

Psalms Bible Studies

Psalm 1

1. (a) What does "blessed" mean?
(b) What does the psalm say "blessed" means?
2. Who is "the man"?¹
3. What does the blessed man do and what does he not do?
4. What happens to the blessed man and what happens to the wicked?
5. What has this got to do with Jesus?
6. Today, rather than in OT times, how are God's people blessed?
7. (a) Are Christians radically different to non-Christians?
(b) If so, how are Christians radically different?
(c) If so, why are Christians radically different?
8. (a) What is meant by "the judgement" (v5)?
(b) Who are the righteous?
(c) What hope have we?

Ponder: How does Jesus impact on our idea of the righteous and the wicked?

Prayer Ideas: Thank God that Jesus made his people righteous by dieing with our sin and rising again.

Psalm 2

1. What are your first impressions of this psalm?
2. (a) What do the rebels (the kings and rulers of the earth) say v 2-3?
(b) What does God say v 4-6?
(c) What is the Son's job v 7-9?
(d) What does the psalmist say v 10-12?
- 2.5. What do the rulers of the nations want to do?
- 2.6. How does this compare with God's power?
- 2.7. What is the wiser course of action for the rulers?
- 2.8. What is the Son's role in all this?
3. Often in the psalms there is an aspect of the present i.e. the OT time in which the psalm was written, and an aspect of the future. What are the present and future aspects of:
 - (a) the conflict - God v the rulers?
 - (b) God's anointed v 2 / King v 6?
 - (c) the blessed v 12?
4. What aspects of this psalm point to Jesus?
5. Look up Rev 2:27, 12:5, 19:15
 - (a) Who is going to rule with "a rod of iron" Ps 2:9?
 - (b) What does it mean to rule with "a rod of iron"?

Ponder the transience of rulers and nations in our world.

Prayer Ideas: Pray for our governments and the areas they look after and that they may "kiss the Son".

Psalm 3

The heading to Ps 3 "A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom, his son" is no editor's heading but it is a part of canonical scripture. So, in the historical context, God has installed his king and Ps 3 describes how David feels during the rebellion of Absalom, one of his sons. David and his followers have to flee Jerusalem (2 Sam 15:13-16) and Absalom moves in (2 Sam 16:15-23). The Lord, however, is still active and in control (Ps 3:3-4).

1. What is David up against?
2. How does David describe his faith in God?

Ponder: How would you describe your faith in Jesus?

Prayer Ideas: Thank God for his faithfulness and the security we have in him.

Psalm 4

David's glory of kingship has turned to shame (v2). If we are continuing in the same context as Psalm 3 then this may be referring to Absalom taking the kingship by deception and lies ("he stole the hearts of the men of Israel" read 2 Sam 15:1-17).

1. What is David calling for?
2. What advise is he giving to his friends in v 4-6?
3. How does he follow his own advice?
4. Can you see any similarities with Jesus (e.g. Jesus clearing the temple Matt 21:12-13)?

¹ The Psalter has a great deal to say about 'man' in the generic sense. Man and God, man and beast, men and angels, are just a few of the phrases used which have nothing to do with gender.

Ponder: How is joy, peace and safety a reality in a Christian's life (Ps 4:7-8)?

Prayer Ideas: Pray for people you know who are in distress and encourage them to put their trust in the Lord.

Psalm 5

1. What does David want God to do?

2. What makes someone righteous (v 12 and re-read Ps 1)?

3. What makes someone wicked (v4 and Ps 1)?

Ponder: 4. Why doesn't David call for repentance and forgiveness?

5. Should Christians treat the "wicked" differently to what is proposed in this psalm? Why/why not?

Prayer Ideas: Pray for your friends who are living in rebellion against God (v10).

Psalm 6

If this psalm is in the same context as Psalm 3 then it flows from David's mismanagement of his family, kingdom and the rebellion of Absalom. The threat of death and David's love for an ungrateful son add to his anguish.

Ponder: What is David saying about life after death v5?

1. What are the emotions expressed in this psalm?

2. What does David hope for?

3. What did Jesus teach about life after death?

4. Compare Jesus' words in John 12:27 with Ps 6:3 and Matt 7:23 with Ps 6:8. Why are the expected outcomes so different?

Prayer Ideas: Thank God that Jesus has given us eternal life through his death and resurrection.

Psalm 7

1. Why does David take refuge in God?

2. What do we know about taking refuge in God because of Jesus?

3. Why is repentance crucial - in this psalm (v 12-13)?

- for us?

4. (a) Why is asking for God's judgement a dangerous request (v 3-9, 11, 14-16)?

(b) Why does David make this request (read Shimei's accusations in 2 Sam 16:5-13)?

(c) Why would a Christian feel safe from God's judgement?

5. How can we, with David, praise God for his righteousness because of the Holy Spirit (see John 15:7-11)?

Ponder: How is God's judgement and taking refuge in God reconciled by what Jesus has done for his people?

Prayer Ideas: Pray for guidance and wisdom when we talk to people about God's love and judgement.

Pointer: Regarding the heading to this psalm: We don't know who Cush was but there were other Benjamites who David had problems with, e.g. Saul and Shimei (2 Sam 16:5-13).

Psalm 8

1. According to this psalm (a) what has God done?

(b) why are human beings so important?

2. How does this psalm connect with Jesus? Read Heb 2:5-9, Eph 1:22, 1 Cor 15:22-27

Ponder the glory of God in his creation.

Prayer Ideas: Thank God for his creation and pray for wise and loving dominion over it.

Psalm 9

1. Why the concern for the oppressed v9, the afflicted v12, the needy and poor v18 in this psalm?

2. Why was Jesus concerned for the oppressed, needy and poor (see Matt 11:2-15, Luke 4:16-21)?

3. In this psalm, what does David thank God for?

Ponder: How can we thank Jesus in relation to our enemies?

Prayer Ideas: Thank God that Jesus has come to put things right and pray for the coming of a time when that promise is completely fulfilled.

Psalm 10

1. In this psalm (a) what do the wicked do?

2. What happens to the afflicted?

(b) Is God "far off" v1?

(c) How does God respond?

3. Today, how "far off" is God?

4. How has Jesus dealt with the wicked?

Ponder: how does Jesus bring hope, healing and justice?

Prayer Ideas: Pray for hope, healing, justice and salvation.

Psalm 11

1. In this psalm David gets some advise - notice the quotation in v 1-3.
 - (a) What is that advise?
 - (b) What is David's attitude to it?
2. What are the different ways in which God deals with the righteous and the wicked?
3. What is in the cup in v6 (the word "lot" is used instead of "cup" in the NIV)?
4. What is in the cup for Jesus (see Matt 26:36-46)?
5. What has the cup got to do with us today?

Ponder: Are we the righteous or the wicked?

Prayer Ideas: Thank God that Jesus took the cup and dealt with our wickedness. Pray that we respond to Jesus by living obediently.

Psalm 12

1. Is v1 an exaggeration (see also Micah 7:2, Is 57:1, 1 Ki 19:10, 14)?
2. How does David describe
 - (a) the wrong way to use words?
 - (b) the right words?
3. How did Jesus handle the wicked and vileness on every side v8?

Ponder: How do we handle the wicked and vileness on every side?

Prayer Ideas: Pray for patience, understanding and forgiveness when people sin against us.

Psalm 13

This psalm most likely relates to the antagonism between David and Saul (read 1 Sam 18:6-29).

1. What are David's feelings in this psalm?
 2. How does David deal with his predicament?
 3. What is one incident in Jesus' life where he shared some of those feelings?
- Ponder: Have you ever felt the same way? What was happening and how did it turn out?
- Prayer Ideas: Pray for faith in God's steadfast love.
4. How long will we suffer (read Phil 1:6)?

Psalm 14

Ponder: "The Bible says there is no God". 1. How would answer that allegation?

2. If all people are evil v 1-3, how are some righteous v 4-5
 - (a) in David's day?
 - (b) in our day (see Rom 3:9-24)?
3. How did salvation come out of Zion (Jerusalem) v7
 - (a) in David's day?
 - (b) in Jesus' day?

Prayer Ideas: Thank God that Jesus has saved his people and made us righteous through his death and resurrection.

Psalm 15

1. What answer does David give to the question in v1?
2. Rather than thinking of these as conditions for people who want to get into God's sanctuary (NIV) or God's tent (ESV), think of them as descriptions of people who are there already. How does this compare with how Jesus describes his people in Matt 5:1-11?
3. What does the last line of the psalm say about a believer's relationship with God?

Ponder: Do you think people in Old Testament times had a personal relationship with God? How personal is your relationship with God?

Prayer Ideas: Thank God that Jesus has brought his people into a personal relationship with God.

Psalm 16

1. What does David
 - (a) want?
 - (b) profess?
 - (c) praise God for?
2. What does this say about David's relationship with God?
3. How do Peter (Acts 2:22-33) and Paul (Acts 13:32-37) apply this psalm?

Ponder: Is David writing about life after death in v 10-11?

Prayer Ideas: Thank God for raising Jesus from the dead and giving the Holy Spirit to his people.

Psalm 17

1. Consider the events of 1 Sam chs 18 - 20. Why does Saul hate David?

If this is the historical context for the psalm it may explain David's righteous tone in v1-5.

2. What does David want God to do in v6-14?

Rather than take vengeance on Saul (1 Sam 24, 26), David leaves it in God's hands.

3. How is David's trust in God shown in v15?

(b) Is he prophesying life after death?

Ponder: Do we trust God in the good times but resort to our own devices when things go wrong?

Prayer Ideas: Pray for patience and understanding of those who oppose you and trust in God to keep you in his care.

Psalm 18

This psalm is reproduced in 2 Sam 22 celebrating the end of David's troubles both within and outside his kingdom. Ps 18 is a bit longer than the previous psalms. Read it through quickly to get a rough idea of what it is about before we focus more closely on specific sections.

1. What are the prominent themes as David reviews his life?

2. (a) Do you think v7-15 should be taken literally?

(b) What is being conveyed to the reader?

Ponder: (a) In v20-24, is David claiming a reward from God because of his own righteousness?

(b) See if you can come up with another reason by considering v1-19.

3. Why does David love the Lord ?

4. What phrases remind you of Jesus (see the heading, v19 and v50) and why?

5. What does v49-50 point to?

Ponder: In v20-24 is David claiming a reward from God because of his own righteousness? Isn't he a sinner like the rest of us and undeserving of any reward from God?

Prayer Ideas: Thank God for his protection and salvation from our enemies.

Psalm 19

1. What is the connection between the sun (v1-6) and the law (v7-14)?

2. "But we need to grasp that here in the Old Testament 'law' is a wonderfully comprehensive word, meaning all that God wants us to know about himself" (Michael Wilcock "The Message of Psalms 1-72" p71). What does God want us to know about himself in v7-14?

3. What does God want us to know about himself from creation (v1-6 and Rom 1:19-20)?

4. How does v14 apply to Jesus?

5. How does v14 apply to us?

Prayer Ideas: Praise God for revealing himself to us through his creation, Jesus and the Bible.

Psalm 20

1. Who is talking to whom in this psalm?

2. What are they talking about?

3. Psalm 20 is not really a prayer or is it? How would you describe this psalm?

Ponder: Do we pray for our leaders like this?

Prayer Ideas: Thank God that Jesus has been victorious. Help us to trust in Him.