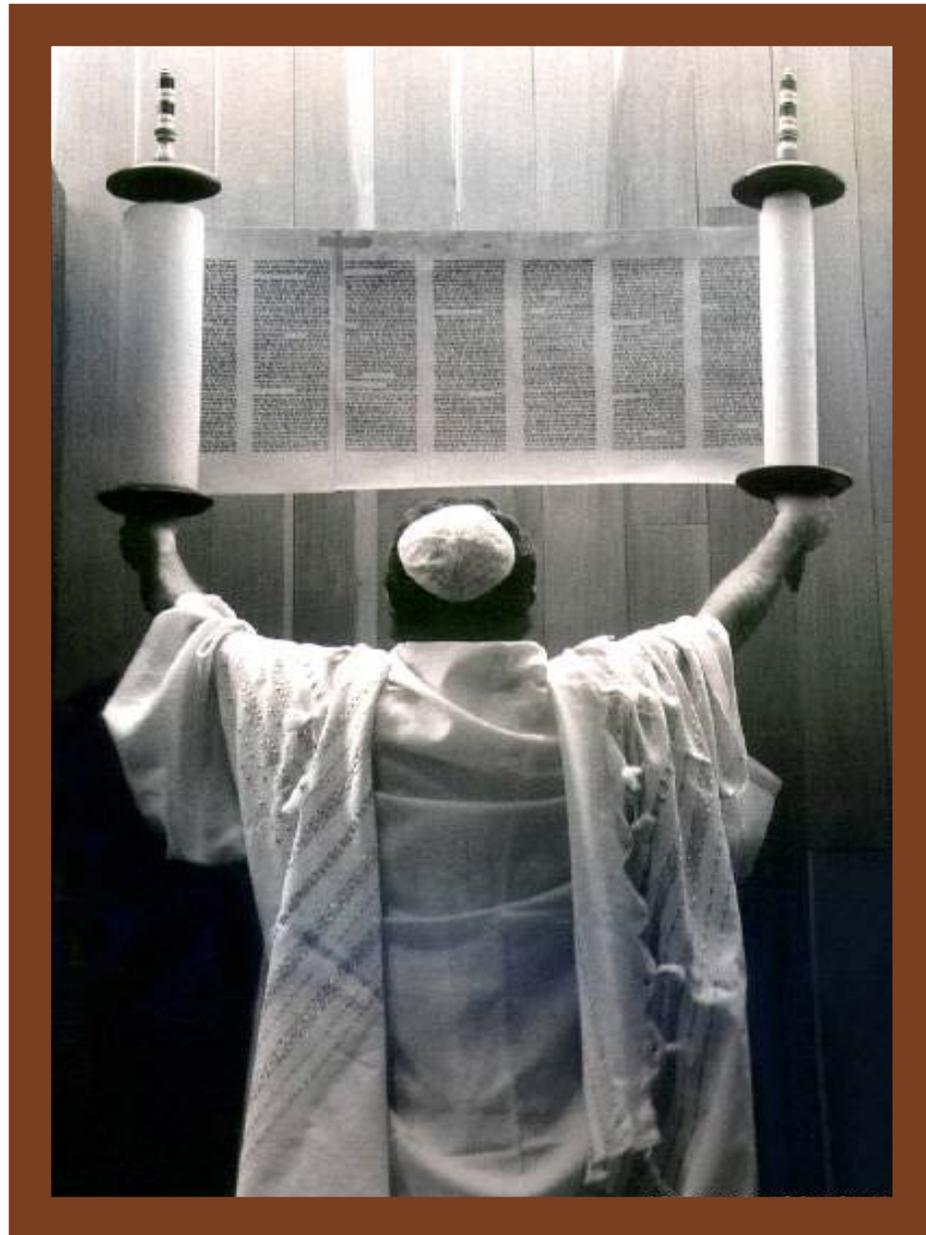


The Book Of Psalms



By Charles Willis

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The Use of 'Selah'



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Forward

Psalm 23

1 מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד

יְהוָה רֹעִי לֹא אֶחְסָר: 2 בְּנֹאֲוֹת דְּשֵׂא וְיִבְיָצֵנִי
 עַל־מֵי מִנְחֹת וַיְהַלְנֵנִי: 3 נַפְשִׁי יִשׁוּבֵב
 וַיְהַנְנֵנִי בְּמִשְׁעָלֵי־צֶדֶק לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ:
 4 גַּם כִּי־אֵלֶּךְ בְּגֵיא צַלְמוֹת לֹא־אִירָא רָע
 כִּי־אֵתָּה עִמָּדִי שְׁבָטְךָ וּמִשְׁעַנְתְּךָ תִּמְנֵה וַתִּחַמְנֵנִי:
 5 תִּשְׂרָף לְפָנָיו שְׁלֵתֵן וַיְגַד צִרְיִי
 דִּשְׁנָתָה בְּשִׁמְוֹן רֹאשִׁי בֹּסֵי דְרוֹמָה:
 6 אֵדָּה טוֹב וְתַסֵּד יְרֵדְפוּנִי כָּל־יְמֵי חַיִּי
 וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית־יְהוָה לְאֹרְךָ יָמַיִם:

The Psalms are debatably the best examples of Hebrew poetry that exist in the world. No matter what century of history you care to study, men of all ages have studied from this great book. It has a depth of meaning that lends itself well to study and contemplation. Many look to the Psalms as the expression of their feelings and devotions. The importance of the Psalms to the Christian is easily seen when one considers how many New Testaments are sold that include the Psalms in the back of the publication.

The Hebrew title of the book is *Sepher Tehillim* and means “book of praises”. The Greek translations carry the titles of *Psalmoi* and *Psalterios* from which we get our English titles of Psalms and Psalter. The Latin title is *Liber Psalmorum* or “book of Psalms”. For the Jews, the Psalms were used as both prayers and songs. The devotional quality of so many of the writings cannot be compared with anything man has created.

Almost half of the Psalms are attributed to David (73 of them). His life as a shepherd, warrior and king can easily be seen in the writings. One dozen Psalms are written by Aseph who was the “collector”, a priest who most likely headed the music service at the Temple. The sons of Korah also wrote several, two by Solomon, and Moses, Heman and Ethan wrote one each. There are many anonymous Psalms.

The book is usually divided into five parts, five small books each ending with a doxology: 1-41, 42-72, 73-89, 90-106, 107-150. One of the difficulties in undertaking a study of Psalms is how to approach the book. A verse by verse study would be too long for a public study, but very profitable in private (and recommended). To attempt to study every Psalm also borders on asking too much of a class setting. To study the five smaller book divisions is unsatisfactory as it is still too large a collection.

I have elected to try to study the types of Psalms with an example or two of each to focus on in each lesson. There are many ways to organize the types of Psalms and what is contained in this study is not the only way, nor is it intended to be a complete study of all the types. It is my hope that studying these major forms of writing will enable us to better understand the majority of Psalms as we personally study them in more depth. A good way to extend this study in a class setting is to look at more examples of each type of Psalm. Rather than being a 12 lesson study it could easily be expanded to 26 and even further at the teacher or student’s discretion.

In all of the Psalms there is an underlying theme of praise and worship of God. God is worthy of worship because of who He is, what He has done, and what He will do.

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer” (Psalm 19:14).

“My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord; and all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever” (Psalm 145:21).

Psalm 25:10 Read right to left:
← (2) (1)

כָּל	אֲרָצוֹת	יְהוָה	חַסְדֵּךָ	וְ	אֱמֶת
(1)	(1) (2) (3)	(1)	(1) (2)	(1)	(2) (3)
kol	ore chot	Adonai	che sed	ve e met	and truth
and the paths of all of					
לְ	נֹזְעֵי	בְּ	רֵי	וְ	עֵדוּתֵי
(1)	(2) (3) (4)	(1)	(2) (3)	(1)	(2) (3) (4)
le nots rei	v rito	and His testimonies	His covenant	for the keepers of	

The beauty of the Psalms is easily seen in the expression of the guilty heart found in the Penitential Psalms. Though not a complete list, these include Psalms: 6, 32, 38, 51, 130 and 143. The more of these you read, the better you will understand the type of expression being written.

I am impressed with the depth of sorrow expressed over sin. In each of these there are several admissions of guilt. So we see:

“my sin is continually before me” (38:17)

“my sin is ever before me” (51:3)

“my iniquities are gone over my head, as a heavy burden they weigh too much for me”
(38:4)

“in your sight no man is righteous” (143:2)

“my soul is greatly dismayed” (6:3).

This is but a sampling of the guilt we read about. There is no covering up of sin, no watering down of what has been done. Reading these Psalms forces us to examine our own attitude about our sin. Do we see it as what separates us from God?

It is also easily seen that the statements of guilt flow into statements of confession.

“I acknowledged my sin to you...I said I will confess my transgressions to the Lord”
(32:5)

“I confess my iniquity” (38:18)

“Out of the depths I have cried to you”
(130:1).

The Penitent heart feels the guilt of sin to the extent that repentance is necessary. A desired change is expressed with:

“create in me a clean heart” (51:10)

“blot out all of my iniquities” (51:8)

“my soul longs for you, as a parched land”
(146:6)

“return, O Lord, restore my soul; save me”
(6:4).

Lesson #1

Penitent Psalms

The desire for a changed condition before God is a driving theme in all of these Psalms. They are full of confession and a desire for forgiveness.

God forgives the penitent.

“You forgave the guilt of my sin” (32:5)

“There is forgiveness with you” (130:4)

“with Him is abundant redemption”
(130:7).

God loves us. He is willing to forgive our guilt, but we must be penitent at heart. His attitude about this has not changed though the Law has changed since the Psalms were written. *“God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent”* (Acts 17:30). *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). We need the attitude of heart expressed in the Penitent Psalms. We must say with David, *“I hope in you, O Lord”* (38:15).

READING

PSALM 51

This psalm was written by David after Nathan confronted him about his sin with Bathsheeba and the murder of her husband Uriah (2 Sam. 11:1-12:15). This is considered by many to be the greatest example of a Penitent Psalm.

1. How does David express his guilt? (v.1-4, list some phrases)
2. What does David want God to do? (v.7-12)
3. What does David say he will do? (v.13-15)
4. What is God pleased with?
5. Why will sinners be converted? (v.13)
6. Why was God not pleased with sacrifice? (v.16)



For Discussion

1. How do Penitent Psalms impact our expression and understanding of sin?
2. Explain Psalm 51:5. Many believe this teaches the Calvinistic doctrine of being totally depraved at birth and therefore in a lost condition before God. What does this verse mean?
3. What New Testament concepts about salvation seem to be “previewed” in the language of this Psalm? [Example: Verse 10 speaks of a renewed and steadfast spirit which agrees with Ephesians 4:23-24, “be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new self”]

'Halel' is the Hebrew name for the book meaning "praises". The Greek name is 'Psalms'. It is appropriate to consider how much these hymns praise God. 'Hallelujah' is a transliteration of a Hebrew phrase (Hallelu Yah) meaning 'praise Yahweh', 'praise Lord'. The Greek New Testament renders this same idea as the word 'Alleluia', though there are many examples of where the word 'Hallelujah' is retained.

As with all of the 'groupings' in this series of lessons, there is debate and disagreement on how to exactly group them. Generally the Hallelujah Psalms (or Halel Psalms) include Psalms 113-118, 135, and 146-150. While it is not expected that you would go read all of these Psalms, I would encourage you to read the following selected Psalms: 113, 146-150. Just by reading these a person can easily understand why they are grouped together because they are full of similar concepts all focused on praising God.

In Jewish Tradition, Psalms 113-118 are used in connection with the Passover celebration. Psalms 113 and 114 are sung before the Passover meal and Psalms 115-118 are sung after the meal. Many hold this is what Jesus and the disciples would have turned to when Matthew 26:30 records, "after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives".

Three basic parts can be seen in a Hallelujah Psalm: 1) a call to praise, 2) reasons why God should be praised, and 3) further calls to praise. Generally, all of these Psalms begin and/or end with "praise the Lord". Consider these examples.

Call To Praise

*"Praise the Lord! Praise, O servants of the Lord,
Praise the name of the Lord."* (113:1)

*"Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, and
His praise in the congregation of the godly ones"*
(149:1)

*"Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to
our God; For it is pleasant and praise is becoming"*
(147:1)

*"Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! I will
praise the Lord while I live; I will sing praises to my
God while I have my being."* (146:1)

Reasons To Praise God

For who He is

*"Who is like our God who is
enthroned on high"* (113:5)

Lesson #2

Hallelujah Psalms

*"Let them praise the name of the Lord, for He
commanded and they were created"* (148:5)

*"Let Israel be glad in his Maker; Let the sons
of Zion rejoice in their King."* (149:2)

For What He Has Done

"He has lifted up a horn for His people"
(148:14)

*"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up
their wounds"* (147:3)

*"For He has strengthened the bars of your
gates; He has blessed your sons within you. He
makes peace in your borders"* (147:13-14)

*"This is the day which the Lord has made; Let
us rejoice and be glad in it"* (118:24)

*"He makes the barren woman abide in the
house as a joyful mother of children"* (113:9)

Further Calls To Praise

*"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; For
His lovingkindness is everlasting"* (118:29)

*"You who revere the Lord, bless the Lord.
Blessed be the Lord from Zion, who dwells in
Jerusalem. Praise the Lord!"* (135:20-21)

*"The Lord will reign forever, Your God, O
Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord!"*
(146:10)

*"Let everything that has breath praise the
Lord. Praise the Lord!"* (150:6)

The Hallelujah Psalms make up some of the most popular Psalm texts for modern hymns (see table in back). They are wonderful expressions of praise to which all believers can relate. There are many other Psalms that also contain praises, but it is not the theme or primary content of the Psalm. Truly, these Psalms celebrate the joyous spirit of the believer and his relationship with God.

READING

PSALM 146

*“Praise the Lord,
all nations;
Laud Him, all
peoples!
For His
lovingkindness is
great toward us,
and the truth of the
Lord is everlasting.
Praise the Lord!”*

Psalm 117

1. What is the significance of verse 2 in relation to eternity? (see also 2 Cor. 5:10)
2. Compare and contrast the “help” and “hope” of mortal man versus God (verses.3-7).
3. Who keeps faith forever? (v.6) What New Testament passages agree with this statement?
4. In what ways does God open the eyes of the blind? (v.8)
5. Who does God raise up? How does He do it? (v.8)
6. Who are the “strangers” that are protected by God? (v.9)
7. How does God “thwart” or “turn upside down” the way of the wicked? (v.9)



For Discussion

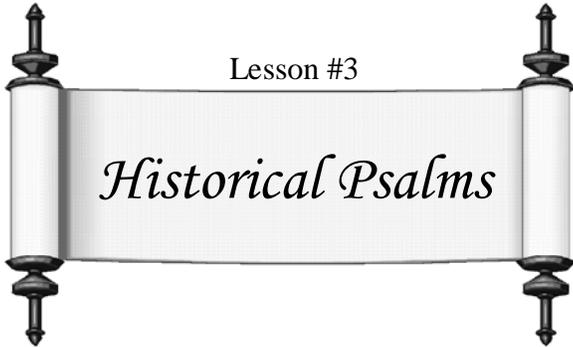
1. What personal benefit is derived from public praises unto God? Should we enjoy praising God? (v.1-2)
2. How will God reign to “all generations” (v.10) when the Israelites are no longer considered His special people?
3. List three things for which God should be praised (other than salvation through Jesus).
4. What will the faithful do in eternity? (Revelation 4:8-11; 5:11-14; 19:1-6)

It is often said that if we do not know history we are doomed to repeat it. God has always placed history before men as a means of teaching and forming applications. The memory of what God did for the Israelites motivated his people to live righteously. Moses and Joshua were repeatedly instructed to remind the people of history. Why else would scripture include the book of Kings and Chronicles except to enlighten us about the history of God's people during that time? Even in the New Testament Peter (Acts 2) and Stephen (Acts 7) recite history in order to teach the truth. The best examples of Historical Psalms include Psalms 78, 105, 106, 135 and 136.

A good reason for the inclusion of historical Psalms is found in Psalm 78:2-4 which reads, "*I will utter dark saying of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not conceal them from their children, but tell to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done*". The law of God is intended for all men, including the generations to come. These young ones need to be taught what God has done. As adults we must pass along the history of God's dealings with mankind and educate the next generation. If we fail in this, they will not praise God nor live for Him. We must impress upon them the "strength" and "wonderful works" of God. The old stories need to be repeated again and again. As we study the history of the Israelites we are not just learning stories, but are being educated about how God deals with men, what God's attitudes are, and how men should serve Him.

By studying and knowing this history, young people should grow up setting their hope on God. The purpose of history is to teach us to depend on God, to trust Him who keeps His promises. We can read how He kept all His promises with the Israelites and we then have confidence He will keep His promises to us in regards to eternal salvation.

Knowing the stories and hoping in God is not enough. A study of history clearly teaches us we need to obey God. We learn from history how



Historical Psalms

we are not to be stubborn and rebellious and leave the Lord. The bad examples teach as much as the good examples. Without history we are at a great loss.

The historical psalms provide a means of easy teaching for the Israelites. Remember, these were hymns that were sung. Most people did not read or write, and did not have easy access to the scriptures. The primary means of learning history for them was through story telling and songs. Anything set to music is easier to remember. For example: how do children typically learn the books of the Bible? We teach them a tune, eventually the tune is dropped and they are left with a solid memorized list. I am convinced this was in part some of the reasons why the historical Psalms were written.

Many of the Psalms contain historical information, such as portions of Psalms 77, 89, and 132. These are often drawing from one historical occasion and making a point of application, or are elaborating on one event. History is strongly held up before the Israelites as a means of learning. We also need to be studying history and be familiar with history so that we do not repeat it. The book of Hebrews is full of historical references that make this very point. Hebrews 3:15 serves as a good example for us: "*Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked. For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses?*" Without history the writing loses much of its meaning. We need to know.

READING

PSALM 106

This Psalm is typical of the “Historical” type beginning with a “Praise the Lord”. Several historical accounts are recited indicating the sin of the people.

It closes with:
*“save us, O Lord
our God...Praise
the Lord!”*

1. How can we be blessed (happy)? (v.3)
2. How does the Psalm make application of the history that is about to be recited? (v.6)
3. For each division of the Psalm, tell what sin or event is being recited. Try to list a biblical reference for the story.
 - A. Verses 7-12
 - B. Verses 13-18
 - C. Verses 19-27
 - D. Verses 28-31
 - E. Verses 32-33
 - F. Verses 34-39
 - G. Verses 40-43
 - H. Verses 44-46



4. Looking at the entire Psalm, write down some of the phrases that indicate their dependence and faith in God.

For Discussion

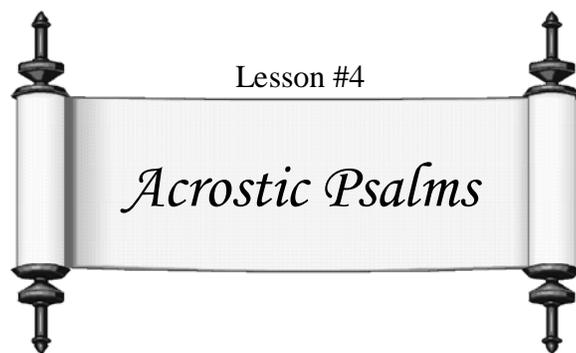
1. From verses 35-36 describe how Christians are in danger of repeating this history.
2. Describe the attitude of the writer in verses 4-5. Should this be the attitude of believers today?
3. From verses 6-12, what caused the people to believe the word of God? What causes belief today?
4. What examples of compassion and love are exhibited by God in this Psalm? What do we learn from this?

When I was in college I had an awful lot of information to memorize. It was helpful at times to arrange long lists of names or places into a rhyme scheme or some sort of order. In teaching students to read music they are instructed to memorize this phrase: *Every Good Boy Does Fine*. The first letter of each word spells out the names of the lines in the treble clef. This kind of device is not terribly unusual and is an old technique.

The Israelites (I'm convinced) employed a similar device in teaching things to the people of God – that of an acrostic. Their style was to always follow the letters of the Hebrew alphabet – usually each successive line beginning with the next letter of the alphabet. So most Hebrew acrostics have twenty-two lines or multiples of twenty-two. The nine acrostics are Psalms 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, and 145.

Eight of the Psalms have only one occurrence of each alphabetical character. The number of poetic lines introduced by each letter varies, but there is only one line that begins with the Hebrew equivalent of “A” and one with the Hebrew equivalent of “B” and so on. The only exception to this is the huge Psalm 119. Each letter is represented by eight lines and all eight lines begin with that letter of the alphabet. It is arranged in eight lined stanzas for that reason. To see such a poem in the original language with this arrangement would have been impressive to see, not only for its beauty but out of admiration for the skill of the author.

Acrostic Hebrew writing is not limited to Psalms. The Lamentations of Jeremiah contains five chapters, the first four are acrostic. Chapters 1, 2 and 4 have one line of each alphabet character and chapter 5 has three lines for each character. One other particularly good and memorable acrostic is



located at the end of the Proverbs of Solomon. Proverbs 31:10-31 is the wonderful acrostic poem of “The Worthy Woman”. This type of Hebrew poetry is also seen in the discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls with at least one outstanding “new” acrostic not found elsewhere.

We typically view a sermon or article as a bit “contrived” that is based on an acrostic. For example, stewardship may follow this acrostic:

Service
Trustworthy
Eager
Willing
Assist
Rewarded
Duty.

It is a format used in teaching, but it is typically unappealing. However, scripture uses this form for an effective purpose. When God uses it, I have to reconsider if it is so silly.

As a teaching device acrostics remains popular and widely employed. There is little doubt in my mind this is why they were written. Consider how much easier to remember the 176 verses of Psalm 119 when it is divided into 8 lined stanzas each beginning with the next letter of the alphabet, and then set to music.

READING

PSALM 34

This is a Psalm of David when he feigned madness before Abimelech, who drove him away and he departed (1 Samuel 21:10-15). David tells none of the particulars in the poem, but dwells instead on the fact that God heard him in his hour of need.



1. How does David's attitude about praising God (v.1-3) compare with Job's attitude?
2. How does David describe himself?
3. How do we take "refuge" in God (v.8)? What images does this bring to your mind?
4. Compare verse 10 with Matthew 6:33.
5. Who does the Lord save? (according to this text)
6. Compare verse 22 with Romans 8:1.

For Discussion

1. Provide New Testament teaching that agrees with verses 13-14. What's the difference in "seeking" peace and "pursuing" it?
2. What importance does this Psalm place on "fearing the Lord" and humility? Has God's attitude changed about these things?
3. Explain verses 15-17.



Messianic Psalms

The Psalms are the greatest example of Hebrew poetry, but we must not forget the writers were inspired of God. The Psalms contain many prophecies of the coming Messiah (see chart at end of workbook). We know without a doubt they are Messianic because they are quoted as such in the New Testament. Jesus told His disciples just before He ascended, *“These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”* (Luke 24:44). Most of the Messianic Prophecies are found imbedded in various Psalms, but the following have an unusual amount of Prophecy in them. Psalms 2, 22, 69, 89, 109, and 110.

His Pre-Existence

David begins Psalm 110 with *“The Lord says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”*. Jesus quoted this verse as a proof of His eternal existence in Matthew 22:42. He asked the Pharisees, *“What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He? They said to him, ‘The son of David’. He said to them, ‘Then how does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord’...?’”* He goes on in explaining His point in verse 46, *“If David then calls Him ‘Lord’, how is He his son?”* Before he became the fleshly descendant of David, Jesus was David’s Lord.

His Incarnation

The Psalmist wrote, *“I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant, I will establish your seed forever and build up your throne to all generations”* (Psalm 89:3-4). Matthew 1 lists Jesus as a descendant of David from the tribe of Judah. The angel of God told Mary, *“You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David”* (Luke 1:31-32). His seed is forever because Jesus now reigns in heaven. Verse 33 of Luke 1 continues saying, *“He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end”*.

His Priesthood

Psalm 110:4 reads *“you are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”* This is quoted in Hebrews 7:21. His priesthood is unchangeable. He *“always lives to make intercession”* for the saints (Hebrews 7:16, 24-25).

His Death

As Christ hung on the cross, at the end of His physical life, He voices the cry of Psalm 22:1, *“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me”*. The details of His last hours are strikingly foretold in Psalm 22 and other Psalms which will be studied in a moment. That the Messiah is being prophesied is without question.

His Resurrection

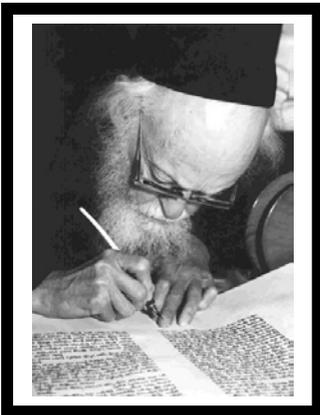
David wrote, *“For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay”* (Psalm 16:10). Neither the Messiah’s body nor soul will linger among the dead. God would install His King *“upon Zion, My Holy mountain”* (Psalm 2:1-6). Nothing men could do would prevent God’s plan from happening. As Peter said on Pentecost, *“It was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘The Lord said to my Lord, ‘sit at My right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for Your feet’ [Psalm 110:1] Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified”* (Acts 2:34-36).

The Messianic Psalms can be an intense study, but we will only touch upon them in this lesson. They are deserving of greater attention and study. No attempt to study the Psalms would be complete without at least looking at a few of these great Psalm texts. What is perhaps so amazing about the abundance of such prophecies is to remember these where texts which were poetic and intended to be sung. What a marvelous testimony to God’s hand at work in the writing of the Psalms!

READING

PSALM 22

This is a Psalm of David that may well have described the suffering of David. As we now read it with a knowledge of Jesus, it is difficult to see anything but the Cross of Christ.



1. Why would Jesus make verse 1 His cry on the cross? How had God forsaken Him?
2. List all the Messianic Prophecies in verses 11-18. How were these fulfilled?
3. How would Christ have perhaps viewed Himself as “a worm” (v.6)?
4. Which portions of this Psalm would have been viewed by Christ as an attestation of His reliance and faith in God?
5. Explain how verses 30-31 have been fulfilled?
6. From verse 27, give the three steps of conversion mentioned.

For Discussion

1. Notice the change in tone starting in verse 22 when compared with the preceding verses. How do you account for such a seemingly drastic change?
2. “*When he cried to Him for help, He heard*” (v.24). What should be our attitude in the midst of suffering when compared to Christ as expressed in this Psalm?
3. Who does verse 29 declare will worship the Messiah?

One of the most memorable forms used in the Psalms are phrases and entire Psalms that focus on the Word of God. Two Psalms stand out in this category as superb and astounding examples of Hebrew writing – they are Psalm 19 and 119. The length of Psalm 119 (the longest Psalm) will prevent a thorough study on this short page. I will attempt to try and identify a few areas of beneficial study which you can pursue deeper on your own.

Descriptions of the Word

These Psalms refer to God’s word in a variety of phrases. The most common are represented here by an appropriate example.

*“The Law of the Lord is perfect,
restoring the soul” (19:7)*

Law denotes a guidance or instruction. The wicked forsake His Law (119:53) but the righteous love it (119:97).

*“The testimony of the Lord is sure,
making wise the simple” (19:7)*

God testifies about Himself. We learn His will, but we also learn about His personality. There is no mistake in what God has revealed.

“They walk in His way” (119:3)

Surely this refers to God’s righteousness. Staying in God’s way should be the strong desire of every believer.

*“The precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart” (19:8)*

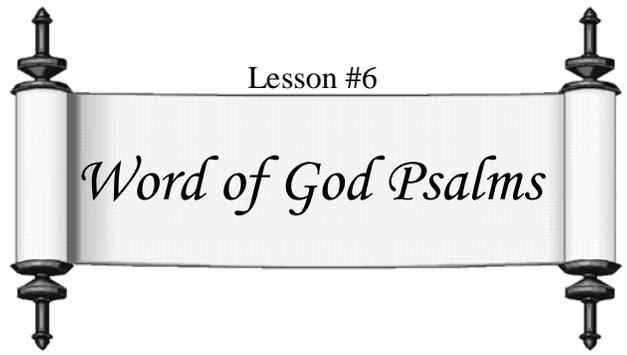
These are instructions given to direct behavior and are very similar to commands and laws. They are to be kept “diligently” (119:4). They restrict our conduct in this life but give us freedom in God (119:45).

“Teach me your statutes” (119:12)

God makes the rules. His standard must be kept. So the psalmist David desires to be taught them. He will “delight” in them (119:16). He will “perform” them (119:16). He will “meditate” on them (119:112).

*“The commandment of the Lord is pure,
enlightening the eyes” (19:8)*

God’s commands result in our righteousness since they are righteous (119:172). They open our eyes to understand how to please God. Our sins are made known.



*“The judgments of the Lord are true,
they are righteous altogether” (19:9)*

God repeatedly has warned mankind of the dangers of sinful conduct. There is a judgment coming, but this usage in the Psalms refers more to the idea of God’s warning us to abstain from things. His judgment is: these are wrong.

*“How can a young man keep his way pure?
By keeping it according to Your word” (119:9)*
His word is now written for us, but it could have also referred to the spoken word. He has revealed His mind in His word. If we submit to His word we can be pure in His sight.

Character of the Word

In many of these same passages we find descriptions of the Word such as “perfect” (19:7), “sure” (19:7) or trustworthy, “settled” (119:89), “right” (19:8), “pure” (19:8) and many others. We can see God’s nature in the nature of His Word.

The Effect of the Word

By adhering to the Word, an effect is wrought upon us. It “restores” the soul (19:7). It changes the simple into wise (19:7). It causes us to “rejoice” (19:8). Our heart can be clear of any guilt of sin knowing we are forgiven. It “enlightens the eyes” (19:8) being our “lamp” and “light” (119:105).

Of all the Psalm forms, this is perhaps the most memorable because it speaks so plainly of how we think and feel. It is fundamentally applicable to Christian thought and living. It provides a voice for our appreciation and love to God for the revelation that has been given. Let us ever be thankful.

READING

PSALM 19:7-11

PSALM 119:1-176

Psalm 119 is an alphabetical psalm with eight line stanzas through all 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

"The most," says

Martin Boos, "read their Bibles like cows that stand in the thick grass, and trample under their feet the finest flowers and herbs." Let us

approach this lengthy psalm with seriousness and with the intent to learn.



1. What should be our attitude about the word of God? (19:10-11; 119:81-83; 119:161-1168)
2. In what ways does God's word make us wise (119:97-104)?
3. What are our choices in regards to God's Word (119:105-112)?
4. What phrases or thoughts from Psalm 119 describe the attitude of the penitent heart? (example: v.136)
5. "Give me understanding according to your word" (119:169). "Deliver me according to your word" (119:170). According to the New Testament, what understanding and deliverance is revealed by God's word? (give examples)

For Discussion

1. Why do so many young Christians in the church fall away? (119:9-16)
2. How do we establish our ways? Why were we ashamed of His statutes before they were established? (119:1-8)
3. "Incline my heart to your testimonies" (119:36). What does this mean? What does the Psalmist want God to do? (119:33-40)

*“I will give thanks to You among the nations,
O Lord, and I will sing praises to Your name.*

*He gives great deliverance to His king,
and shows lovingkindness to His anointed,
to David and his descendants forever.”*

(Psalm 18:49-50)

A great majority of the Psalms include messages of praise and thanksgiving. It is therefore difficult to identify a particular “thanksgiving” Psalm set. Having said this, I do believe the following are great examples which have much thanksgiving in them as a theme: Psalms 18, 30, 66, 92, 100, and 136.

These Psalms have to be grouped somewhere between a Psalm of Praise and a Psalm of Lament. Thanksgiving Psalms are full of language expressing pain and suffering that come as a result of sin, treachery, oppression and threats. A Psalm of Lament describes a present suffering while a Psalm of Thanksgiving describes a suffering that is over and now lies in the past.

So we read, *“The cords of death encompassed me, and the torrents of ungodliness terrified me”* (18:4); *“You have turned for me my mourning into dancing”* (30:11); *“You have tried us, O God; You have refined us as silver is refined”* (66:10).

All of the references to suffering are in the past and now point to the praise of God for bringing us through them and forgiving us. We read of the grateful responses for deliverance which begin to closely resemble a praise Psalm. Hopefully this helps explain (in part) why it is difficult to classify or arrange this type of Psalm.

The common structural elements of a Psalm of thanksgiving are:

- Introduction
- Distress
- Appeal

Lesson #7

Thanksgiving Psalms

- Deliverance
- Testimony

A subset (perhaps) would include the Thanksgiving of the nation or community which emphasizes God’s action in the history of Israel. Sometimes these are listed as a Communal Thanksgiving and sometimes they are listed as a Historical Psalm. These typically are dominated by the creation, the Exodus, the wilderness experience and the Promised Land. These celebrate God’s faithfulness in keeping His promises.

Psalm 136 is unique as a Psalm of Thanksgiving. Every other line of its 26 verses is the same: *“For His lovingkindness is everlasting”*. There is much speculation as to the way this Psalm may have been sung, perhaps with this line as a recurring “chorus” or perhaps with this line as a “rebuttal” to the leader who spoke the other lines. Regardless, it is a testimony to the fact that these were intended to be sung. It makes the text even more memorable.

*“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
Give thanks to the God of gods,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
Give thanks to the Lord of lords,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
To Him who alone does great wonders,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.”*

(Psalm 136:1-4)

READING

PSALM 100
PSALM 136

The introduction to #100 reads:
“A Psalm for Thanksgiving”.

It is the only Psalm with this exact inscription.

It has been and will continue to be a favorite of the faithful for the beauty of its depiction of a thankful and joyous spirit.



Psalm 100

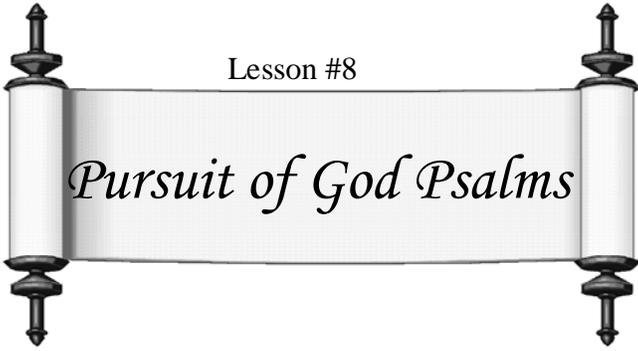
1. In one word try to describe the overall attitude of the one who wrote the Psalm. How does this compare with our attitude toward worship today?
2. How is our relationship with God described? How does this fit the “Christian”?
3. How do we serve Him (according to this Psalm)?
4. How long will Jehovah be served in this way?

Psalm 136

5. What benefit do we derive from thanking God for some of the “obvious” things he has done (v.4-9)?
6. Name the leaders of men that were overthrown by God on behalf of the Israelites (from this Psalm).

For Discussion

1. Examine the statements in 136:23-26 and tell how God’s everlasting loving-kindness has been exhibited to us as Christians.
2. These Psalms express a spirit of Thanksgiving in song that should exist in the heart of all believers. Name one or two songs we sing that are primarily songs of Thanksgiving. Why do we not have many songs like this?
3. Explain and demonstrate from scripture how our prayers should also reflect this attitude of thanksgiving.



Pursuit of God Psalms

This type of Psalm reflects a dependence and reliance upon God that should dwell within each of us. They speak of times of trouble with adversaries. Some fall away at that point, but the faithful pursue God even more. It is a longing for God that needs to be satisfied.

“As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God;” (42:1-2)

“One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek; That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life” (27:4)

“My soul thirsts for you, my flesh yearns for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water” (63:1)

The adversaries are strongly presented as seeking to “devour my flesh” (27:2) and are “encamped against me” (27:3). They “seek my life to destroy it” (63:9). The enemy oppresses and reviles saying “where is your God” (42:9-10). Surely when it appears as if the world is against us, when everything that can go bad has gone bad, when people begin to jeer at our beliefs – that is when we need to pursue God. That is when we need to let our faith fully take over our life. That is when we trust in God.

So the Psalmist indicates his supreme trust in God by use of several phrases that are not unique to this psalm form, but can be found throughout the Psalms: “God my rock” (42:9); “the help of my countenance” (42:11); “My light and my salvation” (27:1); “The Lord is the defense of my life” (27:1); “You are my God” (63:1); “You have been my help” (63:7). When everything else fails and it seems we are at the “end of the rope” – we must then turn to God. We call out to

Him and pursue Him. It is then we long for His help and do not desire to be forgotten (27:9). Surely, we’ve all been in this place.

Satisfaction can only be ours when we know we are right with God. “My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth offers praises with joyful lips” (63:5); “His song shall be with me in the night” (42:8); “Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him” (42:11); “In spite of this I will be confident” (27:3).

We need the attitude of David expressed in Psalm 27:14, “be strong and let your heart take courage”. Too often in difficult times we despair and lose heart. Our faith becomes weak and we stop pursuing God. This feels “natural” to us (perhaps), we might even attempt to diagnose it as ‘depression’. David indicates in these Psalms we need to do just the opposite – redouble our efforts to pursue God. With all our strength and vigor to seek Him. To thirst for God like that deer panting for a drink that drives it to seek water. We need to pursue God. This thought is echoed in the words of Jesus when He tells us to, “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33).

READING

From Psalm 27

PSALM 27
PSALM 42

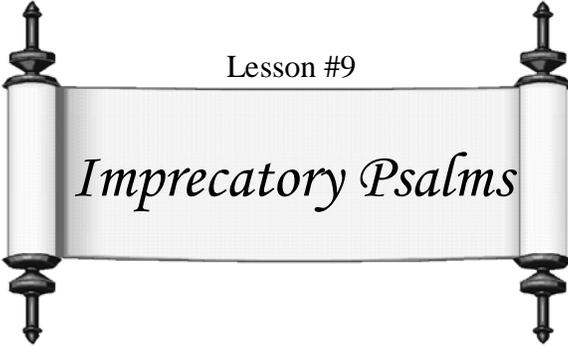
There are many similarities in these two psalms, but also some differences. Study them both and learn how David sought God diligently. We can unite with him in saying: *“I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living”* (27:13).

1. Why can we be confident when facing adversaries (v.1-3)?
2. What did David seek (v.4)?
3. *“Hear, O Lord, when I cry”* (v.7) and answer. What does the New Testament teach about God hearing and answering prayer?
4. David did not want God to abandon him or forsake him (v.9). Will God abandon or forget the faithful? What passages tell us?
5. *“Wait for the Lord”* (v.14). What does this mean?



For Discussion (from Psalm 42)

1. Of what importance was public worship assemblies to the psalmist?
2. How is the Lord a help to those who seek Him (v.5, 11)? How do these verses impact our understanding of Matthew 6:33?
3. Review verse 11. In a period of difficult trial how can we say *“I shall yet praise him”*? What is meant?



Imprecatory Psalms

Imagine a Sunday worship assembly where a good brother get up to pray. He says, “Lord, we realize there are many wicked men in the world who would love nothing more than to see the faithful fall. They devise evil against us and surround us with words of hatred. Let their days be few. Let their children be fatherless and their wives widows. Let the creditor seize all that he has. Let them cover themselves with their own shame”. There would likely be a moment of shocked silence following such a prayer. Yet all of these statements agree with the Imprecatory Psalms. The imprecations (or curses) employ violent language against the evildoers and enemies. Included in this category are Psalms 35, 58, 59, 69, 83, 109, 137, 140, and portions of many others.

These Psalms have caused a good deal of problems for believers over the years. Some have just simply skipped or ignored them thinking they are unchristian in nature. At first glance they do seem to violate New Testament teaching such as “love your enemies” (Matthew 5:44). We must realize these Psalms were intended to be sung. They are not written with a vengeful spirit, but from a standpoint of God’s righteous wrath imposed upon the wicked.

The wicked in the Psalms are presented as evil, proud, cruel and deceptive. The writers of the Psalms understood the nature of those opposed to God. They really saw how poorly their heart was in a lack of submission to God. It’s not so much that their sin has brought a personal offense, but a recognition of how offensive it is to God.

They are great expressions of fearful realities about the enemies. “*They crush your people...They slay the widow and the stranger...They have said the Lord does not see*” (Psalm 94:5-7). “*Save me from men of bloodshed*” (Psalm 59:2). “*Swords are in*

their lips” (Psalm 59:7). In times of hardship we can truly relate to the sentiments of these Psalms in recognizing the desire of the wicked to harm the faithful.

Yet it must also be noted that these Psalms are not vengeful in nature. The vengeance is always left to God. “*O God, shatter their teeth in their mouth*” (Psalm 58:6). “*You, O Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to punish the nations*” (Psalm 59:5). “*Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me*” (Psalm 35:1). We know the Lord said, “*vengeance is Mine, I will repay*” (Deut. 32:35; Heb. 10:30). Personal vengeance is not the request of the Psalms, but a desire for God’s judgment be brought upon the wicked. If a person broke into your house and murdered a loved one, would you pray to God that the evil one be caught? Surely we all would. Such is the nature of the Imprecatory Psalms.

These Psalms are part of the inspired word and as such deserving of our attention and study. They should not be skipped or deemed inappropriate. As God does not approve of such evil behavior, neither should we. “*Do I not hate those who hate You, O Lord?*” (Psalm 139:21). Understanding these are not songs of personal animosity, let us learn from the inspired writers.

READING

PSALM 109

“We would all pray for the conversion of our worst enemy, and David would have done the same; but viewing the adversaries of the Lord, and doers of iniquity, *As Such, and as incorrigible* we cannot wish them well; on the contrary, we desire their overthrow, and destruction. The gentlest hearts burn with indignation when they hear of barbarities to women and children, of crafty plots for ruining the innocent, of cruel oppression of helpless orphans, and gratuitous ingratitude to the good and gentle. A curse upon the perpetrators of the atrocities in Turkey may not be less virtuous than a blessing upon the righteous. We wish well to all mankind, and for that very reason we sometimes blaze with indignation against the inhuman wretches by whom every law which protects our fellow creatures is trampled down, and every dictate of humanity is set at nought.”

Charles Spurgeon
Treasury of David, Psalm 109



1. What was David’s problem that caused him to pen these words?
2. Which of the curses in verses 6-14 seem to be the strongest in your opinion? Explain that phrase from the standpoint of God’s righteousness.
3. Is verse 16 saying that this enemy of David simply forgot to do something or is more meant? Does this imply a knowledge of righteousness existed in the mind of the evil man?
4. How was the hand of God going to be made known among the people? (verses 26-29)
5. Why does the Psalmist end this Psalm with words of thanks?

For Discussion

1. How does Peter understand verse 8? (see Acts 1:20)
2. How do verses 21-25 impact our understanding of David’s righteousness and zeal in the present difficulties? Where does he place his trust? Tell how the Christian’s attitude should be similar.
3. Can a Christian pray in the fashion of an imprecatory Psalm?

Psalms of Deliverance must be considered one of the larger groupings or forms seen in the Psalms. Many Psalms contain sections that speak of God's deliverance or ask for it. It is a major theme in the book. One could easily compile a very large list, instead I offer these few as good examples: Psalms 3, 17, 22, 31, 35, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 70, 71, 143, and 143.

That a deliverance is needed indicates these Psalms are written during times of distress, or about times of distress in the history of the Israelites.

"They slandered me without ceasing. Like godless jesters at a feast, they gnashed at me with their teeth" (35:15-16).

"My heart is in anguish within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me" (55:4).

"Let those be ashamed and humiliated who seek my life" (70:2).

"They have hidden a trap for me" (142:3).

A majority of the Psalms speak of a similar ordeal or time of stress.

It was at these times that David turned to God. *"For you have been my stronghold and a refuge in the day of my distress. O my strength, I will sing praises to You; For God is my stronghold, the God who shows me lovingkindness" (59:16-17).* God is repeatedly referred to as his refuge in this type of psalm (17:7; 31:1; 56:3; 57:1; 71:1; 142:5) as well as his rock (71:3) and shield (3:3; 59:11). David's attitude in times of trouble was to turn to God because God would not disappoint.

Jehovah would deliver him.

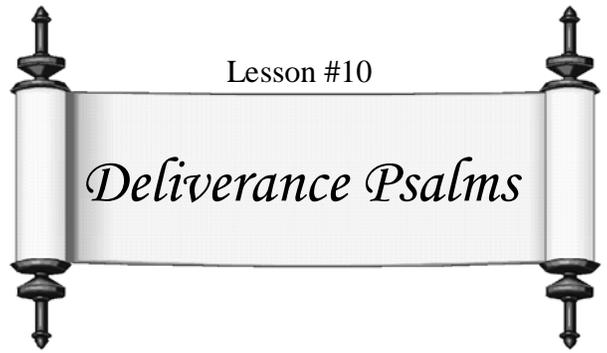
"Deliver my soul from the wicked with your sword" (17:13).

"In you our fathers trusted; they trusted and You delivered them. To You they cried out and were delivered. In You they trusted and were not disappointed" (22:4-5).

"Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me. Take hold of buckler and shield and rise up for my help" (35:1-2).

"As for me, I shall call upon God, and the Lord will save me" (55:16).

Lesson #10



"Deliver me from those who do iniquity" (59:2).

"You are my help and deliverer" (70:5).

"Deliver me, O Lord, from my enemies; I take refuge in You" (143:9).

"You have delivered my soul from death" (56:13).

"O give us help against the adversary, For deliverance by man is in vain. Through God we shall do valiantly. And it is He who will tread down our adversaries" (60:11-12).

David does not take matters into his own hands, he does not trust upon his own abilities. He turns to God. He casts all his cares upon Him. He calls upon God for help and deliverance.

Many of these Psalms end with a word of praise for God's desire to help and deliver His people.

"O love the Lord, all you His godly ones! The Lord preserves the faithful and fully recompenses the proud doer" (31:23).

"My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises" (57:7).

"Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken...I will trust in you" (55:22-23).

This great grouping of Psalms helps us learn to trust in God and overcome the difficulties we experience in this life. They are a source of comfort, strength and encouragement.

READING

PSALM 31

“Some have thought that the occasion in his troubled life which led to this Psalm, was the treachery of the men of Keilah...but it may be more satisfactory to illustrate it by the period when Absalom had rebelled, and his courtiers were fled from him, while lying lips spread a thousand malicious rumors against him.”

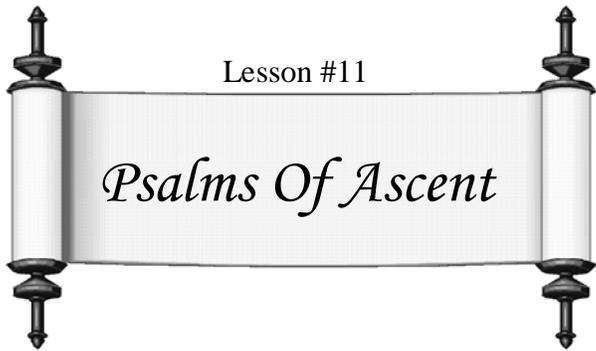
Charles Spurgeon
Treasury of David, Psalm 31



1. What phrases or words are used in verses 1-4 to describe the attitude of refuge in David's heart? What shades of differences can be understood by use of these various words and phrases?
2. How did Christ use the word in verse 5? (see Luke 23:46)
3. What distress does David speak to God about (verses 9-13)?
4. How did David want God to deliver him? What did he want God to do?
5. Why would David then praise God's goodness? (verses 19ff)

For Discussion

1. How will the attitude of verse 14-15a help us as Christians today?
2. Why was David alarmed (v.22)? Why was he then comforted?
3. What does the New Testament teach about God "preserving the faithful" (v.23).
4. Explain verse 24 from the standpoint of Christianity – why we can be strong, courageous and hopeful.



Psalms Of Ascent

Psalms 120-134 each have a heading that labels them as a Psalm of Ascent. Often these are referred to as the Psalms of Degrees (depending on your translation). The exact use of these Psalms in Hebrew practice is unclear. Many hold that they were “pilgrim songs” sung as they ascended to the mountain top city of Jerusalem at the time of the great annual feasts. Others contend they were sung by exiles as they went up to the Babylonian captivity. The Hebrew *Mishnah* tells us Levites stood “upon the fifteen steps leading down from the court of the Israelites to the Women’s Court, corresponding to The Fifteen Songs of Ascent in the Psalms; upon them the Levites used to stand with musical instruments and sing hymns”. In Herod’s Temple, there were fifteen steps leading upward from the Court of the Women to the Nicanor Gate that opened the way into the Court of the Men and the Temple beyond.

These Psalms are strikingly brief, especially coming on the heels of the 172 verse Acrostic Psalm 119. Jerusalem is frequently spoken of in these psalms:

“Our feet are standing in your gates, O Jerusalem”
(Psalm 122:2)

“Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion”
(Psalm 125:1)

“When the Lord brought back the captives to Zion”
(Psalm 126:1)

“The Lord bless you from Zion” (Psalm 128:5)

“May all who hate Zion be put to shame and turned backward” (Psalm 129:5)

“The Lord has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his habitation” (Psalm 132:13)

Peace is a concept easily seen in the Songs of Ascents. God’s peace is able to rest in our hearts no matter where we are. Even as a pilgrim we are at peace in our heart, perhaps as a desired peace upon the “homeland”. Two psalms end with the blessing: *“Peace be upon Israel”* (Psalm 125:5; 128:6). Paul similarly wrote: *“those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God”* (Galatians 6:16).

Furthermore, God’s protection is requested: *“The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forever”* (Psalm 121:8). *“As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people”* (Psalm 125:2). *“Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchmen keep awake in vain”* (Psalm 127:1). Only Jehovah can protect the “homeland” and the “pilgrim”. It is His watchfulness and concern that we should all desire.

The blessings of children are also mentioned. Perhaps because as pilgrims (without possessions) we recognize the child as God’s gift to us. *“Children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them”* (Psalm 127:3-5). *“Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house, your children like olive plants around your table”* (Psalm 128:3). No where are children more appreciated than at a time when there is nothing else in this life. As pilgrims traveling from one place to another we recognize the value of the child in our heart. It is appropriate to give thanks to God.

“Behold, bless the Lord, all the servants of the Lord, who serve by night in the house of the Lord! Lift up your hands to the sanctuary and bless the Lord. May the Lord bless you from Zion, He who made heaven and earth”
(Psalm 134:1-3).

READING

PSALM 122
PSALM 126
PSALM 131
PSALM 133

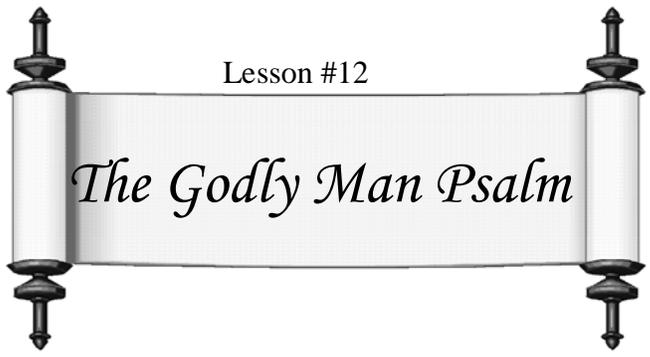
*“Do good, O Lord,
to those who are
good and to those
who are upright in
their hearts. But as
for those who turn
aside to their
crooked ways, the
Lord will lead them
away with the
doers of iniquity.
Peace be upon
Israel.”*
Psalm 125:4-5



1. What was David’s prayer about in Psalm 122:6-9? How might we pray a similar prayer about the Church?
2. Why did David write, “restore our captivity” (Psalm 126:4)?
3. What is the point of Psalm 131? Would this hold any meaning for a Christian?
4. To what degree does the Psalmist express the goodness of unity (133:1-3)? To what degree is this concept taught in the New Covenant?

For Discussion

1. From Psalm 122 tell why David was glad when they said “let us go to the house of the Lord”. What does this teach about our attitude toward worship?
2. Describe how the heart that is sown “in tears shall reap with joyful shouting” (126:5-6).
3. Israel was told to “hope in the Lord” (131:3). What else might they have been hoping in? Where should we place our hope (give a New Testament passage)?



The Godly Man Psalm

This lesson and the next will be devoted to one Psalm each rather than a type or form found in the Psalms. I simply could not conduct a study without including these two. The first is Psalm 1, what I am calling “the Godly Man” Psalm.

In many ways the first Psalm acts as an introduction to the Hebrew hymnal. Many of the themes contained in this Psalm are found throughout the Psalms. Perhaps the strongest theme in this Psalm (and therefore in the entire collection) is that of the ‘two ways’. A way of righteousness is presented, and a way of wickedness. The results of following each way is also presented: the righteous will “prosper” (v.3) and the wicked will “perish” (v.6). There are only two ways. Jesus also mentions only two ways when He said, *“enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it”* (Matthew 7:13-14).

A call to godliness is clearly heard. David writes to encourage God’s people the Israelites to leave their worldly ways and return to a pure spirit of submission to God. In the troubled world we live in we also need to heed the call. Only by living in faithful obedience to God, by walking His narrow way, can any of us hope for the home in heaven.

The Psalm also contains information about how we can be happy (“blessed”) and find “delight”. Again, in our day everyone seems to be looking for happiness – but they are looking in the wrong places. Only in obedience to God can man be happy and at peace.

Steadfastness and stability is affirmed for those who are faithful. They are compared to the tree planted beside the water. This is then contrasted with the unfaithful who are like *“chaff which the wind drives away”* (v.4). They are easily driven by the winds of error, false doctrine and sin. Therefore they cannot *“stand in the judgment”* (v.5).

A final affirmation is given of God’s all-knowing nature. He knows the righteous and evil as well as the works they do. He will judge. God’s wrath will be spent upon the unrighteous – a theme clearly called upon in the Imprecatory Psalms. His love will be showered upon the righteous, *“For the Lord is righteous, He loves righteousness; the upright will behold His face”* (Psalm 11:7).

READING

PSALM 1

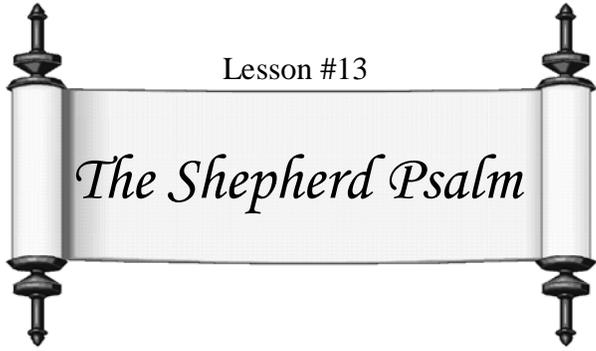
*“But his delight is
in the law of the
Lord, and in His
law he meditates
day and night”
(Psalm 1:2)*

1. From verse 1 tell the progression of sin that is presented.
2. It is not enough to merely not participate in sin. What does verse 2 demand of the righteous?
3. Describe how a tree beside a stream is “firmly planted”. Relate this to the believer.
4. The wicked are not firmly rooted. Is David referring to some of the Israelites as the wicked? How does this compare with Ephesians 4:14-16?



For Discussion

1. What does it mean, how do we meditate on His law “day and night” (v.2)?
2. What should happen to a person who has strong faith (v.3)?
3. Why will sinners not “stand in the assembly of the righteous” (v.6)? Is this a reference to the congregation of God’s people, or the kingdom of heaven?



The Shepherd Psalm

This Psalm could be argued to be one of the best known passages of scripture by all men. Surely all have at least heard it once. Certainly any who profess godliness have contemplated its wonderful themes. Who has not been comforted by these words at the passing of a loved one?

One cannot read the Psalm without remembering how David himself was a shepherd boy when God anointed him to be the next King of Israel. How he would have been so familiar with “*green pastures*” and “*quiet waters*”. All the hours and days of his youth that he spent contemplating such pastoral scenes. Furthermore he was also familiar with the “*valley of the shadow of death*” as he fought off the bear and the lion (1 Samuel 17:34-36), Goliath (1 Samuel 17:31ff), and the countless battles he engaged in as King. David writes from the depths of his own soul in an unparalleled inspired work of Hebrew poetry.

There seems to be three main themes presented in the Psalm. The first is:

The Lord Will Provide

“I shall not want” (v.1)

“You prepare a table” (v.5)

“You have anointed my head with oil” (v.5)

“My cup overflows” (v.5)

It is not that the sheep are content because of what has been provided, but because there is a shepherd. The blessings come from God. It is through His effort that these great gifts are given to us.

The Shepherd Guides

“He leads me beside quiet waters” (v.2)

“He guides me in paths of righteousness”
(v.3)

More than any of God’s creation, sheep require careful handling and direction.

Without supervision they will eat a hill barren and wander aimlessly becoming easy targets for predators. Certainly this image is conveyed upon man when Isaiah wrote: “*all we like sheep have gone astray*” (53:6). Our trust must be in the shepherd to guide us in right paths.

The Shepherd Guards

“You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me” (v.4)

It is in the valley of the shadow of death that we “*fear no evil*”. As sheep we understand the shepherd watches for us and will leap to protect us from the wolves. The presence of the shepherd is a comfort. No longer is he leading but now is “with” us. He is close by, observant and alert.

To this day we have multiple settings of these words in our own hymnals, often two and three settings in each volume. Such is the power, majesty and comfort of Psalm 23. Who cannot delight in the application of this great Psalm to our lives as Christians.

So many know the Psalm, but do not understand it in their soul. They do not know the Shepherd. Let us praise His name for His goodness and lovingkindness in providing for our salvation.

READING

PSALM 23

The Lord my
Shepherd is: I shall
be well supplied;
Since He is mine,
and I am His, What
can I want beside?
What can I want
beside?

Hymn setting by Isaac
Watts arranged by
Ralph Harrison.
***The Lord My
Shepherd Is***
#364 in
Hymns for Worship
(revised).



1. Compare our relationship to Christ as sheep to a shepherd. Consider how he rules, guides, feeds and protects. What are the feelings of the righteous sheep toward the shepherd.
2. Why is it significant to “lie down in green pastures” (v.2)?
3. How does God restore our soul (v.3)?
4. It is good that God prepares a table before us, but why “in the presence of my enemies” (v.5)?
5. We do not anoint with oil in our culture. What importance is attached to it (v.5)?

For Discussion

1. How does God guide us “in the paths of righteousness” (v.3)?
2. We cannot visibly see His rod and staff in our times of trouble. What passages in the New Testament present us with similar words of comfort about God being with us?
3. Make a list of how God has caused your cup to “overflow” (v.5).

Table #1 - Popular Current Hymn Settings of Psalms

As found in *Hymns for Worship* (Revised), edited by R.J. Stevens

Psalm 7	Hymn #38	King Most High
Psalm 19	Hymn # 30	All Things Praise Thee
Psalm 19	Hymn #127	This IS My Father's World
Psalm 19	Hymn #439	Psalm 19
Psalm 23	Hymn #364	The Lord My Shepherd Is
Psalm 23	Hymn #375	The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want
Psalm 23	Hymn #292	The Lord's My Shepherd
Psalm 25	Hymn #607	Psalm 25
Psalm 27	Hymn #112	Teach Me Thy Way
Psalm 31	Hymn #685	The Lord Our Rock
Psalm 42	Hymn #589	As The Deer
Psalm 45	Hymn #447	Ivory Palaces
Psalm 51	Hymn #501	Psalm 51
Psalm 51	Hymn #303	Whiter Than Snow
Psalm 55	Hymn #59	I Will Pray
Psalm 55	Hymn #436	I'll Fly Away
Psalm 61	Hymn #367	The Rock That Is Higher Than I
Psalm 85	Hymn #37	Revive Us Again
Psalm 87	Hymn #143	Glorious Things OF Thee Are Spoken
Psalm 89	Hymn #660	I Will Sing OF The Mercies
Psalm 104	Hymn #513	Psalm 104
Psalm 106	Hymn #559	Psalm 106
Psalm 113	Hymn #601	Psalm 113
Psalm 118	Hymn #644	Psalm 118
Psalm 119	Hymn #435	How Shall The Young Secure
Psalm 119	Hymn #459	The Precious Book Divine
Psalm 133	Hymn #219	How Sweet, How Heavenly
Psalm 148	Hymn #21	Praise The Lord
Psalm 148	Hymn #2	Hallelujah Praise Jehovah



Psalm 122
in Hebrew



Table #2 – Messianic Prophecies in Psalms

Psalm Prophecies

	OT Scripture	NT Fulfillment
The Messiah would also be rejected by Gentiles.	Psalm 2:1	Acts 4:25-28
Political/religious leaders would conspire against the Messiah.	Psalm 2:2	Matthew 26:3-4 Mark 3:6
The Messiah would be King of the Jews.	Psalm 2:6	John 12:12-13 John 18:32
The Messiah would be the Son of God.	Psalm 2:7a	Luke 1:31-35 Matthew 3:16-17 Hebrews 1:5-6
The Messiah would reveal that He was the Son of God.	Psalm 2:7b	John 9:35-37
The Messiah would be raised from the dead and be crowned King.	Psalm 2:7c	Acts 13:30-33 Romans 1:3-4
The Messiah would ask God for His inheritance.	Psalm 2:8a	John 17:4-24
The Messiah would have complete authority over all things.	Psalm 2:8b	Matthew 28:18 Hebrews 1:1-2
The Messiah would not acknowledge those who did not believe in Him.	Psalm 2:12	John 3:36
Infants would give praise to the Messiah.	Psalm 8:2	Matthew 21:15-16
The Messiah would have complete authority over all things.	Psalm 8:6	Matthew 28:18
The Messiah would be resurrected.	Psalm 16:8-10a	Matthew 28:6 Acts 2:25-32
The Messiah's body would not see corruption (natural decay).	Psalm 16:8-10b	Acts 13:35-37
The Messiah would be glorified into the presence of God.	Psalm 16:11	Acts 2:25-33
The Messiah would come for all people.	Psalm 18:49	Ephesians 3:4-6
The Messiah would cry out to God.	Psalm 22:1a	Matthew 27:46
The Messiah would be forsaken by God at His crucifixion.	Psalm 22:1b	Mark 15:34
The Messiah would pray without ceasing before His death.	Psalm 22:2	Matthew 26:38-39
The Messiah would be despised and rejected by His own.	Psalm 22:6	Luke 23:21-23
The Messiah would be made a mockery.	Psalm 22:7	Matthew 27:39
Unbelievers would say to the Messiah, "He trusted in God, let Him now deliver Him."	Psalm 22:8	Matthew 27:41-43
The Messiah would know His Father from childhood.	Psalm 22:9	Luke 2:40
The Messiah would be called by God while in the womb.	Psalm 22:10	Luke 1:30-33
The Messiah would be abandoned by His disciples.	Psalm 22:11	Mark 14:50
The Messiah would be encompassed by evil spirits.	Psalm 22:12-13	Colossians 2:15
The Messiah's body would emit blood & water.	Psalm 22:14a	John 19:34
The Messiah would be crucified.	Psalm 22:14b	Matthew 27:35
The Messiah would thirst while dying.	Psalm 22:15a	John 19:28
The Messiah would thirst just prior to His death.	Psalm 22:15b	John 19:30
The Messiah would be observed by Gentiles at His crucifixion.	Psalm 22:16a	Luke 23:36
The Messiah would be observed by Jews at His crucifixion.	Psalm 22:16b	Matthew 27:41-43
Both the Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced.	Psalm 22:16c	Matthew 27:38
The Messiah's bones would not be broken.	Psalm 22:17a	John 19:32-33

Psalm Prophecies

	OT Scripture	NT Fulfillment
The Messiah would be viewed by many during His crucifixion.	Psalm 22:17b	Luke 23:35
The Messiah's garments would be parted among the soldiers.	Psalm 22:18a	John 19:23-24
The soldiers would cast lots for the Messiah's clothes.	Psalm 22:18b	John 19:23-24
The Messiah's atonement would enable believers to receive salvation.	Psalm 22:22	Hebrews 2:10-12 Matthew 12:50 John 20:14
The Messiah's enemies would stumble and fall.	Psalm 27:2	John 18:3-6
The Messiah would be accused by false witnesses.	Psalm 27:12	Matthew 26:59-61
The Messiah would cry out to God "Into thy hands I commend my spirit."	Psalm 31:5	Luke 23:46
There would be many attempts to kill the Messiah.	Psalm 31:13	Matthew 27:1
The Messiah would have no bones broken.	Psalm 34:20	John 19:32-33
The Messiah would be accused by many false witnesses.	Psalm 35:11	Mark 14:55-59
The Messiah would be hated without cause.	Psalm 35:19	John 18:19-23 John 15:24-25
The Messiah would be silent as a lamb before His accusers.	Psalm 38:13-14	Matthew 26:62-63
The Messiah would be God's sacrificial lamb for redemption of all mankind.	Psalm 40:6-8a	Hebrews 10:10-13
The Messiah would reveal that the Hebrew scriptures were written of Him.	Psalm 40:6-8b	Luke 24:44 John 5:39-40
The Messiah would do God's (His Father) will.	Psalm 40:7-8	John 5:30
The Messiah would not conceal His mission from believing people.	Psalm 40:9-10	Luke 4:16-21
The Messiah would be betrayed by one of His own disciples.	Psalm 41:9	Mark 14:17-18
The Messiah would communicate a message of mercy.	Psalm 45:2	Luke 4:22
The Messiah's throne would be eternal.	Psalm 45:6-7a	Luke 1:31-33 Hebrews 1:8-9
The Messiah would be God.	Psalm 45:6-7b	Hebrews 1:8-9
The Messiah would act with righteousness.	Psalm 45:6-7c	John 5:30
The Messiah would be betrayed by one of His own disciples.	Psalm 55:12-14	Luke 22:47-48
The Messiah would ascend back into heaven.	Psalm 68:18a	Luke 24:51 Ephesians 4:8
The Messiah would give good gifts unto believing men.	Psalm 68:18b	Matthew 10:1 Ephesians 4:7-11
The Messiah would be hated and rejected without cause.	Psalm 69:4	Luke 23:13-22 John 15:24-25
The Messiah would be condemned for God's sake.	Psalm 69:7	Mat. 26:65-67
The Messiah would be rejected by the Jews.	Psalm 69:8a	John 1:11
The Messiah's very own brothers would reject Him.	Psalm 69:8b	John 7:3-5
The Messiah would become angry due to unethical practices by the Jews in the temple.	Psalm 69:9a	John 2:13-17
The Messiah would be condemned for God's sake.	Psalm 69:9b	Romans 15:3
The Messiah's heart would be broken.	Psalm 69:20a	John 19:34
The Messiah's disciples would abandon Him just prior to His death.	Psalm 69:20b	Mark 14:33-41
The Messiah would be offered gall mingled with vinegar while dying.	Psalm 69:21a	Matthew 27:34
The Messiah would thirst while dying.	Psalm 69:21b	John 19:28

Psalm Prophecies

The potters field would be uninhabited (Field of Blood).
The Messiah would teach in parables.
The Messiah would be exalted to the right hand of God.
The Messiah would come from the lineage of David.
The Messiah would call God His Father.
The Messiah would be God's only "begotten" Son.

The Messiah would come from the lineage of David.
The Messiah would come from the lineage of David.
The Messiah would be eternal.

The Messiah would be the creator of all things.

The Messiah would calm the stormy sea.

The Messiah would be accused by many false witnesses.
The Messiah would offer up prayer for His enemies.
The Messiah's betrayer (Judas) would have a short life.

The Messiah's betrayer would be replaced by another.
The Messiah would be mocked by many.
The Messiah would be Lord and King.
The Messiah would be exalted to the right hand of God.

The Messiah would be a Priest after the order of Melchisedec.

The Messiah would be exalted to the right hand of God.

The Messiah would be the "Stone" rejected by the builders (Jews).

The Messiah would come in the name of the Lord.
The Messiah would come from the lineage of David.
The Messiah would come from the lineage of David.

OT Scripture

Psalm 69:25
Psalm 78:2
Psalm 80:17
Psalm 89:3-4
Psalm 89:26
Psalm 89:27

Psalm 89:29
Psalm 89:35-36
Psalm 102:25-27a

Psalm 102:25-27b

Psalm 107:28-29
Psalm 109:2
Psalm 109:4
Psalm 109:8a

Psalm 109:8b
Psalm 109:25
Psalm 110:1a
Psalm 110:1b

Psalm 110:4
Psalm 110:5

Psalm 118:22
Psalm 118:26
Psalm 132:11
Psalm 132:17

NT Fulfillment

Acts 1:16-20
Mat.13:34-35
Acts 5:31
Matthew 1:1
Matthew 11:27
Mark 16:6
Colossians 1:18
Revelation 1:5

Matthew 1:1
Matthew 1:1
Revelation 1:8
Hebrews 1:10-12
John 1:3

Ephesians 3:9
Hebrews 1:10-12
Matthew 8:24-26
John 18:29-30
Luke 23:34
Acts 1:16-18
John 17:12

Acts 1:20-26
Mark 15:29-30
Mat. 22:41-45
Mark 16:19
Mat. 22:41-46
Hebrews 6:17-20
1 Peter 3:21-22

Mat.21:42-43
Matthew 21:9
Matthew 1:1
Matthew 1:1
Luke 1:68-70

The Use Of “Selah”

There is much debate about the meaning and use of the word ‘Selah’ in the Psalms. It occurs 71 times in 39 psalms. It also occurs 3 times in Habakkuk. What follows are some of the definitions commonly found about the word.

The original meaning in Hebrew is lost to us.

A marking of a place where the closing benediction might be sung.

A designation of a musical interlude between the “verses”, usually a stringed instrument interlude.

To increase in volume.

Pause and reflection.

The word Selah (or ‘celah’ in Hebrew) means: to hang. By implication we understand this means to weigh. The common practice of weighing and measuring items was through the use of a balance scale which required things to be hung. This allowed a determination of value.

The Hebrew word ‘celah’ is found three times in Job 28:15-19. None are translated to mean a musical direction or marking.

“Pure gold cannot be given in exchange for it, nor can silver be weighed as its price.” (v.15)

“It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in precious onyx, or sapphire.” (v.16)

“The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it, nor can it be valued in pure gold” (v.19).

The best logic would insist that we view ‘Selah’ to mean to pause and reflect on what was just sung in the Psalm. To weigh the importance of it and consider its value in relation to our soul. It is unknown whether this word was actually sung or was simply there as a point of direction for contemplation. Either way it seems clear that it was intended to be more than simply musical direction to the singers.