What would you recommend?

Q1. In the opening verses the psalmist proclaims the name of God four times over? What do you think is the importance of reminding themselves of the Most High, the Almighty, the Lord and my God?

Q2. What types of calamities are discussed in verses 3-8? What do you think the psalmist means by “terror of night,” and “an arrow that flies by day”?

Q3. In verses 3-8, the psalmist lists several metaphors to describe God’s protection: save you (v3), cover you with his feathers (v4), shield (v4), fortress or rampart (v4). Which image of God echoes the most with you? Why?

Q4. Based on Psalm 91, would you say that the believer is protected from danger and sorrow or protected in the middle of hard times? Why is the difference between the two situations an important one? Then in verses v9-12 and v14-15, what gives the psalmist confidence that he has a secure shelter?

Q5. This psalm has been used by Jew and Christian alike as a shield against demonic pressures, so it is rather ironic that Satan uses it (vv. 11-12) in his attempt to corrupt Jesus (Matthew 4:5-7). Jesus saw it as a way to test God, not as a way of trusting God. What is the difference between trusting God's promises and testing Him to prove the veracity of those promises?

Q6 In verses 14-16 God responds to the psalmist and seeks to bring a blessing. Which of the eight blessings is most important to you and why?

Q7. Finally, a young Christian asks you over coffee, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" How does this Psalm help you to answer their dilemma?

Q8. "What have you discovered or remembered from studying of this psalm about Jesus Christ?"

Bible Study 5

Psalm 98

If you turn on the TV or open a newspaper you can see we are in a messed-up world. Look around at the wars, famines, financial crises, personal suffering; how are we to have joy? I was asked this in Waitrose back in the autumn. People are asking, how can we find joy and hope? The psalms are always a great place to find courage and words of hope during tough times. Many of the psalms were written during the hard times faced by God's people. Some of the psalms were written after invasion, imprisonment and captivity. We might call the psalms 'God's book of hope'.

Before we look at Psalm 98, I want you to notice how often the psalm calls for joy and singing see v1, v4, and v5-6. How is joy feasible at such times? Where is the joy when things are falling apart? What can we learn from Psalm 98?

1. The Sovereign Saviour v1-3

Right at the start we are told in v1 to "sing to the Lord a new song." It does not mean that the Lord tired of the old songs. A "new song" here is a remembrance of the triumph achieved by God. They sing because they recall God's rescue. The Lord's right hand and his holy arm have achieved salvation. It is his own power that brings victory. We know that God will act to uphold his own name and holiness. Yes, he will act for us. He also acts for himself, and this gives us hope. God's faithfulness and righteousness is revealed through his salvation to Israel and the world. God's steadfast love and faithfulness are our hope today.

If you read Revelation 14v1–3 you will hear a new song. This is the message of salvation. The blood of the Lamb has ransomed (5v9), redeemed (14v3) and made a kingdom of priests to the Lord. God's triumph is our triumph.

For us, we look at God's deliverance from our sins when we see the cross. We sing by faith in times of suffering because we rest in the salvation achieved by our Lord.

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

In the days of anguish think of God's love and the salvation he has given to you through Jesus.

2. The Sovereign King v4-6

Here we have a call for all the earth to make joyful noises and sing praises to the Lord. Notice that worship is to be joyful. Our worship is not a duty but comes from the joy for our king. The psalm makes clear that our God reigns. This is the next reason why we can have joy in the heart of suffering. God reigns and rules over the earth. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Since Jesus is the King and the Lord then our joy is linked to God's sovereign rule over all things.

3. The Sovereign Judge v7-9

All of the world is called upon to honour the Lord. We have understood that our joy comes from our God as our saviour and king. Now in v7-9 we see that we can have joy in face of distress is because God is the judge. Verses 8-9 sound strange to us because the judgment of the Lord is a reason for joy! The Bible says that Jesus will judge the world. This means we can look ahead to the return of Christ. Jesus will make things new and right. This lasting joy is echoed more than once in the New Testament - see 1 Thessalonians 2:13–16 and 2 Thessalonians 1:5–12.

When it comes to our enemies, God will right the injustices we have faced. When it comes to the world's evils, like violence and suffering, God is the right living judge and he will decide fairly. Amazingly in the early centuries, many believers were persecuted and killed because of their commitment to Jesus, but we are told that evil will not have the last word. We may be living in dangerous times, but we know that God will judge every evil act committed. Let us focus our joy knowing that the Lord will return.

We have joy and hope not because of ourselves, but from the Lord who saves. God alone rules and judges the world. So do not let issues or problems of this world bring us down because God reigns and he will put all his enemies under his feet (1 Corinthians 15v24-26).

Bible Study 5 Questions Psalm 98

Breaking the ice: If you were on a Desert Island and could take only three Christian songs/hymns with you. What would be your selection and why?

Q1. What specific “wonderful things” does the psalmist celebrate in v1-3? What are the reasons we are told to sing a new song (v1-3)?

Q2. Describe the manner our praise should take as we look at these opening verses? v4. What might it be like at St John’s?

Q3. What reaction to God’s marvellous works is called for in v4-6? List the styles of joyful celebrations that are suggested. How are we told to sing? (v5-6)

Q4. The call to praise expands to include all of nature in the psalm’s final part. What is the response of the elements? (v7-8) List the specific sections of creation that join in the celebration and describe how they offer praise. Describe in your own words how the “new song” of Psalm 98 progresses from the beginning of the psalm to the end.

Q5. What future event does the psalmist anticipate in v9? Take a moment to write your own praise prayer, thanking God for his past, present, and future involvement in your life.

Q6. According to verse 9, why are we to rejoice? How will God judge the world? (9)

Q7. What do you learn from this psalm that will help you become a person after God's own heart? What tips would you share with others?

Q8. "What have you discovered or remembered from studying of this psalm about Jesus Christ?"

Bible Study 6

Psalm 110

Introduction

If I were to ask you which is the best-known Psalm, I would imagine everyone would go on to say it's Psalm 23! This is the most popular Psalm today. It opens with the words *"The Lord is my Shepherd"* however, it might be surprising to learn that this was not the case when the New Testament was written. The most quoted Psalm in the New Testament is Psalm 110.

In our last study we will focus on Psalm 110 and see that it is all about Jesus. He is the main person in this Psalm. You can find this Psalm scattered across the New Testament. (Matt. 22v44, Mk. 12v36, Luke 20v42-43, Acts 2v33-34, and Heb. 1v13.) There are implicit references in Matt. 26v64; Luke 22v69; 1 Cor. 15v25; and Heb. 5v6, 7v17, 21. And hints can be found in Mark 14v62; 16v19; Ephesians 1v20; Colossians 3v1; Hebrews 1v3; 5v6; 10v12-13. This Psalm is worth studying for this reason alone.

This Psalm also speaks of the Messiah, as the King, Priest and Judge. King David speaks of the Messianic King 1000 years before Jesus' ascension to God's right hand. The Lord Jesus told us that David was the author and inspired by the Holy Spirit (Mk 12v36). This is one of the royal Psalms.

1. The King v1-3

The LORD says to my lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." This verse is quoted no less than 15 times in the New Testament and echoed in many other passages. When you hear this verse, it sounds a little strange. What we need to understand is that two different words are being used for Lord in this Psalm. *Yahweh says to Adonai, "Sit at my (Yahweh's) right hand until I make your (Adonai's) enemies a footstool for your (Adonai's) feet."*

Like much of the Old Testament the verse may well have two meanings. The first a direct one and the other a future one. Its current setting was about God's promise to King David and his family. Now as we look a little deeper, we see that it indicates to someone in addition to David. Who did David think he was writing about?

We find the answer in the New Testament. Here we learn that Lord refers to Jesus Christ. So we see that the verse is about the Son of God. Now v2 could also be about David. David's victories laid the groundwork for a generation of peace under his son's rule.

Now v3 is another tricky verse. Today, in the kingdom of God, we have a lot of hesitant service. Service and support is not always enthusiastic, there will come a day when Christ returns as King of kings then all his people will dedicate themselves to the service of the Lord. What a wonderful day that will be! Why? We will have the King reigning among us.

2. The Priest v4

In verse 4 we have the second direct message from God to the Messiah. The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: *"You are a priest for ever in the order of Melchizedek"*.

Jesus Christ is not just a King, but also the great High Priest! "

Normally, according to the religious principles of Israel, there was a clear split between the offices of king, priest, and prophet. It was usually seen as not good to mix them. However, David accepted the status of priest on a number of occasions. On earth the two offices of king and priest should remain separate. But in heaven there was no separation. The King of heaven alone is qualified to be Prophet, Priest, and King.

Amazingly this verse is mentioned six times in the book Hebrews! This was done to stress that the priesthood of Jesus Christ would be unique and greater than Aaron's priesthood. This is made clear by the reference to the order of Melchizedek. Jesus was like Melchizedek, not a priest following Aaron, but because of God's will. Even more, Jesus will be our High Priest forever (see Hebrews 7).

Even the name Melchizedek is important. His name means king of righteousness. (Gen 14) This king of righteousness was king of Salem (or Jerusalem), which itself means peace. Jesus is our great King. He is the Righteous King and Prince of Peace.

3. The Judge v5-7

"The Lord is at your right hand; he will crush kings on the day of his wrath."

As we look at v5-6 we see that the Psalm ends on the note of conflict as it speaks about the future when the King will return in glory. What's interesting is that back in v1, it appears as though God the Father will give the enemies into His King's hands. By v5, it is the King who fights successfully.

What we see here is that it is God who is being addressed. (Think Jesus) We need to see that sometimes peace can only be achieved through bloodshed! (Look at Psalm 2). His enemies, who don't know Jesus, will not know peace. The King and High Priest will also be the Judge of the living and the dead. *"He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead and crushing the rulers of the whole earth."* (v 6) When Christ comes again it will be terrible for those who rejected Him in this life. Hope will have ended.

The Psalm ends with a strange verse v7 *"He will drink from a brook along the way, and so he will lift up his head"*. I think it is a poetic way of portraying our King in battle. He is surrounded by death, tired and thirsty, but stops in the battle to drink, then it is on with the battle. The King will not be stopped.

Our King will one day return. Evil will be destroyed. Righteousness, justice and peace will reign on the earth. The Cross will have done its work. When Jesus comes, He will triumph, and He will crush evil establishing a New Heaven and a New Earth.

Bible Study 5 Questions Psalm 110

Ice Breaker: A young Christian has just read Psalm 110 for the first time. He would like you to help him understand its big message. What would you share? And what more would you like to learn?

Q1. Looking at the Psalm as a whole, what impacted you? What encouraged you? Convicted you? Confronted you? Confused you?

Q2. Read Psalm 110v1. Who is the first Lord? Who does "my" refer to? Who is the second Lord (1 Corinthians 15v24-28; Hebrews 10v12-13)?

Q3. How does Jesus use Psalm 110v1 with the religious leaders of His day (Matthew 22:41-46)? And how do Acts 2v31-36 and Hebrews 5v5-10 help us to understand Psalm 110?

Q4. What are the attributes of the Lord's kingdom in Psalm 110:1-3? What promises are given to the One who will rule this kingdom?

Q5. Read Psalm 110v4 and Genesis 14v18-20. What do we learn of Melchizedek here? Read Hebrews 4v14-5:10. What more do we learn of Melchizedek? How does the author of Hebrews use Psalm 110 to compare Melchizedek to Jesus?

Q6. Read Psalm 110v5-7. What will happen to the Messiah's enemies? How do these verses relate to Jesus? Especially think about Jesus' resurrection and ascension and how it relates to His coming again.

Q7. What does this Psalm teach us? Can you see 6 revelations in the Psalm? What does each one mean?

Q8. In the light of this Psalm 110 can a person accept Jesus as Saviour, but not as Lord? Should Jesus as Saviour and Lord be more prominent in our witnessing?

Q9. "What have you discovered or remembered from studying of this psalm about Jesus Christ?"

