

## ABOUT THE BOOK OF PSALMS

The Hebrew title of the book of Psalms is "Tehillim" which means "book of praise". And they're just that... the praise songs of Israel... the *Hebrew hymnal*.

All the psalms were originally set to music, but of course, the notes and melodies have been lost. Only the lyrics live on. Perhaps God intended for each new generation to rewrite the musical score in a fresh and relevant style.

The Psalms were written out of every possible human situation and emotion; and as a result, they teach us how to relate to God in any and every circumstance.

Think of it this way- Genesis to Esther is full of movements, places, dates, and decrees - it records Hebrew history - *the steps of their feet*... but the Psalms provide us *the beat of their heart*. They're a *Diary of Devotion*. The book of Psalms chronicles the inner life of the nation - their spiritual struggles and victories.

Picture the Psalms as the EKG read-out, as God's people take the stress test called life.

Ron Allen sums up the theme of the book: "Life is tough, but God is good." Both truths are illustrated with crystal-clear clarity in the book of the Psalms.

Just a couple of technical notes...

Most of the psalms - at least 73 - were written by King David. 27 were written by other authors. And 50 psalms are anonymous. We call them "*orphan psalms*"...

Tradition says Ezra compiled the psalms in their present form.

Notice too, the 150 psalms are divided into 5 sections. Book One: chapters 1-41 - Book Two: 42-72 - Book Three: 73-89 - Book Four: 90-106 - and Book Five: 107-150. Hebrew tradition says the five divisions were intended to correspond with the first five books of the Bible, or the Law of Moses.

## JESUS IN THE PSALMS

### PSALM TWO

Acts 4:25 attributes Psalm 2 to David, and is taken as prophetic of our Lord Jesus. It was probably written in a time of battle, but David's thoughts transcended his own battle, and focused on the final battle.

Psalm 2 becomes prophetic of the Second Coming of Jesus when God will destroy the wicked nations of the earth. Verse 6 says that God will set His King on the temple mount in Jerusalem.

God further identifies His ruler in verse 7 as His begotten Son. Of course the New Testament tells us that God's only begotten Son was Jesus of Nazareth.

The rest of the Psalm describes how Jesus will rule the nations with a rod of iron - a picture of the Millennial Kingdom. The plea goes out in verse 12, "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way..." In other words, make peace with Jesus while the offer is on the table, lest in the end He breaks you in pieces.

### PSALM SIXTEEN

Psalm 16:10 tells us, "For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption." Understand, this is no longer David speaking, for his body did see corruption. If found today it would be nothing but dust. Our Lord Jesus alone avoided death's decay. Peter quotes verse 10 in Acts 2 as prophetic of Jesus' resurrection.

### PSALM TWENTY-TWO

Psalm 22 looks beyond the agonies of David, and foresees the cross of Christ. Rome doesn't invent the form of execution known as "*crucifixion*" for another 1000 years, but this psalm amazingly predicts 33 details fulfilled in the death of Jesus.

Verse 1 was quoted on the cross by Jesus, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani" or "My God, My God, why have You

forsaken Me?" At Calvary Jesus became sin for us - the Son was separated from the Father, so that we could be reconciled.

In verses 7-8 we hear the jeers of the crowd at the foot of cross... Verse 14 describes Messiah's physical sufferings. "I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it has melted within Me." Verse 16, "They pierced My hands and My feet." Verse 18, "They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots." It all speaks of the cross - written a 1000 years before the fact.

Verse 22 is quoted of Jesus in Hebrews 2:12, "I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise You." Jesus hung on the cross, but now He's risen from the dead. He hangs out in the midst of His people. Verse 27 reminds us that one day all the nations will worship the risen Lord.

### PSALM THIRTY-ONE

Psalm 31:5 again takes us to the cross. Jesus quoted, "Into Your hand I commit my spirit..." Jesus faced down death because He trusted His spirit into the hands of a faithful God. The same assurance will serve us well when we face death.

### PSALM FORTY

Psalm 40:6-8 are quoted in Hebrews 10:5, as the words of Jesus, on the day He left heaven for a manger in Bethlehem. The millions of animals offered in the temple worship as a sacrifice for the people's sin had *pacified*, but not fully *satisfied* a holy God. They had covered sin temporarily, but not blotted it out.

God's righteousness demanded more than sin-stained blood. It called for a perfect sacrifice, and Jesus alone could satisfy that requirement. Here Jesus dedicates Himself to do the Father's will, and fulfill the promise of salvation.

# Bible Scan - Psalms 1-41

## THE COMMENTS

Many of the psalms begin with introductory comments. These notes were not in the original manuscripts - but are very old, and are considered to be fairly reliable. Below are some terms and definitions found in these comments...

Many of the Psalms are addressed to the "Chief Musician". These were psalms intended to be used in the public worship of the temple.

The Hebrew word *Sheminith* means simply "eight".

Some scholars believe it was an note to the musician to raise or lower the music 8 notes, or an octave. Since Psalm 6 is a song of confession it was probably dropped an octave.

Psalm 7 is prefaced "A Meditation of David". The Hebrew word translated "*meditation*" means "*wandering*", and the song may've come from David's years in exile. For at least a decade he wandered the Judean desert on the run from Saul.

Psalm 9 is "to the tune of 'Death of the Son'... or "*death of a champion*" is another translation. Jewish tradition attaches this psalm to David's triumph over the giant Goliath.

Psalm 16 is called "A Michtam of David." The word "*Michtam*" could have one of three definitions: It could mean "*jewel*" - in other words, the Psalm is special. Or "*engraved*" - you don't want to forget it. Or "*secret*" - it has a hidden meaning. Actually all three are true of Psalm 16.

Psalm 32 is a "*Contemplation*" - the Hebrew word is "*maschil*", or "*a sermon set to music*".

## WHAT IS MAN ?

Imagine the shepherd boy, David, out in the field under a starry sky. He gazes at a billion stars, and admires the genius of the God who created it all. Then it hits him - *he sits on earth thinking about God, but God is in heaven thinking about him.* God has cosmic vistas to enjoy, but His attention is fixed on us earthlings. David marvels in verse 4, "What is man that You are mindful of him..."

It's been noted that the raw materials that make up the human body could all be bought with a \$10 bill. Reduce us to our most basic physical composition and we're nothing but glorified mud balls. The value of man cannot be measured by looking *inward*, but *upward*. We're special... because we're special to God.

God made us in His image. We started out a little lower than the angels, but we're destined to rule over them. God gave mankind dominion over His creation, and one day all things will be under human feet. Of course, God's plan for man was spoiled by the sin of the first man, Adam - but it's been restored by the last Adam, Jesus Christ. In Jesus we can become all that man was meant to be.

### Devotion Box - The Lord Delivers

In Psalm 34: 19 David sums up the circumstances of his life at the time, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all..." We all could say *Amen*.

The Christian life is not a trouble-free existence. Become a Christian, and you swap one set of troubles for another... but God becomes your deliverer! Look for God's deliverance today!

### Devotion Box - Psalms for Insomnia

If you're having a hard time sleeping at night Psalms 3-4 are for you. Every year Americans consume 800,000 pounds of barbiturates to try and get to sleep. We're sleepless in America. Over 200 sleep-inducing potions are on the market.

But Psalm 4:8 we find the formula God prescribes for His people, "I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety." Guys, we'll sleep soundly, if our faith is grounded in the faithfulness of God.

In Psalm 3:5 David is able to *lay down* - for he knows in verse 7 God will *arise* on his behalf.

It's been said, "If you can't sleep, don't count sheep - talk to the shepherd."

## SELAH

Throughout the Psalms the word "Selah" appears as a break in the song. It means "*to lift up*".

Most scholars believe it's an instruction to pause and think about what's just been said.

When you see a "Selah" the psalmist is telling us, "*Lift up that thought, and ponder its meaning. It's a vital point.*"

### Devotion Box - David's Longing

David wrote Psalm 17 after being attacked and accused. Rather than get bitter, he took it as a test. He asks God to handle his case, and vindicate him. David's concern is not to sin or stumble. In verse 5 he asks God to steady his steps.

In verse 15, David says, "As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness."

David's longing is threefold: *to know God, be right with God, and to be like God.* Do we share David's passion?

David prays for deliverance, but often a quick deliverance can short-circuit a long term transformation. When God turns up the heat in your life, the immediate impulse is to jump out of the pan. But let the pressure melt, mold, and purify.

## THE SHEPHERD'S SONG

Psalms 23 is "the Shepherd's Song" "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." A little boy quoted, "The Lord is my shepherd, *I've got all I want.*" Both work!

The psalm is divided into 3 stanzas – the shepherd *provides* (verses 1-3), the shepherd *protects* (verse 4), and the shepherd *promotes* the flock (verses 5-6). Think of it this way... *our grazing, our groping, and our glory.*

Verse 2, "He makes me to lie down..." Only a contented sheep will lie down.

Verse 3, "He leads me in the paths of righteousness..." The shepherd never drives the sheep. He wins their confidence, and they desire to follow him.

An Israeli tour guide used to point this fact out to his groups, until one day he saw a man driving his sheep. He asked, "I didn't think a shepherd ever drove his flock, but lead them?" The man answered, "You're right, but I'm not a shepherd. I'm a butcher." Satan is the butcher who drives, forces, and beats the sheep.

And when the footing gets dangerous, and the flock passes through "the valley of the shadow of death", the shepherd is right there to protect his flock.

He leads 'em all the way to glory – exalts 'em over their enemies - fills their cup to overflowing – and they live forever in the house of the Lord! What a deal!

Verse 6 sums it up, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life..." Did you hear of the couple with 3 kids? They thought to name 'em "Surely", "Goodness", and "Mercy"... but worried they'd follow 'em all the days of their lives.

## PEARLS FROM THE PSALMS

In Psalm 12:6-8 David contrast the *words of men* with the *words of God*. He makes four statements:

- 1) God's words are *true* ("the words of the Lord are pure")
  - 2) God's words are *tested* ("like silver tried in a furnace")
  - 3) God's words are *trustworthy* (God keeps His word)
  - 4) God's words are *timeless* (they last forever).
- True, tested, trustworthy, and timeless.*

Psalms 33 is an encouragement to praise the Lord.

We're told in verse 2, "Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy." In other words, *jazz it up*, and *juice it up* - turn up the amp. Worship is a combination of art and heart.

In Psalm 31:15 the psalmist tells us, "My times are in Your hand..." The Lord not only has a plan for my life, but a schedule. He'll work it out in His way, and in His perfect timing.

## CRUMBLING FOUNDATIONS

Psalm 11:3 says, "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" This is the question we need to ask ourselves today. As society's Christian heritage disintegrates, we've lost our foundation for truth and morality.

How do you operate in a society that no longer values honesty and personal integrity... no longer has respect for human life... no longer believes in the sanctity of marriage? When the foundation crumbles the rest of the house turns to rubble.

Psalm 11 answers the question asked in verse 3... rather than run from the erosion of society, the psalmist pledges himself to trust the Lord.

## Devotion Box - Faith not Fret

Psalm 37 tackles the age-old question, "If God is good and just, then why do the evil prosper?"

And notice the first thing David says about the issue, "Do not fret because of evildoers." We're tempted to fret... When we hear of an abortionist making millions by killing babies, or the porno king getting rich by exploiting women, or the barons of big business trampling on the rights of workers just to pad the pockets of their shareholders... we get mad. We want to lash out. We're tempted to fret... But David tells us, "Do not fret..."

The proper response is *faith* not *fret*.

Verse 2 affirms, "they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness." Don't let evil around you take your eyes off God's faithfulness. We need to do what you can to stop injustice, but remember - we live in a fallen world. One day God will right all wrongs - but it won't happen 'til Jesus returns.

Once more in Psalm 37:8 David tells us again, "Do not fret - it only causes harm." Focus on life's injustices, rather than God's mercies – and it'll poison your attitude. It's been said, "Look at others and be distressed; look at self and be depressed; look at Jesus and you'll be at rest."

We look at the injustice all around, and figure there's no hope for us, but God can take care of his own. David says in verse 25, "I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread."

## A FATHER-CHILD THING

Verses 4-5 are a couple of my favorite verses, "Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." The Lord loves to delight with good gifts the person who delights in Him - who *takes his joy* from God.

Guys, it's a Father-child thing... the more my kids enjoy hanging out with me the more I'm inclined to want to give good gifts to them. That's also how God feels...

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - [sandyadams@calvarychapel.org](mailto:sandyadams@calvarychapel.org)

Calvary Chapel Announcements - August 13, 2000 - 8/18 Night of Worship - 8/16 High School BBQ - 8/30 Dennis Zech "Ministry Through Mystery" - 9/10 Morning Baptism - 9/17 Morning Baby Dedication - For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: [www.calvarychapel.org/stonemountain/biblescan.htm](http://www.calvarychapel.org/stonemountain/biblescan.htm)

Next Bible Scan - August 20 - Psalm 42-72

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." - Psalm 23:1

Bible Scan Memory Verse

## IMPRECATORY PSALMS

Some of the psalms are referred to by scholars as an "Imprecatory Psalms". "Imprecate" means "to curse", and in these psalms God uses David to call down judgment on his enemies. A few examples are Psalms 28, 35, and 36...

David was a godly man with a fiery temper. He hated sin, and got angry at sinners. What saved him from sin was his willingness to take his feelings to God.

CS Lewis once observed, "If the Jews cursed more bitterly than pagans it was because they took right and wrong more seriously." That probably explains some of David's harsh statements towards his enemies in the next couple of chapters.

Psalm 35:1 is a good example of an imprecatory prayer. David asks God, "Fight against those who fight against me."

As Christians, Jesus has given us a higher standard. We're to love the people who hate us... but we can also pray the prayer of David... We can still love the sinner, yet pray for God to thwart his sinful plans and purposes.

Many times I've prayed the equivalent, "Lord, I'll love him, but you upset what he's trying to do."

## DEVOTION BOX - THE FOOL

Psalm 14 begins, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" It reminds me of the agnostic fleas. They're walking across the furry landscape of the back of a canine when one asks the other "I wonder if there really is a dog?"

Guys, the evidence for God is overwhelming. Look at the order and symmetry all around us. Order never flows out of chaos. It requires intelligence. There's no way the complex systems of life – and nature - sprang from chance occurrences of accidental circumstances. Only a fool would deny the existence of God.

It's been said, "Earth houses atheists many. Hell is not occupied by any."

## DEVOTION BOX - THE DANGERS OF SEXUAL SIN

In Psalm 38:4 David admits, "my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me." He's drowning in guilt. In verse 7 David says, "my loins are full of inflammation".

Some commentators have guessed that his sin was sexual sin, and he picked up a venereal disease in the process.

It's a frightening reality to consider. One lustful indulgence – one slip – and you can contract a painful illness you'll have to carry the rest of your life. It's estimated that 40-60% of college age women in America have been infected with herpes.

Always remember, *when you have sex with someone you're having sex with everyone your partner has had sex with, and with everyone their partner has had sex with, and on and on it goes...* Guys, God forbids sex outside of marriage not to rob you of your fun, but to protect you from physical and emotional damage. It's been said, "Sin is not hurtful because it is forbidden. It is forbidden because it is hurtful."

## CONCEALING OR CONFESSING ?

In Psalm 32 David reflects back on his sin with Bathsheba, and the agony it brought him. His intent is to steer us away from making similar mistakes.

The psalm opens with a reminder of God's mercy, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity..." This is true of every believer who's put His trust in Jesus.

The blood of Jesus doctors the ledgers in heaven. It erases your debts, and credits us with the righteousness of Christ. And blessed, *or happy*, is that man!

But there was a time when David wasn't so happy. For a whole year he covered up his sin. He says in verse 3, "When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer."

Unconfessed sin, and the conviction it brought took a toll – it robbed David of strength. On the outside he kept up appearances, but inwardly he was miserable. Relief came only when he stopped concealing, and started confessing. When he repents we're told in verse 5, "You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah."