

# PSALMS

Seeking and Finding God

Embry Hills church of Christ  
Spring 2016

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# PSALMS

## Course Description

### Goals of the Study

1. To know the structure and form of Hebrew thought-rhyme poetry
2. To understand and explain the meaning of psalms we study
3. To effectively use psalms in public worship and personal devotion
4. To understand the ways God delivers us from trials and how we should respond
5. To know how to find key psalms to help us in times of difficulty
6. To pray more effectively and more eloquently

### Course Outline

Lessons	Psalms Studied	Teacher	Class Dates
<b>Part I: Introduction</b>			
1. Introduction to the Psalms	77	Mason	Sunday, February 21
2. Literary Features in the Psalms	13, 27, 66	Mason	Wednesday, February 24
<b>Part II: Themes in Psalms</b>			
3. God's Anointed–Messianic Psalms	2, 18, 22, 89	Mason	Sunday, February 28
4. Worshiping the Lord–Songs of Ascent	121, 127, 132-134	Jack	Wednesday, March 2
5. Praying with the Psalms	25, 56	Mason	Sunday, March 6
<b>Part III: Topical Studies in Psalms</b>			
6. Man's Relationship to God	90, 95, 100	Mason	Wednesday, March 9
7. Deliverance from Evildoers	35, 36	Jack	Sunday, March 13
8. Deliverance from Life's Trials	41, 63	Jack	Wednesday, March 16
9. Deliverance from Sin	51, 130	Jack	Sunday, March 20
<b>GOSPEL MEETING – NO CLASS</b>			Wednesday, March 23
10. Calling Down Curses?–Imprecatory Psalms	69, 109, 137	Mason	Sunday, March 27
11. Waiting for Restoration	74, 79	Mason	Wednesday, March 30
12. The Messianic Solution	144, 110	Mason	Sunday, April 3
13. A Triumphant Close (+Review)	146-150	Jack	Wednesday, April 6

### Lesson Objectives (At the end of the class, the student will be able to...)

#### *Lesson 1 – Introduction to the Psalms*

- List the psalms that comprise each of the 5 Books of the Psalms
- Name at least 2 themes of the book of Psalms
- Describe the emotional movement of the book from beginning to end
- Explain how Psalm 77 encapsulates this shift in tone

#### *Lesson 2 – Literary Features in the Psalms*

- List at least 5 genres of psalms
- List and define the two most important literary devices used in the Psalms
- List at least two psalms containing examples of each literary device
- Identify and describe the four main types of parallelism
- Diagram the use of parallelism and chiasm in selected psalms

#### *Lesson 3 – God's Anointed–Messianic Psalms*

- List the distinguishing characteristics of a messianic psalm
- Name at least three examples of messianic psalms
- List at least two themes found in messianic psalms

#### *Lesson 4 – Worshiping the Lord–Songs of Ascent*

- List the distinguishing characteristics of a song of Ascent
- Name the series of psalms known as the Songs of Ascent
- List at least two themes found in songs of Ascent

#### *Lesson 5 – Praying with the Psalms*

- Name three parallels between the Model Prayer and the prayers in Psalms
- Describe the relationship between knowing God’s word and demonstrating our faith in prayer
- Explain the relationship between personal deliverance and corporate (group) deliverance

#### *Lesson 6 – Man’s Relationship to God*

- Name two images used to describe the relationship between man and God
- Describe the psalmist’s understanding of the relationship between man and God
- List at least two psalms that describe this relationship

#### *Lesson 7 – Deliverance from Evildoers*

- List at least three human inventions the psalmist warns his reader not to trust
- Explain what kind of deliverance the psalmist hopes for
- Name three prerequisites for deliverance found in these psalms

#### *Lesson 8 – Deliverance from Life’s Trials*

- Describe the nature of the trials the psalmist discusses
- Explain what kind of deliverance the psalmist hopes for
- Name three prerequisites for deliverance found in these psalms

#### *Lesson 9 – Deliverance from Sin*

- Describe the circumstances under which Psalm 51 was written
- Explain what kind of deliverance the psalmist hopes for
- Name three prerequisites for deliverance found in these psalms

#### *Lesson 10 – Calling Down Curses?–Imprecatory Psalms*

- List the distinguishing characteristics of an imprecatory psalm
- Name at least three examples of imprecatory psalms
- Name at least two themes found in imprecatory psalms
- Describe two theories to explain the harshness of the imprecatory psalms

#### *Lesson 11 – Waiting for Restoration*

- List the key features of psalms about restoration
- Describe Asaph the Seer
- List the four Needs of God’s People

#### *Lesson 12– The Messianic Solution*

- Describe the problem confronting the psalmist in Psalm 144
- Explain how Psalm 110 answers the problem raised in Psalm 144
- Describe the importance of Psalm 110 to the argument of the book of Hebrews

#### *Lesson 13 – A Triumphant Close*

- List at least 7 groups of individuals called to praise Jehovah
- Name the two phrases that occur repeatedly in Psalms 146-150
- Explain the historical and theological significance of the ending of the book of Psalms

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## Making Practical Use of the Psalms

In many of the lessons you will find a **Practical Psalms** chart to fill out. This chart will be the basis of our class discussions about how to make full use of the psalms in our lives, so I encourage you to have it filled out before class. Here is a description of what each element represents.

- **Physical Challenge(s):** What challenges of a physical nature are confronting the psalmist? Is he surrounded by enemies? Are his friends betraying him? Is he out of food and water? List physical difficulties the psalmist mentions in the text of the psalm.
- **Physical Requests:** What does the psalmist ask for in a physical sense? Does he want his enemies to be destroyed? Is he hoping for a return to his more honored state? List the things the psalmist wants to be physically different about his circumstances.
- **Spiritual Challenge(s):** What challenges of a spiritual nature are confronting the psalmist? Has God apparently let him down, perhaps by not seeming to keep a promise? Has the psalmist sinned? Is he discouraged by his lack of spiritual companions? List spiritual difficulties the psalmist faces.
- **Spiritual Requests:** What does the psalmist ask for spiritually? Does he want forgiveness? Is he asking God to comfort him in his discouragement? Does he want God's name to be honored among the people as it should be? List the spiritual improvements the psalmist asks God to make.
- **Basis of Psalmist's Hope:** What reasons does the psalmist give for believing that God will answer his prayers? Does he look to the wonder of the natural world, or the record of God's faithfulness in Israel's history? What inspires the psalmist's faith in God's help?
- **Emotions Stirred:** How does the psalmist feel in the midst of his crisis? Is he sad, angry, peaceful, happy, etc.? (The best way to determine this may be to work backward from what the psalmist asks for; for instance, if he asks for total destruction of his enemies, he is probably angry.)
- **Deliverance/Consolation:** In some cases, the psalmist's deliverance is celebrated in the psalm. In other cases, the psalmist makes peace with his situation even though the crisis is not over yet. What is the deliverance that God provides? What does the psalmist remember or see that allows him to be calm and trust in God?

Here is the Practical Psalms chart filled out for Psalms 43 and 46 as an example.

	Psalm 43	Psalm 46
Physical Challenge(s)	Oppression, v.2; Deceitful enemies, vv.1, 3	Natural disasters, vv.2-3; Political turmoil, v.6; Wars, v.9
Physical Requests	Deliverance from oppression, v.1b	(implied) Continued protection from disasters, vv.2-3, 6; Deliverance from turmoil, v.7
Spiritual Challenge(s)	Discouragement at God's apparent rejection, v.2	none
Spiritual Requests	Vindication (prove him righteous), v.1; Restored fellowship with God, vv.3-4	none
Basis of Psalmist's Hope	God "owns" light and truth, v.3; His relationship with God, v.5b	God's promises to Jacob, vv.7&11
Emotions Stirred	Desperation; then hope, and trust in future comfort	Trust, assurance, faith in God's power
Deliverance/Consolation	God will deliver him, v.5	National and personal peace and deliverance, vv.1, 4-5, 7-9; God is with them, vv.10-11

## **Seeking and Finding God in the Psalms**

Use these categories to help you find psalms to read and meditate on as you go through the ups and downs of life. Think carefully about what the psalmist says about his situation, and how he relates to God as he deals with his circumstances. Then try to imitate that faith in your prayers and actions. Each time you read a new psalm, decide which category it fits in. You may need to add categories for specific psalms and situations.

### **Psalms of Seeking God**

- When I'm sad – Lament
  - Because someone has mistreated or hurt me – 41, 55
  - Because bad circumstances have happened to me – 42, 60
  - Because of the consequences of my sin – 38, 130
  - Because God seems to have abandoned me, or not kept His promises – 79, 89
- When I'm tempted – 73, 141
- When I'm angry because someone has mistreated or hurt me – Imprecation: 35, 55, 59, 109, 137
- When I've sinned and need forgiveness – Penitential: 51, 39
- When I'm sure God will help me, even though He hasn't yet – Trust: 62, 63

### **Psalms of Finding God**

- When I'm joyful – Praise
  - Because of God's work throughout history – 66, 81
  - Because of the glory of God's creation – 29, 19
  - Because of the blessings of citizenship, fellowship, and worship – Songs of Ascents; 84, 87, 91
  - Because of God's (and Christ's) authority and reign – Kingship: 2, 24, 72, 110
  - And want others to rejoice with me – Hallelujah (146-150)
- When I've been delivered – Thanksgiving
  - From physical difficulties – 18, 107
  - From the guilt of sin – 32, 103
- When I'm building my faith on God's past faithfulness – History: 68, 78, 105, 136
- When I'm learning how I should act – Wisdom: 1, 49, 73, 112
- When I'm reading His Word – 19, Torah (119)

Use the quiz answer key and blank quiz sheet on the following page to learn some of the facts about Psalms that will help us read and understand the Psalms more effectively. Make copies of the page to practice more often.

## Psalms Facts Quiz (Answer Key)

**Word Bank:**

Ps. 107-150	Doxology	Imprecatory	Wisdom	Lament	Ps. 1-41
Thanksgiving	Ps. 90-106	Ps. 42-72	Ps. 73-89	Messianic	Torah
Hallelujah Psalms	Praise	Parallelism	History	Trust	Ascent

<b>History</b>	Celebrates God's role in Israel's past, and inspires further trust in His power to deliver
<b>Parallelism</b>	A literary device that states an idea in one line and examines it more closely in the second
<b>Ps. 73-83</b>	Book III of Psalms
<b>Thanksgiving</b>	Reflects joyfully on the salvation God has brought about
<b>Lament</b>	Complains to God about the way the psalmist is being (mis)treated
<b>Wisdom</b>	Emphasizes the importance of day-to-day behaviors that draw us closer to God
<b>Ps. 107-150</b>	Book V of Psalms
<b>Trust</b>	Asserts confidence in God during difficult circumstances
<b>Doxology</b>	A declaration of praise to and about God
<b>Imprecatory</b>	Calls on God to deal with the psalmist's enemies
<b>Ps. 90-106</b>	Book IV of Psalms
<b>Torah</b>	Celebrates the Law and its application to the life of the psalmist
<b>Hallelujah</b>	Begins and ends with the Hebrew word for "Praise the Lord"
<b>Ps. 1-41</b>	Book I of Psalms
<b>Messianic</b>	Describes Israel's coming deliverer who will perfect David's kingship
<b>Praise</b>	Magnifies God for His work in Creation and Israel's history
<b>Ps. 42-72</b>	Book II of Psalms
<b>Ascent</b>	Emphasizes Israel's need for unity, reliance on God, and proper worship in Jerusalem

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_____	Emphasizes Israel's need for unity, reliance on God, and proper worship in Jerusalem

## Introduction to the Psalms

- I. Why study the Psalms?
- The Psalms describe in poignant detail the suffering, doubts, rejoicing, and faith of individual followers of God. Understanding their thoughts allows us to better deal with our own in similar circumstances.
  - The Psalms are the most accessible collection of Hebrew poetry. They form an excellent introduction to the other poetry of the Old Testament (Job, prophecies, etc.), and give us a head start on understanding the more difficult writings.
- II. Outline of the Book
- Textual Divisions
    - 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
  - Organizational Notes
    - Books I-III are the first collection, compiled just before the Babylonian exile (Bullock 65).
    - Books IV-V were likely compiled after the return to Jerusalem (Bullock 70).
    - Each Book ends with a Doxology (declarative praise of God), probably appended to the text by the editor (see 41:13, 72:18-19, 89:52, 106:48, 150:6).
    - The final compilation of all 150 psalms in the order we read them occurred, at the latest, by 250-150 BC; the Septuagint contains all the psalms in the current order.
    - These dates of compilation do not reflect the dates of composition (Psalm 90, in Book IV, is attributed to Moses). We should think of these two collections (I-III and IV-V) as two sets of messages that their compilers felt Israel needed to hear.
    - Terms like *selah* and *maschil*, which occur frequently, have unclear meanings, and generally are unimportant to understanding the psalm (Bullock 250-251).
- III. Themes of the Book of Psalms
- Note:** Each psalm can and should be studied individually. However, when we look at each book as a collection, we see the work of an editor who chose some psalms and rejected others. By noting the psalms he chose and the historical circumstances in which he chose them, we see a sketch of Israel's national feeling at the moment the psalms in that book were collected. Noting this helps us to read the psalms as they read them, with their collective fears and uncertainties about the present and future.
- Books I-III
    - Since they were likely collected just before the Babylonian exile, Books I-III emphasize the justice of God among the nations (Psalms 2, 89), and obedience to God's Law (Psalms 1, 19). These Psalms ask, "Where is God? Why do the wicked among His people go unpunished, and why do the pagan nations prosper over us?"
    - Books I and II contain four Psalms of Praise each, and Book III contains none. Just as the destruction of Jerusalem in 590 was the low point of Israel's history, the final chapter of its psalter (in this edition) is the low point of the collection.
  - Books IV-V
    - These books were collected after the exile (see Psalm 137:1), and indicate a desire to keep God's law; Book IV begins with a psalm of Moses, the law-giver. There are many confessions

### Lesson Overview

- Date of Composition: ca. 1500-400 BC
- Authors (known): Moses, David, Solomon, Asaph, Sons of Korah
- Key Genres:
  - Praise
  - Prayer
  - Imprecatory
  - Thanksgiving
  - Instructional
- Key Terms:
  - "psalm" vs. "Psalms"
  - doxology
  - Torah
  - selah
- Key Psalms: 77

of sin, especially national (106), and powerful statements of the value of God's law (119). The power, love, mercy, and greatness of God are reiterated constantly.

- ii. Books IV and V frequently discuss the relationship between God and His people (90, 100).
  - iii. Book IV contains 9 psalms of praise, and Book V has 13. Rejoicing in their deliverance and the promise of the coming king, God's people call the whole world to praise the Living God.
- c. The Book of Psalms as a Spiritual Journey
- i. The psalms move, in tone and genre, from lament to praise across the psalter as a whole.

Compare the number of Laments to the number of Praises in each book:

	Book I (1-40)	Book II (42-72)	Book III (73-89)	Book IV (90-106)	Book V (107-150)
Laments	19	7	7	5	4
Praises	4	4	0	9	13

- ii. Ending as it does with a detailed focus on God's greatness and kingship (Psalm 145), the Book of Psalms seems to indicate that the historical Israel has at last learned to look to God for deliverance, and not to their own might or planning (Deuteronomy 17:16).

#### IV. Psalm 77 – The Pattern Psalm

Psalm 77 exemplifies the overall movement of the book. Match these verses of Psalm 77 with the type (genre) of psalm they sound like.

- a. vv.1-9 \_\_\_ Praise
- b. v.10 \_\_\_ Lament
- c. vv.11-15 \_\_\_ History
- d. vv.16-20 \_\_\_ Trust

Now, find verses in Psalm 77 that exemplify the themes of the Books of Psalms listed below:

- a. Psalmist seeks, but feels that he cannot find God:
- b. God's relationship with His people:
- c. Importance of obedience to the Law:
- d. Total helplessness without God:
- e. God's power displayed in His works:
- f. Israel's history (and God's work in it):

What is the Psalmist's chief complaint in this Psalm?

What answer does he eventually arrive at by examining Israel's history?

### **Questions**

1. Find New Testament passages where psalms are used in each of these circumstances:

- a. To explain or comment on a person's actions:
- b. As a prophecy that has been fulfilled:
- c. As part of a worship:
- d. As an admonition or warning:
- e. To prove the deity of Christ:

2. What do you think makes the Psalms valuable for Christians to study?

3. Why do you think the Book of Psalms moves, as a whole, from lament at the beginning to praise at the end? What should we learn from this transition?



## - 2 -

**Literary Features in the Psalms**

## I. Lesson 1 Review

- a. List 5 genres of psalms:
- b. What is the movement in tone and genre across the psalms as a collection?
- c. What are the books that made up the two original compilations of psalms?
  - i. Collection 1:
  - ii. Collection 2:

Lesson Overview

- Psalmic Literary Devices:
  - Parallelism
  - Chiasm
- Types of Parallelism:
  - Synonymous
  - Antithetic
  - Climactic (Stairstep)
  - Comparison
- Key Psalms: 13, 27, 66

## II. Features of Hebrew Poetry: Parallelism

- a. Parallelism is "a literary pattern that states an idea in one line and focuses more closely on the same idea in the following line" (Bullock 36). It focuses more closely in two ways:
  - i. Repeating the same thought in different terms
    1. Example:     A   The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?  
                  (27:1)     A'  The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
    2. "my light and my salvation" is equivalent to "the strength of my life," and the end of each line is nearly identical

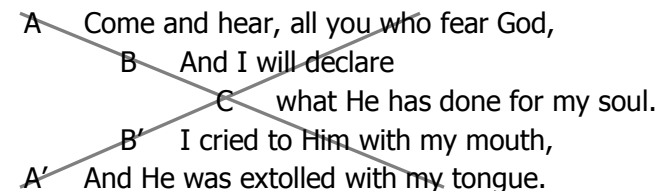
**Note:** When marking parallelism, use the same letter (A, in this case) to indicate two parallel lines, but add an apostrophe (A') to distinguish the second line.
  - ii. Stating the thought more specifically
    1. Example:     B   I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle;  
                  (27:6)     B'  I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.
    2. A' indicates what kind of "sacrifices of joy" the psalmist will offer in the tabernacle
- b. Parallelism is at the heart of Hebrew poetry. Rather than rhyming words, Hebrew poetry rhymes thoughts. There are 4 main types of parallelism:
  - i. Synonymous: stating the same idea in new words (examples: 27:1, 6)
  - ii. Antithetic: stating the opposite of the first idea (example: 66:12)
    1. Example:     C   We went through fire and through water;  
                  (66:12)     C'  But You brought us out to abundance.
    2. C states what Israel did; C' states the opposite: what God did
    3. Often antithetic parallelism includes the word *but* (1:6), though not always (66:7)
    4. Antithetic parallelism is the chief literary device used in Proverbs
  - iii. Climactic (Stairstep): building an idea through a series of increasingly forceful thoughts
    1. Example:     Enlighten my eyes,  
                  (13:3-4)     D   Lest I sleep the sleep of death;  
  D'  Lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed against him";  
  D'' Lest those who trouble me rejoice when I am moved.
    2. In addition to growing longer each time, the successive thoughts state what the psalmist hopes to avoid in stronger and more direct language.
  - iv. Comparison: using an image to describe an object or idea
    1. Through metaphor: *You brought us into the net; You laid affliction on our backs.* (66:11). The first line is a metaphor for the thought in the second.
    2. Through simile: *He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water...* (1:3). The righteous man described in vv.1-2 is compared to a fruitful tree in v.3.

3. In comparison, the *idea* and the *image* are parallel, rather than the words themselves

### III. Features of Hebrew Poetry: Chiasm

a. The word *chiasm* comes from the Greek word for the letter X (*chi*). A chiasm is a progression of thoughts toward a central idea, and then back out to the first thought in the reverse order. If you sketch out the progression, it resembles the letter X.

b. Typically, the thoughts move from the general (on the outside) to the specific (the central idea).

c. Example: 

d. The center of the chiasm contains the main point. In this case, the psalmist focuses the chiasm around the specific things God has done for him and for Israel. Coming at the end of Psalm 66, this chiasm highlights the wondrous works of God that the psalmist has already mentioned (vv.5-12).

### Questions

1. What do you think are the practical benefits of understanding the literary features of Hebrew poetry?

2. Circle the literary device used in the underlined sections of Psalm 13:

**1** How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?

How long will You hide Your face from me?

**2** How long shall I take counsel in my soul,

Having sorrow in my heart daily?

How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

**3** Consider and hear me, O LORD my God;

Enlighten my eyes, Lest I sleep the sleep of death;

**4** Lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed against him";

Lest those who trouble me rejoice when I am moved.

**5** But I have trusted in Your mercy;

My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.

**6** I will sing to the LORD,

Because He has dealt bountifully with me.

- a) Synonymous Parallelism  
b) Comparison  
c) Antithetic Parallelism

- a) Chiasm  
b) Climactic Parallelism  
c) Synonymous Parallelism

3. For class, be ready to identify and describe the literary devices found in Psalms 27 and 66. Use the attached printouts of the psalms to underline, circle, and highlight the text as necessary.

4. Find some passages in the New Testament where a truth is based on how an Old Testament passage is written—that is, based on grammar or word order in the quoted text. What does this tell you about the importance/value of a “literary” study of the Bible?

## God's Anointed—Messianic Psalms

### I. Lesson 2 Review

- a. List the 2 main literary devices used in the Psalms:
  
- b. What are the 4 main types of parallelism?

#### Lesson Overview

- Messianic Psalms
  - Laments & Royal Psalms
  - Incomplete Picture of Coming Messiah
  - Occur Across All Genres
- Key Themes:
  - Perfected King(ship)
  - God the Ultimate King
- Key Psalms: 2, 18, 22, 89

### II. The Messiah in the Psalms

- a. While the idea of a deliverer goes back to the Fall, it is in the psalms that we begin to see a clearer picture of what this deliverer will be like
- b. "What we have in the Psalter is the raw material for the messianic vision that captured the attention of...the Christian church" (Bullock 183)
  - i. The psalmists did not have the better-defined view of the Messiah found in the prophets and finally revealed in Jesus Christ
  - ii. The psalmists saw this coming king as the ultimate version of a physical king like David, who would, with God's help, "rule in the midst of his enemies" (Psalm 110:2)
  - iii. Part of the reason why the Jews were surprised by Jesus' claim to be the Messiah is that they had taken the raw material of the Psalms and prophets and reforged it into the Messiah's physical kingship. Jesus and the apostles' insistence on a spiritual application was simply not a part of their conception.
- c. The Messianic Psalms are not a distinct genre of psalms. They come from all genres, especially Laments and Royal psalms, which focus on both the earthly king (typified by David) and the heavenly King (God). The Messiah is the perfected earthly king.
  - i. Royal Psalms: 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, 144
  - ii. A first step to determine Messianic Psalms is to see which psalms Jesus and the apostles used to support Jesus' claim to be the Messiah:
    1. Psalm 2: quoted 6 times
    2. Psalm 18: quoted 1 time
    3. Psalm 45: quoted 1 time
    4. Psalm 110: quoted 7 times
    5. On the other hand, we also see messianic echoes in psalms that are not directly quoted in the NT, though they are clearly referenced (e.g., Psalm 89)
  - iii. Note that these four psalms fit into various genres that we have already studied.
  - iv. Non-kingship psalms are also quoted as describing the Messiah, most famously Psalm 22.

### III. Key Themes of Messianic Psalms

- a. The King and Kingship Perfected
  - i. It would be a gross understatement to say that Israel never had a perfect king, but the Royal psalms, and those with messianic overtones in particular, promise exactly that:
    1. God calls this king His son (2:8; 89:26-27) and vows to do whatever this king asks
    2. This king will rule over the nations (2:8-9; 18:43-44), which is an extended version of the "Land Promise" to Abraham and Israel
  - ii. This king is "David" (89:20), but freed from internal and external struggles (89:22-23)
- b. God as the Ultimate King
  - i. The Messiah, like the kings of Israel, derives His power from God (18:43; 89:4)

- ii. His authority is a gift from God, to whom He must give an account of His rule (89:28-33)
- IV. An Incomplete Picture of this New King
- The word *messiah* (Hebrew *meshiakh*) means “anointed one.” Anointing was the traditional way in the Ancient Near East to signify a king’s selection for the throne. This word appears in 6 of the 10 Royal psalms, and some uses do not refer to the Messiah (20:6)
  - The future king in the Psalms is described incompletely, and on a first reading there appears to be less of a spiritual focus here than in the prophetic visions of the coming king (cf. Isaiah 53-55).
    - This king will break his enemies with a rod of iron as if they were clay pots (Psalm 2)
    - He will rejoice in the strength of God, which will swallow up the king’s enemies (Psalm 21)
  - We should see this incomplete picture as a step in God’s revelation of His great plan for salvation
    - The Messiah would destroy the nations who opposed Him and consume His enemies with fire, but not at first, and perhaps not in the way the psalmists understood it.
    - On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine a man like David being dissatisfied with the way the coming King appeared and delivered God’s people.
    - Finally, Paul describes Christ’s rule in similarly physical terms, though his emphasis is clearly spiritual (1 Corinthians 15:24-28)

### **Questions**

1. Fill out the Practical Psalms chart for each of the psalms in the lesson. Use a separate piece of paper if necessary.

	Psalm 2	Psalm 18	Psalm 22	Psalm 89
Physical Challenge(s)				
Physical Requests				
Spiritual Challenge(s)				
Spiritual Requests				
Basis of Psalmist’s Hope				
Emotions Stirred				
Deliverance/Consolation				

2. What genre would each of the four psalms we are studying fall into? List some key verses from each psalm that are typical of the genre. Review Lesson 1 for descriptions of each genre.

	Genre	Verses Typical of Genre
Psalm 2		
Psalm 18		
Psalm 22		
Psalm 89		

3. Find some verses or descriptions of the king in Psalms 2, 18, and 89 that do not seem to apply to the Messiah.

4. Imagine you are an Old Testament Jew reading about the Anointed One in these psalms. Describe your understanding of this coming king and what his reign will be like.

## Worshipping the Lord—Songs of Ascent

### I. Lesson 3 Review

- a. What does the word that is transliterated as “messiah” mean?
- b. What are the 2 major themes of Messianic Psalms?

#### Lesson Overview

- Songs of Ascent  
Use/Purpose Uncertain  
Emphasis on “Nation”
- Key Themes:  
Unity of God’s People  
Reliance on God  
Jerusalem as Center of  
Worship
- Key Psalms: 121, 127, 132-134

### I. Songs of Ascent

- a. The Songs of Ascent are a collection of 15 psalms (120-134) that are linked by their subtitle “Song of Ascents.” The exact meaning of this phrase and the exact use of these psalms are still debated by scholars.
- b. The two prevailing theories for the meaning of the phrase are:
  - i. The name may refer to the pilgrimage up to Jerusalem for the annual feasts (Passover, Weeks, Tabernacles). This is the more widely-held view.
  - ii. The name may refer to the return to Jerusalem from Babylonian Captivity in the latter part of the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.
  - iii. Both could be true: the Songs of Ascent written by David and Solomon could have been used before the Babylonian Captivity, and then taken on additional significance after the Return. Some of the anonymous ones were probably written after the return (cf. 123:3-4 and Nehemiah 4:1-5), and some even make reference to it (126).
- c. The two prevailing theories for their use are:
  - i. They may have been sung on the road to Jerusalem during the annual pilgrimages. Psalm 122 in particular would seem to be especially meaningful in this context.
  - ii. They may have been sung on the steps of the Second Temple, which featured 15 steps leading from the Court of the Women to the Court of Israel, coinciding with the 15 Songs. One song would have been sung on each step. The phrase “Song of Ascents” could also be translated “Song of the Steps.”
  - iii. Again, both could be true. The earlier songs could have been in use in Solomon’s time during the journey, though the additional use in the temple grounds was certainly a post-exilic addition to the worship order.
- d. The Songs of Ascent feature many *corporate psalms*—psalms in which all of Israel speaks as one voice. Psalms 124, 125, 126, 133, 134, and 135 all are corporate songs. This unity of thought is, as Psalm 133 notes, a valuable asset to corporate worship, and it is not surprising that these psalms speak for all Israel as Israel goes up to its national worship.
- e. Four of these psalms are attributed to David, and one to Solomon, which emphasizes these men’s importance in establishing Israelite worship at Jerusalem.

### II. Themes of Songs of Ascent

- a. **Unity of God’s People:** The Songs of Ascent emphasize unity both in form and content. By speaking about worshiping and serving together, often in a corporate voice, the psalmist is telling his audience (and they are teaching each other in singing) how vital it is for them to all seek the Lord together.

- b. **Reliance on God:** Especially after the Captivity, Israel was a shattered nation. They had to seek the Lord to rebuild Jerusalem, defeat their enemies, and restore true worship. The Songs of Ascent are adamant that "unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it" (127:1).
- c. **Jerusalem as the Center of Worship:** In contrast to their fathers who had worshiped "on every high hill, and under every green tree" (1 Kings 14:23), Israel now understood that Jerusalem was the proper place to worship because it is where God was. Bullock muses that the journey to Jerusalem for the feasts was "a kind of second Exodus" (80), in that they journeyed from the bondage of sin and daily life to the freedom of purification and worship.

### III. Organization of the Songs of Ascent

- a. Scholars have divided and organized the Songs of Ascent in various ways to help explain their purpose, but most of the schemes place Psalm 127 at the center. Some of their reasons:
  - i. It was written by Solomon, who built the Temple that features in these psalms
  - ii. It is at the physical center of the group: 7 Songs before and 7 after
  - iii. There are two psalms attributed to David in each group of 7, and each group of 7 uses God's Divine Name (Yahweh) 24 times. Bullock feels that this distribution is "too symmetrical to be coincidental" (80).
- b. Psalm 127, at the center of the Songs of Ascent, emphasizes reliance on God, but also makes the most direct personal application in this group, by applying Israel's national reliance on God to establish and support them to the individual believer's family life. It also focuses the worshiper on the future, and his need for God in all areas of life.

### Questions

1. Find examples of the three Themes of Songs of Ascent in the following psalms.

	Psalm 121	Psalm 127	Psalm 132	Psalm 133	Psalm 134
Unity					
Reliance on God					
Jerusalem					

2. The following phrases are repeated often in the Songs of Ascent. Find all the verses where they occur.

	Verses
"who made the heavens and the earth"	
"now and forevermore"	
the word "peace"	
"May the Lord bless you from Zion"	
"O Israel, put your hope in the Lord"	

3. What applications to New Testament worship can you find in these psalms?

4. Ephesians 5:17-21 and Colossians 3:16 emphasize the need to teach one another the word of God in our singing. What applications do you find in the Songs of Ascent about teaching through singing?

## - 5 -

**Praying with the Psalms**

- I. Lesson 4 Review
- What are the 3 themes of the Songs of Ascent?
  - What are the 2 possible interpretations of the word "Ascents"?

Lesson Overview

- The Discipline of Prayer
  - Knowledge of the Word
  - Relationship with God
  - Frequency
- The Model Prayer
  - A Pattern to Follow
  - A Guide to Prayers in Scripture
  - A Bridge to Praying with the Psalms
- Key Psalms: 25, 56

- II. Praying with the Psalms
- The psalms are partly a collection of prayers, so we can learn valuable lessons from them about how and what to pray.
  - Our prayers should be influenced by the psalms' content and fervor. To grow in our prayer we should pray like the psalmists, and at times even pray their words.
    - E.g.- Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1-10), Jonah (Jonah 3), and Mary (Luke 1:45-55)
    - These prayers are full of quotations from psalms, which indicates both how well people knew the psalms, and that they considered them valid expressions of their own feelings
  - When Christ gave us the Model Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4, he gave us a pattern that all prayers should follow. According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, all the prayers of scripture, and the Psalms in particular, follow the pattern Christ gave us (Bonhoeffer 16). We can therefore match the contents of psalms to the categories of prayer exemplified in the model.
  - When we group our praises and petitions into the categories in the Model Prayer, the Model Prayer becomes the bridge between the psalms and our prayers. Then we can use the words and thoughts in the psalms to help us express our needs to God more perfectly.

**Questions**

1. Fill in the verses from the Model Prayer (use Matthew 6:9-13) and the Genres of Psalms (there is a list on p.5) next to the category of prayer they exemplify. One answer has been filled in for you.

	Examples in the Model Prayer	Genre(s) of Psalms
Praise	v.9b,	
Statement of Trust		
Petition for God's Will to Triumph		
Petition for Physical Needs		
Petition for Forgiveness		
Petition for Spiritual Needs		

2. Next, find verses in the psalms for this lesson that exemplify the categories of prayer found in the Model Prayer.

	Psalm 25	Psalm 56
Praise		
Statement of Trust		
Petition for God's Will to Triumph		
Petition for Physical Needs		
Petition for Forgiveness		
Petition for Spiritual Needs		

## 3. Psalm 25

- a. What does the psalmist ask for in this prayer? Is he asking for one thing, or several?
- b. As the psalmist lays his petitions before God, how does he relate his petitions to one another? What does the psalmist believe must happen before God will fix his problems, vv.7, 11, 18, etc.?
- c. What can we learn about the discipline required for prayer from this psalm?
- d. Why do you think the psalmist ends his petition for personal deliverance with a prayer for national deliverance? What is the connection between the two?

## 4. Psalm 56

- a. What does David ask for in this prayer? Is he asking for one thing, or several?
- b. What is the "refrain" that occurs twice in this psalm? How does it relate to the request the psalmist is making? What applications can we draw from the content and repetition of this refrain?
- c. The refrains divide this psalm naturally into three stanzas. The first two contain the complaints, and the third contains David's promised response to God's deliverance. Match the summaries on the right with the verses on the left.
 

___ Stanza 1: vv.1-3	A. They twist my words and plot against me
___ Stanza 2: vv.5-9	B. I will offer sacrifices and serve God
___ Stanza 3: vv.12-13	C. They fight against me constantly
- d. What does David conclude is the reason God has delivered him from difficulty in the past, v.13? What lessons can we learn from this about one reason (at least) that God answers our prayers?
- e. According to the refrain of this psalm, what seems to be the relationship between knowing God's word and demonstrating our faith by praying for the things we need?

## 5. Choose one of the prayers from II.b.i above, and note which psalms are quoted by the speaker of the prayer.



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## Man's Relationship to God

### I. Lesson 5 Review

- a. What are three parallels between the Model Prayer and the prayers in Psalms?
  
- b. What is the relationship between personal deliverance and corporate (group) deliverance?

#### Lesson Overview

- Man's Relationship to God
  - God's Superiority
  - God's Guidance
  - God's Judgment
  - Man's Powerlessness
  - Man's Duty to Obey God
  - God's Commandments
- Key Features
  - Images/Roles of God
  - Value of Worship
- Key Psalms: 90, 95, 100

### II. The Psalms are categorized as Wisdom Literature because they have much to teach us about our relationship with God:

- a. God's Superiority to Man, Job 42:1-6; Ecclesiastes 11:5
- b. Man's Need for God's Guidance, Proverbs 3:5-8; Ecclesiastes 8:16-17
- c. God's Judgment of Man's Actions, Proverbs 21:1-3; Job 36:5-12
- d. Man's Powerlessness Before God, Ecclesiastes 7:13; Proverbs 15:11
- e. Man's Duty to Obey God, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Proverbs 22:4
- f. Man's Response to God's Commandments, Proverbs 30:5-6; Ecclesiastes 5:1-2

### Questions

1. Fill in the following information for each of the Psalms you read for this lesson.

	Genre	Author	Images from Nature	Historical/Circumstantial Notes Given
Psalm 90				
Psalm 95				
Psalm 100				

2. Fill out the Practical Psalms chart for each of the psalms in the lesson. Use a separate piece of paper if necessary.

	Psalm 90	Psalm 95	Psalm 100
Physical Challenge(s)			
Physical Requests			
Spiritual Challenge(s)			
Spiritual Requests			
Basis of Psalmist's Hope			
Emotions Stirred			
Deliverance/Consolation			

3. List the Roles of God that the psalmists discuss in these psalms.

4. Find verses in these psalms that use the descriptions of Man's relationship with God found in Wisdom Literature.

	<b>God's Superiority</b>	<b>God's Guidance</b>	<b>God's Judgment</b>	<b>Man's Powerlessness</b>	<b>Duty to Obey</b>	<b>God's Commands</b>
Psalm 90						
Psalm 95						
Psalm 100						

5. What other lessons about Man's relationship with God do you find in these Psalms?

6. Two of these psalms emphasize praise or worship as an important part of our relationship with God, even as we consider our frailty before Him. How is praise an important element of our relationship with God?

7. Psalm 95 ends on a distinctly bitter note. Who is speaking in the last few verses of the psalm, and how would you connect these sentiments with the joyful, celebratory beginning? What message do they combine to deliver?

8. Psalms 95 and 100 use the same metaphor to describe God's relationship with His people, but they draw different applications from that metaphor. What is the metaphor they both use, and what lesson does each psalm draw from it?

9. What do you think Moses means when he asks in 90:15 for God to "make us glad for as many days as You have afflicted us?" What are some blessings that the psalmists mention of God's relationship with His people?

## Deliverance from Evildoers

- I. Lesson 6 Review
- List three tenets of Man's Relationship with God.
  - What is the image of God that Psalm 95 and 100 both use?
- II. The Psalms, like all Wisdom Literature, speak of evil (that is, difficulty in life) as coming from three sources:
- Wicked people in the world, Ecclesiastes 3:16-22
  - Circumstances of life, Job 1:13-19
  - Sin in the life of the individual, Proverbs 6:6-19
  - In the next three lessons, we will examine each of these sources of difficulty and the deliverance the psalmists seek and find from them
- III. Conflict with the Wicked
- The righteous and the wicked have always been in conflict, but the conflict can take different forms:
    - Physical battle, Judges 3:1-7
    - Temptation, Genesis 3:1-5; Matthew 4:1-11
    - Debate, 2 Timothy 4:1-4
    - How else do the righteous and the wicked engage in conflict?
  - These psalms express the feelings of the righteous about their conflicts with the wicked:
    - It is right and valuable for us to ask God to deliver us from evildoers, Psalm 35
    - But that request must be based on implicit trust that God can deliver us, as well as a right relationship with Him, Psalm 36

### Lesson Overview

- Evil in the World (3 Sources):
  - Wicked People
  - Circumstances of Life
  - Individual Sin
- Deliverance from Evildoers
  - Attributes of God
  - Faith in Deliverance
  - Consequences of the Conflict with Evil
- Key Psalms: 35, 36

### Questions

1. Fill in the following information for each of the Psalms you read for this lesson.

	Genre	Author	Images from Nature	Historical/Circumstantial Notes Given
Psalm 35				
Psalm 36				

2. Psalm 36 seems to divide naturally into four stanzas. What is the phrase that repeats three times to indicate a new stanza?

3. Fill out the Practical Psalms chart for each of the psalms in the lesson. Use a separate piece of paper if necessary.

	Psalm 35	Psalm 36
Physical Challenge(s)		
Physical Requests		
Spiritual Challenge(s)		
Spiritual Requests		
Basis of Psalmist's Hope		
Emotions Stirred		
Deliverance/Consolation		

4. Describe the wicked man in Psalm 36:1-4. What attributes make him and his actions a difficulty to the psalmist? How does the wicked man evaluate the appropriateness of his actions?

5. Match the attributes of God listed in 36:5-6 with the contrasting attributes of the wicked listed in vv.1-4.

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| ___ saves man and beast | a. believes he cannot be discovered and hated |
| ___ faithful            | b. plots trouble on his bed                   |
| ___ righteous           | c. does not reject evil                       |
| ___ judges evil         | d. words are trouble and deceit               |
| ___ steadfast love      | e. has ceased to act wisely and do good       |

6. Find verses in Psalm 35 that describe specific actions of David's enemies that match the categories of evil behavior mentioned in Psalm 36.

**Psalm 36**

transgression speaks to him  
 does not fear God  
 believes he cannot be caught  
 words are trouble and deceit  
 does not act wisely or do good  
 plots trouble  
 does not reject evil

**Psalm 35**

v.7 - "without cause they have dug..."

7. Compare Psalm 36:1-4 with 2 Peter 3:1-7. What traits do the scoffers of 2 Peter 3 share with the wicked of Psalm 36?

8. What kind of vindication do the psalmists seek against evildoers in these psalms? What kind of vindication does the New Testament promise for us against the wicked? How are these vindications essentially identical?

9. How do the nature images used in Psalms 35 and 36 heighten the emotion of the passages that contain them?

10. Jot down some possible meanings for and/or applications from Psalm 36:9b: "in your light do we see light."

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## Deliverance from Life's Trials

### I. Lesson 7 Review

- a. What are the 3 sources of evil, or difficulty, according to Wisdom Literature?
- b. What spiritual difficulty almost inevitably accompanies conflict with evildoers?

#### Lesson Overview

-Deliverance from Life's Trials  
 Prerequisites for  
 Deliverance  
 Deliverance Sought  
 Our Response to It  
 Integrity vs. Innocence  
 -Key Features  
 "The Bed" in Psalms  
 Relationship with God  
 Integrity  
 -Key Psalms: 41, 63

### II. Deliverance from Life's Trials

- a. Sometimes we can trace evil in the world to a specific person or action, but sometimes the source of an evil is less clear.
- b. Jesus discusses such an event in Luke 13:4-5, and His conclusion is that the challenge for us is not to discover the source of the evil, but to determine how to respond to it.
- c. The psalmists, like all followers of God, try to determine the correct response to difficulties in their lives, and their searches are useful examples for us to study and follow. We must seek the kind of deliverance they sought.

### Questions

1. Fill in the following information for each of the Psalms you read for this lesson.

	Genre	Author	Images from Nature	Historical/Circumstantial Notes Given
Psalm 41				
Psalm 63				

2. Fill out the Practical Psalms chart for each of the psalms in the lesson. Use a separate piece of paper if necessary.

	Psalm 41	Psalm 63
Physical Challenge(s)		
Physical Requests		
Spiritual Challenge(s)		
Spiritual Requests		
Basis of Psalmist's Hope		
Emotions Stirred		
Deliverance/Consolation		

### 3. Psalm 41:

- a. List the difficulties the psalmist is facing.

- b. What gives the psalmist's enemies occasion to speak evil against him? Why are they devising evil against him?

- c. What is the relationship between vv.1-3, which are in third person ("he") and vv.4-12, which are in first person ("I")? In terms of the psalmist's message, why are vv.1-3 first?
- d. What is the psalmist's response to the difficulties he faces? How does he know that God delights in him?

#### 4. Psalm 63:

- a. Based only on the text of the psalm (i.e., not the historical note), list the difficulties the psalmist has faced. To what does he compare his longing for deliverance?
- b. How does the psalmist respond (or promise to respond) to God's deliverance?
- c. Based on vv.7-8, what seems to be a prerequisite for deliverance?
- d. Now consider the historical context of the psalm. How would you reconcile v.11 with David's assertions of Saul's authority and kingship during the time this psalm may have been written (1 Samuel 24:1-7)? Is David speaking of himself in v.11?

5. In Psalm 41, how can David claim his integrity in v.12, having already admitted his sin in v.4? How does "considering the poor" (v.1) tie in to this? What is the difference between innocence and integrity? Which does David claim?

6. The bed is often spoken of in the Psalms (4:4; 6:6; 36:4; 41:3; 63:6; 132:3; 139:8; 149:5) as a place of introspection. Why do you think the psalmists so often describe the bed as a place to think, pray, and plan?

## Deliverance from Sin

### I. Lesson 8 Review

- a. What are 2 of the prerequisites for deliverance found in Psalms 41 and 63?
- b. What is the difference between integrity and innocence?

#### Lesson Overview

- Deliverance from Sin  
From Punishment and Guilt  
From Resulting Evils  
Linked to Nation's Wellbeing
- Key Features  
Central Metaphor  
Relationship with God  
Integrity
- Key Psalms: 51, 130

### II. Deliverance from Sin

- a. In the Old and New Testaments, sin is the most serious problem God's people face.
- b. The psalmists seek deliverance from two things:
  - i. The guilt and punishment for their sins, 51:7; 130:8
  - ii. The evil (or difficulty) resulting from their sins, 51:8
  - iii. Of these, clearly the first is the most important; Psalm 130 mentions only forgiveness
- c. Each of these psalms focuses on a different aspect of the process of forgiveness. Look for words and images that are repeated in the Psalms
- d. In both Psalms, forgiveness of the individual's sins is directly linked to the wellbeing of the nation (51:18-19; 130:7-8).

### Questions

1. Fill in the following information for each of the Psalms you read for this lesson.

	Genre	Author	Repeated Words/Images	Historical/Circumstantial Notes Given
Psalm 51				
Psalm 130				

2. Fill out the Practical Psalms chart for each of the psalms in the lesson. Use a separate piece of paper if necessary.

	Psalm 51	Psalm 130
Physical Challenge(s)		
Physical Requests		
Spiritual Challenge(s)		
Spiritual Requests		
Basis of Psalmist's Hope		
Emotions Stirred		
Deliverance/Consolation		

3. Psalm 51:

- a. What is the psalmist's chief complaint in this psalm? Who is his complaint against?
- b. List all the ways the psalmist says "Forgive me" in this psalm.

- c. In v.4, the psalmist says that he has sinned against God alone. How does this relate to the second half of the verse, where the psalmist says "so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment?" What does this mean?
  
- d. The psalmist draws a contrast between an offering or sacrifice that God does not want and one He does. Is the psalmist saying that sacrifices are unnecessary? What must happen before the psalmist's physical sacrifices will be accepted?
  
- e. v.5, which is sometimes cited to suggest that humans are born guilty of Adam's sin, is part of a two-verse statement about the nature of the human soul. What is the message that vv.5-6 convey about our inclination to sin? What is a New Testament passage that teaches the same principle?

#### 4. Psalm 130

- a. Psalm 130 is one of the Songs of Ascent. Why is it important to consider our sinfulness as we draw near to worship God, as the singers of these songs do?
  
- b. What do we learn from vv.3-4 about our need for God's grace? How does God's forgiveness of my sins make me fear Him?
  
- c. What two attributes of God allow His people to hope for forgiveness, according to v.7?

5. Both of these psalms zoom out at the end to focus on the welfare of the nation as it relates to the righteousness of the individual. Apply this to the church today: how does my sinfulness or righteousness affect the strength and success of the congregation of which I am a member?



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## Calling Down Curses?—Imprecatory Psalms

- I. Lesson 9 Review
- a. What are the 2 kinds of deliverance the psalmists seek from sin?
  - b. List 2 of the prerequisites for deliverance found in Psalms 51 and 130.
- II. Imprecatory Psalms
- a. Imprecatory psalms express the psalmists' anger over the evil behavior of their enemies.
  - b. We often find these psalms uncomfortable, given Christ's command to love our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48), so it is important for us to consider how Imprecatory psalms work.
- III. Features of Imprecatory Psalms
- a. Most scholars identify 7 Imprecatory psalms: 35, 55, 59, 69, 79, 109, and 137 (Bullock 228). Of these, 35, 69, and 109 sound the harshest.
  - b. "Imprecations" are simply "curses," but Bullock suggests "Psalms of Anger" as a better label. The psalmist is not praying for undeserved evil to happen to his enemies: only justice as he sees it.
  - c. Imprecatory psalms often follow a similar pattern to Laments
    - i. Usually include a lament about the psalmist's situation or the evils done to him (69:2-3)
    - ii. The psalmist nearly always asks for deliverance (69:1; 109:26)
    - iii. The writer often either protests his innocence (109:2-3) or confesses his sin (69:5)
    - iv. Many end with a vow to praise God for His deliverance
    - v. Also, several of the Laments include imprecatory elements
    - vi. We can see Imprecatory psalms, then, as an extension of the sentiments of the Laments, but with more emphasis on the desire to see vengeance enacted on the psalmists' enemies
- IV. The Problem
- a. How should a Christian understand Imprecatory psalms? Are they sentiments we should partake of?
  - b. Even in the Old Testament, the Israelites were not to take vengeance or bear a grudge (Leviticus 19:18). Is the psalmist himself right in making these requests? Are these psalms scripture?
  - c. "The Imprecatory Psalms put both the Psalmist and God in the context of anger and vengeance. Who is this religious poet who wishes, even prays, for such things to happen to his enemies. Who is this God who, the psalmist assumes, would side with him and do such terrible things?" (Bullock 228)
- V. Two Errors to Avoid (from Longman 138-139)
- a. One response is that Imprecatory Psalms are not scripture: that they are humans speaking without Divine inspiration. Since the psalmists lived before Christ, they do not think to love their enemies.
    - i. Response: God told His people not to seek their own vengeance (Leviticus 19:18)
    - ii. Also, if the Imprecations are unscriptural, the rest of the Psalms are on shaky ground; how do we determine what is inspired and what is not?
  - b. Another response is that the Imprecations are not only inspired, but valid for Christians to use in their prayers. We can ask for this vengeance on those who persecute us or actively seek to destroy God's influence in the world.
    - i. Response: "This does not take into account the radical love to which Jesus calls us" (Longman 139).

### Lesson Overview

- Imprecatory Psalms
  - Similar Pattern to Laments
  - Express Anger toward Enemies
- Errors to Avoid
  - Imprecatory Psalms Not Scripture
  - Imprecatory Psalms Should Be Parroted
- Key Psalms: 69, 109, 137

- ii. Jesus said to “pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44), and gave us an example of loving behavior between people of different beliefs (Luke 10:25-37).

#### VI. Pieces of the Solution Puzzle

- a. If we accept that the Imprecatory Psalms are inspired, then we must accept that ultimately we can reconcile them with God’s mercy and love being available to all people.
- b. Compare Psalm 137:9 with Isaiah 13:16, Hosea 13:16, and Nahum 3:10. God is speaking in the last three passages, and He promises that the event the psalmist wishes for in Psalm 137 will happen to Babylon, Israel, and Assyria, respectively.
- c. It may be too easy to say that the Old Covenant was a more physical and bloody covenant than the New, but in the Old Testament God sometimes illustrates His judgment on sin by wiping out nations and peoples. When the Israelites were used as the vehicle of judgment, the standing order was to destroy all of the people, even the infants (Deuteronomy 20:16-18). Therefore:
  - i. The psalmist may simply be wishing for God to accomplish what He said would happen.
  - ii. These judgments are part of the Old Testament program of Israel being holy and the other nations flowing to them. Israel’s separateness is demonstrated by God’s judgments, both on their enemies and on Israel itself.
- d. Also, the Psalms, like most poetry, use hyperbole to express their sentiments. We are not necessarily obligated to read all the imprecations as literal descriptions of punishments. They may be a hyperbolic statement of the Psalmist’s desire for justice.
- e. Finally, the Imprecatory Psalms contain Messianic prophecies (69:9, 21), and these psalms are quoted as authoritative by Jesus and the apostles (109:8).

### **Questions**

1. Fill in the verses of the following Imprecatory Psalms that correspond to elements of Psalms of Lament.

	Address to God	Cry for Help	Lament(s)	Sins/Innocence	Petition	Confidence	Vow of Praise
Psalm 69							
Psalm 109							

2. Fill out the Practical Psalms chart for each of the psalms in the lesson. Use a separate piece of paper if necessary.

	Psalm 69	Psalm 109	Psalm 137
Physical Challenge(s)			
Physical Requests			
Spiritual Challenge(s)			
Spiritual Requests			
Basis of Psalmist’s Hope			
Emotions Stirred			
Deliverance/Consolation			

3. How many verses in these two psalms contain actual imprecations, as opposed to laments, statements of trust, etc.? What conclusions can you draw from this balance of content?

4. What are some New Testament passages that call us to be indignant or upset about sin?

## - 11 -

**Waiting for Restoration**

- I. Lesson 10 Review
- What is Bullock's better label for Imprecatory Psalms?
  - What are the 2 errors we should avoid as we read the Imprecatory Psalms?

Lesson Overview

- Waiting for Restoration
  - Destruction of Enemies
  - Vindication of Faith
  - Restoration of Worship
  - Peace of a Godly Ruler
- Key Features
  - Personal/International Focus
  - Often Attributed to Asaph
- Key Psalms: 74, 79

- II. Asaph the Seer
- Twelve psalms are attributed to Asaph (50, 73-83), a Levite who was one of David's worship-leaders (1 Chronicles 16:4-7). His descendants also occupied this position (1 Chronicles 25:1-2), even after the Babylonian Captivity (Nehemiah 7:44; 11:22).
  - Asaph is called a "seer" (2 Chronicles 29:30), and a feature of the psalms attributed to Asaph is that God sometimes speaks directly to His people (81:8-16).
  - Some of these psalms, however, were clearly written after Asaph died (e.g., 74 & 79), and may have been either written by his descendants or written to be sung by them.
  - Despite a multiplicity of authors, these psalms are thematically uniform. They are concerned with deliverance from Israel's enemies, and how God will repay the wicked (see especially Psalm 73).
- III. Waiting for Restoration
- When we read psalms that talk about the restoration of Israel, we should look for the Psalmists' definitions of these problems, and the answers they ask for and propose.
  - Throughout Israel's history, but especially after the destruction of Jerusalem, godly Israelites wondered when and how God was going to make Israel into the promised nation that would rule the Promised Land and maintain the perfect relationship with Him that the Covenant outlines.
  - This wondering seems to center around Four Needs of God's People:
    - The Need for the Destruction of Israel's Enemies, 79:6-7
    - The Need for a Vindication of the Believers' Faith, 74:18-19
    - The Need for the Restoration of Godly Worship, 79:1, 13
    - The Need for the Peace Brought by a Godly Ruler, 74:20-21
  - Many of the psalms that discuss the restoration are attributed to Asaph, which fits with his concern about Israel's enemies and their punishment.

**Questions**

1. Fill in the following information for each of the Psalms you read for this lesson.

	Genre	Author	Battle Images	Written During David's Time?
Psalm 74				
Psalm 79				

2. List the verses from each psalm that discuss the Four Needs of God's People.

	Destruction of Enemies	Vindication of Faith	Restoration of Worship	Peace of Godly Ruler
Psalm 74				
Psalm 79				

3. Fill out the Practical Psalms chart for each of the psalms in the lesson. Use a separate piece of paper if necessary.

	Psalm 74	Psalm 79
Physical Challenge(s)		
Physical Requests		
Spiritual Challenge(s)		
Spiritual Requests		
Basis of Psalmist's Hope		
Emotions Stirred		
Deliverance/Consolation		

4. Psalm 74 is divided into two very distinct stanzas. List the verses that comprise each stanza. Then find one sentence in each stanza that could serve as a summary of it, and copy them here. What is the overall message of this psalm?

5. What images of battle and/or conflict stand out to you in these psalms? Why do you think the psalmist is focused on these types of images? In what contexts do we use similar language in our teaching and worship today?

5. Both Psalm 74 and 79 mention the destruction of the temple. How is this related to Need #3, the Need for Restoration of Godly Worship? Why, for instance, does Psalm 79 begin with the destruction of the place of worship and end with the worship of God's people? Is the need for godly worship merely physical, as in a building or a specified order of services? What else is implied about this need in these psalms?

6. Where does the writer of Psalm 74 go to bolster his faith in God's ability to deliver His people, vv.12-17?

7. By contrast, to what attribute of God does the writer of Psalm 79 appeal in asking for restoration, vv.9-12?

## - 12 - The Messianic Solution

- I. Lesson 11 Review
- a. What are the 4 Needs God's people express when they seek restoration?
  - b. To what historical event do Psalms 74 and 79 make reference?

### Lesson Overview

- The Messianic Solution to:
  - Destruction of Enemies
  - Vindication of Faith
  - Restoration of Worship
  - Peace of a Godly Ruler
- Key Features
  - Coming Peace
  - Likeness to David
- Key Psalms: 144, 110

- II. David's View of the Restoration
- a. We have seen in Psalms 74 and 79 how the Jews understood the restoration God had offered them. Now we will examine David's perspective of it.
    - i. Psalm 144 gives us David's view of what God's restoration would accomplish
    - ii. Psalm 110 gives us David's view of the ruler who would accomplish that restoration
  - b. David's view of the coming restoration is phrased differently from the view of the Exiled Jews, since he is writing approximately 500 years earlier, but his underlying confidence in God's promised deliverance is the same as theirs.
  - c. He also addresses the same 4 Needs in these psalms, as both a problem to be solved and a solution.

### Questions

1. Fill in the following information for each of the Psalms you read for this lesson.

	Genre	Author	Battle Images	Hints at the Messiah?
Psalm 144				vv.
Psalm 110				vv.

2. List the verses from each psalm that discuss the Four Needs of God's People.

	Destruction of Enemies	Vindication of Faith	Restoration of Worship	Peace of Godly Ruler
Psalm 144				
Psalm 110				

3. Using the 4 Needs as guidelines, explain how Psalm 110 answers the questions and pleas expressed in Psalm 144. Consider also how these psalms answer the requests from the Practical Psalms chart for Psalms 74 and 79.

4. Psalm 144 borrows extensively from other Old Testament passages. Find the OT references for the following verses:

- a. v.3 –
- b. v.4 –

c. vv.5-6 –

d. vv.7-8 –

e. v.9 –

5. Vv. 12-15 seem to form an unfinished thought. David keeps saying “when this happens,” but he never finishes the grammatical structure by including a “then...” statement. What is the implied “then...” that makes this era of prosperity and peace possible? How does David hint at this cause in these verses?

6. Compare the description of the blessed people in Psalm 144 to the subjects of the Priest-King in Psalm 110. How are they similar? How are they different?

7. We understand from Jesus’ words and the book of Hebrews that David is referring to Christ in 110:1 and describing the Messianic reign in the Psalm, but how would David and his initial readers have understood this psalm? To whom would the descriptions refer in their minds?

8. We often criticize the Jews of Christ’s day for looking for a militaristic Messiah who would drive out the Romans when Christ was offering a much better solution to their problems. But the language of this psalm is unavoidably violent and physical. How do vv.5-6 still apply to Christ’s work, even though he did not fight any physical battles?

9. The Hebrew writer quotes or refers to 110:4 five times in his discourse. In what ways is this verse, and indeed this psalm, a central part of any discussion of Christ’s superiority?

## - 13 - A Triumphant Close

### I. Lesson 12 Review

- a. What is the problem confronting the psalmist in Psalm 144?  
Who is the answer in Psalm 110?
- b. What description of the Messiah in Psalm 110 is central to the book of Hebrews?

#### Lesson Overview

- Calls to Praise
  - Who is Called
  - What They Say
  - Why They Praise Him
- Key Features
  - Chiastic Structure
  - National Focus
  - Inclusivity
- Key Psalms: 146-150

### II. A Crescendo of Praises

- a. In Lesson 1 we noted that the number of Praise Psalms increases from book to book in the Psalms. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the editor ends the book by reinforcing two points:
  - i. Everyone should praise God for His works, which also praise Him (148, 150)
  - ii. God will redeem and preserve His people (146, 147, 149)
- b. Each psalm in this group begins and ends with the word *Hallelujah*, which is usually translated in our Bibles as "Praise the Lord"
  - i. This set of bookends marks these five psalms as a set
  - ii. It also gives us their theme: praising the Lord for His works
- c. The five psalms are arranged in a chiasm:
  - A The individual praises God for personal deliverance (146)
  - B Israel praises God for national deliverance (147)
  - C All people and nations are called to praise God (148)
  - B' Israel is called to further praise (149)
  - A' All individuals are called to further praise (150)
  - i. The center and central idea of this chiasm is the call to praise God, which is also the theme of every psalm in the group, and the beginning and ending of each psalm.
  - ii. From every angle, this group of psalms encourages and demands that we praise God.

### Questions

1. List everyone who is specifically called to praise God in this group of psalms:

2. Besides "Praise the Lord," there is another phrase that is repeated at least once in each of these psalms (except Psalm 148). What is the repeated phrase, and what does it add to the command to "Praise the Lord"? Why do you think this phrase is not present in Psalm 148?

3. Psalm 146 draws a contrast between the one the psalmist will not trust and the One he will. Make a list of the reasons he will not trust another man for deliverance, and a list of the reasons he will trust God for deliverance. What fundamental point is the psalmist making by drawing this contrast?

4. According to Psalm 147:20, what is the greatest mark of God's special relationship with Israel? How are the benefits of this unique blessing reflected in the rest of the psalm?

5. Psalm 148 is divided into two stanzas: praise from the heavens, and praise from the earth. List the verses that make up each section. What reason is given in each section for the listed to praise Him? Finally, what is the additional reason why everyone should praise God (v.14)?

6. Why do you think the psalmist calls for "a new song" for Israel's worship to God that is described in Psalm 149? (Consider also Psalm 33:1-3.) Where else is this phrase used?

7. Psalm 150 first lists reasons to praise God, then ways to praise God. It ends with a general call to praise. List the specifics of each category from the psalm:

a. Reasons to Praise God:

b. Ways to Praise God:

c. What is the qualification a being must meet to praise God in this psalm?



## - Review Worksheet -

1. What does the word *psalm* mean? (For a bonus point, write the Hebrew word that is the title of the book.)
2. List at least 5 genres of Psalms:
  
3. What is the movement in tone and genre across the Psalms as a collection?
4. What are the books that made up the two original compilations of Psalms?
  - a. Collection 1:
  - b. Collection 2:
5. List the 2 main literary devices used in the Psalms:
6. What are the 4 main types of parallelism?
  
7. What is Bullock's better label for Imprecatory Psalms?
8. What are the 2 errors we should avoid in reading the Imprecatory Psalms?
  
9. What does the word transliterated as "messiah" mean?
10. What are the 2 major themes of Messianic Psalms?
11. What are the 3 themes of the Songs of Ascent?
  
12. What are the 2 possible interpretations of the word "Ascents"?
  
13. What are three parallels between the Model Prayer and the prayers in Psalms?
  
14. What is the relationship between personal deliverance and corporate (group) deliverance?
  
15. List 3 tenets of Man's Relationship with God.
  
16. What is the image of God that Psalm 95 and 100 both use?

17. What are the 3 sources of evil, or difficulty, according to Wisdom Literature?
18. What spiritual difficulty almost inevitably accompanies conflict with evildoers?
19. What are 2 of the prerequisites for deliverance found in Psalms 41 and 63?
20. What is the difference between integrity and innocence?
21. What are the 2 kinds of deliverance the psalmists seek from sin?
22. List 2 of the prerequisites for deliverance found in Psalms 51 and 130.
23. What are the 4 Needs God's people express when they seek restoration?
24. To what historical event do Psalms 74 and 79 make reference?
25. What is the problem confronting the psalmist in Psalm 144? Who is the answer in Psalm 110?
26. What description of the Messiah in Psalm 110 is central to the book of Hebrews?
27. Recreate the chiasm (including the summaries) formed by Psalms 146-150.
28. What is the qualification listed at the end of Psalm 150 that a being must meet to worship God?