

C12 - Studies in the Psalms

Study 1 - Psalm 2: A Psalm of Kingship

BIBLE READING:

Psalm 2

KEY VERSE:

**“I have set My King on Zion,
My holy hill.”**

Psalm 2: 6

Psalm 2 is a royal psalm, because it points forward to the coming of the Messiah, the Anointed One, the King above all kings, the Lord Jesus. In **Revelation 2: 27** the risen Lord connects His victory over the rebellious nations and His reign on earth to **Psalm 2: 9**. **Revelation 19: 19–21** describes when and how Jesus will defeat the nations that assemble to go to war against God’s anointed Son.

A REBELLION DECLARED

(verses 1-3)

David, the Psalmist (**see Acts 4: 25**) begins by lamenting over the condition of the world - everywhere he looks the nations are in turmoil, united in their rebellion against God. Fast-forward three-thousand years and nothing has changed! In our world today, we constantly hear and read of plots and conspiracies to overthrow governments. In many parts of the world, counsel has been taken to destroy authority, resulting in uprisings, coups and revolutions. In this psalm their rebellion is specifically against God and against His **“Anointed”**, - Jesus The Messiah. (**verse 2**) The Psalmist looks ahead and sees this rage, resistance and rebellion which will be directed against Israel’s Saviour. When the Lord Jesus came into the world, people resented Him and rejected Him. They treated His coming as an interference. Eventually they cried, **“Away with Him, crucify Him”**. (**John 19: 15**)

A DERISIVE RESPONSE

(verses 4-6)

God laughs at the opposition. His plans were made in an eternity past, and the plots and schemes of puny man can never thwart them. God has no need of emergency measures. Man may rage and rebel, but God remains unmoved. This is the wonderful thing about Him! Rebellion against Him is futile. He is the Sovereign ruler of the world and the future is absolutely under His control. Despite the rebellion of those who disobey, God will establish His rule, through Christ, just as He has promised. (**verses 4-6**) This is why the Christian’s heart can be at peace in the troubled times in which we live. Although all around the world we may hear of **“wars and rumours of wars”** (**Matthew 24: 6**), and **“the love of many will grow cold”** (**Matthew 24: 12**), yet the Christian can look up and know that God IS still in control.



A ROYAL DECREE

(verses 7-9)

The Anointed One, now speaks, and declares the decree of the Lord. He is God’s begotten Son, who upon request is given the ends of the earth as an inheritance which He will rule with a rod of iron. Over and above the rule of men God has planned that His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, will be King of Kings. When He came into the world it seemed that the only crown that men could give Him was a crown of thorns - given in mockery. How sad that they did not recognise Him as their true Messiah! The Bible teaches that one day, that One who died wearing a crown of thorns, will come again. Then He will wear a crown of glory. (**Revelation 19: 12**) These verses look forward to the time when the Lord Jesus will reign over the whole earth as absolute King.

A REASONABLE DEMAND

(verses 10-12)

David ends this Psalm with an appeal to the kings and rulers of the earth to bring their homage to God’s King. The alternatives of wrath or refuge, perishing or blessing, still lie before them. To serve, submit and surrender, is to show true wisdom. Today we can also respond to the Lord Jesus Christ by making Him King of our lives. All the world will one day have to own His rule. How wonderful that we can do this voluntarily today in our own lives. Lives in which the Lord Jesus reigns are the only lives really worth living - living with a purpose, an inner peace, and a secure future.

C12 - Studies in the Psalms

Study 2 - Psalm 22: A Psalm of Lament

BIBLE READING:

Psalm 22

KEY VERSE:

“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Why are You so far from saving me; from the words of my groaning? ”

Psalm 22: 1

Psalms of Lament are a pouring out of the heart to God where the writer expresses deep emotions in response to very difficult circumstances. **Psalm 22** is a Psalm of David, and at one level it equates with some of the bitter experiences of sorrow which he encountered. It may have been written when David was in exile being relentlessly pursued by his rebellious but much-loved son Absalom.

David describes how he feels forsaken. Despite his cries to God, he receives no answer. (**verses 1-2**) In **verses 3-5** he contemplates who God is and recalls God's track-record to His people in the past. Again, David alternates between his present experience (**verses 6-8**), his relationship with God in the past (**verses 9-10**) and his present experience. (**verses 11-18**) After some specific requests to God (**verses 19-21**) his lament is replaced by praise. (**verses 22-31**)

The words David uses, however, are an extraordinarily precise description of the last hours of the Lord Jesus. As we shall see, they are prophetic. In **Psalm 2**, we learned that the Messiah is King above all kings and the tone is triumphant. (Study 1) The first part of **Psalm 22** portrays a completely different portrait, and the mood is dark and sombre. Note the following:

THE CRY

David may have FELT deserted by God, but the Lord Jesus experienced a REAL separation. Jesus used the opening words as He died on the cross, **“My God, My God why have You forsaken me?”** (**verse 1, Matthew 27: 46**) To be forsaken by friends is heartbreaking but here Jesus is experiencing abandonment by His Father, the One who loved Him with a love beyond our comprehension. (**John 3: 35, 17: 24**) How could such a thing happen? We need to realise that it was the weight of our sin that shut the Lord Jesus from His Father's sight. God who is holy cannot look upon sin, so He had to turn away from His own beloved Son. (**2 Corinthians 5: 21**)

THE CROSS

There are details in this Psalm which are an exact fit with death by crucifixion. Look at **verses 14-18**. It is even more significant that crucifixion was not used at the time when the Psalm was written. When a person was put to death in Israel he was stoned; it was only in Roman times that crucifixion was used as a means of execution. Details such as the sufferer's hands and feet being pierced, and lots being cast for his garments are most amazing. Notice also the mockery of **verse 8**. These very words were hurled at Jesus as He hung on the cross. (**Matthew 27: 43**)

THE COST

In applying **Psalm 22** to the Lord Jesus, we should pause and ask ourselves why this suffering had to be. All the physical details are surpassed by the cry of **verses 1-2** which expresses the greatest suffering ever known. Our sin cost the Lord Jesus ALL the sufferings of the cross and finally His death. He was forsaken by His Father in order that we would never be forsaken by God but instead be able to enjoy His forgiveness and gift of eternal life.

THE CLIMAX

In **verses 22-31** the mood of the Psalm changes to one of true gladness and praise. Although the sufferings of the cross were bitter and costly to the Lord Jesus, yet out of such deep tragedy came triumph. Note how an ever-widening circle of people join in the praise – **“all you descendants of Israel”** (**verse 23**) extends to **“all the ends of the earth”**. (**verse 27**) Many, many people of all ages will join in worship declaring **“He has done it.”** (**verse 31**) This will be the outcome of His finished work on the cross. (**John 19: 30**) As a Messianic Psalm, the first part speaks of Christ's sufferings, but the latter part speaks of the worldwide deliverance which He has made possible. In **Psalm 22**, the Messiah is the Suffering Saviour, but He is also the Sovereign (**verses 27-31**) as depicted in **Psalm 2**.



Answer Sheet

C12 - Studies in the Psalms

Study 1 - Psalm 2: A Psalm of Kingship

Return address on back of answer sheet

Name: _____

Address: _____

1. Who is speaking in the following verses of this Psalm?

Verses 1-3 _____

Verses 4-6 _____

Verses 7-9 _____

Verses 10-12 _____

/4

2. Answer the following questions:

a) What do the nations DO to rebel against God? (**verses 1-2**) _____

b) What do the nations SAY in their rebellion against God? (**verse 3**) _____

/4

3. What is God's response to their rebellion? (**verses 4-6**)

/3

4. What three words are used to describe the Lord Jesus in this Psalm?

i. _____ ii. _____ iii. _____

/3

5. Explain in your own words what wisdom the psalmist gives to kings and rulers. (**verses 11-12**)

/4

6. Peter and John quote some verses from *Psalm 2* in *Acts 4: 23-30*.

a) What does **verse 25** tell us about David, the psalmist? _____

b) To whom do Peter and John say **Psalm 2** is referring? _____

c) Who do they name as being opposed to the Lord and His Anointed (One)? _____

/3

7. Answer the following:

a) What does **Psalm 2** teach us about God's sovereignty? _____

b) How does knowing that God is sovereign help us face the challenges of life? _____

/4

THINK: Am I living each day of my life under the authority and rule of the Lord Jesus?

TOTAL = /25

Answer Sheet

C12 - Studies in the Psalms

Study 2 - Psalm 22: A Psalm of Lament

Return address on back of answer sheet

1. *Psalm 22* is a Psalm of David.

- a) What may have prompted David to write this lament? _____

- b) How is David feeling in **verse 6**? _____

- c) Despite the strong emotions he is feeling, David reaches out to God. Give two examples of what he asks God to do for him. _____

/5

2. Read *verses 1-2* and *Matthew 27: 46-47*:

- a) How was David's sense of being forsaken by God different from that of the Lord Jesus? _____

- b) Why was it necessary for the Lord Jesus to be forsaken by His Father on the cross? _____

/1

/3

3. *Psalm 22* is a prophecy of the Suffering Saviour.

- a) Connect these phrases from *Psalm 22* with their New Testament fulfilment by drawing a line between them.

Verse 7 "*All who see Me mock Me...*"

John 19: 28

Verse 15 "*...My tongue sticks to My jaws...*"

John 19: 23-24

Verse 17 "*...they stare and gloat over Me...*"

Matthew 27: 39-44

Verse 18 "*...for My clothing they cast lots.*"

John 19: 30

Verse 31 "*...He has done it.*"

Matthew 27:36

/5

- b) Identify three groups of people in **Matthew 27: 39-44** who mocked Jesus as He was dying.

i. _____ ii. _____ iii. _____

/3

- c) Explain why it is particularly significant that David was writing about details of crucifixion.

/2

4. What do you consider was Christ's greatest suffering? Give reasons for your answer.

/3

5. In what way can we be sharers in the triumph that came out of the tragedy of the cross?

/3

THINK: Reflect on what it cost the Lord Jesus to suffer on the cross for your sins. Take time to thank Him.

TOTAL = /25

Answer Sheet

C12 - Studies in the Psalms

Study 3 - Psalm 121: A Psalm of Pilgrimage

Return address on back of answer sheet

1. Briefly explain why *Psalms 120-134* are called *Psalms of Pilgrimage*.

□ /2

2. Answer the following:

a) List some of the dangers and threats to the pilgrims which are mentioned in this Psalm. _____

b) Give some of examples of the dangers that we may face on the journey of life. _____

□ /6

3. Answer these questions:

a) Why is it important to remember that our "**help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth**" when we face difficulties? _____

b) Why is it important to remember that God "**will neither slumber nor sleep**"? _____

□ /4

4. What examples does the psalmist give about God being his "**keeper**"?

□ /3

5. What do the following verses teach us about God's love and care?

a) *Psalm 46: 1* _____

b) *Isaiah 41:10* _____

c) *Romans 8: 38-39* _____

d) *Jude 1: 24-25* _____

□ /4

6. Read *Psalm 91: 1-6*. What similarities do you find between these verses and *Psalm 121*?

□ /3

7. In what ways does *Psalm 121* encourage you in times of uncertainty or trouble?

□ /3

THINK: What kinds of personal struggles are you going through right now? How might the biblical perspective that God is watching over you 24/7 help you to face your fears?

TOTAL = □ /25

Answer Sheet

C12 - Studies in the Psalms

Study 4 - Psalm 23: A Psalm of Trust

Return address on back of answer sheet

1. The Shepherd and His Sheep.

a) Explain how a person can have a personal relationship with the Shepherd of **Psalm 23: 1**.

Refer to **Isaiah 53: 6, John 10: 11, 14**. _____

 /4

b) Note that it is the Shepherd who is initiating the care in **verses 2-3a**. Write the three verbs which describe his actions. i. _____ ii. _____ iii. _____

 /3

c) In what sense will we not lack anything if we belong to the Lord? _____

 /3

2. The Guide and His Followers.

a) How does Jesus say His sheep know how to follow Him? (**John 10: 4**) _____

 /1

b) How would you ensure that you are following Him daily? _____

 /3

c) Why can we trust Him to lead us in the right paths? _____

 /1

d) Where is the psalmist in **verse 4**? _____

 /1

e) Why is he not afraid? _____

 /2

f) What application can you make from **verse 4** for your own life? _____

 /1

3. The Host and His Guests.

How is being a guest at the Lord's table a very positive experience for David?

 /3

4. Read **Psalm 27: 4**

a) What is David's one desire for all the days of his life? _____

b) Why does he want to be able to do this? _____

c) The certainty that believers have of being with the Lord in eternity is affirmed in the New Testament.

Write out the last nine words of **1 Thessalonians 4: 17**. _____

 /3

THINK: Reflect on **Psalm 23: 1** in relation to all you have in knowing the Lord as your Shepherd. Take time to praise and thank Him now.

Return your completed answer sheet to:

TOTAL = /25 UNIT TOTAL = /100

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C12 - Studies in the Psalms

Study 3 - Psalm 121: A Psalm of Pilgrimage

BIBLE READING:

Psalm 121

KEY VERSE:

**“My help comes from the Lord,
Who made heaven and earth”**

Psalm 121: 2

INTRODUCTION

Psalm 121 is sometimes called the **“Traveller’s Psalm”**. It is part of a collection of Psalms known as the **“Songs of Ascents” (Psalms 120 - 134)**, which were sung by pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem for the annual feasts. This Psalm was written to instil confidence in God’s people as they journeyed, to encourage them that they were not alone, that God was watching over them and that His help was available to them.

Psalm 121 has been a source of comfort to countless individuals throughout history, whether they were literal travellers or those facing the physical, emotional or spiritual challenges of life. The Psalm addresses universal human concerns such as fear, vulnerability, and the need for security. It reminds us that while we may face uncertainties and dangers, we are not alone, we can rely on the Lord and trust in His protection and care.

VERSES 1-2

Verse 1 depicts the pilgrim’s gaze toward the hills and the psalmist asks a question to which anyone can relate: Where can I get help? This is a natural question to ask, whether we are thinking of a geographic journey through dangerous territory or a lifelong journey through many ups and downs. The answer follows immediately in **verse 2: “My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.”** The psalmist does not look to nature for help, rather he looks to the One who made the hills, the heavens and the earth – God. In declaring God as the Creator and his helper, the psalmist is emphasising God’s supreme power. God is well-able to help in time of need. (**Psalm 46: 1**)

VERSES 3-4

These verses develop the thought of God’s protection. The Psalmist is confident in God’s care despite the hazards, risks and dangers of the journey: **“He will not let your foot be moved”**. The repetition of the word **“keeps”** emphasises the steady, constant nature of God’s care. While human beings get tired and need to rest, God is always awake and attentive. His watchful eye is always looking with love and care upon His people. (**Psalm 33: 18**)

VERSES 5-6

In the same way that shade brings a welcome relief from the blazing sun, so God protects His people, and that protection is not from far off, rather He is beside us, at our **“right hand”**. The **“moon by night”** may refer to the dangers, the fears or superstitions of darkness. Together, these pictures convey that God’s protection is all-inclusive – at all times and in all circumstances God promises to keep us and guard us. God keeping us doesn’t mean that we will never face harm or suffer. It does mean, however, that evil and suffering, danger and heartache will not have the final word. (**See Romans 8: 35-39; Jude 1: 24**)

VERSES 7-8

The Psalm closes with a promise of lasting security. God will watch over us constantly and He will be with us in the daily activities of life. The eternal nature of God’s care is seen in the phrase **“from this time forth and forevermore.”** God will guard us and go with us throughout the journey of life.

In conclusion, **Psalm 121** is a confident declaration of faith in God’s care and protection. It speaks right into the heart of human experience, addressing our fears and affirming our need for divine help. As we reflect on the nature of God’s protection in this Psalm, we see that God does not promise a trouble-free life, but rather we are promised God’s presence and support in the midst of difficulties. **Psalm 121** calls us to lift our eyes beyond our immediate circumstances, to shift our focus to the Creator who is greater than any obstacle we face and who will watch over us with faithful care and love.



C12 - Studies in the Psalms

Study 4 - Psalm 23: A Psalm of Trust

BIBLE READING:

Psalm 23

KEY VERSE:

**“The Lord is my Shepherd;
I shall not want.”**

Psalm 23: 1

Psalm 23 is probably the best-known Psalm of all, having brought blessing and comfort to many people. While it is known as the ‘Shepherd Psalm’ and indeed was written by David the shepherd, it contains three related images, teaching us about trust in our present lives and for the future.

THE SHEPHERD AND HIS SHEEP

(verses 1-3a)

At the outset, notice that the Psalm begins with **“The LORD”**. This immediately conveys who the shepherd is. **“The LORD”** is the One who revealed Himself to Moses (**Exodus 3: 1-6**) – the self-existent, self-sufficient God., characterised by His power and strength. This same God also reveals Himself as a loving tender Shepherd! Can you personally and joyfully exclaim **“The Lord is my Shepherd”**? (with the emphasis on “my”!)

Such a Shepherd has unlimited resources. **“I shall not want”** is more accurately understood as **“I shall lack nothing”**. There may be many things in life that you might want or crave after; often our wants are much greater than our needs. Through the shepherd-care of his Lord, David has come to realise that all his desires are met through Him. This first verse is central to the rest of the Psalm and the remaining verses describe in more detail how this truth shapes and impacts our lives. Because of this, **verse 1** has been chosen as our **Key Verse**.

The shepherd is pictured as leading the sheep to suitable pasture and drinking water. The Lord Jesus as the Good Shepherd. (**John 10: 11**) has made provision for our spiritual needs. (**Isaiah 53: 6, John 10: 14**) As Christians, we are part of His flock and can rely daily on His provision of grace and His restoring us when we grow weary or fail.

THE GUIDE AND HIS FOLLOWERS

(verses 3b-4)

The picture is now of the psalmist following in the tracks of the Guide. **“He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.”** (**verse 3b**) The Lord Jesus is the One who will lead us in the right paths when we are faced with many options and the way ahead is uncertain. Notice it is **“for His name’s sake”** – this means that His leading is in accordance with His character, so the paths can be nothing



else but the right ones! In **John 10: 4**, Jesus explains about how we can follow Him.

Sooner or later, all of us will find ourselves in dark and difficult paths. (**verse 4**) The valleys we face are many - disappointment, illness, bereavement and trauma to name but a few, as well as the one which David names **“the valley of the shadow of death.”** David’s focus remains on his Shepherd Guide who is travelling through the valley with him, protecting him with his rod for defence and his staff for correction. It is immensely comforting for us to claim his words and know with assurance, **“I will fear no evil; for You are with me”**. Note that David’s relationship with the Shepherd becomes more personal, he uses you instead of him in this section.

THE HOST AND HIS GUESTS

(verses 5-6)

In the culture in which the Psalm was written, a host not only satisfied his guest’s hunger but was expected to welcome and honour his guest by anointing his head with oil. David recognised that he was a special guest at the Lord’s table, feasting on the abundance of His provision and experiencing joy, pictured in an overflowing cup. Being in the Lord’s presence gave David the opportunity to refresh himself and build up fresh reserves of strength to face his enemies. (**verse 5**) In applying this to ourselves, we experience the Lord’s generosity and care despite whatever enemies or conflict we are facing in our circumstances.

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life” describes the certainty that the Lord’s goodness and mercy will pursue the psalmist throughout his life. Not everything that happens to us is pleasurable or easy, but we are promised that the Lord will use it to bring about His good purposes. (**Romans 8: 28**) David is assured of a wonderful future in eternity - permanent fellowship in the house of the Lord. (**compare Psalm 27: 4**) Are you, like David, anticipating the time when you will enjoy the Lord’s presence forever?

This is the second of two units on **The Psalms**.

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