

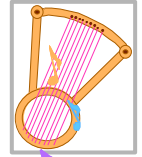
## Lesson #14 – Psalms 2019

Before starting this lesson, read at least **Psalms, chapters 1, 2, 22, 23, 32, 51, 119:1-32**. If possible read additional chapters. To eventually read the whole book, you may find it helpful to read a few chapters each day either in the morning or evening.



The book of Psalms is a collection of songs the Jews used in their worship. It was their hymnbook. When they were first written at the time of David, they were called *Tehillim*, the Hebrew word for *praises*. Stringed instruments were used with these songs.

Eight hundred years after David, in 200 BC, an instrument called a *psalterion* was used. So when the Jews translated their songs from Hebrew into Greek, they named them *Psalms*, meaning, *songs used with a psalterion*. By New Testament times, the word *Psalms* had come to mean *hymns of praise*.



So both in Hebrew and Greek, the theme of Jewish worship songs was *praise* - praise for who God is; praise for what He has **done** and praise that **He** is faithful. When everyone and everything else fails, God can always be trusted.

The earliest song was written by Moses c. 1400 BC. Levite scribes took care of and protected it thru the centuries. They kept it with the books that Moses had written.

Then in 1000 BC, Jewish worship music was developed by David. He started with his own poems and put them to music. Then he chose a Levite clan to be responsible for his music. As they developed, they began to write their own songs. David's son Solomon wrote some more.

Over the next centuries, the Jews continued to use this music in their worship. Each new generation of the Levite music clan taught the songs to the people as well as protected and stored them.

Finally in the 400's BC, a Levite scribe named Ezra, went thru all the music that had been written. Guided by the Holy Spirit, he began to take out certain ones and put them to one side. He took the poem by Moses plus 73 songs written by David. He found songs written by the Levite music clan who had become known as the sons of Korah. Asaph had been the choir director during the time of David. A choir member named Heman was the grandson of Samuel. (1 Chron. 6:33) Another choir member was named Ethan. Ezra took songs written by these people plus 49 unnamed choir members. He then added some poems of his own. Putting all of these together, they became the songs God wanted for the sacred writings. They were now separated from other songs, protected and stored by the Levite music clan and Ezra.

Today, in liturgical churches, there are 4 Bible readings called the Liturgy of the Word. The first reading is from the Old Testament; there is a responsorial Psalm, a reading from the New Testament, usually from one of Paul's letters and finally, a reading from one of the gospels. This liturgy of readings from God's Word came directly from the Jewish synagogues.

In the Old Testament, from the time of David to the days of Ezra, there were only **2** readings: one from the books of Moses and the other from the Psalms that had been written. By the 400's BC Ezra thought it would be helpful if the 2 readings were on the same topic. So he went to the songs he had put to one side and divided them into 5 topics to match the 5 books of Moses. Ezra then called each topic or section a "book". This means that within the complete book of Psalms, there are 5 books – 5 divisions, each with its own topic about **humanity**, the **Jews**, **worship**, **wandering** or **God's Word**. Let's see how he developed it.

<b>Humanity</b>	<b>Genesis</b> and Psalms 1-41
<b>The Jews</b>	<b>Exodus</b> and Psalms 41-72
<b>Worship</b>	<b>Leviticus</b> and Psalms 73-89
<b>Wandering</b>	<b>Numbers</b> and Psalms 90-106
<b>God's Word</b>	<b>Deuteronomy</b> and Psalms 107-150



We know that **GENESIS**, the first book of Moses is all about beginnings, including the beginning of the salvation story. Genesis tells about humanity in creation, in harmony with God, in rebellion and then forgiven so relationship is restored. With this in mind, let's look at the first book of Psalms, which is also about **HUMANITY**.

Psalms 8 and 19 are about humanity and creation. David writes in Psalm 8

*When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place, how is it that You care so much about people? You made them just a little lower than the angels and gave them glory and honor.*

In Psalm 19 David says, *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.*

Even when people live in some remote area and have never heard about God, the heavens will tell them there is a supreme Creator: He has power; He has glory and He should be worshipped.

Paul says the same thing in Romans, chapter one. If people never hear anything more of the Gospel message, but begin to worship the supreme Creator, thanking Him for His glory and power, the payment of Jesus will cover them and we will meet them in heaven. God judges people on how they respond to the information they have. The heavens declare the glory of God. No government can ever stop that message.

Genesis tells about **humanity and creation**.

It also tells about Adam and Eve **living in harmony** with God in the Garden of Eden.

Ezra wrote Psalm 1 to begin the book with the same theme.

Notice that just above the words Psalm 1, many Bibles say Book 1. This is the division that Ezra made.

In verse 1 Ezra describes a person in harmony with God. *Blessed is the one who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord and on His law he meditates day and night.*

In verse 3 he uses picture language that reminds us of the Garden. A person in harmony with God *is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.*

God created Adam and Eve to live in a perfect relationship with Him in the Garden. But He also gave them free will. Adam and Eve chose to go their way rather than God's way. The end of Psalm 1 mentions the 2 ways people can go and the results of those ways.

Creation and harmony with God.

Genesis also tells about individuals and society in **rebellion against God**.

During the days of Noah, people's thoughts were continually evil. After the flood, God told the people to spread out, cover the earth and multiply, but as time passed, the people said, *let's build a tower to keep from spreading out.* There is rebellion against God.

Ezra wrote Psalm 2 to fit with this theme - society rebelling. He begins,

*Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against His anointed One. Let us break their chains, they say, and throw off their fetters. 2:1*

Society defied God in the book of Genesis. It was happening in the 400's BC when Ezra was living. It is still happening in our day.

What is God's reaction to all this arrogance and defiance? Verse 4 is Jewish picture language.

*The One enthroned in heaven laughs, the Lord scoffs at them. Then He rebukes and terrifies them in His response to their disobedience. He says, I have installed my King on Zion, My holy hill.*

To say God is laughing and scoffing is the Jewish way to say God is not in a panic, wondering what to do or how to handle it. He tells people what He wants but gives them freedom to choose. Throughout history the majority have chosen to rebel. This brings even more chaos, tragedies and suffering.

But Ezra tells us not to despair. God will intervene and one day Jesus will be King. He will bring the peace and justice that everyone is seeking. God's kingdom is coming so that **His** will **can** be done on *earth* as it already is being done in heaven.

The book of Genesis, the first book of Moses, tells about people in harmony with God and then in rebellion.

But it also tells about **people being restored**. From Adam and Eve to Jacob, they all experienced God's forgiveness.

The first book of Psalms also talks about **forgiveness**.

David tells about his forgiveness after his sin with Bathsheba. In Psalm 32, he starts with the word **blessed**.

In our Bibles this is sometimes translated as *happy*. That is never the meaning of the word. The word **blessed** means **enriched by the Holy Spirit because of something you have done or chosen**.

Because David confessed his sin, his life was enriched by the Holy Spirit. He says,  
*Enriched is the person whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Enriched is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away thru my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.*

*Then I acknowledged my sin to You and did not cover up my iniquities. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord and You forgave the guilt of my sin.*

David is expressing the joy of forgiveness; joy that his relationship with God was restored.

When we compare the first book of Moses and the first book of the Psalms we find there is a similarity. Both talk about humanity: in creation, in harmony with God, in rebellion and then forgiven.

The second book of Moses, **EXODUS**, tells about the Jews' suffering in Egypt, crying for help and being delivered. The 2<sup>nd</sup> book of Psalms, chapters 42-72, is about the **JEWS** 400 years later in their **suffering** and their **deliverance**.

Chapter **42** describes their suffering, as individuals or as a nation.

Verse 3 *My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, where is your God?*

Verse 9

*I say to God my Rock, Why have You forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy? My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, Where is your God?*

There is a cry for help because of all the **suffering**.

Psalms **59** begins, *Deliver me from my enemies*. Now look at the last 2 verses. David says,  
*But I will sing of Your strength; in the morning I will sing of Your love; for You are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble. O my strength, I sing praise to You; You, O God are my fortress, my loving God.*

The Jews experience suffering, but they can also sing and give praise, because there **is** deliverance. Throughout this section psalm after psalm tells about God's **deliverance** for His people, both individually and nationally.

Another connection between the 2<sup>nd</sup> book of Moses and the 2<sup>nd</sup> book of Psalms is the ending.

Exodus ends,

*Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled upon it and **the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.***  
40:34

The 2<sup>nd</sup> book of Psalms ends,

*Praise be to His glorious name forever; may the whole **earth be filled with His glory.*** 72:19

Notice that both of the books end with God's glory, filling the tabernacle or filling the whole earth.

**LEVITICUS** the 3<sup>rd</sup> book of Moses and the 3<sup>rd</sup> book of Psalms deal with sacrifice and **WORSHIP**.

Ezra put together all the worship songs that mentioned sanctuary, temple, worship, vows or sacrifice and numbered them Psalms 73-89.

Psalms **73** is one of my favorites, because it is so honest. The choir director says one day he noticed how unfair life was. People who had no use for God seemed to be better off than God's people. They cheated, lied and murdered and yet they were rich and had good health. Their children never got sick. If God's people cheated or lied, they got punished. Why does God let those who reject Him get away with sin? Why does He let them get ahead in life? That's not fair.

The author is a Levite, a spiritual leader. But the unfairness so bothers him that he admits, *my feet almost slipped*. He means, *I almost lost my faith*. But then he adds - *until - I almost lost my faith **until**...* 73:2

It is further on in the chapter, in verse 17, that tells us what changed his mind.

*Until I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.*

The choir director says that until he goes to God, life does not make sense. That was 3000 years ago and the same is true today.

The longer we live, the more unfairness we see in life. We wonder, Where is God's justice? Why do good people get hurt and bad people never seem to suffer? It is possible to almost lose our faith until we go to **God** with our questions.

As we ask and then listen, God reminds us that even tho we do not see justice now, there will be justice later. In this life, there are people who will never admit they are wrong; they will never apologize. Let it go. Do not spend your life waiting for their apology.

Some crimes will never be solved in this life. Some questions about tragedies will never be answered while we are here on earth. Do not lose faith. In eternity, as people bow the knee before God, there will be justice. You will get that apology; there will be answers. God will respond.

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In our humanness and in the heartache of the moment, we look at everything from the perspective of this life. God looks at things from the perspective of eternity. It is thru worship of God that we get His perspective; we get strength to live in the midst of injustice and strength to keep our faith.

Leviticus, the 3<sup>rd</sup> book of Moses and the 3<sup>rd</sup> book of Psalms show us the importance of **worship**.

In the history of the Jews, after they left Egypt, God was ready to take them into the promised land. But they were afraid. The walls were too high, the giants too big, the risks too great. Because they refused to believe, God's people wandered in the wilderness.

**NUMBERS**, the 4<sup>th</sup> book of Moses, describes their wanderings.

The 4<sup>th</sup> book of Psalms, chapters 90 - 106, also describe **WANDERING** and **UNREST** on this earth.

Psalm 90 **begins** this book with the prayer of Moses reflecting on the 40 years of wandering. Psalm 106 **ends** the book telling about Israel's rebellion during the time of wandering. There *is* a connection between Numbers and the 4<sup>th</sup> division of Psalms.

**DEUTERONOMY**, the 5<sup>th</sup> book of Moses and the 5<sup>th</sup> book of Psalms, chapters 107-150 deal with **GOD'S WORD**.

In Deuteronomy, the last book of Moses, he warned the Jews about the danger of worshipping idols.

In the last book of Psalms, chapters 115 and 135 tell about the danger of idols and idol worship.

Deuteronomy emphasized *the fear of the Lord*; the phrase is used 15 times.

In this last book of Psalms, *the fear of the Lord* is mentioned 16 times.

The phrase *fear of the Lord* has 2 meanings. When it is talking about **God** Himself, it means to have reverence and awe of Him. When it is talking about God's consequences, it means literal fear. We should be afraid to disobey because of God's consequences. That is a healthy fear.

Deuteronomy emphasized God's blessings for the Jewish nation if they obeyed and the consequences if they disobeyed.

Ezra writes Psalm 119 to explain why he wants to obey God's Word and the blessings it will bring to his life.

It is the longest chapter in the Bible to emphasize the importance of obedience.

Ezra permanently changed Jewish liturgy. From his time onwards, readings from the books of Moses and the Psalms were always connected. They were always on the same topic, either about *humanity, the Jews, worship, wandering or obedience to God's Word*.

In the New Testament, Jesus said there were Psalms written about Him (Luke 24:44). There are 16 Psalms that describe some aspect of Jesus as the Promised Messiah, even tho His name is never mentioned.

The Gospels describe Jesus' **outward** life and tell us **that** He prayed.

The Psalms describe Jesus' **inward** life and tell us **what** He prayed.

Let's look at one of the most important and remarkable Psalms about Him, **PSALM 22**.

David writes it sometime during the 2 years when Saul and his army are trying to kill him. But these are more than David's words. He is describing things he never experienced or knew about. If asked, he would have said he felt compelled to write about these other things. That compelling was the Holy Spirit guiding David to write about Jesus, 1000 years before Jesus was born.

## Psalm 22 – A Psalm about Jesus

Verse 1 ***My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?***

These were David's feelings in his late 20's, when he was hiding from Saul. He felt completely abandoned and forgotten by God. Every day he wondered if he would survive.

We also know these are the words of Jesus on the cross. Now if this were the only verse that applied to Jesus, we would have to say He was quoting David and there is nothing unusual. But as we go on, we discover there is much that is unusual.

Verse 6 ***I am a WORM and not a man...***

We automatically think of the angleworm. But this is not the meaning. In the Hebrew language, there are 4 different words for **worm**. The one David uses refers to the crimson grub. Altho it was called a worm or grub, in reality, it was a small insect found in oak trees.

At the time of David, these insects were gathered, placed in a mortar and pestle and crushed. The crushing produced a red dye used for royal clothes. Once again we have God's picture language.



Because this Psalm is about Jesus, it is Jesus saying, ***I am like that insect.***

Isaiah said He (Jesus) was crushed for our iniquities – He was crushed because of our sins. (Isa. 53:5) In another part of his book Isaiah said, *...He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness.* (Isa 61:10)

With the possibility of 4 different Hebrew words, only the Holy Spirit could direct David to use the word for this insect. It illustrates the **value** of Jesus' payment. He was **crushed** so we can have a **royal garment of holiness and salvation**.

Continuing in Psalm 22:7.

***All who see, mock me;***

***They hurl insults, shaking their heads, 'He trusts in the Lord, let the Lord rescue Him.***

***Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him'.***

From the New Testament we know these are the words of the Jewish leaders when they see Jesus on the cross. They are venting their emotions of the moment. Yet their words are the exact words David predicted would be said.

We all know it is the Gospels that give the story of the crucifixion. But the writers did not want to play on our emotions, so they gave only the basic facts. They did not go into detail about Jesus' physical condition nor His feelings. They knew it was unnecessary, because Psalm 22 had already done that. Starting with verse 14, we have a long description of Jesus' condition and feelings.

Verse 14 ***I am poured out like water; all my bones are out of joint.***

When people are crucified, they sweat profusely. The weight of the body pulls the bones out of joint.

Verse 15 ***My strength is dried up like a potsherd and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.***

Dehydration is a major part of crucifixion. It produces extreme thirst. The tongue becomes thick and it becomes impossible to speak clearly.

Verse 16 ***Dogs have surrounded me.***

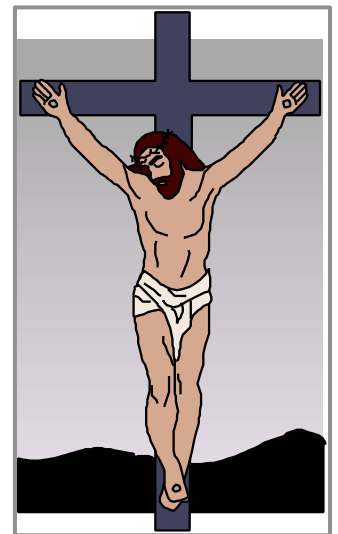
This is not referring to four-legged animals. Jews always referred to Gentiles as *dogs*. Because this Psalm is about Jesus, the verse is saying Gentiles would surround Jesus at the crucifixion. And it was true. The Roman soldiers who surrounded the foot of the cross were Gentiles.

Going on in verse 16 ***A band of evil men has encircled me***

In the gospels, it says the religious leaders, those who condemned Jesus, also stood around the foot of the cross. They literally encircled Him.

The last part of verse 16 ***They have pierced my hands and feet.***

This is an obvious reference to crucifixion. According to history, crucifixion was invented by the Phoenicians but not really used until the time of the Persians. However it was the Romans who brought it into prominence.





When David was writing, the Jews put people to death by stoning. Sometimes a criminal or enemy was killed and their body was then hung from a tree to show disgrace. But crucifixion was never used as a **means** of death. David never saw a crucifixion; he certainly never experienced one. Yet 1000 years before Jesus' crucifixion, David gives detail after detail about the physical and emotional aspects. Only the Holy Spirit could give him that insight.

Verse 17 ***I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me.***

The hanging weight of the body caused the ribs to protrude, so it was possible to count them.

Verse 18 ***They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.***

In the Roman empire during the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the clothing of the criminal was part of the soldiers' payment. Depending on the number of the soldiers involved, they would tear the robe at the seams and divide it among them. But when they discovered Jesus' robe did not have seams, they did not want to tear it. Being Romans, they did not know anything about Psalm 22. They certainly had not memorized it. And yet they did exactly what the chapter said they would do. They cast lots or threw dice to see who would get the complete robe of Jesus.

The last verse - verse 31 ***They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn - for He has done it.***

The last phrase can also be translated, *for it is finished*. This means that both the first and last verses of Psalm 22 are the words of Jesus on the cross.

Let's go back for a moment to the first verse, ***My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?***

To fully understand Jesus' words, we need to understand a basic concept about God.

He is holy. Only that which is holy and perfect can live in His presence. Obviously we are not perfect. This means we are separated from God, in this life and in eternity. But remember, God **wanted** a relationship with humanity. That is why Jesus came. He was Deity and humanity, perfect and holy. When He was on the cross, all the sin of the world, for all time was dumped on Jesus. Because of that unholiness, God the Father had to turn away.

But how would anyone know what was happening between the Father and Son? How would anyone know a payment was being made?

That is why there were 3 hours of extreme darkness. Everyone realized there was something unusual going on.

It is in the blackness that Jesus' voice is heard, *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*

He is letting the world know, for all time, what was happening. In His humanity, Jesus with all our disobedience on Him, was separated from the Father, in our place.

The **first** words of this Psalm explain **what the payment of Jesus was**.

It was not His suffering that made the payment. It was not His *physical* death. It was His *spiritual* death - His separation from the Father, so we do not have to be.

The **last** words of this Psalm, *It has been finished* tell us that **payment for our sin was made and completed while Jesus was still alive**.

It was only **after** His work was finished, that Jesus physically died.

Altho **physical** death was not the payment for our sin, it **was** necessary.

1. Jesus had to die so He could get a resurrection body.
2. He also had to die so the Father could show He accepted Jesus' payment.

Jesus said payment was made. But how do we know God the Father accepted the payment?

**By the resurrection.** When the Father raised Jesus from the dead, He was saying,

*I accept the payment. It has been paid in full and is sufficient. Nothing needs to be added to it.*

That payment was then put on deposit with God the Father. The moment we tell Him, *I want the payment of Jesus for me*, our unholiness is transferred to the account of Jesus and His holiness is transferred to our account. We are given the garment of salvation and holiness. From that point on, the Father now chooses to see us in the holiness of Jesus.

It is **His holiness** that gives us our relationship with God, not just in eternity, but also in this life. We can enjoy His peace, His presence and His comfort. There will always be tragedy, sorrow and chaos around us, but we can live by faith. We can be confident that He is in control.

We can be confident that He knows and cares about our situation and confident He will give us strength and wisdom for each and every day. **All** of this is because of **Jesus!**

## **BIBLE DEFINITIONS**

**Blessed** means *enriched by the Holy Spirit because of something you have done or chosen*.

### ***Fear of the Lord***

When talking about God **Himself** – it means to have *reverence and awe of Him*.

When talking about God's **consequences** – it means *literal fear*.

We should be literally afraid to disobey God because we know there will be consequences. That is a healthy fear!

It makes us decide that sin is not worth the consequences.